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University of Southampton

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Winchester School of Art

Making Space: Social Engaged Art and Community in Support of People Experiencing Homelessness

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

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My thesis extends knowledge and approaches to enhance public recognition, community engagement, and inclusion for homeless adults through my socially engaged practice, Making Space, with the homelessness charity Trinity Winchester.

My strategies initiate inclusive cultural discourse by opening Trinity Winchester's doors to local artists and students. I recruit 'community connectors' (Russell and McKnight, 2022) to build a dynamic workshop network that promotes dialogue, idea exchange, and connect with the broader community.

This research shifts dominant discourses around homelessness by highlighting the untapped creativity of homeless individuals. It extends the discussion on how space is not merely physical but is also socially produced, shaped by social relations, economic systems, political structures, and cultural practices (Lefebvre, 2015). This concept becomes crucial in collaborative art for people battling barriers to inclusion, access to resources, and control over their social identity, which are issues under-discussed in current discourses.

My interventions demonstrate that spaces created through collaborative art engagement are essential for bridging the divide between homeless co-authors and a broader audience. By expanding networks of care (Conradson, 2003) and emphasising empowerment over containment (Parsell, 2023), my work nurtures inclusive platforms and accessibility. This initiative embodies gentle activism, challenging conventions and redefining societal usefulness. It rejects a "homeless identity" and supports the exploration of positive, evolving identities through community-based social practice.

Enriching societal understanding of homeless individuals' experiences and aspirations, Making Space promotes grassroots decision-making and cultural exchange. By facilitating the passions and authentic narratives of people experiencing homelessness, my research aims to celebrate their stories rather than try to fix perceived deficits. In this way, it empowers individuals to find their own sustainable solutions.

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Declaration of Authorship

Alastair Eales

Making Space: Social Practice and Community in Support of Homelessness

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Signature: Alastair Eales

Date: 13.05.2025

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With the oversight of my main supervisor, editorial advice has been sought. No changes of intellectual content were made as a result of this advice.

Definitions and Abbreviations

PGR	Post Graduate Researcher.
SCAG	Southampton City Art Gallery, located at the Civic Centre, Commercial Road, Southampton, SO14 7LY.
TAG	Trinity Art Group, a creative convergent community of artists founded by Alastair Eales on August 20, 2001. The art group is open to anyone accessing Trinity Winchester services, making its composition fluid and ever-changing. While it is challenging to quantify the exact number of participants due to this flexibility, there is a long-term core group of about sixteen to twenty members.
WSA	Winchester School of Art, founded in 1870 and located at the University of Southampton, Park Avenue, Winchester, SO23 8DL.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Overview: This thesis explores the transformative power of community-based art for people experiencing homelessness. Key research questions include: How can art foster social inclusion? What methodologies are most effective in engaging marginalised groups? Chapter One lays out my thesis aims, objectives, and research questions. This details the various elements and how they coalesce to establish my position on community-based social practice and my role as an art facilitator working with marginalised groups. I define key terms, such as art's intrinsic, institutional, and instrumental values and 'community-based social practice'.

1.1 Empowering Adults who are Homeless through Community Art: Long-Term Engagement and Cultural Inclusion

This thesis reflects on 20 years of personal experience as a facilitator, during which I explored effective approaches to long-term community art projects with marginalised groups. My primary audience is anyone interested in community-based social practice, especially fellow facilitators in the same field. This thesis delineates the challenges I encountered, articulates my evolved perspective, and sheds light on the rationale behind the effectiveness of this approach.

In 2001, I founded the Trinity Art Group (TAG), a unique community group for individuals experiencing homelessness. Since its inception, I have dedicated myself to TAG, working to evolve the group into a stable and consistent collective. An inclusive and long-term approach has been the foundation of our success. The Making Space project emerged from the rich history of TAG's artistic engagement.

In this thesis, I explore the transformative potential of art workshops in promoting cultural inclusion for adults experiencing homelessness. My professional trajectory as a facilitator and educator has significantly transformed, moving away from a conventional, object-focused “contain and distract” engagement model. I coined this term to reflect the model that tends to prioritise the practical benefits of art activities, such as keeping participants busy and teaching them useful skills, over the intrinsic value of art as a means of self-expression and social inclusion. This approach can stifle the transformative potential of art, reducing it to a means of control rather than a platform for empowerment and community building.

From my experience working as a museum art educator since the early 2000s, community art facilitation programmes generally operated within a closed system. In this system, we, the educators, were the experts, while the “hard to reach” groups we catered to span a spectrum of marginalised communities, including individuals with learning disabilities and those experiencing homelessness; these were our learners. The engagement model is consistently a top-down approach, where participants are rarely recognised as teachers or artists in their own right. These programmes typically aim to share skills and techniques, boost confidence in learning, and ultimately enhance employability and well-being through structured outcomes like attaining

certificates. While these objectives are commendable, the approach often overlooks the deeper issues of participants' marginalisation, isolation, and exclusion.

In practice, the conventional contain and distract engagement model perpetuates a framework that commodifies individuals, seeking tangible value extraction regardless of their backgrounds, traumas, or life experiences. Typically, these approaches promote a one-way learning process that values the acquisition of formal qualifications over the intrinsic knowledge and creativity of the individuals. This model is a temporary solution to enhance participants' CV credentials and social skills and can fail to tackle the deeper issues of marginalisation and exclusion. Once a programme ends, participants often feel their transient value has been depleted.

I reflect on the period of community art before 1986, prior to Thatcher's dissolution of a powerful ally of community art, the Greater London Council (GLC). This period in community art history was nebulous and had scant institutional support. Yet, it was radical and championed the notion of cultural democracy, as outlined by Francois Matarasso, a notable advocate for community arts:

in rejecting the idea of educating the poor to appreciate the culture of the rich. Instead, the movement asserted the right of working people to create their own art, rooted in their own experience and values, and their capacity to do that as well as anyone else with fair access to the resources of creative production. (2018, para. 3)¹

This sentiment underscores the right of marginalised communities to create and value their artistic expressions, challenging traditional cultural hegemonies.

Matarasso argues that community arts challenged the distribution of cultural resources and questioned the authority of institutions that judged artistic worth. This idea provoked a defensive reaction from the art establishment, which dismissed community art as inferior. The main debate over community art centred on artistic quality, but the underlying issue was who had the right to determine its value (2018).²

Through its organic composition characterised by dialogue and interaction, community art and its hybridised successor, social practice, offer broader forms of art engagement with ordinary people, embracing process-oriented models of art engagement and a return to cultural democracy where the value is situated in the practice. The organisation 64 Million Artists, in collaboration with Arts Council England, describes this relationship:

Cultural Democracy isn't concerned with attempts to define what is excellent art and what's not. What it thrives on is excellent practice, brilliant facilitation, great processes, awesome approaches

¹ Matarasso, F. (2018) 'A (very short) history of the British community arts movement', *A Restless Art*. Available at: <https://arestlessart.com/2018/03/08/a-very-short-history-of-the-british-community-arts-movement/comment-page-1/> (Accessed: 19 June 2024).

² Ibid

to decision making, developing, making, sharing, and engaging. Excellent processes, open and accessible, are at the heart of this notion of Cultural Democracy (2018, p. 6).³

I adopt this model, centring on the needs and voices of the homeless. Through social practice facilitation, I embrace a genuine community, not merely for instrumental purposes but for its inherent value, which is made visible through excellence in practice. This model seeks to extend the scope of art to encompass a broader spectrum of social inclusion, thereby dismantling geographical, psychological, and socioeconomic barriers through sustained artistic and cultural dialogue.

In this thesis, I look at approaches that position art workshops as dynamic sites of exchange and interaction where the voices of the homeless are heard and celebrated. I investigate how creating a vibrant, inclusive cultural sphere where ongoing social discursivity is not just possible but actively encouraged through a critically informed workshop approach. By prioritising process over product, my proposed model considers the transformative power of art as a catalyst for social change, building on a critique of traditional engagement methods and proposing a more inclusive, empathetic framework for cultural integration.

Funding for community arts has evolved over time, emphasising measurable outcomes related to education and well-being. However, this shift can pose challenges for homeless art groups seeking funding for purely artistic endeavours. From my past experience, engagement with Trinity Winchester and TAG was part of the charity's learning initiative, shaped by the most accessible and ongoing funding sources: education and health. The charity promoted the art group as educational art classes and offered 8-week courses. It was incentivised to provide quantitative data reflecting new uptake with the maxim more is better. This approach, however, was detrimental to TAG as a long-term community support structure as it restricted access and support for ongoing involvement and established group members.

The methodology developed for workshop engagement challenges the traditional perception of community creation in the arts as merely instrumental. I argue that short-course art educational programmes cannot alleviate isolation and exclusion. While education is essential, it must be coupled with efforts to promote and strengthen community, identity, stability, belonging, and self-expression within our cultural fabric on a long-term basis.

In this thesis, I introduce Making Space – a model for workshop engagement that tests the conventional boundaries between education and belonging. It is not just a platform for learning and sharing knowledge. Making Space focuses on using art workshops as a catalyst for connection among individuals who often lack familial ties and are generally excluded from groups, clubs, or associations due to socioeconomic barriers (Putnam, 2001)⁴ and prevailing societal prejudices. The absence of such affiliations forms a substantial barrier

³ 64 Million Artists and Arts Council England. (2018) *Cultural democracy in practice*. Available at: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/CulturalDemocracyInPractice.pdf> (Accessed: 27 June 2024)

⁴ Putnam, R. (2001) *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. London: Simon & Schuster.

to forming positive group identities and accessing supportive networks and spaces of “care”. It becomes an initiative to carve out physical and metaphorical spaces where marginalised adults can find and assert their place within the local community, empowering participant users to create and make significant changes and expanding the spaces available for marginalised individuals to feel they belong. I consider this strategy a form of gentle activism, a term I use to describe the subtle yet impactful efforts to forge social change through inclusive and community-driven art initiatives. This is a theme I will explore in depth throughout this work.

The exclusion I mentioned above, is a multifaceted social challenge that requires a collaborative, multi-agency approach. Making Space leverages community-based art to address this need, working in unison with charities and organisations, providing marginalised individuals access to artistic resources, expertise, and new networks of inclusion, thereby challenging societal prejudices and ensuring full participation in community life.

Although community art has previously been utilised as a cost-effective solution or temporary intervention, it is essential to recognise that homelessness demands a comprehensive, sustained approach. Effective community art initiatives must be part of a broader strategy involving various agencies, institutions, and organisations committed to fostering long-term collaboration and support for homeless individuals.

To illustrate a positive community art engagement, consider the community-based theatre/art company Cardboard Citizens. They combine dramaturgy and social activism with cultural discourse – in doing so, they connect audiences to social issues and successfully create work for and with: ‘People who experience homelessness, inequity, or poverty’.⁵ This approach does not just provide temporary relief but works towards long-term engagement and empowerment.

Critics might argue that art alone cannot solve systemic issues like homelessness. This is a valid point. Community-based art should be viewed as part of a broader, integrated strategy that includes cultural hubs, educational centres, housing, and healthcare. Therefore, as others have, I argue for synergy among all relevant parties, where community-based art may act as a bridge, promoting a more connected and comprehensive approach to tackling homelessness: a collaborative vision that enhances our collective impact on one of society’s most pressing challenges.

My workshops serve as critical pathways for connection and inclusion, empowering the marginalised group I engage with to express themselves, confront social issues, reach out to other supportive agencies, and reclaim previously inaccessible spaces. In these settings, the community is not just the recipient but the driving force; the artist's role is that of a facilitator or catalyst who channels community voices and perspectives into the artwork.

This workshop approach was designed to transcend the confines of our immediate environment and connect the art collective with a broader community audience. The project aimed to break this stasis by

⁵ Cardboard Citizens (no date) *Our manifesto*. Available at: <https://cardboardcitizens.org.uk/who-we-are/manifesto/> (Accessed: 19 June 2024).

recognising the risk of the “charity bubble”, where art remains confined within the walls of the charity space. It sought avenues to ensure that the art created within TAG reaches a wider audience beyond the charity's immediate context. My research actively looks for and plugs in the missing voices of the homeless co-participants into the contemporary cultural discourse. The Making Space initiative is a strategic step towards sustainability and inclusivity and ensures that TAG's artistic endeavours contribute meaningfully to the cultural discourse.

As a community art practitioner working with vulnerable communities, this thesis enables me to engage with the attendant issues and associated critical dialogues underpinning this area of practice. My interdisciplinary approach applies this knowledge to my practice by investigating, evaluating, and critiquing how creative collaboration can positively impact the lives of the people experiencing homelessness I work with. Through this research, I intend to develop and improve community art workshops, exhibitions, and audience engagement strategies.

I combine art's essential, institutional, and practical aspects in my work. I explore how art impacts people emotionally and intellectually, operates in places like galleries and community centres, and serves larger purposes such as critiquing society and developing communities. This approach shows how community-based art can play a diverse role in improving society. My research aims to contribute to emerging practices, approaches, and critical dialogues across various social, political, historical-artistic, and philosophical contexts. Additionally, I will assess my practice-based approaches through reflective and reflexive research engagement, critically developing and refining my methods and methodologies.

Central to my practice is understanding the barriers faced by beneficiaries and practitioners in community-based social practice. This understanding allows me to tailor effective and sensitive interventions that address the specific needs and circumstances of these groups. Through user-testing-as-practice, I contribute new knowledge and applications to this burgeoning field, advancing creative opportunities for practitioners. This work extends the professional, critical, and applied knowledge of community-based social practice.

The research consists of this written component and a documented body of practice, developed concurrently and continually informed by the research investigation. This document records and illustrates the elements of my practice, including the strategies developed, the outcomes achieved, and the insights gained, thus contributing to the knowledge base of community-based art practice.

Through my engagement with TAG, I contribute to knowledge by demonstrating how community-based art practices can redefine cultural narratives and promote social inclusion. My work showcases the dynamic interactions between art and society, emphasising the importance of community participation in creating meaning. By integrating and celebrating the creative contributions of people experiencing homelessness, I aim to reshape societal understanding of their identities and the broader social impact of art.

1.2 Trinity Art Group (TAG)

I work with the charity Trinity Winchester, facilitating the Trinity Art Group (TAG), a group of adult service users. The charity describes its function as the provision of 'vital practical and emotional support to over 650 people each year who are experiencing the effects of homelessness'.⁶ Trinity Winchester is dedicated to supporting individuals facing a variety of vulnerabilities, including homelessness, addiction, mental and physical health challenges, poverty, social isolation, and domestic abuse. TAG is a key component of Trinity Winchester's educational and engagement initiatives, designed to involve diverse service users through art. TAG's sessions offer a creative outlet where participants can experiment with a broad spectrum of art-making techniques, all within a framework that emphasises contextual practices. This approach allows service users to explore themes and ideas that resonate with their everyday experiences.

1.3 Trinity Art Group (TAG) Formation

TAG art collective historically comprised three groups: Trinity Art Drop-in (founded 2001), Trinity Women's Art Group (established in 2006), and Arty IT (emerged in 2009, focusing on digital media art). These groups collaborated during events, exhibitions, and Trinity Winchester Summer Art Shows.

In 2018, Dr Daniel Cid from Winchester School of Art (WSA) initiated a collaboration between WSA and TAG, recognising their proximity and potential for creative reciprocity. This led to several joint projects, including two Tate Exchange initiatives and the 2020 *We Protest* exhibition at the University of Southampton's Hartley Library.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Trinity Drop-in and Trinity Women's Service Art Group merged and moved online, while Arty IT held weekly Zoom sessions. By late 2021, in-person meetings at Trinity resumed, but Arty IT funding ended. Consequently, TAG now operates as a single, larger, and more diverse collective that meets twice weekly.

This collaboration with WSA has opened up new opportunities for TAG, bridging what was previously a psychological barrier and demonstrating the mutual benefits of creative partnerships between academic institutions and community art groups.

⁶ Trinity Winchester (no date) *Trinity Winchester support change aspire*. Available at: <https://trinitywinchester.org.uk/> (Accessed: 9 June 2024).

1.4 Frameworks of Value

When exploring and defining the concepts of socially engaged art values, I reference the work of Riikka Anttonen et al. (2016)⁷ who provide a useful definition of art practice. This they divide into three distinct types, providing a framework for assessing its impact. These terms are useful in highlighting and categorising differing aspects of art's impacts and values:

1. **Intrinsic Value** – Often termed “art for art's sake”, this perspective appreciates art primarily for its aesthetic, symbolic, and spiritual qualities. Art is valued for its subjective experiences, which influence philosophical, intellectual, and emotional responses.
2. **Instrumental Value** – Here, art is utilised as a means to an end, serving social, economic, political, or environmental goals. This approach recognises art's utility in broader societal contexts, although it is often noted that instrumental value alone does not encapsulate the full cultural value of art. However, such value frequently garners significant attention from public policies and political agendas.
3. **Institutional Value**: This relates to the methods, structures, and processes established by the arts and related organisations, which contribute to building shared cultural values. Institutional value might encompass the development of specific visual art movements that utilise particular techniques or the evolution of educational structures in fields like social practice labs.

These categorisations help frame my analysis of art's diverse roles and the varied impacts it can achieve within the community, particularly in the context of socially engaged practices.

1.5 Research Aims

Through my research, I set out four interlinked aims, each guided by the overarching mission of empowering a homeless art group and building belonging and agency within its members, all of which will be explored and tested through workshop methodologies. My first aim seeks to dissolve barriers to creative integration for homeless participants, recognising the transformative potential of enabling this group to be heard, and valued in the face of societal misconceptions. My second aim focuses on broadening audience reach, emphasising the importance of diverse perspectives to enrich the conversations it generates – this includes expanding spaces and places TAG can collaborate – in this sense, an audience could also be a collaborator. My third aim delves into the concept of agency, emphasising how participation in art initiatives can empower individuals to shape and influence their world. Lastly, my fourth aim is to facilitate creative convergent communities, bringing together a range of actors beneficial to each other and fostering cultural visibility, inclusion, and positive identity. Together, these aims drive a collective effort to enhance the lives of the homeless individuals involved, bolstering recognition, validation, and a sense of belonging:

⁷ Anttonen, R., Ateca-Amestoy, V., Holopainen, K., Johansson, T., Jyrämä, A., Karkkunen, A., Prikk, K-K., Kuznetsova-Bodanovitš, K., Luonila, M., Kölar, J-M., Plaza, B., Pulk, K., Pusa, T., Ranczakowska-Ljutjuk, A., Sassi, M., Stiller, I. and Äyväri, A. (2016) *Managing art projects with societal impact: In a nutshell*. Helsinki: Unigrafia.

1. **To Dissolve Barriers to Cultural Exchange:** Breaking down barriers to cultural exchange is fundamental for developing the homeless art group. This process provides a platform for participants to be heard, seen, and valued, challenging societal perceptions and fostering reintegration, personal transformation, and societal change. Achieving this requires forming partnerships and relationships with cultural hubs, academic centres, and empathetic local businesses. Friendly negotiation and exchange are essential to establishing this critical infrastructure.
2. **To Broaden Audience, Reach and Engagement:** Expanding audience reach, and engagement ensures a broader representation of perspectives and voices, offering homeless artists/participants vital opportunities to present a positive identity and showcase their strengths and abilities. This diversity enriches the art created and the resulting conversations, promoting a deeper understanding of the art group's needs and desires. While art can be a powerful tool for addressing social issues and inspiring change, it is effective only when it reaches a receptive audience. This audience is not just the gallery visitor, crucially it can also be the museum invigilator, educator team and other gallery staff.
3. **To Generate Agency through Art Initiatives:** Generating agency involves empowering individuals to influence and engage with the world, shaping and achieving desired outcomes through their creative efforts. This is initiated through engagement in an art collective, advancing artistic exchange, ideas, and dialogue. By participating in art initiatives, individuals gain the ability to assert their intentions and contribute meaningfully to their communities.
4. **To Facilitate Creative Convergent Communities:** Facilitating creative convergent communities enhances cultural visibility, inclusion, and positive identity. Building social networks, facilitating exchange, and increasing visibility promote recognition, validation, and a sense of accomplishment for all participants. Most importantly, it establishes a supportive infrastructure essential for sustaining a lasting legacy.

1.6 Research Objectives

As an art facilitator who has worked long-term with a homeless community art group, I seek to define the form of grassroots, collaborative facilitation practice I engage in as community-based social practice.

This practice involves creating inclusive, co-authored art projects that empower individuals experiencing homelessness, allowing them to express their creativity and share their stories. It is a process-oriented approach that prioritises the voices and experiences of the participants, promoting a sense of community and agency.

I investigate and explore definitions of the term homeless. Researching and understanding the various definitions of homelessness is essential to address the issue comprehensively and effectively. It ensures that programmes of art engagement, and public perceptions are aligned with the realities faced by homeless individuals and communities. Fusing this understanding with art research and engagement to help remove the homeless labels foisted on individuals who experience homelessness, emphasising that homelessness is a condition they go through, not who they are.

I critically assess the outputs of key established social practice artists and theorists within the field of community engagement, such as Grant H Kester, through a contextual practice review. This analysis aims to contextualise the prevailing culture of audience reception within my community-based social practice. Drawing from the artists' and theorists' rich experiences and insights, this research seeks to deepen community-based art understanding of the impact of socially engaged art and the reception of its outcomes within diverse communities.

Through reflective practitioner-research I critically examine my workshop methodologies and processes. Through two distinct embedded projects (Chapters 5 and 6), I delve into the core elements of community-based social practice in physical and conceptual spaces to critically reflect on the dynamics, impacts, and transformative potential of art as a catalyst for social change. These projects and assessments contribute to the evolving discourse on community-based social practice and highlight its profound impact on individuals and society. In this thesis I provide:

1. Critical Reflections on Workshop Methodology and Process: I provide a detailed reflection on my workshop methodology and processes, examining their effectiveness and areas for improvement.
2. Contextual Review: Defining my positionality in Chapter 3 involves the critical assessment of social practice outputs in the field of community engagement through a contextual review, situating the current culture of community-based social practice with the emphasis on supporting adults experiencing homelessness.

3. Embedded Projects:

Making Space – This practice component examines a collaborative project conducted through workshops at various locations, culminating in a museum “takeover” exhibition titled *Making Space*.

WASTEWORk – As demonstrated through practical application, this international art project explores the themes of waste and sustainability through natural and social ecology. During TAG workshop sessions, the focus is on group dynamics, inventiveness, camaraderie, and resilience.

1.7 Research Questions

These questions serve as critical anchors that guide my inquiry and underscore its significance. Addressing these questions is paramount as they concern homeless adults' access to creative expression, social inclusion, and cultural participation.

Question 1:

How can we increase agency and authentic expression for homeless adults through art engagement?

I test this through practice-based approaches and the workshop setting.

Question 2:

How can community-based social practice empower homeless adults to explore positive identities of themselves?

Chapter 2 engages with concepts of homeless identities to address the issues of stereotyping and social stigma, which are viewed as a significant barrier to social and cultural inclusion. I consider community-based art engagement to transform the imposed, deficit-focused identities into self-selected, positive identities that underscore homeless individuals' innate worth and genuine experiences, drawing from the insights of sociologists, artists, and psychologists.

This question poses the challenge of how to engineer opportunities for exploring and projecting positive identities through my practice-based workshops and reflection on measuring the success in achieving this.

Question 3:

How can facilitators improve the cultural flow for homeless adults and enhance their presence and visibility in the public art realm while addressing the barriers that prevent homeless artists from working with and between charity spaces, public spaces, and cultural hubs to contribute to contemporary art discourse?

Question 3 shifts the focus to the broader cultural landscape, examining the obstacles that hinder homeless artists from navigating between spaces and making their issues visible to the public. This question recognises that simply offering art engagement is insufficient if broader cultural inclusion barriers remain unaddressed.

Question 3 highlights the need to consider viable networking and partnerships to create pathways for homeless artists and advocate for inclusive measures that reduce obstacles to accessing public and cultural spaces. What would these measures look like? What resources would homeless individuals need to access these spaces? What negotiations are necessary between stakeholders, institutions, and facilitators to ensure homeless artists feel welcome and included? Answering these questions aims to promote community acceptance and understanding of homeless individuals, mitigating social and cultural barriers.

1.8 Defining Community-Based Social Practice

In Chapter 3, I return to this subject to assert my facilitator position in this diverse field to bridge the gap between artistic and cultural activity and individuals who may be homeless. However, to prepare the ground for my role, I flesh out the definition of community-based social practice in this introduction.

Community art is rooted in a rights-based perspective based on post-war concerns for fair, more democratic art (Matarasso, 2019).⁸ It emphasised social engagement and worked (usually) separately from museums and galleries, offering an alternative to mainstream artistic expression (Owen, 1984).⁹ Community art in the 1970s and 1980s occupied a marginalised position within the broader art world, largely operating without significant political or institutional support. This period saw community art practices often overlooked or undervalued compared to more mainstream or gallery-based art forms. However, key figures like Owen Kelly, Su Braden, and artist David Harding provided critical commentary and advocacy for the field (Leeson, 2017, pp .139-140).¹⁰

The 1990s witnessed a shift in the visual arts landscape beyond the gallery setting, largely driven by the rise of public art. This era saw public art gaining prominence, often involving site-specific installations and community engagement projects. This reflected a broader engagement with the changing political climate and the growing and evolving discourse around the relationship between artists, institutions, academia, and their communities. Social practice emerges as a natural extension and evolution of the community art movements of the 1970s and 1980s, shaped significantly by the public art developments of the 1990s. But it also has antecedence in the early 20th-century art movements and later in the post-war movements, notably Joseph Beuys' 'social sculpture' (Schönhöfer, 2021).¹¹

Beuys' socially engaged theory is notably embodied in his artwork *7,000 Oaks – Urban Forestation instead of City Administration* for the Documenta 7 exhibition in Kassel (1982).¹² Beuys' *7,000 Oaks* artwork and his broader theory of social sculpture can be viewed as pioneering contributions to social practice. By emphasising community participation, addressing social and environmental issues, integrating art with everyday life, and challenging traditional art institutions, Beuys set the groundwork for many key principles and methodologies that define Social Practice today.

"Social practice" and "community-based social practice" are related yet distinct terms within contemporary art. The former is an umbrella term encompassing a variety of artistic, cultural, activist and collaborative activities that intersect with social issues and engage communities or individuals. This broad field often involves artists working with communities to address specific socio-political or environmental concerns through public interventions, participatory events, workshops, performances, or installations. The emphasis is on establishing meaningful social interactions and building dialogue and collaboration among participants.

⁸ Matarasso, F. (2018) 'A (very short) history of the British community arts movement' *A Restless Art*. Available at: <https://arestlessart.com/2018/03/08/a-very-short-history-of-the-british-community-arts-movement/comment-page-1/> (Accessed: 19 June 2024).

⁹ Kelly, O. (1984) *Community art and the state: Storming the citadel*. London: Comedia Publishing Group.

¹⁰ Leeson, L. (2017) *Art: process: change: Inside a socially situated practice*. London: Routledge.

¹¹ Schönhöfer, P. (2021) *The art of Joseph Beuys: Shaping society like a sculpture*. Available at: <https://goethe.de/ins/gb/en/kul/mag/22209348.html> (Accessed: 22 July 2024).

¹² Public Delivery. (2024) *Joseph Beuys' Ambitious Plan to Plant 7000 Oaks*. Available at: <https://publicdelivery.org/joseph-beuys-7000-oaks/> (Accessed: 23 June 2024)

Community-based social practice narrows this focus to direct engagement within specific communities. Artists work closely with community members to address shared concerns, goals, or issues. This approach addresses issues directly relevant to these groups and employs methods that are pertinent and accessible to them. It is characterised by a strong emphasis on collaboration, dialogue, and shared decision-making tailored to the particular contexts of the communities involved. Artists in this field work intimately with community members, involving them actively in both the development and execution of projects, thereby establishing a co-creative environment. An example of community-based social practice can be seen through the work of the Turner Prize winners, Assemble (2015),¹³ collaborating with Liverpool residents to enhance their local area through direct action and skill exchange with an eye on long-term commitment. This long-term commitment can be seen through developing a community workshop and establishing a communal winter garden (Tateshots, 2015).¹⁴

Community-based social practice and community-based art education share several commonalities. Both operate outside traditional institutional settings, closely collaborating with specific community groups, providing skill exchange, and applying action to real-world applications. The term ‘Transpedagogy’, coined by artist Pablo Helguera (2011, p. 77),¹⁵ describes the intersection of these fields.

I embrace and adapt Helguera’s Transpedagogy. From my experience working with TAG, I see that we have significantly benefitted from an art-making pedagogy. By promoting dialogue, exploring possibilities, and empowering others, art-making pedagogy provides conduits of exchange, experimentation, and shared learning, offering agency through self-discovery and promoting positive transformation. For Helguera:

Today, it is no secret that standard education practices – such as engagement with audiences, inquiry-based methods, collaborative dialogues, and hands-on activities – provide an ideal framework for process-based and collaborative conceptual practices. (2011, p. xi)¹⁶

By integrating Helguera’s notion of pedagogy as a form of art, my community-based practice not only nurtures creative expression but also cultivates an environment where participants can learn, grow, and contribute to the cultural fabric.

1.9 Long-Term Commitment

Working with a community group often entails a long-term commitment, especially from my experience working with TAG. From a broad perspective, long-term engagement develops relationships, builds trust, and fits — as a small piece — into the complex social mechanisms needed to support individuals experiencing

¹³ Assemble (no date). Available at: <https://assemblestudio.co.uk/> (Accessed: 23 June 2024)

¹⁴ Tateshots (2015) *Assemble*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsSD9ZutRzU> (Accessed: 24 June 2024).

¹⁵ Helguera, P. (2011) *Education for socially engaged art*. New York: Jorge Pinto Books.

¹⁶ Ibid.

exclusion or social isolation. Considering Assemble and its commitment to long-term engagement, I understand that our role as community-based social practitioners is not to go in and make changes! Instead, our role is to be a continuing part of positive change.

My model of community-based social practice's strength is its ability to establish relationships built on trust and respect through reciprocity and longevity. In Chapter 3, I consider the concept of 'relational subjectivity' as highlighted by academic Heather Davis (2011).¹⁷ This notion underscores the interconnectedness of individual identities, emphasising that they are not formed in isolation but rather shaped by relationships with others. This is bolstered by Jean-Luc Nancy and Steph Lawler's theoretical foundation of identity. Building upon this idea, my practice component WASTEWORK in Chapter 6 further explores how social ecology intersects with broader social art collaboration, identity and inclusion within TAG.

1.10 Community-Base Social Practice Antecedence

Historically, art has shifted between communal and ritualistic practices and the exclusive realm of 'fine art' – a term coined in the Age of Enlightenment (Shiner, 2001).¹⁸ However, societal changes blurred these distinctions in the 19th and 20th centuries. Movements like Dadaism and Constructivism emphasised integrating art into everyday life, leading to the emergence of social practice art.

Social practice is rooted in critical theory and institutional critique. These movements proposed a new narrative in which art is an interactive, participatory process focused on social engagement rather than merely visual aesthetic appreciation.

In the 21st century, Grant H. Kester's (2004)¹⁹ 'dialogical art approach' emphasises collaboration, fluid agency, and shared participation. This approach is particularly effective in settings with vulnerable adults, prioritising emotional welfare, empowerment, and community-building through creative workshops.

Conversely, Claire Bishop (2006),²⁰ influenced by Jacques Rancière (2009)²¹ and Chantal Mouffe (1985),²² argues for the importance of social agitation in disrupting existing systems and creating fairer ways of sharing and engaging in cultural life. The debates that initiated 'the social turn' are less polarising now, as socially

¹⁷ Davis, H. (2011) *Art that loves people: Relational subjectivity in community-based art*. Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/211513733.pdf> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

¹⁸ Shiner, L. (2001) *The invention of art: A cultural history*. London: University of Chicago Press.

¹⁹ Kester, G. H. (2012) 'Conversation pieces: The role of dialogue in socially-engaged art.' In Z. Kucor and S. L. Blackwell (eds.) *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985* 2nd edn. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 153-165.

²⁰ Bishop, C. (2006) 'The social turn: Collaboration and its discontents'. *Artforum*, Vol. 44, No. 6. (February) pp. 178-183.

²¹ Rancière, J. (2009) *The emancipated spectator*. Translated from the French by G. Elliot. London: Verso.

²² Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. (1985) *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*. London: Verso.

engaged artistic strategies have become integrated into contemporary art and hybridised with various artistic practices (Charnley, 2021).²³ I explore this art historical debate in more depth in Chapter 3.

Building upon the principles of community-based social practice, my work draws inspiration from the historical lineage of communal and secular rituals. Joseph Beuys famously asserted that everyone is an artist.²⁴ I embrace this notion because he expanded the scope of art by blending it with social activism and political engagement and championed the creative potential in everyone. My workshops empower adults who feel isolated or excluded by blending traditional practices with contemporary social engagement strategies. They foster meaningful interactions, facilitate social connections, and bridge the gap between individual experiences of homelessness and the broader community context.

However, it is essential to note that my practice only loosely connects with traditional ceremonies and rituals. I am aware that rituals are, by and large, linked to religious ceremonies – and that the theorising line between secular and religious ceremonies is itself liminal. Therefore, I use the term secular ritual to couch artistic practices that, in the words of Emilia Grouppe in her review of Millner's take on ritual and contemporary art: 'attempt to use ritual methods to seize and transform a space in order to transform individuals through ritualistic experiences' (2017, p. 88).²⁵

I embrace a secular application of ritualistic methods described by Australian academic Jacqueline Millner, who contends that contemporary art addresses a significant proposition of secular ritual, using Suzanne Lacy's work as an exemplar: 'Rituals can be a force for bringing people together to dream and embody the world otherwise: this is precisely what many contemporary artists strive for in their work' (2017).²⁶ Focusing on transforming spaces and individuals through artistic and ritualistic experiences, this approach ensures inclusivity. It accommodates individuals familiar with art and those encountering artistic practices for the first time.

1.11 Empower Community Through Inclusive Artistic Collaboration

Community-based social practice transcends mere immersion in a community. It involves a commitment to building relationships and creating lasting impacts and a legacy. My 20-year collaboration with TAG and Trinity Winchester has solidified my understanding of the necessity for persistent engagement to achieve substantial

²³ Charnley, K. (2021) *Sociopolitical aesthetics. Art, crisis and neoliberalism*. London: Bloomsbury.

²⁴ Tate (no date) *Joseph Beuys. Every man is an artist. 1978*. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/beuys-joseph-beuys-every-man-is-an-artist-ar00704> (Accessed: 28 June 2024).

²⁵ Grouppe, E. (2017) *New perspectives on secular ritual*. Available at: [https://www.anthro.ox.ac.uk/files/jaso10120188392pdf#:~:text=She%20offers%20a%20practical%20guide,make%20sense'%20\(31](https://www.anthro.ox.ac.uk/files/jaso10120188392pdf#:~:text=She%20offers%20a%20practical%20guide,make%20sense'%20(31) (Accessed: 9 June 2024).

²⁶ Millner, J. (2017) 'Ritual and contemporary art.' in J. Gordon-Lennox (ed.) *Emerging ritual in secular societies: A transdisciplinary conversation*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. pp. 217-231.

change. My practice addresses immediate needs and nurtures an environment conducive to sustained social, cultural, and political well-being.

At the core of my facilitation is the integration of pedagogy, advocacy, and a process-based approach. This methodology facilitates ongoing reassessment of the community's needs. Every participant's contribution is valued equally, ensuring no voice is prioritised over another. This opens the way to a truly collaborative environment.

The projects developed with TAG are deeply informed by the group's unique concerns, needs, and dynamics. As an artist collective and a learning exchange, TAG actively shapes the projects, drawing from their rich knowledge base, experiences, and cultural backgrounds. The involvement of TAG members in every step of the project enhances the work's relevance and impact and empowers them as key decision-makers in the artistic process.

Drawing on theoretical frameworks like Pierre Bourdieu's concept of Habitus – particularly the responses to 'Habitus' and social space (Rooksby, 2016),²⁷ I approach facilitation with an informed perspective, ensuring responsiveness to TAG's aspirations and challenges. This approach aligns with Paulo Freire's inversion of the traditional teacher/student relationship, empowering community members to assume roles as educators and creators (1970)²⁸, thereby offering a sense of agency and ownership. This inclusive methodology supports individual and collective growth. It enhances the group's capacity to act within and influence their lives—a concept echoed by Baruch Spinoza's²⁹ philosophy on enhancing one's ability to act upon the world, which drives my research and practice.

1.12 Dialogical Facilitations: Activism Through Art

Art and activism converge powerfully through conversational facilitations – where the creative process becomes a dynamic space for reflection and transformative dialogue. This space, which we term “making space”, is not merely about skill exchange but about developing and expanding an environment where participants can openly share their views, frustrations, and aspirations. These discussions are crucial as they delve into personal and communal growth and illustrate the potential for social connection and reciprocity. This potential is often realised through the emergent practices of art-making.

²⁷ Rooksby, E. (2016) *Habitus: A sense of place*. J. Hillier (ed.), London: Routledge, 2016.

²⁸ Freire, P. (1996) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Penguin edn. Translated from the Portuguese by M. Bergman Ramos. London: Penguin Books.

²⁹ Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (2023) *Spinoza on the emotions: The explanation of the conatus*. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/emotions-17th18th/LD5Spinoza.html#ExpCon> (Accessed: 1 July 2024).

The value of a dialogical approach extends beyond immediate community impact, influencing broader societal narratives. Dialogical art is inherently collaborative. Grant H. Kester's 2004 work, *Conversation Pieces*,³⁰ argues that dialogical art transcends mere physical creation; it embodies a process rooted in discourse. This discourse mediates encounters between artists, audiences, and the community, facilitating deeper, more meaningful engagement.

In practical terms, dialogical facilitation demands active participation from all involved. It is not a passive experience; rather, every voice contributes to the collective understanding of the artwork. This method promotes shared ownership and empowerment, especially for marginalised participants – who actively shape the artistic narrative. The benefits are manifold: increased self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment that resonates beyond the art project. Through dialogical facilitation, participants gain insights into their creative processes and intentions. Meaningful exchanges of ideas deepen their connection to the art, enriching the overall experience. This approach builds social and cultural understanding, offering a more inclusive and concerned community.

Dialogical facilitation in community-based art serves as both engagement spaces for marginalised adults and a form of gentle activism. It promotes lasting change through conversation and collaboration. As we progress, this dialogical space promises to inspire and empower, transforming passive viewers into active collaborators in art and life.

1.13 Critical Research Contexts

While my critique of traditional models of community art engagement for vulnerable adults stems from my two decades of experience as an art facilitator, it's important to clarify that this perspective is not universally applicable to all community-based art practices. Numerous examples of dynamic, innovative, and impactful art practitioners operate within museums, care homes and community centres in all parts of the country. These practitioners often work under challenging conditions and with limited resources, yet they demonstrate a profound commitment to their craft and to the communities they serve.

My observations have identified a pattern in certain traditional models of engagement, which I describe as "contain and distract". In these scenarios, art activities are used primarily to manage and occupy homeless individuals within a "bubble", effectively treating them as a means to an end and reducing the practice to a box-ticking exercise. This critique does not diminish the efforts of countless dedicated facilitators and organisation managers who support them and strive to enrich participants' lives, often extending beyond the limitations imposed by their operating environments.

³⁰ Kester, G. H. (2004) *Conversation pieces: Community and communication in modern art*. California: University of California Press.

From my personal experience, the role of the facilitator in some settings has been restricted to that of an arts and crafts coordinator, with a prescriptive and didactic approach. However, this does not reflect the entire spectrum of community art practices, where many facilitators creatively engage participants in a manner that respects their autonomy and promotes genuine artistic expression. A notable and exemplar of this innovative inclusion of disenfranchised artists into the art world is the Brighton based charity Outside In³¹.

However, many art programmes for vulnerable adults are frequently insulated, with limited interaction with the broader community. External exhibitions are often positioned as amateur or local art, segregated from mainstream contemporary art dialogues when they occur. This observation points to a missed opportunity for broader cultural integration, dialogue and recognition but does not, as already stated, indicate all community art exhibitions, many of which successfully bridge these gaps.

A common emphasis on education and therapy can sometimes overshadow the potential for cultural engagement and social inclusion. While therapeutic and educational outcomes are undoubtedly valuable, prioritising them can inadvertently limit the recognition of artistic engagement as a cultural practice in its own right.

Furthermore, when exhibitions and audience engagement occur within this conventional model, the social and symbolic benefits often disproportionately favour the organising bodies rather than the marginalised artists themselves. This practice can restrict opportunities for homeless individuals to gain visibility and recognition. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that many practitioners work tirelessly to elevate the visibility and agency of the people they support, often navigating substantial constraints to do so.

While certain limitations and challenges are evident in traditional community art engagement models, as I have experienced them, it is crucial to recognise the broader landscape of community-based practice. Across the country, numerous art facilitators and practitioners bring immense creativity, dedication, and passion to their roles, often achieving remarkable outcomes under less-than-ideal circumstances. So, within this context, I put forward my research concerns as a vehicle for exploring new and innovative ways to work with adults experiencing homelessness from my perspective and not as a definitive one:

- In general terms, traditional models of community art engagement for vulnerable adults have been limited in their approach. I term these models "contain and distract", where the community art engagement is to contain the homeless individual within a charity "bubble" or a carefully corralled environment (for example, a visit by a homeless group to a museum education classroom) and distract them with art and craft activities. The community of homeless artists is treated as a means to an end and as a box-ticking exercise, as proscribed through a funding system. They are passed through these passages of engagement partly because they, the homeless individuals, are seen to be actively involved with.

³¹ Outside In (2025). *Outside In*. Available at: <https://outsidein.org.uk/> (Accessed: 9 March 2025).

- From my experience, the conventional role of the facilitator is akin to that of an arts and crafts coordinator, for which the activities offered are proscriptive, and the approach, by and large, didactic.
- Art with vulnerable adults is usually cocooned, with little or no broader community engagement. External exhibitions are usually celebrated as amateur engagement disconnected from contemporary art conversations and concerns. Often promoted as 'community' or local art and corralled or partitioned from other art exhibitions.
- The onus is placed on education and therapy at the expense of cultural engagement and intellectual inclusion. This approach is limiting because it overlooks the value of artistic engagement as a cultural and authentic inclusive practice.
- Limited exhibition capital and audience recognition. For those exhibitions that do occur within this traditional model, the lion's share of social and symbolic capital returns to the organisations and charities that front them. This practice leaves little room for the community of artists to gain visibility, recognition, and value.

1.14 Activism, Empowerment, Transformation, and the Politics of Care

This thesis explores the transformative potential of dialogical art and community building in addressing social barriers associated with homelessness. By positioning dialogical art as a tool to challenge stereotypes and drive social change, I promote friendly public art engagement that highlights and celebrates the cultural expressions of marginalised individuals: a gentle activism.

As a mode of inquiry, I have found that by being gentle, we encourage dialogue rather than confrontation, making it easier for marginalised voices to be listened to and heard. From my experience, we are more likely to find allies and create lasting change when we approach issues gently.

Central to this exploration is my adaptation of Tania Bruguera's 'Arte Útil' (Savin, 2017),³² offering a pragmatic and impactful approach to art's societal role. I leverage art's practical utility within social contexts to empower participants to create works that address issues pertinent to their lives, enhancing their inclusion and connection with the broader community.

Why not drop the art and focus on activism? Because art transcends traditional aesthetics, serving as a dynamic social inclusion and empowerment tool, which I have witnessed firsthand working with TAG. Art can address complex problems like homelessness by questioning established norms and advocating for solutions. Responsive art projects meet immediate needs, raise awareness, and inspire action. Personalised art engagements create direct and meaningful impacts, nurturing trust and genuine dialogue. Art yields tangible

³² Savin, A. (2019) 'Tania Bruguera's 'Travelling performances': Challenging private and public Spaces / Voices'. *E-Cadernos CES*, Vol. 27, p. 88. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4000/eces.2240>

benefits, including skill development, cultural integration, and social capital. Art has a powerful emotional draw – it can resonate true passion and powerfully motivate individuals and groups to make real and lasting change.

Listening to the art group members and then facilitating what they are emotionally invested in empowers participants, democratising the creation and consumption of art. Long-term commitments to art projects extend to providing ongoing support and community development. Ultimately, art can be reimagined as a transformative force, nurturing personal and communal growth through creative expression.

Based on these principles, this thesis asserts that a dialogical approach is essential for promoting connections and building trust among TAG members and the broader community. Arte Útil underscores the dual role of art as activism and activism as art, providing a robust structure for meaningful, evolving and ongoing artistic engagement.

Integrating “Useful Art” into the Making Space framework enriches theoretical research and practical understanding, demonstrating how art can shape public perceptions and drive authentic social transformation. Through my research, I acknowledge homeless adults' lived experiences and realities, recognising their dignity and worth as human beings. I explore how knowledge is produced, developed, and shared within the context of TAG. I then employ this exploration to challenge dominant narratives and power structures.

Collaborative research, framed by socially engaged methods, informs my practice. This strategy prioritises TAG members' perspectives and gives them a voice. Homeless individuals' experiences and knowledge often go undervalued and unrecognised by society, exacerbating their disenfranchisement. By situating my practice within collaborative engagement and community-based art projects, I aim to challenge these injustices and amplify their knowledge and experiences in impactful ways.

1.15 Methodology

The methodology used in Making Space is an extension of my artistic practice, embedding facilitation and dialogical exchange at its core to cultivate collaborative and sustained creative engagement.

1.15.1 My Practice Operates as Two Entities:

1. **Artist-Facilitator** – Supporting and enabling participants' creative exploration within a collaborative framework, ensuring that artistic engagement is responsive to their experiences and aspirations.
2. **Reflective Practitioner-Researcher** – Critically analysing and documenting the process, considering how participatory and dialogical methodologies contribute to wider discussions on art, social practice, and inclusion.

Here I unpack these two connected but distinct roles.

My practice is fundamentally collaborative, positioning me as a facilitator rather than a creative agent or director. This distinction does not diminish my creative potential but instead redirects it towards enabling and sustaining collective artistic engagement. Rather than imposing a singular artistic vision, my role is to create the conditions for others to explore, express, and develop their own creativity. My artist-facilitator position nurtures embedded relationships that prioritise shared agency and continuity.

This approach is paramount when working with socially disadvantaged groups. A directorial stance can fall into the trap of paying lip service to support without listening to the groups needs and thus failing to genuinely activate the group's potential and amplify their voices in a meaningful way.

At the core of this methodology is a dialogical approach, which I draw from Grant H. Kester's theories of socially engaged art. Dialogue is more than a simple tool for communication, it is a means of constructing knowledge and building reciprocal learning. Kester (2004, p.68)³³ describes dialogical practice as a way to:

define art through its function as a more or less open space within contemporary culture: a space in which certain questions can be asked, certain critical analyses can be articulated, that would not be accepted or tolerated elsewhere.

This framing of art as a site for critical exchange aligns with my facilitative role, where the emphasis is on creating spaces for inquiry and reflection rather than on asserting a personal artistic vision.

As an active member of the Trinity Art Group (TAG), I participate in and observe the group's evolving activities. This involvement allows me to understand cultural phenomena from within, capturing the nuances and complexities of the group's dynamics that an outsider might overlook or misinterpret. By taking this approach, I sought to gain a deeper appreciation of the participants' experiences, values, and the meanings they attach to their involvement in the art project.

Alongside my role within TAG as artist-facilitator, I positioned myself as a reflective practitioner-researcher, integrating critical reflection with creative practice.

It is clear that engaging with a community art group of people experiencing homelessness requires an acute degree of cultural sensitivity. A reflective practice-research approach ensures that the study is grounded in the specific cultural context of the group, acknowledging and respecting their unique experiences and challenges. Parsell (2018)³⁴ raises concerns that portrayals of homelessness by some outside academics are skewed towards deficits, failing to capture the full humanity of those affected. His argument underscores the importance of an insider perspective, one attuned to the lived realities of people experiencing homelessness. By positioning myself as a reflective practitioner-researcher, I aimed to build trust and rapport, encouraging

³³ Kester, G. H. (2004) *Conversation pieces: Community and communication in modern art*. California: University of California Press.

³⁴ Parsell, C. (2018) *The homeless person in contemporary society*. London: Routledge.

open and honest communication while ensuring that the research remains embedded in the authentic experiences of the participants.

Robin Nelson (2013, p. 29)³⁵ describes the shift from practitioner to practitioner-researcher as requiring adjustments that foreground analytical inquiry alongside lived experience. He outlines key principles for structuring practice-based research:

- *'Specify a research inquiry at the outset.'*
- *'Set a timeline for the overall project, including the various activities involved in a multi-mode inquiry.'*
- *'Build moments of critical reflection into the timeline, frequently checking that the research inquiry remains engaged and evidence is being collected.'*
- *'In documenting a process, capture moments of insight.'*
- *'Locate your praxis in a lineage of similar practices.'*
- *'Relate the specific inquiry to broader contemporary debates (through reading and exposition of ideas and with references).'*

This dual role enabled me to engage in the creative process while maintaining a research perspective, critically examining how artistic engagement fosters community, agency, and self-representation among participants.

³⁵ Nelson, R. (2013) *Practice as research in the arts: Principles, protocols, pedagogies, resistances*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Chapter 2. Removing Homeless Identities

Overview: I delve into the complex issue of homelessness. What is homelessness? How do homeless labels stymie and restrict individuals caught in the process of being homeless?

This chapter then explores how art collaboration allows space to form new identities separate from stereotypes and stigma. Chapter Two hones community-based social practice's role removing homeless identities to reveal the actual person with their unique strengths and positive qualities, and in doing so grow new ("making") spaces and opportunities for social inclusion.

In the UK, the COVID-19 pandemic saw the Conservative government enact the 'Everyone In' (2021)³⁶ initiative to 'help make sure we get everyone in, including those who would not normally be entitled to assistance under homelessness legislation'. In reaction, local authorities worked to safely house individuals experiencing homelessness or those in challenging self-isolation environments, such as shelters and assessment centres. This was done to safeguard them and the broader public from the risks of COVID-19. Cameron Parsell professor of Social Science says: 'COVID-19 is a reminder that societies are interdependent, and the presence of homelessness is a health threat to us all' (2023, p.2).³⁷ Housing is a prerequisite not only for individual safety but also for the safety of all. Despite this abundant evidence, homelessness still exists – even after the 'Everyone In' initiative – raising the question: Why is this the case? Crisis³⁸ cites that after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, rough sleeping was back on the increase, rising 27 percent from 2022 to 2023.

2.1 What is Homelessness?

European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) observe that homelessness is not a catch-all term and is not confined to rough sleeping; homelessness is more complex and it deserves clarity. FEANTSA's 'definition of homelessness is based on ETHOS – the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion' (FEANTSA, 2008, p.5).³⁹ In the next section (2.2 ETHOS: Homeless Typologies) I will delve into these definitions.

³⁶ House of Commons Library. (2021) *Coronavirus: Support for rough sleepers (England)*. Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9057/> (Accessed: 19 June 2024).

³⁷ Parsell, C. (2023) *Homelessness: A critical introduction*. London: Polity Press.

³⁸ Crisis. (2024) *Rough sleeping rises by 27% as the homelessness crisis deepens across england*. Available at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/rough-sleeping-rises-by-27-as-the-homelessness-crisis-deepens-across-england/#:~:text=The%20annual%20rough%20sleeping%20snapshot,27%25%20on%20the%20previous%20year> (Accessed: 25 June 2024).

³⁹ FEANTSA (2008) *The role of housing in pathways into and out of homelessness*. Brussels: FEANTSA. Available at: https://www.feantsa.org/download/08_european_report_feantsa_housing_final_en8836616037029374941.pdf (Accessed: 22 July 2024).

Across England, the broader picture of homelessness includes 298,430 households (Gov.UK, 2023).⁴⁰ Household refers to single individuals, couples, families with children and non-related people sharing the same roof. This large number of households being included within the picture of homelessness means they have been identified as experiencing housing instability or homelessness. So, the image of homelessness includes men, women, children, single individuals, and families. The charity Crisis outline homelessness on their website as follows:

There are social causes of homelessness, such as a lack of affordable housing, poverty and unemployment; and life events which push people into homelessness.

People are forced into homelessness when they leave prison, care or the army with no home to go to. Many women experiencing homelessness have escaped a violent or abusive relationship.

Many people become homeless because they can no longer afford the rent.

And for many, life events like a relationship breaking down, losing a job, mental or physical health problems, or substance misuse put people under considerable strain. Being homeless can, in turn, make many of these problems even harder to resolve. However, in nearly all cases homelessness is preventable and in every case it can be ended.⁴¹

Accordingly, the term “homeless” is multi-layered and spans an array of socio-economic conditions and groups. To unpick its complex nature, I explore the term as a spectrum (Nichols et al., 2018).⁴²

At one end of the spectrum, there are people acknowledged to be vulnerable or at risk to homelessness and at the other end there are the chronic rough sleepers. Rough sleeping is one of the most visible forms of homelessness. It involves sleeping outdoors or in unsuitable places such as cars, doorways, and abandoned buildings (Crisis).⁴³ Distinguishing “at risk” from “actual” homeless populations is complex because there is a grey area between the two definitions. For example, an individual about to leave prison without a home to go to falls into both definitions, as does an individual who does not have a home but is in hospital. This grey area constitutes forms of social exclusion and social isolation, which need further unpacking and explication.

Parsell highlights the complexity of what, on the surface, appears to be a simple question:

⁴⁰ Gov.UK. (2023) *Statutory homelessness in England*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-financial-year-2022-23/statutory-homelessness-in-england-financial-year-2022-23> (Accessed: 19 June 2024).

⁴¹ Crisis. (no date) Available at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness/> (Accessed: 19 June 2024).

⁴² Nichols, J., Volmert, A., Busso, D., Gerstein Pineau, M., O’Neil, M. and Kendall-Taylor, N. (2018) *Reframing homelessness in the United Kingdom*. Frameworks Institute. Available at: [Crisis Message Memo 2018 FINAL \(frameworksinstitute.org\)](https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/2018-FINAL) (Accessed: 26 June 2024).

⁴³ Crisis (no date) *Ending homelessness*. Available at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/rough-sleeping/#:~:text=Rough%20sleeping%20is%20one%20of,cars%2C%20doorways%20and%20abandoned%20buildings>. (Accessed: 22 July 2024).

“What is homelessness?” turns out to be far more complicated than one may assume. To start with, this is because it is a concept that is characterised by the absence of something and something that is in and of itself multidimensional and largely experiential: namely, home. (2023, p. 11)⁴⁴

Here, as Parsell points out, the term “homelessness” is not straightforward and I unpick and explore the convoluted term throughout my research and practice. As a social issue, the meaning cannot be gleaned from a dictionary – homelessness is more than being without a home.

2.2 ETHOS: Homeless Typologies

In 2005 FEANTSA set out the European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS),⁴⁵ which became the dominant definition across Europe. The typology begins with the concept that a “home” comprises of three domains, where the absence of one or more these defines homelessness. This concept leads to four main categories: Rooflessness, Houselessness, Insecure Housing, and Inadequate Housing, all indicating a lack of a proper home. ETHOS classifies homeless individuals based on their ‘living situations’.⁴⁶

So, to define homelessness, one must describe the elements constituting a home because the absence of one or more of these elements indicates a lack of a proper home. ETHOS typology describes the three forms of space: social space, physical space and legal space. ‘Having a home can be understood as: ‘having a decent dwelling... adequate to meet the needs of the person and his/her family (physical domain); being able to maintain privacy and enjoy social relations (social domain) and having exclusive possession, security of occupation and legal title (legal domain)’ (Edgar and Meert, 2005, p.14).⁴⁷

Bill Edgar and Henk Meert’s notion of “home” leads on to four types of homelessness. ETHOS⁴⁸ defined them thus:

- Rooflessness – without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough.
- Houselessness – with a place to sleep but temporary in institutions or shelter.

⁴⁴ Parsell, C. (2023) *Homelessness: A critical introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁴⁵ FEANTSA. (no date) ‘ETHOS - European typology on homelessness and housing exclusion’. Available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/en/toolkit/2005/04/01/ethos-typology-on-homelessness-and-housing-exclusion> (Accessed: 25 June 2024).

⁴⁶ FEANTSA. (no date) ‘ETHOS - European typology of homelessness and housing exclusion’. Available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/download/en-16822651433655843804.pdf> (Accessed: 22 July 2024).

⁴⁷ Edgar, B. and Meert, H. (2005) *The ETHOS definition of homelessness*. Brussels: FEANTSA. Available at: <https://www.feantsaresearch.org/download/4-20051064656256989452078.pdf> (Accessed: 22 July 2024).

⁴⁸ FEANTSA. (no date) ‘ETHOS - European typology on homelessness and housing exclusion’. Available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/en/toolkit/2005/04/01/ethos-typology-on-homelessness-and-housing-exclusion> (Accessed: 25 June 2024).

- Living in insecure housing – threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, or domestic violence.
- Living in inadequate housing – in caravans on illegal campsites, in unfit housing, and extreme overcrowding.

However, this initial definition was regarded as too vague. Not all forms of homelessness were defined. In 2011 researchers Kate Amore, Michael Baker and Philippa Howden-Chapman concerned by the vagueness of an internationally agreed homelessness definition, put forward the case for a robust and reliable definition of homelessness, stating:

A definition of homelessness can be judged useful if it allows for accurate and reliable identification and classification of homeless people so that policies can be developed to respond to different manifestations of homelessness and monitor the effectiveness of such interventions. (2011, p. 20)⁴⁹

This criticism, led to the creation of an "ETHOS 'light'" framework to better measure homelessness across Europe. This new framework includes people living temporarily with family and friends due to a lack of housing — and if they do not control their living space, lack privacy, and have no legal right to stay there — then these living conditions are known as hidden homeless, which the original framework did not cover (Pleace and Lloyd, 2020).⁵⁰

Clarity of definition matters because much of the homeless population is misrepresented, overlooked or misunderstood. In my experience as a community-based art facilitator, a lack of definition has meant that many people have felt effectively barred from joining my community art group because they do not see themselves reflected in commonly held definitions of homelessness.

FEANTSA's ETHOS definitions have not found their way into the universal vernacular of everyday usage. News and social media especially use the term homeless broadly and vaguely. In the journal *Homeless in Europe*, Suzannah Young cites David Hulchanski who: 'Questions the usefulness of the term "homelessness" and condemns its use as a catch-all term for a host of serious systemic social and economic failures' (2012, p.1).⁵¹ Hulchanski (2012)⁵² says the term is largely only understood in its broadest sense, which means that

⁴⁹ Amore, K. Baker, M. and Howden-Chapman, P. (2011) 'The ETHOS definition and classification of homelessness: An analysis'. *European Journal of Homelessness*. Vol. 5, No. 2., December. pp. 19-27.

⁵⁰ Pleace, N. and Lloyd, C. (2020) 'ETHOS frequently asked questions'. FEANTSA. Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/528176859.pdf>. (Accessed: 19 June 2024).

⁵¹ Young, S. (2012) 'Homeless in Europe'. *The Magazine of FEANTSA - The European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless AISBL*. Winter 2012/2013, pp. 1- 2. Available at: https://www.feantsa.org/download/homeless_in_europe_winter_2012-36413689891297226614.pdf. (Accessed: 19 June 2024).

⁵² Hulchanski, D. (2012) 'Homelessness, whatever that is, is not the problem'. *The Magazine of FEANTSA - The European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless AISBL*. Winter 2012/2013, p. 3. Available at: https://www.feantsa.org/download/homeless_in_europe_winter_2012-36413689891297226614.pdf (Accessed: 23 July 2024).

various observers, commentators, and actors are free to reinterpret and misinterpret it. He argues that the lack of definition encourages focusing on the individual to find a common factor that can explain homelessness and thus leads to victim-blaming.

In terms of the individuals who are experiencing homelessness by any of the accepted definitions, *The Big Issue*⁵³ claims that as of February 2022, most rough-sleepers are male and over 26. The Office for National Statistics states that the ratio of males to females found 'living on the streets' is 6:1 (2021).⁵⁴ Clearly, women experiencing homelessness are often less visible and face different challenges compared to men in the same situation, and *The Big Issue* highlights that women are significantly more likely than men to become homeless due to domestic violence. This situation worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵⁵ Relatedly, in 2020/21, over 15,000 households with children in England sought help from councils because they were homeless or at risk of homelessness due to domestic abuse. This marked a nearly 14 percent increase from 2019/20, making domestic abuse one of the leading causes of losing a stable home. Needless to say, the complexity of defining homelessness is underscored by its nuanced causes.

2.3 Social Exclusion and Social Isolation

An over-arching common element experienced by both the at risk and actual homeless individuals is social isolation; this can turn into social exclusion. What are the differences, and why do these terms matter in relation to the homeless identity?

The academic Brian Barry, as a means to clarify, describes the difference between social exclusion and social isolation:

It is worth distinguishing social exclusion from social isolation, defining social isolation as the phenomenon of non-participation (of an individual or group) in a society's mainstream institutions, while reserving 'social exclusion' for the subset of cases in which social isolation occurs for reasons that are beyond the control of those subject to it. (1998, p. iv)⁵⁶

It is important to note that social exclusion vacillates between neutral and negative identities. The term is used to identify a group that has been overlooked and needs support, but the term conveys negative connotations. While usage of the term social exclusion flows freely in reports and articles, it does not sit comfortably with the

⁵³ The Big Issue. (2024) 'What percent of homeless people are female?' Available at: <https://www.bigissue.com/news/housing/how-does-homelessness-differ-for-women/#:~:text=A%20glance%20at%20the%20statistics,age%20and%20from%20the%20UK>. (Accessed: 19 June 2024).

⁵⁴ The Office for National Statistics. (2021) *Rough sleeping in the UK: 2002 to 2021*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/roughsleepingintheuk/2002to2021> (Accessed: 23 July 2024).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Barry, B. (1998). *Social exclusion, social isolation and the distribution of income*. Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/93935.pdf> (Accessed: 19 June 2024).

targeted group and facilitating collaborators. Social isolation, however, sits outside the definition above, and so is a description that compounds its own issues.

Socially isolated individuals are often overlooked in the community, meaning they might not get the help and support they need. A further complication of a socially isolated identity (and lack of conformity to perceived notions of homelessness) is the notion that this socially isolated group are undeserving of the support of agencies and charities – that is, they may be housed, but they are still homeless – but because of the vagueness in the general definition of homeless, the socially isolated individual does not recognise themselves as homeless. An example of this can be found in an elderly lady living alone in her own home. She is discovered sitting in darkness, in a freezing cold room, half-starved. She could not afford to feed herself adequately and had not used the heating or turned on lights because she feared the high cost involved. She had not reached out for support because she did not think she was worthy of support as she was housed. Homelessness is not a concept contained in housing. It also extends to the infrastructure of having a home – this includes being able to adequately live in that home, as well as having a network of friends and familial support.

There is a lack of awareness in general about the difference between socially excluded and socially isolated; because of this, people experiencing homelessness may risk being labelled socially excluded when they are socially isolated and accrue judgement or blame and responsibility for their exclusion. A version of homelessness that aligns with social isolation is “sofa surfing”, which, as an identifier, appears innocuous – almost fun – but the term reveals a hidden perniciousness. Senior researcher, Anna Clark whose area of expertise covers homelessness, elaborates on this point: ‘There are a variety of precarious, insecure or unsatisfactory living conditions often termed “hidden homelessness”’; she further adds ‘there is a lack of data on informal homelessness’ (2016, p. 60).⁵⁷ First, sofa surfing is hidden because there is a stigma about being homeless, and so many people in this situation stay silent and, as a result, go unreported. Second, an individual sofa-surfer may not identify as homeless – rather just houseless. The charity Homeless Link similarly says that hidden homelessness goes beyond sofa surfers and includes individuals who become homeless but are not accounted for in official statistics. These people may not seek or qualify for housing assistance and consequently do not receive the necessary support. Many of them sleep in insecure and unsuitable places, such as squats, cars or tents, often out of sight.⁵⁸

So, understanding the distinction between social exclusion and social isolation is crucial, as misidentification can lead to inadequate support for hidden homelessness, which often goes unreported due to stigma and lack

⁵⁷ Clark, A. (2016) ‘The prevalence of rough sleeping and sofa surfing amongst young people in the UK’. *Social Inclusion*. Vol 4, No 4. pp. 60-72.

⁵⁸ Homeless Link | Help End Homelessness. (no date) *What is homelessness?* Available at: <https://homelesslink-1b54.kxcdn.com/media/documents/1 - What is Homelessness 1.pdf> (Accessed: 25 June 2024).

of recognition. Addressing both is essential to effectively support all individuals experiencing homelessness, including those who are houseless.

2.4 Houseless and Homeless

Frances McDormand's character in the film *Nomadland*⁵⁹ says: 'No, I am not homeless. I'm just houseless. It's not the same thing, right?'. The expressions houseless and homeless are indeed not the same. The term houseless usually refers to the lack of a house; homeless, instead, refers to the lack of a house and also to the lack of an environment of life, a shelter, and the subsequent development of the self and effective relationships (Lavanco, Romano and Messina, 2012)⁶⁰. It is an important distinction; having or not having a house is not the primary identifiers for those who are homeless. Feeling disconnected from society and lacking communal support is nearer to the truth of homelessness. I contend that community-based social practice is, in part, able to address this concern, which I explain later in this chapter.

The next step along the homeless continuum is temporary accommodation. This form of shelter offers no stability or certainty, and the duration of an individual's stay is maybe one night; it may stretch into years. Examples of temporary accommodation are night shelters, hostels, hotels, bedsits, and refuges. Each type of temporary accommodation has rules and limitations, such as when to come in, when to eat, what to watch on the communal TV, and so on. These rules reduce individual autonomy, and while that person has a roof over their head, they are still without a home. In many cases, the local authority assesses those in temporary housing as statutory homeless.

The charity Crisis directly draws its definition of the statutory homeless from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Statutory homelessness is a version of situational homelessness. An individual or family does not have to be without a roof to be considered statutory homeless. This could include untenable living conditions due to natural disasters (floods, fires, and so on), fleeing violence, and facing eviction through no fault of their own.

Statutory homeless opens the door to more homeless labels: unintentionally homeless and intentionally homeless. Local authorities have a duty of care to support those who are unintentionally homeless. However, local councils do not have to house people who are assessed as intentionally homeless (Gov.UK, 1996).⁶¹ The charity Shelter defines intentionally homeless: 'homeless because of something you did or did not do'.

⁵⁹ *Nomadland* (2021) [Feature film] Directed by C. Zhao. United States: Searchlight Pictures.

⁶⁰ Lavanco, G., Romano, F. and Messina, C. (2012) 'Homeless and community-less: An action-research'. *Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice*, Vol. 3, Issue 4. pp. 316-18. Available at: <https://www.gjcpp.org/pdfs/2012-Lisboa-036-Homeless%20and%20community.pdf> (Accessed: 23 July 2024).

⁶¹ Gov.UK. (no date) *Housing Act 1996*. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/contents> (Accessed: 26 June 2024).

For example:

- antisocial behaviour
- refusing to get benefits to help with rent
- not paying your rent when you could afford to

‘Your actions must have been deliberate’; the charity then stresses the point, you are not intentionally homeless if, for example, you:

- left because of domestic abuse or other violence
- could not deal with money or your tenancy because of a disability, mental health or drug and alcohol problems. (2024)⁶²

As mentioned before, the far end of the homeless spectrum is the most visible group, and one could argue that the most complex need is that of the chronic homeless rough sleeper. The local authority can say you made yourself intentionally homeless if you are homeless because of something you deliberately did or failed to do – a deliberate act or omission. However, the charity Shelter (2024)⁶³ points out on their website that an act or omission is generally not considered deliberate if it results from limited mental capacity or a temporary lapse of power caused by mental illness, frailty, or an assessed substance abuse problem. Yet, the image of the persistent rough sleeper is a conflation of intentionality and lack of capacity in the public consciousness, which is troubling. Academic Graham Bowpitt questions the notion that persistent rough sleepers choose to sleep rough by examining their decisions and how these are influenced by the unintended consequences of social policies. He challenges the validity of the term ‘intentionally homeless’ (Bowpitt, 2020).⁶⁴

Conflicting identities make the situation too complex for political soundbites, leaving the charities to attempt to ameliorate the problem with housing advice, offers of food and clothing, and referrals to medical support. However, state funded structural reform is needed to ensure people are adequately housed; this should be within the infrastructure of community support, and should be available to those at the sharp end of the homelessness spectrum.

⁶² Shelter. (2024) *How to avoid being found intentionally homeless*. Available at: https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/intentionally_homeless (Accessed: 23 July 2024).

⁶³ Shelter. (2024) *Intentional homelessness*. Available at: https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/legal/homelessness_applications/intentional_homelessness (Accessed: 19 June 2024).

⁶⁴ Bowpitt, G. (2020) ‘Choosing to be homeless? Persistent rough sleeping and the perverse incentives of social policy in England’, *Housing, Care and Support*, Vol. 23, Nos. 3/4, pp. 135-147.

2.5 Homelessness and Identity

The term "othered", rooted in critical and post-colonial theory, describes how a dominant group labels another person or group as different or inferior. This process often involves marginalisation or dehumanisation, reinforcing social and power hierarchies. Examining how individuals experiencing homelessness are "othered" highlights the impact of societal attitudes on their identities.

My reason for focusing on the definition of homelessness moves beyond just the need to establish the term. I look at the definition to show societal misunderstanding and incorrect usage can "other" the homeless individual and label them out of the community – they are not seen as a neighbour or a friend but as either deviant or wretched or vulnerable. While the definition of homelessness provides a necessary framework for identifying and addressing the condition, the homeless identity encompasses individuals' broader and more nuanced experiences shaped by societal perceptions and personal self-worth. Ultimately, the homeless identity is an imposed identity.

Cameron Parsell (2023, p. 109)⁶⁵ makes a salient observation about society's bias between forms of homelessness. In the aftermath of natural disasters, Parsell notes that media coverage often portrays those who lose their homes as 'people left homeless', emphasising their situation rather than labelling them as 'homeless people'. This contrasts sharply with how chronic homelessness is often linked to personal identity. When someone experiences homelessness due to poverty, mental health issues, or addiction, the narrative shifts. Society may perceive this form of homelessness as more entrenched, even associating it with personal failings or character flaws.

Unpacking the term identity can help one understand the context of the homeless identity. Identity encompasses various aspects of an individual's self-perception and how others perceive them. Nevertheless, identity is difficult to define concisely. The word is a functional contranym – it defines one in and out of a group. Identity infers similarity and, at the same time, highlights individuality: it is about sameness and difference. Identity allows one to be part of the group and, at the same time, to be unique. Identity is both inclusive and exclusive (Lawler, 2008).⁶⁶ Lawler asks the question, what makes us unique? How our lives are shaped depends on many factors that vacillate between nature and nurture, social environment, and our metaphysical world. Consequently, identity is not concrete, which allows us to be unique. So, then, identity is the accumulation of multiple states, experiences, and labels.

Homelessness intersects with identity in several ways. Situational homelessness arises from specific life events, such as natural disasters, job loss, or eviction. It is often temporary, and the lack of housing does not inherently define those experiencing it. However, the duration of homelessness is a factor in the identity shift. Chronic homelessness is a prolonged condition often stemming from complex factors such as mental health

⁶⁵ Parsell, C. (2023) *Homelessness: A critical introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁶⁶ Lawler, S. (2014) *Identity: Sociological perspectives*, 2nd edn. Cambridge: Polity Press.

issues, addiction, or systemic barriers. In these instances, homelessness becomes deeply intertwined with an individual's identity.

In 2023, Suella Braverman, then Home Secretary, remarked: 'Living on the streets is a lifestyle choice'.⁶⁷ Braverman's perspective oversimplified the complex issue of homelessness and failed to acknowledge the systemic factors contributing to chronic homelessness. Her comment is indicative of the deep-rooted social bias against people experiencing chronic homelessness in our society.

"Homeless" as an identifier – regardless of whether it is situational or chronic – is too simplistic. Homelessness is a condition, a state an individual may go through, not who they are, and it obscures other qualities, traits, and positive identities. The homeless label effectively renders the individual invisible in plain sight, hidden behind a label.

There is an increasing number of younger people experiencing homelessness from various ethnic backgrounds, but they lack visibility. Many homeless women in the UK are hampered by the dominant image of homelessness as white, middle-aged, and male. There is a real need for this diverse group to reclaim its identity (McCarthy, 2013).⁶⁸

Behind the homeless label is a person, and that person is unique. In reflection of uniqueness – I propose another word, 'sonder', coined by the writer John Koenig – to highlight that we traverse individual states and experiences while inhabiting the same space and time:

But there in the background, faint and out of focus, are the extras. The random passerby. Each living a life as vivid and complex as your own. They carry on invisible around you, bearing the accumulated weight of their own ambitions, friends, routines, mistakes, worries, triumphs, and inherited craziness. (Koenig, 2021, p. 123)⁶⁹

Accordingly, it is an assortment of colliding and overlapping complex factors that form identity. This complexity is compounded by the notion that each person has multiple identities – layers of identities – that can create new shades of identity when juxtaposed. Consequently, fluid identities accrue through associations, group membership and gathered narratives; they attach themselves like burrs, positive and negative.

Jean-Luc Nancy coined the term 'singular plural' (2000),⁷⁰ which refers to the idea that every identity is singular (unique) and plural (multiple and collective) – always a combination of both. For example, a person might be an artist and a member of a particular community or simultaneously identify with multiple cultural

⁶⁷ BBC News (2023) 'Home Secretary Suella Braverman wants to restrict use of tents by homeless'. 4 November. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-67321319> (Accessed: 25 June 2024)

⁶⁸ McCarthy, L. (2013) 'Homelessness and identity: A critical review of the literature and theory.' *People, Place & Policy Online*, Vol. 7, Issue 1, pp. 46-58. <https://doi.org/10.3351/ppp.0007.0001.0004>

⁶⁹ Koenig J. (2021) *The dictionary of obscure sorrows*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

⁷⁰ Nancy, J-L. (2000) *Singular plural* (English edn.). California: Stanford University Press.

and social groups. ‘Singular Plural’ helps us to think about the complexity of identity for adults who may be homeless as they navigate their way while working towards shared goals of cultural inclusion and visibility.

2.6 Identity as Defined Through the Social

So, identity is fluid and essential, but it is not fixed. Rather than promoting a case for a singular revelation of a “homeless identity” or “true identity”, aware of intersectional concerns, I cite sociological and psychological arguments for a diversity of selves and ever-shifting identities in support of a relocated view of those excluded.

The social psychologist Henri Tajfel’s Social Identity Theory (1982)⁷¹ supports the case that identity is a mixture of group memberships, a delineation within an individual and society to place other individuals into “them” or “us” categories. This type of social identity is not artificial but a vital and real part of the person. However, being in-groups and out-groups means that discrimination, prejudice, and exclusion create an underlying current. Tajfel’s Social Identity Theory starkly reveals the inherent social issue the homeless person faces in our society – that is, discrimination coupled with a lack of basic resources means that social membership is limited and that they find themselves excessively being cast into out-group status. The label of homeless, and being cast into out-group status, says nothing of the individual’s aspiration, character, or demeanour; it inflicts negative characteristics onto the person. A person defined in this manner will recognise themselves as part of a group they did not choose and find it even harder to shake off the accrued identity (Grammatico, 2012)⁷². People experiencing homelessness have negligible access to the policymakers whose decisions influence their lives and the media that project their identity – and thus cannot assert their own in-group / out-group status (Wang, Cash and Powers, 2000).⁷³

2.7 Stigma, Stereotypes, and Marginalisation of Homelessness

Cameron Parsell highlights the idea of an imposed homeless identity, which comes from the outside and stigmatises and sinks the person even further into marginalisation. Over time, the homeless identity has gathered many labels, including itinerant labourer, hobo, tramp, bum and vagrant – these labels carried connotations of being detached, sick, lazy or evil. The focus on disabilities and social isolation within the

⁷¹ Tajfel, H. (ed.) (1982) *Social identity and intergroup relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁷² Grammatico, G. (2012) ‘Putting it into words: From talking social to doing social’. *Homeless in Europe*, Winter 2012/2013. pp. 7-9. Available at: https://www.feantsa.org/download/homeless_in_europe_winter_2012-36413689891297226614.pdf (Accessed: 19 June 2024).

⁷³ Wang, C. C. Cash, J. L. and Powers, L. S. (2000) ‘Who knows the streets as well as the homeless? Promoting Personal and Community Action through Photovoice’. *Health Promotion Practice*. Vol 1. Issue 1. pp. 81-89.

homeless population continued to convey that those experiencing homelessness differed from the rest of society (Parsell, 2018).⁷⁴

Homelessness is, then, a socially imposed identity; it denies any positive conversation about life expectations. Being excluded from having a home means being excluded from the ability to take control of one's life. The few possibilities to participate in society hurt the homeless individual's sense of self, creating an inability to interact with others on equal terms. The stigma is accentuated if the services are specially designed for the poor; they perpetuate the homeless identity. So, the state of being homeless dominates how society sees and treats this diverse group of people, and this mislabelling reduces their humanity and acts as a form of social exclusion.

These problematic definitions of homelessness are exacerbated, in some cases, by charities and organisations meant to support and advocate for this group. Sociologists Breeze and Dean (2012)⁷⁵ use the phrase 'Disaster Porn' – a term about news and social media coverage after the 2010 Haiti earthquake – to highlight the contentious issue of homeless charitable fundraisers projecting an image of homelessness as an oversimplified picture that does not consider that poverty is not separated by race, gender, or age. These framings are problematic because they may distort essential details, become the projected social norm, and are hard to remove (Lancione, 2013).⁷⁶ Jurgen Habermas referred to versions of this contemporary malaise as a re-feudalisation of power,⁷⁷ whereby the media and other powerful institutions exert their influence on the public sphere and, in doing so, diminish it.

The problematic (and largely accepted) oversimplified media definition of homelessness serves no useful purpose. They restrict and malign the individual behind the label. Ultimately, there is a need for people experiencing homelessness to claim their own identity and on their own terms.

2.8 Reclaiming Identity

Through my work I propose a way of understanding and representing the identity of adults who may be homeless by emphasising their strengths, adaptability, and creativity to enable them to reclaim and redefine identity on their own terms. I advocate for an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)⁷⁸ approach, which

⁷⁴ Parsell, C. (2018) *The homeless person in contemporary society*. London: Routledge.

⁷⁵ Breeze, B. and Dean, J. (2012) 'User views of fundraising: A study of charitable beneficiaries' Opinions of their Representation in Appeals.' *CGAP*. Available at: https://www.cgap.org.uk/uploads/reports/USER_VIEWS_OF_FUNDRAISING.pdf (Accessed: 26 June 2024).

⁷⁶ Lancione, M. (2013) 'How is homelessness?' *European Journal of Homelessness*. Vol. 7, Issue 2, December. pp. 237-248. Available at: https://michelelancione.eu/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/02/2013_How-is-homelessness_EJH_Lancione.pdf (Accessed: 27 July 2024).

⁷⁷ Calhoun, C. (ed) (1992) *Habermas and the public sphere*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

⁷⁸ Russell, C. and McKnight, J. (2022) *The connected communities: Discovering the health, wealth, and power of neighbourhoods*. Paperback edn. Oakland, California: Berrett-Koehler.

highlights the untapped skills and resilience of individuals rather than focusing on their deficits. It is necessary to provide resources designed to help people to overcome the barriers that have led them to homelessness. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that a certain intervention is necessary to ensure that the person experiencing homelessness can participate in an unequal society, intervene so that the person can regain the ability to choose, to "feel normal".

Reclaiming identity for people who may be homeless through creative engagement can challenge negative narratives and move towards a more inclusive society. This process involves returning agency and choice to disenfranchised individuals, celebrating and projecting positive, self-defined identities. This is not superficial but a powerful means of reclaiming visibility and agency in the public sphere.

Community-based social practice as a tool can empower adults who may be homeless and help them to reclaim their identities. This approach is informed by Judith Butler's concept of identity as performative (1990)⁷⁹, suggesting that identity is shaped by social interactions and performances rather than being innate or static. However, ethical considerations are essential when engaging in community-based art practices. These include consent, respectful representation, and empowering participants while respecting their dignity and autonomy. Homeless stakeholders and I frame the narrative by examining identity through the perspective of social practice. Art facilitation is guided by an approach that does not focus on deficits – instead, it nurtures the participants' passions and abilities. These workshops provide avenues to spark curiosity and enthusiasm and aim to strengthen interdependence within naturally cohesive communities.

These workshops broach spaces and places usually outside the geographies open to adults who may be homeless. Crucially, these workshops expand geographies of care, build structures of support for independence and agency external to charity hubs, and bring homeless individuals into contact with a broader community. This workshop initiative raises awareness that people experiencing homelessness are, first and foremost, people – unique and complex, just like everyone else. It effectively makes the term homeless secondary and an aside from the complexity that makes us human, nullifying the homeless identity through the projection of positive identities activated by art workshops in museums, academic centres and public spaces.

To combat the common vernacular and the media projection of a homeless identity, I propose that one can reposition the notion of homelessness. To do this, I align with the academic Michele Lancione.⁸⁰ He reveals that the homeless person has a hidden ingenuity and ability to negotiate a precarious path through the hostile and complicated abstracted topography at the heart of homelessness. This position reveals the adaptive and creative ways homeless individuals navigate their lives. My research position customises an ABCD approach to shift the discourse around homelessness towards a more constructive and positive perspective. Despite their marginalised position, it recognises that homeless individuals possess a wealth of untapped strengths, skills,

⁷⁹ Butler, J. (1990) *Gender trouble*. 2nd Edn. London: Routledge.

⁸⁰ Lancione, M. (2013) 'How is homelessness'. *European Journal of Homelessness*. Vol. 7, No. 2, December. pp. 237-248. Available at: https://michelelancione.eu/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/02/2013_How-is-homelessness_EJH_Lancione.pdf (Accessed: 19 June 2024).

and resilience. Instead of dwelling solely on the "why" of homelessness and its attendant deficits, this approach focuses on the "how" of navigating life in precarious conditions.

Lancione's work on the hidden ingenuity of homeless individuals, as outlined in his 2013 article *How is Homeless?*⁸¹ resonates with my approach. It underscores the importance of acknowledging the resourcefulness and adaptability that homeless individuals demonstrate daily. By repositioning the homeless identity from one of victimhood to one that recognises agency and potential, stigmatising narratives can be challenged and a more inclusive society can be created. Community-based social practice becomes a powerful tool in this endeavour. It provides a vehicle for homeless individuals to express their experiences, talents, and aspirations through creative engagement, which can showcase this community's positive qualities and contributions by facilitating workshops and collaborative projects. Social practice naturally promotes expanded social interactions, so community workshops framed in this structure continually strive to open new spaces of inclusion, action and collaboration for homeless participants. Through this lens, the homeless individual transforms from a passive aid recipient to an active participant in shaping their narrative and the broader community's perception. In essence, repositioning the homeless identity through an ABCD-infused social practice approach is vital for dismantling stereotypes, encouraging empathy, and building a more equitable society.

Reclaiming an identity, then, is akin to making yourself visible on your terms and of your own volition in the public sphere. Gaining control of identity and visibility is empowering and allows the flow of dialogue between different community groups on a level footing; it promotes recognition and social capital for the individual and reduces stereotypes (I go into more detail about how my art facilitator practice is positioned to promote identity reclamation for adults who may be homeless in Chapter 3). This reclaiming of identity is coupled with Judith Butler's (1990)⁸² notion of identity-as-performative – which, as Sociologist Steph Lawler points out, is not innate or a reflection of an inner state but rather a repeated performance within a matrix of social relations and expectations (Lawler, 2008).⁸³ The proposition that identities are not static or innate allows Butler to explain the role of human agency and for me to assert the value of community-based social practice in activating it.

The binding concepts of access to the public sphere and identity as performative build towards a collage of unifying dimensions of community culture in action – culminating in the proposed solution to the negative identities foisted onto the homeless through a subtle repositioned community art approach that celebrates and promotes a glorious surface, a loud glittery projection: a positive projected self-derived identity wholly detached from the participant's other identities (job prospects, health, education and so on). This emphasis on and celebration in the adoption of a new "skin", or new costume – a new surface and self-defined projection –

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Butler, J. (1990) *Gender trouble*. 2nd Edn. London: Routledge.

⁸³ Lawler, S. (2014) *Identity: Sociological perspectives*, 2nd edn. Cambridge: Polity Press.

is key to the homeless individual's awareness that you are the life you project and not just the accrued circumstances of a life lived; and powerfully, this is not superficial.

Taking the analogy of clothes as interchangeable garments of identity, one could bolster this image and return to Judith Butler's argument that identity is performative and unstable. One can apply the same ideas to the broader sense of identity. Indeed, the projection of identity becomes part of the person who projects it, beautifully illustrated in Daniel Miller's chapter *Why Clothing is not Superficial* from his book *Stuff* (2010).⁸⁴

Shifting from an abstract analogy to the actual, for example: a person dressed in an immaculate suit with an expensive briefcase may be homeless. Still, their projected identity forms an aspect of their lived experience, in this case, innovation and entrepreneurial ability to source and acquire accoutrements that reflect their pride in their appearance – this is not shallow. However, it is performative, empowering, and accumulative.

2.9 Addressing Homelessness Through Community-Based Social Practice

Homelessness persists due to structural factors like affordable housing shortages, systemic failures in social services, and policy complexities. Addressing this issue requires collaborative efforts and a focus on long-term solutions.

Homelessness is a systemic issue that communities can address through inclusive practices; as such, I champion community-based social practice as a viable and dynamic form of community building and exchange. Within this concept, I challenge traditional notions of art and creativity, advocating for a model where art serves the public interest and advances social cohesion. This approach benefits homeless individuals and strengthens the community as a whole.

The term community refers to an accumulation of interactions and human behaviours imbued with meaning and expectations among its members. Importantly, a community is distinct from its individual members; while residents may come and go, the community's essence remains intact (Bartle, 2007).⁸⁵ This concept supports the idea that homelessness does not exclude individuals from the community; rather, they drift in and out of homelessness within the community. This raises the question: Is there a systemic design failure in a community where homelessness exists?

Cameron Parsell argues that wealthy, developed countries like Australia and the UK have the resources to end homelessness, but governments choose not to intervene systemically. Instead, they leave charities and community initiatives to address homelessness's visible and acute aspects without altering the underlying

⁸⁴ Miller, D. (2010) *Stuff*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁸⁵ Bartle, P. (no date) *What Is community? A sociological perspective*. Available at: <https://edadm821.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/what-is-community.pdf> (Accessed: 19 June 2024).

community structures that perpetuate it (Parsell, 2018).⁸⁶ This implies that homelessness reflects broader issues within community systems and governmental choices.

From a socially engaged artistic perspective, the critical question is how homeless individuals can be included and have equal choice and agency as contributing community members. An increase in community groups designed to meet the needs of homeless individuals could help reduce the stigma and marginalisation they face. For example, my firsthand experience with community art groups framed within social art practice demonstrates the positive impact of such initiatives. In my art group, positive membership is engineered, projected, and celebrated through a dialogical framework in inclusive and peer-supported community environments. This approach can potentially drive broader social change and improve the lives of other marginalised groups and the wider homeless communities beyond the immediate group. Specific outcomes include increased self-esteem, social skills exchange that extends beyond the initial group, and community engagement among participants.

Some participants in my community art group are cautious to identify themselves as artists – as someone involved in “fine art”. The dominant cultural definitions of art often emphasise formal training, exhibitions, and the creation of high-quality objects that fit within the established art market. Some homeless participants feel their work does not meet these criteria, and some group members associate the title of “artist” with certain social and economic statuses from which they feel excluded due to their socioeconomic position. As a social construct, a community is cultural, and community-based art extends and serves the community's needs. Community art's roots go back to the earliest manifestations of art and have been part of communal practice throughout human history (Kenny, 2015).⁸⁷ So, it matters little whether a member of a community art group identifies themselves as an artist; it only matters that they feel they are included and have the opportunity to express themselves and be part of the conversation.

Community-based art values are derived from community engagement and should be judged by broader influences such as politics, ethics, and pedagogy. It serves the public interest, feeding into and reinventing our engagement with art. My dialogic role in this context involves workshopping the nature of art itself, arguing that community art is inherently inclusive and challenges the romantic notion of creativity being exclusive to solitary genius artists.

In *Community, Art and the State: Storming the Citadels*, Owen Kelly (1984)⁸⁸ calls for a reassessment of art's social function. He suggests that art should be seen not as distinct from “non-art” but as a category encompassing various forms of creative and communal production. Community-generated art's potential lies in

⁸⁶ Parsell, C., Clarke, A. and Perales, F. (2022) *Charity and poverty in advanced welfare states*. London: Routledge.

⁸⁷ Kenny, A. (2015) *Social practice art and community art: What are the contrasting characteristics of the two and do these genres fundamentally aim to meet common objectives?* Kingston University. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/34038269/Socially_Engaged_Art_Essay (Accessed: 19 June 2024).

⁸⁸ Kelly, O. (1984) *Community, art and the state: Storming the citadels*. London: Comedia.

forging identity, reflecting lived realities, enhancing social cohesion and belonging, and making visible underrepresented groups. This aligns with the Cuban-American artist Tania Bruguera's concept of "useful art".⁸⁹ Kelly also emphasises that the value of art should be specific and material rather than abstract, addressing the question: 'to whom is this art of value and for what purposes is it valued?' (Kelly, 1984, p. 90).⁹⁰ This perspective rejects cultural hierarchies and acknowledges the diverse value systems of different social groups. A de-emphasis on hierarchical ability allows community-based art to offer choice and control through inclusivity. There is no expectation other than to share and be part of the group's creative energy, if desired.

The critical theorist Jurgen Habermas (1992)⁹¹ put forward a model of social exchange. He dubbed it the 'public sphere' a reimagining and adaption of the social spaces of exchange between individuals on a level field. Habermas drew from the historical record the burgeoning power of the 'middling sort' gathering in coffee and chocolate houses of London during the restoration period. Here, Habermas observes the separation from the top-down hierarchical feudal model to a nascent public sphere where a broader range of voices can be heard. By the turn of the 20th century, the public sphere would include the voices of trade union members and workers. Still, years later, Habermas agrees and offers the postulation of an emergence of a new (re)feudalisation played out over social media spheres where the power and control have been returned to the few who have the power to direct, curate, and manipulate forms of the social sphere.

Referencing Habermas' idea of a public sphere, dialogical art engages homeless individuals in cultural dialogues initiated by facilitators. It serves as both an inclusive medium and a stimulus for authentic expression, providing space – a "making space" – for self-expression and participation in broader cultural and community discussions. This inclusivity helps adults experiencing isolation and/or exclusion by welcoming them into supportive communities. Specific examples from my workshops include collaborative performances and artist book fairs involving TAG members, art school students, and other community members, underpinned by mutual understanding and camaraderie. Social practice connects adults who may be homeless with the broader community, strengthening relationships through shared conversations. Participation in these art workshops extends beyond developing artistic skills, promoting cooperation and receiving participants into creative networks and conversations (within the otherwise elusive public sphere). This integration helps homeless individuals gain a sense of belonging within the community.

Reclaiming the homeless identity is crucial as it confronts stigmatising labels and systemic exclusion that often reduce individuals to their circumstances rather than acknowledging their inherent worth and potential.

⁸⁹ Arte Útil (no date) *About / Arte Útil*. Available at: <https://www.arte-util.org/about/colophon/> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

⁹⁰ Kelly, O. (1984) *Community, art and the state: Storming the citadels*. London: Comedia.

⁹¹ Habermas, J. (1992) *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. Paperback edn. Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

By reshaping the narrative, a more inclusive community can be cultivated, where individuals, regardless of their housing status, are recognised as integral members capable of meaningful contribution and engagement.

Community-based social practice workshops, then, offer opportunities for people to exercise a degree of control over their lives. In conclusion, I advocate for a paradigm shift in how homelessness is perceived and addressed and offer a model of community-based social practice as a means to empower homeless individuals, challenge stereotypes, and build inclusive communities where everyone can make a contribution and everyone is valued. An interesting question still arises: What does this “certain intervention” consist of? As the community-based social practice facilitator, I unpack and describe the answer in the following chapters.

Chapter 3. Making Space: Contextual Review - Situating My Social Practice

If you've come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you've come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

~ Attributed to Lila Watson, Aboriginal Elder (Aboriginal activists group Queensland, 1970s)

Overview: In this chapter, I establish the contextual foundation for my practice and approach as an art facilitator and examine the literature relevant to my theoretical position. The chapter is organised into four themes that help to define my field. While these themes inevitably overlap and inform one another, they are presented as near enough discrete, sequential categories. Each section includes a reflection on contemporary artistic engagement with homelessness:

1. **Situating my position:** My socially engaged art approach draws inspiration from Suzanne Lacy, Jane Gilmore and Tom Finkelpearl. Emphasising dialogue and action to address homelessness. I focus on co-participatory and co-authored projects, positioning myself as a facilitator to empower marginalised individuals and communities in sharing their narratives.
2. **Community and the social turn:** By contrasting artists like Santiago Sierra with Saskia Janssen and George Korsmit and their work with a homeless centre in Amsterdam (Rainbow Soulclub), I address the "social turn" in contemporary art, highlighting the strengths and limitations of these practices and the need for inclusive dialogue and critical reflection. I explore the transformative power of community-based art practices through relational subjectivity and collaboration, drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of 'community'.
3. **Art as conversation:** Exploring the intersection of community-based social practice, art facilitation, and collaborative engagement reveals the potential to create an empathetic, convergent community. My approach champions co-authored, socially impactful art that fosters solidarity, inclusivity, and positive identity formation. By incorporating the ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development) approach alongside Paulo Freire's transformative pedagogies, I demonstrate how dialogical art can empower individuals and contribute to sustainable, equitable social change through gentle activism. A key example is Rainbow Soulclub "Free Advice" performance, in which audiences seek advice from people experiencing homelessness. Through this simple act, societal roles are reimagined, and those who are typically marginalised are recognised as valuable contributors to public discourse.
4. **Framework for inclusive social practice:** Following the decline of community art in the UK post-GLC closure, I highlight the shift towards neoliberalism and a reduction and repositioning in arts funding, particularly impacting marginalised communities. I look at the evolution of community art into social practice, citing Helguera on integrating teaching with art production, activism and reassessing art pedagogy. I stress the importance of audience engagement for social recognition and inclusion, and reflect on space as a physical and conceptual aspect in social practice. I highlight the value, impact and power of the audience for High Hopes Choir comprised of people who have experienced homelessness. I conclude with situating my practice within a "making space."

3.1 My Role as Facilitator

In Trinity Art Group's (TAG's) artistic ecosystem, my role is supportive rather than hierarchical, providing guidance and stability for TAG. My practice integrates diverse voices, rich histories, and innovative problem-solving to promote a shared vision and individual expressions to drive positive social impact for disenfranchised individuals and the broader community. My work with TAG involves collaborative workshops, interventions, and exhibitions that unite artists, 'community connectors' (London Borough of Croydon, 2014, p. 8),⁹² students, charities, and cultural institutions. We promote creative exchange and cultural inclusion, ensuring participants are integral to the process. By celebrating differences and integrating into new spaces, collaborators build recognition based on their actions and ideas rather than their homeless status.

The workshops are organised through various public and semi-public spaces, and shifting locations enhances engagement, facilitates broader exchange, and bolsters audience reach. These venues provide a crucial platform for homeless individuals to articulate their positive identities, and to showcase their talents and resilience to a wider audience – vitally increasing the geographies that offer inclusion. These workshops encourage learners to become active contributors – and not just remnant objects – but the actual person in the actual space drawing from the cultural, social, and intellectual wealth those spaces and interactions provide.

3.2 Theoretical Workshop Context

Jane Gilmor,⁹³ an early pioneer in socially engaged art who has dedicated much of her career to working with homeless and marginalised groups, once remarked that her time as a young university lecturer afforded her the remarkable opportunity to meet Suzanne Lacy, Lucy Lippard and Arlene Raven—each of whom passionately championed the use of art as a vehicle for social change. Placing my approach within the historical context of socially engaged art, I focus on the transformative potential of art in addressing social issues and advancing inclusivity for homeless adults. I align my approach with Suzanne Lacy and her *New Genre Public Art* (1995),⁹⁴ and the art theorist Tom Finkelpearl, who emphasise the importance of dialogue, reflection, and action, thereby providing a foundational backdrop for understanding the evolution and impact of community-based social practice. Their ideas establish a critical structure that informs the broader field and underscores the vital interaction between art and activism.

⁹²London Borough of Croydon. (2014) *Community connectors asset based community development (ABCD) Pilot Project Report*. Available at: <https://www.nurtureddevelopment.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Croydon-ABCD-full-report.pdf> (Accessed: 29 June 2024).

⁹³ Office of Community Engagement (2021) Jane Gilmor, "Within and without: A socially engaged art practice investigates". 16 November. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUe5npwvx34&t=146s> (Accessed: 4 March 2025).

⁹⁴ Lacy, S. (ed.) (1995) *Mapping the terrain: New genre public art*. 2nd edn. Seattle: Bay Press.

Next, I delve into the theoretical frameworks that underpin my practice. This discussion draws on the perspectives of established contemporary artists and art groups, including Laurie Jo Reynolds,⁹⁵ whose work blurs the boundaries between art and activism. By examining these influences, I highlight the nuanced challenges and complexities of engaging communities in art practices that are not only participatory but also co-authored. This emphasises the critical difference between these engagement models, flagging up how each contributes to the agency and visibility of marginalised artists within contemporary cultural conversations.

I define my role in this spectrum of social practice, positioning myself as an artist-facilitator rather than the primary creative agent. This stance is mediated through the lens of the artists and theorists discussed, which enhances my approach to supporting people experiencing homelessness through art. Within a theoretical context that recognises the dynamic interactions between art and society and emphasises the role of community participation in creating meaning, I anchor my approach in a relational construction. I assert that TAG's convergent artistic community co-constructs the reality of art and its impact. This perspective promotes a process that evolves through engagement. A dialogical exchange supports this by suggesting that artists' knowledge and significance are developed through an active conversation rather than passive observation. In this way, the co-authors and the audience contribute to the artistic experience, influencing and reshaping each other's understandings and interpretations. This interaction does not just redefine the artwork itself but also the roles of the creator and the viewer within the artistic ecosystem. My role, then, is to make the space – physically, intellectually, and professionally – to enable this intersubjective exchange.

The goal of my practice is thus to create a space where art is not merely displayed but actively engaged with and shaped by its collaborators. This engagement enriches the artwork, promoting a shared sense of ownership and responsibility. By investigating and amalgamating these multiple aspects of art and its impact, I demonstrate that art is a potent tool for community enrichment.

The contextual literature I have explored supports my reflective practitioner-research and my role as a community-based social practice facilitator. In this chapter, I focus on four key themes: situating my practice, community and the social turn, art-as-conversation, and a framework for inclusive social practice. I also demonstrate how these themes overlap and intersect, providing contrasting perspectives from social practice literature.

3.3 Social Practice: Overview and Position

Social practice, as defined in Chapter 1, is an artistic discourse shaped by social interactions, unified only by the involvement of people beyond the artist or collective. It combines traditional and non-traditional interdisciplinary approaches. The emergence of social practice, highlighted by Suzanne Lacy's *Mapping the*

⁹⁵ A Blade of Grass. (no date) *Laurie Jo Reynolds: ABOG Fellow for Socially Engaged Art*. Available at: <https://abladeofgrass.org/fellows/sea-fellow-laurie-jo-reynolds/> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

Terrain: New Genre Public Art (1995),⁹⁶ stems from the socio-political art of the 1960s and 1970s. I review socio-political art from the 1990s, when the movement coalesced into practices relevant to my facilitation practice.

Socially engaged art encompasses a wide array of art-making that comes together under the term social practice, a concept that has gained prominence in art discourse. This term, rooted in the German *Kunst als soziale Praxis*, first appeared in the 1990s (Anagnost, 2018)⁹⁷ and has since been adopted widely in American and British academic circles. Social Practice is an inclusive label that captures the essence of various collaborative and community-focused artistic approaches. It includes, but is not limited to, Littoral Art, Social Sculpture, Community Art, Art Activism, Dialogic Practice, Relational Aesthetics, and Participatory Art.

This chapter explores and integrates these diverse yet related disciplines, positioning Social Practice as a unifying framework that embraces the full spectrum of artistic engagement. The rise of Social Practice reflects ongoing debates in the art world about the nature and impact of these art forms, questioning the purpose of the art, the role of artists and facilitators, and how these practices are engaged critically both within and outside art institutions.

3.4 Suzanne Lacy's Influence

Susanne Lacy (1995)⁹⁸ defines social practice as addressing issues like toxic waste, race relations, homelessness, ageing, gang warfare, and cultural identity. It often involves non-traditional, post-object art forms such as street art, guerrilla theatre, video, protests, oral histories, dances, and environments. Lacy emphasises the relationship between the artist and the audience, suggesting that this interaction can itself be the artwork.

This art audience dynamic stresses the importance of interaction and engagement in the creation and experience of art. In my model of community-based social practice, art is not just an object to be viewed but a process that involves active participation from the community. This interaction transforms the relationship between the artist and the audience into a dynamic and collaborative experience where the boundaries between creator and observer blur. Critically, it returns agency to the participants, transforming them from passive cultural consumers to active cultural producers.

Lacy's work often involves communities directly affected by social issues, creating spaces for dialogue, reflection, and action. Her influential piece *Three Weeks in May* (1977)⁹⁹ in Los Angeles combined feminism with activism to address violence against women. Over three weeks, the performance included actions,

⁹⁶ Lacy, S. (ed.) (1995) *Mapping the terrain: New genre public Art*. 2nd edn. Seattle: Bay Press.

⁹⁷ Anagnost, A. (2018) *Theatre Gates' social formations*. Available at: <https://nonsite.org/theater-gates-social-formations/> (Accessed: 29 June 2024).

⁹⁸ Lacy, S. (ed.) (1995) *Mapping the terrain: New genre public art*. 2nd edn. Seattle: Bay Press.

⁹⁹ Lacy, S. (1977) *Three weeks in May*. Available at: <https://www.suzannelacy.com/three-weeks-in-may> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

performances, and public conversations focusing on the high incidence of sexual assault. A significant aspect was the public mapping of reported incidents, making the issue visibly apparent.

Suzanne Lacy's project serves as an example of how art can transcend traditional boundaries to address social and political issues actively; she challenged the conventional confines of art and demonstrated its potential as a transformative force capable of mobilising communities and challenging existing power structures. Lacy's approach has significantly influenced my collaborative work, guiding efforts to create spaces that promote awareness, reflection, and action. By doing so, my work facilitates TAG members' engagement with broader cultural conversations, helping to connect them to the cultural mainstream – using art as a catalyst for change.

Dealing with sensitive social issues and incorporating diverse skillsets and experiences, I established a “convergent community” to support TAG. This brings together various stakeholders and community connectors to address pressing social issues through collaborative and inclusive art practices, advancing a community that supports and enhances the group's mission.

The notion of space for Lacy is linked to site-specific social practice and seeks to address these spaces' specific social, political, and cultural contexts. Lacy's work amplifies the voices of her participants. In turn, this dialogue, reflection, and action manifest Lacy's praxis – one steeped in critical contemporary art discourse, modulating her practice, and opening up innovative discursive avenues to tackle social issues and concerns.

Lacy's role as the sole artistic visionary — creative agent— in her projects poses questions about the balance between creative authorship and the agency of the group or community she collaborates with. Her top-down approach, where she defines, orchestrates, and represents the interactions and interventions, can centralise authorship and artistic control as in her hands. This reduces the group or community to participants rather than co-creators. My practice reverses this relationship and adopts a grass-roots approach, returning agency and control to group members.

3.4.1 Collaboration vs. Participation

Artist and academic Loraine Leeson articulates the nuanced yet vital distinction between collaboration and participation in her book *Art: Process: Change: Inside a Socially Situated Practice* (2017)¹⁰⁰. Leeson advocates for a genuinely co-authored relationship between the artist and the community, whereby the community not only shares in the creative process but also actively shapes it, turning them into co-authors rather than passive recipients. This bottom-up approach, Leeson argues, empowers marginalised voices and ensures that excluded and overlooked perspectives are authentically represented.

¹⁰⁰ Leeson, L. (2017) *Art: Process: Change: Inside a socially situated practice*. London: Routledge.

In a similar vein to Lacy's work but this time focusing directly with homeless women, Jane Gilmore's 1994 project *BED / SHOE / HOME*¹⁰¹—which involved workshoping with homeless and abused women. While the project commendably integrated the voices of these women into a powerful and important installation, it ultimately remained anchored in the artist's curatorial vision. The contributions of the participants were incorporated, yet they did not achieve an equal platform or co-authorship with the artist. Consequently, despite its poignant impact, *BED / SHOE / HOME* falls short of the collaborative dynamic Leeson champions.

By purposefully relinquishing the autonomy of the creative agent, my approach seeks an alternative vision one that fosters a community-based process where creative agency is genuinely shared, allowing the community's needs and perspectives to lead the artistic dialogue rather than being subsumed by a singular artistic narrative.

3.4.2 Conversation as an Artistic Medium

Traditional arts and crafts sessions often focus on skill development and creating tangible works, but they can overlook engaging participants' artistic voices. Lacy's method emphasises the process of dialogue and interaction, which is vital for art emerging from marginalised communities' experiences. This perspective informs my practice with TAG, promoting deeper engagement. Similarly, Bourriaud (2002)¹⁰² highlights art as a social encounter, fostering interaction and dialogue. Lacy and Bourriaud both use interdisciplinary practices to address marginalisation and barriers to inclusion; this shift in emphasis towards social, cultural, or human aspects within visual art signifies a move from purely structural or material considerations to greater recognition of social dynamics, cultural influences, and human interactions.

Social dynamics are key to Grant H. Kester's dialogical practice, he uses the term 'reciprocally responsive' (2004, p. 77)¹⁰³ to describe an interactive and mutual exchange between the artist and co-participants. This concept involves both parties actively engaging and responding to each other, establishing a two-way dialogue characterised by openness and mutual influence. It creates a collaborative relationship where all participants adapt to and respect each other's perspectives, needs, and contributions, avoiding dominance by any one side. Instead of clinging to a fixed self-concept (self-interest) or aiming for complete detachment (disinterestedness), this approach encourages learning and growth through interactions with others. Engaging with new people and experiences can reshape our self-understanding, cultivate empathy and compassion, and promote personal growth. It contrasts with traditional, top-down methods where the artist imposes their vision without deep interaction and mutual understanding. Loraine Leeson cites Kester's notion of being 'reciprocally responsive' and synthesises it into her practice, stating:

¹⁰¹ Sperling, J. (2012) *Jane Gilmore: I'll be back for the cat*. Brooklyn: A.I.R. Gallery.

¹⁰² Bourriaud, N. (2002) *Relational aesthetics*. Translated from the French by S. Pleasance and F. Woods with the participation of M. Copeland. Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel.

¹⁰³ Kester, G. H. (2004) *Conversation pieces: Community and communication in modern art*. California: University of California Press.

In this way the artist's intention is not abandoned, but rather develops through the dialogue... One's own interest becomes so completely bound up with the interests of others that it is only through the collective needs being properly fulfilled that it is possible to realise one's own. This process of "conversation" actually enables one's own ideas to be formed. (2017, p. 84)¹⁰⁴

These dynamic and emergent forms of conversation enable the artistic process to evolve collaboratively, leading to innovative idea formation grounded in shared experiences and mutual understanding. This is achieved through interdisciplinary practices — which involve combining elements from different fields or disciplines, such as visual art, science, and technology, to create innovative and boundary-pushing works.

An interdisciplinary practice approach focusing on human interactions and identities is key to sparking dialogue between marginalised people and an audience. As explored in Chapter 2, this is crucial because the homeless identity often masks the individual's true personality, prompting the harmful belief that a homeless person is fundamentally different. This psychological tendency leads people to show more kindness to animals while disregarding homeless individuals without a second thought (Harris, 2013).¹⁰⁵ Artistic intervention that initiates a conversation between homeless individuals and an audience can change perceptions and dissolve prejudice. The embrace of interdisciplinary practices with an onus on social dynamics by artists underscores my facilitator position to utilise dialogue and social interaction. This shift toward recognising social dynamics, influences, and human interactions is essential for addressing the multifaceted nature of homelessness and dismantling the barriers to inclusion.

3.5 Situating My Position on the Social Practice Spectrum

Social Practice is a broad spectrum of artistic activities, so defining and situating my practice with a relational awareness of the other engagement forms on the spectrum is vital. My art facilitation is positioned to empower TAG. The workshops critically promote and engender local connections and become spaces of action, catalysing engagement and co-authorship in the broader art-cultural discourse. 'Making space' refers to a tangible, interactive environment that promotes shared exploration and participation. This approach emphasises 'making a difference', a phrase preferred by Leeson, over simply 'making an impact', highlighting a focus on meaningful, transformative interactions:

It describes more accurately the notion of a creative endeavour rather than an academic exercise. Thinking about art as a process and not just a product of research offers a means of bringing the imagination more fully into play and can serve to release the creative energies of

¹⁰⁴ Leeson, L. (2017) *Art: Process: Change: Inside a socially situated practice*. London: Routledge.

¹⁰⁵ Harris, L. (2013) 'The brain on homelessness'. *The Magazine of FEANTSA - The European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless AISBL Homeless in Europe*. Winter 2012/2013. pp. 10 -11.

others in order to spark the momentum that enables an arts-led intervention to take effect in the wider world. (2022, p. 1)¹⁰⁶

Artists cannot fix all the world's problems. However, they are good at asking questions that spark ideas and creativity, and Leeson insightfully points out that the answers often come from local community knowledge:

Making a difference generally requires a need to be addressed. Including groups who are most affected by an issue in the related research offers the input of first-hand knowledge, local connections and, not least, the problem-solving purposefulness of those for whom much is at stake. (2022, p. 1)¹⁰⁷

Making Space is a dynamic space that takes inspiration from Leeson's (2022)¹⁰⁸ idea of socially engaged individuals synergising with a community for mutual benefit. This relationship brings with it the responsibility to create sustainable and respectful relationships and projects that can continue to benefit the community after the initial engagement period has ended.

Tom Finkelpearl (2013)¹⁰⁹ reminds me of the importance of approaching community engagement ethically and responsibly. Facilitators and organisations should take responsibility for addressing power and privilege issues and, in turn, feed back into an institutional art praxis. By taking responsibility for addressing power, facilitators and organisations can contribute to a more equitable society. Finkelpearl (in Kelly (Ed.), 2014)¹¹⁰ contends that social practice can be divided into three main themes: relational, activism, and agitational. I recognise that my practice incorporates elements from each category. Later in this section, I explore these modes, their polarities, and the artists championing particular blends. Finkelpearl has written extensively on social practice, and I am drawn to many of his ideas and approaches. He supports community-led art practices, emphasising contemporary art's political and social dimensions. Finkelpearl¹¹¹ also lays out the case for community-based socially engaged art practice, stating primarily that it can provide a space for dialogue and action.

In assessing my place within the spectrum of current social practices, I reference the survey by Alexis Frasz and Holly Sidford (2017)¹¹². Beneath Finkelpearl's overarching themes, Frasz and Sidford flesh out nine key

¹⁰⁶ Leeson, L. (2022). 'Make a difference: Collaboration and participation in arts-led research'. *The Campus*. Times Higher Education. Available at: <https://repository.mdx.ac.uk/download/953c250436fc148c5df811c76a2b8029c21727f0ba74edb4219af0747a948214/136341/730%20FEATURE%20Creative%20and%20arts-based%20processes%20in%20research.pdf> (Accessed: 23 July 2024).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Finkelpearl, T. (2013) *What we made: Conversations on art and social cooperation*. Durham and London: Duke Press.

¹¹⁰ Kelly, M. (ed) (2014) *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹¹¹ Finkelpearl, T. (2013) *What we made: Conversations on art and social cooperation*. Durham and London: Duke Press.

¹¹² Frasz, A. and Sidford, H. (2017) *Mapping the landscape of socially engaged artistic practice*. Available at: <https://icasc.ca/wp->

attributes. This framework is visually represented in a map that delineates the various approaches within social practice, offering a clear guide to understanding the field's diverse methodologies.

Frasz and Sidford's nine sliding scale polar variations illustrate social practice's multifaceted activities and goals. The first sliding scale situates 'Social' on one end of the scale and 'Fine' on the other end (see Figure 3-i). As exemplified by Laurie Jo Reynolds¹¹³ efforts to raise awareness for prisoners' rights, social practice can involve direct action and advocacy work. Reynolds's position is at the 'Social' end – and the opposite of 'Fine'. Reynolds uses art activism to bring awareness and action to the issues facing incarcerated and formerly incarcerated inmates of the Tamm Supermax prison (2013).¹¹⁴

FRASZ AND SIDFORD'S NINE CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL PRACTICE (MY SOCIAL PRACTICE POSITIONALITY IS HIGHLIGHTED IN YELLOW).

Frasz and Sidford's Nine Characteristics of Social Practice		
• Aesthetics:	Social-----Fine	
• Role/function of the artist:	Facilitator-----Creative agent	
• Origin of the artist:	Rooted in-----From outside	
• Definition of the 'work':	Process-----Product	
• Direction of influence:	Participant-----Audience	
• Origination of the work:	Community-----Outside generated	
• Place:	Specific-----Non-specific	
• Issue:	Single issue-----Multi-issue	
• Duration	Short term-----Long term	

Returning to Susanne Lacy's social practice, while valuable, robust, and innovative in many respects, her approach does not fully embrace co-authorship. Instead, she chooses the 'Creative Agent' role, which is opposite to 'Facilitator' in the social practice spectrum.

Social practice can be an artistic idea or project that engages with communities as a means of production for their directed vision. To reiterate my role as an artist mediator, I would situate myself on the left, near the

content/uploads/2018/05/Mapping_the_Landscape_of_Socially_Engaged_Artistic_Practice_Sept2017.pdf (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

¹¹³ Arte Util. (no date) *Archive / Tamms Year 10*. Available at: <https://www.arte-util.org/projects/tamms-year-ten/> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

¹¹⁴ Creative Time Summit. (2012) *Laurie Jo Reynolds*. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHegZ_ANDOw (Accessed: 29 June 2024).

Facilitator function. As illustrated in Frasz and Sidford's nine characteristics of social practice, in evaluating my practice against the nine characteristics, I find that my approach is process-oriented. I am focused internally on supporting TAG and externally on engaging an audience and heightening awareness. My work is not confined to a single issue, reflecting a broad thematic scope. TAG's projects also involve a degree of site specificity, utilising cultural spaces generally inaccessible to marginalised individuals and groups, though we are not bound to any particular geographic location. This further emphasises the flexibility and adaptiveness of our approach.

While Frasz and Sidford's spectrum simplifies the complexities of social practice, it still serves as a useful tool. Mapping my practice has clarified my role, highlighted potential areas for growth, and suggested new avenues to explore; these avenues include, for example, expanding the direction of audience influence and looking to investigate future social issues. Mapping has also proven beneficial for articulating the nature and scope of my practice to various stakeholders, including funders, collaborators, and audiences. It facilitates connections with broader discussions and places my work within a wider artistic and social context.

3.6 Community and The Social Turn

To further consider the theoretical context of my practice, I discuss the transformative power of community-based art practices, emphasising relational subjectivity and collaborative research. I draw on notions of community as set out by philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy and explore and synthesise aspects of the approaches of art activists like Laurie Jo Reynolds and Tania Bruguera. I examine art historical debates on the "social turn" in contemporary art, addressing critiques from scholars like Claire Bishop. The discussion extends to the limitations and strengths of community-based social practice, where I emphasise inclusive dialogues and the need for critical reflection.

Heather Davis (2011)¹¹⁵ elaborates on community-based social practice, arguing that collaboration with specific communities can challenge societal norms; she emphasises 'relational subjectivity'— building relationships to support diverse perspectives and challenge prevailing narratives. Davis draws on Jean-Luc Nancy's (1991)¹¹⁶ ideas on community and relationality, viewing community-based art as collective action against individualism. My practice embodies Nancy's ideas by creating spaces for conversation and collaboration, adopting shared experiences and opportunities to speak truth to power.

The way in which I conduct and explore my practice can be understood through the critical lens posited by Deborah Barndt (2008),¹¹⁷ who describes research as an inquiry process to increase understanding and

¹¹⁵ Davis, H. (2011) *Art that loves people: Relational subjectivity in community-based art*. Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/211513733.pdf> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

¹¹⁶ Nancy, J-L. (1991) *The inoperative community*, P. Connor (Ed.), Translated from the French by P. Connor, L. Garbus, M. Holland, and S. Sawhney. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

¹¹⁷ Barndt, D. (2008) *Touching minds and hearts: Community arts as collaborative research*. Available at: <https://deborahbarndt.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2008-Touching-Minds-and-Hearts-1.pdf> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

knowledge; Barndt explains the purpose of research in community arts is not just to gather information but also to create transformative experiences for all involved. In this sense, research is seen as a collaboration that involves the sharing of knowledge and skills and the co-creation of new ideas and ways of thinking. My practice and research with adults experiencing homelessness involve shared, playful explorations informed by reflexivity. Artists and co-authors must continually examine and challenge their assumptions and biases to create meaningful work.

My practice involves framing the research process as a collective artistic practice – where the creative output is the result of the research process (as further evidenced in Chapters 5 and 6). I temper this with the reiteration of Leeson's notion of 'making a difference' (2022),¹¹⁸ which is bound up in the shared 'making' with a de-emphasis on engagement as an academic exercise. Artistic practice, then, generates new knowledge and understanding; in this sense, it is a collective practice made by and accessible to all participants, and a shared mode of inquiry in which the creative output is seen as a form of knowledge that can contribute to broader debates and understanding in community-based art engagement with people experiencing homelessness. A key advantage is that research-as-practice allows the facilitator and co-authors to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge. This approach emphasises the value of process, experimentation and innovation in the research process – leading to new forms of expression.

Taking onboard Barndt's point about research as a collective transformative experience, I return to Jean-Luc Nancy (1991)¹¹⁹ and his emphasis that community celebrates the diversity of voices and, in doing so, offers a sense of belonging through communication and sharing of members' experiences and limitations. This transforms individuals and groups; connections are formed, increasing visibility and social engagement opportunities. The hope is that this action will make viable space to connect with policymakers and politicians interested in positive social change.

An embodied version of this can be found in Laurie Jo Reynolds' work¹²⁰ with US prisoners and their families, which exemplifies convergent community grassroots action, positive impact and further wrought actual social change. Reynolds' work combines activism and advocacy with research as an inquiry process. Her approach utilises democratic social engagement – for which she coined the term 'Legislative Art'¹²¹ – as a practice that involves participating in and intervening in governmental systems to bring about tangible political change. It is crucial to recognise that Reynolds' work aligns with Jean-Luc Nancy's foundational notion of community, where

¹¹⁸ Leeson, L. (2022). 'Make a difference: Collaboration and participation in arts-led research'. *The Campus*. Times Higher Education. Available at: <https://repository.mdx.ac.uk/download/953c250436fc148c5df811c76a2b8029c21727f0ba74edb4219af0747a948214/136341/730%20FEATURE%20Creative%20and%20arts-based%20processes%20in%20research.pdf> (Accessed: 23 July 2024).

¹¹⁹ Nancy, J-L. (1991) *The inoperative community*. P. Connor (ed.), Translated from the French by P. Connor, L. Garbus, M. Holland, and S. Sawhney. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

¹²⁰ A Blade of Grass. (no date) *Laurie Jo Reynolds: ABOG Fellow for Socially Engaged Art*. Available at: <https://abladeofgrass.org/fellows/sea-fellow-laurie-jo-reynolds/> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

¹²¹ A Blade of Grass. (no date) *Laurie Jo Reynolds: ABOG Fellow for Socially Engaged Art*. Available at: <https://abladeofgrass.org/fellows/sea-fellow-laurie-jo-reynolds/> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

shared experiences and relationships supersede individualism, forming the basis for collaborative actions in community-based art practices. Tania Bruguera, like Laurie Jo Reynolds, firmly believes in the power of art as a transformative catalyst that can trigger social change. Bruguera emphasises the importance of embedding forms of hospitality (2017),¹²² and her work often involves marginalised individuals – such as immigrants and politically oppressed groups – highlighting their experiences and narratives. Through this, Bruguera creates space for dialogue and community, thereby returning power to the powerless.

Political engagement and art activism are crucial to Bruguera's work. Bruguera likes coining terms to illustrate and act as a socio-political shorthand to aspects of her work. Several of her terms are helpful in that they situate the potentiality of community-based practice, notably 'Artivism' (Savin, 2017)¹²³ and 'Useful Art' [*Arte Útil*]¹²⁴ and more recently 'Political Timing Specific' (Bishop, 2019).¹²⁵ Bruguera's website *Arte Útil* defines Useful Art: '*Arte Útil* roughly translates into English as "useful art" [... it] draws on artistic thinking to imagine, create and implement tactics that change how we act in society'.¹²⁶ This is a playful nod towards the physical 'site-specific' sculptural practice and reinforces the importance of the timing of an artistic, political intervention.

Claire Bishop describes Tania Bruguera's art activism as 'sending a metaphorical arrow through the newly opened window of political uncertainty' (2019, n.p.).¹²⁷ Bishop argues that Bruguera's Political Timing Specific art requires the alignment of political, ideological, cultural, and economic factors for immediate understanding but may need more explanation over time. Bishop cites Reynolds' 'Legislative Art' (2019)¹²⁸ as effectively leveraging institutions for visibility. Both Reynolds and Bruguera use strategic timing and creativity to capture media attention and influence a broad audience, demonstrating the impact of politically timed art in community-based social practice.

However, I will flag Bishop's early concern about socially engaged practice in contemporary art here. Bishop was wary of an inclusive community-based approach to art – in 2006, she used the term 'social turn'¹²⁹ in her essay published in *ArtForum*¹³⁰ to define a broader consideration of the social and cultural contexts in which

¹²² Monument Lab (2017) *Tania Bruguera, monument to new immigrants*. Available at: <https://monumentlab.com/projects/tania-bruguera-monument-to-new-immigrants> (Accessed: 24 July 2024).

¹²³ Savin, A. (2017) 'Tania Bruguera's 'Travelling performances': Challenging private and public spaces /Voices'. *e-cadernos CES*. <https://doi.org/10.4000/eces.2240>

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Bishop, C. (2019) 'Rise to the occasion'. *ArtForum*. Vol. 57, No. 9. Available at: <https://www.artforum.com/features/claire-bishop-on-the-art-of-political-timing-243070/> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

¹²⁶ *Arte Útil* (no date) *About / Arte Útil*. Available at: <https://www.arte-util.org/about/colophon/> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

¹²⁷ Bishop, C. (2019) 'Rise to the occasion'. *ArtForum*. Vol. 57, No. 9. Available at: <https://www.artforum.com/features/claire-bishop-on-the-art-of-political-timing-243070/> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Bishop, C. (2006) 'The social turn: Collaboration and its discontents'. *ArtForum*, Vol. 44, Issue. 6. (February) pp. 178-183.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

artworks are produced, circulated, and interpreted. Grant Kester, Miwon Kiwon, and Nato Thompson further disputed and expanded the social turn through the artistic lens. They initiated a lively debate regarding the ethical and artistic aspects of the practice and the most suitable terminology to describe and critique it.

Thompson (2012)¹³¹ compiled a collection of essays that explore a growing number of art projects known for their social turn. These projects reflect Finkelpearl's modes relational, activism, and agitational (2023),¹³² each with its unique blend of elements. The discussion around these practices has sparked debates offering examples and critiques relevant to my practice. Specifically, these discussions delve into questions such as the role of the art facilitator, the purpose of art in the community, and who can be an "artist". These themes blur boundaries between art and everyday life and redefine who can participate in and contribute to artistic endeavours.

From the perspective that relational subjectivity was flawed, Bishop portrayed the community facilitator as merely a 'good soul' (2006)¹³³ who tries to ameliorate social deficits instead of tackling the systemic structures that enable social inequity and marginalisation. Bishop¹³⁴ argues further that relational, participatory work often does not have enough critical distance from the social and political aspects of the community it supports to be helpful; she regards aspects of social practice, and especially community art, as being naïve and assimilated into neoliberal institutions and power structures. Moreover, Bishop states that social practice is biased toward Christian-inspired human-centred ethics, which run counter to the role of autonomous artistic aesthetics in questioning value systems – including collective morals.

Bishop's views are influenced by Theodor Adorno's writings, who believed that art should challenge and critique the dominant culture and its social and political structures, as explained in his book *Aesthetic Theory* (1970)¹³⁵. Bishop also draws on the concept of 'rupture' put forth by Jacques Rancière (2009)¹³⁶ to disrupt existing systems and reveal the hegemonic structures that create social inequity. We can better understand how art can challenge power structures and promote social equity by engaging with these ideas while offering counterarguments.

¹³¹ Thomason, N. (ed) (2012) *Living as form, socially engaged art from 1991-2011*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

¹³² Finkelpearl, T. (2013) *What we made: Conversations on art and social cooperation*. Durham and London: Duke Press.

¹³³ Bishop, C. (2006) 'The social turn: Collaboration and its discontents.' *ArtForum*, Vol. 44, No. 6. (February) pp. 178-183.

¹³⁴ Bishop, C. (2012) *Artificial hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*. London: Verso.

¹³⁵ Adorno, T. W. (2013) *Aesthetic theory*. G. Adorno and R. Tiedemann (Eds.). Translated from the German by R. Hullot-Kentor (ed). 2013 Paperback edn. London: Bloomsbury.

¹³⁶ Rockhill, G. and Watts, P. (2009) *History, politics, aesthetics*, Durham and London: Duke University Press

While I acknowledge Bishop's point that community artists trying to ameliorate social deficits instead of tackling the systemic structures that enable social inequity is flawed, Cormac Russell¹³⁷ offers an alternative approach to the social turn.

Russell's approach is espoused through ABCD (Russell and McKnight, 2022).¹³⁸ This entails starting a conversation with the community you plan to engage with, working to discover the community's strengths, passions, and positive identities, locating what they want and then working towards a creative approach to solve the emergent issues. Russell strongly contends that this simple strategy makes visible an abundance of community assets, but it needs an empathetic facilitator to put it into action for the community's benefit.

I turn to the artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles' 1973 performance work *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance: Outside*,¹³⁹ in which the artist scrubbed the plaza steps and exhibition galleries of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum in Connecticut. Is Ukeles' piece just the work of a cleaner? Her work questioned the position of art in 1973: the step is clean, and that is useful; nevertheless, the action is more than cleaning the step. The work highlights the imbalance of visible and invisible labour – I argue that this is analogous with the role of a community-based social art practitioner, to make the invisible visible. Ukeles describes her engagement as 'Maintenance Art' (Ukeles, 1996),¹⁴⁰ marrying together the labour of her artistic endeavours with the labour of her parental endeavours. The combination initiated and agitated institutional critique. Likewise for community-based social practice engagement, I argue, when the critical assessments have been met (as advocated through an ABCD approach).

Social practice thus holds a unique position, whereby the broadest range of the community is included in the questioning of contemporary art, and through which marginalised voices are added to the cultural fabric. This act, albeit gentle, carries with it the potential to dismantle hegemony by reflecting a world in which all have what Amanda Fricker calls 'testimonial justice' (SocialEqualityUCT, 2014);¹⁴¹ this is a form of agitation, even if a mild one. Returning to Ukeles' artwork, the institutional value is met through the critique of the Connecticut Museum's "cleanliness", but so too is the instrumental and intrinsic value of hidden connections wrought between life and articulated through the art of those small acts carried out by artists working with invisible communities in care homes, homeless shelters, and outside the traditional nexus of the studio, gallery, and museum.

¹³⁷ Nurture Development (2018) *Cormac Russell*. Available at: <https://www.nurtureddevelopment.org/who-we-are/cormac-russell/> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

¹³⁸ Russell, C. and McKnight, J. (2022) *The connected communities: Discovering the health, wealth, and power of neighbourhoods*. Paperback edn. Oakland, California: Berrett-Koehler.

¹³⁹ Smarthistory. (2024) Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance: Outside* (July 23, 1973). Available at: <https://smarthistory.org/ukeles-washing/> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

¹⁴⁰ Ukeles, M. L. (1969) *Manifesto for maintenance Art*. Available at: <https://queensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Ukeles-Manifesto-for-Maintenance-Art-1969.pdf> (Accessed: 24 July 2024).

¹⁴¹ SocialEqualityUCT (2014) Amanda Fricker - *Epistemic equalities?* [YouTube video], 27 Nov. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8zoN6GghXk> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

While Bishop advocates for polemic agitation to reconsider and reposition our relationship with one another and the broader picture, she also highlights the potential risks of perpetuating power struggles and reinforcing the status quo in socially engaged practice. I cannot entirely agree with Bishop's stance that change will occur only through the agitation of systemic structures, which Bishop claims is often at loggerheads with a community-based approach. However, I understand her concerns that the autonomy of art is at risk of being subsumed into art as a means to an end by the singular pursuit of a concrete goal – the art then becomes perfunctory. Bishop's erudite and in-depth analysis prompts me to critically re-examine the power dynamics and ethics of my convergent community art group.

From the context of artists working with and advocating on behalf of marginalised groups, there is still the implication that community-based art practitioners are merely: 'New missionaries who play guitar with marginalised youth, the disabled and the unemployed, aiming at mitigating the perception which they have of their own exclusion' (Merli, 2002).¹⁴² The academic Paola Merli's quip 'new missionary'¹⁴³ came from an article she wrote attacking Francois Matarasso's report *Use or Ornament?* (1997).¹⁴⁴ Matarasso's vigorous reply in his article *Smoke and Mirrors*:

Paola Merli's critique is founded on treating *Use or Ornament?* as something it is not: an academic attempt to prove definitively the social value of participation in art. In taking this approach, she makes unrealistic criticisms of its process, and ignores what the study does offer. (2003, p. 338)¹⁴⁵

He concludes: 'Art is among the most important resources we have for enjoying, understanding, sharing and benefiting from our lives, and that its importance demands equal access to it' (Matarasso, 2003, p. 345).¹⁴⁶ Matarasso establishes the point that art is a vital resource. It is crucial that everyone, regardless of their social status, has the opportunity to engage with and benefit from it.

Laurie Jo Reynolds is someone Bishop (2019)¹⁴⁷ is happy to poach from camp "good soul" and claim them as one of her own—maybe rightly so. Reynolds employs political agitation and advocacy for the individuals she supports. However, it is essential to stress that her approach is rooted in community-based social practice.

¹⁴² Merli, P. (2002) 'Evaluating the social impact of participation in arts activities.' *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Vol. 8. Issue 1, pp. 107–118. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline-com.soton.idm.oclc.org/doi/abs/10.1080/10286630290032477> (Accessed 20 June 2024).

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Matarasso, F. (1997) *Use or ornament? The social impact of participation in the arts*. Stroud: Comedia. Available at: <https://arestlessart.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/1997-use-or-ornament.pdf> (Accessed: 24 July 2024).

¹⁴⁵ Matarasso, F. (2003) 'Smoke and mirrors: A response to Paola Merli'. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Vol. 9, Issue 3, pp. 337–346.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Bishop, C. (2019) 'Rise to the occasion'. *ArtForum*. Vol. 57, No. 9. Available at: <https://www.artforum.com/features/claire-bishop-on-the-art-of-political-timing-243070/> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

Reynolds' work might occupy or illustrate a nexus between the ideas of Bishop and Grant H Kester; her gentle, inclusive engagement, combined with a proclivity for political agitation that any politician would envy, has made a demonstrable and positive social impact on the lives of the individuals she works with.¹⁴⁸

So, the debate centres on the value of community-based art. Paola Merli criticises these artists as "new missionaries" who mitigate perceived exclusions without substantial change. In contrast, François Matarasso argues that art is a vital resource for everyone. Laurie Jo Reynolds combines community engagement with political advocacy, showing the significant social impact of community-based art. My work with marginalised adults balances community involvement and advocacy, highlighting art's collaborative and transformative roles.

3.7 Inclusive Dialogical Art

An inclusive dialogical art approach fills a gap and provides a much-needed conduit for the invisible individuals in our community to be seen and heard meaningfully. This is distinctly where I position a "making space".

Community-based social practice has limitations, but it also has strengths. One of these is that it often addresses issues directly relevant to the community in which it is situated and in the most direct manner: talking to each other. This can readily spill into the public spaces where the community resides, offering new insights and visibility through inclusion. Without this grassroots social practice, how many marginalised communities would be overlooked?

Dialogic art, as espoused by Grant Kester, frames a body of aesthetic practice centred on conversational community interactions, which he argues is a more inclusive approach than public art (2011).¹⁴⁹ This approach emphasises collaboration and dialogue between artists and community members, creating a space for reflection, critical thinking, and exchanging varied perspectives. These are tenable benefits when the homeless participant is active to the art process.

The opposite is true for polemic agitation for a specific art audience, where the homeless individual is usually a passive participant subject to autonomous art action instigated by the artist as director, as in the case of Santiago Sierra's artwork. Here are two examples illustrating my point: *160cm Line Tattooed onto Four People* (2000)¹⁵⁰ wherein four prostitutes are paid the equivalent cost of a hit of heroin to grant consent to be tattooed, and *Repetition of Writing a Phrase* (2022)¹⁵¹ for which two long-term unemployed people were recruited to write "My Body Does Not Belong to Me" repeatedly for 5 hours a day for 4 days who were paid

¹⁴⁸ Arte Útil (no date) *Archive / Tamms Year 10*. Available at: <https://www.arte-util.org/projects/tamms-year-ten/> (Accessed: 20 June 2024).

¹⁴⁹ Kester, G. H. (2011) *The one and the many: Contemporary collaborative art in a global context*. Durham: Duke University Press.

¹⁵⁰ Sierra, S. (2000) *160cm Line tattooed onto four people*. Available at: https://www.santiago-sierra.com/200014_1024.php (Accessed: 29 June 2024).

¹⁵¹ Sierra, S. (2022) *Repetition of the writing of a phrase*. Available at: https://www.santiago-sierra.com/202203_1024.php (Accessed: 29 June 2024).

according to the recommendation of the European Employment Services (EURES) network. Sierra's work is agitational, powerful, and abject. Sierra's work intentionally mirrors exploitation; he does not say that his work "improves" lives, instead to reveal how little it takes to get someone to endure humiliation or discomfort when they are desperate for money. His subject is a critique of capitalism and social inequality, but what have those people – his medium – gained? These individuals remain downtrodden and invisible, both within the artwork and in society. They are sidelined, treated as mere tools for the artist's message, and are not genuinely engaged or empowered. Meanwhile, Sierra gains all the recognition and financial reward, leaving the participants' voices largely ignored and unaddressed.

In contrast, artists like Saskia Janssen and George Korsmit exemplify a dialogical approach that prioritises reciprocity and shared authorship. Their project *Rainbow Soulclub* (2005–ongoing)¹⁵² engages people who are homeless and experiencing addiction in collaborative art-making, creating platforms for self-expression and cultural exchange. By co-producing and organising performances, exhibitions, and workshops within the De Regenboog Groep (The Rainbow Foundation) homeless centre in Amsterdam, Janssen and Korsmit reject the extractive dynamics of Sierra's practice. Instead, they build enduring relationships with centre participants, transforming marginalised individuals from subjects into co-creators. As with *Making Space*, *Rainbow Soulclub* functions over an extended period, where care, trust, and shared experience accumulate, allowing meaningful participation to unfold gradually rather than being imposed as a temporary intervention. This kind of sustained, embedded practice highlights how dialogical methods can support vulnerable communities in asserting their agency, not only within the framework of an artwork but within the cultural narratives that so often overlook them.

The evolving conversation of work has, as Kim Charnley (2021, p. 5)¹⁵³ notes that:

... initiated the social turn are no longer current precisely because socially engaged artistic strategies are now incorporated into the normal repertoire of contemporary art, hybridised with all sorts of other practices.

Each project must respond to its own context. For *Making Space* and TAG, this means carefully balancing gentle activism, care, and creativity, while continuing to ensure participants have a real say in how they are seen and heard.

Drawing from Reynolds and Bruguera's grassroots approach, for TAG and I, it is crucial to find mutually beneficial ways to disrupt and question the systems that prevent them from being active in the cultural fabric.

¹⁵² ter Gast, E. (2021) 'The Rainbow Soulclub: in conversation with artists Saskia Janssen and George Korsmit'. *Homeless in Europe*. Spring. pp. 20-24. FEANTSA. Available at: https://www.feantsa.org/public/user/FEA_002-21_magazine_spring_v4.pdf (Accessed: 2 March 2025).

¹⁵³ Charnley, K. (2021) *Sociopolitical Aesthetic: Art, Crisis and Neoliberalism*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Cameron Parsell begins *The Homeless Person in Contemporary Society* (2018)¹⁵⁴ with a 1965 quote from social worker Alan K. Jordan, who described a homeless man as an 'inadequate personality.' (Jordan, 1965, p.27)¹⁵⁵ This quote highlights the social norms of Jordan's time, but Parsell argues that these assumptions persist today, perpetuating stereotypes about homelessness. Considering this ongoing reliance on biases, I frame the relationship between Making Space workshop facilitation and a dialogic approach as a means of challenging and reshaping societal preconceptions about homelessness. Working with TAG exemplifies the transformative power of community-based socially engaged art, offering homeless individuals visibility on their terms.

3.8 Art-as-Conversation and the Convergent Community

My work intersects community-based social practice, art facilitation, and collaborative engagement, creating a unified approach.

Drawing from various philosophical and artistic influences, I highlight how dialogical art complements my transformative pedagogies and a convergent community approach— especially as a way to reclaim agency and project positive identities. I illustrate an argument for advocacy for a co-authored and socially impactful approach to art that promotes solidarity and inclusivity, empowering individuals, strengthening community cohesion, enriching the creative process, and contributing to more equitable and sustainable social change: a gentle activism subtly drives social change through inclusive, community-driven art.

I use the ABCD (Asset-based Community Development) to address the relationship between the participating community and the facilitator's approach. This dovetails with looking at ways to embed transformative pedagogies, as championed by Paulo Freire, to return agency and encourage self-discovery. I explore examples of convergent communities contingent on inclusion and positive social change underpinned by dialogical art, where problem-solving and art production are carried out in a public sphere.

Dialogical art encompasses both a process and a tangible outcome. It involves a "conversation" and "agreement" rooted in discursively mediated interactions. The potential of this approach lies in creating an equitable space for genuine co-authorship. So, a dialogical approach naturally informs my development of facilitation strategies that balance group dynamics, artistic aesthetics, and socio-political significance.

Through mediated dialogue, the convergence of TAG members, professional artists, teachers, and creatives becomes a fertile space where ideas and artworks are collectively shaped to reflect the community's needs and aspirations. The professionals invited into this collaborative space contribute their expertise and critical rigour, creating a platform that extends beyond the immediate artistic context to encompass broader political and

¹⁵⁴ Parsell, C. (2018) *The homeless person in contemporary society*. London: Routledge.

¹⁵⁵ Jordan, A. (1965) 'Homeless men and the community'. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*. 2(3): pp. 27–33.

social structures. By bringing professional artists and educators into the Trinity Winchester charity's space, a rich and dynamic hub is created for future projects and exchanges. This hub provides a safe and familiar space for adults who may be homeless to take part in the creative action and, crucially, to be central to its process. This, in turn, promotes social and cultural capital for the Trinity Winchester community, enhancing the potential for sustained engagement and creative endeavours.

Kester (2004)¹⁵⁶ draws on the work of the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy in his impactful book *The Inoperative Community* (1991),¹⁵⁷ where the philosopher sets out his stall to reclaim community by redefining it. Nancy emphasises the value of community as a site of belonging and identification. According to Nancy, a community is continually formed and transformed (1991).¹⁵⁸ I embrace Nancy's definition and take this concept as critical in the consideration of TAG as a convergent community and how it comprises an ebb and flow of professional and non-professional people. Moreover, this community might be identified by openness and porosity to difference. TAG is not concrete, nor a fixed community with one identity. Indeed, I argue in Chapter 2 that labels foisted onto a group are profoundly unhelpful. Instead, TAG as a community is in constant negotiation and reconfiguration in relation to others. A defining feature would not come from labels applied to the group but from the group's ethos to tolerate and celebrate differences.

What mechanism could support and promote unity amidst diversity? Critical theorist Jürgen Habermas proposed the concept of a public sphere where dialogue could be shared and debated free from coercion and disparity, overcoming the constraints imposed by contemporary hierarchical structures. Habermas stated:

Every subject with the competence to speak is allowed to take part in discourse... everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatsoever... everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatsoever... everyone is allowed to express his or her attitudes, desires and needs. (1990, p.89)¹⁵⁹

Habermas' public sphere is guided by basic rules free from undue influence. In this case, participants evaluate each other's statements purely on reason and evidence, aiming for a rational consensus without physical or psychological pressures. This notion is useful to my art facilitator's practice as it describes an (ideal) environment where participants can freely and rationally express their creativity and perspectives, leading to genuine collaboration and understanding without external pressures. However, I am aware that this might be unrealistic because, in real-world situations, communication is often influenced by various non-rational factors such as personal biases, emotional influences, and social pressures, making it difficult to achieve a completely

¹⁵⁶ Kester, G. H. (2004) *Conversation pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. California: University of California Press.

¹⁵⁷ Nancy, J-L. (1991) *The inoperative community*. P. Connor (ed), Translated from the French by P. Connor, L. Garbus, M. Holland, and S. Sawhney. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Habermas, J (1990) *Moral consciousness and communicative action*. Translated from the German by C. Lenhardt and S. Weber. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

free and rational consensus. The antidote I offer is to develop environments that emphasise active listening, empathy, and equitable participation – while actively looking at ways to mitigate power imbalances and biases.

Collaborative engagement in a public sphere promotes solidarity and shared ownership because everyone is allowed a voice. One can express the vitality and potentiality of one's life by speaking one's mind in spaces where all feel welcome. Engineering workshops in various spaces that break out of the "charity bubble" – offer an alternative to the traditional didactic time-limited educational model offered to vulnerable adults in a safe but cocooned space.¹⁶⁰ Ultimately, public spheres are natural spaces for transformative pedagogies mediated by the facilitator to evolve in meaningful ways.

So, public spheres support guided exploration and self-discovery, aligning with Freire's pedagogical approach, which favours participatory over passive education. In my practice, this perspective is crucial, as it utilises workshops' interactive and collaborative nature to empower participants, enhance problem-solving, and enrich social and cultural dynamics. Freire¹⁶¹ championed a participatory approach to education. He criticised the traditional 'banking' model of education, in which students are passive recipients of knowledge. Freire argued for a dialogical model that empowers students as active participants, fostering critical consciousness and engagement. This model aligns with Kester's dialogic approach and the ethos of a convergent community, advancing a sense of learning and discovery through problem-solving among participants. Through shared experiences, Freire's pedagogy becomes a transformative force, empowering individuals to shape their learning journey and, in turn, contributing to the community's broader social and cultural dynamics. This dialogical and exploratory educational model and an interactive workshop method are highly relevant to my practice. In my workshops, we focus on problem-solving among participants, reflecting Freire's vision of education as a dynamic process that promotes personal and community growth.

3.9 Gentle Activism

People experiencing homelessness are often viewed as different. To counter this perception, I advocate for gentle activism – a subtle yet impactful approach to social change through community-driven art initiatives.

Inspired by Sarah Corbett's *Craftivist's Manifesto* (2017, n.p.),¹⁶² this approach harnesses the power of optimism as a form of quiet resistance. Corbett asserts that while cynicism is easy, actual change is fuelled by positivity and compassion, transforming dreams into reality and building meaningful movements. Similarly, the

¹⁶⁰ Art House. (no date) *Who we are*. Available at: <https://opportunities.shp.org.uk/arthouse#:~:text=ArtHouse%20develops%20and%20delivers%20bespoke,th%20are%20accessible%20and%20ambitious> (Accessed: 21 June 2024).

¹⁶¹ Freire, P. (2000) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. 30th Anniversary edn. Translated from the Portuguese by M. Bergman Ramos. London and New York: Continuum.

¹⁶² Corbett, S. (2017) *How to be a craftivist: The art of gentle protest*. London: Unbound.

Chinese philosopher Laozi (6th century BCE),¹⁶³ with his ‘gentle anarchist’ philosophy (in Clarke, 2000)¹⁶⁴, championed a path of resilience through harmony, demonstrating that resistance need not be loud to be powerful—a sentiment I echo in Chapter Four (TAG’s Manifesto).

Curiosity and shared aims are embedded in the workshop ethos driving my gentle activism. In the face of social norms that look to fix the homeless person as if they were somehow different from the rest of us, TAG actively but quietly moves against these preconceptions; the group’s activism promotes the members’ individual and collective strengths.

My use of the term ‘gentle activism’ is directly informed by Corbett (2017),¹⁶⁵ who employed the term as a framework for compassionate, community-focused social change. While Corbett’s interpretation centres on craft as a meditative and dialogic tool, the ethos of gentle activism aligns with earlier feminist traditions of collective making, as well as the principles of slow activism.¹⁶⁶ Slow activism¹⁶⁶ emerged as a critique of fast-paced, reactionary activism and shares common ground with broader cultural movements such as the Slow Food movement (founded by Carlo Petrini in 1986¹⁶⁷). This approach also resonates with dialogical practices rooted in Freirean pedagogy. Corbett’s work builds on these foundations, reimagining resistance as a quiet, collaborative process that prioritises dignity over charity— a principle central to my own approach.

Returning to the pernicious notion of the homeless person seen as different, the need for activism is succinctly framed by Parsell, who raises the core issue for the homeless person. As noted on the back cover of his book *The Homeless Person in Contemporary Society*, Parsell states:

The homeless person is thought to be different. Whereas we get to determine our difference or sameness, the homeless person’s difference is imposed upon them and assumed to be known because of their homelessness. (Parsell, 2019)¹⁶⁸

Addressing this systemic inequality requires more than mere awareness; it necessitates a shift towards meaningful solidarity. TAG’s resilience and shared aims are an amalgam that serves as the foundation for a form of solidarity. Returning to the *Craftivist’s Manifesto*,¹⁶⁹ Corbett advocates for a shift from sympathy to solidarity. She writes: “*Preserve the dignity of others showing them solidarity with them in your craft.*”

¹⁶³ Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (no date) *Laozi (Lao-tzu, fl. 6th cn. B.C.E.)*. Available at: [https://iep.utm.edu/laozi/#:~:text=Laozi%20\(Lao%2Dtz%2C%20fl,\(25%2D220%20C.E.\)](https://iep.utm.edu/laozi/#:~:text=Laozi%20(Lao%2Dtz%2C%20fl,(25%2D220%20C.E.)). (Accessed: 10 March 2025).

¹⁶⁴ Clarke, J. J. (2000) *The Tao of the West: Western transformations of Taoist thought*. London: Routledge.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Borland, K. (2021) ‘Slow activism and the cultivation of environmental stewardship in rural spaces’, *Ethnologia Fennica*, 48(1), pp. 4–30. Available at: <https://journal.fi/ethnolfenn/article/view/102851> (Accessed: 3 March 2025).

¹⁶⁷ Slow Food Foundation (No date) *Our history*. Available at: <https://www.slowfood.com/our-history/> (Accessed: 3 March 2025).

¹⁶⁸ Parsell, C. (2019) *The homeless person in contemporary society*. London: Routledge.

¹⁶⁹ Corbett, S. (2017) *How to be a craftivist: The art of gentle protest*. London: Unbound.

Understand their struggles, and you'll understand their solutions. Activism is not about charity" (2017, n.p.).¹⁷⁰

This approach emphasises understanding and mutual support rather than a hierarchical giver-receiver dynamic. Instead of charitable acts driven by sympathy, solidarity-based initiatives emphasise partnership, trust, and co-authorship over time.

Making Space's dialogical art approach, where conversation, collaboration, and shared creative processes become tools for empowerment and gentle activism. Returning to artists Janssen and Korsmit and their convergence of artists and people who have experienced homelessness: *Rainbow Soulclub* (ter Gast, 2021)¹⁷¹ provides a compelling model of this practice in action: agitating social hierarchies through sustained reciprocal relationships. Their "*Free Advice*" performance, in which audiences seek advice from people experiencing homelessness, deliberately inverts traditional power dynamics, positioning participants as experts with knowledge to share. Through this simple but subversive act, societal roles are reimagined, and those who are typically marginalised are recognised as valuable contributors to public discourse.

As with *Rainbow Soulclub*, Making Space is concerned with creating the conditions for meaningful exchange—where trust, solidarity, and shared authorship can flourish over time. This gentle activism has the potential to dissolve prejudice and nurture sustainable social change. Through co-produced public artworks, exhibitions, and events, Making Space participants—like those in *Rainbow Soulclub*—are invited to take up space as cultural producers, sharing their experiences and celebrating their uniqueness on their own terms and shifting how homelessness is understood in the public imagination.

Reiterating Nancy's stance that a healthy community tolerates and celebrates differences, TAG's convergent community stands united in pursuing collective solutions. Members achieve this by meeting and exploring new and unfamiliar places, creating spaces for harmony and recognition among diverse communities by connecting through socially engaged art (Wexler and Sabbaghi, 2019).¹⁷² Interactions and partnerships among diverse groups create social networks that offer support, resources, and opportunities. These networks enhance social capital, addressing immediate social issues and building a foundation of resilience and cohesion for TAG over time. In this context, activism is reframed as a collaborative endeavour where different voices contribute to the dialogue and coalesce around shared objectives. It is not about one group providing solutions for another but about diverse groups working together for mutual benefit.

Feeling "sorry for" does not change or help shed light on the flawed social system that the homeless individual finds themselves in. By standing together, we move toward redressing the inequality the homeless person faces. I contend that advocating for solidarity over sympathy in art activism is a call to move away from

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ ter Gast, E. (2021) 'The Rainbow Soulclub: in conversation with artists Saskia Janssen and George Korsmit'. *Homeless in Europe*. Spring. pp. 20-24. FEANTSA. Available at: https://www.feantsa.org/public/user/FEA_002-21_magazine_spring_v4.pdf (Accessed: 2 March 2025).

¹⁷² Wexler, A. and Sabbaghi, V. (eds.) (2019) *Bridging communities through socially engaged art*. New York: Routledge.

paternalistic approaches and instead empower ways of addressing social issues from and with individuals who hold authentic experiences of those issues. This approach tackles one of my main concerns: establishing a workshop environment of shared responsibility and co-creation where the service users of a space like Trinity Winchester have opportunities to break out of the “bubble” they are placed in by charities and current governmental social support systems and find ways to gain autonomy.

3.10 A Framework for Inclusive Social Practice and Collective Action

Owen Kelly (1984)¹⁷³ discusses the shift of community artists toward education and health projects, limiting independent art. Economic and policy changes have reduced funding and recognition for marginalised communities, posing significant barriers. The decline of community art in the UK, particularly post-GLC (Greater London Council) closure in 1986, provides context for the current socio-political landscape of community arts. Here, I explore and discuss how community art engagement has evolved into social practice. I cite Pablo Helguera’s (2011)¹⁷⁴ position promoting the integration of teaching with the art production process while also exploring Gregory Sholette’s (2018)¹⁷⁵ advocacy for reassessing art pedagogy as a dialogical tool for creating collaborative art activism within social practice, emphasising the need to recognise the impacts of power dynamics.

I further discuss the importance of audience engagement in social practice, emphasising its role in providing social recognition and breaking down barriers to cultural inclusion. In my experience working with TAG, the lack of an audience can be identified as hindering participants' social recognition. In addition, I explore notions of space (physical and metaphorical) as engagement spaces from a social practice perspective. This exploration combines dialogue, trust, and co-authorship notions in the various workshop environments. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s spatial triad (2012)¹⁷⁶, I consider how the interplay between perceived, conceived, and lived space can activate an inclusive “making space”—one that not only accommodates participation but is co-produced through it, reinforcing a sense of belonging and cultural presence.

I conclude by fleshing out my concept of “making space”, which represents creating a physical environment promoting inclusion and creativity and a metaphorical idea signifying the intentional creation of space for marginalised participants. The art workshop is presented as a transformative space for producing art, cultivating community and understanding, and celebrating shared humanity.

¹⁷³ Kelly, O. (1984) *Community art and the state: Storming the citadels*. London: Comedia Publishing Group.

¹⁷⁴ Helguera, P. (2011) *Education for socially engaged art*. New York: Jorge Pinto Books.

¹⁷⁵ Sholette, G. and Bass, B. (eds.) (2018) *Art as social action: An introduction to the principles and practices of teaching social practice art*. New York: Allworth Press.

¹⁷⁶ Lefebvre, H. (2012) ‘STATE power and the politics of space’. In C. Butler (ed.) *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial Politics, Everyday Life and the Right to the City*. London: Routledge.

3.10.1 Raymond Williams and Democratic Culture

To bolster my position for social practice facilitation to be a grassroots co-authored approach, I look to historical contexts, citing the academic Raymond Williams's *Culture is Ordinary* (2014)¹⁷⁷ essay, which states, 'An interest in learning or the arts is simple, pleasant and natural' (2014, p. 5).¹⁷⁸ His essay revolved around the notion that culture should be for all, not just an elite few. The Welsh writer believed that culture could be readily understood as a social practice produced and shaped by people in specific historical and social environments.

Williams' ideas on culture as a social practice are relevant to my research in that he argued that culture was moulded by society's social and economic structures and conditions and not the sole preserve of the individual artist, as do I. In this way, community-based social practice can be viewed as an active form of shaping and transforming culture by involving communities in producing art. Community art is borne from the shared lived experience: a skill that is the sum of human communal reflection, narration, and knowledge. Williams powerfully understood this socialised and democratic forming of art culture, stating:

A culture has common meanings, the product of a whole people, and offers individual purposes, the development of a man's entire committed personal and social experience...they are made by living, made and remade in ways we cannot know in advance. (2014, p.5)¹⁷⁹

In conclusion, community art, shaped by collective lived experiences, reflects shared narratives and knowledge. Raymond Williams' concept of democratised culture supports this, suggesting that culture emerges from shared social and economic conditions rather than solely from individual artists. Making Space validates TAG's common experiences, demonstrating that through these shared conditions, TAG has the potential to make meaningful cultural contributions.

Community art emerged in the post-war years, taking Williams's social democratisation to heart. The burgeoning phenomena in the UK stemmed from ideas about art, society, and human rights. Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)¹⁸⁰ is the catalyst and foundation of community art, where professional and non-professional artists work as equals for the greater good of their community. Thus, community art developed from a post-war drive for cultural democracy. This idea would meet Williams' "notion that culture should be for all" and has evolved over 70 years into a resilient hybrid form of socially engaged art, a category in which I feel TAG members' and my own work fits well.

¹⁷⁷ Williams, R. (2014) 'Culture is ordinary.' In J. McGuigan (ed) *Raymond Williams on Culture and Society: Essential Writings*. London: Sage.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ United Nations (no date) *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights> (Accessed: 21 June 2024).

3.11 The Shift in Site-Specific Art: Miwon Kiwon's Contributions

Art History professor Miwon Kiwon¹⁸¹ has extensively explored the intersection of art, public spaces and communities through her work. Her ideas benefit my research due to her emphasis on the dynamic engagement between artists and communities and the potential of these interactions to bring about new forms of collective action and social transformation.

Kiwon investigates how site-specific works relate to specific communities and spaces, unpacking and exploring how these community initiatives can challenge dominant narratives and power structures. Pertinent to my research question on how to dissolve barriers to cultural engagement, Kiwon sheds light on the role of public art in shaping urban spaces and communities: the potential for these works to spark new forms of social interaction and civic engagement.

Site-specific social practice can be seen as expanding the scope of what art can be and does beyond the traditional confines of the art object, the gallery space and, indeed, the creative agent or facilitator. Kiwon highlights the trajectory of site-specific art, noting a shift from focusing on physical sites to artists' projects engaging with social and political issues rather than specific locations. Site-specific social practice can be seen as a mode of art that foregrounds artistic practice's social and political dimensions rather than pandering to a particular virtue. Instead, it highlights how art can be a tool for open and often unpredictable social engagement and change. In this context, Kiwon's exploration of the shift from physical to socio-political dimensions in site-specific art underscores how this evolution can be harnessed to address and engage with pressing social issues by transforming public spaces into "making spaces" for meaningful dialogue and community empowerment.

3.12 The Decline and Co-option of Community Art

As an antidote to the overly optimistic application of art as a catalyst of positive social change and individual enrichment, I am reminded of the literary critic John Carey¹⁸², who dryly noted: 'The belief that art can improve people goes back to classical times' (2005, p.96). Carey rejects the idea that the Arts stand as a panacea for all ills, and neither can they instil in us superior acumen. It is fair to assert that (passively) appreciating the Arts is insufficient to improve us.

The Arts are certainly not a cure-all. However, art in action offers non-hierarchical self-expression and positive identity and encourages a culture of interaction, participation, and reflection, all crucial to positive

¹⁸¹ Kiwon, M. (2002) *One place after another: Site-Specific art and locational identity*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

¹⁸² Carey, J. (2005) *What Good Are the Arts?* London: Faber & Faber.

community development. These can improve well-being, spark economic opportunity, and encourage social interaction, reducing isolation and opening up new places and spaces that welcome marginalised adults.

The contrarian academic's assertion simultaneously negated art appreciation as a vehicle for positive social impact while acknowledging implicit neoliberal gains mediated through art as a well-being enhancer. Carey boils his argument down to literature as a more valid art. This is a peculiar comparison, considering literature and visual art serve different purposes. I take from this the devaluing of visual art as an oblique way to set the economic value of visual art as related to its usefulness to society. This economic art framing offers an understanding of why there was a shift towards Neoliberalism in the 1980s and 1990s. This right-wing political and economic ideology emphasised the importance of individual freedom, free markets, and limited government intervention in the economy.

It was in the 1990s that community art became increasingly marginalised from the art world and associated cultural hubs. This was partly due to cuts in public funding for the arts, which made it harder for community artists to access resources and support (Leeson, 2017).¹⁸³ Concurrently, community art was co-opted by the neoliberal agenda, shifting the focus towards using art as a tool for economic development. This meant that community art projects were routinely aimed at attracting investment and tourism (1988)¹⁸⁴ rather than promoting social change or addressing systemic community concerns. Under the auspices of the neoliberal machine, where community art did address community issues, with notable exceptions (Leeson, 2017),¹⁸⁵ it did so as an ameliorative smokescreen instead of actually tackling the underlying long-term problem. As a result, community art was seen as separate from mainstream art and perceived as less legitimate. This led to further marginalisation of community artists and a loss of the radical and transformative potential for which community art had previously strived.

In her lecture for FEINART, Leeson talks about the raising of funds for her art project *Volco* (1999-2009);¹⁸⁶ Leeson¹⁸⁷ wryly stated: 'I didn't call it art. I called it education, and that was helpful' (2023). Leeson's inference points to the lack of funding for community projects outside of health or education. I have encountered similar funding situations to those described by Leeson. Moreover, since the late 1980s, there appeared to be a trend of delegitimising the role and function of community-based art facilitators engaged in intrinsic art engagement with community groups (Matarasso, 2019)¹⁸⁸ and a noticeable move to separate art from life. From my perspective, this delegitimising role of the value of intrinsic art engagement is compounded by a top-down

¹⁸³ Leeson, L. (2017) *Art: Process: Change: Inside a socially situated practice*. London: Routledge.

¹⁸⁴ Myerscough, J. (1988) *The economic importance of the arts in London*. London: Britain Policy Studies Institute.

¹⁸⁵ Leeson, L. (2017) *Art: Process: Change: Inside a socially situated practice*. London: Routledge.

¹⁸⁶ cSpace. (no date) *Volco*. Available at: <https://cspace.org.uk/cspace-projects/volco/#more-127> (Accessed: 21 June 2024).

¹⁸⁷ Feinart. (2023) *Art: Process: Inside a socially situated practice Lecture by L. Leeson*. Available at: <https://feinart.org/lecture-recordings/> (Accessed: 21 June 2024).

¹⁸⁸ Matarasso, F. (2019) *A restless art: How participation won and why it matters*. Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

approach perpetrated through the misconception of the homeless person in contemporary society to remedy the supposed deficit without recourse to gleaning what their authentic needs and requirements are (Parsell, 2023).¹⁸⁹ Simultaneously, funding remains and has historically been, generally scarce.

The estrangement of art from everyday life is a by-product of the capitalist division of labour and finds itself intricately intertwined with corporations and the wealth-dominant class. They are trying to treat art, creativity, and our creative cultures mainly as economic commodities. On the one hand, neoliberals talk about cutting funding using “austerity” as an excuse. Simultaneously, they encourage big companies to invest in the arts through sponsorship, donations, loans, and partnerships. In doing so, they offer more significant influence for those corporations to shape, define, and monetise the arts as they see fit. Kim Charnley (2021)¹⁹⁰ argues that this destabilised art system can no longer absorb and neutralise dissent. As a result, the dynamic between aesthetics and politics is experienced with renewed urgency and militancy.

3.13 Current Community-Based Social Practice Engagement

Along with the neoliberal creep comes a renewed vigour to explore ways to return opportunity and access to resources for the homeless participant. As a result, I turn to the ABCD approach and look to work alongside community connectors to build partnerships with local organisations to pool resources, develop cultural networks, and initiate a culture of reciprocity where people experiencing homelessness can play an integral role. This means moving away from seeing art only in economic terms and making it something that brings people together in an enriching way. By doing so, the focus shifts from transactional to relational, thus enabling art to become a shared space for connection, empowerment, and mutual growth—where everyone, regardless of their circumstances, can contribute meaningfully to cultural life.

Returning to community art and its decline, Owen Kelly¹⁹¹ provides an insightful historical account of community art in the UK; in his 1984 book, Kelly raised prescient concerns about the potential assimilation of community art into a state structure. After Thatcher’s government closed the Labour-controlled, community art-supporting Greater London Council (GLC) in 1986, there was a significant shift in funding opportunities. Community artists were increasingly directed toward funding opportunities that required tangible, instrumental, art-oriented benefits such as education and health community projects, limiting their ability to engage in intrinsic art projects with marginalised groups.

For some grant providers, the mere association of an art group with the word homeless meant they could only envision funding that provided concrete remedies for aspects of homelessness. Simultaneously, the lack of funding and recognition of artistic value posed significant barriers to art projects within these marginalised

¹⁸⁹ Parsell, C. (2023) *Homelessness: A critical introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

¹⁹⁰ Charnley, K. (2021) *Sociopolitical aesthetics: Art, crisis and neoliberalism*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

¹⁹¹ Kelly, O. (1984) *Community art and the state: Storming the citadels*. London: Comedia Publishing Group.

communities. This is why gentle activism is vital; TAG assert the right to choose the art we create. Whether or not the theme is connected to the notion of homelessness is our choice alone.

Current community art engagement has been blended into social practice. However, many meaningful and valuable aspects of community art are to be mined from the historic strata of community art legacy. Kelly (1984)¹⁹² emphasised the importance of committed and sustained engagement and a deep understanding of local context to make meaningful and sustainable social change. He also suggests creating a sustainable engagement model – vital for achieving impactful and lasting change – by developing long-term relationships with community members and setting structures for ongoing participation and collaboration; this sentiment is championed by the socially engaged artist and educator Pablo Helguera, and is shared by me as a community art facilitator.

3.14 Social Practice Pedagogy

Helguera (2011)¹⁹³ provides a key text on social practice pedagogy that concerns the combined intrinsic, institutional, and instrumental value of collaborative community practice and questions: 'Is [it] possible to distinguish and define successful and unsuccessful socially engaged artworks?' (2011, n.p.). Helguera's writing balances the benefits of social engagement practice in a forthright and practical way. He also champions the culturally co-authored grassroots approach. My facilitation practice aligns with Helguera's approach, as he advocates for strategies that facilitate knowledge exchange and foster relationships among artists, students, and communities. Helguera introduced the term 'trans-pedagogy' to describe this approach, which integrates teaching with the art production process. It goes beyond traditional art teaching boundaries by engaging with the experiences and perspectives of diverse communities. In answer to Helguera's question about defining successful and unsuccessful socially engaged artworks, the answer lies between the shifting ground of the social interaction and the artistic value in the process, exchange, and relationship between socially engaged art and the community participants. If the consensus agrees on those three fronts, one can argue that the socially engaged artwork succeeds. But crucially, this is contingent upon the dialogical and artistic engagement.

To draw out and expand on Helguera's engagement model, I turn to the educator Gregory Sholette, who has written in great depth on the intersection of art and politics (see: 2007¹⁹⁴ and 2011¹⁹⁵). Sholette emphasises collective action and collaboration as a powerful mechanism for marginalised and excluded groups

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Helguera, P. (2011) *Education for socially engaged art*. New York: Jorge Pinto Books.

¹⁹⁴ Sholette, G. (2007) *Collectivism after modernism: The art of social imagination after 1945*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

¹⁹⁵ Sholette, G. (2011) *Dark matter art and politics in the age of enterprise culture*. London and New York: Pluto Press.

to gain a voice and visibility, and to initiate positive change, chiming with artists like Tania Bruguera (2024)¹⁹⁶ – art engagement that is art in and of itself while simultaneously providing a social impact.

In *Art As Social Action* (2018),¹⁹⁷ a practical handbook for the field of socially engaged art edited by Gregory Sholette.

Sholette in unison with his City University of New York (CUNY) colleague Chloe Bass argue social practice art is an interdisciplinary field that integrates the arts with disciplines like urban studies, public architecture, and political organising. Its goal is not just to represent sociopolitical injustice but to use art as a collaborative, participatory method for driving real-world social change and promoting justice, community-building, and transformation.

Art As Social Action is useful because it serves as an introduction to socially engaged art and a practical guide for educators. Sholette and Bass draw on the contributions of leading social practice artists and educators, namely Loraine Leeson, reflecting the increasing influence of socially engaged art in both academia and broader society.

The fusion of teaching and social practice is highly complementary in promoting collective action and reclaiming agency, especially when working with marginalised individuals. Thus, the dialogical nature of social practice pedagogy allows for an investigation of art-making, where the artist can have an open dialogue with the community. As a result, teaching social practice can serve as a tool to empower and engage marginalised communities, allowing them to gain confidence in their abilities and perspectives.

3.15 Art and Audience Engagement

Social practice is a powerful mode of communication. Loraine Leeson and Alberto Duman (2018)¹⁹⁸ contributed a powerful account of this in a workshop featured in *Art As Social Action*, emphasising that listening is not a passive activity but an active process that allows the speaker to feel heard. In this sense, the formalisation of active listening requires the presence of an engaged audience. Ideas, such as these, inform my teaching art practice. My experience of the UK museum education framework for “hard-to-reach groups”, catering to homeless person-centred engagement and access to cultural spaces, is that it offers little provision for audience engagement or even the abstract consideration for the value of reflecting and amplifying these artists’ voices. In effect the groups do not feel they are being heard.

¹⁹⁶ Art21. (2024) *Tania Bruguera*. Available at: <https://art21.org/artist/tania-bruguera/#:~:text=Advancing%20the%20concept%20of%20arte,a%20school%20for%20behavior%20art>. (Accessed: 25 July 2024).

¹⁹⁷ Sholette, G. and Bass, C. (eds.) (2018) *Art as social action: An introduction to the principles and practices of teaching social practice art*. New York: Allworth Press.

¹⁹⁸ Lesson, L. and Duman, A. (2018) ‘Experience as art’. In: Sholette, G. and Bass, C. (eds.) *Art as social action: An introduction to the principles and practices of teaching social practice art*. New York: Allworth Press, pp. 330 – 337.

Employing socially engaged art practices the organisation Art and Homelessness International (AHI)¹⁹⁹ is trying to address this imbalance, supported by the Gulbenkian Foundation²⁰⁰ – but they are still in the minority. Against them is a sea of neoliberal-backed big corporations that do not quite recognise community art as “art”. Instead, they understand the “value” in terms of economic return, and which could not abide, politically speaking, support of people experiencing homelessness outside of the convention of charity because it would constitute a searing indictment of the capitalist system.

Francois Matarasso argues that the mainstream history of Western art, which often highlights 'tales of individual genius and narrow standards of taste' (2019, p.133),²⁰¹ is not an objective truth but rather a biased perspective. This history has largely dismissed or undervalued artistic work that falls outside its control or interest. 'Mostly, though, it has othered the artistic practices of large sections of society through labels such as craft, folk and entertainment, with the deliberate aim of devaluing their creative and sense-making power.' (2019, p.133).²⁰² Matarasso notes the critical term othered, saying: 'This othering extends far beyond participatory art... there is no equivalent for white men's art because it is claimed as the norm from which others deviate.' (2019, p. 227).²⁰³

To mitigate against being “othered,” *Making Space* uses collaborative art-making as a method to actively challenge and reframe societal perceptions of homelessness. By creating opportunities for participants to co-produce visible, public-facing artworks, the project seeks to disrupt dominant narratives that often position homeless individuals as problems to be managed. As Rachel Kiddey (2014)²⁰⁴ demonstrates in *Homeless Heritage*, creative methodologies such as co-produced exhibitions and participatory archaeology not only provide therapeutic benefits but also serve as powerful tools for social intervention. Through making and sharing work with wider audiences, participants in *Homeless Heritage* asserted alternative identities and demonstrated the cultural value of their experiences, directly countering reductive stereotypes. Drawing on this approach, *Making Space* similarly positions its participants as cultural producers, whose creative expressions offer counter-narratives that redefine both personal and public understandings of homelessness, fostering recognition, dignity, and inclusion.

However, despite these intentions, there remains a real risk that TAG is still left behind—still othered—and that the cultural reflections embedded in their creative work remain unrecognised or unappreciated by wider

¹⁹⁹ Shaw, P. (2020) *Open house: Cultural spaces responses to homelessness*. London: Artists and Homelessness International. Available at: <https://artshomelessint.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2020-02-Cultural-Spaces-Responses-to-Homelessness.pdf> (Accessed: 21 June 2024).

²⁰⁰ Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. (2024) Available at: <https://gulbenkian.pt/en/> (Accessed: 21 June 2024).

²⁰¹ Matarasso, F. (2019) *A restless art: How participation won and why it matters*. Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Kiddey, R. R. M. (2014) *Homeless heritage: collaborative social archaeology as therapeutic practice*. PhD thesis. University of York. Available at: <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/6262/> (accessed: 3 March 2025).

audiences. Without meaningful reception, TAG's artwork risks being left inactivated, perceived merely as evidence of participation in a learning or well-being session rather than as vital cultural expression with intrinsic value. As Helguera (2011)²⁰⁵ argues, innovative approaches to socially engaged art and pedagogical practice can help address this gap, fostering more equitable and reciprocal exchanges between participants and their broader communities. Drawing on these frameworks has been critical within *Making Space*, opening new possibilities for creative expression while increasing opportunities for visibility, recognition, and inclusion. Historically, TAG has lacked a sustained audience, which has contributed to an absence of social recognition for their creative contributions. I contend that when the cultural dimensions of art-making—its narrative, identity-forming, and reflective capacities—are overlooked, art risks being reduced to a functional tool for skills development, employability, or therapeutic intervention alone. This diminishes its potential to assert the cultural agency of participants and its power to generate social change. Gaining and including an audience is vital for the group to feel connected to the broader community. The side effect of this leads to increased well-being, employment opportunities, and, notably, in community-based social practice, the chance for social recognition and meaningful promulgation of the homeless person's ideas.

In her article called 'The Audience: Subjectivity, Community and the Ethics of Listening' (1993),²⁰⁶ Alice Rayner highlights the pivotal role of the audience in activating the potential inherent in an artwork. She states: 'In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, the Player King accosts the uncertain duo "joyously" with the words, "An audience! Don't move!"' (p. 3). This underscores the dynamic interaction between the artwork and its viewers, essential for the art's full realisation. Meaning emerges through exchanges between the audience and artists. Collaborations with the audience offer multiple benefits and can generate authentic connections. Viewing the audience as active participants in social reciprocity intrigues me; I explore audience relationships that transcend passive observation and encourage active engagement. A dialogue between an audience member and a homeless participant represents a meaningful step forward (Johnston and Westwater, 2019).²⁰⁷ In this way, the art engagement is activated and is "useful" beyond economic value.

Similarly, the High Hopes Choir in Ireland offers a powerful model of how creative practice can support people experiencing homelessness to reclaim their literal and social voice. As Glenn Alexander (2021)²⁰⁸ explains, the choir provides a space where members are not asked to give their trust, stories, or autonomy to professionals but are invited to sing—to use their voices on their own terms. Run by its members with the support of a musical director, the choir fosters confidence, visibility, and community through public

²⁰⁵ Helguera, P. (2011) *Education for socially engaged art*. New York: Jorge Pinto Books.

²⁰⁶ Rayner, A. (1993) 'The audience: Subjectivity, community and the ethics of listening.' *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*. Vol. 7, No. 2, Spring. pp. 3-24. Available at: <https://journals.ku.edu/jdtc/article/view/1864/1827> (Accessed: 2 June 2024).

²⁰⁷ The Big Issue. (2019) 'This is your brain on homelessness by Katy Johnston and Hannah Westwater.' Available at: <https://www.bigissue.com/news/housing/this-is-your-brain-on-homelessness/> (Accessed: 21 June 2024).

²⁰⁸ Alexander, G. (2021) *Hear my voice: The role of the High Hopes Choir in tackling social exclusion*. Homeless in Europe, Spring, pp.34-35. FEANTSA. Available at: https://www.feantsa.org/public/user/FEA_002-21_magazine_spring_v4.pdf (Accessed: 2 March 2025).

performance. High Hopes exemplifies and projects the powerful notion that you may fall but you can also rise, and in the case of this homeless choir even rising to the esteemed challenge of singing the Irish National Anthem at the Aviva Stadium for a Six Nations game in 2016.²⁰⁹

Projects like High Hopes and Rainbow Soulclub demonstrate how socially engaged art can move beyond extractive relationships, creating lasting self-expression and cultural participation spaces for marginalised people. An engaged audience is vital in these contexts as it validates the experiences of the participants, turning their personal stories and creative expressions into a public dialogue. This audience engagement not only amplifies the voices of those often unheard but also offers a sense of belonging and recognition, which is crucial for building confidence, identity, and social connection.

Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad (2012)²¹⁰—perceived space, conceived space, and lived space—offers a useful framework for understanding how projects like High Hopes and Rainbow Soulclub activate inclusive cultural spaces. *Perceived space* manifests in the physical sites where creative expression unfolds, from choir rehearsals to art studios. *Conceived space* reflects the structured intent behind these projects—the social and artistic frameworks designed to support and empower participants. Finally, *lived space* emerges through the personal and collective experiences of those engaging in these practices, shaping new identities and social relations. *Making Space* synthesises these elements, creating an environment where marginalised voices move from exclusion to visibility, not only within the arts but in wider society. Through this lens, audience engagement is not simply about spectatorship; it becomes an act of co-authorship, reinforcing the social and cultural legitimacy of participants' creative expressions.

3.16 Situating My Practice Within a “Making Space”

People experiencing homelessness often encounter exclusion and restrictions in public spaces. Unlike the average urban dweller, who moves freely without fear, homeless individuals lack this privilege. Making Space aims to alleviate their negative experiences by providing safe havens where trust can flourish. The initiative Making Space intentionally counters stratified spaces. By actively “making space”, participants create opportunities for new connections, idea-sharing, and resource exchange. “Making space” generates social and cultural capital through collaborative art practices. Social capital is defined as the accumulation of resources linked to durable networks of relationships (Bourdieu, 1986).²¹¹ In Making Space, a network of relationships shapes the art-making process, promoting stability and trust not solely from physical spaces but also from

²⁰⁹ Cork Penny Dinners. (No date) *Social inclusion*. Available at: <https://www.corkpennydinners.ie/> (Accessed: 2 March 2025)

²¹⁰ Lefebvre, H. (2012) 'State power and the politics of space'. In: Butler, C. (ed.) *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial politics, everyday life and the right to the city*. London: Routledge.

²¹¹ Bourdieu, P. (1986) *The forms of capital*. Available at: https://home.iitk.ac.in/~amman/soc748/bourdieu_forms_of_capital.pdf (Accessed: 30 June 2024).

identifying with the community itself. For homeless participants, establishing trust is crucial. While hope represents abstract desires, trust is rooted in stable, positive relationships (Luhmann, 1979).²¹²

By creating safe and inclusive environments that foster trust and collaboration, Making Space exemplifies the practical application of social capital in art-making. Social networks provide access to resources such as information, support, and broader networks. According to Bourdieu's (2008)²¹³ concept of social capital, building networks of relationships can enhance support and open up opportunities. By facilitating connections within and beyond marginalised communities, Making Space helps build social capital, improving individuals' social mobility and economic prospects. Thus, as a public intervention, "making space" enables people experiencing homelessness to acquire cultural and symbolic capital, potentially transforming how they are perceived and valued in society.

Ironically, existing literature lacks attention to people experiencing homelessness and their spaces within collaborative practices. Making Space addresses this gap, moving beyond physical spaces to symbolise an inclusive ethos – an intentional shift toward empathy, understanding, and shared humanity.

²¹² Luhmann, N. (1979) *Trust and power*. Edited by T. Burns and G. Poggi. Translated from the German by H. Davies, J. Raffan and K. Rooney. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.

²¹³ Grenfell, M. (ed.) (2013) *Pierre Bourdieu: key concepts* 2nd edn. London: Routledge.

Chapter 4. Making Space to Make Space – Planning and Explaining the Making Space Project

Overview: Making Space is physical and conceptual, promoting knowledge sharing and recognition through “gentle activism”. This community-integrated project bridges gaps between homeless co-authors, cultural discourse, and community exchange, with collaboration and inclusivity key to its success.

This chapter details the workshop’s use of three locations, each offering unique benefits in accessibility, resources, and engagement. This multi-space approach enhanced participants’ creativity, skill exchange, and social capital, fostering community support and broader social inclusion.

‘Making Space’ workshops open empathetic spaces for homeless individuals, emphasising agency and co-authorship. This approach empowers participants through art and activism, focusing on empowerment, passion, and community. It enables them to contribute to cultural conversations and reclaim positive identities.

4.1 Making Space as a form of “Gentle Activism”

The Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Horticulturist Ernesto Sirolli (2012)²¹⁴ asked: ‘Which is more important, creativity, knowledge or passion?’ His reply was passion. You can give somebody an idea and offer your expertise, but you are stuck with a failed project if that person does not want to do it. The simple solution is to start a conversation with the group you want to support, find their interest, and use your expertise to facilitate that. Discover a way in. Join because your passions and goals are linked. Listen.

The Trinity Art Group (TAG) were not looking for artistic direction or offers of creative intervention driven by sympathy for the plight of people experiencing homelessness. Instead, TAG sought co-authors to build solidarity, not sympathy (Corbett, 2017).²¹⁵ Solidarity is unity and mutual support within a group with shared passions. Through gentle activism, a community of local artists, students, and TAG can build solidarity, forming a collective that combines their diverse skills and networks to engage in larger art projects and reach broader audiences.

4.1.1 TAG Manifesto

Through solidarity, you find community. Through community, you find your voice. Through your voice, you can be heard. By being heard, you feel recognised, and then you belong. TAG sought co-authors to build solidarity,

²¹⁴ Sirolli, E. (2012) ‘Want to help someone? Shut up and listen!’ *TED Talks*. Available at: https://www.ted.com/talks/ernesto_sirolli_want_to_help_someone_shut_up_and_listen/transcript?language=en (Accessed: 22 June 2024).

²¹⁵ Corbett, S. (2017) *How to be a craftivist: The art of gentle protest*. London: Unbound.

echoing Axel Honneth's theory of intersubjective recognition (2015),²¹⁶ recognition nurtures identity and social integration. TAG's manifesto emphasises active recognition and self-formation through art engagement, viewing self-recognition as a form of activism.

While a charity supports TAG, members do not see artistic engagement as an extension of "charity". Instead, members see our engagement as a gentle form of activism. Activism is not charity. Charity involves offering assistance, support, or resources to those in need, often driven by a desire to alleviate immediate suffering or address specific issues – in some cases plugging gaps where systemic social shortfalls occur. A point in case, Parsell criticised a charity that temporarily converts city car parks into pop-up accommodations for homeless people, arguing that it only mitigates the effects of homelessness without addressing the root causes. Media praise followed for the pop-up shelter initiative which consisted of blow-up lilos in empty multi-story car parks — to which Parsell questioned why such limited solutions are celebrated when affordable housing and professional services could provide permanent solutions to homelessness. (Parsell, Clarke and Perales, 2022).²¹⁷ Activism offers amplification of marginalised voices and, in doing so, improves awareness of social issues and opens conduits for possible social change. Making Space is thus a form of activism. Borrowing a favourite saying from artist and activist Tania Bruguera: 'I don't like art that points at a thing. I like art that is the thing' (2011, n.p.).²¹⁸ This stance gently allies the rejection of labels and expectations imposed on art group members as people experiencing homelessness. Powerfully, instead it asserts the collaborative practices with people experiencing homelessness as art: the thing. It gently rejects a system that only sees its deficits and fails to recognise its strengths. It gently rejects community art engagement that serves only as a box-ticking exercise. Instead, TAG align with the Chinese philosopher Laozi (6th century BCE)²¹⁹ and his 'gentle anarchist' approach (in Clarke, 2000).²²⁰

TAG embraced Laozi's *gentle anarchism* because it aligns with our belief in quiet yet transformative resistance. Laozi's philosophy rejects imposed hierarchies, valuing fluid, organic change over rigid structures—just as TAG challenges systemic limitations through creative solidarity rather than confrontation. TAG creates gentle ripples that, over time, erode barriers. I expand on this wave metaphor in Chapter Seven as part of my conclusion.

TAG's activism offers a new perspective on homelessness, distinct from traditional views focused on control and management. Instead of viewing homelessness through regulatory frameworks, TAG emphasises

²¹⁶ Zurn, C. F. (2015) *Axel Honneth: a critical theory of the social*. Cambridge: Polity.

²¹⁷ Parsell, C., Clarke, A. and Perales, F. (2022) *Charity and poverty in advanced welfare states*. London: Routledge.

²¹⁸ Dolnick, S. (2011) 'An artist's performance: a year as a poor immigrant'. *New York Times*. 18 May. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/19/nyregion/as-art-tania-bruguera-lives-like-a-poor-immigrant.html> (Accessed: 22 June 2024).

²¹⁹ Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (no date) *Laozi (Lao-tzu, fl. 6th cn. B.C.E.)*. Available at: [https://iep.utm.edu/laozi/#:~:text=Laozi%20\(Lao%2Dtzu%2C%20fl.,25%2D220%20C.E.\)](https://iep.utm.edu/laozi/#:~:text=Laozi%20(Lao%2Dtzu%2C%20fl.,25%2D220%20C.E.)). (Accessed: 10 March 2025).

²²⁰ Clarke, J. J. (2000) *The Tao of the West: Western transformations of Taoist thought*. London: Routledge.

understanding and recognition of the individuals behind the label, challenging conventional narratives through engagement. Relatedly, Making Space allows a shift toward embracing the emotional aspects of homelessness – revealing how feelings and emotional experiences shape the lives of homeless individuals and their perception of their surroundings. This approach involves viewing space through the eyes of people experiencing homelessness, understanding it as a complex network of places that encompass not just survival but also social, emotional, and cultural experiences (Cloke et al., 2010).²²¹ The dialogical workshop space activates these social and emotional dimensions, expanding and building on this understanding.

The phenomenon of homelessness extends through both institutional and non-institutional spaces that support daily living. The lived experience of homelessness is shaped by the connections formed with these environments (Conradson, 2003).²²² Making Space's inclusion of Southampton City Art Gallery (SCAG) and Winchester School of Art (WSA) serves to create new care-centred geographies – places in which the humanity of people experiencing homelessness is respected. Consequently, TAG, supported by Trinity Winchester, has become a small, but active art collective. TAG has created a safe space for homeless individuals to share ideas, gain creative commonality, and develop a public voice. To quote one of TAG's members: 'Feeling safe in a place with like-minded people allows me to share my artistic thoughts, artworks, feelings, and emotions without too much pressure' (2023).

This chapter explores the intersection of art, notions of space, and community building through a series of workshops that bring together the work of a convergent community and culminate in a national museum "takeover" and exhibition. Making Space has various meanings explored in this chapter – repetition of the shifting term "making space" throughout this chapter acts as a literary device to illustrate the layered, multifarious interpretations of spaces and their uses. It fundamentally serves as an innovative space allowing agency over the shaping of positive individual and group identities and expression – to take control of one's identity shifts the individual into a position to act upon the world in ways that they deem fit. I offer an interpretation of the 17th Century philosopher Baruch Spinoza (2023)²²³ and his notion of 'conatus', which he describes as our inherent drive to survive, thrive, and increase our power to act. The most joyful thing is acting upon the world. In essence, it is to have agency, which is to have the power to act upon the world, to make things and to make things happen in the ways you want.

²²¹ Cloke, P. May, J. and Johnsen, S. (2010) *Swept up lives? Re-envisioning the homeless city*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

²²² Conradson, D. (2003) 'Spaces of care in the city: The place of a community drop-in centre'. *Social & Cultural Geography*. Vol. 4, Issue 4. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline-com.soton.idm.oclc.org/doi/epdf/10.1080/1464936032000137939?needAccess=true> (Accessed: 22 June 2024).

²²³ Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (2023) *Spinoza on the emotions: The explanation of the Conatus*. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/emotions-17th18th/LD5Spinoza.html#ExpCon> (Accessed: 1 July 2024).

Beyond this project, the Making Space approach continues today to amplify the voices of people experiencing homelessness within discursive art discourse.

4.2 Project Aims

People experiencing homelessness often find that their participation in a community arts project is framed as a form of cultural consumption, where they are the audience or student – and not the teacher or the artist. As a freelance facilitator working in the charity sector for over 20 years, I am familiar with the model of support favoured by outside agencies that focuses on remedying perceived community deficits, who parachute in ‘experts’ (Helguera, 2011),²²⁴ offer short-term amelioration and recruit community organisations into buying their goods and services and, in effect, stymieing the community from identifying its strengths and helping itself (Russel and McKnight, 2022).²²⁵ Making Space is different; I prioritised cultural production over cultural consumption – returning agency to the art group members in a space where the facilitator and the group both become teachers and students simultaneously (Freire, 1990).²²⁶

Engaging people experiencing homelessness in creating art empowers them by providing a platform for their ideas and perspectives, harnessing their passion for problem-solving. This involvement promotes self-efficacy, enables authentic representation, and challenges stereotypes through positive visibility. Making Space is a project inspired by the history of social change movements, including feminism, ethnic diversity, and artists-as-activists. It aims to engage new and diverse audiences, is relevant for communities, and uses a way of working that involves collaboration (Lacy, 1995).²²⁷ The gentle activism of Making Space draws on and extends these by incorporating approaches that emphasise empathy, active listening, and mutual respect. Through creative community action, individuals can feel valued and connected. Creating art together has become a mode of communication, a conduit for education, and a means of strengthening social bonds.

Creating spaces where people experiencing homelessness have choices and feel included is vital. It offers some dignity and improves self-esteem. Charity spaces go some ways towards this; however, it is vital to acknowledge the limitations of a charity space to enable agency. Parsell points out that needs appear to be met on the surface (Parsell, Clarke and Perales, 2022).²²⁸ The charity service user may be able to choose food and activities that are preferable to them and receive donated articles of clothing that are desirable to them. However, they are still homeless, and the systemic cause of their homelessness is ignored and obscured by the

²²⁴ Helguera, P. (2011) *Education for socially engaged art*. New York: Jorge Pinto Books.

²²⁵ Russell, C. and McKnight, J. (2022) *The connected communities: Discovering the health, wealth, and power of neighbourhoods* Paperback edition. Oakland, California: Berrett-Koehler.

²²⁶ Freire, P. (1990) *Pedagogies of the oppressed*. 30th Anniversary edn. New York and London: Continuum.

²²⁷ Lacy, S. (ed.) (1995) *Mapping the terrain: New public genre art*. Paperback edition. Seattle: Bay Press.

²²⁸ Parsell, C., Clarke, A. and Perales, F. (2022) *Charity and poverty in advanced welfare states*. London: Routledge.

surface choices and agency offered by charitable spaces and the media that champion them. For Parsell, Clarke and Perales:

Charity is valorised in the media for the restoration of dignity to the poor and thus addressing the inequalities of status between the poor and better-off members of society. Charity is represented as meeting basic needs and as creating opportunities for recipients to be recognised as “people”, with minimal attention paid to the structural drivers of their poverty, including the role of the inadequate levels of social protection provided by the State. (2022, p. 128)²²⁹

Making Space is a project that seeks to break out of the charity space and build networks of support independent from it. While this project directly engages with the immediate needs and creative expressions of individuals experiencing homelessness, it has the potential to engender agency. Simultaneously, it serves as a platform for advocacy and awareness about the systemic issues underlying homelessness. In this way, Making Space is a powerful ally to charity.

So, the Making Space project has multiple purposes: a physical realm for creative expression and a symbolic space for catalysing impactful change. It is a platform for people to produce art and be acknowledged and witnessed; it originated from the imperative to integrate people experiencing homelessness into ongoing artistic conversations, allowing them an active role in shaping the cultural landscape around them – and at the same time, gently but insistently raising the point that homelessness needs to end.

4.3 Workshop Considerations and Planning

Before I started the workshop sessions, I considered relevant factors to the smooth functioning of a project. This consideration ensured that the project was organised and effective. This was crucial due to the limited time factor and the diverse actors and organisations involved. Careful planning also led to more impactful outcomes – such as renewed interest from sympathetic organisations and individuals to collaborate with TAG on future events.

My goal was to maximise engagement and attendance by considering factors that influence participation, such as timing, location, and communication methods. To develop a project plan, I employed a structured approach to outline key considerations:

- Ethical Considerations
 - Prior to the start of the project, obtaining necessary permissions and consents, particularly if participants are being photographed or recorded or if their work will be publicly displayed.
- Workshop Location and Space Requirements:

²²⁹ Parsell, C., Clarke, A. and Perales, F. (2022) *Charity and poverty in advanced welfare states*. London: Routledge.

- **Types of Spaces:** Charity space, academic space, public space, institutional space, cultural space, and historic space.
- **Nature of the Space:** Classroom, studio, or hall, along with the size of the space.
- **Accessibility and Safety:** Ensuring the space is accessible to all participants and conducting health and safety evaluations as necessary.
- **Dedicated or Shared Space:** Determining if the space is exclusively for the workshop or shared with other building users. Negotiate access with other users of the space.
- **Environment:** Assessing whether the space is conducive to creative expression – ample workspace and access to necessary materials.
- **Communication Methods:**
 - One-to-one meetings, workshop plenaries, email updates, and social media platforms to ensure effective communication and engagement. Mindful that not every participant has access to the internet. Work alongside Trinity Winchester project workers for effective communication with charity service users.
- **Facilities:**
 - Access to washing basins and toilets, usable tables and chairs, adequate lighting, and heating to create a comfortable environment.
 - Ensuring participants are aware of fire safety drills and muster points. Not just reflected in a health and safety form but verbally acknowledged face to face.
- **Materials:**
 - Resourcing recycled materials from volunteers, local charities, supermarkets and recycling centres. The cardboard used for this project was 100 percent recycled. After the project, the cardboard was broken down and used for the WASTEWORK project.
 - Ensuring accessible, non-toxic and, where possible, environmentally friendly materials and appropriate teaching aids are available, such as printouts, sticky notes and marker pens.
 - Providing sufficient materials to ensure full participation.
 - Ensuring technical support is available for any equipment used during the workshop, such as access to the WSA photo studio with support provided by a WSA photography technician and access to a projector, computer, and internet connections in the WSA PGR room.
 - Incorporating sustainable practices, such as minimising waste and using recyclable materials. Encourage collaborators to collect recycled materials to use in the making process.
- **Support Personnel:**
 - Recruiting students and local artists' workshop assistants to support the physical and emotional needs of participants and share creative skills. I call this the Making Space convergent community. Ensuring Trinity staff members are up-to-date with the project progression and proactive in their support of the participants. Trinity staff are the first port of call for recruiting new members to the art group.
- **Session and Project Duration:**
 - Planning travel times to and between locations.
 - Planning the duration of each session, incorporating adequate breaks and access to refreshments.
 - Allowing sufficient time for the project's development and progression.

Additional factors I considered were the workshop's specific goals and objectives, the number of participants, and the nature of the activities.

Key to this initiative was acknowledging the importance of physical, cultural, and public spaces as critical determinants of inclusion for people experiencing homelessness. By intentionally choosing and utilising these spaces, the workshop aimed to break down barriers to access and participation, making these areas settings for artistic activities and platforms for societal change.

The workshops were an interactive art learning experience. They comprised hands-on activities to initiate dialogue and shared exercises to gain and exchange new knowledge, skills, and insights. The workshops had a specific goal: to work towards an artistic collaborative “takeover” of SCAG for a day, followed by a 6-month museum exhibition.

Three mini stand-alone complementary workshops led by convergent community members Ren Wooldridge, Kevin O’Connor and Manjira Mazumdar were baked into the Making Space workshop programme. Later in this project, I elaborate on the activities and shared exercises. In this section, I critically consider my position as a facilitator and researcher.

4.4 Reflective Scrapbooking and Critical Distance

Using a reflective approach poses challenges, primarily the risk of personal bias and subjectivity. As TAG's founder since 2001, my deep involvement with participants could potentially skew my objectivity. To mitigate this, I maintained critical distance through self-reflection at each project milestone, questioning my biases and assumptions.

I compiled a Making Space reflective scrapbook (see appendix A) with sticky notes, photos, and observations to document the project's progression. This routine helped me to evaluate experiences and reactions consistently, preventing emotional entanglement from clouding my judgment. For instance, scrapbook entries on group interactions highlighted patterns in dynamics, leading to efforts to engage quieter members more actively.

Reflective scrapbooks, much like sketchbooks and journals, are widely recognised as essential tools for critical and creative thinking in various fields relevant to this thesis, such as critical pedagogy and creative research and practice. Although a detailed discussion of reflective scrapbooking is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to note that my approach can be described as an 'iterative and inductive process' (Walling-Wefelmeyer, 2021)²³⁰ and 'affective and embodied consciousness-raising and continuum-thinking' (Walling-Wefelmeyer et al., 2023).²³¹

As part of my reflective process, involving WSA students and local artists with varying perspectives helped to challenge my assumptions and ensure a more balanced investigation. Interviews were unstructured and informal, extending the dialogical workshop approach. This style was adopted when I suspected some TAG members were trying to provide answers they thought I wanted to hear. Relaxed conversations encouraged

²³⁰ Walling-Wefelmeyer, R. (2021) 'The methodological potential of scrapbooking: Theory, application, and evaluation'. *Sociological Research Online*, Vol. 26, Issue 1, pp. 3-26.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1360780420909128>

²³¹ Walling-Wefelmeyer, R., Johnson, K., Westmarland, N., Dhir, A. and Lyons Sumroy, A. (2023) 'Teaching for social change: Introducing 'scrapbooking' as a pedagogic approach towards ending Gender-Based violence'. *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, Vol. 7, Issue 1, pp. 128-145.
<https://doi.org/10.1332/239868021X16661126604534>

honest communication without pressure to “say the right thing”. This informal approach helped to build trust, crucial when working with people who have experienced marginalisation or distrust in formal settings. Consequently, the informal dialogical approach allowed for a nuanced exploration of the complex life stories of people experiencing homelessness. TAG members thus shared unique perspectives, and I adapted questions based on unfolding conversations. Notes, snippets, and transcriptions from these informal conversations, along with TAG members' reflections, were collected in the Making Space scrapbook (see Appendix A).

4.4.1 Making New Spaces of Discussion on Community and Identity

I recognise that the term “community” is complicated and contested. I use community to mean the coming together of people supporting TAG and their symbiotic artistic collective action. I was asked by the Trinity Winchester staff how I knew I was making a connection with the convergent community. My response was to offer this simple four-point test I discovered in a book called *The Connected Community*: ‘1. I know their names, 2. They know my name, 3. I notice when one of the members is missing, [and] 4. They notice when I am missing’ (Russell and McKnight, 2022, p. 131).²³² This community is not all the same – we come from different backgrounds, educations, and life experiences. Some individuals are housed, and some are not. Some individuals are professional artists, and some are amateur. In fact, the group are united by diversity and difference. Each individual brings their unique perspective and authentic narrative; as a community, we tolerate, celebrate and gain strength from each other in unity (Nancy, 1991).²³³

Community, as emphasised by Making Space, is not a thing but a relation. This aligns with my assertion at the end of Chapter 3, drawing from Bourdieu’s notion of social capital, defined as, and I quote: ‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition — or in other words, to membership in a group’ (1986, p. 21).²³⁴ In Making Space, the art-making process shapes and expands these networks. These relationships work towards breaking down barriers by establishing conduits of dialogue between marginalised groups and the broader community, building trust, and fostering a more inclusive and culturally vibrant world. In the same way, dialogical art engagement, espoused by Kester (2004),²³⁵ is not about objects. It is about relations. Drawing out these relationships through workshop engagement informs emergent ideas and structures and shapes opportunities for mobilisation and activation. This notion is predicated on the belief that community-based social practice's transformative potential lies in its ability to promote dialogue, build community, and trigger social change. In the context of my workshops, several strategies are key to facilitating

²³² Russell, C. and McKnight, J. (2022) *The connected communities: Discovering the health, wealth, and power of neighbourhoods*. Paperback edn. Oakland, California: Berrett-Koehler.

²³³ Nancy, J-L. (1991) *The inoperative community*. P. Connor (ed.) Translated from the French by P. Connor, L. Garbus, M. Holland, and S. Sawhney. London: University of Minnesota Press.

²³⁴ Bourdieu, P. (1986) *The forms of capital*. Available at: https://home.iitk.ac.in/~amman/soc748/bourdieu_forms_of_capital.pdf (Accessed: 30 June 2024).

²³⁵ Kester, G. H. (2004) *Conversation pieces: Community and communication in modern art*. California: The University of California Press.

opportunities for mobilisation and activation – namely, process over product (or relation over “the thing”) and careful documentation of the project.

Focusing on the creative process and interactions rather than the end product led to the development of positive identities – both individual and group relationships and understandings that transcended the immediate goals of the project, which, in turn, laid the groundwork for sustained engagement and action. It is here, I contend, where the value and quality of the artistic engagement lies, for facilitators and marginalised groups to mine. An example of this is illustrated through a group activity: I asked TAG members to write down as many personal identifiers as they could, such as “I am a dog owner”, “I am a brother”, “I am a husband”, “I am an artist”, “I am a friend”, “I am a geek”, and so on (see appendix A). The response was cathartic, and group conversations opened out the simple but important realisation that we are more than just a couple of labels. One group member later messaged me, reflecting on the activity:

When we were writing down words that describe us. I wrote a few words down and thought that was it then more and more words came to mind! It was really eye-opening and reassuring as well. I quite often feel defined by my mental health problems being labelled with Schizophrenia and this showed me I am so much more than that! [It] was good for my confidence and helped me think more positively. (2023)

By documenting the process and outcomes through photography, video, writing, and artwork, I hope sharing these stories and emphasising the ‘singular plural’ (Nancy, 2000 p. 21)²³⁶ in each TAG member will inspire others to undertake similar initiatives, extending the project's reach and impact.

4.4.2 Identities

Jean-Luc Nancy suggests that our identity comes from our relationships and connections with others, rather than being isolated individuals. He postulates we are all part of a large, interconnected network, and our essence is defined by how we interact with the people and world around us (2000).²³⁷

So, Making Space is a space for the ‘singular plural’ (2000),²³⁸ to mean we simultaneously hold multiple identities, collective and unique – and these identities are not isolated but interconnected parts of a larger network. The space to explore and shape these identities is crucial for personal development and societal connection. Thus, Making Space is space for self-discovery. Through my work as an art facilitator, I have observed that self-discovery boosts agency, improves a positive self-image, and builds authentic connections with others.

²³⁶ Nancy, J-L. (2000) *Being singular plural*. Translated from the French by R. D. Richardson and A. E. O’Byrne. California: Stanford Press.

²³⁷ Ibid

²³⁸ Ibid.

Making Space aims to empower individuals by encouraging them to pursue their passions and explore identities through creative interactions with each other and their audiences. This idea resonates with sociologist Steph Lawler's perspective on identity; she posits that identity is not inherent within an individual but is produced and negotiated through interactions with others (2013, pp. 180).²³⁹ This interplay between personal agency and societal constraints highlights how identities and social relationships are shaped. Dialogical space is crucial because it empowers individuals to assert their identities, regardless of group affiliations, and to receive a range of reactions and views from others.

Importantly, some of these reactions will offer acknowledgement and celebration, which enhances well-being. As Salmon (2023)²⁴⁰ notes, recognising and celebrating what makes us similar and what sets us apart can significantly enhance well-being, moving beyond mere acceptance and tolerance to active acknowledgment and celebration by others.

So, Jean-Luc Nancy contends that our identity is formed/informed through relationships and interactions, as part of an interconnected network. Making Space provides a space for exploring and shaping these interconnected identities. This aligns with Steph Lawler's view that identity is constructed through social interactions. Dialogical engagement allows individuals to assert and negotiate their identities, potentially receiving positive feedback and celebration, which enhances their well-being. My facilitation practice serves as a foundational platform where individuals experiencing homelessness can establish healthy routines, build a supportive peer network, and embrace positive identities – both individual and collective, such as artists, creatives, and TAG members.

4.5 The Physical and Creative Spaces of Making Space

Trinity Winchester, located by the River Itchen on Durngate Street, offers disabled parking and wheelchair access. TAG is part of Trinity Winchester, which is near the town centre and easily accessible from the train station. Its proximity to the Winchester School of Art (WSA) enhances the convenience and resources for workshops.

Since 2007, Trinity Winchester has been based in Bradbury House, which offers a range of services, including a drop-in centre, women's services, counselling, outreach support, learning programmes, and a healthcare hub (Trinity Winchester, 2024).²⁴¹ The recently added residential wing incorporates many features

²³⁹ Lawler, S. (2013) *Identity: Sociological perspectives*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Polity Press.

²⁴⁰ Salmon, M. (2023) *Tolerance and acceptance aren't enough*. Available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/tolerance-acceptance-arent-enough-dr-matt-r-salmon> (Accessed: 30 July 2024).

²⁴¹ Trinity Winchester. (no date) *Trinity Winchester*. Available at: <https://trinitywinchester.org.uk/> (Accessed: 22 June 2024).

of the 'Housing First' initiative (Wilson and Loft, 2021),²⁴² which prioritises the provision of stable housing before addressing issues such as addiction or mental illness.

Residents have access to all Trinity activities, including TAG sessions, after a social lunch. Trinity Winchester states that their services meet basic needs and provide learning, advice, therapies, housing, qualifications, and employment opportunities. The drop-in service features security doors, a reception area, toilets, laundry facilities, bag storage, a shower room, a meeting room, stairs, and a lift. The main hall, accessed through grey fire doors, is equipped for digital projections. It is divided into three sections: the first with a round table, leaflet rack, and bookcase, benefiting from natural light; the second section features a lower ceiling with copper shades, creating a cosy atmosphere, and it includes a lounge area with comfortable chairs and access to an outdoor patio overlooking the river; the third section is a café area with lightweight, stackable tables and chairs and a self-service tea and coffee facility. The decor is functional yet pleasant, with distinct social areas, indoor plants, and a welcoming atmosphere. The art group, consisting of eight to twelve members, meets in the main hall with access to quieter spaces upstairs for privacy and focused work. This flexible setup accommodates various activities and group sizes, making Trinity Winchester an inclusive and welcoming base for the project. The space's design allows for both social interaction and quieter, more focused sessions, as needed.

4.5.1 Winchester School of Art (WSA)

Access to the WSA campus became possible once the necessary health and safety forms were filled out. Surprisingly, these forms proved more beneficial than I initially thought. Beyond their primary purpose of ensuring the well-being of TAG members and students, the paperwork compelled me to consider how the group would use the allocated space, move around the campus, and interact with other users.

Exploring space dynamics forced a thoughtful reflection on how the group's presence might influence or be influenced by interactions with students and staff at WSA. It was not merely about physical safety but about cultivating a shared space where diverse individuals could collaborate and learn from each other. One of the primary reasons this consideration was crucial lies in the diverse composition of the TAG group. Comprising vulnerable adults, the social dynamics were especially sensitive, and recognising this, I aimed to set an environment that ensured participants' physical safety and encouraged positive and respectful interactions with the broader WSA community.

By reflecting on the potential interactions, I identified ways to enhance understanding and awareness among students and staff about the unique circumstances and backgrounds of the TAG members – this was achieved through an awareness and recruitment campaign undertaken by emailing potential student

²⁴² Wilson, W. and Loft, P. (2021) 'Housing first: Tackling homelessness for those with complex needs (UK)'. *House of Commons Library*. 8 March. Available at: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8368/CBP-8368.pdf> (Accessed: 22 June 2024).

collaborators to outline the project and offer a brief history of TAG and their achievements. Then, I met with the students in an informal setting, the WSA canteen, to chat further about Making Space and TAG. This dialogue reduced presumptions and initiated the students to think about ways to engage with the project.

Carefully considering WSA space and social dynamics helped me to create an introductory session and set the tone for the workshop.

4.5.2 Southampton City Art Gallery (SCAG)

SCAG is within a half-hour bus journey from Winchester. Due to the Making Space partnership between WSA and Trinity Winchester, members had the benefit of a free shuttle bus service between the WSA campus and University of Southampton main campus.

In 2021, I approached SCAG's education team with a proposal for TAG to undertake a day workshop in the museum and exhibit through their Community Exhibition space. Due to the exhibition backlog caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the workshop and exhibition dates were pushed back. However, the workshop was finally set for Wednesday 1 February 2023, with the TAG exhibition installation in the Community Exhibition Space set for the week after.

The Community Exhibition Space at Southampton City Art Gallery has an engaging and lively display programme featuring contributions from schools, community groups, and workshops organised by the Gallery's learning team. The space is in the main sculpture hall, adjacent to the gallery shop, and provides a dynamic setting.

Crucially, despite its dedication to showcasing local community-based pieces, no distinct signs delineate this space from the surrounding sculpture hall. Notably, it resides in close proximity to key works from the museum's art collection. This subtle yet important aspect lends an air of institutional capital and is sensitive to the value of inclusion, as reflected in one TAG member's response: 'My artwork is next to Rodin, flippin' [sic] Rodin! So pleased my costume is on display! Then people can read my poems as well! I'm honoured!' (2023).

4.6 Dissolving Barriers to Inclusion

At Trinity Winchester, TAG artwork is displayed throughout the building. TAG art sessions often extend beyond the main hall into the café and lounge areas. This was especially evident during the Making Space project, allowing broader participation from other service users through respectful negotiation. This expansion promoted a more inviting environment, enabling choice and participation.

The project's expansion also increased Trinity staff involvement, fostering camaraderie and trust, enriching the project, and promoting a unified community. By encouraging various levels of participation, the Making Space project engaged a broader group, making the afternoon sessions vibrant and active.

The workshop spaces in the two locations featured flexible layouts adaptable to different creative processes. For instance, Trinity Winchester used lightweight aluminium tables and chairs, facilitating task-based reconfiguration for collaboration and individual work. These spaces served as active arenas, amplifying the voices of homeless individuals and integrating their presence into the broader community fabric.

The workshop locations also shaped the interactions and outcomes. Each space's physical design, layout, and ambience influence how TAG and its convergent community communicate, collaborate, and generate ideas. In Chapter 5, the Making Space embedded project critically draws on those interactions and outcomes to understand and improve workshop spaces for marginalised groups and individuals.

The Southampton City Art Gallery space impacted the direction of the material process in that TAG could not change the physical layout of the space and so decided to change the physical space around themselves. This was explored through the making of cardboard costumes and later through Kevin O'Connor's Parasol Making workshop, where props and objects that could be carried could extend the physicality of the TAG member into the museum space.

The gallery, as a cultural space, also affected the direction of the workshop process. Before starting the Making Space project, TAG had visited the SCAG. Being in the space provided direct inspiration from existing artworks and exhibitions, and TAG members drew ideas from the themes, art history, and materials they encountered as means to reclaim the space:

Standing before Monet's painting, I thought he was so famous. He is everywhere, even on tins of biscuits. I wanted to stand in front of him [his painting], block him out to say I'm here too. My bedroom is filled with my artwork, but no one ever sees it. By obscuring this 'old master', I am taking my turn to be seen. (TAG member, 2023)

Similarly, Manjira Mazumdar's improvisational workshop explored the use of physicality to reclaim museum space. Manjira and I were keen to explore how we use performance to interact with museum staff and how those guardians of the museum could help shape TAG experience.

The project champions art as a medium for social commentary and change. Providing a platform for the voices of those experiencing homelessness contributes to a broader dialogue about homelessness, social inclusion, and the role of art in society. This approach aligns with contemporary movements that seek to utilise art for advocacy and social impact.

Philosopher Henri Lefebvre (2012)²⁴³ informs my understanding of public space as a site of continuous contestation. This concept underpins my use of public spaces for conducting workshops and intervention

²⁴³ Lefebvre, H (2015) *The production of space*. Translated from the French by D. Nicholson-Smith Oxford, UK and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing

practices. By advocating for the rights of homeless participants to inhabit these spaces, I have been able to attract new audiences. This is exemplified in my Making Space embedded project.

Chapter 5. The *Making Space* Embedded Project

Overview: This chapter unpacks the *Making Space* project, focusing on its implementation, participant experiences, and outcomes within the broader context of community-based art initiatives. The word "Making" is threaded through this project and underscores the focus on the creative process rather than solely on the end product. It highlights the creation, experimentation, and exploration during these workshops. Notably, exploring workshops in different 'spaces' broadens access to areas of care and engagement, and this project addresses a critical gap in the homeless support system.

Making Space was a 3-month initiative and a 6-month national art museum exhibition. The project represented a segment of an ongoing, long-term, evolving community art engagement aimed at providing the Trinity Art Group (TAG) with meaningful opportunities to participate in and contribute to contemporary art discourse. *Making Space* was a vehicle for the group's inherent inclination to share and connect in the present moment (Nancy, 1991).²⁴⁴

Within a contextual practice framework, TAG supported by local artists and Winchester School of Art (WSA) students developed art-making strategies that transcend conceptual and actual spaces. The workshops culminated in the creation of costumes, props, and improvisational performance devices, providing avenues for the exploration of group identities free from stereotypical assumptions.

A standout feature of the project was the final workshop's transformation into a museum intervention at Southampton City Art Gallery (SCAG), where the group asserted their presence. The subsequent exhibition showcased the methodological approach taken during workshops, emphasising community-building through collaboration and celebrating the group's diversity and wealth of creativity.

The *Making Space* initiative promoted co-authorship, grassroots decision-making, and cultural exchange, empowering homeless individuals by providing creative networks, resources, and platforms for visibility and self-expression.

5.1 Goals and Objectives

The systemic approach to managing homelessness often perpetuates a cycle of exclusion and reduction in autonomy (Parsell, 2023)²⁴⁵ Existing strategies can reinforce the marginalisation of homeless populations by focusing on homelessness as a problem to be managed rather than a societal failure that reflects broader systemic inequalities. This management often emphasises containment or control rather than empowerment or integration, leaving little room for people who are homeless to assert agency within their own lives. The

²⁴⁴ Nancy, J-L. (1991) *The inoperative community*. P. Connor (ed.). Translated from the French by P. Connor, L. Garbus, M. Holland, and S. Sawhney. London: University of Minnesota Press.

²⁴⁵ Parsell, C. (2023) *Homelessness: A critical introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

main goal of Making Space is to gently resist this model by creating new and vital spaces for people who are homeless to share ideas and knowledge and creatively integrate.

The *Making Space* objectives fit into the project timeframe, so it is essential to note that objectives are crafted to underline the importance of the process of participation and connection. They serve not as rigid markers of success but as flexible frameworks that support and enhance the ongoing engagement and experiential learning of TAG within the space of contemporary art discourse.

In this way, while I have clearly defined objectives, their primary purpose is to nurture an environment where the focus remains on the process – the dynamic act of participating and connecting – rather than being an outcome-orientated project. This approach allows for a more inclusive, exploratory, and enriching experience for all involved, ensuring that the *Making Space* project remains a reflective and adaptive journey.

5.1.1 Objectives

- Explore ways to enhance public recognition, encourage broader community engagement, and promote inclusion in cultural discourse for the adults supported by the charity Trinity Winchester. I aim to create common ground – what I like to call a “making space”.
- Explore ways to recruit community connectors to help build a vibrant, flexible workshop environment where ideas and learning can be shared and result in a mutually beneficial experience.
- Open Trinity Winchester’s doors to local artists and WSA students to meet TAG members and explore ideas to initiate collaborative action.
- Document the workshop process for display at Southampton City Art Gallery, highlighting how it empowers people experiencing homelessness and its positive impacts on the broader community.
- Tap into WSA and museum spaces and pool material and expertise – resources that traditionally TAG members would find difficult to access.
- Develop a model for artistic collaboration that extends spaces of care for people experiencing homelessness.
- Include three workshops led by invited artists. Collaborate with the artists, facilitator, and TAG members to develop content that addresses the specific needs and concerns of the participants and community.

As workshop coordinator, I balanced facilitator intervention with collaborators' freedom and agency. This nuanced approach allowed for artistic intervention while maintaining critical rigour and focus on an end goal. It involved knowing when to step back for free-form engagement and when to intervene to modulate directions.

The project's objectives evolved through a reflective approach, with the workshop dynamic becoming key to creating an active, focused environment. This process drew out emergent ideas through dialogical and material processes, guided by community members.

With the over-arching goal in mind, the workshops entered spaces traditionally unreceptive to people experiencing homelessness, expanding the geography of inclusive spaces (Conradson, 2003).²⁴⁶ These spaces

²⁴⁶ Conradson, D. (2003) ‘Spaces of care in the city: The pace of a community drop-in centre’. *Social & Cultural Geography*, Vol. 4, Issue 4, pp. 507-525. Available at: [doi:10.1080/1464936032000137939](https://doi.org/10.1080/1464936032000137939)

nurture creativity and community mixing, drawing on personal insights from homeless individuals. This marks a departure from traditional institutional approaches, creating places that foster both creativity and community integration.

This approach aligns with Juha Kaakinen's emphasis on the importance of moving beyond traditional institutional methods in addressing homelessness, as noted in his review of Parsell's work, in which he states:

We cannot address homelessness simply by tweaking existing systems and leaving unjust institutional arrangements in place. We must also meaningfully engage with the experiences and insights of those who are homeless who can themselves contribute to driving an agenda of social change. (2024)²⁴⁷

Kaakinen praises Parsell and his firm assertion that meaningful change comes from direct engagement with people experiencing homelessness in the pursuit of solutions addressing homelessness.

Making Space serves not just as a series of artistic activities – the workshops are gateways to dignity, self-expression, and collaborative problem-solving. It challenges the prevailing narratives about homelessness by demonstrating the value and potential of every individual. By broadening access to spaces of care and engagement, the workshops address a critical gap in the homelessness support system. Throughout the project, each individual was recognised not for what they lacked but for their brilliant innovation, skills, and aspirations.

Actively participating in art creation with other people, organisations, and cultural institutions allowed individuals to share personal stories and enrich a sense of purpose or identity (Matarasso, 2019)²⁴⁸ – all of which improved conversation opportunities. These conversations acted as micro-barrier breakers and cumulatively enhanced inclusion and belonging. This approach went beyond passive cultural consumption, offering a more immersive and cathartic experience.

Framing TAG members as an artistic community – producers of culture – allowed participants to challenge societal stigmas and stereotypes directly, allowing the broader community to see individuals beyond preconceived notions. TAG "imposing" on these traditionally barriered and elitist spaces can make a difference. I hope and intend that when TAG's work is displayed in recognised art venues, people start to see the group beyond the homeless label and acknowledge their artistic contribution.

TAG members and I were impressed and greatly enthused by the respect, professionalism, and kindness shown to us by the museum staff. TAG readily anticipated our art being treated as amateur and only there

²⁴⁷ Kaakinen, J. (2024) 'Homelessness: A critical introduction – book review'. *The European Journal of Homelessness*. Vol. 18, No. 1. Available at: https://www.feantsaresearch.org/public/user/Observatory/2024/EJH_18-1_BR09_v03.pdf (Accessed: 3 July 2024).

²⁴⁸ Matarasso, F. (2019) *A restless art: How participation won, and why it matters*. Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

because of our being 'homeless'. However, we were humbled by the curatorial respect and time invested in the exhibition's installation and promotion. TAG were treated just as any other exhibitor at the museum is treated.

5.2 Making Space Recruitment

The recruitment of community backers established opportunities for TAG members to be an integral part of a creative, supportive, and dynamic network. The initial step involved gaining Trinity Winchester's support for the project. While the staff and volunteers were fully behind the initiative, I realised the importance of explicitly inviting them to think of ways to support the project, transforming abstract backup into tangible, material support.

5.2.1 Action Through Support

Contrary to assumptions, especially for a freelance facilitator who may be perceived as an independent entity, it is not always automatic for co-workers to offer help uninvited. Russell and McKnight's insight from *The Connected Community* (2022)²⁴⁹ resonated with me in that people are often willing and able to help but are waiting to be asked. Trinity Winchester, however, enthusiastically opened their doors, allowing invited artists and students to work alongside TAG. The charity offered more than just moral support. They provided access to TAG members who wanted to work on their *Making Space* costumes outside formal art sessions. Additionally, they allocated extra storage space for those developing costumes. The charity covered packed lunches and travel expenses for *Making Space* collaborators commuting between Winchester and Southampton; they also facilitated access to the exhibition and funded a celebration picnic event in the park next to the exhibition venue.

Establishing a good rapport and trust between the art facilitator and the charity staff was vital. Together, we created a synergy offering Trinity service users a welcoming and engaging space, making them feel included. The project workers at Trinity Winchester acted as community connectors, spreading the word about the art project among the service users and generating a positive buzz about the opportunities arising from participation. Significantly, the project workers are the bridge between service users and the art facilitator. The 17th-century poet Jon Donne's *No Man is an Island* (1988)²⁵⁰ is a pithy reminder that connection extends beyond those we are trying to support, including those who are supporting us. So, teamwork, trust, and respect between the facilitator and the project workers are the foundation for a healthy, dynamic, and long-lasting community art programme under the auspices of a charitable organisation. This support extended beyond Trinity Winchester to include Street Reach, a youth organisation sharing the same building. Street Reach generously offered TAG the use of their minibus and driver to transport TAG members to and from SCAG,

²⁴⁹ Russell, C. and McKnight, J. (2022) *The connected community: Discovering the health, wealth, and power of neighbourhoods*. Paperback edn. Oakland, California: Berrett-Koehler.

²⁵⁰ Donne, J. (1988) *No man is an island*. London: Souvenir Press Limited.

which serves as a further example of the positive and fractal connections wrought by Making Space as a project and a collaborative concept.

5.2.2 Outside Support

By tapping into existing networks and inviting socially conscious artists and students, the project cultivated a convergent community, emphasising collaborative creation rather than imposing external artistic visions. I was mindful that when bringing aboard outside actors, the individual or organisation should support TAG by acknowledging what TAG can do themselves rather than just treating them as entities with problems that need to be fixed. By identifying and acknowledging TAG's strengths, the outside supporter is then in a position to enable TAG to explore and extend its creative ability. Logically, I looked to my creative network to consider broader collaboration in preparation for the project. This became a catalyst for establishing a nascent network for TAG. Evaluating my network of colleagues, artists, creative collaborators, and supporters, I recognised the potential in tapping into and leveraging the networks of others: an 'association of associations' (Russell and McKnight, 2022).²⁵¹

Establishing the Making Space network provided the infrastructure for a convergent community to share resources and engage on a meaningful level – while simultaneously community building and strengthening social bonds. Involvement contributed to developing new skills, having experiences, making new friends, and enhancing participants' sense of empowerment. The network also served as a platform for raising awareness about homeless identities and exclusion. This visibility contributed to advocacy efforts, which garnered support and understanding from the broader community, including the policymakers and politicians who support Trinity Winchester. In essence, the network increased social, creative, and cultural opportunities underpinned by empathy and dialogue while amplifying the need for people experiencing homelessness to have a voice.

Making Space workshops provided a dynamic environment for listening to TAG members and helping them achieve their goals. Unlike previous models, where outside artists imposed their vision, this project was led by TAG members' desires and needs. Past experiences with the artist-as-visionary model had led to mixed results and apathy among TAG members. Consequently, invitations for outside support were guided by TAG members' preferences and project requirements. The network concept preceded invitations, with TAG members expressing interest in working with WSA, SCAG, and local artists. I also recruited WSA students through connections from a previous project at the WSA Social Practice Lab. Local artists with social consciousness and advocacy orientation were invited, enhancing the network's ability to address social issues and ensure long-term sustainability. Selection was based on necessity and suitability.

The project united diverse local voices, creating a platform for reciprocal artistic experiences. This approach benefited both community-based art practitioners and TAG members, providing opportunities for professional

²⁵¹ Russell, C. and McKnight, J. (2022) *The connected community: Discovering the health, wealth, and power of neighbourhoods*. Paperback edn. Oakland, California: Berrett-Koehler.

development and volunteer support. Collaborators reported developing as practitioners through cooperation and exposure to different perspectives.

Reflecting on past TAG collaborations, such as the 2020 *We Protest* project with the Archives Team at Hartley Library Southampton, I recognised the value of professional collaboration. For Making Space, we aimed to produce professional photo and audio-visual documentation to portray TAG positively. Thus, TAG collaborated with Joe Cooper, a professional artist and BBC cameraman/DOP photographer, who had a strong connection with TAG. Joe agreed to film parts of the workshop and document the SCAG takeover. His involvement as a BBC cameraman energised participants, making them feel their contributions were significant, and his film (see Appendix B) provided a lasting record of the project's activities, which was invaluable for evaluation, reporting to Trinity Winchester staff, trustees, and stakeholders, and informing future projects. This professional documentation extends the project's reach beyond its immediate context, potentially opening up opportunities for broader recognition, networking, and future collaborations.

5.3 Convergent Community in Action

The Making Space project aimed to expand the scope of convergent networking and collaboration focused on working with TAG. It brought together a diverse group of contributors, including retired art teacher Dr Kevin O'Connor, WSA students, BBC cameraman Joe Cooper, and local painter Rowan Melling. This convergence of unique skills and perspectives promoted a positive affiliated identity and enriched the creative potential of TAG members.

The diversity of the individual supporters involved was instrumental in expanding the convergent community's reach and impact. This diversity was not just about different artistic styles but also about different geographic networks and communities. It enabled the project to extend its influence beyond a single location (such as Winchester School of Art) to multiple locations where contributors had connections or influence, all of which returned to the creative hub established at Trinity Winchester. TAG was inspired by fresh ideas and innovative approaches, pushing the individual group members to expand artistic (and geographic) boundaries. Beyond the charity space and with the various workshop mediators, this interaction facilitated community integration, breaking down perceived barriers and advancing a sense of belonging within the broader Winchester artistic community.

The creative convergence generated energy and passion. It facilitated the cross-pollination of ideas, exposing participants to varied perspectives and broadening their horizons. This collaboration, supporting the Making Space workshops, is the cornerstone of our convergent community: 'We are a little community with an infrastructure of support and friendship' (TAG Member, 2023). Engagement nurtured friendships and contributed to the social development of community group members.

Positive interactions and feedback from artists and art students further empowered participants in their artistic pursuits. I asked a TAG member how they felt about being part of this art community, and they responded:

It is great to be part of a like-minded community [in] which being artistic and creative is important to us all. It is important that it's a long-term time that we can rely on to provide safety and stability, friendship, support, and learning. (2023)

Many of the local artists and students involved in the project are still in touch with the group and Dr O'Connor has taken up a permanent role as a volunteer assistant facilitator. This engagement model forms part of the project's legacy and will continue to be embedded in community facilitation in the long term.

5.4 The Making Space Workshops

The Making Space workshops came in two stages. A preparatory stage (Making Connections) for TAG members to acclimatise and develop ideas, and a collaborative stage (Making Space Happen). The preparatory stage timeframe is broken into two parts, establishing its basic structure:

TAG and I collaborated to reach a group consensus on the project's direction, ensuring members felt invested in its success. These exploratory sessions provided content for the inaugural Making Space Happen session with WSA and helped to identify potential challenges early. Given TAG's diverse group – many facing trauma, poverty, and educational disadvantages – a sensitive approach was essential. The pre-workshops focused on leveraging individual strengths while acknowledging challenges, as one TAG member noted: 'When I am doing art, all the bad stuff goes away. I have something I am good at and I can sort myself out' (2023). Building confidence and trust was paramount, especially for those apprehensive about participating. Another member emphasised: 'Once you've built trust in a group, you can then express yourself freely without any fear of being judged or criticised' (2023). Furthermore, the project acknowledged the range of abilities within the group, including educational backgrounds, special needs, and varying levels of art project experience. Adapting to participants' capacity and comfort levels increased engagement.

The preparatory workshops allowed TAG members to familiarise themselves with each other and the project, improving group connections, as one member shared:

Why did I like the prep workshops? Well, it's good because I saw the girls and everyone, all of us have our issues and problems, personal problems, but we catch up with each other, and you understand and respect each other. That's really good. I don't know how to draw anything. I just draw flowers. But it's improving. (2023)

The initial phase was crucial for identifying individual needs, tailoring the project, and establishing communication mechanisms for equal participation. Structured activities fostered open dialogue and idea exchange.

Peer support was introduced in Making Connections – allowing longstanding TAG members to connect with new members who had experienced homelessness. This promoted mutual understanding and facilitated integration into the art sessions.

These preparatory workshops established a timeline, familiarised participants with the process, and laid the groundwork for effective time management during the main project.

5.5 Pre-Workshops

The first pre-workshop was held at Trinity Winchester.

5.5.1 ‘Making Connections’

With the project's ethos of expanding beyond our usual space and “making connections” through art, TAG extended our workspace to include Trinity's lounge and café area, inviting other Trinity Winchester service users to join. The workshop began with an 'Ice-Breaker' conversation emphasising 'the importance of active listening,' ensuring speakers feel heard (Leeson and Duman, 2018).²⁵² Participants shared positive aspects of their lives, with others reflecting on these contributions to highlight and celebrate them.

Next, I introduced a game to kickstart our collective dialogue and problem-solving. Using a bag filled with words and phrases cut from newspapers and mounted onto cards, the challenge was to create sentences, poems, or nonsensical statements, encouraging spontaneous and uninhibited expression. This activity promoted a democratic and collaborative approach to art, where the spontaneity of word selection bypassed overthinking and self-censorship – laying a creative foundation for our project.

The group was divided into smaller teams, each given a stack of words focusing on “making connections”. This activity was designed to be accessible to all participants, demonstrating our commitment to inclusivity. I emphasised that there were no right or wrong answers, encouraging enjoyment, playfulness, and curiosity in an open environment.

Inspired by Surrealist techniques and Arthur Koestler's concept of ‘bisociation’ from *The Act of Creation* – this process involves combining elements from two previously unrelated matrices of thought into a fresh framework of meaning, incorporating comparison, abstraction, and categorisation (1964).²⁵³ This playful exploration of language and connections catalysed imaginative associations, stimulated a collaborative creative atmosphere and embrace new possibilities.

²⁵² Lesson, L. & Duman, A. (2018) ‘Experience as art’ In: G. Sholette, ed., *Art as social action: An introduction to the principles and practices of teaching social practice art*. New York: Allworth Press.

²⁵³ Koestler, A. (1964) *The act of creation*. London: Hutchinson.

When the game concluded, TAG members shared their discoveries with the group. By introducing a process that minimises reliance on external facilitation, participants learnt to engage with materials independently, spark their own ideas, and collaboratively make decisions, promoting teamwork and autonomy. In subsequent sessions, the group continued in a similar vein with variations. I introduced visual elements alongside word tiles, such as random pictures of objects cut from magazines and newspapers – like a shoe, a tin of beans, and a butterfly. Encouraging experimentation, I prompted the group to playfully juxtapose words and images to generate new connections and ideas. Introducing the "making connections" activities gradually, first with word tiles and later incorporating images, was strategic in nurturing creativity and building participant confidence. This methodical progression has several significant benefits, especially when working with diverse groups like TAG. Gradual skill progression helped participants not to feel overwhelmed. It allowed them to focus on exploring one mode of expression, which can be a foundational skill, before tackling more complex creative tasks. These skills can then be synthesised into individual group members' own artistic practice, as evidenced when I asked a TAG member: 'Do you like the way you are given activities and then given ways to develop and explore those activities?', to which they responded:

Personally, I find the activities very inspiring and [they] motivate me to work on projects outside of the structured art group. I definitely like the direction the given activities give us and that we can be guided in our individual practice to develop and explore in the way we would like to or in a way that we are using our strong points. For example, portraits and poetry for me. (2023)

Combining words with images encouraged the group to think multimodally, blending textual and visual literacy. This led to creating more playful, nuanced and innovative ideas as TAG members learnt to communicate and express themselves more imaginatively.

What started with random word connections evolved into juxtapositions of text and images, sparking narratives and eventually inspiring group members to think in three dimensions. They began incorporating themselves into the work, integrating sounds and tactile elements. This multimodal approach embraced various forms of expression, accommodating diverse learning abilities and enabling participants to engage naturally and effectively. Multi-sensory exploration stimulated imagination, and participants were more fully immersed in the creative process; it captured their attention and maintained their interest, making it easier for them to think creatively and problem-solve during our workshop activities. When TAG members engaged with materials through touch, sight, sound, and smell, they made unique connections and generated innovative ideas that might not have arisen through a single mode of expression. Reflecting on the workshop activity, it is clear that the multi-sensory engagement was beneficial in allowing the participants to investigate a space rich in exploration and discovery.

These workshops transitioned into the second stage of the pre-workshops, where group members engaged in guided discussions to reflect on their creations. This focus extends the development of creative skills and imaginative innovation. It consolidates discoveries by engaging TAG members in an exchange of ideas, feedback, and collaborative decision-making. TAG members presented their work to the group, explaining the

thought process behind their creations, the challenges they faced, and what they learnt. These show-and-tells became useful tools for exploration and growth, enabling participants to delve into their creative discoveries and the collective creative process.

5.5.2 'Making Conversations'

Conversations played a crucial role in shaping the Making Space project by identifying themes and guiding our direction. Through dialogue, TAG members collectively discovered common interests, such as the theme of cardboard costumes, which clarified our investigative and creative path. This approach effectively incorporated everyone's input and shaped the project based on shared interests and insights.

During the preparatory workshops, structured group discussions were pivotal in determining TAG investigation and creative direction. I stressed the importance of dialogue, encouraging TAG members to articulate their thoughts, actively listen to others, and engage critically with different perspectives. This process deepened understanding and engagement with the project's themes and objectives. Participants reflected on their beliefs and assumptions, sharing their thoughts and listening to others. This reflective process allowed them to reconsider and refine their viewpoints in response to new perspectives. This inclusive and evolving process involved individual members sharing discoveries and connections in a structured talking circle format.

Talking circles originated from Native American communities (Jennings, Gandarilla and Tan, 2015).²⁵⁴ Talking circles are used for community discussions, conflict resolution, sharing stories, and collective problem-solving, and the processes promotes mutual understanding, respect, and a sense of community among participants. A loose form of show-and-tell was linked to the talking circle during the preparatory workshops; each person would have the opportunity to describe their work, and then the floor would be open to a conversation based on that work, as described by one TAG member:

We talked about our work. I recited my poem. I liked that my poem was spontaneous, but I felt it meant something real and important to me. I liked that the group found something in my poem in my words. I liked that we could talk about what we had done and that someone could say something and that it would lead to someone else saying something and it all just flowed and made sense, and I can't remember all of what was said, but it was lovely and heartwarming and all because I had put together some random words. Those random words were not so random after all – they came from the same space as our conversations. They were spontaneous and authentic. (2023)

²⁵⁴ Jennings, L., Gandarilla, M. and Tan, P. P. (2015) 'Using the native American talking circle: Experiential learning on ethnic and cultural diversity of southern California'. *Groupwork*. Vol. 25. Issue 1. pp. 58-77. Available at: <https://journals.whitingbirch.net/index.php/GPWK/article/view/842/916> (Accessed: 23 June 2024).

During these conversations, a theme of costume-making as wearable art emerged. The group revisited their previous project at the Tate Exchange, where they created cardboard "itinerant" costumes and moved through the Tate Museum's fourth-floor gallery. TAG also reflected on a recent visit to the Southampton City Art Gallery, concluding that while TAG could not alter the museum, they could transform the space around themselves through their art. This led to the question: 'How can we change ourselves to affect the museum space?'

Initially, members struggled with ideas, but using cardboard word tiles to form random, amusing words and sentences sparked inspiration and confidence. One member humorously noted, "Where're your words?" transformed into "Wear your words!" This consensus to create cardboard costumes as vehicles for their narratives and artworks exemplifies community-driven decision-making, reinforcing TAG members' sense of agency over the creative process.

Aware that the final creations would be showcased at Southampton City Art Gallery, the group established the costume theme. The next challenge was defining the role of these costumes in the museum takeover. They pondered the message they wanted to convey and how they could affect the space. They also considered how a convergent community of local artists and art students could help achieve their goals.

The transition from creating poems and stories to experimenting with combining and juxtaposing words on objects and themselves occurred spontaneously through gentle facilitation.

5.6 Making Space Happen

Once TAG members had established an initial idea and direction and were ready for the inaugural convergent community workshop. The workshop took place in the WSA Postgraduate Research room, a light and airy space that could easily accommodate twenty individuals. The seating arrangement was informal, with movable chairs, two couches, and two tables. The room also had a large flatscreen and computer access for presentations. TAG members could use the WSA canteen, providing a change of scene from the more formal classroom space and a chance to socialise. This relaxed setting allowed me to explore how participants wanted to contribute to the project.

For TAG members, visiting the WSA campus was a novel experience. One member felt it marked the beginning of something new, bringing excitement about being in a different space and meeting new people. Holding workshops at Trinity Winchester and WSA was significant. Moving between these spaces allowed each group to enter the other's world, strengthening empathy and building a support network. The university space at WSA provided a welcoming, "blank canvas" where collaborators could meet and form bonds. For TAG, being included in a prestigious educational environment like WSA was important as it broadened their recognition through these expanding spaces of inclusion. The group, joined by three WSA students, a local artist, a BBC cameraman, and a retired art teacher, began the inaugural workshop with a brief presentation on socially engaged art. We explored the differences between dialogue, discussion, and debate, emphasising the importance of active listening to allow for effective communication.

TAG members shared their plans to create wearable art, and we divided into smaller groups to experiment with various materials. The informal and friendly environment encouraged natural conversations, leading the group to explore the idea of cardboard costumes, ceramic jewellery, and card and cane parasols as accessories. The group also decided to include a performative element through an improvisational workshop. It was agreed that three standalone workshops would be led by two students and a local artist/teacher, which would constitute the 'Making Dynamics' phase of the project.

5.7 Making Dynamics: Invited Artist Workshops

Making Dynamics embodies the interactive and collaborative spirit of the Making Space workshops.

"Dynamics" refers to the social dynamics that emerge when people come together to create, share ideas, and learn from one another, strengthening art community connections and collective creativity. "Dynamics" also suggests energy, change, and movement within the creative process. The title reflects artistic expression's fluidity and evolving nature, highlighting that these workshops are designed to be lively and transformative experiences.

As established in the inaugural workshop (Making Space Happen), two students and one local artist/teacher were invited to lead bespoke workshops. These workshops brought fresh perspectives and galvanised the group into action, building up to the museum takeover and exhibition. Introducing guest artists helped re-engage participants who were flagging. It reignited their passion for the project and encouraged more consistent participation. Each artist brought their teaching style and approach to art-making to the project. Exposing the group to these varied methods accommodated different learning preferences and encouraged adaptability and openness to new experiences.

Each artist incorporated facilitator-led group discussion into their workshops. This allowed group members to give their input and promoted active listening, questioning, and evaluating different viewpoints. The artists' reflective practice encouraged participants to think carefully about their work, the process, and the themes they explored. This helped deepen participants' understanding of their art and its place within broader societal contexts.

TAG welcomed the invited artists into its community, sharing and learning from each other. Mutual learning was crucial for Making Dynamics; instead of positioning the invited artists as just instructors, the initiative engendered an environment where everyone could co-create as equals. This validated the experiences and skills of those experiencing homelessness whilst it also enriched the practice and perspectives of the visiting artists, highlighting the value of life experiences in the creative process.

Critical engagement with the art-making process is essential, along with the promotion of an inclusive environment to enable the holistic development of each co-collaborator. It is not just about learning a skill or completing a project; it is about building creative connections, extending access to cultural activities, and nurturing long-term artistic exchange. Community art researcher Francois Matarasso points out this is crucial

because, without cultural participation, ‘people are denied the capabilities to flourish as human beings and to choose what they want to be and do with their lives’ (Matarasso, 2022, n.p.).²⁵⁵ Those excluded from cultural participation risk losing other human and democratic rights due to a lack of legitimate voice and visibility.

Tangible achievements are useful. However, intangible and inclusive participation processes hold equal, if not greater, significance (Matarasso, 2019).²⁵⁶ So, inviting artists to work with TAG fosters a network of support and enhances access to cultural inclusion, thereby reducing barriers and initiating ongoing artistic collaboration.

5.7.1 Making Dynamics Workshop #1 – Ren Wooldridge

Ren Wooldridge delivered a ceramic glaze workshop at Trinity Winchester. She brought biscuit-fired porcelain discs and a variety of colourful glazes. The discs had small, pre-made holes so the finished pieces could be strung as necklaces. A workshop sheet showed the post-firing glaze colours.

Ren encouraged the group to draw inspiration from their personal narratives and daily lives to design motifs for their tiles. She advised starting with a simple design, which could be developed into a more complex motif, if desired. TAG members pencilled their designs onto the discs and then applied the glaze using squeezable bottles and paintbrushes.

The exposure to new materials and techniques sparked excitement. After decorating their ceramic discs, the group was encouraged to discuss what inspired their designs. These conversations were cathartic because they allowed group members not only to articulate their ideas but also to explain why this type of creative engagement was meaningful to them. A tag member remarked in relation to Ren’s workshop:

We are sort of on the sidelines. So, we are not brought into the mainstream, really, and coming here is a godsend, you know, because, yeah, I might be six feet under or locked up – insane. So, I am here, and I am OK. (2023)

Sharing in the creative process reinforced the bonds within the TAG community. These shared experiences, especially those involving emotional expression and vulnerability, as professed by Dr Brené Brown, led to a ‘stronger sense of belonging and mutual support’ (2013).²⁵⁷

After the , Ren collected the decorated discs and arranged for them to be kiln-fired at WSA in time for the exhibition.

²⁵⁵ Francois Matarasso (2022) *This is not a level playing field*. Available at: <https://arestlessart.com/2022/05/24/this-is-not-a-level-playing-field/> (Accessed: 5 July 2024).

²⁵⁶ Matarasso, F. (2019) *A restless art: How participation won, and why it matters*. Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

²⁵⁷ Brown, B. (2013) *The power of vulnerability: Teachings on authenticity, connection and courage* [audiobook]. Available at: <https://www.audible.co.uk/> (Accessed: 23 June 2024)

5.7.2 Making Dynamics Workshop #2 – Kevin O’Connor

Kevin’s paper parasol workshop lasted two Friday sessions. It was held in Trinity’s main hall and attracted a new participant. A Trinity Winchester service user, who was by chance in the building for a separate meeting, happened upon the group and joined in. After this, she remarked that she could join in because of the friendly and informal atmosphere.

The workshop called for large sheets of craft paper to achieve the correct parasol size. The group used the hall space and the café-style tables as makeshift workstations, allowing ample space to make, share, and help each other.

The first stage involved making the canopy. Kevin prepared a card template to get the radius of the parasol. TAG members cut out their circles from the craft paper and decorated the paper with paint, felt tips, and collage. The WSA students supported TAG members with the practical aspect of achieving this stage, allowing TAG members space to focus on the creative aspects of the workshop.

The role of the WSA students was vital. It was not just that they supported the ‘making’, but they took on the role of ‘grandmothers’ inspired by Sugata Mitra’s ‘Granny Cloud’ (2022).²⁵⁸ Just like grannies the world over, the role adopted offered an air of focused, empathetic interest, decoupled from expert necessity, and provided a sense of expectation and belief (Mitra, 2013).²⁵⁹ This expectation, energy and environmental agar powered the engine of TAG members’ creativity.

For the second stage, Kevin prepared garden canes for TAG. A hole was drilled into the bottom of each cane (which would become the top of the parasol). Kevin demonstrated how to attach the canopy to the cane.

Reflecting on the workshop, Kevin remarked that the preparation of the materials contributed significantly to the event’s success. By preparing materials in advance, Kevin could make accommodations to ensure the workshop was accessible to all, regardless of skill level or physical ability. This forethought ensured that everyone could engage meaningfully with the workshop activities.

For many participants, especially those new to the activity or less confident in their creative abilities, starting with prepared materials provided a reassuring structure. This structure proved necessary in the limited-time setting and helped to maximise the productive use of the available sessions.

5.7.3 Making Dynamics Workshop #3 – Manjira Mazumdar

²⁵⁸ Mitra, S. (2022) *The granny cloud*. Available at: <https://thegrannycloud.org/> (Accessed: 22 June 2024).

²⁵⁹ Mitra, S. (2013) *Build a school in the cloud*. Available at: https://www.ted.com/talks/sugata_mitra_build_a_school_in_the_cloud?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare (Accessed: 22 June 2024).

The improvisation performance workshop, which Manjira devised and led, was held in the Post Graduate Research (PGR) room at WSA. It allowed participants to explore ways to use their individual and collective bodies to occupy and move through physical space, which was vitalising and stimulating.

The location and setting balanced familiarity and novelty. The workshop formula was familiar enough to offer security, trust, and ease, while the environment, workshop leader, and activities simultaneously offered a novel experience.

The workshop provided TAG with the ammunition to softly disrupt the Southampton City Art Gallery. I will describe and unpack two of Manjira's performative exercises undertaken during the session.

The first improvisational activity explored was the 'One-Word Story Circle' (2024).²⁶⁰ This task promoted listening and collaboration, sparking creative spontaneity through collective story construction. Manjira gathered everyone in a circle and outlined the game's objective: to collectively construct a story one word at a time, without prior planning. A volunteer starts with "Once upon a time", and then each subsequent person adds a single word, passing the narrative around the circle. The challenge lay in attentive listening and swiftly contributing contextually fitting words. Manjira skilfully steered the group towards shaping a coherent story, ensuring it wrapped up neatly after two rounds. Whenever the storyline wavered, she adeptly offered encouragement, introduced twists, or posed challenges to keep the narrative on track.

After the activity, Tag members discussed our feelings about the collaborative process and what we learned about improvisation and teamwork. The group found the activity fun and highlighted the importance of non-verbal communication for team building and trust. Manjira's light-hearted atmosphere helped those struggling with non-verbal cues feel included, emphasising that the task was primarily about enjoyment. This empathic approach generated a supportive space where trust grew as members felt understood and valued.

Participants became more attuned to each other's utterances and non-verbal cues, enhancing the immediate experience and encouraging a shared purpose. Manjira's playful approach reduced pressure to be "correct", creating an environment of acceptance and openness. As a workshop activity, this served as a foundational tool for dialogical engagement, with trust stabilising communications over time (Luhmann, 1979).

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The second activity, "Flock Movement", promoted awareness of bodily position in space. Participants stood in an open area, with a volunteer "flock" leader initiating movements for others to mimic. Leader roles changed fluidly at Manjira's direction. The challenge was to achieve seamless transitions without verbal communication. This energetic activity reinforced the importance of non-verbal cues, enhanced spatial

²⁶⁰ Beat By Beat. (2024) *Drama game: one word story*. Available at: <https://bbbpress.com/2013/01/one-word-story/> (Accessed: 4 July: 2024).

²⁶¹ Luhmann, N. (1979) *Trust and power*. T. Burns and G. Poggi (Eds.). Translated from the German by H. Davies, J. Raffan and K. Rooney. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.

awareness, and fostered a sense of collective purpose. It visually illustrated the fluid exchange between leading and following, highlighting the significance of both roles within a group.

This perspective applied to TAG's museum "takeover", where Manjira's interactive activities engaged museum staff and gallery visitors. The dynamic roles of leader and follower challenged symbolic notions of "them" versus "us" through visual representation.

A powerful mental image emerges of the repositioned homeless individual taking the lead in a museum murmuration – an expression of the transformative power of art. In this social practice laboratory, reflection and negotiation of space and interaction can flourish in meaningful ways.

The "Flock Movement" activity also visually illustrates a symbolic sharing space where leaders become followers and vice versa, forming 'culture circles'; in her book *Teaching and Learning: Culture Circles Across Contexts* (2010),²⁶² Marian Souto-Manning draws on Paulo Freire's conceptualisation of this teacher-student dynamic. Within these circles, the group poses problems, engages in dialogue, and collaboratively solves issues – this mirrors the approach of the Making Space workshops.

Manjira's workshop dovetailed into the Making Space process. It promoted the vital qualities of trust and closely related concepts like respect, recognition, legitimacy, social cohesion, and confidence, which are interconnected principles essential to community and interpersonal relationships. TAG intended to repurpose the museum space to gently disrupt power dynamics and subvert traditional use of the space, treating it as our canvas. The improvisational workshop laid the groundwork for TAG's museum takeover.

5.7.4 Making Dynamics Reflection

I thought reflectively about the invited artists and their workshops. I appreciated that their engagement with TAG goes beyond skill sharing, manifested in TAG's emotional engagement, and made more meaningful by the broadening of 'care spaces' (Conradson, 2023, p. 507)²⁶³ available to Trinity Winchester service users. A care space is an inclusive space where individuals can share ideas and are treated with mutual respect (Conradson, 2003).²⁶⁴ People who experience homelessness have reduced areas where they feel welcome and included. Community-facilitated workshop practice demonstrably increased this space.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, homelessness renders individuals vulnerable, making them passive recipients of aid rather than active agents (Parsell, 2023).²⁶⁵ Their daily experience often involves moving

²⁶² Souto-Manning, M. (2010) *Teaching, and learning; culture circles across contexts*. New York: Peter Lang.

²⁶³ Conradson, D. (2003) 'Spaces of care in the city: The place of a community drop-in centre'. *Social & Cultural Geography*, Vol. 4, Issue 4, pp. 507-525. Available at: [doi:10.1080/1464936032000137939](https://doi.org/10.1080/1464936032000137939)

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Parsell, C. (2023) *Homelessness: A critical introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

through controlled spaces and relying on institutional systems, in effect, being contained in those spaces. David A. Snow and Michael Mulcahy sum up this notion of containment:

By containment, we refer to a control strategy that seeks to reduce the public visibility of the homeless and their likely interaction with other citizens by curtailing their mobility and ecological range. It is a strategy that aims to keep the homeless corralled. (2001, p. 160)²⁶⁶

Predominant responses to homelessness in Britain are more about managing its visibility and impact on the general population and less about addressing the fundamental needs and rights of people experiencing homelessness. These strategies reflect broader societal and governmental priorities that may not necessarily align with the best interests of those experiencing homelessness (Cloke, May and Johnsen, 2010).²⁶⁷

The spaces in which people experiencing homelessness are welcomed – shelters, drop-in centres, etc. – are regulated and limited, and the guardians of those spaces, albeit often well-meaning, often treat homelessness as an identity, fundamentally differentiating those who experience homelessness from others. Breaking from those controlled spaces is vital. It signals a shift from an “us versus them” environment to one of sharing and mutual respect. The stimulus of new people joining TAG and sharing their creativity, passion and ideas in a friendly and empathetic manner opened the art group to novel, exciting possibilities and enabled agency.

Creating art empowers individuals by allowing them to choose how they express themselves. But so does the space in which these art engagements occur. Breaking out of controlled spaces, returns agency. It moves towards counteracting the helplessness and passivity often imposed by the experience of homelessness and the institutional systems that manage it.

The supportive convergent community is activated through the spaces in which they meet and establishes a sense of belonging. Through the Making Dynamics workshops, TAG members, supported in a community setting, were more likely to explore new opportunities and make decisions aligned with their aspirations, significantly enhancing their sense of accountability and ownership.

5.8 Wearable Costumes

Continuing the theme and momentum established in the prep workshops, the costumes were assembled like collaged armour: tabards, pauldrons, and helmets.

First, the work of the late American painter Elizabeth Murray was shown to the group, complementing the modular costume-making process (Murray, Storr and Foster, 2005).²⁶⁸ Her large abstract paintings, carefully

²⁶⁶ Snow, D. A. and Mulcahy M. (2001) ‘Space, politics, and the survival strategies of the homeless’. *American Behavioural Scientist*. Sage Publications. Vol. 45. No. 1. September. pp. 149-169.

²⁶⁷ Cloke, P. May, J. and Johnsen, S. (2010) *Swept up lives? Re-envisioning the homeless city*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

²⁶⁸ Murray, E. Stor, R. and Foster, B. (2005) *Popped art*. New York: Museum of Modern Art.

constructed like puzzle pieces, symbolically echoed the Making Space community ethos – each element is separate, but together they form a relationship and visual dialogue, creating a coherent and convergent community of shapes and colours.

One TAG member integrated Murray's style by creating misshapen cardboard cutouts decorated with oil pastels. These shapes were then arranged and duct-taped onto a simple cardboard tabard. The costumes evolved gradually through experimentation and informal discussion. Initially, a couple of TAG members struggled without clear goals for the final costume's look, preferring to be given specific instructions. However, gentle support from the students soon alleviated these concerns – “Granny powered”.

Participants refined solutions collectively, harnessing the group's combined knowledge, passion, and energy, which created a strong sense of camaraderie. The simple but abundant materials – cardboard and marker pens – contributed to the informal atmosphere. The group was encouraged to play and have fun, focusing on the process rather than the finished results – embracing a “wonky” aesthetic— an intentionally imperfect and unconventional style. A TAG member appreciated the freedom and creativity in this approach saying: ‘Well, I was in a “making space”, I just started making!’ (Tag member, 2023). The playful experimentation encouraged participants to try new ideas and techniques without fear of failure. This led to surprising discoveries and humorous solutions that enriched the process. The casual atmosphere nurtured a community spirit, as TAG members reported that they found it easier to open up and be their authentic selves. The costumes were photographed in the WSA Flash Studio. TAG members remarked that having their costumes photographed validated their creative efforts. Documenting the costumes celebrated individual and group achievements, marking the culmination of their hard work and creativity in a tangible and memorable way (Caraffa, 2019)²⁶⁹. The photographs also provided a high-quality record of the project that can be used for future exhibitions, presentations, and promotional materials. This will help extend the project's reach and impact

5.9 Southampton City Art Gallery (SCAG) Takeover

The museum takeover intervention enacted a workshop-developed methodology, aiming to subtly disrupt the museum space, promote dialogue, and cultivate a more inclusive art culture. In their takeover of Southampton City Art Gallery (SCAG), TAG members engaged actively as artists and activists, not passive occupants (see 5.11).

The takeover included modular planned activities inspired by pre-workshops: “connections”, “conversations”, and Making Space Happen: “dynamics” interactions and “wearables”. It raised awareness

²⁶⁹ Caraffa C. (2019) ‘The photo archive as laboratory. Art history, photography, and materiality’. *Art Libraries Journal*. Vol. 44, Issue 1, pp. 37-46. Available at: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/art-libraries-journal/article/photo-archive-as-laboratory-art-history-photography-and-materiality/870350416F3CCF6F10F71D0A7EE535D9#> (Accessed: 27 July 2024).

about exclusionary culture experienced by adults who may be homeless, challenging labels associated with homelessness while advocating for their inclusion in cultural discourse.

TAG's manifesto states: We claim the museum. We ascend this platform. Our message, with our imperfections and quirks – like everyone else's – reflects deep and complex lives. Let us move beyond negative labels and stereotypes, allowing us to speak authentically from our wells of lived experience, integrating these experiences into the broader human narratives that shape our cultural fabric.

The involvement of museum staff lent a sanctioned nature to the events, encouraging visitor participation and validating TAG as a cultural producer. The Making Space initiative transformed the museum's public areas through artistic expression, providing a platform for voicing ideas.

During one instance, a gallery visitor's question about a TAG member's cardboard costume sparked a conversation about visibility and belonging. These interactions highlighted the emotional impact of occupying the space and the sense of empowerment from being seen and heard.

A conversation with a gallery invigilator revealed shared feelings of being overlooked, emphasising the invigilators' key role in making the museum welcoming and safe for participants. Their support helped participants feel valued and respected, reducing feelings of alienation or exclusion.

By involving invigilators in genuine conversations with people experiencing homelessness, the project aimed to break down barriers that often keep homeless individuals from engaging with cultural spaces, promoting inclusivity and understanding.

The opportunity to work in WSA spaces and display art at SCAG was profoundly affirming. It allowed recognition of skills and contributions, giving individual members a deep sense of accomplishment and pride – helping individuals redefine their identities beyond their housing status.

5.9.1 Reflection on the Museum Intervention

Drawing from Henri Lefebvre's (2012)²⁷⁰ concept of physical and mental space, we understand that our experience of space is shaped by cultural meaning, social norms, historical context, and physical attributes. While the physicality of space impacts our movement and interactions, it only becomes meaningful through associated social practices and cultural significance. Consider a park: for me, it's a place for dog walking, leisure, and connecting with nature. However, the same space can serve various purposes, from political protests to music festivals. Space is not fixed but produced and transformed by its users. TAG's occupation of SCAG exemplifies this concept. This "takeover" challenged dominant power structures governing public space

²⁷⁰ Lefebvre, H. (2012) 'The production of space'. In C. Butler (ed.) *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial politics, everyday life and the right to the city*. London: Routledge.

use and meaning. It asserted our right to shape public space, reflecting our interests and values and resisting prevailing norms that often exclude adults who may be homeless.

Lefebvre's (2012)²⁷¹ 'Right to the City' concept emphasises collective ownership and accessibility of public spaces. TAG's action manifests this democratic right, addressing imbalances in public cultural spaces and critiquing the traditional roles of learners and teachers in community art. It was a way of claiming and "making space" to be visible – this was important because our insertion of ourselves in the museum space was an act of testimonial equality (Fricker, 2015).²⁷²

Space is not homogeneous or experienced uniformly. For some TAG members, the museum initially represented an intimidating, elitist space. Occupying it created a relational shift, opening new, positive relationships between the cultural space and TAG members. Indeed, TAG members reported that they had "found" a new space and that they were looking forward to returning to SCAG, off their own volition, on a regular basis.

The "takeover" highlights that space is characterised by varying rhythms, intensities, and meanings, experienced differently by diverse social groups. Physical and mental spaces are intertwined, with our perceptions shaped by history, circumstances, and preconceived ideas.

TAG's reshaping of the museum space challenges stereotypes about homelessness, creating a new narrative that reflects a positive, diverse community identity. This action promotes tolerance, reassessment, and respect.

The power of Making Space lies in community action's ability to change both the space and its guardians. The intangible legacy of TAG's presence may positively influence TAG members and museum staff's future interactions with people experiencing homelessness, fostering a more inclusive environment.

5.10 Making Space – Findings and Impacts

This chapter concludes by summarising key findings to improve future projects. Recommendations include strengthening local partnerships, integrating participant feedback into program design, finding ways for homeless collaborators to transition between 'controlled spaces,' challenging negative stereotypes, and using gentle activism to leverage the lived experiences and passions of the groups facilitated.

5.10.1 Key Findings

²⁷¹ Lefebvre, H. (2012) 'The right to the city and the production of differential Space'. In C. Butler (ed.) *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial politics, everyday life and the right to the city*. London: Routledge.

²⁷² Fricker, A. (2015) *Testimonial equality?* Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8zoN6GghXk> (Accessed: 22 June 2024).

The Making Space project yielded several significant findings, demonstrating the power of artistic expression in reshaping social and cultural spaces:

- A. The project successfully established a network that connected TAG members with professional artists, WSA students, charities, cultural hubs, and academies. This network facilitated the development of lasting relationships and created new opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness.
- B. The collaboration with WSA was significantly strengthened, leading to ongoing engagements, exhibitions, and projects. This enhanced partnership not only increased participant engagement and built friendships but also contributed to notable personal growth among participants, highlighting the project's overall value.
- C. Trinity Winchester as a creative hub: The organisation's central role in expanding creative engagement reinforced cultural democracy, increasing social inclusion by allowing non-art group service users to participate in TAG initiatives.
- D. Impact of structured conversations and reflective practices: These approaches refined ideas, guided project themes, and deepened participants' understanding and commitment. Participant feedback shaped the project's direction, boosting dedication and readiness to handle challenges.
- E. Expanded creative engagement: The project demonstrated how artistic expression in diverse spaces can serve as a form of gentle activism, challenging societal norms and promoting cultural democracy.

5.10.2 Project Impacts

The Making Space project had far-reaching impacts, both on individual participants and broader societal perceptions:

- A. Social and cultural integration: The project facilitated meaningful connections between homeless individuals and various organisations, promoting integration and sustained involvement in the local arts community. Leading to new “found” spaces that people who are homeless felt welcome to belong in.
- B. Challenging stereotypes and power dynamics: The 6-month exhibition at a national museum and the museum “takeover” promoted recognition and empowered TAG members to share their narratives and challenge societal stereotypes about homelessness.
- C. Personal growth and empowerment: Participants developed a stronger sense of agency and identity beyond their housing status.
- D. Bolstering community support: Dr Kevin O'Connor, transitioning from temporary support to permanent volunteer assistant facilitator roles within the project.
- E. Realisation of the 'Right to the City': The project embodied Lefebvre's concept of the 'Right to the City'(2012),²⁷³ empowering homeless individuals to actively participate in shaping urban spaces and cultural institutions.

5.10.3 Recommendations for Future Projects

²⁷³ Lefebvre, H. (2012) 'The right to the city and the production of differential space'. In C. Butler (ed.) *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial politics, everyday life and the right to the city*. London: Routledge.

Based on my experiences and Lefebvre's theoretical framework, I propose the following recommendations for similar initiatives:

- A. Strengthen partnerships: Continue to build and nurture relationships with local organisations, cultural institutions, and educational establishments to create a supportive network for participants.
- B. Integrate participant feedback: Consistently incorporate input from homeless collaborators into programme design and execution to ensure relevance and effectiveness.
- C. Explore strategies for breaking out of “controlled spaces”: Develop innovative approaches that allow participants to transcend traditional boundaries and engage with broader communities.
- D. Incorporate gentle activism: Harness the lived experiences and passions of participants to create impactful, non-confrontational forms of social change.
- E. Emphasise reflective practices: Continue to use structured conversations and reflection to deepen engagement and guide project.
- F. Apply Lefebvre's ‘spatial triad’ (2012)²⁷⁴: Future projects should consciously engage with Lefebvre's concepts of perceived, conceived, and lived space to create more inclusive and transformative experiences.

5.10.4 Future Directions

Looking ahead, the Making Space project offers a blueprint for expanding creative engagement and cultural democracy:

- A. Scaling up: Explore opportunities to expand the project's reach, potentially collaborating with other cities or regions to implement similar initiatives.
- B. Cross-sector application: Investigate how the project's principles can be applied in other contexts, such as healthcare, education, or urban planning.
- C. Long-term goals: Work towards broader cultural transformation, aiming to create more inclusive spaces and challenge pervasive stereotypes about homelessness. This aligns with Lefebvre's vision of space as a site of contestation and potential social change.

So, the Making Space project, grounded in Lefebvre's theories of social space and the ‘Right to the City’ (2012)²⁷⁵, demonstrates that artistic expression can be a powerful tool for transforming both physical spaces and societal perceptions. By creating welcoming spaces for people experiencing homelessness and facilitating their engagement with cultural institutions, we can challenge societal norms, promote integration, and build a more inclusive society. The project's success in harnessing participants' lived experiences and passions provides a model for future initiatives aimed at breaking down barriers and promoting cultural democracy, realising Lefebvre's vision of space as a collective resource accessible to everyone.

A structured dissemination strategy is essential to maximising the impact of my research beyond the charity, gallery and museum sector. I am developing a research paper that synthesises key insights from Chapter 2: *Removing Homeless Identities* and Chapter 4: *Making Space to Make Space—Planning and Explaining the*

²⁷⁴ Lefebvre, H. (2012) ‘State power and the politics of space’. In C. Butler (ed.) *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial politics, everyday life and the right to the city*. London: Routledge.

²⁷⁵ Lefebvre, H. (2012) ‘The right to the city and the production of differential space’. In Butler C (ed) *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial politics, everyday life and the right to the city*. London: Routledge.

Making Space Project. This paper will explore how creative practice can challenge and reshape dominant narratives of homelessness while offering practical models for inclusive, participatory art projects.

I aim to present this research at conferences and publish it in journals, contributing to broader discussions on cultural inclusion, homelessness, and community-based arts. Expanding the project's application across healthcare, education, and urban planning will create opportunities for direct engagement with policymakers, local authorities, and sector leaders, ensuring that the insights from *Making Space* inform systemic change.

Collaboration with Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust, Winchester School of Art, and Trinity Winchester is underway to develop a funded research initiative. This project will focus on bolstering social connection, community-building, and the creation of sustainable, supportive spaces through artistic engagement, driving long-term impact in social inclusion and well-being.

This project would specifically explore the transition of socially isolated patients leaving Melbury Lodge (a secure mental health unit), supporting them through creative practice and facilitating their inclusion within established community arts groups.

Through *Making Space*, this research explores how collaborative art-making can intervene across both Melbury Lodge, Trinity Winchester and Winchester School of Art, establishing a continuum of creative engagement that begins within the secure environment and extends into the wider community. Here, the perceived barriers between institutional care and public cultural spaces are softened, and patients are invited to imagine new geographies of belonging.

In this way, Trinity Winchester also becomes more than a site of support; it is reimagined as a creative hub—a place of possibility, innovation, and agency rather than deficit. The act of organising and participating in workshops reframes the space, challenging external narratives that limit its identity and potential.

By embedding collaborative practices across these settings, the project facilitates a shared, dynamic reimagining of these environments. Melbury Lodge becomes a place not only of recovery but of creative agency, while Trinity Winchester evolves into a celebratory space of inclusion and cultural production. Together, they form an expanded network of care and creativity, where individual and collective identities are nurtured and celebrated. Through their ongoing creative engagement, participants' lived experiences continue to transform these spaces into sites of pride, imagination, and cultural democracy.

Building on the *Making Space* approach, using art-making to support patients transitioning from secure mental health settings into the wider community and in doing so extend the model beyond its original context, the research will collate outcomes through embedded projects, case studies and participant reflections, alongside developing practical toolkits to share workshop methods and approaches.

These findings will be shared through talks, exhibitions, and training aimed at healthcare professionals, community organisations, and cultural institutions, as well as through publications and public events designed to highlight the value of creative practice in mental health recovery and social inclusion.

Future expansion may involve partnering with other NHS trusts, charities, and arts organisations to pilot similar projects, with the aim of establishing a wider network of practice focused on supporting creative transitions from clinical care into community life.

To increase impact, with Trinity Winchester's support the research will also feed into policy briefings for local authorities, health services, and funders, advocating for the role of cultural participation in building inclusive, caring spaces and improving long-term outcomes for socially excluded individuals.

Additionally, and in more immediate and concrete way, Trinity Winchester has agreed to host a public lecture evening, where I will present my research and ideas to an invited audience drawn from the charity's network of supporters. This will include local politicians, business leaders, and members of the wider public, offering a valuable platform to advocate for the role of cultural democracy in bolstering inclusive communities.

Also, conversations are underway with Woodrow Kernohan, Director of the John Hansard Gallery, regarding my potential involvement in a steering group aimed at developing the gallery's engagement with marginalised and homeless individuals. This presents a further opportunity to embed the principles of *Making Space* within the strategic planning of major cultural institutions, strengthening the case for art as a tool for social transformation across multiple sectors.

5.11 TAG Takeover Southampton City Art Gallery Photo Essay

On Wednesday, 1st February 2023, at noon, TAG and its convergent community took over Southampton City Art Gallery. This time was deliberately chosen for its relative quiet, allowing TAG's "disruption" to resemble a gentle quake rather than a rumbling tsunami. The education team, gallery curators, invigilators, and some members of the public supported TAG's takeover, occasionally joining in the performance activities and engaging in conversation with the group.

TAG's intervention reimagined the museum space, challenging traditional roles and institutional power dynamics. In doing so, TAG treated the gallery as a living canvas, aligning with Henri Lefebvre's (2015)²⁷⁶ concept that space is a social product—one that can either reinforce or disrupt existing power structures.

The art group members engaged with the space using their bodies, costumes, props, and a Wi-Fi speaker that periodically played sounds and music. This disrupted the conventional museum atmosphere of silence and contemplation. The sound acted as both a call to gather and a deliberate interruption, making visitors more aware of TAG's presence and shifting the dynamics of the space.

As TAG moved through the gallery, some members lay on the floor – as if they were rough sleeping - while others posed as statues. This unexpected spectacle challenged the museum's traditional function as a site for

²⁷⁶ Lefebvre, H. (2015) *The production of space*. Translated from the French by D. Nicholson-Smith Oxford, UK and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing.

passive art appreciation, instead inviting imaginative reinterpretation. For instance, one could envision the *Perseus* suite paintings by Sir Edward Burne-Jones (1898)²⁷⁷ as spectators rather than objects of contemplation. What might Perseus think upon encountering these “fallen warriors” scattered across the gallery, echoing the crumbling statues outside the Gorgons’ lair?

TAG’s “takeover” was both an occupation and a transformation—reshaping audience perceptions and altering the gallery’s spatial dynamics.

Note: All TAG members appearing in these photos have actively consented to their inclusion and the use of their names. This was a deliberate choice, as they wished to be recognised as artists contributing to the cultural discourse.

²⁷⁷ Southampton City Art Gallery. (2024) *The Perseus series*. Available at: <https://southamptoncityartgallery.com/collection/the-perseus-series/> (Accessed: 30 July 2024).



Photo 1: Welcome To Southampton City Art Gallery. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 2: TAG ready to “takeover” the museum. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 3: Sandra Foley wearing her “Alice in Wonderland” costume. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 4: Heliana Da Silver in her handmade wedding dress. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 5: Ren Wooldridge wearing Lucy Lloyd's costume. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 6: Sam Hopkins in front of a painting by Gainsborough. (Photo credit: R. Melling)



Photo 7: Vanessa Cotte under the Daniel Buren arches. (Photo credit: J. Cooper)



Photo 8: Heliana Da Silver performing with SCAG staff. (Photo credit: A. Eales)

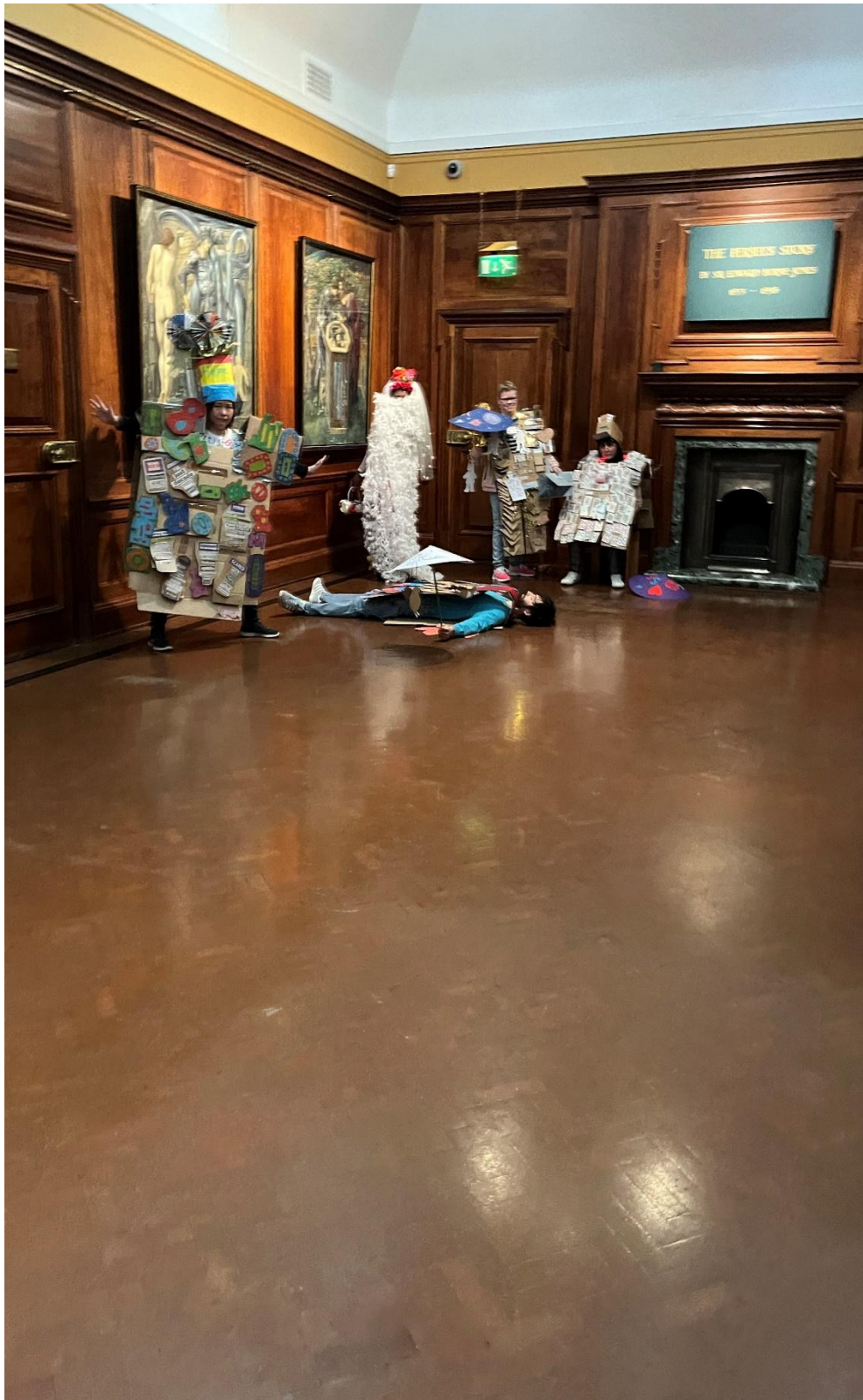


Photo 9: TAG as living statues. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 10: Behind the scenes. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 11: Sam Hopkins next to the Nuzi's altarpiece. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 12: TAG and Southampton City Art Gallery Staff. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 13: Welcome back anytime. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 14: “Takeover” complete. (Photo credit: A. Eales)

Chapter 6. WASTEWORK – Reflections of Facilitation in Practice

Overview: The WASTEWORK delves into an exhibition and workshops as part of a global initiative. Notably, TAG was not just a participant but a key contributor to the culminating exhibition, curated by artist and lecturer Dr Ian Dawson. This reflection considers TAG's pivotal role in a larger, open-ended, international research project. WASTEWORK provides a unique perspective on creative engagement paradigms for community art groups, elevating the periphery and reshaping the roles and identities of people experiencing homelessness and marginalised communities, then mapping them back into central ones of a broader ecosystem.

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores TAG's engagement with the WASTEWORK project at Winchester Gallery with an accompanying photo essay (6.4). The WASTEWORK project, hosted by Winchester School of Art's Materials Lab, exemplified an innovative approach to addressing environmental sustainability and social issues. At its core, the project employed the concept of 'sociomateriality' (Dawson, 2023),²⁷⁸ highlighting the intricate connections between waste, ecology, and human dignity. This interdisciplinary framework, integrating material and social aspects, formed the foundation of the project's unique contribution to the field.

Exhibition curator and artist Ian Dawson envisioned WASTEWORK as a dynamic platform for engagement and creativity. He invited The Trinity Art Group (TAG) to participate through a series of workshops and exhibition contributions. The project's impact, according to Dawson (2023)²⁷⁹ was:

WASTEWORK became a fulcrum for a series of events and workshops. The exhibition prominently featured workshops by Ali Eales and The Trinity Art Group (TAG), who created works in response to the artists in the show. These works were installed through weekly 'takeovers' of the exhibition, forming a palimpsestic response that added layers of meaning and interaction. This inclusion of TAG was both powerful and poignant, bringing the issues of social ecology and homelessness into the conversation about waste and social disposal.

The project's scope extended beyond TAG's involvement, featuring contributions from various experts and institutions:

²⁷⁸ Dawson, I. (2023) 'The polymer chain: Plastic itineraries and plastic images in a sociomaterialist assemblage'. In G. Jeffery and B. Parry (eds.). *Wastework: The art of survival in Dharavi*. Bath: Wunderkammer Press in partnership with AEN (Art Editions North), pp. 177-205.

²⁷⁹ Ian Dawson Studio (2023) *Wasteworks*. Available at: <https://www.iandawsonstudio.com/dawson-wastework.html> (Accessed: 27 July 2024).

1. Dr Ben Parry and Professor Graham Jeffery, founders of Compound 13 Lab, shared their insights on waste management and social innovation.
2. Marie-Louise Jones delivered talks at the Sustainability Forum during the opening day, further enriching the discourse on environmental issues.
3. Winchester School of Art students, under the guidance of Louise Siddens, created works that were seamlessly integrated into the exhibition, showcasing the next generation's perspective on waste and sustainability.

This diverse array of participants and approaches underscored WASTEWORK's commitment to nurturing a multifaceted dialogue on waste, sustainability, and social responsibility.

Ian Dawson said that WASTEWORK is inspired by Vance Packard's ground-breaking book *The Waste Makers* (1960),²⁸⁰ which sheds light on the connection between environmental degradation and disposable consumer goods. Consequently, the WASTEWORK inaugural exhibition, *Wastemakers on Cornucopia Street*, hosted at the Newhaven Art Space in 2022, encouraged audiences to rethink how waste could be reinterpreted, repurposed, and re-evaluated.

WASTEWORK unfolds as a series of exhibitions and workshops that explore fundamental questions about waste and its societal implications. As curator Dr Dawson (2023)²⁸¹ poses, 'How do we define waste? Is it merely matter out of place?' The project's inaugural venue, strategically located near an Energy Recovery Facility, provided a tangible backdrop for these waste-related themes. This setting underscored the project's focus on restoration and rehabilitation, connecting local realities to global challenges. Compound 13 lab also shared its plastic recycling experiments from Dharavi, the heart of Mumbai's recycling industry. Through various creative expressions, from zine making to 3D printing, the WASTEWORK project looks optimistically towards the future (Dawson, 2023).²⁸² By featuring artworks from North America, India, and the UK, WASTEWORK emphasises the universal nature of waste issues while showcasing diverse artistic approaches. This international scope not only highlights the global dimension of waste management but also advances a cross-cultural dialogue on sustainable practices and social responsibility.

The antecedents of WASTEWORK can be traced back to a previous, long-term arts-based project in the godowns (warehouses) of Dharavi and to Compound 13, where Dawson collaborated as an artist-in-residence with researchers and recycling workers in Mumbai; this work was captured in the book *Waste Work: The Art of Survival in Dharavi* (Parry and Jeffery, 2023).²⁸³ Dharavi is considered to be India's largest slum and the third largest in the world (Habitat for Humanity, 2017);²⁸⁴ it was also the backdrop for the film *Slumdog Millionaire*

²⁸⁰ Packard, V. (1960) *The waste makers*. New York: David McKay Company.

²⁸¹ Dawson, I. (2023) *Wastework exhibition and events at Winchester Gallery, April*. Available at: <https://www.iandawsonstudio.com/dawson-wastework.html> (Accessed: 6 July 2024)

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Parry, B and Jeffery, G (eds.). (2023) *Wastework: The Art of Survival in Dharavi*. Bath: Wunderkammer Press in partnership with AEN (Art Editions North).

²⁸⁴ Habitat for Humanity. (2017) The world's largest slums. Available at: <https://www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk/blog/2017/12/the-worlds-largest-slums-dharavi-kibera-khayelitsha-neza/> (Accessed: 7 July 2024).

(2008).²⁸⁵ The editors Jeffery and Parry introduce the book by stating: 'This is a book about waste, work and survival in present day urban India, with a particular focus on the informal waste and plastic recycling economy in the city of Mumbai' (2023, p. 7).²⁸⁶ In his chapter contribution 'The Polymer Chain' (2023),²⁸⁷ Dawson highlights Roland Barthes' prescient concern with plastic, as outlined in his seminal work *Mythologies* (1957).²⁸⁸ Barthes emphasises plastics' transformable and multifaceted nature to the point that they have no other value than their use (in Allen, 2003),²⁸⁹ but, based on his experience in Dharavi, Dawson contends: 'Plastic was more than a substance; it was the idea of infinite transformation' (2023, p. 178).²⁹⁰ The omnimalleability of plastic enables it to adapt and transform, reflecting commercial desires to shape the world with increasing specificity. Dawson's observation encapsulates the dual nature of plastic: its ability to be moulded into virtually anything, from trivial toys to vital components, exemplifies its versatility and ubiquity in our lives.

Plastic's transformative quality is a powerful metaphor for rethinking waste and value. Roland Barthes muses on plastic's infinite ability to transform (in Allen, 1957).²⁹¹ The discarded plastic fork in the gutter and the medical pacemaker symbolise both the mundane and the miraculous. By dint of its formlessness, plastic is not an object. Plastic's value is its use. Use is contextual, and as Barthes notes, plastic is nothing without context.

Standing outside the godowns of Dharavi, one would see poverty, urban decay and pollution, but as the environmentalist Trisha Mascarenhas notes, there is something else:

No one seemed utterly miserable. Once you strip away the old perceptions of slums (that we've been presented with through films like *Slumdog Millionaire*), Dharavi is a fully functioning economy with 5,000 businesses and 15,000 single-room factories (many of which focus on the recycling and sorting of Mumbai's waste). (2018, n.p.)²⁹²

Dawson's photogrammetry and use of Structure from Motion (SfM) software made visible the hidden labour and ingenuity of the recycling sector workers. Dawson recognises their knowledge and creativity. These people

²⁸⁵ *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) [Feature film] Directed by D. Boyle and L. Tandan. United States: Fox / Searchlight Pictures.

²⁸⁶ Parry, B. and Jeffery, G. (eds.) (2023) *Wastework: The art of survival in Dharavi*. Bath: Wunderkammer Press in partnership with AEN (Art Editions North).

²⁸⁷ Dawson, I. (2023) 'The polymer chain: Plastic itineraries and plastic images in a Sociomaterialist assemblage'. In G. Jeffery and B. Parry (eds.). *Wastework: The art of survival in Dharavi*. Bath: Wunderkammer Press in partnership with AEN (Art Editions North), pp. 177-205.

²⁸⁸ Barthes, R. (2013) *Mythologies*. First American paperback edition. Translated by R. Howard and A. Lavers. New York: Hill and Wang, a division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

²⁸⁹ Allen, G. (2003) *Roland Barthes*. London: Routledge.

²⁹⁰ Dawson, I. (2023) 'The polymer chain: Plastic itineraries and plastic images in a Sociomaterialist assemblage'. In G. Jeffery and B. Parry (eds.). *Wastework: The Art of Survival in Dharavi*. Bath: Wunderkammer Press in partnership with AEN (Art Editions North), pp. 177-205

²⁹¹ Allen, G. (2003) *Roland Barthes*. London: Routledge.

²⁹² Mascarenhas, T. (2018) *Dharavi: Asia's largest slum or a recycling and circular economy goldmine?* Available at: <https://greenisthenewblack.com/dharavi-asias-largest-slum-indias-recycling-circular-economy-goldmine/> (Accessed: 7 July 2024).

are not merely denizens of India's largest slum. Dawson celebrates and repositions them back as active, vital human components of the Mumbai city-machine circular economies. Dawson (2023, p. 187)²⁹³ states:

Different forms of knowledge systems start to become evident, and different ways of knowing start to intersect: the tacit knowledge of the pickers, who intuitively organise and sequence the plastic into types and the explicit knowledge of the SfM software which codified and stored in electronic media.

Dawson's work brings to light the implicit understanding and skills of Dharavi's ragpickers, who can swiftly and accurately categorize different types of plastics thanks to their experience and expertise. His use of photogrammetry converts the physical environment into digital data, which can be analysed, processed, and preserved. By digitally documenting the recycling activities, Dawson creates a transformative space that acknowledges and celebrates the essential contributions of these workers. This aspect of his artwork serves as a form of archive, preserving and honouring the workers' knowledge and practices.

SfM is more commonly used from above, but Dawson photographs from inside the godowns and internal to the structure; the photo data used to build these images creates occlusions, which occur, Dawson says, when overlapping structures create mismatches, distorting objects onto and into one another. The spaces take on fantastical appearances, objects morph into architecture, and deep shadows become solid. From chaos, beauty emerges in this blended, malleable landscape – echoing the aggregate on which the Dharavi recycling industry is based. Dawson artistic and technical process maps the ragpickers essential use within the broader narrative of Mumbai's urban landscape. The images serve as a metaphor for the city's plasticity – constantly reshaping and adapting – and for the essential role that these marginalised workers play in the city's life and its beating heart, Dharavi.

In his book *Emotional Ignorance* (2023),²⁹⁴ the scientist Dean Burnett champions the importance of our emotions. Without them, we would be unable to make decisions, let alone get out of bed. Emotions, as mushy and painful as they may be, are vital to our being – you would not remove your skin if you got burnt, and the logic can be applied to times that you feel emotionally fraught. Emotions matter. If one seeks to find value in something, one must understand its emotional impact. The WASTEWORK project underscores the importance of recognising and valuing all forms of knowledge, particularly from those people often overlooked or undervalued. It is a powerful reminder of the human element integral to the functioning of a healthy social ecology, and the potential for art and technology to reveal and honour that contribution.

TAG's participation in the WASTEWORK workshops and exhibition significantly enriches the project's scope and impact. By bringing their unique perspectives as individuals experiencing homelessness, TAG members add

²⁹³ Dawson, I. (2023) 'The polymer chain: Plastic itineraries and plastic images in a Sociomaterialist assemblage'. in G. Jeffery and B. Parry (eds). *Wastework: The art of survival in Dharavi*. Bath: Wunderkammer Press in partnership with AEN (Art Editions North), pp. 177 - 205

²⁹⁴ Burnett, D. (2023) *Emotional ignorance*. London: Faber and Faber.

a crucial layer to the dialogue initiated by Ben Parry, Graham Jeffery, Compound 13, and the recycling workers of Dharavi. This inclusion not only diversifies the artistic discourse but also emphasises the value of knowledge exchange across social boundaries. It broadens the project's perspective by incorporating voices often marginalised in discussions of waste and sustainability. Importantly, TAG's involvement returns agency to those who frequently bear the brunt as "waste" – material and social. Their contributions highlight the intersectionality of environmental and social issues, demonstrating how the concept of waste extends beyond material objects to encompass societal attitudes towards marginalised groups.

The WASTEWORK project provided an invaluable opportunity to apply and extend the methodological approaches outlined in my thesis, offering a real-world context in which to demonstrate the efficacy of my facilitation techniques and TAG's collaborative potential. This engagement served three critical purposes:

6.1.1 Broadening the Conversation

TAG's involvement elevated the discourse beyond consumer waste and plastic pollution, drawing poignant parallels between material waste and social marginalisation. This connection highlighted the issue of social equity.

WASTEWORK created a unique platform to explore social ecology and waste issues. The framing of these collaborations as exhibition "takeovers" was deliberate, asserting TAG's right to actively contribute to the public sphere as artists, not merely as representatives of homelessness.

6.1.2 Metaphor of Transformation

The act of recycling became a powerful symbol for transformation and revaluation. This creative process, which showcased the versatility of recyclable materials (especially plastic), resonated with Ian Dawson's observations on plastic's formlessness and omni-malleability. More importantly, it served as a compelling metaphor for repurposing social potential.

Through their engagement with WASTEWORK, TAG members:

- Challenged negative stereotypes associated with homelessness.
- Demonstrated resourcefulness, creativity, and resilience.
- Presented positive projections that confronted societal views and values regarding homelessness.

6.1.3 Theoretical Connections

Drawing on Dawson's work, Barthes' analysis of plastic, and my reflections on homelessness, WASTEWORK challenges preconceptions about what constitutes waste, both in terms of consumer products and social and ecological contexts. The project demonstrates that, with the right opportunities, individuals often overlooked

or marginalised can make meaningful contributions to artistic and social discourses, much like plastic can be transformed into valuable objects when handled skilfully.

TAG seized on the opportunity to participate in the WASTEWORK project. A TAG member approached me and poignantly remarked:

Waste is only waste if you cannot find another purpose for it. We sometimes feel like we are not proper artists; we feel like our artwork is a waste because we make it, and it is then placed on a shelf, and no one sees it and no one recognises us as artists. (2023)

I went back to Ian and suggested that TAG could run workshops where members repurpose materials they have previously used, reworking old artworks to give them a new life. After the project concludes, any artworks that are brought back to Trinity could, with permission, be broken down and reused for future projects. This approach is inspired by the ingenuity of Dharavi's waste-pickers and serves as a reflection on the broader concept of recycling materials in art education worldwide.

TAG members transformed the gallery space by crafting art journals from discarded plastic fragments, cardboard scraps, and damaged books – composites from their old, discarded artworks. They also shared their scrapbook-making skills with the gallery audience. These repositioned diaries and their sharing reflected the adaptable nature of materials (and the individuals who repurposed them).

TAG's participation brought the issue of homelessness into discussions about waste and social disposal. By involving homeless artists who actively chose to participate in the exhibition as a form of interventive “takeover”, WASTEWORK powerfully challenges misleading homeless identities. WASTEWORK repositions the individual, removing the stigmatising homeless label. Similar to the recovered plastics in Dharavi's godowns, which have inherent value, adaptability, and potential, a visceral shift occurs: the discarded bottle cap transforms into a vital medical component. This inclusion symbolised transformative and practical artistic engagement, giving TAG members a platform to express themselves, gain recognition, and contribute meaningfully to discussions on waste and social ecology. In this Barthesian context, the workshops transcended mere community inclusion and scrapbooking, becoming an art as a tool for social awareness and change. This approach led to a more nuanced and multi-layered discourse.

In its truest sense, waste in this context is not about discarded materials or marginalized individuals but rather about a lack of imagination and the influence of greed within systems of power and capitalism.

WASTEWORK provided a symbolic connection between Dharavi and our small community art group in Winchester. Connecting us to an international project demonstrates that we have the potential to create an impact beyond our immediate surroundings. This broader context allows us to generate waves of influence that can ripple out and forge meaningful change, both for ourselves and others.

I see social ecology as connected fluidity, which emphasises the interdependence of humans and their environment. This perspective reinforces the idea that every individual, regardless of their social status, is

integral to the ecological web. The experiences and survival strategies of homeless individuals, often overlooked, offer profound insights into the functioning of our social systems and how resources are allocated and valued. As these waves spread outward, they intersect with other circles of influence, creating a pattern of diffraction and interaction. TAG members' recognition that they can make waves and that they are affected by the waves of others is powerful. This dynamic process is generative, facilitating growth within our group. Growth is beneficial, analogous to a plant expanding to its fullest potential. It enables TAG members to progress towards their aspirations and recognise their importance within a larger societal framework.

6.2 Taking Space

Being part of WASTEWORK and other similar projects help TAG break out of the safe but restricted bubble of the "controlled homeless space" (the women's refuge, the homeless hostel, the charity drop-in centre, the NHS corridor or the police cell), moving TAG members to recognise themselves as agents capable of effecting change and contributing meaningfully to society.

Through my role as an art facilitator at a charitable drop-in service for people experiencing homelessness, I have witnessed people waiting. So, I see the hidden control system experienced by people experiencing homelessness as sitting in waiting rooms almost perpetually because the individual is either waiting to get into a hostel, waiting to see the housing officer, or waiting in a library to while away the hours instead of aimlessly treading the streets. They may also be sitting waiting to see the charity worker or sitting because it is cold outside, and they sit because they have nothing to do and nowhere to go. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* offers a philosophical take on the futility of waiting and the uncertainty of life:

Estragon: "What do we do now?"

Vladimir: While waiting.

Estragon: While waiting. [Silence]... (1965, p. 76) ²⁹⁵

The homeless person faces a complex web of challenges, far removed from Vladimir and Estragon's existential musings. Beckett's protagonists, at least, get to make their own meaning for their lives as they wait. People experiencing homelessness often report systemic control, monitoring, and segregation, even in places one would normally think of as places of care, for example, NHS A&E waiting rooms (Listening to Homeless People, 2004, p. 9) ²⁹⁶ – all of which limits their choice to create their own meaning in life.

²⁹⁵ Beckett, S. (1965) *Waiting for Godot: A tragicomedy in two acts*. Rev. and unexpurgated edn. London: Faber and Faber.

²⁹⁶ Listening to Homeless People (2004) Available at: https://groundswell.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Groundswell-Health-Link-Listening_to_Homeless_People.pdf (Accessed: 7 July 2024).

The contemporary homeless person is trapped, not just by a lack of resources or a flawed social system that corrals them out of sight (Snow and Mulcahy, 2001)²⁹⁷ but also because:

canonical definitions of who they [homeless individuals] are – “the poor”, “the drunk”, “the addict”, “the dispossessed”, and so on – frame them by rigid theoretical frameworks that, although supposedly developed to enhance our understanding of the homeless phenomenon, often lead to classifications, compartmentalisation, and reification. (Lancione, 2013, p. 237)²⁹⁸

The WASTEWORK workshops and exhibition served as a powerful intervention in the cycle of passivity often imposed on homeless individuals. By providing a platform for creative expression outside conventional “homeless” spaces, the project disrupted the typical narrative of homelessness as a state of perpetual waiting. Instead, it positioned TAG members at the centre of a collaborative artistic process, acknowledging and harnessing their unique knowledge and creativity. This approach not only challenged societal perceptions of homelessness but also offered TAG members an opportunity to address issues of self-worth and social value actively. Through their involvement in WASTEWORK, TAG members transitioned from passive recipients of aid to active contributors to cultural discourse, demonstrating the transformative potential of artistic engagement in addressing social issues.

WASTEWORK “takeover” workshops were mechanisms to be seen. The workshops engendered TAG members as cultural makers, challenging misconceptions about their capabilities by actively and visibly co-creating in cultural production. TAG members actively defy notions that undermine their intellect and skills, thus contributing to dismantling harmful biases.

I contend that when artists with different cultural, social and personal experiences come together, they often reinterpret traditional or “accepted” themes and concepts in novel ways. This is true of TAG and our mix of perspectives, which I contend led to social creations and gentle activism that push boundaries, challenge conventions and, especially, normative approaches to defining usefulness in society. Sometimes, TAG’s presence is enough to shake the conventions of traditional art engagements – an ethos we draw from the ‘artivism’ of Tania Bruguera (2018)²⁹⁹ and the social justice art of the Guerrilla Girls (2020),³⁰⁰ especially their use of humour, compassion, and irony to critique established institutions and promote awareness of socio-political issues and the lack of diversity in the art world.

²⁹⁷ Snow, D. A. and Mulcahy, M. (2001) ‘Space, politics, and the survival strategies of the homeless.’ *American Behavioural Scientist*. Sage Publications. Vol. 45. No. 1. September. pp. 149-169.

²⁹⁸ Lancione, M. (2013) ‘How is homelessness?’ *European Journal of Homelessness*. Vol. 7, No. 2, December. pp. 237-248. Available at: https://michelelancione.eu/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/02/2013_How-is-homelessness_EJH_Lancione.pdf (Accessed: 27 July 2024).

²⁹⁹ Bruguera, T. (2018) *Art + activism = artivism*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C38sPtBj4uo> (Accessed: 7 July 2024).

³⁰⁰ Guerrilla Girls. (2020) *Guerrilla Girls: The art of behaving badly*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books

6.2.1 Key Aspects of the Convergent Community

Drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy's (1991)³⁰¹ conceptualisation of community, the WASTEWORK project cultivated a unique convergent community comprising TAG members, Winchester School of Art (WSA) students, and local artists. This community embodied Nancy's vision of a collective that recognises and values its internal differences rather than striving for homogeneity. Key aspects of this convergent community include:

1. **Diversity of Perspectives:** The participants brought varied experiences, skills, and viewpoints to the project. TAG members contributed insights from lived experiences and wisdom, WSA students offered fresh academic perspectives, and local artists brought their professional expertise.
2. **Embracing Differences:** Rather than seeking consensus or uniformity, the project encouraged the expression and exploration of divergent opinions and approaches. This openness to difference became a source of creativity and innovation – it promoted tolerance and celebration of individuality, offering porosity and adaptability to the community dynamic.
3. **Collaborative Learning:** Through their interactions and shared work, participants engaged in a process of mutual learning. This collaborative approach generated what can be termed 'heuristic knowledge' (Emery, 1996)³⁰² – practical, experience-based understanding that emerged from the group's collective efforts.
4. **Dynamic Interaction:** The community was not static but evolved through ongoing dialogue and negotiation. Differences were not merely tolerated but actively worked through, leading to new insights and approaches.
5. **Challenging Hierarchies:** By valuing diverse contributions equally, the project challenged traditional hierarchies of knowledge and expertise. The insights of TAG members were given as much consideration as those of academics or established artists.

TAG approached the WASTEWORK workshops using experiential, intuitive, and often informal problem-solving strategies. TAG members' artistic interactions developed through practice and experience. This evolving and emerging approach encouraged participants to reflect on their experiences and personal growth throughout the project.

WASTEWORK provided an opportunity to revisit previous art created by TAG, examining the context in which it was made, members' current feelings about the work, and how they could reuse, reimagine, and activate it, drawing on the emotions it initially evoked. From this perspective, recycling takes on a new dimension – offering the artwork a second chance to be appreciated by an audience. It also symbolically

³⁰¹ Nancy, J-L. (1991) *The inoperative community*. P. Connor (ed.). Translated from the French by P. Connor, L. Garbus, M. Holland, and S. Sawhney. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

³⁰² Emery, L. (1996) 'Heuristic inquiry: Intensifying subjectivity in art education research'. *Australian Art Education*, Vol. 19, Issue 3, pp. 23-30. <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/jelapa.970404212>

encouraged audiences to reconsider the individuals who made the work, along with the knowledge and experiences that informed its creation.

6.3 Finding an Audience

In her 2020 video essay 'What is Art' (2020)³⁰³ from the PBS Studios series *The Art Assignment*, Sarah Urist Green likens art to throwing a ball and someone else catching it. We often throw out a ball for TAG, only for it to land unnoticed. Dr Ian Dawson caught our ball. WASTEWORK, through Dawson, provided TAG with a seat at an international table. This inclusion rekindled members' passion and re-activated our work – not just the tangible, recomposed artworks reclaimed from dusty shelves, but the intangible quality of being included, having our advice sought, and being part of a larger ecosystem.

Dawson recognised TAG's heuristic approach, coupled with the poetry of reconstituted old art fragments now formed into new art objects; he employed curatorial verve that included the material generated from the workshops and into the exhibition in surprising and innovative ways. Taking on a structure of layering, overwriting, and juxtaposition, TAG's conversation was included as a visual palimpsest. This triggered a positive and emotional response from TAG members. Dawson recognised TAG's desire to be included and achieved in so doing highlighted the power of WASTEWORK: recognising, celebrating, and plugging TAG's knowledge back into the contemporary art matrix.

Through involvement supported by Dawson's curatorial action, TAG exemplified how sociomateriality (Dawson, 2023)³⁰⁴ can be enacted in practice, demonstrating that integrating social and material dimensions can lead to more inclusive and sustainable outcomes. Their contributions underscored the importance of rethinking waste and value in terms of materials and human lives, building a more empathetic approach to addressing social and environmental challenges.

Returning to my argument in Chapter 4, which highlights the importance of capturing someone's passion: you won't be able to motivate them unless you discover what interests them and work with them to achieve it. If you can do that, you might even change the world. In art and social practice, then, emotions are incredibly important because they provide the gumption, energy, and motivation to act. TAG members approached the WASTEWORK project with a theoretical concern about plastics and environmental issues, but they were also emotionally invested in social ecology and people's well-being. It is well documented that art has the power to create an emotional connection, especially around issues that generate strong personal or political opinions. TAG joined WASTEWORK to make art to point to a thing and, in the process, embody that thing (Dolnick,

³⁰³ Green, S. U. (2020) "What is art?" *The Art Assignment PBS Studio*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2VpNx5ZxSA&t=84s> (Accessed: 7 July 2024).

³⁰⁴ Dawson, I. (2023) 'The polymer chain: Plastic itineraries and plastic images in a Sociomaterialist assemblage'. In G. Jeffery and B. Parry (eds.). *Wastework: The art of survival in Dharavi*. Bath: Wunderkammer Press in partnership with AEN (Art Editions North), pp. 177-205.

2011).³⁰⁵ To look for the value of that thing, one has to know what it feels like, and then it becomes not even a question – it becomes obvious. This is not trivial. I mentioned this earlier and will say again that if one seeks to find value in something, one must understand its emotional impact. This understanding transforms the question of value into an obvious truth.

6.4 WASTEWORK Photo Essay

The central message of WASTEWORK is that addressing global issues such as plastic waste and environmental concerns requires a collective effort. Effective solutions emerge from diverse perspectives working in concert. TAG's engagement critiqued attitudes toward homelessness and waste, prompting a re-evaluation of societal values.

Through workshops and creative interventions, TAG artists, along with WSA students and local artists, gradually added to the WASTEWORK exhibition space. They repurposed old TAG artworks into art journals and created new pieces through two “takeovers”. This photo essay captures TAG's journey, showcasing a heuristic approach and dialogical negotiation, which led to Dawson's innovative curatorial technique of palimpsestic layering. This method added depth and interaction and provided a platform for integration.

WASTEWORK exemplifies a sociomaterialistic framework. When applied to art-making research, this framework considers not only the artist's intentions and social context but also the materials and environments involved – leading to more inclusive and sustainable outcomes. This inclusivity reignited TAG members' passion, enhancing the intangible experience of being valued, consulted, and part of a larger community.

While in conversation with Ian Dawson reflecting on the WASTEWORK project, Dawson said:

By bringing together a series of artworks and socially engaged artistic projects from the field of Waste Studies, WASTEWORK was an exhibition that explored the relationship between material practices and human labour. The gallery's environment became a site for accumulation, and the ongoing curation served to sift and sort. Workshops led by game makers, art students, and community groups added credibility to various material knowledges.

TAG was proud to be part of dialogue around the value and implications of waste in contemporary society.

³⁰⁵ Dolnick, S. (2011) 'An artist's performance: A year as a poor immigrant'. *New York Times*. 18 May. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/19/nyregion/as-art-tania-bruguera-lives-like-a-poor-immigrant.html> (Accessed: 22 June 2024).



Photo 15: Flyer for the WASTEWORK exhibition. (Design credit: I. Dawson)



Photo 16: At the Winchester Gallery. Workshop I. (Photo credit: A. Eales)

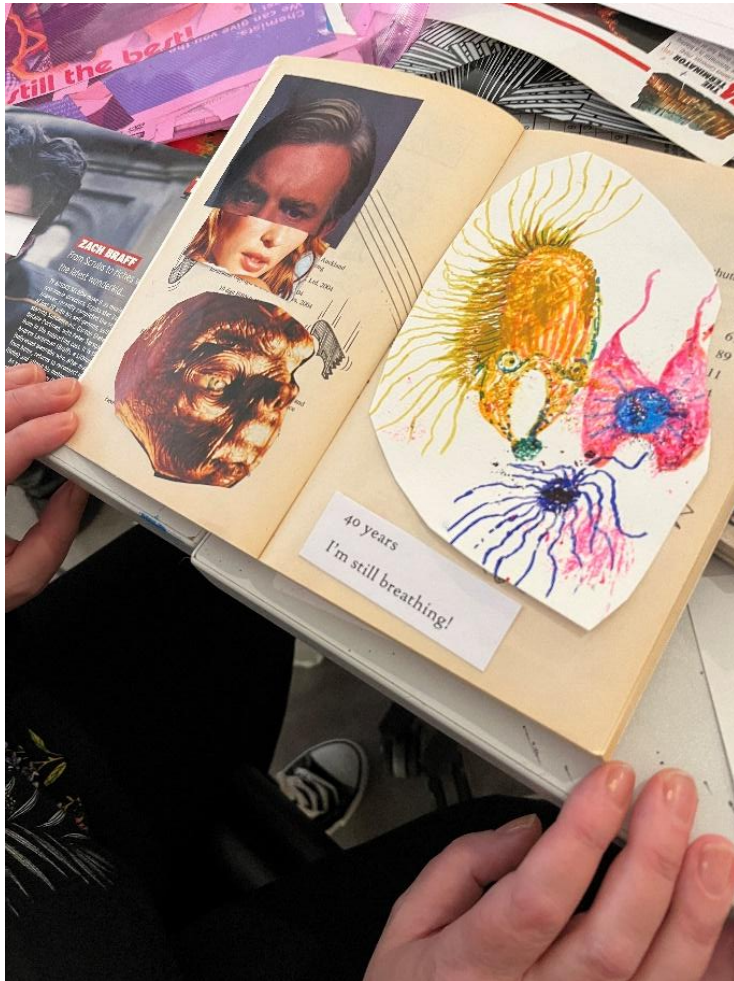


Photo 17: Scrapbook journalling. Workshop I. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 18: TAG members engrossed in making. Workshop I. (Photo credit: A. Eales)

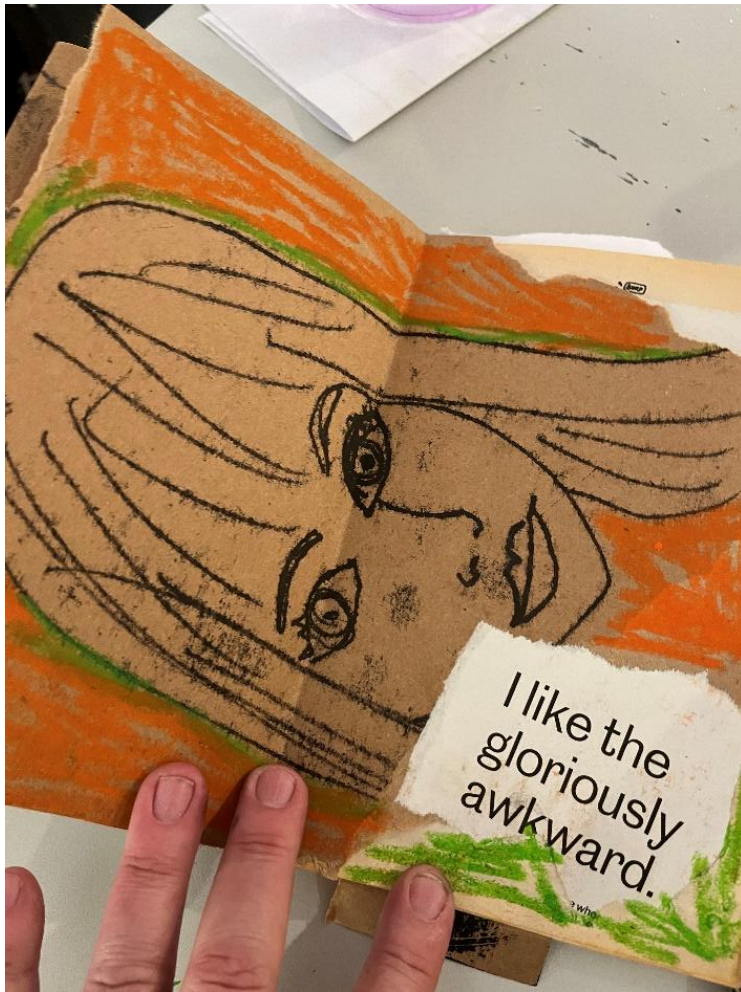


Photo 19: TAG show and tell sharing ideas. Workshop I. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 20: Jules shows her systemic approach. Workshop I. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 21: Jules' "Flowers". Workshop I. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 22: The perfect spot to display the “Flowers”. Workshop I. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 23: Heliana ready for the second workshop. Workshop II. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 24: Vanessa excited to get going! Workshop II. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 25: Merging work generated from the workshops. Workshop II. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 26: Lucy's handmade dress. Workshop II. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 27: New location for Lucy's dress. Workshop II. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 28: TAG move one of Ian Dawson's sculptures. Workshop II. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 29: Heliana becomes a living sculpture. Workshop II. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 30: David's mini diorama. Workshop II. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 31: Leftover cardboard makes for useful shelving. Workshop II. (Photo credit: I. Dawson)



Photo 32: More cardboard shelving. Workshop II. (Photo credit: I. Dawson)



Photo 33: Objects gravitate towards Lucy's dress. Workshop ii. (Photo credit: I. Dawson)



Photo 34: Heliana being photographed. Workshop II. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Time to wave goodbye. Workshop II. (Photo credit: A. Eales)



Photo 35: The end. Workshop II. (Photo credit: I. Dawson)

Chapter 7. Making Space

Overview: Why do we need more space for inclusion? The neuroscientist Dean Burnett outlines the essential role of emotions in shaping decisions and understanding others. Homelessness is complex, too complex to address in this thesis, however art engagement through community-based social practice might move towards tackling aspects of this issue. Art, by evoking emotional connections, can simplify complex discussions on value, making the need for inclusivity and openness clear and compelling. This emotional impact underscores the importance of creating inclusive and accessible spaces, turning it into a deeply felt necessity.

This chapter serves as a conclusion and is divided into three sections: 'Breaking In and Out of Spaces', 'A Space to Make Waves', and 'A Personal Space'. Each section delves into different facets of Making Space, exploring the inspirations behind the initiative, including the influence of Mierle Laderman Ukeles' groundbreaking work on my practice. It also examines the impact of the workshops, the formation of new creative and caring networks, and my personal motivations that continue to drive the creation of more inclusive spaces.

In my work with TAG, I have shown how community-based art practices can redefine cultural narratives and promote social inclusion. Making Space highlighted the dynamic interplay between art and society, underscoring the value of community participation in creating meaning. By embracing and celebrating the creative contributions of individuals experiencing homelessness, I have challenged traditional perceptions and broadened TAG's understanding of their identities. This journey has affirmed the decisive role of art in shaping societal views and promoting empathy, demonstrating that once deeper understanding is achieved, labels like 'homeless' can be set aside, allowing individuals to express themselves without being confined by predefined identities.

7.1 Breaking In and Out of Spaces

Mierle Laderman Ukeles' *Washing Tracks/Maintenance* (1973)³⁰⁶ is revealed through a series of black-and-white photos. In one photo, a young woman can be seen cleaning the steps of a museum. In another photo, she is at the top of the steps pouring water from a bucket. Behind her is the entrance to the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, Connecticut in the US. In yet another photo, she is caught in action, wielding the mop in a dramatic swoosh. She is outside the museum. In a sense, she has broken out of the "controlled space" of the institutional system.

³⁰⁶ Medium. (2020) *Mierle Laderman Ukeles's "Maintenance art performances"*. Available at: <https://medium.com/notes-to-a-young-artist/mierle-laderman-ukeless-maintenance-art-performances-dfd4861609bf> (Accessed: 27 July 2024).

Before Mierle Laderman Ukeles became known for her work outside the museum, she was an active artist. However, after getting married and having children, her friends and family told her she could no longer be an artist because she was now a mother. This caused her to experience an identity crisis — feeling torn between the labels imposed on her. She often found herself thinking about her art while caring for her children, and vice versa. This led her to question whether caring for and maintaining something could also be considered art.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles found a “useful” art.

Now back at the museum, Ukeles has laid out cotton diapers to dry the steps of the museum — a meticulous process mirroring the museum restoration departments' use of cotton diapers to clean and preserve delicate art, while also reflecting a mother's care for her child. Her work challenges the traditional view of art as being solely object-based, proposing that art can also encompass everyday life and the maintenance that sustains it.

Ukeles turned her constrained circumstances into a new way of thinking about art and motherhood. By merging these disparate worlds, her work has a clear political aspect, making invisible labour visible.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles broke back into the art world.

Through her innovative and deeply thoughtful artwork, Ukeles challenges restrictive identities, makes power structures visible, and celebrates ordinary yet vital tasks.

Making Space created a symbolic space for mutual exchange, where the artistic expressions of people experiencing homelessness brought an authentic dimension by sharing their often-underrepresented perspectives with the broader cultural fabric.

Ukeles' maintenance art recognises the often-overlooked labour and care work that sustain communities. Making Space and Ukeles' art underscores that everyone, regardless of labels, disabilities, or social disconnections, possesses a unique gift or talent to offer their community (McKnight, 2014).³⁰⁷ The key is to provide the time and “space” needed to uncover and appreciate these contributions.

Mirroring Ukeles' approach of breaking out of and re-entering a “controlled space” on her own terms, Making Space reached out and connected with WSA and SCAG. This integration into Trinity Winchester left a lasting legacy by transforming the charity into a vibrant, interconnected hub. No longer a cocooned space, Trinity Winchester now actively engages in creative collaborations with art schools, local businesses, and

³⁰⁷ McKnight, J. (2014) *Professor John McKnight: About John McKnight and the Asset-Based Community Development Institute*. 26 August. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27fCAK1AUPE&list=PLWeQ6pngNCZN4R9DL5_63Vn9OVSeEk5EG (Accessed: 28 July 2024). 26 April.

cultural hubs. This dynamic environment is evident in TAG's recent projects, such as artist book fairs, the *Earth Day Living Library*³⁰⁸ event, and the 'What is "Home" to You?' initiative led by Emily Ralph (2023)³⁰⁹.

7.2 Space to Make Waves

AGENCY

Power?

Don't fear your waves.

The sea doesn't.

It also didn't choose its existence.

But you are here.

Bring colour.

Footprints.

Stand out in the mud,

And snow. Stomp.

~ Lucy Lloyd, artist, poet and Trinity Art Group Member. (2023).

A snapshot of TAG's "takeover" at Southampton City Art Gallery (SCAG):

A group of people wearing strange and outlandish cardboard costumes walk into a public art space. A deliberate disruption of the usual orderliness is expected in certain spaces. As a form of art activism, The Trinity Art Group (TAG) created a gentle wake.

By designing and wearing cardboard costumes, TAG members visually and conceptually interrupt the conventional museum experience for gallery visitors, mildly challenging norms and expectations. The costumes represented an incursion into physical space; the wearer would expand their physical boundaries and push into the space.

Just as waves ripple outward from a single point, the actions and creations of the TAG members aim to extend their influence beyond the immediate space of the museum. Making Space seeks to impact

³⁰⁸ Morwood, R. (2023) 'Winchester School of Art develops innovative living library.' *Hampshire Chronicle*. 26 April. Available at: <https://www.hampshirechronicle.co.uk/news/24275164.winchester-school-art-develops-innovative-living-library/> (Accessed: 28 July 2024).

³⁰⁹ Ralph, E. (2023) 'Emily Ralph designs is in Winchester'. Facebook, 3 May. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/emilyralphdesigns/posts/pfbid02EMG72hBumDDjEBBdzjMZ8mE3QVepcGjmoBF4CZoQ4QRz8gZFoCggehxcgyJmM6E6I> (Accessed: 28 July 2024).

perceptions, inspire other communities, and perhaps influence the practices of institutions and organisations to be more inclusive of people experiencing homelessness.

Waves, in this case, are a metaphor for creativity and change. The process of making the costumes – through collaging, discussion, and collaboration – reflects the dynamic and innovative energy behind the project. This energy echoes the force of waves that continuously shape and reshape the landscapes they encounter.

Making Space is also about making the invisible visible and giving a platform to marginalised voices. By occupying a high-culture space like a museum with their creations, the co-producers assert their right to cultural participation and expression, challenging societal barriers and preconceptions – and critically forging new ‘spaces of care’ (Conradson, 2003)³¹⁰ for marginalised groups to be in.

The Making Space project, grounded in Lefebvre's theories of social space (2012),³¹¹ demonstrates that artistic expression can be a powerful tool for transforming physical spaces and societal perceptions. Creating welcoming spaces for people experiencing homelessness and facilitating their engagement with cultural institutions – on TAG's “gentle” terms – can challenge societal norms, promote cohesion, and build a more inclusive society. The project's success in leveraging participants' lived experiences and passions is a model for future initiatives. These initiatives can break down societal barriers to cultural inclusion and promote cultural democracy, realising Lefebvre's vision of space as a collective resource accessible to everyone (2012).³¹²

Returning to Ukeles' notion of maintenance art and combining it with a version of Making Space signposts how art can allow community-based social practice facilitators to explore critical and innovative approaches. These approaches combine the essential maintenance of community art facilitation with insights that can meaningfully feed into the contemporary art discourse. This integration is crucial as it bridges the gap between practical community engagement and theoretical advancements in art, ensuring that community-driven art practices remain relevant and influential within broader artistic conversations.

The importance of this approach is underscored by the work of scientist Dean Burnett (2023),³¹³ who champions the significance of our emotions. Without emotions, we would be unable to make our multifarious decisions. Burnett pours scorn on the concept of *Star Trek's* “emotionless” android Data, pointing out that day-to-day decisions made by Data would be arbitrary and that there would be no motivation for the android to choose one perfunctory thing over another – posing the question: would Data freeze, unable to gauge which decision is the correct one? Jam first, then cream on a scone, or vice versa.

³¹⁰ Conradson, D. (2003) ‘Spaces of care in the city: The place of a community drop-in centre’. *Social & Cultural Geography*, Vol. 4, Issue 4, pp. 507-525. Available at: [doi:10.1080/1464936032000137939](https://doi.org/10.1080/1464936032000137939)

³¹¹ Lefebvre, H. (2012) ‘The production of space’. In C. Butler (ed.) *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial politics, everyday life and the right to the city*. London: Routledge.

³¹² Lefebvre, H. (2012) ‘The right to the city and The production of differential space’. In C Butler (ed.) *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial politics, everyday life and the right to the city*. London: Routledge.

³¹³ Burnett, D. (2023) *Emotional ignorance*. London: Faber and Faber.

7.2.1 Truth Wave

In *Emotional Ignorance* (2023),³¹⁴ Burnett argues that emotions are essential to our lives. They are not just reactions but help us make decisions, understand others, and connect with the world. Even when they seem irrational or uncomfortable, emotions are crucial. Understanding them helps us appreciate diverse viewpoints and experiences, as highlighted, in Chapter 6, in the WASTEWORK project, underscoring the value of all kinds of knowledge and contributions to society.

Art can transform the complex question of value into an obvious truth, particularly regarding inclusivity and openness. While traditional concepts of value in art and society are often influenced by economic worth, historical significance, or cultural relevance, art that evokes strong emotional connections transcends these layers, speaking directly to the human experience. This emotional resonance makes the importance of inclusivity and shared human experiences undeniable.

When people engage with art that reflects diverse perspectives, they often experience empathy and understanding. This emotional response simplifies abstract discussions about inclusivity, making the moral imperatives behind these concepts feel immediate and personal. In my Making Space project, Wittgenstein's ladder metaphor (1999, p.66)³¹⁵ as learning (see Appendix C) illustrates a vital point: the value of creating inclusive spaces becomes self-evident when we are moved by art that tells the stories of marginalised or underrepresented groups. Once this understanding is achieved, the "ladder" of initial categories and labels like "marginalised" or "homeless" can be discarded. What remains is the recognition of the individual, seeing them for who they are and truly listening to what they have to say. So, Wittgenstein's ladder serves as a metaphor for transcending the need for categories once deeper understanding and empathy are reached.

So, art's ability to connect emotionally simplifies the discourse on value, making the need for inclusivity and accessibility an "obvious truth" rather than a debated concept. This makes the push for inclusive and accessible spaces not just a societal goal but a deeply felt necessity.

Making Space is about choosing to create inclusive space – accessible space for all. Art has a unique power to connect emotionally with the viewers, enabling empathy and understanding among artists and audience by expressing shared experiences, and communicates complex ideas and values in a powerful and relatable way, rendering it a potent medium for social change. Making Space is about choosing to create inclusive space — and this matters BECAUSE it opens spaces of care. Art has a unique ability to connect emotionally with viewers,

³¹⁴ Burnett, D. (2023) *Emotional ignorance*. London: Faber and Faber.

³¹⁵ Wittgenstein, L. (1999) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated from the German by C. K. Ogden. Rev. edn. New York: Dover Publications.

inspiring empathy and understanding by expressing shared experiences. By communicating complex ideas and values in powerful, relatable ways, it becomes a potent medium for social change.

7.3 Personal Space

Notions of space are central to my thesis, a theme that traces back to my MA studies over 20 years ago. During that time, I defined my workspace by constructing cardboard dens. I would climb inside. They were snug and gave a wonderful warm cardboard smell. Dry, clean cardboard, though slightly aged, has a faintly velvety feel. The material is super insulating. These makeshift structures offered me sanctity and calm, shielding me from interruptions and, in doing so, increasing my productivity. Without my cardboard barrier, I could be easily distracted.

A fresh supply of cardboard was free and readily available outside my studio space in the Gothic Quarter of Barcelona. Tall buildings and labyrinthine medieval alleyways surrounding my studio seemed to grow piles of the stuff by the hour. With armfuls I could replenish and expand my makeshift dominion.

There is something very primordial about marking out a space for yourself. Erecting a shelter, building your castle – in doing so, you define yourself. The space informs and bolsters your identity, and it becomes your space. Maybe you invite others into your space? Then, it becomes our space. Together, we can make our space bigger and better. Our space is different to the cardboard den over there – the one next to the tree. Our den is better than their den. Theirs is wonky, and the roof is caving in. While our den has a pirate flag...

For a moment, I regressed back to childhood reveries, reminiscing about den-building as a small boy. Children are prolific den-builders. The bug seems to settle in and take hold around the age of eight; by twelve, most children seem to have cured themselves of their den-making craze. I still have that bug.

The whimsical dens served a practical purpose: they provided a sense of privacy in the shared studio environment I inhabited and reminded me of my childhood: long, lazy, sunny afternoons where the cardboard shelters became vehicles for my imagination. Growing up in Apartheid South Africa before moving to the UK at age nine, they evoked memories of joyous moments playing “Cowboys and Indians” in the garden. However, as explored in my chapters, identity is rarely fixed. Jean-Luc Nancy’s ‘singular plural’ (2000),³¹⁶ Roland Barthes’ formless plastic (2003),³¹⁷ and Steph Lawler’s (2013)³¹⁸ position that identity and use is not inherent within an individual but is produced and negotiated through interactions with others.

³¹⁶ Nancy, J-L. (2000) *Being singular plural*. Translated from the French by R. D. Richardson and A. E. O’Byrne. California: Stanford Press.

³¹⁷ Allen, G. (2003) *Roland Barthes*. London: Routledge.

³¹⁸ Lawler, S. (2013) *Identity: Sociological perspectives*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Despite their simplicity, the dens of my childhood hold multiple identities. Lefebvre's understanding of space (2012)³¹⁹ predicts and outlines the shift between oppression and childhood innocence in the space of a makeshift structure. These now resonate deeply as space dividers that continue to offer me solace and revulsion. Khayelitsha, in Cape Town, is now the largest recorded slum in the world. In my halcyon days, I was cheek by jowl to Khayelitsha. I remember the corrugated iron roofs, the ripped plastic bags that stood in for insulation and weather-proofing, and the broken plywood that formed those shelters. They whizzed past my nose as my car sped me to the airport for my new life in the UK. I did not understand those strange dens for adults. I do now.

Reflecting on these experiences led me to contemplate the “what ifs”: what if I hadn't had the privilege to create a space for myself back in 1999, as a young postgraduate student in the dizzying city of Barcelona, or as the white child cocooned in middle-class 1980s colonial suburbia?

I realise that the words I write here, in my conclusion, must be measured and carefully chosen. And I have descended into talking about a white kid in Apartheid South Africa and his cardboard den and colonial-era games involving conflicted groups of people in North America (“Cowboys and Indians”). The point I am trying to make is that the abiding lesson learnt is about “making space” to include, not exclude.

In August 2001, I approached Trinity Winchester, a charity, with the idea of establishing an artist group. My approach was rooted in building a community first – a fluid space defined by the people who gather – prioritising human connections over physical infrastructure. The goal was to empower TAG to establish a presence. By leveraging their collective strengths, TAG members address their own challenges. Before starting my PhD journey, I asked the group what they wanted me to do. TAG members had one request, simple yet profound: we ask just to be included. To have space.

³¹⁹ Lefebvre, H. (2012) ‘The production of space’. In C. Butler (ed.) *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial politics, everyday life and the right to the city*. London: Routledge.

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Appendix A: Photographs of My Reflective Scrapbook

This appendix provides a visual and narrative documentation of the Reflective Scrapbook, chronicling the Making Space Project. The scrapbook serves as a record of the project's progression, sampling a variety of materials such as notes, teaching plan examples, and personal reflections. These elements collectively highlight the project's evolution and its reflective process.

This art journal documenting socially engaged workshops with TAG, is useful for a number of reasons. It serves as a record of artistic growth, documents TAGs voices, and highlights emergent themes and concerns through the workshop process. Additionally, it offers educational insights for artists and educators, supports advocacy and provides therapeutic benefits to participants. The scrapbook captures the impact of art in promoting personal development and workshop evolution.

This scrapbook contains quotes from diverse sources, including conversations, poems, TAG journals, and personal notes. This eclectic mix offers a view of the project's development and the thoughts that have shaped it.

The use of sticky notes and photographs throughout the scrapbook introduces a modular and interactive component, promoting a sense of engagement and involvement. This method not only enriches the documentation but also nurtures creativity by allowing for a more adaptive reflection process.

The photographs included are carefully labelled and annotated, providing context and expanding on the role of scrapbooking in facilitating the project. I have included 30 representative images here.

Importantly, all TAG members whose names and images appear in the scrapbook have given explicit consent through opt-in agreements, ensuring that their contributions are acknowledged respectfully and ethically.

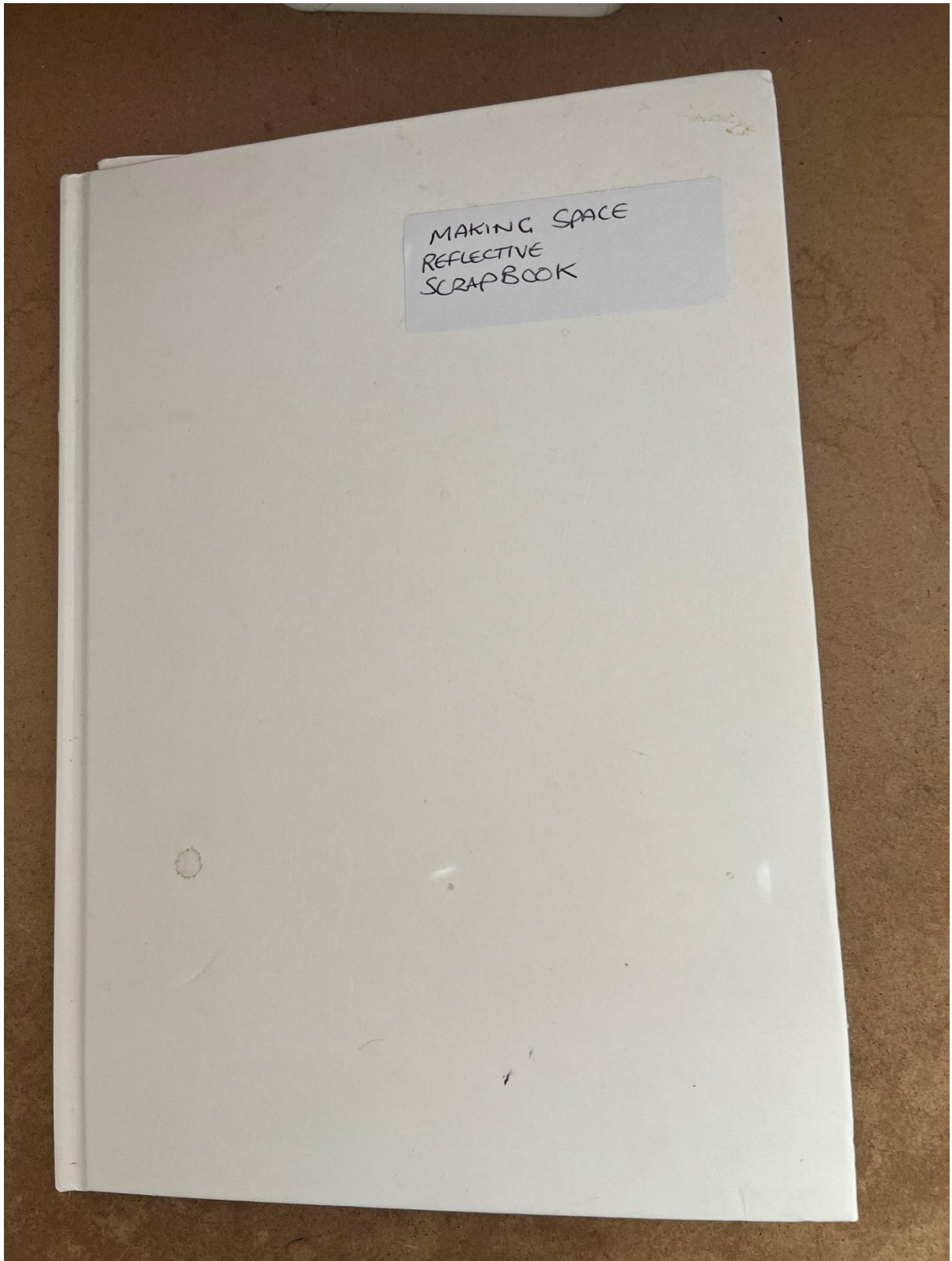


Photo 36: A1 – Front cover of my Reflective Scrapbook.

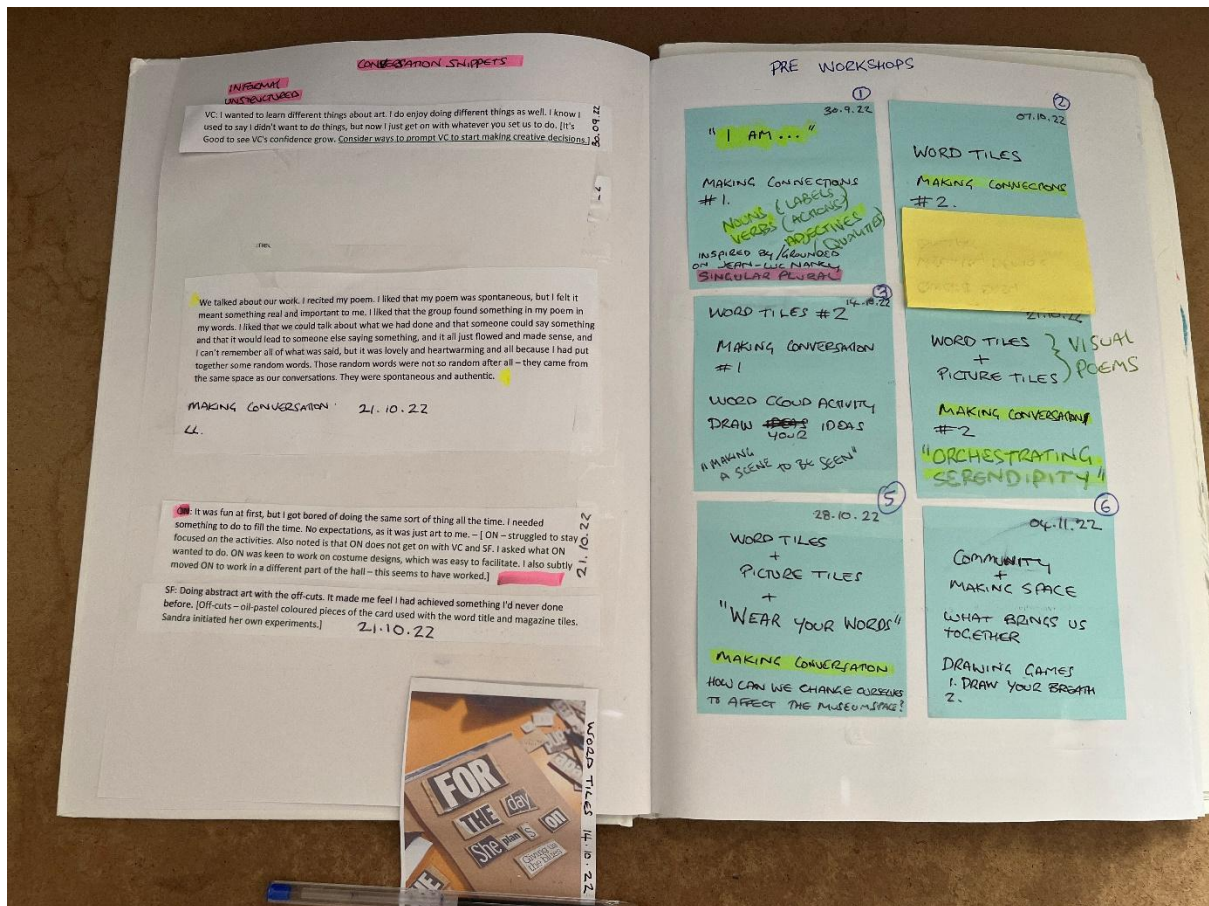


Photo 37: A2 – A sample of collected TAG quotes, an image of a word tile activity.

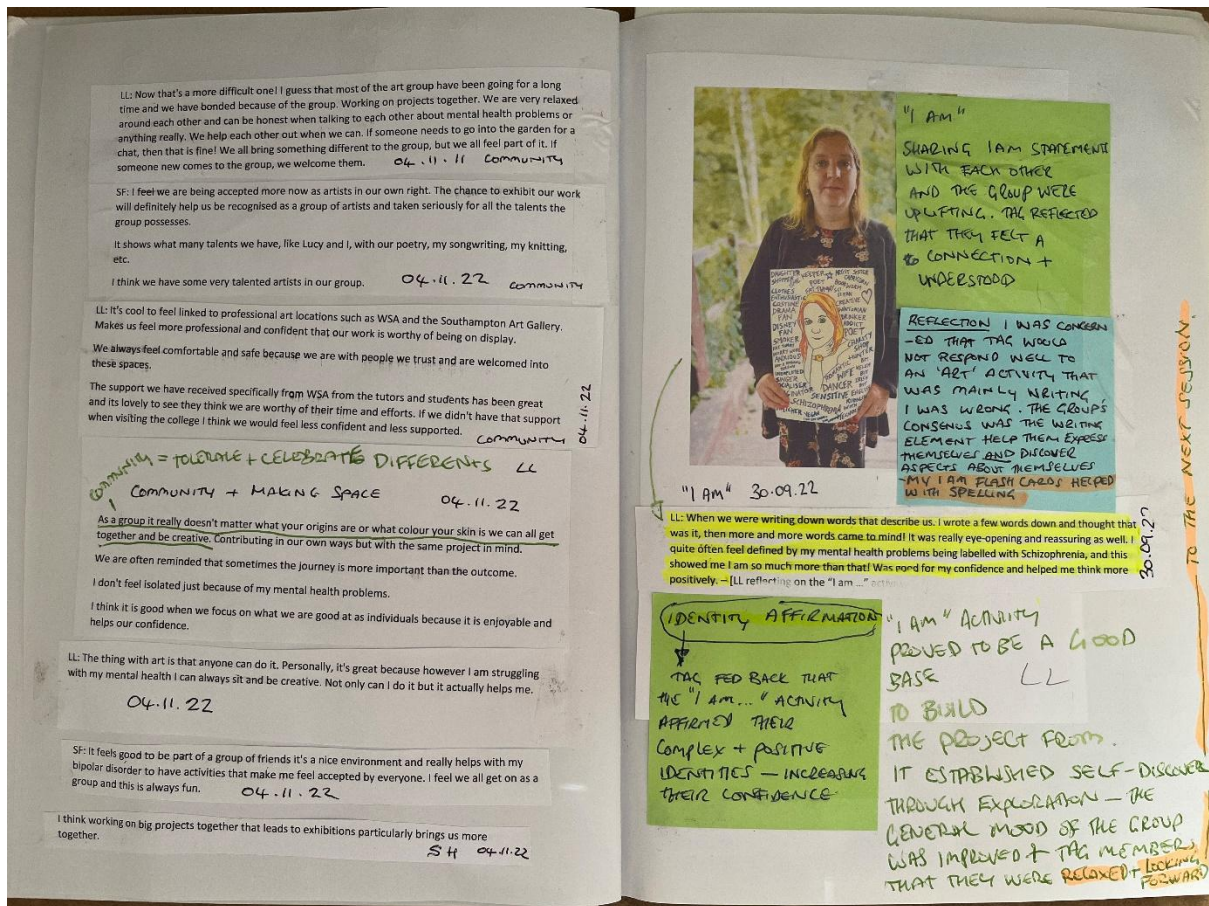


Photo 38: A3 – More quotes from TAG members in the build up to the Making Space project.

PAGE 1

GREEN PEN = REFLECTION TAG

28.09.22

"I AM..." Activity

THE "I AM" ACTIVITY IS AN EXERCISE DESIGNED TO HELP INDIVIDUALS EXPLORE AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE MULTIPLE IDENTITIES THEY HOLD SIMULTANEOUSLY. THIS ACTIVITY IS DRAWN FROM PHILOSOPHIC CONCEPTS DISCUSSED BY JEAN-LUC NANCY + IDEAS EXPLORE BY ARTIST MAGICIAN DEREK DELGAUDIO.

BOTH DELVE INTO THE COMPLEXITIES OF IDENTITY AND SELF-AWARENESS.

OBJECTIVE:

TO SPARK AWARENESS OF MULTIFACETED NATURE OF HUMAN IDENTITY AND TO ENCOURAGE

PARTICIPANTS TO REFLECT ON THE DIFFERENT ROLES AND IDENTITIES THEY EMBODY.

MATERIALS:

PAPER AND SHARPER PENS

ALSO ^{ENCOURGE} ~~TO~~ DEALING SELF PORTRAIT

WORKSHOP SPACE CONSIDERATIONS:

A COMFORTABLE AND QUIET SPACE FOR REFLECTION

DURATION:

APPROXIMATELY ⁵⁰ ~~30~~ MINUTES

INSTRUCTIONS:

EXPLAIN THE OBJECTIVE OF THE ACTIVITY — TO EXPLORE AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE VARIOUS IDENTITIES THAT EACH PERSON HOLDS.

WITH THE "I AM..." ALL AROUND THE PORTRAIT.

Photo 39: A4 – "I Am ..." teaching plan and reflective notes, page one.

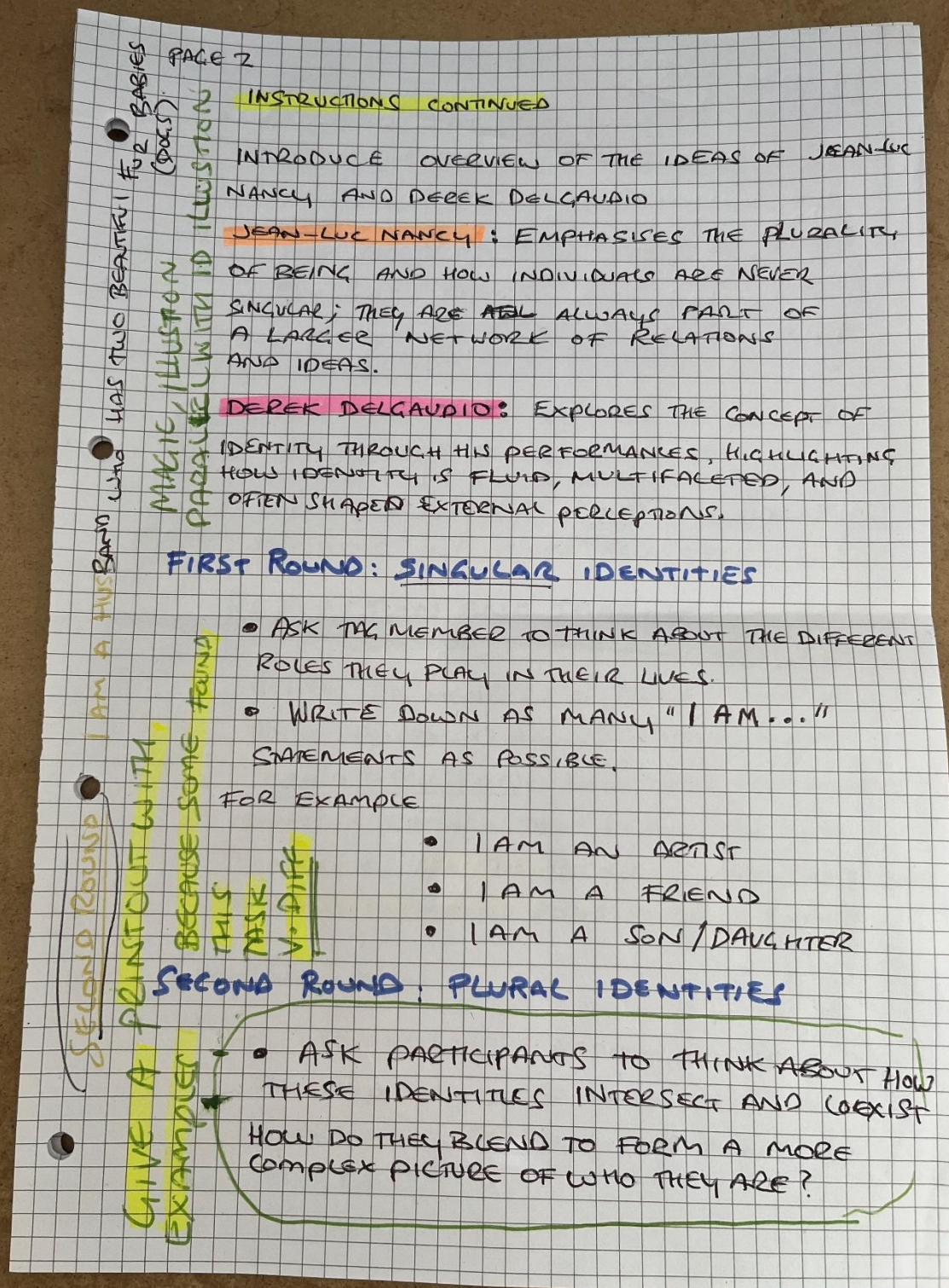


Photo 40: A5 – "I Am ..." teaching plan and reflective notes, page two.

PAGE 3

- ASK TAG TO WRITE DOWN "I AM..." STATEMENTS THAT REFLECT THIS PLURALITY. FOR EXAMPLE:

HAND OUTS
REFLECT ON

I AM AN ARTIST WHO LEARNS FROM MY CO-AUTHORS

I AM A FRIEND WHO IS ALSO A CARE-GIVER.

I AM A ARTIST WHO DRAWS INSPIRATION FROM BEING A SON/DAUGHTER

ENCOURAGE GROUP TO CONSIDER HOW THEIR IDENTITIES INFLUENCE EACH OTHER

REFLECTION AND SHARING

TRIGGER CONVERSATIONS

- INVITE TAG MEMBERS TO SHARE SOME OF THEIR PLURAL "I AM..." STATEMENTS
- GROUP DISCUSSION: HOW DOES COMBINING IDENTITIES CHANGE THEIR PERCEPTION OF THEMSELVES. DO THEY RECOGNISE NEW CONNECTIONS BETWEEN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THEIR LIVES?

CONCLUSION

- SUMMARISE THE ACTIVITY BY REITERATING THE IMPORTANCE OF ACKNOWLEDGING + EMBRACING THE MULTIPLE IDENTITIES WE HOLD.

WE ARE MORE THAN A NOUN, THERE ARE VERBS THAT ELICIT ADJECTIVES

Photo 41: A6 – "I Am ..." teaching plan and reflective notes, page three.

PAGE 4

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR TAG

- HOW DID IT FEEL TO LIST YOUR SINGULAR IDENTITIES? DID ANY SURPRISE YOU?
- WHEN COMBINING IDENTITIES, DID ~~ANY~~ ^{YOU} DISCOVER ANY NEW INSIGHTS?
- HOW DO YOU THINK THESE MULTIPLE IDENTITIES INFLUENCE YOUR INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS?

CAN YOU THINK OF A SITUATION WHERE ONE ID TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER ANOTHER? HOW DO YOU NAVIGATE SUCH SITUATIONS?

USEFUL RESOURCES

"BEING SINGULAR PLURAL" BY JEAN-LUC NANCY

AVAILABLE ON:
"IN \$ OF ITSELF" DISNEY +
DEREK DELGAUDIO

SCENARIOS?

~~THE~~ THIS ACTIVITY NOT ONLY PROMOTES SELF-AWARENESS BUT ALSO HIGHLIGHTS THE RICHNESS OF HUMAN IDENTITY, ENCOURAGING ALL MEMBERS TO APPRECIATE THE COMPLEXITY AND INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF THEIR LIVES

Photo 42: A7 – "I Am ..." teaching plan and reflective notes, page four.

EXPANDING ON "I AM..." ①
30.09.2022

THE IDEA WE ARE MORE THAN
STATIC NOUNS BUT RATHER DYNAMIC
VERBS THAT ELICIT ADJECTIVES
CAPTURES THE FLUIDITY AND ACTIVE
NATURE OF OUR IDENTITIES. THIS
PERSPECTIVE CAN FURTHER ~~ENRICH~~
ENRICH THE "I AM..." BY ENCOURAGING
THE TO THINK ABOUT THEIR IDs NOT JUST FIXED
AS LABELS BUT ONGOING ACTIONS AND
EXPERIENCES

VERBS "I AM..." ③
30.09.2022

- I AM TEACHING
- I AM LEARNING
- I AM CREATING
- I AM HELPING

"I AM..." ②
30.09.2022

NOUNS = LABELS

VERBS (ACTIONS) = THE
ONGOING, ACTIVE ASPECTS OF
OUR IDENTITIES

ADJECTIVES (QUALITIES) =
ATTRIBUTES + FEELINGS OUR ACTIONS
BRING OUT IN OURSELVES + OTHERS

ADJECTIVES "I AM..." ④
THAT DESCRIBES THE QUALITY
OR FEELING THAT ACTION EVOKES

- I AM LEARNING, AND IT MAKES
ME FEEL ~~LESS~~ INSPIRED
- I AM CREATING, AND IT MAKES
ME FEEL INNOVATIVE
- I AM HELPING, AND IT MAKES ME
FEEL COMPASSIONATE

"I AM..." ⑤

COMBINE TO HIGHLIGHT
THAT OUR ACTIONS LABELS, ACTIONS
AND QUALITIES INTERSECT AND
COEXIST.

- I AM CREATING WITH INNOVATION
AND HELPING WITH COMPASSION

30.09.2022

Photo 43: A8 – "I Am..." teaching notes.

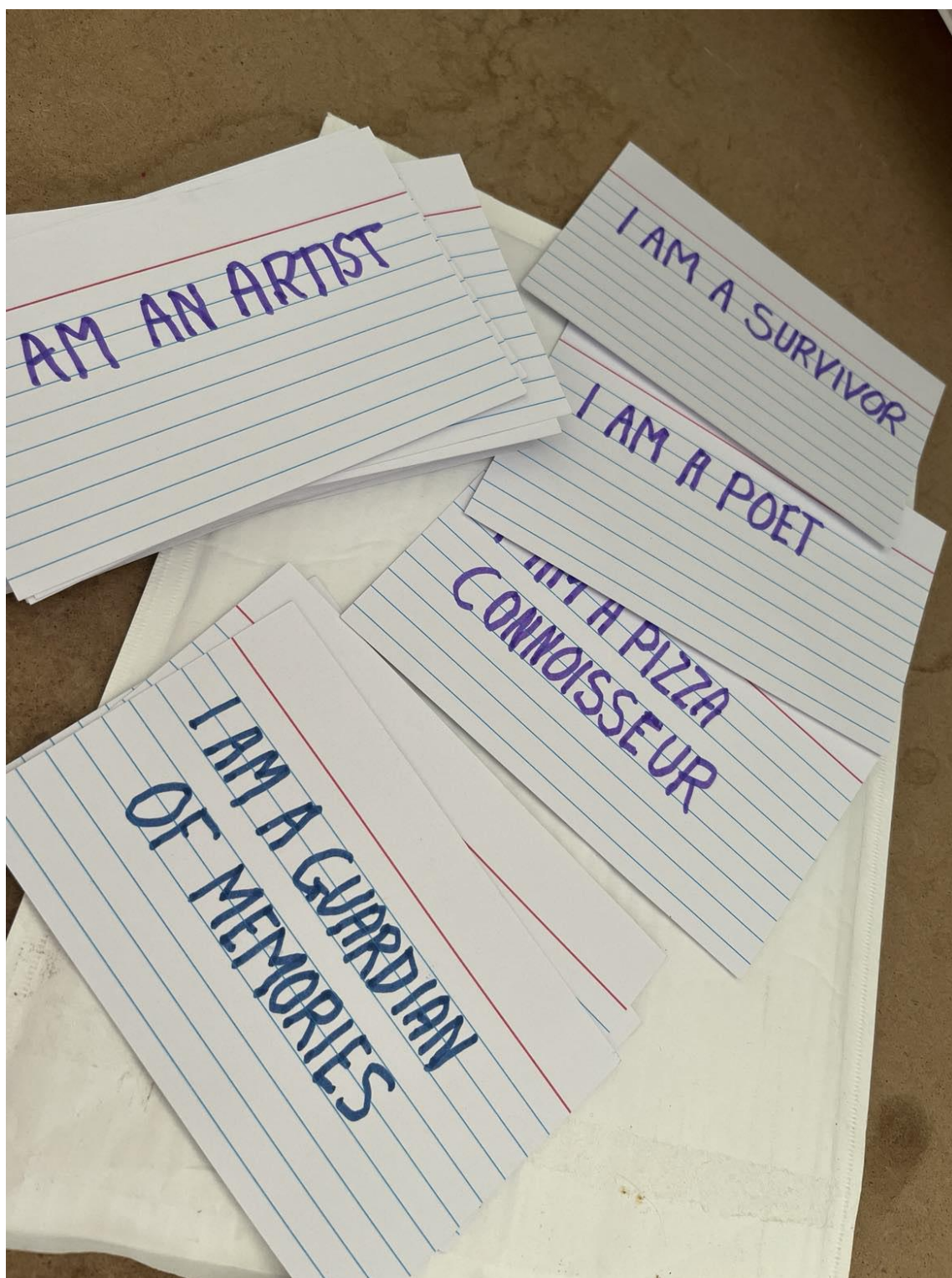


Photo 44: A9 – Teaching resource “I Am ...” flash cards.

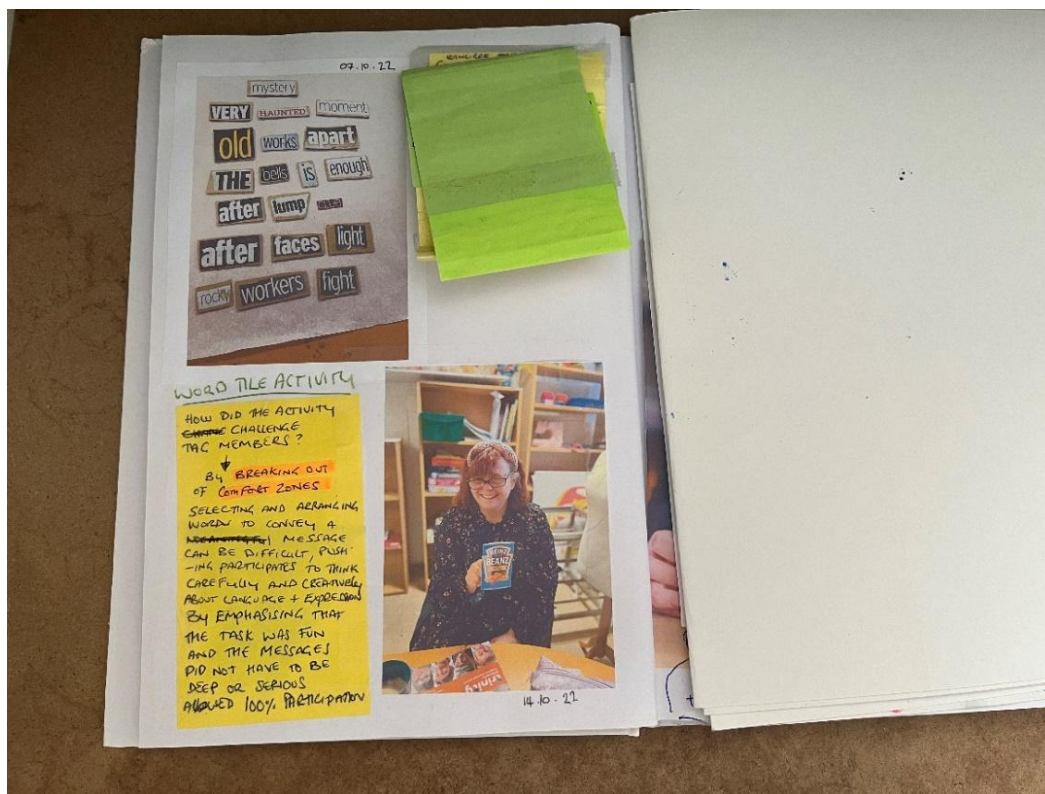


Photo 45: A10 – This photograph shows an example of the random word tile activity.

Rachel started to experiment and interact with collaged images.

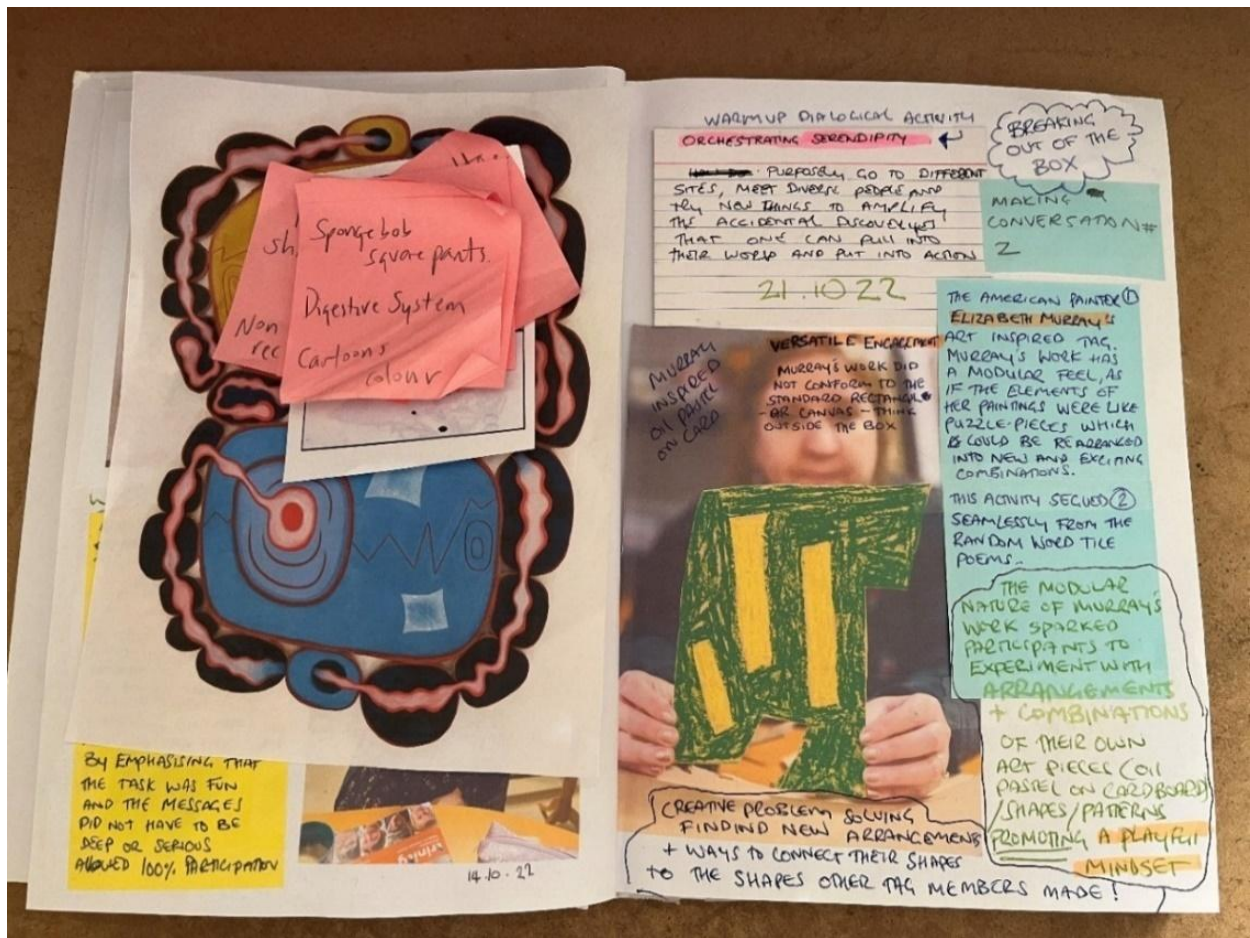


Photo 46: A11 –Lucy holding a cardboard and pastel element.

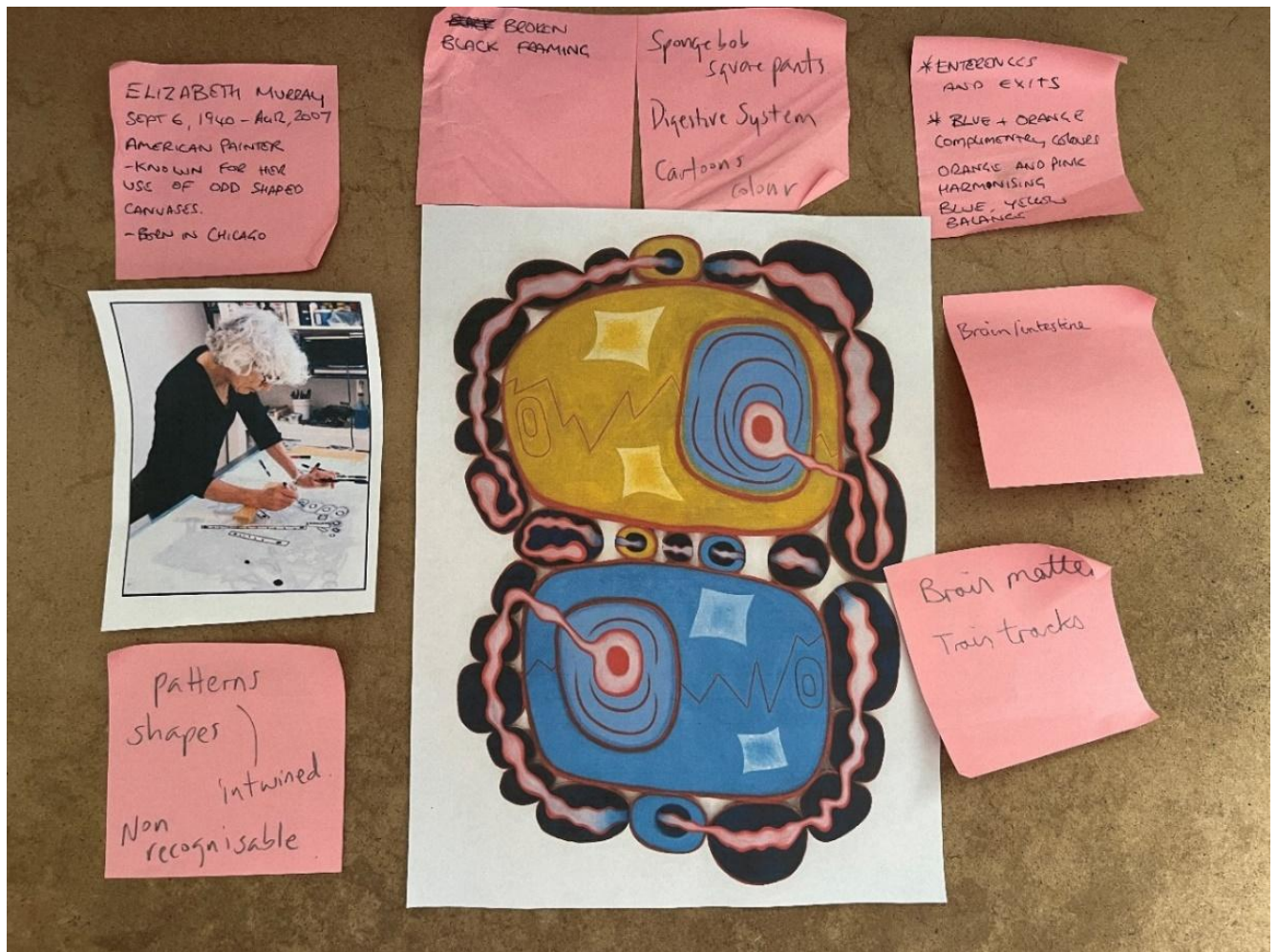


Photo 47: A12 – Elizabeth Murray inspired activity. Sticky notes show TAG members' initial reaction.

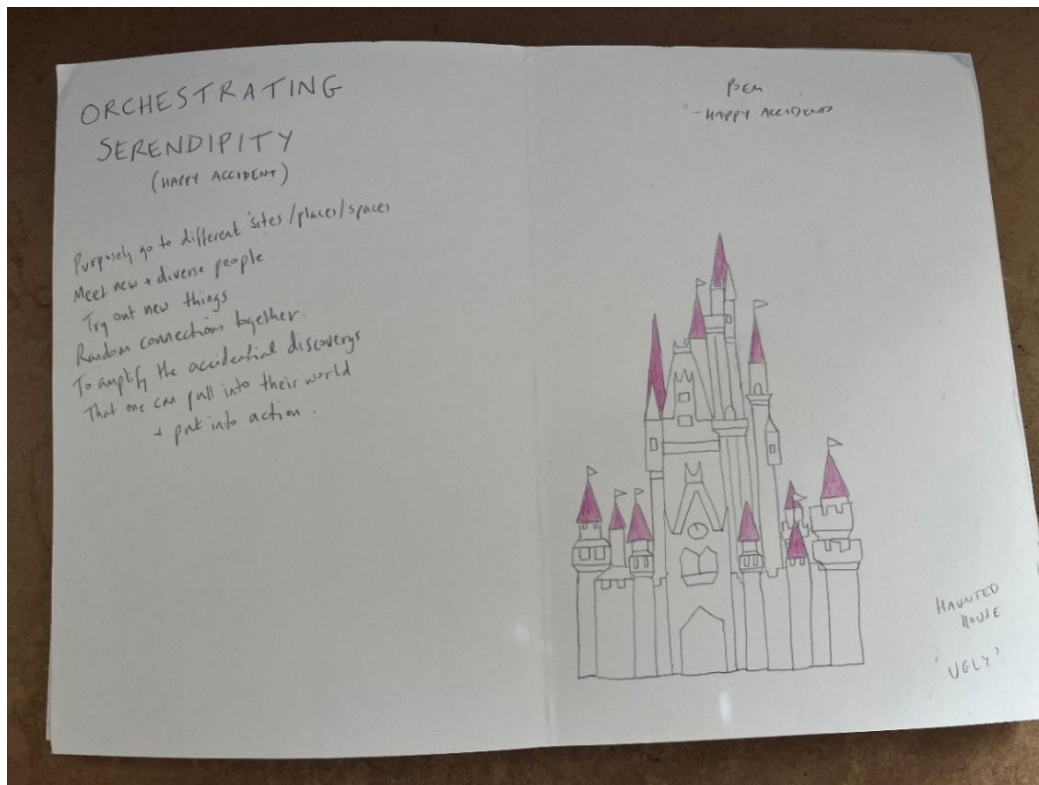


Photo 48: A13 – TAG member Lucy making notes and drawings.

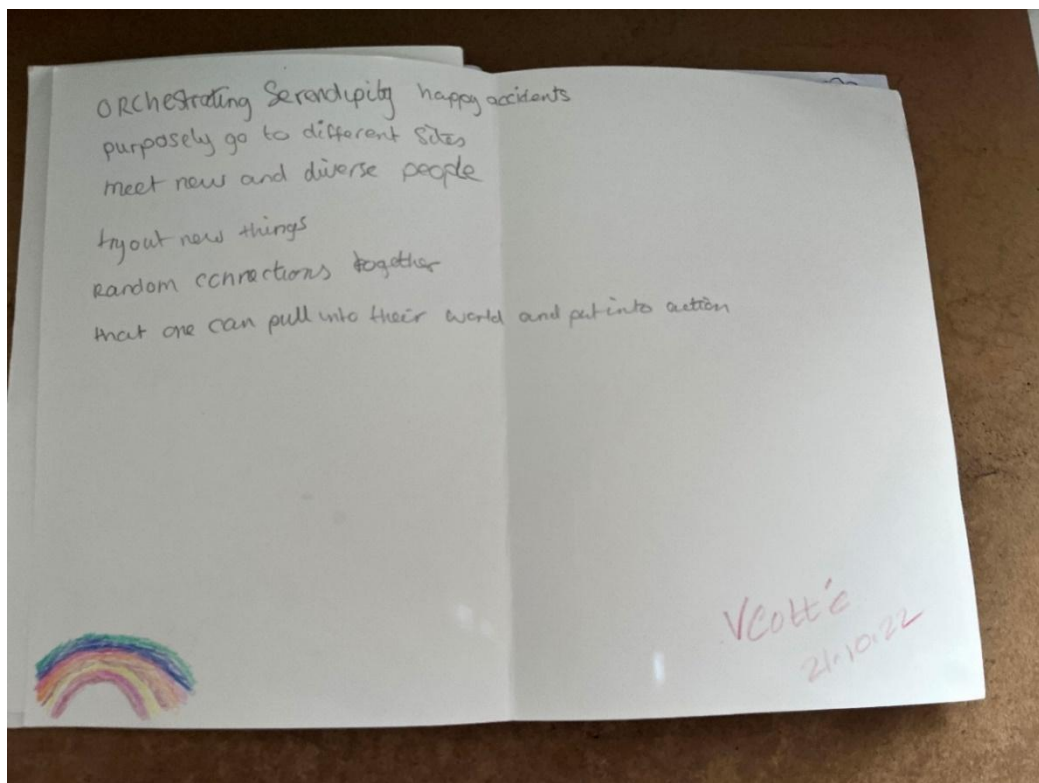


Photo 49: A14 – TAG member Vanessa making notes and drawing.

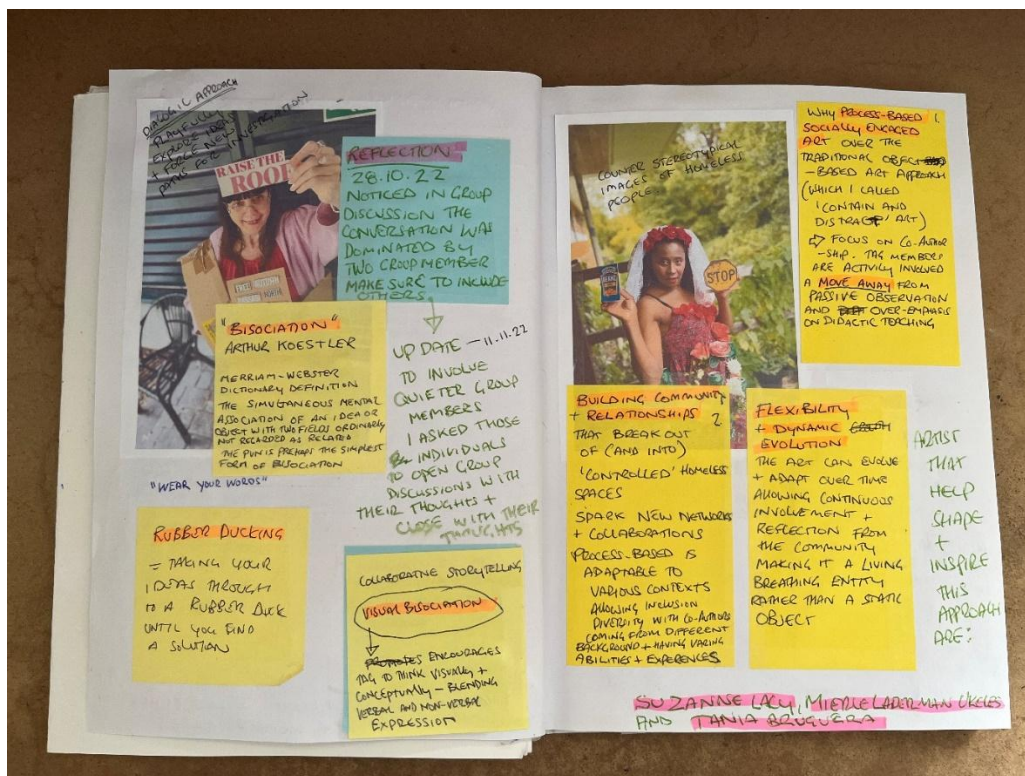


Photo 50: A15 – Word tile activity evolves into “wear your words”.

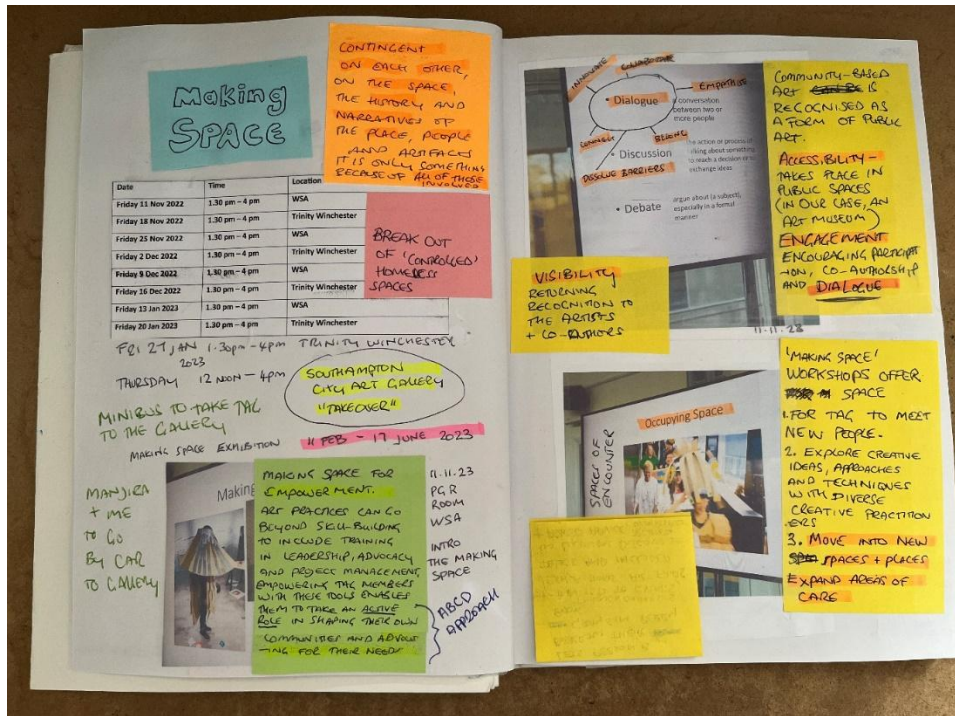


Photo 51: A16 – Making Space Happen – inaugural workshop at WSA PGR room.

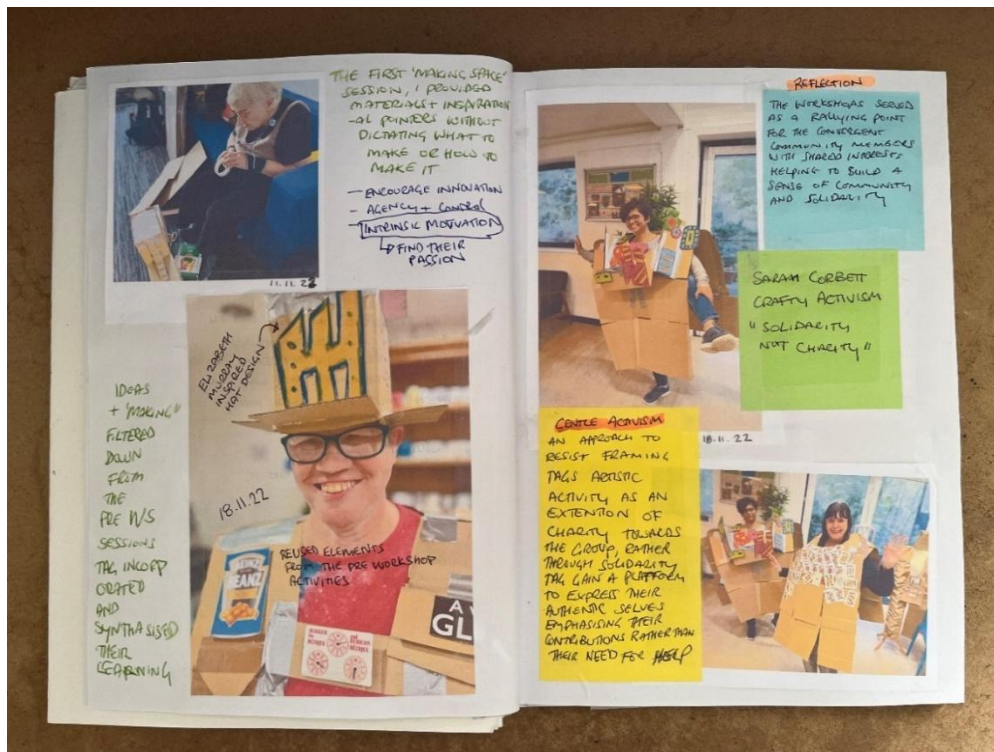


Photo 52: A17 – Convergent community making wearable arts.

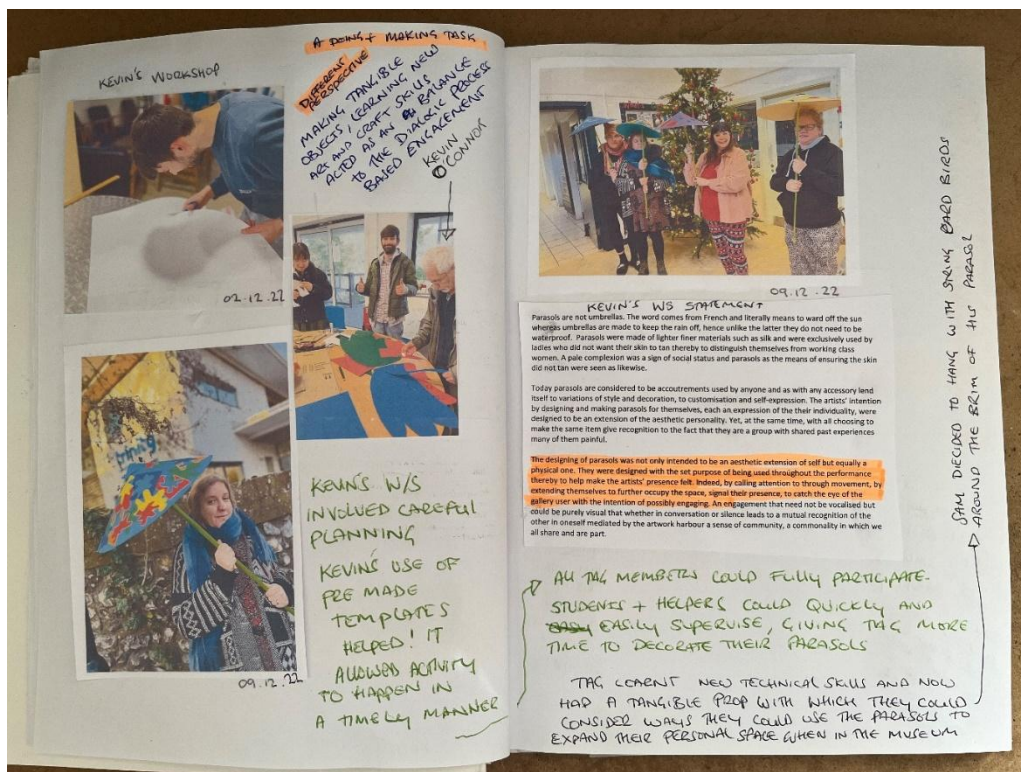


Photo 53: A18 – Kevin O'Connor's Dynamic Parasol workshop.



Photo 54: A19 – TAG member Lucy decorated her parasol inspired by Matisse cutouts.

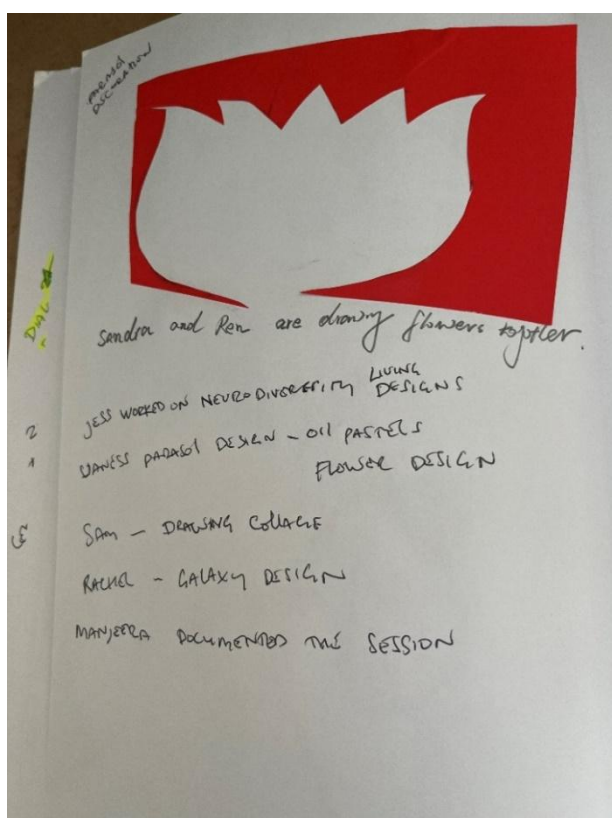


Photo 55: A20 – Sandra and Ren – red rose design.

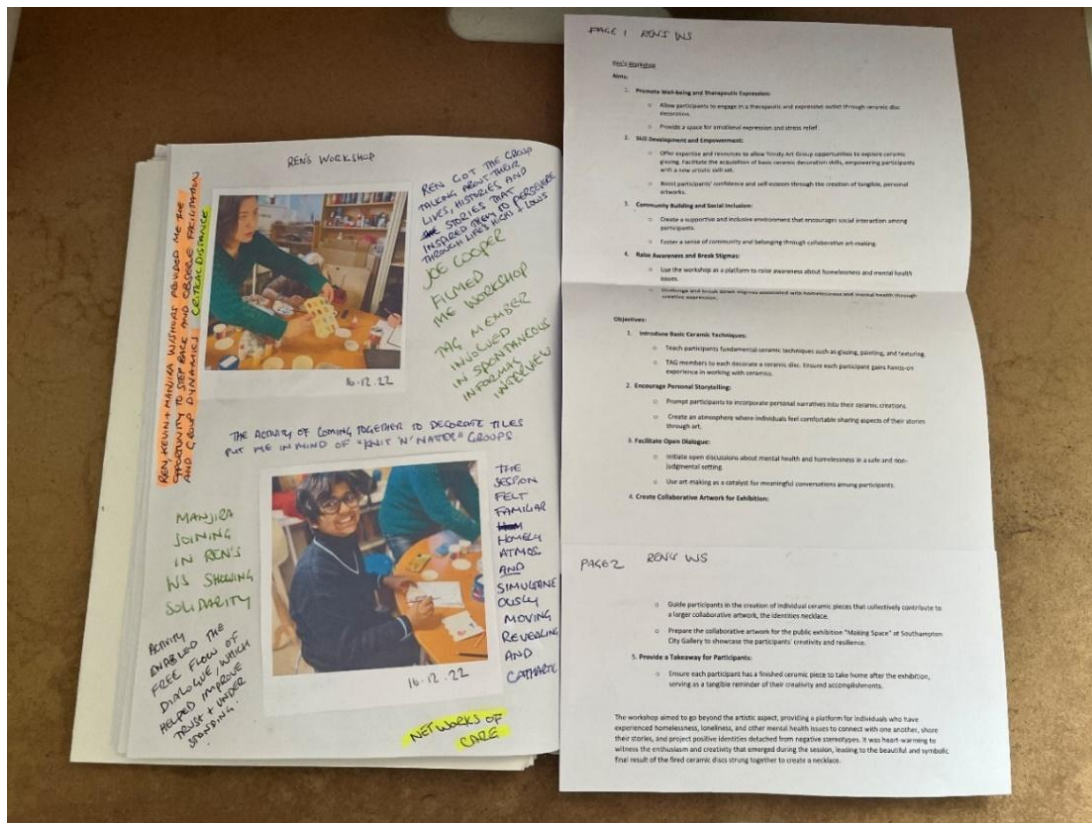


Photo 56: A21 – Ren Woolridge’s ceramic workshop.

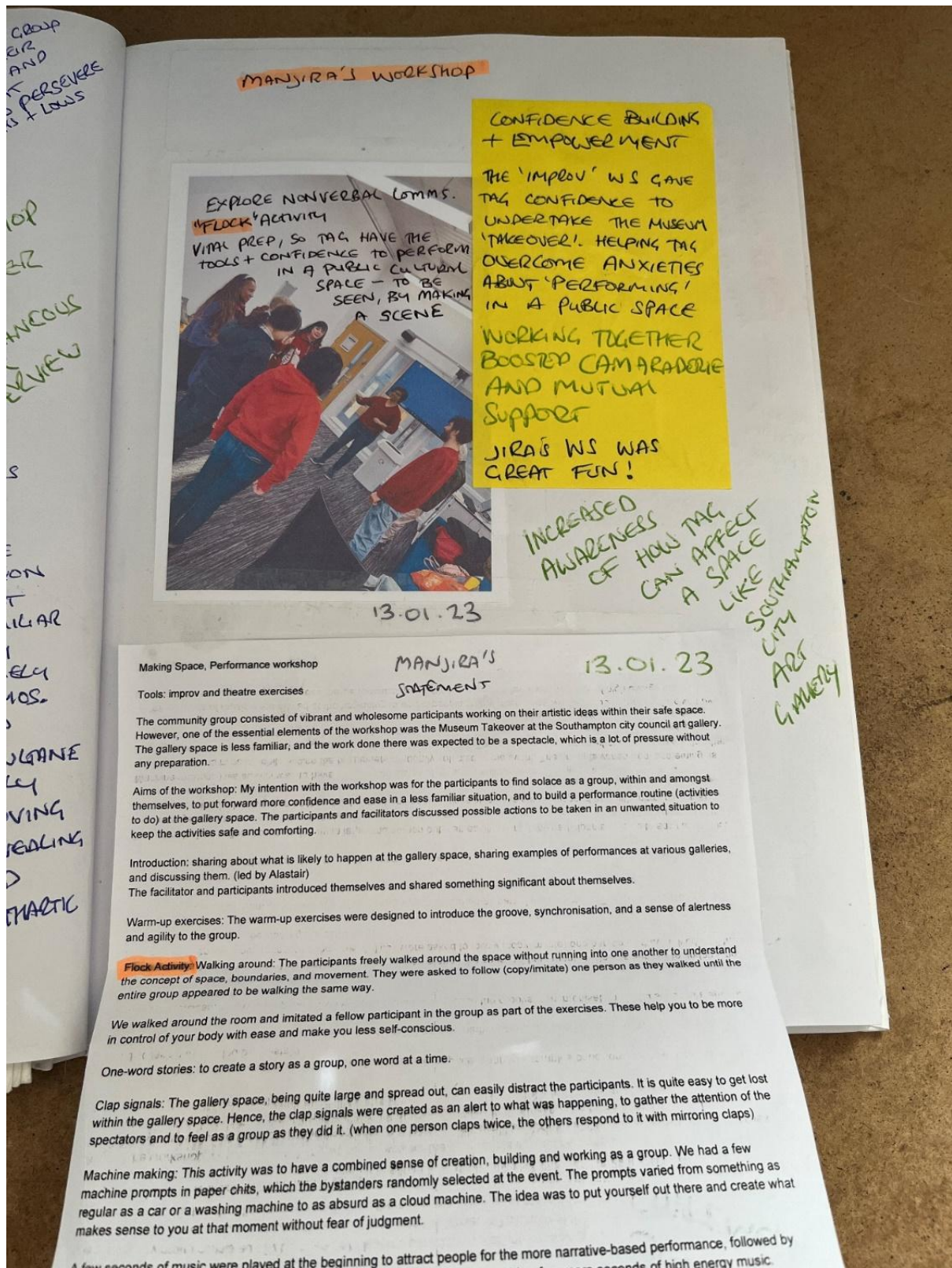


Photo 57: A22 – Manjira Mazumdar’s improv workshop at WSA PGR room.

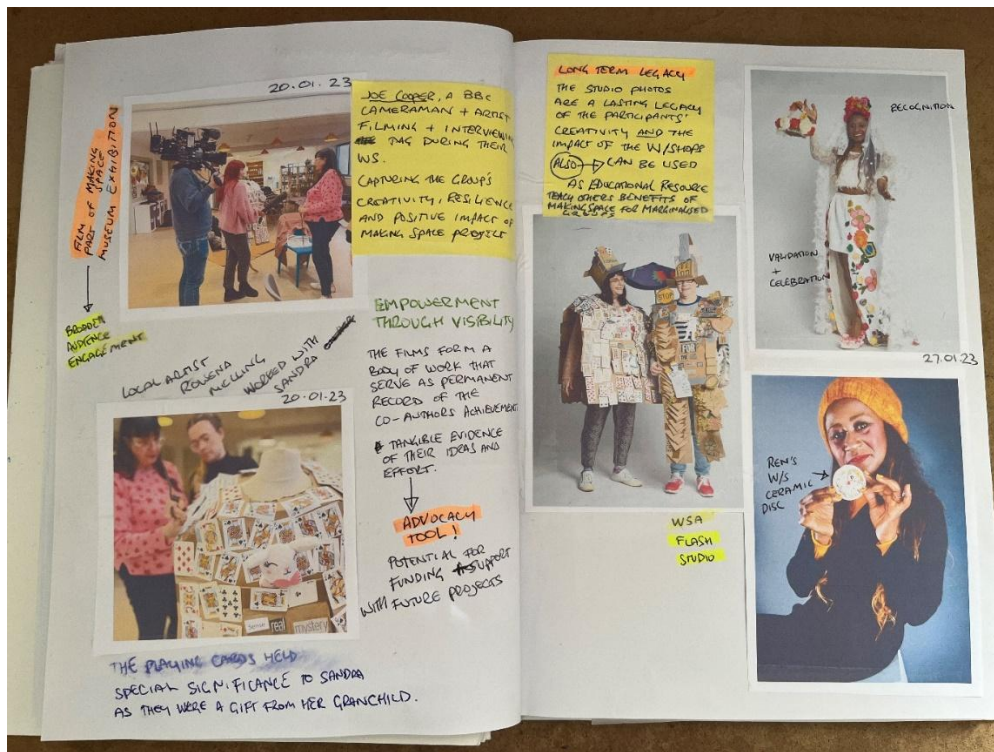


Photo 58: A23 – Documenting the wearable workshop + photoshoot in the WSA flash studios.



Photo 59: A24 – Southampton City Art Gallery (SCAG) takeover.

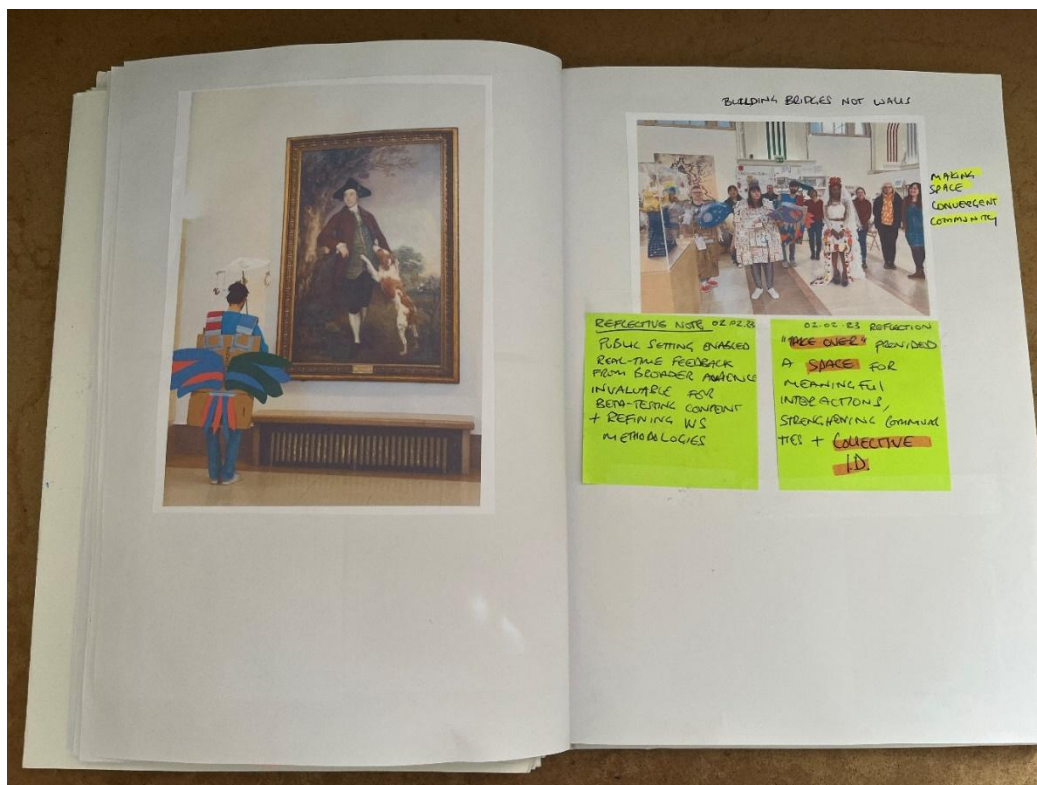


Photo 60: A25 – The takeover was at time quiet and contemplative.

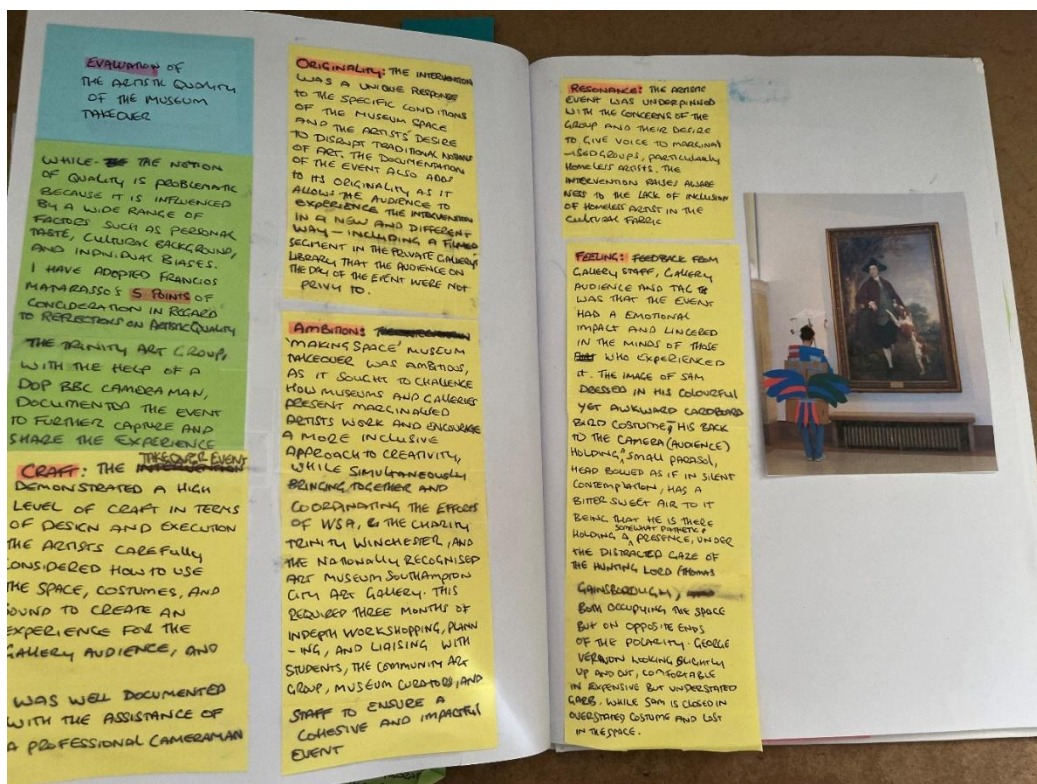


Photo 61: A26 – Two artists: Sam Hopkins and Thomas Gainsborough.

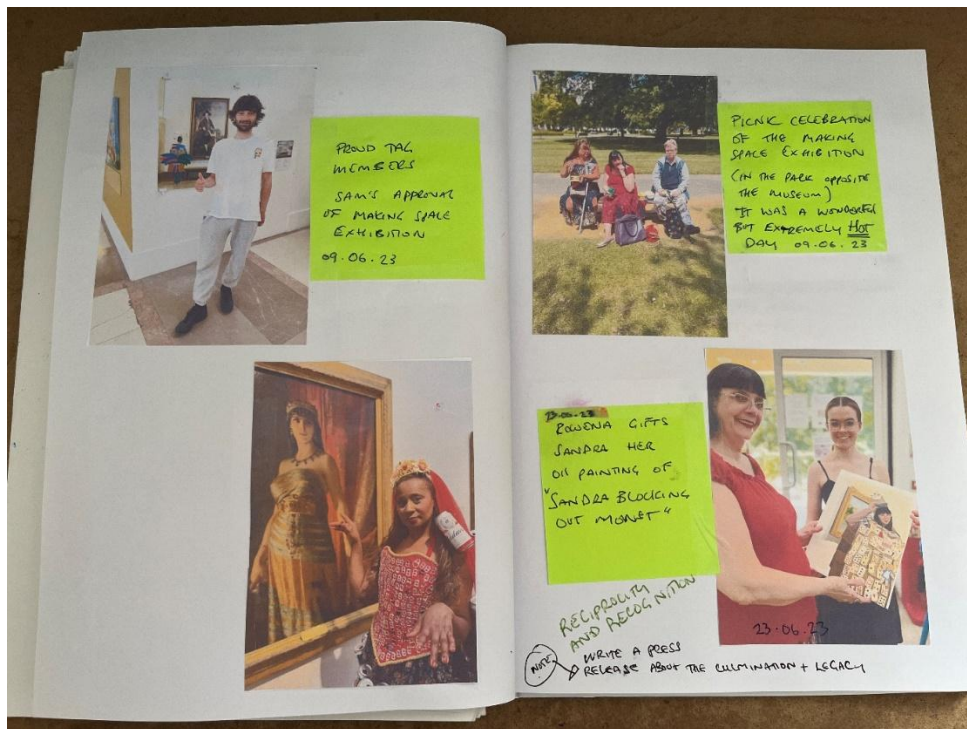


Photo 62: A27 – Exhibition celebration June 2023.

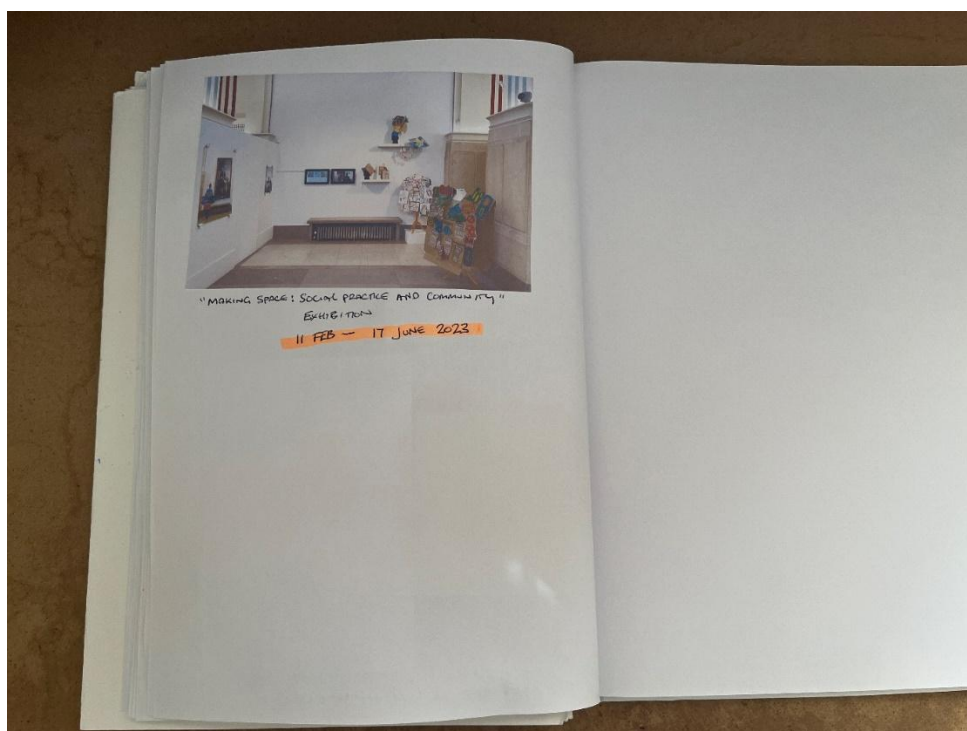


Photo 63: A28 – Installed exhibition at Southampton City Art Gallery (SCAG).

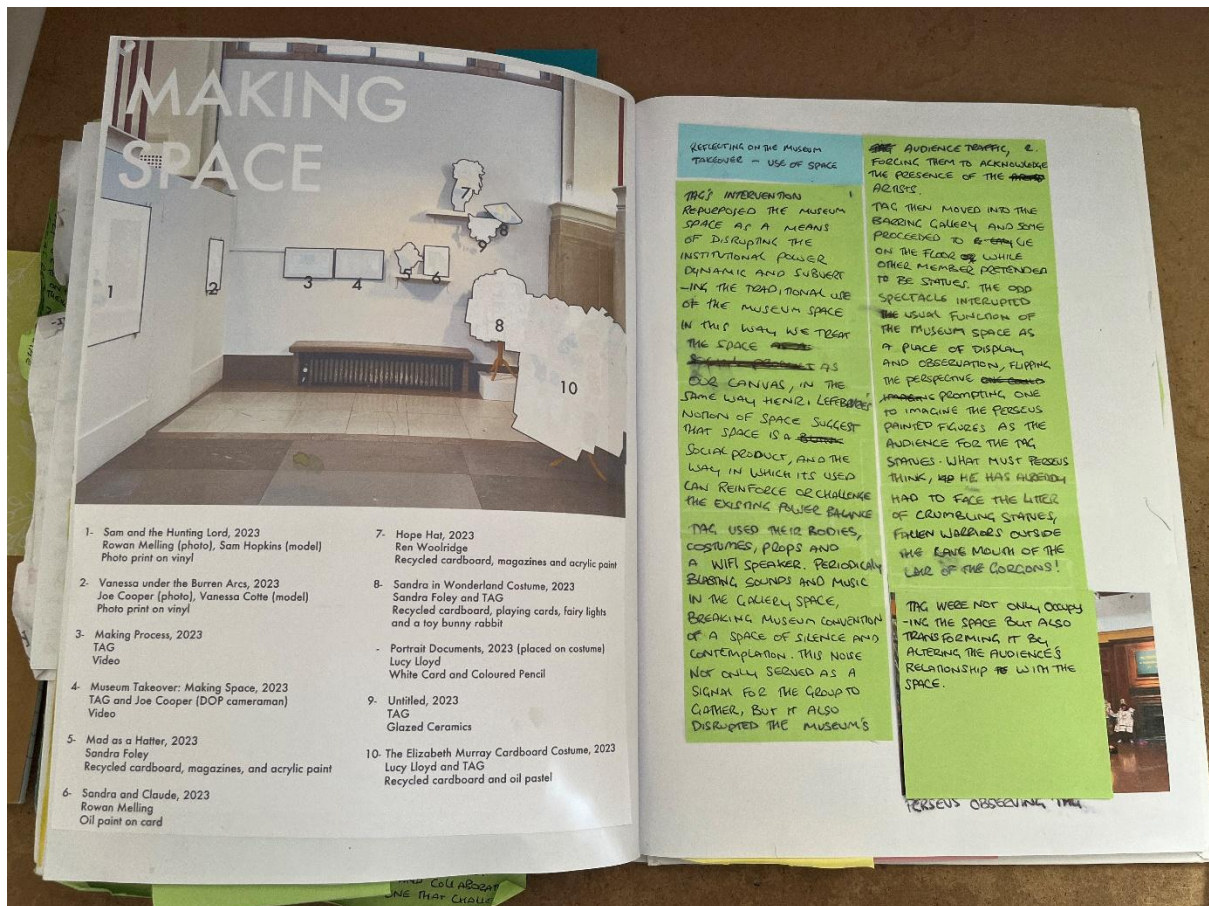


Photo 64: A29 – Artists and their work.

Appendix B : Making Space: TAG

Video of the TAG museum takeover of Southampton City Art Gallery (SCAG) on 1 February 2023.

Video by Joe Cooper.

The link below takes you to an unlisted YouTube video.

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BkkynggeMWU>

Making Human Connections

Making Space was a project that was more than just making things; it was also making things happen – making new friends and a chance to tell your story. Making Space was a space where intangible histories could be collected and shared in places and spaces that the TAG members are usually have little or no access to.

During the TAG “takeover” at Southampton City Art Gallery (SCAG), TAG artists Sandra Foley and Vanessa Cotte, along with the voice of Lucy Lloyd, took over the private gallery library. This setting offered them a quiet place to share stories and chat. By engaging in these personal exchanges, labels and assumptions were set aside, allowing the true personalities of the individuals to emerge.

Video of the TAG museum takeover of Southampton City Art Gallery (SCAG) on 1 February 2023.

Artists Sandra Foley, Vanessa Cotte and Lucy Lloyd.

Video by Joe Cooper.

Directed by Alastair Eales.

The link below takes you to an unlisted YouTube video.

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyCKYvThK58>

Appendix C: Wittgenstein's Ladder Metaphor

Text from Wittgenstein's book *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1999, p.66)³²⁰

6.53 The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science--i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy -- and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person--he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy--this method would be the only strictly correct one.

6.54 My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.) (1999)

I am mindful that Making Space predominantly focuses on TAG and their status as people experiencing homelessness while simultaneously advocating for repositioning, replacing, and removing the negative homeless label placed upon them. For this reason, I co-opt Wittgenstein's ladder metaphor and try to reemploy it for my own purposes.

In *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1999)³²¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein presents a unique view on the role and nature of philosophy. Wittgenstein contends that philosophy should focus only on statements that can be clearly articulated and empirically verified, like those in natural science. He believes that discussions of metaphysical concepts often misuse language, as they do not correspond to observable facts or logical reasoning. The philosopher's role is to highlight that these metaphysical statements are not meaningful.

Wittgenstein's propositions in the *Tractatus* aim to help the reader reach a particular understanding. Once this understanding is achieved, the reader should recognise that these propositions, like metaphysical statements, are ultimately meaningless. They serve as a ladder to clarity. After reaching this clarity, the propositions should be discarded, as they have served their purpose in demonstrating the limits of meaningful language.

So, Wittgenstein says philosophical clarity comes from recognising the limits of what can be said meaningfully and then discarding the philosophical propositions used to reach this understanding, much like discarding a ladder after using it to climb up.

In my project, the metaphor emphasises that terms like "marginalised" or "homeless" are initially necessary to identify and address specific issues or experiences. These labels help to bring attention to the unique challenges faced by these groups and can be crucial in advocating for their inclusion and support. However,

³²⁰ Wittgenstein, L. (1999) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated from the German by C. K. Ogden. Rev. edn. New York: Dover Publications.

once deeper understanding and empathy are achieved – facilitated by engaging with art that highlight individual experiences – the necessity for these labels diminishes.

At this point, the focus shifts from the category to the individual, recognising their unique identity and voice beyond any labels. I feel this transition mirrors Wittgenstein's concept where, after using propositions to achieve understanding, they are discarded because they have served their purpose. Similarly, in *Making Space*, once the narratives and experiences of the members of TAG are understood and appreciated, the emphasis on the label "homeless" can be let go. The group can then create and express themselves without being confined to a predefined identity.