



National College of Art and Design  
*A Recognised College of University College Dublin*

Critical Cultures Research Project

**How collective making produces emancipatory knowledge.**

Patsy Tyrrell

Sculpture and Expanded Practice, School of Fine Art

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## **School of Visual Culture**

I declare that this **Critical Cultures Research Project** is all my own work and that all sources have been fully acknowledged.

**Signed:** Patsy Tyrrell

**Programme / department:** BA Fine Art (Hons) Sculpture and Expanded Practice

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## **Introduction**

In this essay I am going to discuss how making is a form of knowledge production and how collective making produces emancipatory knowledge. To effectively explore this topic I will first discuss the definitions of relevant terms and concepts. From here I will go on to talk about the practices of three multi disciplinary, socially engaged artists, Evelyn Broderick, Dr. Fiona Whelan and Kate O'Shea, each who have collective making as central to their practices. The motivation for this essay stems from my own experiences of working with young people and youth workers in Rialto Youth Project as part of the Dublin 8 Neighbourhood Residency during my Studio + year; supported by NCAD and Create, the national development agency of collaborative arts. Through this residency I had first hand experience of collective making as knowledge production. Making is uniquely capable of accessing the tacit knowledge of the maker and giving that knowledge tangible form, and collective making creates a space and momentum for the generation of a collective pool of knowledge. This accessible commoning of knowledge is empowering and emancipatory in nature and can lead to real change.

## Chapter 1: Definition of terms

Artistic research is the practice of art making, “the *practice* of the arts is central to artistic research” (Biggs, 2011, pg 45). The process of making art creates the space for knowledge production to happen. The material enquiry of artistic research can incorporate knowledge and artefacts from many fields (Cotter, 2019, pg14) where the resulting form is not separable from the content (Cotter, 2019, pg 16).

The artist engaging in artistic research is trying to make clear other forms of knowledge counter to a “bias in academia towards linguistic articulation” (Cotter, 2019, pg 16) where the medium of the art object and the making of it are not secondary to the knowledge production of the research (Cotter, 2019, pg16). It is in the practice of art making where the research lies. “Research is practice, writing is a practice, doing science is a practice, [-] making art is practice” (Frayling, 1993, pg4).

Collective making is emancipatory because it resists this bias that Cotter highlights above. Emancipatory knowledge is “the ability to recognize social and political problems of injustice or inequity, to realise that things could be different, and to identify or participate in social and political change to improve people’s lives” (Chinn, 2011, p64). Similarly collective making is an act of ‘commoning’. Commoning activities are ways of being that are alternatives from state, market and capitalism (Federici, 2019, pg 93). “Commons are defined by the existence of a shared property” (Federici, 2019, pg 93) which includes “systems of knowledge” (Federici, 2019, pg 93). Collective making is a sharing of knowledge and thus an act of

commoning. Commons does not have to be a physical space as “commons are not things but social relations” (Federici, 2019, pg 94).

Knowledge as referred to in this essay aligns with philosopher John Dewey’s definition of knowledge, which has its basis in experience (Biggs, 2011, pg146). Knowledge is built from all that is “thought, felt, hoped for, willed, desired, encountered, and done” (Biggs, 2011, pg146).

The key is to stop thinking of knowledge as an abstract quasi-entity or a fixed body of propositional claims. Instead, knowledge should be a term of praise for success in a process for intelligently transforming experience (Biggs, 2011, pg 142).

When it comes to collective making as knowledge production, as with artistic research, it is the process that is central; a “process of knowing” (Biggs, 2011, pg145).

What sort of knowledge is produced by art making? What is the otherness of knowledge production through art making that distinguishes it from other forms of research and knowledge production? With art making not falling within the “hard-nosed know-how” of scientific research method but equally not falling in “its ostensible opposite, ignorance” writer Sarat Maharaj suggests we could call it “non-knowledge” (2009, pg1). This is a knowledge that is “to be found literally in the lines or words or fitfully in the gaps, hairline fractures, cracks between them—in ‘non-knowledge’ spaces” (Maharaj, 2004, pg29). Lucy Cotter in *Reclaiming Artistic Knowledge* also uses this term “non-knowledge”; it is these “open-ended forms of knowledge, which remain in flux as a subjective embodied viewing experience” (Cotter, 2019, pg 17) that is central to art making.

Collective making can make tangible our embodied knowledge. Our embodied experience of the world provides a rich and real knowledge of the world. “Man is a mind with a body, a being who can only get to the truth of things because its body is, as it were, embedded in those things” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p56). Our bodies are central to our complex interactions with the world (Johnson, 1989, pg 7) and there is a direct connection between our embodied knowledge and our rational cognitive capacities. “The brain controls the hand which informs the brain” (Frayling, 1993, pg4).

To understand language, rationality, and knowledge we must explore the way structures and patterns of our bodily interactions work their way up into our more abstractive concepts and rational processes, and thereby give us the means for cognizing things as meaningful and for reasoning about them (Johnson, 1989, pg 7).

As Donald A. Shon states in *The Reflective Practitioner*, while a practitioner may have a knowledge that they try to verbalise to another, they may struggle to communicate this knowledge articulately. Rather “they exhibit a kind of knowing-in-practice, most of which is tacit” (1983, pg viii). Tacit knowledge is an embodied knowledge that people possess as practitioners of their own lives, of their unique social perspective.



## Chapter 2: Evelyn Broderick

Evelyn Broderick is a multidisciplinary and socially engaged artist who is the current recipient of Common Ground's 'A Radical Imagination' community based residency award. Evelyn Broderick's particular interest lies in collective making as a method of creating social change and has set up *A People's Shed* in Studio 468 in Rialto and in the Lodge in Inchicore. Broderick graduated with an MA in Fine Art from Liverpool John Moores University. It was in Liverpool that she found herself working on projects surrounded by people and began to gain a deeper understanding of her need to make with others. It was also here that she began thinking about "alternative spaces for making" (Broderick cited in Tyrrell, 2022) and then started looking into The Men's Shed model (Tyrrell, 2022). She has been working with The Men's Shed in Dublin 8 and The Sister Shed in Dublin 8 but also thinks a space that isn't gendered or limited by age is more accessible for more types of people, perhaps for men who feel ill-equipped for a Men's Shed or women who need encouragement to try working with timber and tools (Dalby, 2022).

These spaces host local drop-in sessions where people can make, exchange skills, explore materials and through this collective making and sharing, think, learn and generate collective knowledge. She speaks of making as an important language that everyone should be able to utilise (Tyrrell, 2022). In Broderick's own making journey she talks about the relief of making and of finding the right materials through which her ideas can manifest (Tyrrell, 2022). She is driven to create a space where people can learn skills and feel free to make, thus supporting the knowledge created

through making and supporting the knowledge people bring to the space. Everyone should feel free to make (Tyrrell, 2022).

## **Material Thinking**

Broderick's practice is very much rooted in thinking through making and "hand head coordination" (Broderick cited in Tyrrell, 2022). While she began her career with an undergraduate in painting, it wasn't until the final year of her undergraduate degree that she started working with wax and timber that things quickly started to take form. The making was a language that made more sense to her (Tyrrell, 2022). When I asked where this compulsion to make comes from, Broderick spoke about growing up surrounded by making.

It was just something that was always done in the house. [-] Always seeing something being built. [-] You just made things, because we could - because dad had the workshop. [-] There was always making around the house. [-] Everything that was broken was repaired [-] You just repair what you have and make what you don't have (Broderick cited in Tyrrell, 2022).

Being surrounded by making and being encouraged to make allowed Broderick to learn the language of making that she says not everybody has access to (Tyrrell, 2022). "It was never in my mind that you wouldn't MAKE things" (Broderick cited in Tyrrell, 2022). This haptic knowledge is very much part of her practice now. She describes the frustration she experienced during her undergraduate degree when she was brimming with thoughts and ideas but couldn't find a way she wanted to put them onto a canvas. It was when she started making with materials that her embodied knowledge emerged through the making (Tyrrell, 2022).

Anthropologist Tim Ingold touches on this process of knowledge production when he refers to making as a "procession along a path rather than a building up of parts into

a predetermined whole” (2013, p110). The maker is thinking and learning through the material haptically. “Even if the maker has a form in mind, it is not this form that creates the work. It is the engagement with materials” (Ingold, 2013, p22). Not only does the end result depend on the process of making rather than a rational predetermined plan (Ingold, 2013, pg110) but in *A People’s Shed* the resulting object is not more important than the making (Tyrrell, 2022).

Thinking through making with materials can provide a way of processing and producing knowledge that otherwise cannot be communicated through articulation (Ingold, 2013, p111). The tacit knowledge that a person holds should be considered as valuable as the rational academic knowledge that they may not have access to, and making can be a way of processing this knowledge. Ingold suggests that thinking through making is an alternative to articulation which he defines as “the assembly or concatenation of rigid elements, bolted at the joints into a larger totality” (2013, p110) which although rational is an “enemy of sentience”(2013, p111).

To only articulate this knowledge, rather than searching for and conveying it through use of materials, would only be done with “great difficulty and potential loss of meaning” (Ingold, 2013, p111). Through *A People’s Shed*, individuals can have access to tools and materials. Through making and developing a feeling and understanding of the making, a space is created in which individuals can think through their embodied knowledge, through the haptic making process that Ingold describes.

## **Accessible knowledge production**

Broderick's socially-engaged practice is tethered completely to the power of collective making to produce emancipatory knowledge. Her main interest lies in skill sharing and creating an accessible space for this to happen, for people to make freely, and to be supported in their making. She feels that we all carry a huge weight created by the deeply rooted belief that in order to do something, we have to be a master of it (Tyrrell, 2022) but that really "being okay at it is just as good because you get that feeling of doing it" (Broderick cited in Tyrrell 2022). Broderick wants to create spaces that "prompt other ways of working" (Broderick cited in Tyrrell 2022) so that people can get a feel for making and learn the language of making in an environment alternative to their experiences of learning in schools. In Broderick's experience, many individuals have had terrible experiences of school and learning, a fact that is brought into relief when they enter spaces in which they are encouraged to learn something new. There is a resistance there that can slowly be changed through collective encouragement and support (Tyrrell, 2022). This accessible and pedagogical approach to making is empowering and emancipatory. Having access to making opens individuals up to a haptic process of thinking that many don't have an access to, or which, at the very least, they are hesitant and shy about attempting (Tyrrell, 2022).

This circular group building of knowledge began early in Broderick's life with learning and playing music in traditional sessions. She spoke to me about how she would go to her neighbour to learn the tin-whistle with all the other children on the green, which would become the beginning of her first collective learning and making experience (Tyrrell, 2022). While this differs in medium to her current projects with *A People's Shed*

it is a foreshadowing of the commoning of making that takes form in her current practice. Having the time and space to just make, with no pressure placed on the outcome or the purpose of making, gives individuals the opportunity to learn the language of making. This access and space is the impetus for the project. When talking about her visions for *A People's Shed*, Broderick describes "spaces that would be filled with material and with local knowledge of local makers, people who are interested in certain things, people who have knowledge of materials. [-] A really open space where people could make whatever you wanted" (Broderick cited in Tyrrell).

Collective making is a way of honouring the knowledge that already exists within a group. Each person could have an entirely different knowledge base and experience and within a group this knowledge has space to come forth through skill sharing. Not only is there space for the knowledge of the individual to be supported, but with a group where there are many forms of knowledge, the threads between these knowledges will emerge through collective making. On describing this process, Broderick says that "The conversation usually starts with, 'what are the skills in the room?'" (Broderick cited in Tyrrell, 2022). This question is met with initial resistance "Ah sure I've no skills" (Broderick cited in Tyrrell, 2022) but then "somebody will say 'ah well you do that don't you? You do a bit of that'" (Broderick cited in Tyrrell, 2022) and from there individuals might slowly begin exchanging skills and supporting each other. "The more people are doing it, like 'ah I'll give it a try' [-] I think it's then creating an atmosphere for people to feel that they can" (Broderick cited in Tyrrell, 2022). Broderick describes this process when one of the people in the group had an idea for making crochet butterflies and the group then learnt how to do it together. "The one person showed the five people who

already could crochet how to do the butterfly and the five showed the rest of the group” (Broderick cited in Tyrrell, 2022).

Creating a space where people have access to materials, tools and the collective skills in the room means creating an alternative pedagogical space that is accessible and full of possibilities.

### **Chapter 3: Dr. Fiona Whelan**

Dr. Fiona Whelan is an artist, writer and lecturer. Whelan has a socially engaged art practice that involves durational projects and collective processes through making, writing and dialogue. One such project was *Policing Dialogues* which took place over a period of four years from 2007 to 2011. This project was undertaken by *What's The Story?* collective, a collective made up of artist Fiona Whelan, youth workers and young people from Rialto Youth Project in Dublin 8. Through *Policing Dialogues*, *What's The Story?* collective set out to explore young people's feelings of powerlessness in their interactions with the Gardaí. This durational collaborative process consisted of several phases, building from a private research phase to the resulting public iterations and events. While this process is too rich and nuanced to unpack fully in this essay I will touch on some of the elements of this project that illustrate how collective making can produce emancipatory knowledge - although there are many more.

#### **Collective power.**

The process of the *Policing Dialogues* project involved the collection and sharing of personal stories from each participant. The reading of these stories was done after some serious deep thought about the best ways to share these stories and many critical considerations were made (Whelan, 2014, pg 92). It was decided that each person would read a story out loud at any time. Nobody would ask or guess whose story was whose, and the group would not be broken up until every story had been

read. The result was a powerful space in which the collective participation created a collective power and generated a pool of deep knowledge of experience.

Although most stories reflected a deep sense of individual powerlessness, there was a feeling that by reading these accounts aloud together, a collective power was being harnessed momentarily in the room (Whelan, 2014, pg 96).

As each person hands themselves over to the vulnerability of sharing such personal stories fraught with trauma, there is the realisation that the risk of being vulnerable in a group is respected and met with support and compassion. "Hearing young people reflect on that moment, describing it as one where we had taken the same risk" (Whelan, 2014, pg 96). This collective strength is powerful. The pool of knowledge that is created here, the knowledge of each other's experiences and how they relate to one's own experiences begins the shaping of an image of the world that is different to the singular image you hold on your own. Slowly the fabric of your reality is enriched as it is now built with the realities of others. This capacity for connection with other people that collective making and dialogue encourages can lead to what Grant Kester terms a "connected knowledge" (Kester, 2004 pg 6).

Rather than entering into communicative exchange with the goal of representing "self" through the advancement of already formed opinions and judgments, a connected knowledge is grounded in our capacity to identify with other people (Kester, 2004, pg6).

Jeanne Van Heeswijk speaks of this power of collectivity when she describes the merit of the arts in political imaginaries;

To me the investigative and exploratory qualities of the arts should serve a process in which we can learn collectively how we can engage and act upon the world in order to renegotiate the conditions of our existence (2020).

While art may usually engage with the viewer as a finished art object and while the art object may ignite insight and new perspectives (Scrivener, 2002), the collective process ignites engagement in the artistic process in an alternative way. The



collective making becomes the work itself. This “generative process”, “can help us speak and imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities and official discourse” (Kester, 2004, pg2).

### **Alternative ways of seeing.**

Collective making has the power to produce emancipatory knowledge by revealing different lived experiences and realities and beginning to suggest and create alternative ways of being/seeing. Fiona Whelan speaks of her personal realisation of the reality of the young mens’ interactions with the Gardai in the neighbourhood when she observed it first hand.

I understood that for many young people, being stopped by the police had become normal and expected behaviour. I remember clearly my first experience of the constant surveillance that some young people in Rialto undergo. When working with a group of 14 to 16 year old young men in Fatima when I had just started in Rialto, we took a tour around the area, discussing the suitability and positioning of certain walls for a mural we were developing. Standing at the local well-known symbolic site of the arch, we stood looking above it to the visually prominent wall space, considering dimensions, when two Gardai approached and interrogated the young men as to their reason for standing around. Most shocking to me, observing this interaction, was how completely normal an experience it was; it was not mentioned after the Gardai left and never referred to again - just a regular part of life (Whelan, 2014, pg 187).

How normal this interaction was for the young men was equally abnormal for Fiona Whelan and it serves to starkly highlight the difference of reality of each normal. It is realities like this one that can be shaken and reconfigured by collective making. That making together can serve to develop knowledge that can free you from how you view the world around you and what you accept as normal and “connect a level of reality kept apart from one another” (Bourriaud, 2002, pg 8). Grant Kester speaks of this radical emancipatory change that art making can create as “a kind of somatic epiphany that catapults the viewer outside of the familiar boundaries of a common

language, existing modes of representation, and even their own sense of self” (Kester, 2004, pg3).

Can collective making restructure a way of seeing and generate a new way of knowing how the world could be? In the instance that Whelan describes above, the young men didn’t question their reality, they hadn’t considered or experienced an alternative way in which that interaction could have occurred, or not occurred. This was such a normal occurrence for them, but changing their way of seeing, and changing the way of seeing for the Gardai involved could in turn work to build real change. This is where collective art making can begin producing emancipatory knowledge.

In this sense, artworks offer perspectives or ways of seeing. These perspectives may concern, for example, the way the World was, is, or might be. So far I have not discussed the ability of works of art to affect our perception, emotion and aesthetic sensibility. Because artworks have the potential to arouse such responses we are able to associate sensation and feelings with how things were, are, or might be. In this sense, artworks provide both ways of seeing and ways of being” (Scrivener, 2002, pg11).

### **Collective research.**

Collective making can produce emancipatory knowledge as it provides an accessible means of knowledge production that places the participants at the centre of the research, as researchers of their own realities. “For young people, their expertise would lie in their connection to the present tense, their own personal lived experience and that should in turn steer the future direction and potential subject matter of the project” (Whelan, 2014, pg 65).

By working collectively with people who have direct insight into and experience with the specific nature of their own lived realities of social inequality and abuses of power you can generate a knowledge of systematic faults much richer and more true than an outside analysis or research attempts (Lindqvist, 1979, pg4).

It is important to mention that this form of collective making does not just come about naturally with the forming of groups. Artist Dr. Fiona Whelan is extremely skilled in deep listening and care that creates a space of trust that makes people feel safe to engage in this process. A primary method of research for Whelan during the process of research for *Policing Dialogues* was gathering stories which involved a careful building of trust within the collective (Whelan, 2014).

Whelan's role as artist here is caught in a tension between the young people in this instance, the youth workers and the institution of power and facilitating a space for deep learning and research that is beneficial for all involved, while also getting to the heart of the matter. Whelan does this in a way that engages each individual with respect and care but also creates an effective body of work that can go forward to instigate social change. This deep listening and emotional labour combined with the collective nature of the process can result in the production and structuring of embodied knowledge. Collective making of this kind has the potential to create emancipatory knowledge in each individual participant. These individuals are given structures through which to express their own unique stories, which are listened to, acknowledged and given a place within a larger project. This accessible form of processing and articulating their tacit knowledge is affirmative and empowering.

While seeing one's own story in print for the first time presents a challenge to the storyteller, the experience also has the potential to heighten a person's sense of control

over their experiences, offering a sense that the world is within their grasp (Whelan pg, 2014, pg 90).

It is emancipatory in that the process is built upon and reliant on each individual's participation and contribution. They are all equal players. In addition to this, as each story is listened to a new understanding is given to the overall picture. Each story adds to the fabric of a building description of the social reality.

For what matters is how stories enable us to regain some purchase over the events that confound us, humble us, and leave us helpless, salvaging a sense that we have some say in the way our lives unfold. In telling a story we renew our faith that the world is within our grasp (Jackson cited in Whelan, 2014, pg 90).

In this way, collective making is a pedagogical process that is accessible to the participants and creates learning experience for all involved. This cyclical form of research is at the heart of collective making, and can be used as a unique and powerful tool for social change and achieving individual emancipatory knowledge production.

## Chapter 4: Kate O'Shea

Kate O'Shea is a multi-disciplinary, socially engaged artist who works with print, large scale installation and publishing. The core thread of her work is creating interconnection between people in a way to radically disrupt the capitalist norm of individuality and create an alternative way of working together, building networks of solidarity. O'Shea was awarded the *Just City - Counter Narrative Neighbourhood Residency Award* from 2020 to 2022 by Common Ground. O'Shea began this residency initially from home (due to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown) working on her project *How Much Is Enough?* and then in Studio 468 in Rialto, Dublin 8. To begin to create a connection to the area and to build a collaborative and collective space she started The *Just City Reading Group* which linked herself to people in Rialto and to others internationally and across Ireland. The *Just City Reading Group* organically grew and established itself as *The Just City Collective* (Geoghan, 2023, pg18).

Further on in her residency, she exhibited *Half Way to Falling* in Cork in early 2021 and again on culture night from Studio 468 inviting people to respond to housing and development across Dublin 8. She also co-curated a series of online talks *Networks of Solidarity* with writer Enya Moore from the *Just City Collective*. This short description of some of Kate O'Shea's work serves to paint a picture of some of the iterations of her practice. From here I will try to unpack the depth and richness of the real substance of her practice and all that exists within the threads of her process.

In the soon to be published book written in response to Kate O' Shea's residency in Studio 468, Siobhán Geoghegan and Catherine Marshall of *Common Ground* reflect on the *Just City* residency brief.

We wanted the brief, in particular, to respond to the way in which the urban and social fabric of inner-city Dublin is currently threatened and disrupted through the acquisition, development and management of public housing, private rented accommodation and decreased public space (2023, pg 9).

While thinking about this brief and the deep relational collective making that O'Shea engages with in her practice I am reminded of Karen Till and the emphasis she puts on the importance of the "lived realities" of inhabitants when it comes to planning for development and change.

A deeper appreciation of the lived realities of inhabitants of the city including cultural identities, dynamics of the everyday and symbolic worlds would enable planners, policy makers, and urban theorists to consider more appropriate and sustainable urban transformations than those that continue to legitimate disciplinary forms of governmentality. (Till, 2012, pg 4)

How do you develop an understanding of the lived realities of community members? How can you access the embodied knowledge the inhabitants hold of their own lived experience, or rather how do the inhabitants generate this knowledge into tangible forms in order to create change? I would suggest collective making.

### **Making and the art object.**

At the beginning of the *Just City* residency Kate O' Shea was facing the then unique reality of lockdown and the challenge of creating spaces for collective making without physical access to people. O'Shea managed to use this opportunity to create a new way of making together by combining two threads of her practice together; making and gifting back.

After creating the *Just City* reading group, which slowly built solidarity amongst an international collective, (Geoghegan, 2023, pg18) O'Shea asked the members to send her their handwritten notes. The handwritten notes were then used as material for creating digital prints which O'Shea shared back to the group. These prints were then made into objects to fill the blank canvas of Studio 468 once O'Shea was able to take up residence physically (Geoghegan, 2023, pg 17). The objects included large rolls of paper prints, printed cups, plates, glasses, cake stands and bedding - thus physically building up the fabric of the reality of the world around each member of the collective and community, an accumulative knowledge given tangible form. The art object exists to embody the knowledge produced in the making of it providing "ways of seeing and ways of being in relation to what is, was, or might be" (Scrivener, 2002, pg12). This process was continued in the studio in a more Dublin 8 specific context as objects were then made from conversations that happened within the studio. The physical objects were often gifted back to the people whose contributions had helped in the creation of them (Tyrrell, 2023).

In this practice the making and the art object have multi faceted roles. The making of the object serves to offer physical and visual form to the conversation and gifting it back to the person serves to forge and strengthen the collaborative relationship.

With the reading group asking people to send me their handwriting and send me their thoughts and then turning that into a print and gifting it back was a way of trying to have a conversation through making. [-] The material becomes a thread that shows that you are listening and understanding and valuing it but it's also making it more tangible (O'Shea cited in Tyrrell 2023).

In this instance this form of collective making is working to produce and support emancipatory knowledge as "It is all linking into creating alternative ways of

people relating to each other and making together” (O’Shea cited in Tyrrell 2023). The making supports the building of relationships and networks of support and collaboration. “Sharing the artworks back to the group, this cycle created its own energy and further broke down boundaries of knowledge production” (Till cited in Geoghegan, 2023, pg 18). Making collectively honours the embodied knowledge of the participants and provides structure and support to this knowledge. “The making is really a way of showing [-] that you think this is really important and worth the time and space to make. [-] And it’s also a way of valuing other ways of knowledge making (O’Shea cited in Tyrrell 2023). The resulting object is also a physical, visual and archivable form of, and representation of, the collaborative process and knowledge shared (Tyrrell, 2023).

O’Shea also speaks of making as a way to counter paralysis and to get out of her own head. The making and production of art objects seeds the next step, the next conversation, the next realisation and insight. This is true in her individual process but O’Shea really implements this strategy collectively and to launch herself into the collective.

Intuitively it was to avoid paralysis. [-] I want something to show, I want to make something, literally I want to make something happen or make something outside of my head or outside of someone else’s head (O’Shea cited in Tyrrell 2023).

This applies similarly to physical printmaking. “There is a physicality of printmaking that allows people to [-] get out of their heads” (O’Shea cited in Tyrrell 2023). Once the process has started and there is an accumulation of visual material generated, the fabric of the knowledge in the room can become visible and in turn provide a foundation on which to build new knowledge. In addition to this the physical process



of printmaking and print-making creates an alternative dynamic than more usual linear verbal conversations (Tyrrell, 2023). The physical making, and in a room with other people printmaking together offers “a potential to get out of your set ways of thinking and your set ideas [-] or maybe potential for new knowledge to be made” (O’Shea cited in Tyrrell, 2023).

By making and sharing the thing that is made, and supporting others to make, O’Shea starts the momentum that builds towards a larger accumulation of emancipatory knowledge.

### **Collective making versus siloed thinking.**

In Kate O’Shea’s practice, when it comes to printmaking workshops, the nature of printmaking can also situate people in the context of a larger print making history. Physical printmaking workshops give Kate O’Shea an opportunity to talk about larger political emancipatory movements in accessible visual form (Tyrrell, 2023). While this is an effective and accessible pedagogical process it also serves to situate participants as actively engaged in a political history of printmaking and significantly narrows the distance between them and other collective emancipatory movements, historical or contemporary (Tyrrell, 2023). This shift of perspective can cause a sense of empowerment that is difficult to otherwise grasp. The collective making makes it tangible.

Breaking down barriers and narrowing the distance between people by collective making is the impetus of O’Shea’s practice. With a practice striving to a greater goal

of alternatives to capitalism, emancipatory knowledge production is a significant thread to O'Shea's practice.

I think collective making is the only way of producing emancipatory knowledge. [-] I think that the biggest source of emancipation or liberation is knowing that the individual self is false. [-] Everything is interconnected and interwoven and if you truly understand collective making and the interdependence of everyone then you can't see someone as being less human than you (O'Shea cited in Tyrrell, 2023).

The emphasis here is on the collective. The building of collectives and the strengthening of an interwoven web of solidarity and interdependence can create emancipatory knowledge and movement. It is what is necessary to create it. But how do we create these reciprocal networks, these foundations of accessible collective knowledge? The force and power of Kate O'Shea's socially engaged art practice demonstrates the answer to be; through collective making.

Collective making is a way of experiencing interconnection and love and solidarity and all these things, and there's a healing in that, that is going to allow space for emancipatory knowledge to emerge outside of siloed disciplinary thinking (O'Shea cited in Tyrrell, 2023).

Prioritising love and solidarity as a means to build interconnection is certainly a radical anti-capitalist act (Geoghegan, 2023, pg 21) and as Kathleen Lynch states, "our survival depends on love, care and solidarity [-] human flourishing requires caring and loving" (cited in Geoghegan, 2023, pg12). This care and resistance to "possessive individualism, competition and scarcity, and not caring for others" (Till cited in Geoghegan, 2023, pg21) is built through and with collective making, and thus collective making is a means of producing emancipatory knowledge.

If people are collectively making and those collective makings are linked then there's the potential for ecosystemic thinking of webs of social relations to produce emancipatory knowledge, [-] it has to come from collective making (O'Shea cited in Tyrrell, 2023).

## **Conclusion**

Collective making is a means of producing emancipatory knowledge in a myriad of nuanced ways. Art making produces knowledge that resides in our embodied experience of reality. Making can access the tacit knowledge of peoples' embodied lives. This tacit knowledge can give insight into the realities of systemic social inequalities because it directly accesses the truth of lived experience.

Through collective making we can create accessible spaces for skill sharing which builds pools of knowledge and radical networks of support. Making can ignite alternative ways of seeing, and doing this collectively can further provide insights into alternative realities. The physical visual object that is often created through the process of making can serve to illustrate the value of the process, give tangible form to the knowledge produced, and become the substance of a larger fabric of emancipatory movement. Collective making breaks down the isolation of the individual and creates a huge collective power.

We are experts of our own lives; combining each individual's experiential knowledge can create systems of knowledge and support that are emancipatory. We can do this through collective making.

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