

Shorelines: transforming emotion through creativity

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings from a four year study into collaborative creativity; it reveals the importance of hand-making as an emotional channel contributing to physical and mental wellbeing. The case study research draws from four practical investigations documenting the development of a series of artworks made collaboratively in response to shoreline locations around the UK. It focuses in detail on one specific practice-led case study, illustrating ways in which both environmental and social factors contribute to the creative process and how hand-making and performance support mental well-being.

The outcomes from the practice-led investigations comprise a body of artworks exhibited recently in Australia. These works embody the research process and illustrate the paper.

Keywords

Creativity, wellbeing, emotion, art practice, collaboration, physicality, digital technology

INTRODUCTION

Processing emotion

This paper presents findings from a four year practice-led research project into creative practice. Although the main aim of the research was to examine how the visual arts can be supported by digital technology, findings also reveal ways in which creativity impacts upon subjective wellbeing. Creative practice is shown to facilitate the translation of emotion into artworks (artifacts, performance and writing) and *the act of making* provides opportunities to move outside the usual patterns of thinking and perceived experience. This happens in two phases within the creative process; these are characterized in this paper as 'rhythm' and 'flow'. Instances from case study research are used to illustrate the ways in which the rhythmic and iterative episodes of physical experience, memory, reflection and making are used by artists to process and translate emotion. Flow is experienced through periods of total self absorption in the act of creating and making; time stands still and positive emotions are experienced [1, 2]. The end result (artwork) may or may not result in gratification for its creator, depending on its perceived success and the achievement of wider goals. Nevertheless, the performative process that encompasses a state of flow, provides relief from negative emotions and facilitates more generative and diverse thinking strategies shown to support subjective wellbeing [3, 4].

Society and wellbeing

Research has identified that despite rising living standards and economic security in Western Society there is a decrease in perceived subjective wellbeing [3]. There has been a marked increase in diagnosed cases of depression and stress related health issues [1]. The economic impact of health care, time missed from work and pharmacological costs suggests that understanding ways to improve subjective wellbeing is a research imperative, as highlighted by the RCUK's current calls for research in this area. A better understanding of ways in which creativity impacts on wellbeing will inevitably lead to better support strategies for those in society who are failing to flourish and will provide national and government agencies with positive reasons for encouraging creativity and the arts. This paper aims to present findings to contribute to this area of knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

Research goals

'Shorelines' is a collaborative practice-led research project led by the author of this paper (University of Wales Institute Cardiff). The research involved a series of case studies of collaborative art practice undertaken in artist's residences in England, Scotland and Wales (2006-2010). The collaborating researchers: Alison F. Bell and Cathy Treadaway are also practicing visual artists and the investigations that took place in each case study involved the documentation and reflection on a specific period of art making. Although the main aim of the study was to investigate the ways in which digital imaging technology supports creative practitioners in the visual arts, findings from the final case study have also identified ways in which creativity impacts on subjective wellbeing. Details of the project as a whole and examples of the resulting artworks can be found at: www.cathytreadaway.com

A qualitative methodology was used to acquire data and art making collaboration provided a way of corroborating evidence and validating findings. Any study seeking to explore the workings of the human mind is problematic since analyses of the observations are inevitably highly subjective [5]. The collaborative process did, however, provide some validation by providing insight into cognitive strategies deployed by the practitioners, facilitating discussion and deepening reflection on and during practice. This type of *studio as a laboratory* [6] research strategy is widely used in the arts when studying creative practice [7]. Documentary processes used included *fly on the wall* video documentary, research interviews, research logs, reflective journals and sketchbooks. Still and video photography were used to record the development of the artworks and the resulting artefacts embody the research process and encapsulate the creative act. The research data from each case study has been analysed through a process of discourse analysis, identifying recurrent themes and cross referencing these within the study as a whole.

This paper draws on findings from the final 'Shorelines' case study carried out at Brisons Veor, Cornwall, England. Quotations from the research data (video recorded interviews and research journals), have been included to provide instances to support claims made in the following sections.

Brisons Veor

Treadaway and Bell were given the opportunity to use the Brisons Veor Women's Artspace (BVWA) following a peer reviewed juried selection process. This award provided accommodation and studio space at Brison's Veor, Cape Cornwall, England, for a two week period in August 2009. The BVWA venue is located just north of Land's End in Cornwall on a promontory jutting out into the sea. The cottage was originally built as the engine house for a nineteenth century tin mine and is now used as a residential creative space for women artists.

Evidence, from comments written by previous residents in the visitor's book, indicates that Brison's Veor is perceived by artists to be an inspirational place. Many of the entries in the book commented on the way in which the location had stimulated a period of intense creative activity; provided a refreshing and revitalizing opportunity in which new ideas and artworks had been created. Written comments noted that it was a place that provided the individual with a sense of personal permission to be creative, to take time out and to refocus. The property had been built on the edge of the cliff and was surrounded on three sides by the ocean. The noise of the sea, the intensity of the light, colour and constantly changing weather contributed to a sense of 'being at sea'. In the recorded data Treadaway comments that she felt as though she was '*on board ship*' and Bell compares it to being on '*an island*'. The space also had a palpable atmosphere that exuded domestic feminine qualities (vases of fresh flowers and carefully selected artworks) and felt very safe and secure (whistle, torches etc. kept by the front door). The studio space was on the first floor with windows overlooking the sea; the whole house resonated with the perpetual rhythm of the ocean.

Treadaway travelled to the location from Wales and Bell from Scotland. Both had been dealing with stressful events in their personal lives. Bell had been feeling 'blocked' and was struggling to work creatively; Treadaway was emotionally exhausted. Evidence from the research data and the resulting artworks indicate that this residency was an important creative time and space. Work created during this case study was exhibited in 'Shorelines' University Gallery, University of Newcastle, NSW Australia October 2010 and 'Shorelines', Maclaurin Galleries, Ayr, Scotland, November 2011.

Documentary process, artworks and performance

Throughout the two week residency both artists kept journals. For Treadaway this comprised two books: a reflective journal describing daily thoughts and events as well as sections of poetry, and a traditional

sketchbook containing paintings and sketches. Bell kept all her reflections and sketches in one book which was bound into an artist's book at the end of the residency. Conversations were video recorded at regular intervals to reflect upon and explore issues concerning the creative process in which both artists were engaged. Documentary video and still photography was also used to capture the making process and also to collect visual stimulation for the developing artworks. These were developed via a number of processes including watercolour sketches, stitched and formed paper, digital photography, sculpted and collaged assemblages and drawings in clay and on paper. Each of the 'Shorelines' residencies culminated in the production of a series of collaborative artworks created digitally and printed on fabric and paper. These images were informed visually by a short period of performative art making in a shoreline location. Engaging in the collaborative act of making art in this way provided both artists with a shared set of physical experiences of the location which were used as the inspiration of the artworks. This performance was video recorded and documented using still photography; some visual elements from the performance were integrated in the resulting artworks.

Creativity

The creative process takes time [8] and requires self-permission, a non judgemental environment and a playful exploration of ideas [9, 10]; the Brison's Veor residency provided these important constituents. In any creative process there is an iterative cycle of stimulation, idea association, insight, idea development and verification or testing of ideas [12]. These patterns have been identified and theorised by scholars such as Wallas, Heimholz,[10] deBono [13],Resnick[11], Gardner [14-16], and Boden[17].

Creativity can be both personal: concerned with new thinking and making for that individual or historical: significantly innovative that it is marked out as such within a given domain [1, 16, 17]. This research is concerned with personal artistic creativity. The following sections in this paper identify and illustrate the creative strategies deployed in the production of artworks during the case study at Brison's Veor. These instances have been selected to illuminate how creative activities enable emotion to be translated into and communicated through the resulting artworks.

RHYTHM

In order to think and make creatively new thoughts are brought to mind, reflected upon and ultimately impact on decisions that are made; exploration and evaluation are crucial components [17]. This process may be non linear, divergent, encompassing associated ideas and is always iterative; refining and honing possibilities [9]. Moments of insight occur when thoughts collide and are recognised as producing new perspectives and innovative concepts [10]. None of this would be possible however without *'the revelations of existence that our consciousness offers us'* pp316 [5]. It is our physical sense of *being in the world*, sensory stimulation at both conscious and subconscious levels that enables the brain to process experience and shape thinking [18]. Absolute reality is problematic since our experience is subjective and *'concocted by a complex neural machinery of perception, memory and reasoning'* pp.97 [18]. There is a rhythm to creative thinking that encompasses exposure to physical experience, information gathering through our senses, and a sensory selection process which is guided by emotion, memory and logic [8, 9].. From these stimulants, playful exploration shapes and associates embryonic ideas. The following sections illustrate this initial *emersion in experience* phase as experienced in the Brison's Veor residency by Treadaway and Bell.

Sensory stimulation

The recorded data reveals ways in which three particular senses: vision, hearing and touch informed the generation of initial ideas for the artworks. The instances also reveal that these sensory experiences produced emotional responses which contributed to the creative process assisting idea selection and association.

Vision

Vision is generally accepted as the primary sense [19], providing the brain with instantaneous non sequential information and so it is hardly surprising that it should be crucial to idea development. By comparison, hearing and touch are sequential and to some extent, therefore, lack the immediacy of vision

in the acquisition of sensory information [19, 20]. Hannaford contends however that the information acquired through vision is significantly modified by the other senses and that it is *'these internal images, along with the associated emotions, that determine our preconception of the world.'* pp. 39. Damasio contends that everything we *'perceive or recall'* is *'accompanied by some reaction from the apparatus of emotion'* and that *'all objects get some emotional attachment'* [5] pp58. Vision therefore contributes to the way the world is apprehended but our perception of physical experience is a mix of *vision* and *memory* charged with *emotion*. This selectivity in vision is evident in the kinds of visual elements that both practitioners chose to observe, draw and photograph during the residency.

Bell found she was visually attracted to the shapes of the rocks and the waves which she drew, painted and stitched in her sketchbook. Colour was highly significant and 'Paynes grey' watercolour paint, chosen to describe the rocks, is mentioned several times in the recorded data. Bell anthropomorphised the rocks describing them in her book as *'dark and menacing'* and suggesting they contained an *'inner darkness'*.

Treadaway also found the rocks provided useful visual information and were emotionally significant since her ancestors had worked in the tin mine at Cape Cornwall during the nineteenth century; she felt an intimacy with the place and personal attachment to the rocks (This family connection with the place and the rocks is echoed in the poem *Rock*, which was written during the residency and can be found in *'Shorelines: an anthology of photographs and poems'* C. Treadaway 2011 pub. UWIC Press). Using a digital camera she made a collection of photographs of rock surfaces, waterfalls and rock pools and a series of small watercolour paintings:

'Just painted some more Haiku sketches – inspired by Porth Ledden where I walked yesterday: water, waterfalls, rock pools, caves and rocks. I found stones I had collected in my coat pocket this morning and placed them on my desk. It seemed to help in selecting the colours from my watercolour paints; assurance my memory was correct.'

The photographs and watercolour sketches of rocks were used in the development of the collaborative digital print *'Granite'* (Fig.1).



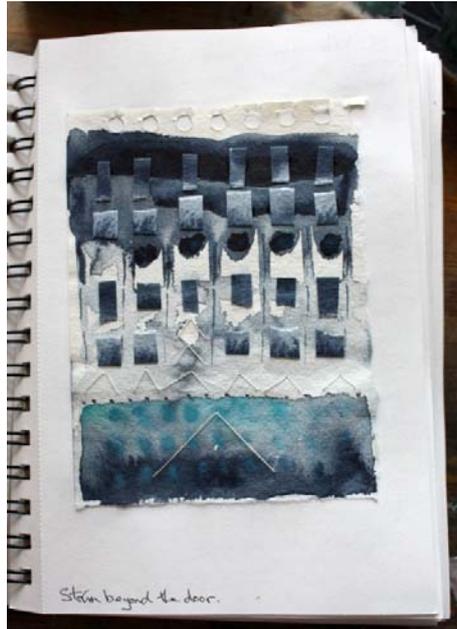
**Figure1. 'Granite' Large format digital ink-jet print on paper
120cm x 120cms**

Visual characteristics of shape and form were noted as particularly significant for Bell. She made drawings and stitched collages developed from observations of the triangular beams within the building. These strong triangular shapes echoed the shape of the waves she could see from the studio window. For Bell the sea, waves and house evoked positive emotions: feelings of safety and security. These triangular motifs feature in a number of works by Bell and influenced the composition of the collaborative digital print 'Woman' (Fig.2)



**Figure 2. 'Woman' Large format digital ink-jet print on paper
120cm x 120cms**

Window panes and doors also feature in Bell's stitched paper collages and elements from these works have been integrated into several of the collaborative digital prints. These architectural features were selected both consciously and unconsciously as visual motifs. Bell comments in the recorded data that it was only after she had completed a watercolour sketch/collage that she realised that she had inadvertently represented the door onto the balcony overlooking the sea in her work (Fig. 3).



**Figure 3. Page from Alison Bell's journal;
watercolour and stitch on paper**

Hearing

Numerous references are made in both the video recorded interviews and research journal writing concerning the pervasive and continuous sound of the sea. The studio was surrounded by the ocean and the whole building throbbed with its rhythm: *'The waves continue to rage. The power of them is indescribable and the sound is quite exhausting.'* Treadaway had made visual artwork, prior to the residency, inspired by shoreline sounds, and this provided an opportunity to continue the theme. Initially however the experience of hearing and feeling the powerful beat and roar of the waves resulted in a period of writing culminating in a series of poems. Although inspired by the rhythm and sound of the sea the words conveyed a deeper emotional response through the use of metaphor. The perceived auditory sensory experience evoked an emotional response in which 'feelings' became conscious and were then reflected upon. Metaphor was used in the poetry to combine concepts, memories and associated ideas arising from the feelings. The opening lines of the poem *Ebb and Flow* provides an example; when recited aloud, with the single word on alternate lines spoken softly, waves breaking on the shore are evoked:

*'Roaring ocean, beating rhythms of the
Moon,
Constant motion, whipped by wind in
Turmoil,
Surging, swelling, swamping, falling,
Helpless,
Lost in the wholeness of the
Water.*

From: Ebb and Flow. Shorelines: an anthology of photographs and poems, C. Treadaway

The sound of the sea also stimulated a series of drawings by Treadaway, some made in clay and some on paper (Fig. 4). These translated the audible sound of water at various locations along the shore including a place where a waterfall met the sea and through a narrow opening in a cave. These drawings later contributed to the development of a series of printed works and a Treadaway and Bell collaborative print called 'Grey Wave' (Fig. 4 and 5). Marks made in these drawings were an expressive response to

the sounds; the artist's muscular control of the drawing implement and the physical action of drawing was stimulated and guided by the sensory experience.



Figures 4 and 5: Clay sea sound drawings (left) and 'Grey Wave' (right)
Large format digital ink-jet print on paper, 120cm x 120cms

Bell described the sound of the sea as being *'powerful and unceasing – it seems to give rest. It's easy to fall asleep, at night it's like a lullaby'*. In her journal she wrote: *'the sea is breathing; it's like a presence'* and in an interview she noted: *'There is a rhythm – slow rhythm that's keeping track of the waves; rise and fall; deep and full.'* The rhythmic nature of the sounds influenced her desire to make by hand, slowly, responding to the tempo and repetition of the beating of the waves and the movement of the tides. Dissanayake and Hanniford contend that there is a deep human affinity for rhythmic patterns and that they provide a significant and visceral underpinning for human creativity [20, 21].

Touch

Texture and tactile qualities of found objects as well as materials and implements used to make work were influential in the development of ideas. Rock surfaces, sea shells, sea weed and flotsam and jetsam found on the beach were photographed and collected by both artists and brought back to the studio. A series of small sculpted artefacts were made by Treadaway from driftwood, stone and metal collected from the shoreline. These items were selected for their tactile qualities, weight and colour – how they felt in the hand was an imperative, since these were to be formed into hand held objects, to be thrown into the sea as part of the final performance art phase of the collaborative work (Fig. 6).



Figure 6. Treadaway making totems (left) to throw into the sea in the art performance (right)

FLOW

Activities that totally engage and absorb conscious thought have been described as promoting a state of 'flow' [1, 2]. Research indicates that flow states can induce positive emotions and increase subjective wellbeing as they redirect thoughts away from the self [3, 20]. Hand making processes that are well practiced, automatic or tacit, have been shown to induce flow [2]. Hannaford [20] contends that: 'this state of flow, being fully present in the moment, allows us to be creative and express our emotions.' The following sections provide instances from the case study research that reveal how the making strategies that Treadaway and Bell deployed provided flow states which enabled emotion to be channelled into the artworks. Dissanyake contends that there is an innate human predisposition to make by hand and that the social purpose of art is to create '*mutuality, the passage from feeling into shared meaning*' [21]. The artworks created during this case study are physical evidence of the translation of emotion into artefact through the creative process. The emotional content may not necessarily be perceived as such by their audience and this is of little relevance to the artists for whom the emotional stimulation was regarded as a constituent of the creative process. The artist's purpose in making the work was not therapeutic; there was no intention for the art making to make them 'feel better' but rather to fulfil a need to communicate the experience of being and living.

Making

Moments of creative insight arise in the creative process when ideas are proliferated and associated with memories and past experience [10]. This frequently occurs following a period of elapsed time, sleep, meditation or some kind of mental distraction. Recognition that an idea is worth pursuing is often guided by intuition, which Damasio describes as: '*the sort of rapid cognitive process in which we come to a particular conclusion without being aware of all the immediate logical steps*' [18] Pp xix. The ability to intuitively recognise the appropriateness of an idea is guided by '*emotion and much past practice*' [18]. Numerous examples of this are recorded in the research journals; activities such as running, walking and sleep are noted as playing a part in the process of idea incubation. The physical process of making and crafting by hand, guided by intuition, serendipity and playful exploration of tools and materials are shown in the research data to foster moments of insight and creative decision making.

Bell found that her making processes were influenced by the sound of the sea; she stated that: '*slow rhythmic stitching and tearing seemed in keeping*'. She intuitively felt she needed to work slowly and by hand; working with techniques that involved precision finger use and dexterity. Tearing handmade paper and stitching this with needle and thread provided her with rhythmic activities that engaged her body and mind in a state of flow. The work created was small, contained and detailed; punctuated with words and reflective thoughts which revealed personal inner feelings: '*rediscovering a part of me that was buried under the day to day stuff... sorting out all kinds of internal issues*.' She comments on the slowness of the work '*this is what this place demands – it's the right speed*'. Her desk faced a window overlooking the sea and she comments on how the view of the sea beyond was '*hypnotic, you can't take your eyes away from it – I just feel so calm*'. These feelings are translated through the slow making process and are visibly evident in the subtle neutrality of the colour and the rhythmic pattern elements (Fig.7).



Figure 7. Alison Bell: making by hand (left) collage stitched pages from Bell's journal (middle and right)

Previous research by the author has revealed how hand craft activities enable emotion to be communicated through the muscular tension and bodily pressure involved in making and drawing [22]. This physical translation of emotion through making is evident in an instance recorded towards the end of the case study when preparing artefacts to use in the collaborative performance work. Both artists had shared an experience during the week when they had both felt intensely angry and had planned to make work that expressed some of the underlying reasons for these feelings. Bell stitched small packets containing words written onto small pieces of paper which expressed her feelings of anger and Treadaway sculpted three small totems: assemblages crafted from driftwood and rock. Treadaway wrote in her journal:

'I thought of Alison's wrapped pieces and how she had talked this morning about being 'bound up' trapped and this was why she used stitches and threads in her work. I thought she might like the idea of performing a ritual of taking wrapped anger and leaving it in the sea – I was right....Alison sat and wrote angry words – I didn't need to do this; I was angry carving the driftwood and twisting the wire. The anger, my anger was in the making – through my hands – not gentle actions but coarse and tense.'

Time crafting these items was spent with both artists working in silence and with great intensity (Fig.6). This was a period of flow; emotions being channelled through making into items that symbolically represented, in words and form, the feelings both artists were experiencing and remembering.'

Emotional expression

The act of taking the totems and word packets to the sea was regarded by both artists as being a creative performance. The activity was video recorded and the artefacts photographed to provide a permanent trace of the art making. Both artists approached this activity differently. In her journal Treadaway wrote: *'I may toss mine in with gay abandon – to be released – heavy weights to be dropped. Hers are gifts to give away – more gently offered to the sea.'* The last verse of the poem 'I want to Fly' was written the morning before the performance and indicates the intention of the artist in casting the items into the sea:

*Now I can fly;
Propelled through dancing silver spray
Tossed purposefully*

*Into malachite green sea
Let go the anger and be free.*

From: Ebb and Flow. Shorelines: an anthology of photographs and poems C. Treadaway

Visual elements from the performance were later integrated as motifs within the collaborative artwork 'Woman' (Fig.2). This particular creative journey that began with experiencing anger, resulted in a range of artworks including stitched paper, sculptural forms, photographs, video documented creative performance, a large format digital print and poetry.

Collaboration and mutuality

The overarching aim of the Shorelines project has been to investigate creative collaboration using digital technology. During the period of the research as a whole the opportunities to work together have provided the artists with sufficient mutual experience to be comfortable working creatively together. Documentation of the Brisons Veor case study provides numerous instances when both practitioners express their empathic relationship, for example: in reaching to collect the same objects on the shoreline, speaking the same word at the same moment and finding commonality in the types of sensory stimulants for the work. Treadaway writes: *'We sat and talked about the anger incident yesterday and simultaneously said the word 'palpable'. We have become very empathic as the week has progressed and now we are speaking the same words at the same time!'*

A deep understanding for the rationale of the project by both artists underpinned the working processes and thematic content of the project. The aim was to experience a shared memory of a shoreline location and this inevitably impacted on the mutuality that developed. This common goal was important in the final phase of the collaborative process in which images were developed for large format digital printing after the case study had concluded. The Internet was used to share layers of the image files which were developed from sketches, photographs and video footage using Photoshop® software. The most difficult stage in creating collaborative work this way is knowing when the image has reached completion. Damasio contends that emotion *'assists with the process of holding in mind the multiple facts that must be considered in order to reach a decision'* [18] Pp.xviii. The shared emotional memory of the shoreline experience seemed to provide the framework for making these difficult decisions (Figs. 1, 2 and 5)

Technology

During the Brisons Veor case study only a limited use was made of digital imaging technology in the development of the artworks. Digital cameras and were used to collect imagery but the majority of the digital image manipulation was undertaken once the residency had concluded. Bell noted that she felt uninspired to work digitally at Brisons Veor and that the location was far more conducive to working by hand. Technology pervades contemporary daily experience and its impact on emotional engagement with life and relationships is not always positive [3, 20, 21] *Dissanayake* argues that handling real things *'generates a kind of exchange between body and mind that is absent in computer art'* and that *'no matter how essential electronic media become or how virtual the realities they provide for us, we are still living creatures who require interaction with the natural world'* [21] Pp.121. *Hannaford* argues that compared with technology, *'it is our emotional connections with nature that allow us to remember our worth'* pp130. The desire to connect with the environment and use technology selectively, as tools to capture and stimulate memories of being in the location, is evident in this case study. The emotional incentives for choosing imagery are shown in the recorded data to be drawn from a combination of physical experience in the real physical world combined with memory of past experiences.

DISCUSSION

The intention of the research described in this paper was to investigate creative practice; the art making that took place was not intended to be therapeutic nor did it aim to enhance positive emotions. The study illuminates ways in which artists translate emotional experience into artworks. This processing of emotion does not necessarily result in the practitioner 'feeling better' since the process of objectification and reflection on past experience may be painful. There are, however, stages in the creative process which

are shown in the research to have positive emotional benefits which may enhance wellbeing. These include hand use, mastery and gratification, a sense of objectivity that is obtained through self expression and physical engagement with the natural world.

Hand use, mastery and gratification

The hand making activities documented in the research were shown to enable both artists to experience flow [1] which is widely considered to have positive effects on subjective wellbeing [3, 20]. The state requires an intense awareness of what is taking place in the present, as the locus of attention is the task in hand. Repetitive and rhythmic patterns of practice also free up mental space for idea association and consideration of the development of the artwork as a whole. Making processes enable manipulative skills to be exploited, providing a sense of mastery and competence. Although this was not commented upon directly, it was implicit in the study since the resulting visual art work was being produced for public exhibition. Intentional activities, such as the pursuit of valued goals, are recognised as enhancing subjective wellbeing [3]; the end goal of producing a body of work for exhibition was a source of creative motivation and had a positive impact on subjective wellbeing. Both artists commented on feeling energised and refreshed following the residency.

Objectivity through self expression

The process of experiencing emotions, becoming conscious of them as feelings [5] and translating them via creative making into artefacts has been illustrated through this research. The process objectifies emotions, making them physical and opens up the possibility for them to be considered with a new perspective. The making process imbues the artefact with a trace of the experienced emotion translated through the bodily movement, muscular tension and physical mark of the hand. In this way the artwork can communicate the emotional experience of the artist – the emotion can be shared [22] [21]. Sharing in this way develops mutuality and a sense of belonging and competency for life [21].

Physical engagement with the natural world

Research has indicated that natural environments are beneficial to wellbeing and have been shown to reduce stress [3, 20, 23]. Both artists commented on the positive effects of being in the shoreline location; it provided a sense of peace, rest, tranquillity and at the same time was invigorating and energising. The rhythmic sounds of the sea were soporific and sleep quality was enhanced. The slow rhythms of the sea were also reflected in the pace of the working processes that were adopted providing an antidote to normal frenetic patterns of daily life. Opportunity to observe and experience the natural world and make use of it in the creative process provided positive emotions.

Emotional response

Findings from this case study reveal the importance of emotional responses to lived experience as stimulants within creative processes. The case study illuminates how emotion can be channeled into artworks through the making process. The rhythms of making frequently induce a state of flow in which dominating and pervasive negative emotions can either be suspended (living in the moment) or reflected upon from differing perspectives and externalized through creative expression. This opportunity to broaden thought patterns and build new ideas induces positive emotions [4]. Findings from research by Fredrickson suggests that experiencing positive emotions enables individuals to 'build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources' and is fundamental to human flourishing. Positive emotions resulting from the creative process of 'flow' however may be 'of the moment' rather than long lasting and are not always restorative; the end product may not be successful as perceived by the artist or may convey difficult or painful experiences. The opportunity to externalize emotion and reflect on the resulting feelings afforded by flow states in creative processes involving hand use is significant. Further research into the ways in which hands are conduits for emotion will foster a deeper understanding of the benefits of creativity and creative activities to subjective wellbeing.

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FIGURES:

Figure 1 'Granite' Large format digital ink-jet print on paper 120cm x 120cms

Figure 2 'Woman' Large format digital ink-jet print on paper 120cm x 120cms

Figure 3 Page from Alison Bell's journal; watercolour and stitch on paper

Figures 4 and 5 Clay sea sound drawings (left) and 'Grey Wave' (right) large format digital ink-jet print on paper, 120cm x 120cms

Figure 6 Treadaway making totems (left) to throw into the sea in the art performance (right)

Figure 7 Alison Bell: making by hand (left) collage stitched pages from Bell's journal (middle and right)

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