Building Community

Can co-creating a cross-year social session with students help build a stronger sense of community on the BA Embroidery course?

Fig 1, Antony Gormley, Field (1991)

Course Context

3-year Embroidery Undergraduate Degree.

47 total students.

Part of a wider textile course with Knit and Print where there needs to be parity.

Fig 2, Dalia Nation, BA Embroidery 2022

External Examiner **Relevance: PRINT / KNIT / EMBROIDERY**

WORKING SPACE / COMMUNITY Level 6 felt that the general studios were not fully utilised, and after experiencing the benefits of having a booked studio one day a week, they felt it would be beneficial to increase the number of days and also create fixed room bookings for studio/portfolio work across all year groups as it had only been implemented to final year students. Level 5 students were evidently struggling with wellbeing, and fixed rooms for studio days would help alleviate some of this. I would highly recommend that booked studio spaces were allocated to all year groups to provide a dedicated space for students to develop portfolio work, drape on the mannequin, create garment blocks etc. The dedicated studios would also work effectively as a community space that facilitates cohort peer-to-peer learning and wellbeing support.

Fig 3, External Examiner Report 24/25

Why does this research project matter?

Community can positively impact course engagement.

Student mental health.

Creates a space that feels theirs and that they belong.

This allows for creative freedom and a space that safe for individuals.

Fig 4, BA Embroidery, yrs 1-3, Rep Feedback Padlets

Research approach and ethics

The format I've chosen is informal, conversational and student-led, it isn't about extracting data or producing quantifiable outcomes. Instead, I'm inviting students to contribute ideas, reflections, or simply engage in a casual conversation around what community means to them.

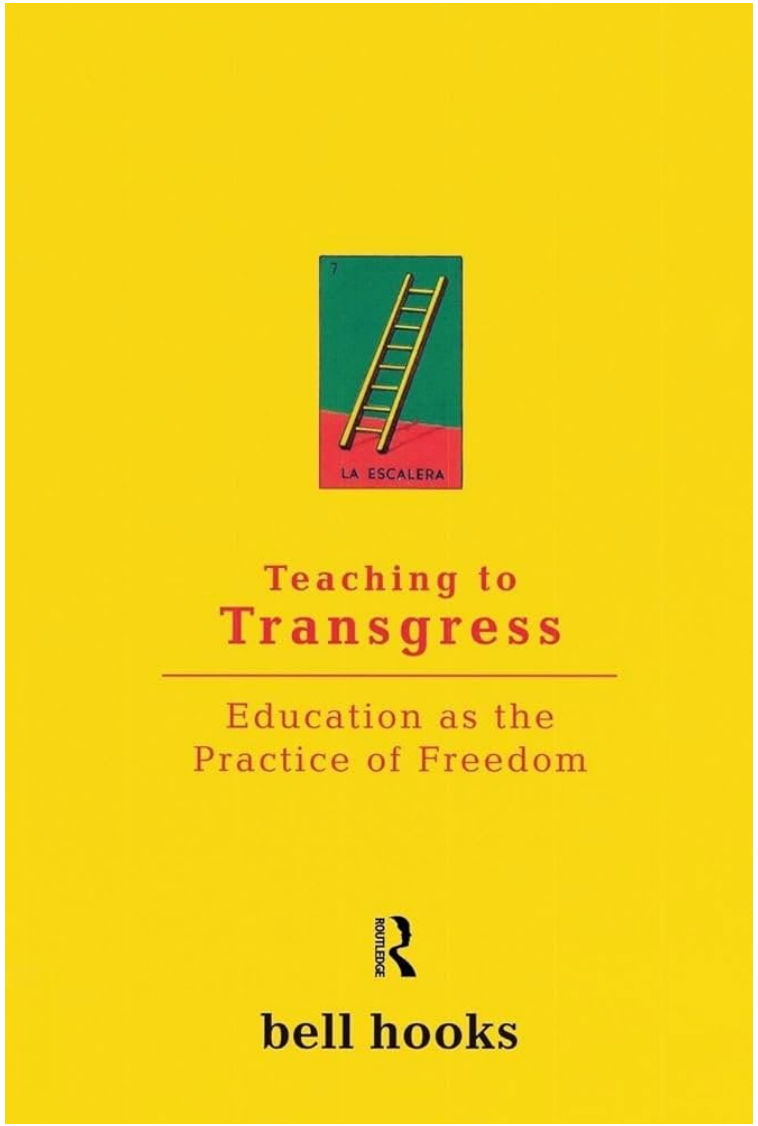

Fig 5

Student communication

ual: university of the arts london

Research project:

Can co-creating a cross-year social session with students help build a stronger sense of community on the BA Embroidery course?

Participant Information Sheet

About this study

As part of a PgCert at UAL, I'm running a small research project, more importantly, I want to explore how students might shape informal, cross-year ways to connect that feel natural, fun, and useful and ultimately aims to build a strong, energetic and creative community on our embroidery pathway.

What's this about?

I've noticed there aren't many chances for Embroidery students from different years to connect casually. This project asks: Can we co-create informal social spaces that help build a stronger sense of community on the course?

It doesn't have to be one specific "event" or room, just a way for students to feel more connected across year groups. What that looks like is completely open. The point is: what kind of social connection do *you* want, and what would make it feel worth showing up for?

What does it mean to take part?

You can get involved in whatever way feels comfortable:

- Add ideas via Padlet, quick poll, or in-person chats
- Join a social session (when it happens, it may not be this term!)
- Share anonymous feedback afterwards

This isn't being pre-designed; I'm inviting your input to help shape it. Nothing will be formal, assessed, or performance based.

Will it be anonymous?

Yes, all your feedback is anonymous. No names, no emails, no identifying info will be used. If I refer to any of it in my PgCert work, I'll only use general reflections or anonymous quotes.

Do I have to take part?

No! It's voluntary. You can be involved in all communication methods, take part in just one bit or none at all.

Fig 6

ual: university of the arts london

RESEARCH PROJECT

1 CAN CO-CREATING A CROSS-YEAR SOCIAL SESSION WITH STUDENTS HELP BUILD A STRONGER SENSE OF COMMUNITY ON THE BA EMBROIDERY COURSE?

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No! It's totally voluntary. You can do just one bit or none at all and change your mind any time.

5 IS THIS JUST FOR RESEARCH?

I'll reflect on this process for my PgCert, but the real aim is to explore something that could continue. If students find value in it, the idea is that this could grow into something that lives beyond the project, shaped by you, for you. This is about building a social, creative and supportive course community together.

Thanks for reading! If you have any questions or ideas, please email me at the address below.

Ellie Sweeney (BA Embroidery course tutor)
e.sweeney@fashion.arts.ac.uk

Fig 7

Data Collection Methods

light-touch,

conversational

more aligned with the tone of the project.

Methods:

Informal chats

Padlet board

Whiteboard

My own written reflections and observations

Questionnaire (if an event was to go ahead)

Fig 8

Fig 9

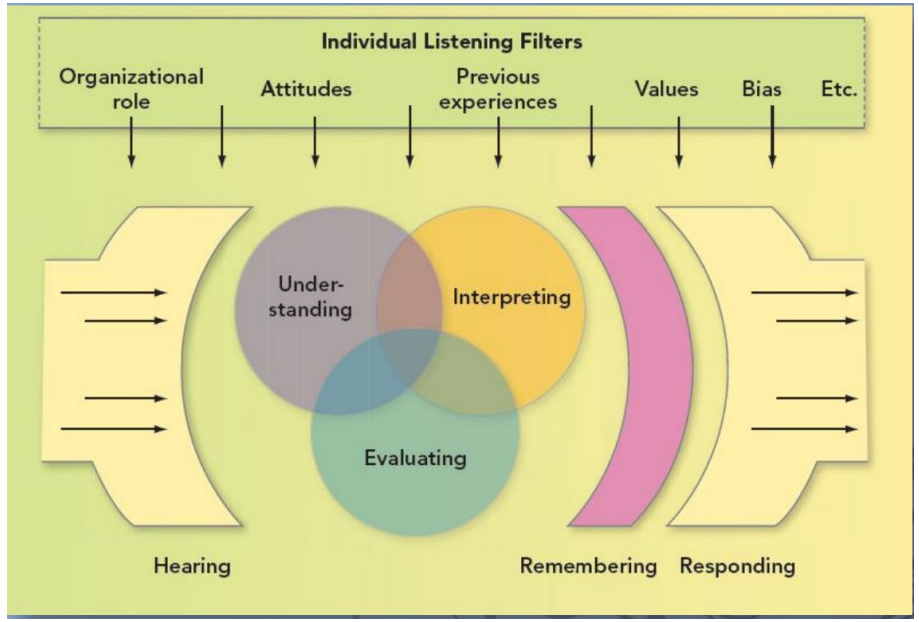

Fig 10

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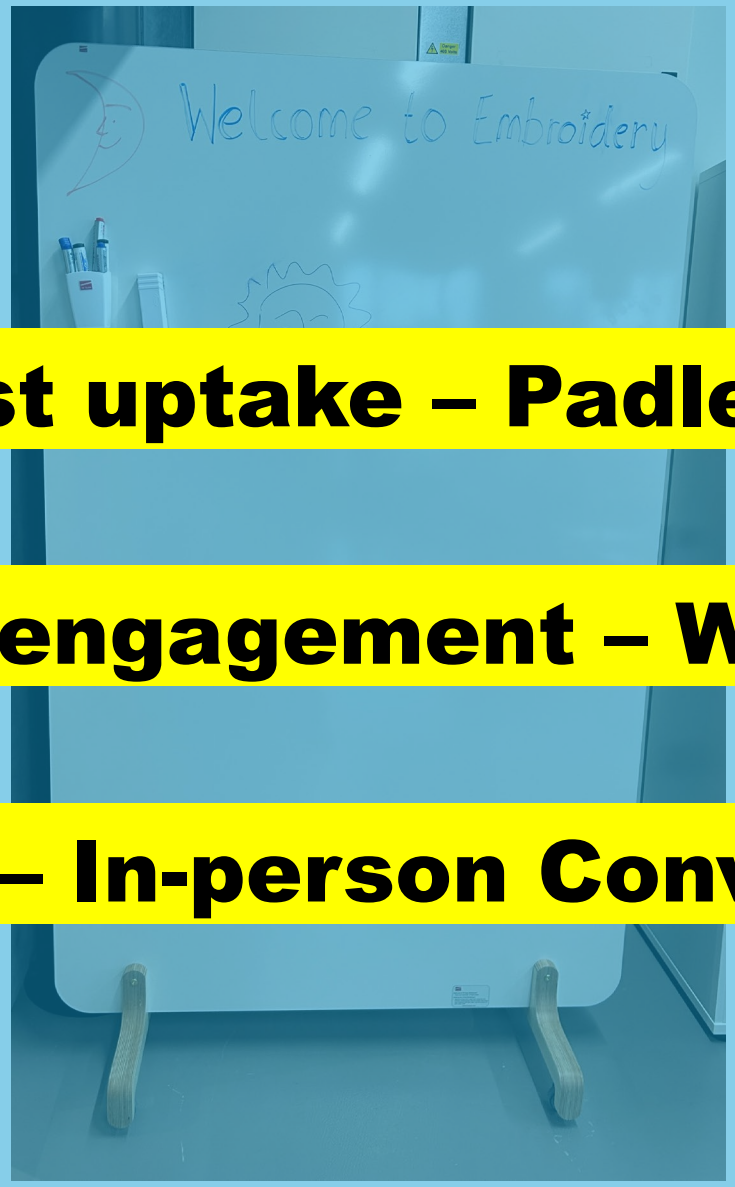

Fig 8

Lowest uptake – Padlet board

Medium engagement – Whiteboard

Highest – In-person Conversations

Fig 9

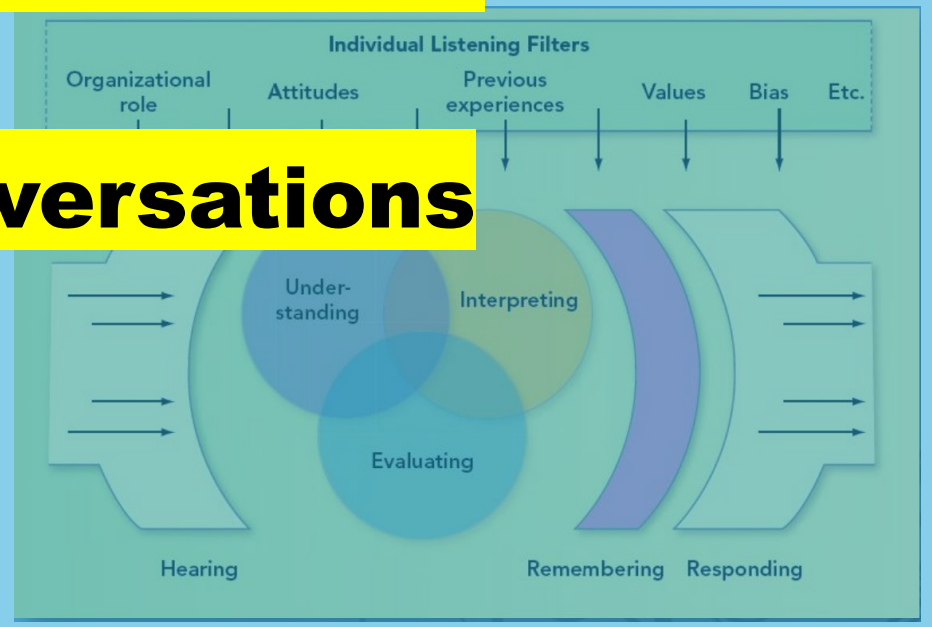

Fig 10

Emerging Themes

PEER VISABILITY

SOCIAL INTERACTION & BELONGING

OWNERSHIP OF SPACE

[redacted]/student/
a month ago
I think one way to build community could be to have regular course exhibitions. We don't have a large course so it should be possible to just use the walls in uni. But we just put some of our favourite pieces up at the end of a project or term, and then invite other year groups to view them and allow for feedback. Or maybe we work together to put up an exhibition. Our course doesn't really have any community events like a regular university course.

Fig 11

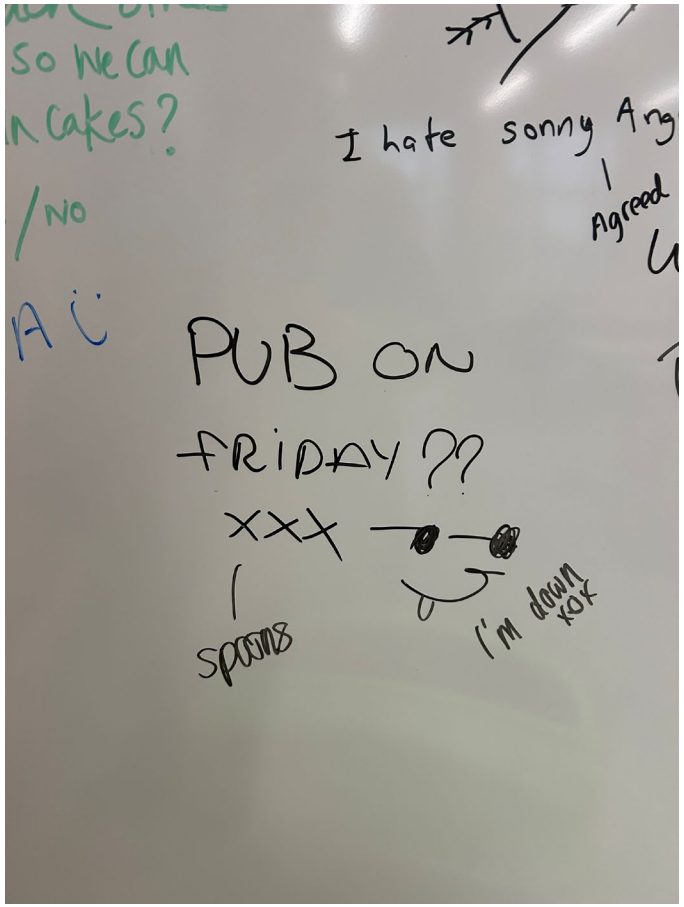

Fig 12

EXHIBITION (END OF NOV)

2nd year end of project exhibition

Cross Pathways (print, knit, embroidery)

1st and 3rd years were invited to support

EXHIBITION (END OF NO

2nd year end of pro

exhibition

Cross Pathways (print, l

embroidery)

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FUTURE CRAFT EXHIBITION

(This questionnaire is optional and anonymous – please answer any questions you feel comfortable with)

1. **What year are you in?**
   ☐ Year 1 ☐ Year 2 ☐ Year 3
2. **Did you speak to someone from another year group today?**
   ☐ Yes ☐ No
   → *If yes, any thoughts about meeting people from other years? (Optional)*

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3. **What did you enjoy or find interesting about the exhibition?**

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4. **Did anything surprise you or give you ideas for any future work?**

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5. **Did the exhibition make you feel more connected to the course or your peers?**
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
   → *Why or why not?*

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6. **What kind of spaces or events would help you feel more connected with students from other years?**
   (e.g. casual hangouts, group tutorials, skills sharing, cinema nights, pub...)

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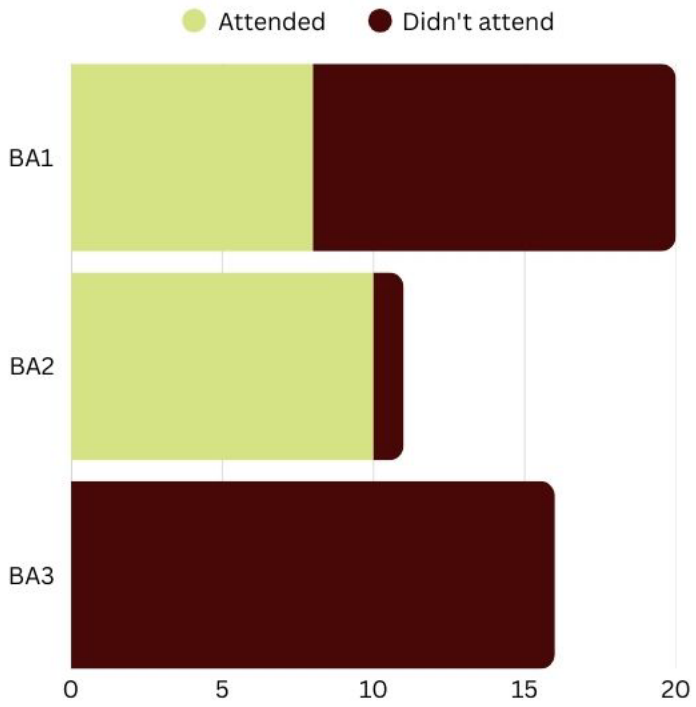
7. **Any other thoughts or ideas about community on the course?**

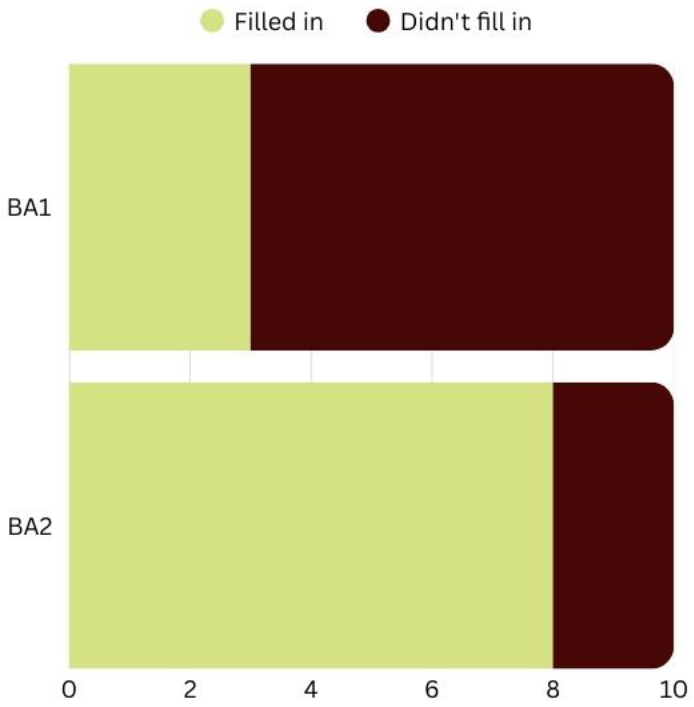
Fig 14

Data analysis

Amount of Embroidery BA students that attended:



Questionnaires filled in:



How many students spoke to someone from another year group?

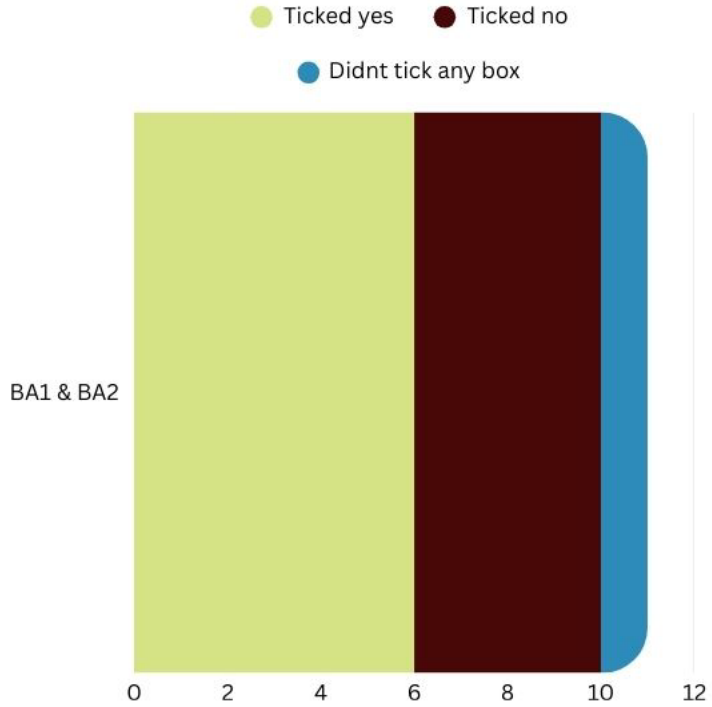


Fig 15, Graphs made with Canva

Suggestions, Reflections and Moving Forward

This research is still very much underway and ongoing.

opportunity for me to work on the delivery and nature of sessions that are already in place.

Alumni talk has been organised

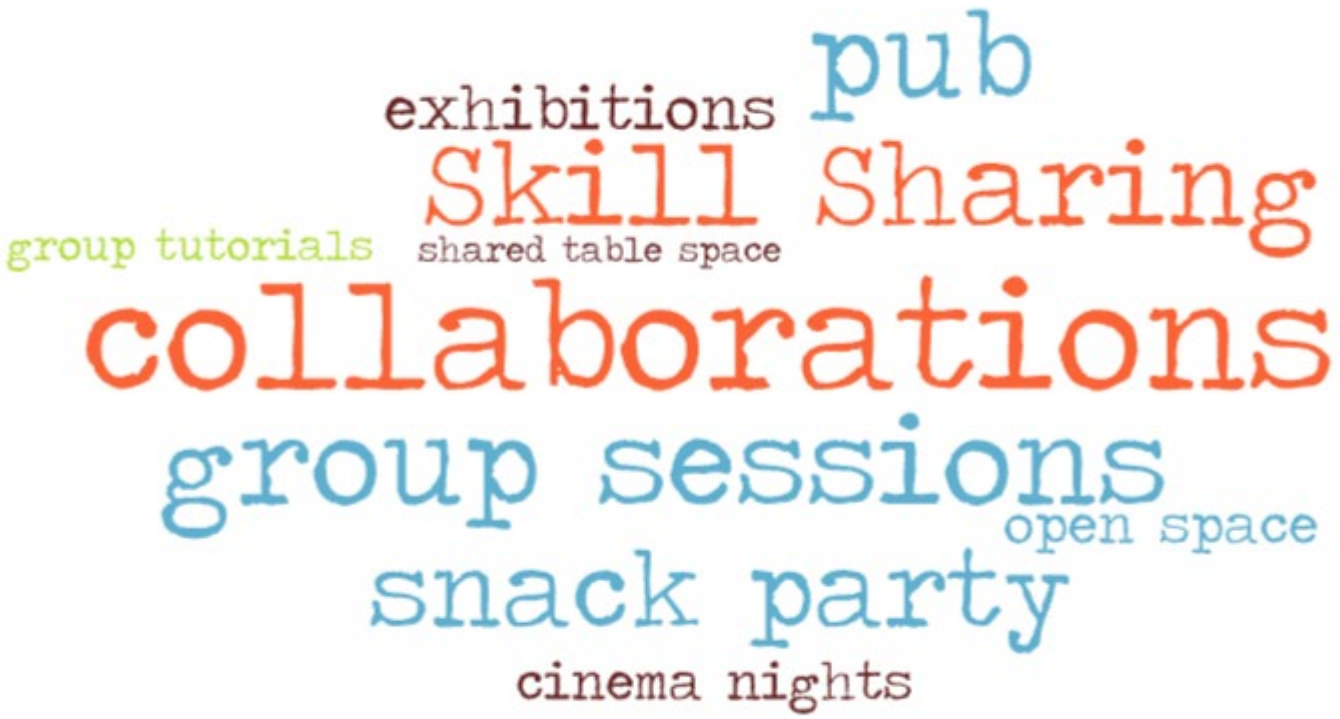


Fig 16

Thank you,

any questions?

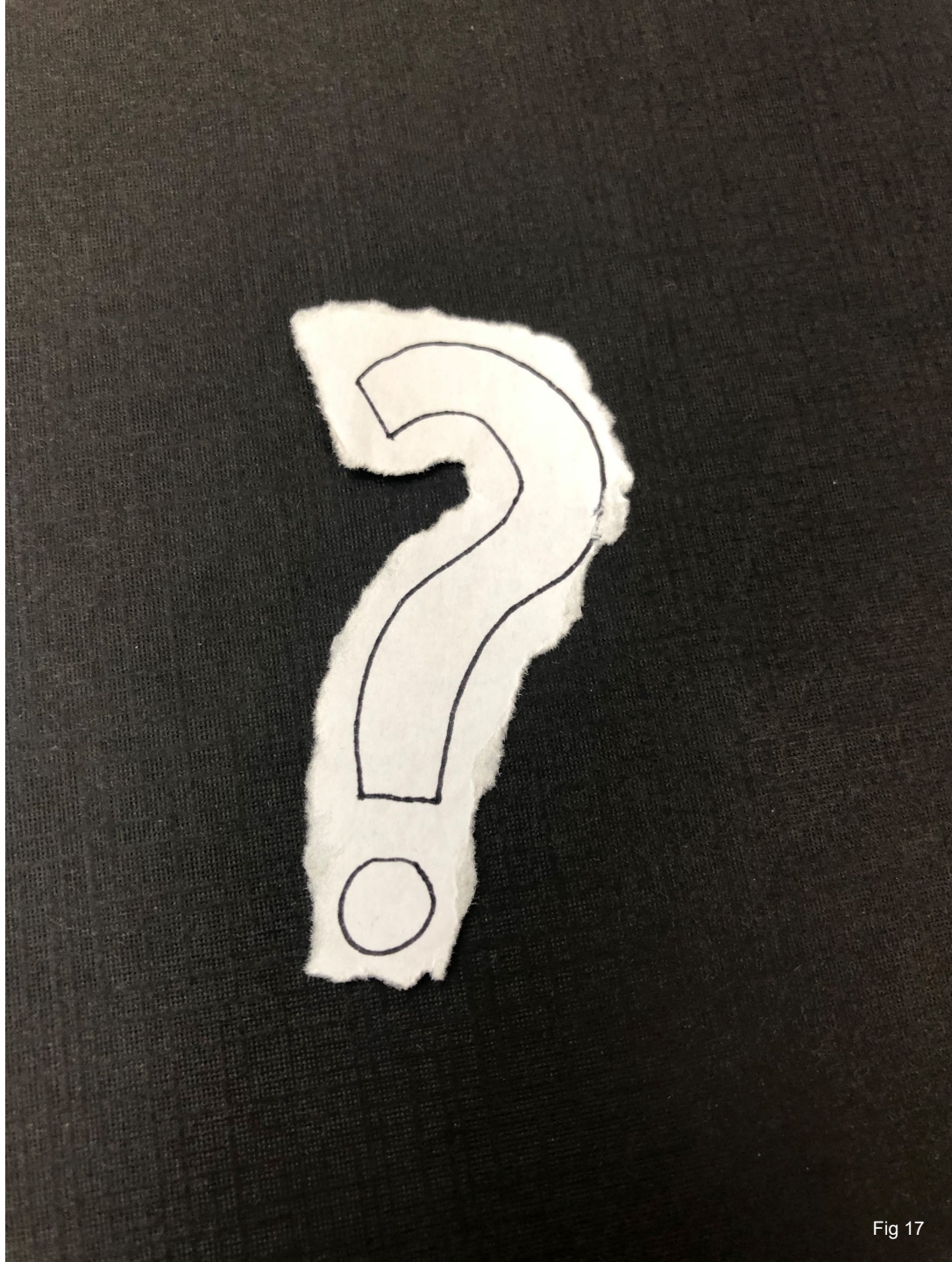


Fig 17

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Image References:

Slide 1:

Fig 1, Antony Gormley, Field (1991)

Slide 2:

Fig 2, Dalia Nation, BA Embroidery (2022), own image.

Fig 3, External Examiner Report 24/25, screenshot.

Slide 3:

Fig 4, BA Embroidery, yrs 1-3, Rep Feedback Padlets, screenshot.

Slide 4:

Fig 5, bell hooks teaching in Transgress, source: Princeton University.

Slide 5:

Fig 6, ARP information sheet, own document

Fig 7, ARP information poster, own document

Slide 6:

Fig 8, Community whiteboard, own image.

Fig 9, Community padlet page, screen shot.

Fig 10, The Heurer Method diagram, Source: Taylor & Francis Online

Slide 8:

Fig 11, Community padlet page, screen shot.

Fig 12, Community whiteboard, own image.

Slide 9:

Fig 13, Textile Exhibition, own image.

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Fig 14, Exhibition questionnaire, own document

Slide 11:

Fig 15, Data graphs created on Canva, own document.

Slide 12:

Fig 16, Word cloud created on Canva, own document.

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Fig 17, Question mark graphic, Source: Arena