

## **Freedom to make: Radical mundanity and its anarchic undertones in female making practice**

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## **FREEDOM TO MAKE – radical mundanity and its anarchic undertones in female making practice.**

*This paper draws on doctoral research titled 'How Women Make – Exploring female making practice through Design Anthropology'. The term 'making' is here used as a deliberate demarcation from the terms design and craft, because the study aimed to be open to any kind of making practice brought forward by the female participants. I deemed the term design as being too bound up with professional and economically valued making and the term craft as too narrow to explore the full spectrum of making that women engage with in their everyday lives.*

### **Introduction**

The benefits of being engaged in creative 'making' practices are broadly discussed in scholarly research ranging from studies of design economies and design & craft, to health and well-being research, as well as interdisciplinary studies which span across.

Outside of the economic benefits of commercial design practice, most of the attention *as to why* engagement in creative making practices is beneficial, is primarily assessed within two areas. One focus is on the benefits of creative making to women's well-being and mental health, the other (and often connected one), is the benefit of participating in politically and socially engaged making activities such as craftivism or maker communities. Here, I am proposing, that in order for making to be either beneficial, radical or political it does not have to be conceived within these confines. There is a vital core to female making practice that is often not sufficiently conceptualized in these contemporary discussions on the subject, - one which should be considered as fundamentally important and no-less political. This is the *space and time*, in which women use their making as an enactment of temporal resistance to neo-liberal capitalist value structures and ring-fence spaces of autonomy that have the potential to inform ways of modelling new ways to live in the decades to come.

### **Methodology**

The body of research that this piece draws from was conducted within a design anthropological approach. Design Anthropology is a methodology that aims to aid the investigation of peoples' ability to create, craft and re-shape materials, systems or experiences (Smith 2015:3). It is an emergent field, by nature interdisciplinary and encompassing Anthropology's concern with the human condition, whilst also embracing the design disciplines hands on, future-directive approaches (Gunn, Otto & Smith:2013). Contributing to the developing discourse of the field are academics and practitioners from a wide and expanding range of disciplines such as anthropology, art & design, sociology, archaeology, architecture (Clarke 2011). Julier (2013) points out that design activism's political drive often gets lost in the questions of implementation. I have previously proposed that the reason why its political drive gets lost in implementation is because most implementation imaginings are primarily conceived *within* Design's contemporary ontology (Levick-Parkin 2017). This leads to ontological entrapment, because as Design's identity is axiologically that entrenched in patriarchal and capitalist conceptions of design, all other ways potential ways of being in design appear un-natural or impossible to imagine being

implemented. (Levick-Parkin 2017). I believe that Design anthropology offers us the opportunity to make human making activities visible in ways which facilitates a zooming out from contemporary design ontology, out over space and time, gaining a farther sight of how and why humans make, and what that might mean to our 'futures yet un-thought' (Grosz 1999).

Research methods included participant observation via co-making, conversations and observations, which were recorded through field notes, photography and film.

Additionally, I recorded informal interviews, which were transcribed and followed a basic structure in order to surface themes from my research questions:

How do women make within particular material and physical contexts?

How do women conceptualise their making in social-economic contexts?

What do insights gained from women's making mean in relation to educational and socio-political contexts?

Data was created with eleven different women, who pursue a range of different making practices and were recruited through via social and professional circles. In this paper, I am not describing the women's individual practices in particular, as there is not enough space to do so, but drawing on insights gained whilst spending time with them and their practices. The guiding concept of this small study was the decision to privilege ordinary knowledge close at hand. It is a feminist approach of 'why not here, why not now', focusing on human making that is neither 'exotic' nor distanced. My analysis was informed by feminist theory on space, time and materialism, as well as critiques of gendered labour. In order to consider the implications of my research and to conclude, I draw on a range of anti-work and post-capitalist theory in order to propose futures of making in space and time.

## **Background**

A profound sense of happiness that is linked with being able to make, came across in many parts of the fieldwork, during co-making, conversations and informal interviews. It was also evident during the recalling of childhood making as well as in the women's conceptualisation of their adult making. Childhood experiences of making were often recalled as natural states of being, like when Kaz said 'I don't know, it just attracted me to that, it just was natural. There was never a need to make it was just ...' or Vicky who recalls: 'I felt like I didn't really have to try very hard it just came naturally and that was just what I wanted to do. I never really thought about doing anything else'. Toni commented, that she couldn't even remember a time when she hadn't been making and that making meant that '...I was always happier, give me a cardboard box and a packet of felt tips, I was happy.'

Adult making is conceptualized in ways which speak of the central importance of the making process in the women's lives. Like Becky describing her making as being '... almost an entity to me. ... It's almost a friend' and explaining that she was truly miserable during times where she could not make. This sentiment repeats across the different women's accounts, again and again. In order to discuss how and why making has

a profound impact on an individual's well-being, we will start by looking at how space and time 'intra-act' in female making practice.

### **The Spaces of Making**

To have space in which to make is important. Whether this is physical space, mental space or temporal space – space or being able to make space is a pre-requisite to being able to make. Especially for women, claiming spaces to make, can be challenging because the space women have traditionally inhabited domestically are often spaces created in order to make for others, - whether that's the kitchen, nursery or bedroom (Wayland Barber 1994, Parker & Pollock 1981, Rowbotham 1973 b). Virginia Wolf's seminal 1928 essay 'A room of one's own', proposed that in order for women to create, they are in need of financial autonomy as well as spatial autonomy 'the space and time required for intellectual freedom' (Snaith 2015:xviii). In terms of space for making, this would have to include the intellectual and physical space as well as having access to matter with which to make.

### **Making Spaces**

Making spaces are part of the process of making. They hold ideas, materials and temporal calls to 'making'. All the women remarked in one way or another on the importance of having physical space. Attie commented: 'I was so lucky to have a work room to be able to do things for myself. I had that from my mother, everyone needs a work room'. During fieldwork, memories of elders making spaces and practices were recalled and discussed in much detail. Seven out of the ten women who participated had a space dedicated to make in, and if they didn't, the idea of longing for a dedicated space, or difficulties in making, due to lack of space, came up frequently. At the time of my fieldwork, Becky, Bill, Katy, Fotini and Attie had dedicated making spaces within their domestic set-ups. In Bill's case, this extended across the whole of the domestic setting. Toni and Vicky had professionalised making spaces – studio spaces situated externally from their home and situated within a community of other creative practitioners. Kaz, who's lack of space had been very obvious, has since also found a space within an external shared creative studio. Eirini, commanded making spaces on an ad-hoc basis, using the family living room and another part of her house, when it wasn't rented out (which it mostly is). Dedicated domestic spaces in particular, were lovingly curated in terms of materials and tools, and a sense of the importance of these spaces in the women's lives evident in both the care taken and how they talked about them.

The longing for, or the finding of an ideal space and space in time, surfaces in different ways. Often this is time oriented, i.e. 'if I had more time', sometimes space oriented 'if only I had a space', - or it is both. But both aspects are ultimately also temporal already, in the sense that they are future oriented. When space has been made, there is a sense of absolute love and appreciation that emerges. Like Fotini describing her making in her mosaic room: 'But the good thing is we have this special room at home, like a, I can work there and we have put everything together'. Both space aesthetics and time aesthetics are important, - the sensory experience and appreciation is holistic. Fotini, describing her

making space and time further: 'It's a nice place then to be and doing it, with a lot of light. The light is very important....My favourite way is just hearing my nice classic music and put some stones together and then look if I, whenever I do something then I want to have a look at it from a distance and it's very nice to do that'.

Pink (2012) reminds us that '... sense can be understood as interconnected, and at the level of perception inseparable' (p.4), highlighting the importance of attending to 'the multisensory and embodied ways in which environments are experienced and the unspoken, the tacit and ways of knowing and communicating in everyday life and activist practice that are not verbalized' (p.4). Fotini is not only verbalizing her sensory aesthetic experience of light and sound, her bodily experience of the doing, the spatial experience of stepping back and reflecting on what has been made, the visual experience of reflective viewing, - she is also evaluating it and judging it to be important.

In the domestic sphere making space is often also contested space, whether that is through children needing space or a partner having designs on your space. Becky mentions that her partner keeps asking her to reduce the amount of things she keeps for her making, but she ends up accumulating more, rather than reducing it. Her space functions not just for current making, but is also the incubator of future making: 'I haven't done beading in like eight years and I've got millions of beads, but I won't get rid of it because I know at some point I will go back to it.' She gives an example of her material resources *reminding* her to make: '... I found two kits that I'd forgotten I'd bought and I can't wait to start them, but I've got a list sort of a mile long of stuff that I can't wait to start. Yes, so I'm not going to get bored this winter.' Here is the temporal aspect again, the future-orientation of making stored physically within the making space as well as a refusal to give up space. Commanding space and material has a particular kind of pleasure attached to it that is akin to play. An almost childlike enjoyment of the material aesthetics of things owned surfaces when Becky says: '...because I like organisation, I have labels on boxes but sometimes I just label it 'cool stuff' or 'more really cool stuff' (laughter).

Ideally, successful making spaces, feed the making by providing inspiration, comfort and ready to hand materials, but sometimes the reality of what you think *you need* and what you are actually *making do with*, are somewhat lightyears apart. Eirini stated quite vehemently: 'I think what's important is to have your space ... it's easier to get back to working when you can identify with a working space'. When I responded saying: 'But you don't have a space!?' She elaborated:

'... I do watercolours on the table, that's where I do it. I was cutting my stuff, I don't care. The thing is you have to be at peace with the fact that, because there is, you know, there's this thing where we're saying 'Oh the day I'm going to have a studio it's going to be great.' and actually, you know what, you can work on your table. Yes it would be great to have a studio and I constructed this to be the studio and now it's my income because I rent it. And yes, it would be great but sometimes you need to work where you are, you know, you need to just, it's great to have a desk and it's great to have, but like today I was cutting the fabrics and I was doing it half on the floor and half on the table because there were Legos on the table and I couldn't be bothered. So I was like "Okay I'll just sit on the floor" and then the floor was cold, so I did the long cuts on the floor and then I did the short cuts on the table. But I finished in one morning, I cut all the pieces so it wasn't that hard. Now

they're all wrapped up. What was the question again?’

Eirini’s description of her making practice during just one particular morning, shows in quite a nuanced way, how different aspects of the space available impact on her body and her making. She highlights that her ‘real’ making space is now fulfilling another role, because it provides an income by being rented out. She needs this in order to have more freedom to make. This freedom is time. Renting out her making space provides her with an income, which gives her time she might otherwise have to use generating income rather than making her work. It appears that whenever compromises have to be reached in relation of making – freeing time is always the deciding factor, it overrides being able to command the ideal space.

When there is dedicated space, the ordering and curating of it becomes part of the making, because it essentially re-locates some of the intellectual and emotional effort required to make, into a physical space, which means it frees up inner space. Toni outlines her struggle to stay on top of her very varied and wide-ranging making practice: ‘But yes, there’s so many different threads to it and it’s all connected but I’ve, I’m still waiting for the day, I’m sure it will happen at some point where it will all just go ‘Slot’ and I’ll got ‘Ahaha” – ‘But at the moment it’s all so overlapping and I see bits and linkages’. Talking about the impact that can have on her: ‘I try and keep it all in my head and it makes you very tired’. She tries to ease that intellectual and emotional burden, by organizing her thoughts, ideas and plans with boards full of coloured post-it notes in her studio: ‘I keep the post-it note boards and if something occurs, ...’. This means she can externalise and record parts of her making that she might not need at that present moment, but that may or may not become an essential part of it. She essentially *parks* part of her making externally, to keep her head clear for tasks at hand. So, the studio space *is* her making materialized in that sense, allowing her to flow between different modes of making required at different points in time ‘... I’m a great combination, or I’m an awful combination of wanting to be hyper, hyper, hyper organised and the fact that I work really well in chaos and it’s constantly that, of me struggling to be organised and then chaos’.

Making spaces can accommodate both order and chaos, and are part of the process of making in two ways: Firstly because they provide the physical space to make and ensure the maker has their resources ready to hand-during the making process, secondly because during their curation, ordering and being in them, they support the makers to ‘mind-make’ in a future oriented way. Dedicated making spaces also issue temporal ‘calls to action’, which makes it easier for the makers to extract themselves from other calls upon their time.

What happens in a space is not incidental. Space has its own agency and its own call to action. The demarcation of space is also the demarcation of time. Making time. This is not to say that time to make cannot be found without a dedicated making space, but that a dedicated making space appears to have way of ‘storing’ some of the intellectual, emotional and material energy it takes to make, whilst also presenting a ‘temporal’ call to action. When I last saw Fotini, I had Doreen Massey’s ‘For Space’ (2012) with me. She asked

about it and we talked about my analysis of the making spaces I had witnessed. I explained: 'She (Doreen Massey) says that space is not just static and that it is connected closely to time. After I worked with all the other women, I was thinking – the space is not just space – it is space in time'. Fotini nodded and said: 'Of course, - the space is saying: This is the time!' (to make). Massey critiques the idea of space being imagined as 'conquering time', saying that it points to space being perceived as a somehow 'lesser dimension than time: one with less gravitas and magnificence, it is the material/phenomenological rather than the abstract; it is being rather than becoming and so forth; and it is feminine rather than masculine ...' (Massey 2012:29). I would argue that, when Fotini and myself were imagining space as being a *pointer to* and a *demarcation of* time, we didn't conceive of it as being *lesser* than time – rather the opposite – we connected space to *making time*, both in the abstract and literal sense. Pink (2012) highlights that 'places are not bounded zones that we live or engage in practice *in* but they are actually produced through movement' (p.25). Referring to Ingold's (2000) concept of entanglement and of the constantly changing constellation of things within an environment, she reminds us that 'these are not movements that we necessarily always observe with the eye or feel underfoot' (p.25).

The material and phenomenological aspects of space, actually supports abstract *and* concrete movement: The *imagining* of making and the *doing* of making. Neither the abstract nor the concrete happen at a static point in time, they happen in the motion of space and time together. Whilst Becky talks about her space inspiring her making and prompting her to make, Eirini who is without a dedicated making space, has to adapt her process constantly because the space she is making in, is not supportive of her making. When I saw her recently she wore a badge that said: 'Despite everything – she persisted'. In many ways, this to me, summed up how Eirini makes: - her space (amongst other things) does not offer volition to her making, but is like an obstacle course, both physically and mentally, because she has to keep moving her making, whilst at the same time also pushing against the temporal call of domestic labour.

Making space is not just related to time by the temporal call to making that Fotini and I had talked about. As Massey (2012) reminds us, space is not static because it is not fixed in time, even though it may often appear to us in that way. The ideal making space is kind of humming 'energy storage' for making. It is not a static space, even when it is not in use – it carries intentionality, which is connected to the maker's mind whilst at the same time freeing the maker's mind, because it incubates disparate ideas, materials, and making not yet started or finished. And as the maker's mind can re-configure their making intentionality, while away from their space, the space itself is not fixed, even when un-attended, because it hums with the potentiality of an endless amount of configurations of future making. It is part of the maker's mind. As Massey (2012) points out, space is neither petrification nor a lack of temporality, - it doesn't hold time still – the lively world is both temporal and spatial. Making thrives in space lively with material and conceptual possibilities.

## **Making Space in Time**

The temporal space that making requires has been more difficult to surface than the physical space previously outlined. It is mainly when a lack of time is brought up as a barrier to making, that its importance becomes clearly visible. It may be obvious that making is entirely dependent on time, but temporality in making is not fixed to one single thing, thus hides itself amongst all the other aspects of making. Traditionally, women's labour in the family and community has been on the one hand a vital commodity for the functioning of the fabric of life, whilst on the other hand being de-valued within the capitalist economic systems (Rowbotham 1973a & 1973b, Weeks 2011). Women now often still fulfill these family and community focused roles, whilst also working for pay externally. This, as Malabou (2016) points out, means that they are dually exploited by the system. Childcare and domestic duties, are however considered to be one of the keystones to have shaped women's labour for thousands of years as well as their development of making technologies such as weaving (Wayland Barber 1994). During my fieldwork, women did not blame childcare and domestic duties of keeping them from making, but mentioned them as something they might also *want* to do and that they themselves *allowed* it to distract them from their making.

Attie brings up how women's' making is often both defined, confined and configured by their domestic roles. Commenting on her own life, she says 'Well because for women the making is often to the housekeeping and the children's work but, yes, but I personally had, well a more manly life in the way that, okay I had to cook and I had to do the household but I also had my work and now there is just no, not much household, there is a lot of making, there is room for making, yes, so it's not, well it's also different in which age you are'.

She highlights that, despite having had more of a, as she put it, - 'manly life', she had still had a future oriented desire to have more time for her making, saying that 'I always thought of "Well when I had my ... (pension)" Then I will be really making, then I can work undisturbed.' So despite the fact that she hasn't had children and hadn't been keeping a traditional family household, she had still felt that her making had been compromised before she retired from her teaching position.

Domestic and care demand on women's time is visible in the accounts. When I ask Fotini what stops her from making she explains: 'Again, me stops me because I'm putting many things together like if I want to have time with the kids and read with the kids and clean up the house and cook for the house, then it's always something behind.' What strikes me is that she doesn't give the children or the household as the primary reason as to what stops her. She highlights her own desire to fulfill those demands, which she prioritises over her making.

Toni described how even having a dedicated making spaces within the domestic setting, was not enough to 'call' her to work in the way she needed, because other calls to action within the domestic space dominated. Speaking of renting a space externally, she said: 'I wanted a space to go to.' I would argue that this does not only describe a physical space to go to but also importantly a *space in time* to go to. And this also entails having space to

think. She describes how her making space holds parts of her making-thinking not yet resolved, on post-it notes, in books, in work in progress etc.. But on top of those materialities, there it provides making-thinking space, because she doesn't have to spend energy drowning out other demands on her time. Asking, 'How does thinking function?', Schües proposes that 'In thinking I withdraw from the world, and am by myself; that is, I *have* the feeling of *liveliness* of myself (and liveliness can also be part of our experiences). However, the inability to think about "something" turns a human into a "sleepwalker"' (2011:72). When the women 'withdraw' into their making spaces, they have space and time to think, and this has also has political implications, a Schües points out 'A feminist approach is always concerns the revaluations of power relations within society, as, for example, the question of the relevance of time when discussing power relations or asymmetrical hierarchies between men and women' (2011:6). Toni account shows how *being at home*, signals in some way being available. This signaling of availability may come from others, but may also come from oneself internally. Toni highlights externally experienced pressure, when she recalls: 'I think I kind of needed to put the break in from family. It's like if you're working from home people don't think you're working. 'Oh you're at home all day.' and it's like 'No, I am working'. But she also acknowledges how being in the domestic space was also signaling availability to herself: 'I mean I blame my family but also in my own head having that stuff upstairs, it's great but then you also get distracted 'Oh look the washing needs doing.' I can't start work until I've done the pots, or the garden needs digging and I found myself making excuses because I'm quite easily distracted'. Toni made the decision to take her making outside of the domestic sphere, to signal to herself and others that she was 'at work'. Being 'at work' carries a different signal both internally and externally, it eliminates the need to spend energy on demarcating space in time in order for making to become priority. Just being in the domestic space appears to have a way of pushing other duties that one might have before any making 'duties' or intermingling with other distractions.

In order to spend a meaningful amount of time making, sacrifices often have to be made in financial terms or in the type of economic labour you engage in. Toni explains that in order to prioritise her making, she took a job cleaning a pub very early each morning, before she goes to her studio to 'work'. She explains: 'I had to sort of make a decision last year about whether I go and get a proper job or whether I commit myself to the art life and make a thing of it, and I sort of went 'Well I didn't waste all that time going to Art School if I'm not going to do it.' so sort of put myself in a position where I'd only need to work a few hours a week and then the rest of the time is making'.

To demarcate and prioritise making time takes discipline and sacrifice, and it is very common for the time spent on 'economic labour' to eliminate making time. Eirini recalls earning money doing administrative work for another artist and when I ask her how that felt, she answers: 'It was like I was not an artist anymore. I had to like realise that I needed to practice again and it took a while.' '...I was not working at all anymore.' This period of time was also after her first child had been born, which meant there were a lot of other demands put on her time. Similarly to Fotini though, Eirini points to *herself* as being the cause of not making any more within that context and also uses similar terms - 'I had like a tiny desk in (my son's) bedroom and I think I got distracted also by a lot

of other things, I let myself be distracted'. When I ask her what generally stops her from making, she tells me:

'Routine I think, everyday life. Preparing food, travelling, taking care of the kids. I made a promise to myself that my mornings would be spent for work and I would ignore calls for coffee, walks, paying bills, doing the dishes, cooking, before it's one o'clock and that from one to two was enough to cook'. She told me recently that she realised that while she is making, she feels invincible. She said 'when I am doing my work I feel like I am the strongest women in the world, - I can do anything.' This is very similar to what Fotini told me about her making having given her a sense of power. She had said: 'Now I think I can do a lot of things, I have no problem'. I would argue that the demarcation of time to make is a vital space where the women can experience themselves as powerful and this sense of power also partially stored in their making spaces, as well as having rippling effects into other aspects of their lives. Commanding temporal, spatial and material autonomy are essential to successful making.

Of all the women, Toni and Eirini were most explicit about how they conceptualise the prioritisation of their making 'work' in conscious opposition to domestic calls to action. When Toni explains why she felt that it was the right thing to do, she refers to the years she had invested into her art-school training and not wanting it to go to waste. Eirini is also a trained artist. For both of them their training may have made it easier to conceptualise their making as 'work' which is worthy of prioritisation over domestic work. The tension between domestic spaces and making or economic labour has been much discussed in relation to female labour. Massey's (1997) research showed that, the spatial separation of home and workplace, was one of the deciding factors in the emancipation of the female Lancashire millworkers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who went on to contribute significantly to the suffragette movement. Being able to leave the domestic sphere and becoming part of a work-based community, meant that women could combine their efforts to negotiate their position in society. These days the internet enables women to pursue a range of making activities from their domestic settings and as a flexible, frequently home-based workplace production economy, Etsy and indie craft work models resonate with wider debates about engaging in self-actualising and cultural work within the creative economy, and these engagements are enabled by digital technology. But Luckman (2013) points out 'Such work practices might be particularly attractive to women, as they allow for income generating work to be conducted alongside unpaid, domestic responsibilities, but they can also lead to a 'presence bleed' whereby the worlds of paid work, domestic labour and leisure blur, normally at the expense of the latter.' (ibid p.256). Furthermore, Schües (2011) highlights that 'Particularly in Western countries, most people say they need more time and that they lack time: many employees complain about the tempo at work; women especially feel that given their different roles as mothers, employees, partners, housekeepers, and caretakers, they lack time for themselves. The fight to balance among the different roles is a temporal problem.' (ibid p.10)

Thus, making *space in time* for making purely for one's own benefit is ultimately a political act. And making time for economic activities within the domestic realm is not the same as making space in time for autonomous making. I argue that order for making to be experienced as emancipatory, its primary function cannot be economic benefit.

## **The Benefits of Making**

As part of my participant observations, I also conducted informal interviews, which were conversational in nature. One of the questions I asked the women during that conversations was: 'Who benefits from your making?'. Although the benefits of their making also surfaced in other parts of our encounters, it was through this question that they explicitly conceptualized it for me. I was also hoping to shine some light on their *making* motivations, - what motivates them to make and what are the values underpinning their motivation? Other aspects of the research showed how their motivation was linked to being inspired by materials and concepts that engaged them. Here, I am primarily surfacing how their motivation is framed by their conceptualization of the benefits of making as they perceive them.

The question itself was not neutral on my part, to the extent that one of the things that had motivated me to do research in this area, had been my perception from an early age that *women's making, made life happen*. In the light of this 'felt' personal insight and despite gaining an intellectually understanding of systemic exclusion through Patriarchy, it can still be difficult to apprehended how female making could be so invisible and undervalued at an external societal level. So by asking this question I harboured to a certain extent the hopeful intention, of making visible all the ways in which women's making benefitted the world. What women told me however, gave a far more nuanced and interesting insight into how *they* framed the benefits of their making, than my somewhat partisan feminist biases had anticipated.

## **Benefit to self**

When I asked the women who benefitted from their making, the most common answer was that they themselves were the primary beneficiaries. Becky, Katy, Bill, Toni, Kaz, Attie, Dylan and Eirini all named themselves as benefactors. Becky, Bill and Katy most explicitly linked it to their personal well-being and mental health:

Me: Who benefits from your making?

Becky: 'Me. Absolutely. Me. I suppose people who I give stuff to, but 99% of it is me.'

Whilst answering a previous question, she had also already commented on this, but in more depth, describing her making as almost as a friend to her: 'And for a lot of years my craft kept me sane, or relatively sane, because I had a very tumultuous period and my craftwork is where I found my refuge and so I'm very grateful to my crafts. It's almost an entity to me. It's almost a friend. Yes, yes, it's almost a friend that I can turn to when I'm feeling really down and I know it will make me feel better, without having to actually interact with somebody, which is not something I always enjoy because people suck.'

Other women also named making is being very important for them to cope with life.

Bill said: 'Me. I'd go crazy if I didn't have something to do. I've got, I don't know, three or four things on the go at the moment and whichever mood I'm in I'll work on that, you know. Yes, I'm a bit of a flitter bug ... I suppose other people that buy the things but, yes, it's me. I'd go crazy.'

Katy answered: 'Obviously I clearly do, I massively benefit from it in so many ways and I can talk about that. .... But for me it's very good for my mental health, I'm not very good at stopping work, ... it's the thing that I think calms me and I think it's the thing that allows me to exist in this fucked up crazy world as well and cope with it a bit better.'

Fotini points towards, how her making practice has given her confidence in a more general sense: 'It helps me to feel better and if you feel that you are good in something then you, it's a nice feeling if you can do it. It helps me to think that when I was 18 years old I thought I cannot do anything. Now I think I can do a lot of things, I have no problem.'

Kaz and Dylan mention other people who they might share things with, but sideline them – highlighting how feedback from others might be sought, but is ultimately kept separate from the value they themselves ascribe to their making practice.

Kaz: 'Me. I think only me. I don't really think anyone else is that bothered, but that doesn't bother me, that's fine, because I don't know what everyone likes. Like it's nice when I show my mates my work and they like it, that's nice, but I can't do it for them because, I don't know.'

Dylan: 'I think the people who benefit from my making is just me really, I mean I sometimes share it with other people but, like I said, people are just like, it's just something someone's made, but for me it's really important. So, I think I'm probably the only person that really benefits from it.'

Attie, also names herself first: 'Now in that respect, first of all myself ...' but then goes on to talk about how her making benefits in a broader context, whilst Toni highlights the mental health benefits her making has and further on explains how she understands that this is connected to states of flow. Toni: 'Oh now there's a question. Me. With the sewing, yes, it's definitely me because I find that just incredibly calming and it's one of those flow moments, you lose yourself and three hours have gone, ...'. Attie reflected on only being able to sleep when she had done something during the day she was satisfied with and the importance of feeling 'I have created something' and you can look at it and rest.'

### **Near and Far Benefaction**

When the women considered how their making might also benefit others, they often mentioned their partners. Becky, Katy and Vicky identified how their practice impacted positively on their partner. Becky and Katy mention this particularly in relation to the idea that, because their making makes themselves happier it in turn makes things better for their partners too. Becky said: '...I suppose to a degree Sully benefits from me being healthy. Because it is good for me. So I suppose it has a knock-on effect that if I'm happy then Sully's happy, so yes.' Katy outlines how her making, as it involves travel, benefits her partner because he gets to see different places, but she ultimately concludes that: '... I think it's about being with me and having me in a better mental health because I'm doing these things, I'm busy and always doing something. So I think he benefits as well.'

Vicky, who was one of the only two women who hadn't named themselves as primary benefactors of their making practice, did identify as her partner benefitting from it, albeit more hesitantly: 'Maybe my boyfriend benefits from it a little bit because he's quite creative but he doesn't have a creative job so his outlet is more kind of, he started

making clothes spontaneously.' She explains that they have started doing creative work together, which gave him an outlet from not having a creative job.

Becky, who has fostered and childminded for over two decades also mentions how the children in her care have benefitted from her interest in making: 'The kids enjoy making things obviously, whoever the kids are, because there's not so much scope for kids to make things these days'. Becky also explained in some length how she had used her making therapeutically, to support those often severely traumatized children. Fotini also mentions her children at the same time as talking about herself: 'I like to create things. I like to do something ... you know, I want to do something for my kids, I want to do something for me.' This reminds us how entangled the self and any making that is pursued is with others who are cared for and about. When I did the fieldwork with Bill, she talked a lot about all the work that had gone into the themed room she had designed for her visiting grandkids. Making for yourself is entangled in the social fabric of life and making for others is an essential part of this, as long as it can be performed on the individual woman's terms.

Only three of the women who participated, were very immediately explicit about how their making benefitted the wider world. Vicky who didn't even bring up that her making was benefitting herself, explained how her making benefitted her colleagues, because it fed directly into commercial work that the co-operative studio she is part of is doing. She explains 'The studio definitely because I think I spend a lot of time researching processes and things.' She then went on to describe how her creative partner might ask her for some quick turn-around solutions for a commercial design brief and because she has been experimenting with her own practice, she can utilize that experience in order to help the studio turn something around quickly. The idea of creative peers benefitting, also comes up with Toni, who highlights how her interests, knowledge and skills in particular areas have inspired others in the creative community she is situated in, to explore new ways of approaching their own practice through collaborative projects.

Eirini's answer was quite complex, - she starts by saying 'Oh, the world. Well I think that when you are an artist you have a responsibility to get your work out there' but then ties this back to herself immediately by saying 'The first responsibility is to yourself because all artists are self-centered and want, I think, people to see their work'. So in that context her answer of the 'the world' is brought back in line with the idea of this benefitting herself, because she wants her work to be seen. But she also highlights, how this is connected to a broader responsibility to her audience and the community she lives in: 'So, to get it out there is, your first responsibility to yourself but then also, especially if you're in a small city like where we live, you have a responsibility to get work in the public space because you need to communicate with people.'

Attie, who had been an Art and Technology teacher all her working life, also alludes to the idea of how her making contributes to culture in a broader context. Although she starts with herself benefitting, she then broadens it out: 'Now in that respect, first of all myself and, yes, I think culture in general.' Similarly to Eirini, she then also goes on to talk about an 'audience' of sort, - places and people who have benefitted from her making: '... I come into school and I see a painting I've made, or when I come home and I see something I've made or people have something hanging on the wall or you see a

child that's wearing a hat that you made, that's satisfying, yes.' Here, her audience is others, as well as herself and she also brings it back to how witnessing other people enjoying her making output, is in itself beneficial to her because it gives her a feeling of satisfaction. Bill makes a similar point in another part of our conversation when she talks about going past a pub that had bought some of her restored furniture, and her looking in and getting a feeling of satisfaction that it was still in use.

### **Permission to make**

What surfaces during the research was that a number of the women had experienced a paralysis in their making practice at some point in time, which in one case lasted for years. This happened when their making was framed within value systems external to them, - systems they were in but felt excluded from at the same time. This came out of discussions with Kaz, Lucy, Katy and Dylan. The women showed a reflective awareness of how certain types of making contexts had meant that they lost power over their making. This loss of power was experienced as a loss of the feeling that their making was meaningful. Feeling that their making was meaningless led to an avoidance of making and a sense of un-happiness. Kaz said 'it was like I'd shut it off' and '... it just felt like 'It's over.' This only appeared with women who had been part of professionalized making in the context educationally formalised or professionalized making. Some entirely abandoned their making for long periods of time, when they perceived that their making would not be recognized within the system. I am conceptualizing this as 'permission to make', in the sense that the women affected, were at that point relying on external reasons to make, - the value they themselves assigned to their making was bound up with the system valuing it. The women who went through periods of 'needing permission' to make, experienced a profound loss of motivation to make at all. Recovering from this was described as an internal struggle, during which they 'divorced' external value systems from their making practice. This freed them from 'needing permission' to make. The women who's making had *always* happened outside of these value systems, had no accounts of undergoing such crisis.

The systems in question are also what Lave & Wenger (1991) have conceptualized as 'Communities of practice'. These communities of practice are important support systems for their members and are widely regarded as systems that allow a practice to determine its value system and trajectory. In order to be a member of this community one has to be encultured into it and then becomes part of the production and reproduction of that system (Trowler:1998; Becher:1989; Mc Farlane:2004, Shreeve:2009). A successful member of the system will be valued by it and also become part of a gatekeeper to it (Trowler:1998), but just as a community of practice can bestow value, it is just as likely to withhold it.

When value is withheld or withdrawn it can affect how the viability of making is perceived. Dylan recalls at one point being so trapped in the idea that something had to be *for* something, that she was quite down when one of her funding applications for a project was unsuccessful, because in her mind it meant it would be happening: 'I was telling my dad about an idea I had for an academic project that was to do with play and making things and it didn't get funded and I told my dad and he was

like “Well why don't you just do it anyway?” and I was like “Well it won't be recognised as having any value unless it's being funded”. So in the academic system, even though it could potentially then be helpful to children, which I hoped that it would be, without it having been recognised by a research council and worthy of funding --' and he would talk about how ridiculous that was to him. He would just say “Well you've got the idea, there must be a way of –...”. And I think that's been quite nice, like when I've struggled with things in academia, to have someone say “Actually that's a load of rubbish, you could just do it”.’

It's not that Dylan didn't realise that she could just do it, but had internalised the constructs of her community of practice as to how something is assigned value. Feeling like *making* outside of these, ultimately economic, value systems, is not of value, stifles the impulse to make.

Never having been encultured in a community of practice in relation to their making as such, with women like Fotini, Bill and Becky, - the idea of needing ‘permission to make’ does not feature at all as a barrier to their making. The only things stopping their making are restrictions of money, time, space or health. Dylan, Katy and Kaz however talked quite explicitly about how their education and work had at some point made them feel as if only *making* in particular contexts was ‘permissible’. Only by working through this barrier through self-reflection, soul-searching and a certain amount of inner rebellion were they able to reject those embodied concepts of validity and reclaim their making practice. Kaz reflected on the journey she had been on, since reclaiming her making practice:

‘I actually thought I would just get a job in animation, you know, at one of the studios and do you know now I wouldn't want that. I'd rather do my own thing. Not that, God forbid, not that if anyone rang me up and said 'Do you want to do six months?' Of course I do because it would be nice to learn, of course it would, but I just think, I do my own things now, I've just got to the point where I've spent a good ten years doing shit jobs because I didn't think I could do anything else.’

She also mentions how she has the desire to share her insight with her other female friends who have ‘lost’ their making: ‘we're always sending each other the art stuff because she's like 'I really want to get back into it.' and I said 'You should, if I've got back into it you can get back into it.’ She has reframed her making in terms of ‘This is what I do.’ rather than trying to do what I think people would want me to do’ and that now, when people counsel her against certain *making* plans, she feels strong enough to think to herself ‘that's just their fears’. So, when Kaz talks about her making, as it is now, it is much more similar to how Becky or Fotini talk about theirs. There is a conscious and sometimes willful removal of their making from any external value systems.

In the fieldwork, the group of women, such as Eirini, Vicky and Lucy, who declared their making as beneficial to the wider world, are more actively engaged with external value systems. They are active contributors to them and this confers value onto their making which goes beyond themselves and is visible to others within those communities of practice. These value systems are well established in the wider context of the socio-economic practices as well as capitalist systems. Being encultured into such systems, can on the one hand confers value onto the making, whilst on the other hand withhold. The women who experienced a withholding of value through this system, experienced it both

as an internal, self-generated act as well as an external act. They had to actively de-culture themselves in order to experience the value of their making as belonging to themselves, and that being a good enough reason to make. It's like when I asked Kaz what she now says when somebody asks her what she does/is: 'I'd say 'artist' but it did take me a long time to be all right saying that.'

### **Resisting Benefaction**

Throughout my encounters with the different women, there was a noticeable refusal by the women to view their making as being primarily conceived for the benefit of external economic factors. Vaneigem proposed that: 'In an industrial society which confuses work and productivity, the necessity of producing has always been an enemy of the desire to create.' (1967/2006:52). But these women were not confusing their making with productivity, instead they showed many signs of consciously rejecting the potential of necessity of production, in order to safeguard their desire to make. This surfaced, scattered throughout the fieldwork. Becky was the most explicit about rejecting productivity, she commented 'It's not about needing to get something finished, it's about enjoying making it and whether I give it away, throw it away or sell it, it doesn't matter, it doesn't make any difference to me, I enjoy the process of making.' She also later related this to the idea of the investment of time in contrast to monetary investment or return:

'... the money that I invest in the craft that I'm doing is kind of irrelevant to the end result. I can make a bag that I absolutely love that costs, I don't know, twenty quid, but if I bought it in a shop, something similar, it might cost £3.99, but that doesn't matter because I've had the enjoyment of making it.' When I point out that in that sense she is paying for the pleasure of making the bag, Becky confirms this, quite defiantly - 'For the pleasure of making something. ... Yes, that I could buy in a shop that's cheaper and quick.' I protest that a cheap bag bought in a shop would not be as nice as the one she has just made, but she is determined to make her point:

**Becky:** 'Well it might be but it doesn't matter to me. I've made the quiet books that took fifty hours of sewing to make, fifty hours, which in a monetary value, if you paid yourself £7 an hour to make you couldn't sell them, but I enjoyed the process of making it.'

**Mel:** 'And what has happened to them?'

**Becky:** 'I give them away as presents. But that's fine, even if they wreck them it doesn't matter because I've really enjoyed making them.'

**Mel:** 'Yes, so once it's out of your realm it doesn't --.'

**Becky:** 'Yes, it doesn't really matter. So, if I make something for somebody, if they chuck it in the bin I wouldn't be offended or upset about it. I might want the material back to reuse but, yes, it's the process of making that I enjoy'.

It seems to be a point of pride and principle to Becky that her making is not about monetary economics in terms of her making being financially economical in relation to the time she has spent on making. A quiet defiance in terms of time economics, generally echoed around the women's accounts – it does not matter how much time is spent on

making, because 'being in the process' is what they enjoy and desire. They realise that this means that their making time does not fit into a traditional monetary economy, - they point out how this time is theirs to spent outside of those measurements, and show a certain pleasure in knowing that it subverts conventional ways a valuing time in a financial economy. Other women were similarly ambivalent about their making being 'beneficial' in a social or economic sphere. Katy talked about her refusal to academise her making, because she wanted it to remain in her domain and under her control. She also described how she kept making drafts of particular artifacts, partially because she had no desire to finish her body of work, - saying that she could happily make it last for the rest of her life. Kaz highlighted how only when she decided that she would only make what would make *her* happy, she experienced a kind of emancipation from the pressures she had felt on her making practice up to then. She also talks about putting in 'ridiculous hours' into her practice, saying 'there are no clock-points'. Toni took a cleaning job, so that her making could remain autonomous from any economic demands being made on it and she could put the hours into her very time-intensive black-work embroidery as well as progressing her coding skills for her digitized pieces. The women's accounts of resisting economic purposes for making, resisting the need to finish and or to re-produce making, also showed up in their actual making as the modes of making. Desire to also make for others (which they did), was juxtaposed with their desire to not compromise their modes of making too much, even for those close to them

They generally highlighted that 'finishing was not important', sometimes delaying the conclusion of any artefactual outcomes so that they could remain process bound for longer. They showed, in their making and in their conceptualization of it, that they value the iterative, experimental and explorative modes of making, which they identify as the place of most joy. Repetitive processes based on reproduction are judged primarily negatively. Becky explains: '... making multiples of one thing doesn't interest me, I like everything to be different.' She makes clear that she understands that, - if her making was to make any sense economically, she would have to alter her modes of making: 'If I was to sell them it would make sense to make five gingerbread houses all in one go because then you can cut out a job lot of fencing or roofing or whatever, and it would save an awful lot of time.' But she is also explicit and adamant about *why* she is making and *who for*: 'My crafts is my interest for me, it's not a commercial thing, even though I have made things and sold them that's not the reason why I make things and if it was to become that I think I would get bored very quickly. I'm not very good at making the same thing again and again and I have tried, but I'm not very good at that'. She mentions that even making repeat items for her sisters is problematic: 'I will, because I'm making for my sisters but it's not because I'm going to enjoy the process'. Bill also talks repeatedly about getting bored with re-producing particular items. With her smaller craft items, she enjoys thinking of new/different things to make: 'There's no shortage of ideas it's just what I fancy do it and once I've done it and got it out of my system that's great and I'll move on to the next thing'. When I ask her about not making the same things again, she says 'No because I've been there, done that, it's kind of scratched that itch'.

It's not that the women don't want to share their making practices, skills, labour and fruit,

with others. Their accounts, as well as my observations and wider experience of them, clearly shows them using their making to benefit others. The point is that they refuse their making to be *defined* by anything other than their own desire to make.

The kind making some of these women pursue is often called amateur making or craft. Critiquing amateur craft, Adamson (2007) disputes the idea that this kind of making has anything to do with the rejection of capitalist value structures, explaining that from a strict Marxist perspective conceiving it as such is the 'very embodiment of false consciousness' (p.140). He argues that, rather than being an extraction from capitalism

'...the effect of such activity is exactly the reverse. Precisely because they are made so lovingly, homemade crafts betray the degree to which their makers are integrated into the larger structures of capitalist ideology, in which commodity forms are the primary carriers of meaning. The experience of amateurism may feel like autonomy, but in fact nothing could be more pre-determined'. (Adamson, 2007)

According to this critique, it would appear that the women, far from rejecting capitalist value structures, are in fact not only deeply embedded in them but are also re-producing them with their consumption of materials and time. Knott (2015) appears to deal a similar such death knell to notions that making might harbor an anti-capitalist stance, when he states that 'Amateur craft is inherently dependent on routines of everyday life, the structures symbolized by the "office stool" ... - the division of labour, entrepreneurship, the adulation of productivity, and the accumulation of capital' (p.xii) and that as such amateur craft "does not represent simple, individual opposition against 'the machine", as so often presumed' (xii). I personally dislike the term amateur on the grounds that, to me it, it speaks more loudly of current ontological value constructs (there is a reason why there is no amateur brain surgery), than of its original meaning of doing something for love and not gain, - which *would* be accurate for the women I worked with. More importantly though, I also beg to differ on both their assessments of *making* being inexorably bound into the nature of capitalism. I concede that they have relevance insofar as materials acquired and time 'bought free' for making, are still subsumed within the dominant system of capitalism and that, in Marxists terms, the pursuit of making speaks of a desire to not be alienated from one's own labour. What I find at fault here, is that the very framing of making from within the capitalist system can only result in us conceptualizing it within its ontology. To a man with a hammer everything looks like a nail. I reject Adamson (2007) and Knott's (2015) assessment of making, because I believe that, if anything, the female makers resistance to benefaction is both pre – and post-capitalist.

Design anthropology's expanded conception of human making can offer us a zooming out contemporary ontological constructs, because through its interests in Anthropology and Archeology, it can cast our eyes beyond human making dispositions defined by western contemporary thought. But it is Grosz (2010) who touches the heart of my rejection of Adamson's and Knott's diagnosis the most, when she asks: 'Is feminist theory best served through its traditional focus on women's attainment of freedom from patriarchal, racist, colonialist and heteronormative constraints? Or by exploring what the female –or feminist –subject is and is capable of making and doing?' (p141). She acknowledges that *freedom*

*from* has important political and activist relevance, but critiques the ideas that freedom should be tied to an ultimately negative concept of liberty, because this means that '... it remains tied to the options or alternatives provided by the present and its prevailing and admittedly limiting forces' (p.141). She further argues that *freedom from* is insufficient for providing 'any positive action in the future'. Calling on a Bergsonian, pre-socratic philosophy of life, where freedom is conceived as the *very*, and *inalienable*, condition of life, she positions *freedom to* as the conceptual stance which offers future directed possibilities, - a freedom that is attained rather than bestowed and one which does not wait passively for its moment, but functions through activity (ibid). I believe that the women I spent my time with, act from such a space in time created for and by themselves, not from a place bestowed to them within patriarchal capitalism. I reject Adamson's diagnosis, because it doesn't account for the intrinsically political act the women engage in when they extract 'space in time' from capitalist time. Rather than seeing it as 'space in time' embedded in capitalist and patriarchal time, I see it as 'space in time' that is being and has been kept secret from it, - subverted from it. I also believe that this 'space in time' precedes capitalist time, because it speaks of making as a fundamental human attribute and desire. The women do not make because of capitalism, but despite of it. What Design Anthropology and the archaeological records show us, is that human making is an archaic expression of our *freedom to*, rather than our *freedom from*.

### **Freedom to make**

Beneficial reasons for 'making' being framed as primarily therapeutic, deeply unsettle me. I consider them harbouring an implied judgement of pathology, which I object to. Whilst the women's own accounts clearly speak of the benefits of making to their personal sense of well-being and as supportive to their mental health, I believe it would be a mistake to frame the benefits of making they experience, as one, which is curative or sanative, because one would have to come from a position where making is acting, as a kind socially acceptable sticking plaster to their own personal fragilities.

'There is no such thing as mental illness. It is merely a convenient label for groupings and isolating cases where identification has not occurred properly. Those whom power can neither govern nor kill, it taxes with madness.' (Vaneigem 1967/2006: P.137)

Whilst I do not believe that 'there is no such thing as mental illness', I am sympathetic to the sentiment. Contemporary society is full of sticking plaster prescriptions by the media, government, schools and work, - we are sent on staff-training for our well-being, our kids get taught mind-fullness in school during exam time in order to counteract the rise in childhood depression (in primary school!), government schemes shame us into eating healthier and to reduce our self-medication with alcohol, etc. - I consider the vast majority of these schemes as downright misanthropic. And here is why: These schemes are a symbol of the absolute avoidance within society of having to confront in action, that which is making us depressed, stressed, unhealthy and addicted. There is much good work out there that aims to give people space and access to meaning-making and form giving activities, but we need to beware to not become part of narratives where the conditions that make us ill are framed as 'just so' and where activities that we design to soften the

blows, normalise the fact that something is fundamentally very wrong. From craft for the elderly, to design thinking for the mentally ill (Devlin 2010, Social Value Lab 2011, Yair 2010, 'Design thinking in soul care' 2018, Wolfe 2018), - the applications of forms of making for better living are much discussed and promoted. In a report on craft and wellbeing the Craft Council, highlights the UK governments agenda of measuring the nations well-being and points to a range of examples of how making can benefit a wide range of people, for example: '... participants who are generally given little freedom in life (young people with learning difficulties for example) experience new autonomy from being encouraged to experiment with boundaries, and especially from being given responsibility for sharp, hot or otherwise dangerous materials' (p.5). Whilst the report hints at the problematics of politicising 'happiness' linked to the governments data collection, it also implies that craft could contribute to the improvement of this happiness data. A great amount of academic literature in relation to making and wellbeing comes from a health and well-being background, such as Liddle et Al. 2013, Reynolds 2010, Cameron, et al., 2013, Stuckey & Nobel 2010, Van Lith et al. 2012, Titus & Sinacore 2013, for example, which explains why the standpoint is primarily one of 'proving' the therapeutic benefits of creative making. Whilst I take no issue with the validity of research which explores the therapeutic benefits of making and appreciate the humanistic intentions of making *making* accessible to those in need of its benefits, I propose that analysis of deeper socio-political implications of *why* it is beneficial is needed. As Guffey (2014) reminds us: 'The politics of human creativity are often messy. The very idea of making, of improving, or of recycling requires an imaginative leap of faith ...' (264), I would argue that we need to pay attention to both the politics and the leaps of faith in making practice.

It is perhaps not surprising, that it is primarily feminist literature in relation to craft, such as Grace & Gandolfo, 2014, Kelly, 2015, Bain, 2016, Bratich & Brush 2011, Hackney, 2013, to name a few, which takes a political stance and questions underlying political implications of making for mental health and well-being. I have previously proposed to move towards a 'feminist design ontology' (Levick-Parkin 2017), because I believe that the plasticity of feminist critique is such, that it has the capacity to ask deeper questions about all our making practices, including questioning the very ontology we are situated within. I also believe that this what is necessary when we look at research findings that tell us that making is experienced as beneficial to mental health and well-being.

I do not believe that making is a remedy, which 'treats' or counteracts the cause of illness. I propose that it is simply, that, the opportunity for a human to be engaged in making is such an essential part of their human condition that if your ability or desire to make is stifled or curtailed, you become unwell. So, the benefits of then engaging in making, are not a cure, but a claiming of what is our fundamental right in the first place. The capitalist system takes our capacity to make and self-produce. and nurtures in us the endless capacity to consume. And in order to endlessly consume, we have to work. This takes up our time and space. And within work, as Weeks highlights, even "Dreams of individual accomplishment and desires to contribute to the common good become firmly attached to

waged work, where they can be hijacked to rather different ends: to produce neither individual riches nor social wealth, but privately appropriated surplus value.” (Weeks, 2011:8)

When Toni and Eirini call their making ‘their work’, they claiming value for their making which is normally earmarked for capitalist productive work, with that the ethical and moral values ascribed to it. That they should do so, is not that surprising, as they are both trained fine artists and the identity of being an artist is traditionally not bound to being economically viable through your work, and this notion is also traditionally cultivated in the art school. Even within wider capitalist society, the romanticised notion of the ‘starving artist’ supports the idea that in order for an artist to work i.e. to make art and be an artist, they do not have to be economically productive. They are measured by other systems, such as peers, exhibitions, galleries, etc. which although of course also connected to the economic sphere, do not directly judge based on economic worth but indirectly via aesthetics (Orr 2011, Niedderer 2013, Drew, 2004). The first question is: are you an artist that makes ‘good’ work?, then: are you an artist who sells work? (and makes money), - the economic value judgement is there, but one step removed. Although a slight exception to the rule, it still fits neatly within the narrow constructs of what can be counted as ‘work’ within the capitalist system, exactly because it is an exception, but also because capitalism has successfully commodified much of art and culture-making, even if most who produce it don’t necessarily benefit greatly economically at an individual level.

Saying they were at ‘work’, Eirini and Toni were able to signal to both themselves and others that they *could* prioritise their making over other labour demands made on them. But what of the women who are not artists? As previously discussed their making space provided a signal that they could make time, but they had to claim a certain amount of autonomy before they could even make that space. Part of that had to be a refusal to do other work. And the refusal of work is a significant act, which, within a capitalist construct that values work above everything else, is mundanely radical. It is a radical mundanity which Knott (2015) soberly disavows, - although describing ‘amateur time’ as ‘the possibility for temporary control of one’s own labour alienation’ (p98), he pinpoints one of its defining features as being its constraints and limitations in terms of utopianism, and as such its lacking of any meaningful will or future-directive power. Vaneigem (1967/2006) however, proposed that ‘lived space-time is the space-time of transformation, whereas the space-time of roles is that of adaption’ (p.220). I would argue that the space in time that the women take for their making is one where they have freed themselves of roles, - it’s a freedom that is attained, not bestowed and it functions through activity (Grosz 2010). As such, to conceive it as “compliant”, “weak” and lacking discursive power, as Knott (2015) describes ‘amateur time’, is to view it from within an ontology of patriarchal capitalist value structures. I refuse the ontology.

Capitalism, Mason (2015) proposes: ‘... will be abolished by creating something more dynamic that exists, at first, almost unseen within the old system, but which breaks through, reshaping the economy around new values, behaviours and norms” (p.xiv). He is

in this context, primarily talking about the impact of information technology on societal and economic structures, proposing that it is already loosening the relationship between wages and work. I would argue for women, the relationship between wages and work has never been a particularly stable one. Rowbotham (1973a) pointed out that one of the reasons why capitalism has remained to a large degree suspicious of women, is that it has never viewed them as being reliably committed to waged work. I believe that we can still see this suspicion reflected in gender pay-gap and career progression discrepancies to this day. This is because women's labour often remained and still often continues to remain in the process, - in the production of their families and communities (Rowbotham 1973b, Parker and Pollock 1981, Buckley 1986). In relation to care for others in particular, this is also often a production they prioritise, if they can, if they must. I do not have space here draw on critiques of reasons for this gendered labour, only to say that I am fully aware of their importance. My main argument here, is that women have *always* retained knowledge of work outside of the capitalist economic constructs, which although this resulted in painful exclusion for centuries (Rowbotham 1973a&b, Parker and Pollock 1981, Buckley 1986), has also harboured knowledge of '*freedom to*' (Grosz). Frayne (2015), who's research with people who had reduced work-hours or given up work, found that 'they had not done so according to some kind of crude anti-work morality, but according to a strongly felt desire to do *more*.' (Frayne, 2015:141) For some that it had included more of, what society currently considers idling time, for others it has meant being involved further in self-production and community oriented production (ibid.). Scholars of post-capitalism, such as Mason (2015), Weeks (2011), Frayne (2015) and Bregman (2016), make the case that self-production will be an essential component of a society which successfully comes to terms with the automisation of a large proportion of what is now wage labour. They argue that in order to thrive, we have to break the link between wages and production, through implementing basic income for all citizens so that from their self-production, society can continue to be produced, socially, culturally and economically. I argue that making dispositions are the ground from which this can be nurtured by giving it time, space and opportunity to make.

The space and time that the women command to make is time for self-production. That is for most of them its primary purpose. And with that, they are anarchic. That the benefit of their self-production extends beyond themselves is evident all around them, yet they refuse to give any of it power over their making. This refusal even extends to their family and community, which is probably the most radical aspect of their practice in feminist terms. A deep knowledge of *freedom to*, resides both within female making practices and within the art & design discipline, but in order utilize its full potential for our communities in years to come, it needs to be privileged with value not currently conceivable in contemporary design ontology. In order to make it conceivable discourse over making, design and education, have to be expanded beyond contemporary ontology, supported by the breaking of the work/wage conflation and it's narrowly defined ethical and moral evaluation of both what constitutes public life and what counts as work.

As Grosz (2010) reminds us 'Freedom is not a transcendent quality inherent in subjects but immanent in the relations that living has with the material world, including other forms of life' (p.148), which means that each freedom has to be a dialogical process informed by the construction of our own ethics in relation to the world around us. Yet, I also believe in the more un-ruly elements of a *freedom to*, and as Vaneigem (1967/2006) highlights '... subversion is the basic expression of creativity. Daydreaming subverts the world' (p.X). In their *making*, women are taking space to day dream, - they are taking space to think, - 'to feel lively within themselves' (Schües 2011), but more than that, - they are taking the *freedom to* make, with all its material and sensory possibilities of making the new.



Blackwork embroidery made by Toni Buckby

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