

## Serendipity of Gathering: People, Place and Making

### **Initial Thoughts - A means of capturing my own ideas**

Before leaving Scotland to go on a field trip to Sweden, I considered how I might gather my thoughts during my time on this trip. I came up with the idea of making what I decided to call a ‘thought basket’. I could combine my love of crochet and make a basket containing notes of my thoughts each day. It seemed like an easy, quick way of capturing thoughts—an alternative to keeping a diary or reflective journal. I intended to write and leave notes, delaying the deep reflection until the end of my trip, perhaps emptying the basket on my return home when I could take time to sit back and absorb the experience and consider the effects that it had on me and my practice.

### **Developing Thoughts (Inviting Others to Add Their Thoughts)**

I decided that the ‘thought basket’ could be opened up to others, creating the potential for a basket of collective thoughts, so I sent an invitation to everyone in the LILA group.

### **The Response – What Happened?**

There was no immediate response from anyone, so I decided to take the necessary materials and tools with me and follow my original intentions on my own.

I began to crochet the basket as we sat together in the evenings, talking and often crafting together in Sweden.

### **Being Together**



*Figure 1. Sharing ideas, crafting and skill sharing across cultures Körningsgarden, Nordingrå, Sweden. Images: Jane Ronie, 2023.*

People started to engage with the process, the first being Susannah, who came to me with a piece of Harris Tweed, which she had intentionally taken from home in Scotland. She had never crocheted before but, with guidance, managed to crochet a row of the basket. I was delighted.

More people came, offering materials from different places. It was as if seeing the process brought out desires to be involved.

The process of making what was originally a basket brought us together and I really enjoyed the challenge involved in combining these diverse and unusual materials, making sure that everyone who came forward was involved.

Tim Ingold suggested in his work *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (2013) that:

“Making is a process of growth. This is to place the maker from the outset as a participant in a world of active materials. These materials are what he has to work with and in the process of making he ‘joins forces’ with them, bringing them together or splitting them apart, synthesising and distilling, in anticipation of what might emerge.”

“To make anything is to join with the forces and materials of the world in such a way as to bring forth something that did not exist before.”

These thoughts resonated with me through the process of making, using my hands to manipulate the different materials that came together and create a new, unexpected form. There was an added joy as the ‘joining of forces’, as described by Ingold, went beyond mere material; it became the joining of people and material, and a very special form of reciprocity as the giving of material and the act of making brought all involved together. The basket became testimony to the ‘temporality of our

dwelling’ together in Sweden. My interpretation of the making of the nest and all that went with it in bringing its particular form about seems to fit with Ingold’s notion of the ‘dwelling perspective’ as “bringing to bear the knowledge born of immediate experience, by privileging the understandings that people derive from their lived, everyday involvement in the world” (Ingold, 2022).

Ingold has left me with a question: ‘What will I leave as evidence of my being, my own taskscape, after I have gone?’ The nest and all that it constitutes would have to be representative of a special, most important part of my personal taskscape, which is about bringing people together through craft.

### **Collecting Reflections**

#### **The Beginnings of Transformation – Basket Becomes Nest**

On the morning of our departure back to our individual homelands, we met in the veranda of the house to reflect on our time together. I passed the basket around with small pieces of paper and a pen, inviting people to write a reflection of their experience of LILA and to fold up their message and place it in the basket. I promised that I would not look at the contents until I got home, where I could lay them out and photograph them to share with everyone as soon as possible after I had read them.

Once home, I emptied the contents of the basket, laying them out on a tree stump in the trees near my home. It was at this point, on reading the moving messages, that the basket really became a nest, a releasing of such community spirit, a nest that had kept these special notes safe during the journey from Sweden to Scotland.

The following QR code is a link to the film ‘There was Love in the Room’, which I made as a means to share this experience with my fellow LILA participants.



### **Concluding Thoughts**

Being part of the LILA project has given me much greater insight into how I want to move forward with research in my emerging socially engaged art practice.

I have learnt that research as a process is about the opening up of possibilities. As social beings, we are all involved in this process. Research the word may be thought of as something that mainly resides in the world of academia, but research is something that we are all involved in—a process of continual learning. During our field trip, I was very inspired by the talk and presentation of the work of Sune Jonsson at the Västerbotten Museum through his documentation of changes to life and landscape through photography, described by Per Uno Agren as a ‘Picture Commentary’ in Sune Jonsson’s

*Figures 2 : Looking Closer. Seeing beyond the naked eye using a macro lens. Rotsidan Nature Reserve – Nordingra, Sweden. Image: Jane Ronie 2023. Continue on page 130.*

book ‘And Time Becomes a Wondrous Thing’ (2007). This, combined with the words that I recall from the talk at Mannaminne regarding the approach of Anders Aberg’s as ‘anything is possible’, opened up ease and excitement in me about the many ways that research might be approached.

I realise now that I am driven and intrigued by the serendipitous nature of social exchange, and I love being with people. Dialogue and physical making are at the centre of my practice, and I am interested in how the interplay between these pursuits can influence and expand our thinking.





I am curious. Listening, talking, making and being with people ignites me. My mind and imagination are wonderfully fuelled by the potential expansion of thought, feelings of belonging, and purpose that can arise from these often, magical moments of exchange.

I aspire to bring this realisation to others through participatory workshops, looking closer at nature (which is something that I did in Sweden) and responding by making with different materials.

My ultimate aim is to determine if this creates a greater connection and moral awareness of our environment. It strikes me that as humans in this interconnected world, we must learn to understand and know our place, and in so doing, perhaps we can gain a greater moral awareness through an appreciation of our strengths, weaknesses and powers. Perhaps this will help us deal with the challenges that we face in our global landscape.



Figures 3,4 : Looking Closer. Seeing beyond the naked eye using a macro lens. Rotsidan Nature Reserve – Nordingra, Sweden. Images: Jane Ronie 2023.

## References

- Ingold, T. (2013). *Making: Anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*. Routledge.
- Ingold, T. (2022). *The perception of the environment*. Routledge.
- Jonsson, S. (2007). *And time becomes a wondrous thing*. Västerbotten Local Folklore Society, Umeå.