



*Image of Sarah Elwick, University of Brighton hand stitching reflections from the day.
Photo credit Helen Johnson*

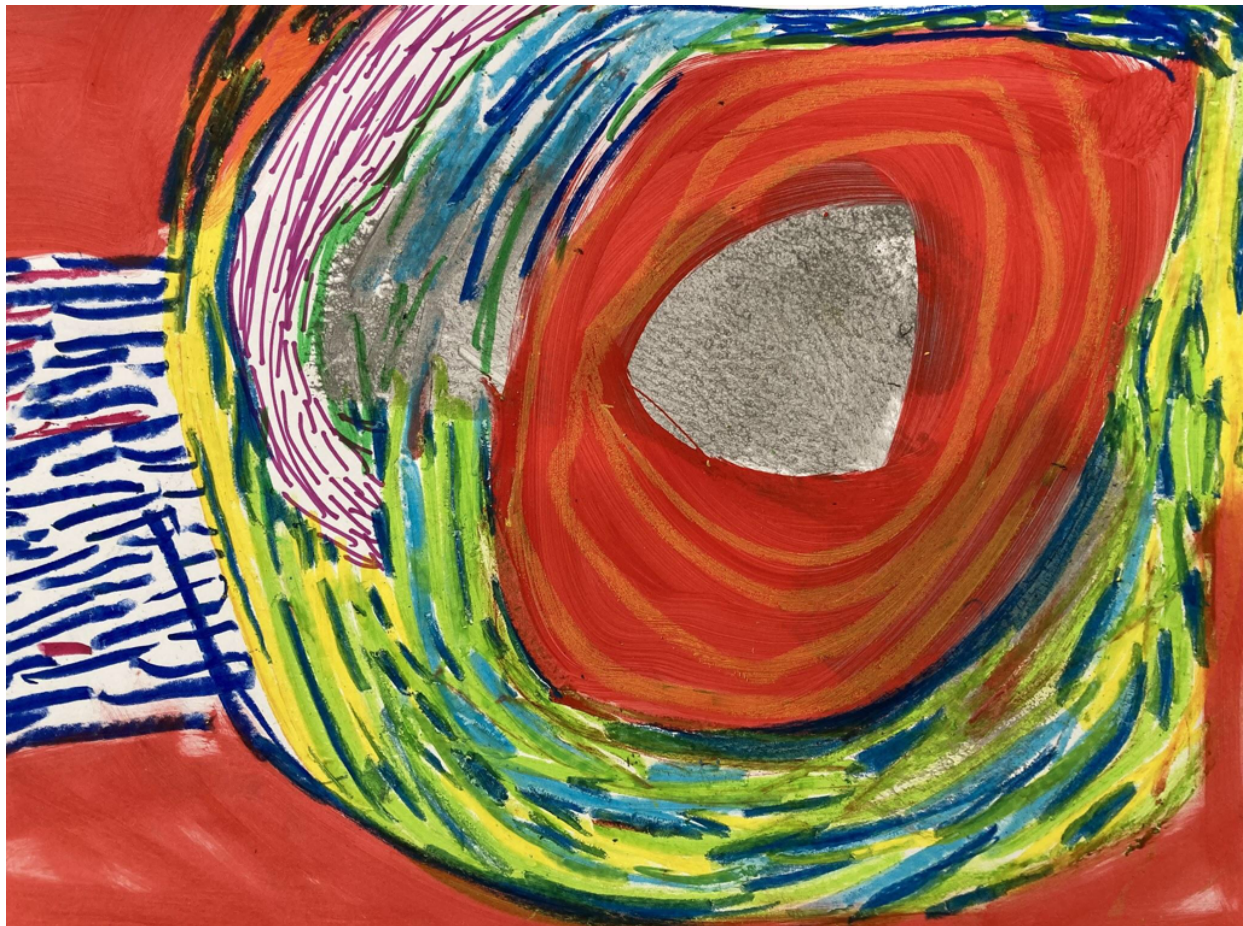
Last Sunday I nervously boarded a plane for the first time in over three years! Destination? Not a much anticipated holiday but to deliver a workshop session at the inaugural Everyday Creativity Conference hosted by The Centre for Arts & Wellbeing at Brighton University. As someone who spent far too many hours in the air as an expat child I don't much care for flying anymore but somethings are important, and this conference opportunity peaked my interest and spoke to my deeply held belief that small creative acts, when incorporated into daily routine can have huge wellbeing benefits, so off I flew.

So what is this everyday creativity malarkey and why the fuss? Time for an academic definition to lend gravitas to this everyday-ness:

'Everyday creativity' is characterised by quotidian day-to-day actions that are often understood in terms of little and mini 'c' creativity; the former focusing on observable creative actions/products and the latter on more fleeting "interpretive and transformative aspects of thought" (Silvia et al, 2017).

This initial gathering will be the first step in paving the way to building an International Research Network in this exciting emerging field. Everyday Creativity encompasses the diverse range of immersive creative activities that millions of people engage in every day. Often removed from established hierarchies and economic models, these activities enable people to explore their creative potential, maintain their health and wellbeing, and connect to other people and the world around us. Check out this blog for more info. <https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/everydaycreativity/>

Small 'c' creativity is inherent in us all, it is interdisciplinary, often spontaneous and fleeting and as a facilitator of other people's creativity for the last twenty years (possibly longer) I cannot even guess at how many times sessions have started with the words, "But... I'm not creative, I can't even draw a stickman!". To which more often than not my go to response is, 'Well it didn't hurt Lowry's career any!' But in all seriousness, the idea that creativity is so readily accepted as drawing or something you would put on a wall feels like a bit of a personal challenge for a die hard interdisciplinary artist.



Creative Journal: Moment of research clarity in hurricane of info. Photo credit Alex McEwan

The conference fell into four main categories: Enriching Creative Methods, Home and Placemaking (including pandemic responses), Arts & Wellbeing, and Arts, Science and Technology Interfaces! with speakers and makers from across the UK. Talks and

workshops were diverse and intriguing from the analysis of everyday knitting diaries, exploring STEM based teaching through the medium of ceilidh reels, large group music making with found objects, spoken word performances on “How To Starve An Artist” by Rose Condo <https://www.rosecondo.net> to my own workshop on Creative Journaling: an essential dyslexic safe space”

I have always journaled in one form or another in various guises but I probably never really fully appreciated its importance to both my wellbeing and as an unapologetically authentic tool for processing information through my dyslexic brain. The pandemic and a return to academic study collided to bring new meaning as to how pivotal image making is to processing, digesting and reflecting on information. Doctoral research involves consuming a torrage of other people's ideas and observations, it swamps the mind, unplugs hard wired beliefs and accepted norms and leaves possibilities fusing and sparking in its wake. Without an image, my own mark, to illustrate and bookmark moments of enlightenment I would be cut adrift without an pictorial anchor to which could tether understating to. But for me, drawing is even more than this, it is my lens on the world and it helps me make meaning. It is a meditation which slows the mind. Creative journaling is a safe space where I can reform, recraft and reshape thoughts and words into new loggable personal shorthand and an aide memoire to my terrible short term memory!

It was hugely inspirational being with so many inspirational people all committed to taking on social challenges through such a diverse creative activity. Infact on reflection it was made more meaningful for the nervous taxing, turbulence, bumpy landing and airport queues, reminding me that creativity is, at its heart, about

challenging yourself, is experiential and transformative, even on an everyday level.



Creative Journal:In the moment Reflections from BOLD Programme.

Photo credit Alex McEwan

Found Poem for the Everyday Creativity Conference, University of Brighton, June 2022

by Dr Helen Johnson: Principal Psychology Lecturer Co-Director for the [Centre of Arts and Wellbeing](#) School of Humanities and Social Science University of Brighton

I am here.
We are but dust and shadows,
accustomed to easy categories,
an alibi for not wasting time
in our nonchalance,
irritation, industry.
But I am here,
deserving to be alive,
rewriting the trauma
stitched to my bones.

If your normal is this,
then give me madness.
Enter the song,
the poems from liminal spaces,
meditations
piercing a hole from within myself.
I am here.

So the conversations start,
everyday conversations that entice change.
contribution without exclusion,
practice-based and collaborative,
at each corner a guardian angel.
I am here,
and I can't stop waking up.

Here comes the rubber girl
erasing evil from the world,
superheroine,
troublemaker.
What can the institution do?
Many wizards spend their lives
in pursuit of the true words for things,
a different kind of resistance,
heresy,
fearful and hopeful.
We are here.

What do we want from each other
after we have told our stories,
of what we know or think we know?
slowing down time,
minimising the burden
on the shoulders of the oppressed.
The patriarchy's got the clay,
but we're here
And we're taking it back.

There will be shouting.
There will be anger.
There will be pent up rage.
There will be poem as trace,
poem as evidence,

**no longer simply embellishment,
but layers of meaning,
a conscious and unconscious knowing,
practice-based transformation.**

**We are here,
weirdos,
relational and performative,
talking about connection,
empowering through stories,
mundane and ignored,
unadorned, beautiful,
everyday.**

**Research can be about the everyday,
round and bouncy,
not straight and narrow,
pleasure and power,
the subversive stitch.**

**We are here.
Our overlapping humanness,
a catalyst
messing with matter,
disrupting normal,
comes alive,
altering the shape of the things
we want to address,
becomes an artefact worthy of display,
embodying our relationship to power.**

**You can't decolonise alone.
I am here.
This could feed me for a while.
I'm still playing and I'm not going to stop.
Can someone please
just give them a glass of water?**

