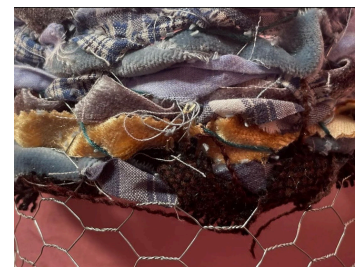By Oly Bliss

Mindfully Queering Materials from the Landscape into Craft Objects

Activity for group with leader

This activity can help reimagine and redefine fixed labels and aid participants in grasping the fluidity. It prompts reflection on how social norms dictate what something 'should' or 'should not' be. By engaging in this process, participants can envision and transform materials into new forms.

Invite participants to collect and utilise any raw materials as a starting point for crafting something queer: something new, unique and reflective.

Conduct your workshops by giving participants freedom to explore the materials and create forms. Encourage participants to explore raw materials mindfully, allowing their creativity to flourish.

Tools

Scissors
String and thread
Stanley knife and cutting board
Ruler
Sewing and knitting needles, crochet hooks
Natural dyes, such as turmeric
Pliers
Chicken wire and gloves
Wire

Materials

Second-hand clothing/bedding
Cardboard, paper, magazines
Straw, cotton, dried leaves, and grass for stuffing
Willow and sticks for shaping and construction
Wool/yarn and thread, preferably natural
Natural dyes or paints for decoration

Potential risks to include in risk assessment

- Sharp objects and scissors need to be carefully managed. Consider their number and placement and ensure adequate supervision.
- Stanley knives may be included for older groups but require closer supervision.
- When using chicken wire, wire and natural materials wearing gloves is advised.

- Consider the location of the workshop and how materials will be stored and disposed of.
- Assess the level of mess allowed in the space.
- Foraged items may require cleaning and drying before use.
- Identify synthetic materials for workshops involving natural dyeing processes.
- Provide a few pre-made examples for participants to understand the creative possibilities. Encourage participants to choose materials freely and explore creatively without a specific end goal.

Discussion Points

As a group discuss what queer means. Consider the idea of 'queering' an object. What does that look like? Use action words to encourage your group to experiment with the process of creation. For example:

modify, knot, rip, weave, unravel, alter, corrupt, stuff, embellish, knit, twist, identity, bend, cut, graft, queer, gouge, unpick, reimagine, subvert, wrap, bundle, crumble, smear.

Encourage reflection on creativity, materials, feelings about the local environment and humanity's impact on it, and societal change through redefining roles and functions. Consider how you wish to capture responses as well.
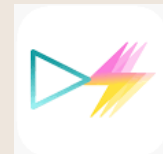
Here are some potential questions to ask:
- When was the last time you had the opportunity to be creative for fun?
- When you were handling these materials, what inspired you to start making in this way?
- How does this process make you feel about your local environment?
- What do you feel about humanity's impact on the local environment?
- How do you feel about transforming your materials into something queer?
- Can these materials have a new function or purpose?
- Why do you think assigning labels and functions to materials is helpful or harmful?

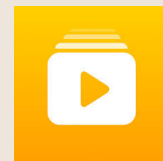# Filming, animating or displaying the creations

life Lapse

You can use a smartphone to film your creation and use a free app Life Lapse to make free stop motion animations. The app has simplified free main functions for making simple movies with its free tools. You can subscribe to the app to get more advanced features if desired, but the free parts of the app will work for basic needs. The app has tutorials embedded in the app when you first open it which will explain how to use the app.
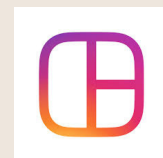
ImgPlay

You can use a smartphone to turn a group of creations into a carousel of images that will be shown one after another. You can change the order and speed of the images and how many times they are repeated. You can turn these into GIFs but that is not a free feature of the app.

Layout

Layout is an app which can be used to turn images into a collage. This is a free app which works with Instagram but can also be used to crop and arrange images simply.

Further research and Reading

If there are people interested in further academic reading, please follow this link to seam collective website which provides a blog article created by Oliver Bliss and Lou Baker during their research at a residency in the Andrew Brownsword Gallery at the Edge, University of Bath. https://seamcollective.org/a-deeper-dive-into-permission-to-play/