

Human beings or human buyings?

Arts, education and sustainable development

This paper shares some of the main ideas from a 'think group' of West Midlands educators, looking at arts, education and sustainable development.

The group aimed to develop fresh ideas and fresh thinking in an educational context, including challenges about taking this agenda forward.

Our core interest was in where the three overlapping circles meet, which is significantly about *transformation* ~ of self, society and the environment.

Art/s

Sustainable development

Education

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Art of all kinds involves making, using images, sounds, words, movement etc. In order to make things which have value and meaning we have to think them through. This involves us imaginatively, physically, emotionally and intellectually.

Making things affects, and is affected by, our wellbeing. Our wellbeing is connected to that of our society and environment.

Our sessions involved a group process which developed our *thinking through making*. We are interested in how this approach might work with all sorts of learners.

1. Think eg we asked the question *"what does transformation look like?"*

2. Make eg we created 2 and 3D images of transformation

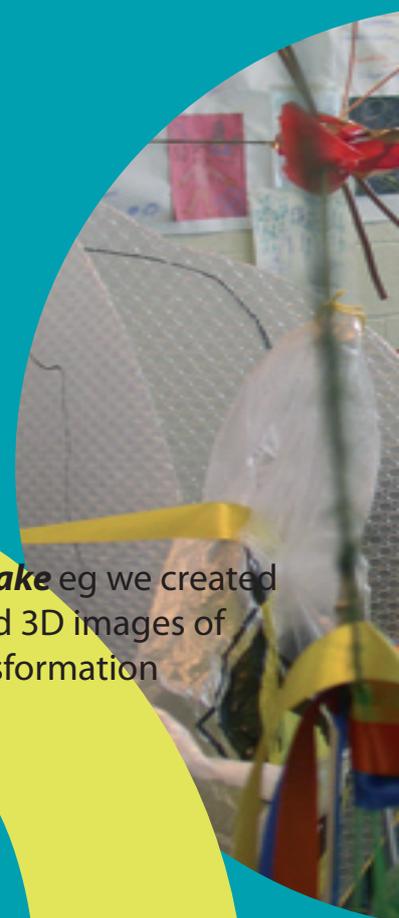
Value and meaning

4. Think again eg we discussed how we felt and what we had learnt. This gave us our next question: *"how can we create a social sculpture based on this work?"*

3. Explain/interpret eg we listened to others' reactions to our own work, then explained our intentions

Thinking through making

Here is a model of the process. We are offering one example from our work.



Arts and sustainability



Environmental system

Social system

Self

Making things affects, and is affected by, our wellbeing

This is connected to the wellbeing of our society and the environment.

How do we make these connections explicit?



“Is Citizenship about the rules? If so, then is social sculpture about making up the rules, being a human, a citizen of the world?”

We have found that social sculpture offers us a good model. Social sculpture involves people working together in object-making and meaning-making. It is also about ‘sculpting society’.

- **Social sculpture** <http://greenmuseum.org/c/enterchange>, www.social-sculpture.org
- **Shelley Sacks** www.exchange-values.org/
- **Joseph Beuys** www.walkerart.org/archive/0/9E43A9C48839AFC46164.htm

Making a sustainable culture

Our creative approach equally values the process, the product and the sharing of the work.

- *What values and meanings are embodied in our work?*
- *How does this transform ourselves, environment and society?*

Our group has raised the following challenges:

For arts teachers

- How do we make sustainability explicit in what we do?
- What does thinking through art look like [eg in a scheme of work]?
- How does your work value process, product and sharing?
- What opportunities do you need to develop ideas like these further?

For all teachers

- How can we incorporate creative thinking processes into our work?
- Does sustainable development offer us opportunities to share our expertise with other teachers? How?
- How can we incorporate creative risks into our learning [and teaching] culture?

For artists working in education

- What tools do you need to build real partnerships with schools?
- How do we make sustainability explicit in what we do?
- How can we ensure that sharing and process are valued as much as product?

For teacher educators

- What kind of culture of learning are we making?
- How can the way we educate teachers model creative teaching itself [eg thinking through making]?
- How can we make sustainability an explicit and 'natural' part of teaching?

For learners

- How can what you learn and how you learn be more in tune with who you are?
- What matters about:
 - the process of making something?
 - the thing you make?
 - how you talk about it with others?
- Does making things help you think? ... about yourself, your environment and society?

For policymakers and advisers

- How can we encourage a learning culture based on creativity rather than 'delivery'?
- How can we offer time, space and resources for supporting creativity in this area of work?