

Weaving-with Democracy in Action

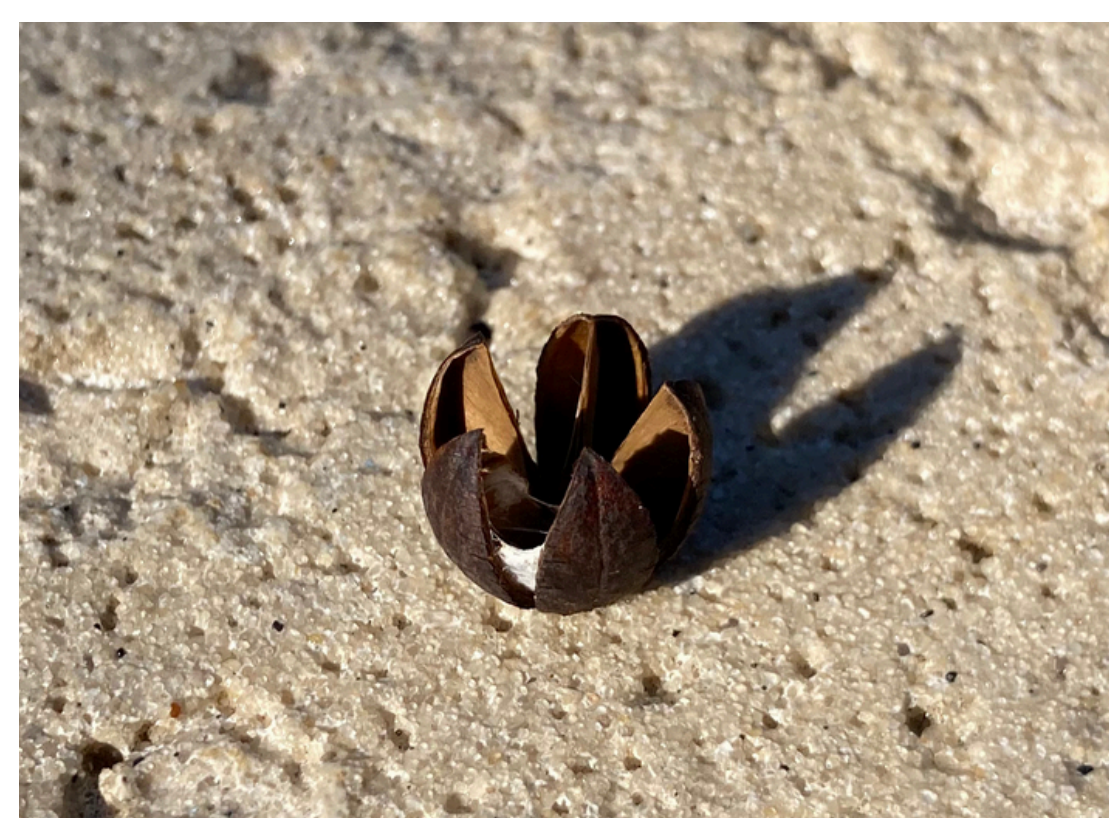
Merium Qureshi with Amber Ward and Hsin Fang

Introduction

This research explores craft pedagogies through radical democracy and artistic collaboration between three researchers—a faculty member, doctoral candidate, and undergraduate student. As a first step, we collected data from residential classes featured in summer programs at The Clearing Folk School in the United States, tracing the richness of the folk school's craft pedagogies and philosophy. We creatively and collectively crafted-with our natural and political surroundings as unexpected territories, working from communal knowing-in-making and embodying co-creation and empowerment. In all, with our research, we aim to resist social hierarchies within and outside of our collaboration and advance equity and difference.

Theory

- Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, 1992
 - Introduces hope as a method for the oppressed to use in pursuit of democracy
 - Hope “born in the creative unrest of the battle” is necessary to determined, meaningful struggle (161)
- bell hooks, *Teaching to transgress*, 1994
 - Revolutionizes teaching practices to challenge oppressive systems and the classroom as a “space of possibility” (12)
 - hooks uses personal narrative to create dialogue with other educational thinkers and her own experiences
- Brooke Anne Hofsess, “Renewing a Craftsmanship of Attention With the World,” 2021
 - Learning by being in company with “other intelligences,” and imagining ourselves in relation to others (187)
 - Uses intentional observation and attention as a resource for crafting and arts in education
- Elizabeth Garber, “Craft as activism,” 2013
 - Craft here is seen as direct action and foundational to social movements based on interactions between people
 - Includes sustainability through reuse and connections to feminist (women’s work) and civil rights struggles



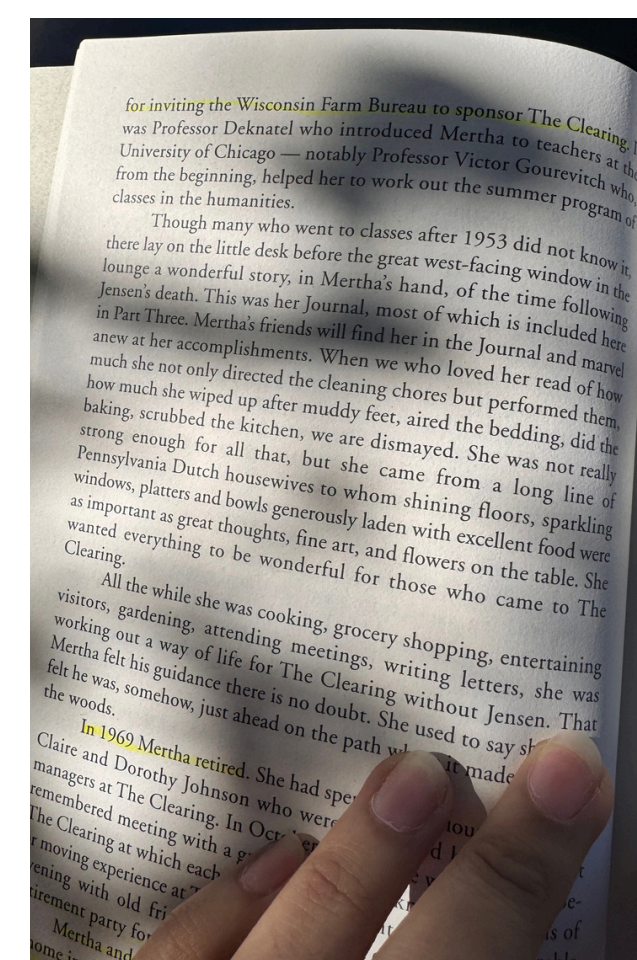
Methodology

In our research, we employed a method called “crafting-with,” a practice of making and an embodied way of knowing, where educators, learners, and materials are in dynamic conversation, meant to highlight underrepresented craft materials, histories, and praxis toward radical democracy. We used “crafting-with” to engage with the data and collaborate with each other in research and art-making.

- Examining folk school philosophy
 - We digitally mapped and documented archival data from The Clearing Folk School in Door County, Wisconsin, beginning in the 1950s to
 - We used an online Miro Board to digitally map our findings and interactions with the data
 - I read *The Story of the Clearing* by Mertha Fulkerson
- Craft Retreats: to visualize the data and practice “crafting-with,” we completed a series of crafting retreats
 - Retreat 1: Literature review and planning at Sweet Shop
 - Retreat 2: Attended Democracy, Meet AI, a talk by Professor Lawrence Lessig
 - Retreat 3: Collaborated in paper-making and weaving
 - Retreat 4: Prepped for exhibition
- In doing so, we intertwined the data with our natural surroundings, cultural experiences, political concerns, and pedagogical optimism, re-envisioning the place of craft in art education
 - Additionally we displayed our crafts at WJB as a museum exhibit, allowing viewers to interact with the research and data visually



Miro Board



Findings and Future

Horizontal and mutual learning facilitated my collaboration with a professor (Amber Ward) and doctoral student (Hsin Fang), where we all contributed to the writing with our perspectives and by sharing our personal stories and art. In doing so, we “crafted-with” each other, exploring non-hierarchical learning and roles in democracy. We connected our work to indigenous teaching practices and folk school philosophy as respect for non-person objects and harmony with nature through ink-making and working outside. Similarly, weaving-with and craft-making in company with each other helped me put into practice and write about our retreat experiences using folk school philosophy. In sharing this research with others, our art exhibition allowed viewers to visualize the collected data and gain insight into our process as researchers and collaborative artists. In reflection, this research solidified my understanding of art education and expanded my view of the roles craft arts play in the connection between people, in both democracy and learning. In July, we will present this research as a panel presentation at the The 38th InSEA World Congress.

References

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