

Fibres and Beyond: The Pedagogic Affects of a Women's Art Collective

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Abstract

In this case study, we explore how a group of mature fibre artists, known as Fibres and Beyond (FaB), have made an ongoing contribution to their rural communities through art practice, both within the circle of group members and among the wider community. For nearly twenty years, FaB has successfully maintained their artist collective, generating pedagogic affects in bi-annual exhibits as venues that raise awareness of creative expression and stimulate reciprocal dialogue with the general public about ways of making, sharing and producing art. In this way, art events are arguably a form of knowledge creation that attend to lifelong learning and rural art education by building upon informal exchanges that demonstrate an ongoing and vital commitment to nurturing and sustaining local social and cultural engagement.

Key words: *artist collectives; informal learning; pedagogical events; rural art education, social art practice.*

Introduction

The role of artist collectives in rural communities remains an overlooked area of inquiry in art education in Canada, although such discourses are well-established internationally (Skipington & Davis, 2016 [Australia]; Palmer, 2015 [United States]; Jokela et al., 2013 [Finland]), and artist collectives are recognised in many urban centres for making important socio-cultural contributions (i.e. Boynik, 2012; Tunali, 2016). In this case study, the artist collective *Fibres and Beyond* (FaB) offers a lens through which to initiate conversations about rural art education in Canada, and to explore the potential of emergent modes of inquiry that recognise the pedagogic *affects* of sustained practice. Attending to the nuanced dynamics of artful exchanges in rural, regional and remote communities, where women historically have been at the

forefront of the arts as organisers, artists, and educators (Flood, 2001), is an important source of information that contributes to broadening and deepening understandings of informal learning in relation to the community.

Although borderlines between urban and rural locales are changing in relation to the emergence of network societies and translocality, and centre-periphery relations are blurring in contemporary society (Fisker et al., 2019), the everyday distinctions and differing levels of connectivity lived by artist collectives like FaB suggest that the countryside continues to present diverse opportunities and challenges. We are mindful not to conflate rural with nature, as a comparative to urban landscapes with cities. In this case, we extend Thrift's position on affective cities (2008) to consider affective "ruralities" also, as body-object-space movements of collective becomings (Groz, 2017).

Residing beyond major urban centres for visual art, culture and learning demands that women artists, like the members of FaB, continually innovate and improvise, and often create their own organisational infrastructure to support the arts, blended with qualities of self-direction and collective initiatives in relation to the pulse of the local community. Such a disposition has a long, rich and continuous legacy for those in regional to more isolated locations, and it is a mind-set central to sustaining relationships that make for robust arts communities in rural-based areas, inclusive of art practice, art systems, expansive geography and social relations. As a community of practice, FaB formed in response to the need for art and cultural capacity-building, and in doing so, there was and remains today an opportunity to explore the artistic impulse in ways that facilitates collaborative learning and teaching exchanges beyond the hegemonic practices of art institutions in urban areas (Tunali, 2016). The pedagogic *affects* of this collective and their hallmark event, *Consider the Lilies*, serve as the impetus for this case study, attending to visual art in small communities, where art-making is not necessarily driven with a political or social activist intent, but by valuing the contribution of everyday aesthetics articulated by women who strive to make art accessible, inviting and responsive.

This does not suggest other artist collectives in rural areas share similar constructs, nor those other local communities in which collectives reside are receptive in the same ways, however, the value of such situated knowledge in community art education holds an intrinsic value that warrants further consideration (Haraway, 2016). The latitude to be an artist "on the margins" of the art scene may spur on localised experimentation and exploration, and given the social structure of rural communities, ongoing sharing of techniques, knowledge, skills, opportunities, ideas and challenges with fellow makers often results in the informal delivery of the arts directly by artists, at times in combination with, rather than exclusively through intermediaries such as galleries, retail or related means of distribution. At the heart of such practice is relationality, and the vitality of the relationships that offer the freedom to investigate the parameters of art practice as participatory engagement.

In this study, we review the protocols of *Fibres and Beyond* to address how the group initiates, instructs and invigilates art practice. Although pedagogy is not their primary

motivation, that is, they do not make art to teach the wider community how to view or engage with textiles, there are arguably pedagogic affects that this collective generates by demonstrating how “living artfully” is part of sustaining a meaningful personal and professional role in the arts and society (Sinner & Lowther, 2012). Collectives like FaB bring forward perspectives rooted in curiosity and appreciation, and in turn, their presence voices new relations between art and community. We consider how FaB helps facilitate pedagogic affects through three key aspects of the collective: vernacular art practice; collective leadership in terms of planning, participating, self-regulating, as well as cooperative decision-making within the group; and the value of lifelong learning that interweaves with social support among members. For FaB, it is relationships with materials in tandem with their relationships with group members that extend to audiences to collectively define the patterns of art making, where the process is equally as important as the product within these networks of relations *and beyond*.

The role of art in facilitating creative and critical interfaces across multi-layered and multi-level community contexts further demonstrates a responsive ethic of caring that underscores the group. The guiding philosophy of FaB, of sharing, making, and engaging, by renewing, reworking, and rearticulating fibre, is an opening to socio-material synergies that generate core questions, such as: Why is this group a successful artist collective, when other such community art initiatives are often only sustained briefly? What has this group as a community organisation contributed to the cultural development of the arts? How does the site of the event shape the aesthetic relations of both artists and visitors and in so doing, contribute to pedagogic affects?

Consider the Lilies: A catalyst of rural art education

FaB began in 2002, with nine of the thirteen active members today having been with the group from the first meeting (Figure 1). Mary explains, ‘Staying together takes a degree of willingness to compromise, willingness to listen, and to share the airtime. For those of us who have stayed, it’s worked for us ... and I think that’s part of the secret to its longevity.’ The artists span in ages as mature women to elderly members in their late 80s, and members at various life stages, from families to widows, working to retired, and the group shares diverse backgrounds in art training. Recruitment for the group is a careful curation of art practice and worldview. As Phyllis shared, ‘...our process of bringing in new members seems to be to invite people whose personality will work with the group, our personalities need to blend. It is okay for us to disagree with each other ... diversity is always a strength and a necessity in my mind to progress.’ Highlighting the importance of openness, Elizabeth added, ‘I admire how adventurous some of the artists are, willing to try anything and give it their best and that’s inspiring to me, so it’s really not about the product ... [it is] necessary to stay involved.’

This women’s textile collective is based in Sooke, a small town on the far west coast of Canada, with some members residing in neighbouring communities – all part of a

region known for artists and creative expression. The collective formed at a time when the town was still in the echo of dramatic social and cultural transformation, when many small towns in British Columbia shifted from a long history as resource-based communities (for Sooke, primarily logging) to rural towns in economically precarious situations seeking new innovations and diversification as a way forward (Ryser & Halseth, 2017; Creative City Network of Canada, 2009). More recently, Sooke and neighbouring areas have evolved as bedroom communities for the provincial capital as the regions expand, blurring the urban-rural divide that defined the boundaries in the past. FaB has been a socio-cultural stakeholder in this wider community from its inception,



Figure 1. FaB, 2017, Left to right, Linda, Mary, Joan, Janet. Centre: Phyllis, Elizabeth, Stephanie; Back l to r Isabel, Irm, Gail, Judy.

bringing together social relationships, art as a community asset and economic staple, and by extension, in the organisational structure of the collective that is defined by the values and beliefs of community service that reflect rural living for group members.

FaB has held more than thirty art events since it was established, adding significantly to understandings of artists, art-making, and how local communities are engaging in conversations about the arts in ways that are authentic to the makers, audiences, and the craft itself. This art collective operates with pedagogic affects, and as mature learners, members of the collective are also teaching and learning with, from and through each other, as lifelong learners. In effect, the hallmark exhibit for FaB, *Consider the Lilies*, held each spring, mobilises art as a catalyst for pedagogic affects reverberating in rural art education. This event takes place in a unique community venue: the historic St. Mary's Anglican Church in nearby Metchosin, built in 1873, amidst a cemetery of pioneer families, now a location renowned for a spectacular field of lilies that has become a destination for many day trippers (Figure 2).



Figure 2. St. Mary's Anglican Church

Events like *Consider the Lilies* align with conceptual perspectives offered by Rogoff (2011), in which the staging of the event is a platform for knowledge creation, where exchange through dialogue at the moment changes how we perceive and engage in the world around us. For Badiou (2013), art events elevate the presence of ideas through proximity, and for FaB, this is at the heart of belonging to both the group and the wider community. By engendering didactic spaces for exchange, artists 'take on the identity of a deliberative citizen' (Ranci re, 2009, p.43), and embrace the intensity of artistic events alongside the audience. In this way, the event arguably holds a host of pedagogic affects that reverberate through networks of relations and activities surrounding the exhibition. Borrowing from Watkins' (2016) argument for classrooms, in communities of practice like FaB, different pedagogic practices have different body-space-object affects that in turn affect how and why we learn. Among the many encounters possible in this review, we attend to the essence of conversations with four members who participated in interviews, in addition to field notes and reflections, and visual mapping of the *Consider the Lilies* event, which together offer insights to how artist collectives can operate as educational entities in rural areas.

Pedagogic affects: Unfolding events with body-object-space movements

There is no single definition for affect, rather 'affect is understood as a form of thinking' (Thrift, 2008, p.175). For Vannini (2015), affective capacities help to focus our attention on more-than-human relations that bring forward resonances in events, such as intensity of feeling, an atmosphere, making-doing practices and more, rendering a 'signature style' of enactment of everyday life 'laden with creativity and possibility'

(pp. 12-14). Rooted in living inquiry, we discussed socio-material qualities of the event, *Consider the Lilies*, to more fully articulate and appreciate the contribution of women, artist collectives and rural art education.

At the heart of fibre arts are sensory responses to textures and contours of touching, feeling, seeing, and energizing, in ways that other art practices do not necessarily facilitate. Taylor (2015) refers to this kind of pedagogic practice as 'edu-crafting ... a movement which uses craft for critical thinking, questioning and considered creative activism' (p.20). The affects in this case highlight the negotiation and perhaps interruption of knowledge exchange, much as Hickey-Moody and Page (2016) describe, 'learning becomes about the process of moving the margins of knowledge from exterior to interior locations and this process of movement, or folding, is an embodied act' (p.8). There is intentionality in the affects, and by considering this orientation we move beyond the gesture of art to the forces that transform encounters with art, artist and area (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010). In this case, we adopt an artwork scholarship lens, which is concerned with the form and content of art as research. Such inquiry requires an anticipatory mode of thinking-with the arts to advance pedagogical and experimental perspectives, and in the case of FaB, socio-material iterations that bring our attention to continuously renewing, reworking, rearticulating, where the collective is inscribing practices *between*: members-materials; materials-community; community-members and beyond (Sinner & Lemieux, 2020).

Material affects: Vernacular arts as diverse social practice

For FaB, textile art is not just a leisure activity, or social signifier of women's work, but an occupational endeavour of belonging, where the quality of the work receives monthly input and review, much like a typical classroom critique in art education. Monthly meetings are hosted at members' homes, collectively described as places filled with heart, and while comments are generally supportive and considerate, given the value of friendship over self-advancement, feedback is vital to maintaining a high standard of production. Mary shared, 'We go around the circle and if you've been working on something, then we are eager to see it ... spontaneous critique is mostly affirmation. Occasionally someone will make a suggestion how they think the piece could be improved.' This informal jurying means not all works are included in the exhibit, but the invitation to continue making is always open. Gail added, '...definitely you'll get the give and take with different opinions and different ideas ... there is sometimes tension. I mean, any group has tension ... but the mechanics of this group is that yes, we are a mature group.'

In response, members invest significant time planning, testing, and experimenting with standard techniques in new ways to develop unique designs for upcoming exhibits. Their works generally document "their worlds" in terms of events, scenes, and daily activities, with motifs of joy, togetherness and pleasure dominating over expressions

of hardship, unhappiness or disappointment – a deliberate selection that is a historic reflection of women engaged in crafts (Congdo, 1985). Connectedness between artist-artwork-community does not necessarily demand all art send a political message, and that is not an agenda that FaB wishes to take on (Figure 3). Instead, they have found remarkable success as artists knowing their local market, attending to aesthetic qualities that speak to their audience, and profiling works in bi-annual exhibits that consistently generate a high volume of sales comparative to other local art events, with pieces often selected for private homes and as gifts to be appreciated in personal collections. Therein lies the pedagogic affects, in that ‘there are always two of our members there to have conversations with the public ... the connection [is] one-to-one, so explaining your technique and your process works very well at the church, and it is very interesting.’ FaB’s motivation has from the outset been to respond to the community with attunement. This suggests diverse forms of art practice are equally valid, and perhaps more importantly, contingent on the communities which they serve.

The close relationship between the makers-materials-space is critical in their sustainability as a collective. The church as a venue is a location of display that not only offers a distinctive experience for the audience, but also for the group members. The architecture of a historical church was described by Elizabeth as ‘a lovely atmosphere for initiating conversations, where in an open gallery space, walls and open floor space may not give that intimacy.’ In part, because FaB is well-known in the region, Gail notes, ‘...we’ve had a huge amount of material come to us’ that is then shared among the collective. For Gail, the values of a community are embedded in the materials, ‘...I have been given exquisite fabrics – because they had fabrics or clothing that they cherished, they didn’t want to just throw it away – they brought it to me because here was someone who would value it and make use of it.’ In this way, we may consider how materiality inspires meaning-making that is embodied in the location, in community donations to the group, and even in the naming of the group and the naming of the event also.

Such a social-material approach takes into consideration how materials – fibres, threads, cloth, notions and more – affect the way members and the public think and act in response to the bi-annual event (Tanggard, 2013; Rantisi & Leslie, 2010). Materiality becomes inclusive of group members, their artworks, home studios, shared spaces, exhibition spaces like the community church and more, reverberating pedagogically through the everyday to form what Bennet describes as ‘a dynamic assemblage of multiple agencies and processes that disrupt and interfere with one another within an ontologically heterogeneous field of relations’ (Rantisi & Leslie, 2010, p.23).

Collective affects: Sharing leadership as a discursive practice

Central to mapping pedagogic affects of FaB is the responsive, shared decision-making that is the cornerstone of managing the collective. Their organizational structure parallels guilds, women’s institutes, and arts societies, and much as Congdon (1985)

stated, 'women were, and to a large degree still are, seen as guardians of the culture,' a description that lends to the work of FaB today (p.193). Their resilience, improvisation and self-sufficiency as artists make it possible to establish their own system of making-doing, pooling resources within and sharing public roles of promotions, marketing, and administration. Even with the physical challenges for some team members, "all hands on deck" is the guiding motto as the team prepares for exhibits at the church, transforming the interior, running lighting, setting up exhibition stands, artworks, signage, in a labour-intensive installation that is designed to enhance the quaint atmosphere of the space and structure itself. Each member takes responsibility for a specific role with the needs of the collective at the forefront.

Yet despite being an all-woman collective that advocates for fibre arts, FaB categorically does not consider themselves a feminist-based group, even though many held professional careers during the second-wave movement. Instead, as Gail noted, they self-describe as 'alpha-women,' where the leadership model evolved spontaneously, intuitively, and responsively, with each member rotating responsibilities equitably over time as part of shared, collaborative leadership and decision-making. Elizabeth observed, 'We don't compete or feel threatened by someone else's excellence ... this is why we continue to work together as a group.' Their management mode harkens to distributed leadership in the field of education, and more recently to the advancement of collective leadership (Goksoy, 2016). Mary concurred, 'We are relational, rather than competitive. Simply being together and being inspired by one another has been very much more important than competing or jockeying for position in the group.' With a process of collective decision-making, members consistently reported a sense of belonging and self-confidence in voicing their opinions and evaluations, much like Tian et al. (2016) suggest, such distributive authority is responsive, and holds accountability by ensuring equality and equity, to grow affectively as both individuals (in the will to act) and as a collective (in this case, the group and wider community provide opportunities to act). Woods and Roberts (2016) also identified various aspects that resonate with FaB, notably, participation in decisions, respect for identity and beliefs of others, and opportunities for personal learning and advancement, all of which can be recognized as democratic values. FaB leadership as a group activity takes place through relationships, instead of static models of decision-making (Bolden, 2011). As Cherkowski and Brown (2013) explain, learning communities like FaB '...built around shared visions, values, and goals have a collaborative work culture are places where collective learning and shared understanding exist' (p.27). We speculate that the very nature of vernacular arts, and how the medium inspires creativity, imagination and artistic thinking, is in part why leadership is distributed among the learning community and in turn, shaped their leadership approach.

Sharing power and authority with every member is considered a core tenet that has brought balance, fairness, trust, acceptance of opposing points of view, and a clear sense of respect and responsibility among group members, allowing for resolution

of differences, rather than reaction. As Phyllis noted, ‘...we are mature enough to accommodate a range of different characters, the goal being to encourage our diversity and autonomy while strengthening our group. I’ll speak up and offer my input, even if I feel I have a solution, or if I strongly disagree with what’s being proposed.’ This approach evolved responsively and has been refined since the group’s inception, and it is the mode through which all activities cycle each year, enabling a collective vision to emerge and realistic goals to be achieved based on discursive practice. It could be said that operating in these ways, with individual autonomy within group consensus, and doing so in a rural location where freedom of expression is relatively unimpinged, is potentially a liberating, if not a decolonizing forum within the art world. The mode of collective leadership that evolved in FaB and the pedagogic value of this approach has particular relevance to art educators, especially since their strong collective identity does not rely on external validation or permission to be professional artists, a role they already hold in their own right.

Lifelong affects: Artistic sensibilities and art challenges as learning

Ongoing engagement with fibre arts since their inception has created what O’Grady (2013) describes as a “culture of learning” that centres on artistic sensibilities, innovations and challenges, where art methods generate new ways of thinking about the arts, and in the process, facilitate teaching and learning together in ways that promote more active engagement and responsibility for their individual and collective art practice (Laal et al., 2014; Manzoor 2014). FaB continually pushes beyond traditional techniques with fibre, and the group actively seeks to improvise learning opportunities through membership in the collective, cultivating a spirit of lifelong learning premised on cooperation and sharing in the moment, which is then extended to the wider community through exhibitions as creative participation and knowledge mobilisation (Aspin, 2000). Their maturity, individually and as a collective, directly impacts a strong sense of cohesion, and has furthered “life-wide” participation in learning (Stickley et al., 2016). As the interviews suggest, there are direct benefits to members physically, socially, emotionally, *and beyond*, that are both professional and personal (Lawton & La Porte, 2013). Mary reflected on the learning that takes place between members, charting the relational qualities of FaB as:

One of the wonderful things about our group that has kept me in it and excited about it is that we learn from each other every month when we get together, even though that’s not our goal necessarily. It’s always exciting to share with the whole group what each one of us has been learning.

FaB has incubated a learning environment in the collective that is open, balanced and trustworthy. Each member is invited and willing to participate, freely express themselves, share their knowledge and discuss their opinions, appreciate one another,

and most importantly, take risks, knowing peers will be critical and caring in the moment. The desire to push their boundaries was captured by Mary, who noted, 'To take the quilt off the bed and put it on the wall has been a challenging leap.'

Turning to life-wide affects more fully, during the exhibition continuous interaction with visitors and the exchange of ideas beyond the group generates an environment with a high level of community engagement that members report motivates all to challenge themselves further. During the time leading to the next event, the group takes up feedback, comments and responses from the last exhibit as a starting point. This has resulted in the adoption of art challenges by the group three years ago, and as Elizabeth states, the challenges 'push the members to create something they might not necessarily have thought of doing.' Art challenges are propositions set by group members, and these artist-driven initiatives draw upon trends in contemporary art, international exhibitions, and leading artists world-wide, locating FaB simultaneously on the margins and at the centre, both geographically and in terms of trends, movements and popular discourses related to art practice (for examples see Figure 3). Challenges require members to respond with original new works, making each show distinctive. For Gail, art challenges push the group forward, '...it's coming up every six months and it is part of the process ... I've enjoyed the group challenges more than I expected to, and they give us something to come together around as a group.' Such art praxis is akin to approaches in community art education in general, and in this case, all members oscillate as both informal teachers and learners, and share in both roles fluidly and with different degrees of technical skills that suggest the advancement of lifelong and life-wide learning is underway.



Figure 3. Pictures of fab's artworks, Retrieved October 2, 2019 from <https://www.fibresandbeyond.com/gallery-shows>

The learning process has become an integral part of their everyday life, where living artfully is a lifestyle, that is, their art practice embodies social aesthetics that are relational and dialectical conditions (Meban, 2009). For instance, although individual members openly state they produce works they regard as failures, it was the conversation about the works that they valued above all, whether the works were ultimately included in the exhibition or not, demonstrating that pedagogic affects are prioritised in the collective. Emphasizing the diversity of expression and artistic interests, the collective created “play days” intended to bring interested members together to experiment in their studios with new ideas and methods. A strong sense of social responsibility underlies this orientation, and indeed, ‘when women [folk] artists pass on their skills and techniques involved in the creating a work of art, they teach values as well’ (Congdon, 1985, p.199). In this way, the members voice and practice authentic selves who maintain their distinctiveness during the year, which preserves the vital condition of the plurality in the public sphere during bi-annual exhibits (Berger, 2015).

Fibres...and Beyond: 'I am deeply grateful'

The historical position of vernacular art practices and the role of fibre arts in particular has long been referred to as part of the domestic economy, with a well-established association to women’s work, and in the case of FaB, women continue to be critical makers of utilitarian to decorative textiles (Flood, 2001). As Flood (2001) notes of Canadian craft, artmaking and production for collectives tend to be eclectic, where all is handmade, from conventional to innovative modes of expression, and resulting works are generally one of a kind or part of a series, and in this case, art challenges provide a thematic approach to exhibits. At the same time, as keepers of local social and cultural practices, it is important also to note that FaB is a group of largely mature women, a generation for whom the personal remains private and that is how FaB operates in the public sphere. Some are members of founding families in the region, with legacies that shaped the communities where they exhibit today, and they continue to hold deeply embedded identities entwined with the rural landscape. As a group, they are demographically reflective of the history of the region, and it would be easy to generalize and make assumptions that flatted aspects of diversity that include different socio-economic statuses, orientations, immigrant experiences, and lifestyles. In turn, the plurality of expression, originality, and dynamic interactions between artists and art practices, are all qualities that enable them to portray their actual selves as artists, bringing variety and originality to their modes of expression. In other words, each of the members has their own personal narratives from their everyday life that are expressed visually, and these stories are embodied in working, practicing, and presenting collectively as a group. Geismar (2004) refers to this as a form of cultural knowledge, attending to interactions between people and things as part of broader arts and pedagogic discourse and experimental practice (Rousell &

Fell, 2018). Tanggard (2013) emphasizes what we see unfolding in FaB as a collective, that is, 'creativity is much more social and everyday-like than has hitherto been acknowledged; materiality and artefacts are to be seen as substantial components of creativity in itself' (p.20).

As Palmer (2015) suggests, borrowing from Bell and Jayne, the cultural traditions of rural areas bring another perspective to art education and our shared conversation, where the 'creative script' is 'differently manifested and articulated' from the artistic standardizations of cities (p.240). Attending to distinctions in landscapes is arguably a kind of quality and qualification of rural living as a creative marker, in relation to our wider social fabric. Drawing upon the pedagogic affects of artist collectives like FaB we encounter ways of being, doing, seeing, thinking, feeling, responding that disrupt presumptions in community art education, for as Haraway (2016) proclaims, 'material play builds caring politics' (p.79). The relationship of FaB to the rural communities in which they reside is premised on an exchange, where the event, defined by interaction, creates new ways of asking, thinking, reflecting, understanding art, and planning with community interest. Although we cannot assess the lasting impact on audiences of FaB, it is evident in the high levels of attendance and ongoing conversations that the collective is part of the evolving social fabric.

FaB operates as an artistic body, to bring the value of vernacular art practice to the fore. The collective holds an artistic mind-set that guides both the ethics of practice and the integrity of engagement among the group (Sinner & Lemieux, 2020). Simply, the fibres used are repurposed and recycled from all sorts of sources, including second-hand stores, garage sales, friends, and the wider community. For the exhibition, the equipment has been reclaimed from discarded items, marking a philosophy of scouring and collecting, to turn "left overs" into an encounter of creative possibilities. Together they have demonstrated quite organically how community art is situated, and how this artist collective creates and strengthens social dynamics of innovation at the nexus of art and rural communities.

Consider the "Lilies" who compose FaB shifts the value of art making from production to process, where the connections between body-object-space hold meaning beyond traditional art discourses and raise our sensitivity and aesthetic relation to when is art, rather than what is art (Sinner, 2019). Contingent on the event, drawing on pedagogic affects attends to geographies of self-in-relation, akin to what Hawkins (2014) describes as 'the "work" of art' as what is set in motion, particularly the presence of FaB, 'to think about art as something, something that produces effects, produces differences, when coupled with other bodies' (p.10). With pedagogic prompts embedded in the event, FaB is consciously engaging in artful conversations by placing newsletters, books, information pamphlets and more in the pews, encouraging visitors to sit and read for extended periods of time, to ask questions, to deliberate *beyond*, yet always with fibre.

In this case, the purpose of our inquiry is not to suggest conclusive findings, but to deliberate on the potentialities operating with, in, and through FaB, and why this collective residing in a rural dynamic has sustained both members and the wider community, how sharing as leadership is inherent in vernacular art practices and why the relationality of the encounter at that particular church each spring continues to evolve as a kind of aesthetic relation that is living artfully. In closing, perhaps the most significant pedagogic affects of FaB reside in the friendships that have bloomed. As Elizabeth reflected, 'We've become friends and there is an importance to being a member of the group and remaining a member of the group, I think for many of us, it is one of the really positive things in our lives.' For Mary:

FaB is a beautifully significant part of my life. I don't think any of us can imagine our lives without the others in it because we have been with each other through some very difficult and life-marking events: deaths, marriages, divorces, estrangements within families, illnesses and major surgeries. This gives us an insight into each other's lives at a deeper, more personal, intimate level that doesn't need to be articulated. We pick up on each other's ways of living, ways of being, on each other's values that might not otherwise be evident. It contributes to the deep respect we have for one another. I think that is a very significant reason why we are still together.

In Mary's comments, the intrinsic value of community emerges, reminding us that there is a pulse of pedagogic affects underway in rural art education and that artists collectives like FaB deserve attention for their ongoing socio-cultural and material impacts and the reverberations they bring to the communities in which they are living artfully. As Mary so eloquently stated, 'I would not be the woman I am if I had not been a member of this group. I am deeply grateful.'

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Vlakna i više: pedagoški afekti ženskoga umjetničkog kolektiva

Sažetak

U ovoj studiji slučaja istražujemo kako je skupina zrelih tekstilnih umjetnica, znana kao Vlakna i više (ViV), trajno doprinijela svojim ruralnim zajednicama kroz umjetničko djelovanje, oboje unutar kruga ili grupe članova i u široj zajednici. Tijekom gotovo dvadeset godina, ViV je uspješno održavao svoj umjetnički kolektiv stvarajući pedagoške afekte na dvogodišnjim izlozbama, kao mjestima razvijanja svijesti o kreativnom izričaju te poticao recipročni dijalog s općom javnosti o načinima izrade, dijeljenja i stvaranja umjetnosti. Na taj način umjetnički događaji nedvojbeno su postali oblik stvaranja znanja te služili cjeloživotnom učenju i ruralnom umjetničkom obrazovanju, nadograđujući neformalne razmjene koje demonstriraju kontinuiranu i vitalnu predanost njegovanju i održavanju lokalnoga društveno-kulturološkog angažmana.

Ključne riječi: *neformalno učenje; pedagoška događanja; praksa socijalne umjetnosti; seosko umjetničko obrazovanje; umjetnički kolektivi.*