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Pandora Hobby

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Abstract

Art Hives: Communities of Practice and learning to be in Community

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The purpose of this research paper is to situate the emergent Art Hive movement, first historically, and then theoretically, applying educational theory to lived and participatory experience. The Art Hives are independent art centers and open-studio spaces loosely amalgamated into a network. Each art hive runs their own community arts-based programming practicing the concept of radical hospitality and inclusion. While these centers are becoming recognized for their role providing art-as-therapy, the discussion of their role as sites of learning is still less defined. This paper examines the types and functions of various art hive models and outlines some critical theoretical underpinnings for learning in art hives, such as third place theory, communities of practice, and human agency theory.

KEYWORDS: Art Hive, Community of Practice, Human Agency Theory

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Introduction

Art Hives are free art studios open to the public, offering a therapeutic philosophy of art for all. They recognize everyone as an artist, a form of welcoming and democratizing, while honoring the strengths and creative capacities of each participant. An art hive "fosters self-directed experiences of creativity, learning, and skill sharing" (Timm-Bottos and Reilly, 2014). Anyone entering an art hive is welcomed as a participant to create art for free with the available materials.

There are presently three primary forms of Art Hives: pop-up, permanent, and virtual. Pop-up art hives can be set up in a park or an open public venue, often as part of a larger event. Supplies for various arts and crafts will be on hand, and activities may have suggested craft outcomes (more precise themes with quickly achievable results). Alternatively, an art hive may be a permanent venue such as La Ruche d'Art St-Henri (2011–2020), with scheduled hours, accessible for free or by voluntary contribution. Most recently, virtual art hive offerings were held on Zoom and other platforms to create a space for art sharing online in response to the COVID-19 restrictions. Other art hive versions included in the network are Drama Hive(s) (Brennan, 2019), Music Hive(s), and Dance/Movement Hive(s).

The physical art hive spaces themselves are human scale (easy accessibility in an urban environment with mixed-use design), open workspaces that often offer structured workshops and open studio practice such that those who wish to engage in new creative activities or continue a set project are working side by side. In many cases, an art hive is located in a shop or storefront location, or a room in a community center or library. A distinct feature of an art hive is the

shared tables, which invite people who have yet to become familiar to sit and create side-by-side and thus offer the opportunity to both broaden our network and connect informally.

Art Hives connections extend further to the greater community in the form of the international network at arthives.org, leading web users to a variety of social media pages and individuals/groups/hives from all over the world. This keeps people apprised of the various offerings, events, and possible contributions they might engage in. Usually, an individual hive will serve a geographical community and promote their activities on their own Facebook group or page as well as many collectively hosted pages.

Art Hives have recently been the subject of research in the fields of art therapy and art education, but studying them in education through the lens of communities of practice is potentially new territory. This paper will analyze what the art hives purport to be and establish a variety of outcomes that the author has directly experienced through her extended involvement as a participant, facilitator, workshop leader, and community organizer at these sites.

This analysis will offer an informal look into learner/participant outcomes. Participant (learner) outcomes in this case are not necessarily acquired art skills or expertise, even though the activity is art and art-as-therapy. Participant outcomes in this analysis are further community engagement and personal agency, investment in holding space, knowledge-sharing, and workshop-leading. During COVID-19, additional learner outcomes have emerged, including coping skills, abilities to engage with new conferencing technologies, and bolstering of network connections at a distance.

I will begin with a historical overview framing how the art hives movement was established. I will continue by explaining present developments and various specific types of art hives. Next, I will elaborate on third place (Oldenburg, 1989), which is the backbone of previous

theoretical writing on the topic of art hives. I will then introduce the application of communities

of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) which sheds light on the varieties of learning occurring at

art hives. In addition, I will put forward an argument that art hives promote agency for

participants based on agentic theory (Bandura, 1989). The goal of this project has always been to

share the optimism and future-facing learning practices that I have found at art hives, so I will

wrap up by mentioning possible futures paths for the art hives.

<div align="center">**Roots and the Current Art Hive Movement**</div>

> To my mind creativity is an innovative process which embraces all the arts and sciences.
> It includes the love, friendship and cooperation that people develop between one another
> in the common effort aimed at achieving a better life, and moulding better individuals. It
> is not confined to the intellectual activity or the mental production of the individual but in
> its essence encompasses the collective action of groups, classes and nations…. (El
> Saadawi, 1997, p. 209).

Foundations

We could begin at a primordial foundation with the reference of the "tradition with no

name" (Timm-Bottos and Chainey, 2015, p. 7) or more recently referencing the "settler

movements of New France." With examples such as quilting bees and tapestry weaving that were

artistic, survivalist, and healing, the roots of the art hive movement are grounded at the

intersection of community function and reciprocity through art-making.

There are many parallel historical practices that have influenced the development of art

hives. In her article on public homeplaces, Belenky et al. (1996) describes places that offer

services to newcomers, such as educational opportunities, workspaces, and art studios. An

example of a public homeplace would be the settlement (house) movement, which, through a collectivist approach, pushed for social reforms addressing poverty by bringing rich and poor together with links to local universities. By encouraging university students to live alongside local less-advantaged populations as early as the 1880s, settlement houses extended space for community exchange, learning, popular education programming, clubs, and debate forums.

There have also been important theoretical antecedents as well. Greene (1982) refers to "authentic public space," a community of personal contact and verbal exchange for which she feels finds parallels in John Dewey's idea of the "great community" (cited, 1927). Greene (1982) argues for a common world with scope in her public space:

> I want to see imagination released and openings found for the arts, so that new languages can be explored and new perspectives opened, and so that young people will be enabled to look out beyond the actual and the given and summon into being alternative worlds. I want to see alienation and fixity give way to participation and movement, the free play of movement, the free play of thought, all for the sake of the common world (p. 9).

Spaces where people can congregate to work, learn, and find agency were present throughout history. However, having a tradition with no standard (public) nomenclature makes it vulnerable to a lack of record and historical erasure.

Beginnings

The idea of art hives was pioneered by Dr. Janis Timm-Bottos. Timm-Bottos' body of work (2017, 2014, 2005, 2001,1995) describes her founding involvement and vision of further iterations of third space (Oldenburg, 1989) or public homeplace (Belenky, 1996) beginning at ArtStreet and OFFCenter Arts (Albuquerque, New Mexico, founded 1994/2001). In this context,

Timm-Bottos was originally working with individuals facing poverty and looked to creativity and art as tools to assist in the restoration of health. Her efforts were not constrained to individuals and their physical health but were also concerned with the health of the family and larger community. These interests brought Timm-Bottos to the study of art therapy and collaboration with Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless as part of her doctoral studies. In this work, Timm-Bottos emphasized the use of art for the expression of ideas that cannot easily be said in words. Following Timm-Bottos' learned experiences through her early practice, she presents us with members' narratives; she describes their learning and transitions (for example, the details of a trained artist who evolved from working alone to working in community (2001, p. 218)). In an interview, she notes, "Everything we teach today about the Art Hives, the methodologies, the principles, are all from that time period" (Timm-Bottos cited, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2018, p. 1).

Timm-Bottos' initiatives brought her next to the British Columbia interior for a brief period before establishing her operational base in Montreal in 2011 in association with Concordia University in the Department of Art Therapy. In the same year, la Ruche d'Art St-Henri - Community Studio and Science Shop (which will be referred to as La Ruche [The Hive]) was established, a flag-ship location operating until 2020. La Ruche served a historically underprivileged working-class neighbourhood, with a converted storefront location facing a low-rent housing complex. The front window showcased a seasonal exhibition to passersby on the street. With two long worktables at the back of the room and more seating in the front gallery space, La Ruche could comfortably host 20—30 participants. When participants entered the open concept studio/gallery space, they were greeted by a facilitator and directed to sign a registry. The registry was used to collect data on the number of daily participants, which was of interest,

especially when applying for grants and other partnerships. If a person was, in fact, new to the space, they were asked if they were already familiar with art hives, and if not, the facilitator would explain the space and invite the newcomers to participate. If newcomers were interested, tours of the space and extensive materials offered (including all kinds of drawing and painting supplies, fabric and yarn, collage, sculpture, mosaic) were given to guide new participants to something they were either comfortable with or curious about using.

La Ruche d'Art St-Henri was able to implement all the necessities stipulated in the art hive guide (Timm-Bottos and Chainey, 2015), including an outdoor space, studio, donations repository, kitchen, art display areas, and accommodation for significant tools such as looms, woodworking and hardware equipment, and multiple sewing machines. La Ruche hosted open studio hours twice a week, studio times for closed groups, including an elder meet and a cancer support group, and a series of science shops and fibre labs for artful inquiries into specific mediums. It also hosted public discussions akin to adult popular education with optional art-making components.

Present Evolutions

The recent history of art hives in Montreal and beyond is but ten years old at this writing, and interest has blossomed. Many artists, facilitators, and art therapists would take up the "baton," adopting some or many of the significant art hive characteristics in their own versions of the hive space. At last count, art hives are listed as numbering 207 hosting sites internationally (arthives.org, n.d). Over the last decade, a wide variety of art hive styles have evolved as people become more familiar with the basic principles developed by Timm-Bottos and how easily they can be implemented or moulded to fit varying circumstances. A divergent example, the Co-op Le Milieu serves the Centre-Sud neighbourhood of Montréal, also known as the Village. This

studio is much more intimate than La Ruche and includes a café, thus diversifying its clientele. While participants at La Ruche came primarily for the studio, the attraction at Le Milieu is twofold; people can come as artists or as patrons of the café. Additionally, many more workshops and events such as clothing or material swaps and craft sales are held at Le Milieu, as the autonomous co-op model is largely self-financed instead of relying on grants.

The idea of the art hive encompasses more than just the studios. The Art Hive Institute (2015–present) is a four-day annual intensive course that offers practitioners interested in or presently hosting their own open studio an opportunity to discover the ideals and purpose of a hive. It expands on the principles which are ever-evolving, based on the practice and research of the growing art hives community of practitioners.

The Art Hives network, managed by Rachel Chainey, hosts a website at arthives.org as a curated online central resource with a search engine to geolocate any listed art hive at closest proximity. The art hive site has a variety of collaborators. It works as a repository of the research and media that have previously been published, a hub for future opportunities, and a record of potential innovations. Coupled with public Facebook groups and pages, the network is a way of ensuring that the art hives' impact reaches a greater international community. Over the years, the evolution of this network has offered a broad community to learn from, as each practitioner has achieved some expertise in learning, art, and creative investigations.

Notably, during COVID-19, the art hive community has expanded into virtually hosted art hives through online conferencing platforms (Zoom, for example). Within the first week of lockdown, art hive network members were offering two art hive sessions a day, seven days a week. Over the duration of the lockdown, these virtual venues have grown to include English, French, Japanese, Spanish, Persian, and German offerings that are internationally attended.

New art hives often base their development, especially their administrative practices and their focus, upon community engagement, which harmonizes with the original vision of the model pioneered by Timm-Bottos (Timm-Bottos and Chainey, 2015). Each new hive will build its own financial and infrastructural resources and relationships while drawing on the lessons of prior iterations. While other organizations are trying to incorporate agile management principles into their culture, this is the hives' opening stance. As each location/virtual hosting is diverse and devoted to the mental health of the community, and all facilitators have varying skill sets, one of the most important aspects is learning as an evolution of diverse practices.

Though it can be challenging for participants to shake off their default "consumer" stance, initially expecting facilitators to interact with them as in a regular class or workshop, many participants will step up and engage when they are treated as if their own expertise is of value. An art hive is a venue that "welcomes everyone as an artist" (Timm-Bottos and Chainey, 2015). Further guidelines for an art hive are:

- celebrates the strengths and creative capacities of individuals and communities.
- fosters self-directed experiences of creativity, learning, and skill sharing.
- encourages emerging leaders of all ages.
- provides free access as promoted by gift economy.
- shares resources including the abundant materials available for creative reuse.
- experiments with ideas through humble inquiry and arts-based research.
- exchanges knowledge about funding and economic development strategies.
- partners with post-secondary institutions to promote engaged scholarship and participatory research.
- gardens wherever possible to renew, regenerate, and spread seeds of social change.

(Timm-Bottos and Chainey, 2015, p. 3)

It does not take long for participants to become comfortable with the idea that although the facilitator may be hosting, they will not be directing the activity; instead, each participant can choose how they spend their time. If we think of art hive participants as members of an interest-based learning community, they are learning and making, yet also often creating and testing new ideas.

Replicating a specific activity is often far from the learners' objectives in this workshop environment, and this can also be said of the development of the actual locales themselves, with facilitators holding to ideas proposed by Timm-Bottos that they have an affinity for and creating new ones to ensure the smooth running of the space. Most physical art hives reflect a design that demonstrates (non-monetarily associated) abundance, contrary to the scarcity philosophy that pervades our present general culture. Recycling and learning to source free materials are encouraged. In many cases, ideas for changes in spaces are shared or learned as they are brought forth formally and informally by participants or equally drawn from leadership or improvisational sources. Again, the practice of open-source/open studio is echoed from people's creative personal engagement. Consistent involvement in the space promotes stewardship of the space. Participants who have limited art practice due to prior material or time constraints find that resources are finally within their grasp. Because participants are placed in a realm of experimentation based on the safe space that has been developed here, a culture of exploration has thrived. If a change works (infrastructural, administrative), that evolution may become learning that is transferred from hive to hive, either through social media or between the facilitators as they meet to further discuss best practices. This is one element that distinguishes a hive from just another studio space equipped with materials and tools — the evolution of values through participants' practice and learning.

Types of Art Hives

Although we have already discussed some of the present realities of art hives, three overarching categories are helpful to illustrate the infrastructural learning engagement and community involvement offered by various types of art hives. The first, pop-up art hives, may occur only once, regularly, or be a regular occurrence at a variety of locations, but they are necessarily ephemeral in some sense. The second, permanent art hives, are geo-situated and integrated into a physical community. Finally, virtual art hives are an emergent model in response to COVID-19 lockdowns and serve all who can join them online from around the world. I will discuss each of these categories briefly in turn.

Pop-up Art Hives

Though pop-up art hives are usually temporary, whether during a festival, event, or conference, they serve to introduce people to the hive movement, as a community outreach activity, the educational element is simply explaining why we are offering participation in and demonstrating art techniques. The value of pop-ups is found in working together, making new contacts, and creating a straightforward proposed project and positive feedback loops. A challenge in the pop-up approach is the speed at which material and ideas must be shared, given that participants may not be at the location specifically for art-making, learning, community building, or art as therapy. Yet another challenge is that absent the variety of materials in a studio space, the creative exploration and therefore, extent of the possible educational outcomes can be limited.

While many pop-ups are organized by existing studios represented at events, many other hives have a hybrid model. Their regular community presence is based on partnerships with other community groups to grant them physical space. Art Hive initiatives create the opportunity

for some scheduling of art practice in venues such as libraries, hospitals, art centers, museums, galleries, and community centers. Supplies that are stored on-site are stowed away in shared rooms during closing hours. Depending on funding, partnerships may be flexible or permanent, as many of these pop-up art hives evolve into permanent spaces.

An example of a long-standing pop-up art hive is La Ruche Yéléma which serves the community of Rosemont in Montréal. With no fixed address, La Ruche Yéléma's founder Nelly Daou loads her car with supplies, and sets up in a park, a café, or a spacious room at the local library as a "small welcoming mobile art studio" (paraphrased from the social media description).

Permanent Art Hives

There are also art hive studios with permanent space and staffed/volunteer hours. These physical spaces may host many different organizations and activities to support the offer of art practice. Permanent hives are often funded through grants or diverse offerings, including the sale of participants' art or art material, pay-what-you-can coffee, membership fees, and funding drives. Art Hives are rarely financially independent endeavors. In many ways, the art hives' educational elements result in administratively engaged members interested in grant writing, logistics, management, marketing, and finance. Whether it is all stakeholders in a cooperative model or simply administrators, the engagement model calls for learning—incidental or otherwise—best practices in maintaining the space's sustainability.

A permanent shared studio space offers a consistent presence in the community that invites participation. Though newcomers may be unfamiliar with what is being offered and are often doubtful of the "free" aspect of the offerings, they can soon find their place since the abundance of available materials is a curiosity that attracts them. Because volunteers often staff

these spaces, some form of commitment to maintaining access is offered as a two-way street of stewardship. For example, the public library in Montreal's Mile End offered a room to create an art hive which was opened in spring 2017. To begin, there were two weekly scheduled studio times of two hours that the Ruche d'art de la bibliothèque Mordecai-Richler's fully stocked room was open for artists based on the availability of two committed volunteers. After a few weeks of joining the art hive to access the sewing machine, a woman who wanted to come at an earlier hour offered her time, meaning that space was opened for an extended period—four hours on Fridays and two and a half on Sundays.

In creating and offering accessible spaces (and materials) that are situated in between the public and private spheres, art hives introduce ideas to their users that contradict common assumptions about scarcity. The commodification of commonly held ideas and spaces is a recent addition to our cultural experience. Within just a few generations, we have unlearned our right to space and place. The challenge of reintroducing common places as a space for learning offers participants broadened views on stewardship, volunteerism, leadership, facilitation, and self-care/wellness as well as boundaries, self-awareness about biases, and destructive internal dialogue.

Virtual and Virtual Hybrid Art Hives

The virtual component of the art hive movement is a new aspect of art hives developed in response to COVID-19 and the ensuing lockdown. Although art hives have always had a virtual presence consisting of Facebook pages and websites, it is only more recently that meetings have been held over virtual conferencing apps. These apps are quickly becoming a robust new space for participants to gather and share their creative practice. At the (pop-up) Virtual Art Hive, an initiative beginning directly after lockdown measures were implemented in

many places around the world. Zoom meetings were launched twice daily for the first six weeks and hosted through a hub-style Facebook account. Within one week, it was established that two facilitators would host each Zoom session, with university interns and volunteers heeding the call. Facilitation on virtual platforms required technical expertise and ease, as many participants were very hesitant and suspicious of using new software at first. However, quickly, these sessions began to work well. In the wake of this success, many already existing art hives chose to "host" live streams, YouTube channels, or share pages of inspiration.

With ongoing technical hurdles that varied by the day, it became known that many participants were drawn to the physical art hives due to their lack of art materials at home. This led to further challenges of experimenting and offering a variety of software, alternative techniques, and DIY materials. When approaching every participant as an artist, we frequently rely on the free flow of materials and ideas to inspire them towards their project. Unfortunately, without the abundance of physical materials to lead the trial-and-error introduction to open-studio thinking, encouraging participants to learn new techniques was often stinted and laborious. And yet, many participants continue to join from all over the world, sharing what they have been working on and creating. This created a great informal learning environment that inspires folks to take up new practices; often because their traditionally preferred materials could be obscured through the moment we were living. People whose artistic practice had become consistent to one medium over the years suddenly found they needed a new outlet, a different medium. Common space was built through the universal experiences of loss, as many were no longer pursuing their studies, working in studios, or employed. Cut adrift, participants cast their anchor to the virtual art hives.

My relationship with Art Hives

Before getting involved in the Art Hives movement, I participated in a community art group in my local neighbourhood. For 25 years, my art and administrative labors were included in 14 editions of the group's exhibitions. I took that opportunity to learn through my participation. The skills I undertook at varying levels of efficacy were coordination and administration, graphic design, media relations, publicity, social media (editing), archives, and bookkeeping. I saw my participation in this work as incidental and collaborative learning through the tools and skills I acquired from organizing this annual collective exhibition. When I learned about the educational concept of communities of practice proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991, 1998) I saw parallels in my community of art and artists. Further skills that collective work promotes include deliberation, hosting, making/holding space (for example, exhibitions, workshops, conferences, live shows), and the welcoming of new and even uncomfortable ideas.

Having space for common and individual interests with fluid participation and diverse skill sets fosters all kinds of peer learning, and it provides psychological support for the often-marginal task of making and sharing one's artistic product. And yet, all this experience was transient in the sense that it only existed in the preparation leading up to the two-week window of the community art group exhibition.

The shared social aims that existed between participants in my original art community were often related to support, social justice, health, financial solidarity, popular education, and *always* place. When I became aware of something new and more enduring, with a physical space potentially open at scheduled hours year-round, I was attracted to it. To imagine that the service was offered freely as an open studio with no monetary charge seemed magical. Within weeks of hearing about their existence, I had signed on and scheduled to teach a set of crochet workshops. I became a cooperative art hive member within the year.

It became clear that although there were similarities with my previous art practice community, art hives were an equally new type of learning environment offering a more flexible scenario. The open studio of the art hive is predominantly reliant on art practice, technique demonstration, and trial and error in self-directed learning. This can be illustrated by the first Christmas party I attended at the art hive. I offered to host a small table and demonstrate a technique. Many folks joined in and tried out the technique during the party. A few months later, I saw one of the women at an art fair selling her product that was made using the same technique. "So, at the party, that wasn't the first time you had tried it?" I asked. "Actually, that is how it all started," she answered.

In the back-and-forth discussion about various models for learning such as the banking model or the Socratic teaching model, art hives might suggest, appropriately enough, a pollination model. In the previous anecdote, we can see that hands-on demonstrations offer us a different kind of human scale of practice that can send the learner off equipped with exponential curiosity.

Theoretical basis in Education

I have now outlined some of the literature surrounding the history of art hives and some of the current developments in this area. In the section that follows, I will outline three educational theories—third place theory, communities of practice, and human agency theory—that help explain the educational effectiveness and the success of art hives.

Third Place Theory in the argument for Art Hives

The need for publicly situated gathering places, the third place outlined by sociologist Ray Oldenburg (1989), describes the idea of a space straddling the public and the private, accommodating something less formal than work (the second place) and only slightly more

formal than home (the first place). In connecting art hive and third place, Timm-Bottos, and

Reilly (2015) state, "Third places host regular, voluntary, informal, and highly anticipated

gatherings, and root community life in a sense of place, facilitating and fostering creative

interactions. They promote social equality by leveling the status of participants, provide a setting

for grassroots initiatives, create habits of social association, and offer psychological support" (p.

103). A third place is a space for leisurely socialization, unprogrammed exchange and dialogue.

However, it should be noted that Oldenburg's gathering spaces often refer to public houses or

cafés hosting their patrons as a means of doing business, in contrast to the intentionality of space

at art hives.

The freedom to choose attendance, the neutrality that the space can convey to participants

(a "leveler" of socio-economic distinctions), interaction as the main activity (though Oldenburg

specifies conversation), openness and welcoming, "regulars" in the form of consistent attendees,

somewhat modest décor conveying an "everyday" aesthetic, a playfulness of mood, and a sense

of belonging similar to being at home are some of the particularities Oldenburg uses to

distinguish a third place (paraphrased p. 20, 1989). In the course of explaining the kinds of

norms that develop at third places, Oldenburg quotes Henry Sedgwick's detailed account of the

art of conversation:

> 1) Remain silent your share of the time (more rather than less). 2) Be attentive
> while others are talking. 3) Say what you think but be careful not to hurt others'
> feelings. 4) Avoid topics not of general interest. 5) Say little or nothing about
> yourself personally, but talk about others there assembled. 6) Avoid trying to
> instruct. 7) Speak in as low a voice as will allow others to hear (Sedgwick, 1930,
> as cited in Oldenburg, 1989, p. 28).

These guidelines apply equally when learning to be part of a community, though much could be elaborated as we get past conversation into holding space and fostering creative expression.

In the North American trend of housing development, as detailed in works by Oldenburg (1989) and Jacobs (1961), it is argued that the geographical separation of housing from other daily activities as seen in suburban developments and urban modern renewal creates a rift between public and private life, depriving people of just such spaces. In efforts to resolve this division, clubs, community centres and sports centres have sprouted, unfortunately further dividing leisure activities away from integrated neighbourhoods. In the ideal mixed-use model of neighbourhoods, no single use would be set apart from another, as streets containing businesses such as shops and production sites, as well as leisure areas such as parks, community centres and cafes, would be interspersed. When a housing development in the postwar urban design school isolated homes from workplaces, it further set apart the leisure needs of its homeowners.

We have become accustomed to the modern commercialization of space; indoor public spaces, whether directly commercial or otherwise designated, are often purposefully non-welcoming in design. For example, as much as I appreciate libraries, they are not conducive to all activities, including those that are in any way boisterous or messy. We have learned to restrict interaction in these "publics." From waiting rooms to shops to parks, we remain in our group and refrain from approaching strangers or passing the time of day until we are sufficiently familiar with our neighbours. The venue to initiate these connections must be sought out. In Oldenburg's argument "…those core settings of the informal public life…" (1989, p. 26), consider urban design and inclusion, but not necessarily the nature of the relationships that the third place could foster. So, what kind of third place can we muster?

What kind of third place can we host if we become stakeholders and go one step past the conversation proposed by Oldenburg and engage in the creative project proposed by Timm-Bottos? We can, for one thing, go significantly beyond the standard curriculum. Food and repair literacy ("nourish-acy," "mending-acy," "repair-acy") are no longer in schools' mandates; though they could be tied to the curriculum in a variety of lesson plans, they no longer have their own class or forum. It is significant to have potential learning venues dealing with day-to-day skills to further drive home, secondary concepts like self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and self-esteem through conservation, reuse, and regeneration (gardening, financial, and resource management).

Learning these skills are all part of learning to be in a community, yet the skills of fostering community and holding space for others are important, too. As much as Virginia Woolf (1929) argues for a room of one's own, sometimes a room for exchange, feedback and experimentation are more in need. Not only do we have a place for the exchange of ideas but also creative production and exchange of skills.

Timm-Bottos and Reilly (2015), however, equally refer to the third place and the third space theory (Bhabha, 1994) as "space where individuals have the opportunity to take ownership of their learning by engaging in crucial discussions and participate in cultural practices. It is a space where transgressive acts can be played out, where people can let their real selves flourish, and where "different identities . . . remake boundaries" (Bhabha, 1994, as cited in Timm-Bottos and Reilly, 2015 p. 219). The liminal nature of the third place as between home and work, or the third space as between fixed identities and experimenting with new materials or ideas, still offers the novel aspect of being between. I have chosen to examine Oldenburg's third place more specifically—whether it is the holding of a virtual welcome online or physical space as the site of

unstructured participation, what these spaces offer is foundational to common art practice at art hives.

If it were accepted that common and sharable space is vital to learning (though it may often be a generic or virtual space we have converted), and some participants took on a custodial role to sustain it (this may be figurative between participants as emotional work, or actually in the role of setting up and tidying as participants are encouraged to do at each activity), how would it change things? The spaces we are fashioning and maintaining now are not only welcoming and comforting but also expressive—they provide access to creative tools.

Timm-Bottos' application of third place "provide places to mobilize collective actions," (2017, p. 95) and though this may seem like a sizable undertaking, perhaps it simply means that an idea is collectively and informally deliberated. A question can be answered, or a problem solved, whether it is a collective or personal query. One can draw on an idea, experience, or expertise in the space just by conversationally participating. This may not work every time or in a timely fashion. People will often come back to you with something they have learned later, but in many cases, the ongoing nature of this type of dialogue in the third space of the art hive, across real and virtual conversations, offers further learning benefits.

Community of Practice

A practical theory for explaining the educational potential of art hives is communities of practice; choosing to frame my theoretical analysis through the lens of a community of practice is an effort to articulate the learning occurring at art hives in its authentic environment. Communities of Practice are "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger, https://wenger-trayner.com, n.d). Originally a set of ideas advanced by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991)

(alongside their definitions of situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation), the theory of community of practice explains how practitioner apprenticeship differentiates from other learning models.

The theory of situated learning is most often contrasted with classroom learning based on its cultural embeddedness of learning in production. Lave and Wenger (1991) state that situated learning is "an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice" (p. 31). Situated learning is then further clarified through examples of various kinds of apprenticeship models. Lave and Wenger (1991) share the example of Lave's field work with Vai, and Gola tailors in Liberia in which each step that the apprentices complete offers the "unstated opportunity to consider how the previous step contributes to the present one" (p. 72). Lave explains that due to a practice of learning to produce a garment in the reverse order of production, the novice tailors start with the easier and straightforward tasks of finishing (sewing on buttons and hemming), which creates more successes through focus. In this way, learning can be situated with less fear of negative outcomes.

In the art hive, the idea of situated learning might take the form of learning how the art hive works as a space over the course of participation. Many ideas such as the "welcome as an artist" (Timms-Bottos and Chainey, 2015) and the unstructured nature of open studio are central to the welcome of newcomers. A facilitator might communicate further the need for all to participate in the daily closing of the open studio session (tidying, replacing materials, and making the space welcoming for the next users) or other successful ways to manage the space. Whether through demonstration, collaboration, or articulation, the idea of the open studio often requires tours of available material and the certainty that newcomers will not be overcome with the newness of the experience.

Lave and Wenger (1991) state that "legitimate peripheral participation is intended as a conceptual bridge" (p. 55). Here, ""legitimate peripheral participation" provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice" (p. 29).

Legitimate peripheral participation in the art hive model would often look different from the apprenticeship model, as each participant is understood to be an artist from the moment they walk in the door. This means that the recognition of expertise is horizontal (rather than vertical and hierarchical) and slotted together. Still, there are specific ways in which newcomers—legitimate peripheral participants—are welcomed into the space. The community care (interpersonal and maintenance of space) necessary at the art hive becomes a learned habit through legitimate peripheral participation based on observation and repeated involvement. The more some individuals truly engage with the hive, the more likely they are to offer service or donations such as art materials. Over time, this might play out as each participant having a turn at being the master or the novice depending on what materials or techniques were highlighted and each participant's experience with it. This act of reciprocity to the community shows an understanding of the replenishment of resources necessary to support the resource that art hives offer.

An example of legitimate peripheral participation could be seen at La Ruche D'art St-Henri ~ Laboratoire Fibre Lab (late 2015 to spring 2017), which was a weekly meeting of people working with stitchery in all forms that initially had no scheduled workshops. Consequently, managing a session was often a process of matching those who had experience with those who wished to learn a specific textile or fibre skill. It was up to the facilitators to become familiar

with the repertoire of a variety of regular participants so that they could find which participants would easily demonstrate and skill-share, even as it might interrupt the participant's current production. As we knitted together as a cohesive group, a common project of a spring exhibition and a set of workshops to assist in this project emerged. The smooth pairing of novices with not-so-novices became a more occasional question, as more and more participants got basic skills established and could easily produce their own motifs to adorn the exhibit or run the demonstrations in an each-one-teach-one form (Casanova, 1996, as cited in Timm-Bottos and Chainey, 2015).

Another tangible example of learned community care through legitimate peripheral participation at the more recent virtual art hive is the instituting of the opening and closing "What are you working on?" question. At a physical art hive, it is easy to visually check-in on people's progress throughout the activity by doing a tour of the participants and their work or by glancing around the table, if it is a smallish group. In the virtual art hive, we must first insist that cameras be on unless folks have a good reason not to have them on, but this only guarantees a view of participants' faces. After a few of the participants are in the activity, we will ask what they are working on. This serves a facilitator in two ways, first it can be determined if there are commonalities between practice--for example, if three people are on watercolour and one working on a collage--and second, technical issues can be addressed, and unfamiliarity with platforms can be resolved. During the last fifteen to twenty minutes of a virtual session, a further inquiry as to progress is voiced. This allows participants the opportunity to hold up their work's progress to the camera; explanations about process, technique, or choices made are expressed. Throughout the meeting, discussions or inquiries about technique usually occur, especially between those working in a similar medium.

There are other aspects of art hives that permit legitimate peripheral participation. Perhaps most importantly, participants are, above all, seen as artists. This promotes confidence in participants who would shrink away from experimentation if they felt that there was a standard to live up to. In turn, the leeway afforded one by belonging to a community that is encouraging creativity by default brings exponential space for positive reinforcement. Many people promote the "fake-it-till-you-make-it" philosophy to keep experimenting with and broadening ones' learning. In the case of the art hive, I amend that expression to read "do-it-till-you-get-it," as there is often no limit or constraint other than available materials and time.

Based on my observations at art hives, I have identified five categories of learning taking place in a community of practice. First, one needs to learn the ins and outs of how the community works. For example, does one join a group (social media or actual), subscribe to a newsletter, or go to meetings? Also, how engaged can the practitioner be? These are the practicalities of attending, keeping track of relationships, and supporting the projects of a selection of members by sharing resources, whether through encouragement or references. The second area of learning is the practice in and of itself. Learning the evolution of one's practice itself means remaining engaged in the practice, staying passionate and up to date, as Wenger notes (1998). As the field evolves, must the practitioner sustain an intellectual vigilance? Or, by participating in the community of practice and practicing, is the practitioner satisfying their progress? The third category of learning is anterior support skills, furthering the community as a whole. Learning anterior skills to support the community of practice might mean learning to keep the books, administer an online forum, publicize the work of the community of practice, or host skill-share meetings on virtual platforms. Keeping the community resources robust through

engagement might require people to take on learning they had never considered a priority for themselves as an individual.

The fourth category is the sharing of established knowledge. An example would be sharing "tricks and tips" either through word of mouth, in a guide, or online thread. Ensuring that lessons learned about techniques, tools, and materials have a second life help build and evolve the practice proper and its repertoire. The fifth and final category of learning is experimentation and tweaks for the creation of new knowledge. In particular, this can take the form of hybridization/cross-pollination— in other words, a brand-new idea or practice forms as multiple practitioners resolve an issue together.

If we agree that the ideal purpose of education and learning is to create opportunity, inclusion, and access through awareness and knowledge, we have a lot to learn from the kinds of communities of practice we see in art hives. Many forms of learning should foster connections that support the kind of knowledge exchange aspired to in the community of practice model. It is as if the whole community were one textbook, each member being the author of the chapter they have mastered.

Art Hives as a Source of Agency

Having a place to meet and people to engage with supports learning, both in the community and as individuals. The human agency (agentic theory) concept, as proposed by Albert Bandura argues that "People's perceptions of their efficacy influence the types of anticipatory scenarios they construct and reiterate." (1989, p. 1176). Simply put, if one sees themselves as good at a task, they will further the practice of that task with the help of positive feedback loops that will in turn, create strength in that task. When obstacles are present in this scenario, a "self-efficacy belief" decides the level of engagement that the individual commits to.

Bandura is clear that self-efficacy can either be positive or negative based on the judgment of efficacy and visualization of success or failure. "When faced with difficulties, people who are beset by self-doubts about their capabilities slacken their efforts or abort their attempts prematurely…" (Bandura, 1989, p. 1176).

An understanding of the nature of self-talk and the unfortunate power of negative (self) judgment is a useful tool in an art hive. It is an important step to regularly remind participants that they are always artists at the art hive. People who are not fully aware of the mandate of the resource are often given a welcoming instructive introduction when they drop-in. It can take time for participants to adopt the practice, not only to be seen as an artist but also to see themselves as artists and be successful in their art objectives. Though it may not be difficult to establish a rapport, demonstrate a technique, or encourage folks to follow through on the spot, *agency* may seem to be re-instilled from visit to visit like a muscle that is not flexed enough.

Agency can be encouraged by establishing achievable goals, making sure that participants keep the scope of their project meaningful (they should not get ahead of themselves because of time or material constraints), refraining them from comparing themselves to others (other participants around the table or great artists) by bringing them back to 'their' own creation especially what is good about it, thereby validating the taking of space with work that they might have doubts about, and by confirming the validity of their creativity. The art itself does not always meet the artist's expectations. When this problem arises, outlining the success of the event, the act of being in community, the process, and the learning of a new technique can be framed as a positive; the participant is reminded of the bigger picture.

Many types of participation and participatory learning make up the art hive community repertoire. For example, there are creatives who are up for nearly anything and do not take much

convincing, whether there is a project or an open studio. Their calm experimentation style eases the adoption of any anterior community learning. Through their confidence in their productive capabilities, these participants are easily able to engage in the agentic process. There are engaged citizens; curiosity and inquiry govern their learning style. Striking up a conversation and commenting to ensure each process is articulated or leading a go-round to ensure all participants are included characterizes their approach. Fostering communication to help others articulate and work out their creative experience generates agency through reflective opportunities. Occasionally, there are skeptics, whether this is their present mood or their overall demeanor, they may keep to themselves or engage only to turn an off-handed comment to something passive-aggressive, dismissive, or often self-deprecating. These skeptics may be testing boundaries or be in real distress. Having stepped out of their artist role, their self-efficacy is out of balance.

Bandura (2006) outlines four properties necessary for his human agency theory: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. To work this out, an agent starts with a plan (intentionality) ("Remember that time when I was happy? Let's get back to that") and visualizes it (forethought) ("What does a happy future look like to me?"). A variety of choices are at one's disposal before taking real action (self-reactiveness) and steps to take follow ("Which way will be best? The most fun? The fastest? Most productive?). Analysis while moving through the process is the last step (self-reflectiveness) ("Is this right? This seems much slower than I planned. I will tweak things a little bit").

Let us revisit each of these steps as it might unfold in the art hive. When a practitioner is creating art, they would first choose a medium such as collage or paint (intentionality). This could require an analysis of the availability of the types of materials the artist is comfortable

working with. Second, an artist might choose a subject for their collage or painting, such as a scene before them, a picture from a magazine, or something imagined (forethought). Bandura's theory articulates this step as visualization, planning, or imagining the outcome, which offers the artist an array of potential results. The third step is selecting techniques, styles, or tools based on preferences and the ability to create desired results. Inspired by another's work, an artist might try to replicate the technique or just mimic a pattern or theme to get the right impression. An example would be choosing to try a pointillist technique while using recycled buttons, which might be best suited for the desired effect (self-reactiveness). Since this choice is not always straightforward, this step might require that the participant research certain elements that need illumination. Lastly, the artistic process results in ongoing feedback loops of the success of choices (self-reflectiveness), which encourage or discourage the pursuit of various avenues and details. For example, the participant embarking on pointillist work may have found that trying to establish the works form prior to sorting and quantifying her available resources (buttons) meant that she needed to source more buttons of a certain size and colour. She may find an appropriate set of buttons after inquiries, switch to beads in part, change the colour scheme, or decide to include a form of raised embroidery that fills the gap created by the absent buttons.

Such analysis shows the susceptibility that this process has to self-doubt. While the creative process is, in a sense, forgiving in that there can be no clear wrong answer, the artist themselves is the judge of the efficacy of their own work in general. If a participant is successfully self-reflective, they may be able to feel empowered by their work, whether the creative expression is seen as a successful work in their eyes or not. A lot of learning around this concept has to do with an artist letting the work (even if it is ultimately disappointing) inform them (the maker) of potential future analytical or creative steps or approaches. For example, a

participant regularly described her discouragement with her recent watercolours; however, she also commented on how she often keeps these works as future fodder for collage and had shown a work she deemed successful derived from these past non-starters. Similarly, people expressing creative pessimism can be introduced to computer programs with filters to demonstrate how their work can be modified and cropped quickly so that they can re-envision or experiment virtually. Though art hives do not engage in critiques as art classes might, we talk about potential best practices for materials and techniques. We often notice what we do see working in our productions and those of others.

Since all facilitators apply art hive principles by working on art projects productively alongside participants and by maintaining physical and psychological space, they successfully model human agency behaviour. In the case of skeptical participants, however, the first two of Bandura's steps are potentially blocked by negative self-talk. Fortunately, facilitators can often turn this around by reengaging the participant. It could be as simple as reminding the participant why they are at the hive by inviting them to articulate their intention. Very often the block can be in the forethought because things are not proceeding as was previously visualized, conjuring up feelings from previous unsuccessful narratives. The solution often lies in embracing ambiguity and stepping into the process for its own sake. Whether this takes the form of happily experimenting or chalking it up to learning, community momentum is invaluable. With everyone's production moving forward, their commiserating stories of botched attempts, perseverance, and fixes will often shift the participant away from their wobble. Acknowledging that there are a multitude of possibilities and ways to engage with the process can be the key to letting the art become and give oneself permission. Learning agency is often a 'this works too'

proposition. Whether or not a participant is happy with their artistic outcome, their appreciation of the fellowship a hive can offer establishes confidence to broaden their repertoire and continue.

Notably, by encouraging participants to articulate what is happening with their work, facilitators make space for participants to open-up about other aspects of their lives. This has the potentiality of improving self-efficacy indirectly. Examples of common subjects frequently broached at art hives include family relationships and lack of support for creative pursuits. One participant spent the whole session experimenting with colour and as our time neared a close, she started to comment that she felt at a loose end and did not have any inspiration to paint a subject as she had some derisive comments from her ex-husband echoing in her ears. She spoke briefly about it, and many participants showed solidarity, agreeing that they had had a similar kind of experience as well. We resoundingly articulated the need for space to vent, and we all expressed gratitude for the fact that this participant had shared her experience, allowing all of us to support her with this difficulty collectively. The balance of intrinsic/extrinsic feedback available at the art hive creates a unique experience of self-efficacy, and available agency as participants generally acknowledge the value of their own creativity as well as the cohort around them, which may be drawn on in difficult times, whether artistic or personal.

The Future of Art Hives

Art Hives Within Reach

Though drawing on some time-honoured concepts of communal collaboration such as third spaces and communities of practice, art hives are a new space on the therapeutic, creative, and educational landscape. This new public threshold needs to be documented from many angles as it arrives on the scene. Because of its development in tandem with the blossoming of social

media, the options of viewing this community as local and global enable many diverse relationships. Owing to social media, more people currently understand themselves differently as content creators and creatives. Additionally, people have changed how they interact throughout 2020 because they are participating in real-time virtually. This has been exquisitely and excruciatingly relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic. In many cases, virtual spaces established at the start of lockdown have already evolved, from Zoom to outdoor pop-ups when physical distancing was possible throughout the summer and then back to Zoom because of weather conditions or governmental restrictions. New approaches for using and sharing materials at in-person art hives have been implemented by prepackaging materials for participants to take home and 'idling' shared kits between 48 and 72 hours. New art hives continue to enter the picture; old art hives have reinvented themselves by distributing take-home kits wherever allowable. The suggestion of creating public art kit distribution boxes, like the little free library movement, or uses of pre-existing share box locations have been proposed.

Now that many virtual hives have offered hosting alternatives, the possibilities of hybridization, not only between different gatherings at the same art hive but also tandem meetings during the same occasion (for example, an opportunity to meet in-person, online, and between simultaneous various locations), have been made available. Hybridization was offered and tested over the summer of 2020 in at least three hives. I was lucky enough to attend as La Ruche Yelema successfully held a socially distanced pop-up in a public park and broadcasted over Zoom to participants in their homes, as well as to another hive in the Quebec City area. Ruche d'art La Page Blanche also made that bridge, broadcasting from a community center, with additional zoom access as well. There have also been some suggestions on how to use closed-circuit broadcast systems in hospitals and care homes, such that people not equipped with the

internet could still follow along and perhaps participate interactively by telephone if restrictions forbid in-person services.

One of the ambitions for the future of art hives is the proliferation of hives in every community, much like drop-in clinics (another analogy might be gyms). We hardly remember the idea of a medical clinic being geographically or financially out of reach, yet there was a time when that was the case. Art hives need to be consistently viewed with wellbeing in mind—as an educational outlet for unlearning personally difficult habits of self-doubt and negative self-talk while learning creative techniques with a supportive community of people. For those participants who believe that regular art therapy or therapy is overpriced or who do not have disposable income for materials, or for those who have not tried to unravel what ails them through creativity, art hives can be the first step. As such, something that a participant might have seen as out of their grasp or 'not for them' can be made available and fruitful.

For art hives to be seen broadly as a new resource, formally prescribing art-making as a therapeutic activity would be one option to consider. Though art as therapy and art hives are currently making inroads into creating programs such as this, thus far, doctors have only issued prescriptions for museum visits. Further study of the concept of healing through ad hoc open studio art-making and its true outcomes should not only cover what art-making can offer but also what community engagement can offer.

Continuing the project and offering more accessible art hives both geographically and virtually offers a sense of boundless possibility; since every gathering is different, diverse materials catch the eye, and collective knowledge of techniques and experience is always varied. Though more dependent on participant access to materials, the virtual art hive, in particular, offers exciting future possibilities—it makes it possible to use open-source apps and software

accounts for digitally modified art, another form of infinite experimentation. It goes without saying that the assumption of connectivity is another question that must be broached here (for example, learning how to find Wi-Fi, links to meeting rooms, other resources to work from home, tripods, and lighting), as a whole other set of resources becomes relevant.

Conclusion

The theoretical frameworks (third place/space, communities of practice, and agentic theory) that are the basis of my analysis were selected based on my practical experience working at several art hives (Co-op Le Milieu, La Ruche d'art - St. Henri -fibre lab-, Galerie Ame Art, La Ruche d'art de la bibliotheque Mordecai-Richler, Ruche d'art du Plateau, the Virtual Art Hive, Rendez-vous Creatif Virtuels). This paper is based on personal observations and experiences acquired on-site, while either facilitating or participating in art hives. Although formal interviews were not conducted as part of the research, several of my fellow art hive facilitators have corroborated these experiences anecdotally or through their own research.

Though not specific to my analysis, but definitively relevant to art hive study is the question of "third age" (50+) participants. Much of my work at art hives included participants over the age of fifty. Many factors could be at play here—for example, this is a community that has time to participate, a community that makes the best use of such a resource once it is established, and a community that is looking for this kind of learning and inspiration. A discussion of the changing face of resources for third age participants and the obstacles faced due to new technical expectations is crucial study yet to be undertaken.

Art hives offer something new, versatile, and renewable based on their open-source modeling. Viewing this phenomenon as a resourceful learning exercise broadens the possibilities and allows for ever-changing applications. Facilitators are enthusiastically a have-supplies-will-

travel community of practice unto themselves. A diversity of interests within the art hive community allows for hive meetings devoted to inquiry, science, recipes, reconciliation, fast fashion, any and all forms of art technique, storytelling, specific holidays and their cultural base, or anything a participant can suggest. Each of those unique hive occasions can be their own demonstration of a community of practice or a reinforcement of the resource to participants.

By arguing for a view of art hives as a space beyond art-as- therapy—a site of learning—and not just a space for art but also for personal and community betterment, I have illustrated how such a simple concept has such boundless ramifications. I am not the first to have noted that art hives seem like such a self-evidently useful educational innovation, yet no one had developed this kind of project and to this extent before Dr. Timm-Bottos. No one had articulated a specific scope and established guidelines. No one had conceived of a studio as such a living, breathing thing, arguing that we had forgotten this homeplace, these commons - our right to space in practice.

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