

The Vows of Symbiosis: the blending practice of situational experience and art education in the workshop

Yun Zhang

Communication MFA, Royal College of Art, London, United Kingdom

Abstract

This study takes "The Vow of Symbiosis" as its core theme and design concept to explore the interdisciplinary practice of combining situational experience and art education in the workshop mode. In contemporary art education, situational experience, as an immersive learning method, can stimulate participants' perception, emotion and creativity, while the workshop model provides an interactive and co-created learning environment that enables individuals to establish deep connections in art practice. This study combines literature analysis, case studies and practical observation to explore how to enhance learners' aesthetic perception, emotional expression and social interaction ability through situational art experience, and mobilize their reflection on symbiotic relationship. Art education is not only limited to knowledge transfer, but also becomes a carrier to promote individual growth and social relationship construction. This study hopes to provide new theoretical support and practical reference for art educators, experiential learning researchers and interdisciplinary practitioners, so as to promote the development of a more immersive and symbiotic art education model.

Keywords: Workshops, art education, situational experience, interdisciplinary design.

1 The concept and characteristics of the workshop

1.1 Workshop concept

The term "workshop" first appeared in the research field of education and psychology. It is a learning mode integrating participatory, experiential and interactive learning. In the 1960s, Lawrence Harpin in the United States introduced the concept of "workshop" into daily life, as a means of self-improvement learning, and as a way for people of different positions and ethnic groups to think, discuss and communicate with each other. (Shuai Liang, 2020) The activity mode of the workshop enables participants to learn knowledge or obtain information in a relatively simple and direct way in a short time.

The activity mode of the workshop enables the participants to receive information from

one channel and become planners of thought output, providing an interactive platform for the group to brainstorm, learn from each other, build relationships, and solve problems. It has been more and more widely used and carried out in the fields of daily teaching and technical learning in universities. (Ning Zhang, 2023)

The situational experience art education course planned in this paper is based on the workshop model, which gathers 10-15 graduate students and teachers, pays attention to each participant's sense of experience and participation, and gives enough time for personal expression and interaction, so as to ensure that the workshop achieves its goals.

1.2 Characteristics of the workshop

In the cross-disciplinary combination of art education and situational experience, workshop, as an open platform for creation and experimentation, is highly interactive, collaborative and practical. Unlike traditional classes or exhibitions, workshop emphasizes the creative concept of "process over product", encouraging participants to explore ideas and materials together in a non-linear, non-judgmental environment (Kester, 2011).

As Helguera points out in his book *Education for Socially Engaged Art*: "Workshop is not a one-way transfer of knowledge, but a process of co-construction of knowledge, which sees learners as active participants in knowledge." (Helguera, 2011, p. 48). This is particularly crucial for the author's project, because through the workshop, I can share the meaning of symbiosis with the participants, allowing them to participate in the narrative of the "wedding" as "witnesses", thus forming a more physical and emotional co-creation field.

2 How to integrate situated experience with art education practice

The situated experience, which places the learner in a concrete situation, has become a central concept in contemporary art education. Different from traditional knowledge infusion education, this method focuses on the integration of body, sense, emotion and space, making the learning process more realistic and participatory (Dewey, 1934). Art creation is no longer just an exercise in medium and form, but a process of "acting in context", which is especially applicable to some workshops and site-specific projects in schools.

Placing participants in a workshop with a sense of situational experience, engaging their auditory, visual and physical senses, helps to stimulate deeper perception and reflection. For example, in "The Vows of Symbiosis," participants are invited to the ceremony of the wedding and interact directly with the live environment through sound collection, touch, observation, etc. This experience-based approach to art education not only enhances the awareness of spatial relations, but also stimulates discussions about ecology, material and symbiosis, forming a process of "learning is participation, participation is creation" (Kolb, 1984).

3 Research and innovation

3.1 How to combine symbiotic theme and situational experience

At the beginning of the course, the author focuses on the theme of symbiosis, hoping that the course will make participants reflect on anthropocentrism and feel the connection between living and non-living things, organic and inorganic things. First, the author sets up the wedding as an output form of situational experience, as a symbol of ritual and culture, which can guide participants to think about the deep themes behind the wedding. In this process, teaching not only focuses on the transfer of creative skills, but also explores cultural and anthropological perspectives. Wedding as a symbolic act, combined with the concept of symbiosis, can inspire participants to develop a deep understanding of cooperation, commitment and coexistence. The author treated the two materials as symbiotic carriers, held weddings for them, and encouraged participants to create freely across disciplines, prompting participants to combine their knowledge of handicraft, art and ecological design. By combining these different areas, the workshop offers both artistic freedom and practical skills. For the design of the invitation, we used mossy bark that naturally falls in the forest, and rubbed the leaf texture on the paper. A love nest was also built for the couple out of twigs and yarn, symbolizing their symbiotic relationship.



Image1: Wedding invitation



Image2: Symbiotic nest

3.2 An interpretation of the symbiotic oath

The author quotes Gregory Orr's poem "This is what was bequeathed us" as the text on a wedding invitation, reminding us to reflect on how we treat the planet we share.

This is what was bequeathed us:

This earth the beloved left

And, leaving,

Left to us.

No other world

But this one:

Willows and the river

And the factory

With its black smokestacks.

No other shore, only this bank

On which the living gather.

No meaning but what we find here.

No purpose but what we make.

That, and the beloved's clear instructions:

Turn me into song; sing me awake.



Image3: A wedding accompaniment

Participants will expand their sense of community in the biosphere by exploring new kinship (Donna Haraway), a shared respect for all life and its environment, and reweaving themselves into the web of life.

3.3 Practical application of the workshop in art education

The author treated the two materials as symbiotic carriers, held weddings for them, and encouraged participants to create freely across disciplines, prompting participants to integrate their knowledge of handicraft, art and ecological design. By combining different fields, the workshop offers both artistic freedom and practical skills. The teaching concept of sustainability

and environmental awareness is also reflected in the selection of materials. By using natural, recyclable or biodegradable materials, the course design encourages students to focus on environmental protection and the recycling of resources, thereby achieving symbiosis. In the design of the workshop, the author emphasizes learning and experience through hands-on participation, rather than relying solely on theory or lectures. Through hands-on practice, students incorporate the representations of branches and wool at weddings to understand the relationship between symbiosis, collaboration, and creativity. In the discussion session of the workshop, participants need to combine their own inner perception to create art, use the materials prepared in advance (such as branches, stones, feathers, wool, etc.) to make wedding gifts for the wedding couple, and introduce their own output and the perception of the whole wedding after production. Participants reflected on the creative process, the meaning behind the work, and how symbiotic themes are represented in art.

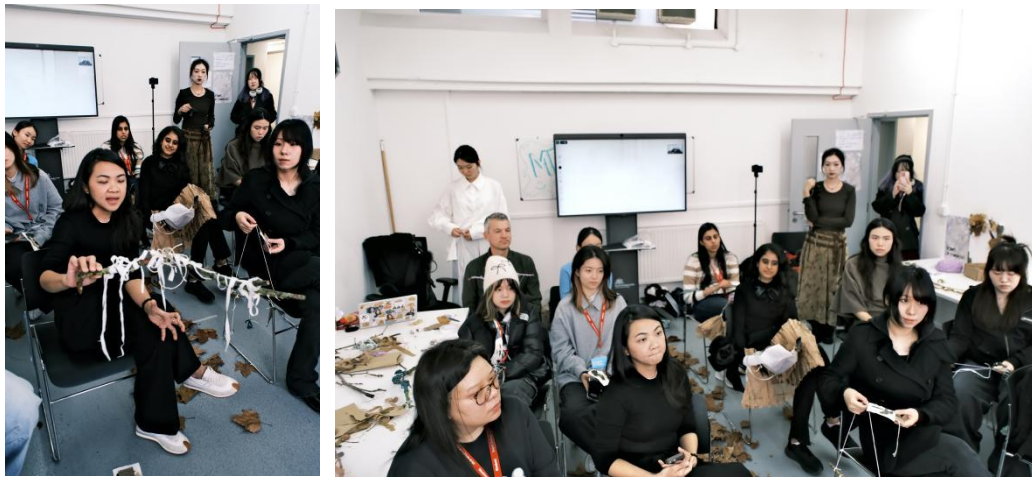


Image4、 5: On-site discussion

4 Conclusion

In this project, "wedding" is not only a symbolic artistic expression, but also an exercise in re-understanding and perception of relations in the material world. Through the practice of the workshop model, I realized that integrating situational experience into art education is not only a methodical innovation, but also a cognitive shift - it prompts us to change from "doing art" to "living, feeling and co-existing in art".

In the course of the actual workshop, participants are not passive recipients, but build a community of meaning with me in a symbiotic space. The collection of sounds, the touch of materials, and the planning of rituals became the starting point for them to re-understand the relationship between environment, time, and matter. It is in this sensory immersion and situational intervention that we jointly witness a fictional but real "oath" - the flexible connection between inorganic and organic, city and nature, art and education.

However, the project also raises deeper questions about whether "symbiosis" is possible. When we attach the natural and the artificial to human emotions and language, does this anthropomorphic artistic act obscure their own complex way of being? Are we truly understanding the subtle but ongoing interactions between these substances, or are we just borrowing them to map human emotional logic?

In future exploration, I hope to further expand such space-based practices to more neglected urban corners, and stimulate the perceptual dialogue between participants and the environment through a more open educational framework. Perhaps the real meaning of art education is not to teach anything, but to open the possibility of "symbiosis", so that people, things and fields can generate and transform each other in coexistence.

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