



The role of the evolving artefact in creative collaboration

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This work examines the role of the artefact in creative collaboration. In the context of visual art practice, collaboration is a method through which work is produced by more than one artist. It is a process that offers the opportunity for intellectual conversation and critical discourse and is a working method appropriate to practice-based research in art and design. Collaborative dialogue has an effect on the evolution of an artwork and the developing work in turn influences the collaborative process.

The collaborative artwork begins as a conceptual object and evolves through abstract or virtual forms before it becomes a physical entity. To examine the communication and interaction that is integral to collaboration, it is important to think of the artefact as an emergent form as well as a final artwork. In this study, I regard even the earliest objects of interaction, the ideas and sketches as the emerging artefact. It is useful to do so because, from the very start, the process of collaboration requires an object to which the collaborating partners can refer.

The work presented here focuses on a recent case study and examines the significance and function of the emerging artefact within a particular collaboration. Throughout the process of creative collaboration, partners engage with the emerging artefact through their observations, the questions they ask and the level of detail they require in order to communicate effectively with each other.

This study identifies two ways in which the artifact impacts on the collaborative process, as a physical object and as an abstract object. It examines the impact of the evolving artwork in its transformation from conceptual form, through the developmental phase and final process of refinement and completion. The evolving artefact is assessed in relation to a) the decision making processes, b) the critique of work in progress and c) the final execution of it. This analysis was conducted through active documentation of work in progress. It involved the making of a new artefact and a reflexive analysis on the evolution of concepts and ideas informing the work.

The results suggest that as the artefact evolves, so does the collaborative process. The intellectual conversation and productive exchange results in a deeper level of discourse and analysis contributing both to the development of the work and to its quality. The intersecting creative practices of the collaborating partners benefit in particular ways through their unique sensitivities to the materials and processes of the emerging artefact.

This study began with the post exhibition reflection and critique of one installation artefact, and continued through the period of germinating new ideas, refining a proposal and developing a second, related artefact. Analysis of the collaboration has revealed the impact of the emerging new work on the creative process, particularly in relation to the shifts in leadership throughout the project. It has also revealed the way in which the evolving artefact has been enriched by the impact of collaboration.