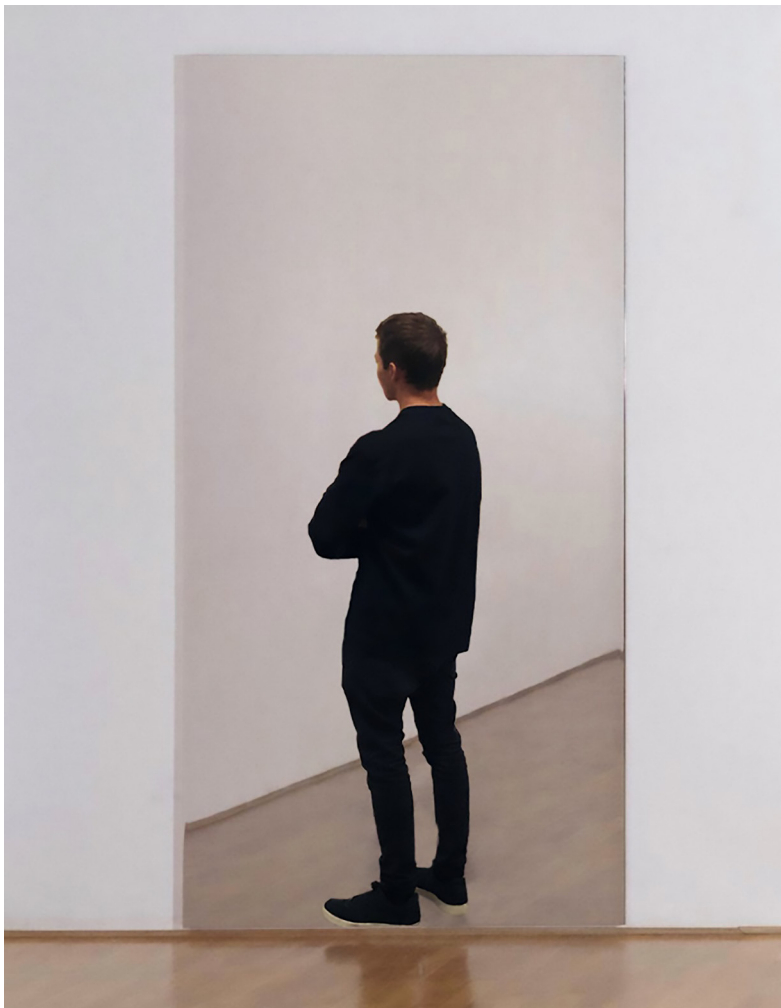# BEYOND THE MIRROR

Self-Actualisation Design

NOAH KELSEY

"I've had a lot of worries in my life,
most of which never happened"

Mark Twain

CONTENTS

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The Italian philosopher Franco Berardi, also known as 'Bifo' refers to the postmodern condition as "the slow cancellation of the future". This term is a global condition that got underway in the seventies and eighties. The term suggest that life continues, but in a way that time has stopped. Berardi does not refer to future in this statement as a direction of time but rather a psychological perception of value that emerges through progressive modernity and fabricated expectations that reached its peak after the second world war (Berardi, Genosko and Thoburn, 2011, pp 13). These expectations brought on capitalist globalization, the machine of exploitation, debt and compulsory consumption. A collective contagion of anxiety now prevails through this movement. The movement has produced lasting damage in the social, cultural, and nervous systems of mankind and therefore the material structures of the world (Berardi, Genosko and Thoburn, 2011, pp 8).

What Berardi is getting at here is that we have entered a state in which cultural movements or developments are no longer real and significant. He is suggesting that our future has essentially been cancelled. He says that innovation, sense of possibility and the production of newness that is seen in the 20th-century culture no longer exists. Mark Fisher, a philosopher, writer, music critic, theorist and teacher who analysed the idea of the cancellation of the future in detail states that what it means to be in the 21st-century is to have 20th-century culture on high-resolution screens that is distributed by high-speed internet. The culture today has largely remained in the past, or as Fisher puts it, "cultural time has folded back on itself" (Diaz, 2021). This condition goes against the widely held belief that the self and the future continually improve with time. With this theory, our anxieties and stresses could have derived out of our own control but because we are experiencing these lost or cancelled futures.

However, I believe this to be only part the case and that designed methods can be used to relieve us from anxiety and stress regarding our future. When it comes to valuing our future, Nietzsche believed that value is not found or discovered but rather created or invented (Langsam, 2017). He believes that things do not have value in themselves. It is only because humans give things value that it creates value. Therefore, the value that has been created can also be ruined and vice versa. The value is not something that is fixed, but rather shifts over time. For example, the monetary value in Baseball cards, once reaching up to $500,000 at auction, are now worthless (McDowell, 2019). Hume's claims that self-value is created by cause and effect, and a result of our natural habit of attributing existence to any collection of associations (Zalta, 2018). Our individual control of value is placed not solely by past associations but can derive from an abstract nature which influences our present subjective value. If this was not the case the idea of abstraction would not exist at all.
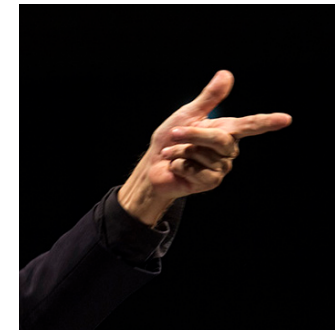
Franco **Berardi**

Mark **Fisher**

Friedrich **Nietzsche**

INTRO

Human beings for the last several thousand years have tried to imagine a world that is different from the one they live in. Our history is filled with countless versions of alternative ways of living and social paths (Green, 2016). In more recent times, our future has started to feel more mapped out for us given society's more data driven nature. We face a silent but overpowering pressure to think of ourselves in the future. For example, it could be a pressure to achieve our career aspirations, material goals or even something as trivial as what shoes to buy. This is bringing about conformity, structure and systematic approaches to living our lives.

Consciousness-deflation occurs due to the banal omnipresence of corporate communication that infiltrates practically all areas of consciousness and everyday life (Fisher, 2022). It builds-up individual and collective uncertainty, anxiety and confusion about the self. We are consequently occupied with trying to achieve our future aims and goals that the present self doesn't appreciate the current moment in time.

This report aims to see ourselves beyond the mirror. It is not only to reflect on our forefront reality (e.g. vanity or appearance) but also to reflect on the background forces that shape us (e.g. confusion, imagination or play). It looks at different self-creative mechanisms that help care for and deal with emotional states, facilitating self-confidence. This report starts reflecting upon a public experiment and uses it as a window into different designed methods that can facilitate positive self-actualisation experiences. It then goes onto analyse the different approaches to self-actualisation design. Self-actualisation design is design that evokes emotions which result in increased self-actualization experiences helping us come to terms with our own reality. It is similar to emotional design, which evokes emotions which result in positive user experiences (Norman, 2007). Self-actualisation design is done by looking at tools, methods and processes that can facilitate positive and impactful transitional experiences through our own recognition, acceptance and expression.
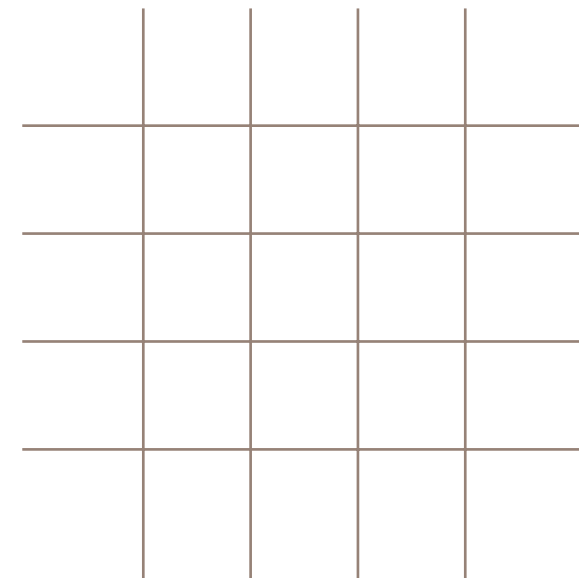
The Name Painting

Section one is a reflection upon the main areas that stood out during the public experiment. This includes: **Art Therapy, Experience Gift, Breaking the Loop, Being Fixed to a Space, Social Interactions on Well-being and Listening.**
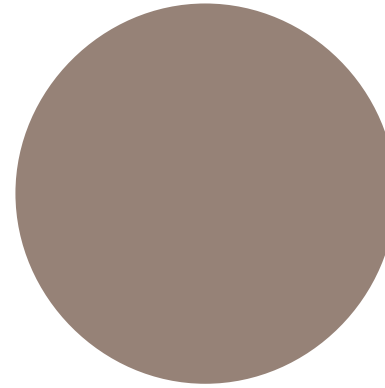
I experienced how a designed process can facilitate self-actualization by undertaking a public experiment. The initial aim was to emotionally map out three different locations in London where I am situated the most:

Deptford (South East London)
Willesden (North West London)
Kensington (Central London)

The intention was then to compare them to each other as well as to myself through the medium of visual art. The experiment consisted of three blank canvases, three colours, an easel and myself. I set up a canvas in these locations for an hour in an area with heavy footfall and I asked each person that walked by to pick a colour and sign their name on the canvas.

It turned out that most of the people that walked past were happy to participate willingly. I believe having the canvas displayed grabbed their attention in a non-confrontational way which made it easier to get them involved. This is in stark contrast to when I asked questions to an internet forum which was seen by 1184 people but was only answered by 25 people. This demonstrates the impact different mediums can have on the number of interactions.

Art Therapy

This process started off as an emotional mapping experiment but evolved to be a process related more to Art Therapy. Therapy is a treatment that helps us cope and deal with stress and trauma. Art Therapy is a treatment that uses art as a mode of expression and communication, and is used as a medium to address emotional issues which may be confusing, distressing and stressful (BAAT, 2022). Therapy as an institutional practice in recent years has been more accepted and holds less of a social stigma than it has done previously (e.g. sense of failure, loss of control, perception of weakness) (Pajer, 2019). The stress we experience can broadly be due to internal stress (e.g stress that comes from within linked to personality-based anxieties, conscious and unconscious) or external stress which comes from the environment around us (e.g noise, overcrowding and pollution to relationship/financial problems, major life changes, pressure from work/family or daily hassles).

This experiment contained a form of Therapy within it because the participant would express their feelings in more depth during conversation after they selected a colour to express their mood. I also think this is partly due to my neutral reactions of their colour selection making them feel more comfortable to speak. The colour and canvas acted as a design that broke down the normal barriers of interaction (e.g. awkwardness or confrontation) not only for myself but also for the people walking past. It helped initiate in-depth conversations about what was on people's mind. This happened repeatedly which I did not expect. It then became clear that the participants felt a need to explain the reasons for their selection once they had chosen a colour dependent on their mood.
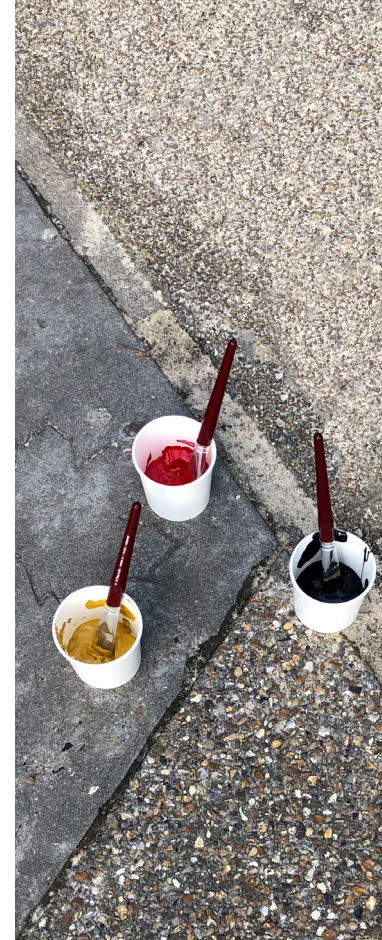
However, the participants had the autonomy to freely choose whether they wanted to express themselves. There were also some tactics used by people to create barriers to express their feelings further in this experiment. For example, a girl kept her headphones on while participating. This clearly signalled to me that she's not there to talk about feelings but to solely engage with the activity. We will never know whether she was just finishing up an interesting podcast or just simply too lazy to remove them. However, the important point was that a medium (i.e. the paints and canvas) made her feel confident enough to stop her run and contribute. This was my aim as I wanted to get as many people to participate as possible.

One reason the participants were willing to share their feelings, stories or ideas was because this process acted as a gift, and you generally feel the need to reciprocate when you receive a gift. The act of giving and receiving a gift also creates a bond between people. This is because the gift usually represents one's nature and substance and helps the receiver get to know the giver better. Marcel Mauss, a French sociologist, states that gifts should be clear of the receivers own experience (Tumin, Mauss, Cunnison and Evans-Pritchard, 1956, pp8). This is similar to this experiment as it acted as a gift of doing something different for the participant. Mauss also identified that the obligation attached to the exchange of goods carried a spiritual power. The gift given is capable of having a symbolic value greater than its material worth. Therefore, this experiment had the capacity to hold symbolic value through its meaning.

However, the notion of reciprocation is made redundant by the anonymity within the exchange in the theory of the gift in the book 'gift to strangers' by Richard Titmuss (Bowden, 2010). This may be one of the reasons for some people not wanting to stay and exchange their thoughts and feelings. The other reason could be that people didn't want to break the cycle of their daily routines too much. Nonetheless, those people still participated, and that alone is a form of reciprocation. Therefore, this spontaneous interaction which gave the participant a new experience to their usual daily routine that was free acted as an experience gift.

The Gift of Doing Something DIFFERENT

People get comfortable within their routines and find it difficult to "sharpen the saw" (Covey, 1999) and try new things on their own accord. Bill Murray's 1993 classic movie "Groundhog Day" shows this difficulty. Murray's character is trapped in a time loop where he lives the same day over and over again until he 'gets it right'. I have become increasingly aware that most of us are similarly trapped in a routine. It may not be in an exact same day loop, but each week seems to unconsciously morph into each other, as does each month and year and so on.

Breaking the Loop

It is easy to lose sight of the different opportunities available to us among the pressures of our daily routines. It is easy to let years go by without self-renewal and self-examination. You can look at seemingly challenging problems in new ways by breaking the loop and stepping outside your comfort zone to allow different perspectives to form (Eastern, 2016). It is the stepping out of the 'loop' that opens us up to self-realisations. This is critical in how we transition into the future as it expands both our capacity for action and our circle of influence and control. This enables us to grow and change with confidence. For example, an experiment that focused on our frequent reliance on technological navigational systems (e.g. Google Maps and City Mapper) shows that routes navigated solely through awareness are more memorable. It also shows the process of way finding is more enjoyable due to the enabling of sensory experiences and social interactions (McCullough and Collins, 2018). Therefore, by not using these navigational systems all the time you'll discover more, enjoy more as well as be more confident when you might not be able to use them e.g. from having no battery or signal.

The hardest

part

of trying

something different
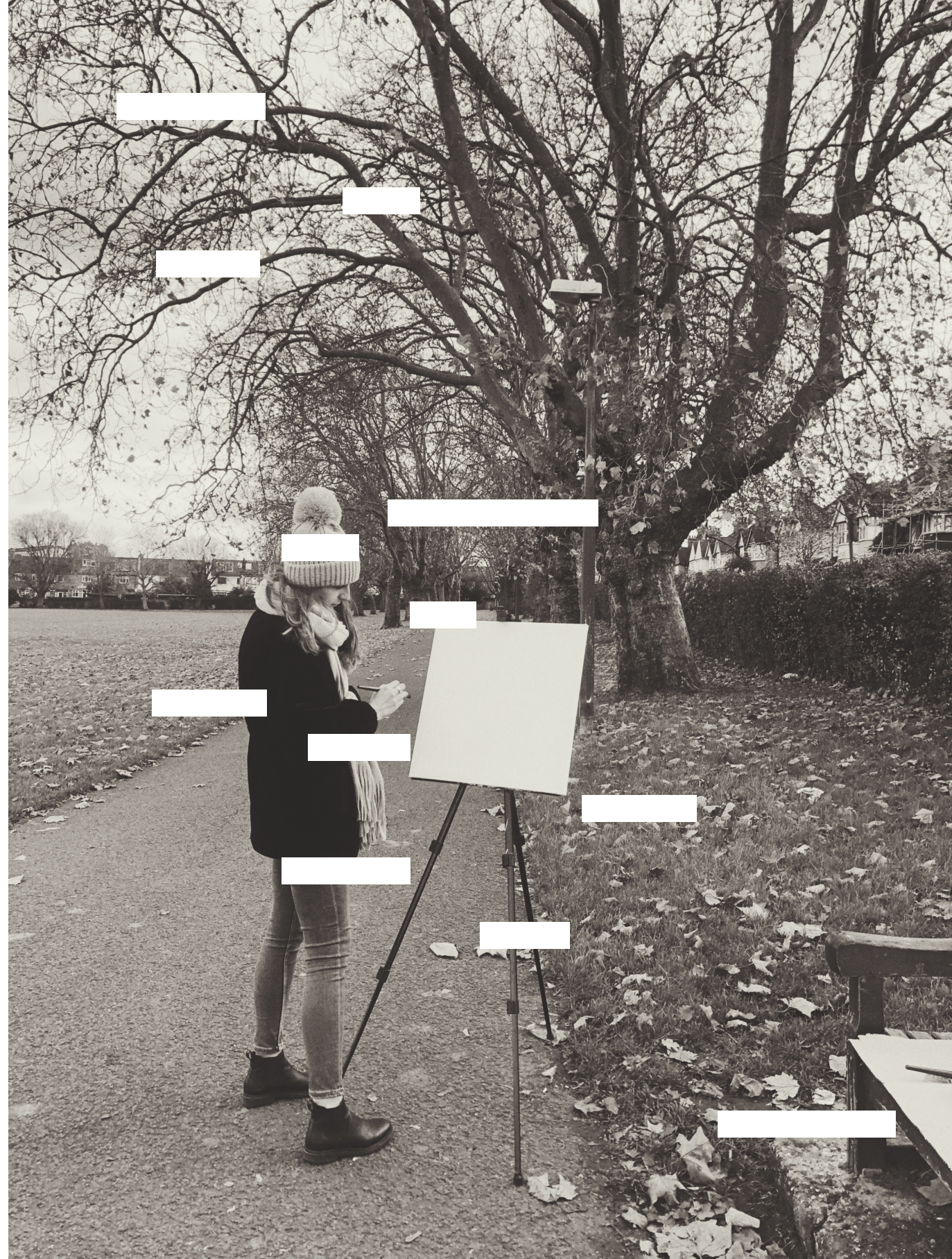
is the

very

first action

you take

towards it,

a thought,

a word,

a brush stroke...

It is our perception of our belief in our own self-capacity that hinder us from exploring uncharted territories. There is nothing about our behaviour that is permanent except our belief that it is so (Feldenkrais and Kimmey, 2003). Our confidence comes through repetition (Walter, 2021) so we live within our own repetitions.

I know that not everyone likes to paint or is confident at it. Therefore, I knew that picking a colour as an exercise broke the first step in trying to paint. I also designed the exercise so that people only had to write their names instead of say a random brush stroke, because everyone is confident at writing their name through its repetition. I was able to engage the participants by using their name as tool while incorporating something external (i.e. painting) to their daily lives.

In addition, there was a personal connection to the design. This enabled the user to reflect on themselves because they are connected to the experiment physically through their name on the canvass and subjectively through their emotional state. Therefore, a medium that creates a unique connection to the user allows for effective self-actualisations to occur.

Lastly, there was also an element of herd mentality in participants getting involved in the experiment. Herd mentality is a alignment of the thoughts and behaviours of individuals in a group. It describes how people can be influenced by their peers to adopt certain behaviours on a largely emotional, rather than rational, basis (Raafat, Chater and Frith, 2009). The visual cue of seeing other people's name on the canvas encouraged people to get involved because everyone else did.

Therefore, the low difficulty, personal connection and herd mentality were the main contributing factors that enabled such a high number of participants.

A factor that increased people's confidence in their ability to express themselves was by fixing the experiment to a space rather than approaching people. It is less confrontational and it gave people the time and autonomy to decide whether to walk past or stay. The potential participants were able to build up that initial thought process of deciding whether to try something new. Otherwise, they would have naturally created a defensive barrier if the experiment was randomly sprung upon them.

If I had sprung the experiment on an unsuspecting participant then it would no longer be them volunteering to participate which I believe would result in an entirely different outcome. In addition, this was a public experiment so it is important to be respectful of people's personal space. However, the process of self-actualisation design can happen in the personal space as well as the public.

Therefore, I believe the most effective methods of self-actualisation occur when the participant voluntary approaches a situation. We learn about ourselves when we learn new processes and so by limiting this we limit our scope for learning.

Fixed to a Space

Social Interactions on Well-being

All the interactions (i.e. minimal, prolonged or silent) during the experiment had a positive effect on my mood. I believe this was a mutual feeling between both the participants and myself. The process of engaging and expressing yourself to a stranger also allows yourself to free yourself of the worry of any ongoing judgement because you are unlikely to meet them again. This made me think of anonymity and how removing one's forefront identity could be used to express oneself without the pressures of vanity.

This became apparent during the experiment when a man started to talk to me about suicide. Unfortunately, this was something that he had to deal with as it had happened twice in his family. I could tell he was deeply grateful that I was there to listen. What I enjoyed most about the conversation was how open, honest and free it was. I wonder if I were to meet him again whether the same openness and honesty would occur outside of the experiment now that we know each other. We are all brought up being told that talking to strangers is dangerous and for good reason. However, in the right situation an adult talking with a stranger can add to their well-being and often result in a positive experience as I have shown in my experiment.

(Community Transport Association, 2019)

A study that looks at the effects of minimal social interactions with strangers between commuters and shuttle drivers shows that these types of interactions contribute to our well-being in everyday life. Specifically, the study of three hundred and forty-seven participants shows that commuters who engage in these minimal positive social interactions (e.g. by saying "thank you", "have a nice day" etc...) experience greater subjective well-being compared to those who do not. The overall results of the study showed that simply taking a moment to greet, express good wishes or say thank you to strangers is linked with greater happiness in everyday life (Gunaydin, Oztekin, Karabulut, and Salman-Engin, 2020). A similar study which looks at social interactions with a barista at a coffee shop shows an increased positive effect through feelings and belonging (Sandstrom and Dunn, 2013). Therefore, we can achieve the benefits of social connection and a sense of belonging by initiating small interactions with strangers.

Listen

"The special human ability is to communicate with other forms of life, learn from them all, and act as a focal point for things they wish to express. In any sacred location, therefore, humans become the instrument by which all of creation is able to interact and express its totality of satisfaction" (Carbaugh, 1999, pp251).

Listening is foundational to finding answers and seeking truth (Bunkers, 2015). True communication is more than physically conveying a message but also about getting your message heard and understood. A person listens in order to acknowledge another person's reality as well as recognise their own. The process of listening can facilitate self-actualisation in both the listener and the speaker. It is associated with awareness, focus, acceptance, presence, learning and feeling. However, listening skilfully is difficult. To listen impeccably, with fixed, full attention is a discipline much like meditation. It requires practice, rigor, and resolve (Bunkers, 2009).

I reached out to someone who has had a lot of practice of listening. Sean Houlihan, a well-being professional, who has taken on the challenge to not talk for a whole year. This is part of his 4-year challenge to develop a structured approach towards health and well-being that he has called the Four Years of Intentions. Houlihan says there are four fundamental components that develop health: listening, playing, loving and empowering (Houlihan, 2021). He has not spoken for over one hundred days so far as he started his journey on 8th October 2021. His initial experience was that he started understanding his thoughts clearer and he was able to take thoughts that aren't helpful to him and re-purpose them. He mentions that not speaking has created more thinking space. Houlihan's physical space also helped this. He is situated in the mountains of Piemonte, Italy, where there aren't many distractions or noises. This helped him have clearer thoughts enabling him to notice whether a particular thought pattern is healthy or not. One of the associations that he realised is that 'listening does not mean agreeing'. We are usually forced into having to agree or disagree or by engaging into a conversation. However, Houlihan's understanding is that listening can just be to allow which is outside of our ego. You do not have to take sides and pressure your mind into deciding.

This can be seen within self-actualisation as it can be a process of simply asking why something is the way it is, rather than liking or disliking it (Fabian, 2020). For example, Julia Annas argues that our well-being is founded on the question why? "Why is this important? Why am I doing this?". It is because this type of thinking leads to associations. It prioritises different ambitions whether they are abstract or linear and brings them into a kind of unity of feeling and thoughts. This process naturally leads to the defining an identity with the intent to affirm this identity through choices that endorse values (Annas, 2004).

Saun Houlihan (HertsLive, 2021)

Self-actualisation Methods

Section two is an analysis of seven different methods to approach self-actualisation design. These include: **Inner Language, Play, Creativity, Confusion, Self-experiments, Objects and Anonymity.**

Inner Language

The creation of an inner language is not about verbal communication but rather our communication between our outer and inner self. It involves designing a mechanism that helps you express, care for and deal with an emotional state. For example, an artist's style is the language they have created with themselves that represents and facilitates how they feel.

Do you ever express your mood through an object or process? If so what and how?

The process of exploring the question above from twenty five responses to my survey taught me about how people's emotions impact design processes. This then enabled me to look further into whether there was a connection between them. For example, one response I received from a floral artist was that she notices how her mood impacts the life stage of the flower that she is drawing (e.g. closed, blooming, open or faded). I realised that we adapt methods to be in tune with ourselves and there is no generic method of dealing with emotions.

I DO SPORT, I LIKE TO CYCLE AND RUN

SONG WRITING

FOOD AND CLOTHING

YES THROUGH CLOTHING . MY OWN AND SET DESIGN

FOOD, COMFORTING AND HEARTY

SEWING

THROUGH MY PIANO/DRUMS AS OBJECTS. MAKING A SCHEDULE AS A PROCESS

MY MOOD INFLUENCES HOW CONFIDENT MY WRIST IS WHEN I DRAW - INTRINSICALLY EFFECTING MY DRAWING

YOGA AND ABSTRACT ART

I WRITE A DIARY

BUY FLOWERS

WRITING A TO DO LIST

I PUNCH THINGS WHEN IM ANGRY

I PLAY GUITAR

MUSIC CREATION

I SKI AND SURF TO CLEAR MY MIND

MEDITATION

EXERCISE

TAKING A BATH

MAKE ART THAT EXPRESSES HOW I FEEL

PAINTING - USUALLY WATERCOLOUR

An internal language is created when we start a process that addresses our own emotions. We use it as a tool to help us cope and grow within our reality. Wim Hof, the 'Ice Man', who is known for his ability to withstand extreme cold for long periods of time mentions that it was only through his overpowering emotion of sadness over the loss of his first wife that led him to develop techniques to face low temperature environments. The story goes that Hof was sat next to a frozen lake feeling so desperate and sad about the passing of his wife that he felt an extreme urge to submerge himself into the freezing lake. Once submerged he stated the pain went away for the first time since his wife's passing and his cold water journey started.

Hof going into the water allowed himself to search within by putting aside the overpowering emotion of sadness and sorrow. This gave him a different perspective on reality. It brought him to a place where he knew he was able to heal. Therefore, it can be said an effective way to gain clarity is by putting emotions aside to better enable you to guide yourself into dealing with them. However, this is different to ignoring them as they are still being addressed. This was one of the connecting factors that arose from the twenty five responses.

"Do you know what healed me? The cold water. It brought me back into reality. Instead of being guided by my broken emotions toward stress and sorrow, the cold water led me to stillness. Stillness of the mind. That gave my broken heart a chance to rest, restore, rehabilitate" (Hof, 2020).
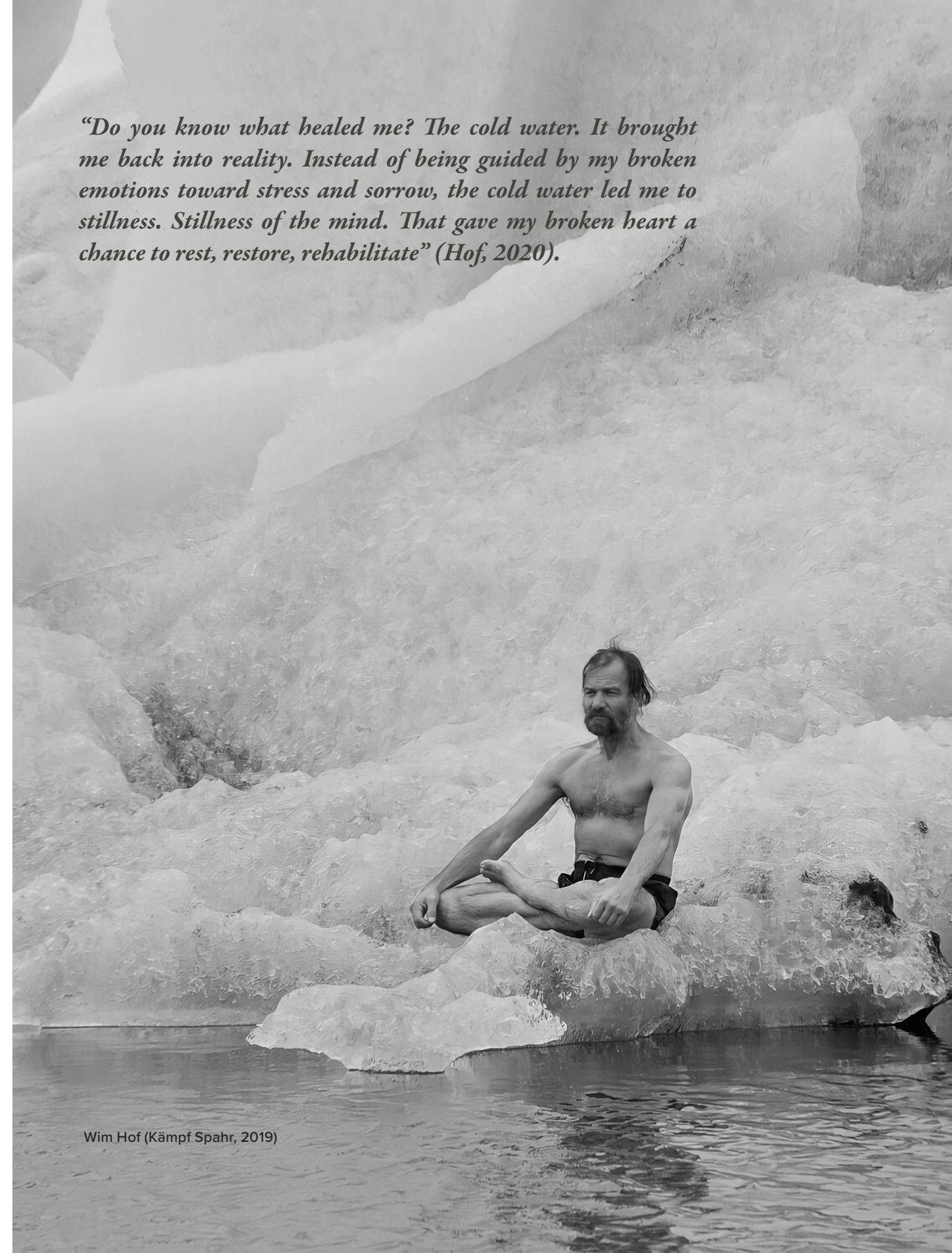
Wim Hof (Kämpf Spahr, 2019)

The participants said they used their design process or objects (e.g. skiing, sewing or crochet) as a tool to distance themselves from their thoughts in order to get clarity. Their mind then becomes focused on the activity rather than their life stresses and they enter a flow state. However, in order to enter this state, one must be in the right environment and eliminate all external distractions. The biggest source of distractions at the moment is your smart phone. Therefore, it is recommended that your phone is turned off or alerts are disabled to minimise distractions. It takes on average twenty five minutes after being distracted to gain that flow state back as your attention is still focused on the distraction, known as 'attention residue' (Roomer, 2019).

Flow experiences play a role in our well-being as they provide an opportunity for growth and achievement in the long-term (Lynch and Troy, 2021). Designed therapy as a tool can be used to elicit the process of self-actualisation through distancing oneself from their emotions. This is done through the action of releasing emotion through design processes such as drawing, painting or writing. These processes shape feelings, thoughts and memories. Art therapy and these processes that people use to express themselves are connected in the sense that they both provide the possibility to distance oneself from their emotions and provide cognitive integration of emotion and stimulate meaning-making processes (Schouten et al., 2014).

Play

To play is to engage in activity for enjoyment and recreation. Anything new comes from the unconscious and in order to get in touch with the unconscious, one must be in a playful mood (Walter, 2021). The act of playing is of a particular and independent nature that lies outside the ordinary categories of action (Huizinga, 2009, pp37). Consequently, play is unpredictable, and a playful mood lets new ideas form separate from responsibility and pre-existing normalcies.

The process of play allows ideas to be released and it doesn't consider the good or bad. Playful learning enables more interactive engagement with the world. It allows humans to acquire conceptual capacities which give them the opportunity to share, engage with and build on each other constructive judgements. In relation to Anna's theory, rather than attributing something to be bad or wrong we can ask the question "why is it that way?". This creates a shared, accepted and normative structure based on thoughts, ideas and judgements. Our engagement with the world by being playful is a natural step that facilitates our understanding with our collective history and our capability to participate in it. This builds our sense of self and prepares us for our uniquely human way of life (Joseph An, 2018).
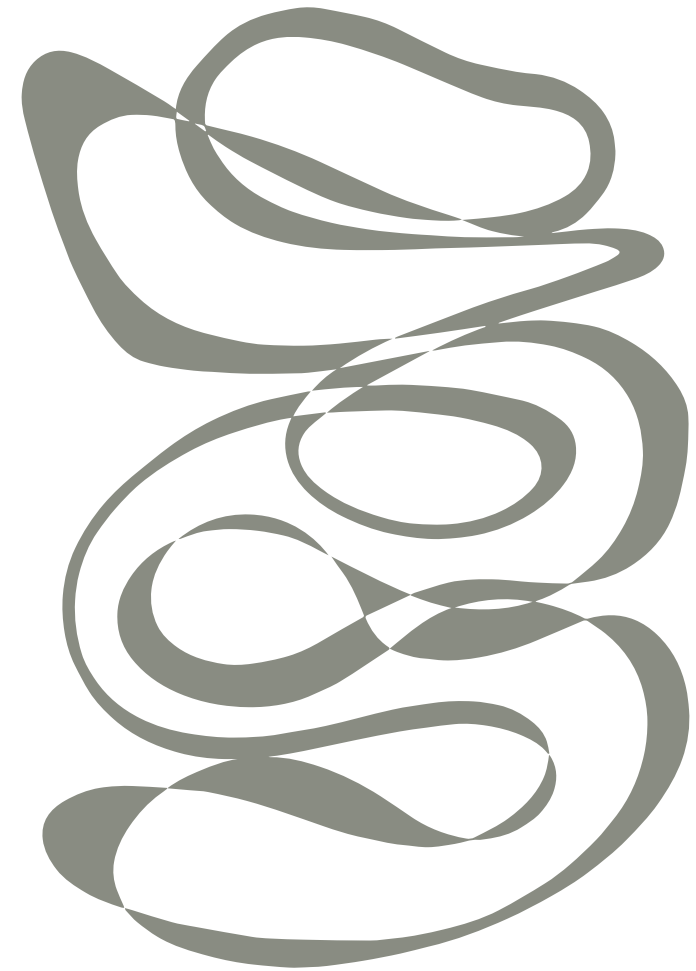
"Animals play, so they must be more than merely mechanical things. We play and know that we play, so we must be more than merely rational beings, for play is irrational" (Huizinga, 2009, pp37).

The idea of the importance of play has been around for a while. The book Homo Ludens published in 1938 by Dutch historian and cultural theorist Johan Huizinga discusses the importance play has within culture and society. Huizinga states that play existed before culture as animals did not wait for humans in order to play. Play is a natural manifestation and in humans it goes beyond the confines of purely physical or biological activities.

The pairing of play with irrationality could be the cause of the rejection of play across areas of society such as within school classrooms. Huizinga suggests that play is a necessary condition of how culture is formed. It is a significant function which transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action (Huizinga, 2009, pp4).

(The Lack of)
Creativity in Schools
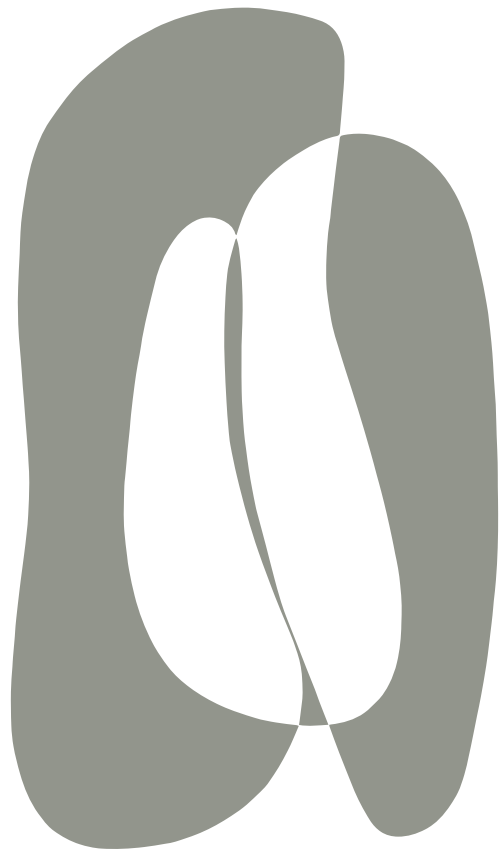
Play and creativity come hand in hand. The majority of people leave high school assuming that creativity is a rare gift that only a few possess. For example, I remember being at school and thinking that creativity only means that you can paint well. The schooling system is partly to blame as it doesn't reward creativity well, and it even often rejects it. The Teachers don't encourage playfulness because they are taught to teach inside the boundaries of a curriculum.

An example made by John Cleese, actor and producer, on how school rejected his creativity was when he received poor marks when asked to write an essay about time at school, and he proceeded to write the essay about not having time to write the essay. His courage to experiment with creativity in the essay was immediately rejected. John then went onto study Science at Cambridge University because he didn't think he was creative. However, it was only until he joined a writer's club that he recognised his creative potential. These barriers to developing creativity effect the students confidence and hinder them from expressing themselves. I hope that one day that the majority of people who leave school realise they have the potential to be creative. They just need to find the right environment and avenue to explore it.

Confusion

Einstein once said that he could never find in words what it was that he was thinking (Walter, 2021). In contrast, most of us never think twice about what we say. We often take speech as the end all on what we are thinking. This is not the case. For example, some people can't find the words to articulate themselves when pressed on what they are thinking about. I often find myself reliving past conversations and realising that there was a much more effective way to represent what I was thinking through an object, action or gesture.

Martin Pistorius comes to mind when it comes to small gestures and their impact. He was a boy who was trapped inside his own body for twelve years from the age of twelve. He was unable to communicate or move at all. He was thought to be severely brain damaged and unaware of his surroundings. However, he was in fact fully aware the entire time. Pistorius, now aged forty seven, recalls often giving up and sinking into a dark abyss. However, there was one particularly low moment when his Dad left him in the car alone. A random stranger walked past, looked at him and smiled. This simple act, a fleeting moment of human connection completely transformed how he was feeling and made him want to keep going (TEDx Talks, 2015). I am not saying a stranger's smile will have the same effect on everyone, but they have the potential to have profound effects on others. Those gestures also enable us to express ourselves.

One reason that people find it hard to represent how they are feeling is because they don't understand why their emotional state is not a reflection on their experiences in life. Some people feel unhappy and disconnected even when society conveys them as having an 'ideal life' involving a high salary, lots of friends and healthy lifestyle. One reason for this is that we spend a lot of time in trying to achieve other people's idea of happiness. We are constantly in front of screens which are trying to sell us what happiness is e.g. targeted ads or social media influencers. This leads to a state of confusion and inability to understand our sense of self because those things do not bring us happiness. This is because each humans sense of self is fundamentally unique from another. You can use examples of other people's happiness for your own, but the chances are it probably won't match.

However, through this uncertainty we can gain the motivation to change and try new things. We live in a culture where people always want instant clarity so confusion in certain situations can be a good thing for creativity. Creative people may be more comfortable with uncertainty and confusion because of this. It fuels the drive that keeps them searching for what is next and what is needed. Designer Kenya Hara states that to understand something is not to be able to define it or describe it but to take something that we think we already know and make it unknown which trills us afresh with its reality and deepens our understanding of it (Hara, 2017). A major factor that defines a creative person is the confidence in expressing their imagination by looking at the world in a different way. They are accepting of something that doesn't already exist and using the uncertainty as a state of exploration for the future.

"it is commonly believed that one must wait for the muse or some other inspiration to bring about such happy moments. but mature, creative people have learned to know themselves sufficiently well so that they can bring themselves to the reversible state of acture. thus, they can advertise months in advance the hour when the muse is going to function." Moshe Feldenkrais (Feldenkrais and Kimmey, 2003, pp199-200)

nap

Thomas Edison taking a nap

The American inventor Thomas Edison got his best ideas somewhere between feeling very relaxed and dosing off (Walter, 2021). Edison designed his own biofeedback mechanism to tap into the Hypnagogic state which is the transitional state of consciousness between wakefulness and sleep. He was fishing out the ideas that stemmed from his imagination. Edison would sit in his favourite armchair when he got sleepy, holding a ball bearing in his left hand. This arrangement made it difficult to fall asleep which prolonged his hypnagogic state. When Edison eventually moved into deep sleep the ball bearing would drop into a metal bucket below making a loud noise that woke him up. He would then have a pad and pencil ready to note down any ideas that appeared in his head before being awakened (Ringmar, 2016).

(Edison Innovation Foundation., 2014)

Test the Interest
Self-Experiments

The purpose of performing an experiment in a scientific manner is either to see if desired idea works in a controlled environment or to better understand how things work and to get one step closer to the objective truth. You can apply this to your personal life by self-experimenting which will enable you to gain new knowledge, innovate and better understand about what you find fulfilling.

The actions that nourish self-actualisation needs have been found in the pursuit of hobbies, rather than the pursuit of wealth, fame and other goals that are contingent to activities themselves (Fabian, 2020). Self-experiments involve small decisions that involve refining habits. For example, they can be going to bed earlier, making a new recipe or taking a different route to work. These small experiments can act as gateway into other interests and hobbies. The self-experiments that we perceive as more impactful such as exploring how improve our physical health, financial stability or relationship can be a struggle when it comes to motivation. However, this lack of motivation may really be disguised a lack of clarity.

In general, people put too much pressure on getting self-experiments right the first time which can result in them reflecting badly on the experience. James Clear states in his book 'Atomic Habits' that bad habits repeat themselves again and again not because you don't want to change, but because you have the wrong system in place for change. The key is not to set a goal to win the game, but rather to keep playing the game. In other words, the true long-term thinking is goal-less thinking. You need to remove single accomplishments and enter a cycle of endless refinement for improvements to continue. The small changes count for a lot in the long run. One method Clear presents in approaching a new habit is by using the "two-minute rule" (Clear, 2018). The basic premise of the rule is that starting a new habit should never take more than two minutes to do. This not only allows for the first step to be tackled, but it means the habit will be less of a struggle at the start and therefore you are more likely to associate a positive experience with the habit when trying it again. This plays into the fact that you should be more concerned with your trajectory than with your current results.

Objects
Tangible Expressions

Objects hold meaning and that meaning can serve as a bridge to the gap between your emotional state and your experiences in life. Where you cannot find the words to describe how you're feeling you may find a physical object that is able to represent it. People become attached to objects because objects help people to define, reflect and communicate to the self. Objects not only help to know the self but also help to grow the self. Donald Winnicott identified transitional objects as items which were discovered by an infant for comfort, and support the transition away from their primary caregiver (Wakenshaw, 2020). These transitional objects can also be applied to adulthood as objects can represent a moment in one's life. They then can serve as great tangible companions which are comforting and relieve anxiety due to having positive experiences associated with it.

An example of a naturally designed method involves a story about a headmaster at a high school during the 70's called Ben Rushton. Mr. Rushton used a smoking pipe to signal to students as to whether he was in a good mood or a bad mood. If he placed the pipe at a normal 45-degree angle it would signal to the students that Mr. Rushton was approachable and in a good mood. However, anything over 45 degrees and you'd knew not to approach him. This method was formed through a language Mr. Rushton had created with himself through the pipe. This was then understood by the students, and it became a form of communication with the outside world.
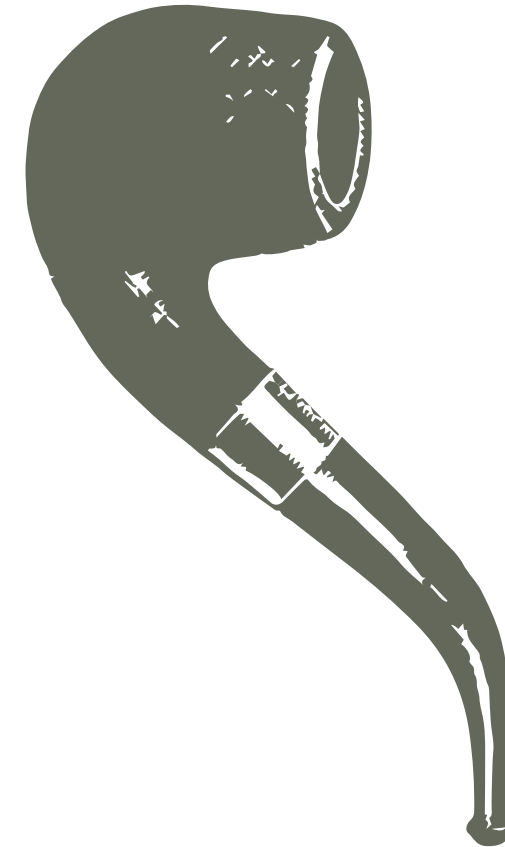
(Champion, 2011)

Ben Rushton

An example of a designed method that aids expression used in therapy is a toolkit designed by Nicolette Bodewes. Bodewes's toolkit includes a set of objects that help people express themselves. They represent different situations, people, thoughts, feelings and emotions. Each object is made from a different material and has different qualities attached to it such as it being round, hard, squishy, flat, smooth, rough etc. Bodewes uses the objects as metaphors for your feelings to help articulate your emotional states (Morby, 2016).

(Dezeen, 2016)

A similar example is made by Ariadna Sala Nadal, a Spanish design student, who focused on making feelings tangible through objects that engage multiple senses including sight, touch and balance. Nadal developed a series of mental health tools called 'Balisa' to help make emotions more tangible and thus easier to communicate. Balisa makes abstract concepts easier to understand and helps improve the communication between the patient and the psychologist. The pieces are designed to act as an open-ended exploration enabling patients to add, subtract and combine different pieces over time. This is because Nadal's does not see dealing with trauma as a linear process. Nadal said "For this reason, Balisa does not have an end. The goal is not to heal completely since everyone will always have problems and situations that affect them. The goal is for the person to learn how to manage these problems when they arise " (Hahn, 2021).

The pieces themselves have an abstract nature about them because they are open ended. This is important because it allows the pieces to adapt for different people each with their own needs. A one rigidly defined process would be unlikely to treat everyone's complex needs. Furthermore, the process of combining, adding and subtracting the pieces act as a form of creating art. This is similar to the process of creating a sculpture which involves entering the flow state through the use of play.

(Dezeen, 2021)

The Power of Anonymity

Anonymity as a tool can be a scary prospect as it is often affiliated with offensive or disruptive communication, such as internet trolls using anonymity to harm online discussions. However, I believe anonymity can be used in a good way. A way that helps people release their inner emotions. Anonymity has the potential to remove the pressures of stigma, vanity and judgements. This realisation came while reflecting upon my engagements with strangers on the internet. I discovered Ventscape.life (Ventscape.life, 2021) due to this interest which is a minimalistic online platform that allows people to vent online anonymously. There are no profiles, and all messages are in real time. VentScape is similar to Twitter, but people's messages disappear after a few seconds. When it comes to venting the last thing you want to do is to have a permanent record of your messages because it might not represent you at a different point in time.

I found it intriguing that most people were respectful and displayed strong etiquette despite it being an anonymous forum. I envisioned a physical space where this form of communication could be adopted after witnessing the positive impact this platform was having on the self. This led me to find "Confession to an In³* writer" at the Design Biennale curated by the Latvian Literature Platform. The way it works is by speaking a question, secret or confession into a microphone on the outside of a large box and lo and behold, a piece of paper will be handed to you through a small exterior drawer. The answer is crafted by a writer inside the box (Latvia | Confession to an in³* writer, 2022). This touches on the aspect of anonymity, expression, listening and the gift. However, this process only allows one statement to be made by the speaker. An improvement could be a design element that increases the level of interaction that occurs while keeping the speaker anonymous.

(London Design Biennale, 2022)

CO CON C LU SIO N N

To conclude, through 'The Name Painting' experiment I became aware of how different methods can be used to facilitate self-actualisation design. The people confidently participated and they did so willingly due to the experiment being fixed to a space, having a low difficulty, a personal connection between them and the painting and herd mentality. The design also allowed for people to step out of their daily routines and "break the loop". The benefit to breaking this loop is that it allows for self-reflection and self-examination to occur. The participates were consistently expressing themselves on a much deeper level after the initial process of selecting a colour and writing their names. One of the reasons for this was they were free from any ongoing judgements. I experienced how solely listening without agreeing or disagreeing can have a positive impact on someone. The experiment held an aspect of Art Therapy and acted as an experience gift to the public.

The findings from the 'The Name Painting' experiment led me into a deeper understanding of the seven different approaches I investigated to self-actualisation design. The experiment gave an insight into how a process can clear one's mind of stress. When someone has a mechanism that helps them to deal with an emotional state (e.g. painting, drawing or cooking) they have created a unique inner language within themselves. In addition, the aspect of play is a way in which someone can express themselves without the pressures of it being 'good or bad'. This allows for a better understanding of self and the world around us. Play and creativity go hand in hand. However, play is also related to irrationality and therefore signs of creativity at schools are rejected through the boundaries of our current curriculum. Confusion is often looked at as a bad thing, however, within this report it is the fuel that sparks motivation and is used as the ignition to discovery. In order to discover we must pursue interests which should be done through small refinements and constant improvement rather than big goals. Furthermore, this report shows how objects can bridge the gap between emotional states and experiences in life through visually contextualising your emotions. Lastly, I investigated existing methods that used anonymity as a tool for expression which show that anonymity can be used as a way to remove judgement and the pressures that come with vanity. The use of anonymity in this way, can enable positive self-actualising experiences. .

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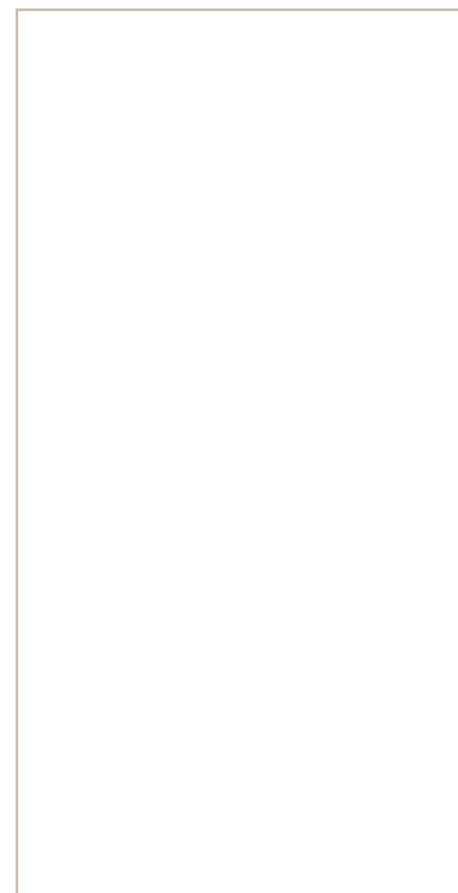
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