**Notes from workshop *Hand Carving Hand***

**Workshop No. 1**

Feedback from participant:

A participant had mentioned that she found direct references to, or requests to recollect/represent, her experience of Covid, quite triggering. As an ICU nurse, she had experienced Covid on the ‘front lines’, and mentioned the toll the experience had had on her mental health.

We spoke about how she would perhaps enjoy a task that did not necessarily require any direct portrayal of the covid experience but allowed her to work through any of those relevant feelings, in what felt like a safer way, using the symbol of the hand as a sort of starting point – encompassing hard work and ware, but also connection and intimacy.

Despite mentioning that a focus on covid triggered her, she did discuss her experience working on a covid ward, mentioning the death of a friend and her dissipating eagerness to work as a nurse or as a member of frontline staff. This made me realise two things;

The first being that the activity I had created had also facilitated a space for discussion and perhaps catharsis, allowing her to talk about her experience in a way personal to her, not necessarily prompted by a direct question regarding her experience of covid.

The second was regarding safeguarding, for both the participants, and myself/workshop coordinators. I left the workshop feeling very overwhelmed, I was very grateful for the experience and pleased that the participant had enjoyed it, but I also felt unequipped to process what she had told me. Even though the task I have designed does not directly reference covid, it would still be carried out by participants with possibly, significant trauma related to Covid-19. After speaking with Emma, I began to consider the possibility of using a facilitator, with the appropriate training, to carry out the workshops alongside me, or perhaps independently with an existing group.

My own reflections – things to remember for next time:

I don’t think the big wordy intro really worked, I realised I needed to think more about how to grab people’s attention. It’s not enough to just have a plan, I must consider **engagement.**

Despite only carrying out the workshop with one participant, instead of sets of two, I felt that I was successful in several ways, including the following;

* Inexperienced hands – carrying out a task that was new to the participant (had never drawn a hand, or not since childhood), will intrinsically create a unique ‘relic’.
* The activity was a successful starting point or ‘ice-breaker’
* Ability or skill was not important, the outcome is a **relic** of what is important – the action or process, because these 30 minutes involve so much more than just observational drawing.
* Allowed me to develop a clearer impression of my aims and the overarching theme of the workshop and project.

**Notes from workshop *Hand Carving Hand* No. 2**

**Participant 1**mentioned the banana test: if you ask someone to close their eyes, then put a banana on their arm they won’t be able to tell you what it is, or it will take a while. However, if you place a banana in their hand while their eyes are closed, they will be able to tell you it's a banana in a second, sometimes less.

**Participant 2** spoke about how many nerve endings there are in the human hand, how sensitive they are, she said "our hands are our eyes".

**Participant 2** also mentioned the infection control workers who would come round and spray NHS worker’s hands with a substance that made dirt or germs show up under UV, she said one member of staff said she "had builder’s hands" while spraying them, she said she didn't go back after that.

**Participant 1** asked me "do you know what nurses look for when they see your hand? Where they could put a Cannula!"

My own reflections – things to remember for next time:

* I realised I would need to soak the plaster if I had made the tablets more than a week ago because they had become quite difficult to carve into, compared to last week, or alternatively I could make them the day before - they were the perfect softness the first time I carried out the workshop.
* I also found that the time left spare for one participant, while the other is carving out the observational drawing they had done, could be spent rolling out the slab that would be used to make the tile.
* Intimate moment, period of examination
* Furthered my own examination of the workshop design, I focused more on timings and feasibility this time – making notes as I went instead of retrospectively.
* After about 10 minutes of chatting and drawing I asked the participant who was drawing to try to find something distinctive about the hand they were drawing, something that makes it unique. I would like to include this mini task in the workshop as I felt it added more depth to the carvings.

**Timings for *Hand Carving Hand* workshop No. 2** (in minutes)**:**

Introduction/explanation of task/concept by myself: 05: 00, 00

Set up (for six people): 05: 00, 00

Drawing and carving time:

Anna: 29: 13, 75

Jo: 22: 46, 41

Average:

Slab rolling and stamping time (for one tile): 07: 04, 25

Clean up (for two people): 08: 00, 00

Discussion/reflection at the end: 05 – 10

Total time: 60: 27, 00

If I were to carry out this workshop again, I would give myself an hour and thirty-five minutes, so there’s a bit of room for extra time or error – basically contingency