

NURTURE

Has the word “nurture” gained wider currency in the past five years or so?

I found many definitions which were straightforward and only a few which I felt conveyed the meanings as indicated by Craft ACT: Craft + Design Centre information given to exhibitors: “This year’s Craft ACT members exhibition, **Nurture**, will celebrate and explore the ways that nurturing ourselves is valuable and vital for contemporary craft practitioners, artists, designers and makers.”

They were also told that: “Nurture draws on the well-documented benefits of creativity and making to support mental wellbeing by engaging in goal-oriented, repetitive sensory processes which can calm the mind. Such activities have been scientifically proven to reduce stress and anxiety and improve wellbeing. (Craftfulness, Tahsin & Davidson, 2018, Quercus).

In their artist’s statements several of the exhibitors concurred with these ideas.

A few people mentioned the importance of connectedness. Lockdown during the COVID pandemic hurt us all. I was impressed with the way Craft ACT tackled the issues of members being isolated and unable to sell their work – an important aspect of their income and an expression of how Craft ACT nurtured its members. I am sure there were members, however, who felt the isolation more acutely than others, particularly those who teach classes or who collaborate with others.

Several members referred to repetition and rhythm, and being in nature, often walking or undertaking some other repetitive activity as a form of self-nurturing. Repetition “... replenishes my energy and calms my soul ...”, one wrote.

Other sentiments included “tactile care”, “active and embodied meditation”. Several members referred to the process of making and the immersive activity of hand working as being nurturing.

One member summed this up “... the making process is one of nurturing – at every stage the maker physically holds the work ...”. Or put another way, there is “... direct interaction with the subject and materials.”

We have all had a different response to COVID and the lockdown. I hope not many people will have felt a “ ... sense of mistrust and separation internally towards ourselves ...” as one exhibitor stated.

Exhibitors are all professional members of Craft ACT, meaning they have been acknowledged by their peers as having achieved a high standard in their work – the design, its execution and overall quality. I am a big supporter of setting such standards and congratulate Craft ACT for maintaining this category of membership. As a result, we have an exhibition of outstanding quality.

Several exhibitors expressed an intellectual approach to their work in their artists' statements. They are thoughtful and express their concern for the future of our planet, as many other artists have done – and will continue to do.

When it comes down to it, we are human and as one member stated: “through the act of nurturing others, we inevitably care for ourselves, our plant and future generations.” Surely this is the main point of an exhibition such as this.

We are all nurtured, one way and another, by the work in this exhibition.

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