

Craft Engagement for Environmental Sustainability

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CRAFT ENGAGEMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

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A CRITICAL AND PROCESS DOCUMENTATION PAPER SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF DESIGN

Emily Carr University of Art + Design

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Abstract

This research incorporates cultural and traditional Persian practices in order to develop social engagement with environmental sustainability. Persian crafts and rituals are utilized as the means of engagement in developing tangible practices that nudge consciousness and lead to greater understanding of nature and ecology.

Cultural rituals in Persian culture such as Nowrooz and Yalda inspired me to design a service that supports and amplifies their connection to nature. In the development of this service two facets of sustainability are explored: materiality and nature. Craft opens up fascinating possibilities that address sustainability. Locality is the remarkable aspect of Craft. Materials, methods of making and the meaning in a craft artwork talk about the specific characteristic of the place that it comes from. It helps us to identify the characteristics of our natural environment and understand how to benefit from its capacities. In this service design, people participate in traditional craft activities and learn how the materials and processes of these craft artifacts are in tune with ecological systems. They then use the crafts that they have created as artifacts for display in their own cultural rituals like Nowrooz and Yalda.

This service promotes consciousness about sustainability in participants during their involvement with the practice. Key to the design is my belief that a viable service is inviting and provides an atmosphere for people to play an active role in addressing current ecological issues. This empowers citizens and helps to develop and nurture the culture of environmental sustainability in Persian society.

By unlocking the roots and histories of traditional crafts in any given culture, and then tapping into the creative possibilities of how they can be re-combined and re-framed, a path to social innovation can be etched by applying the results to contemporary issues of environmental sustainability.

Keyword

Craft
Ritual
Environmental Sustainability
User Engagement
Social Innovation

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Acknowledgement

Primarily, I would like to thank my supervisor *Christopher Hethrington*. No part of this thesis would have been possible without his invaluable guidance, direction, encouragement and constant support, but also constructive criticism during my research. I am enormously grateful to him for making all those valuable discussions that we had and for his patience in listening and discovering my hidden thoughts. I would specially like to express my deep gratitude to *Louise St.Pierre* for supporting me in all my academic pursuits during my time at ECUAD and specifically for sharing her rich knowledge with me during my research process, which create a significant improvement in my project. I would also like to thank the Emily Carr community and specifically to *Hélène Day Fraser* for her efforts in providing a space with no boundaries to think; with respect for each of us to develop what comes from our hearts. I also want to thank my editor and friend *Scott Mallory*, who spent his time to hear my thought and helped me to pass the barriers. I was impressed by your professional skills of communication and also an editor. Thanks to my dear friends , MDes 2018, for all the amazing moments of joy and support. My experience would be different without you. Thanks to my dear smart brother, *Khashayar*, who always brings up deep conversations that open new perspectives for me and lead me to achieve a better understanding of those concepts; the same happened in this project. Last but not least, thanks to *Hesam*, my best friend and partner in life, for always supporting me, hearing me and giving me courage to move. This research would have not been done without all your support and kindness. Words could not express my gratitude for having you in my life.

Introduction

In this research craft and cultural rituals are utilized as the means of engagement in developing tangible practices that lead to nudging consciousness and perception towards sustainability. I propose a service that empowers citizens and helps to develop and nurture the culture of environmental sustainability. Key to this is my belief that a viable service is inviting and provides an atmosphere for people to play an active role in addressing current ecological issues.

Craft draws a relationship between nature, culture, and sustainability

Environmental deterioration is a complex problem that includes a lack of understanding about nature. Craft is a cultural bridge that at the basic level can help people understand more about the sustainability of local materials and small scale craft production. At a deeper level, in Persian culture, craft helps people connect to and relate to nature. These two facets of sustainability are explored in the development of this service: materiality and nature. The service proposes a model characterized by participation in craft-based practices to prepare for the celebration of cultural rituals. Craft supplies resources and theoretical foundations for developing the practices of the service. The Persian crafts and cultural rituals that I use as models are inherently eco-friendly and harmonious with the natural systems of the Earth. Citizens get involved in working with natural and local materials and learn the process and methods of the craft. They then use these crafts to support the celebration of a cultural ritual. These engagements make it more possible to perceive the values and meanings of the environmental sustainability that exist in craft and ritual.

Inspiration and Motivation

It was an intuitive exploration that led me to find my focus area in the context of Persian culture. It was the first year of my study in Vancouver and the first time that I was experiencing our New Year, Nowrooz, outside the country, far from family and friends. It was not easy to deal with my homesickness challenges. Our New Year happens on the first day

of north hemisphere Spring, with the philosophy of change in nature and environment. I was walking outside, while I saw the first buds and blossoms on trees. This made me very excited and I felt a very deep perception of what I was looking at. Although I was very far from my country and culture, I could still feel that a new year was starting. I was living my culture right there under cherry blossoms in Canada.

It does not matter where you are, as this celebration is about a change in nature and the environment that I am living in. It was a “Eureka” moment for me and was a pivotal point in my process.

This powerful feeling motivated me to focus on the cultural practices that we Iranians do to celebrate this event with thousands of years of experience and history behind us. Nowrooz is about bringing everyone from any religion and culture together to celebrate the beginning of a change in nature, as it is about the realities and facts of our planet earth, the home of all human beings. The whole journey of this celebration, from the beginning to the end, is full of activities that connect people with nature as they draw attention toward the change in our natural environment.

Having this potential in Persian culture led me to focus on the cultural rituals that are based on our solar calendar. Nowrooz is not the only ancient Persian tradition that has a relationship with the natural world. There are others based on the solar calendar with scientific fundamentals related to Earth's position in orbit and are about celebrating the changing of seasons. Another example is Yalda, the longest night of the year, which marks the beginning of Winter. Nowrooz, Yalda, and other Persian cultural rituals inspired me to design a service that supports and amplifies their insights.



Fig. 01: Blossom, 2017, Nasim Khosravifarsani

1. Context and Framing

1.1 General Overview of Problem Space

**“There is not nature and then us;
We are part of nature.”**

(Chick & Micklethwaite, 2011, p.79)

Nature is “the self-originating material/spiritual world, of which we are a part, including the powers that sustain and govern it.” (Bonnett 2002) Growth of cities and moving from country side to city, have detached people from nature. This destructive aspect of cities has made us forget how our existence is dependent on earth’s natural resources. (Suzuki, 1999, p.24)

Lack of understanding about ecological issues has threatened the existence of many natural systems. (St. Pierre 2014) The growing understanding of the seriousness of environmental deterioration has made us aware of the need to rethink our attitudes and reframe our approach to dealing with their root causes. There is a huge necessity for improvements in creating intuitive awareness and knowledge about our ecological responsibilities and the consciousness of our relationship to the environment. If people fully understood how each element of nature is essential in sustaining the ecosystem, we would not be witnessing the degree of ecological damage that we see today. In the Green Imperative, Papanek states that “Our survival depends on an urgent attention to environmental issues, but even now there still seems to be a lack of motivation, a paralysis of will, to make the necessary radical changes” (1995, p.9).

“ ...There must be a spiritual underpinning to our ecological consciousness. ...The present world-wide concern for the environment cannot now be dismissed as a fashion, as it was during early 1970, nor as a pure panic over the sustainability of life on earth. ...It is rather a great spiritual rebirth or reawakening, a desire to re-establish closer links between nature and humankind. Deeply embedded in our collective unconscious is the intuitive awareness of our relationship to the environment.

(Papanek, 1995, p.9)

To expound on Papanek's perspective on how our relationship to the environment has slipped away from us in recent history, I propose that there is in fact an innate connection among humankind, and between us and nature. Something nearly ineffable that makes us feel bound to all life forms, where we identify with them at the core, as what we do have in common is the Earth itself, which is our most important possession. It begs to be preserved.

1.2 Problem Space in Iran

As in other parts of the world environmental problems are expanding in Iran. According to Shobeiri, Meiboudi, & Kamali (2014), Iran is encountering massive environmental issues such as air pollution, deforestation, erosion, lake droughts and biodiversity loss. These threats have led Iran's government to initiate a comprehensive program to develop environmental education and establish principles of sustainability in the country. By investigating the causes and consequences of the current ecological issues there, I realized that one of the essential aspects of achieving environmental sustainability lies in social and cultural behaviors of human beings. According to Tehrantimes (2018), Renowned Iranian scientist and environmental activist Kaveh Madani, states that “the environmental disasters remind us of the fact that the environment matters, what needs to be changed to restore the environment is the mindset, and unless we manage to modify the mindset the environment won't be saved.” (“We have made mistakes in protecting the environment”, 2018).

“The majority of today's environmental problems stem from inadequate awareness and poor outlook on the relationships between humans and nature.”

(Shobeiri, Meiboudi, & Kamali, 2014)

1.3 The Cultural Context of Study Area

Relationship between human and nature in Persian culture

Through the history of Iran, we see how in its geographically diverse regions, people adapted to each circumstance and lived in harmony with nature. The Iranian worldview often tends to emphasize our relationship to nature, and is reflected in architecture, literature and other cultural elements such as crafts' artwork and heritage rituals.

Architecture

Looking at the history of Persian architecture, it is very noticeable how its approach has shaped the principles of designing a building. "...Iranian traditional courtyard houses were designed based on a careful attention to climatic requirements in their socio-cultural context, in order to provide both physical and mental comforts for residents." (Soflaei, Shokouhian, & Zhu, 2017). All elements of a building were designed by taking into account the characteristics of nature, climate and socio-cultural need of a region. The houses in humid and wet climates were designed completely differently from those in the hot-arid ones. Materials, forms, structures, etc. were selected and designed in harmony with their natural environment.

It is also mentioned that "the purpose of designing gardens in Persia, was not only limited to providing green spaces for the inhabitants, but also creating the opportunity for further interaction between the human and nature as well as creating various ranges of functions and promoting Persian culture via various design elements." (Mahmoudi Farahani, Motamed, & Jamei, 2016)

Literature and Poetry

In Persian literature and poetry, we see how writers and poets have often incorporated elements of nature as symbols to convey their thoughts and beliefs. “By investigating into the Persian poetry, we find out that the poets have used natural elements for various purposes, such as describing, praising, criticizing, etc.” (Dezfoulan & Rashidi, 2013)

In the following there are some examples of Rumi’s poems translated by Reynold A. Nicholson.

“What seed went down into the earth but it grew?
Why this doubt thine as regards the seed of man?”

(Nicholson, 2004, p.76)

“Welcome, soul-producing sun! when a single ray of thine hath appeared,
Thousands of human souls shoot forth from the black (barren) clay.”

(Nicholson, 2004, p.154)

“The seed of the spirit, sown beneath this water and clay (the body),
Becomes not a tree until it reaches Thy spring.”

(Nicholson, 2004, p.160)

“The blossom has opened its lips in pleasantry,
The lily has closed its mouth in coquetry.”

(Nicholson, 2004, p.162)

In these 13th century excerpts, Rumi chose images from nature to express his opinions. They show how deeply Persian culture is connected to nature; the subtle nuances of nature are noticed and then connected to Persian culture.

Cultural Ritual

In Persian culture, the beliefs of green thinking and sustainable development have shaped the philosophy behind many of the cultural rituals. Many of these are based on the solar calendar and closely linked with the change of seasons. The Iranian calendar is a solar one that is based on the Earth's movements around the Sun. For example, new year Nowrooz happens at the exact moment of the Spring equinox that marks the first day of Iranian calendar. We Iranians also celebrate the longest night of the year as celebration of beginning the Winter. People celebrate the change and rebirth of nature. These cultural rituals are an important way for Iranians to connect to nature. In the designed service of my research participants create an artifact for a cultural ritual. The anticipation of creating an artifact for a cultural ritual entices participants to engage in a traditional craft process.

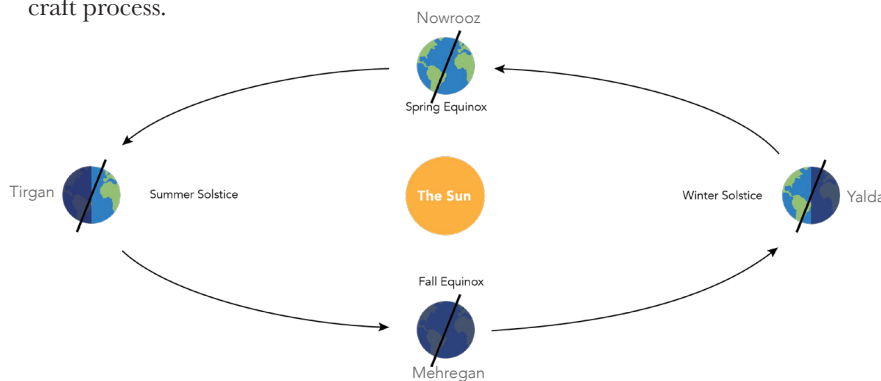


Fig. 02: Iranian Calendar, 2018, Nasim Khosravifarsani

Craft

The most essential attributes of crafts in Persian art and culture are associated with natural materials. Persian crafts cannot be made from just any type of material. The presence of plastics or any synthetic materials in making the artifacts does not have any meaning in traditional craft. Materials with natural origins such as wood, clay, copper, silver, gold, plant fibers, are compatible with the philosophies of Persian craft, and objects must be made with these materials. No artifacts made by hand are considered as craft in this context unless they have these essential attributes. Each region has its own specific crafts that are tied to the requirements of that particular environment. Craftspeople in this culture are known as artists and their works are very valuable yet inexpensive for people to purchase. (Dadvar, Qaribpour, Rabnia, 2016)

1.4 Research Goal and Objective

Research Question

How can craft practices support awareness and action towards the natural environment?

This research aims to incorporate cultural and traditional practices in order to develop social engagement with environmental sustainability. The objective of these engagements is to promote the consciousness about sustainability in participants during their involvement with the practice. It looks at sustainability from the point of view of nature and the materiality of the craft world. I hope the engagement with practices of crafts and cultural rituals promotes user awareness and re-establishes closer relationships between people and the natural environment. We need to achieve a deep understanding about the concept of sustainability. This understanding shapes our behavior, values and worldview to our natural living environment.

2. Areas and context of the research

2.1 Bottom up Changes

We are living in a specific era in Earth's history, witnessing the expansion of environmental problems. People's participation in environmental action is required more than ever now. "In the sustainable perspective, in fact, people should be considered as an active part in the process of caring about things, the public goods and the environment in general." (Manzini, 2008, p.33) Environmental challenges are complex problems with multiple interconnected factors. One approach to address these huge issues is to break down the whole into small parts and look into all the connections. "Real change occurs from the bottom up; it occurs person to person, and it almost always occurs in small groups in locals and then bubbles up and aggregates to larger vectors of change" (Hawken, 2007). Emergent community projects are an important avenue to environmental sustainability.

I believe that in order to achieve the targets of environmental sustainability, a viable avenue is for every society to build up the desired vision and culture. Sustainable solutions to address lack of awareness about ecological issues should start from the heart of a society, and changes in the people's mindset. There are millions of environmental organizations and activists around the world, each participating in a type of ecological care. Accordingly, Hawken (2007) states that the emergence of these communities, is the largest social movement in all of humankind history which is undertaken by ordinary citizens everywhere, not by governments. (p.4) This shows promise for addressing complicated and huge ecological problems such as global warming.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Attributed to Margaret Mead

2.2 Research Areas

This research is also an emergent community project supporting larger social and environmental movements. Specifically, it leverages social engagement, craft and design in an effort to create social innovation. The social engagements address themselves to sustainability by building greater awareness and compassion for nature.



Fig. 03: Research Areas, 2018, Nasim Khosravifarsani

a. Social Innovation and Craft

“Social innovation is a process of change emerging from the creative re-combination of existing assets.” (Manzini, 2014, p.57). According to Bofylatos (2017), Social innovation is about how humans or societies reframe their existing situation to change a problem space and create a desirable or new occasion.(p.229) By unlocking the roots and histories of traditional crafts in any given culture, and then tapping into the creative possibilities of how they can be re-combined and re-framed, a path to social innovation can be etched by applying the results to contemporary issues such as sustainability.

“As environmental issues move into the mainstream, a rising tide of concern presents an opportunity for the crafts movement to renew its engagement with social, political and philosophical issues...”
(Hughes, 2011)

A service based on Persian craft brings in effective and particular advantages in designing services of sustainability and social innovation. Craft plays a very important role in representing the culture and traditions of any country or region. It is a substantial medium to preserve rich traditional art, heritage, culture, traditional skills and talents which are associated with people's lifestyle and history. Arts and crafts movements are less industrial and more about natural materials. The idea of traditional practices and how they are not industrialized, not mass production and not mass consumed, are all part of sustainability. Crafts open up fascinating possibilities that address sustainability. Kadish and Dulic (2015) explain, “Crafting sustainability refers to the notion that we can approach environmental problems from practices that are locally grounded but globally connected and engage challenges deeply from a perspective of crafting”.

According to Bofylatos (2017) craft can substitute for the huge industrial production that plays an essential role in modernity. He believes that changing mass production to craft production solves environmental problems that are caused by extracting raw materials, the pollution of manufacturing and the massive waste of disposal. (p.226) The remarkable aspect of crafts is locality. They emerge from the heart of a society. They are rooted in the social, natural and cultural components of that society. Crafts help us to identify the characteristics of the nature around us and understand how to benefit from its capacities. Materials, methods of making and the meaning in a craft artwork talk about the specific characteristic of the place that it comes from. Because they are shaped through centuries in a culture, from selecting materials to methods of making, they are shaped based on climactic attributes and cultural context of their origin.

b. Craft and Design

“...the world of ‘doing and making’, is prior to understanding.”

(Mäkelä, 2006, p.3)

How is craft incorporated in designing for sustainability?

“Both crafting and design thinking are practices that supply people with new ways of examining and approaching complex problems and challenges” (Kadish & Dulic, 2015). Recently, craft has become an integral part in designing for sustainability. Craft’s framework provides possibilities to develop valuable engagement with people and motivates them to get involved in exploration practices. Tacit knowledge and materiality aspects of craft provide an exclusive design approach. (Bofylatos, 2017, p.224) Craft is “a dynamic process of learning and understanding through material experience” (Gra & Burnett, 2009). This is how knowledge is made through making and practice. Interacting with products and services form the doing and making, directly and also unconsciously imply behaviors and knowledge of desired concepts.

“The Key to craft, however, is the fusion of design and making and the ongoing dialogue this establishes between maker, object, materials, and processes” (Hughes, 2011). In the process of craft-based practices, participants stand in role of a maker; not to become a maker, but they observe the materiality of natural world from the lens of craft. This occasion makes users more receptive to achieving the desirable knowledge through making rather than the usual ways of learning.

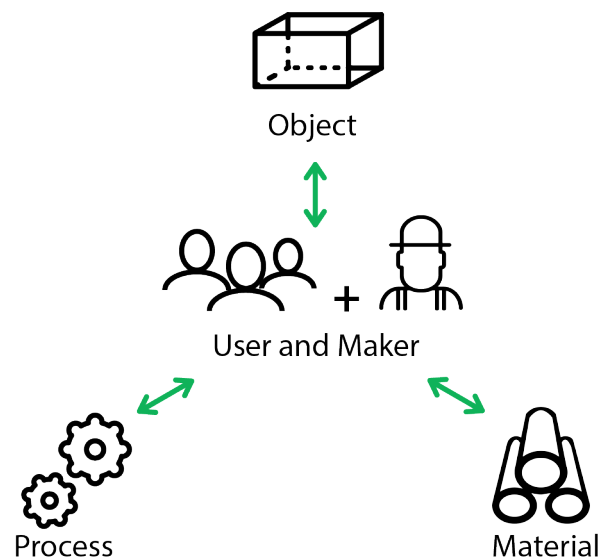


Fig. 04: Relationship between maker, object, materials, and processes , 2018, Nasim Khosravifarsani

c. Cultural Ritual

The incorporation of cultural rituals in designing the service of this research, creates an inviting and familiar atmosphere which makes the new engagements tangible and understandable for the participants. The Ritual Design lab at Stanford University, believes “Rituals have a special power to bring people together and give them a sense of purpose, values, and meaning. Ritual can provide the user with both the story and purpose necessary to make behavior change work.” (Ozenc, 2016)

By engaging in celebrating a cultural ritual, people feel that they are part of a bigger movement. The cultural rituals and traditional practices in the context of Persian culture bring various groups of people together with common cultural purposes and the sense of belonging to their community. The selected Persian rituals are considered as the intangible heritage of Iran and provide a rich resource of contents for implementing socio-cultural engagements.

In the Persian culture celebrating cultural rituals is intertwined with craft artworks. Setting up a display is a common ritual in many Persian cultural celebrations. People set up these displays by valuable and craft artworks such as pottery dishes and handmade fabric/table cloth.



3. Methodology

Fig. 05: Patterns of Nature , 2018, Nasim Khosravifarsani

The methodology for this research is founded on a combination of secondary research and practice-led design research. During my research process I had a challenge to find a direct relationship between what I was making and what I was pursuing in my research overall. The outcome of my journey is developed from secondary research, in parallel with primary research methods, practice-led, observation and interview.

3.1 Practice-led

According to Makela (2007), “In conventional research, making is generally regarded as consequent to thinking – at least in theory. Thus, a series of experiments, for example, is carried out in order to test a certain assumption, i.e. to solve a problem or answer a question. In the field of practice-led research, praxis has a more essential role: making is conceived as the driving force behind the research and in certain modes of practice also the creator of ideas”. (2007, p.3) Practice-led research is a method about knowing through making. It is a conceptual framework that allows a researcher to implement their creative practice, methods and output into the research design and as a part of the research output. (Sheridan, n.d.) “Practice-led research is characterized by a focus on issues, concerns, and interests that are explored and manifested through the production of creative artifacts. This implies that, as an object of experience, the creative product is as important as any knowledge embodied in it” (Mäkelä, 2007, p.3).

Through my process of making, I realized that my approach might best be found through closer connections to material making, and this led me to think about the relationship between craft and tradition in Iran.

With this in mind, I returned to Iran to conduct some local investigations, discussions with craftspeople and reviews of the secondary resources regarding crafts in this society. The solution was indeed in making, and it was in the sharing of knowledge through the process of making.

When culture touches nature

The practice-based activities that I have done during this research, were an exploration between craft, ritual and nature. In the early phases, research was full of broad and ambiguous keywords. My first questions were looking for possibilities in cultural activities to create engagements with environmental and sustainable actions. Focusing on crafts and rituals arose from practice-led research.

Parts of the studio practices were natural material-based. Below are a number of significant studio practices for this research:

01. Nowrooz Gift making workshop
02. Collecting Natural Materials
03. Crafting materials
04. Exploration of traditional designs

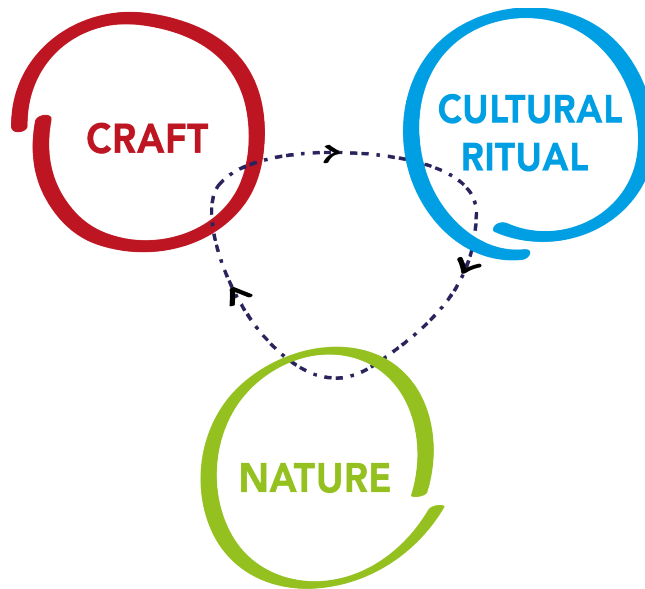


Fig. 06: craft, cultural ritual, nature, 2018, Nasim Khosravifarsani

01 Nowrooz Gift making workshop

This was a workshop that I ran in collaboration with Desis Lab at Emily Carr University, on Spring 2017. In this workshop, participants made seed gift packages, all the while talking about the ancient Iranian ritual of growing seeds and plants as gifts during the Nowruz festival. This was related to the Gift Economy and Eco-centric design versus Anthropocentric design. This workshop was conducted to explore ideas for expanding the culture of sustainability in Iran. I linked underlying philosophies of green thinking and notions of sustainable development to rituals that have been part of Persian culture throughout history. In Persian culture, the new year Nowrooz, there are many activities that people do to celebrate this event such as seed growing, planting, gift giving and connecting with family and friends.

The focus of the Nowrooz Gift Making Workshop was to explore the concepts of planting and gift giving. At the end of the workshop participants talked about their experience and shared their stories in a round of discussions. Many creative works, deep thoughts and ideas around seed planting and gift making were collected to inspire my thesis work.



Fig. 07, 08, 09: Nowrooz Workshop at Desis Lab , 2017, Nasim Khosravifarsani

02 Collecting Natural Materials

During the material explorations I spent a lot of time in nature in local areas to observe and collect materials. This made it a personal journey to be in touch with nature and collect natural materials such as different kinds of leaves, pebbles and woods. I was collecting and making with materials without seeing a direct connection between the practices and the purpose of my research. But gradually an insight was developed through the practice of materially working which made it apparent to me that “making for its own sake” helped me to discover a deep understanding of the value in crafts and its connectedness to cultural rituals in Iranian culture.



Fig. 10, 11, 12: Material Collecting , 2017, Nasim Khosravifarsani

03 Crafting Materials

- Making with natural collected materials and combining them with crafts
- I implemented related techniques on new materials to explore how I could carry the symbolic meaning in patterns forward. For example I drew them on pebbles, put them in various places in nature.



Fig. 13, 14, 15, 16: Patterns of Nature , 2017, Nasim Khosravifarsani

- Then I expanded my repertoire of craft making with the natural collected materials. I made various combinations that included sewing them, coating them, preserving them and making them stronger for forming, weaving and combining them with metal.

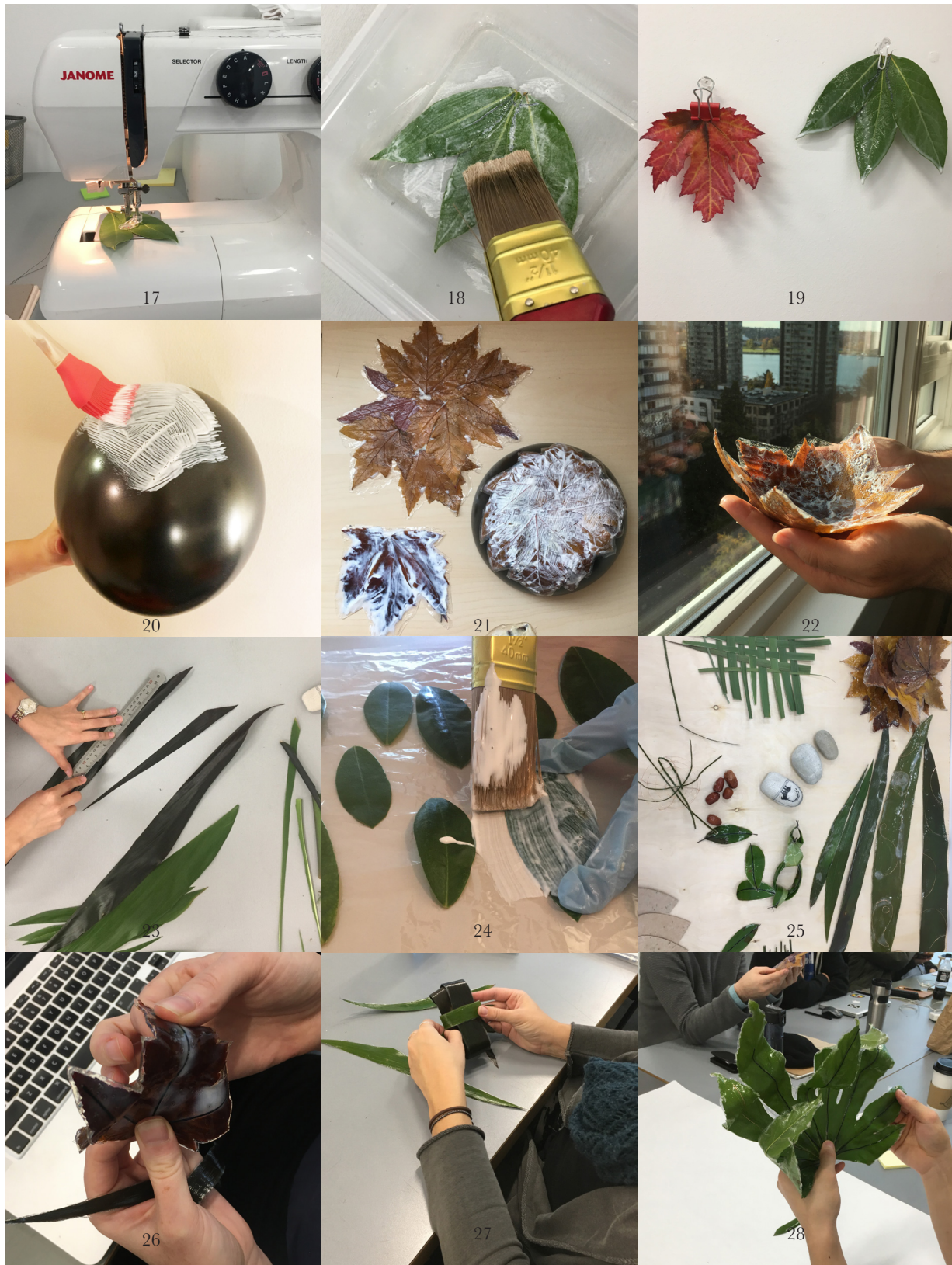
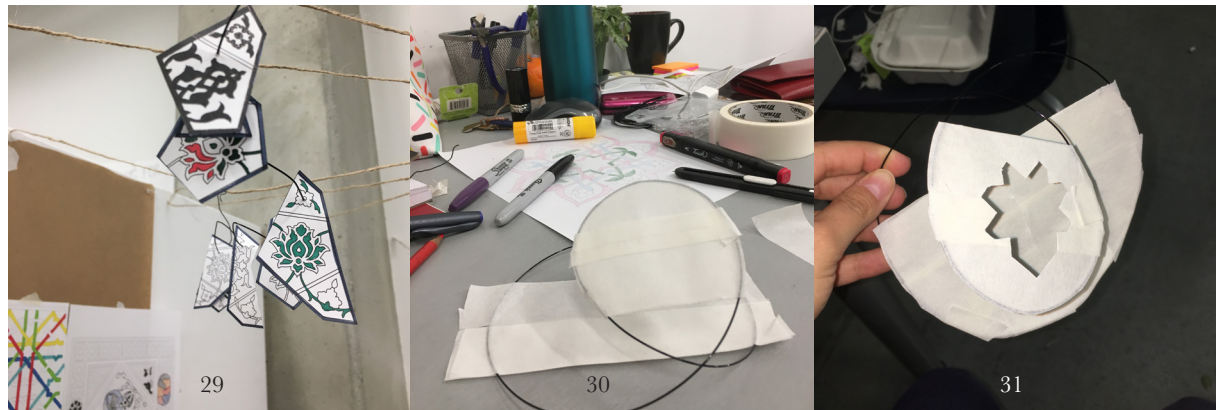


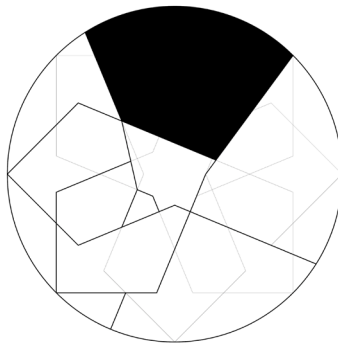
Fig. 17-28: shaping leaves , 2017, Nasim Khosravifarsani

04 Exploration of traditional designs

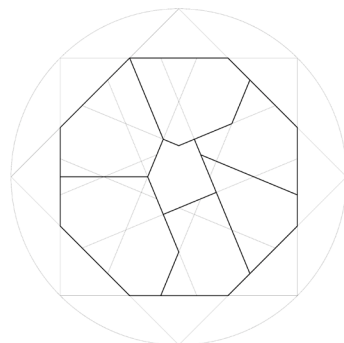
In this practice I made forms with traditional and cultural patterns and designs and worked on them from a different perspective and made new compositions.



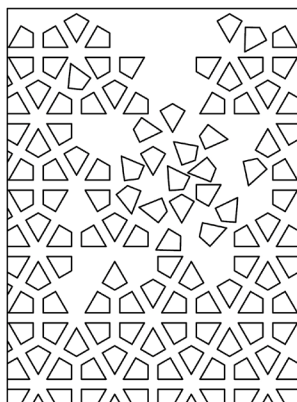
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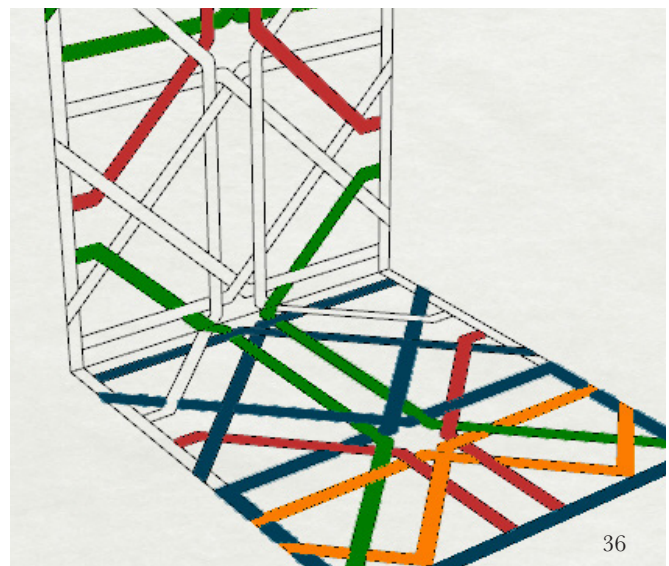
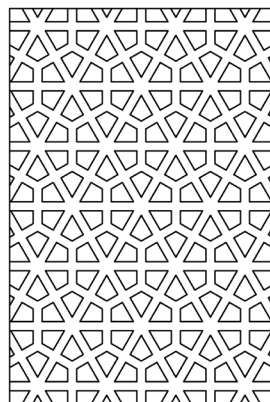


Fig. 29-36 : an exploration on patterns, 2017, Nasim Khosravifarsani

3.2 Observation and Interview

The pivotal moment in this project was my trip to Iran, where I observed a number of craft practices and interviewed the craft artists. They gave me a good picture and perception of that context and its specific opportunities.

I documented the process of fabric printing in one of these craft shops. They explained to me about the materials they use and the techniques of making.

Their products are made locally and the whole production process is environmentally friendly. It was very intriguing for me to hear how these producers are committed to utilizing the natural resources of their local environment.

These markets have a thirst for any collaboration that would lead to growth, as they are currently not as productive as they used to be and are concerned for their future.

I talked to one of the fabric print producers, and they are willing to provide the material component of my service. For example, making the block prints, providing fabric, making natural colors and teaching fabric printing techniques.



Fig. 37: Mr.Zabolian, one of well-known craft artists in his shop: Isfahan, 2017, Nasim Khosravifarsani



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Fig. 38-43: Craft market in Iran, 2017, Nasim Khosravifarsani

4. Research application and outcome

4.1 Proposed Service



I realized, through my research, that I would need to develop some form of social innovation service in order to connect people with nature. Specifically, the integration of cultural ritual and the user engagement in craft practices was deemed most appropriate for my study area, Iran. The developed service is craft-based and I've called it Craft Connected.

The focus of Craft Connected in this service is on integrating and synthesizing the elements of craft in Persian culture. This is a service that involves people working and making with the craft community. There are several types of Persian crafts such as weaving, pottery, textile and fabric printing that are suitable to be implemented in this service. This service attempts to open conversations about the natural environment through the acts of doing and making.

How does *Craft Connected* motivate people to engage?

While designing this service, I was wondering whether the craft-making practices should happen at any particular time or occasion? How can these engagements encourage people to participate and reach their highest level of effectiveness? I believe craft-making practices for a cultural ritual will motivate users to participate in designing and making a handmade artwork for celebrating their cultural heritage ritual. From what I experienced in my material-based practices, making for a purpose makes that practice more meaningful. For example, they could design and make a hand-printed fabric for setting up the cultural ritual's table that is the main part of many Persian cultural celebrations.

Craft Connected process

The process of engaging in this service, involves an initial introduction. In the journey that each participant experiences, first, they learn about that particular craft, its materiality and its production process. They understand that the materials they utilize in each step of the making process are extracted from nature without depleting any natural resources. All the materials are supplied from local resources in the region they are living in. Certain areas with typical and identical types of natural materials have meaning for people in those areas. Furthermore, they learn how craft benefits from the geography, nature and also the natural energy of their environment. For example, for many centuries craft makers have been utilizing a special kind of wood for making fabric block prints in the city of Isfahan; a tree local to that region, has specific characteristics that have made it the best choice for print making.

Then they design what they want to make. For example, for a fabric printing they choose the patterns and colors and make a quick sketch of the printing plan. Next, they choose and/or make the required materials. For example, a participant might make natural color and then learn about its making process. This fosters the opportunity for people to make their own personalized craft object while learning a lot about this valuable element of their culture. This shifts their role from passive consumer to active user. Then with the guidance of a craft person they would create artifacts. Eventually they can use this artifact to set up the table for their cultural ritual or they might share it with friends and families as the new year gift.

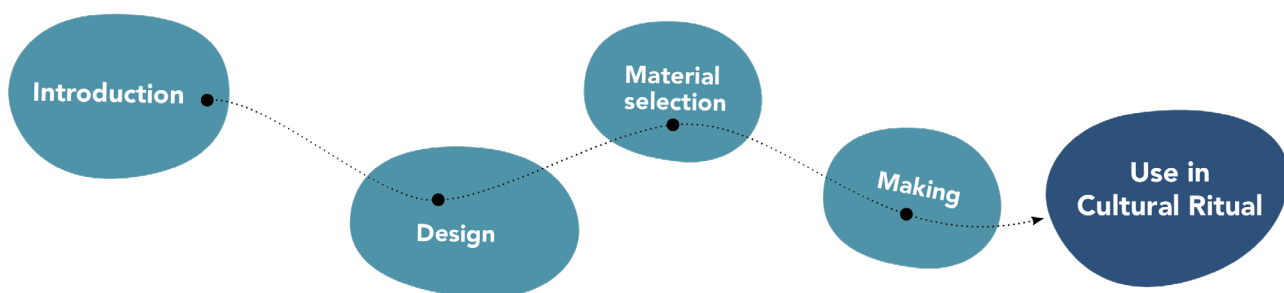


Fig. 44: User Journey, 2018, Nasim Khosravifarsani

Craft Connected components

1. What are practices of the service?

The craft used in this example of Craft Connected is Block printing, which is known as Ghalamkari in Iran.

2. When does this happen?

Individuals participate in the making of an artifact from this craft activity that supports cultural rituals. There are certain celebrations in Persian culture that happen at different times of year based on the seasonal changes. This service creates opportunities to take any other rituals throughout the seasons that embrace nature.

3. Who are involved in this service?

Individuals of all ages (e.g. a family group), with the guidance of skillful people from the local craft community, can design and make their own personalized artifact. The craft community supplies the tools and the materials. They also share their knowledge of making with participants and help them in making an artifact.

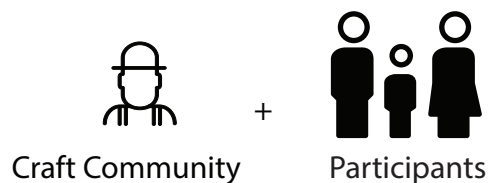


Fig. 45: Service's people, 2018, Nasim Khosravifarsani

Craft Connected components

5. Where does Craft Connected happen?

Each city of Iran has unique and different types of crafts. The selected craft of the service should be local to the city in which it takes place. It is ideal to hold Craft Connected in cultural heritage locations in each city, such as historical places, because of how past Persian architecture was in direct relation to the climate requirements of its own region.



Fig. 46: Craft connected in Ameriha Hotel, 2018, Nasim Khosravifarsani



Fig. 47: Craft Connected components mood-board, 2018, Nasim Khosravifarsani

Craft Connected characteristics

- a. Life-cycle thinking
- b. Durability and values
- c. Experiential learning
- e. Tangibile: tacit knowledge

a. Understanding the product life-cycle thinking

In this service, participants are part of all phases of producing and designing an environmentally attuned artifact. They participate in making, then will use it or even share it as a gift with family and friends. They know how to take care of it and dispose of it later. (fig. 48)

“Ecodesign considers environmental impacts during the whole product life cycle, from extraction of raw materials, to product manufacture, to product use and finally to treatment at end-of-life.” (Chick & Micklethwaite, 2011, p. 107). It does not only focus on one aspect of a product’s environmental impact, but also considers the entire product life cycle. (p.106) Users will get a sense of understanding of all phases and life cycle of the product: its origin, each material’s characteristics, how it is made, its usability, and how to dispose of it.

**“The ways in which we think
about our material culture,
conceive it, produce it, use it and
dispose of it are fundamentally
connected to matters of
environmental care...”**

(Walker, 2014, p.119)

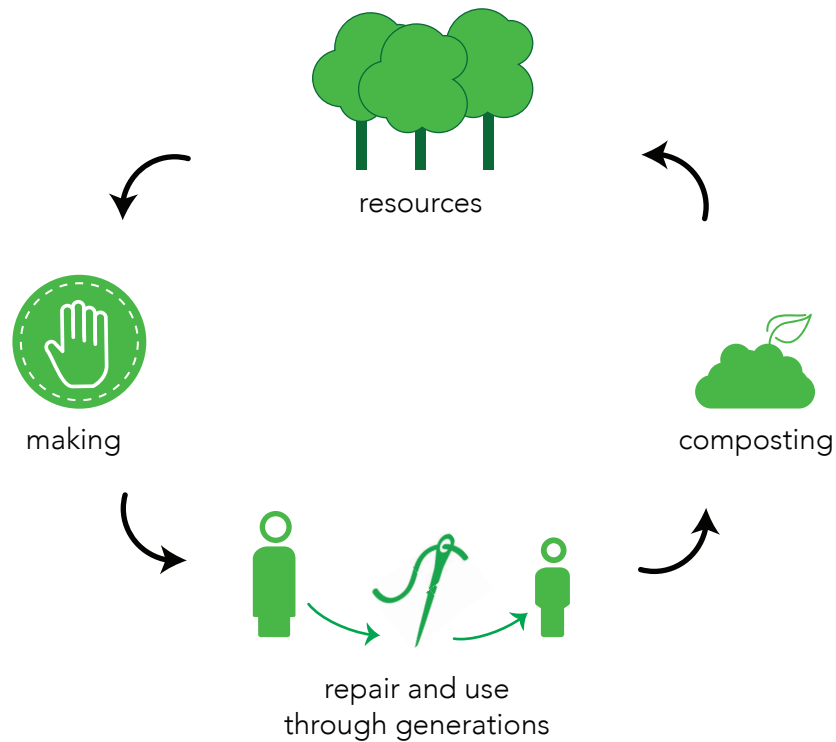


Fig. 48: Life-cycle thinking, 2018, Nasim Khosravifarsani

b. Durability and values

Hughes (2011) states that “Durable Design is an approach that seeks to prevent redundancy not through mere physical durability that has proven ineffective, but by designing objects whose lives are prolonged because people become emotionally attached to them. Craft, with its inbuilt material, process and personal narratives and unique objects have a powerful resonance with this concept” (p.16). Persian craft artifacts are considered as creative, artistic and valuable objects among Iranians. They usually know how to repair and maintain an object and rarely throw it away. They are well maintained, preserved and usually transferred from one generation to the next.

Creating personalized designs is an addition that brings people into this practice. For example, users select several numbers of patterns, and design their fabric in various combinations and print on it with different colors. Making with other people in a group to celebrate cultural heritage also motivates people to participate and create objects that carry the memories and stories of their experience.

According to Chapman (2015) “the consumption of material artefacts is largely motivated by the need to designate one’s own particular being – matter serves to illustrate our values, beliefs and choices as an individual.” By connecting people to ancient traditional crafts and ancient traditional rituals Craft Connected supports the transformation of this concept towards more widespread contemporary adaption.

“Our attachment is not to the thing. It is to the relationship to the meanings and feelings the thing represents.”

(Donolad Norman, as cited in White, St Pierre, Belletire, 2013)

c. experiential learning

This is a collaborative practice; people make with crafts artists. They are informed about the instructions of making new artifacts, and all the materials are provided by craftspeople. The participants make under supervision of craft artist. They teach the required techniques to the participants and help them to design and make their artifact. It is not a traditional way of teaching, and they are free to make and design. They learn to make in an experiential process of education. Depending on the type of selected craft, participants collaborate in specific steps of designing and making. They do not need to have any special skill. What they learn is very simple and easy to implement. The focus is on the freedom of exploring materials and hands-on making.

From a sustainability point of view, Manzini (2008) explains that people as active part of a society have the ability and eagerness to get involved in producing and designing a production-consumption system that is related to them. (Manzini, 2008, p.33)

This collaborative making is bringing the user to stands in the role of a maker. As according to Faud-luke (2009) this process is about the evolution of the customer to become a person who creates.

e. **Tangible: Tacit knowledge**

In this service, the participant will be informed about who manufactures and ships the goods and materials and how, who distributes the products, the reasons behind the methods and process of making, and how their participation in this process is beneficial for themselves and their society. In other words, making in craft goes beyond process. Touching materials and involvement in the process of making makes understanding all the concepts tangible for them.

Fry emphasizes that (1994) “the qualification of craft practice is neither predicated upon established hand working, machine-based skills nor new methods which employ advanced technology but rather on the articulated relation between hand and mind in making which secures a direct human presence, as the loci of power and knowledge, in the made” (Bofylatos, 2017, p.8)

Craft Connected criteria

- Craft’s materials must not be harmful to the natural environment
- Craft’s materials must be natural and provided from local resources
- The collaborative practices must be easy and do not need any special skills
- Bring local craft makers in the system, they provide required materials, tools, and pre-made objects.

Craft Connected side benefits

- Craft community will become more familiar with the visions and ideas of their audience.
- The practices support craftsmanship and bring awareness and recognition about them.
- These interactions also have positive impacts on the preservation of cultural and traditional heritage.

4.2 An example of Craft Connected

Craft: Ghalamkari (Block Printing)

Cultural Ritual: Nowrooz and Yalda (celebrations of spring and winter)

Location: City of Isfahan, the original area of Ghalamkari

It is recommended to hold this practice in historical places such as cultural heritage houses and Persian Gardens. (read section 1.3/architecture)

Participants Journey of fabric printing

1. Introduction About the craft and process of making
2. Select the patterns and design the fabric
3. Select fabric size
4. Select colors
5. Print on fabric
6. Color Fixation: After printing on the fabrics, they must boil it in a mixture of hot water and pomegranate skin to fixate the color.
7. Dry: Then they place the fabric outdoor under the sun to dry.
8. Making Natural Color: During the drying period, they make natural colors with



Fig. 49: Ghalamkari, 2012, Nasim Khosravifarsani

The art of printing and drawing patterns on cotton fabrics is called Ghalamkari. It is a Persian name, combined of the words Ghalam (pen / brush) and Kari (making), which literally means “making with brush.” The art of print making is local to the city of Isfahan in Iran. The whole process of making in this art is dependent on the natural resources that are supplied locally, from making the print blocks (die) to coloring fabric. They use wooden dies, natural colors and natural fabrics for printing. In the interview I conducted with one of the artisans, he mentioned that based on the defined standards of the Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, craft producers are not allowed to use any synthetic fabrics, chemical colors, processed wood and must not carve the dyes’ patterns with CNC machines. They should also only provide the materials from local resources. It is worth mentioning that one of the well-known Ghalamkar producers has won the Award of Excellence for handicrafts in West-Central Asia programme of UNESCO in 2010. In this award it is mentioned that: “The international 2010 Jury acknowledges that this handicraft product conforms to the rigorous standards set by the Award of Excellence Programme. The criterion looks at excellence in production, cultural authenticity innovation features or techniques, the potential for the world market, eco-friendly materials and processes in terms of fairness and equity in the production process.”



Fig. 50, 51: Ghalamkari Tools, 2017, Nasim Khosravifarsani

Ghalamkari Tools

Die: Where natural forms and motifs are tied together

Pear wood is used for making the dies and carving patterns on them. This wood, with its fine pores, has a delicate texture that makes it a very good choice for carving and fine work in wood. It is a local material in the Isfahan province. They also immerse the wooden piece in animal fat to make a smooth surface for easier carving and fine prints. Some of the dies that you see in this image are very old from centuries ago and still are functional.

Fabric

The fabrics are 100% cotton and woven in the local factories in the city of Isfahan.

Natural Colors

In Ghamkari, four colors are used and all of them are made naturally. Black, Blue, Yellow and Red.

Brush

Brushes are made of goat's wool and hair. They utilize the wool for making brush handles, as it is water proof and does not get wet while working with color.

Die Making Process

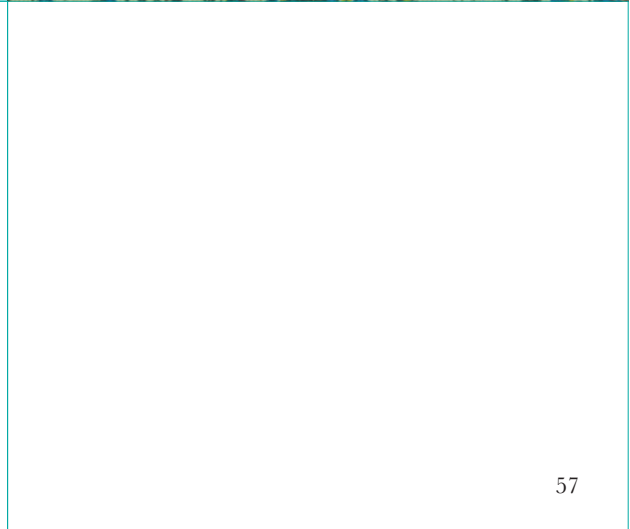
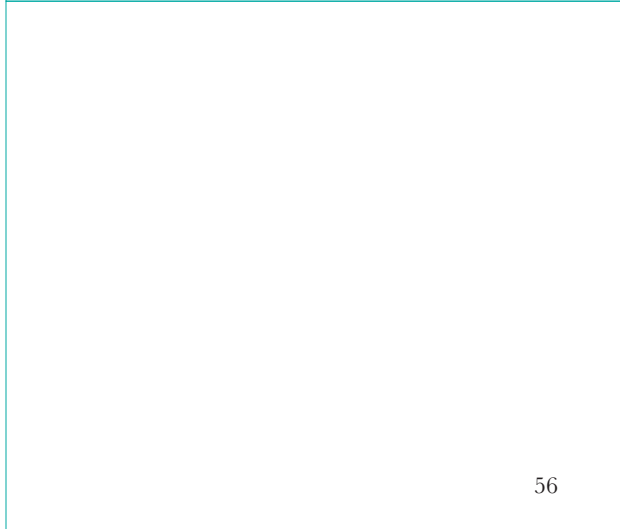
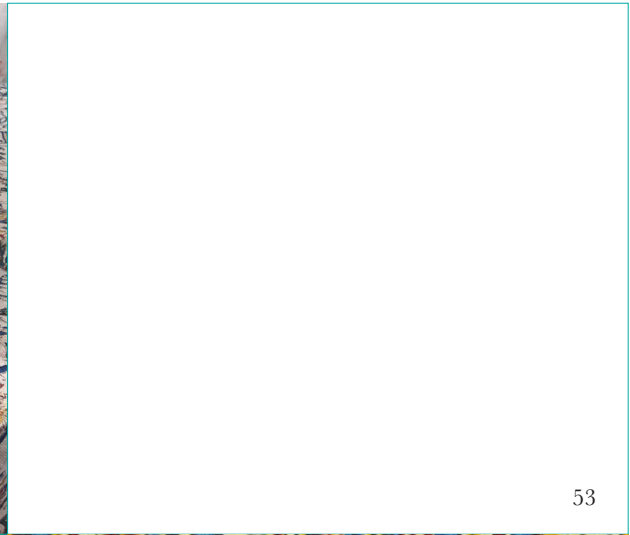


Fig. 52 and 55: Process of making a die, 2017, Nasim Khosravifarsani

Fig. 53: Ghalamkari, 2017, MehrNews Agency (Photo removed due to copyright issues)

Fig. 54, 56, 57: tools, 2012, Fariborz Alagheband (Photo removed due to copyright issues)

Printing Process

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Fig. 58: Craft Artisan, Zabolian.com (Photo removed due to copyright issues)
Fig. 59-61: Printing Process, 2017, Nasim Khosravifarsani

b. Cultural Ritual: Nowrooz and Yalda

Ghلامkari printing practices can be used in making artifacts for both Nowrooz and Yalda .

Nowrooz: Persian New Year

Nowruz, Persian new year happens on the first day of Spring and is the most important Persian cultural event in Iran. The philosophy and notion of Nowrooz are about the rebirth of nature and renewal in all aspects of life. Rituals and practices for celebrating this cultural event are the ways to reconnect humans with their nature, environment, and community. The concept behind rituals of Nowrooz is basically to strengthen the relationship between human-kind and nature. Nowrooz is a way to reinforce that connection to nature with participants and restatement new ways of understanding about environment and sustainability.

Yalda

Yalda means birth. Based on our solar calendar it is the longest night of the year that marks the beginning of the Winter. At this night family members gather around, set up a display of nuts, pomegranate, watermelon, sit around it and read poems and tell stories.



Fig. 62: Nowrooz display: set up by Ghلامkari fabric, Nasim Khosravifarsani



Fig. 63: Yalda display, 2017, Nasim Khosravifarsani

c. Location

There is a remarkable and productive opportunity in the city of Isfahan, the most historical and cultural city of Iran. This environment is ready to develop a variety of cultural engagements by employing the local and eco-friendly crafts and traditions.

Naqsh-e-Jahan Square (image of the world) in Esfahan is the center of craft making, which is designated by UNESCO as a universal heritage site.

Under each arch there is a store, where artists are making, drawing and painting in a diverse range of fields such as metal works, fabric printing, Persian Enamel and many others.

It is ideal to hold the service in this historical place or the similar ones, as it is the hub for the craft community. The place itself makes minds ready for becoming a part of this collaborative act of making.

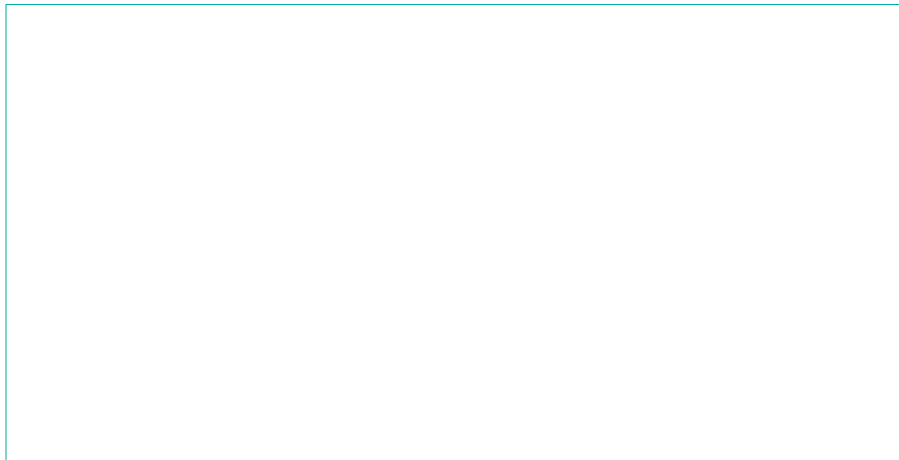


Fig. 64:Naqshe Jahan Square in Isfahan, welcomtoiran.com (Photo removed due to copyright issues)

Pattern

Each of the patterns and motifs in Persian cultur has symbolic meanings and stories. There is a huge potential in storytelling by utilizing them. Participants can select various patterns and combine them to design a fabric that has a story. Besides the original patterns of this traditional craft other motifs also can be carved on dies since there is an infinite resource of motifs in Persian arts and crafts.

1. Original Classic Motifs of Ghalamkari
2. Motifs from other arts: for example, from rugs, potteries, textiles

5. Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study is limited to Persian heritage and culture. Persian craft is an integral part of its culture and is intertwined with all cultural-traditional practices. This resourceful and rich context with diversity in crafts, rituals, and traditions provides many possibilities for designing the components of services and social communications. One example of the service that is presented here, focuses on one area in Iran, the city of Isfahan. This framework can then be applied to other areas in Iran and also any culture around the world that have the required characteristics of the service. In addition, not all the crafts are the focus of this research. Its focus is only on crafts that cover the criteria of an environmentally sustainable production. They must have the following items:

- They must utilize eco-friendly and local materials.
- Techniques and processes of making have to be compatible with nature and must not cause any harmful impacts on the environment.
- The rituals should have the notions of embracing nature.

It is also worth to mention that the activities of this service are not directly replacing the traditional ways of celebrating the ritual practices. In addition, the newly made objects, and the process of making them are not going to substitute for existing artifacts and current craft practices.

6. Conclusion

This research has resulted in the formulation of a model for a service that engages citizens in making Persian crafts. Through making, people come to understand more deeply the connection that every activity has to the natural world. This service can be integrated into a variety of cultures throughout the world. The entire service has the flexibility to be adapted to any cultural rituals that are related to nature and have similar characteristics to those involved in this project.

I have demonstrated that Iran offers a viable model for how local rituals can give people a stake in engaging with meaningful craft. The physical engagement with craft and interpersonal engagement through the learning involved with the process develops a deep connection with the process itself and therefore the subject matter embedded in that process. In this case, environmental sustainability. This re-positioning of cultural heritage and practice establishes itself as a form of social innovation, adapting historical contexts to recent natural phenomena and global issues.

Each part of the service is designed to instil awareness in people about the value of craft traditions. This is a very tangible mode of communication. Craft practices raise awareness of how we engage with our environment, the material, production and consumption. Incorporating craft practices for designing and proposing user engagements in the socio-cultural context of Iran supplies the research outcome with a rich resource of assets.

The craft-based activities of the service help users to observe the concepts of nature and sustainability through this lens. They navigate through the practices of selecting materials, tools, designs and finally make an artifact with the guidance of skillful artisans. Generally, they will gain an understanding of the worldview behind each step and the benefits of the materials, process of making and the knowledge that each element of the system pertains to. These aspects of the service are deliberate and intentional, while other aspects such as engaging more with local practices are side benefits.

The primary intent is a change in perception over time through these practices. This system encourages passive users, who only purchase and consume, to change and become active users who make. I hope this proposed service shifts peoples' mindset by doing and making, deliberately and publicly creating a connection to the environment and honoring the importance of Sustainability.

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Glossary

Ecology

Relating to or concerned with the relation of living organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings. (Oxford dictionaries)

Eco-awareness

Designs that raise the users' awareness of ecological and/or sociological issues. (Fuad-Luke, 2009, p.324)

Active Citizen Participation

Designs that encourage citizens to become proactive in dealing with challenging contemporary social, environmental, economic and/or political issues. (Fuad-Luke, 2009, 324)

Nowrooz

The Persian New Year is celebrated as the beginning of the new year by more than 300 million people all around the world and has been celebrated for over 3000 years. Nowrooz marks the first day of spring in northern hemisphere and is celebrated on the day of the astronomical vernal equinox, which usually occurs on 20/21 of March. There are many things that people do to celebrate this cultural event, such as visiting family and friends, planting, spring home cleaning, gift giving and many other social communications.

Yalda

Yalda means birth. It is celebrated on the eve of the first day of the winter (December 21-22) in the Iranian solar calendar, which falls on the Winter Solstice. Based on this calendar, last day of fall has the longest night of the year and marks the beginning of the Winter. At this night family members gather around, set up a display of nuts, pomegranate, watermelon, sit around it and read poems and tell stories.

 craft connected



MASTER OF DESIGN

Emily Carr University of Art + Design

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