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'It's just nice not to be on screens': exploring the relationship between pottery making, eudemonic wellbeing, and Instagram

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ABSTRACT

Since the mid-nineteenth century Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain and its subsequent revivals, craft has been positioned in opposition to new technologies. Yet, increasingly people learn, share, produce, and consume crafts through engagements online. This article discusses the relationship between pottery making, eudemonic wellbeing, and the social media site Instagram in the context of digital ethnographic research with British potters during the COVID-19 pandemic. When physical access to spaces such as studios was limited, these potters turned to digital and social media to learn new skills and connect with others from within their own homes. Central to this article is the dissonance between my participants' belief that pottery offered them an escape from their phones, yet simultaneously, much of their enjoyment of pottery came from their participation in online spaces, particularly Instagram. The eudemonic wellbeing impacts generated through their engagements with pottery and the online resources and communities associated with it, concern, 1) satisfying work: self-fulfilment and empowerment, and 2) crafting the self: identity, belonging, and social connectedness, as well as a discussion of the stress and negative consequences engagements with social media brought about for several of my participants.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic in Britain rendered workshops and studios closed for prolonged periods during lockdowns in 2020 and 2021. Unable to enter these communal spaces the potters I worked with were confronted with learning and developing their skills from within their own homes. Moreover, the social and collective community located there was now out of physical reach. Thus, they turned to social media to access learning resources and connect with other potters. This article attends to the affective impact of pottery making during the COVID-19 pandemic in Britain and in particular those benefits associated with identity, self-fulfilment, and social belonging that craftworking can bring. That is to say, this article is focused on what can be understood as the eudemonic form of subjective wellbeing. I argue that in discussing the relationship between craftworking and eudemonic wellbeing, it is vital to acknowledge how increasingly craftworking intersects with the digital, and how this shapes the affective impacts generated by engaging in such leisure activities.

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I will discuss how earlier literature on craftwork often placed craft in opposition to advances in technology, particularly associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement of the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century, which still endures today in much of the craft revivalist literature. However, increasingly more recent work is conscious of the role digital and social media technologies play in the production of their work (e.g. Pöllänen and Weissmann-Hanski, 2020; Tvede Hansen and Falin, 2016; Yair, 2011a), and the creation of collective narratives and craft communities the sharing of their work (e.g. Gauntlett, 2011; Kuznetsov & Paulos, 2010; Minahan & Wolfram Cox, 2007; Orton-Johnson, 2014a, 2014b). I will highlight how while many of my participants perceived a benefit of pottery to be that it forced them to take time away from screens, much of their enjoyment of pottery came from interacting with resources and others through social media, discussing here their use of Instagram. The remaining discussion will focus on two overlapping aspects of eudemonia: 1) satisfying work: self-fulfilment and empowerment, and 2) crafting the self: identity, belonging, and social connectedness. These sections draw on my research with British potters learning and developing their skills during the pandemic, contextualised within the literature on craftwork, and its discussions of digital media and wellbeing. While this research context is an extreme example, in that people did not have access to in-person communities or spaces, it also speaks to the wider phenomenon of Do-It-Yourself (DIY) craft and its relationship to Web 2.0. technologies.

Methods

This article draws on research undertaken between March and July 2021 with participants learning pottery skills during the COVID-19 pandemic in Britain. Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Oxford Social Sciences and Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee (reference number: R74617/RE001). During this period, twenty-five semi-structured interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams, each one lasting around one hour, with participants ranging from novices to professional potters. Table One lists the participants quoted in this article and indicates their relative skill level. Furthermore, through drawing on the experience of participants at various levels of skill, who are using the same site in alternative ways, I have sought to emphasise the variability and complexity of their experiences. Informed written consent was obtained via email before each interview. Participants were recruited through direct messaging public Instagram accounts using my account @anthro_pottery,¹ and through posts on my personal social networking sites, and free advertisements in the London Arts and Health Forum newsletter and the magazine Clay Craft. Moreover, using my experience as a beginner potter since the first British lockdown, I became part of the community that I sought to explore via this Instagram account. This draws on the well-established idea of ethnographers using their own bodies as sites of analytical exploration, working as an apprentice, or participating in the skilled practice which they study (e.g. Marchand, 2010; O'Connor, 2006) including in digital spaces (e.g. Bluteau, 2019; Luvaas, 2016). This offered access in respect to people's willingness to speak with me as a fellow potter, creating a shared sense of identity and rapport, and in how I was able to relate to and understand many of their 'feelings' – sensory and emotional – even while we were not physically co-located. The account featured a 'bio' which immediately flagged my researcher status to anyone who clicked on my profile, and when messaging potential participants this was always disclosed in the first message. In this space I participated much like any other beginner potter on Instagram, posting images of my work and liking and commenting on other's posts, and staying in contact with participants through direct messages (DMs). No data was collected, such as analysing posts made by participants, unless they consented to this along with their interviews.

However, it must be acknowledged that my sample of interview participants is skewed by both the gender and relative financial privilege of many of my participants. All my participants, except Luna who used they/she pronouns, identified as women. This was not a conscious decision in the recruitment process. However, on Instagram I found far more accounts were operated by women, even when their profiles made no mention of their gender, and while several male-run accounts

were approached, only women accepted my interview request. Additionally, all those who responded to my advertisements were women. Moreover, unlike textiles, crochet, or knitting, which have relatively low entry costs with respect to tools and materials, pottery can be an incredibly expensive craft to participate in, and this is exacerbated when access to community studios and workshops is limited. While some participants had fully functioning home studios and could afford the spatial and financial costs of professional equipment, many participants were renting or living with family and could not access expensive equipment but found ways around this to still engage with pottery. For example, Jasmine, a recent university graduate living in a rented flat worked with air drying clay, household utensils, and used lacquer to seal the acrylic paint she used to decorate her work.² Thus, although pottery has often been considered a middle class hobby in the UK, this is increasingly changing as more and more people find ways to experiment with clay, albeit in perhaps less traditional ways. These limitations should be considered in relation to the arguments made in this article.

	Participant Skill Level:		
	Hobby Potters	Part-Time Potters	Full-Time Professional Potters
Participant name:	Amber* Ella Leah Luna* Megan*	Charlotte* Daisy* Jasmine* Zoe*	Imogen

Table One: This table breaks down the relative experience with pottery each participant quoted. I define hobby potters as people who are producing pottery in their leisure time for their own enjoyment without selling their work. Part-time potters are individuals who operate small businesses on the side of their work or studies but do not rely on this as their main source of income. Full-time professional potters are individuals whose sole income is derived from selling their work. However, these categories are somewhat reductive, and individuals do not fit neatly within them, nor are the experiences of participants in the same categories homogenous. The Supplementary Material offers a brief discussion of each of these participants' experience of pottery in more depth. Participants who chose to have their names pseudonymised are indicated by an asterisk (*).

Defining eudemonic wellbeing

We can broadly understand wellbeing as being categorised as either 'objective wellbeing', which is related to material and social circumstances, or 'subjective wellbeing' which is based on individual self-assessment (Hird, 2003). Subjective wellbeing is further divided into 'hedonic wellbeing' which is concerned with happiness, positive emotion, and an absence of pain, and 'eudemonic wellbeing', which implies fulfilment and the realisation of potential or flourishing. Questions surrounding these two sub-divisions of subjective wellbeing can be traced back as far back as Ancient Greece and were notably discussed in Aristotle and Irwin's (1985) *Nicomachean Ethics* (Waterman, 1993). More recent elaborations on these definitions come from across the social and medical sciences which continue to distinguish these concepts (e.g. Deci and Ryan, 2008; Duckworth and Gross, 2014; Sirgy, 2021; Vitterso, 2016). While the boundaries between eudemonic and hedonic, as well as even subjective and objective, wellbeing are somewhat permeable this research adopts these simplified categories to facilitate inter-disciplinary understanding.

Sebire's (2020) Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP) categorizes leisure activities into three types: casual, serious, and project-based. Serious leisure requires a considerable time and effort investment and leads to expertise or mastery, whereas project-based leisure offers many of the rewards of serious leisure without a long-term commitment. All the potters discussed in this article fit within these two SLP categories based on their experience with pottery. SLP argues that serious leisure can

lead to both hedonic and eudemonic well-being, including personal rewards such as self-actualization and financial return, and social rewards such as social attraction and shared values with other participants (Stebbins, 2016). This article focuses on both personal and social aspects of eudemonic well-being, including self-empowerment, self-fulfilment, relief from stress, personal growth, social connectedness, and belonging (see also, Pöllänen & Weissmann-Hanski, 2020, p. 348; Sirgy, 2021, p. 99; Wilcock, 1998). These ideas are organised into two main themes:

Satisfying Work: Self-Fulfilment and Empowerment. Relating to ideas surrounding finding satisfaction and pride in one's work, achieving mastery, and the empowerment that may arise through finding an alternative to mainstream employment.

Crafting The Self: Identity, Belonging, and Social Connectedness. Concerning individual identity in relation to positive self-image or a sense of worth, as well as the meaning found in belonging to a social community with other actors with shared interests.

The arts and crafts movements

The Arts and Crafts Movement of the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century was associated with Ruskin's (1909) critique of mechanical industrialisation in England and was led by advocates such as William Morris with antimodernist sentiments (Bell et al., 2018, p. 8). In the nineteenth century, contrasted against the 'rigorous perfection of the machine' the craftsman became emblematic of human individualism as a result of the variation, irregularities, and flaws of handworking (Metcalf, 1993: 44–46; Poulson, 1989; Sennett, 2009, p. 84). Moreover, this positioning of handwork as antithetical to the machine-made has given rise to the contemporary and persistent notion of 'craft' as both a practice and a social ideology (Marchand, 2021, p. 2). This is reflected in how we struggle to understand the positives of our limits in relation to the mechanical and continue to battle with anti-technologism (Sennett, 2009, p. 84). Morris viewed craftwork as a social critique that could impede the degradation of factory labour, and offer individuals the ability to find pleasure in their work, 'so long as man allows his daily work to be mere unrelieved drudgery he will seek happiness in vain'. (Morris, 2010, p. 152). Morris argued, in craftworking, workers would be proud of their labours and freed of capitalist exploitation (Metcalf, 1993, p. 46), restoring the 'lost utopia of unalienated work' (Kuspit, 1996, p.19, cited in Minahan and Wolfram Cox, 2007, p. 13).

This movement inspired a substantial number of organisations across Europe and North America, and subsequent waves of increased interest in craftwork. Typically, periods of increased enthusiasm for craft have arisen as a counter-cultural response to the dominant modes of production or economic models of that time (Marchand, 2021, p. 2). For example, in the 1960s and 1970s craft revivalism in Britain focused on anti-establishmentism in response to the preceding decades of Fordism that followed the Second World War, which saw standardised production, deskilling of labour, lower prices, and mass consumption (2021: 2). Craftwork was seen to offer practitioners and patrons an escape from the increased technological dominance and mass production that was considered to disrupt human autonomy, creativity, and purpose (2021: 2). We also see the alignment of the anti-Vietnam War protesters in North America, with 'Flower Power' becoming emblematic of peace and a connection to nature and its resources (Minahan and Wolfram Cox, 2007, p. 13). With the looming fret of energy shortages or a nuclear holocaust, many women in the Western world took to the production of textiles for wear and domestic use as a statement of self-sufficiency. We see contemporary craft revivalists similarly positioning craftwork, as Morris did, as a means of overcoming worker alienation (Crawford, 2009; Metcalf, 1993), challenging consumerism (Luckman, 2015), or as a means of self-fulfilment (Sennett, 2009).

Digital revolution and the craft resurgence

Furthermore, the resurgence of craft across the world since the late 1990s has coincided with the Information Age. Luckman (2013, p. 251) argues that the current renaissance of the handmade has

come at a time of profound social, cultural, and economic change in the global West, or the ‘digital revolution’. The rise of digital technologies has been posited to have contributed to increased alienation in the modern world (Minahan and Wolfram Cox, 2007, p. 18), resulting in a desire for the ‘authenticity’ and individuality which might be found in the handmade (Metcalf, 1993). Furthermore, this may be related to how, as Naisbitt et al., (2001) high tech/high touch theory posits, the more time we spend at a computer the more high touch and sensual our leisure time activities become (Hanaor and Woodcock, 2006, p. 11). Such research suggests, the current craft revival comes in response to the Information Age. However, others, such as Miller and Slater (2000, p. 178), have argued that the internet can actually be used to expand communicative possibilities, facilitating the consolidation of identities with respect to wider communities. Thus, it has been argued that the current craft resurgence is also facilitated by such technologies, allowing for the dissemination of images, the creation of shared narratives and personal identities, and the revelation of the processes of creative production (Marchand, 2021, p. 4). Gauntlett (2011, p. 8) argues this is exacerbated by the shift from a ‘sit back and be told’ culture towards one more oriented towards ‘making and doing’, enabled by Web 2.0 technologies. In this way, the experience of crafting for many people is increasingly entangled with digital practices, particularly in relation to social media as people use it to build communities, gain support and encouragement, share ideas, and gather inspiration (e.g. Kuznetsov and Paulos, 2010; Orton-Johnson, 2014b; Pöllänen and Weissmann-Hanski, 2020). This is particularly evident in the contemporary growth of Do-It-Yourself (DIY) craft culture. DIY craft is a domestic creative activity, which emerges from a DIY ethic which opposes mass market consumerism and cultural homogenisation. Furthermore, Minahan and Wolfram Cox (2007: 5–6) reflect on the ways that the ‘Information Society’ has produced significant changes to how people live, communicate, and connect, triggering more community-focused activities utilising craftworking. They discuss the international Stitch’nBitch movement, which involves mostly women, either locally or virtually, meeting to knit, stitch, and talk. They argue it might be considered a new iteration of the Arts and Crafts Movement, in that the wider circumstances of the Information Society might be characterised for some people by alienation or a lack of social connectivity, but the power of these new technologies can be harnessed by the movement to enhance social connectedness and the wellbeing of women (2007, p. 18). Moreover, while there remain echoes of Morris’ opposition to mass-industry and capitalist modes of production, particularly in relation to ideas of individuality and sustainability, DIY crafting can never be totally anti-consumerist. It is because mass-produced craft materials and technologies are widely available that these crafts can increase in popularity (Fort, 2007, p. 9). That is not to mention, the critical role of digital technologies in the popularity and accessibility of craftworking, which are part of wider production chains. Therefore, we must understand the balance between such negative impacts of the digital revolution, which might encourage a resurgence of craftworking, with the power it has for promoting craft, and how both facets may have eudemonic impacts.

Pottery as time away from screens

The harmful physiological and psychological impacts of smartphone overuse have been documented extensively (Elhai et al., 2017; Ratan et al., 2021). This was particularly significant during lockdowns when around 70% of internet users globally were spending increased time on their smartphones (Sebire, 2020). Several of my participants mentioned that working with clay, and keeping their hands busy and messy, freed them from succumbing to their phones or other screens.

Megan: ‘It is a nice activity. You can get something out of it physically, as a pot, and it’s just nice not to be on screens ...’

Jasmine: ‘I don’t [go on my phone] because it’s so messy. I never look at my phone. Yeah, maybe I’ll stick something on the TV a lot of the time nowadays. But I used to just listen to music. And you know, it’s just nice to have just a bit of time to let your mind be free really? Do its thing’.

Leah: 'Sometimes I'll be watching stuff and I'll probably barely look at it ... it's nice to kind of chuck your phone away, chuck whatever away, and just be like, "sorry, I haven't replied to you in four hours my hands have been full of clay".'

Luna: 'What I do like about it is that it's like you're so like gross and messy that you can't look at your phone. Like that's quite nice is that it's sort of like built-in, like, no looking at phone time, which in the pandemic, obviously everyone is doom scrolling'.

Thus, many of my participants perceived a benefit of pottery to be that it forced them to take time away from digital screens and devices. Yet, they also made extensive use of digital and social media to construct their identity as potters, find communities, learn new skills, and develop a consumer base for their wares. It is this dissonance that I explore throughout this article. Even while away from screens during their engagements with clay, they were employing skills, knowledge, and emotional dispositions, that developed as part of their wider engagements with digital media, complicating the boundaries between online and offline. Thus, I argue that engagements with social media are implicated in both the positive and negative wellbeing impacts my participants experienced through potting, as they make up part of the wider environments or ecologies in which they learned and worked.

Satisfying work: self-fulfilment and empowerment

Craftworking is an empowering enactment of social agency that creates pride in one's labours, capabilities, and achievements (e.g. Burke and Spencer-Wood, 2018, p. 12; Corkhill et al., 2014; Maidment and Macfarlane, 2011). The satisfaction found in craftworking has been discussed at length and draws upon the historical precedents associated with Arts and Crafts Movement (e.g. Marchand, 2021; Martin, 2021; Metcalf, 1993; Pöllänen and Weissmann-Hanski, 2020; Sennett, 2009). Martin (2021, p. 6) has discussed craft as being a 'means of achieving personal fulfilment ... embracing our inborn capacity for navigating and transforming the social-material world'. He discusses how his boat-building participants were driven by 'a belief in the edifying and personally fulfilling nature of their work, which they explained would not be found in work that did not require use of the whole body and the skilled manipulation of physical materials'. (2021: 234). Moreover, Metcalf (1993, p. 46) argues even the most unmotivated students can come alive once they engage with materials and find an activity that 'conforms to an innate sensibility and answers an unarticulated need'. Likewise, Sennett (2009, p. 9) argues that 'Craftsmanship names an enduring basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake'. In tandem with the hedonic or sensuous pleasures of working with materials Sennett discusses how this satisfaction is derived not only in the instant of engagement, as skill must evolve to be satisfying (2009: 295). Rather than simply imitating, practice and the making of one's own skill allows, over time, for reflection and imagination.

Ella, a Fine Art student who completed her degree during the pandemic, described struggling with her status as an artist and finding confidence and self-assurance through learning pottery.

Ella: 'I had long felt like I wasn't actually an artist, I wasn't creating anything. And then, just stripping it back and just being taught one thing really well is, you know, has really given me that confidence again ... It was definitely a really good boosting experience for my wellbeing and my self-esteem ... As I was seeing the results of what I was doing so quickly, I think you know, there were the set stages, and each stage I was working on it, and I'd fire it and I have a result of my work, which just feels amazing ... I finally found my craft, my thing ... I think, getting to the nitty gritty of a topic and the technique and mastering it is like it feels more, you know, you like you get more from it.

Through coming to pottery, she had found 'the thing' she wanted to do. In learning the specific techniques of the craft, and slowly gaining competency, Ella improved her self-esteem. This is tied to the notion of mastery and the sense of achievement that comes from developing one's skill, which encourages an individual's sense of uniqueness, and identity as an independent actor, and

contributes to positive self-image (Pöllänen, 2011, p. 116). While Ella spoke more broadly of improving her skill, other participants tracked this in more specific ways. Amber used a dedicated pottery Instagram account as a means of recording her progress.

Amber: '[Instagram is] a way of me tracking where I've come from ... sometimes you have a lull where you just go, "I thought was doing all right, now I'm not" but then when you look back to see where you come from, to where you are, you think "actually I'm doing all right" ... it's for that rather than to get recognition from anybody ... But if Keith Brymer Jones, commented I'd be pretty chuffed'.

Although Amber did have family and friends as followers on her account, and the page was public and freely accessible, her Instagram account was used predominantly as a personal archive, which allowed her to observe her progress. This has similarly been discussed by Torrey et al., (2007, p. 407) in reference to how their participants document their projects through How-To guides online and archiving through the social networking sites Facebook (e.g. Zhao et al., 2013) and Instagram (e.g. Sheldon and Bryant, 2016). The archival affordances of Instagram contributed to the positive eudemonic impact of pottery for Amber, in that when she doubts her progress, she was reminded of how far she had come and could take pride in her work, resulting in a sense of personal achievement. That being said, she also acknowledges that external validation, particularly from someone she admires, such as Keith Brymer Jones, a judge on the television show *The Great Pottery Throw Down*, would also be welcomed. The satisfaction from executing high quality work is not simply in the eye of the beholder and is at odds with the objective standards imposed by a community of practice, competitiveness, frustration, or obsession (Sennett, 2009, p. 9).

Increasingly the DIY movement and Open-Source technologies, such as blogs, websites, pages, and online tutorials, have blurred the line between amateur and professional practice (Luckman, 2013, p. 260; Yair, 2011a, p. 3). For example, Wood, Rust, and Horne (2009, p. 65) discuss how by engaging with master craftworkers, expert learners, and novices to create and use a web-based learning resource that allowed for participation and exchange by learners, it was found that well-motivated learners, whilst working in physical isolation, but supported through an online community, were able to develop challenging new skills and apply them in creative ways. Moreover, Pöllänen and Weissmann-Hanski (2020, p. 348) relate such ideas more concretely to eudemonic wellbeing in their discussion of textile crafts. Building on existing research that shows that face-to-face and online communities nurture interactions, inspire collaboration and discussion, and enable shared meanings and understandings of craftwork, they explore how these digital and physical interactions fulfil the 'intrinsic needs of doing, belonging, becoming, and being', which are central to eudemonia, through crafting (2020: 350).

Daisy, who had previously limited experience with pottery, struggled to find employment during the pandemic after she graduated, but was aware that she wanted to work in the creative industry. She began learning during the pandemic, predominantly using YouTube tutorials, and set up an Instagram account to sell her work.

Daisy: 'My first couple of sales were in February, I think I sold them for a little bit cheaper because obviously they still looked a bit like rough and a bit, you know, a bit basic. But I feel like now they look really really good and I'm just like amazing! I just sell them through my DMs ... But it is quite good that they sell out so fast because at least I know that like people like my work and like I know that if I just carry on, you know, people are going to want to buy it and this is an ideal situation for me because I knew that I wanted to do creative business and like the feedback has just been amazing, so I am very happy with it all'.

For Daisy, the positive response she has received to her work on Instagram, particularly in relation to her pieces selling well, has encouraged her to continue making and selling pottery. From a self-taught beginner, initially producing pretty 'rough' work, to gaining confidence in her skill and benefiting monetarily from work that she thinks look 'really really good', indicates the strength of Web 2.0 technologies, both as a learning resource and as a means of selling her work, impacting her

eudemonic wellbeing in relation to self-fulfilment in finding satisfying work, empowerment, and pride. Moreover, as we have seen in the quote from Amber, we see the importance of external validation in encouraging this sense of accomplishment.

Crafting the Self: Identity, Belonging, and Connectedness

Being a craftsperson is defined in relation to participation in the wider community and history of the craft through the learning of traditional skills or exchange of ideas (Metcalf, 1993). Thus, identity is both personal and collective, in that individuals identify themselves as ongoing participants in a leisure activity, but also members of the community similarly identify them in that way (Stebbins, 2020, p. 46). Fort (2007, p. 16) discusses how the value of DIY culture comes from its 'commonality'. Social capital arises through sharing – whether in the exchange or purchase of craftwork, ideas, information, or peer respect. Whether occurring at a local level in workshops, fairs, or meet-ups, or on a digital level through online exchanges, forums, or social media – it is the quality of a shared interest that constitutes belonging to this wider community. Therefore, we must attend to how craftworking works to construct both an individual identity as well as a sense of belonging, or collective identity, and how this is facilitated by digital media.

To participate in pottery communities on Instagram participants felt it was necessary to create accounts dedicated specifically to their work, which were often separate from their personal accounts which they used to connect solely with friends and family. For some participants social networking sites allowed them opportunities to connect with others over their shared interest in pottery. Leah had begun pottery during the pandemic using YouTube tutorials and an online course and was not interested in selling her work at this point as she considered herself too amateur. However, she was an active user of Instagram, and described finding a 'little community' there, which she found furthered her interest in participating in pottery and contributed to the wider enjoyment she had of pottery as a leisure pursuit. This relates to Orton-Johnson's (2014b) discussion of how Web 2.0 technologies are implicated in people's enjoyment of craft. She questions how participatory web culture reshapes the experience of craft as a digitally mediated leisure practice, arguing that social media offers her participants new ways to engage with and think about their craft which has itself become embedded in their construction and enjoyment of it (2014b: 306). Both satisfaction from pottery, and belonging in this space with other potters, were brought about for Leah precisely through her engagement with both the craft and the site.

Other participants discussed how they curated their accounts, which was particularly important for those opting to sell their wares, with many of them being concerned with their 'branding' and how their Instagram profile reflected this:

Imogen: 'It's definitely a conscious decision. I figured that I really wanted a strong like theme for my brand. And I wanted to show you that throughout ... So, it's quite fun. And thinking of like different colours and backgrounds that I can use'.

Imogen, a professional potter, enjoyed posting on Instagram, curating her profile, and attending to the ways it would be experienced by their followers. Thus, we might consider the performance and crafting of self-identity within these communities, or what Orton-Johnson (2014a: 146–145) refers to as 'digitally mediated maker identity'. Moreover, despite her professional status, for which posting on Instagram is a component of operating her small business, Imogen was able to find enjoyment in engaging with the site in respect to the creativity it afforded her. However, for other participants seeking to sell their work, Instagram brought on stress, and contended with the satisfaction and self-fulfilment that had drawn them to pottery initially. Zoe, a first-year photography undergraduate student, also started making pottery and selling it on her Instagram as a form of supplemental income:

Zoe: '... it's cool because it's quite a nice thing to like make something on the side sort of like a part-time job kind of thing because I still get to be creative ... I think it is nice because I really did do it just for me ... When

I started selling them, I used to sell them on Instagram but now I have a website because I used to get so stressed because I used to do it first come first serve and I would have a bunch of people messaging me and I'd be like "aaaaghhhh", I used to get so stressed and my boyfriend was like "Zoe you literally started this because you like doing it so don't get stressed about it". Hahaha'.

Thus, while we can consider these more positive eudemonic impacts associated with selling online, we also see the more negative side of this, in that it can invite stress. Particularly, Zoe's stress was tied to the digital media that she used to sell her work through, Instagram. Unlike the website she later used, this site was not designed or intended for selling – compared to other popular sites such as Etsy. Furthermore, the aforementioned blurring of boundaries between amateur and professional can also be considered in relation to individuals who largely consider pottery as a hobby, rather than a professional career for which they have trained, establishing small businesses online to supplement their income. Craftwork is an identity practice that can be empowering in respect to creating alternatives to mainstream employment (Crawford, 2009; Luckman, 2013, 2015; Yair, 2011b: 1–2), entrepreneurial risk-taking (Dudley, 2014), and have been elaborated in reference to 'what makes life worth living' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008; Dudley, 2014). Many of my participants, who were predominantly women, considered pottery as a viable secondary income stream due to their ability to work from home and sell their wares online during the pandemic. However, the precarity of online labour contends with the eudemonic benefits this might offer, which is apparent in the stressful nature of marketing oneself and one's work online. By their nature, Web 2.0. technologies are an interactive and collaborative formulation of actors, collectively contributing to creating a service or resource that is greater than its component parts (Gauntlett, 2011, pp. 5–7). Sites like Instagram and Etsy rely on what Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010) define as 'prosumption', or the interrelated process of production and consumption. Users of sites both produce and consume the content it features, with their interactions, location data, browsing data, and preferences all becoming data commodities to be sold to advertisers (Fuchs and Sevignani, 2013). In using such sites their leisure time has been transformed into unpaid labour, and the boundaries between work and play are exploited for capital gains (Yazdanipoor et al., 2022). Comparatively, irrespective of their amateur or professional status, both Imogen and Leah arguably found their engagements with Instagram to be part of their wider enjoyment of pottery, despite them being engaged in such digital labour. This complicates our understandings of leisure and labour in digital spaces, particularly when we consider how for others, participation in such digital practices can detract from their enjoyment of pottery.

Charlotte similarly experienced a conflict between the personal satisfaction that motivated her pursuit of pottery and the challenges that arose from participating in the collective space of Instagram. Charlotte felt under pressure to post details of her making process in order to appeal to more followers who wanted genuine insight into her working practice, rather than polished finished posts of her work.

Charlotte: 'It can actually get quite stressful, I think, just if I allow it to. The point of Instagram is people want to know. They're not interested in just the product that you produce; they want to know the story behind it, they want to know about the person. But in order to do you have to put yourself out there.³ I do a lot of filming myself making stuff and I put it in stories . . . I'm not wanting to give away too much. I want to keep a little bit back. . . . So sometimes I would want to just come in here and make an animal and not think of anything else. But actually, sometimes I have to set up my camera, I've got two different tripods, I just do it on my phone. Yeah, it can be a little bit disruptive . . . Sat in one position doing one thing then I have to stop, wash my hands, move the camera . . . I mean, it's distracting. It stops that flow. But I just know it's important for the business side.⁴ I do spend a lot of time getting into reels recently. So, if I've spent a day in the pottery making stuff, I'll then be spending time perhaps editing photos and videos, getting stuff ready for content basically'.

I argue this speaks to the wider demand for 'authenticity' in contemporary social media, which many of my participants cited. Social media users are becoming increasingly critical of the lack of authenticity in these spaces (e.g. Maares et al., 2021; Ross, 2019), while new technologies such as BeReal (2022) are emerging to meet this demand, users on existing social media sites are changing

how and what they post to cultivate authenticity. Reade (2021) discusses this in relation to Australian women aged 20–35 who use Instagram to interact with fitness inspiration, or *fitspo*. Exploring how sensitive self-disclosures, or the posting of 'raw' images and text, cultivates digital intimacies between users on the site, which are socially and economically productive as they facilitate a sense of connectedness and belonging, aiding influencers in developing branding and commercial value through personal recommendations and endorsements (2021: 550). Thus, despite the authentic image that Charlotte's reels might project, this is a marketing strategy intended to cultivate intimacy with followers and promote her businesses. Users like Charlotte rely on such sites to sell their work, and when the demands of the platform change, such as by promoting alternative types of media like reels, they are forced to adapt and conform if they wish to maintain engagement. This leaves online sellers in a place of precarity, and begs the question, what happens to such sellers if the site is no longer profitable and collapses? As companies such as Meta, who own Facebook and Instagram, are facing plummeting profits in part due to competition from rivals such as TikTok, will users be forced to move over to other sites, and will they be able to adapt their marketing to sell themselves in such spaces? Furthermore, as Orton-Johnson (2014b) observed, the eudemonic impacts of craftworking are tied to the use of Web 2.0 technologies. However, this necessarily extends to the negative impacts too. Charlotte was taken out of the flow of her practice in order to produce content deemed personal or authentic enough to promote her brand if she wished to continue amassing a following and supporting herself through her small business. She must construct her brand identity in a way that others perceive as authentic, through offering insights into her practice as a maker. However, at the same time, such a projection of authenticity is an artifice, that in reality takes her further away from her 'real' practice as a potter. This relates to a wider tension running throughout this article between the positive eudemonic benefits associated with satisfaction and self-fulfilment and constructing identity within and as part of a wider community on Instagram. Thus, while these positive wellbeing benefits were in many ways joined, in this context, they were also in conflict.

Other participants, such as Luna, eschewed social media precisely because they thought it would draw them into monetising their hobby and take away from the personal and satisfying experience they had of pottery. While Luna did post some images of their pottery on their private Instagram account, they did not have a personal account specifically for pottery and did not want to enter into the arena of selling their work. However, they did collaborate with another potter who they had met in a shared studio space prior to the pandemic on a joint account dedicated to hiding free pottery and waiting for people in their local community to find it.

Luna: 'I wanted it to be like, collective and anonymous . . . pottery is just such a, like, white middle class thing in the UK, and it has like a price point for entry a lot of the time to access it. So, we started that as a way of making it anonymous, like sort of, like undermining the market a little bit for pottery . . . So, we'd get together and we'd hide them . . . and go hide and like watch as people find them. . . Then we post them on Instagram . . . the first mug we hid was found by a truck driver who goes between like France and the UK. And he loved it and was like, not the usual sort of buyer that like you'd see in like Expensive Pottery Studio in Oxford*. . . I think it's like quite fun to be able to get that in the hands of people that otherwise wouldn't pick it out or afford it, or whatever, be able to justify it . . . A bunch of people from the studio . . . give pots to it. So, it's like you can't tell who made each individual one. You know, our names aren't on it . . . because I just don't want it to be like a branded . . . I just don't want it to be like an advertisement for everyone's pots'.

Luna rejected the idea of constructing an individualised identity, or brand, as a potter on Instagram. Yet, they used the platform in an alternative way, to create a collective identity that merged other potters, and to share their practice with a wider community, which included those who have often been excluded from participation in craft due to financial constraints. This brought about its own positive eudemonic consequences, which were tied to their wider enjoyment of pottery. Moreover, this complicates the idea of presumption in digital spaces, as while outwardly critiquing social media and its associations with monetising leisure practices, they were still reliant on it to spread their wider message, which meant participating in the digital labour that constitutes the site itself.

Furthermore, we also see here the permeability of the boundaries between amateur and professional, as Luna and their collaborators undercut the market of professional potters by giving away highly skilled work that, should they have wanted to, could have been sold. Such a collective project queries the emphasis on individual success and skill, and the monetisation of craftworking, in contemporary understandings of professionalism in craftwork.

Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to illustrate how mass-produced and digital technologies and craftworking are deeply entangled, despite their perceived opposition, and how this extends to the eudemonic benefits of practising pottery. Despite many of my participants expressing that part of their enjoyment of pottery was because it took them away from technology, many of them experienced positive eudemonic impacts in relation to using social media. Throughout I have argued that the boundaries between online and offline leisure activities, leisure and work, and amateur and professional potters, are blurred through the use of Web 2.0 technologies. While in some ways digital media has democratised the learning of a skill which can otherwise be prohibitively expensive, and was largely inaccessible during the pandemic, it also renders these participants vulnerable to the capitalist models that dictate their access to these communities and exchange networks, even when they are not selling their work.

The positive eudemonic wellbeing impacts discussed include finding satisfaction and pride in working, with participants finding fulfilment and confidence through developing their skills, as well as empowerment through establishing small businesses to sell one's wares. Digital media contributed to this in respect to offering learning resources, personal archiving to document skill development, and sites through which to sell and promote their businesses, blurring the lines between amateur and professional. Moreover, people were able to cultivate a sense of personal identity through connecting with a wider community using Web 2.0 technologies to share images and narratives pertaining to their work, which also offered a sense of belonging and social connectedness, and for some was a creative practice or leisure activity in itself. Instagram enabled a crafting of self-identity which sat in relation to identifying as part of a wider community of others with shared interests. In this way, their use of social media was integral to the positive impacts that pottery brought, and divisions between their online and offline leisure practices were broken down. However, in many ways the digital entanglements of craftworking also had negative eudemonic impacts. Particularly concerning operating a small business on Instagram, whether this was in respect to cultivating a following or 'brand', and a need to project an image of 'authenticity', or navigating selling through the app. Throughout the article we see a tension between people seeking to retain pottery as a leisure pursuit undertaken for their personal satisfaction and the pressures associated with monetising their craft through social media. In this way, we see that conflict arises between the two forms of positive eudemonic impacts discussed here, as participating in the wider pottery community online, and constructing an identity that generates a following, can detract from the self-fulfilling and satisfying experience of pottery that motivated their participation in it. Moreover, as a result of the collaborative nature of such technologies, even when not promoting or selling one's work, users were engaging in digital labour, thus complicating distinctions between leisure and work.

Overall, I have argued that there needs to be a dual attention both the positive and negative wellbeing impacts experienced when engaging in leisure practices, such as pottery, and have shown that these experiences are deeply entangled with their digital engagements complicating the boundaries between online and offline practices.

Notes

1. The account name, inspired by Bluteau's (2019) @anthrodandy, aimed to reflect my position as both researcher and potter.

2. Such practises bring up questions surrounding innovation and technical proficiency, as key elements of the craft remain unlearned due to this financial cost. However, this is beyond the scope of this article.
3. These are viewed as more informal than 'posting', and are usually very short clips or photographs posted in a slideshow format that are only shown for one day.
4. These are Instagram's answer to TikTok's short format videos. It is well acknowledged by Instagram users that 'the algorithm' promotes accounts that post in this format, which helps recommend your page to other accounts and grows your following.

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