

Emma Daker

Shelanu 'belonging to us'

Refugee and migrant women working with Craftspace to develop a craft social enterprise.

The craft of making physical things provides insight into the techniques of experience that can shape our dealings with others ... Material challenges like working with resistance or managing ambiguity are instructive in understanding the resistances people harbour to one another or the uncertain boundaries between people. (Sennett, 2009).

Introduction:

It has been widely recognised in recent years that craft practice and making can be a valid and effective way to engage with people from all walks of life. Through considered and reflective work the experience of making can be utilised to address social issues and create positive change.

It is against this context that this paper will present the potential of craft as a social process through a practice led case study. Shelanu: Women's Craft Collective is a developing craft social enterprise of refugee and migrant women based in Birmingham supported by Craftspace. Through the development of this social enterprise Craftspace has been keen to explore how utilising craft practice can meaningfully engage refugee and migrant communities in building confidence and integration and connect through its outcomes to the wider community. Alongside this, it has been important to consider the route to the craft market and how the social enterprise should be placed within the sector.

This case study will begin by introducing Craftspace, describing the philosophy of the organisation and its methods for working within the community. The organisation's model of engagement will be summarised, particularly how it is applied in practise to achieve a holistic approach to project work.

The aims for the social enterprise and the approach to its development will be considered, through how they have been applied in practise with an analysis of that process through residencies, exhibitions, fairs and workshops. The positioning of the social enterprise within the contemporary craft sector will also be reflected upon.

The paper will conclude with an evaluative summary of the outcomes to date and how these might influence our plans and the manner in which we proceed with developing the social enterprise for a sustainable future.

Context:

Craftspace is an independent organisation working to increase opportunities for makers, as well as access to and participation in contemporary crafts for all audiences. It is committed to touring, quality, innovation and to the development, making and presentation of crafts in diverse cultural contexts. We aim to initiate programmes of work which stimulate artistic excellence, critical thinking, curiosity and understanding of contemporary crafts. We do this through different scales of touring exhibitions, socially engaged creative interventions, participatory projects, action research and consultancy. One of the organisation's key aims is, 'To research, develop and disseminate models of

best practice in social engagement, participation and lifelong learning where creativity is used as a tool for personal development and self-expression.' (Figueiredo 2010, 7)

Since its inception in 1986, Craftspace has recognised the limitations of working with craft purely as a commodity. Through understanding the value of the processes of craft; the potential of a convivial atmosphere and the nature of craft to be inherent to cultures worldwide, the organisation has developed a model of engagement which moves past the object to promote a more holistic approach to project work which promotes a sustainable way of working.

Much of this approach is a result of action research projects which are an intrinsic element of Craftspace exhibitions. The projects are run in partnership with host venues and relevant organisations alongside exhibition planning, targeting people not involved in crafts. Facilitated by a practising maker/s with established reputations, these projects enable different community groups to question social issues through the exhibition theme by working with craft practices; the documentation of these projects and sometimes pieces produced, are featured within the exhibitions.

Each step of the process is reflected upon with the participants and every session ends with a debriefing between the lead maker, the project manager and partners to identify what worked, what didn't and if anything needs to be altered for next time. This is a responsive but reflective way of working which ensures robustness for the work and integrity within the practice.

Through the presentation of the action research project, the participants offer a different voice within the exhibitions, one which visitors can often relate to and identify with more than that of the curator. They are also a tool to question and unpick issues around making and craft practice. This action research based method of working has moved across to project work as it develops models for collaboration, audience, maker and staff development and allows Craftspace the framework to explore current issues within crafts practice and the sector, through an evidence based mode of working.

It was through one of these projects that Craftspace initially worked with the Community Integration Partnership (CIP). CIP was an organisation based in Birmingham that supported and trained refugee and newly arrived women by providing a wide range of educational and skills building services within a safe environment. It helped women to progress into employment and to become part of their host community.

Background:

Making contact through the Midlands Refugee Council, Craftspace first worked with CIP in 2003 on an action research project for the development of the 'Self' exhibition. 'Self' was a major touring show organised in partnership with Angel Row Gallery. Through jewellery, photography and clothing the exhibition examined our physical, cultural and personal identities. The artists responded to their own experiences to reflect upon the value of difference and diversity.

These themes led to the action research project, 'The Meeting of Hands and Hearts'. As the question of identity is particularly significant to newly arrived refugees, Craftspace approached CIP. Working with artists Jivan Astfalck, Senior Lecturer at the School of Jewellery, Birmingham City University and photographer Kate Paxman, the women at CIP explored notions of identity and 'self'. The title, 'meeting of hands and hearts' was the inspiration behind the first collective piece. A necklace, made from clay beads formed through shaking hands which retained the individual imprint of each person's handprint on each side. Personal stories and messages, written on fine paper, were then threaded into the beads. This work was an excellent ice breaking exercise, the women who were

from diverse backgrounds, were put at ease through a simple yet effective process, creating a convivial atmosphere in which to work and they drew confidence from seeing their contribution to an engaging piece of work.



The second piece involved transferring personal images onto a set of ceramic plates. These were used for a celebration feast at the end of the project in which all participants prepared and shared food particular to their cultures. A video of the feast was showcased in the exhibition. This work enabled the women to share their cultures, as well as learning new skills through the process of making. The impact of the project on the participants was outlined in a 2008 report on the Arts and Refugees, 'Their self-esteem was raised, their confidence reinvigorated, they began to look more closely at the other services and courses provided by CIP and they began to see themselves as having the right to enjoy a fulfilled and active life.' (Kidd, Zahir and Khan 2008, 38) The benefits of this initial project for the organisation was summed up by the Manager of CIP,

The beauty of the project has been that it has brought together women from different backgrounds and cultures. The Community Integration Partnership values a holistic approach when working with women and this activity has fed into the organisation's values and ethics and has introduced new ways of working. Specifically it has enabled us in our work in breaking down barriers, raising confidence and encouraging the integration process.
(Panesar 2004, 1)

The impact the project had on CIP was a valuable outcome, the organisation understood that working with makers could advance their own aims in developing and integrating the women they worked with. Also, for the majority of the women, English is their second language, indeed some had very little. The project enhanced their communication skills and enabled them to practise their English. It also raised CIP's profile as an emerging organisation within the city.

The project also benefitted Craftspace. The two agencies worked effectively together using the arts as a tool to unlock creativity and develop skills, but the expertise of CIP and their pastoral care when working with such a diverse group of women was invaluable. Their knowledge and procedures enabled the artists to approach working with

the women in an informed way. This reiterated Craftspace's belief in the benefits of partnership working and involving the makers, project partners and staff throughout the whole process.

Due to this first collaboration CIP committed to continuing to work with Craftspace on two further high quality projects between 2005 – 2007 and achieved funding through the Aspire Development Partnership to do so. Both projects, 'Seeds of Change' and 'New Growth', resulted in exhibitions within Birmingham, which not only increased the women's sense of achievement and pride in what they'd produced, but also enabled Craftspace and CIP to disseminate the work and create relationships with other venues in the city which continue today.

It is also due to the wide dissemination of these projects, along with other action research initiatives, through local displays, touring exhibitions and conferences that Craftspace has developed a reputation for demonstrating the wider role for makers in society that goes beyond commercial transactions. Furthermore they have worked to raise our critical profile for positioning crafts practice in the widest social and cultural constituencies.

A strength recognised in all of the projects was the notion of collective making. Through creating pieces together the group became more integrated and unified. They gained more confidence in themselves whilst developing their own self-expression. Work completed with furniture maker Natalie Cole during the 'New Growth' project, 2007 demonstrated the potential of creating a body of work which was equally as successful as a group piece as it was individually.



The wooden stools designed by Natalie were commissioned by the group. The women used embroidery, transfers and woodworking techniques to decorate their surfaces. This range was of particular interest to Craftspace, as it demonstrated an alternative approach to the traditional route to the contemporary craft market place. The majority of practising makers in the contemporary craft sector operate as sole traders; furthermore the industry is not wholly diverse. This view is supported by recent Crafts Council research, 87% of all contemporary craft businesses work as sole traders....Demographic data indicates a marked lack of diversity in the contemporary craft sector.... To summarise the relevant data, contemporary makers are predominantly white (96%)....In addition, media and leisure habits indicate a predominantly middle class orientation.

Improving sector diversity is a key challenge for sector support agencies. (Yair 2010: 3 & 4)

Promoting diversity within the crafts sector has always been a key element of Craftspace's practice. We are really interested in exploring and promoting alternative routes to making and the marketplace. The projects completed in partnership with CIP coincided with research and thinking within the organisation to develop this approach further, along with the concept of creative production with social responsibility.

These ideas were reinforced during Craftspace's attendance at 'Origin' in 2007. Craftspace was able to negotiate a stand to show the work from the recent CIP projects as part of its 21st anniversary celebrations. It was the first time that craft produced in a community setting had been shown at the fair. It was a fantastic experience for the participants, who visited the fair but there was also a great response from visitors who were interested in buying work, particularly intrigued by the narrative behind it. Together with this experience and the interest in investigating collective making the organisation explored the possibilities of social enterprise to examine the potential of engaging newly arrived and refugee women to develop their skills and integration into host communities by creating work with a social aim.

In Practice:

The model of social enterprise was a comparatively new concept at the time, especially to the contemporary craft sector. The not for profit, philanthropic nature of the social enterprise format would be most suitable to the development of the project work with CIP. The structure of the social enterprise and the approach to its development would mean that the women could progress from being recipients and beneficiaries of arts activity, to producers who can contribute to the creative economy and develop a more diverse offer to the marketplace.

At the time there was a perceived hostility towards refugee and asylum seekers in the country, although a lot of arts organisations were working within the sector to improve integration and cohesion,

Negative and sometimes inaccurate reporting on refugee and asylum issues has hampered possibilities for the development of positive relationships between individuals and communities. Several organisations...within the arts, have sought to address this issue by creating work that helps to increase understanding of the real issues involved. Evaluations...have demonstrated the positive impact achieved in changing attitudes.

(Kidd, Zahir, Khan 2008: 6)

The craft social enterprise could be promoted to challenge the negative representations of refugees and asylum seekers. By highlighting the work of the social enterprise it would be possible to show the contribution members were making to the host communities.

The social enterprise framework is also sufficiently flexible to accommodate both refugee women as long term participants and those who can only have transitory involvement. At the time it also meant that the social enterprise could connect into CIP's daily routine, increasing the numbers it can help without adding additional staffing and resource burdens to the organisation. It was also a business ethos founded upon both organisations' deep social concern to improve the position of the women. There was also great potential for the development of a social enterprise to work towards Craftspace's aims of elevating the role of crafts in an ongoing contribution to the cultural, economic

and social regeneration and tourism infrastructure of the region and potentially the country.

In order to develop the Craft Social Enterprise, CIP and Craftspace successfully applied for funding to the Baring Foundation to enable the appointment of a part-time Craft Social Enterprise Manager in early 2009. This post would be employed and supported by Craftspace but based at CIP.

Following a research period, skills building taster workshops were run during the Learning Revolution Festival 2009, at seven centres around Birmingham to identify communities of refugee and newly arrived women and to establish interest in the social enterprise. Following the Craftspace model the workshops were run with three established practising makers Melanie Tomlinson, Ruth Singer and Nicola Griffiths. Although evaluation showed 100% positive response by participants, artists and centre staff to the content of the workshops, the skills learnt and the women's desire for further workshops, they weren't effective in recruiting for the social enterprise. The main reason for this was travel. Women weren't confident enough to travel from their area of Birmingham to CIP. Subsequent activities were promoted to the centres but it was mainly women from CIP that attended. Conversely, the taster sessions were successful as contact was made with a network of centres across Birmingham that could utilise the services of the craft social enterprise in the future. The programme of taster sessions also highlighted the uneven spread of refugees across the city.

The next step was to achieve substantial funding for a programme of activity to develop a framework for the social enterprise. Working with CIP we were successful in gaining funding from Arts Council England to run three residencies to test different approaches to making:

- limited edition collections for sale through selected galleries or craft fairs regionally and nationally
- tendering for bespoke commissions for local and regional public or corporate clients
- training to facilitate and deliver workshops to others in the community.

To initiate the residency process and to begin to develop a profile for the social enterprise it was determined that the inspiration for work produced should be the city of Birmingham, the new home to the participants. By utilising a creative process and craft practices the women could get to know the city, to increase their confidence and encourage the development of a sense of place through their locality. This had a dual purpose; by focussing on local industrial craft heritage as inspiration, the work produced could project an alternative image and identity for the city. Birmingham has always been a place of cultural tolerance and innovation, of creative diversity, of cultural integration and cohesion so the work produced by the women could be promoted in this way and utilised for tourism, enabling the women within the social enterprise to influence and contribute to the creative economy through making.

The first residency began in May 2010 with Birmingham based jeweller Kathryn Partington and ceramicist Rosanna Martin. The programme followed Craftspace's model of working, by involving the artists and the external evaluator and documenter in the planning of the sessions and the reflection of every session they attended. The artists developed a creative process for the women to explore the architecture and diversity of Birmingham through experimenting with a number of techniques to create ceramic pieces for a limited edition collection.

The residency included visits to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, the Museum's Collection Centre, the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter and the Botanical Gardens.



Although there were some great successes there were also a number of challenges throughout the residency. From May to November that year, thirty women attended sessions, although only fourteen attended regularly and at varying times within the session. This was challenging for the artists when planning sessions and the continuation of a developmental process when attendance was patchy. This also impacted on the progress of the social enterprise structure. Although business training sessions with a focus on social enterprise were run alongside the residency programme, they suffered from the same irregular attendance. Conversely, the variable attendance was not necessarily a negative reflection on the commitment of the women, but reflected the demands on refugee and asylum seeker's time which are significant. The three hour sessions which were held one afternoon a week often clashed with appointments the women were obliged to attend. Equally the transient nature of the target group was an issue; women who'd attended on a regular basis for a number of weeks may then stop coming without warning or explanation.

The biggest challenge however, was the unexpected closure of CIP. Unfortunately the organisation went into administration approximately a month before the residency was due to be completed. Fortunately it was possible to move the sessions to Craftspace's base, although this wasn't ideal. Arts Council also agreed that Craftspace could continue with the project. The closure impacted a great deal on the women, it affected their confidence and sense of belonging. The transfer to the Custard Factory had limited success and we couldn't persuade all of the women to follow the project there. Consequently, the residency end was very disjointed and the limited edition of ceramic vessels was never properly completed.

Despite the challenges there were a number of successes. With the ambition to eventually have work in reputable galleries we approached Yvonna Demczynska, owner of Flow Gallery London, to be a critical friend to the project. It was intended that she would visit sessions, critique the work and advise on its development. Following the first residency she commented:

I found The Routes to Revolution a very valuable project for newly arrived refugees to the Birmingham area. It is run very professionally and enables the participants to learn useful craft skills, which should eventually lead to making commercially viable crafts within a social enterprise framework...the women were able to meet up with other women in similar circumstances and share their thoughts and ideas. I think this type of community based learning is very empowering for women who are often home based caring for their children and families.

(Thornhill 2010: 8)

The involvement of a critical friend was one mechanism to gauge the impact, if any, of the social enterprise on the contemporary craft sector. Another positive outcome was an exhibition on the process of the residency in the Community Gallery at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Aside from meeting Craftspace's aim of disseminating the work to a wider community, the exhibition was also a fortuitously timed confidence boost for the women just at the point that CIP was closing. It also contributed to instilling a sense of pride in the group, particularly the positive response of visitors. The exhibition also provided an opportunity to assess how the project outcomes were connecting to the wider community, 'Many [visitors] recognised that craft activities can unite people from different countries and cultures, and help them to integrate into new communities.' (Slattery 2011: 5). The Gallery staff completed an extensive evaluation of the exhibition which included adopting Generic Learning Outcome techniques to measure visitors' learning; one visitor commented that the exhibition had given them a better understanding of the, 'Creative potential of people who may not have had creative opportunities before...the empowerment in giving people creative purpose.' (Slattery 2011: 6) Through the exhibition contact was made with two other Birmingham based refugee organisations, providing invaluable contacts for the later development of the social enterprise.

Following residency one, there was a core group of ten women. In light of CIP closing the decision was made to continue working with Kathryn Partington for the second residency to provide continuity for the women following the uncertainty and distress. Birmingham also continued to be the source of inspiration, focussing on the potential of batch production and working with historical small businesses in the Jewellery Quarter. Visits to the Quarter and the businesses were insightful for the women, but learning from the last residency there were full debriefs with the women following the visits to discuss what they'd seen, the relation to the theme and ideas for developing their designs. Consequently, in contrast to the first body of work, the theme remained strong throughout this residency.

Working with Kathryn again initially proved valuable, but towards the end of the residency evaluations raised concerns that the women were beginning to depend on her greatly, presuming that she would continue working with them, which impacted on plans to transfer autonomy in their making to the women.

Nevertheless, it was very beneficial to work with a smaller group. The first residency had been quite charged with high numbers and changes of women. Working with a smaller regular group provided opportunity to work on the development of the social enterprise. Sessions in residency one had been just half a day, these were extended to a full day for the practical sessions and half a day for the business session, with the opportunity to stay on in the afternoon to continue making, without staff support. This required more commitment from the women but was a good indicator of their dedication. The smaller group also meant the development of hand skills between the two residencies was immense.

Business sessions were led by 'ise': a Birmingham based social enterprise dedicated to developing social enterprise across the Midlands. These classes ensured that the women understood the social enterprise model, the business we're creating and our social aim: to assist migrant, refugee and newly arrived women to become more aspirational through their creative and holistic development, encouraging better integration into local communities and for those communities to profit from the diversity and richness of the women's experience.

This process followed Craftspace's collaborative approach, to maximise on expertise and share best practice. The facilitator of the business sessions tailored the content to suit the group and also worked with them to identify their roles within the social enterprise. Although this was a useful exercise for the women's realisation of the extent of the

project and how much responsibility they could have, these roles are yet to be formalised.

Within the business training was a period of five weeks to focus on marketing, to develop a brand for the craft social enterprise, with a view to being able to launch the business at the 'The Contemporary Craft Fair' in Bovey Tracey in June 2011. Practicing makers were invited to present how they brand their work, how they promote it traditionally and through social networking and how to publicise their involvement in a craft fair. It was within these sessions that the name 'Shelanu' was identified. This is Hebrew for 'belonging to us'. The women felt this name reflected the main ethos of the social enterprise; that it was a business for them, which belongs to them, and anyone that might join them.

During this time the group really began to bond, although timekeeping was still an issue, attendance was regular and there was an emerging dedication to the sessions due to the smaller group, the business sessions and the focus of preparing for the Bovey Tracey craft fair. The women were also working as a group. Although they were making individual pieces they were working together through discussions on their making, how to approach it and talking through design problems. For us it was interesting to hear the discussions making can generate and the shared experience making can evoke.

The 'Contemporary Craft Fair' in Bovey Tracey was a seminal show for the project. The women contributed to display design which was developed to highlight the Birmingham inspiration so that visitors could immediately make the link to the work. The skyline photograph is the view from the unit in the Custard Factory in which the women work and highlights the contrast between the historical industrial Birmingham and the developing consumer led city centre.



'Shelanu' was cited in the 'Materials and Marketing' section of the fair, as the social enterprise applied to promote work rather than to sell it. The fair was to gauge people's response to, and interest in, the work; was it a viable range for selling to generate income for the social enterprise? The response was phenomenal. Visitors responded positively to the work and the idea of buying pieces that contributed to social responsibility. We took over two hundred and fifty contacts, creating a 'Shelanu' mailing list, in addition to meeting representatives of galleries and museums who were interested in stocking work made by the Collective, plus other organisations that were interested in workshops.

Every member attended the 'Contemporary Craft Fair' and took their turn manning the stand. The participation was important as they had immediate positive responses to their work; it gave them the chance to talk about their work, but was also fantastic for the sense of pride within the group and developing the passion and commitment to take the

social enterprise forward. They returned to Birmingham with a real desire to identify selling opportunities. However, perhaps most importantly, they also looked around the rest of the fair and consequently critiqued their work in comparison to the designer makers exhibiting. The women had renewed aspirations to develop their own skills to improve the quality of their work.

For Craftspace the Bovey Tracey experience highlighted the work that's needed within the sector for the success of the social enterprise model. 'Shelanu' were based in the 'Materials and Making' section, ideal for this year to launch the enterprise, particularly as there wouldn't have been the stock to sell. However, to participate in the main selling areas of the fair with other practitioners the Collective would, quite rightly have to go through the application process. Unfortunately, 'Shelanu' would be unable to apply as the fair does not allow shared stands and would identify the Collective's eight members as sharing a stand. This is an issue that may affect other craft fairs which Craftspace will have to lobby against to progress the collective approach to making as a viable alternative route to the contemporary craft market place.

Combined with the outcomes of the first two residencies and 'The Contemporary Craft Fair' debrief the thinking on how to proceed with residency three altered. Originally the plan was to respond to a live commission to develop another income strand for the social enterprise. In light of the fractured end to the first ceramic focussed project and the women's desire to perfect their skills in one discipline, it was decided to continue with jewellery making but through a different approach. 'Shelanu' are just embarking on this third residency, but to avoid dependency on an artist there will be three visiting artists who will each only have contact with the women for two sessions over four weeks. They will explore using found and recycled materials combined with metal, the use of colour through enamel and perfecting finishing and fixing skills. All these elements will be considered throughout the residency and then to develop a product range that could be worked on by a wider group of women, no matter how much or how little they can be involved. Thus enabling the Collective to engage both refugee and newly arrived women. The core group will be responsible for teaching and instructing new members. With a wider membership it will be possible to provide regular stock for galleries, craft fairs and the website. The core group will also continue to work on inspiration pieces for exhibition.

Alongside the residencies the potential outcomes to the wider community have been explored through the development of another income stream. During the exhibition at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, members of the Collective supported the resident artists to provide two Saturday drop-in workshops for members of the public. This was taken further when the Collective's work was on sale in a Birmingham artist run shop; the women facilitated a public workshop supported by the Project Manager. Over the summer, this experience has been consolidated as 'Shelanu' were paid for facilitating workshops for Birmingham City Council.



These were a series of two, three day workshops for families which the women devised, supported by Kathryn Partington, but then facilitated themselves with only the supportive presence of the Social Enterprise Manager. This will be expanded through contacts with other organisations made during the taster sessions and exhibitions at Birmingham and Bovey Tracey and a forthcoming exhibition at Bilston Craft Gallery. In addition to providing another income stream for the social enterprise it will enable us to promote the women's contribution to their local communities through the craft sector, the social enterprise sector and local press.

Following the closure of CIP, a long term venue to provide a sustainable future for 'Shelanu' is still an issue. A potential space has been identified, but the negotiation for this will take some time as for the continuation of the social enterprise it is essential the venue is a partner rather a host organisation. Our ambition is to work with community partners, including local politicians, to develop the craft social enterprise and its work as a strategic community resource. 'Shelanu: Women's Craft Collective' would still operate as envisaged and create high quality contemporary craft to sell within the craft sector, in addition to providing workshops for community organisations but it will be placed within the main community it serves, enabling formal referral mechanisms to ensure that we are engaging with the women that need the resources and support of 'Shelanu.'

Summary:

In this paper, I have presented the process adopted to develop a structure for a craft social enterprise with refugee and migrant women and the progress made by the Collective to date. By summarising and analysing the eight year project through the key schemes and achievements, I have shown that through considered and reflective work there has been success in building the confidence of the women involved in its development, particularly the core members and that progress has been made in providing opportunities and mechanisms for more positive integration with the wider community.

The model of working that Craftspace has developed has enabled partnership work with organisations outside of the contemporary craft sector, not only achieving our aims within each project but also influencing the thinking of those partners. Partners from CIP to Birmingham children's centres and other refugee organisations have acknowledged that utilising craft practices, supports their work to achieve their own organisational aims, creating potential for a further income stream for the social enterprise, by engaging with some of these organisations in the future.

The more recent work funded by Arts Council has demonstrated the importance of having the flexibility to be able to adapt to arising situations. Fortunately Craftspace is in a position to work in a responsive manner. However, the model of reflective, evidence based working the organisation has implemented enables us to be alert to the challenges as they arise, thereby supporting more informed decisions about how to proceed. The organisation has been able to adapt the programme as necessary to maximise the benefit for the women and the more sustainable development of the social enterprise. For example, it was initially intended that a formal craft social enterprise would be established within the first year of the residency funding. Through the process of the first residency it became clear that this was over optimistic and it was determined that a slower, more organic growth would lead to a stronger, more sustainable enterprise in the future. Consequently, the third residency was completely changed to revisit and develop techniques and processes to strengthen the women's skill base and confidence, instead of moving them on too quickly.

Craftspace's approach to testing the market and getting feedback for the work made by the women through critical friends, exhibitions, fairs and workshops is a successful

model to measure impact on the wider community but also a valuable tool to inform the development of the social enterprise, by evaluating feedback on a regular basis and utilising it to inform the next steps. This has proved successful and led to the production of a strategic plan to form a new community partnership, hopefully leading to a permanent home and a sustainable future.

The development of 'Shelanu: Women's Craft Collective' has also enabled Craftspace to further its work on exploring alternative routes to crafts practice and the marketplace to contribute to the diversification of the sector. The work produced by the women is distinctively positioned to advocate this approach. The potential to promote the ranges of work produced through tourism is a dimension yet to be fully explored. This has been identified through observing how embodied and lived experience is manifest in the work, how the women are inspired by their new city but are also influenced by their own experience, resulting in an aesthetic synthesis which, when promoted, contributes to a contemporary sense of place, something to relate to.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the creation of the craft social enterprise has been successful in enabling the women to acquire and develop new skills, not only in making, but in learning, communication, design, teaching, selling and networking. They have also developed business skills which they will utilise within the craft social enterprise but may also support them in other areas of their lives.

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