#QUILTFORPULSE: CONNECTED AND SHARED PRODUCTION-CENTERED SOCIO-POLITICAL ACTIVISM THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

Nickolina Yankova, Kylie Peppler
University of California, Irvine

ABSTRACT

Aligning crafts and activism, craftivism provides a useful context to study the processes of socio-political engagement. While crafting’s historical associations with domesticity make it seem antithetic to civic activism, it is these exact overtones of comfort and habitation that give craftivism its power. Building on connected learning, this hybrid online-offline ethnography analyzes the #quiltsforpULSE movement, a response to the 2016 mass shooting at a gay bar in Orlando that distributed over 1,700 handcrafted quilts to survivors, families, and first responders. We study the intersections of the public #quiltsforpULSE movement and one quilting group’s production of material responses to violence. Findings broaden our understanding of activism by building on established craft practices in producing contributions to socio-political movements and have implications for how to design educational spaces across settings.

Research Questions

1. How is the public profile of the large-scale craft-based #quiltsforpULSE movement connected with local implementations of the movement through craftivism?
2. How do shared practices of the production-centered process of quilting contribute to producing material responses toward shared purposes of the larger public movement?

METHODS

We analyzed the intersections of the larger movement with craftivism. We performed a thematic analysis to identify emergent codes around production-centered processes of the local quilt group.

Data sources

• 6,000 public #quiltsforpULSE Instagram posts.
• 108 posts on the quilt group’s Facebook page.
• Field notes from 4 in-person meetings
• 180 photographs (artifacts, tools, workspaces)
• 3 semi-structured interviews with quilters.

BACKGROUND

Connected Learning builds on the idea that listening to social transformation oriented movements can be a way to guide design recommendations for similar efforts (Ito et al., 2020). The Connected Learning elements that are particularly relevant to the study of #quiltsforpULSE relate to 1) connection across settings, 2) shared practices, and 3) shared purposes (Ito et al., 2020, p. 27).

FINDINGS

Craftivist Connections across Public- and Local Action

The large #quiltsforpULSE movement fostered connections across gendered, public, domestic, and spiritual spaces. It was the physical production and distribution of the quilts in combination with the online publication that allowed for such connections to flourish.

DISCUSSION

This work has implications for craft-driven design recommendations of socio-political action for production-centered educational contexts, such as maker-centered learning without introducing new and non-integral aspects to existing programs and activities. These include introducing socio-political activism into making as something related to ongoing activities, integrating personal aesthetic preferences as part of the socio-political expression, engaging with the craft beyond the craft itself to form personal connections, and setting limits that reflect recognition of group member’s limits at the time of production.

REFERENCES


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