



To say that something appears 'as if by magic' usually implies that it has materialised without effort. Yet if we consider magic as something that arises within a very particular set of conditions, catalysed by direct intension, we can understand it as an effectual 'doing'. It is just that the effects of this 'doing' cannot be easily quantified beyond the period of the workshop; the magic occurs in the moment of happening and cannot be accurately represented or measured after the event.

Every Tuesday a group of primary school children between the ages of nine and ten arrive at the entrance to the courtyard, their approach made audible by collective chattering as they descend from the street above. Once down the concrete steps and through the large steel gates, which are always open, they make their way diagonally across the courtyard. Some are loud and racing, others more hesitant. On warmer days they claw jackets away from their bodies while still in transit, in colder seasons they pull hoods more tightly around their heads and shuffle along the concrete. The group, known collectively as P5, find their destination in the corner of the courtyard, where they stop under a white canopy.

What we define here as 'magic' might be an attempt at naming what has been referred to as the 'unquantifiable other element' involved in the facilitation of workshops. The inability of many educational models to account for these unquantifiable instances has perhaps lead to an underestimation of their value, and while it could be contradictory to give name to something so inherently indefinable, the already slippery (mis)understandings of our own magical tendencies, and of the term 'magic' itself, might offer an appropriate language within which we can begin to discuss this 'other element' without reducing it to pedagogical definition.

Underneath the canopy on one of four wooden tables are the names of each P5, handwritten on small blue rectangles by those who anticipated their arrival. They scramble to find their own label, and on discovery proceed to stick it to their jumper or shirt or forehead. Some try placing the sticky paper across their mouth, but soon retract this decision when realising it might be difficult to talk. They search for a black bin of unfixed location, its transience meaning some time can be spent looking, perplexed about what to do with the sleek white rectangle peeled from the back of their name. Later, on the journey back to school, they will stick these same blue labels on to the lamp post at the end of the street. A collaborative installation built upon each week, a mutual yet unspoken understanding amongst the collective that they will not alert the adults to the development of such work.

While recognising that any attempt to conceptualise magic within this context is nothing more than a gesture towards the ungraspable, it is the element of magic that we as facilitators hope most to cultivate. It is essential however, that we realise it can never fully materialise without the active input of our participators, in this case; the magic cannot happen without the children. It is with this understanding that we attempt to create the conditions most likely to facilitate magic, while remaining open and flexible to the uncontrollable other forces that can influence the occurrence of magical instances; weather, mood, interruptions, emotions, tensions...

The canopy, opaque and protective, holds space more openly than the solidity of a ceiling, while deflecting damp leaves or filtering the burn of too strong sunbeams. The billowing sheet above our heads adopts different shades of white and grey as the light changes throughout the day and with the seasons. In spring it becomes a tear duct, holding showers collected throughout the morning to release later, a gushing waterfall; a noisy place to wash our sticky hands. In summer the canopy is lighter and more humorous, the hilarity of webbed feet seen from underneath as a seagull patters across its surface, now glowing with unfamiliar sun. In autumn it becomes a collector, gathering leaves from each deciduous neighbour, to keep for a little while before they

are swept back into the earth. And in winter it is gone, the threat of high winds becoming too much for its delicate body. We understand its need for rest and wait for March, when it might return again.

Without the canopy, the corner becomes more visible as a gap. Not in a sense of lack, but more like a break. A break is something we might associate with leisure, or the absence of labour, a short period within the day where we are permitted to rest and not work, yet within this break we are still working. It is more like an interruption; to be productive in this break means something else, removed from the vocabulary of economics. It fosters activity not always permitted in the rigid structures of the outside world. The corner, as host to magical activity, is also a gap in time, further complicating any traditional measures of productivity. That isn't to say that time stops, but that our perception of its passage is altered. Time in the corner isn't static, it is more fluid than ever as it wraps around and envelops each of us in the magical present of each moment shared. During this period of activity, past and future events become less significant, unless they are being shape-shifted, mis-remembered or mythologised.

The anticipators rearrange the corner according to the needs of each day. They talk about feng shui and ways to move through space, reflecting on the successes and failures of previous arrangements. While some elements within the corner remain constant, the wooden tables are always moving. They are the central surface which accommodates making and gathering, and so the positioning of each is a vital decision made before the arrival of the collective. The central making tables are orbited by smaller, supporting tables which hold the materials. Both the possibilities and limitations of the material selection are equally considered, in other words, what is left out is just as important as what is put in. In the corner, the materials are often salvaged, recycled, donated or repurposed. They are gifted by the receptionist who kindly cleans out her yogurt pots each week, or collected from the cafe on delivery day. They might

be foraged from the nearby cycle path, or raided from the workshop offcut bin, but they are almost always left over from something else.

While the magic occurs in the moment of happening, that does not mean that tangible things cannot be produced within the workshop, or that they are reduced to the status of by-product. An idea transformed from thoughtform into physical reality through engagement with material process is fundamental to our understanding of what constitutes an occurrence of magic. The objects made within this context also hold the possibility of extending the magical experience beyond the workshop, as the perception of these objects can instigate further instances of magic. There is no doubt that they become the source of much joy, conversation and reflection. It more that these objects do not fully represent the conception of magic, but instead hold both its memory and potential to conjure.

The P5s gather in front of a large, colourful, metal wall, which displays a selection of laminated depictions of artworks, held up by small magnets. The solidity of this giant rectangle, drilled into brick, becomes an ideal host for the ever changing selection of pictures, which reflect the activity taking place that day. It is a carefully curated backdrop that sets the scene of each workshop, planned long before the curtains open. It is a consistent meeting point, where discussion is sparked, questions are asked and new images are always expected. It is a quiet retreat made for looking, a place to gather inspiration and be open to new possibilities. A giant fridge door, on which we might post our achievements or thoughts or drawings, as the play comes to an end.



	cutting,	dropping,	swapping,
	chatting,		
sticking,	drawing,		
hammering,	thinking, looking,		
laughing,	humming, splashing,		
putting,	squidging, deciding,	mashing,	squelching,
	glazing, dipping, painting,	imagining,	mistaking,
	celebrating, undoing,		whispering,
	sawing,		noise-making,
	collaging,	sitting,	drilling,
sewing,	choosing,	deliberating, switching,	singing, banging,
shaking, pulling, dying,		bundling,	knotting, listening,
tying, spraying, slicing, rummaging, collecting, picking,			sorting, moving,
	questioning, story-telling,		squeezing,
	designing, foraging, rolling,	steaming,	failing,
	scraping,	colouring,	carving,
		hammering,	
printing,	world-building,	playing,	waiting,
stirring,	engineering,	performing, discussing,	zipping,
recycling,	testing, planning,		unwrapping,
oxidising,	boiling, ripping,		skewering,
washing,	skipping, arranging, disco-		dancing, reflecting,
	scrubbing, communicating,		glowing, taping,
trusting,	writing, being, sweeping, extruding,		
	pretending, replacing, sponging,		creating,
running,	wearing, feeling, braking, hiding,		balancing,
stacking,	imitating, hearing,		building,
	soaking, trying, observing,		
	measuring, washing,		sanding,



Music emanates across the empty concrete yard. A shipping container is opened from one side to reveal a disco ball reflecting specs of scattered light across handmade costumes that hang like flamboyant ghosts from the inside walls. Outside, the four wooden tables now huddle together in support of a large felt board game, newly invented worlds patchworked across their collective surface. Cardboard box totem poles tower in one corner and beside them lies a variety of makeshift masks, colourful creatures with packaging peanut noses, mossy eyebrows and paper teeth await animation. Giant boards of different sizes balance against the wall, clothes and other objects stapled on to them to create fantastical images; a rucksack-frog chases a leather-jacket-spider down a waterfall. Hand painted signs gather in gangs around the courtyard edges, ready to accost their readers with demands and play station colloquialisms, while others relay their loves of geography and dogs. A table painted like a sky offers crisps, strawberries and Oreos to be consumed without limitation. Later, the entirety of the P5 collective will arrive en masse, flooding the courtyard with noisy excitement. Costumes will be pulled down from their hangers and put on in a frenzied race, purple juice will be glugged from paper cups, dice will be thrown, mask creatures come to life. A macarena line will erupt spontaneously on the shipping container stage while tiny voices scream pop songs in unison, drowning out any remnants of Rick Astley or Kate Bush. Inside the building the chaos of making will ensue at stations set up with now familiar materials. Bewildered adults will watch from the side unsure of how, if at all, they might join in with the party.

never gonna give you up...

never gonna let you down...