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Kate Scale

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Supervisor Julia Lockheart

Engaging with art and jewellery is mentally beneficial for autistic people: How can art, art classrooms/workshops and jewellery be more inclusive?

There is evidence that autistic people, also referred to as people with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) (Currigan 2018), can benefit from immersion in certain sensory activities and that these may be beneficial in teaching and learning self-regulating behaviours. For instance, Kimble, (2019) states that sensory activities immerse the body and the mind of the autistic child in stimuli he or she can use to develop sensory connections in the brain and reduce stress or anxiety. The same can be said of adults on the autistic spectrum. For many creative activities, the self-soothing characteristics of interaction with different mediums and repetitive activities may enhance the ability of autistic people to self-regulate certain behaviours (Malchiodi, 2017). It is also known that autistic people prefer to think in a visual rather than verbal way and that many enjoy art activities as a time to interact with others without the pressure of verbal commitment (Baron Cohen, 2008).

Despite the evidence that creativity and art can have benefits for autistic people (Baron-Cohen, 2008; Beaver, 2012; Gonzalez-Dolginko, 2019), there appears to be limited research into the need for a suitable and inclusive learning environment for autistic people to fully engage in crafts and making. Furthermore, there is limited research into how crafted objects can be designed in a way that helps stimulate autistic people. The first purpose of the essay is to analyse how people on the autistic spectrum engage in art practices as a way of self-expression, and how makers and art educators can use inclusive workspaces to engage autistic adults in craft making. The second is to evaluate the benefits of stimming and the use of wearable items such as jewellery to allow for discrete stimming. I intend to use this research to further my own designs to be inclusive and accessible. One of the key researchers of autism I will be looking at for my research is Simon Baron Cohen.

Professor Simon Baron-Cohen is a Professor of Developmental Psychopathology at Cambridge University and the Director of the Autism Research Centre (Smallman, 2021). Baron-Cohen also opened the first clinic in 1999 to help people with Asperger's and Autism (Autism Research Centre 2021). Baron-Cohen argues that most learning environments and places of work do not accommodate diverse brain types such as ASD. In schools pupils are taught in the same way, but people on the autistic spectrum often have a different learning style to neuro-typical learners.

The first part of this essay will analyse artists who are on the autistic spectrum to understand the connection between autism and the art world and help form the theoretical research for this essay. These are Gilles Trehin, Stephen Wiltshire, Derek Paravicini and lesser-known artists Blake Zucker and Siddharth Gadiyar. Many of these artists have Savant syndrome, a rare condition which affects people with different developmental disorders, including autism. It enables them to have an amazing talent in not only art but memory and mathematical skills which in a neuro typical brain would be known as a genius (SSM Health 2021). 'Acquired savant syndrome' is also known to appear following a brain injury or disease (Treffert 2017), again showing remarkable talents. The "Autism spectrum" has a wide range of symptoms and skills, some people needing considerable support and others managing their everyday lives (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke NINDS 2015).

The essay will then move on to specific autistic traits such as 'stimming' and how art can be therapeutic for people who like to 'stim'. This often refers to fidgeting with an object in the hand, which can be used to make people feel calmer, improve concentration or as a distraction when needed. This will lay

the foundations for the final part of the essay, looking at how to design items that can be beneficial to people on the autistic spectrum.

Following this, the essay will go on to explore how makers can create inclusive workshops to help engage autistic people. The emphasis on this section will be on the benefits of designing and making for themselves. By synthesising research about art education, (Henderson 2014) beneficial learning methods for autism and the benefits of crafts, (Schukei 2021) I will show that participating in art crafts can be constructive for people on the autistic spectrum. Designers creating workshops with good environment for autistic people can allow this beneficial creativity to develop. This requires more awareness of needs by the people delivering workshops in creative arts, whilst also being aware of the needs of undiagnosed people.

Based on the findings from this research, the final section will focus on how to design items that can be beneficial to people on the autistic spectrum. More specifically, I will explore how designers and makers who create inclusive pieces, have influenced my own designs.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is said to be one the most common neurodevelopmental disorders and “characterized by persistent impairment in reciprocal communication and social interactions as well as restricted repetitive pattern of behaviours, interests or activities” (Campisi et al 2018). Autism can affect people in different ways. For some, it may cause issues with communication and self-expression or often anxiety and sensory sensitivity. People on the autistic spectrum may experience “far greater anxiety in their daily life than the vast majority of people” (Attwood 2015). This is often due to being more vulnerable to negative life experiences which can lead to poor mental health (Cage et al 2017; Griffiths et al., 2019). This essay will focus on these key aspects.

Therapeutic activities help to ease a troubled mind and give respite from everyday challenges. Some artists, who will be looked at in more depth below, have shown how practical art gives them this therapy, but there are other approaches. One therapeutic method for many autistic people is ‘stimming’, derived from the word ‘stimulation’. This is a term that refers to self-stimulatory behaviour and can help release anxiety, provide comfort and re-focus (Rudy, 2019).

Methods of stimming are specific behaviours that are usually repetitive including, spinning, hand-flapping, repeating words, body rocking or tapping with hands (Rudy, 2019). Stimming can also be “used to describe the noises and movements [autistic people] sometimes make to feel calmer. It also covers habits such as nail-biting” (BBC, 2013). These activities can help autistic people to navigate their environment and help overall wellbeing. Stimming serves an

internal need for emotional self-regulation, sensory and tactile stimulation. According to Rudy (2019), stimming can be a way of helping autistic people deal with the disabling effects of a neurotypical world.

But it is not just hand flapping or body rocking. In fact, as Maxfield Sparrow, who is Autistic, writes “Almost anything in the environment and anything our bodies can do can become a stim. The entire world is a joyful place with grass to pluck, fabric to rub our faces on or chew on, rolls of toilet paper to unwind, cat fur to ruffle, dice to click together in our hands, and water to spit in a perfect arch of sparkling sunlight” (Sparrow 2021). Recently it has been noted that crotchet is also effective with people with ADHD (Myers Bullard 2019). There seems to be a calmness which is produced by stimming activities to help the neurodivergent to readjust and refocus.

One reason for stimming, according to world-renowned animal behaviourist Temple Grandin, also autistic, is that it simply ‘feels good’ (Grandin 2013). Grandin also provides examples of stimming from her own life, as well as from her professional research. For instance, she stated that stimming “may counteract an overwhelming sensory environment or alleviate high levels of internal anxiety” (Grandin cited in BBC, 2013). Further evidence of this is in the ‘Ouchlets’ BBC (2013) blog article, *Stimming: What autistic people do to feel calmer*. They conducted interviews with autistic people to find out about their stimming habits. One person claimed that, stimming had to be tactile to manage sensory input, especially when out in public. Stimming provides a calming way of dealing with an overload of sensory input which is why it is so important to not to discourage it but to accept it as a vital behaviour for many (Wilkinson 2019). Furthermore, there are theories that state that stimming calms a person if the environment is too stimulating and the person is in a

state of sensory overload. Autistic people often stim to 'block-out the over-stimulating environment; and his/her attention becomes focused inwardly' (Edelson 2021).

Researchers (Baron-Cohen 2008, Banire et al 2020) have also shown that stereotypical autistic behaviours interfere with attention and learning. By tapping a table in a class to relieve stress could be disruptive for other learners. In addition, it could cause a distraction for the autistic person by taking focus away from their learning. Interestingly, these behaviours are often effective positive reinforcers if a person is allowed to engage in these behaviours after completing a task, (Kapp et al 2019) it could be argued then, that the behaviours that are distracting when they are not allowed to engage in them have the opposite effect when they are permitted to do so.

It is known that "part of the brain called the amygdala is enlarged in some autistic children" which can cause anxiety and the need to stim (Zeliadt 2019). Looking at the figure below we see how different the Autistic brain is, giving us an insight as to why brain overloads and meltdowns can occur in different situations.

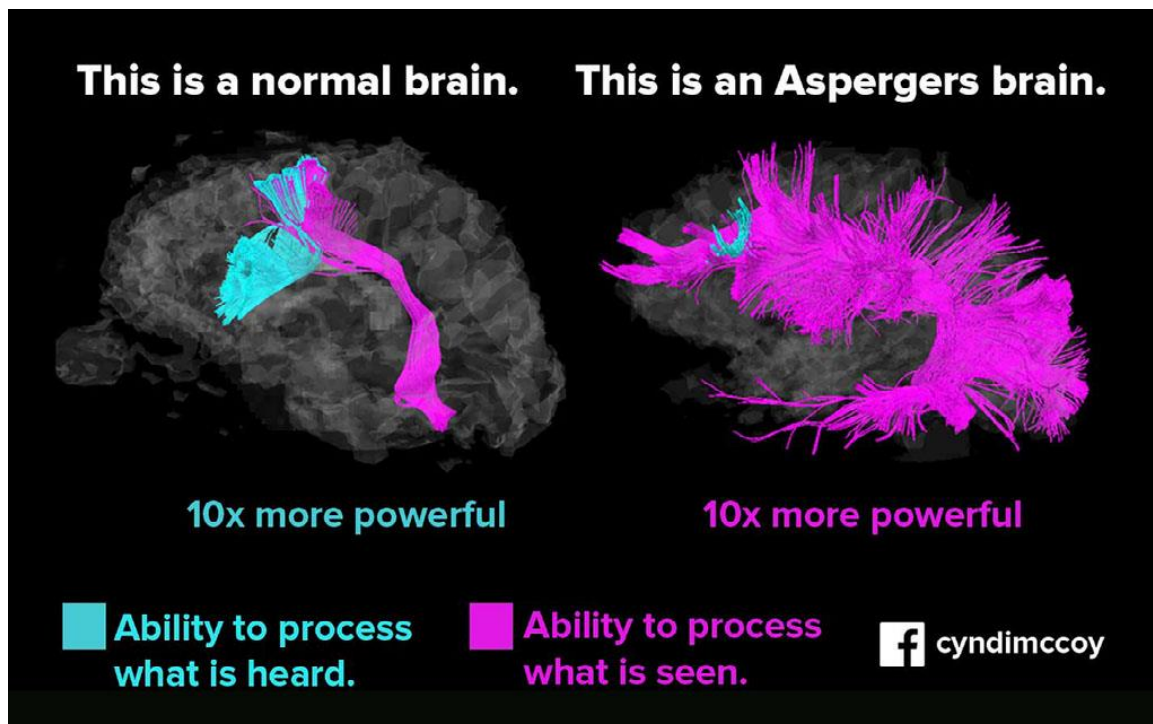


Figure 1: What is Asperger syndrome?, 2021

Many Autistic people can be overwhelmed by certain textures and even hypersensitive to touch (Burrell 2016). It is known that “Touching things is an instinctive way in which we test our surroundings” (Pye 2016) but for many Autistic people it is a complex sensation which is either craved or avoided (Musser 2019).

A popular example of a stimming item is the fidget spinner. Sometimes seen as toys, these are small objects that can be spun in the hand. Research published in the *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* found that items such as fidget spinners can distract people from situations they find stressful. The research compared the effects of meditation with distraction methods such as fidget spinners and found that both helped to avoid daydreaming, but meditation was better at helping with problem solving. This shows that the

fidget spinner is not a solution to all problems, but it does go some way towards helping (Scott, 2020).

Wagner (2017) reported that many adults find that their focus is improved while fidgeting with an object in their hand. This is especially true when working on time-consuming tasks or attending long meetings. “From pens and paper clips to today's spinner toys, everyone has their own favourite” (Wagner, 2017). This again proves that stimming is beneficial for people at any age and should not be restricted or prevented. Further research into stimming indicates that it is a way to cope with overstimulation or under-stimulation. This could suggest that in any type of learning situation, some autistic learners might benefit from activities to channel their energy and help them focus. Examples of activities that could help include allowing them to use any tactile items (such as fidget objects or stress balls) that they would normally use.

As well as stimming, another method of coping with some of the struggles that might come with being autistic, is art practice, which is known to help deal with day-to-day struggles and intrusive emotions. For instance, Siddharth Gadiyar paints as a release from his sometimes chaotic and challenging world. The textures and colours of his paintings give him contentment in his life (Gadiyar 2019).



Figure 2 Siddharth Gadiyar (2021)

Another example is Derek Paravicini, who is autistic and blind and uses music as a way of coping with his struggles with verbal learning. Paravicini's music capabilities are phenomenal and he has played to audiences around the world (Artistic fuel 2020). Music therapy has had positive results for autistic people, with many enjoying its systematic and structured information. The repetition and structure of music is a way which appeals to many people on the autistic spectrum (Baron-Cohen 2008).



Figure 3 Derek Paravicini (2014)

These are just two example of autistic artists who use their artform to cope with external struggles. The following artists have similarly used art to cope with their individual struggles.

Artist Gilles Trehin was formally diagnosed with autism. Trehin is a French artist who began drawing at the age of five. He later began to design his own imaginary city which he called Urville. Giles' book *Urville* was published in 2004 featuring his extraordinary drawings (Moore, 2006). His skilful drawings come from his amazing imagination and are mostly designed in his head. It could be argued that this detailed, imaginary world helps Trehin deal with some of the complexities of life. In 2019, a study showed that living in an imaginary world can actually help people reduce stress and anxiety in their lives (Sallberg, 2019).



Figure 4 Giles Trehin (2014)

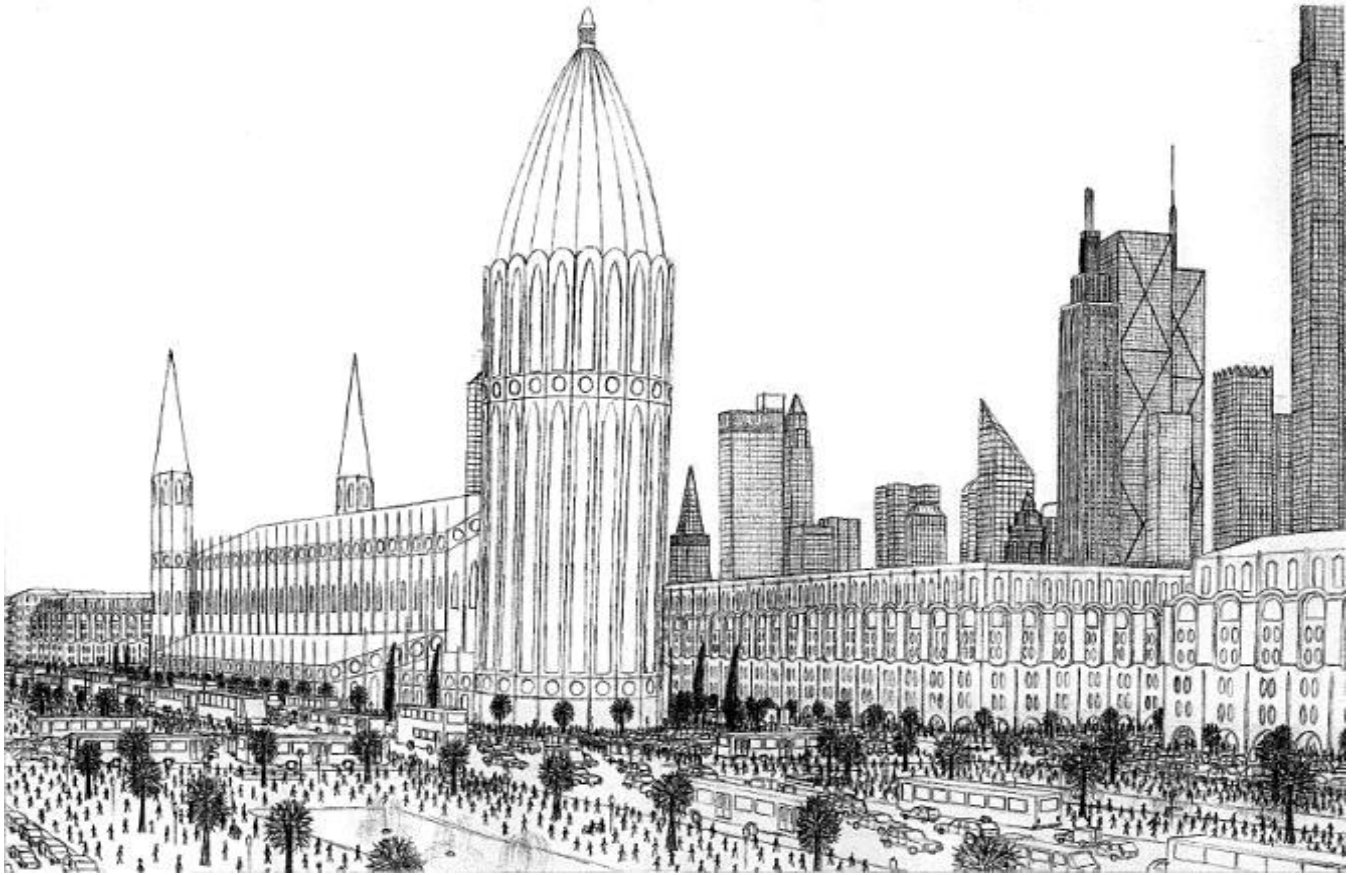


Figure 5 Giles Trehin 'Urville' (2013)

Many experts on autism have speculated how art can help people on the autistic spectrum, but for Blake Zucker, he has made this point himself. Zucker is an artist who makes ceramics and is also autistic. He states that ceramics helps him to express his feelings and thoughts when he is unable to in other ways. He says that “many times my works are a profound voice when I have difficulty speaking” (Zucker, 2020).



Figure 6 Steven Wiltshire (2018)

Stephen Wiltshire is a British artist with a diagnosis of autism. Wiltshire is famous for being able to draw entire cities after looking at them for only a short time. As well remembering the exact layout of the roads and buildings, he includes details such as the correct amount of windows on each building (Truthinsideofyou 2017; Engoren, 2018). It has been argued that his remarkable artistic talent is due to his photographic memory. Researchers claim that due to the unique way in which the autistic brain is wired, certain people have this creative memory unavailable to most (Engoren, 2018). This shows that “neurodiversity is something we need to respect, as each person can prove to have a talent that others wouldn’t expect” (Truthinsideofyou, 2017). Wiltshire is very driven, and he is cited as saying “Do the best you can and never stop” (Wiltshire cited in Engoren, 2018). This is a great motto to continue through life with as your skills nearly always improve with time and

determination. Although not every person with Autism is a 'savant' like Stephen Wiltshire, every autistic child does have the potential to be 'discovered' (Autism Connect 2019). Correct guidance, environment and needs are all vitally essential for people's well-being and happiness.

Many people who are drawn to the arts are people with specific learning disabilities such as autism or dyslexia (Chan 2019). Miki Henderson (2014) states that subjects such as art, music, drama and dance developed within early childhood curriculum are more accessible as they are not as focused on oral or written language. This means that children who may struggle in other academic areas can excel in the arts, making artistic expression a good route into other areas such as language skills, motor skills, social behaviour and emotional intelligence. This can develop over time into a love of arts into adulthood.

The evidence from Baron Cohen (2008), Wagner (2017), Rudy (2019) and Scott (2020) strongly shows that some on the autistic spectrum are better able to focus in a learning environment where they are allowed to 'stim'. Therefore, it would be beneficial if they can do this in any environment. For instance, artists and designers have skills that can be shared with others. When designers apply more accessibility and inclusivity when designing their workshops, it encourages more people to learn the artists craft. Inclusivity in any learning setting means considering differences. "Inclusive education is when all students, regardless of any challenges they may have, are placed in age-appropriate general education classes" (McManis, 2021). This means that artists and designers should think about ways of making their workshops accessible to different types of learning needs.

Miki Henderson (2014) goes on to describe ten considerations for teachers when creating an inclusive learning environment: Togetherness; Diversity; Community building; Differing abilities; “Can Do” attitude; Student-centered; Shared space and time; Professional collaboration; Documenting student learning; Families (Miki Henderson, 2014). These areas help to create inclusivity in the classroom which leads to imagination and innovation (Bland, 2016). Researching inclusion gives a wider knowledge of Autism and what can lead to get anxiety and fidgeting and then to stim. It is encouraging to know that “children are more understanding and accepting of their peers with disabilities when they are equipped with knowledge about those disabilities and have some personal experiences with them” (Lindsay and Edwards, 2013, cited in Droney 2021). By educating children and adults it provides an easier, adaptable and much happier environment for everyone.

An autism friendly classroom can create a space that is not only a more positive environment for people on the autistic spectrum but it can also benefit other students. This can be created by understanding the sensory needs of the students in the class by looking at lighting, positioning of furniture to create space, the amount of visual stimulation on the walls and the noise levels in the space (Matusiak 2020).

By making physical changes to the classroom environment for differing learning needs, the classroom or workshop becomes a more positive climate for acceptance and understanding. Schukei (2021) suggests that the art room is a good environment for students to develop an understanding about one another, identify what they have in common and celebrate how people are all different and learn in different ways. This helps to create an awareness of other people’s differences and needs.

Designers, makers and artists who teach their craft can be more aware of autistic needs and hidden needs by getting a basic understanding of different needs and inclusive practices. Our government have pledged to spend a significant amount of money in addressing Autism in Education as well as the understanding and acceptance of Autism in the coming years (Gov 2021). Teacher Kinsey French admits that “Having a student with a disability in your classroom for the first time can be [daunting]” and continues to say that “The key is to be open-minded and welcoming of change, to work together to figure out how to make it successful for all students” (French, cited in Scholastic, 2021). Getting autistic people involved in their own designing and making is a good way of helping with their self-expression. This has been the case for several of the artists discussed in chapter one, as most of the artists struggled with verbal communication (Surangiwala 2019).

Schools usually have a change in lesson every 30-60 minutes. This could be counterproductive for learners who are likely to ‘hyper-focus’ and for those who take a while to transition between thinking about one subject then another. Students should be able to learn in different ways depending in if they are more kinaesthetic, auditory or verbal learners (Malvik 2020). “Education that excludes and segregates perpetuates discrimination against traditionally marginalized groups. When education is more inclusive, so are concepts of civic participation, employment, and community life” (Open society Foundations 2019). Rather than group learners by ability, it would be better to group by their learning styles.

The number of students declaring disabilities has increased by 50% in five years. The most common being dyslexia and others having mobility, hearing and sight disabilities (Allan and Storan 2005). Unfortunately, due to limited resources, individualised education is unlikely. This can lead to some people not getting a useful education (Baron-Cohen cited in Smallman, 2021).

Furthermore, there are many studies that state that negative experience in education can lead to poor mental health. Documented research noted that there was “a strong and positive link between completed education and adults’ mental health” (Halpern-Manners et al., 2016). It was suggested that higher levels of education can lead to more skills, giving people an advantage, leading to improved mental health. A higher level of self-esteem and confidence can certainly help you to manoeuvre through life and manage and cope with things that are unexpected (Centered Mind Therapy 2020).

Halpern-Manners et al. (2016) suggest that due to the long lasting impact of schooling, it is vitally important that young people have the chance to gain a positive education experience which is surely the basis of having well rounded adults in the future. The Chief executive of YMCA, Rosi Prescott says that “[when] we’ve failed to achieve our full potential in education [it] can carry a negative impact on wellbeing, which we carry with us into later life” (YMCA 2016). Although we have had positive changes in our educational system over the last twenty years, there are still a percentage of young people that slip through quietly having had a stressful, unsupported and negative experience, which for many will have a huge impact on their adult life.

Raya Bidshahri (2018) writes that “What and how we teach future generations will have a powerful impact on the kind of world we live in and that a complete revolution in our education system is so long overdue”. It is time to change what is obviously unsuccessful and rethink a system for our future children to all succeed in.

Responding to John Harris’s article in *The Guardian*, Martyn Taylor writes that “Inclusion works. It enables understanding, empathy and tolerance” (Taylor 2018). We must encourage and nurture our future generation and educate them to become tolerant, open-minded adults that can happily adapt in our ever-changing world. Every student learns in such a different way (Khan 2021) and with the correct support and instruction each and every student should be capable of progress at whatever speed that is suited to them as an individual. This is a principle of inclusive education. In an inclusive classroom, teachers weave in specially designed instruction and support that can help students make progress. These strategies are helpful for all students.

One thing that should be considered when designing a learning environment is that “Individuals with ASD respond to visual stimuli entirely differently than someone without ASD” (Satpathy, 2020). This is due to their hypersensitivity and a need for things to be simple and quiet. An example of this can be seen in the architectural designs of Le Corbusier, being very simple and using pure geometry. It is speculated that Le Corbusier was autistic and not able to process visual stimuli normally (Sussman et al 2017). Le Corbusier preferred these simple lines and uncomplicated shapes which to many on the autistic spectrum are a necessity to ‘limit stimulation’ whilst ‘wrestling to calm a brain abuzz’ (Sussman et al 2017). Le Corbusier’s (1887-1965) architectural designs certainly were a radical change at the time and its fascinating that some

physicians say that these drastic changes in design were by designers who were either 'autistic' or had 'suffered trauma in their lives and had 'specific disorders'. It appears that simplicity and calmness were needed for these architects who had and were experiencing trauma or sensory overload (Sussman et al 2017).



Figure 7 Villa Savoye / Le Corbusier (2021)

As well creating an inclusive learning environment, designers and artists who teach others should also consider how art materials can reflect different religions, race or ethnicity, social economic statuses, sexual orientations and gender identities, language, culture and abilities or disabilities (Mendoza 2020). Using different art materials can help people see themselves reflected

in the materials they use. However, it is also important for people to see the lives of others depicted in materials, to show diversity and difference. This helps foster a good understanding of the world around them and celebrates difference. Mendoza (2020) suggests that art classroom include materials that are representative of all populations.

By researching the benefits of engaging in art and craft practices, inclusive art education and the benefits of being able to stim, it has helped to inform my ideas for practical items for autistic adults. Most of my practical work involves jewellery making and after researching the benefits of stimming for autistic people, I have moved on to designing more tactile pieces of jewellery with movable parts. The intention is that adults who benefit from fidgeting can wear an elegant piece of jewellery that can be spun, twisted or moved in a different way, whilst not looking like an obvious fidget toy. This section will look at companies that create moveable jewellery or wearable fidget toys as inspiration for my own designs.

I like the idea of jewellery with a stimming function as it can be worn without drawing attention to stimming. There have not been many studies into fidgeting and the reasons behind doing it (Hullinger 2015). However, there are some studies that give a small insight into it. Research from Mumbai has shown that moveable jewellery can be good for stimming. The research was in people with ADHD, whose purpose for stimming is the same as it is for autistic people. It was found that “Any sort of fidget device will help...the jewellery will not, by itself, rectify chemical imbalances... but it will provide the momentary distraction during stressful moments, when anxiety builds up” (Ghosh 2019).

This shows that there is already some research into jewellery as a fidget object. An article by Forbes (2017) explains the reasons why moving parts of jewellery can be mentally beneficial. One reason is because the part of the brain that would usually have distracting thoughts, is occupied when fidgeting. It helps with stress and anxiety, as well as help to prevent distracting thoughts (Forbes, 2017). This is supported by research from New York University that investigated fidget jewellery. The research found that “fidgeting is a coping mechanism the body employs to promote natural stimulant release, enabling the mind to focus on tasks” (Karlesky & Isbister 2014, cited in Lubitz 2018).

Furthermore, Hullinger (2015) states that fidgeting is a way to distract parts of the brain that is bored in order to maintain focus in other areas is an evolutionary trait that could date to prehistoric times. The reason for this claim is that the ability to fully focus on one task was not desirable as focus needed to be divided to avoid danger and be on the lookout for food sources.

Discreet, moveable jewellery is the perfect stimming tool for many people to use. One user of such jewellery explains; “Having a discreet item to fidget (stim) with allows us to have a natural coping mechanism available while also ‘blending in’ a bit more. Many people especially find the blending in aspect helpful or even necessary at work or in other professional settings.” (Kim cited in Lubitz 2018). From helping to stay focused to dealing with a sensory overload, it appears an invaluable object to relax the mind. “Quiet stimming with a piece of jewellery creates enough of a ‘slow leak’ to prevent that from becoming a distraction” (Kim cited in Lubitz 2018). To know that fidgeting with an object can also enhance academic performance for people with ADHD, Autism and sensory processing is positive knowledge that it must be encouraged and accepted in the workspace (Claflin 2017).

There are many theoretical arguments asking for what reason do Autistic people stim, many even believing that stimming is purposeless (Kapp 2019). In fact, it was Kapp and his colleagues who published a study about stimming behaviours, interviewing 31 autistic adults about their habits of stimming. Sadly, most “regularly felt like social outcasts and thought they were perceived as weird or immature” and felt “social judgement and rejection because of their stimming” (Kapp 2019). It seems essential that people with Autism should be allowed to stim and that it should be accepted by all. To stop this therapeutic activity it only seems to lead to behaviour problems, frustrations and meltdowns (Birch 2019).



Figure 8 A Kinect Gear fidget ring (2016)

Given the known benefits of fidget objects, there are surprisingly few organisations that design wearable fidget objects. Kinekt Gear have designed fidget rings to help ease anxiety (fig. 8). Stimtastic is one organisation that creates fidget toys and jewellery that supports 'stimming'. The company creates these items specifically for autistic people and the designers are also autistic. Stimtastic was founded in 2014 by Cynthia Kim, who is Autistic. Kim wanted to produce jewellery and toys for men and women that were affordable and to celebrate the fact that stimming is an essential part of Autism for many (Kim 2014). The company explains that this is important because "stimming refers to our need to self-stimulate which kind of looks like fidgeting but is much more than that. When we're feeling overwhelmed or stressed, stimming helps calm us down" (McKay 2017). Therefore, Stimtastic has the right ideas as the designs are created by autistic people. "Designs for people with autism need to take into account their 'unusual and complex sensory responses'" (Kingwood Trust cited in Montgomery 2014). Unfortunately, the company has recently closed, creating a new gap in the market for this type of product. I am interested in designing this type of jewellery myself and will investigate the reasons for the closure and try to emulate the successes without any of the downfalls.



Figure 9 Stimtastic chewable jewellery (2021)

Silver Cave Designs (fig. below) have designed a ring with a spinning middle section. The company is based in Hertfordshire and produces a variety of spinning, anxiety and meditation rings as well as other silver and gold jewellery. This type of design is discreet, whilst still allowing people to stim. In my own work I would like to expand this idea to other pieces of jewellery such as bracelets and necklaces, and design pieces that are suitable for men and women. Although the company does not specifically mention 'stimming', they are aware of the benefits of fidgeting for anxiety.



Figure 10 Ring Design by Silver Cave Designs UK (2019)

Paula Lorence from the Riga School of Design and Art created objects (Fig. below) to specifically help children with Autism. Lorence talks about her project which aims “to provide tools that can help children on the autistic spectrum achieve higher levels of concentration ... and reduce stress in their everyday lives” (Lorence cited in Yalsinkaya 2018). Researching Autism and stimming it has become clear that sensory items can certainly benefit people of all ages (Kozlowski 2021), from children to adults with different degrees of Autism. Lorence also mentions the benefits of tactile stimulation that “can affect the brain development and potentially bring positive changes to their lives” which can lead to and “contribute to the overall enrichment of society” (Lorence cited in Yalsinkaya 2018). With an enormous increase in Autism diagnosis in the last twenty years (Meloire 2021), these forward-thinking designs are reassuring progress for the neurodivergent community.

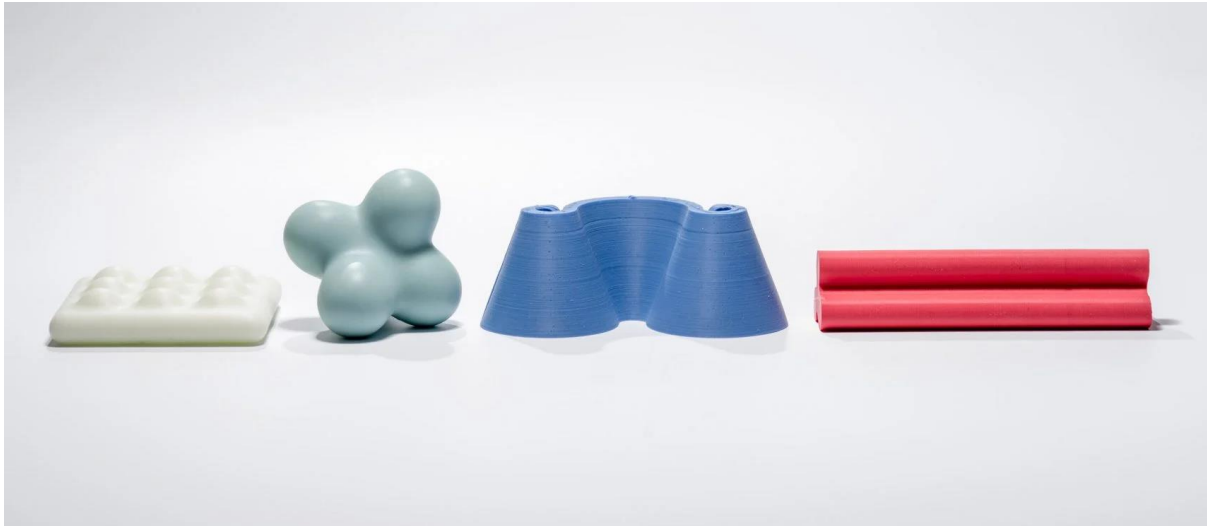


Figure 11 Taktil Collection by Paula Lorence (2018)

As a response to the research into stimming, I want to create jewellery with moving parts to help reduce anxiety but that also looks good as a unique piece of jewellery. Many of the wearable items designed for stimming are not aesthetic pieces of jewellery and are made of plastic, rubber, or fabrics and look like 'objects for stimming'. I want to create pieces that can be worn as beautiful jewellery pieces in their own right that also serves as a stimming item with various tactile textures.

The research has shown that there are limited companies that produce moveable jewellery for the purpose of stimming. In this sense, my work will be emergent moving forward into this market. The designs are in the experimental stage, but the goal is to have the right model in place, for functional, elegant pieces of jewellery.

Over the next year I hope to develop my skills and understanding surrounding this specific jewellery. There seem to be very few jewellery designers who are making jewellery with this in mind and I will look at different textures and the

movability of materials and incorporate this into my designs and workshop time. To produce a product that is a wearable piece of beauty and curiosity as well as giving someone a sense of well-being would be a great achievement and something I look forward to investigating over the coming months ahead.

The first part of this essay has looked at artists who are on the autistic spectrum to show that art can be a therapeutic way of channelling their focus. It then looked at stimming as way for artists and non-artists to deal with over or under stimulation. It has shown how learning environments for the creative arts can be more inclusive and how art materials can be beneficial in different ways. The essay then moved on to deeper research into organisations that produce stimming jewellery, and how this research has impacted my own practice.

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