

# Taking DIY to the Classroom: The Abstract Bookshelf Project with the Sparkling Mindz School

Sophia Park

Yongsan International School of Seoul, Seoul, South Korea  
Email: 25.sophia.park@yisseoul.org

**How to cite this paper:** Park, S. (2024). Taking DIY to the Classroom: The Abstract Bookshelf Project with the Sparkling Mindz School. *Creative Education*, 15, 1914-1920. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2024.159117>

**Received:** July 26, 2024

**Accepted:** September 26, 2024

**Published:** September 29, 2024

Copyright © 2024 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

## Abstract

The Abstract Bookshelf Project, conducted at Sparkling Mindz School in Mumbai, India, explores the intersection of abstract art and functional design in a classroom setting. Led by student artist Sophia Park, this initiative engaged students in a hands-on workshop that combined creative art-making with a practical furniture design inspired by IKEA's DIY business model. The project consisted of two phases: first, allowing silent observation of each student's abstract interpretation through collaborative drawing, and second, transforming those abstract designs into functional 3D-modeled furniture, which is, in this case, a bookshelf. Through this experimental workshop, the goal is to measure the optimized flow state of the students while also promoting sustainability through minimalist design principles: a blueprint for integrating art and design into education worldwide. This approach will highlight the benefits of experience-based learning and propose a shift towards a more progressive, community-oriented educational environment.

## Keywords

Abstract Art, Flow State, DIY, Art Pedagogy, Curriculum Development, Tactile Learning

## 1. Introduction

A student artist from Yongsan International School of Seoul in South Korea conducts an experimental workshop with students in Sparkling Mindz School in Mumbai, India, to do something unprecedented: to connect on a deeper level through the process of abstract art, creating a piece under one hour, and then transform that interpretation into a bookshelf with an IKEA style manual. This

approach aims to integrate meaningful educational steps with the modern liberal arts and design as the positive aims of the student's efficiency, creative thinking, and personality.

On the other hand, the interlinking of significant barriers between abstract art and functional furniture offers participants a novel and actual learning intervention that would aid in honing their artistic aptitude, stimulating creativity, and community solidarity. The following report brings more specificity to the selected procedure of taking abstraction to the tangible. The transformation process not only shows how creative students can be but also fosters pride and accomplishment in the student's projects. The following report offers a general insight into the applied methodologies, the workshop phases, and the roles of the students and the facilitators.

Additionally, it looks at the effect of this initiative on the students, the effectiveness of the strategies to engage the students, and the quality of results obtained from the activities.

Finally, this report looks into the possibility of extending the given approach to other learning environments and identifying prospects for the further development of progressive education for the given target group. Hopefully, this research can pave the way for a more approachable, minimalist, environmentally sustainable pedagogy that instills DIY engagement.

## 2. Project Overview

### 2.1. Scope

The Abstract Bookshelf Project is formally defined as a three-hour learning-teaching process in which students actively participate. Ultimately, the process will result in the production of a single piece of furniture. This type is practical and symbolizes the student's innovative contribution and ownership of the classroom. The initiative is a two-part workshop inspired by the idea that students must learn about abstract art and a brief session about 3-dimensional models. During the first part of the lesson, students learn about such general classifications of abstract art, which provides them with a space for being inventive in their artwork.

In the second part, these artistic visions are incorporated into functional designs through the employing of 3D modeling applications from Sophia Park for the creation of a chair. The main aims and objectives of the project are to increase the student's appreciation of art, to provide better opportunities for social relatedness using collaborative experiences through the construction of the "art-womb", and to develop a design concept that can be used as a model for similar learning institutes to maintain and encourage creativity and the sustainability ethos (Iyengar, 2023).

### 2.2. Workshop Process

The workshop was divided into two sessions to maximize student engagement and creativity. It will follow the following order. There were two principal strands

in the one-day workshop: The first would focus on a particular theoretical topic; the second would accommodate the type of learning that fosters students' imagination and enhances their learning.

1) Preliminary and preparatory session with the checklist for participants and course outline.

- The first part of the activity was an orientation presented by Sophia Park, where she briefly discussed abstract art and then showed the students some aspects of abstract art.
- The total number of student participants was four ( $N = 4$ ).
- All the learners were given an inspiration card and drawing item of their choice: colored pencil, felt pen, oil pastel paint brush, and acrylic tube.
- To avoid bias, the students did not explain what would be drawn on the large canvas. Each student was given a one-minute turn to draw before passing the canvas to the next student. The students were to draw on top of each other (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Final drawing.

2) Session 2 was a 1-hr discussion about the process itself, inviting students to learn from each other about the intentional and improvisational process.

- The drawing continued until each student had staked more than once in the artwork.
- The last drawing was then posted, and the students were asked questions related to their understanding and experience of silent collaborative drawing during the activity and the impact of this technique on their creativity. In a post-workshop survey, students were asked the question, "What was the most surprising thing you have witnessed during this process?" Student participants reported that their interpretation of, say, **love** (from one of the inspiration cards), were all different, but that they had to respect the interpretation since they were more fixated on drawing on top of another's interpretation.
- This conception for the joint design was developed whenever the abstract drawings of the students were connected into one layout, which, in turn, was reconstructed into a layout the students used to design from.

3) Session 3 was the replication of the process in which students from Sparkling Mindz would take the workshop and expand to the rest of the school. The  $N = 4$  students who initially experienced the workshop have reported in the same post-workshop survey distributed to twelve ( $N = 12$ ) new students the similar feelings

of respecting fellow inspirations and increased flow state as a result.

### 3. Impact on Students

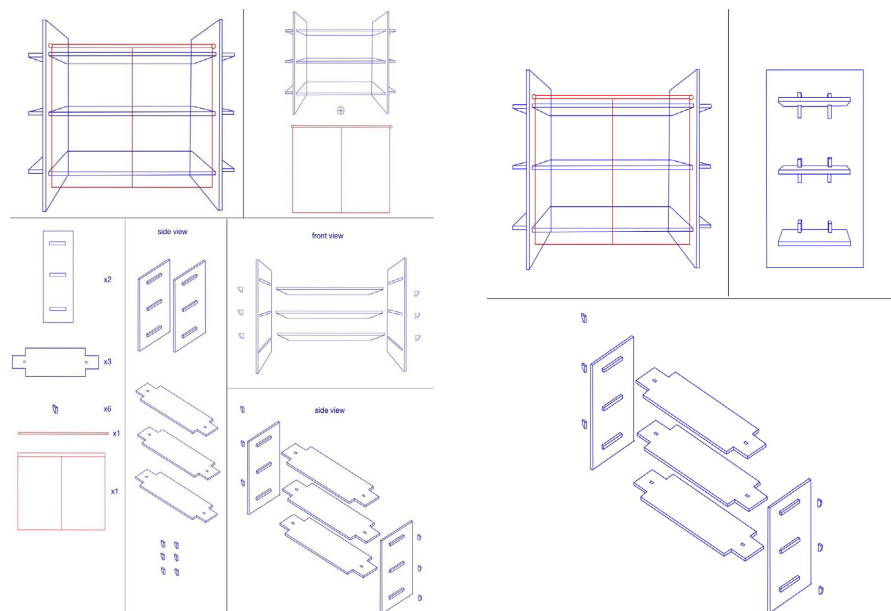
The Abstract Bookshelf Project had a significant impact on the students involved in the workshop:

- 1) Optimized Flow State
  - Flow state is defined as a mental state operation in which an individual participating in an activity is wholly absorbed in the feeling of intensified concentration, investment, and enjoyment (Iyengar, 2023). This flow state involved concentration, enjoyment of the activities, and a sense of completion. It was thus positive and satisfying for the student's needs. This collaborative approach where students are encouraged to silently witness the creative abstract interpretation of their peers augmented that flow state and created a no-judgment environment. They were given creative liberty, probably a rarity in schools managed using conventional methods (Iyengar, 2023). This idea gave them independence and deeper appreciation of their peers—their innermost expressions unleashed—that fostered the growth of their community bonding.
- 2) Deeper Bonding with Classmates
  - Organization of the office according to the principles of collective creation of exhibitions effectively improved collaboration between students, better interpersonal relationships, and unity (Iyengar, 2023). When the students get involved in an everyday activity, they acquire interpersonal relationships and teamwork as they have to share their ideas and work as a group.
  - It also consisted of the aspect of sustainability, that *less is more*, that is, students' conscious efforts towards designing objects with less impact on the environment. This particular component of the workshop education enabled the students to leave a sense of accountability concerning the physical environment and nature, which also made them understand the tenet of sustainability in the current world (Ciufo et al., 2024).
- 3) Entrepreneurial Spirit and Innovation
  - Students developed a sense of entrepreneurship and innovation through design, construction, entrepreneurship, and innovation. In this way, they could use new actualizations and embrace themselves in roles that meant they could plan, design, and implement their initiatives – as in the start-up process from idea to formation.
  - Students benefited from the issue raised by the workshop: to hone in on the creation process and be mindful of everyone's input (and how they think). Through this variable of ownership and positive recognition, which entailed seeing their ideas materialize, they were more encouraged to engage in other entrepreneurial activities (Ciufo et al., 2024).

#### 3.1. Sustainable Design Blueprint

The final tangible outcome resulting from the workshop's completion was the

incorporation of sustainable design features, integrating the students' concept of abstract art into a bookshelf that was not only practical but aesthetically fashionable. It is not a pilot model, and it is a model that can be used between students in any part of the world, therefore stressing the significance of incorporating art and design into the learning process in all the curricula of schools (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). The idea was inspired by the success of IKEA and the invitation to consumers to DIY furniture. Why not bring that same concept to education and have the artists provide workshops to engage and bring that design to life? In addition to creativity and practical knowledge development, it empowers learners regarding environmental issues (Ciufo et al., 2024). Sometimes, students are allowed to use environmentally adverse consumables and processes to implement their ideas but are occasionally discouraged from doing so and minimizing paper usage as it affects the environment.



### 3.2. The Bookshelf

Within three weeks, the students at Sparkling Mindz were given the blueprint (sample photos above) on how to assemble the final product and the raw materials shipped from Seoul to Mumbai. Upon receiving it, the students were excited to build their abstract art into a bookshelf. The interpretations of the students were incorporated into the furniture, and the last piece of the puzzle was accomplished: they built something tangible from the iterative and creative process of abstract art.

### 3.3. Conclusion & Discussion

By performing these tactile projects, the students can practice what they learn, meaning they can grasp well and never forget. Moreover, the entrepreneurial view on the project contributed to improving students' innovative and self-directed

opinions on the work (Bickel et al., 2023). Also, art-making with the goal to empower each other and the classroom is a great discussion starter for optimizing mental health and concentration. It was practically therapeutic for them, allowing for the breakthrough in the piece, simultaneously for their feelings, and making them focus. Such an approach enhances academic results and the students' prosperity and self-realization (Carlotto, 2024).

As for the Abstract Bookshelf Project's characteristics and capabilities, it should be noted that this concept incorporates several useful features in harmony with the principles of forming a progressive education environment. It satisfies seven of the eight-course objectives of envisioning an environment that supports creativity, promoting and maintaining physical and psychological health among learners, and the desire to produce entrepreneurial-minded learners. Thus, involving abstract and three-dimensional art in the educational process allows for the implementation of the principle of active and experience-based learning. The pilot performance at the Sparkling Mindz School exhibited the possibility of positive changes in the learning environments and forms of education. Students absorb the subject, find their way to own the work, and are satisfied with turning their concepts into something tangible.

In addition, the contributions of rubric partner schools and nonprofit organizations dedicated to the importance of art and environmental sustainability are vital in expanding it. Learning at such significant levels would help deal with the widespread adoption of such innovative practices in education, thus bringing about systems transformation regarding incorporating art and design in learning. The goals associated with the initiative to be sustainable, minimalistic, and focused on the community also correlate with education concepts that look to raise responsible and mindful citizens of the world. Hence, the Abstract Bookshelf Project is not a project but a movement towards changing the education paradigm for learners' benefit and tackling the contemporary world.

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Sreeja Iyer, Head of the Sparkling Mindz School in Mumbai, India, for allowing this special workshop to take place in the name of advancing progressive education and catalyzing what would be the foundation to future education. I would also like to thank the students at Sparkling Mindz for allowing themselves to participate with open minds and hearts. Without their participation, this pilot program would not have been birthed in the first place.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

## References

- Bickel, B., Irwin, R. L., & Siegesmund, R. (Eds.) (2023). *Arts-Based Educational Research Trajectories: Career Reflections by Authors of Outstanding Dissertations*. Springer Nature.

- Carlotto, F. (2024). *Luxury Brand and Art Collaborations: Postmodern Consumer Culture* (p. 124). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003274094>
- Ciufo, T., Dvorak, A. L., Haaheim, K., Hurst, J., Leu, G. S., Miller, L., Mizumura-Pence, R., Oddy, N., Stewart, J., Sullivan, J., & Tucker, S. (Eds.) (2024). *Improvising Across Abilities: Pauline Oliveros and the Adaptive Use Musical Instrument*. University of Michigan Press.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1975). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. Harper and Row.
- Iyengar, S. (2023). *Think Bigger: How to Innovate*. Columbia University Press.