

SMALL TALK

Sharing a Small
Personal Part
with Strangers.

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2023.11.22 Felting in Adlershof

1. How can I start conversations with many strangers?

2. First, I visited the cultural center in Adlershof.

3. In the winter of 2023/2024, there were particularly many DB strikes. Every time I wanted to go to Adlershof, the S-Bahn was interrupted.

4. I went to a felting course. I had never done felting before. I kept stabbing the wool with the needle, and in the process, I often pricked my fingers. While doing so, I had a conversation with a woman about her daughter, who studies in Braunschweig. Her daughter has been studying art in Braunschweig since 2021, just after I graduated, so I don't know her. The felting instructor told me that I was doing well for my first time. At the beginning, I couldn't even get the wool to stick together. But after over a hundred stitches, it started to take shape. I made a hamster. Hamsters have short limbs, which makes them relatively easy to create. Even so, it took me over an hour to make this small wool ball. I added brown spots on its back, gave it ears, black eyes, and a pink nose. Every time I pricked my finger, I yelped. I would like to have a dog someday—when I have a stable home and the time to take care of one. If I ever adopt a dog, I can say that I have succeeded in life. Right now, I can't even take care of a hamster. But at least I can bring a felt hamster into my home.

5. In the felting course, I met two older ladies and a girl. They kept taking snacks and drinks out of their bags and offering them to me. One of the ladies had brought a lot of snacks, including a salted caramel pastry that I had never seen before. It tasted so good that I asked where she had bought it. She said she got it in Poland. I want to eat that pastry again, but I can't find it anywhere on Google. She also brought homemade bottled grape juice and shared it with us. My mother and grandmother used to make grape juice in the summer, but since coming to Germany, I haven't experienced that taste again. Maybe it's because the people around me are mostly unmarried artists. It was a strange but beautiful feeling.

6. As we talked, we continued working on our felt creations. I asked for recommendations for a hairdresser in the area. I am also someone who barely has hobbies. When I get excited about drawing, the picture often gets out of control. I've always tried to focus and do my best to create something new, which is why drawing is not a hobby for me. But with felting, perfection isn't necessary. The movements are repetitive, and it's not exhausting. Apart from occasionally pricking my fingers, I really enjoy it.

7. We all had our own tasks. They weren't difficult, they were gentle, and even when the conversation paused, it never felt uncomfortable.



2024.02.XX. Line Dance -> Drawing Workshop!

1. After having positive experiences in the felting and Qi-Gong courses, my next goal was to join a line dance class. I made my way to Adlershof on time. However, once inside the Alte Schule building, I didn't know which room the class was in. So, I asked an elderly woman in the Kiezklub where I should go to learn line dancing. She told me that the class was already full and no longer accepting new members. I introduced myself and explained that I wanted to get to know people in the area and asked if I could still participate in the class just once. She told me that this course was a voluntary event for retirees and not for young people who earn money.

2. So, I asked if I could instead offer a drawing class on a voluntary basis. She said that might be possible and gave me the contact details of the administrator. I want to talk to people for my art project. To do that, I would either have to rely on my family's connections or use my social skills. If that didn't work, I would have to offer them something. And the only thing I can offer beyond the language barrier is my drawing skills.

3. Okay, I could offer a drawing workshop. But somehow, I feel nervous. Can I really stand in front of people and teach them how to draw? I've never taken an art education course. Besides, people who haven't studied art often feel embarrassed to show their drawings to others. How can I make this a comfortable experience for them? And do all of that in German?

2024.04.06. Drawing Workshop!

1. I am someone who doesn't easily warm up to people upon first meeting them. So why am I working on this topic? Truly extroverted people wouldn't think twice about something like this. They would just start talking. But I keep thinking and thinking about how to start a conversation with strangers. That's how I came up with the idea of a drawing workshop—where people can talk to each other while maintaining a comfortable distance.

2. The theme was: Favorite Objects! I wrote in the advertisement that participants should bring an important object or a photo of something they wanted to draw. I walked around, giving drawing tips and compliments. In fact, the participants in this workshop were already somewhat interested in art. One woman showed me a fairy tale book she had made for her grandchildren. An older gentleman sketched casually and had a great sense of color and balance in his drawings. During our conversation, he also showed me some of his drawings on his smartphone. I felt a little embarrassed about actively teaching, but I still did my best to give feedback. However, it seemed like people had come to draw together rather than to learn drawing techniques from me. That was actually a relief because it took a lot of pressure off me. This way, I could comfortably chat with people about their objects. Several times, I walked between participants and asked them questions.

3. Some participants had brought very meaningful objects, while others found pictures on their smartphones. It was interesting to see how participants of different ages approached drawing. Even though I had barely slept the night before due to nerves, I gradually relaxed thanks to the friendly participants. A woman from the Middle East drew an orange and reminisced about her homeland, telling me that orange and lemon trees grow very well there. An older man drew a cappuccino and recommended his favorite café in Adlershof. He also told me about his favorite walking routes and his daily life. A young girl eagerly drew Harry Potter and told me that her favorite character was the owl, Hedwig. I was surprised that kids still love Harry Potter today, as I had read the books at her age.

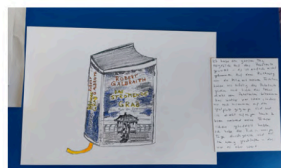
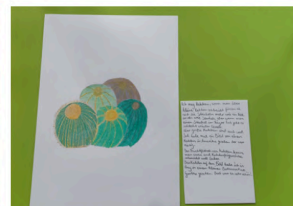
There was also a participant who drew her bicycle, which she rides every day in all kinds of weather and has had since she was eight years old. Another participant drew a very special necklace that her son had made when he was a child, and her lifelong friend, whom she had known since childhood, drew tiny shoes she had worn as a baby. Both were very interested in art. Another participant drew her favorite book, a girl drew her favorite shoes—a pair of Converse—and another sketched a cactus she had seen while traveling. Everyone was so engaged in their drawing that I didn't actually have much to teach beyond giving a few small drawing tips.

4. I truly felt at ease during this time and enjoyed sharing something personal with so many strangers. Of course, I don't remember all of their names, but it was wonderful to draw together and have small, personal conversations. I asked them the same questions: Why do you like this object? When did you first discover it? And how did you come to own it?

OFFENE KUNSTWERKSTATT

Samstag, 06.04.2024
15 – 18 Uhr
In der Galerie Adlershof
offen für alle – kostenlos

Als kleine Einladung ins Atelier der Kunstwerkstatt Adlershof
ein offener Werkstatt für alle, die Lust haben, sich kreativität
auszuüben und mit anderen zu arbeiten.
An diesem Samstag findet ein offener Workshop statt, bei dem
jeder Teilnehmer seine eigene Kunstwerke zeichnen kann.
Die Teilnehmer werden durch die Künstlerin Hilke von
Dachstein geleitet, die auch die Teilnehmer bei der
Auswahl der Materialien und der Technik unterstützt.
Die Teilnehmer können ihre eigenen Kunstwerke
mitbringen und diese in der Werkstatt zeichnen.
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2024.05.08. Breakfast in Adlershof

1. Finding Participants! I was invited to a breakfast gathering at the Kiezklub in Adlershof. It was supposed to be an opportunity to officially introduce my project, but I had no idea what kind of meeting it would be. The room was filled with many elderly people. I had to start a conversation myself, but it felt awkward, and I didn't know how to begin. Still, I was here, and I had to find a way to talk to someone! At least the breakfast buffet was delicious. It wasn't a setting where everyone talked in one big group, but rather small circles of friends chatting among themselves. At that moment, I almost wished I could just sing a song.

2. After eating from the buffet, I gathered some courage. Together with Catherine, I approached two older women who looked quite similar. It turned out they were mother and daughter. They told us that whenever they didn't feel like cooking at home, they would come here to eat. They had been living in Adlershof for a long time and had even gone to school there. We explained our art project to them, but they didn't seem as interested as we had hoped. It would have been better if we had something visual to show them.

3. Another group of elderly ladies was chatting cheerfully, and one of them recognized me from the Qigong class. She remembered my olive-green cardigan. Her friends were also friendly and showed interest in my small talk drawing workshop. They even invited me to a wax painting class the following week. However, I told them that I wouldn't be living in Berlin this year and couldn't attend. I now regret declining their invitation.

2024.05.31. Self Small Talk

1. To promote my Small Talk Drawing Workshop, I thought I should create an example myself. An important object that represents me! My lovingly cared-for perilla plant. Growing perilla is one of my personal goals for this year. Perilla is an annual plant—neither rare nor particularly beautiful or expensive. It is cultivated for food, but it is not as valuable as saffron. However, in Germany... it is hard to find and drives Koreans crazy.

2. I documented the difficult process I went through to grow perilla as a narrative and created a video where I drew my perilla plant using colored pencils.



2024.06.08. Nobody Came

1. Nobody came to my drawing workshop. I had carefully prepared all the materials and waited for people. Why did I assume that people would definitely show up?

2. Because in April, more people than expected attended my workshop. I didn't know how many would come this time, but I never imagined that no one would come at all!

3. Julia said that advertising well on the opening day is crucial. Was I too careless? I thought maybe not many people would come, but none at all? Why?

4. I believed there were enough reasons for people to join. It was a free workshop offered to the public by the city gallery, held in the city gallery Adlershof. And I am the artist exhibiting there—wasn't that enough?

5. Looking back, I was really lucky in April. Many people visited the gallery, were polite, enthusiastically drew, and even followed my request to write about ten sentences. Why did I expect the same turnout this time?

6. After two hours, I took some flyers and went outside. First, I went to the flower shop right next to the gallery, introduced myself briefly, and promoted the workshop. The florist didn't seem particularly interested. Next, I went to the bakery near EDEKA and promoted it there. Then, I visited my usual café in Adlershof and told them about the free workshop in the Adlershof gallery. Finally, I went to the hair salon right in front of it, invited them to come with their families, and gave them the schedule.

7. I also promoted the exhibition and the next two workshops in the Facebook group for Adlershof residents. Many people hit the like button. Surely, at least one of them will come, right?

2024.06.18. Strawberries with Vanilla Sauce



1. I had worked hard on advertising but was still a bit worried. So, I arrived three hours early and hung a large A4 poster on the bulletin board at the Alte Schule. Today!! At 3 PM!! Drawing Workshop!!

2. This simple and direct last-minute advertisement surprisingly worked. Some people knew about the workshop thanks to the poster.

3. One participant showed up. I asked him what he would like to draw. I mentioned that I usually use topics like favorite drinks, desserts, and hobbies for small talk.

4. He decided to draw his favorite dessert—strawberries with vanilla sauce. For me, this was a somewhat unfamiliar dessert. Of course, I had tried it before, but I had never considered it a favorite. He was someone who enjoyed drawing. After looking at a few photos, he immediately started sketching. It was a simple but very appealing drawing. You could see that he truly enjoyed drawing.

5. As he drew, he told me about strawberries with vanilla sauce. His mother had often made it for him since he was a child. It was familiar, required no baking, and was easy and quick to prepare! You simply buy vanilla pudding powder from the supermarket, mix it with warm milk, and chill it in the fridge! Then, you enjoy it with strawberries.

6. Sitting next to him, I drew my favorite coffee—an iced Americano—and explained it to him. In Korea, we drink iced Americanos both in summer and winter. Interesting, right? Nowadays, more places in Germany sell it, but just a few years ago, you had to order a Café Crema and ice cubes separately.

7. It's fun to hear about what others like. The person explaining always looks happy because they are thinking about their favorite things.



2024.06.28. Guitar-Drawing

1. Today was another failure.

2. I really want to understand what the problem is. I have never done so much advertising in my life! I even distributed flyers personally, like a restaurant owner opening a new place! I'm not even trying to sell anything! Are working people just too busy? Are they so exhausted that after work and childcare, they simply collapse? Is it my communication skills? I wish someone could tell me what's going on.

3. The only participant in today's workshop was the man working as an exhibition supervisor. I am so grateful to him. He said he wanted to draw his favorite object—his bass guitar. Of course, he had a photo of it in his smartphone gallery and started drawing. His black bass was decorated with colorful stickers, and because of the guitar strings, a detailed drawing was required, for which I gave him some advice.

4. He wasn't very talkative but was friendly. When I first saw him at the exhibition, I was a bit afraid to approach him, but without this drawing workshop, it would have been difficult to start a conversation naturally.

5. I asked him another small talk question: What's your favorite drink? He answered: Spezi. Spezi??? A response I had never heard before, so I was curious. He told me that he used to drink beer and other alcoholic beverages often, but since that led to some problems, he looked for an alternative and chose Spezi. He likes to drink it cold.

6. After the drawing workshop, just as he had mentioned, he pulled a Spezi out of his bag to drink, and I immediately took a photo of it.



2024.07.15. Reflections on Small Talk

1. My small talk is a type of conversation that one can have, but doesn't have to. That means people won't have any problems if they don't engage in it.

2. Spending two hours thinking about their preferences and why they like certain things is a great opportunity for people to focus on themselves. In a way, it has the character of art therapy. Nowadays, people often feel stressed, as if they must always be productive and use their time for important things. But in my workshop, they have the chance to reflect on what truly brings them joy. Instead of just taking a photo with their smartphone, they can draw what brings them satisfaction.

3. Should I have been more confident and promoted my workshop as art therapy? I wanted to offer something to the participants of my art project. In exchange for a small piece of their personal story, I provided a drawing workshop and the results from it. I thought it was a fair exchange. I also hoped that I could make a small contribution to the community and find a sense of fulfillment. But now I doubt whether art can really offer something to the public.

4. I have to keep insisting that my art project is important. I must continue meeting people, having conversations, and overcoming the fear and discomfort of seeming strange. Short interactions with new people add diversity and complexity to life. This randomness enriches life and brings new inspiration.

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