

# **Junk Journeys and Urban Play: Unearthing Auckland's DIY Adventures Through the Eyes of Street Play Makers**

Rachev, R., Smith-Harvey, J., Berthelsen, C., Ben-Dror, A., Zhang, L., Fu, Y.

## **Abstract:**

This paper embarks on an exploration into the vibrant world of do-it-yourself (DIY) play practices within the urban milieu of Tāmaki Makaurau previously known as Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Here, enthusiasts traverse the city streets, collecting discarded materials and ingeniously transform them into imaginative play experiences. This study acknowledges the multifaceted challenges of quantifying and accessing play, shedding light on the unconventional yet immensely enriching ways in which people can engage in the act of play. Beyond mere recreation, these non-traditional approaches to play hold profound significance within the broader discourse on play theory and cultural practices.

In the spirit of contributing to Hautaka Tākaro, A Play Aotearoa Journal, this paper is dedicated to a comprehensive examination of the concept of "frugal making" as it pertains to the study of play and sense-making. Our research serves as a reflection on DIY play projects facilitated and performed in Bunnings (a prominent hardware store chain) and Shaoxing (a vibrant and culturally significant city in Zhejiang Province). Through an interdisciplinary lens that draws from anthropology, sociology, and play theory, this paper unravels the intricate tapestry of DIY play practices, illuminating their cultural, social, and cognitive dimensions. By delving into the phenomenon of frugal making within these unique contexts, we seek to uncover the hidden intricacies that underlie the play experiences of participants and, in doing so, contribute to a deeper understanding of the diverse ways in which play enriches our daily lives.

## **1. Introduction:**

Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa (New Zealand), stands as a prominent example of a city renowned for its multifaceted cultural diversity and a thriving creative milieu (Gluckman, et al., 2022). This urban centre, characterised by its cosmopolitan fabric, has cultivated a unique ecosystem of do-it-yourself (DIY) play practices (Bonham, 2022; Edinberry, 2019; Klein, et al., 2021). These practices, emblematic of resourcefulness and innovation, have emerged as a distinctive response to the complexities of our times (Boswell, 2021; Leorke, 2020). This section introduces the concept of DIY play and "frugal making", and underscores their profound significance in navigating the challenges of structured and linear contemporary life. This lifestyle is characterised by the imposition of schedules,

routines, and hierarchies, and self-micromanagement, which serve to bring order and efficiency to our daily activities. Furthermore, it reflects a preference for clear objectives and a step-by-step approach to accomplishing tasks, mirroring the principles of industrialization and modern management practices that have shaped our societies.

Auckland's socio-cultural landscape is marked by a dynamic interplay of traditions, worldviews, and creative expressions brought forth by a diverse population. Amidst this rich cultural mosaic, a remarkable phenomenon has materialised: the thriving realm of DIY play practices, as promoted by Activities and Research in Environments for Creativity (AREC). AREC, as a registered charity located in Aotearoa, is dedicated to promoting activities and research within environments that foster creativity (Activities and Research in Environments for Creativity, n.d.). This mission aligns harmoniously with the principles of 'frugal making', creating a symbiotic relationship that amplifies the potential for innovation and creative expression. AREC's charitable status underscores its commitment to the public benefit, and its activities encompass education, self-learning, artistic creation, practical research, publishing, community initiatives, and poverty relief through education in creative living (Activities and Research in Environments for Creativity, n.d.).

The concept of 'frugal making' resonates profoundly with AREC's ethos. By repurposing discarded materials and emphasising resourcefulness, frugal making exemplifies a form of creativity that aligns with the organisation's goals. AREC's support for activities and research in environments for creativity extends its benevolent reach to DIY play practitioners, who are actively engaged in creating innovative play experiences. Through this alliance, AREC not only empowers individuals and groups involved in DIY play practices but also nurtures environments (including physical, social, and psychological contexts) that stimulate creative thinking and artistic exploration.

At its core, DIY play represents a paradigm shift in how individuals engage with their environment, one that fosters autonomy, creativity, and adaptability. It is an approach to play that transcends traditional boundaries, encouraging participants to actively shape their play experiences through resourcefulness and imagination. Central to this concept is the notion of "frugal making," denoting the practice of crafting play opportunities from readily available and often discarded materials. In essence, DIY play and "frugal making" challenge established norms of structured and commercialised leisure, inviting individuals to become architects of their own play experiences.

The 21st century is often characterised by a fast-paced, precarious, structured, and often linear way of life (Au, 2020; Priya et al., 2020). Au (2020) emphasises the rapid pace at which societal and technological changes occur, rendering the prevailing milieu fast paced. Furthermore, Priya et al.

(2020) argues that the pervasive uncertainty and volatility inherent in economic, social, and political domains contribute to the characterization of this era as precarious.

Another salient hallmark of the contemporary period is its penchant for structure and linearity, wherein routines, systems, and processes often adhere to predetermined pathways and sequences (Smith, 2021). This predilection for structured and linear modes of operation can be discerned in various aspects of modern life, including educational systems, corporate hierarchies, and the organisation of daily activities. These attributes collectively shape the distinctive nature of contemporary existence, compelling individuals to navigate the intricate interplay of these elements in their daily lives.

The contemporary era is further characterised by the pervasive influence of capitalist logic, which often emphasises the expectation of an exchange of capital and the generation of profit in various facets of life (Johnson, 2021). This prevailing paradigm can significantly impact how individuals approach their interactions and activities. In many instances, the relentless pursuit of monetary gain tends to overshadow the intrinsic value of experiences for their own sake, and the concept of non-monetary exchange often takes a backseat.

Within this context, the act of experiencing something solely for the sake of enjoyment or engaging in playful interactions that facilitate non-monetary exchanges can be seen as a refreshing departure from the dominant capitalist ethos (Brown, 2021). These activities, which are not driven by profit motives but rather by the pursuit of intrinsic satisfaction, can provide individuals with a respite from the relentless pursuit of financial gain that characterises much of contemporary life. In essence, they serve as a counterbalance to the prevailing capitalist logic, allowing individuals to exchange other intangible and fulfilling aspects of life, such as creativity, knowledge, and emotional connection, in the absence of financial transactions.

This juxtaposition between the capitalist logic of profit-driven exchanges and the value of non-monetary interactions for their own sake underscores the need to re-evaluate our priorities in the contemporary landscape. While capitalism undoubtedly plays a pivotal role in economic systems, it is essential to recognize the importance of preserving spaces where individuals can engage in activities purely for the joy and fulfilment they offer, fostering a more holistic and balanced approach to modern existence.

In such an environment, the spontaneous, carefree, process-focused, and unstructured nature of play may be overshadowed by capitalist/commercialised utilitarian (?) logic, regimented schedules, and digital distractions. DIY play practices emerge as a counterpoint to these challenges, offering a means

to reintegrate unscripted, creative, and exploratory elements into daily life. By fostering resourcefulness and innovation, DIY play not only serves as a source of personal fulfilment but also equips individuals with the skills and mindset necessary to adapt to an ever-evolving world.

Moreover, the ethos of "frugal making" within DIY play practices aligns with contemporary imperatives related to sustainability and responsible resource utilisation (Asamoah et al., 2022; Istenič, 2019; Manelius et al., 2019). By repurposing discarded materials and minimising waste, these practices contribute to a more environmentally conscious approach to leisure and recreation. This chapter lays the foundation for an in-depth exploration of the dynamic interplay between DIY play, frugal making, and two case studies, offering insights into the significance in shaping a creative, adaptive, and sustainable future within the urban fabric of cities, like Auckland and Shaoxing.

This paper focuses on two playful interventions enacted by an interdisciplinary and multi-cultural team dispersed between Tāmaki Makaurau, and Shaoxing, China. The encounters in question both utilised found and repurposed materials, commonplace video conferencing software, everyday mobile technology, and creative, spontaneous, and improvised playful actions to foster interpersonal and intercultural connections between the two countries, the team of play-facilitators, and the public in both contexts.

## **2. The Synergy of Bunnings, Frugal Making, and DIY Play Practices: A Holistic Nexus Facilitating Creative Expression and Personal Empowerment**

The first of the DIY frugal making play encounters we would like to examine, took place between play makers inside a Bunnings Warehouse chain store in central Tāmaki Makaurau, and a group of individuals at a university in Shaoxing, China. In Shaoxing, one playmaker was a New Zealander based at the university on work secondment, and the other a Chinese university student who was interested in the potential to see and playfully 'experience' Aotearoa and interact with people in English. The encounter was facilitated through an adapted toolbox made by the Aotearoa playmakers using a 'frugal making' methodology (the toolbox was found in a collaborators' garage). The toolbox device, modified to have a cheap smartphone on an affordable 4G internet data plan installed inside it (see Figures 1. & 2.), was used to call the participants in China through the Zoom video conferencing app. A portable Bluetooth speaker was also encased within the box, and connected to the video call. With the video of the participants' faces in China facing outwards, and their voices amplified through the Bluetooth speaker, the toolbox was carried through the Bunnings store by the play makers in Tāmaki Makaurau. The encounter unfolded, first by the Chinese student and Tāmaki Makaurau play makers meeting each other and establishing relations, then the play practitioners showing the student around the Bunnings store. This involved meeting some of the staff (see Figures 3. and 4.) and

allowing the student to direct the playmakers as to where to go, asking questions and noting similarities and differences between a hardware store in Aotearoa, and in China. Through this process a creative challenge emerged. The student introduced the concept of ‘lahua’ (ribbon or paper roses 丝带玫瑰 or 折纸玫瑰. See Figures 5. and 6.) and the playmakers asked if they could attempt to recreate this traditional Chinese craft, only using products and materials available in Bunnings. The student responded well to the idea, and instructed and led the playmakers in sourcing suitable alternative materials to create the ‘lahua’, interacting with the helpful Bunnings staff to assist as well. After the initial challenge did not eventuate in a successful outcome, a later date was set for another telepresence visit to Bunnings. In this second encounter, the student and playmakers in Aotearoa traversed through Bunnings and nearby neighbourhoods to find materials and create the traditional craft. Sharing and exchanging cultural and maker knowledge in the process.



Figure 1. Prototype of the ‘Bunnings Telepresence Bot’. Constructed out of an unused Bosch toolbox. (Image supplied by the authors).



Figure 2. The 'Bunnings Telepresence Bot' in use during the first Bunnings play encounter. (Image supplied by the authors).



Figure 3. the 'Bunnings Telepresence Bot' in use during the first Bunnings play encounter. (Image supplied by the authors).



Figure 4. The 'Bunnings Telepresence Bot' in use during the first Bunnings play encounter.(Image supplied by the authors).



Figure 5. Ribbon 'lahua' Roses 丝带玫瑰 Image from:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=uj-kL3Va51k&ab\\_channel=%E6%89%8B%E5%B7%A5%E5%B0%8F%E5%8C%A0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=uj-kL3Va51k&ab_channel=%E6%89%8B%E5%B7%A5%E5%B0%8F%E5%8C%A0)

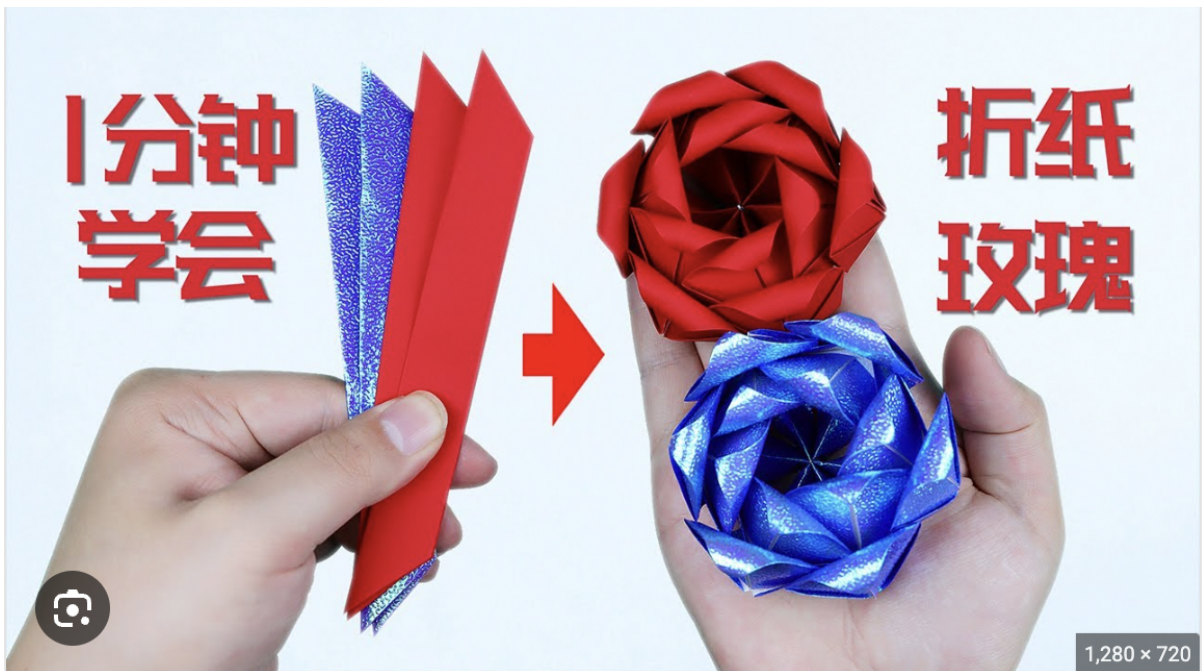


Figure 6. Paper 'lahua' roses. Image from: <https://youtu.be/01J-t-dUEsE?si=AMnffjeQgLnd9soS>



Figure 7. Listening and observing instructions on how to make 'lahua' roses through the 'Bunnings Telepresence Bot'. (Image supplied by the authors).



Figure 8. Attempting to make 'lahua' roses with instructions coming from a Chinese participant through the 'Bunnings Telepresence Bot'. (Image supplied by the authors).

The intricate interplay observed among Bunnings, frugal making, and DIY play practices signifies a dynamic fusion encompassing diverse resources, philosophical tenets, and creative pursuits, thereby presenting individuals with a multifaceted avenue for free expression via self-guided play adventures. This chapter endeavours to elucidate the profound interrelationships binding these constituents, with particular emphasis on their combined capacity to transcend conventional boundaries, while concurrently fostering a profound nexus between creativity and play. In so doing, the synergistic amalgamation in question accentuates the remarkable significance ascribed to DIY play practices, characterised by their inherent multifunctionality in serving as a conduit for self-expression, problem-solving, and personal empowerment.

Bunnings, often regarded as a conventional purveyor of hardware and construction materials, ascends to a more profound role within the context of DIY play practices. It transcends its conventional retail identity to emerge as an expansive repository, not solely of tangible tools and materials, but also as an incubator for imaginative play. Within the extensive inventory contained within Bunnings' confines lie abundant reserves of raw materials and resources, which serve as foundational elements for the construction of DIY play adventures. The metamorphosis of this commercial establishment into a domain replete with creative potential underscores the transformative capacity by which Bunnings extends its primary function to become an instrumental catalyst for the inception of innovative play.

Bunnings, as a retail establishment primarily focused on home improvement and DIY products, offers a range of opportunities for frugal making and playful engagement without succumbing to the conventional consumerist paradigm. One notable affordance is the provision of in-store seating and product samples, which can be repurposed by play enthusiasts for gatherings or creative hui sessions. These areas within the store provide a physical location in which to initiate playful interventions, foster casual encounters, enjoy refreshments, and generally "hang out" while operating outside the confines of a strictly capitalist or consumerist framework. Additionally, Bunnings often offers sample products and promotional "freebies" within its stores, serving as potential catalysts for creative and playful interactions. The availability of free Wi-Fi further enhances the possibilities for play, as visitors can bring in their Wi-Fi-enabled devices to access digital resources, facilitating imaginative engagements and communication. Engaging with Bunnings' shop assistants presents an intriguing dimension for playful encounters. Involving these employees in playful activities not only adds depth to the experiences but also opens up new avenues for exploration. Their participation can contribute significantly to the overall enjoyment and meaningfulness of these interactions.

Exploring discarded waste and defective products in Bunnings' bins offers yet another avenue for inventive play. These overlooked items can serve as the basis for resourceful and creative projects, reflecting the ethos of frugal making and sustainability. Considering the future of Bunnings, the incorporation of AI may present both opportunities and challenges. The role of AI shop assistants could potentially streamline and enhance customer experiences, but questions arise regarding their capacity to understand and respond to playful explorations and unconventional, non-commercial expressions. It remains to be seen whether AI systems would recognize the value and enjoyment derived from such interactions. Furthermore, AI could potentially facilitate cross-cultural and international interactions within Bunnings. Imagine AI bots from different cultural contexts interacting, or people in China engaging with AI bots designed for a Kiwi audience. This opens new frontiers for playful exploration and intercultural exchanges within the store. In conclusion, Bunnings offers a myriad of possibilities for DIY play and creative engagement, creating space for alternative ways of being within its confines without the necessity of significant purchasing power. As the role of AI evolves within the retail landscape, there is an exciting prospect of new and innovative forms of play and interaction emerging, challenging the boundaries of traditional consumerist spaces and practices.

Central to the synergy underscoring the amalgamation of Bunnings and DIY play practices is the underlying philosophy of frugal making—a creative ethos deeply ingrained with principles of resourcefulness and sustainability. This philosophy engenders the art of shaping play opportunities from humble, often overlooked materials, thereby inculcating a prevailing ethos of minimalism and judicious resource utilisation. Frugal making operates to expand the inherent potentiality of Bunnings' commoditized offerings beyond their original, utilitarian scope, facilitating the imaginative repurposing of materials and thereby providing the means for the inception of innovative play experiences.

At the core of this intricate interplay resides the fundamental concept of DIY play practices, which function as an expansive canvas that empowers individuals to engage in self-guided play adventures, thereby facilitating uninhibited avenues for free expression. This domain is distinguished by its remarkable capacity to transcend the constraints imposed by structured activities and predetermined play constructs. Participants, within the realm of DIY play practices, assume the mantle of creativity and problem-solving agency, thereby affording them the liberty to unleash their imaginations without the encumbrances of predefined rules or the influence of commercialised play equipment. This intrinsic DIY mindset does not only engender a profound fusion between the creative impulse and the act of play but also endows individuals with the agency to mould materials according to their unique visions, thereby yielding play experiences characterised by an unparalleled depth of personalization, reflective of their distinctive creative inclinations.

The interconnection between Bunnings, frugal making, and DIY play practices signifies a holistic alliance that extends beyond the confines of mere utilitarian considerations. This symbiotic relationship is emblematic of the notion that creative play transcends the constraints of conventional spatial confines and structured activities. It constitutes a manifestation of a broader philosophy that champions the transformative potential inherent to seemingly mundane resources. Within this context, this association venerates the intrinsic value of self-expression and innovation, concurrently promoting a profound sense of ownership and pride in the play experiences that manifest through the agency of the DIY mindset.

In summation, the multifaceted interplay between Bunnings, frugal making, and DIY play practices coalesces as a dynamic fusion, drawing upon diverse resources, philosophical underpinnings, and creative potential. This intricate relationship furnishes individuals with a versatile avenue for free expression, facilitated through self-guided play adventures. Bunnings, functioning as a wellspring of raw materials, and frugal making, serving as a guiding ethos, harmoniously converge to empower individuals to partake in DIY play that transcends conventional boundaries, thereby cultivating a deeper, symbiotic connection between creativity and play. This synergistic affiliation, underscored by the philosophy underpinning DIY play practices, accentuates their multifunctional significance, affirming their role as not only a medium for personal expression but also as a means by which to cultivate problem-solving abilities and attain personal empowerment.

### **3. Case Study Shaoxing**

In the second playful encounter, the roles were switched somewhat. This time, two Chinese students and the New Zealand facilitator in Shaoxing, created a frugal, DIY telepresence trolley out of a hand truck, a found cardboard box, and a disposed of green tea packaging set. A mobile smart device and Bluetooth speaker were also attached (see Figures 9. & 10.). This device was used to make a call to the Aotearoa based team and was then wheeled around to show the Aotearoa group a popular tourist attraction in Shaoxing - the hometown of influential Jin dynasty calligrapher, politician, and writer, Wang Xizhi (王羲之). Through the encounter, the New Zealand team directed the group on the ground in Wang Xizhi's hometown, to explore local street scenes and tourist attractions, and interact with shopkeepers, vendors, and the public. Additionally, some of the members of the group in Aotearoa were 'responding' to the interactions and context through live musical compositions, and interpretive dance (see Figures 13. And 14.). This turned the trolley into something akin to a portable speaker being wheeled through the streets and provided a convivial atmosphere to the location. As the intervention unfurled, creative, humorous, and playful encounters and interactions eventuated. Games were made up spontaneously (such as the Aotearoa team instructing the China group to follow certain

members of the public for as long as possible, or finding a particular colour item of clothing to buy from one of the street vendors) and new intercultural experiences were fostered (e.g. going into a restaurant and translating a menu full of Shaoxing local delicacies for the kiwi participants, letting them order a lunch for the playmakers on the ground in China).



Figure 9. The 'DIY telepresence trolley'. (Image supplied by the authors).



Figure 10. The 'DIY telepresence trolley'. (Image supplied by the authors).



Figure 11. The 'DIY telepresence trolley' being wheeled around the hometown of Wang Xizhi (王羲之). (Image supplied by the authors).



Figure 12. The ‘DIY telepresence trolley’ on the streets of the hometown of Wang Xizhi (王羲之). (Image supplied by the authors).

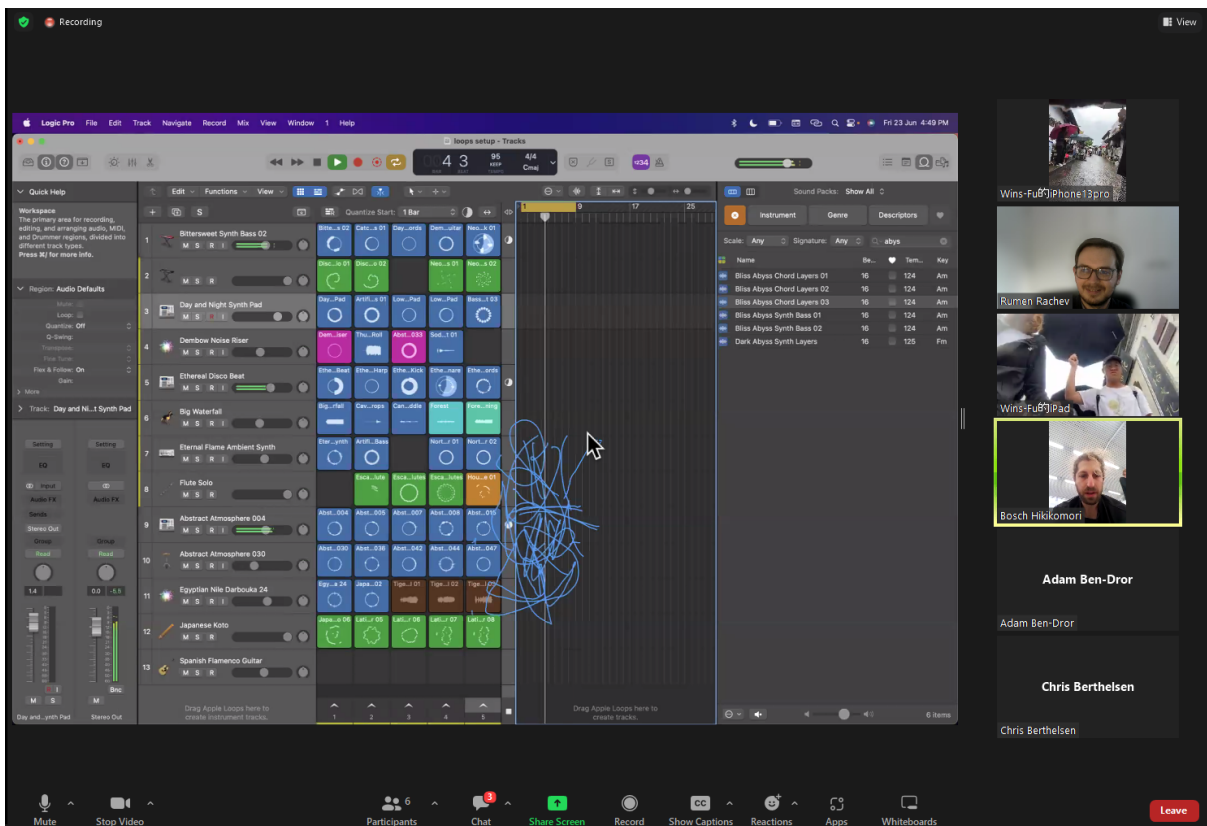


Figure 13. Screen capture of the Aotearoa participants making live music in response to scenes in Wang Xizhi (王羲之)’s hometown. (Image supplied by the authors).

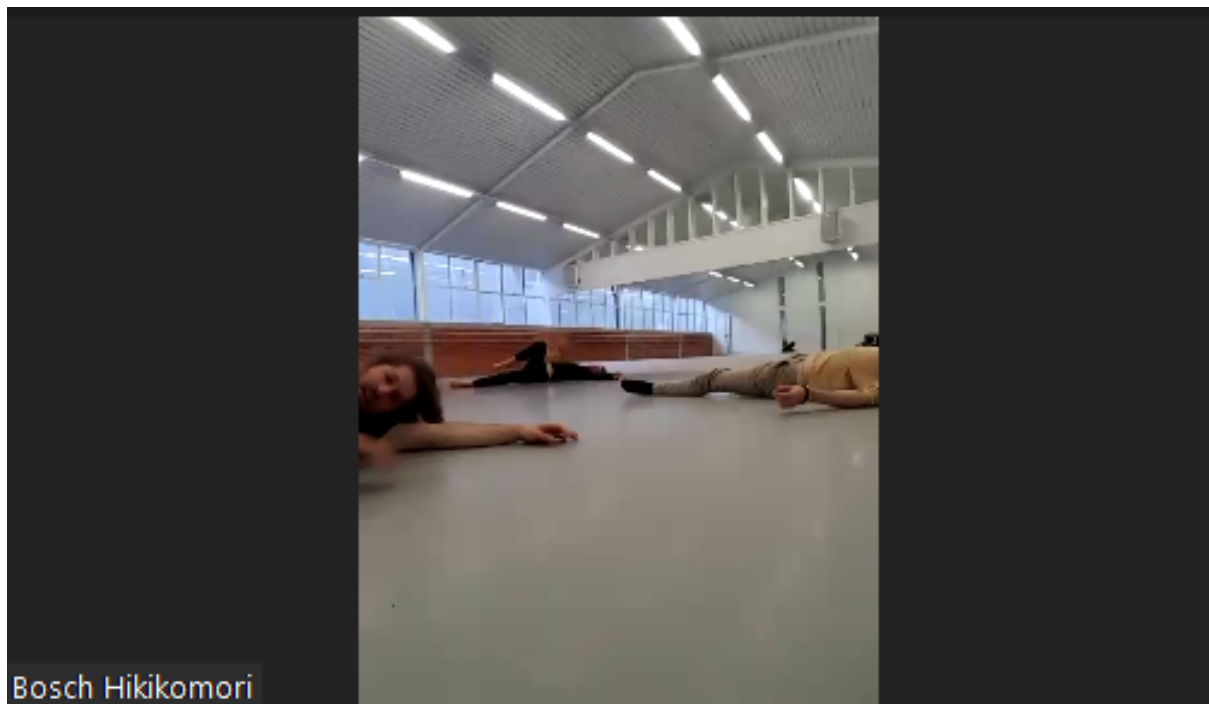


Figure 14. Screen capture of the Aotearoa participants doing live interpretive dance in response to scenes in Wang Xizhi (王羲之)'s hometown. (Image supplied by the authors).

“The first time I talked to my friends in New Zealand was to teach them how to make lahua, they were very patient and learnt very fast, it was so interesting to talk to New Zealand people with me in a toolbox, at first, I thought my New Zealand friends were video recording on their mobile phones hahaha, but it turned out that I was in the toolbox. The supermarket in New Zealand is very big, unfortunately I didn't find the ribbon for the lahua, but in the end, I used paper instead, thank you very much for your patience in finding the ribbon material. During the video call, I was impressed by the paint purchase, because in China, the paint is prepared and sold, but in New Zealand, the salesman got the colours of babypink by mixing them in a certain ratio, which is very novel.

During the book saint hometown trip, we dragged a machine puppy made from a camper van and a paper box to record the traditional streets of Shaoxing live, although it was raining that day, our machine puppy still attracted a lot of people's attention. I thought the machine puppies were funny. We ate authentic Shaoxing food on this trip, and the Shao San Fresh received unanimous praise.”

“I felt the warmth of New Zealanders when I interacted with them in the toolbox, and it reminded me of the couple selling stinky tofu on the Lu Xun trip, who greeted Mr James with the same warmth. It is worth mentioning that the colour of the toolbox is green! It's the same as I remember the grassland in New Zealand. I would like to come to New Zealand if I have the chance in the future. New Zealand

is a good country to settle down, first of all, I think the environment is good, the life is not too stressful, and through the people I saw in the toolbox are very friendly, so I would like to come here.”

Linda's evocative reflections offer an intimate window into a transcultural exchange facilitated through an unconventional medium, a toolbox. Her initial interaction with acquaintances in Aotearoa, New Zealand, framed within an instructional dialogue on crafting 'lahua', reveals a convergence of cultural curiosity and educational endeavours. The narrative chronicles the nuances of this pedagogical encounter, characterised by the receptive assimilation of knowledge by her Kiwi counterparts. The rapidity with which Linda's New Zealand friends embraced and internalised the instruction underscores the universal appeal of play as a captivating and cross-cultural conduit.

Remarkably, the toolbox itself assumed a symbolic dimension, inadvertently setting the stage for intricate dynamics of communication. Linda's initial bemusement, stemming from a misapprehension of her friends' actions as video recording, exemplifies the fusion of technological interface with traditional crafting methodologies. Consequently, the narrative metamorphoses into an allegory that delineates the bridging of geographical expanses through the digital realm, aptly encapsulating the contemporary discourse on global connectivity.

A compelling dimension arises during Linda's exploration of an Aotearoa, New Zealand supermarket. The juxtaposition of the expansive supermarket with the quest for a seemingly mundane item, the ribbon for lahua, assumes significance in its manifestation of cross-cultural materiality. Linda's improvisational recourse to paper in lieu of ribbon underscores the adaptive proclivity characteristic of DIY play practices, reinforcing the interconnectedness of creativity, resourcefulness, and cultural innovation.

Linda's virtual sojourn during the book saint hometown trip further illuminates the transformative power of play within an intercultural context. The deployment of a whimsical "machine puppy" crafted from unconventional materials serves as a charismatic emblem of play's ability to evoke intrigue, amusement, and communal engagement even amidst adverse weather conditions. The convergence of artistic expression, technological application, and the sociocultural milieu amplifies the narrative's resonance, emblematic of the synergy between innovation and tradition.

Culinary explorations during the trip, exemplified by the deep dive into authentic Shaoxing cuisine, provide an experiential anchor, illustrating the role of gastronomy as a conduit for cultural communion. The unanimous acclaim garnered by the Shao San Fresh underscores the potential of gastronomic encounters as a vehicle for intercultural understanding, catalysing dialogue and appreciation beyond linguistic or geographical confines.

Wins reflection:

“Cut out a rectangle in the middle of this toolbox and put it into the mobile phone, just like a window to open the world to China, which is very fantastic and wonderful, and different cultures communicate with each other. People are also very friendly and will take the initiative to say hello and take photos. Shaoxing is an old city, but New Zealand is modern and developed, and all kinds of new things are developed (for example, cycling can be seen everywhere in New Zealand, but it is still rare in Shaoxing). The pace of life in New Zealand is relatively slow, but the pace in China is relatively fast, with people rushing to work on the road, which is the difference of modern culture. I prefer a slow life and a good air environment.”

Wins' reflection extends the discourse on transcultural engagement through an imaginative metaphorical prism—the rectangular aperture within the toolbox, akin to a window. This imaginative analogy unveils the dialectical passage between cultures, wherein the window serves as not just a physical aperture, but a symbolic transcendence of boundaries. This portrayal conveys the fluidity with which cultures intersect, precipitating dialogue, exchange, and the diffusion of ideas.

The sociability inherent in play practices finds articulation in Wins' observation of the affability exhibited by individuals across cultures. The propensity for spontaneous salutations and photographic exchanges exemplifies the conviviality that pervades DIY play practices, forging connections irrespective of linguistic or geographical disparities. This manifestation of cultural interaction accentuates the social dimensions intrinsic to play, further underscoring its potential as a unifying medium.

Wins' juxtaposition of the historical tapestry of Shaoxing with the contemporary landscape of New Zealand yields a thought-provoking exploration of temporal and spatial dispositions. The emergence of novelties within the latter, epitomised by the ubiquitous presence of cycling, engenders reflections on cultural evolution and technological advancement. This comparative insight elucidates the malleability of play practices as a living cultural artefact, responsive to temporal vicissitudes and indicative of societal shifts.

The perceptual contrast in the pace of life, delineated through the cultural prisms of New Zealand and China, unveils the variances engendered by modernity's encroachments. The rhythmic cadence in each context—New Zealand's leisurely tempo vis-à-vis China's frenetic momentum—implicates the influence of contemporary ethos on play practices. Wins' predilection for a measured existence resonates as an endorsement of the tranquil, conducive milieu that nourishes DIY play experiences.

When contextualised within the broader framework of this study, Linda and Wins' reflections furnish a deeply insightful dimension to the discourse on DIY play practices. Their experiential narratives underscore the transformative potential of play as a medium that transcends sociocultural barriers, facilitating the organic exchange of ideas, the cultivation of relationships, and the encapsulation of identity. The toolbox emerges not merely as a physical receptacle but as a metaphorical realm that underscores the interconnectedness of cultures, engendering a synergistic interplay resonant with the ethos of Hautaka Tākaro. The juxtaposition of cultural dynamics, temporal evolution, and spatial dispositions—drawn from Linda and Wins' personal accounts—ultimately underscores the intricate tapestry woven by DIY play practices within the fabric of human interaction.

The experience of being on the 'other side' of the classroom in a Chinese university was profoundly surreal. Interacting with Chinese students who had never set foot in Aotearoa, had no knowledge of or prior exposure to a store like Bunnings, and then witnessing their reactions to hearing New Zealand accents, encountering unfamiliar products and brands, and responding to seemingly ordinary scenarios and items, left the New Zealand play practitioner with a peculiar sense of the uncanny, intertwined with a feeling of disorientation. It was as if they had partially traversed a portal with the students to a place known intimately by the individual, yet not being fully present within. This perception was coloured by the immediate embodied and lived experience during the secondment in China. This juxtaposition of contexts and 'worlds' generated a subtle yet palpable friction and dissonance, at times even inducing a sense of bewilderment, as the playmaker observed how the cultures and experiences of individuals on both sides of the Bunnings bot were intermingling in occasionally jarring ways. Miscommunication, confusion, and awkwardness seemed to permeate interactions on both fronts as they navigated and adjusted to this unconventional situation. Conversely, moments of synergy, mutual understanding, and unadulterated enjoyment emerged organically, such as the development and enactment of the 'lahua' concept among playmakers on the ground in Bunnings, guided by the student. Additionally, there were heart-warming interactions between the student and Bunnings staff, exemplified by a shop assistant assisting in selecting the right paint colour for the lahua ribbon and preparing a pot of paint.

The experience of guiding our friends from New Zealand through the historic town of Shaoxing in a homemade 'telepresence trolley' proved to be more chaotic and sensorially overwhelming. The numerous live video calls, with some channels transmitting live musical feeds of electronic and ambient music, others performing live interpretive dances in response to the music and people encountered in the tourist location, and still others sending computer-generated text-to-voice messages through the system, all while manoeuvring a rickety hand trolley on cobblestone streets amid bemused and confused locals, inundated our senses with sights, sounds, smells, and flavours. Although this experience yielded numerous interactions and moments of creativity and synergy, it

unfolded with less cohesion and direction compared to the Bunnings endeavour. This may be attributed to the sheer diversity of activities taking place and the challenge of directing playful experiences in specific directions within this dynamic setting.

From the lived experience in China, there were several noteworthy contrasts with my experiences in Aotearoa. China offered a sensorially overwhelming environment characterised by a multitude of people, sounds, sights, and smells, and a constant flow of movement and exchange. The scale of everything, from the size of buildings to the distances between locations, the sheer number of people, and the multitude of options and choices in activities, interests, and consumerist goods, was initially overwhelming but gradually became more routine during the time based there. The feeling of being visibly different and attracting attention, both fascinated and at times slightly hostile, persisted, as did the sense of sticking out in the crowd. Yet, amid the cultural and linguistic barriers, there was a prevalent openness to play games, experience new things, and engage with strangers in public spaces.

Moreover, the Aotearoa playmaker noted the striking affordability and exceptional quality of food throughout China, as well as the rapid pace of life, exemplified by same-day online deliveries and the swift pace of change in the urban landscape. Interestingly, the individual also observed that while many aspects of Chinese culture were ancient and deeply rooted, they coexisted alongside a modernity characterised by a slightly wild and unpolished aspect, reflected in issues like litter and pollution. China appeared to the play practitioner as a collectivist and communal society, with people readily coming together for meals, activities, games, and socialising in public spaces. Duty towards family and the responsibilities associated with hosting guests were prevalent themes.

Furthermore, there was a notable tradition of gift-giving as a sign of respect and relationship-building, a practice with the potential to be integrated into playful encounters in Aotearoa. Reflecting on the future of playful interactions between the two cities, establishing relationships with enduring connections ('whakawhanaungatanga') and fostering collaborative artistic endeavours centred around the concept of play are pivotal. Remaining open to identifying synergies and connections, maintaining a sense of awareness regarding shared characteristics and interests, and prioritising the element of fun and enjoyment in these interactions are fundamental to creating distinct and shared sense of place. Reciprocal relationships (aroha) marked by mutual exchange and an ongoing spirit of giving and receiving can further enhance these connections. Finally, uniting frugal makers from diverse backgrounds holds the potential to create innovative and resourceful forms of play that transcend cultural boundaries and promote a global spirit of creativity and ingenuity.

#### **4. What can be the future of frugal making in cities?**

The future of frugal making in cities holds immense promise and potential, not only for individuals but also for the collective well-being of communities. Our exploration of DIY play practices in Tāmaki Makaurau and Shaoxing has underscored the innovative and resourceful spirit of individuals who transform discarded materials into playful wonders. These non-traditional approaches to play not only challenge conventional notions but also resonate deeply with the broader discourse on play theory and cultural practices.

As we look ahead, it is essential to consider how local governments and urban planners can actively incorporate elements of DIY play into urban design and policy frameworks. By doing so, we can create public spaces that not only serve practical purposes but also become vibrant hubs of community engagement and creativity. Frugal making can be integrated into park designs, community centres, and even urban regeneration projects, offering a unique blend of sustainability, resourcefulness, and fun.

Imagine playgrounds designed with input from local DIY play enthusiasts, where discarded materials are repurposed to create interactive and ever-changing play spaces. Picture public events that encourage residents to come together, explore their city, and contribute to the transformation of neglected areas into thriving community assets. By embracing and supporting such practices, local governments can foster a more sustainable and enriching urban environment, where play becomes an integral part of our daily lives.

Moreover, these innovative DIY play practices, often facilitated through telepresence and accessible digital connectivity, have the power to transcend borders and foster intercultural connections. Enthusiasts from different corners of the world could collaborate on playful projects, exchange ideas, and create a global network of creativity and resilient modes of play and community development beyond capitalist market rules. This cosmopolitan localism, where local communities engage with global networks, enriches the cultural fabric and sense of place in cities, promoting a sense of shared humanity and interconnectedness, and ability to share knowledge and resources.

In this vision of the future, we not only unlock the hidden dimensions of human experience but also celebrate the remarkable tapestry of play that weaves through our societies. DIY play practices offer a path towards more inclusive, engaging, and vibrant cities, where the act of creation becomes a communal endeavour, connecting individuals and neighbourhoods in ways that transcend traditional boundaries. As we navigate the ever-evolving urban landscapes, let us recognize the power of frugal making to inspire change, enhance our public spaces, and strengthen the bonds within our

communities while simultaneously forging connections that bridge cultures and celebrate the beauty of our diverse world.

In conclusion, the paper emphasises the importance of recognizing and celebrating DIY play practices as integral components of Auckland's play landscape. It underscores how these practices align with Hautaka Tākaro's mission to provide a comprehensive and inclusive platform for play-related content, embracing various forms of expression to capture the essence of play.

## References

Activities and Research in Environments for Creativity. (n.d.). *Activities and Research in Environments for Creativity*. <http://arecreative.org/>

Asamoah, S. P., Adom, D., Kquofi, S., & Nyadu-Addo, R. (2022). Recycled art from plastic waste for environmental sustainability and aesthetics in Ghana. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 3(1), 23-46.

Au, A. (2020). Reconceptualizing the generation in a digital (izing) modernity: Digital media, social networking sites, and the flattening of generations. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 50(2), 163-183.

Bonham, A. (2022). *Space to Play and Playing the Space: How may playful practices co-produce the playful city?* (Doctoral dissertation, ResearchSpace@ Auckland).

Boswell, R. (2021). *Play, politics and the production of space: DIY urbanism in post-earthquake Christchurch* (Doctoral dissertation, ResearchSpace@ Auckland).

Edinberry, Z. (2019). *Playful pathways: the regeneration of Manurewa Town Centre* (Master's thesis).

Gluckman, P., Clyne, D., & Bardsley, A. (2022). *Reimagining Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland: harnessing the region's potential*.

Istenič, S. P. (2019). Participatory urbanism: creative interventions for sustainable development. *Acta geographica Slovenica*, 59(1), 127-140.

Klein, M., Cox, B., Tuck, K., Baker, T., Jones, R., & Schloffel-Armstrong, S. (2021). Pop-up publics: Temporary publicness at the Auckland Night Markets. *New Zealand Geographer*, 77(2), 114-122.

Leorke, D. (2020). Games, play and playfulness in the creative city: A brief overview. *Games and Play in the Creative, Smart and Ecological City*, 27-37.

Manelius, A. M., Nielsen, S., & Kauschen, J. S. (2019). Rebeauty—artistic strategies for repurposing material components. In *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* (Vol. 225, No. 1, p. 012023). IOP Publishing.

Priya, A., Garg, S., & Tigga, N. P. (2020). Predicting anxiety, depression and stress in modern life using machine learning algorithms. *Procedia Computer Science*, 167, 1258-1267.

手工小匠 [@user-bo4ik8yj9v]. (2021, September 29). **【手工】** 丝带玫瑰你会做吗？简单又漂亮，学会就送喜欢的人 [Screenshot]. Youtube. <https://youtu.be/uj-kL3Va51k?si=RbJ3Vr9Ov-a43g4l>

脑洞作战部 [@user-go5fm5wg9d]. (2022, February 5). **【创意折纸】** 超简单1分钟学会！值得收藏的一版玫瑰花！就是实用 | 脑洞作战部 [Screenshot]. Youtube. <https://youtu.be/01J-t-dUEsE?si=AMnfFjeQgLnd9soS>