"Collins’ hacking workshops relate to tinkering because they allow for experimentation with parts and materials that can come together in different ways for different results."
ArtsECO Fellows 2020-2021 - Wesley Friedrich

Briefly explain what the artifact is and where it came from.

This artifact is documentation of “hacking workshops” by Nicolas Collins. Nicolas Collins is an artist, teacher, composer, and author of the book "Handmade Electronic Music, The Art of Hardware Hacking". The video shows students experimenting with various found materials and cheap electronic parts to create instruments, sound sculptures, and prototypes for electronic circuits. Nicolas Collins has been a teacher in the Department of Sound at the Art Institute of Chicago since 1999. His work and research have been very influential in the fields of electronic music and sound art. As I understand it, Collins’ book provides the structure for these workshops. Projects range from simply making a speaker jump with a battery and some wires to soldering circuits for handmade synthesizers and electronic sound processors. The fields of Sound Art and Experimental Music (especially Musique Concrete) run adjacent to and blend with Visual Art because the conceptual concerns are often the same. Materials, processes, interaction with the audience, and thinking about space and place are some of these common concerns. I believe Sound Art and Experimental Music could be exciting artforms for K-12 students to learn about in a Visual Arts curriculum.

Explain how the artifact represents your current thinking on tinkering.

The video "life lessons through tinkering" briefly shows what is possible when young people are given time to freely experiment with tools and materials under the guidance of open-minded experienced makers. Today, makerspaces and Innovation Labs provide this type of access to students and curious adults in schools and communities. These spaces would be great places for Collins-style hacking workshops. Collins’ hacking workshops relate to tinkering because they allow for experimentation with parts and materials that can come together in different ways for different results. Collins’ book provides schematics and diagrams, but it also encourages the maker to try multiple ways of putting the pieces together (i.e. tinkering), listening to the results along the way and taking note of what is exciting. Beyond this, the set of materials could also result in non-sounding sculptures built from soldering wires and combining found materials together. I see these workshops essentially as the Tulley camps with different materials and a smaller space to work in. Like Gever Tulley’s tinkering camps, Collin’s workshops also inspire collaboration. At the end of a typical hacking workshop, students combine their built components and sound together in the same space.

Link to artifact:

youtube.com/watch?v=8E38DX4Cw4A