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FUTURE CRADLE



research
exposition

GEORGINA FOLLETT and LOUISE VALENTINE



past, present and future craft practice

PUBLISHED ON THE OCCASION OF THE RESEARCH EXPOSITION

future craft

26 March – 26 April 2010

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past
present
& future craft practice

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introduction

Past, Present and Future Craft Practice has sought to use the Future Craft exposition as a vehicle for showcasing its research. The exposition was chosen over the exhibition as it opens up a dialogue with the audience on the work undertaken. The work is presented in a number of ways, through text, diagrams and objects, with the aim of providing the viewer with the thoughtful journey undertaken by the researchers within the project team.

The exposition is concerned with revealing knowledge and generating an understanding of the process behind the work. Objects contain very dense material; one object can embody thirty or more years of experience within it. Therefore, making the object the singular focus does not always give access to the level of knowledge required to create it. The exposition seeks to look at process as well as product, to assist the viewer in gaining a fuller understanding of the intention behind the work.

This is a research exposition emanating from a five-year project, undertaken by a team of five. Their individual journeys through the process are explored, and collectively they provide insight into the answers sought to the questions established within the Arts and Humanities Research Council grant application. The five individuals have worked both collectively and individually and the resultant picture is necessarily both complex and simple.

FUTURE CRAFT RESEARCH exposition

26 March – 24 April 2010

Matthew Gallery

Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design

University of Dundee

Scotland



context

Past, Present and Future Craft Practice research was conducted under the framework of a successful grant application to the Arts and Humanities Research Council (2004), which established that the research would evaluate the aesthetics embodied within craft by analysing methodological approaches embedded within historical and contemporary practice. It would develop a tool for interrogating the process of progress, and evaluate the relationship between skill, intellect and culture in order to attend to the following question: Is there a future role for craft?

The following is an abstract of the application.

grant application

The value of craft may be considered as a concern for innovation, individual vision, intrinsic values, and future cultural concerns: a fusion of art, science, engineering, and technology. This project aims to articulate the relation between skill, intent, and culture through the construction of an integrated approach to questioning visual knowledge. The fundamental premise of this investigation is that craft-based practice is a socially interactive process despite being a predominantly individually executed product, where dialogical methods expose contradictions and nurture mindful interrogation: a system of thinking.

However, craft is often misunderstood as skilful making. This common misperception fails to address the maker's capacity to retain the integrative nature of thought. The practice of crafts is a journey through the mind, reliant on building an individual vision through tacit knowledge. Yet, the skill of coherently expressing the intellectual and personal voice within the development of work is usually missing. This project will challenge the perceptions of the crafts person to keep the journey silent and authorless. It will challenge these assumptions by inverting the perspective from which crafts are conventionally interrogated and communicated.

We aim to expose, articulate and develop this way of working by studying historical and practical craft knowledge. We will:

- Conduct comparative research on visual and cultural aesthetics of craft-based practice; attending to the plurality of perspectives inherent in creative thinking.
- Develop visual methods of interrogating the process of craft-based practice for the study of craft knowledge, involving participative and non-participative observation and interview.
- Develop an integrative framework of history, theory, and practice for analysing the material obtained through the application of visual methods.
- Build a European network of research links with research centres and institutions concerned with craft-based practice and knowledge management, with a view to generating financial support for further research in the future.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What can be learned from historical craft ideologies and philosophies? Why is there a lack of understanding regarding the principles of craft? Culturally, how do crafts relate to the other visual disciplines? What is the value of craft to the development of culture? How does a craftsperson communicate the knowledge embodied and embedded in craft? What is the significance of the craftsperson's approach to thinking for other knowledge domains? How can the discipline of craft regenerate itself?

Considering the relation, in crafts, between learning skills and knowledge application, we shall seek to answer these questions by focusing on the following issues:

- Communication and the use of craft knowledge and skills
- Visioning and the role of craft in cultural development
- Knowledge and its application in craft
- Technology and its role within the process of making.

The generic question being attended to within each of these four issues is of how interrogation of visual knowledge deepens the skill of questioning the self, and how this ability relates to creating innovative cultural development.

The crafts practice relies on the knowledge and wisdom held within the individual practitioner, where the individual embraces the qualities of specialist and generalist, together with the ability to generate new knowledge and to exploit this through practice. This holistic way of working assumes that the vehicle of dissemination, usually exhibition, is inherently understood through viewing the object. By embracing the holistic approach, and using knowledge of historical and contemporary practice, the intention is to communicate the generic significance of a craftsperson's pattern of thinking.

The craftsperson has developed deeper individualised working processes as a method for idea generation, and in doing so, developed articulation of visual thinking as a method. This project intends to explore and extend articulation of 'visual thinking' as thought itself, thereby demonstrating the capacity of craft to contribute to future cultural development. It is intended that by establishing a close relationship with practitioners and their audiences, we will deepen an understanding of the conditions required to facilitate dialogue, which is a primary means of developing future visions.

There is a significant decline in the importance of Crafts internationally. This phenomenon could be attributed to two mutually reinforcing causes: problems associated with economic viability of producing crafts in a market geared to mass consumption and the decline in quality of existing practice, albeit with notable exceptions (Florida and Tinagli, 2004).

The Art and Crafts movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought to the public's attention contemporary crafts. Scottish examples include Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Phoebe Anna Traquair and Robert Lorimer; indeed the second Arts and Crafts congress was held in Edinburgh in 1889. The underlying philosophy and particular visual qualities that emerged from the movement clearly demonstrate the new visual knowledge. Many historians of art and design (for example, Alan Crawford, Elizabeth Cumming, Annette Carruthers, among others) have treated the period as an object of investigation, however, the practice of crafts as an investigative set of intellectual and practical tools, ie a driver of cultural development and change, remains to be established.

The crafts are subject to historical investigations focused solely upon the product of making and on clusters of makers rather than on the individual. The rationale for this is that it is simpler to give a historical perspective through technical similarities rather than a practical perspective through theoretical similarities with a focus on individual development of knowledge.

While fine art and, more recently, design writing can exemplify the work in terms of its conceptual achievements such writing in the crafts is still modest. There is, by comparison, an inadequate account of the general principles or the intellectual development behind the making, thus reinforcing the perception that craft is purely concerned with hand skills. By inverting the tradition of exploring craft as a product of making, we will investigate craft as a process of thought.

This sets the context for the exposition, which seeks to reveal both the processes involved in undertaking the research and the outcomes. The research undertaken has exceeded the ambition established within the grant, and whilst it answers the questions posed, this in itself has exposed a number of further questions that will form the basis of the second application for *Past, Present and Future Crafts Practice 2*.

REFERENCE

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GEORGINA FOLLETT AND LOUISE VALENTINE 'MINDFUL INQUIRY'

'Mindful Inquiry' is the research framework for Follett and Valentine's study; it is a synthesis of critical social science, hermeneutics, phenomenology and Buddhism. At the heart of this methodology is the concept of 'change' where perpetual activity is its inherent characteristic, both within the research context and of the subject under consideration, because the human condition is at the centre of investigation (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998). The process and product of the discipline of mindfulness is inextricably interwoven: it is both a means and an end – a philosophy and a method (Valentine, 2004; Valentine and Ivey, 2009). The concept of 'postmodern chaos' and its presence in our everyday existence is a key reason for selecting 'Mindful Inquiry' as an appropriate methodological framework to investigate past, present and future notions of craft practice.

The premise of Bentz and Shapiro's concept of 'Mindful Inquiry' is the idea that research is intimately linked with the researcher's awareness of his/her life and his/her lifeworld[1]. They advocate that 'awareness and reflection on your world and the intellectual awareness and reflection that are woven into your research affect – or should affect – one another' (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998: 5). 'Mindful Inquiry' is a reciprocal system: quality research contributes to personal development as a mindful practitioner and personal development in terms of awareness and reflection embody the research. It sits within the realm of 'reflective practitioners' where the researchers do not adopt a detached and impersonal approach, rather they have direct engagement and involvement.

'Mindful Inquiry' was used to embark upon a journey into the context and culture of contemporary practice. A lot of the learning associated with 'Mindful Inquiry' is social learning; learning about language and social convention rather than methods, and it is a requirement of the inquirer to become socialised into a community. The inquirer's remit includes learning where the action is and becoming an active member of the community (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998).

For Follett and Valentine, this process of socialisation and familiarisation for this study of craft took place throughout the research through in-depth conversations about craft as a practice and methodology.



House of Falkland (Figure 1), set the parameters for this research project; it is a central tenet of the original research proposal as it is an unexplored, unexploited, virtually undiscovered resource offering an unspoiled interpretation of craft. Although the house is well known to those who study the buildings associated with the Bute family, its crafts have had little public exposure.



House of Falkland is a resource of international significance. The House is an 'A' listed building designed by William Burn (a pre-eminent Victorian country house architect), built between 1839–1844 with the exterior and the landscape created by Alexander Roos; the internal decoration commissioned by John Patrick Crichton-Stuart, Third Marquess of Bute, a great Victorian patron of the Arts who installed works by Robert Weir Schultz, Horatio Walter Lonsdale, and others. House of Falkland has never been subject to investigation, nor sought resource support from any public body. This unique resource enables visual analysis and cultivation of the crafts from a historical perspective. It offered an opportunity to have an intimate discussion about craft practice through observation of historical examples in their original environment.

Nestling at the foot of the Lomond Hills in Fife, Scotland, House of Falkland is a two-storey country house, in the Jacobean-style. The crafts commissioned for the House are not of the exuberant nature of those commissioned by the Third Marquess of Bute for Cardiff Castle although neither are they sedate, rather they fit somewhere in the middle (Figures 2, 3, 4,5).

The key works of craft within the House of Falkland are undisturbed by time and offer interpretation from the perspective of practice, for example, discussing the relationship between asymmetry and symmetry in the composition of works, the effect of natural light and its movement through the course of a day on the use of colour, and the various levels of storytelling embedded within an individual room, the relationship(s) between the various designed spaces and the narrative of the house as a complete entity.

FIGURE 1
House of Falkland,
Fife, Scotland.
Photograph by
Malcolm Finnie.

FIGURE 2
A detail of the Vine
Corridor in House
of Falkland, Fife.
Photograph by
Malcolm Finnie.

Understanding the language of structure and composition from the practitioner's visual perspective is a central tenet of the research project: it is to understand craft practice through the visual narrative embedded in products, and to articulate the conceptual and developmental frameworks used to construct visual scenarios. In analysing the House through observation of craft in situ (being mindful of the research objectives which are to explore the relation between skill, intent and culture) Follett and Valentine identified parameters affecting practice, namely:

- An **indexical mark** of the creator which offers insight into the practitioner's intellect *ie* his/her conceptual capabilities.
- Use of **storytelling** and the various forms in which the method is applied, for example, the use of myth, romance, mysticism, belief systems, astrology, natural lifecycles (winter, spring, summer, autumn), heraldry, heritage and the concept of family.
- The **environment** for craft and the different meanings associated with the term, for example, cultural, economic, physical and meta-physical, and societal environment.
- The role of **patronage** as an economic model for craft practice.
- Application of **iconography** in practice, for example, strong use of symbols and images from the natural world (*ie* flora and fauna) demonstrating a direct use of iconography, and also an embedded or implied metaphoric relationship with nature as concept *ie* the dynamic relation or tension between inside and outside (or inner view and external view).
- Visual structure (*ie* **form**) of craft practice and its relation to narrative.
- **Realisation process** or the relation between concept and physical actualisation (*ie* the working relation between patron, craftsman and artisan) and the various ways in which this can manifest.



FIGURE 3
The ceiling and
wall covering in the
formal dining hall,
in House of Falkland,
Fife. Photograph by
Malcolm Finnie.

FIGURE 4
An example of
marquetry in the
formal dining hall in
House of Falkland,
Fife.

In order to further explore and test the findings from this analysis of House of Falkland, Follett and Valentine undertook a series of field studies where crafts culture was integral to the architecture. The rationale was to look at crafts inherent within buildings; buildings act as time capsules and the crafts within them are still located as the practitioners intended. They are not separate from their environment and viewed as discrete single objects, but have an integrity that has survived time. One of the principles of craft practice offered by this research is that, by its very nature, craft practice operates over the lifetime of an individual and as such, it is necessary to view practice as a continuous journey rather than a series of independent events. It is argued that single objects alone do not convey the visual exploration and development inherent in an individual's craft.

The sites visited were selected because the crafts were integral and characterised the environment and, in effect are 'locked' in the period in which they were conceived. These included:

- Charleston House, England, which was created by the Bloomsbury Group (Bell and Nicholson, 1997; Humm, 2006), and recently restored with interiors created and painted by Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant over their lifetime of occupation. This site also had single occupancy of owner, similar to the Third Marquess of Bute at House of Falkland.
- Portmeirion: a village or 'an experiment in sympathetic development with the contours of the land' conceived by Sir Clough Williams-Ellis and constructed over a 70-year period based on his personal beliefs about his motto which was, 'cherish the past, adorn the present and construct the future' (Portmeirion, 2000). This site visit allowed the issues of individual vision, the indexical mark and storytelling to be further discussed.
- The Spanish city of Barcelona and the works of Antoni Gaudí, which are now central to the city's identity, from which a whole industry has grown from the vision of this one man and his patron Count Eusebi Güell, a ceramic tile manufacturer. This model in comparison to House of Falkland offered the same process of production ie conveying the visual elements of a group of artisans in the construct of the work where the indexical mark of the craftsman and individual vision of the patron is ambiguous yet powerful. The issues of patronage and storytelling were explored through this reflection on practice.

FIGURE 5

*An example of the visual content of the Third Marquess of Bute's bedroom in House of Falkland, Fife.
Photograph by Malcolm Finnie.*



- Cardiff Castle, which was restored and reinvented under the Third Marquess of Bute who created a 'Neo-Gothic dream palace' using the finest craftsmen of the day, under the guidance of architect William Burges (Williams, 2006). It offered another example of Burges' architecture and Bute's investment in craft. The issues of environment, iconography and the realisation process were further discussed through this work which is viewed as an extreme manifestation of craft, skill, intent and culture in practice.

These visits (and the associated evaluation of the findings from Follett and Valentine's House of Falkland analysis) supported understanding of the essential elements that give visual integrity to objects or environments exemplifying the indexical mark of the author and their development in relationship to crafts practice. In addition to the seven parameters for practice identified via House of Falkland, five additional generic factors were identified as being fundamental to practice and evident from the works examined through the visits including:

- **Vision** ie an ability to conceptualise and 'see' something in the mind's eye that has yet to be created and to hold the full view (rather than fragments of it in the mind's eye) while it is being physically exposed.
- A requirement for a personal **visual language** from which to test and develop the vision.
- **Passion** and personal commitment.
- An understanding of the limitations of **time**.
- A **personal capacity** to continuously develop one's visioning capacity or indexical mark.

With the exception of Charleston, the authors Gaudí, Burges and Williams-Ellis were not responsible for the making element, the projects were too large for a single individual to conduct their construction, rather they engaged and worked with exceedingly skilled craftsmen (artisans: individuals who used their skills in the service of another individual's vision). In doing so, they indicated that crafts per se are not tied to the widely held perception that 'making' with one's own hand is a fundamental requirement for the craft practitioner[2].

The evaluation of House of Falkland in terms of craft practice formed a central resource from which the project team could discuss and evaluate craft through the objects created by practice. The research used this exemplar from which to explore craft historically and to provide a frame from which to evaluate contemporary practice.

Present

Present practice was perhaps the most contentious and difficult aspect of the project to embrace. The issue stemmed from the lack of a clear definition of contemporary craft within the plethora of practices that come within the potential scope of the project. Follett and Valentine observed that definitions in reports commissioned by existing public bodies with responsibility for craft either excluded certain forms of craft or were so non-specific as to be true for any visual practice.

(McAuley and Fillis, 2002; Morris, Hargreaves, McIntyre, 2006).

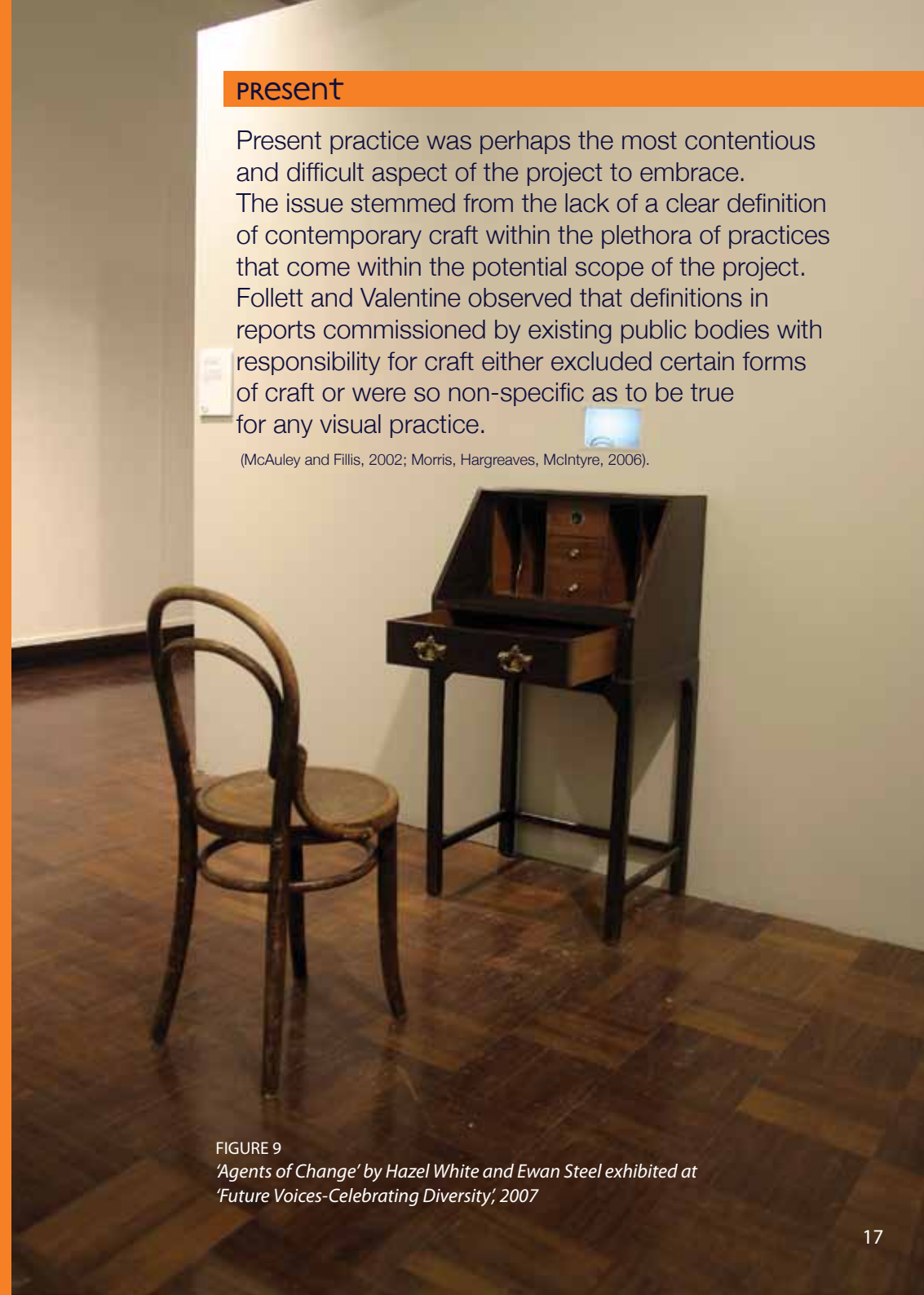


FIGURE 9
'Agents of Change' by Hazel White and Ewan Steel exhibited at
'Future Voices-Celebrating Diversity', 2007



FIGURE 6
'Communicating the Transitions' by JR Campbell was one of the exhibits in the 'Future Voices-Celebrating Diversity' research exhibition, Cooper Gallery, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, Dundee, 2007.



FIGURE 7
'A Designed Discourse' by Carol Epp was an exhibit in the 'Future Voices-Celebrating Diversity' research exhibition, Cooper Gallery, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, Dundee, 2007.

To capture the diversity of activities within the crafts and take stock of its fast changing cultural and creative role, a conference was held in Dundee – 'New Craft Future Voices', July 2007 (NCFV). The conference objective was to promote the highest level of craft practice and initiate a new discourse around some critical questions, including:

- *Where should the emphasis of a new craft discourse be located, is it object, process or maker?*
- *What is the significance of the craftsperson's approach to thinking for other knowledge domains?*
- *What is the future role for craft?*
- *How does a craftsperson communicate the knowledge embodied and embedded in their practice?*
- *What are the distinguishing features of craft in comparison with other forms of creative practice?*
- *What is the value of craft to the development of culture?*

Valentine brought NCFV into being, placing a call for two different types of outputs, those associated with theory and those associated with the processes and products of practice. This approach was adopted to embrace the widest possible engagement with the craft community, and with the capability of giving the broadest view of the values of contemporary craft. NCFV consisted of a three-day conference with 45 papers and five keynote presentations (from Paul Greenhalgh, Bruce Metcalf, Jorunn Veiteberg, Marie O'Mahony and Sandra Alfoldy) and, an exhibition consisting of 27 craft research projects, 37 exhibitors and nearly 250 pieces of work (Figures 6, 7, 8).

To ensure that the conduct of the conference and exhibition met the high standards associated with research, an international peer review group was established, including for example, Professor Chris Rust, Professor Marie O'Mahony and Dr Katie Bunnell. An online reviewing process was put in place as the issue of transparency was deemed imperative. This allowed the craft community to capitalise on the knowledge being shared via the process and to enable individuals to respond to comments made by reviewers and peers.



FIGURE 8
'Heigh-ho' by Trinidadian jeweller Barbara Jardine was an exhibit in the 'Future Voices-Celebrating Diversity' research exhibition, Cooper Gallery, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, Dundee, 2007



FIGURE 10
Hand woven
textiles by Tim
Parry-Williams from
his 'craft: industry
interface' project
exhibited at 'Future
Voices-Celebrating
Diversity', 2007.



FIGURE 11
ST1 Aluminium
by Drummond
Masterton was
included in the
'Autonomic' group
exhibit at 'Future
Voices-Celebrating
Diversity', 2007.

There were four key findings from the event which were pertinent to the overall research. Firstly, the conference papers and exhibit proposal submissions (which were published in full, ready for the conference) provided the project team with the largest collection of contemporary thinking on the crafts which helped to fill a gap in the literature, a problem identified within the original Arts and Humanities Research Council grant application. The papers presented to conference, where the almost universal citing of Peter Dormer and David Pye demonstrated the dearth of reference material available to the discipline, reinforced this issue [3].

Secondly, works put forward for the exhibition did not use visual referencing via the work of other practitioners operating within the same field, either past or present. Rather, individuals saw visual referencing as objects of their own practice, thus not applying the same premise to practice as they did within a theoretical context, even when the author submitted both forms of research for inclusion in the conference and exhibition. Interestingly no 'other' form of referencing or a literature review was included. This posed a series of questions – Why do practitioners construct their ideas without referencing work within their field? How do they make

themselves aware of the issues affecting their practice? Is this related to the belief that practice is concerned with a unique set of individual skills, which generated work purely from their singular perspective? Is this insularity inherent to the nature of craft practice?

The third key finding arose from the formal evaluation of the exhibition conducted by a carefully selected review group (Geoffrey Matthews, Martina Margetts, Kristina Niedderer, Gavin Renwick, Stephen Partridge, Sally Moir, Donna Leishman and Hazel White).

The key outcome was a series of questions, including, what is a research exhibition and what should it be? What is its purpose and audience? Should it communicate knowledge about processes and contexts etc or should it mainly contain the outcomes of research ie finished artefacts? What is an effective balance of textual and visual information? In terms of the content of a research exhibition, is there an adequate range of material evidence and associated information? Has it been purposefully selected, structured and presented? In terms of the curatorial process, how have the contingencies of space, time and media availability been handled?

What is the thematic or narrative structure? Collectively, the questions offered a basis for evaluation criteria for future craft research exhibitions.

The fourth and final finding related to the format and call for works for the exhibition which produced an interesting insight into practice as research. Most of the objects submitted were unresolved, in that they were prototypes, glimpses of an idea, partly formed and searching for knowledge that would enable further iterations until a solution emerged. This approach was insightful and enabled the research team to commission five practitioners to the project. Selection of the commissioned practitioners was made on the basis that the work demonstrated a strong visual aesthetic, or indexical mark, had clarity of purpose and was articulate in discussing and revealing conceptual thinking evidenced through their exhibition proposal(s) and/or conference paper.

The following practitioners were selected: Hazel White, interactive jeweller and conceptual thinker (Figure 9); Tim Parry-Williams, textile designer working from a depth of understanding of the nature of textile material (Figure 10); Drummond Masterton, silversmith using a reductionist approach to product development (Figure 11); Geoffrey Mann whose work is concerned with capturing the transient through the use of new technologies (Figure 12) and Sally Moir, curator with the ability to conceptualise space (Figure 13). They are all mid-career and have an acknowledged reputation for their work.



FIGURE 12
'Flight -landing'
by Geoffrey Mann
exhibited at the
'Future Voices-
Celebrating Diversity',
2007.

FIGURE 13
A photograph of the 'Future
Voices-Celebrating
Diversity' research
exhibition, which
was curated by Sally
Moir, the Cooper
Gallery, Duncan of
Jordanstone College
of Art and Design,
Dundee, 2007.



In 2007, Follett and Valentine's research indicated that there was a large amount of work going on within and between the various Scottish craft stakeholders – agencies, councils, curators, galleries, museums, practitioners – but there was poor visibility and insufficient pooling of resources to form a connected strategy. In essence, they observed a significant investment in the development of craft had been made (between 2000–2007) but there had been inadequate return on investment. To address this problem the major stakeholders were invited to join a discussion about how to move the agenda forward, given that the sector contributes £168m to the Scottish economy, with the proposal to hold a festival of craft in 2010. These discussions led to an agreement to hold a pilot event, Craft Festival Scotland (CFS), in May and June 2010 to see if it could make a difference to the sector. The discussion also led to a second pilot project which looks at the role of research and development in future craft programmes.



CFS is one project within the future craft portfolio of Follett and Valentine (Figure 14). It is an initiative conceived to celebrate past, present and future craft, and champion crafts relevance in the twenty-first century. Its objectives include: raising awareness and understanding of what craft is; challenging perceptions and encouraging debate; exposing the diversity of craft by showcasing it in a range of contemporary and traditional ways; promoting quality craft exhibitions and events taking place in Scotland; encouraging new audiences to experience craft; working with the key stakeholders to devise a festival programme across Scotland and develop the festival in 2010 and onwards; raising the profile of the City of Dundee as the key city in Scotland for craft research and, involving the local community with craft in preparation for V&A at Dundee 'Making it Happen' initiative.

A total of 57 events in 24 venues across eight regions are included in the festival (as at March 2010).

The majority of activity will be in Dundee through an ambitious series of events to challenge perceptions and profile debates around craft including exhibition, film, symposia and a diverse educational outreach programme, which have been organised as part of the research at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design (DJCAD) and in partnership with the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Scottish Arts Council; National Museums Scotland; Dundee Contemporary Arts; McManus Galleries and Dundee City Council.

In partnership with the Scottish Arts Council and CraftsScotland, Follett and Valentine are evaluating CFS in terms of its effectiveness as a means of developing audience awareness and as a way of connecting craft research with the public and the craft sector.

Investigating what is effective for the future of crafts is ongoing. Another key issue related to the craft economy is testing new ways of enhancing the development of growth, specifically from the perspective of the professional craft practitioner. This forms the basis of a second pilot project. The exploratory study concerned with craft enterprise frameworks is being led by Valentine and conducted with Dr Ian Fillis, Director of Marketing Research, University of Stirling. It seeks to evaluate an investigation into the role of a research and development programme on future craft practice, where the level(s) of innovation in practice are being measured. To date, five practitioners have participated in the study which has been funded by the Scottish Arts Council. The results are currently being analysed and evaluated, and are due to be disseminated in 2010.

The V&A at Dundee project is the most ambitious aspect of the future plan. Follett currently is seconded from her post as Dean of Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, to articulate the content for the V&A at Dundee project. She is looking at how Dundee can build a unique enterprise within the heart of the new building that will showcase design as an object, process and product of thought.

The research conducted has examined how other centres across the world communicate contemporary design, exemplars included the work of: the Guggenheim, Bilbao; Bilbao Ria 2000; One North East, Newcastle; the Design Council, London; Powerhouse, Australia; Design Lab, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA; the Baltic, Gateshead; Hamilton, New Zealand and others across the world.

FIGURE 14

The Craft Festival Scotland logo designed to support the promotion and marketing of the new national initiative.

The aim was to examine models of public engagement with design in the broadest sense, to understand how and at what level design is operating and its visibility in the contemporary cultural landscape. Follett examined the current literature on creativity and the economy from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (UNESCO); the Cox Review and Richard Florida's Creative Cities – all of them exemplified models for building a creative economy and maximising the wider societal benefits.

The findings have shown that the exhibition holds precedence as a means for public engagement with design, with products being placed on display as iconic objects. The general understanding of how products are evolved is a black box: no centre has brought together the products, processes and people associated with design and designing. The V&A at Dundee therefore provides a unique opportunity to create both a cultural centre for displaying the best of design, unravelling the processes behind the product creation as well as the designers' thinking and creative journeys.

This research has led to the development of an opportunity to both develop public awareness of design and to engage with the wider community of practitioners to further their agendas in an environment built around the products of their work.

The project will be completed in 2014, with the opening of the new building housed on the Tay. To ensure that the project is successful from the day of opening, Follett has undertaken significant research on the lead in time and the requirements for public and professional engagement; to this end, a full programme of events will take place within the city from Autumn 2011.

The project will build for the city a new persona, which will reposition it as a contemporary cultural centre, linked internationally to other such cities. This visibility will enhance the reputation of Dundee as a can do place where change is actively sought and innovation flourishes.

In closing, the Future Craft research exposition also gives insight into the future phase of Follett and Valentine's activities. While it encapsulates the ambitious portfolio of activity that has been undertaken by the team and gives insight into the network and partnerships that have been nurtured and secured, it concurrently indicates the beginning of a new journey. Follett and Valentine are working towards securing research funding for 'Past, Present and Future Craft Practice 2', to test the findings from this first phase and develop the future craft.

FOOTNOTES

- [1] A 'lifeworld' is essentially 'the world of everyday life'.
- [2] The theory of craft as a physical act of skilful making with one's hands is a recently held view, one that emerged from the evolution of the European Art Schools following William Morris and John Ruskin's particular philosophies. The different models for craft practice are not the focus of this aspect of discussion and as such, are not explored.
- [3] For further information about NCFV visit www.newcraftfuturevoices.com

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Georgina Follett, Principal Investigator

Georgina Follett is a jeweller who has specialised in enamel, especially the technique of plique-à-jour, for over 30 years. Her research looks at the relationship between skill, intellect and culture through reflection *on* and *in* her craft practice.

Past

Reflection on Practice: process and outcome overview

Follett identified a gap in her craft methodology when comparing it to a research methodology, in that she noted a review of the literature was essentially missing. She sought to rectify this and introduced it as a means of progressing and contextualising her practice. This process required her to reflect on her practice as well as reading the key literature surrounding enamelling and plique-à-jour.

A review of literature within the domain of international enamelling was the method for understanding the precedence of previous enamel practice and as a means of appreciating where the knowledge gaps were in terms of the visual language of plique-à-jour.

George Fouquet, Peter Carl Fabergé, Louis Comfort Tiffany and René Jules Lalique were identified as key practitioners whose work collectively and individually offered a benchmark for best practice and a suitable framework for the evaluation of Follett's own craft practice.

Follett conducted an evaluation of her work over a six-year period (2000–2006) by analyzing the photographic record of the majority of her portfolio during this period. She visually compared this record of intellectual progression against other items in jewellery publications (Phillips, 2000; Snowman, 1990; Gere and Munn, 1996; Falk, 2004) as a way of providing greater general understanding of the quality of her work relative to that of other individuals in the field (Fabergé, Cartier, Lalique, Fouquet, Traquair). Additionally, it was understood to be a way of gaining insight into her position in the discipline as a whole.



FIGURE 15 /
Arum Pins



FIGURE 15
Arum Pins is an example of Follett's jewellery designs, representing 'past' practice within her research. Photograph by Shannon Tofts.

Following this, an examination of the work of other enamellers was undertaken to establish the current position of the knowledge base in the enamelling of three-dimensional forms in order to ascertain if her own work was expanding that base. Through this critique of practice it was discovered that the only significant reference to anyone enamelling three-dimensional forms (for example, 'Arum Pins', as seen in Figure 15) dated back to the work of the French jeweller George Fouquet in the latter half of the nineteenth century. However, his portfolio indicated that he had only succeeded in creating parts of a form or undulating elements within his work by employing the plique-à-jour technique. Therefore, his work was limited in this field.

Moreover, through analysis of the work of Peter Carl Fabergé and Louis Comfort Tiffany, Follett noticed that the majority of their work applied enamel to a flat metal surface in order to give it colour. This is a technique she has also employed. However, it is a well-known jewellery method that has been well documented and as such, does not add to the current body of knowledge in enamelling techniques. In short, what seemed to run concurrently through the examination of the literature was that the key elements of the plique-à-jour within any piece of jewellery were few and far between with the exception of those already cited.

The main exception to the apparent absence in the literature of the plique-à-jour technique is seen through the work of René Jules Lalique. Lalique applied the plique-à-jour style extensively throughout his career and his work was selected as a useful comparator to establish if Follett's work was expanding the current knowledge base in the area. When using the technique, Lalique always applied the enamel to a flat surface using large dimension 'cells'. These cells would have been filled using a backing as the front and back surfaces have different surface tensions; the reverse surface flows to the edges of the metal frames and the top surface retains the fluid movements of enamel after firing.

Lalique used enamel for the creation of flat surfaces; he never used plique-à-jour to construct three-dimensional forms. In contrast, within Follett's own work she generally always employs a three-dimensional form. This involves using a technique of applying the enamel in a meniscus of water in order to suspend the enamel during the firing process; this results in the same enamel signature on both the top and bottom surfaces of the pieces. To the best of her knowledge this technique is currently used by no other and represents an innovation in the field. In turn, this suggests that Follett's work is expanding the current body of knowledge in the area.

Having examined the literature and compared it to her own work, attention was redirected to the issue of form and how the forms used in her work give the pieces an aesthetic quality. This analysis revealed a variety of useful points. The most critical of these indicated that whilst colour, transparency, and opaqueness were all key elements that could be associated with her work, she had been using the colour in a very two-dimensional manner. This limitation in her pieces seemed to run through those of other jewellers also.

As in her work, these jewellers (ie Louis Aucoc, Leopold Gautrait, Lluís Masriera, Pierre Vever) had simply applied a single enamel colour to the base metal in order to give the finished product impact and richness. However, very few individuals had attempted to moderate colour over form by creating a complex visual image that is characterised by various colours across the piece. When considering this factor Follett realised that in her earlier pieces she had tentatively begun to explore this but had failed to carry it forward. This observation provided the base from which to make the decision to explore the opportunity of mixing enamel colour on sheet metal to give a painterly quality to the surface and to examine the light refraction.

Having evaluated her enamelling process Follett then went on to look at the final forms given to jewellery with an analysis of a variety of work spanning from the now priceless art forms of the ancient Greek and Roman periods to that of her contemporary visual craft practice. Following this Follett examined her own aesthetic value with specific reference to how she worked necklaces. Based on a comparison between the works of others (for example, Lalique, Henry Wilson, early pieces by Watkins and Ramshaw, Cartier) and that of her own she soon realised, to her dismay, that she had fallen into the traditional mirror image method of formation that involves balancing the piece in terms of function by placing equal weight at either side of the central line and mirroring the forms away from this central point. Upon recognising this she determined that her new work would eliminate this cycle of convention that seemed to run concurrently through her work. The next piece would be asymmetrical rather than a simple mirrored reflection from the central line.

Overall the analysis Follett had made of her previous work and the relevant materials in the literature gave a clear direction when beginning the crafting of the next new work. The conclusions drawn from this evaluation allowed the key parameters for future craft practice to be established and also assisted in identifying the challenges she would have to address in the making process.



FIGURE 16

'Violets' is an exposition of the resolved problems of achieving a painterly effect through enamelling. Enamel is traditionally applied using colours determined by the manufacturer's palette; this is applied to the metal, usually through a single colour.

In 'Violets' the green colour applied to the leaves is mixed and blended together to give the illusion of light and shade falling on the leaves, moving the enamel colour from a flat surface to a light-refracting surface.

The overall visual effect is one used by painters to give depth and form to surface.

Reflection *in* Practice: process and outcome overview

The perspective with which Follett viewed contemporary craft practice was informed by the preference within the literature to highlight craft as a skill set rather than an intellectual act and, the lack of knowledge of craft practice as a methodology; subsequently limiting craft as a service to its sister disciplines, art and design.

This viewpoint directed how the 'present' or contemporary craft was studied; it was studied from the perspective of the practitioner *ie* herself. It resulted in the decision to use case study as a vehicle for articulating craft as a methodology while concurrently challenging the intellectual and visual literacy limitations of her discipline (of enamelling) through her own craft practice.

In terms of progressing the intellectual underpinning of her practice, the initial phase of Follett's research study (*ie* contextual and literature review of historical craft practice, including her own craft practice history) asked the following questions:

- *Where would my work be positioned within the niche practice of enamelling?*
- *Which other enamelled pieces offered insights into the same skill base?*
- *What technical aspects of enamelling have been explored?*
- *Is there a gap in knowledge of the techniques employed and if so, where is it?*
- *Could the(se) gaps in knowledge be filled by the development of new work?*

In conducting this review a series of observations around visual literacy within the construction of jewellery pieces resulted, enabling the development of a new visual quality in her enamelling. The key observations were the need for new work to have an asymmetrical composition, to mix enamel colour directly on sheet metal in order to give a painterly quality to the surface and to examine the resulting light refraction.

These conclusions established the key parameters that would define her new product(s) and also assisted in identifying the challenges she would have to address through the process.

Two new pieces of work were the vehicles for articulating craft as a methodology and exploring the visual knowledge gaps in the discipline of enamelling. They were 'Violets' (2007, Figure 16) and 'Field of Endeavour' (2008, Figure 17).

Reflection on and in Craft Practice

Follett having adapted the traditional research methods of literature review (from the perspective of the practitioner), via a visual review of the craft practice jewellery, used this to establish a framework for exploration and innovation within her practice and produced two pieces from the perspective of the craft researcher. This method of approach differed significantly from the methodology taught within the 'Art College', where the frame of reference is the insularity of one's tutors, peers and own practice.

The Researcher Practitioner is a new force for crafts (Valentine, 2004), practice as research has always been accepted as a valid research method by the Arts and Humanities Research Board (later Council), since its inception in 1998. However, models of how to achieve this, and their potential impact on practice, have yet to be established or evaluated. Whilst this advance is visible to the individual, a dialogue needs to be established for the public domain to access visual thinking and visual knowledge embedded in objects.

Follett's 'Holy Grail' for practice is to find a methodology that advances individual practice, and visibly develops and evolves the products of practice. Through her own practice, she will continue to develop a research methodology for practice for practitioners, and develop/expand intellectual growth for crafts.

The full paper exposing Follett's research is included in the 'Past, Present and Future Craft Practice' book published by National Museums Scotland, June 2010.

FIGURE 17
'Field of Endeavour'
is an exposition
of the resolved
problems of achieving
an asymmetrical
composition through
form and the
application of mixed
enamel colour.

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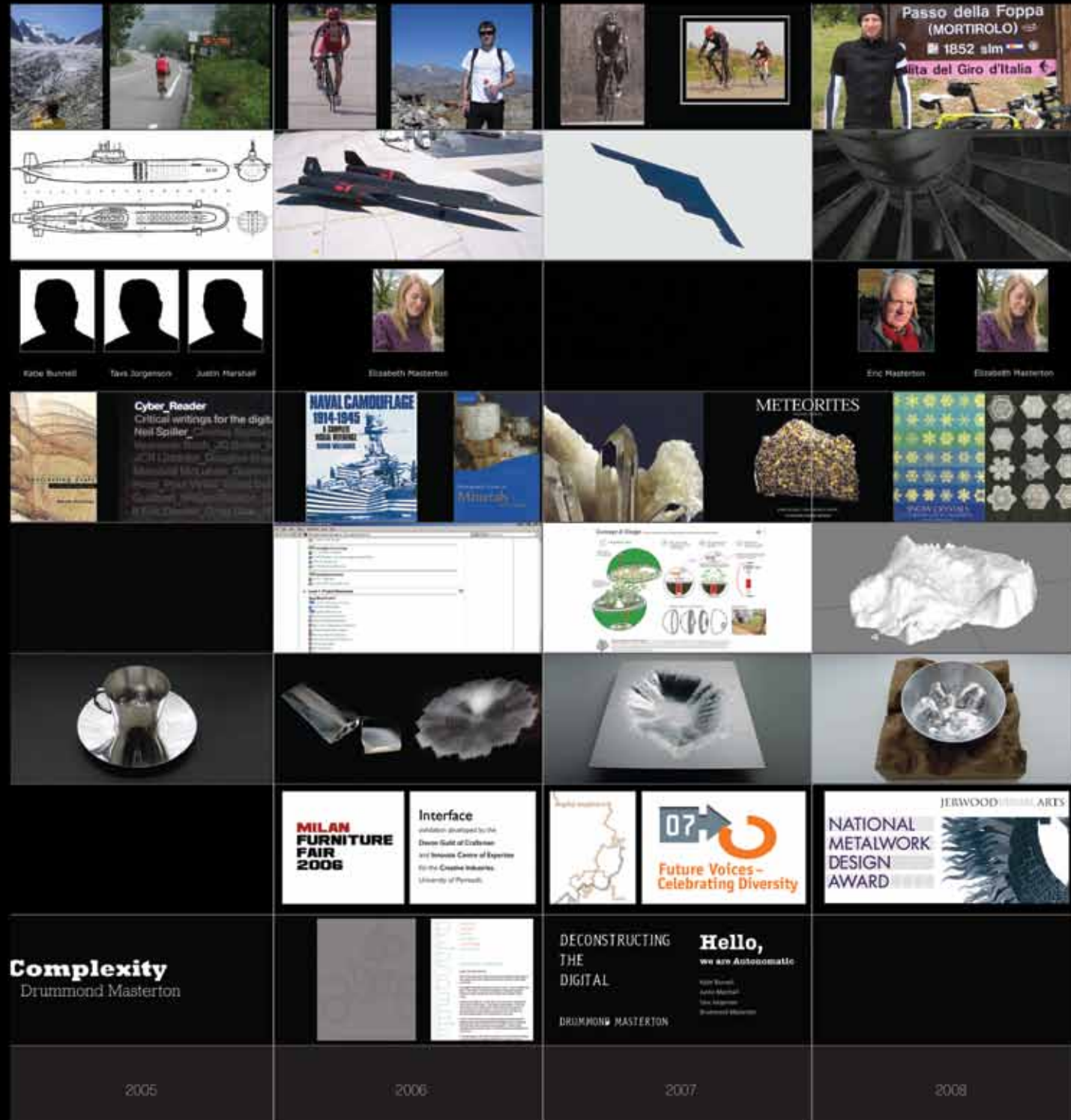
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Louise Valentine,
post doctoral research assistant

Louise Valentine is a textile designer with 15 years' experience in applying her design thinking across a spectrum of creative and management activities. In 'Past, Present and Future Craft Practice' she carried out 'Mindful Inquiry' of the process of craft thinking with a view to defining the qualities of creative practice.

FIGURE 18
A snapshot of (four years out of the ten year) visualisation map or 'cultural enrichment cycle' for Drummond Masterton, offering an alternative viewpoint from which to understand the term 'craft practice'. From top to bottom, the concurrent layers of activity that constitute 'craft practice' for Drummond are cycle racing, developing knowledge of military modes of transport, (specifically aeroplanes and submarines - their form and nature), people who influence his thinking, reading of books concerned with mathematical structures and visual forms such as crystals and meteorites, teaching 3D design, crafting objects, exhibition participation and academic writing.



Central to her research was the commissioning of contemporary craft practitioners to embark on a series of journeys from which craft (as a process and product) could be documented, observed and critiqued. Five practitioners were invited to participate and embark upon a journey into the context and culture of contemporary practice. The journey asked questions of how the mind synthesizes visual, oral and written information, and the process by which it is transposed into an individual's personal philosophy. In essence the journey explored the intellectual rigour required to ensure integrity of output, through interrogation of the self and total immersion in the process of making.

past

Valentine reviewed past and present craft literature to provide a frame of reference for 'Mindful Inquiry' research. The purpose of the historical context was to paint a picture of the main milestones within the last century which have influenced craft practice, how craft is perceived by the public and shaped by cultural, political, technological progress and ideals. This was to give clarity to the environment of contemporary craft and verify the appropriateness of 'Mindful Inquiry' (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998) as a framework for reassessing the question, 'What is contemporary craft practice?'

She argues key thinkers existed within two or three aesthetic movements (Arts and Craft, and Modernism including Postmodernism) from the nineteenth century to the present day tracing the development of craft and its progress as an intellectual pursuit.

Valentine opens up the debate of craft research indicating this as one future pathway for craft, through the development of its distinctive methodologies and demonstration of its particular contribution to knowledge. The value for craft in asserting its place in visual thinking signals craft as an alternative visual communication model. Embracing this cultural shift would allow the emergence of a more assertive and research-grounded culture of craft practice.

Valentine identified the following as key messages taken from her literature review:

- Craft is an identifiable discipline in its own right, rather than an adjunct to art and design.
- Craft is a constant variable; its meaning, purpose, aesthetic and economies are forever moving and transforming.
- A preference for presenting craft as a passive rather than active discipline has caused an imbalance in how its value and significance are communicated, with over-emphasis given to the value of the 'made' and, very little attention given to communicating the value of the maker and their intellectual agility and ability.
- Craft knowledge as a form of currency needs to be continually evaluated and used to nurture new contexts for craft and the craft practitioner. It is a key tenet of progressing craft as an economy.
- Material, technology and concept remain the three interrelated ingredients within craft practice, and are given meaning by placing them in context with contemporary cultural, economical, political and societal frameworks. These relationships collectively offer an understanding of craft as a system of thinking.

Valentine's review of craft practice through the literature demonstrates that change is a continuum; she sees this as a constant challenge to the discipline. Looking forward Valentine identifies that the change is ever more rapid and globally pervasive. Her literature review argues that the circumstances affecting craft are multiple and that craft is not immune from the wider societal concerns, but that these are the generative elements for new ways of working, attitudes and behaviours.

In conclusion, she posits that a 'mindful' reassessment of 'what is craft practice?' is needed to expose how and why twenty-first-century craft is both different and similar to its predecessors. Presenting the need to use a holistic methodology built from phenomenological, heuristic and hermeneutic perspectives are required in order to achieve a balance between the history, theory and practice of craft thereby understanding and communicating it as a discipline, giving this as the vision for future craft.

Valentine's aim is to offer a new way of discussing craft practice.

Literature reviews identified a preference to emphasise craft practice equated with the final object. If materials and technique are removed from the conversation, how do you gain access to craft practice given that most practitioners use these as an oblique way of accessing their knowledge in practice?

Valentine's research looks at contemporary craft practice from the practitioner perspective working directly with selected individuals. She conducted a series of interviews with the practitioners over an 18-month period to understand the development of their personal journey, of how they gain inspiration and what drives them to develop their work through a combination of the visual, conceptual, social, material or technical. She constructed a series of stories to facilitate analysis of craft practice.

Valentine's stories provided insight into how individuals create the questions from which to challenge the idea. They revealed that the practitioners all looked for rhythmic activities, and constructed meditative spaces in different ways to suit their lifestyles in order to internally resolve issues within their making practice.

The interactive jeweller's rhythm was found in the way she engaged people within her thinking process; her craft is a social product. She carried the most recent prototype with her at all times and used the interstitial moments in her day to unwittingly inform colleagues of her new work and seek their immediate reaction, using this to inform her questioning and decision-making.

The silversmith's rhythm was found through the solitary physical challenge of cycling and cycle racing which is used as a means of resolving 'tension' in his craft practice, often riding for hours at a time to understand the intellectual conflict hindering progress; his craft is a meditative product.

The woven textile designer's intimate relationship with material (fibres, structures and finishes) coupled with his poetic, flamboyant and energetic personality is the home for his rhythm; his craft is also a social product.

His affinity with the cultural ethos of Japan significantly influences his thought process and his efforts to achieve a holistic approach and a balance between tradition and modernity.

The curator's social relation with object (be it art, craft or design) and the insatiable need to take the object to new audiences is where we find her rhythm; her craft is also a social product.

The speed with which she conceives and transposes her visions from two-dimensional abstract forms to three-dimensional tangible environments and, the manner in which she communicates with her team and artists is where we find the intellect and decision-making.

In a similar way, the ceramic and glass artist is also audience driven, and the rhythm of his practice is tied to the pursuit of identity through international acknowledgement, which stimulates his new product cycle; his craft is both a social and political product.

In order to understand an individual's intellectual development the research looked at recent practice to understand whether the journey is linear, moving in a forward direction, laterally or backwards. To facilitate this understanding Valentine has constructed visual timelines, articulating a holistic pictogram garnered from the practitioner including products, personal influences, literature, travel, materials, inspirational sources and social contexts (Figures 18, 19, 20).

This visual mapping allowed Valentine to evaluate patterns of productivity, from which an individual's development can be extrapolated and compared, to understand whether craft practice operates a universal model, or whether it is idiosyncratic in form and dependent on many variables.

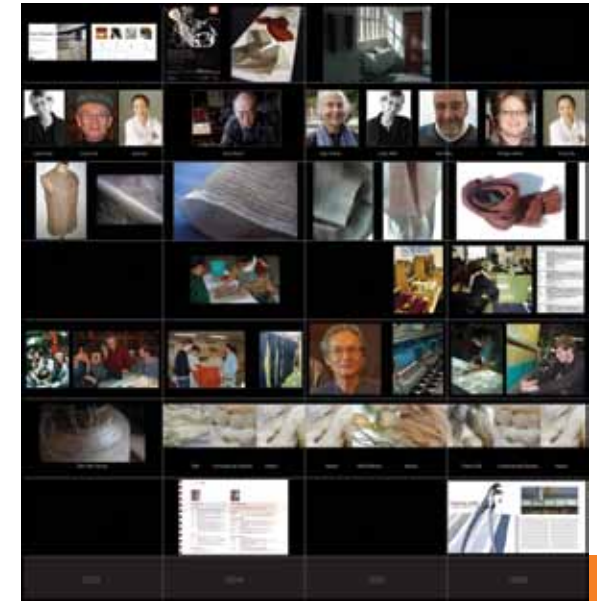


FIGURE 19
A snapshot of (four years out of the ten year) visualisation map or 'cultural enrichment cycle' for Hazel White, offering an alternative viewpoint from which to understand the term 'craft practice'. From top to bottom, the concurrent layers of activity that constitute 'craft practice' for Hazel are travel, reading a mixture of fictional and factual books, people who influence her thinking, teaching jewellery and metalwork and multidisciplinary design, crafting methods and objects, exhibition participation and academic writing.

Given the rationale for selection it may be possible to understand that different individual imperatives require specific circumstances for craft to operate within, and to develop an understanding of which particular environments allow for the greatest progress to be made, collectively and individually.

Valentine's visual timelines and stories encapsulate the working life and environmental constructs used by the practitioners in the formation of their work.

Her model has the potential to act as a developmental tool for ongoing use by practitioners to enable them to understand the generative circumstances under which they operate most effectively, and how they operate within certain patterns, and what effect apparent disparate and unconnected elements have on their practice.

Outcomes of 'Mindful Inquiry' were constructed through stories and ten-year visualisation maps of each practitioner's journey of practice. The assumption of craft as a lifetime journey means the ten-year snapshot was the shortest timeframe possible to give coherence to the practice of the practitioner, and allow an understanding of the patterns of an individual's progress and the constituent parts of their practice. Mindful Inquiry of Craft Practice through the work of the four practitioners all showed different patterns and the visualisation maps identified rhythms within practice revealing progress. However, ten years was too short a timeframe to gain a full sense of these; a timeframe of 15 years would allow for verification of the working processes and practices. The maps identified the progress of skill, intellect, content and knowledge; understanding progress within practice, not through singular objects, but as a holistic journey.

The maps or pictograms evidenced that intellectual skill developed in the work of all the practitioners, as did knowledge of material and technique, people and culture. And, the ability of the practitioners to develop self-knowledge directly impacted on the levels of innovation within their practice.

Craft research has a value to craft practitioners, demonstrated through taking a research methodology and applying it to support understanding of both practice and research.

On reviewing the research process and outcomes, Valentine acknowledges they offer a basis to undertake a SWOT analysis of the individual's practice to understand the different layers of activity that makes up their practice. The visualisation will allow for an individual evaluation of the impact of the different elements of their life journey on their work; providing an insight into different aspects and their direct effects on practice, through research, intensive engagement, volume of work and their management within it. Potentially the practitioner could alter these relationships within their portfolio, rebalancing and influencing potential impact thus perhaps driving innovation at a faster pace than their current practices.

The model offers an understanding of craft practice as layers of a journey of the self, which influence how an individual moves forward; it is the self that requires understanding as a practitioner/researcher with layers of activity rather than through an outcome or output.

Valentine's ten-year snapshot is the shortest timeframe possible to give coherence. She believes a 15-year timeframe would allow for verification of the progress of skill, intellect, and understanding progress within practice as a journey. This further research will need to be undertaken through revisiting the practitioners within a five-year window.

The 'Mindful Inquiry' model revealed that all the practitioners developed their intellectual skill, knowledge of material and technique, people and culture: they also enhanced their ability to develop their self-knowledge to increase the level of innovation within their practice.

In order to make this model universal Valentine will develop a series of self-reflective questions along with a pro forma for practitioners to place the essential elements that make up their journey, which embodies the elements of practice. This will offer individuals an understanding of craft practice as layers of a self-directed journey.

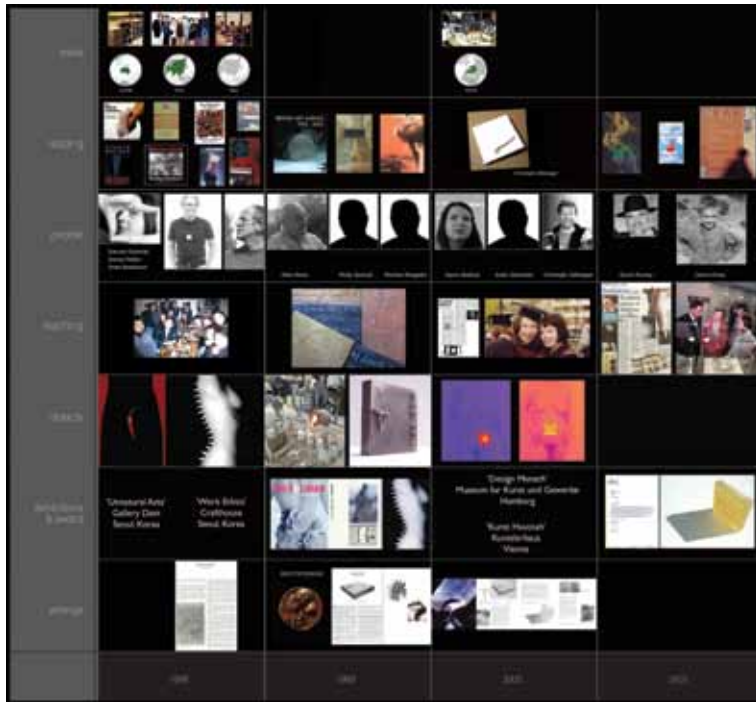


FIGURE 20

A snapshot of (four years out of the ten year) visualisation map or 'cultural enrichment cycle' for Tim Parry-Williams, offering an alternative viewpoint from which to understand the term 'craft practice'. From top to bottom, the concurrent layers of activity that constitute 'craft practice' for Tim are exhibition participation, the people in his life who influence his thinking, the objects of his craft practice, the teaching undertaken in Britain and Japan, his sojourns to Japan, the textile fibres directing his thinking, and an engagement with writing for academic and professional practice journals.

It will proffer them access to the elements that facilitate understanding of how to advance their thinking and understand what their layers of activity are rather than to see their work reflected solely as outcomes or outputs. This is linked to the key argument that to understand craft practice through craft research continues the dialogue initiated by key historical craft thinkers.

Valentine's research is being published through a range of academic avenues, including the 'Past, Present and Future Craft Practice' book published by National Museums Scotland, June 2010.

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FIGURE 23
Stevenson engaged in
scenario testing to build the
Participatory Craft model.
Photograph by
Malcolm Finnie.

FRANCES STEVENSON, PHD RESEARCHER

Frances Stevenson is a printed textile practitioner who has journeyed as a professional crafts maker within Gallery territory for 15 years. In the context of 'Past, Present and Future Craft Practice' Stevenson was tasked with exploring the relation between context and content of craft within a cultural framework through the establishment of a series of practice-led projects. The key objectives included interrogation of the role of materials and technology in craft, analysis and cultivation of the management process associated with creativity, and its availability and application to future cultural development.

Past

Stevenson's route through professional craft practice began in 1997 through a start-up grant from the Scottish Arts Council, a rented studio space and a 'sole trader' business. This framework is typical of the majority of professional contemporary makers working in the UK (McAuley and Fillis, 2002; 2004).

Her creative journey was central to her craft business. She sought beauty and aesthetic integrity in her patterned and coloured cloth products (Figures 21), and she believed that the products had longevity through the customer's ability to engage with them and apply their own meanings. However the journey was difficult at times, as maintaining a balance between sustaining the creative spirit and nurturing innovation within a commercial environment was sometimes problematic. Stevenson wanted to diversify her practice from 'scarves and ties' but found no clear route to take. It was a matter of timing.



FIGURE 21
An example of
Stevenson's printed
textile designs,
representing 'past'
practice within her
research.

The maker's creative cycle of inspiration, internalisation, development and realisation (Kettley, 2005) seemed out of step with commercial demands. This ultimately led Stevenson to question how craftspeople work and whether there were additional/alternative working models that would help maintain aesthetic integrity and drive innovation without losing the essence of craft.

Present

Stevenson's review of the literature, including a series of commissioned reports (2002–09), for example the 'Craft Blueprint' (2009), noted innovation as a key tenet for maintaining craft as a professional occupation. It also highlighted the need for crafts to increase its level of public engagement. Stevenson sought to bring these two problems (one concerned with economics and the other marketing) together in her methodology. While each problem can be viewed independently within the same agenda, her idea to combine them was central to her argument concerning the sustainability of the individual's craft practice.

She devised four scenarios, testing audience participation and response to craft practice and how (if at all) audience participation advance(s) a practitioner's thinking. Throughout the studies Stevenson's textiles became probes or tools for participants to engage and experiment with craft. The method of exhibition was the framework for each of the scenarios as this is a central way of working for craft practitioners (Newell, 2007; Follett, Moir and Valentine, 2007).



FIGURE 22
Stevenson and Scobie's 'Natural Forces' exhibit at the 'Future Voices-Celebrating Diversity' research exhibition, Cooper Gallery, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, Dundee, 2007.

Scenario 1: Pattern in Nature – Frances Stevenson and Lara Scobie

The gallery exhibit was a joint piece of work with ceramicist Lara Scobie and was presented as a familiar domestic ritual ie a dinner table with cloth pieces and ceramics (Figure 22). Visitors were invited to 'set' the table or arrange the work as they wished and then photograph the 'setting' with the provided disposable camera. The researcher was a non-participant observer in this scenario (Robson, 1993). The objective was to explore how visitors (of their own volition) responded to the decorative elements. This was observed through the photographic recordings.

A key observation was the variety and volume of table settings which indicated an energy and willingness for visitors to engage with craft. In doing so, it exposed the maker to a new way of working with the method of exhibition.

Scenario 2: Past and present printed textiles – Frances Stevenson

This was a solo exhibition showcasing the author's work created between 1997–2007. The researcher was a participant observer where the objective was to ask invited visitors/participants how they 'felt' about the products which in essence were a portfolio of prototype samples with no clear function. The open-ended nature of the invitation for engagement with the textiles was to observe how participants naturally engage with the work and move round the exhibits when propositioned with a question concerning their personal emotive response. It was a means of accessing the feelings they had (if any) on seeing the work and it was an opportunity to ask questions about their thoughts and aspirations for the work.

A key observation from this scenario was the collective preference of participants to engage with prototypes rather than finished pieces and the propensity of some participants to seriously play. This aspect of 'play' became the key issue as it sparked new ideas in terms of the new potential products for the maker.

Scenario 3: One to One

A refined approach to exploring the act of participants playing with craft to support progression of a maker's thinking was devised. Two people were invited to work with the researcher and a selected range of her textile prototypes. The participants arranged the work on their bodies, assessing and playing with the placement via a full-length mirror. The researcher was a participant observer and engaged in the 'play' process offering comments throughout (Figure 23). In terms of progressing the researcher's thinking through making craft, the objective was to heighten understanding of two-dimensional patterning, colour and cloth on three-dimensional form. The act of working with human form or 'bodies' enabled Stevenson to begin visualising pattern composition(s) in three-dimensional contexts, thus adding a new way of thinking to her creative process.

Scenario 4: Making it Happen

The 'Making it Happen' (2009) exhibition was curated as part of the 'V&A Dundee' project which seeks to bring the Victoria and Albert Museum to Dundee. Stevenson was invited to exhibit and used the national exhibition framework to explore audience interaction with her most recent textile prototypes (Figure 24).

FIGURE 24
Stevenson's textile exhibit at the 'Making it Happen' exhibition which accompanied the V&A at Dundee conference, Dalhousie Building, University of Dundee, 2009. This event was employed as a tool for further testing audience participation and engagement.

In this scenario, she was a non-participant observer as the aim was to ascertain the effectiveness of audience participation without the maker's direct involvement to support audience understanding. Through observation and feedback evaluation, the exhibit was well received. However, in comparison with previous scenarios it was less effective as a means of progressing the maker's visual thinking as the audience required direct prompting.

Through these four scenarios, a model for 'participatory craft' evolved enabling the audience to become engaged in a product development process. In the 'Future Craft' research exposition (2010) a fifth scenario is being played out; one which brings together elements from all previous scenarios in order to test the newly devised 'Participatory Craft Practice' model.

Stevenson engaged with risk in the craft-making process throughout the research and while learning that the exchange of tacit knowledge can hinder progress in practice, the act does support the development of thought round an individual's methodology as it encourages deep reflection and critique.

An evaluation of the impact of the participatory process in formulating craft is being conducted to understand the difference the audience makes to the conceptual thinking in textile product development.



FUTURE

Contemporary craft making and makers are at the heart of Participatory Craft Practice (PCP) as they journey through their creative careers. Their journey is cyclic in nature and makers acknowledge that there is often a need to reinvigorate their practice particularly at mid career, in order to sustain and develop their practice and business (McAuley and Fillis, 2004). Put simply, contemporary craft makers must continually develop themselves and new products to survive in the marketplace.

The Participatory Craft approach to progressing practice mitigates the insularity of practitioners. Stevenson's framework for evaluating and developing craft in terms of textile products, offers a means of increasing the level of motivation for practice by seeing participants 'play' with the practitioner's ideas. It facilitates the removal of preconceptions and frees-up the thinking process. In doing so it becomes a vehicle for liberating the body and mind, inspiring the maker to look to the future and encouraging active engagement with the future.

PCP has the potential to become a generic tool for practitioners and vendors alike (eg galleries) to increase the level of innovation within their practice while concurrently extending audience participation and understanding of craft. The next step is to test the transferability of this new model by working with creative practitioners while concomitantly extending and honing the method via her own craft practice.

Stevenson's PhD is entitled, *Participatory Craft: a product development method for professional makers of contemporary craft* and is due for completion in December 2010.

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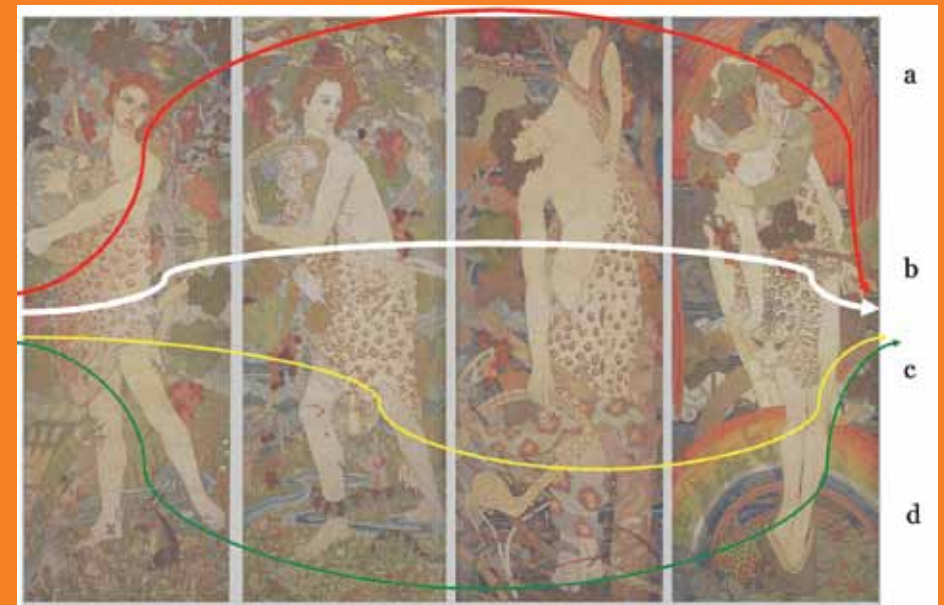
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fanke peng,
PHD RESEARCHER

Fanke Peng is an interactive media designer with five years' experience. In the context of 'Past, Present and Future Craft Practice' Peng was tasked with revealing the visual thinking (philosophical and aesthetic qualities) embodied within the object of craft practice, to complement existing craft literature which predominantly focuses on craft as skilful making.

FIGURE 25
One layer within Peng's VAM when applied to the work of Phoebe Anna Traquair, in particular, the driving forces (or how the direction of energies) between the top and bottom cross's 'the Progress of a Soul' (1893-1901).

The crafts are subject to historical investigations focused solely upon the product of making and on clusters of makers rather than on the individual. The rationale for this is that it is simpler to give a historical perspective through technical similarities rather than a practical perspective through theoretical similarities with a focus on individual development of knowledge. While fine art and, more recently, design writing can exemplify the work in terms of its conceptual achievements such writing in the crafts is still modest.



There is, by comparison, an inadequate account of the general principles or the intellectual development behind the making, thus reinforcing the perception that crafts are purely concerned with hand skills. By inverting the tradition of exploring craft as a product of making, we will investigate craft as a process of thought.

past

Peng through her contextual review of established analytical approaches to visual culture identified that there was no model developed for reading the practitioner's intention in the construction of their works, to enable an understanding of how they articulated this through practice. She identified an opportunity to contribute to contemporary analytical approaches to visual intelligence in art history (Elizabeth Cumming), perceptual psychology (Rudolf Arnheim), social semiotics (Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen) and craft practice (Peter Lane), and develop an exploratory model for visually analysing ie the craft practitioner's perspective.

Peng developed a Visual Analysis Model (VAM) through a deep understanding of holistic modes of consciousness by bringing together Zen and Goethe philosophies to produce a model that has the capacity for reading objects of craft practice.

The VAM was developed using the work of Phoebe Anna Traquair (PAT), who was selected because she was a practitioner who brought the Art and Crafts movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the public's attention (Figure 25). The quality of her works, their availability for primary investigation and the diversity of practice (in that different skill sets were required for different forms of practice) were additional criteria for practitioner selection. The process used visual thinking (manifested via interactive media tools), leading to 13 levels of 'seeing' being identified within the language of craft practice.

Present

The newly devised VAM required testing. A three-dimensional small-scale monochromatic work was selected as this was in stark contrast to the works of PAT. The intention was to understand whether the VAM has the capacity to operate effectively across 2D and 3D, and reveal the author's visual intention, thus unlocking the intellectual voice of the practitioner held within the 3D object.

Peng applied her VAM to Michael Lloyd's silversmithing through the use of interactive media, which allowed her to modify the scale of her VAM to be able to read the language inherent within small-scale, three-dimensional objects (Figures 26 and 27). Transfer of the model from 2D to 3D and the change in scale was problematic. The VAM could not be transferred without modification to small 3D objects.

Peng identified the differences from 2D to 3D when visually reading form, constructed through colour and pattern – to constructed form using light and shadow. Peng also delineated that the small object required a different relationship with the viewer where haptic concerns took precedence and intimacy with the form was required.

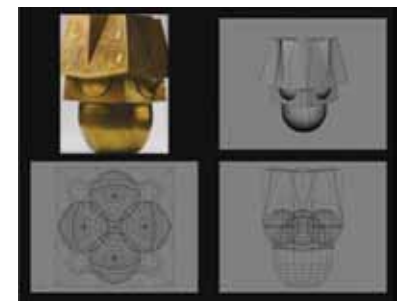
Peng significantly modified the VAM to enable it to function fully as an analytical tool for the visual analysis of 3D craft. Peng identified that 3D objects convey their visual intention differently from 2D objects.

Within a craft practitioner's visual thinking the elements of shape and form are not purely compositional within which to hold decorative pattern, rather they are the visual language of the author.



FIGURE 26
'Weapons of Peace'
by the silversmith
Michael Lloyd.

FIGURE 27
*An example of Peng's
use of Interactive Media
to support the visual
process of analysis for
craft practice. In this
example, it has been
applied to develop
understanding of
'force and expression,'
from several viewing
perspectives (where
'force and expression'
are one of the 13 levels
of seeing in her VAM).*



An individual's personal philosophy and aesthetic are deeply embedded and are, tacitly, very well understood by them. Each day the practitioner tries to express this within the craft and as such offers the object(s) as a means of communicating these attributes and values. In essence, the practitioner's inclination is to conceal the intellect and maintain distance between the relationship of object to the maker and audience.

The value of the VAM is that it provides a way of understanding the intellectual component(s) of craft practice. The VAM facilitates deep understanding of a practitioner's personal philosophy and aesthetics. It recognises craft practice as both skilful making (tacit knowledge) and visual thinking (conceptual framework).

The VAM offers an alternative interpretive framework, supporting the extrapolation of both philosophy and aesthetic of craft practice, both of which are difficult to access as a visual language, (where philosophy is the practitioner's 'guide' to making craft products and his/her approach to living; it is the holism applied and practised every day. Aesthetic is the theory used when creating visual work and is an unfixed variable).

Peng will develop the VAM into an interactive tool, so that it is accessible and transferable. This would allow for it to be evaluated across the spectrum of craft objects and practices.

Peng's VAM has the potential to become a ubiquitous tool for practitioners to evaluate their current practice, to understand whether they have imbued their work with compositional integrity.

Peng's PhD is entitled, *Visual Thinking – beyond Craft Making: identifying and verifying a visual analysis model (VAM) for craft practice* and was successfully completed in February 2010.

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elizabeth donald,
PHD RESEARCHER

Donald is a tapestry weaver with 10 years' experience. She was tasked with evaluating the aesthetics embodied in craft through analysis of methodological approaches embedded within historical and contemporary practice. The central objectives included the development of a tool for interrogating the process of progress; development of a model for 'reading' the visual language associated with craft and, identification of opportunities for developing communication of craft as a discipline of thought.

The Vine Corridor in the House of Falkland was the case with which to study historical craft practice. Nine Scottish craft practitioners collectively formed the case study from which to understand the intellectual process of progress within contemporary craft practice. The collective process was the vehicle with which to identify opportunities for future communication of craft.

FIGURE 28 /
*The Vine Corridor
in the House of
Falkland, Fife.
Photograph by
Malcolm Finnie.*

The Vine Corridor is situated on the first floor of the House of Falkland and leads from the first floor landing with its barrel-vaulted ceiling into the Laird's bedroom, entered via a small insignificant wooden door, which provides no clue to the imagery greeting the viewer on entering. The profusion of colour, light and form, constructed through the narrative of an orchard and a vineyard, is so unexpected as to be quite startling (Figures 28, 29, 30).

PhD researcher, Donald, was tasked with unravelling the intention(s) of the craftsperson producing this work through an investigation and understanding of the message(s) encapsulated within the visual language (if any) and the layers of meaning inherent in its construction.

Heuristic inquiry was the process with which the researcher engaged with historical craft practice (Moustakas, 1990). The method of storytelling was used to unravel the narrative in the Vine Corridor and to unpack the meaning embedded in this work of craft. It was achieved through intense observation and analysis of the construction of the Vine Corridor which unveiled layers of meaning constructed through the separate use of colour, light, space, form, imagery, pattern and composition.

Donald used her knowledge as a practitioner (*ie* her visual thinking) to absorb and reflect on the work, so as to move beyond the immediate imagery and to question the work and understand its visual message. This reflection led to further observations about the placing and relation of one image to another within the overall construction; it was observed that a grid system had been employed as a framework for the imagery. Grid systems use a mathematical basis in their construction and to understand the grid a 'mapping' of the overall construction was undertaken. The resultant diagram presented a picture of reoccurring numbers, namely three, five and eight and derivation thereof.

This finding led Donald to question and understand why these numbers held significance, as they were repeated throughout the work. This was perceived as odd. In the context of the Third Marquess of Bute, the chosen path for interpretation was mysticism, specifically because it is known that mystical numbers were an interest of the patron (Stamp, 1981).

Reviewing numerology and its origination via the Greek philosopher Pythagoras led Donald to see if there was a relationship between the three people deeply involved in the house, namely the Marquess of Bute, his wife Gwendolyn and Robert Schultz (Architect) and the aforementioned numbers. Pythagorean theory attributes a number to each letter and as such was used to determine a specific number to an individual name. A direct correlation between the names, the numbers and visual construction was identified.

As a result of Donald's interpretation it can be shown that the corridor conceals a number of deeply embedded stories. Findings revealed layers of storytelling which are carefully interwoven. At one level and immediately accessible is the simple story of a beautiful garden in the height of summer, with the creatures of the garden placed within the tree branches.

At the other extreme is a deep personal symbolism hidden within the structure, perhaps concealed purposefully, or only accessible by those closely connected with the work's conceptual base. The intended meaning and symbolism of the Vine Corridor is therefore accessible by different individuals at different depths; this gives an indication of the sophistication of its overall construction.

It should be noted that the work was not carried out by Schultz, but constructed on his instructions by an artisan (skilled maker). While the narrative is of the highest order, as is the method of construction, the actual forms and imagery have a certain naivety to them (Stamp, 1981).



FIGURE 29
A front view of the 'vine' in the Vine Corridor (House of Falkland, Fife), exposing the grid system upon which Pythagorean theory was applied. Photograph by Malcolm Finnie.

Donald's second task was to unravel the intention(s) of the craftsperson producing work through an investigation and understanding of the stage in a visual practitioner's journey where they are able to actualise their intentions through the construction of products.

Donald's work on the process of progress required a number of contemporary practitioners to be interviewed. Nine Scottish-based practitioners were selected because of the stages they were at within their careers, namely 'early career', 'mid career' and 'established career', thereby allowing craft as a lifetime journey to be 'mapped'. The data collected allowed Donald to extrapolate particular qualities pertaining to craft practice which were grouped into four separate processes, readily understood by the practitioner community (inspiration, incubation, investigation and interpretation). Collectively these facilitated identification of the stages within the journey of craft embodied within an individual's practice.



FIGURE 30
A detail of one of the three copulas in the
Vine Corridor (House of Falkland, Fife).
Photograph by Malcolm Finnie.

A model evolved directly from engagement with practitioners, and Donald was able to construct an argument that visually delineated potential areas for growth. This model theoretically provides a method that can be accessed by practitioners to understand their progress within practice and where they need to build their experience and expertise.

Donald has produced a heuristic method for interrogating the practitioner's development from the perspectives of skill, intent, knowledge and culture. This method enables individuals to understand where their practice requires further development and where they have achieved high levels of understanding within the different elements of visual practice.

This model will need to be further tested with additional practitioners to understand whether it has a generic use within the development of individual visual language, and to see if other historical craft objects can reveal their visual messages and narratives.


Donald's PhD entitled *Mind the Gaps! An advanced practice model for developing and understanding Fine Craft Practice* is completed for examination in June, 2010.

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