



**Manchester
Metropolitan
University**

Niedderer, Kristina and Townsend, Katherine (2020) Crafting progress through research education and digital innovation. *Craft Research*, 11 (2). pp. 171-176. ISSN 2040-4689

Downloaded from: <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/626812/>

Version: Accepted Version

Publisher: Intellect

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1386/crre_00024_2

Usage rights: Creative Commons: Attribution 4.0

Please cite the published version

<https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk>

Editorial

Crafting Progress through Research Education and Digital Innovation

Kristina Niedderer, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

Katherine Townsend, Nottingham Trent University, UK

Craft has a long tradition going back to the first attempts of humans at making things. The need for craft education also stretches back in time, in the form of craft guilds in Medieval Europe and through a worldwide tradition of apprenticeships where skills and knowledge are passed on from master to novice. In the past (and sometimes today), training started in childhood to hone skills as well as material and aesthetic sensitivities, with craft education taking many years to obtain mastery. In many places of the world, apprenticeships were followed by a period of travelling as a journey(wo)man to see new places and work with other masters. This enabled journey(wo)men to practice their skill, gain wider knowledge of their craft and its latest applications for the purpose of enriching their understanding and developing their style and expertise. Through this process of honing their skill on the way to mastery, they became professional crafts(wo)men (Fuller and Unwin 2009).

But the purpose was not only to hone their skill. Included in this journeying was the expectation of finding oneself and to grow as a person to become a true master. This was the case in both Eastern and Western cultures, as described in the book on *Zen and the Art of Archery* (Herrigel 2004) as well as in the fourth novel of the *Prydain Chronicles* by Lloyd Alexander, where the orphan boy hero Taran learns the crafts of weaving, blacksmithing and pottery to hone and finally find himself before his dream of becoming king can be realised (Alexander, 1967). Both Herrigel's journey as well as Alexander's fairytale beautifully capture the essence of craft, of the dedication needed to learn one's craft and about oneself in the process to become a true master – in whichever field.

Issue 11.2 deals with modern day craft education and practice in the Northern European region, and we find both of those elements within it: the journeying to advance one's craft as well as the aim for self-development. Although, today, apprenticeships are only one way to learn a craft, the journeys of different education systems can be compared (Guthrie 2007). Two articles specifically explore university level craft education, including primary degrees

(Kröger) and doctoral education (Kokko et al.), to chart the development of craft education and experience and how, in turn, doctoral craft education is advancing the field.

In this regard, Kröger explores students' experiences and relationships with craft by discussing an International Study Programme at the University of Eastern Finland. Drawn from 10 countries, and studying Cultural Heritage and Craft Education, the students are encouraged to move beyond a stereotypical cultural heritage focus through the course which employs Fink's (2013) taxonomy of significant learning and Seitamaa-Hakkarainen et al's (2010) collaborative designing for supporting cultural dialogue. Kröger reports on how the students undertake and describe their significant learning in response to Fink's six-stage taxonomy, by making connections between historical and contemporary, traditional and technologically-enhanced, 'social acts and crafts'.

Kokko et al. survey the field of doctoral thesis in the crafts across three Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden, Norway) provides an overview of the state of the art of the field. In many ways the research journey parallels the traditional journey of the journey(wo)man in that research, and in particular doctoral research, seeks to understanding one's field to enable innovation. Through their review, Kokko et al. identify and define four dominant areas of investigation and innovation. Interestingly, their review also reveals a merging of traditional craft and research and demonstrates how craft is maturing as a field by drawing on research.

Digital technologies continue to be another driver for innovation in the crafts. Nimkulrat charts how skills learnt by hand, such as the hand knotting of string to make three-dimensional artefacts (Nimkulrat 2009) are translated from analogue to 3D digital platforms through a process of 'translational craft', as explored by arts practitioners seeking to make sense of working through computer interfaces by activating embodied cognition and situated intelligence (Penny 2017). By reflecting on several iterations of 3D-printed objects, Nimkulrat reveals the capabilities and limitations of 'gesture'; how physical actions 'for which there is no satisfactory causal explanation' are mediated, requiring a re-learning process to enable the maker to 'express specific forms of consciousness' and know-how (Flusser, 2014).

In his self Portrait, Simon Penny reiterates how 'the skilled handling of tools is anything but automatic...[more a] perceptual activity, reaching out into its surroundings along multiple pathways of sensory participation' (Ingolds 2006) by exploring his commitment to what he refers to as 'intelligences of the body', through discussion of an arts practice

spanning more than four decades. Penny describes learning how to forge metal from a master, to making kinetic sculptures, interactive robotic artworks and even boats. The golden thread, and relevance to this journal is Penny's commitment to the importance of materiality, embodiment and bodily dynamics - sensibilities honed through working in performance and installation art but which are fundamental to craft practice - whereby the temporality and spatiality of bodily engagement is always part of the larger work. Penny's challenging use of technology and the resultant artworks are intriguing, as are his ruminations of what constitutes the essence and value of skilled craftsmanship.

Chatterjee and Alvelos' Craft and Industry Report merges academic and community-based research approaches to 're-inscribing the value of craft in times of dictated obsolescence' by presenting the collaborative initiative *Azulejos do Porto*, focused on reanimating traditional tilemaking, a long-established cultural archetype in Portugal, whose original technique is on the brink of dissipation. Linked to the wider research mediation project, Anti-Amnesia, the study explores various connotations of "wealth" as embedded in the material culture and human narratives surrounding traditional crafts, arguing that it is undergoing a process of signification that is semantically reductive, by tacitly invoking monetary gain which is adversely affecting perceptions towards intangible values related to craft practices. The authors discuss their methodology for creating 'interknowledge' between the community and student researchers by drawing on Cattano's (2017) model for active pedagogy as a way of connecting past and contemporary cultural traditions through craft (Thomas et al. 2011).

Closing the circle, Kouhia's Position Paper reports on the use of digital technologies and how they facilitate new developments and ways of learning both for professional and hobby crafters. Focusing specifically on hobby crafts, her research reveals three different approaches, which she uses to speculate on three future scenarios - craft as declining skills culture, as a form of specialization, and as sustainable discursive practice. At the centre of her speculation, is the individual embedded within a community of like-minded people willing and eager to share and learn from each other to develop their skill and themselves.

The exhibition reviews this time are looking at the reading, representation and interpretation of our culture, current and past. Ian Whadcock reviews the *Cultural Icons* exhibition with particular focus on the Drawings and Sketchbooks of Dr John Hewitt of traditional flat-back ceramic forms, raising the question of how closely we look and observe anything around us, our world and its details. Roma Madan-Soni reviews the exhibition *Untitled* by Syrian artist

Fadi Yazigi who portrays human emotions, strength and frailty, hope and despair in his work about human suffering within war torn Syria.

The book *Polish Lace Makers: Gender, Heritage, and Identity* (Anna Sznajder, 2020) reviewed by Carol Quarini develops the theme of cultural development through and expressed in bobbin-lacemaking in southern Poland, tracing issues of gender, identity and cultural heritage. Finally, *Crafts: Today's Anthology for Tomorrow's Crafts* (Fabien Petiot and Chloe Braunstein Kriegel, 2018) reviewed by Janis Jefferies comprehensively documents the evolution of crafts from 1945 to the present day through 65 contributions from five continents, many of which have not been published before in English. The editors question what we mean when we talk about craft, stating early on their preference to use the word *craft* rather than the French word, *artisanat* (English translation: handcraftsman) arguing that *craft* seems more appropriate for the diverse juxtapositions and plurality of approaches brought together within this anthology and the contemporary world.

Seeing the field of craft education and research as this issue demonstrates, it is encouraging to see the growth and maturing of craft in the 21st Century, embracing new ways of learning and technology and integrating them seamlessly with traditional ways, drawing on the best of both worlds to enable innovation in an empathic, ethical and sustainable way.

Acknowledgements

We are delighted to present Volume 11.2 of *Craft Research*. As always, many people have been involved in the realization of this issue. We wish to thank all our contributors, and those authors whose submissions we regrettably had to turn away. Our gratitude also extends to all our advisors and to our reviewers for their excellent work. Their constructive advice and feedback to authors is an essential part in fulfilling the developmental role of the journal and in advancing the field. We further wish to thank Intellect Publishers for their amazing and unwavering support for our journal, in particular our new journal's manager, Mareike Wehner, and her team.

References

Alexander, L. (1967). *Taran Wanderer*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing.

Cattaneo, K. H. (2017), Telling Active Learning Pedagogies Apart: from theory to practice, *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research*, 6:2, pp. 144–152. doi: 10.7821/naer.2017.7.237.

Fink, L. (2013), *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Flusser, V. (2014), *Gestures* (trans. N. A. Roth), Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.

Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2009) Change and continuity in apprenticeship: the resilience of a model of learning, *Journal of Education and Work*, 22:5, 405-416, DOI: 10.1080/13639080903454043

Guthrie, C. (2007). On learning the research craft: Memoirs of a journeyman researcher. *Journal of Research Practice*, 3(1), Article M1. Retrieved [13/07/2020], from <http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/47/80>

Herrigel, E. (2004). *Zen and the Art of Archery*. London, UK: Penguin Books.

Ingold, T. (2006) 'Walking the Plank: Meditations on a Process of Skill', In *Defining Technological Literacy*, Ed. John R. Dakers, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp 65-80.

Penny, S. (2017) *Making Sense: Cognition, Computing, Art and Embodiment*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Petiot, F. and Braunstein Kriegel, C. Eds (2018) *Crafts: Today's Anthology for Tomorrow's Crafts*, Paris: Editions Norma.

Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, P., Viilo, M. and Hakkarainen, K. (2010), 'Learning by collaborative designing: technology-enhanced knowledge practices', *International Journal of Technology Design Education*, 20:2, pp. 109–136.

Sznajder, A. (2020). *Polish Lace Makers: Gender, Heritage, and Identity*. London: Lexington Books.

Thomas, N.J, Hackney, F. and Bunnell, K. (2011), *Connecting craft and communities*, *Connected Communities*, Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Contributor details

Kristina Niedderer (Ph.D., MA [RCA]) is professor of design at Manchester Metropolitan University. She was originally apprenticed and worked as a goldsmith and silversmith in Germany. She then trained as a designer and design researcher in the United Kingdom. Niedderer's research focuses on the role of design to engender mindful interaction and behaviour change. She has led the European project 'Designing for People with Dementia', MSCA grant agreement No. 691001 (2016-2020).

Katherine Townsend (Ph.D) is associate professor of fashion and textile crafts at Nottingham Trent University. She leads the Digital Craft and Embodied Knowledge group in the Centre for Fashion and Textile Research. Katherine's current research (and Ph.D. supervision) encompasses emotionally durable design, dress archives and wearables, social and sustainable textile innovation, including ethnographic work in Guatemala, supported by the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). Katherine led the research projects/exhibitions: *Closely Held Secrets* (2010), *Crafting Anatomies* (2015) and *Emotional Fit* (2017) and has published outcomes in *The Design Journal*, *Textile*, *Textile Design Research and Practice* and *Clothing Cultures*.

Contact:

Kristina Niedderer, Manchester School of Art, Faculty of Arts & Humanities, Manchester Metropolitan University, Oxford Road, Manchester M15 6BH, UK.

E-mail: k.niedderer@mmu.ac.uk

Web address: <http://www.niedderer.org>;

ORCID identifier <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8188-6338>

Katherine Townsend, School of Art and Design, Nottingham Trent University, Burton Street,
Nottingham, NG1 4BU, UK.

E-mail: katherine.townsend@ntu.ac.uk

Web address: <https://www.ntu.ac.uk/staff-profiles/art-design/katherine-townsend>

ORCID identifier: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2212-2511>