

CURATORIAL | PERFORMANCE | CRAFT: A SHIFT IN CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE

Loucia – Irene Manopoulou

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ABSTRACT

Curatorial, Performance, Craft: A Shift in Contemporary Practice, explores a wave of contemporary makers who are transforming the image of craft, challenging historical and cultural preconceptions by incorporating performance or performativity, resulting in progressive, often political work. The term *kaino-craft* is introduced to define this specific shift observed in the practice from the mid-twentieth century to the present.

This thesis investigates curatorial practice as a mode of research, drawing from Peter Bjerregaard's (2020) *Exhibition as Research* which provides a fresh perspective on the knowledge value of exhibitions. Specifically, this research focuses on the *mise-en-scène*, which is overlooked in the context of craft's curatorial theory. This research moves the focus beyond craft's capacity to carry information, into an investigation of its non-textual quality, particularly the relationship between research, curating and exhibitionary practice.

The thesis theories are examined through the practices of contemporary makers, ceramic artist Phoebe Cummings and textile artist Celia Pym, who break away from the traditional practice of the singular still object and direct the attention to the ways their material and works perform. Two curatorial projects, *Makers' Tale* and *Hidden Histories*, apply and test the findings of the case studies.

This research intends to develop new interpretations of the relationships between the established categories. The thesis contributes to craft's curatorial theory by opening up new perspectives on the curatorial process as a practice-based form of academic research. The curatorial outcome acts as a platform for identifying new and unconsidered inquiries that may open new avenues for research and inspire other similar investigations in both curatorial and craft practice as well as future scholarships.

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Thank you,

Loucia Manopoulou

DECLARATION

I confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is my original work. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree.

Signed:



Name:

Loucia - Irene Manopoulou

Date:

31 October 2022

1 INTRODUCTION

Curatorial, Performance, Craft: A Shift in Contemporary Practice, investigates contemporary craft curatorial practice as a mode of research (Niedderer et al., 2006; Sheikh 2013; Bjerregaard, 2020). With the emphasis on craft, this research is a reflective inquiry (Hullfish and Smith, 1961) constituting a new perspective on contemporary practice. This thesis explores comparisons, connections and convergences related to a dynamic shift in crafts to incorporate elements of performance in the UK from mid-twentieth century to the present.

This research project, related and timely, is supported by the analysis of contemporary theory, makers, and critics. It should be noted that this is not an historical investigation of craft, but live research, situated in the contemporary practice as a method of understanding of the impact of the curatorial and performance in transforming the field.

This doctoral research offers important insights about the curatorial within the expanding field of crafts and addresses the following questions:

In the past years a trend has been observed, since early 2000s, that contemporary curators are engaging makers in research based curatorial projects. However, the impact in the field of crafts has not yet been investigated. What does the curatorial as research mean within crafts and how does it help enrich the field and push the boundaries of the practice?

Mise-en-scène in film theory and theatre literature is associated with setting up the stages and offers the technical possibilities for selection and control to express the *auteur's* vision. The thesis uses certain aspects of *mise-en-scène* to investigate the possibilities of the staging and setting of exhibitions. In particular it raises the question: what does *mise-en-scène* bring to craft exhibitions and how has the craft curator's role evolved to resemble the paths of the *auteur*?

The expanding field of crafts curatorial practice and the incorporation of performance as well as the development of the broader creative and professional practice of the curators has generated new fields of inquiries. How does the curatorial as research help create intersections or meeting points for knowledge concepts of craft and performance, and how does it favour collaborative practice?

This understanding begins with an analysis of the research methodologies, the curatorial and performance before continuing in an in-depth examination of the craft field. With this, I have developed a deeper awareness of my own curatorial methods of developing and delivering exhibitions and identified the *mise-en-scène* I create as *auteur*. My practice is situated within the craft discourse. However, this research revealed the mutable role of curator as *auteur* who works through a variety of mediums and formats as a method of testing both discourse and development of knowledge, which produces a new model of engagement with craft practice.

This is a major development in the craft field, as a wave of makers embedded within the discourse are embracing performance as well as a variety of media and materials as aspects of their practice. An in-depth examination of two case studies as well as my work bring new methods of practice.

The thesis draws from Glenn Adamson in considering crafts not as ‘a fixed category,’ but rather as ‘an active, relational concept,’ embodied most powerfully in skill, ‘a process’ that ‘only exists in motion’ (Adamson, 2007:3-4). It explores a wave of contemporary craft artists who are transforming the image of crafts, challenging historical and cultural preconceptions. These makers are incorporating performance or performativity, resulting in progressive, often political work. In this sense, the content of craft expands further and redefines the concept of materials and the skills of its making and the knowledge involved.

The incorporation of performance and the blurred boundaries have allowed contemporary craft to be understood more than just being well-made or being laborious. This research emphasises craft practices which communicate commentaries about culture, politics, economics to develop an understanding of the meaning of crafts in the twenty-first century. Moreover, it investigates the intersections of material culture, contemporary craft practice, performance and the curatorial.

The new contribution to the field of craft is the use and application of ideas and practices drawn from curation and performance. Therefore, the thesis begins by setting up the curatorial and performance/performativity materials first, before using these as tools to interrogate crafts. Specifically, this research initially considers the complex notion and definition of the curatorial, demonstrating a variety of ways to understand its practice as well as its historical transformation. Furthermore, the thesis examines the term ‘performance’ which has been used broadly since the mid-twentieth century, encompassing a variety of artistic productions from dance to

theatre, as well as practices connected to the visual arts. Therefore, there is a need for an in-depth investigation to identify what 'performance' means in the context of contemporary craft practice, which is addressed in this thesis.

Following the analysis of performance, it is necessary to distinguish between a broadly 'performative' reading of craft and works that focus on performances of crafting or craft-making and thus, engage more directly with the history and aims of performance art. Finally, the thesis examines the evolution of craft practice. For the purposes of this thesis there will be two dominant yet abstracted definitions to frame crafts. For one, craft refers to 'studio crafts' to cover everyone working within any crafts discipline. Secondly, craft refers to the process which allows a person precise control. Contemporary scholars proposed that craft implies thought and tacit knowledge, skill, and material (Sennett 2008; Ingold 2013).

The thesis introduces a new term, *kaino-craft*, I created to define a specific shift observed in the practice from the 2010s to the present, of makers incorporating performance or including performative elements in their work. The prefix *Kainos*, in Greek *καινός*, means novel, new in quality (innovation), fresh in development or opportunity, something not seen before. *Kainos* has a distinct difference from the word *Neo* (νέο) which means young. *Neo* primarily is seen as a temporal adjective and *kainos* as an adjective of quality. *Kainos* calls the old into question in a qualitative manner.

My argument is that *kaino-craft* denotes deep knowledge, understanding of materials and skill, and intellect with respect to move the practice consciously fresh

and relevant to contemporary needs. An extended analysis of the term is in Chapter 7.

Kaino-craft except of a term used to described certain contemporary practice could also be seen as a methodology which enriches the field and allows for craft to consciously be applied to relevant contemporary needs. *Kaino-craft* as collaboration, experimentation, innovation (fresh and novel) and participation consists of the conceptual agenda for contemporary craft.

A key text informing this thesis is *Exhibitions as Research: Experimental Methods in Museums* (2020), an anthology edited by Peter Bjerregaard. The book demonstrated that exhibitions represent ‘knowledge-in-the-making rather than platforms for disseminating already-established insights’ (Bjerregaard, 2020:i). Although Bjerregaard acknowledged in his introduction that this is not a new idea, the book offered a fresh and mature perspective on why and how exhibitions allow us to know things differently (Bjerregaard, 2020:i).

Jacqui Mulville’s chapter ‘Exhibitions, Engagement and Provocation From Future Animals to Guerilla Archaeology’ defined exhibitions as events that essentially ‘bring the public and material culture together in a physical space for a fixed time’ (Mulville, 2020:131).

One other theoretical concept addressed in the book is the exhibition space as a laboratory. Bjerregaard explained that this sort of exhibition space, a ‘knowledge-producing technology’, challenges the authority of museums to be ‘inserted within processes inspired from and affecting the world outside’ (Bjerregaard, 2020:4). This appropriation from science has fuelled adventurous exhibition-thinking. Henrik

Treimo's chapter described a 'LAB-method' in which scientific and technical objects provide 'points of enquiry' and where text-based approaches of academic curators interact with aesthetic practices of art and scenography (Treimo, 2020:23).

Cumulatively, the theoretical underpinning and central claim of the book is the knowledge value of exhibitions. The book demonstrated that curatorial theories supply alternative perspectives and colourful metaphors.

The projects featured in the book support knowledge-making of a different register, both through fresh curatorial concerns with real issues and in relational methodologies involving non-traditional 'knowledge-workers.' Bjerregaard stated that 'If we want to turn [exhibition] into research, the exhibition will not progress according to the most efficient plan, but according to the curiosity and serendipity involved in finding out' (Bjerregaard, 2020:12).

The serendipity as per Bjerregaard, indeed, could be a combination of social, political, and other factors affecting the collective experience of makers, audience, and curator.

The thesis questions these theoretical insights, and how well-matched these understandings are with the introduced term *kaino-craft*, a concept as well as a language of material, making and skill which appear in the most unanticipated places. An example that could be considered as *kaino-craft* is Celia Pym's residency at King's College titled *Mending and Anatomy* (2014). Pym's set up was a mending desk just outside the Dissecting Room. The artist in partnership with Richard Wingate, Head of Anatomy, questioned the qualities of haptic experiences evoked through touch,

the feelings of care and the patterns of wear in material through the intersection of anatomy studies and textiles.

Another example that this thesis considers as *kaino-craft* is *Veneration Bells* (2013) by Welsh ceramic artist Adam Buick, a commission initially by Jerwood Arts. This work became the first digital altarpiece in the Lady Chapel at St Ann's Church at the heart of Manchester's city centre. *Veneration Bells* was exhibited as a sixteen-minute video projection. The video showed the hand thrown porcelain church bells suspended in sea caves around the coast of Pembrokeshire chiming in repeating patterns as the waves lap against the rocky walls at different states of the tide.

Bells are a universal symbol of the sacred and Buick's placing of them in the caves acted as a homage to nature, highlighting the striking architectural properties of these environments. The digital altarpiece offered an invitation to pause and reflect on wilderness, silence, mindfulness, and simplicity in everyday life.

These examples demonstrate that skills and material knowledge are central to craft. Skills and material knowledge continue to have great value; however, it is the role of craft itself that has shifted. Even though craft scholars like Glenn Adamson, Alison Britton and Richard Sennett have discussed the shifted identity of craft, yet craft curatorial practice seems to be under-theorised.

The prevailing definitions for art and craft come mainly from art history, which follows a tradition from the nineteenth century. Art theory, which is based on language, literary theory and semiology is neglecting certain practices such as craft, a practice that is not experienced solely or mainly through language and operates beyond discourse and semiotics. The Arts and Crafts Movement, the Bauhaus as well

as many avant-garde manifestoes have all strived to reconcile art, craft and life and to obliterate the barriers between practices and media. However, even though this has been repeated ceaselessly for more than 100 years little has changed.

An interesting observation is by curator Marianne Zameczink who stated that the development of craft theory and literature cannot compete with the speed of development of discourses in contemporary art, because there are not as many theoreticians, writers, historians and curators who specialise in or work with contemporary craft (Zameczink, 2015:27).

This thesis contributes to developing the conversation of curatorial theories and practices in the field of crafts.

In addition to exhibition as research, the thesis explores performance art and how it has expanded by growing discussions on performativity and its implications for language and power within broader areas of creative and social practice. This thesis uses performance and performativity as lenses through which the curatorial influence on crafts can be understood, moving the concern beyond the object, towards a concern with process, relations, and happenings (Schechner, 2006:1-2). Here, performance is examined beyond being just a medium, beyond its liveness and ephemerality, and raises inquiries reflecting how craft mediates social relations among people.

The research draws from performance studies as well as other disciplines to address this shift of crafts to performance. It raises the questions of 'presence, liveness, agency, embodiment and event' (Schechner, 2006:3) and contributes to the

development of an understanding of craft's curatorial practice, particularly in relation to performativity.

A wave of contemporary makers, for example, ceramicists Clare Twomey and Phoebe Cummings, textiles artist Celia Pym, jewellery-textiles artist Caroline Broadhead and potter Carol McNicoll reclaimed crafts by breaking away from traditional British studio practice. These makers have moved into, or are experimenting within, this new area of performance, incorporating, or using performance, creating site-specific installations and performative work, often enabled by technological development. The observation of this emerging trend towards performance art and performativity informs this thesis, which investigates new modes of curatorship in relation to contemporary crafts.

The thesis considers the intersections of one medium and the way this might connect and converge with another. It also focuses on the curator, whose role has expanded from the traditional notion of the steward/keeper of art objects - as indicated by the Latin etymology of 'Curare' or to take care of (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, s.d.) - to one that is aiding and encouraging and often instigating this process resulting in the introduction of alternative dialogues with objects, gestures and cultural narratives (Obrist and Abramovich, 2010, O'Neill, 2012, Martinon 2013, Bjerregaard, 2020).

The Curatorial as Research

Curation is usually considered as a platform or a means of communicating the results of research to an audience. However, the curatorial practice can be a research process itself, with new insights emerging through curatorship.

Given the public nature of curatorial practice, as well as being a practice of connecting things together - of making constellations that contradict the notion of truth as something finished - the consideration is, to what this research is contributing.

Walter Benjamin, in a review of an exhibition, remarked that the visitor 'is not expected to leave the exhibition feeling learned but smarter' and elaborated that 'the task of a genuine, effective presentation is exactly to detach knowledge from the limitation of specialism and make it practical' (Benjamin, s.d. cited in Bjerregaard, 2020:12). Benjamin proposed that the exhibition asks the visitors to detach themselves from the notion of knowledge which traditionally is gained via text. Instead, he advised to concentrate on the material and the experience gained from the exhibited objects as well as from the environment itself.

In a similar note, Bjerregaard explained that exhibitions require us to move away from the notion of knowledge, as based in text, to turn knowledge into something that works independently from text in its material and spatial arrangement. The arrangement of the exhibition is linked with the stage setup or the *mise-en-scène*. This thesis is informed from film theory and studies to call attention to the *mise-en-scène* and its impact on staging crafts exhibitions. This is further analysed in Chapter 4.

This thesis expands the concept of exhibition as research and is informed by Jean-Paul Martinon's hypothesis:

If curating is a gamut of professional practices that had to do with setting up exhibitions and other modes of display, then the curatorial operates at a very different level: it explores all that takes place on the stage set-up, both

intentionally and unintentionally, by the curator, and views it as an event of knowledge. So, to drive a distinction between 'curating' and 'the curatorial' means to emphasize a shift from the staging of the event to the actual event itself: its enactment, dramatization and performance. (Martinon and Rogoff, 2013:ix)

It develops Bjerregard's argument that the exhibition as research needs to be considered as part of a larger process rather than the product. This means the exhibition is not just to work with researchers and artists to deliver a show, but rather it should be understood as a process or a method of developing and implementing ideas, experimenting with materials and concepts within the academic institution and beyond.

The curatorial as a methodology, however, cannot be ascribed to a specific set of practices or projects; its outcome can be a discussion, an exhibition, a space, a book, an action, a combination of all these or other, often intermediary forms. Yet, one of the salient features of the curatorial, in terms of the people involved, may be its collaborative and collective character.

It is important to briefly define the terms *specialist* and *specialism* as they are used in the thesis and compare them against interdisciplinary. A specialist refers to the person who is expert in at least one discipline, and specialism is the field they work in. The extensive knowledge of a certain field and set of methods or methodologies define specialism. Specialism allows the specialists to make a robust contribution in collaborative projects, making connections across the disciplines and bringing their learning together.

The thesis deciphers that by working together curatorially could mean several individuals coming together, sharing responsibility for a project to realise, and a trust in one another's work within that. Consequently, these projects tend to be polymorphous; they are longer-term, complex, and often research-based, with many levels and instances of realisation, in a stage of perpetual becoming. Examples of such projects are my research curatorial practice *Makers' Tale*, a collaboration between organisations, curators, artists, and undergraduate students, and *Hidden Histories*, an association with a textile artist and the public. Both projects are analysed in Chapter 9.

The thesis also considers the paracuratorial, as discussed by Paul O'Neill in his essay 'The Curatorial Constellation and the Paracuratorial Paradox' in the sixth issue of *The Exhibitionist* (2012), to indicate the tendency of certain twenty-first century curators to focus on secondary events supplementary to the exhibition. The term paracuratorial was formalised in the fourth issue of *The Exhibitionist* (2011). The issue included essays by Vanessa Joan Muller, Livia Paldi and Emily Pathick who elaborated on this concept in relation to curatorial practice. Muller explained that Jens Hoffmann coined the term paracuratorial to criticise the curatorial practices that go beyond exhibition-making (Muller, 2011:70). Hoffman in a discussion with Maria Lind stated that:

Exhibition making is a craft, and I treasure that. Too many curators seem to think exhibition making is a thing of the past and that today it has to be all about what I call the paracuratorial: lectures, screenings, exhibitions without art, working with artists on projects

without ever producing anything that could be exhibited. (Hoffmann 2011)

The paracuratorial, in Hoffmann's sense, is all the activities outside of the exhibition making i.e., lectures, screenings etc, which are still considered as the outcome of curatorial work, linking to the educational and discursive aspects of the curatorial. In addition, the paracuratorial includes the 'exhibitions without art, working with artists on projects without ever producing anything that could be exhibited' which is a direct link to performativity.

O'Neill identified the discursive nature of the paracuratorial and saw the political potentiality to set things in motion within the curatorial paradigm, which points to performativity. According to O'Neill, to allow the potentiality of the prefigurative in the curatorial he stated:

The discursive aspect of curatorial work should be given parity with - rather than being perceived as contingent upon - the main event of staging exhibitions. Similarly, the work of exhibition making is not only there to legitimize the para work in relation to it; rather, processes are set in motion in relation to other activities, actions, and events within the curatorial. Instead of conforming to the logic of inside and outside, a constellation of activities exists in which the exhibition can be one of many component parts. (O'Neill, 2012a:57)

O'Neill here recognised the discursive nature of the paracuratorial, and how it helps to embolden the curatorial practice. The paracuratorial was applied and tested in *Maker's Tale*, my major research project, analysed in Chapter 9.

Beyond the debate about the centrality of the exhibition form, another criticism levelled against the curatorial is that it emphasises the curator and their evolved role.

To summarise, the curatorial is not only a way of presenting research, but is also, itself research. This extends to the activities, the lectures screenings as well as the projects that take place around the exhibition, and also to the exhibition itself. This thesis expands on these ideas and concepts to investigate further their relevance to crafts. Specifically, the thesis studies the use of the *mise-en-scène* concept as a tool to create the exhibition's aura and the role of the curator.

The *Mise-En-Scène* and the Curator as *Auteur*

The French term *mise-en-scène* originates in the theatre to refer to the stage arrangement for a theatrical production, but in the field of film its definition is extended to include every visual component that appears in the composition of the shot. When applied to the cinema, *mise-en-scène* refers to everything that appears in front of the camera (Bordwell and Thompson, 2003:112).

In the book *Film Art* (2010), David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson analysed the 'Power of *Mise-en-scène*' and explained that the aspects of *mise-en-scène*, particularly those of the film that overlap with the theatre - setting, lighting, costume, and the behaviour of the figures - offer the director the opportunity to stage the

event for the camera. (Bordwell and Thompson, 2003:112). They continued saying that *mise-en-scène* involves a certain planning, but the filmmaker may be open to unplanned events as well, an addition of a line by the actor on the set or an unexpected change in lighting.

This thesis uses the concept of *mise-en-scène* as addressed by Bordwell and Thompson for its technical possibilities to express the exhibition vision, and to create the environment and ambience the curator envisioned (Bordwell and Thompson, 2010:135). It follows the methods of the film directors employing, as *mise-en-scène* offers the technical possibilities for selection and control to express the film's vision (Bordwell, Thompson, 2003:114). The thesis uses certain aspects of *mise-en-scène* and identifies commonalities in the methods analysed by Peter Bjerregaard in *Exhibition as Research* (2020) who investigated the possibilities of the staging and setting of exhibitions and more.

Setting

An important element of setting the stage is the setting of a scene and the objects, screens, or graphics in the exhibition. As in films, the exhibition stage does not need to be the container for the event but dynamically enters the narrative action (Bordwell and Thompson, 2003:115).

Lighting

The intensity, direction, and quality of lighting influences the audience's interpretation and understanding of the curators' and artists' intentions. Light and, by extension, shadow emphasises texture, shape, distance, mood, but also time of

day or night. Light affects the way colours are perceived by the viewer and can also direct the attention on particular elements of the exhibition. The thesis asserts that lights call attention to shapes and textures, while shadows create a sense of mystery or ambiguity. For this reason, lighting must be thoroughly considered in advance to ensure its desired effect on an audience.

Staging: Movement and Performance / Composition

Composition is regarded as the organisation of objects, makers and space within the exhibition stage. Here, it is important to also consider the integration of sound, video film projections or screenings. Staging, in spite of its ambiguous hint to theatricality, means display.

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, the prefix, *dis-* of display indicates an opposition, a negation, a separation, or an exclusion (Merriam-Webster, s.d.). It directs to an apparatus designed to separate an artwork from its context and to distance it from the viewer. The distancing entails a form of alienation necessary to display the artwork. From this perspective, the twentieth century could be read as a battle of art against display. In the twenty-first century, this battle moves into the field of crafts, challenging craft against display and culminating in the emancipation of craft from utilitarian objects showcase to eventually questioning its material properties and the field altogether. It could be argued that even without an explicit ideological agenda, the design of a craft exhibition has a political narrative.

Contemporary craft exhibitions approach the curatorial as a proper praxis (informed, committed actions). The moment craft curation successfully left behind the plinth,

and the gallery wall and cabinet to claim the political narrative, it began to actually use the entire space of the installation and the political context as materials to work. This shift is evident in the work of ceramic artist Phoebe Cummings and textile artist Celia Pym which is analysed in Chapter 8.

This research project stems from a simple premise: thinking about the practice and process of curating craft. Influenced by Martinon, I distinguish between 'curating' and 'the curatorial'. The thesis asserts that the curatorial explores what takes place on the stage set-up, the stenographic term '*mise-en-scène*', both intentionally and unintentionally by the curator. While acknowledging conventional art historical narratives and identifying the moments when artistic and curatorial practices merged or when the global curator-author was first identified, the thesis applies performance and performative perspectives. These perspectives allow for a fresh reflection on crafts curating, one in which curating becomes an activity and a process that implicates artists-makers, curators, and viewers, not just as passive recipients, but as active members.

Knowledge at the Intersection or the Cross-Over of Craft and Performance

Knowledge and the intersection or the cross-over of craft and performance is interrogated. What this means is how knowledge and experiential forms are tangled. Glenn Adamson, in *Thinking Through Crafts*, mediating between the definitions of 'skill', given by David Pye and art historian Michael Baxandall, argued that skills are the craftsman's knowledge of managing the risk involved in the process of making.

In addition, craft knowledge refers to the maker's judgement of what is right. Both, managing risk and judgement, fit together in mutual dependence in the making process (Adamson, 2007:69-78). Richard Sennett, in *The Craftsman*, defined skills as 'bodily practices' acquired from repetitive training, while 'technical understanding develops through the powers of imagination' (Sennett, 2008:10). Sennett claimed that higher skills involve 'tacit knowledge' (Michael Polanyi's term), through which is found 'a constant interplay between tacit knowledge and self-conscious awareness, the tacit knowledge serving as an anchor, the explicit awareness serving as critique and corrective' (Sennett, 2008:50-51).

Malcolm McCullough in *Abstracting Craft* (1996) stated that the best way to understand any medium is by considering the range of the material possibilities. McCullough argued that within traditional crafts the material is often articulated in terms of process and properties. For example, he said wood has grain, and metal has temper. The core of McCullough's argument is that the understanding of structure process is implicit, explaining what is learned through experience. This means that although this [implicit knowing] becomes everyday knowledge, it does not become formalised. McCullough claimed that although there are lumber grades based on the number of clear faces on a cut piece, there is still no formal scale or gradation for describing the texture and grain of wood (McCullough, 1996:196).

This thesis states that by using exhibition as research and by considering the character of the objects (process of making and material) as well as the *mise-en-scène*, the exhibition serves as a form of contextualisation for crafts.

The curatorial uses the *mise-en-scène* to create a location where the craftwork and/or the viewer performs. The curator's role, the *auteur*, is to develop a site of

exchange, a site where craft, space and audience converge. This coming together of social, spatial and critical contexts generates a political space that exists within a wider cultural sphere.

Thesis Structure

This thesis comprises ten chapters:

Chapter 1, Introduction, introduces the specific objectives of this research and provides an overview of the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2, Methodology, provides the theoretical framework of the thesis and highlights the methods applied to conduct the research.

Chapter 3, The Curatorial, discusses this diverse field of activity. It includes an in-depth analysis of the curatorial and examines the practice of the contemporary curator with a special emphasis within the field of crafts. **Chapter 4, The Curator Auteur and the *Mise-en-scène***, deepens the understanding of the ontology of curation and its reason for being. It emphasises within these new dynamics, the traditional role of the curator and compares it to an *auteur*, as seen in film practice. This chapter also discusses *mise-en-scène*, the site where the craft or the viewer performs.

Chapter 5, Performance/Performativity, considers the complex notion and definition of performance as well as its historical transformation since the mid-twentieth century. In addition, this chapter elaborates on the notion of 'performative' reading of craft, and the performative potential of the finished work.

Chapter 6, Craft, draws from the examination of the curatorial and performance chapters with the intention to establish the theoretical framework to examine the meaning of crafts in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 7, *Kaino-craft*, builds on the Craft chapter and introduces *kaino-craft*, a term encompassing innovation and tradition, to define the evolving contemporary practice which incorporates elements of performance. It also unfolds the thinking process I followed to derive in the development of this new term.

Chapter 8, *Kaino-craft Case Studies*, presents two case studies to showcase and apply the theories discussed and analysed in the previous chapters. This chapter studies the contemporary makers, ceramic artist Phoebe Cummings and textile artist Celia Pym.

Chapter 9, *Makers' Tale and Hidden Histories projects*, explores my major research project *Makers' Tale* (2020) and exhibition *Hidden Histories* (2020). These projects are considered as live curatorial projects and demonstrate practice as research while they explicitly explain how these case studies advance the understanding of the three theoretical pillars and prove the thesis arguments.

Chapter 10, *Conclusion*, considers the findings of the research.

The thesis develops an understanding of the meaning of crafts in the twenty-first century and investigates the intersections of material culture, contemporary craft practice, performance and the curatorial. Performance and performativity are used as lenses through which to understand the curatorial influence on craft's performance.

The thesis analyses contemporary craft which has interrogated traditional understandings of exhibitions, with a particular emphasis on ceramics and textiles, in museums and public spaces and their boundaries. The researcher aims to challenge the prevalent perception of exhibition making models and to contribute to a more open form of academic research based on practice.

The thesis was undertaken as a form of autoethnographic research. The decision to include the researcher-self in the study through practices of autoethnographic reflection introduced a descriptive, evocative research approach grounded in personal experiences. This approach offered an analytic frame through which I, the researcher-curator, could reflect on my own knowledge, expertise and individual situatedness in relation to the theory and practice of craft.

The literature and contextual review of the craft field is used to establish an understanding of the recent history of craft's shift to performance in the form of exhibitions, interventions, or other types of events. The examination of the practice is through the lens of performativity as expressed in the writings of Judith Butler, and Dorothea von Hantelmann. The focus is on ceramics and textiles, however the examination included other crafts disciplines for example jewellery, wood, and glass when necessary for the purpose of the thesis. Moreover, specific international practices and relevant to the thesis texts, including the practice of Japanese textile performance artist Chicaru Shiota and book series *Documents on Contemporary Crafts* published by Norwegian Crafts, have also been referenced as a means to attain a comprehensive view of the field.

Before building the research arguments, it is important to establish the methodologies and methods that framed this thesis, and this will be the subject of the next chapter.

2 METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology used in the thesis which focuses on understanding the development of the curatorial practice of craft integrating performance. The thesis is to be used as a tool to assess the understanding of the craft curatorial practice and its trajectory. The methodology used is intended to be easily repeatable and adaptable.

Constellations

The research uses the notion of constellations as featured in Walter Benjamin's 'Epistemo-Critical Prologue' in *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (1928) and was translated as *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* by John Osborne (2003). Benjamin laid out his method of 'indirection' and his idea of 'constellations' as a key means of grasping the world, making dynamic entities out of the numerous elements of everyday life. His proposition was that:

Ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars. This means, in the first place, that they are neither their concepts nor their laws. They do not contribute to the knowledge of phenomena, and in no way can the latter be the criteria with which to judge the existence of ideas. The significance of phenomena for ideas is confined to their conceptual elements. Whereas phenomena determine the scope

and content of the concepts with encompass them, by their existence, by what they have in common, and by their differences, their relationship to ideas is the opposite of this inasmuch as the idea, the objective interpretation of phenomena-or rather their elements-determines their relationship to each other. Ideas are timeless constellations, and by virtue of the elements being seen as points in such constellations, phenomena are subdivided and at the same time redeemed. (Benjamin 2003:34)

These words suggest that ideas are no more present in the world than constellations exist in the sky but that, like constellations, facilitate the perception of relations between objects. Particularly, constellations are a human construct, a way of organising our perceptions of the stars. The stars in the night sky are positioned regardless of how they are being looked at and it is their location that allows the viewer to form a perceived outline or pattern.

But having said that, the names used for constellations are embedded in history, tradition, and myth. So, the constellation is simultaneously subjective and objective in nature, but it is not a system. The latter was of true significance for Benjamin, who rejected the notion that philosophy can be thought of as systematic, as though it were mathematical or scientific, but instead as discursive. Benjamin developed this notion of constellations further in his account of the arcades in nineteenth century Paris. With the notion of constellations, Benjamin named the dialectical or historical image in which what-has-been comes together in a flash to form a constellation.

Benjamin's concept of the constellation offers an alternative model for organising things in the field of knowledge. The constellation breaks away from the dualism of body-mind by demonstrating the interdependency between things and ideas. The thesis demonstrates that ideas are not radically separated from objects. Things are not derived from absolute ideas, but ideas themselves constitute the very source for the materiality of things.

Theodor Adorno adopts and adapts constellations in his account of negative dialectics, transforming it into a model.

The notion of constellations used in the thesis, allows for depicting the interrelation between ideas that gives individual notions their autonomy but does not plunge them into a state of isolated anomie.

Curator and curating theorist Paul O'Neill looked at how the curatorial could be conceived of as a constellation. O'Neill aimed to demonstrate how a progressive understanding of the curatorial as a constellation of activities is essential to grasping durational approaches to public art and how curatorial processes conceive of time as part of a cumulative practice. In *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (2012) he considered the curatorial as a space of thinking that doesn't necessitate an exhibition only as a private form. He claimed that one should think curatorially, act curatorially, and consider curatorial practice as a process of engagement, becomingness, and emergence. He proposed that the curatorial provides a different way of thinking because it is not object-oriented production and examined exhibitions as collaboration, participation, and cooperation. O'Neill claimed that cultural production needs to be perceived as a 'constellation of creative

activities, akin to artistic praxis' (O'Neill, 2012b:1) by artists, critics, curators, collectors, and the field itself.

Here O'Neill is influenced by Theodore Adorno's quotation from *Negative Dialectics*:

As a constellation, theoretical thought circles the concept it would like to unseal, hoping that it will fly open like the lock of a well-guarded safe-deposit box: in response, not to a single key or a single number, but to a combination of numbers. (Adorno 2007:163)

O'Neill drew from Adorno's description of the culture industry as a dialectic between producers and administrators, and argued that the convergence of these roles challenges the traditional structure of art institutions by promoting fluidity between power and authorship:

This [cooperative models and collaborative structures within contemporary cultural practice] frames the curatorial as durational, transformative, and speculative activity, a way of keeping things in flow, mobile, in between, indeterminate, crossing over between people identities, and things, encouraging certain ideas to come to the fore in in an emergent communicative process which permits much more freedom than Adorno's conception of organisation. (O'Neill, 2012b:89)

In addition, this thesis examines the paracuratorial, as discussed by O'Neill in his essay 'The Curatorial Constellation and the Paracuratorial Paradox' in the sixth issue

of *The Exhibitionist* (2012), which presented the trend of twenty-first century curators to deliver secondary events additional to the exhibition.

O'Neill acknowledged the discursive nature of the paracuratorial and the political potentiality to set things in motion, directing to performativity.

He outlined his premise of the Curatorial Constellation – a curatorial practice that sets the paracuratorial in equal footing within the curatorial paradigm. O'Neill explained his premise about the discursive processes of the paracuratorial stating:

...the paracuratorial facilitates an extended artistic practice in which diverse activities commingle while employing an existing cultural form within which, and through which, many other ideas and propositions intersect and interrelate. (O'Neill, 2012a: 59)

This commingling and intersections in the curatorial are conceived by O'Neill as a constellation where the static relationship of the curator-artist-spectator triumvirate is destabilised in favour for 'a more semi-autonomous and self-determined aesthetic and discursive forms of practice.' O'Neill further explained:

The constellation, in this sense, is an ever shifting and dynamic cluster of changing elements that are always resisting reduction to a single common denominator. By preserving irreconcilable differences, such praxis retains a tension between the universal and the particular, between essentialism and nominalism. (O'Neill, 2012b:59)

On O'Neill's essay outlining the Curatorial Constellation – a concept he derived from the development of paracuratorial praxis within the curatorial paradigm – I would like to say that this praxis offers an alternative to the growing trend of the curatorial turn in the global market of cultural production. However, as O'Neill also concluded in his text:

I do not wish to fetishize process over product, nor to see curatorial discourses superseding praxis. Rather, my intention is to problematize the recently manifested desire for more procedural, exclusive, dominant, or instrumental forms of curatorial production. This is registered by a number of curators and commentators who have called for a regression to the artwork-first model of curation: curating as selecting from an already-sanctioned art market; the disappearance of curatorial self-reflexivity; curatorial labor restricted to object-oriented exhibitions; curating reduced to working within institutions; establishing a canon or selecting from within a canon; curating associated with, or working within, a private collection or museum context as the only way forward. (O'Neill, 2012b:59)

O'Neill primarily is concerned with the transformation of curatorial roles and the development of new institutional collaborations and exhibition strategies. O'Neill's thinking indicates ways of setting ideas into other curatorial forms besides

exhibition-making, which could be in the form of screenings, talks, performances, discussions, publications, and other discursive events.

The above is tested in Chapter 9 which describes my curatorial practice as research. In particular, *Makers' Tale*, departs from the concept of traditional monographic exhibitions and autonomous artworks in favour of collaborative curatorship, group exhibition, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and process-based project (Figure 1)

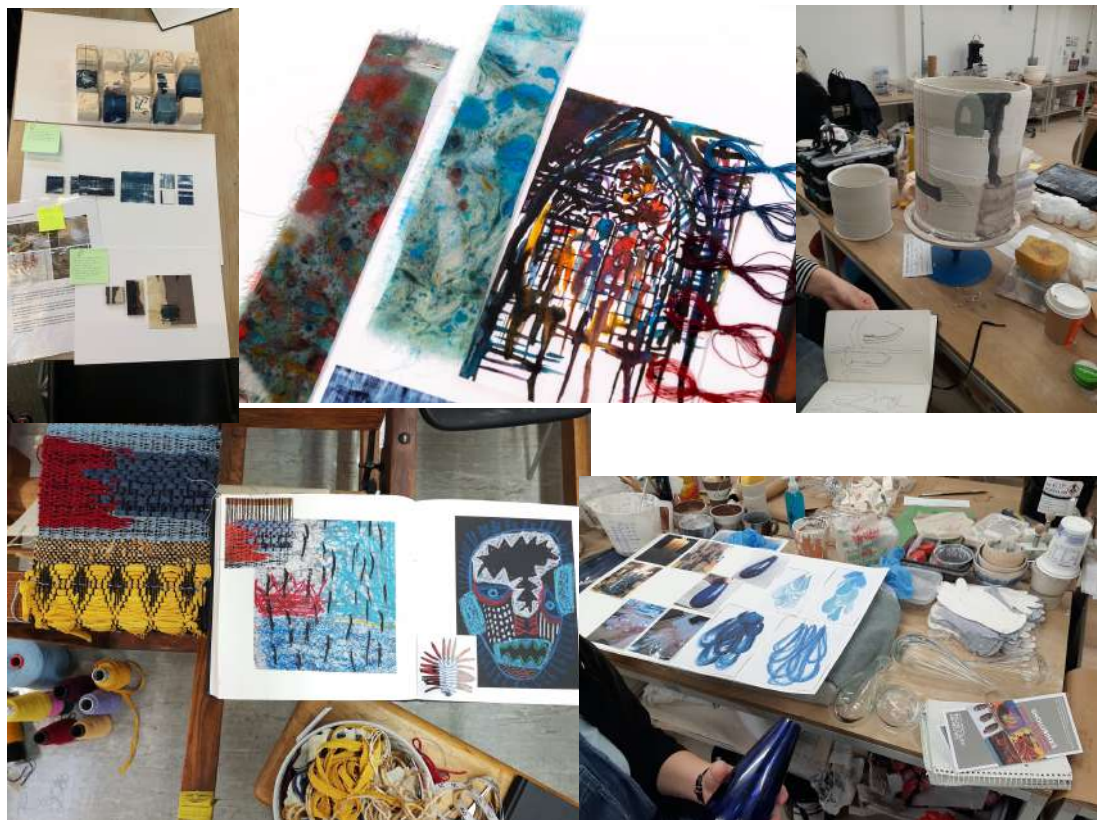


Figure 1 *Makers' Tale* (2020). Mood boards and proposals from year 2 BA (Hons) students from the University for The Creative Arts School of Crafts and Design, Farnham.

Exhibition as Research

The curatorial, performance / performative and crafts form the context in which the thesis' arguments are placed. Drawing from Peter Bjerregaard (2020) *Exhibition as*

Research, the thesis moves the focus beyond the craft object's capacity to carry information, into an investigation of its non-textual quality, which allows the interrogation of its material qualities, as well as its expressive and aesthetic potential.

The study explores the theory and philosophy of craft, performance and the curatorial, through critical analysis of texts, happenings, exhibitions, and events. Historic theories, even though they were considered for the purpose of building an understanding and expertise within the craft field, are not being reviewed in detail and are only being referenced when considered appropriate. The investigation is led by discussions on the shifting identity of craft in the twenty-first century.

The past decade has witnessed a rich debate on museum and gallery reformation, including their structures and priorities along with the need to increase visitor numbers. The research recognises shifts in the contextual development of curatorial practice and in craft theory that have developed alongside crafts in the twenty-first century. During this period, a certain shift from crafts to performance has been noticed, in which projects and the craft curatorial practice have moved from the traditional notion related to stillness and functionality of an object, to that of a performance.

The thesis reflects on the existing literature and considers what the notion of 'exhibitions as research' entails. The notion of the exhibition as research emerged in the last couple of decades where the main academic interest in the museum institution came in, to shape the critique. Curatorial theory is significant in that it provides the context to the theories around practice as addressed by O'Neill in the chapter 'The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse' in *Issues of Curating*

Contemporary Art and Performance (Rugg and Sedgwick, 2009), Jean-Paul Martinon in *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* (2013) and Peter Bjerregaard in *Exhibitions as Research* (2020). O'Neill's concern was the 'turn towards curating' (O'Neill, 2009:14), while Martinon was concerned with distinguishing the terms of curating and the curatorial. He claimed that if the consideration of curating is a range of professional practices for setting up exhibitions, then the curatorial explores what takes place on the stage set up, the *mise-en-scène*, both intentionally and unintentionally, by the curator. According to Martinon, the curatorial refers not to the staging of an event, but to the event of knowledge itself. In a similar note, a few years later, Bjerregaard explored the potential of the exhibition to create a research surplus, asserting:

Working intensely with collections, testing ideas out in a physical environment, and relating more or less directly to a lay audience does not only tell us something new about how to make exhibitions but may also provide us with more insight into the subject matter of the exhibition. That is, the exhibition has the potential to create a research surplus; through the making of exhibitions, we are liable to learn more about the topic of the exhibition. (Bjerregaard, 2020:1)

When I interviewed Bjerregaard via zoom on 29 October 2020, he explained that the idea of the research surplus offers a way of changing our own way of thinking about exhibition making. His argument was that the exhibition, instead of reducing and simplifying the complexity of its theme, should be able to 'take it in another shape' that could be experienced physically by the audience (Bjerregaard, 2020).

What Bjerregaard meant is that the curatorial effectively works in a particular way of doing research as the surplus does not only concern how much is known, but also involves the different ways of knowing. The making of exhibitions allows to develop an understanding of things in ways that are different from the usual textual production of research, which offer different perspectives to more conventional cycles of research.

The idea of the research exhibition was put forward by Chris Rust and Alec Robertson (2003) who aimed to demonstrate the potential of the exhibition for new forms of research dissemination, and also importantly, they highlighted a number of problems and issues which must be dealt in order to provide a robust and appropriate way to present and record research outcomes. One of the issues they identified was whether the exhibition addressed a clear question or problem which was being investigated and whether the question had arisen from a good understanding of its context. One other requirement was to make the process of the research explicit. As the exhibition consists of things, and research comprises activities, this is not a trivial challenge, but it is vital that the audience understands both the methods used and the sequence of events in the programme of work. And finally, they questioned what should be considered the outcome and impact of the research. Rust and Robertson suggested that this is not straightforward and making too explicit a statement of outcomes or conclusions may miss the point in a project where a rich set of ideas and experiences have been developed.

The authors explained that it is important to help the audience understand and reflect on what has been learned. They proposed the consideration of ways which

are accessible to the whole audience for the exhibit, which will usually include people who have limited knowledge of the specialised issues addressed.

Academics Kristina Niedderer, Michael Biggs and M. Ferris (Niedderer et al., 2006) have developed an initial framework for a non-verbal contextual exhibition outlining some of the parameters and criteria for its realisation. They have moved the inquiry beyond the question of how to realise such an exhibition, to asking why such an exhibition is needed and is of interest. They claimed that a research exhibition may be used not only as a means for presenting the outcomes of research, but also as a tool for research inquiry.

The thesis draws on these problems to investigate 'exhibition' in its broader meaning, within the realm of crafts.

Craft theory as a term of reference is significant in the thesis, since it provides an anchor to the philosophies around practice as addressed by Jorunn Veiteberg in her analysis in *Craft in Transition* (2005) which discussed a paradigm shift from applied art to art-oriented craft in the 1970s (Veiteberg, 2005:24). Veiteberg emphasised the distinctive qualities and effects of crafts, discussed new craft and challenged old categorisations. Glenn Adamson in *Thinking Through Craft* (2007) pointed out that craft has played the role of 'other to fine art' in such important ways that it is most usefully discussed in those terms.

This expansion in the context of crafts, beyond the traditional end points, relates directly to the shift in craft and the curatorial practice. The thesis considers craft as well as curatorial theory as the paradigm from which the new methodologies will be informed to investigate this shift in practice.

Bjerregaard suggested that using exhibition as a method of research enables the researcher to overcome 'preconceived framings as researchers' (Bjerregaard, 2020:6). Exhibition as research allows us to engage in other kinds of reasoning and to pose questions which may be lost to more conventional scientific practice. Bjerregaard noted that exhibitions are interpreted differently by audiences from what was intended by the makers and could be turned into a creative element that allows exhibitions to let in new perspectives and ideas.

Additionally, as Austrian post-conceptual artist, curator Peter Weibel and French philosopher Bruno Latour in *Making Things Public* observed, exhibitions may be used to test theoretical elements saying, 'once the question is raised, the only way to experiment with it is by conducting a real experiment with real images brought into the imagery space of the museum' (Weibel and Latour, 2007:104).

A phenomenological approach in research methods informed by the writings of Robert Sokolowski (2000) and Jorella Andrews (2018) was of specific value in the early stages of this research, i.e., during the exploration and collection of information and data. Furthermore, it proved to be a useful tool in the process of selecting and interpreting the visual, physical, textual, and other sources of the initial exploration, as well as the analyses of these materials.

Research Techniques and Methods

I have applied a variety of methods including interviews, conversations, participant observation, and action research. The employment of an heuristic approach made it possible to acquire a broader understanding of the way in which the shift in

contemporary practice unfolds within a diverse and yet related set of theoretical approaches from the curatorial history and practice. Here, the term heuristic is used as per its etymological meaning, from the Greek *Ευρίσκω* meaning to find to discover (Etymonline, 2022). This approach offered a method of using my pre-existing experience to help think through things, like the process of elimination, or the process of trial and error.

Interviews with artists, curators and creative professionals have played an important role in this research process. My decision to conduct mainly unstructured interviews was based on the particular characteristic of this format which allows for developing an understanding of an as-of-yet not fully understood or appreciated culture, experience, or setting (Wildemuth, 2017:239-247). Specifically, I considered unstructured interviews as an opportunity to test out my preliminary understanding of the shift in craft practice, while still allowing for ample opportunity for new ways of seeing and understanding to develop in a not yet fully examined field.

The aim of each interview was to discuss the main objective of the research and to highlight specific areas of interest for critical review. This interview and reflective process allowed for an understanding of the impact of crafts practice which incorporate performance.

The decision for the selection of the interviewees was based on their expert knowledge. For example, Andrew Renton, Keeper of Arts, National Museum Wales Cardiff; Siobhan Davies, choreographer and founder of the experimental dance studio, Siobhan Davies Dance; Clare Twomey, ceramic artist and Alun Graves, Senior Curator of Ceramics and Glass Collections at the Victoria and Albert museum - were

interviewed amongst other professionals. All the interviewees are listed in Appendix A.

Renton was the curator of *Fragile?* (2015) the biggest exhibition, to date, in Wales of contemporary ceramics at the National Museum Wales, which challenged the preconceptions of ceramic practice presenting a diverse mix of modern and contemporary ceramic sculptures, installations and objects (Figure 2) A particular interest in Davies was due to her motivation to promote contemporary craft, more than any non-craft organisation (Olding, 2019), and the inclusion of art practice as an integral part of her studio's programming. Additionally, the decision to interview Twomey was based on the artist's creative and research activity. Twomey's practice crosses over the realms of performance, serial production, and transience, while it often involves site-specific installations. Finally, Graves was selected for his extended knowledge as well as his involvement and contribution in this field.



Figure 2. View of the *Fragile?* exhibition at the National Museum Wales. The curatorial team setting up Clare Twomey's *Consciousness/Conscience* ceramic installation. Photo property of the copyright holder.

A primary research method was my curatorial practice, providing a way of mediating between theory and praxis¹. The research includes an investigation of contemporary craft makers. With the intention of limiting the scope of the research, the investigation concentrates particularly on makers engaged with ceramics and textiles. Here it is essential to highlight the importance of observation as seen in Benjamin. Academic Nathan Ross in *Walter Benjamin's First Philosophy: Experience, Ephemerality and Truth* (2021) explored Benjamin's early philosophy as a source of

¹ Fabian Freyenhagen in his published article 'Adorno's politics: Theory and praxis' for the *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 2014, Vol. 40(9) 867–893, distinguished six principal meanings the of the term praxis in Adorno's writings which have multiple and interrelated meanings of which no. 1, 2 and 3 are relevant in this thesis:

1. Praxis as activity/behaviour [Tätigkeit].
 2. Praxis as productive labour.
 3. Praxis as revolutionary/transformational activity.
 4. Praxis as resistance [Widerstand] and not joining in [Nicht-Mitmachen].
 5. Praxis as actionism [Aktionismus].
 6. Praxis as activity in a free society.
- (Freyenhagen, 2014)

insight into his later works and discussed the philosopher's notion of observation. Ross explained that Benjamin, immensely influenced by German Romanticism, claimed objects could be known as subjects, capable of their own subjective reflection. For Benjamin to gain true knowledge meant essentially to 'observe' an object.

This model of observation applies just as much to experiments on natural processes as it does to the critique of art works. To observe an object means both to put the object in a 'natural' continuum of the objects to which it is related, as well as to treat this object as a being capable of its own reflection, its own subjective self-awareness. Benjamin considered that this Romantic proposition of observation is most fruitful in relation to artworks since artworks are literally perceived as both objects of experience and products of subjective creation. He considered observation as an overall theory of object knowledge.

Based on this, by observing contemporary craft and performance works, I was able to identify patterns and acknowledge the craft curator's role in this process.

Case Study Research

The thesis's construction is based on case studies drawing from established textbooks on case study research, including Yin, 1994; Stake, 1995 and Rowley, 2002. Specifically, it is influenced by Yin who said that case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 1994:1). The use of case study research offered

me an approach that supported deeper and more detailed investigation. This method of research employs a variety of evidence from different sources, for example documents, artefacts, interviews, as well as observation, which goes beyond the range of sources of evidence that might be available in historical study and existing literature.

The thesis uses case study research to lift the investigation from a descriptive account of 'what happens' (Rowely, 2002:16) to a piece of research that contributes to knowledge within the craft curatorial practice.

The case studies are informed by the writings of academic, social analyst Richard Sennett (2008) who proposed a new way of thinking about craft; furniture maker Peter Korn (2014) who offered insights into the significance of craftsmanship and handmade object not only for the makers themselves but also for society as a whole; and craft scholar Glenn Adamson whose notion of *Material Intelligence* (2018) defined a deeper understanding of the material world surrounding us, an ability to read that the material environment, and the know-how are required to give it new form.

The case studies move beyond describing what happened, intending to develop an understanding of the 'how' and 'for whom'. The thesis includes two studies on contemporary makers: ceramic artist Phoebe Cummings and textile artist Celia Pym, and two studies of my curatorial practice, *Makers' Tale* and *Hidden Histories* (Figure 3)



Figure 3 View of *Hidden Histories* (2020) by Alison Baxter. Mirror Gallery, South Hill Park, Bracknell. Photo possession of the author.

The selection of the makers and exhibitions in this body of research has arisen from the development of the key questions addressed by this thesis. Conceptually, the research explores craft curatorial practice from a wide perspective, as constellations.

Considering the selected case studies as core examples for studying the shift in craft practice, the research investigates the specific developments in craft curatorial practice. Furthermore, the research explores how craft is evolving to be relevant to the needs of the twenty-first century, while examining the gaps between the craft practice and the curatorial.

The proposition is that thinking about the curatorial in terms of constellations might lead us towards a new, critical, understanding of the task of the practice today. The thesis explores how the concept of 'constellation' and its critical potential, offers a way of thinking, reading, and writing afresh about craft and curatorial practice.

Comprehensive research carried out, during this doctoral research project demonstrated that, although the relationship between craft practice and performance has been addressed in articles, exhibition catalogue essays and books published since the early 2010s, it seems that currently there is not a developed body of research that examines the relationship between craft practices, performance and curatorial practice.

There is therefore a need for contextual review which emphasises the shift of crafts to performance, as well as the development of the craft curatorial practice in the twenty-first century. A focus on performance and the performative as well as the curatorial practice contributes to understanding the ways in which the artists and the venues accomplish public engagement.

Following this chapter, where an overview of the methods and methodology used in the thesis were described, a discussion about the literature on curatorial and exhibition as research and how this relates to crafts will succeed.

3 CURATORIAL

This chapter sets out to explore and examine the curatorial and the practice of the contemporary curator with the emphasis within the field of crafts. This part investigates the expanding field of crafts, the evolving nature of collaboration between makers and curators and the development of the broader creative and professional practice of the curators which has generated new fields of inquiries.

It is informed and influenced by anthropologist, curator Peter Bjerregaard's (2020) *Exhibition as Research* which unfolded, and demonstrated that exhibitions represent 'knowledge-in-the-making rather than platforms for disseminating already-established insights' (Bjerregaard, 2020:i).

The focus is on the curatorial challenges: How the curatorial encourages innovative, inclusive inter- or cross-disciplinary exchanges which bring new insights to the field of curatorial studies; and how curators are transcending boundaries and opening new possibilities for crafts. Before moving to an analysis of craft curatorial practice, the chapter provides an overview of key writings that highlight the shifting/evolving role of curatorial practice in the visual arts and the role of the curator.

Curating and Curatorial

This chapter explores the distinction between curating and the curatorial. It examines authorship and the role of the curator while it investigates the curator as

auteur. The analysis of the *auteur* is informed from film theory and studies. The emphasis is on *mise-en-scène* and its impact on staging craft exhibitions.

This chapter considers two quotations, a hypothesis by academic Jean-Paul Martinon and an argument by Peter Bjerregaard. Specifically, Martinon's hypothesis suggests that the curatorial is a holistic approach which encompasses, not only the staging of the event but also, the enactment, dramatisation and performance:

If curating is a gamut of professional practices that had to do with setting up exhibitions and other modes of display, then the curatorial operates at a very different level: it explores all that takes place on the stage set-up, both intentionally and unintentionally, by the curator, and views it as an event of knowledge. So, to drive a distinction between 'curating' and 'the curatorial' means to emphasize a shift from the staging of the event to the actual event itself: its enactment, dramatisation and performance. (Martinon, 2013:ix)

Bjerregaard's argument suggests that the status of exhibition as research needs to be considered not as an end product, but as part of a larger process: 'Approaching exhibitions as research in and of themselves does not reflect a loss of faith in research, but it asks for research to go even further and turn its problems into material, experiential consequences' (Bjerregaard, 2020:13).

These words propose considering the curatorial as the creation of knowledge within this field that occurs on the edge of the activities often associated with curating.

Martinon, similarly to Bjerregaard, seems to be more interested in reflecting on the making or creative processes rather than in the final product, for example an exhibition or methodologies of work.

Therefore, whereas curating represents the formal aspect of practices and modes of cultural production pertaining to art institutions and establishments, the curatorial is more like an invitation to actively challenge and reflect upon the operative functions of curating and critically rethink its relation to the wider social sphere.

A Brief Overview of the Shift in Curatorial Practice

The existing literature provides sufficient contextualization and historicization, hence, this chapter is not aiming to provide an encyclopaedic narrative on the history of curatorial practice. However, it is important to highlight the key literature which relates to the fine art and visual arts context, intending to inform the thinking and expand its application to craft.

Curator Hans Ulrich Obrist in *A Brief History of Curating* (2008) explored the growth of creative curating in recent years. The book was presented in an interrogatory format, with interviews that were nonetheless conversations, discussing various topics which included examination of the transforming role of the museum and the curator.

Christopher Cherix in the preface noted that Obrist aimed to explore the to-date unexplored ties that 'interconnected manifestations have created among curators, institutions, and artists' (Cherix, 2008:7). The book provided a comprehensive account of the curatorial field development, looking into the practice from early

independent curators in the 1960s and 70s and the experimental institutional programs developed in Europe and the U.S. through the introduction of Documenta and the various biennales and fairs.

Additionally, the anthology *Cultures of the Curatorial* (2012) by Von Bismarck, Jorn Schafaff, and Thomas Weski, marked some important conditions of the field's development. The book included twenty-two essays from artists, curators, historians, and theorists that provided different methods of analysis and numerous practical case studies. What is interesting to note here is the last lines of the introduction where the editors identify the performative qualities of the curatorial, claiming:

the different perspectives taken in this book have developed performative qualities: they not only attest to a variety of cultures and their politics and aesthetics within the curatorial but also to how the curatorial itself allows for a continuous dynamic reconceptualization of the relations of all actors. (von Beatrice, Schafaff and Weski, 2012:15)

Curator Jens Hoffmann in his article 'Curating Between the Lines' in the *Critique d'art* (2013) recognised that *Cultures of the Curatorial* 'is a useful and substantial read as a loose amalgamation of texts'. However, he is problematised on the book's impact stating 'it is difficult to assess the greater impact of the sum of its parts' (Hoffmann, 2013).

Academic, art historian Terry Smith, in *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (2012) offered a clear and effective prose for understanding the landscape of what he calls

‘contemporary curatorial thinking’. Smith described how today’s curators are taking on roles that move beyond exhibition making, to include reimagining museums, writing the history of curating, creating discursive platforms and undertaking social or political activism.

The Curatorial Turn

A key writing that acknowledged these changes in contemporary curatorial practice almost three decades earlier was the anthology *Thinking about Exhibitions* (1996) by Bruce W. Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg, and Sandy Nairne which re-examined the ‘white cube’ and contributed to the novel, at the time, discourse of the expanded field of curatorial practice, commenting on exhibitions being temporary, and existing outside the traditional museum.

The ‘white cube’ concept was introduced in the early twentieth century in response to the emphasis on colour and light, by artists from groups like De Stijl and the Bauhaus who favour showing their works against white walls to minimise distraction. The white walls were thought to act as a frame, rather like the borders of the work.

Thinking about Exhibitions anthology addressed the role of exhibitions in the production of knowledge and in the construction of aesthetic and art historical narratives. The authors noticed that the installations, exhibitions, events, and site-specific works of the past decades were demonstrating the implementation of cultural and artistic strategies towards new relations and forms of visual culture. This anthology focused on the agency of exhibition choices in creating and disseminating knowledge. According to the editors, the narrative of exhibitions is a fragmentary fiction, shaped to the aims and objectives of the exhibition’s designers and curators.

The editors also made a distinction between thinking critically about exhibitions and thinking critically about museums; the two interconnecting but still, separate entities. The anthology included a paper by sociologist Natalie Heinich and Michael Pollak 'From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur' (1996:231) which commented on the shifting role of the curator from the mere responsibility of safeguarding artefacts collected by cultural institutions to the one connecting with people who have no special knowledge or experience with art. They concluded that exhibitions have also changed from having, in the past, been displays of a particular collection to now, predominantly being thematised shows that are conceived around an artist, movement, or idea which contain works owned by multiple different collecting bodies. In the paper, the authors compared the curator-as-author to the cinematographic concept of an *auteur*, which will be further analysed later in Chapter 4.

Interdisciplinary architectural historian, Peg Rawes writing a review, published in *Curating the Contemporary Art Museum and Beyond* (1997), about the aforementioned anthology claimed 'The "white cube" which characterises the institutionalised presentation of contemporary art in the modern art museum, has been shown to be hermetic, exclusive, masculine and therefore a severely restricted physical, conceptual and cultural arena' (Rawes, 1997:V).

Rawes continued by explaining that the anthology presented the idealised space of the art institution that has been permeated by cultural and artistic practices which both challenged the aesthetic limits and revealed experiences that have 'been negated or neglected by the traditional art institution' (Rawes, 1997:V).

From a similar perspective, O'Neill's essay 'The curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse' in *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance* edited by Judith Rugg and Michèle Sedwick (2007) explored how, from the late 1960s, the primary discourse around art in an exhibition began to turn away from forms of critique of the individual art works to a form of curatorial criticism. He specifically focused on the tensions, evident across the field of contemporary art curation from the 80s and 90s. The tensions were between those in the field that privilege either practice or discourse production, and those that would either to affirm or dissolve the designations artist and curator within curatorial endeavours.

O'Neill argued that one of the main challenges for contemporary curators in the world where the 'local and the global are in constant dialogue' (O'Neill, 2007:16) was to demonstrate the diversity of artistic practices on an international scale. Specifically, O'Neill, argued 'indicative of a shift in the primary role of curator is the changing perception of the curator as carer to a curator who has a more creative and active part to play within the production of art itself' (O'Neill, 2007:15).

O'Neill claimed that curators are 'willing themselves to be the key subject and producer of this discourse' (O'Neill, 2007:26). Quoting Ferguson, Greenberg and Nairne, he stated that 'Exhibitions have become the medium through which most art becomes known' (O'Neill, 2007:14).

He concluded his essay claiming that all curatorial activities today should take place in a space of open dialogue and close collaboration between curators, artists, and their audiences. In a similar note, a year earlier, in his essay 'Curating: Practice Becoming Common Discourse' (2006) positioned contemporary curators in an

emerging and flux state of the discursive: 'Curating is no longer about being somebody else; it is about being a curator, not as it is understood in practice, but in discourse' (O'Neill, 2006).

Creative director and curator Karen Gaskill opened her presentation 'Curatorial cultures: considering dynamic curatorial practice' at *the 17th International Symposium on Electronic Art*, Istanbul (2011), using O'Neill's words. Gaskill's paper claimed that 'the practice of curating is live and temporal' (Gaskill, 2011). She argued that much of this shift has been influenced by the works being curated, and with a growing body of works being process-led as opposed to object-based, pushing the practice of curation to evolve accordingly. Her paper, where Gaskill employed an almost encyclopaedic range of citations from writers and curators, considered curation as praxis, elaborated on 'how responsive methods and approaches are called for when curating media-artworks, and how they shift the curatorial role to that of an active practitioner' (Gaskill, 2011).

Gaskill acknowledged that curating has shifted substantially, stating that curation is a rapidly growing practice and discourse that is fundamentally shifting the ways in which we view and receive art (Gaskill, 2011). Her statement positions curation at a point between what is known and what will be revealed. Gaskill implied a curatorial turn to performativity, by referencing Mari-Carmen Ramirez who stated 'by contrast, the centrality accorded to contemporary art curators in the new system is evident in the multiplicity of extra-artistic roles and the diversity of performative arenas that have come to define our current practices' (Marincola, 2001:26 cited in Gaskill 2011).

Gaskill acknowledged O'Neill's position and continued saying:

It can therefore be said that curating is no longer about being somebody else, e.g., curator as negotiator or facilitator, it is about being a 'curator' as understood in discourse. In addressing what the role of the curator is, it is very much dependent, as previously stated, on the translation of practice into discourse. Even with the limited corresponding literature on curation, there exists a huge gap even within the documentation of contemporary curatorial projects. (Gaskill, 2011)

Therefore, Gaskill's words could be interpreted by claiming that curating should not be labelled as something, for example a curator as negotiator or facilitator, but rather to be considered as being a curator in discourse.

This thesis expands this argument further by considering the transcendence of the curatorial practice into the discursive.

Gaskill asserted that curating is 'experimental and discursive, necessarily responsive to socio-political and artistic shifts in a fluid culture' (Gaskill, 2011). Accordingly, the evolving curatorial crafts practice embodies movement and continuation in its descriptive qualities and makes visible and transparent the links and networks between meanings. This was demonstrated through my research project, the *Makers' Tale* project examined in Chapter 9.

The power of the exhibitions to develop discourse was noted by O'Neill who In *The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse*, concluded by saying 'it is apparent that curatorial discourse is in the midst of its own production. Curating is becoming

discourse where curators are willing themselves to be the key subject and producer of this discourse' (O'Neill, 2007:26).

Following O'Neill, I am considering that the curatorial practice offered the space of exhibition to open new possibilities for dialogue and exchange. These new perspectives feed back into the way in which the exhibition is perceived and reflected upon. In *Exhibition* (2014) the editor Lucy Steeds stated:

The aim is to shift and widen the focus in order to take in the multiple agencies responsible for exhibitions: to consider not only artistic and curatorial contributions [...] but also the works of those concerned with other dimensions, aspects such as design or interpretation materials and more broadly the role of the institutional or alternative context. (Steeds, 2014:14)

Similarly, to O'Neill and Gaskill, Steeds also referred to Ferguson, Greenberg and Nairne's description of an exhibition being a medium (Ferguson, et.al, 1996:2). However, she moved the conversation forward by suggesting ' [we] might talk instead of terms of the potential exhibitions have to be discursive formations with multiple fields of possibility, activating critical exchanges about art' (Steeds, 2014:15).

Through exploring and addressing issues from different perspectives or expressing different possible understandings and ideas, it is possible to reveal or give insight into issues that might otherwise have remained hidden or unquestioned. Therefore, this develops possibilities of becoming more critically open to social, political, and

cultural issues, or as per O'Neill's words 'The power that exhibitions have in assigning or opening up meanings, in creating contexts and situating viewers' (O'Neill 2007:32).

This statement implies that the methodology and formats of exhibitions and therefore, the role of the curator, needs to be continually critically reconsidered and questioned.

Crafting Exhibitions

Crafting Exhibitions anthology edited by Andre Gali (2015) discussed the development and execution of contemporary curatorial practices specifically within crafts. Gali's anthology contributed to the conversation, demonstrating that the curatorial discourse has been an increasingly important aspect of contemporary craft. Curator Marianne Zameczink in her contribution 'Exhibition Making as a Driving Force in Contemporary Crafts Discourse' considered the existing curatorial theories and practices that craft practitioners and professionals can draw from. She also presented the limitations in the field saying, 'The speed of crafts cannot match the speed which discourses are developing in contemporary art, simply because there are too few theoreticians, writers, historians and curators who specialise in or work with contemporary craft' (Zameczink, 2015:27). This thesis is considering Zameczink's observation and contributes to developing the conversation between curatorial theories and practices in the field of craft.

O'Neill's anthology, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture* (2012b), was a rigorously researched volume which suggested an act of curation and provided an extensive historical account of the emergence as well as of the new discourses in the

field. Notably, O'Neill at the conclusion claimed, 'To curate is no longer confined to a specific museum or gallery program or to the acts of selecting, organising, and displaying only art' (O'Neill, 2012b:129),

His assertion suggested a shift in the development of art's authorship discursive spaces between curators, artists, and the public. O'Neill addressed the range of alternative approaches that have been taken to the exhibition form and unfolded the potential for the curatorial to unfold new discursive pathways to knowledge.

This idea was tested in *Beyond Trauma* (2021) exhibition, which I curated at South Hill Park, Bracknell (Figure 4) The exhibition aimed to develop the understanding of different manifestations of trauma. The curatorial intention was to visually showcase the link between creative writing and crafts. The decision to select a textile artist was based on the etymology of the word text which relates to texture and textile. The exhibition focused on the collaboration between creative writer Dr Lynn Hamilton working with PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and textiles artist Tara Kennedy responding to trauma. I have identified conceptual links between Kennedy's practice and Hamilton's stories.

Kennedy was selected based on her emphasis on process, the performance of making rather than the outcome. Hamilton was selected for the creative usage of text as material to create short stories to communicate the multidimensional perspectives of PTSD, beyond the battlefield.



Figure 4 Beyond Trauma (2021) Installation view Tara Kennedy, 'Hope Emerging' (mixed yarns, mixed fabrics, wire, wool tops, pva, metal ring) and Lynn Hamilton's 'researcher desk'. Photo possession of the author.

To summarise, the literature shows that the polyphonic nature of curatorship and curatorial practice challenges the linearity and assertiveness of academic reasoning. This approach allowed for a less hierarchical and a more open-ended relation with topics and ideas production, which does not imply the rejection of, but co-existence with, the established and justified methods and practices of academic knowledge.

Exhibition as a Form of Research Dissemination

The idea of the research exhibition was put forward some time ago in a paper by Rust and Robertson (2003): 'Show or tell? Opportunities, problems and methods of

the exhibition as a form of research dissemination which was presented at the *5th European Academy of Design Conference* (Barcelona, April, 2003). The paper aimed to explore ways in which exhibitions allow for a more constructive engagement. Specifically, Rust and Robertson said:

One feature of the debate has been the idea that conventional texts may not be the best way to record and explain research where creative practice is a significant instrument. The idea of dissemination through artefacts has been discussed but has not been illuminated by many useful examples. (Rust and Robertson, 2003)

Their paper provided as an example, the inclusion of a practice-based exhibition at the European Academy of Design (EAD) biennial conference in 1999 which was referred to in the same way as conventional papers. Rust and Robertson stated that one of the exhibitors was awarded for 'best paper' voted by all delegates. However, they highlighted the limitation of this early EAD initiative. The EAD exhibition was neither archived nor the research was published. It was felt that the exhibits did not contribute to the recorded body of knowledge and therefore, it was not made available for future researchers.

Rust and Robertson highlighted that the *Design Research Society* included an exhibition in their 2002 Conference, 'Common Ground', held at Brunel University in England as an experimental activity to contribute to the understanding of this form of dissemination. They concluded their paper providing a 'how to' advice saying, 'Our

main conclusion is that it is possible to make exhibitions work as research publications in an international setting, but a good deal of work is needed on refereeing, guidance for exhibitors and permanent dissemination' (Rust and Robertson, 2003).

In juxtaposition, Niedderer, Biggs and Ferris developed the exhibition as research and concluded their presentation paper by emphasising the importance of articulating 'contribution to knowledge' to differentiate the research exhibition from any other form of exhibition. The emphasis was to ponder on what the exhibition's essential contribution to research might be, and how that contribution was to be archived and disseminated (Niedderer et al., 2006).

Conference proceedings titled *The Exhibition as Product and Generator of Scholarship* (2010), edited by Susanne Lehmann-Brauns, Christian Sichau and Helmuth Trischler, also presented the debate about the value and knowledge generated in research exhibition in terms of academic standard. These issues were also addressed in Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson's (2014) anthology *Curating Research* who described two modes of research through curating: 'researching within the exhibition-making' and 'exhibition as a research action itself' (O'Neill and Wilson 2014:17). In his contribution 'Towards the Exhibition as Research' curator Simon Sheikh expanded this idea further when he wrote:

The curatorial project – including its most dominant form, the exhibition – should thus not only be thought of as a form of mediation of research but also as a site for carrying out this research, as a place for enacted research. Research here is not only that which

comes before realisation but also that which is realised throughout actualisation. That which would otherwise be thought of as formal means of transmitting knowledge - such as design structures, display models and perceptual experiments - is here an integral part of the curatorial mode of address, its content production, its proposition.

(O'Neill and Wilson, 2014:40)

Curator and researcher Joasia Krysa has taken this notion forward when, in 'Exhibitionary Practices at the Intersection of Academic Research and Public Display' in *Institutions as Praxis* edited by Carolina Rito and Bill Balaskas, she explored the relationship between research and curatorial practice. Her focus was on exhibition-making practices, referred to as 'exhibitionary practices', and the understanding of the exhibition which moves beyond the display of objects of research, to become a site of research, and consequently, to be a form of critical inquiry and knowledge production in itself (Krysa, 2020:64).

Krysa explained that with the intention of positioning the exhibition as research it was necessary to consider the intersection of academic research and public display and the impact on how meanings are produced when exhibition-making takes place. Krysa pointed a particular emphasis on the exhibition venues, arguing about the distinction between the traditional notion of 'academic galleries and the idea of the 'lab'.

The metaphor of the 'laboratory' allows the institutions to experiment with display conventions by staging situations that encourage social exchange in the form of

meetings, collective engagement, and other activities. In the wider context of contemporary art practice, this concept has been understood to denote interactivity, open-endedness, curatorial space, and participation (Bishop, 2004:52; Bourriaud, 2002:9). However, the use of the term 'laboratory' in the context of art and the associated practices is not new. The term suggestion of a correspondence with the laboratory, was encounter at the early years of the *avant-garde*. For example, when art historian and museum director Alexander Dorner invited Russian artis El Lissitzky to collaborate on developing new exhibition environments, the *Cabinet of Abstraction* (1927) with the objective of creating more meaningful relations between art and life, and between the art institution and its audience. Dorner anticipated for new exhibition formats for abstract art, which would allow the visitor to become active participant, interacting with both the art as well as the exhibition space (Figure 5).

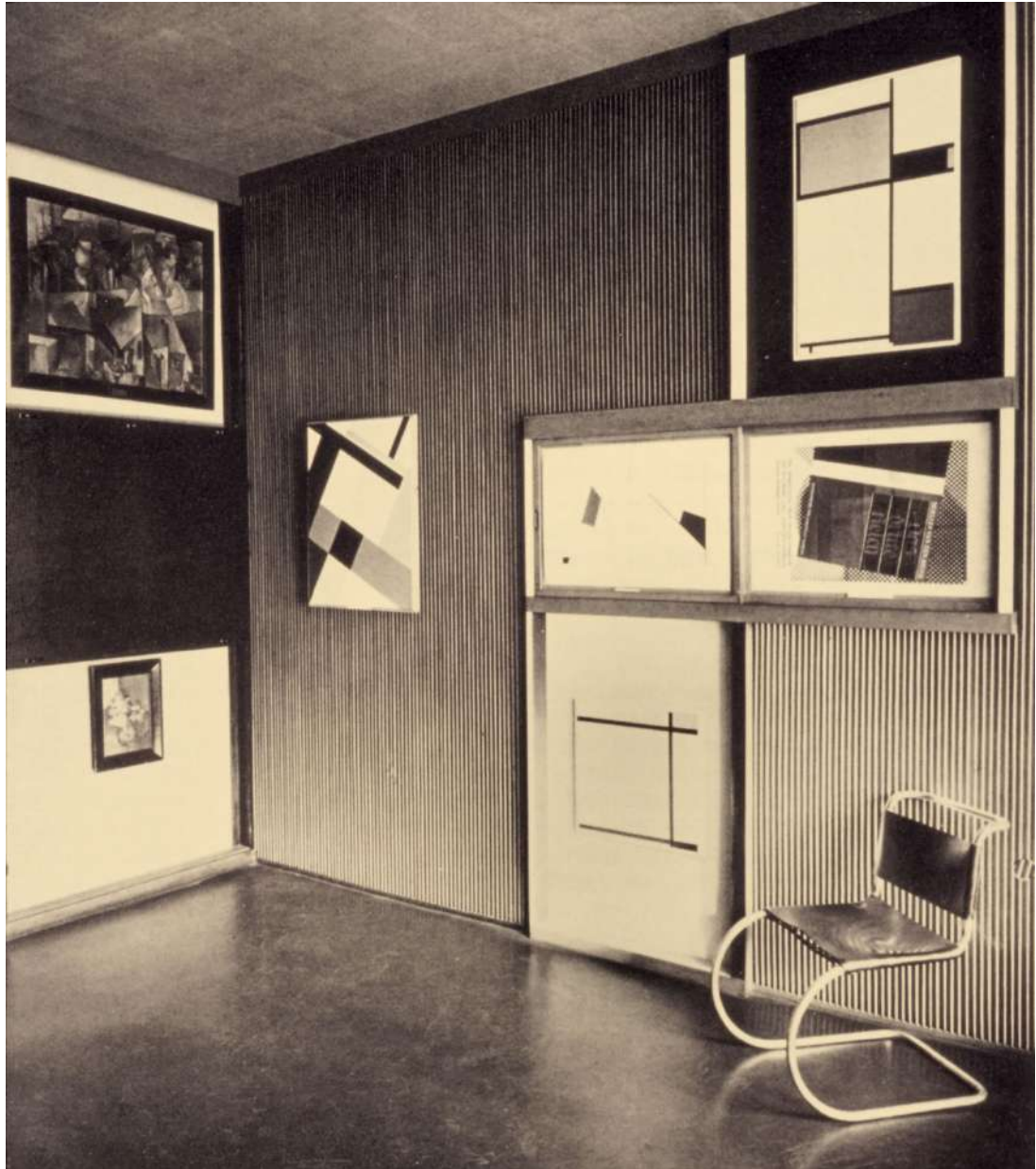


Figure 5 El Lissitzky (1927) *Cabinet of Abstraction* (Kabinett der Abstrakten), a commission by Alexander Dorner for the Museum. of Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum, Hannover. Photo property of the copyright holder.

Krysa stated:

In situating exhibitionary practices at the intersection of academic research and public display in such a way, traditional notions of the gallery are expanded to the idea of the “lab,” where experimental thinking and making can take place and where curatorial knowledge is enacted, produced, and made public. These conditions also challenge straightforward relationships between the curator, exhibition, and context, where curators can be understood as becoming involved in the delivery of research activities as objects for public display. Curatorial practice becomes a dynamic process of setting up frameworks for the experimentation and dissemination of ideas in non-propositional and speculative forms. In this sense— if indeed this is a lab of sorts where research is undertaken— it is one where artistic, not strictly scientific (as the notion of a ‘lab’ might suggest), experimentation takes place (Krysa, 2020:75).

Krysa concluded by saying that as the lab research and practice come together, the relations ‘between curator, exhibition, and the social and public context in which curating takes place can be seen as an active site of knowledge production in the making’ (Krysa, 2020:75).

Krysa acknowledged the limitations of this model, by saying that the research questions are not necessarily answered but recombined. Even though Krysa has moved the conversation forward by emphasising on the actualization of

experimental forms of curatorial research, she has not addressed the limitations of exhibition as research.

Curator Henrik Treimo, however, in the chapter 'Sketches For a Methodology on Exhibition Research' in *Exhibitions as Research* (2020) acknowledged the limitations of the exhibition research and the problem these exhibitions face in being accepted as research articulating 'The problem with having exhibitions as research relates to the general conceptualisation that research knowledge should be transferable and communicated unambiguously' (Treimo, 2020:21).

Here, Treimo identified the same issues as has been discussed before by Rust and Robertson (2003) and Niedderer et al., 2006 and noted that 'attempts have been made to construct 'research exhibition' (meaning exhibitions that present and record research outcomes) with a thorough contextual framing to secure an authorial interpretation (as in, ideas communicated unambiguously) and even peer-reviewing of these shows' (Treimo, 2020:36).

Treimo, to resolve these issues, presented an exhibition-making method that combined academic and artistic research and means, named the LAB-method. Treimo claimed that the resulting exhibition should ultimately be an amalgam of researched knowledge as well as aesthetic experience (Treimo, 2020:20).

Treimo drew from humanities methodology regarding themes, research questions, theoretical perspectives and interpretative methods and combined it with the artistic process of unifying ideas with materials into a whole to create an aesthetic experience (Treimo, 2020:19).

Treimo recalled what John Dewey had described as *aesthetic experience* and explained that such experiences, which are not exclusively linked to art works, result from the immediate sensory and intellectual experience of things, linking past experiences with the present. He continued claiming that the things and artworks carry 'embodied knowledge' that has to be acquired through sensory and emotional perception, resulting from artistic experience (Treimo, 2020:22).

However, Treimo claimed that this method is for a third position of collaborative research that bridges the academic approach (reliance on texts) of the museum curator and the more experimental practice involving conceptual art and scenography (Treimo, 2020:19). Treimo referred to academic and creative director Ken Arnold's article 'Thinking Things Through: Reviving Museum Research' in *Science Museums and Research* (2016) to address the concept of understanding as an alternative to knowledge. Arnold specified:

Embracing the fact that those who engage with museums (from curators and researchers through to audiences) are more concerned to think things through than find things out, they should aim to manufacture a type of understanding that is decidedly livelier and more relevant rather than the alternative, drier, but frankly unrealistic promise of enduring objective knowledge. (Arnold, 2016:3-4 cited in Treimo, 2020:22)

Treimo affirmed that Arnold's insights offered 'fruitful thoughts' which may contribute to create space for a 'qualitative different museum research' (Treimo, 2020:22). Treimo concluded affirming:

Based on extensive experimentation and practice with smaller and bigger projects, we have come to see the contours of a method of exhibition research that brings together the museum (objects), academic research (texts), art (space), and the public in a 'thing'. Further elaboration and development of this methodology could be inspired by the flexibility of the idealised museum proposed by the artist-curator Eduardo Paolozzi who sees all parts movable – an endless set of combinations, a new culture in which problems give way to possibilities (Treimo, 2020:36).

Bjerregaard's anthology (2020) highlighted the shift in museum practice from a space for representing the world, to an agent constructing new perspectives and ideas: the idea of research as knowing. Bjerregaard asked how museums can particularly activate exhibitions as part of their research, considering the museum frameworks (Bjerregaard, 2020:2). Bjerregaard proposed a model for knowledge-making, calling it 'collapsology' (Bjerregaard, 2020:95). He argued that this term refers to 'the process where our conceptual knowledge is shattered and we are asked to construct a new set of relations, a new meaningful order by activating an aesthetic approach' (Bjerregaard, 2020:95).

In line with Bjerregaard's approach on exhibition as research, the thesis aims to demonstrate how that curatorial practice contributes to opening new perspectives on practice-based forms of academic research, where the curatorial outcome acts as a platform for identifying new and unconsidered inquiries that may open new avenues of research. As an example, the thesis draws on Bjerregaard's thinking to consider the *Things of Beauty Growing* (2018) exhibition and publication co-curated by Martina Droth, Glenn Adamson, and Simon Olding. This research project brought together the story of studio pottery in Britain, from the early twentieth century to the present, by focusing on the evolution of the vessel form (Figure 6).

Even though the form of the vessel has been addressed and analysed extensively in literature, this was the first time for such a perspective to be explored. The curators and catalogue contributors have charted familiar territories, yet they have provided some more idiosyncratic perspectives, as for example, Sequoia Miller's essay 'British Studio Pottery in Popular Culture'. Miller considered the changing representation of British studio ceramics, positioning ceramics within popular culture, which enhance,

diversify, and offer a new lens on 'crafts chameleon identity' (Harrod, 1999:342).



Figure 6 *Things of Beauty Growing* (2018), 'Moon jars' installation. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Photo possession of the author

In a similar note but from a different approach, was the *Anni Albers* monographic exhibition at Tate Modern (2018) organised by the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf and Tate Modern, curated by Ann Coxon, Briony Fer and Maria Müller-Schareck (Figure 7).



Figure 7 Anni Albers (2018). Installation view *Anni Albers Retrospective* monographic exhibition at Tate Modern, London. Photo possession of the author.

The exhibition coincided with 100 years since the foundation of the Bauhaus school, where Albers studied and taught. The exhibition illuminated Albers' creative process and her engagement with art, architecture, and design. The exhibition positioned the artist within the modern art canon, but also, and more importantly, highlighted how weaving, an ancient craft, is still relevant and has a currency in the

contemporary digital world, an example of such relevance is demonstrated in the works titled 'Haiku' and 'Code'.

The exhibition was complemented by a conference titled 'The event of a Thread' reflecting upon Albers' description of weaving. Albers, on her book *On Weaving* explained:

Just as it is possible to go from any place to any other, so also, starting from a defined and specialised field, can one arrive at a realisation of ever-extending relationships. Thus, tangential subjects come into view. The thoughts, however, can, I believe, be traced back to the event of a thread (Albers, 1965:15).

This was evident in T'ai Smith's presentation 'Textile Principles: Adapting Anni Albers's Philosophy' which reflected on the history and discussed how textiles constantly adapt and alter, moving alongside different geopolitical moments. Raisa Kabir's contribution 'Entanglements: the tensioned thread, the political line and weaving resistance' addressed the ways weaving itself relates to feminist politics and politics of labour. Kabir in her presentation claimed that Anni Albers used weaving structures to expand crafts as a construct for modernism. Kabir asserted weaving to be a theoretical process claiming 'unweaving to be considered as a resistance and refusal to ideological production and functional labour' (Kabir, 2018).

Returning to Bjerregaard's notion of exhibition as research, these exhibitions unravelled new relations between things that we thought were not connected and revealed new perspectives and interrogations for researchers and curators.

Martinon's anthology *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* sought to open new and different paths of critique that engage with the activity of curating beyond the practices of market and institutions. Martinon built upon the distinction between 'curating' and 'the curatorial' which recalls philosophers Jean-Luc Nancy's and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's book *Retreating the Political* (1997) and the differentiation between 'politics' and 'the political'. Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe offered a new view in the relationship between philosophy and the political. As such, Martinon's anthology aimed to offer a new perspective in the relationship between philosophy and the curatorial. Martinon claimed that the curatorial opens up opportunities to:

... engage in another process, that of precipitating our reflection, of encouraging another way of thinking or sensing the world. [...] Not wishing to operate within a space of binary oppositions (art vs art history or practice vs theory, for example) we have brought in the 'philosophical, not as master discipline or narrative to explain all, but as a slightly designated mode of reflection (Martinon, 2013:x).

Martinon's anthology did not aim to defend that theory/thinking are more important than practice/doing, but to blur the boundaries between thinking and doing - theory and praxis - and to reveal the possibilities of the expanding field. He suggested that the curatorial offers a field for experiencing intellectual exchange and sensual discourse. The anthology focused on the 'curatorial' rather than 'curating'. The curatorial is the exhibition-making and expands the notion of what the exhibition spaces are and what they might become. This is a direct link with the notion of *mise-*

en-scène. These ideas contribute to this study by exploring the production of knowledge in a philosophical sense and feeding back the arguments and hypotheses into a transformed field of practice.

On the back cover Martinon asserted: 'Stop Curating! And think what curating is all about' (Martinon, 2013:n.a.). Martinon, of course, did not suggest stopping curating but called for curators to challenge, to think again, to move beyond the traditional historical narratives. The author proposed to consider a multiplicity of perspectives that extend from the practical to the theoretical and the philosophical. The essays in the anthology demonstrate how practice of curating has been stifled and influenced by a multitude of outside forces and highlighted that alternative paths are followed. The multiplicity of perspectives included in his anthology advocate the curatorial to be a practice that provokes to rethink received knowledge about art, art history - and consequently, craft and craft history - philosophy and cultural heritage.

Many of the authors in the anthology approached the curatorial from a perspective unrelated to what might be considered the traditional role of the curator. For example, curator Irit Rogoff's essay 'The expanding field' looked at the expansion of the field of curating as paradoxically constraining and proposed how to go beyond those restrictions. Rogoff reflected on Derrida's words 'Boundaries, whether narrow or expanded, perform nothing more, than establishing the limits of the possible' (Derrida, 2004:44 cited in Rogoff 2013:48) to conclude her essay stating 'And is the curatorial that has the capacity to bring these together, working simultaneously in several modalities, kidnapping knowledge and sensibilities and insights and melding them into an instantiation of our contemporary condition' (Rogoff, 2013:48).

With the word 'these' Rogoff meant the 'alternate points of departure, alternate circulations, and alternate imaginaries' (Rogoff, 2013:48). Rogoff moved the conversation further by considering the 'shift from representation to investigation' of research (Rogoff, 2013:47).

On a different note, curator Suzana Milevska in 'Becoming-Curator' used Deleuze's understanding of the word 'becoming' to unfold the decision-making process to become a curator and the process of 'becoming-curator' (Milevska, 2013:67). Milevska differentiated the pragmatic decision of becoming a curator as a profession to the conscious approach of becoming-curator which according to her, exposed a new route in understanding contemporary art and the way both curators and artists position themselves within the art world (Milevska, 2013:70).

Milevska's essay suggested a new form of institutional critique. Milevska referred to critical curating and explained that the concept was developed in the late 90s, out of the need to differentiate curatorial projects aiming at research, knowledge production and critical theory rather than managerial and promotional models prevailing curating at the time (Milevska, 2013:69). Milevska suggested a linkage to the curatorial agency claiming 'Curatorial agency entrusts its intellectual and theoretical capacities in a curatorial knowledge production, art for social change and collaborations among curators, artists and activists' (Milevska 2013:69).

To conclude, this chapter examined the polymorphic practice of the curatorial.

Curatorial practice including the exhibition as a form of critical inquiry and knowledge production and exchange. Therefore, it extends the traditional remit of the exhibition space and the gallery as a site for display or merely pedagogical

resource. The exhibition is a 'laboratory' where experimental thinking and making takes place, and where craft knowledge through the curatorial is instigated, produced, discussed, experienced, participated and made public.

I argued that the curatorial as the exhibition-making, created direct links with the notion of *mise-en-scène*. These ideas contributed to this study by exploring the production of knowledge in a philosophical sense that is being created during the exhibition which fed back in the arguments and hypotheses into a transformed field of crafts practice.

This chapter investigated the literature on exhibition as research and analysed what this means. It also considered the problems and limitations of the idea of exhibitions as research. Moreover, it raised inquiries of how the theory and praxis of the curatorial and exhibition as research relates to the new wave of contemporary craft makers who are incorporating performance art or are creating performative work or environments. The next chapter draws from the concepts discussed in this section and elaborates further with an emphasis on the *auteur* and the *mise-en-scène*.

4 THE AUTEUR CURATOR AND THE MISE-EN-SCÈNE

This chapter deepens the understanding of the ontology of curation and its reason for being. The curator *auteur* is considered to have become the author of a critically engaged and experimental form of exhibition practice; while the curatorial is seen as a *mise-en-scène*: which elevates the exhibition from a collection of objects and installations to a space with atmosphere and emotion that immerse the visitors.

The brief overview of the literature analysed in the previous chapter showed that curation is a rapidly growing practice and discourse, fundamentally shifting the ways in which we view and receive art. Conferences and publications on the curatorial and exhibition history have addressed the ways in which art interpretation owes much to its forms of display. Papers, essays, and articles argued that innovative contemporary curatorial practices have shaped new exhibition formats, and that some of these have even impacted the way art institutions redefine their cultural tasks.

Most of the developments in curatorial practice have been theorised in conferences and books, mainly as anthologies of historic and commissioned texts. These texts also attempted to define what a curator is. My argument is that the practice of curating is live and temporal. It has shifted dramatically from its anonymous backstage origin within dusty museums to a role at the forefront of modern art and is responsible for conjuring both a synergy and a dynamic that operates across a multitude of levels. Within these new dynamics, the traditional role of the curator,

as it was defined in relation to the institutions of contemporary art and the museum, is being questioned and readdressed.

Key texts from the existing literature have been considered to develop a comprehensive understanding of the field of practice; for example, *Contemporary Curating Thinking* (2012) by Terry Smith, *The Artist as Curator* (2017) edited by Elena Filipovic and the more recent *When Artists Curate: Contemporary Art and the Exhibition as Medium* (2018) by Alison Green.

The thesis acknowledges the practice of artists as curators; however this won't be further addressed as it seems to be beyond the limits of this study.

Curator

Academic scholar of contemporary art Claire Bishop in her presentation 'What is a Curator?' at the *Shifting Practice, Shifting Roles? Artists' Installations and the Museum* conference at Tate Modern (2007), highlighted the need for a more nuanced vocabulary to address the shifting role. Bishop presented a number of examples, some even extending to the extreme, of various analogies for the curator seen in the anthology of short essays edited by Carin Kuoni, *Words of Wisdom: A Curator's Vade Mecum on Contemporary Art*, saying that Viktor Misiano considered the curator to be a psychoanalyst (Misiano 2001:119 cited in Bishop, 2007:5); Jean-Christophe Ammann, a matchmaker (Ammann 2001:23 cited in Bishop, 2007:5); Dan Cameron, 'a kind of artist' (Cameron, 2001: 39 cited in Bishop, 2007:5); Robert Fleck 'not an artist', nor a 'meta-artist', but a 'facilitator' (Fleck, 2001:63 cited in Bishop,

2007:5); and Yuko Hasegawa, a 'conductor of an orchestra' (Hasegawa, 2001:80 cited in Bishop, 2007:5).

Yet, the perspective that aligns with the viewpoint of this thesis, is that of Rosa Martinez, who in her essay 'Think it Over' considered the curator to be a combination of a 'polymorphous being', a 'therapist', an 'intrepid explorer', 'diplomat', 'guerrilla', 'economist' claimed:

being a curator was not the result of an early vocation but a process of becoming, which I've had to build up step by step; a kind of destination I've had to discover slowly, guided at times by necessity and at others by chance. (Martinez, 2001:111)

Martinez statement also reflects my own experience and process in becoming a craft specialist curator.

Academic and creative director Ken Arnold in his essay 'Show Business: Exhibitions and the Making of Knowledge' in *Acts of Seeing, Artists, Scientists and the History of the Visual* (2009) edited by Martin Kemp, Assimina Kaniari and Marina Wallace, suggested that the curator's role and identity resembles that of a magician. A few years later, Kaniari in her essay 'Curatorial Style and Art Historical Thinking: Exhibitions as Objects of Knowledge' in *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* (2014) explained that Arnold came to this assumption by considering the curatorial as a 'magician's' act, that is the act of pulling out of one's hat 'strange goods' (Kaniari, 2014:447).

In this context, the curatorial act ascribes not only visibility, but also new meanings to material works. If exhibitions are seen through Arnold's view, the research

suggests that even though exhibition acts resemble a magician's act, it is the 'intellectual temper of the curator' responsible for the type of knowledge, or connections to knowledge systems and objects. Arnold also acknowledged other factors such as 'the characteristics of the spaces in which exhibitions happen' and the role of visitors who 'stroll through them', as mediating between the presence of the objects and the production of meaning during the event of the exhibition (Arnold, 2009:19).

Creative director and curator Karen Gaskill claimed that curators are about authorship and agency (Gaskill, 2011). Recalling Ferguson, Greenberg and Nairne, she explained that the curatorial role has risen to the forefront of modern exhibitions, because of the general growth, complexity, diversification, and collaborative nature of art practices. Therefore, she acknowledged that there are more requirements for a mediator to collate, contextualise, and translate to the public the works shown in an exhibition. Specifically, the mediator is being asked to deal with the whole process as opposed to dealing with a single element (Gaskill, 2011).

As the literature shows, curatorial practices have come to embody one of the most dynamic forms of cultural agency available today. The challenges represented by this role and its ability to affect a series of interdependent areas inaccessible through other, more restricted, modes of cultural practices require a fluid and multidimensional approach.

Bishop in her essay 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents' for the *Artforum* (2006) coined the term *The social turn* to define the shift of artistic interest in collectivity, collaboration, and direct engagement with members of the public, who are not the artist's friends or other artists. An example of this shift can be

identified in the practice of textile artist Raisa Kabir, a textile performance artist, who trained as a weaver and incorporates sound and video into her work claiming: 'when I'm using different languages in my work - it means different audiences can experience the work on varying levels' (Kabir, 2019:32). Kabir suggested that the use of multiple platforms of engagement, allows for the works to be seen as more than just a textile, thereby enabling the audiences to experience the references in different ways. Kabir has turned textiles practice into a radically political artform, using craft, specifically weaving, to address issues about race and gender. Specifically, Kabir's practice highlighted how the gendering of embroidery in Western history, marginalised the practice through sexism, as well as ignored global histories and experiences of people of colour.

An example is the project *Weaving Local Voices*, a collaboration with *Stitches in Time* (a participatory arts and education charity), organised by curators Giulia Casalini and Diana Georgiou presented as part of EcoFutures Festival. The project curator Casalini, in our correspondence via email, explained that the project explored weaving as a healing community practice and aimed to collate ways of embodied knowing - i.e. knowledge that resides in the body, as well as gained through the body - via craft making (Figure 8). Kabir worked with the two collectives in Bangladesh and London aiming to save some of the traditional back-strap loom patterns (that would otherwise get lost or decay) through a process of digitization and reproduction. The project used textiles as a common language to develop a sense of belonging, community, and commonality (Casalini, 2020).

As the participants often couldn't communicate with words, they developed methods of visual communication, a conversation through making. My

understanding is that Kabir would have worked and taught the participants via making, and developed a conversation through activity, through body language, through hand gestures. These experiences allowed the participants to gain skills necessary to think critically and creatively, in order to communicate clearly, and to adapt to new environments, thereby navigating today's interdependent and interconnected world.



Figure 8 Raisa Kabir, workshop part of *Weaving Local Voices* (2019). Photo by Seana Wilson, property of the copyright holder.

Auteur

Kabir's *Weaving Local Voices* organised by *Stitches in Time* echoes Bishop when she referred to the curator as *auteur*. According to Bishop the *auteur* moves the interest in performative (or self-reflexive) exhibition-making; therefore, a collaboration

between curators and artists broadens the institution's remit from a space of exhibition to a production centre and hub for discussion (Bishop, 2006).

Nonetheless, the *Weaving Local Voices* example raised again the question of the role of the curator. Sociologists Nathalie Heinrich and Michael Pollack in their essay 'Museum Curator to Exhibition *Auteur*' compared the evolving role of curator to that of the *auteur* in cinema theory (Heinrich and Pollack 1996:231-250). Heinrich and Pollack described the transition from museum curator as a specialised professional (e.g., art historian) to that of a creative subject (*auteur*). According to the authors, this transition could indeed be compared to that of the *auteur* in French cinema (Heinrich and Pollack, 1996:235).

In the editorial for *The Exhibitionist* inaugural issue (2010), curator Jeff Hoffmann pointed out that his journal was inspired by the French journal *Cahiers du Cinéma* (1951). The editor, a long-time independent curator, positioned the work of the contemporary curator along the lines of what French film critic Francois Truffaut called the *auteur* filmmaker in the 1950s. Hoffmann supporting the above, stated that the act of exhibition making, a critical and creative endeavour, develops and puts out there a language of its own (Hoffman, 2010:2).

Bishop, in her aforementioned presentation 'What is a Curator?' at Tate Modern (2007) who also addressed the issues of collective authorship, highlighted the need for a refined vocabulary. She recalled Boris Groys to say that Groys is not the only writer who compared the curatorial role to the cinema *auteur* (Bishop, 2007:1). She also referred to the critic and curator Robert Storr who compared the curator to a film director. Storr argued that a curator is the one who has the final cut – like the

literary editor who negotiates with publishers and writers to get the 'best' version of work that can be attained (Storr, 2006:20 cited in Bishop, 2007:5).

To gain a comprehensive sense of what the term *auteur* means and to identify the relevance to craft's curator, it was considered necessary to explore the development of the theory within the film studies.

Film Studies Variations of *Auteur* Theory

Since the 1960s, film critics began to criticise the *auteur* theory's focus on the authorial role of the director. One reason for this is the collaborative aspect of filmmaking. However, this might be received as a misunderstanding of the *auteur* theory at the time. In fact, the 'theory' was based on the translation and interpretation of what the French called the '*politique des auteurs*' by the American film critic Andrew Sarris.

In his essay 'Notes on the *Auteur* Theory in 1962', Sarris synthesised his views on the policy of the authors '*la politique des auteurs*,' while he expanded the *auteur* theory. The author drew on the views of film directors André Bazin, Richard Roud and Ian Cameron and provided an account of its complexity, crediting *the Cahiers du Cinéma* critics who were involved in the formulation of the idea, attempting a definition of '*auteur*' in the English language. In his essay Sarris stated that there are three premises to '*auteur*' theory: the technical competence of the director, the director's distinguishable personality and the interior meaning. According to this definition, an *auteur* is someone who imposes on the spectator recurrent characteristics of style that reflect their worldview.

Nonetheless, film theorist Peter Wollen in the chapter on *auteur* theory in his book *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (1972) offered a structuralist approach to the *auteur* theory, highlighting the importance of synthesis as well as the analysis arguing 'What the *auteur* theory does is to take a group of films-the work of one director-and analyse their structure. Everything irrelevant to this, everything non-pertinent, is considered logically secondary, contingent, to be discarded' (Wollen, 1972:104).

Wollen saw film as a network of different statements, crossing and contradicting each other, where these statements form within a film a coherent individual vision. His argument was that by comparing several films of the same director, it is possible to decipher a certain structure, which underlines and shapes the film. This structure is associated with a single director not because they have expressed their own artistic vision of the film, but because it is possible for a careful viewer to decode the unconscious, unintended meaning of the director within his films. Instead of a distinct personality that creates a unified style, in this construct, an *auteur* is merely a signifier that points to stylistic affinities between films.

Sarris's and Wollen's writings provided two classic film studies variations of the *auteur* theory and offered a useful construct when understood as a form of connectivity between a director's work; seeking the individuality of their voice and what they might bring to the projects they selected.

In a broader sense, this notion of the *auteur* is applied to consider the curator. During my research, I observed that the exhibitions have become flexible and fluid spaces within which the viewers are becoming participants in the production and relay of the individual works and their meanings. The exhibitions, as a whole (i.e., object,

space, related events), are considered theatrical and curating involves the presentation of the artworks to be analogous to a theatre. Thus, the gallery space has become the stage into which the visitors are invited.

Historian Steven Lubar in his article 'Curator as *Auteur*' in *The Public Historian* (2014) explored Richard Rabinowitz's holistic, multi-dimensional curation of historical exhibits. Lubar quoted Rabinowitz, who considered that the exhibits tell stories, and that the exhibition's developer is an *auteur*, a creative mastermind:

My [Rabinowitz] job as a curator is to arrange these objects . . . no, I mean these stories, so that they move visitors to invent stories for themselves. The art of the gallery is to furnish the imagination with the makings of good stories—human characters, human actions, human places, human rules, and human tools—so that visitors can feel themselves dramatizing the past. I do my art so that you can do yours. This is the task of interpretation. (Rabinowitz, 2013:10 cited in Lubar, 2014:72)

Rabinowitz here referred to the history exhibition *Slavery in New York* he curated at the New-York Historical Society (2005). The exhibition aimed to overcome the silence of archival and museum collections and to emphasise on those voices which were unheard and/or never registered. For this, a deployment of interpretive media - display techniques, audio-visual programs, graphic annotations, commissioned art objects, and architectural design - brought visitors physically and emotionally close to the experience of New York slaves (Figure 9). The sequence of media elements paralleled the historical narrative.

The curator *auteur* created the devices that bridged the artifacts, images, and documents of the history and the interpretive media that made them accessible to the audiences. This is summed by Rabinowitz who wrote ‘the form of the exhibition is another kind of narrative, perhaps as important as the ‘content’” it is designed to communicate or the stories visitors are inscribing as they move through our galleries’ (Rabinowitz, 2013:44)

Lubar explained that for Rabinowitz, interpretive exhibitions were a form of narrative art closely related to theatre, or film which links the curator with a theatre director. Interestingly, Lubar referred to the performative element of the exhibition itself saying ‘the contents of an exhibit case are transformed into an animated field of action’ (Lubar, 2014).

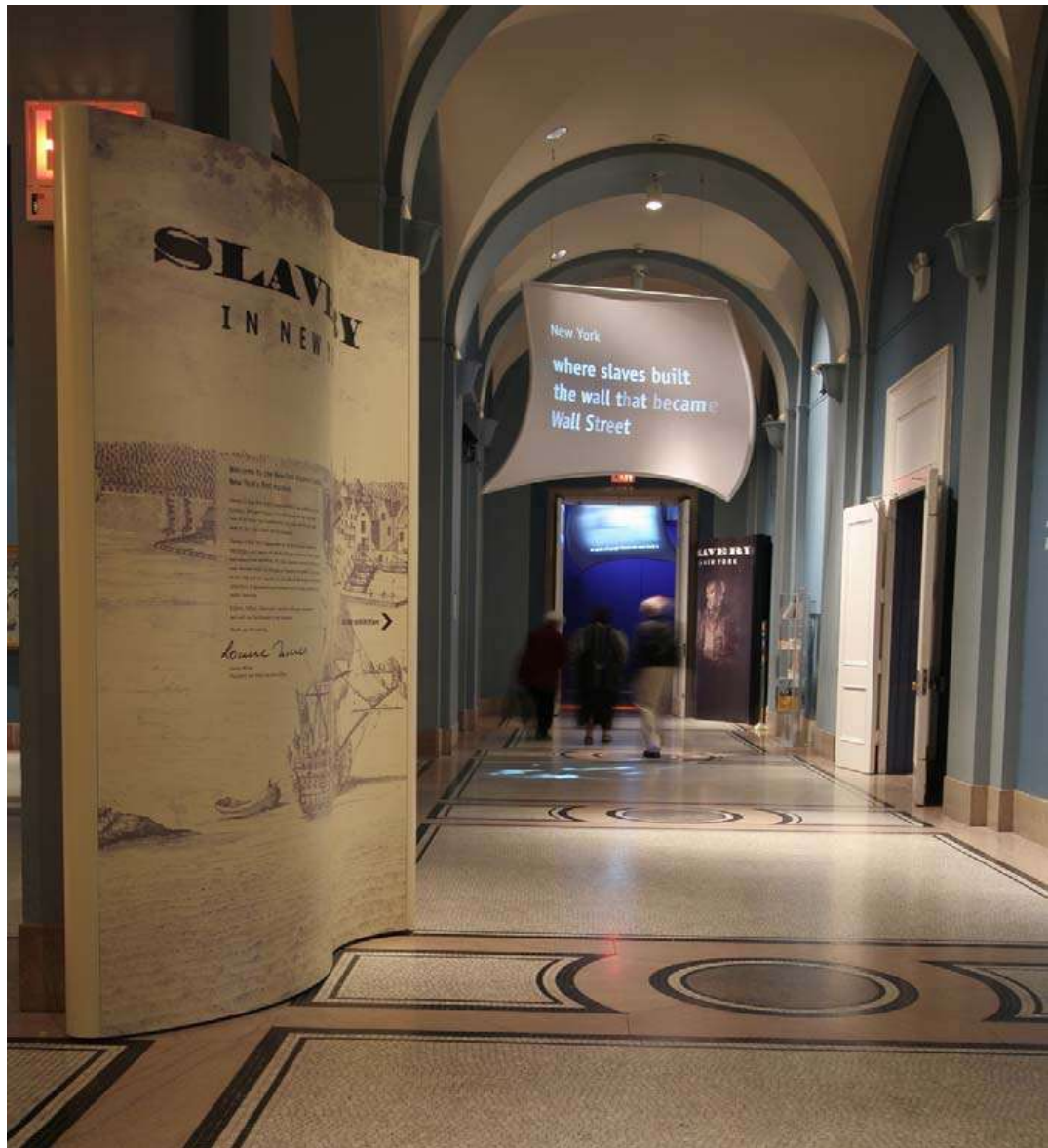


Figure 9 *Slavery in New York* (2005) View of the exhibition at Great Hall, 'Dynamic Text' on sails, Document of Caesar, and entry to orientation videos. Photo courtesy of Nick Paffett, KPC, property of the copyright holder

Museums as Stage

A few years later, Hoffmann, in a conversation with curator Lawrence Rinder, discussed *The Exhibitionist* and the 'Auteur Theory' of Curating (2011) and explained that his background in theatre and dance has influenced his curatorial practice. The curators discussed the pioneer practice of academic and museum director Alexander

Dorner who challenged the museum to transform from a 'treasure vault' to an educational institution, putting emphasis on evolutionary changes in spatial conception and perception (Germundson, 2005).

Dorner's ideas were of a living and dynamic museum, not a dead monument in an established way, limited only to a set of exhibition rooms for historical artifacts and artistic treasures closed behind glass displays. His exhibitions proposals consisted of environments for the works, spaces that he called atmospheric rooms to describe the grouping of artworks from historic periods/styles in discrete rooms. In contrast to museum period rooms, these were not stylistically homogeneous. The rooms were given an identity through colour and fitted with modern furniture and everyday objects to reflect the self-understanding and spatial conceptions of their respective time as seen from a present perspective (Figure 10).



Figure 10 Alexander Dorner *Ramberg Room* after its reorganisation showing door curtains. Museum of Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum, Hannover. Photo property of the copyright holder,

Architect Sandra Karina Löscke in her published essay ‘Material aesthetics and agency: Alexander Dorner and the stage-managed museum’ in *Interstices: Journal of Architecture and Related Arts* explained ‘His stage-managed environments transformed the way the audience interrelated with the art objects presented to them – a material dialectic intended to promote empathy and immersion whilst simultaneously encouraging active reception and awareness of reality’ (Löscke, 2013:25).

The aim of these environments was to evoke the spirit of each period, in which the immersed visitor would have an opportunity to approach visually and rationally the culture in which the works had been created. The idea was not to create an imitation

of the period, but to offer sensations evoked by colours, shapes, and images of historical exteriors placed over windows.

Dorner influenced curatorial practice and questioned static ideas of the museum by using various scenery settings for example transparencies, reproductions, as well as other educational elements, arguing for a dynamic and progressive experiential space.

The experiential changes and the sequence of atmosphere rooms can be compared to Bjerregaard who suggested the 'exhibition as research to go even further and turn its problems into material, experiential consequences' (Bjerregaard, 2020:13). As such, it could be considered the research practice of ceramic artist Claire Twomey. For *Factory: the Seen and the Unseen*, a large-scale live installation at Tate Modern (2017). Twomey transformed the entire space of Tate Exchange into a working factory for two weeks, making everyday objects from clay to explore ideas around the concept of production.

When I interviewed her in April 2020 via Zoom, Twomey described that her installation communicated the importance of material transformation, knowledge, and values.

The first week of the installation was about labour (Figure 11). The audience participated in clay workshops, something that could be associated with Bjerregaard's 'knowledge-in-the making' (Bjerregaard, 2020:4).



Figure 11 Clare Twomey (2017) *Factory: The Seen and The Unseen Week1*. Photo property of the copyright holder.



Figure 12 Clare Twomey (2017) *Factory: The Seen and The Unseen Week 2*. Photo property of the copyright holder.

In the second week, the factory was redundant, the live buzz and noise of the first week was gone (Figure 12). However, Twomey explained to me that this emptiness has been replaced by a soundscape, a playback of the thoughts of the participants captured during the first week. The visitors were invited back to uphold the ethics of the factory. This fictional factory, which reflected on the ideas of production, and what that meant to people, assisted to raise a broad understanding of what the human element is in production.

Twomey talking about the second week said, 'it was like the aftermath of the turn to fill the emptiness of what was missing [...] The first week was a live work with clay making, while the second week was a redundant week' (Twomey, 2020).

In week two, the visitors were asked to hear these thoughts and the sounds of making and had to write and reflect their ideas on production and what it meant to them. From this perspective, in terms of exhibition as research, Twomey's installation could be considered as a 'lab' which is evident in her statement '[The participants] were reminded of making, not making in terms of craft but making in terms of our everyday life, survival, jobs, all those things. So, really looking at broad understanding of what the human is in production' (Twomey, 2020).

Twomey's statement expanded the notion of crafts and positioned the value of crafting in our everyday life, something which points to Sennett's core concepts in *The Craftsman* (2008), as set out in the Introduction. Sennett and ideas around craft will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Moreover, Twomey's work does not demonstrate traditional signs of crafts authorship. The visitors who joined became performers for a moment, active collaborators merging the boundaries between the institution, artists, and audience.

This work echoes Bishop's notion of social turn: creating collaboration of the artist with members of the public and challenging authorship. Yet, even though the authorship of who created the works in the first week might be challenged, it is the artist who as an *auteur* created a *mise-en-scène* directing the visitors and participants on how to move within this live installation.

Twomey defined her role in many of her projects to be an *auteur*, as she believes her responsibility is to deliver something that can communicate meaning, saying, 'something that makes sense outside of my head and is doable to many, many publics not just one' (Twomey, 2020). She also claimed that in terms of a live installation, it is communicated clearly for her the values of material transformation, knowledge and values, and the viewer who joined the fictional factory became the performer in that moment, guided by her team. At that point of our conversation, Twomey talked about the first week of the project and emphasised the values, commenting that the participants consciously, made exchanges of value of the joy they took of the objects they chose at the end of the session, which, according to her, represented the physical value.

Another important point for the artists was that her team was able to invite people in a live installation, to experience being inside the artwork and, most importantly for the artist, without hindrance because everybody was able, at whatever level they wanted, to join in. What Twomey suggested here is that her work is made politically. This live installation is an example of an exhibition which uses the entire space of the installation and the political context as materials to work.

O'Neill attempted an analysis of the increased importance of the curator as author within cultural production. He presented curators as the agents responsible to

produce value within exhibition history and defined curated group exhibitions as the creative work of curator-*auteurs*, (O’Neil, 2012b:28). The main point of his argument is the shift, since the 1980s, from the primacy of the artist to that of the curator.

O’Neill identified that this shift brought a change in the understanding of the role of the curator, which as discussed earlier in the chapter, is no longer seen as the carer of institutional collections, but instead, the curator has become the author of a critically engaged and experimental form of exhibition practice, an *auteur*.

The *auteur* concept is closely affiliated with *mise-en-scène*, as seen in the above literature review. Specifically, Andrew Sarris’s essay ‘Notes on the *Auteur* Theory’ (1962) expanded the *auteur* theory and introduced three concentric circles representing the three premises: the outer one representing technique, the middle one individual style, and the inner one interior meaning. The director's interrelated roles could be designated as the roles of the technician, stylist (*metteur-en-scène*) and the *auteur* respectively. In his concluding remarks, Sarris said that the *auteur* theory alone is a theory model under constant evolution and expanded the experience of watching movies, by highlighting the input of the director to create a *mise-en-scène*.

Mise-en-Scène

This section focuses on the analysis of *mise-en-scène*, as seen in film studies. It examines how the lens of *mise-en-scène* and the role of the *auteur* frames this research. It begins by examining this concept and its contribution to the cinema. It

investigates how this concept relates to contemporary approaches on staging exhibitions, and its impact to contemporary craft practice.

The term has its origins in the French language and its initial appearance dates to the early nineteenth century. The French expression *mise-en-scène* is synonymous with the English setting up the stage (directing) as it includes all the aspects that are involved when a play is being put on stage.

Historical Overview

A brief historical overview and analysis are important with a view to develop the understanding of the term's origin and its evolution from theatre to films and to visual arts and crafts.

Academic in film studies John Gibbs (2002) and film scholar Frank Kessler (2014) charted the term's use from its origins in theatre circles in the nineteenth century through to the *auteur* theories found in French film criticism of the 1950s and 60s up to the present day. Both authors stated that the practices to which the term refers have changed over time.

Gibbs in *Mise-en-scène* (2002) provided information on how the term was developed, how its meaning has changed over time, and offered historical examples of its use. Gibbs also explained the reasons why *mise-en-scène* analysis remains a vigorous tool for engaging with film meaning beyond narrative analysis. For Gibbs, *mise-en-scène* arose from the intersection of the visual elements of film. He described it as, 'the contents of the frame and the way that they are organised' (Gibbs, 2002:5):

What are the contents of the frame? They include lighting, costume, décor, properties, and the actors themselves. The organisation of

the contents of the frame encompasses the relationship of the actors to one another and to the décor, but also their relationship to the camera, and thus the audience's view. So, in talking about *mise-en-scène*, one is also talking about framing, camera movement, the particular lens employed and other photographic decisions. *Mise-en-scène* therefore encompasses both what the audience can see, and the way in which we are invited to see it. It refers to many of the major elements of communication in the cinema, and the combinations through which they operate expressively. (Gibbs, 2002:5)

Gibbs provided a clear, but also an expansive definition of *mise-en-scène*. He also suggested multiple authorship which could be seen as a kind of discourse where, within the various departments, practitioners make creative contributions together out of which arises the complete film. And while the mark of all those practitioners can be detected on the film, the result becomes something more than each of those individual parts as measured on their own.

Kessler in *Mise-en-scène* (2014) explored the complex interplay between space, actors, and camera, showing the dependence upon technological constraints. Kessler, similar to Gibbs, followed a three-angle approach, historical, theoretical and practical, contributing to the existing literature on cinematic *mise-en-scène* and positioned it within the contemporary digital cinematic landscape. Kessler pointed out that *mise-en-scène* referred to everything involved in the production of a piece of theatre except 'declamation,' the recitation of the text itself.

In his essay Kessler explained that *mise-en-scène* is both a technical, descriptive term, meaning the set-up of production, as well as a concept that designates theatrical expression, the transformation of literature into theatre (Kessler, 2014:4). This distinction between descriptive and expressive definitions of *mise-en-scène* is mirrored in the literature of the cinema. He claimed that the director, the corresponding agent of *mise-en-scène*, develops historically into the authorial instance of the late nineteenth century, an 'interpreter' of the text and 'realiser' of a production. The best English and German translations of *metteur-en-scène* are 'director' and 'Régisseur' accordingly, which are now standard terminology in the cinema. Therefore, the authorial agency in the cinema is bound historically to similar developments in the theatre and to a terminology that they share.

Kessler demonstrated that even though the cultural hierarchies in nineteenth century France may have privileged text and declamation over all the other elements of a play, the mere scope of the *mise-en-scène* contribution to a theatrical performance allowed the hierarchical relations to be easily reversed. The staging of a play came to be considered an interpretation of the text rather than a simple reproduction of the written work; such transition is regarded *mise-en-scène*.

Gibbs's and Kessler's analysis of *mise-en-scène* offered the thesis a theoretical tool to be applied in crafts in performance exhibitions.

Film critic David Sterritt in *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard; Seeing the Invisible* (2008), discussed the contribution of the French-Swiss film critic and director Jean-Luc Godard in the film theory. Sterritt situated Godard's work on media within a broader philosophical, as well as political milieu. Sterritt claimed that Godard films sought to manipulate the modern traditions of cinema, to illustrate and accentuate the

negative spaces that exist within formal '*mise-en-scène*, the content of individual shots' (Sterritt, 2008:17). Sterritt explained that Godard acknowledged that it is not the people who are important 'but the atmosphere between them. Even when they are in close-up, life exists around them. The camera is on them, but the film is not centred on them' (Sterritt, 2008:211–12).

Similarly, aesthetics philosopher Stephan Kristensen, who also considered Godard to be an existential philosopher, and his cinema an activity of thinking (Kristensen 2014:134).

In *Contemporary Mise En Scène: Staging Theatre Today* (2013) Patrice Pavis, a theatre studies scholar, considered *mise-en-scène* to be 'an abstract, theoretical notion, not a concrete and empirical one' (Pavis, 2013:4). He acknowledged that *mise-en-scène* initially had the function of transferring the meaning of the text to the stage, while the performance was used as a means of explaining the play. Pavis stated that, even though there is nothing wrong to make the meaning apparent, this is by no means the aim of theatre work or film:

As regards *mise-en-scène*, we might say: 'it must be visible, but discreetly so, as is fitting for the 'discreet charm of the *bonne régie*!' It need not hide, it takes responsibility for its choices or its hypotheses, but it gains nothing in directly giving away its strategy, since the spectator quickly loses interest in what is already understood. (Pavis, 2013:276-277).

Pavis argued that contemporary *mise-en-scène* might be renamed 'performise' (Pavis, 2013:30), a term that acknowledges the rise in creative agency of performers

and audiences in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which often eclipsed the traditional powers of *metteurs-en-scène*, or theatre directors.

The performise, is the active creation of the *mise-en-scène* made possible by directors and designers, enacted in real time by performers, and read by audiences whose role in the creation of meaning is constitutive.

Pavis's work reclaimed the practice and politics of intercultural performance. What is understood in this instance is that Pavis added another function of *mise-en-scène* to the one highlighting the 'interior meaning' of the play, a notion pointing to the French film critic and director Alexandre Astruc who positioned *mise-en-scène* in the discursive, considering it to be a conceptual process, an interrogation and dialogue. Astruc in 'What is *Mise-en-scène*?' for the *Cahiers du Cinéma* attempted to answer its titular question saying 'a certain way of extending states of mind into movements of the body. It is a song, a rhythm, a dance [...] a particular way of needing to see and to show' (Astruc,1985:267-8).

Pavis's and Sterritt's analysis added to the multifaceted nature of *mise-en-scène* and moved the concept beyond previous description. As such, previously, *mise-en-scène* was mainly concerned with costumes, props and other elements constituting the scene, but has now moved to the discursive and the philosophical.

Considering *mise-en-scène* as a thought apparatus allows an understanding not just of what the craft work represents, shows or expresses; but also, of what the work attains and how in turn the visitor understands it. In a sense, it is about exploring craft performativity as a call to thought.

Approaching *mise-en-scène* from this perspective gives prominence to the space-object dynamics interrelated with the condition of time and the visitor, as well as manifests itself as an apparatus of certain curatorial operations.

More specifically, where considerations around the production and dissemination of documentation and ephemeral traces are an integral part of theorising performance crafts, these same considerations must also be brought to the fore in investigating how these new forms of craft are being curated; how they engage with the public; and how they are being historised.

Mise-en-Scène in the Field of Craft

The decision to consider the critical implications of *mise-en-scène* in craft was influenced by textile scholar and curator Lesley Millar. Moreover, the consideration of the term was formed by the art theorist and curator Dorothea von Hantelmann's critique on the overuse of the term 'performative' in art cultures. Indeed, von Hantelmann isolated this relationship directly:

Today it is widely believed that 'performative' can be understood as 'performance-like.' Understood in this false sense it has become a ubiquitous catchword for a broad range of contemporary art phenomena that, in the widest sense, show an affinity to forms of staging, theatricality and *mise-en-scène*. (von Hantelmann, 2010:17)

The 'affinity' that von Hantelmann described regarding staging, theatricality and *mise-en-scène*, points its typical reference to the 'stage-like' or 'set-like' qualities of

the work. Instead, this study sees *mise-en-scène* as a distinct system of interpretation and translation that frames the situational orientations of curatorial.

Dutch cultural theorist Mieke Bal in her book *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities* (2002) used the theoretical concept of '*mise-en-scène* for cultural analysis, affirming '*mise-en-scène* sets the stage for the performance of performativity and, in turn, for the staging of subjectivity' (Bal, 2002:98).

Bal here discussed how to account for sculpture and installation art's performativity as not exclusively driven by a subject, but rather to consider how the visitor enacts its role as spectator engaging with the composition of materials; the *mise-en-scène* which compose the work.

This is a direct link to Martinon's curatorial thinking and understanding as alternative ways of knowing, discussed earlier in the chapter. *Mise-en-scène* generates new ways of thinking in which the conceptual crosses over in the aesthetic and vice versa. It expresses how thinking takes shape in and through material and embodied practice.

Textile artist and academic Maxim Bristow in her doctoral thesis titled *Pragmatics of Attachment and Detachment: Medium (un)specificity as Material Agency in Contemporary Art* (2016) discussed *mise-en-scène*, saying that the activity of staging, the thing being staged, and the context or frame in which the staging takes place, all take on greater significance as subjective agency is decentred and distributed across a much broader network of relations.

Bristow claimed, 'Through this r(e)distribution of agency, the tension between subjective attachment and detachment becomes much more contingent, and the

relationship between intention and outcome much more fluid and fragmented' (Bristow, 2016:130).

Additionally, Bristow argued that the 'installation format' of the work sets the stage for an 'indeterminate unfolding aesthetic experience from the perspective of the viewer who engages with the work' (Bristow, 2016:130). Her claim was that the spectator, rather than being passive and detached, becomes an active participant in a continually unfolding aesthetic encounter via their 'physical presence within the scene of operation' that 'affords a sensory immediacy' (Bristow, 2016:130).

Bristow considered that this thinking process provides a platform through which to mobilise the performative engagement of the viewer and set the stage for a perceptive phenomenological experience, arguing that she created the conditions for the 'productive potential of affect' (Bristow, 2016:130).

Bristow used *mise-en-scène* to set up the stage saying that it 'provides an operational strategy that gives significance to what has become a much more performative and provisional approach' (Bristow, 2016:130). At this point it could be safe to say that Bristow's work is directed more at the scenographic, visual-related elements of *mise-en-scène*.

While textile scholar and curator Lesley Millar's interpretation of *mise-en-scène* directs to Astruc's essence of the scene, the bodily movement, where this could be considered the movement of the work itself or drawing from Godard to the philosophical aspect. It is essential to note that Millar was the first craft scholar to my knowledge who used and applied the concept of *mise-en-scène* in textile exhibitions. One of the exhibitions that Millar curated applying this concept was *Lost in Lace* (2009) in Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, which investigated lace

structures, and architecture. The exhibition presented works by twenty leading and emerging international artists who explored relationships between space and lace through dramatic installations (Figure 13).

Crafts Council's Executive Director Rosy Greenlees, in the exhibition's catalogue foreword, acknowledged the importance of collaboration and the contribution of the exhibition to develop new perspectives on considering lace:

Lost in Lace provides us with many new perspectives – not least as we walk through, round and under many of the installations. It also shows us how stories can become more potent, and their presentation more stunning through the employment of craft skills and techniques. (Greenlees, 2011:4)



Figure 13 *Lost in Lace* (2011) Installation view. Photo courtesy of curator Professor Lesley Millar.

At the introduction of the *Lost in Lace: The Exhibition* catalogue Millar explained that the curatorial intention was not to define the point of view but to present overlapping layers 'The experience should be one of texture, space and movement through space; of isolation and occupation, contemplation and action' (Millar, 2011:9).

The point of view is the notion of *mise-en-scène*. A few years later, Millar in the *Erotic Cloth: Seduction and Fetishism in Textiles* (2018) explored the sensation and performative properties of lace through the lens of *mise-en-scène*:

Lace performs as the erotic edge between the open and the secret, the pure and the impure, innocence and transgression, providing the perfect *mise-en-scène*, leading yet fugitive, high definition and low definition, occupying the foreground and then receding to become a backdrop. (Millar and Kettle, 2018:12)

Millar drew from the fields of arts, design, film, and performance, reflecting on the sensual materials that 'contribute to the debates around human encounters with cloth' (Millar and Kettle, 2018:19).

To summarise, the literature and practice shows that staging crafts lies at the core of current practice, where exhibitions are no longer a place for pursuing mere didactic knowledge but expand to become a space as a means of posing questions, raising awareness, and initiating discussions.

The Shift in Craft Curatorial Practice

Traditionally, the exhibition was a means of showing objects. However, exhibitions such as *Craftsman's Art* (1973) and *The Raw and the Cooked: New Work in Clay in Britain* (1993), have since shaped craft curating practices.²

More recent examples are the exhibitions *Lost in Lace* (2011) curated by Lesley Millar at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and *Woman's Hour Craft Prize* (2018) at the Victoria and Albert Museum, which explored the critical content and performative potential of crafts and considered the conceptual power of contemporary practice.

Laura Breen, in her doctoral thesis, stated that *The Craftsman's Art* was a fundamental moment in the rebranding of the crafts (Figure 14). In her thesis, she referred to the Guardian journalist and writer Richard Carr (1973) who remarked upon the marketing aspect of this exhibition, describing it as a 'super shop' presenting crafts as a fashionable entity (Breen, 2016:238). The exhibition was set out to be a celebration of the craftsman's art rather than the craftsman's craft. It represented a radical rethinking, highly controversial in the craft world of the time, presenting the objects in a rich and lush setting eliciting the sense of luxury.

Breen also commented on the staging aspect of the exhibition saying 'But it was also a shop window of another kind, which employed dramatic staging to weave diverse works into a homogenising narrative that marketed the idea of the crafts as a fashionable entity' (Breen 2016:183).

² *Craftsman's Art* (1973) organised by the Crafts Advisory Committee and held at the Victoria and Albert Museum; and *The Raw and the Cooked: New Work in Clay in Britain* (1993) curated by ceramic artist Alison Britton and curator critic Martina Margetts, a touring exhibition organised by the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford and funded by the Crafts Council.



Figure 14 *The Craftsman's Art* (1973) View of the exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo copyright of the Design Council and The Manchester Metropolitan, property of copyright holder.

Two decades later, the exhibition curated by academics' ceramic artist Alison Britton and curator critic Martina Margetts challenged ceramic preconceptions as domestic and utilitarian, demonstrating a shift in use of clay, not as a craft material but as a medium for sculptural and conceptual approaches. Margetts lecture 'History in the Making' at the annual *Peter Dormer Lecture* (Royal College of Art, 2013) explained that the exhibition was inspired and influenced by Claude Levi-Strauss's book *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964). Lévi-Strauss' basic idea was that mythology constructs ways of thinking and he was interested in how form and content conveyed societal and cultural patterns. In this context, Britton and Margetts reviewed the specificities of ceramics and revealed the possibilities of an expanding field. At the lecture Margetts argued 'Our exhibition reviewed the specificities of the language of ceramics in contemporary socio-cultural contexts to reveal an expanded field of

sensibility and ideas, showing history in the making in several inclusive ways' (Margetts, 2013:13).

The curatorial aspect of this exhibition was not left unnoticed. Breen in her essay 'Redefining ceramics through exhibitionary practice (1970-2009)' which was included in *The Craft Reader* (2017), commented on the exhibition design by John Pawson. Breen explained that the intention of the layout was to form a direct contrast with the displays of massed ranks of ceramic vessels found in the museums. She explained that the use of white plinths to situate the works in 'as undomestic a setting as possible,' demonstrated a clear attempt to shift them from the category of crafts into that of sculpture (Breen, 2016: 554).

Breen stated that Pawson emphasised the design of the white plinths which aimed to create minimum interference with the work. Here Pawson wanted to move away from the public tendency to consider ceramics for their utilitarian properties but instead present the objects as sculptures. What is interesting is that Barbican's managing director Sir Nicholas Kenyon in his anthology *Building Utopia: The Barbican Centre* (2022) commented on the design of this exhibition, as he considered it path breaking. Kenyon in his introduction stated that 'John Pawson produced an exquisite scenography for ceramic exhibition' recognising that this exhibition was the starting point of an innovative collaboration with architects and designers who transformed the Barbican Art Gallery for each exhibition (Kenyon, 2022).

Lost in Lace (2011) featured work by acclaimed international artists offering the viewer with many new perspectives (Figure 15). For example, the exhibition included a number of artist-makers who employed detailed scientific process and knowledge

in their work, such as Kathleen Rogers who used new microscopy equipment to expose thread structures (Figure 16).



Figure 15 *Lost in Lace* (2011) Exhibition overview. Photo courtesy of exhibition curator Professor Lesley Millar

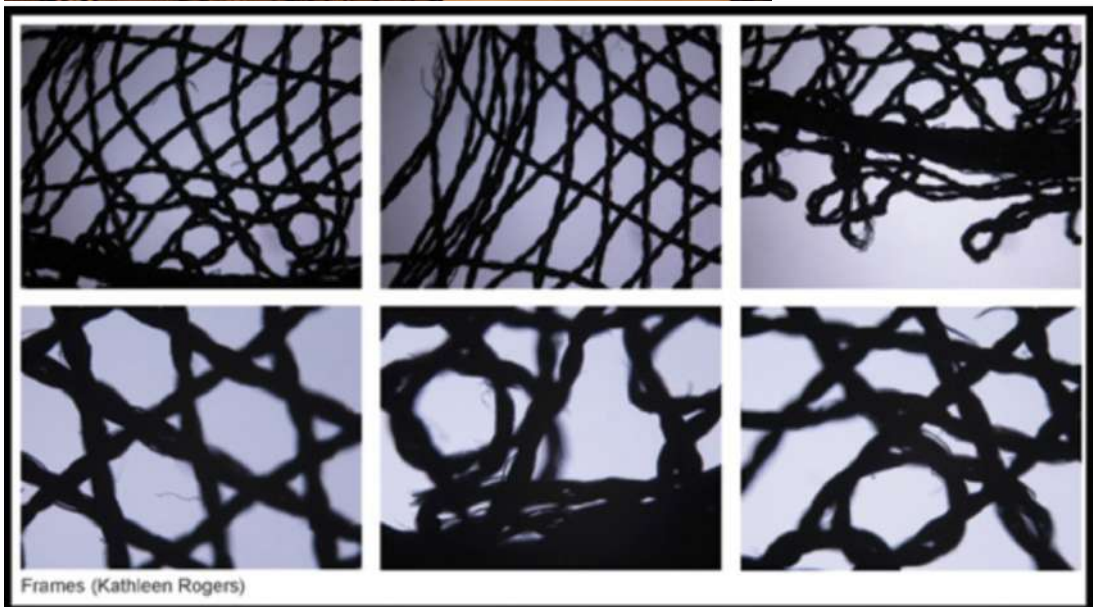


Figure 16 *Lost in Lace* (2011) Frames from *Black Lace*, interdisciplinary moving image and sound installation created by Professor Kathleen Rogers, commissioned for the exhibition. Photo property of the copyright holder.

While, Woman's Hour Craft Prize illustrated the possibilities of using a variety of crafts and skills in different ways (Figure 17).



Figure 17 *Woman's Hour Craft Prize* (2018) Victoria and Albert Museum, London. View of the exhibition Photo possession of the author

I consider the curatorial as the process of creation of new contexts, revealing new perspectives through which artists, curators, spaces are coming together to respond to the contexts of and open a discourse. For example, a complex and ambitious project was *Fragile?* at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff (2015). *Fragile?* required the co-ordination and management of several largely autonomous elements running in addition to the challenge of shaping a coherent visitor experience, while maintaining an open and participative working philosophy. The exhibition aimed to address the diversity and beauty of modern and contemporary ceramic practice in its widest sense. A principal aim was to challenge visitors' preconceptions about ceramics in museums. The museum's Keeper of Arts Andrew

Renton, when I interviewed him in March 2020, he talked about the curatorial intention explaining:

we envisaged an exhibition that would aim to give visitors a different experience of ceramics in the museum. The thinking behind the title *Fragile*, which was *Fragile* with a question mark, was to engage with the object in a sort of physical way, and to play on the fears that people often have when they come to look at a ceramics collection in a museum, the fear of the object being fragile. (Renton, 2020)

The exhibition's emphasis was on the two contradictory inherent material qualities of ceramics: durability and fragility. Renton explained that these characteristics have been a source of interest for contemporary artists and are integral to the cultural status of ceramics.

The exhibition drew upon the museum's permanent collection, complemented by loans from the Derek Williams Trust, the Victoria and Albert Museum and directly



Figure 18 *Fragile?* (2015) Installation view of Adam Buick 'moon jar'. National Museum Wales, Cardiff. Photo by Christopher Tipping, property of the copyright holder.

from artists. The exhibition included ceramic works by Richard Deacon and Felicity Aylieff, as well as pieces from the archaeology, industry, and botany collections. In addition, the museum commissioned three major innovative installations comprising the main body of the show: Keith Harrison, Phoebe Cummings, and Claire Twomey. Moreover, works by four Wales based makers - Claire Curneen, Walter Keeler, Lowri Davies and Adam Buick shown together alongside specially commissioned films that presented each maker's creative process (Figure 18).

The exhibition was accompanied by a comprehensive complementary program, for example artists talks, in-conversation events and workshops as well as a conference. The program included activities for older people aiming to combat social isolation and introduce older people to museums as social spaces. The Final Report stated that the activities were evaluated using the UCL Museum Wellbeing Measures Toolkit and the Generic Wellbeing Questionnaire. The sessions produced a marked increase in positive emotions for participants, exemplified by the comment 'I always come here feeling good and go away feeling better' (member of the public, Final Report to the Colwinston Charitable Trust).

Renton affirmed that the programme achieved its aim of providing a safe, relaxed environment in which participants felt engaged and able to socialise. Renton stated that the exhibition overall offered an opportunity for the different departments in the museum to work together and to develop discussions.

In the conversation with Renton, we also discussed the success of the project and the new insights that it brought in his team and the museum. Renton particularly referred to Cummings research process, which involved investigating the different collections within the various departments of the museum to get inspired for the

commission. Renton stated that Cummings' process offered an opportunity to think across the museum disciplines in a way that made his team consider the various collections and explore opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues in different and more exciting ways (Renton, 2020).

Cummings extensive knowledge in ceramics as well as in research methods allowed her to be a specialist collaborator who provided substantial contribution, by establishing connections across the museum disciplines and bringing their learning together.

Craft Curatorial the *Auteur* and *Mise-en-Scène*

The authorship and the narrative of *auteur* curator and maker which seems to be open to further discussion in craft related exhibitions. This was highlighted in the exhibitions discussed in this chapter. One of the examples featured in this section was *Fragile?* a major ceramic exhibition in National Museum Wales, Cardiff. In this project, the makers and the curator engaged in an adversarial productive artistic discourse.

Due to the inherent character of the outcome, creative production, art professionals and artists are linked in an extremely complicated and interdependent workplace collaboration. However, looking at the crafts curator through the lenses of *auteur* theory and practice helps to add another dimension and a new viewpoint of the role. Each maker in the *Fragile?* exhibition conceived their work as an installation, including ceramic artist Cummings. It was the curator's decision to provide a

framework in which spaces would be able to take hold. This means that the curator had to grant each artist the possibility to realise their installation almost as if it had been a solo show, while they had to consider the relations in-between the pieces. It is this relationship of the in-between space that allows the discourse to develop. The selection of installation, the dedicated space and associated information is presented to a visitor for the purpose of telling a story about these installations. The same underlying story can be presented in numerous ways. The decisions of the curator are creating multiple alternative narrative structures from a single underlying story, by selecting different organising principles for the installations. These authorial decisions can produce different dramatic effects making the curatorial narrative a novel form of authorship.

In a sense, the curator process of selection and arrangement of works, either by a solo artist or in a group format, places the practices within a dynamic. Yet this dynamic could not be brought to life without the audience's engagement with the exhibition. The 'window of liveness' - as per Gaskill's words to define the opening exhibition hours - reflects the performative aspect of the curatorial role. Irrelevant to whether the curator is absent or present in the space over this period, it is in this intermission where the practice of curation is revealed.

The production, mediation and dissemination of artworks becomes a performative gesture, making evident at the actual active praxis of curation. It can therefore be argued that curation in craft is also very much concerned with contextualising sites of reception or live situations. The curator constructs a framework, a *mise-en-scène*, as seen in *Lost in Lace* (2011) within which social engagement and exchange occur,

experience is influenced, and new relational contexts are emerging. Yet, this framework is often overlooked, and its social value not considered.

To summarise, this chapter has shown that the curatorial role is about establishing a site of exchange, referring to a space where craftwork, site and audience converge. The 'exhibition space' exists where these conditions are met. This coming together of social, spatial and critical contexts generates a political space that exists within a wider cultural sphere. The use of the term 'exhibition space' is employed to refer to the *mise-en-scène* which represent the location where the craftwork or the viewer performs.

This is very much a live space working with the conditions of subjectivity and presence, and dependent on an engagement across all elements. It brings us back to O'Neil's statement in *The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse*, that curating is 'becoming discourse' where curators are willing themselves to be the key subject and producer of this discourse. The curator enables the space of exhibition to open new possibilities for dialogue and exchange, with these new perspectives feeding back into the way in which the exhibition is perceived and reflected upon.

The work of the curator is the exhibition and all its associated processes. Thus, again returning to Bjerregaard's notion of 'exhibition as research', the curatorial practice involves the consideration of the agency but also the work's understanding. Also, how this (curatorial practice) reveals the possibility for the exhibition to raise questions about the work, its environment, and the visitors.

This becomes relevant, with the arguments and questions of this thesis, when thinking about the broader social, cultural, and political remit of curation and its practice. The curator's responsibility for the collaborative creation of knowledge includes the maker artist, the craftwork -the concept of the work and its representation- the facilitation of an exhibition's content, and the audience's engagement. Curatorial practice is very much a holistic action in which all the different elements converge. In reflecting the complexity of the exhibition-making and building knowledge formulated by experiences and relationships, the curator is a responsive practitioner who contributes as a collaborator in craft social relations.

5 PERFORMANCE ART AND PERFORMATIVITY

This chapter considers the complex notions and definitions of performance and performativity, demonstrating a variety of ways to understand its practice as well as its historical transformation. These notions were examined from a curatorial perspective and how these forms of artistic expression were addressed.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part provides a brief overview of the historical development of performance as a time-based art. The literature review described in this section, examines the institutional and historical realities that have allowed the development of the performance practice.

The second part focuses on the literature concerning performativity. The indistinct understanding of the term contributes to its ubiquity, as 'performative' is often used to describe work that seems to incorporate elements of performance but does not quite comply with the theory or definitions of the performing arts.

Performance Art

The term 'performance art' refers to a time-based form of creative practice that includes live presentation to an audience, taking place in various spaces, spanning from museums and galleries to train stations and even the street. The practice draws from all the art disciplines i.e., theatre, music, literature, and the visual arts. The exploration of the field and its historical development is through the writings of

curator and performance artist RoseLee Goldberg and the comprehensive anthology by curators Cosmin Costinas and Ana Janevski (2015).

A Brief Historic Overview

There is extensive literature examining the historical development of performance art, thus I will mainly concentrate on the book by curator and performance artist RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* first published in 1979. This book, which has been updated several times since, tracked the twentieth century roots of performance art in Dadaism, Italian Futurism, the early Russian avant-garde, and the Bauhaus. The first edition covered key figures of the movement up to that point including Laurie Anderson, Robert Wilson, Marina Abramovic, and John Cage.

Performance art was closely identified with the development of the avant-garde originating from Futurism. The movement which aimed to revolutionise culture included radical performative evenings. The Futurist events featuring synchronicity and noise were later refined by artists of the Dada movement. Subsequently, performance art was developed at the Bauhaus school (1919-1933) lead by German painter, sculptor, designer, and choreographer Oskar Schlemmer; and in the United States at Black Mountain College in North Carolina (1933–57), specifically through the experimental events usually organised by composer John Cage with the choreographer and dancer Merce Cunningham, and the artist Robert Rauschenberg. Both the Bauhaus and the Black Mountain College artists refused the traditional disciplinary boundaries. Their innovative and experimental events and practices offered the spark for the development of *Happenings*, and Fluxus movements

emerged in the late 1950s, as well as activities and overall, the live art of the following decades. From the 1960s onwards, performance art was characterised by improvisation, audience interaction and socio-political commentate. An example of this were the American Guerrilla Girls, a gorilla-masked anonymous group of feminist female artists formed in 1985, who aimed to expose sexism, racism, and corruption mainly in the art world.

A key contribution in the field was the work of theatre director and performing art scholar Richard Schechner who coined the term 'Performance Studies'. Schechner was inspired by anthropological enquiries and was influenced by his collaboration with anthropologist Victor Turner. Schechner's book *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (2002), first published in 1985, considered performance to be non-artistic, yet still an expressive social behaviour. Schechner examined events and rituals as well as daily life from around the world and highlighted how performance is central to human understanding. By applying the notion of performance to human behaviour he moved the concept beyond performance art to emphasising on the symbolic and coded aspects of culture. Schechner understood performance as a continuum, stating that:

Performing onstage, performing in special social situations (public ceremonies, for example), and performing in every-day life are a continuum [...] with each category leading to, and blending into, the next. There are no clear boundaries separating everyday life from family and social roles or social roles from job roles, church ritual

from trance, acting onstage from acting offstage, and so on.

(Schechner, 2002:170)

Schechner contributed to this movement by bringing detail into the analysis of the ritual and cognitive underpinnings of theatrical performance. Schechner drew the attention beyond the enacted event that appears before an audience focusing on the long process of preparation and rehearsal, which like the enacted event is determined by its own social structures.

Schechner concluded his chapter 'What is Performance' by affirming that there are many ways to understand performance: any event, action, or behaviour may be examined as performance. This distinction between *is* and *as if* is essential in performing studies. Schechner explained that there are limits to what is performance, however he argued, anything could be studied as performance: 'What the *as* says is that the object of study will be regarded from the perspective of, in terms of, interrogated by a particular discipline of study' (Schechner, 2002:34).

In this sense, when craft is examined *as* performance, the consideration is in the critical aspects of both fields which are already recognised, but also those that, whilst not yet recognised, are open to the established criteria of investigation and critique which allow new interpretations.

Schechner's questions of events *as performance* provided a tool to raise inquiries about craft contemporary practice:

How is an event deployed in space and disclosed in time? What special clothes or objects are put to use? What roles are played and how are these different, if at all, from who the performers usually

are? How are the events controlled, distributed, received, and evaluated? (Schechner, 2002:48)

The above brief literature review examined how the performance art and performance studies developed in the twentieth century.

However, in the twenty-first century performance is involved more clearly with meaning, politics, and society. It involves a newly pronounced form of personal experience, often implicating the body and/or one's sense of self. The internet, globalisation, and the ever-increasing presence of media is saturating human behaviour at all levels.

Closely related to these multiple flows of information in addition to the increasing tendency for museums, biennials, art centres and cultural institutions to programme performance events, is the new performance turn. As Goldberg observed, performance has become one of the key terms in the twenty-first century (Goldberg, 2018).

New Performance Turn

The more traditional differences between the museum and the theatre, and the most central aspect of interdisciplinary interest, points to the experiential dimension. Previously, the experience of the artwork in a museum or gallery was designed to be isolated and isolating, in contrast to the theatre, where the individual addressed is almost always part of a collective.

Curators' Cosmin Costinas and Ana Janevski anthology *Is the Living Body the Last Thing Left Alive?* (2015) grew out of a conference at which participants were invited

to discuss developments in contemporary dance and visual arts. The conference and anthology aimed to re-address the role of performance in the twenty-first century. The book provided a substantial account of the field including contributions by academics, critics and professionals from a broad range of disciplines for example art historian Claire Bishop, French choreographer Xavier Le Roy, and curator Catherine Wood. The aim was to define the 'new performance turn' which the editors proposed had emerged within the visual arts. The anthology contributors explored the correlations and crossovers with other shifts in practices, discourses, and broader society.

The anthology compared practices that had emerged in the 1950s and 60s [Allan Kaprow, Robert Morris, Carolee Schneeman, and Robert Rauschenberg in the United States; Lygia Pape and Hélio Oiticica in Brazil; the Gutai group in Japan; and Yves Klein in France] with the emergence to performance in the twenty-first century by various visual artists around the world in museums, galleries, and non-conventional exhibition stages. These artists explicitly or implicitly used dance or choreography to reinvent, reimagine, and reimage how the visual arts produced and conceived images and objects, and therefore, conceived itself both as practice and as discourse. Art historian, critic Claire Bishop in her essay 'Performance Art vs Dance: Professionalism, De-Skilling, and Linguistic Virtuosity' referred to the encroachment of professionalised performing arts (theatre, dance, and music) as a threat to 'visual art performance' (i.e., performance created by visual artists) that challenges hegemonic notions of skill. She considered performance as a critical anti-category that reasserts conventional disciplinary borders and specialism (Bishop, 2015:40).

Moreover, the personal account of curator's Catherine Wood essay 'Game Changing: Performance in the Permanent collection' explored the way live art enforced a change in museum's operations by challenging the existing structures, systems and practices within it (Wood, 2015: 54).

On the other hand, French choreographer's Xavier Le Roy contribution 'Notes on Exhibition Works Involving Life Human Actions Performed in Public' presented an investigation of the effectiveness of performance in addressing questions of agency and community, and in challenging binary thinking: 'performance works might emancipate us from the need to be categorised, and [...] open up spaces of play' (Le Roy, 2015:81).

In summary, the anthology proposed that the new performance turn, enabled by institutional conditions, favoured the development of a methodology which allowed the questioning and the differentiation of the field.

RoseLee Goldberg in *Performance Now: Live Art for the 21st Century* (2018) has taken the visual arts as her point of reference, both in terms of the mode of address of the live events and in terms of their presentation and reception in visual art contexts. In the chapter 'Performance as Visual art' she offered a number of examples of performance works, including Olafur Eliasson *The weather Project* (2003) at Tate Modern, Jesper Just *True Love is Yet to Come* (2005) commission for *Performa 05* at Stephen Weiss studios New York and Carsten Holler *Test Site* (2006) at Tate Modern, and discussed ways in which they have transformed the role of the museum and the experience of viewing saying:

Such events reflected the changing role of the twenty-first century museum, which had been transformed since the opening of Tate Modern in the year 2000 from an institution of quiet contemplation and conservation into a cultural pleasure palace of engagement on a blockbuster scale. (Goldberg, 2018:16)

Goldberg commented on the shifting role of the curator as she argued that [the curator] 'taking up the role of commissioner and producer' to meet the viewer's expectations for a fast-past cultural experience (Goldberg, 2018:16).

Curator Catherine Wood in her book *Performance in Contemporary Art* (2018), published at a similar time with that of Goldberg's, arranged her analysis through three sections: 'I', 'We' and 'It'. This way she explored how, from the 1960s to present, performance has challenged or reconstructed notion of 'I' (as a proxy for the artist, the self, self-imagination, and self-perception), 'We' (the group, collective, community, society and state) and 'It' (the contingent object, artwork, institution or social infrastructure), creating a link to performativity.

Over the past decades the term 'performativity' has come to pervade contemporary discussions around the visual and performing arts i.e. the performative arts, performative arts practitioners, performative arts-based research, performative strategies, performative pedagogy, performative sound design; an infinitum ushering in what has been termed the performative turn.

Performative Turn

In *Perform or Else* (2001), Jon McKenzie asserted that there is a relationship between cultural, organisational, and technological performance. In the book, McKenzie argued that given the multiple meanings of 'performance' - as a live element in the arts and as a reference to economic productivity - the economic and political conditions behind this shift are not to be underestimated. This is also evident in the new developments in crafts and curatorship in the twenty-first century, which often interplay between resisting the commercialisation that was encompassing the object-based functional craft and serving as the product of the immaterial experience economy where memory itself is a prime commodity.

Here the term 'experience economy' echoes curator Ralph Rugoff's analysis in the essay 'Experience Economy' (s.d.) included in the *In Terms of Performance* online anthology. Rugoff explained that art has evolved over the past sixty years to be considered an experience and not an object. He traced the emphasis on the spectator's experience through performance, from the evolution of happenings, minimalist sculpture, Fluxus participatory works, and installation art to current practices, claiming that the [practices] are 'focusing on experiences of sociality and exchange' (Rugoff, s.d.).

The precariousness of working conditions and the devaluation of labour and skill are at stake in both the arts, crafts world, and society today; consequently, they are two important features of the new performance turn and the *kaino-craft* term introduced in this thesis.

For McKenzie, a failure to perform may result in being fired, becoming obsolete, or being socially normalised. The latter refers to his idea of cultural performance,

specifically, of performance art, which defines itself as liminal or marginalised expression, and if the performance is assimilated into the mainstream, it loses its critical power or position. Each of these brands of performances faces a different challenge, a challenge of efficiency, effectiveness, or efficacy. The central argument of McKenzie's book was that performance has replaced discipline, following French philosopher Michel Foucault, as the paradigmatic formation of power and knowledge in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. McKenzie demonstrated that all three paradigms operate together to create powerful and contradictory pressures to 'perform...or else'.

The performative turn is anchored in the broader cultural development of postmodernism. Postmodern scholars argued that society itself both defines and constructs reality through experience, representation, and performance. The thesis acknowledges that the concept of performance was integrated into a variety of theories in the humanities and social sciences, such as phenomenology, critical theory, semiotics, deconstructionism, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and Feminism (McKenzie, 2005).

The concept of 'performing in everyday life' is a central aspect of performativity, as envisaged by Schechner: 'Performativity is everywhere – in daily behaviour, in the professions, on the internet and media, in the arts and in the language' (Schechner, 2002:110).

The *Parallax 14: Craft and Art Symposium* curated by Zoi Dimitriou and Jonathan Owen Clark at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, London (2020), took a more specific view and moved the conversation further. This symposium discussed explicitly the relation between craft and the performing arts. Of particular interest

were three presentations: Jonathan Owen Clark; Susie Crow; and joint presentation of Sarah Whalley, Vidya Thirunarayan and Debbie Fionn Barr.

Clark's presentation, 'Some notes on Craft, Art (and AI)', emphasised the importance of the distinction between 'work' and 'object', reflecting on the writings of anthropologist Tim Ingold on the connections between the ontology of craft and art, and saw them through the lens of similar ideas in phenomenological aesthetics. This presentation positioned crafts within the philosophical discourses that are taking place in fine art.

Ballet practitioner Susie Crow in 'Developing Craft in the Ballet Class' focused on the dancer's absorption via the class of ballet's 'danse d'école', its core technique of academic dance content, and claimed that this process might be more constructively understood through the lens of craft learning and craftsmanship. This presentation contributed to the discourse of the multifaceted nature of crafts and the value of crafts knowledge.

In addition, academic Sarah Whalley, dance ceramic artist Vidya Thirunarayan and choreographer Debbie Fionn Barr presented 'Clay Connection'. The joint presentation was a form of discussion and included a performance by Thirunarayan (Figure 19). The presenters brought together clay making and Indian classical dance storytelling Bharata Natyam, thereby addressing the emerging genre of performance craft. The presenters considered how combining familiar elements of clay and dance creates novel contexts. The viewers were invited to consider how the material properties of dance together with clay making could produce, affect or change perceptions of each discipline.

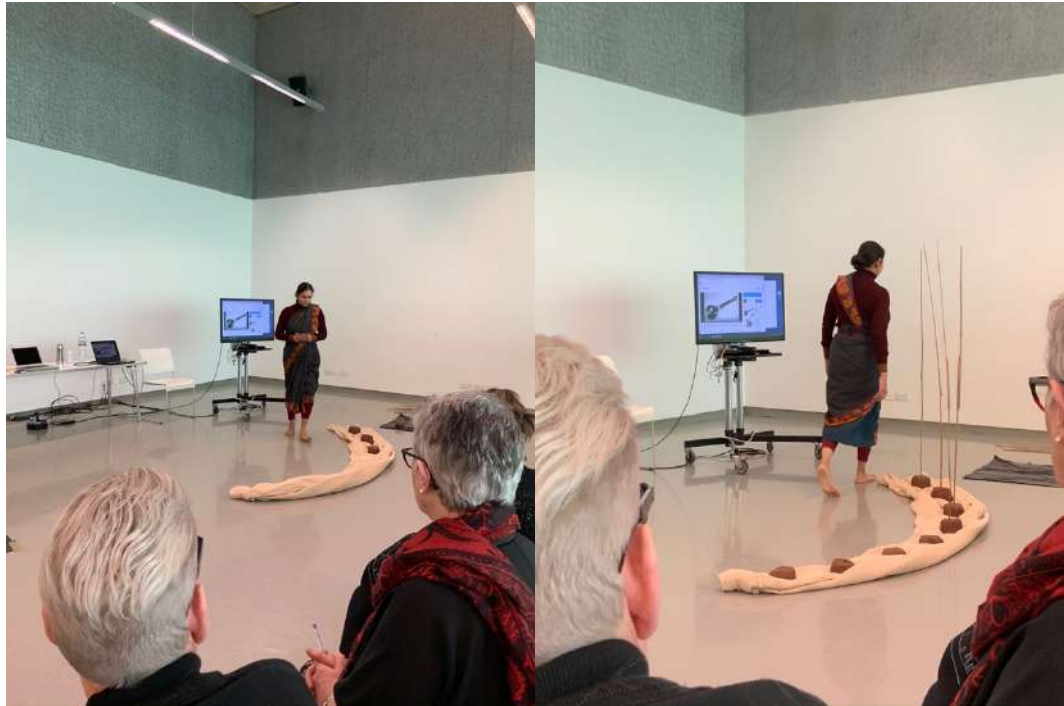


Figure 19 Vidya Thirunarayan (2020) Performance Bharatanatyam dance (Indian classical dance) and Clay part of the presentation at *Parallax14: Craft and Art*. Trinity Laban, London. Photo possession of the author.

Parallax 14: Craft and Art symposium contributed to the discourse of the performance within the craft field and interdisciplinary practice.

It is important to note that the field covered by performance has been expanded and blurred by growing discussions on performativity and its implications for language and power within broader areas of artistic and social practice under gender discourse.

Performativity

The literature in this section shows that performativity has two main origins. Firstly, it goes back to the speech act theory of John Austin and John Searle between the late 1960s and 1970s.

Secondly, it is deeply influenced by theatre and drama as heuristic metaphors of the social. This conceptual shift became manifested in a methodology oriented towards culture as a dynamic phenomenon, as well as in the focus on subjects of study that were neglected before, such as everyday life and domesticity. For scholars, the concept of performance is a means to come to grips with human agency and to better understand the way social life is constructed. Although initially there was a conflation of the terms 'performativity, performance and performance art' in discourses around contemporary art and aesthetics, currently, the claim could be that all art is ontologically performative.

The term performativity has its origin at the speech-act theory that explores the world-making power of language, initially analysed by philosophers of languages John Austin (1955) and further developed by John Searle (1969).

Austin in *How to Do Things With Word* (1955) stated that performatives are utterances that constitute an action within themselves, such as saying 'I now pronounce you man and wife' or 'I christen this ship the HMS Victoria'. So, if we are saying that craft is performative in Austin's original sense, we are not necessarily saying that it performs, but that it 'does': that it enacts something in the now in which we are viewing it. We are also saying that, if something is performative, then it is derived from a linguistic construct - an act of speech. In this view, language is understood not merely to describe the world, but rather to create it. Austin also claimed that the reality-making capacity of the performative happens in the moment of the viewer's reception.

American philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler has theorised Austin's concepts related to linguistics and expanded it to demonstrate how performativity

can include bodily acts as well as speech acts. My understanding of Butler's exploration on performativity in relation to creative arts is that it may enable us to move on from the modernist idea of the singular gesture of the genius artist, to a more nuanced understanding of creativity that underpins artistic research.

Butler in her writings distinguished between 'performance' and 'performativity'. She argued that while performance can be understood as a deliberate act, performativity must be understood 'as the act by which a subject brings into being what they name, but rather as that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constraints' (Butler, 1993:2).

Butler was very clear that performativity involves repetition rather than singularity.

Butler in her writings argued that language forms our perception as well as contributes to the construction of the way we think of ourselves, our relationships, and our environment.

One of the issues in the idea of equating performativity in relation to live art or performance is that the genre has previously championed the radical, the ephemeral, and the anti-structuralist. Butler explained:

Performativity is neither free play nor theatrical self-representation; nor can it be simply equated with performance [...] Performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject.
(Butler, 1993: 95)

Curator and exhibition scholar Dorothea von Hantelmann differentiated her position from Butler saying that by accepting this definition, it makes all artwork to be performative. Von Hantelmann, in her essay 'The Experiential Turn', published online as part of the Walker Art Centre's inaugural Living Collections Catalogue, wrote: '(t)here is no performative artwork because there is no non performative artwork'. In this sense, what von Hantelmann argued is that it 'makes little sense to speak of a performative artwork because every artwork has a reality-producing dimension (von Hantelmann, 2014).

In her essay, von Hantelmann raised the following questions to examine the production of experience in contemporary art:

Does experience reduce art merely to a phenomenological investigation of art's reception, or does the evaluation of such work in the research field collapse artistic research into ethnographic or auto-ethnographic research on the one hand or scientific measurement of responses and psychometric testing on the other?
Or is there something else at stake? (von Hantelmann, 2014)

These statements argue that a world is made within this exchange between the work, the viewer, and the space. The texts of Butler and von Hantelmann suggest that performativity has invited new ways of analysis, modes that focus on process, participation, events, expressive actions, and experience.

On a different note, feminist cultural geographer Catherine Nash proposed that performativity is 'not just a singular act', but a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, that have assumed this status through repetition' (Nash, 2000:662).

Barbara Bolt in her essay 'A Performative Paradigm for the Creative Arts?' stated that there are some curious similarities between this materialisation and the way in which 'art' becomes materialised (Bolt, 2008). Bolt raised the following questions 'What is performativity and what would be the characteristics of a performative research paradigm? Is it enough to say that the performance/production is an event/act/production that becomes the thing done? Are all performances/productions performative?' (Bolt, 2008).

All these allude to an array of questions when considering performance and the performative. However, this thesis considers the philosophical history of the term performative, focusing especially on what the concept implies about the position of the receiver. As it turns out, the receiver's role - the audience, the beholder, the visitor, the participant, or the spectator - is fundamental to understanding the uses of the term 'performativity'.

Indeed, the reception and interpretation of a work by the audience is key to constituting any exhibition or event as 'performative' in its power. This factor creates new perspectives when we consider what it means to 'collect' crafts, as the institution or collector does not simply acquire a performative object but also acquires a structure for renewing its relations of reception. The reproduction of the performance is a later either via digital media (film, video) or physically in the gallery, may lead to different interpretation. This concern has been addressed and discussed by artists and scholars, for example by Philip Auslander. In his article 'The

Performativity of Performance Documentation' (2006) asserted that performance documentation is not merely a passive afterimage of a live act, but rather can be seen as a performance's reception and thus actively shapes what performance could be. Auslander argued that such documentation is itself 'performative' (Auslander, 2006:1). It is important to note that performance documentation is beyond the limits of this thesis as it is not relevant with the current inquiry, however, parallels will be considered and explored.

Academic Sannon Jackson in her essay 'Performativity and its Addressee' (2014) in Walker Living Collections online Catalogue raised a number of questions: 'Is an artist's works performative because they performance artists? Can art be performative without being performance? Can performance not be performative? Are some types of art performative and some not?' (Jackson, 2014).

Performance and performativity are important conceptual tools for considering taken-for-granted social practices, and to emphasise the creativity of everyday life. However, it is also important to recognise the very different ways in which crafts performance can be theorised.

Craft 'as' Performance Art

This section of the chapter explores craft and how it might exist, not only in objects or materials, but also in actions or gestures. The shift within craft theory, towards a less object-centred view, allows for an understanding of the performance's role in relation to craft practice. An emphasis on the actions and qualities rather than objects, shares common ground with theories of performance and performativity. Craft is still present in the works examined but is not bounded by traditional

parameters such as materiality, function, or object production. The recent theoretical developments can be used to further a version of crafts that is not just about demonstration. However, it raises the importance to consider how these interactive, labour-intensive process-based works manifest the consideration of skill, material, and knowledge as well as thoughtfulness and time necessary to make and deploy crafts work.

More specifically, it is important to consider how crafts dematerialization may impact or redefine crafts as a practice or field of inquiry. If craft as a discipline is particularly well-suited to object-centred theories and approaches, it remains important to question the reasons for this focus, as well as the possibility of framing or practising crafts in alternate ways. By seeking to understand the shift of craft practice to performance in a broader historical context, and alongside recent theoretical developments in crafts theory, it is important to consider what crafts might be without the object. This consideration will allow for crafts to be presented, valued, and understood in more diverse and complex ways.

Therefore, it is important to explore how galleries and museums reinforce the new ideas about craft, which is beyond the object-centred discipline and how craft artists and curators work within the shifting practice.

This section uses these notions of performativity and extends their application to crafts.

Here it is essential to highlight that repetition is something integral in making and acquiring crafts skills. This argument was demonstrated in Clare Twomey's *Manifest:10,000 hours*, a large-scale ceramics installation exhibited in the contemporary craft context of the Mezzanine Gallery at the Centre of Ceramic Art

(CoCA) at York Art Gallery. The installation consisted of ten thousand ceramic slip cast bowls made with community groups in York as well as London and acted as a metaphor to showcase the ten thousand hours of repetitive actions which, reputedly, takes to become a skilled maker/craftsperson (Figure 20).

The *Hand+Made: The Performative Impulse in Art and Craft* (2010) exhibition was curated by Valerie Cassel Oliver at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston (Figure 21). The published catalogue featured essays by the curator as well as by craft scholars Glenn Adamson, Namita Gupta Wiggers and Sarah G Cassidy. Both the catalogue and the exhibition seek to explore the critical content and performative potential behind the making process and to delve into the conceptual power of contemporary craft. The publication took a broader view of the connections between crafts and performance, including work that ranged from public crafting performances, objects and installations that suggested or invited interactivity, or those that referenced what could be considered the performance of wearable items i.e., clothing or jewellery.



Figure 20 Clare Twomey (2015) Installation view *Manifest: 10,000 Hours*. Photo Kippa Matthews, property of the copyright holder.

The project aimed to identify a ‘performative impulse’ within craft practice, representing an important part of the work of understanding these relationships, and inspiring other similar investigations in both curatorial and artistic practice as well as future scholarships. However, it seems that it is necessary to distinguish between a broadly ‘performative’ reading of craft, and works that focus on performances of crafting or craft-making and thus engage more directly with the history and aims of performance art. In the exhibition catalogue, Oliver identified craft practitioners working in the late 1960s, including ceramist Peter Voulkos and weaver Sheila Hicks, who experimented with incorporating elements of performance in their practice. The contributors seem to centre their focus on the process of making rather than on the performative potential of the finished object.

Adamson’s essay ‘Perpetual Motion’ freed craft from its reliance on displays of virtuosity and the necessity to produce functional objects (Adamson, 2010:21).



Figure 21 *Hand+Made: The Performative Impulse in Art and Craft* (2010), View of the installations. Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston. Photo property of the copyright holder

Adding to Adamson's statements about the future of craft, Wiggers in her essay 'Craft Performs', considered an expansive definition of the scope of craft, suggesting that 'by focusing on spaces, places, and ways in which visual practitioners perform craft today, could enhance the understanding of the easily overlooked craft-scape' (Wiggers, 2010:27).

Oliver used the term 'performative' to describe works or practices that contain elements of performance, or that connect to methodologies of performance art. Even though Oliver used the term 'performative', she was not referring to it in relation to performativity as addressed by the writings of Butler, von Hantelmann and Bolt. This theoretical exploration has not yet been discussed broadly in the field of craft and performance. The thesis has recognised a gap in the literature and positions performativity and the performative potential of the finished - or unfinished - object and the exhibition in the centre of this study.

Oliver's text explored how shifts in art practice are impacting crafts in representing an important step in uncovering and developing a lineage for contemporary performance-craft works.

Similarly, the anthology *Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture* by ceramic artists and scholars Christie Brown, Julian Stair, and Clare Twomey (2016) examined how specific ceramic artists during the last decade have approached new ways, incorporating performance or performative elements in their practice, in an effort to animate museum collections.

This anthology focused mainly on the relationship between contemporary ceramics and curatorial practice in museum culture. The issues addressed within the essays are how museums have staged contemporary ceramics and how ceramic artists

respond to museum collections. Twomey concluded her paper by citing Tate's curator, Catherine Wood, observation 'We experience the work not only through space and time, but through an awareness of the encounter having a social dimension, often a sense of reciprocity, even, via the act of participation' (Wood, 2012 cited in Twomey, 2016:2).

Reflecting on these words, Twomey asserted: 'We find ourselves in a landscape where the museum, the artist and the object can intersect cultural boundaries that engender more than the material alone' (Twomey, 2016:3).

Curator Nicole Burisch in her essay 'From Objects to Actions and Back Again: The Politics of Dematerialized Craft and Performance Documentation' in *Textiles Cloth and Culture* (2016) noted that the crafted object has undergone a shift in its once-central role, serving instead as a record of an event or process, a prop or tool, and in some cases disappearing altogether. Burisch continued considering how the histories and theories of performance art intersect with contemporary craft practices, with a particular focus on the role of documentation and ephemeral traces. On a similar note, the contributors in the anthology *Material Perceptions* (2018), by art critic André Gali and curator Knut Astrup Bull shared their perspective on how contemporary craft could be perceived in relation to society and everyday life. In the book's review, craft theorist Stephen Knott explained that at its core, the essays of *Material Perceptions* discussed how the philosophy of materialism, or new materialisms is crucial for the understanding of craft practice, and vice versa. He emphasised on the words 'vice versa' saying that 'the phenomenological experience of matter shapes materialist philosophy' (Knott, 2018).

These practices and texts show that the emphasis on the performative elements of material is translated on the audience's experience by their physical presence and attention. This created experience, a result of *mise-en-scène*, occurs when the visitor is surrounding a performer or walking into a textile installation.

Such an example is the work of Berlin-based Japanese artist Chicaru Shiota, who creates immersive, deeply moving, haunting and poetic large-scale installations made of dense webs of thread, interspersed with found objects like plaster casts, dresses, book pages, doors, bed frames, keys, and piano. Shiota's installations are manifestations of her feelings and interior battles. The artist is a storyteller who is sharing the important moments of her life, turning her most intimate thoughts, experiences, and fears into art.

I have visited and experienced Shiota's *Me Somewhere Else* (2019) at Blain Southern Gallery, London, a work which occupied a special place in the artist's life as it is concerned with her fight against her illness, and the certainty that her mind will survive her body. The exhibition was set over two rooms. On the floor at the centre of the first room was a plaster cast of the artist's feet. Expanding upwards from the feet, a funnel of threads in a hand-knotted web of red yarn, stretching up to the gallery ceiling and spreading across it, reminded me of a cobweb that could have been spun by Louise Bourgeois' *Maman* (1999). Red netted undulations swooping down to below head height.

Shiota has long used the technique of drawing in space with yarn, but in this occasion, she has used the medium in a new way. Usually, the artist creates networks of yarn by passing a ball of thread back and forth through the openings in a triangular motion. Here, Shiota has knotted the yarn by hand to create a net-like covering. Shiota sought

to examine the idea that human consciousness could exist independently of the body, somewhere beyond – somewhere else. Her personal experiences were the starting points for this work, which explored the relationships between the body, memory, life and death.

Shiota said:

I feel that my body is connected to the universe but is my consciousness as well? When my feet touch the earth, I feel connected to the world, to the universe that is spread like a net of human connections, but if I don't feel my body anymore where do I go? Where do I go when my body is gone? When my feet do not touch the ground anymore. (Shiota, 2018)

The plaster cast feet, their solidity and fragile permanence, contrasted with the ephemeral nature of her installation. The yarn, red, the colour of blood is the net, symbol of connection and internet, loaded with symbolism, stimulating the consideration of our interconnectedness, the interior of the body and the complex network of neural connections in the brain (Figure 22). Complex questions arise around the relationship between the body and the mind; neurons firing and causing the body to react before a conscious decision has been taken has implications for cognisance. The installation moved beyond its material presence producing an experience between itself and the audience in a shared temporal space.

In a Bloomberg documentary about the artist titled *The Theatricality of Chiharu Shiota's Art*, Sarah Moore senior curator at Imperial War Museums explained that Shiota always discloses that her work isn't active unless there is someone within it, as only when the visitors entering the constructed environment this is made active (Bloomberg Quicktake, 2017).

Me Somewhere Else, this installation could be considered as performative in Austin's original sense, as we are not necessarily saying that it performs, but that it 'does'. This textiles installation enacted something in the now in which the visitor is viewing it, or to be more precise, is experiencing it. It is not only the immersive environment that created this experience, but also the way the visitors were navigating through the space. This sense of environment and the navigation through space are results of the *mise-en-scène*. Shiota's installation directs to consider crafts not as a still object but as action, *as performance*.

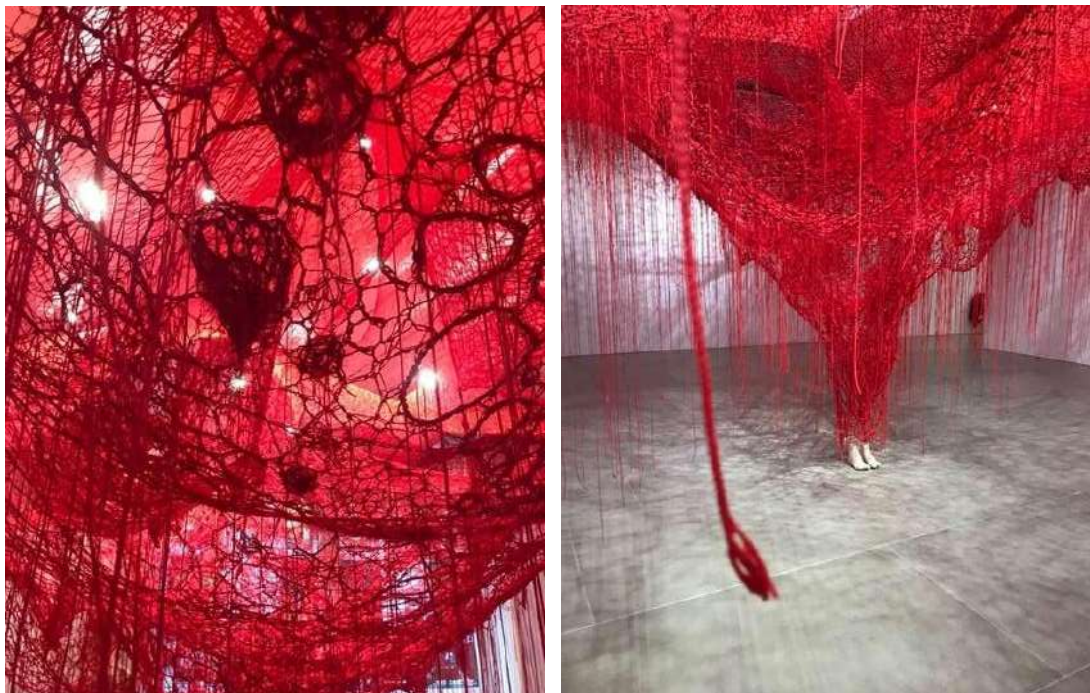


Figure 22 Chiharu Shiota (2019) *Me Somewhere Else*. Installation view. Blain Southern Gallery, London. Photo possession of the author.

Textile artist Lisa Radon in her article for the *American Craft Council* 'Craft as Verb' (2011) reconsidered the word, as she observed that several curators, writers, and artists have focused on craft as a verb, an action, and a performance. She said: 'In this view, the exhibition of craft becomes not the display of objects but the performance of what would otherwise happen in the studio' (Radon, 2011).

Radon's statement echoes Twomey's projects and specifically the *Factory: The Seen the Unseen* (2017) at Tate Modern. Twomey invited the audience during the first week of the project to be involved in the production line and ultimately giving out the fired objects to the visitors of the second week³.

A more recent example is the exhibition of Japanese textile artist Reiko Sudō *Making Nuno: Japanese Textile Innovation* (2021) at Japan House London. The show explored the unconventional materials, collaborations, and cutting-edge technologies Sudō has pioneered in the pursuit of sustainability, quality, and innovation. The show included five large-scale video and immersive sound and visual installations, designed by artistic director Saitō Seiichi, which not only brought to life the manufacturing processes, but also exposed the thought-provoking processes the artist was applying.

The installations, with the use of video and technology demonstrated the ways in which Sudō used innovation and creativity to make steps towards building a more

³ The exhibition discussed in detail in Chapter 4

sustainable global textile production industry, with a focus on the sustainability of materials, regional manufacturing industries and craftsmanship (Figure 23).



Figure 23 Reiko Sudō (2021) Details and installation view 'Web Shaping: Jellyfish' part of *Making Nuno: Japanese Textile Innovation*. Japan House London. Photo possession of the author.

These examples showcase practices that are a dynamic response to contemporary society, emphasising the genre-resistant practices which enable inter/cross-disciplinary outcomes to come to the forefront. These examples direct to the term 'performative' as expressed in von Hantelmann's investigation of how an artwork 'acts' within the ritualistic exhibition space, particularly her notion of the performative in relation to the shift from what an artwork depicts and represents to the effects and experiences that it produces.

In principle, the performative triggers a methodological shift: in how we look at any artwork and the way in which it produces meaning (von Hantelmann, 2014). The practices show that performativity involves the idea that perceptions can be transformed through the active mobilisation of bodies, texts and objects. In this

sense, I may claim that performative works favour an understanding of knowledge as a collective and transformative process.

Art historian Jeni Sorkin in *Live Forms: Women, Ceramics, and Community* (2016) examined women clay artists and argued that the feminist art movement sought to transform our society radically, and, more specifically, to dismantle the systems that enforce man's domination over all beings - from women, to animals, to the environment.

One of the key makers discussed in the book was ceramic artist Beatrice Wood. Sorkin described Wood's work saying that there is 'something incredibly theatrical' describing the two vessels to resemble 'catholic relics' or 'show pieces on a stage' (Sorkin, 2021). Sorkin's work also investigated the reasons why historically craft has occupied a position outside of dominant art discourses.

Craft scholar Tanya Harrod in *Craft* (2018) argued that craft practice supports a wealth of new feminist strategies to interpret and engage the material world. Harrod investigated the relationship between feminism and craft and confirmed that contemporary feminist theories on materiality broaden the craft discussion and assert the relationship between maker and material as an active exchange with the substances from which craft objects are produced.

The above contextual and literature review showed that contemporary craft has created space for radically pluralistic practices that combine and cross formerly distinct borders, disciplines, materials, techniques, histories, and theories. Craft is now viewed as a practice within the broader field of art which in many cases could be aligned with and compared to performance art, with the common abilities of

these two historically marginalised disciplines to challenge dominant art historical systems and values.

From this statement, it is possible to think through how performance and performativity may be exerting a similar influence on the tenets and structures of craft theory and practice, shifting or displacing values such as skill materiality and craft knowledge.

This chapter drew from performance art, performance studies and performativity literature to use as a lens through which to view craft events. At this point, it is important to investigate what craft is and what is its meaning and future in the twenty-first century, which will be addressed in the next chapter.

The previous sections set up the curatorial, the curator-*auteur*, the *mise-en-scène* and performance/performativity materials, which constitute the theoretical framing of the thesis. These materials are applied in this chapter to examine contemporary craft practice.

This chapter, is the central focus of this thesis, broadens the traditional notion of the field, moving away from craft's fixed utilitarian point of view, considering it to be an active, relational concept, a process that only exists in motion (Adamson, 2007:3-4).

This chapter comprises four parts. The first part provides an insight of my research process. The second part emphasises on the historical overview of craft and the intersections between other disciplines and fine art. The third part explores the field today and highlights the growing number of contemporary makers who are incorporating performance in their craft practice (performance craft). Finally, the fourth part considers and compares the conceptual overtone of performing crafts and avant-garde.

Research Process

I have conducted an evaluation of works over a ten-year period from 2010 to the present by analysing the photographic and film records for most of the practices

discussed in the chapter. These were collected from various sources including books, magazines, internet, makers own notes and from the use of my own research journal.

My method involved a visual and conceptual comparison of these records against materials, drawn from the literature analysed in the previous chapters. This method offered a better understanding of the works, as well as lens to identify links between the individual practices in the field.

Moreover, the research carried out throughout included visiting exhibitions, craft-related performances, artists' studios, external lectures, symposiums, conferences, and visits to archives. An important aspect of the research was a series of interviews with craft artists and curators.

I have used the *auteur* structuralist analysis and the concept of *mise-en-scène* to investigate the recent practice as examined in Chapter 4. In addition, the intellectual/philosophical aspects of each practitioner were examined through the lens of performance and performativity as analysed in Chapter 5. Moreover, I have constructed a visual timeline, presenting key projects and makers. This visual mapping allowed me to identify patterns from which the practices could be compared.

The focus is on the way each maker incorporates and bridges the different disciplines, the importance and relevance of space in their practice and how the audience receives crafts, exhibitions, performances, and installations.

The emphasis is on a wave of contemporary artists who are transforming the image of crafts, challenging historical and cultural preconceptions by incorporating performance or performativity, resulting in progressive, often political work.

In summary, with a view to come to a better understanding of the research subject, and ultimately answer the research questions, I have conducted a thorough investigation across and beyond disciplines. The study explored theory and philosophy curatorial, performance through critical analysis of happenings of crafts, exhibitions, and events. As the emphasis is on contemporary craft incorporating performance and curatorship, historic theories will not be reviewed in detail and will only be referred to as appropriate. The investigation is led by discussions on the shifting or evolving identity of contemporary crafts practice.

Craft Historic Overview

Historical evidence indicates craft practitioners to be mainly rural and from the working class, which comes in juxtaposition with the 'arts' movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where the participants were mostly from middle and upper classes. This differentiation in dynamics led to the use of the term Arts and Crafts to distinguish the traditional perception of craftsmanship from the new movement (Greenhalgh, 2017).

The concept of crafts as a defined area or type of work, a skill applicable to many areas or types of work, came into being over the course of the nineteenth century. The founders of the Arts and Crafts movement were concerned by the loss of traditional manual skills as industry mechanised its production (Adamson, 2009:5). This loss of skill was accompanied by alarming material poverty and spiritual deprivation. The workers were seen as nothing more than minders of machines,

alienated from the things that they made. The solution lay not in simply rectifying their poverty, but in changing the nature of the way they worked.

The movement proposed a return into a pre-industrial model of work and society, a restoration of manual skills and the opportunity to a personal responsibility in manufacturing the product. In this way they proposed the restoration of dignity and spiritual satisfaction. It adapted a model that was a romanticised interpretation of mediaeval society.

In this sense, the discourses surrounding the aesthetic deliberations of the eightieth century and the dematerialised art object of the post-1960s period are not as different as they first appear. Both rely on distinguishing the social constitution of the material process and its outcome to notions of play and experiment.

This prevailing ideology also influenced aesthetic philosophy. Philosopher Larry Shiner noted that: 'by making disinterestedness the key to the universality of aesthetic judgement, Kant distinguished the autonomy of aesthetic experience not only from ordinary pleasure of sense or utility but also from science and morality' (Shiner, 2001:146).

This perspective is used to develop the knowledge of crafts process and practice is created within the activity of making as much as within the end objects. These constitute forms of behaviour aimed at testing the limits of possibilities involved in the interaction between actions by the maker, curator or audience and the materials of the environment as well as the *mise-en-scène*.

This echoes craft scholar Tanya Harrod who described 'craft' as 'too pregnant with meaning' (Harrod, 2007:34). Harrod's metaphor is deployed to think through

concerns regarding the practice, the history and heritage as well as the transmission of knowledge and the future, how the practice will evolve, adapt, and mutate to meet societal needs.

This was addressed at the *Power of Making* exhibition curated by Daniel Charny at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (2011) in collaboration with the Crafts Council, which displayed making processes and highlighted the growing importance of making in material culture. The core of this exhibition was on craft, objects that relate not to the quick invention of conceptual art but the slow perfection of skill. The constant endeavour that allowed someone to improve at what they could do with materials.



Figure 24 *The Power of Making* (2011). Exhibition view. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo V&A Images, property of the copyright holder.

Academic Sir Christopher Frayling, and craft scholar and curator Martina Margetts, in the *Power of Making* book which accompanied the exhibition, proposed craft to be a form of knowledge (Frayling, 2011a:31), and making to be a thinking process (Margetts, 2011:39).

Contemporary crafts practice demonstrates that there are numerous sources and influences coming to deliver on the perception of craft, both from the production as well as the consumption end, which means that it is *a priori* open to multifarious interpretation. The nature of craft means that there will never be singular or pure meaning, especially now where the boundaries with other disciplines or creative practices cross-over and converge.

Academic, social analyst Richard Sennett, furniture maker Peter Korn and academic philosopher Matthew Crawford argued that making crafts or buying goods from makers enables a meaningful relationship with the material world.

Sennett in *The Craftsman* argued that 'craftsmanship names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake' (Sennett, 2008:9). He regarded crafts to be a continuum of reinvention and reinvigoration by craft makers who are drawn from the trials and experiences of their predecessors.

Sennett took an historical and socio-political view of crafts as a skill and looked at how it shapes not only the objective productions but also the social interpretations. Sennett used craft practice as a metaphor or as a verb, suggesting that craftsmanship underlies and informs all our activities and actions (Sennett, 2008:287). Sennett's account did not elaborate on creativity, a concept linked to Hungarian-American psychologist. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi book *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (1996). Csikszentmihalyi pointed out that truly creative people work for their own sake.

This idea could be identified in Crawford's *The Case for Working with Your Hands* (2010) and Korn's *Why we make Things and Why it Matters* (2014) books, who aimed

to develop an understanding of craftsmanship as an activity that connects us to others and affirms what is best in ourselves.

Particularly, Korn referring to his students, stated 'what lures them (in furniture making) is the hope of finding a deeper meaning by learning to make things well with their own hands' (Korn, 2014:9). For Korn, the action of making is considered a source of meaning, authenticity, and fulfilment.

Ceramic artist and academic Alison Britton in a gallery leaflet for the British Crafts Centre (1985) argued:

Craft is a means to an end and is not really anything in itself. It consists of doing something properly, and it is a basis of recognition of values and skills and methods and knowledge of materials. It has no real substance or meaning without one or other of these learnings ... Craft is a substratum not an entity. (Britton, 2013:8)

More than two decades later, craft scholar Glenn Adamson noted: 'It (crafts) requires space, time, skill, infrastructure, and tools. It's not conceptual art, therefore its critical apparatus is fundamentally different; it's complicit, embedded, materialized' (Adamson, 2011).

Britton and Adamson, emphasised on the values of craft, such as skills, methods, and knowledge of materials, which constitute the core apparatus of the practice.

The twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century was an era of conflict, social change, and scientific development. Technological innovation enabled more objects to be produced and used than in any other time in known

history. However, many of these objects were ephemeral and disposable, leading to a growing concern for sustainability and environmental issues. All forms of art, including crafts, created during the last few thousand years of human history are being challenged in today's world.

What is notable though, is the 'persistence' of hand-making as a method of manufacture, and, according to art critic Peter Dormer, is one of the most interesting aspects of visual culture in the twentieth century (Dormer, 1997:ix).

My claim is that Dormer's observation is still relevant. Indeed, this was evident in the recent Venice Art Biennale (2022). The Biennale, curated by Cecilia Alemani, titled the *Milk of Dreams*, included an extraordinary amount of craftwork - textiles and ceramics - which for this exhibition was revolutionary and, in a way, bridged certain schisms within the cultural art tradition. The exhibition comprised contemporary craft work including anthropomorphic vases by ceramic artist Dame Magdalene Odundo (Figure 25) as well as plotter prints and digitally woven textiles by fibre artist Charlotte Johannesson, juxtaposed with contemporary and historic artworks from the nineteenth century.



Figure 25 Ceramic works by Dame Magdalene Odundo at the 2022 Venice Biennale, Arsenale Section. Photo by Ben Davis, property of copyright holder.

A specific interest in Odundo originates from the fact that her vessels blend multiple associations and meanings in a manner that makes them simultaneously familiar and novel. Her work demonstrates an interweaving of references to historical and contemporary making practices from different cultures including Mexican traditional pottery, Greek Cycladic, British studio pottery, traditional ceremonial vessels from Kenya and Nigeria, as well as modernist sculpture.

Odundo's pieces are hand-built using a coiling technique. The pieces are left unglazed. The colour derives from the clay body and thin layers of slip clay, while the smooth, shimmering surface is achieved by hand burnishing before and after firing.

Amorphous in shape yet resembling the human body (with a strong reference to the female form, particularly in curvature and sinuosity), the pots are vehicles for thinking about the human body and its relationship to space.

The Venice Art Biennale made evident the relevance of craft within our current society, however it raised the question: what is the meaning of craft today?

Craft Today

A key text that aimed to set out the sense of what British crafts was in the twentieth century is Tanya Harrod's *the Crafts in Britain in the Twentieth Century* (1999), published right at the end of last century. In her book, Harrod aimed to make crafts persuasive and meaningful, worthy of funding and of interest for both public and private collectors (Harrod, 1999:10). She provided an overview of the crafts movement, examining the 'shifting identity' of crafts in the twentieth century while

discussing the complex role crafts played during the socio-political and cultural changes in Britain (Harrod, 1999:10). Harrod juxtaposed crafts with fine art, architecture and design, observing how crafts have been defined and redefined themselves throughout the century and have been 'put in service for many ideas and ideologies' (Harrod, 1999:2-3).

Harrod in her foreword stated that crafts should be seen as a continuum of visual arts (Harrod, 1999:10), whereas a couple of years later, curator Paul Greenhalgh in the *Persistence of Crafts* (2002) in his introduction 'Craft in a Changing World' proposed crafts to be a 'consortium of genres in the visual arts' (Greenhalgh, 2002:1). The genres covered in Greenhalgh's book include ceramics, glass, textiles, furniture, woodworking, jewellery, and metalwork. Greenhalgh observed a shift in craft practice, stating in his book that crafts are deliberately presented as a 'fluid set of practices, propositions, and positions' juxtaposing past descriptions of crafts (Greenhalgh, 2002:1).

Greenhalgh highlighted the particularities of what is considered craft and argued that the reasons that raised and enhanced the differentiation of crafts from the other arts was the same reason that enabled creative genre to shift and flourish. The confinement has resulted in the growth of ties and the recognition of correspondences which successfully protected makers as a collective. He urged the importance of not romanticising or fetishizing craft as a thing in itself and claimed that what really matters at this juncture is where all these genres are going and how they are going to develop in the next period of years (Greenhalgh 2002:1).

Curator critic Martina Margetts in the book's review in *Design History* (2004) questioned Greenhalgh's anthology, claiming that crafts need a continuous growth of carefully researched analyses and theoretical engagement (Margetts, 2004:308). Margetts stated that craft does not need 'a regurgitation' of the progressive line as recurs in the book but rather well-written discourses to create a theoretical interrogation. What stands out from the book, which Margetts also highlighted, is curator Karen Livingstone's conclusion in her essay 'Art Manufacturer of the twenty-first century' which proposed:

the practitioners of the present and future will not be so ideologically motivated, or determined to reject technology, or keen to remain in the position of 'other' or, obsessed with individualism, if they are to have any relevance in the twenty-first century.
(Livingston, 2002:48)

Livingstone called for an alternative shift in craft practice implying that for craft to be relevant in the twenty-first century, the practice needs to move away from preconception and become more hybrid.

In terms of the critical texts on crafts practice developed in the twenty-first century within the field of crafts dialogues, it is vital to recognize art historian's Howard Rissati book *A Theory of Crafts* (2007). Rissati's intention was to move the notion of crafts and investigate the expanded vision of crafts, one that is no longer limited to the object alone, but considered both the metaphorical function and the aesthetic expression. Rissati examined the value of the handmade and aimed to develop an

understanding of craft's relevance in the twenty-first century by making a clear distinction between 'use and function' (Rissati 2007:24). He argued that practical function can help us understand a 'constellation of features unique to both the traditional and the contemporary Studio Craft object' (Rissati, 2007:21). Rissati inquired about the contemporary craft object which 'is about function but does not actually function' (Rissati, 2007:285). Rissati challenged many of the stereotypes about craft, proposing to not only re-evaluate the preconceptions about craft but to ponder what constitutes art.

Craft scholar Glenn Adamson in *Thinking Through Craft* (2007) examined the philosophical problems of craft claiming that craft should be considered as 'a word, an idea, and as a category' (Adamson, 2007:3). Adamson saw crafts as a process and considered them as an approach, an attitude, or a habit of actions. Adamson's concept of craft moved between a generalised sense of action and idea that is culturally labelled, lining up the discussion of craft with fine art. Adamson pointed out that craft has played the role of 'other to fine art' in such important ways that it is most usefully discussed in those terms. This affordance of the breadth in context for craft, beyond the traditional end points, directly relates to the shift in craft practice. The wider context of crafts showcases objects alongside their making and tools which allow a dialogue between the material, process, gestures and finished states.

Even though the book mainly aligned crafts with fine art, it constituted a key text to begin unravelling the shift of craft to performance, unfolding the author's claim that crafts only exist in motion (Adamson, 2007:4). It is hard to say whether Adamson's

intention was deliberate at the time, however he acknowledged from the very first chapter the relationship between crafts and performance, where he stated that crafts is a way of doing things (a process), not a classification of objects, institutions, or people (Adamson, 2007:4). Adamson described crafts as 'an amalgamation of core principles, which are put into relation with one another through the overarching idea of craft' (Adamson 2007: 4).

In the UK, craft is enjoying one of the periodic revivals that has defined its existence in industrialised economies since the nineteenth century. This context is what eminent craft scholars including Glenn Adamson and Tanya Harrod have called 'modern craft' (Adamson, 2010:4). Adamson in the introduction of the anthology *The Craft Reader* (2010), affirmed that he was fascinated by the conjunction of the words 'modern craft' and explained that his anthology aimed to investigate the complex meanings these words give to each other 'craft's transformations within the process of modernization; the way that Modernist and Postmodernists have used and viewed craft' (Adamson, 2010:4). He concluded the introduction with an emphasis on the oppositional terms saying:

Modern craft would best be seen not as a paradox, or an anachronism, or a set of symptoms, but as a means of articulation.

It is not a way of thinking outside of modernity, but a modern way of thinking otherwise. (Adamson, 2010:5)

Informed from my observations and extended contextual study, I am seeing craft as a fluid set of practices, propositions and positions that shift and develop. The

literature demonstrated that distinction of the boundaries, expressing or describing the juxtaposition of the intelligible to the invisible, and the characteristics denoting the object and subject, traditional or novel are blurred.

Performance Craft

Craft makers were concerned with the physical process involved in entering into a dialogue with the material, technical knowledge, skill and craftsmanship.

Curator Jorunn Veiteberg in her analysis in *Craft in Transition* (2005) discussed a paradigm shift from applied art to art-oriented craft in the 1970s (Veiteberg, 2005:24), explaining that 'the concept of art-oriented craft allowed for an artistic freedom that applied art had never permitted' (Veiteberg, 2005:25). The book emphasised the distinctive qualities and effects of craft, discussed new craft and challenged old categorisations. In her analysis, Veiteberg argued that in the past, craft referred to handmade objects that typically served a particular function in our daily lives, including 'functions in cultural rituals and rites' (Veiteberg, 2005:29). However, the author claimed that there is a new tendency in contemporary craft that contributed to expanding the field (Veiteberg, 2005:37).

Veiteberg claimed that makers, by reinterpreting Sigmund Freud and by being influenced by psychoanalysis, have developed a more nuanced understanding of visual and material culture, moving the discussion beyond technique and skill to a discussion of ideas (Veiteberg, 2005:74). For example, Freud's concept of the uncanny, which refers to what is known but not familiar, has become a fixation for many makers during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The status of the craft object was called into question, when everyday objects were thoughtfully recreated by artists using new techniques and materials.

These craft objects are exceedingly realistic, often surreal in their appropriation of



Figure 26 Maisie Broadhead (2019) Installation view 'Part of the Furniture Chair', National Trust Fenton House, Hampstead. Photo by Oskar Proctor, property of copyright holder

the visual characteristics of the object they are meant to represent. An example of this is seen in the work of artist and jewellery maker Maisie Broadhead. Broadhead re-interprets art historical images and cultural motifs, employing their aesthetic to

investigate illusion, the uncanny and the ritual of storytelling. Broadhead was commissioned by the National Trust to create seating in response to seventeenth century Fenton House in Hampstead. *Part of the Furniture* (2019), invited visitors to slow down, sit down and look again in this exciting collision of old and new (Figure 26).

Broadhead explained:

My chair is a response to the last occupant of Fenton House, Lady Binning. She was widowed relatively young. Anecdote has it that she became reclusive and wore 'strange mourning clothes' long after the death of her husband. I have cloaked a chair with fabric which merges into the carpet of the Drawing Room. The chair becomes fixed or trapped in the room. I like the notion that while in a reclusive state you become 'part of the furniture', integral to the house. (Broadhead, 2019)

Making is Thinking

Academics, Richard Sennett and Sir Christopher Frayling have considered making as a way of thinking. Particularly, Sennett moved craft beyond the notion of mere skill, claiming that 'making is thinking'. In *The Craftsman* (2008) he interrogated working methods, and the types of knowledge craftsmen engage in and presented craft as a dialogue between concrete practices and thinking. This dialogue could be seen as the discourse developed between the maker and the visitor through the

performance or as a dialogue between disciplines, the exchange of knowledge and transfer of skills and methods.

Frayling *On Craftsmanship: Towards A New Bauhaus* (2011), pointed to the timeless necessity of craft by referring to the etymology of the word, origins from Old English *cræft* meaning power, strength. Fraying embarked on a proposal for the establishment of a research and education institution, where art, craft, and design merge, a new dynamic Bauhaus of the twenty-first century. He had drawn from *The Craftsman* (2008) where Sennett argued that the pleasure of making, and the improvement of skills are as important to modern society as it was in the past. Frayling's book presented a varied analysis on theories of the definition, status, and education of craft and concluded by returning to his key concept, the proposition that a new, twenty-first century Bauhaus should be:

A place where art, craft and design can engage with the post-industrial age, and with educating a new kind of artist or craftsman or designer or all three who can in turn flourish within a post-modern society and culture; a culture where we have moved on from net curtains to internet, from the space of places to the space of flows. (Frayling, 2011b:133)

The dialogue craft develops between disciplines, the exchange of knowledge and transfer of skills and methods was at the core of *Encounters on the Shop Floor Embodiment and the Knowledge of the Maker* conference at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (2019). Of particular interest was the subject of the panel

discussion chaired by professor of surgical education Roger Kneebone, comprising three-dimension embroiderer and lacemaker Fleur Oakes, puppeteer and dramaturg Rachel Warr, magician Will Houstoun and general surgeon Chris Peters. The panellists discussed the parallels between craft and medicine, and how collaborations between medical professional and craft makers have led to changes in approach. Specifically, the panellists talked about how these crossovers improved surgeons' awareness when handling suture thread, and inspired experimentation with new stitching techniques. The panel unanimously recognised that by engaging craft with experts from other disciplines lead to new insights.

Furthermore, the dialogue developed between the maker and the visitor is identified in Ghanaian British textile and performance artist Enam Gbewonyo practice. Gbewonyo revolves around the handcraft processes used to manipulate and create fabric such as knitting, printing, weaving and embroidery. Gbewonyo works with used ballet tights to tell stories of identity, alienation, and becoming. She is drawing from the experiences of her mother, an NHS nurse who was forced to wear thick tights that clashed with her natural skin tone. Her practice invites the viewer to consider skill and materiality, bringing new life and meaning to the way craft is being experienced.

Gbewonyo used *Oculus/The Third Eye*, a length of chunky knit tights piece, for her performance *Nude Me/Under the Skin: The Awakening of Black Women's Visibility One Pantyhose at a time* (2019). Gbewonyo investigated nude ballet tights from the perspective of being a black woman who, up until recently, was not represented by a shade of nude that reflected the skin tone. Her practice through the performance

and craft workshops also extends further to reach and share the untold stories of women from her broader community. Her idiosyncratic performance united elements of the traditional Ghanaian Ewe dance, alongside the seeming domesticity of nylon tights. Within this delicate realm, Gbewonyo's work addressed issues of discrimination while celebrating the sensuality of the female form, and elasticity and malleability of the human body.



Figure 27 Enam Gbewonyo (2019) Gbewonyo performing *Nude Me/ Under the Skin: the Awakening of Black Women's Visibility one Panythose at a time* at Venice Biennale. Photo Michal Murawski, property of the copyright holder.

Role of Craft

In the *Shape of Crafts* (2017) academic art historian Ezra Shales added to the contemporary discourse by posing key questions that concern craft today, addressing the role of the maker and the meaning that shaped the understanding about craft. Shales celebrated the haptic element in craft. His claim was that the pleasures and mysteries accessed by touch create a path to value craft expansively.

Shales asked the reader to begin to value craft as a human instinct, taking a step away from thinking it through metaphorically or reducing it to an 'exemplary exhibitionist object' (Shales 2017:7).

Shales' argument directs to American psychologist John Dewey who believed that active hands and agile fingers made us more essentially human. Shales, following that logic, said that we must consider that we grow less human when we fail to see craft as a necessity. He suggested that identifying craft has mostly been a highly personal affair. Craft made more sense when people kept and mended things more often and threw away less. In the past there was a specialised army of artisans for each specific material. Breakage demands an imaginary reconstruction and reckoning. Shales stated that the 'best definition of craft might be that it is easily understood but not easy to do and best understood through doing or watching work that needs to be done' (Shales 2017:8).

Authors like Shales argue that the role of craftsmanship in our society is fragile and there is danger in preserving it artificially as well as underestimating the vitality of ancient skills. Shales seems to consider craft as an avatar for humans' memory of things and their journey (Shales 2017:95). Shales drew from academic Malcolm McCullough, who a decade earlier built a case upholding humane traits and values during the formative stages of new practices in digital media. McCullough in *Abstracting Craft* (1998) argued that anyone who gives form with software, whether in architecture, painting, animating, modelling, simulating, or manufacturing, is practising personal knowledge and producing visual artefacts that, although not material, are still products of the hand, eye and mind. Similarly, Shales refuted the

historical fetish with 'natural materials' saying that: 'The sense of an opposition between artificial and natural materials is a pervasive worry in craft. We misread materials as metaphors for the authentic and phony' (Shales 2017:97).

Shales expressed the material turn in art history which is no longer secondary to visual culture. Material culture has become a crucial part of the training in technical art history and conservation studies. There is a long legacy of modern craft practice through the triangulation of decorative arts and design histories, folklore studies, and material culture theory. Shales argued that craft is a constellation 'carrying old rays of light' that luminates the present moment by informing it with previous experiences. His claim was that 'material synapses' can connect us (Shales, 2017:244).

Another important point that Shales raised in his book is the urge for collaboration: 'our future depends on learning collaborative crafts that flow with, not against, our environment as conditions change and as we do, too' (Shales, 2017:251). Shales claimed that craft's role is about collaboration. Pushing this statement forward I would claim that collaboration allows in taking inspiration and building on ideas and methods brought in by the different partner which leads in creating original work or work that could be ascribe as avant-garde, resulting in developing a new space for invention and improvement.

Performance Craft vs The Avant-Garde

Much of the writing about performance craft is centred on identifying historical precedents drawn from a craft perspective, or involving craft artists, processes, or

materials. While this craft-centred approach is an important step in framing contemporary performance craft practices, a comprehensive reading of these works situates them not only within a history of craft practice, but also within the history and concerns of performance art.

Adamson's study (2007) demonstrated how modernist art discourse is centred on the notion of the 'avant-garde'. Adamson explained that art is considered autonomous, pure, and self-critical in its production and reproduction of 'avant-garde' art, whereas craft is supplemental, impure, and uncritical because it is ruled by 'material' and 'skill'. The notion of the avant-garde is idealised as the essence of human creativity, but is not applicable to crafts, explaining why craft is denigrated.

However, as many in the craft scene argued, avant-gardeness is not a relevant notion for craft, and what matters more is the integrity of craftsmanship. Sennett argued that craftsmanship consists of 'problem solving and problem finding' which accords with the inherent human nature to seek new challenges (Sennett, 2008:20, 172).

Further to the view that the notion of craftsmanship is irreconcilable with the notion of the 'avant-garde' was addressed by Scholar Yuki Kikuchi in the essay 'The Craft Debate at the Crossroads of Global Visual Culture: Recentring Craft in Postmodern and Postcolonial Histories' in *World Art*. Kikuchi referred to the art historian Kitazawa Noriaki who in *Avangyarudo ikō no Kōgei* [Craft after the Avant-garde] astutely described craft as 'avant-garde without avant-gardism' and 'avant-garde in the age without avant-garde' (Kitazawa s.d. cited in Kikuchi, 2015). Kitkuchi explained that Kitazawa argued that while the notion of the avant-garde stands on the border of art and non-art and is also supported by the polarised concept of human mind and

machine, craft resides borderless in both art and non-art, in a state where the human mind and machine are enmeshed (Kitkuchi, 2015).

In post-industrial society, where this separation seems increasingly blurred, the notion of the avant-garde seems to have collapsed. However, this raises the question of what the meaning of avant-garde within an artistic context is, and particularly what its significance is within craft.

Ceramic artist Peter Voulkos could be seen as a classic example of an avant-garde artist working in ceramics. Voulkos started his practice being a functional potter, and then by breaking all the rules, he invented a new language for ceramics. In the 1950s Voulkos liberated ceramic practice from its traditional, historical and technical limitations by reimagining the vessel form, emerging clay beyond its aesthetic possibilities to include gesture and sculpturally expressive forms. Voulkos often created work as part of 'theatrical' demonstrations, expressed an intense physicality, and reflected a sense of immediacy and improvisation (Figure 28).

Journalist Hunter Drohojowska-Philip, in 'Breaking Ground Still Fires Him Up' for the *Los Angeles Times*, cited a Voulkos' interview comment:

Wielding clay is magic. The minute you touch it, it moves, so you've got to move with it. It's like a ritual. I always work standing up, so I can move my body around. I don't sit and make dainty things.

(Voulkos 1981 cited in Drohojowska-Philip 1999)

Voulkos continued acknowledging his admiration to expressionism and in particular he referred to avant-garde artist Jackson Pollock:

I was terribly impressed with Jackson Pollock and with the mythical aspect of breaking through the old traditions of art... It was a tactile period even in painting and I felt my work in clay had its parallel in paintings. (Voulikos 1981 cited in Drohojowska-Philp 1999)

What is important to note here is women ceramicists contemporary to Voulikos were also breaking through traditions. However, they were mainly ignored at the time. Art historian's Jenni Sorkin book *Live Form* (2016) throws light on the important role played by women ceramic artists of the 1950s and 1960s in shaping collective and performative experiences of art. Sorkin revealed overlooked women ceramicists who built alternative communities of practitioners while exploring issues of form and process. Sorkin argued that their work anticipated avant-garde collectives and participatory art forms of the late twentieth century.



Figure 28 Peter Voukos (s.d.) 'Wielding clay is magic'. Photo property of the copyright holder

In particular, the book is focusing on the practices of three American women ceramicists, Marguerite Wildenhain (1896-1985), Mary Caroline Richards (1916-1999) and Susan Peterson (1925-2009) who each have links to the twentieth century avant-garde art schools, Bauhaus and the Black Mountain College. Sorkin drew out how each one of these women were part of a much wider historical context: 'The overlapping histories of Wildenhain, Richards, and Peterson constitute a 1950s

bohemia that anticipates the 1960s commune, the 1970s feminist cooperative, and the 1980s alternative space movement' (Sorkin, 2016:8).

The title of Sorkin's book *Live Form* comes from a term coined by Wildenhain in her book *Pottery: Form and Expression* (1959). As Sorkin explained, Wildenhain coined the term to describe:

wheel-thrown vessel, in which the body of the craftsman, through their physical manipulation of the clay, determines the size and shape of the most intimate spaces of the vessel itself: its girth and weight, the delicacy of the rim, the strength and placement of a handle and so on. (Sorkin, 2016:11)

Sorkin continued saying that photographer Otto Hagel, from LIFE magazine, was fascinated by the choreography of Wildenhain's process of making and produced a series of time lapse photographs (Figure 29).



Figure 29 Otto Hagel (1956) *Marguerite Wildenhain: Hands*. Showing the motion of Wildenhain hand-making a pot. Photo property of the copyright holder.

Artists who started their careers in the late 1970s, such as the ceramicists Alison Britton (Figure 30), Richard Slee (Figure 31) and Angus Suttie (Figure 32) broke away from established conventions of studio pottery to produce witty, amusing, and light-hearted 'everyday' objects which, however often, seem to have retained their function, to be a teapot or vase. As with others of their contemporaries, throwing on the potter's wheel was left at the side in favour of hand-building, a process which allowed time for thought and a particular sort of personal expression.



Figure 30 Alison Britton (s.d.) In the Studio. Photo property of the copyright holder.



Figure 31 Richard Slee (2018) Views of *Framed*, Crafts Study Centre, Farnham. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 32 Angus Suttie (2018) Views of *Angus Suttie* exhibition, Crafts Study Centre, Farnham. Photo possession of the author

Alison Britton in her essay 'The Manipulation of Skill and Outer Limit of Function' (1991) stated:

I spent hours as a student learning to throw pots, I invested myself in the acquisition of that skill, and yet found it unsuitable for what I wanted to make. Throwing implies the production of a symmetrical round form, which did not seem to answer my desires for an improvisational mode of working. (Britton, 1991)

Interestingly, Britton concluded her essay by bridging skill, which is 'orderly and controlled' with expression which is 'free and exciting but it's going to be messy'

saying, 'The control is there in the thinking and the making, but it does not confine the sense of exuberance. These are expressive works of admirable skill. They comfort the familiar with the sense of not going backwards' (Britton, 1991).

This seems to be evident in the work of emerging makers, such as Philip Young and the digital experiments of makers including Geoffrey Mann (Figure 33), and Michael Eden (Figure 34), who are challenging historical conceptualizations of craft.



Figure 33 *Geoffrey Mann* (2008) Teacup and Saucer, *Crossfire* Natural Occurrence series. Photo property of the copyright holder.



Figure 34 Michael Eden (2016). View of Bloom Series 2011-2015 installation, *History Re-Printed* exhibition, Holborn Museum, Bath. Photo possession of the author.

The literature showed that currently, crafts considered to be an object or in respect of public intervention an installation, a dematerialized, immaterialized, or materialised concept. Craft implies thought and tacit knowledge, skill and expertise.

The observation was on a wave of contemporary makers, who re-claimed craft, breaking away from the traditional practice of the singular still object. These makers directed the attention to the ways their material and their body performs and the way they create a sense of unease for the viewer, by using the familiar, and as Britton suggested 'with the sense of not going backwards' (Britton, 1991).

Key figures of this wave of artists incorporating performance include ceramic artists Clare Twomey, Keith Harrison, Phoebe Cummings and Edmund de Waal, and textile

artists Caroline Broadhead, Celia Pym, Raisa Kabir and Chiharu Shiota who have formed the focus of those discussions. Their practice demonstrated the significance of the move away from creating traditional objects. It is the materiality and skills and inherent craft knowledge that link up the seemingly indecipherable aspects of these specific makers who are pushing the boundaries of their medium with the notion of what craft is in its essence, as analysed above.

Britton in the introduction of *Seeing Things* (2013) addressed her journey into her creative process on writing and making, calling to the maker's intentionality (the insider), claiming:

writing as an insider involves thinking through the workings of something, to see where senses of material and processes, for instance, have played a part in the form and presence of an object. Being an insider means understanding things with head and hands, for their ideas, their specifics, and for their feel. (Britton, 2013:9)

Britton asserted that writing about how objects worked as ideas and explorations as well as material entities, was developed significantly in the 1980s, when, as she states, *Crafts* magazine encouraged an avant-garde (Britton, 2013:10).

With this statement Britton highlighted the shift in the understanding and awareness of craft at the time. Craft has since gained platforms to present the possibilities and relevance of craft within the contemporary avant-garde.

Makers who are using craft as their medium of creative expression, are pushing its marginalised status within the arts. Their work often deploys guerrilla or stealth

tactics⁴. Beautiful, or disformed, highly decorated, or minimal, utilitarian forms with or without function, analogue or digitally presented or formed, provoke the viewer into confronting challenging contemporary social, political and occasionally deeply personal themes.

This new wave of makers incorporated performance or performativity to denote craft's subversive agenda, thereby transforming craft's profile. Craft field continues to create ground-breaking work.

However, I would argue, that this identification of avant-garde which denoted this newness and experimentation, and the breaking away from the norm, seems to be problematic, as it carries a baggage of connotations which do not necessarily represent the makers.

This is evident in the absence of use of the term by these makers. For example, the introduction panel of the Caroline Broadhead *A Retrospective* (2019) at Lethaby Gallery characterises the breadth of the maker's creative output as 'pioneering', rather than making any reference to avant-garde (Figure 35).

⁴ There is a reference to Guerrilla or stealth tactics the curatorial chapter.



Figure 35 Caroline Broadhead *A Retrospective* (2019) exhibition view. Lethaby Gallery, London. Photo possession of the author.

Additionally, the term ‘avant-garde’ could possibly lead to misconceptions of what the makers intentions were, or the dated term might need to be redefined and re-examined. This problem was observed and addressed in the *New Literary History* journal in 2010. The issue titled ‘What is an Avant-Garde?’ sought to re-examine this category. Richard Schechner’s essay ‘The Conservative Avant-Garde’ confirmed the historic political affirmation of the term as “anarchist or radical and alternative and fiercely against” and noted its ineluctably tied to modernism (Schechner, 2010:909).

In addition, literary scholar's Mike Sell essay 'What Is an Avant-Garde?' highlighted the avant-garde's pluralistic and contingent nature. Sell addressed the complexities of avant-garde relationship to institutions, the biases inherent to it and social identity as well as the limits of the existing theory. Whereas art historians Philippe Sers and Jonathan Eburne contribution 'The Radical Avant-Garde and the Contemporary Avant-Garde' acknowledged that debates about avant-garde and addressed the term's problems, stating that they arise from its social and economical valorisation: 'The notion of avant-gardism subsequently takes on a different meaning that it had originally; it has come to signify a mindset of formal innovation, rather than a dedication to exploration and radical creativity that clashes with convention' (Sers and Eburne, 2010:849).

Sers regarded that what is considered avant-garde could be accommodated within the economic regime which values formal innovation for reasons of competitiveness and profitability. Yet, what is also problematic in this reading is that competitiveness juxtaposes the collective and collaborative aspect of innovative practice which was fundamental at the historic avant-garde.

The literature denoted that argument about the avant-garde remains a live issue in the unfolding present of contemporary thought as it was in the intellectual history of modernism. Therefore, for the purpose to move away from the misconceptions and the heterogeneous set of affirmations, disputations, and limitations of the avant-garde, I have identified the need to create a new term, *Kaino-craft*.

Kaino-craft characterises the pioneering and innovative craft practice which incorporates performance, or performative elements to address contemporary societal concerns i.e., environmental, and social issues, sustainability, and politics.

This chapter recognised craft to be an essentially human and humanising process. To craft something involves human interaction with technology, whether it is a pen, loom, or computer software and hardware. For the maker to create something, it involves a high level of autonomous control over an integrating process of thinking through making.

This chapter demonstrated that traditional craft practice has shifted and has been expanded beyond the object, featuring performative or performance art aspects resulting in different relationships with viewers, and participants. This pluralistic authorship has blurred the boundaries within museums and galleries, between presenter and participant, generating a productive friction between artist as instigator and audience as participant/collaborator.

Crafts had been pushed to the margins of intellectual life, but now they are being recognised and valued again. Currently craft practice is an object, or in respect of public intervention, an installation, a dematerialised, or materialised concept. The hand-made notion and touch are the crux of the process of making and experiencing; however, the practice has been expanded and liberated from traditional restrictions and crafts are made and designed incorporating cutting-edge technology and innovative materials.

The next chapter examines the new term *Kaino-craft* which seeks to define this shifted practice in question.

The analysis of craft in the twenty-first century developed discussions on the transformations of craft activity, which creates knowledge and community. The variety of craft terms and the performative as seen in literature review (Chapters 5 and 6), arguably prompts renewed debate on how performance craft can be asserted as a distinct category, or a set of categories, that demands more recognition as such from cultural institutions.

The observations around literacy and the available vocabulary in the previous chapter requested for the development of a new term - *kaino-craft* - to characterise these practices.

This chapter unfolds the thinking process I followed to derive in the development of the new term.

The term was a result of intense theoretical efforts to consider the core for every contemporary craft explored in this thesis. I introduced the term *kaino-craft* to define this specific shift observed, accelerating since the 2000s.

A wave of contemporary makers attempted to reveal the lived experiences through craft and critically commented on the practice relationship to everyday cycles of life. *Kaino-craft* embodies an intimate knowledge and understanding of materials, techniques, and skills. In addition, it comprises the conceptual agenda of these practices.

The chapter interrogates and evaluates *kaino-craft* by examining the relationship between material, skill, intellect (craft knowledge). The review examined eclectic

craft practices which I have considered as *kaino-craft*. The investigation of craft inquiries resulted in developing a model of practice consisting of four criteria to be further examined below: Collaboration, Experimentation, Innovation, and Participation.

Why Kaino-craft?

Liddell and Scott in the Greek-English Lexicon (s.d.) stated that the prefix *Kainos*, in Greek *καινός*, means novel, new in quality (innovation), fresh in development or opportunity, something not seen before. *Kainos* has a distinct difference from the word *Neo* (*νέο*) which means young. *Neo* primarily is seen as a temporal adjective and *kainos* as an adjective of quality. I am drawing from the Cremer-Kogel lexicon (s.d.) which best stated the argument for this distinction. They remarked that *neo* (*Νέο*) does not, in and of itself, supplant the old, but merely excludes it, whereas *kainos* (*καινός*) actually calls the old into question in a qualitative manner. Cremer-Kogel concluded that an object may be *kaino* (*Καινό*) without always being *neo* (*Νέο*). My argument is that *kaino-craft* denotes deep knowledge, understanding of materials and skill, and intellect with respect to move the practice consciously fresh and relevant to contemporary needs.

Conceptual projects which are noticeable in *kaino-craft* arise out of a shared concern regarding environmental and social issues, sustainability, and politics. Through observation of the craft contextual review, I have identified four distinct criteria unfolding *Kaino-Craft* practices: Collaboration, Experimentation, Innovation, and Participation.

A contextual review defined the qualities of creative practice offering a new way of discussing craft and identified a preference amongst makers and curators to emphasise craft practices related to the craft-thinking process rather than the final object. From my observations, most makers use this thinking-process as a means to develop their own knowledge in practice.

Thus, a conversation about materials, skills and craft knowledge was important to gain access to the insight of craft-thinking in practice, before moving towards analysing the four methodological tools of *kaino-craft*: Collaboration, Experimentation, Innovation, and Participation.

Material

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary (s.d.) the word 'Material' denotes the physical aspect of things as well as, means something which can be worked up, manipulated or anything that can be composed. Moreover, the investigation revealed that the word 'material' connotes philosophical and aesthetic ideas. Moreover, it is often accompanied by the word materiality, which has appeared to be one of the fundamental characteristics of media.

The suggestion that material is a central property of craft, has been addressed and agreed by the makers and craft scholars. In his writings ceramic artist Bernard Leach, stressed the tenet of 'truth to materials', involving an earnest choice of materials which are suitable, as well as recommending that 'nature speaks itself in making a good pot' (Leach, 1975). Leach and other practitioners and scholars affirmed that materials are part of makers' artistic expression. In addition, a part of makers

explorations is the understanding of their material, i.e., integral structural, textural qualities, sound and strength.

The potter Emmanuel Cooper exhibited a modern Triumph Bonneville motorcycle in *The Maker's Eye* exhibition at the Crafts Council (London, 1982). This selection echoes Robert Pirsig's philosophical novel *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974) where the protagonists set out to resolve the conflict between classic values that create machinery, such as a motorcycle, and romantic values, such as experiencing the beauty of a country road. Cooper pursued to celebrate the beauty of the handmade in everything and its possibilities. The motorbike, much of which was built by hand, is a fine and beautiful object, yet it is not craft by the prevailing definition. Cooper's approach set an example of twentieth century craft that expanded the notion of traditional craft and showed a glimpse of the versatile role and the development of the practice in the following decades.

This echoes ceramicist's Michael Cardew words who stated: 'If you are lucky, and if you live long enough, and if you trust your materials and you trust your instincts, you will see things of beauty growing in front of you, without having anything to do with it (Cardew 1966 cited in Adamson 2017:21).

Literary theorists Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and K. Ludwig Pfeiffer in their anthology *Materialities of Communications* (1994) questioned the reception of material in the twentieth century. In his essay, Pfeiffer, cited French philosopher's Jean-François Lyotard *Les Immatériaux* exhibition at Centre Pompidou (Paris, 1985) which aimed to examine matter in all its states. *Les Immatériaux* constituted an example in exhibitions history where curating is being approached from a philosophical perspective. What becomes clear reading the exhibition catalogue is that Lyotard's

concept of 'immateriality' is distinct to 'dematerialisation' of art object introduced by Lucy Lippard at the time. For Lyotard 'the immaterial' considered to be material that was no longer matter (meaning having substance). For example, Lyotard compared matter with the reality and asserted that language, information, and abstract networks replace matter.

Les Immatériaux revealed new conceptual possibilities by highlighting the importance of deconstructing the narrative of history which moves beyond the traditional museum approach. Lyotard introduced a fluid and non-teleological methodology, questioning the relationship between knowledge, objects, technology, and the ways in which narratives are constructed and distributed in society (Figure 36). He challenged the curatorial models, the gallery space itself, the agency of objects, and the function of institutions.



Figure 36 *Les Immatériaux* (1985) View the interactive displays. Centre Pompidou, Paris. Photo property of the copyright holder.

Indeed, museums and galleries used to function more as platforms that display and reproduce accepted knowledge and narratives, and less as public spaces for experimentation and new models of knowledge. However, recent practice demonstrates a change, a shift, as addressed in the previous chapters. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, curating refers to agency and authorship, and an exhibition refers not just to a medium, but rather to a form making possible to develop its own narratives and meaning, becoming in a way matter or a thing in itself. For *Beyond Trauma* at South Hill Park (Bracknell, 2021), I brought together creative writer Dr Lynn Hamilton working with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and textiles artist Tara Kennedy, identifying conceptual links, aiming to develop an understanding of different trauma manifestations.

This exhibition demonstrated that curating offered a way to bring different and differing materials together and alongside one another. The *auteur* curator created flexible points of juxtaposition for mutual exchange, a space within the process of exchange in which meaning as material becomes multiple and mutable. The exhibition offered a new place for departure.

The curatorial intention was to materialise the ties between creative writing and craft. The decision to select a textile artist was based on the etymology of the word text which relates to material properties, texture, and textile. Walter Benjamin has highlighted that the Latin word for text, *textum*, means a web, something woven, referring to words and sentences woven together which implies text's materiality (Benjamin, 1999:202).

The materials of the exhibition were text, textile and techni [a greek word for both art and craft]. These words share etymological roots, as well as are considered

formative processes establishing an interwoven structure, where writing, making and curating are brought together as partners of knowledge-production.

The exhibition included existing works ranging from textile sculptures, and a film demonstrating the textiles making process, as well as a display of a researcher's desk presenting personal notes, books, in addition to fiction literature and audio. For this project, Kennedy created 'Trauma' about Hamilton's story, 'That was Yesterday,' and in turn Hamilton wrote a story about Kennedy's 'Hope Emerging'.

'Trauma' a textile wreath made of mixed yarn, mixed fabric, wire, and nails. The work resembled a crucifixion crown of thorns, a painful burden, as of suffering, guilt, and anxiety. These emotions of suffering, guilt and anxiety are representative symptoms of PTSD. Kennedy used red coloured yarn wrapped pieces, that were knotted together and pierced with nails to express pain and suffering. The red yarn gradually transformed into ivory wrapped lengths which emerged into buds of hope.

'Hope Emerging' hanging knitted strips transformed from red coloured knots to a cascade of ivory shibori. Knitted strips were hung to create a cascade of emerging hope. The red colour of the blood was applied to suggest pain and suffering while the gradual transformation into ivory shibori bubbles implied hope. Each length was knotted and bound with yarn wrapped lengths and felted wool pieces, conveying protection and unity (Figure 40, Figure 41).

The exhibition situated in different spaces within two floors at South Hill Park. At the Studio gallery, there was an installation of the researcher's desk, containing personal items like books, notes, manuscripts, and postcards. The researcher's desk was an

imitation of the actual creative writer's desk, which alludes to the actions of the creative process of making and writing stories.

Above the Hamilton's researcher's desk, was displayed Kennedy's 'Trauma'. Alongside the desk installation, at eye level, it was displayed the labels of the short stories which included the title and a QR code (Quick Response) leading to an audio file (Figure 37, Figure 38, Figure 39). The visitors were invited to listen to the short stories narrated by the creative writer herself. The use of the QR code seemed appropriate as it allowed the visitors to access the audio files from their own smartphones.

The exhibition continued at the landing and the top of the Grand-Staircase with Kennedy's textiles. The wall of the Grand-Staircase was washed with the projection of a short repetitive film, showing Kennedy making and drawing (Figure 42).

The exhibition considered curating, text and textile practice suggesting a model of articulating text-textile-techni interplay. *Beyond Trauma* served to demonstrate the relationship between theory and practice, where practice articulates theory and concurrently in the same space theory materialises meaning.

Kennedy's making itself is performative, her act of hands, eyes, body, yarns, and threads joining and being joined through wrapping threading and stitching, becomes the materialisation of her storytelling. For Benjamin, storytelling is the craft of repeating stories, but each performance of the story embeds itself differently within the listener. The narrative becomes assimilated into and alongside other stories or other versions of the same story (Benjamin 1999:99). The storyteller's craft is to take

experience, personal or received, and turn it into the bodily experience for the audience.

Thus, the curatorial brought into being through its own performance. Drawing from Benjamin, a performance which depends on a constant interplay of agency between storyteller and visitor, 'A man listening to a story is in the company of the storyteller; even a man reading one shares this companionship' (Benjamin 1999:99).

It is this companionship that the space of making together is created. Here is Kennedy's work, Hamilton's short stories and the curator's praxis, joined in a non-hierarchical way. The exhibition did not aim to offer a linear narrative, (often structured around a beginning, a middle and end) to direct to a given point of destination. Rather the visitor was offered the choice of multiple routes through, resulting to varied journeys and interpretations. Each journey, threads yarn and displays, operated as both storyteller and listener. The visitors, to and from they wondered between the pieces, leaved traces of their performance in their path.

The strength of the curatorial outcome relied in considering including the emotions and mind of the viewer in the creative process. The viewer was exposed along this creative process the curator *auteur* travelled in making the installation. It provided a perspective to consider how the meaning is constructed and distributed through the exhibition space. Moreover, it offered a lens to examine the relationship between matter, craft, authorship, and knowledge production.

The exhibition was initially planned for September 2020, but pushed to July 2021, affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. My decision to include the QR codes was a response to the restrictions related to the pandemic, which were still in place at the time, and my intention was to find an alternative so not to use headphones. Even

though it is not related to this study, it is interesting to consider, how much the pandemic has impacted everyday life and habits, and how much more confident and familiar the public became with different forms of technology, be it meetings in virtual spaces, or scanning QR codes.

The exhibition highlighted how the curatorial engage with different aspects of materiality and immateriality in relation to craft, performance, and new media.



Figure 37 *Beyond Trauma* (2021) Lynn Hamilton 'That was Yesterday,' short story, exhibition label.



Figure 39 *Beyond Trauma* (2021) Installation view Researcher's desk. Photo possession of the author



Figure 38 *Beyond Trauma* (2021) Installation view Tara Kennedy, 'Trauma' a response to 'That was Yesterday' short story. Textiles mixed yarn, mixed fabric, wire, nails, pva glue. Photo possession of the author.

Looking at Hope Emerging

LYNN HAMILTON

SCAN ME TO LISTEN

Looking at Hope Emerging
story is based on Tara
Kennedy's work, read by
Lynn Hamilton.



Figure 40 *Beyond Trauma* (2021) Lynn Hamilton 'Looking at Hope Emerging,' short story, a response to Tara Kennedy's 'Hope Emerging' textiles sculpture, exhibition label.



Figure 41 *Beyond Trauma* (2021) Installation view Tara Kennedy, 'Hope Emerging' Mixed yarns, mixed fabrics, wire, wool tops, pva, metal ring. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 42 *Beyond Trauma* (2021) view of the projection at the Grand Staircase. Photo possession of the author.

Materiality

The terms 'material' and 'materiality' seem to have conflicting meanings in English. According to academic and art historian Jeehee Hong in her essay 'material/materiality' (2003), the material aspect of things is blurred, and the very meaning of material becomes associated with the abstractness of things, which prompts the use of its nominalization, materiality in the late twentieth century. Hong used the Oxford dictionary to explain that materiality is defined currently as 'that which constitutes the 'matter' of something: opposed to formality; the quality of being material; material aspect or character; mere outwardness or externality' (Hong, 2003).

Hong pointed to the significance of the notion, conveying the quality of being material despite it being, in fact, non-material, using as an example philosopher's Marshall McLuhan notion of media as 'extensions of man,' which included any material in unfixed form, or even formless material, such as electricity. Here, the notion of materiality plays a crucial role in locating the media as a paradigm, which is articulated by its relationship to form and content of a medium.

According to Hong, a most extreme view on the materiality of medium is seen in French sociologist and cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard's account of a medium as a system administered by the code that is interwoven with a technical apparatus - sound, image, waves, energy, etc.- as well as the corporeal one -gestures, language, sexuality (Baudrillard, 2003:284).

Baudrillard stated that 'reciprocity comes into being through the destruction of mediums per se' (Baudrillard, 2003:284). Composed of the 'immaterial' code, yet still to be 'destroyed,' a medium here is fully charged with its materiality.

Materiality is playing a larger role in the discussion on artistic quality in contemporary art. However, an inquiry at this point is whether we can claim that materiality is a quality-related concept, a skill. It should be considered whether the same quality we are referring to applies equally in the two different traditions and the makers' loyalty and confidence in their materials. Moreover, it should be considered the importance of the hand in contemporary craft practices and the impact of the usage of digital technology.

These issues have been addressed at *Materiality Matters* edited by Joakim Borda-Pedreira and Gjertrud Steinsvåg (2014). In the book, the essay of writer and curator Line Halvorsen examined a conceptual shift in contemporary art that brought practices of craft and fine art closer together. Halvorsen looked at recent developments in the Norwegian art scene and argued that an emphasis on materiality has become a cross-disciplinary strategy for artists. She claimed that the artists are reacting against excessively conceptual modes of production where the art object has been, to a varying extent, abolished. Halvorsen saw the emergence of textile art as a logical result of this reaction.

However, though materiality is concerned with objects, it can also be related to craft as intellectual practice. Writer Jessica Hemmings in her essay 'Crafting Words' addressed the challenges of writing creatively about craft. Having few predecessors, craft writing must not only find a language of its own, but also its own ethos, rather than adapting one of art criticism (Hemmings, 2014:23).

In her article 'Maximum Space around the Typewriter: Yvonne Vera and the Craft of Writing' for *Wasafiri*, Hemmings argued that writing is in itself a craft, with particular

material qualities that can add further layers to the experience and understanding of craft (Hemmings, 2021).

This approach accords with what Britton argued two decades earlier, in her essay 'The Manipulation of Skill on the Outer Limits of Function' included in *Beyond the Dovetail: Craft, Skill and Imagination* exhibition catalogue edited by Sir Christopher Frayling (1991). Britton stated that she doesn't consider using fewer skills in potting than in writing and raised the inquiry 'How different are the skills?' only to acknowledge that the (crafts) process shares similarities while the materials are different. Here she also claimed that she considered words as materials saying 'manipulating punctuation is like focussing the attention on certain points in the painted surface of a pot' (Britton 2013:93).

Textile artist and researcher Catherine Dormor in her presentation titled 'The Event of a Stitch: the seamstress, the traveller and the storyteller' during *The Matter of Material* conference at Turner Contemporary Margate (2017) discussed Kirstie Macleod's *Barocco* performance. The performance consisted of an embroiderer who was placed within a perspex cube, wearing the dress and constantly stitching its ornate red fabric filling the tight space surrounding her (Figure 43). Dormor explained that 'the dress travels around the world, being continuously embroidered' and the material, the dress, becomes the storyteller and listener. The tacit values of one, reinforce the other in a woven fabric of knowledge (Dormor, 2017).



Figure 43 Kirstie Macleod (2012) *Barocco* Durational Performance, Royal Academy London. Photo screenshot from YouTube. At: <https://youtu.be/xEMTmqgUgds> (Accessed 5 May 2022)

Contemporary makers are applying novel together with re-appropriating traditional techniques to intersect various materials including sound and light.

Academic and textile artist Radostina Angelova explored an innovative process to transform musical scores in order to create new patterns for woven textiles. In her paper 'Design of weave patterns: when engineering textiles meets music' published in *The Journal of The Textile Institute* explained:

When transforming the notation of a particular musical piece into a weave diagram, every note on the staff was considered as a warp overlay. Each subsequent note was considered to be a warp overlay of the next thread. Special attention was paid on cords: they were displayed as several warp overlays of one and the same warp thread.

(Angelova, 2017:871)

Angelova observed a commonality between the materiality of music score and the two-dimension coding of weave patterns. She developed a method to transform the music score of acclaimed classical music pieces to a weaving diagram. The new designs of the woven pattern were accompanied with assorted colour designs. The project's outcome was considered to broaden creative practice and to further develop the design and production of textiles.

Informed from Angelova's practice I have curated *Sensory Expedition: Colour, Light, Sound*, interactive exhibition at South Hill Park (2020). The exhibition invited visitors to focus in experiencing the properties of colour light and sound featuring work by three creative practitioners. Particularly, I have identified the links between, textile maker Kas William, light designer FUTURETRO and composer Vangelis Katsinas; each working in distinctly different and differing disciplines however, sharing a commonality of approach to inspiration, experimentation and deep knowledge of processes and their material. Therefore, I have approached them to discuss my proposal. Following our discussions, the exhibition included Williams' colourful and playful installation of long devoré fabric drapes, emphasising the imperfections and marks as distinctive characteristics of the hand of the maker and acetate assemblage on the wall. The acetates on the walls were a visual orchestration of colour, light and pattern creating pieces that floated off the surface, in what she calls 'three-dimensional painting'. In addition, the exhibition included FUTURETRO skilfully handcrafted light sculptures, in tandem with Katsinas' guitar sounds creating a third dimension - a visual and musical interpretation of light, that brought aspects of the sensory world to the visitors' attention.

The exhibition required the visitors to become active participants. Katsinas invited visitors to use an electronic instrument to trigger FUTURETRO's sound-responsive light sculpture, *DNA*, into life, while Williams enticed them to contribute onto her ongoing installation (Figure 44, Figure 45, Figure 46, Figure 47, Figure 48, Figure 49).



Figure 44 *Sensory Expedition: Colour, Light, Sound* (2020) Installation view of Kas Williams' devoré fabric drapes, South Hill Park, Bracknell. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 45 *Sensory Expedition: Colour, Light, Sound* (2020) Installation view of the interactive display and FUTURETRO's sound-responsive light sculpture, *DNA*, South Hill Park, Bracknell. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 46 *Sensory Expedition: Colour, Light, Sound* (2020) Installation view of the interactive display, South Hill Park, Bracknell. Photo possession of the author.

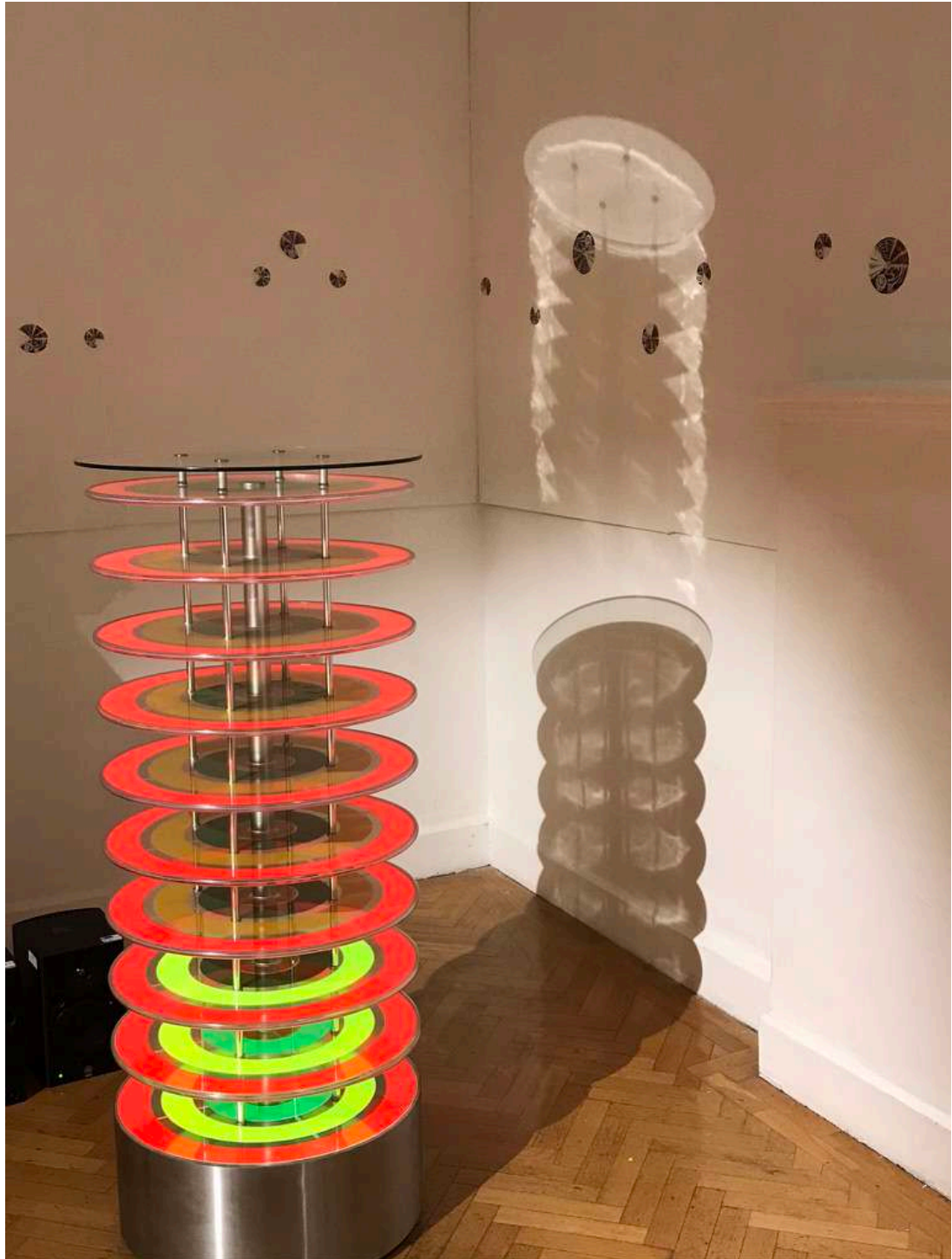


Figure 47 *Sensory Expedition: Colour, Light, Sound* (2020) Detail of installation view, showing FUTURETRO responsive light and Kas William acetate installation, South Hill Park, Bracknell. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 48 *Sensory Expedition: Colour, Light, Sound* (2020) Installation view of Kas Williams' 'three-dimensional paintings,' South Hill Park, Bracknell. Photo possession of the author.

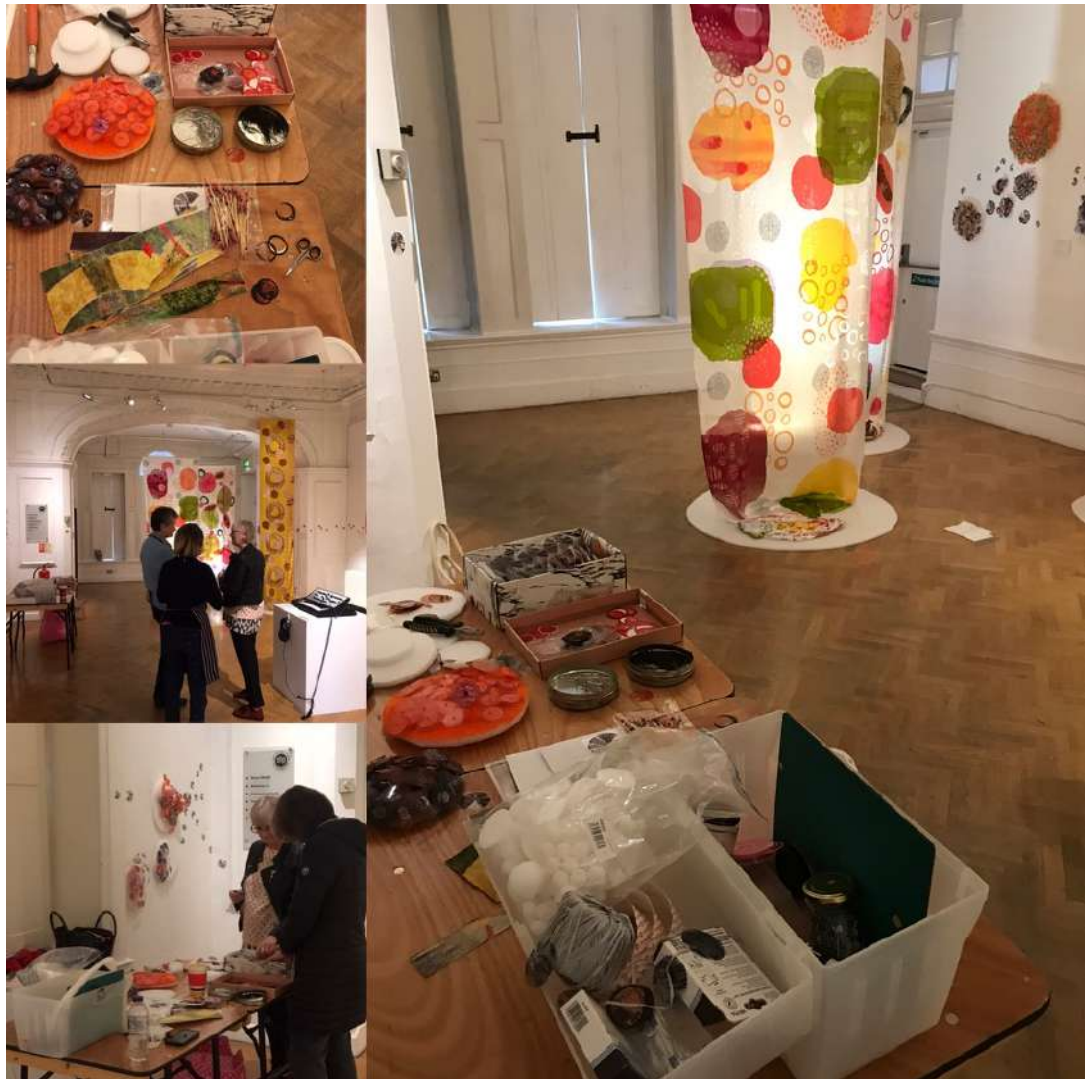


Figure 49 *Sensory Expedition: Colour, Light, Sound* (2020) Kas Williams with visitors contributing to the ongoing installation, South Hill Park, Bracknell. Photo possession of the author.

Another example of a maker who incorporates traditional and novel tools and methods is the practice of artist potter Jonathan Keep who developed his own ‘modern’ tools, software and built a 3D printer (Figure 50). Keep uses tangible and intangible materials to create porcelain pots. He designed in virtual space, on a three-dimensional computer mesh, which progressively grew into the pot shape by adding digital materials to the growing form. For example, his *Iceberg Series* was about the beauty found in apparently random natural forms (Figure 52). Keep

explained that the algorithm used to create the form had an inbuilt randomness, a 'noise' which is analogous to the erosion of icebergs:

The natural structures have an underlying logic that computer code can mimic so a different and original object is created each time the code is run. The cumulative layering of the 3D printer's extrusion recalls the glacial strata of icebergs and offers a sense of process and time. (Keep, s.d.)

Keep explained that his choice to use white porcelain clay is also deliberate, as the translucency of the material echoed the translucency of ice, making the process, material, and content of the work to be one.



Figure 50 Jonathan Keep, studio visit, 8 January 2018. View of his hand build 3D printer. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 51 Jonathan Keep, Studio visit, 8 January 2018. View of pot from his *Iceberg Series*. Photo possession of the author.

The maker's practice denotes a possibility of multiplying the use of materials beyond their functionality. The practices reveal the possibilities of craft to modify symbolic images and the historicity of the material. At this point it must be noted that I have examined the literature of key writings of new materialism scholars (such as cultural

theorists Karen Barad, Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti; political and social theorists Jane Bennet and Diana Coole) whose emphasis is on the materiality of the world and everything – social and natural – within it. However, I have not elaborated further in the theory of new materialism as this move beyond the scope of this thesis. From this field, I considered Barad's essay 'Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter' in *Signs* (2003), as she made a direct link to performativity and references to Butler. In her essay, Barad presented the notion of matter as a process of materialisation. Barad's claim brings to the fore the importance of recognizing matter in its historicity and challenges the preconception of matter as a passive blank site awaiting the active inscription of culture. Her essay ascribed material properties to language drawing from the notions of Butler on performativity.

The linguistic turn, the semiotic turn, the interpretive turn, the cultural turn: it seems that at every turn lately every 'thing' - even materiality - is turned into a matter of language or some other form of cultural representation. The ubiquitous puns on 'matter' do not, alas, mark a rethinking of the key concepts (materiality and signification) and the relationship between them. (Barad, 2003:801)

Barad, reflecting on Butler, claimed, 'that matter, like meaning, is not an individually articulated or static entity' (Barad, 2003:821). In a footnote, Barad explained that in her critique, Butler puts forward an account of materialisation that seeks to acknowledge these important points.

However, Barad noted that Butler's theory reinscribed matter as a passive product of discursive practices rather than as an active agent participating in the very process of materialisation. This is an important element to consider in the process of understanding the nature of discursive practices and material phenomena in their productivity.

Barad challenged Butler's theory of materiality by questioning the anthropocentric limitations of Butler's theory. Barad noted that the theory was limited to an account of the materialisation of human bodies or, more accurately, to the construction of the contours of the human body. Barad argued that agential realism's relational ontology enables a further reworking of the notion of materialisation that acknowledges the existence of important linkages between discursive practices and material phenomena without the anthropocentric limitations of Butler's theory (Barad, 2003:821-822).

In essence, *kaino-craft* considers material both as physical and intangible matter. My assumption is that the material aspects of craft are connected by a network of energy, intellect, and skill.

Skill

In the nineteenth century, there was a strong fear that craft skills, knowledge, quality, and individuality were in danger of being replaced by industrial production and capitalist rationality. Currently, craft skills are in high demand, not only within industrial design but also in fine art, which had abandoned the skill of hands for intellectual skills during the high modernism of the mid-twentieth century.

Craft skills are also becoming fundamental methods of academic research as well as methods for contributing to aesthetic and even social development. Craft artists are finding ways to employ their skills for social and political interventions, evident in the works of ceramic artist Keith Harrison and textile artist Raisa Kabir.

This idea of craft skills and crafts as a way of thinking has become an issue of increasing academic discourse (Sennett 2008; Crawford 2009; Frayling 2011).

Adamson's third chapter 'Skilled' in *Thinking Through Crafts* (2007), developed these arguments by challenging the notion of skill being inessential to the creation of any art. Adamson called on Jackson Pollock's typical attitude 'Technique is just a means of arriving at a statement' and considered how skill has come to be something of 'at worst it is an outright embarrassment' in contemporary art (Adamson, 2007:69). His chapter included key theorists who wrote on crafts, for example David Pye and Michael Baxendale who discussed 'Circular Thinking', and John Dewey and Joseph Albers who investigated the 'Learning by Doing' concept. Adamson's intention was to analyse how we understand, teach and value skill in the twenty-first century arts culture. Adamson concluded his chapter by affirming 'how profitable it can be to think about craft skill in the most general of terms, as Dewey and Albers conceived it: not as a discrete set of techniques but as a way of being within society' (Adamson, 2007:100).

This statement echoed sociologist Richard Sennett's notion in *The Craftsman* who claimed that 'there is an intelligent craftsman in most of us' (Sennett, 2008:11). Sennett argued that 'all skills, even the most abstract, begin as bodily practices; second, that technical understanding develops through the powers of imagination' (Sennett, 2008:10).

The role of tools and repair, associated with skill, are central to Sennett's notions about the craftsman. Sennett stated that a tool is unable to produce an object without the willpower and deliberate act of the craftsman. Tools have been developed over time to facilitate the process of creating and exploration. Part of this process is taking things apart and understanding how they work, as it enables the maker to rethink how to do things. For Sennett, this process of gaining knowledge and skill provides new insight and discovering 'an unknown reality latent with possibility' (Sennett, 2008:213).

André Gali began his editorial for Norwegian *Crafts Magazine* (2012) about 'Skills' by saying 'knowledge, skills and tools are important components in the development of any human society' (Gali, 2012). Gali reflected on Sennett's idea saying, 'To be a craftsman is to master a skill' and claimed that 'Art schools may become important research facilities where skills are preserved, developed and challenged' (Gali, 2012). Skill embedded in craft enables engagement with human values as well as the combination and exploration of concepts not otherwise questioned.

Craft Skills

The approaches on craft skills discuss the intellectual and the cognitive activity required as alongside the manual activity.

The conversations on craft skills and manual skills are ongoing and some statements are still relevant. For example, W.M. MacQueen in his short essay 'What is Craft Skill?' for *The Vocational Aspect of Education* (1951), answered his titular question by starting to make a clear distinction between craft skill and manual skill. He described how, though often confused, craft skill and manual skill have little in common, saying

‘craft skill will show it to be a complex of mental and physical achievements, in which manual skill plays only a part’ (McQueen, 1951:34).

MacQueen defined craft skills as ‘the understanding and assimilation of the total technology of a craft and its application in any craft situation so as to produce effective and satisfying results’ (McQueen, 1951:34).

His examination discussed the difficulties of acquiring craft skills and considered that many craft skill techniques cannot be acquired through practice in a simple sense as the maker needs to navigate through various situations in his work. As an example, MacQueen stated that ‘in wood even the material is ever changing in nature’ so the craftsman needs to work out their methods instantly to meet the evolving situations. What he meant is the necessary skill to understand materials and whether they are suitable for the practice and for the use they are intended. An example is that a woodworker knows what kind of wood to use for a dining chair and what kind of wood to use for an outdoors bench.

A year after MacQueen’s published paper, the exhibition and *International Conference of Craftsmen in Pottery and Textiles* initiated by Bernard Leach and Muriel Rose, Crafts Officer at the British Council, was held at Dartington Hall (Devon, 1952). The aim was to deal with the role of the maker in an industrialised world. Potter Bernard Leach in his talk ‘The essential Nature of Craft’ remarked that ‘Pottery has become fashionable but that does not mean that it has become any more ‘essential’ to lives of those who make or buy ceramics.’ While David Leach in his contribution ‘Teamwork in the Workshop’ addressed the issues of teamwork, co-working and collaboration (Schroeder, 1952:6).

MacQueen's and Leach's analysis, even though were brief and could easily be seen as simple, implied that people dedicated to craft look beyond themselves - they get involved in the community and industry - as a contributing member rather than someone looking to do the most for themselves.

Contemporary discussions on skill started with craft theorist David Pye, speaking from his experience as a wood carver. Pye questioned the term 'skill' considering it to be inaccurate, therefore he did not use it. He claimed that skill meant different and differing things regarding the nature of the work. In his book *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*, Pye stated that craftsmanship is 'workmanship using any kind of technique or apparatus, in which the quality of the result is not predetermined, but depends on the judgement, dexterity and care which the maker exercises as he works' (Pye, 1995:20).

Pye brought to the surface the element of risk, arguing that skills are the maker's knowledge of the management of the risk involved in the process of making, as well as their judgement of what is right, and that these two fit together in mutual dependence in the making process. Therefore, his term 'workmanship of risk' referred to the possibility of mistakes and risk taking.

Innovation and risk-taking require knowledge of making, material, and process. This calls into consideration the maker's intention. Whatever the maker is doing, should have to be intended. The intentionality of risk taking was at the core of ceramic artist Keith Harrison installation *Last Supper* at the Victoria and Albert Museum London (2006). Harrison reconfigured firing and made it a dramatic visual and auditory experience by plugging electrical elements directly into the clay. His time-based installation emitted steam and smoke in the semi-sacred museum space, the

Raphael Cartoons Court, embodied a sense of danger and challenge. The danger from this activity in truth was limited yet the sense of experimentation and the possibilities of success, mistake, and failure, seemed real.

Harrison, during our interview in October 2020, explained that all his installations involve health and safety concerns and require thorough planning, which includes negotiation and discussion with curators and gallery/museum's offices as well as material testing and sampling. Harrison's working practices and processes, specifically the collaborative, negotiative and live aspects demonstrate the skill sets that are employed in the generation of such work.

Through the development of his practice Harrison expands his knowledge and new skills might be acquired which can then be carried forward and applied to a future project. This cumulative learning and experience can be drawn upon to enable risk-taking in new and challenging areas.

In juxtaposition, ceramic artist and academic Alison Britton in her essay 'The Manipulation of Skill On the Outer Limits of Function', offered an alternative view asserting that traditional notions of craft skill have become less admissible to the evaluation of contemporary art and craftworks:

People develop new skills to achieve untraditional ends, and they aren't always of general and importable use. I strongly believe that the traditional skills should be taught as a basis, but not as the whole curriculum. But we can't avoid the climate of appropriateness that moves on with time and changing purposes. Nostalgia is a dead end.

(Britton 2013:91)

These critics have re-evaluated the importance of craft skills and highlighted the intellectual aspect as well as the manual. In addition, *Last Supper* was used as an example to acknowledge the value of the maker's unique skill set intending to bring new understanding to existing practices and disrupt normative procedures.

Skill Body Experience – Haptic

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (s.d.), *Haptic* comes from the Greek word *haptesthai*, [ἅπτεσθαι] meaning 'to touch.' The dictionary explained that the word entered English in the late nineteenth century as a medical synonym for 'tactile.' By the middle of the twentieth century, it had developed a psychological sense, describing individuals whose perception supposedly depended primarily on touch rather than sight. Although almost no one today divides humans into 'haptic' and 'visual' personalities, English retains the broadened psychological sense of 'haptic' as well as the older 'tactile' sense (Merriam-Webster s.d.).

Craft is not only an optical experience, but also a haptic one. Ceramic artist Julian Stair in his introduction for *The Body Politic: The Role of the Body and Contemporary Craft* (Stair, 2000:19), proposed the appropriation of a term from human cognitive science, 'haptic', referring to the psychological orientation of touch, to discuss critically the relationship between body and crafts.

In a similar note, art critic John Perreault in his essay 'Crafts is Art: Tampering with Power' included in the *Objects and Meaning: New Perspectives on Art and Craft* anthology edited by Anna Fariello and Paula Owen, claimed 'craft objects have a more balanced relationship between their haptic and their optic qualities than paint-

on-canvas art or non-craft sculpture, thus allowing a doubleness of being' (Perreault, 2004:77).

Richard Sennet defined skills as 'bodily practices' acquired from repetitive training, while 'technical understanding develops through the powers of imagination' (Sennet, 2008:10). Higher skills involve 'tacit knowledge' (Michael Polanyi's term), whereby we find 'a constant interplay between tacit knowledge and self-conscious awareness, the tacit knowledge serving as an anchor, the explicit awareness serving as critique and corrective' (Sennett 2008:50-51). Yet skills are revealed in Modernist aesthetic theory as 'supplemental' (Adamson, 2007:9). Adamson's first chapter 'Supplemental' in *Thinking Through Crafts* challenged the idea of supplemental craft, drawing mainly from Adorno and Derrida, claimed 'to say that craft is supplemental, then is to say that it is always essential to the end to view, but in the process of achieving that end it disappears' (Adamson, 2007:13).

Adamson, acknowledged this disappearance within modern artwork arguing 'proper craftsmanship draws no attention to itself; it lies beneath notice, allowing other qualities to assert themselves in their fullness' (Adamson, 2007:13).

The nature of craft and craft's practice involve a haptic, optic and sensory experience, as a holistic and visceral physiological human experience of perception. Sennet invoked the moment in which the fingertips' physical movement connects with the haptic experience that becomes technique, which realises 'the unity of head and hand' (Sennet, 2008:168, 170) – a philosophy that characterised the practice of potter Bernard Leach.

In his essay 'Belief and Hope', Leach claimed that the potters' 'disciplines of fire and clay' are the point of equilibrium of 'the unity and maturity of man... a potter is one

of the few people left who uses his natural faculties of heart, head and hand in balance – the whole man.’ Academic and potter Matthew Tyas commented on Leach’s statement in his article ‘The Leach Pottery: a living tradition’ for the *Ceramic Review* (2020) saying that even though these words may be received as deeply patriarchal, the idea still inspires and hints at a spirituality in the act of making as a ‘complete’ potter.

For crafts, the concepts of materiality, tactility and skill are central. This is also the position of cultural historian Constance Classen who in her essay ‘Fingertips: Writing About Touch’ included in her anthology *The Book of Touch* acknowledged the tactile nature of writing. She referred to the etymology of the verb ‘to write’, which is to scratch and considered writing as an inspiration on skin ‘for what we scratch more frequently?’ (Classen, 2005:6).

Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan in his contribution ‘The Pleasures of Touch’, included in the anthology, claimed that the human skin is the most important human sensory system. He referred to the ‘tactile aesthetics’ claiming to be the most common and necessary of aesthetic experiences (Tuan, 2005:74). Tuan concluded his essay saying that touch is the only sense that modifies its object which should remind us that we are not only observers of the world but actors in it (Tuan, 2005:79).

In the anthology’s review, academic Steve Redhead explained that one of Classen’s arguments is that technologies of modernity shaped a new way of seeing the world and of feeling the world (Redhead, 2006:12). The latter echoes what was discussed earlier in this chapter about new technologies which are shaping a new way of craft making, including new tools, materials, techniques, and way of working. Redhead concluded by saying that *The Book of Touch* is part of a wider international

project which intends to turn the attention to sensory experience and expression as a subject for enquiry (Redhead, 2006:12)

In this reading, craft is considered as an engaging form for sensory experience and self-expression. This statement resonates Millar's words:

touching a surface of an object, feeling its weight in the hand, exploring its texture with the fingers is a profoundly sensual experience.' and continued... 'Our skin is the active medium through which we process information; the surfaces of our tongue, eardrum and eye allow us taste, hear, and see. (Millar 2013:26)

Using the words of textile designer Reiko Sudō, Millar explained that is common for textile practitioners to describe with their fingers:

I pick up a yarn, and rub it between my fingers, I pull it and stretch it and I know if it is appropriate for the task in mind ... The first image that comes to mind is the feel and touch of material, its texture. Before considering its use, I always begin with how coarse or smooth it feels. I use my fingertips. (Millar, 2013:26).

Millar's words echo anthropologist Tim Ingold who at his presentation 'Making Growing Learning' (2019) suggested that knowledge should be considered as anything but settled. He presented the word hapticality as an alternative, explaining that the meaning of 'hapticality is the feel of the feeling others are feeling of you' (Ingold, 2019). With this he explained that he is placing this knowing not inside the

body but instead in the field of relationships feeling one another and feeling the materials, so it is knowing in feeling.

Ingold continued with the claim that the knowing or the knowledge is not inside the body but rather in the context of hapticality, of mutual feeling, a human correspondence with other beings, other materials, and other environments. And as such, the knowledge is not embodied but animate, meaning that it is like it is alive to the world and is lively in itself, suggesting it to be full of movements and feelings (Ingold, 2019). Ingold proposed 'making things is not so different from growing things in the sense that you do not impose a plan on materials, but join with them, and investigate the ways in which you want to go' (Ingold, 2019).

From this perspective, the maker stands as a threshold taking materials from one life and transforming them so they can then enter another life. The active touch implies that someone chooses to explore and manipulate an object manually to acquire information about its properties, i.e. texture and material. Such haptic exploration includes several different sensations that contribute to the learning experience.

Skill Learning

The *Encounters on the Shop Floor Embodiment and the Knowledge of the Make* conference at the Victoria and Albert (London, 2019), offered a point of entry into the 'learning' of the maker 'from multiple disciplinary perspectives and different contexts of practice'. Academic Mark Johnson in his presentation 'Embodied Mind, Meaning, and Thought' described disembodied knowing as a two thousand seven hundred year old tradition, and distinguished between 'knowing-that' which is supposedly objective and its subordinate 'knowing-how' which is not objective.

Johnson claimed that to justify embodied-knowing, we should not accept the mind-body division. He argued that all knowing is doing, an action for the 'transformation of experience', and therefore all-knowing is embodied. This directs to the arguments about performance and performativity as analysed in Chapter 5.

Archaeologist Maikel Kuijpers, also a conference delegate, advocated for the renewed value of craft. Kuijpers is a key thinker of what has been called the 'material turn', claiming knowledge is embodied in materials and things that reside in our hands.

Kuijpers claimed that 'Material is the mother of innovation' adding to what Britton, Frayling and Dormer among others have argued, that material occupies a unique position as it stands between tradition and innovation, thinking and making, as well as between the local and global.

Kuijpers, in his book, an *Archaeology of Skill* (2017), identified a gap in studies about understanding the development and practice of the skills of craftsmanship. Kuijpers skill entailed an intentional engagement with materials to produce something in mind, and with an imagined purpose.

That engagement is fundamentally informed by the senses. A maker does not merely act upon materials, but rather the intentions they entertain and their ways of thinking and knowing are dynamically shaped and updated in and through their interaction with materials.

Kuijpers in his short documentary *The Future is Handmade* (2019) extended this investigation to contemporary society and invited several experts including Adamson and Sennett to discuss the values of craftsmanship and craft skills. Kuijpers suggested

an alternative way of knowing, not through books but through practice which result to understanding:

to learn something practical is not to read about it in a book, or to sit and listen to a lecture, but rather to pick the thing up and use it. I think it's much more about understanding that one must dedicate oneself. (The Craftsmanship Initiative, 2019)

In a similar tone, Adamson at the documentary - possibly having in mind the decline of the craft courses in higher education - argued that:

Students no longer have the opportunity to understand what it means to be skilled in a deep way, so they have a sample experience of all of these different practices, but they do not know what it is to acquire a mastery. (The Craftsmanship Initiative, 2019)

Sennett claimed that physical knowledge and mental understanding have a deep connection to each other (The Craftsmanship Initiative, 2019).

This section explored skill and the praxis to situate unlike things together, i.e., materials, techniques, disciplines, and concepts, experimenting while managing and taking risks. It also highlighted the importance of craft knowledge developed in the processes to create something novel.

Craft Knowledge

Academic social analyst Richard Sennett in *Craftsman* (2008) expressed the importance of transferring the knowledge of skilled practice. This was also a point addressed by art historian Howard Risatti in *A Theory of Craft* (2009) who claimed that knowledge, as action-oriented knowledge, has a particular strength and provides a distinctive approach to 'understanding the world' (Risatti:2009), and by extension, possibly, ourselves and our society.

On this note, anthropologist Tim Ingold in *Making* (2013) claimed that making creates knowledge, builds environments, and transforms lives, while Tanya Harrod in *Craft* (2018) suggested that craft is dependent on knowledge that is 'tacit, practical or embodied' (Harrod, 2018:15).

This section examines craft knowledge and moves the interest beyond describing *what* happened, to understand the *how* and *why* (Langland, 2017:25). The claim is that a focus on craft knowledge – as opposed to craft products – unfolds new opportunities to demonstrate the relevance of crafts in the twenty-first century. Craft knowledge, which in essence is the intellectual property of craft and in extent *kaino-craft*, is considered when the practice, be it an installation, event, performance, other activity.

The contextual review shows that craft knowledge is multi perceptual, and a main challenge is to transfer and articulate the embodied fleeting experiences. This section seeks to articulate craft knowledge in ways that can engage and expand the aesthetic awareness of *kaino-craft*.

The examination of contemporary craft, by observing and analysing the creative processes in relation to the makers' approaches to making, skill (strategies) and materials have led me to identify four criteria as a model to examine *kaino-craft* practice: Collaboration; Experimentation; Innovation; and Participation.

The examples presented in this section demonstrate the value of craft knowledge which could be also applied to other disciplines, and extend the technical, aesthetic and cultural potentials of craft practices. Moreover, these examples present how these practices demonstrate making of *kaino-craft* as a knowledge based process - knowledge of materials and skills - which enrich the culture.

The following part presents the four criteria which compose *kaino-craft* intellectual properties: Collaboration, Experimentation, Innovation, and Participation.

Collaboration

This part presents key writings by Paul Greenhalgh and Visual anthropologist Amanda Ravetz, textile/fibre artist Alice Kettle and ceramic artist and curator Helen Felcey and social analyst Richard Sennett, who have discussed the notion of collaboration. This brief analysis is followed by an examination of the working practice of ceramic artist's Mirka Golden-Hann as a method of illustrating the collaborative component consisting of *kaino-craft*.

Greenhalgh in *Persistence of Crafts* (2002) suggested that the various genres that constitute craft have come together for a variety of artistic, political, and institutional reasons, and claimed that, even though they seem not to share any intrinsic connection, they 'successfully protected themselves as a collective' (Greenhalgh, 2002:1).

Ravetz, Kettle and Felcey in the introduction of their anthology *Collaboration Through Craft* affirmed that many of the properties associated with the craft, materials tools, techniques, taught and tacit knowledge as well as body movement 'are highly social and open to shared working' (Ravetz, Kettle, Felcey, 2013:3).

Moreover, Sennett claimed that:

The tenacity of craft is explained by its flux and metamorphosis and by the human compulsion towards materials which arouse the mind, drawing associations with the magic of the unforeseen and unknown, and with the alchemy of material and making. (Sennett, 2008:123)

These statements imply that the outcome of collaborative working through materials and collaborative working through makers of various disciplines can lead to new substances, techniques, processes, and forms. This is evident in Golden-Hann's collaborative project *Choreographed Vessel* (2015). Golden-Hann uses her knowledge of clay and making to investigate the potential for ceramics, to express concepts beyond conventional or accepted usage and functionality, together within new and unfamiliar contexts. Golden-Hann's practice demonstrates a strong connection between making pots, and performance, dance. When I interviewed Golden-Hann, in her studio at Salisbury Arts Centre in June 2019, she said that she finds a 'rhythmic movement in the whole process, from the throw on the potter's wheel to the kiln, where the gas flames dance around the artwork' (Golden-Hann, 2019).

For the *Choreographed Vessel* project Golden-Hann collaborated with choreographer Carrie Madgwick and filmmaker Mark Bishop to create a live performance on the surface of a porcelain bowl. The piece drew upon the ancient Platonic teaching of the concept of *kalokagathia*, consisting of the harmonious combination of bodily, moral and spiritual virtues (Golden-Hann, 2019). The installation challenged the still image of the decoration applied on ancient Greek vessels representing a specific scene, a fraction of a moment of the everyday life, or a scene of a ritual, by projecting an animated scene by contemporary dancers on the surface of the vessel bringing life to the work. Golden-Hann's project highlighted the importance of bridging the old with the new.

An interesting twist was that while the artist was recording the projection for her archives, a piano situated at the back of the Arts Centre was being tuned. Even though there was not a particular song performed, the music generated from the piano keys seemed to be a perfect fit, as if it was intentional. This could be considered as serendipity or *wabi-sabi*, terms to denote a happy accident.

In *Choreographed Vessel*, the threads that connected the artists from the three disciplines were conceptual rather than formal, which allowed for a range of approaches. Considering the domestic object a site of exploration, it seems that it offered the artist the possibility to discover rich layers of complexity and depth and new spaces of perception within and beneath the familiar daily experience. The bringing together of the different creative disciplines with the long-established traditions of ceramics and new digital technologies contributed to extend further the boundaries of each practice. For ceramics the noteworthy element was that the decoration was not applied using traditional process (i.e., glaze or burnish) creating

a static representation of a scene but instead, it presented an actual footage of an event itself which was projected onto the surface of the bowl. The bowl from a functional object became the stage of the live scene (Figure 52).



Figure 52 Mirka Golden Hann (2015) *Choreographed Vessel*. Salisbury Arts Centre, Salisbury. Photo courtesy of the artist.

This project contributed to the discussions on the expansion of ceramics. The collaborators also demonstrated that creative practitioners, who always strive for new forms of expression, are redefining craft, experimenting, and incorporating techniques, materials, and skills distinct from each other.

Experimentation

This part examines and compares the expansive model of practices of Ceramic artists' Geoffrey Mann and Ingrid Murphy. These practices highlight the experimentation criteria of the model for *kaino-craft* study.

Experimentation refers to the play of concepts, materials, skills, space, and everything brought in by the artist's imagination. The two examples described in this section are Mann's *Crossfire* (2010), and Murphy's *Seen and Unseen* (2019). It should be noted here that both makers utilise the clay and digital technology within their practice, demonstrating their knowledge on material and skill as well as the application of craft knowledge to expand their work.

Crossfire was commissioned by *Past, Present & Future Craft Practice* research project (2010), and was predominantly a short film, centralising around the context of a domestic argument, and utilitarian deformed objects.

Mann developed an innovative studio practice that challenges the existing divides between art, craft, and design. His work embraces the symbiotic relationship between digital media and physical form to experiment with the ephemeral nature of time and motion. His practice aimed to materialise the intangible characteristic of the sound and to investigate its unseen affect upon the inhabited environment.

Ceramic artist's Ingrid Murphy *Seen and Unseen* (2019), curated by Ceri Jones challenged preconceptions, inviting the audience to interact with ceramics in an unexpected way. Both practices, provocative and playful, illustrated a shift in the discernible connectivity of craft to society. Their practices demonstrate a return of craft to its origin, yet highlight craft's capacity to motivate, connect and exchange with it, both as regards the making and interacting with the craftwork.

Mann's *Crossfire* film presented an event which samples an audio extract from the Oscar awarded *American Beauty* black comedy-drama film written by Alan Ball and directed by Sam Mendes (1999). The film featured everyday objects, i.e., plates, cutlery, teapot, being animated and deformed as the slow building dialogue between the three main characters during the family dinner climaxes with a sound clash of emotions. The sound waves of the argument traversed the dining table allowing the once domestic inanimate objects which were not unable to express their character, to undergo changes via the intensity of the conversation that seriously affected their form, encapsulating a momentary emotion of the argument.

Mann examined how movement can be suggested as echoed within glass and ceramic material applying specialist design software and 3D printing. His approach was to capture the language of process and the impact of the environment. Even it might not have been in Mann's intention, however, the use of this notably dark-humoured audio extract seems deliberate to address the complex notions of domesticity and discomfort.

I have seen *Crossfire* installed as part of the *Material: Earth. The New British Clay Movement* exhibition at the Messums Wiltshire (2017). Mann's film was presented on a small monitor alongside a deformed ceramic tea-set created (Figure 53). The small monitor could be seen as an apparatus to create a metaphor of how the once highly successful film blooming in the large cinematic screens, two decades later, has no relevance and is in need indeed to reassess the traditional stories of manhood and masculinity. While the domestic tea-set could be seen as a commentary to the UK's favourite beverage and its associations.

In juxtaposition Murphy's installation *Seen and Unseen* (2018) - part of the *Language of Clay* a touring exhibition project curated by Ceri Jones - challenged preconceptions, inviting the audience to interact with ceramics in an unexpected way. *Seen and Unseen* comprised a series of installations, interventions, interactions, experiments, using leading-edge technological elements. The visitors were encouraged to touch and interact with the ceramic works, providing an immersive experience that moved away from the traditional approach of crafts display (Figure 54).

This work was inspired by the artist's fascination with the domestic object. In one sense, the exhibition could be seen as a homage to the ordinary, the familiar, those taken-for-granted objects in the domestic environment. However, the exhibition moved the domestic object beyond its familiarity breaking the rules of use and ceramics alike, challenging the visitor's perceptions and allowing for the everyday to be experienced in a new way.

There is an element of humour in Murphy's installations, and her choice of the thought-provoking title. The title is directed to the phrase 'Seeing the Unseen' evoking the idea of revealing something hidden, an unimaginable lightness and freedom in the agony of domesticity.

Even though there was an underlying threat for the exhibition to be experienced as a mere spectacle, yet the way the artist used the familiar domestic object and the ways she implemented and experimented with leading-edge technology, she managed to overcome this threat. Murphy juxtaposed traditional and contemporary ceramic technology while challenging the prevailing perception of what technology is.

In the film *Ingrid Murphy: Seen and Unseen* (2019) Murphy said that 'all ceramics is technology' and called for a need to 'rephrase our understanding about technology.' Murphy supported her argument by suggesting that we tend to call technology something that is developed in contemporary time characteristically saying, 'we tend to call technology something that is made after we were born' (Murphy, 2019).

In her practice, technology acted as a mediator between objects. She is using all available alternative new-age technological formats to connect sounds, objects, and places. Particularly, Murphy brought the technological lexicon and processes into craft-ceramics, by introducing the usage of QR (Quick Response) codes and AR (Augmented Reality) which enabled her to animate an inanimate object.

Murphy in her essay 'Meta-Making and Me' in *The Ceramic Reader* claimed that technology influences the way we share, access, communicate and develop our making, as well as enhancing our wellbeing (Murphy, 2017:489). I have visited Murphy's installation in Aberystwyth. Her practice is a manifestation of an interplay between function and non-function, tradition and breaking with tradition, and interconnectedness between bodies, time, and space. Murphy's practice showing a craftsmanship of making and idea creating an area, a 'intervening space' a term akin to curator's Joruun Veiteberg concept to define the space between function and non-function, tradition and innovation, craft-based art, and idea-based art (Veiteberg, 2005:87).

Both these practices have moved beyond the traditional notion of ceramic. Themes raised by these ideas resonate with *kaino-craft*; showcasing the experimental potentials when the makers synthesise ideas of cultural practices, materials, skills,

and in this case digital technologies, into craft practice developing innovative potential that challenged social norms and questioned borders and boundaries.



Figure 53 Messums Wiltshire (2017) Installation view Geoffrey Mann's 'Crossfire' *Material: Earth. The New British Clay Movement* exhibition, Tisbury: Messums Wiltshire. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 54 Ingrid Murphy (2019) Installation view *Seen and Unseen*, Aberystwyth Arts Centre. Photo possession of the author.

Innovation

This part discusses the practice of ceramic artist Keith Harrison to illustrate the element of Innovation as criteria of the model applied to identity koino-craft. Particularly, it presents *Mute (2015)* and *Ecstatic Material (2019)*. Harrison's work retains a nexus to ceramic as material and skill, yet his innovative approach favours the temporality nature of the events. His working practice offers an insight to innovation through knowledge and awareness that is developed and carried forward through the processes of collaboration and experimentation.

Innovation refers to makers who are pushing the frontiers of the human–material relationship to a totally new level. Their practice concerns pushing and blurring the boundaries between the physical and the digital, the tangible and the intangible by synthesising craft making with other creative, scientific or societal disciplines and often technology. Their innovative approach offers the possibilities for unexpected and unexplored outcomes which constitute the material for future craft novel research inquiries.

Harrison's 'Mute' installation in *Fragile?* exhibition at National Museum Wales (Cardiff, 2015), consisted of a substantial wall of speakers attached to two turntables, aimed to make the slip in the speakers break down and discover what happens to the sounds. Each of the speakers had a ceramic disc attached to its front made of ceramic tiles and raw terracotta slip. Harrison invited the audience to a voyage of discovery of finding the right pitch that will break down the slip-filled speaker system. Harrison remarked on how his work aimed to fill in the gap 'between the open possibilities' and 'freedom' of a pretend two-dimensional space and the physical properties of his clay material and three-dimensions, saying that he is continually

intrigued by the occurring activities of making and destroying, as well as the role of the audience in taking part or be active observers of the process (Figure 56). Harrison emphasising at the experimental nature of his practice claimed that he produces works that 'are located somewhere between the grim fascination of a car crash, the formality and unpredictability of a scientific laboratory experiment and a wedding night disco' (Harrison, 2020).

Harrison's practice demonstrates craft's innovative potentials and contributes to developing the understanding of exhibition space as a lab to create new knowledge, new insights and develop new understandings and relationships.

Another example to further support this argument is Harrison's collaboration with musician Beatrice Dillon for the installation *Ecstatic Material* (2019) which merged materials, ceramic sound, and substances (Figure 55).

The project drew upon Harrison's practice which transforms raw materials and Dillon's rhythmic computer music compositions. The installation was constructed using boisterous speaker stacks with various ingredients of playdoh bubbling, bouncing, creating patterns, and changing form to Dillon's clean and warm FM synthesis. The output was changing form from one live show to the next. Keith Harrison defined it as:

a live experiment in which our respective systems are set in motion, bending sound and material. We have an overall structure but have factored in a capacity to react to what's happening each night and change as the tour progresses and material accumulates. (Harrison, 2019)

His practice demonstrated that matter is not immutable or passive nor fixed. The sound and matter are inextricably intertwined. Harrison's works demonstrated the contribution of contemporary practices in pushing the boundaries of craft. Harrison's intentions are embedded in the transformative state of the brief firing process. This impression is also connected with the short duration of the installation-performances they offer to the public between one and eight hours long. No ceramic could be fired in that short period of time.

Over the course of Harrison's performance, the material changed creating a physical sense of alteration and development within the audience's perception and



understanding of what they are witnessing. The participants' observations and physical interactions lie at the core of the *kaino-craft* practice. The enabling of a physical, often tactile experience generates new knowledge which is focused on human experience, memory and feelings.

Participation

This part presents the work of textile artist Raisa Kabir as an example to portray participation as one of the four criteria of the model applied to identity *kaino-craft*.

Kabir's work comments on power, disability, and the body.

Participatory craft projects are considered to be more socially oriented as opposed to having political goals, with exceptions, such as the makers-movement (coined by Mark Hatch, 2014) and craftivism (von Busch, 2010). The main motivation of craft is

Figure 56 Keith Harrison (2015) Installation View of 'Mute' a commission for the *Fragile?* exhibition, National Museum Wales. Photo property of the copyright holder

existential, creating an extension of the humane during encounters with the



Figure 55 Keith Harrison (2019) Detail from *Ecstatic Material* installation. Photo property of the copyright holder.

resistance of material and the environment (Risatti, 2009). This may nurture the feeling of reliance on each other, fostering interpersonal skills and thus, become a platform for social processes.

Art historian Claire Bishop in *Artificial Hells Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012) discussed the expanded field of post-studio practices which goes under a variety of names, to name a few: socially engaged art, community-based art, experimental communities, dialogic art, littoral art, interventionist art, participatory art, collaborative art, contextual art and social practice. I have used Bishop's preferred term 'participatory' to apply it in craft, since this suggests the involvement of many people in opposition to the one-to-one relationship of interactivity. According to Bishop, participatory avoids the ambiguities of 'social engagement,' which could be a reference to a wide range of work, 'from *engagé* painting to interventionist actions in mass media' (Bishop, 2012:2). Instead, Bishop claimed that participation constitutes the central artistic medium and material, in comparable manner to theatre and performance.

Drawing from Bishop, participatory *kaino-craft* entails the desire to activate the audience in a participatory way and to emancipate it from a state of alienation induced by the dominant ideological order. Beginning from this premise, participatory craft seeks to establish a communal, collective space of shared social engagement.

This was achieved in the *Weaving Local Voices* (2019) project, part of the 'EcoFutures Festival'. The project involved the delivery of four workshop sessions by Stitches in Time with their Bangladeshi and Muslim women's group, led by textile artist Raisa Kabir (Figure 57).

Weaving Local Voices workshops explored weaving as a healing community practice and aimed to collate ways of embodied knowing through craft making. The workshops challenged Western - and masculine - centred cultural canons,

emphasising in the woven textiles a capacity to carry coded and gendered archives containing their own languages, knowledge, ideas, and histories. Moreover, the sessions acted as a response to the ways globalised labour is exploited in the textile industry which specifically employs and exploits women's labour in Bangladesh to serve 'first world' countries. These sessions explored textile craft labour as paths towards collective economies of sustainable survival.

The women used recycled materials to stitch text in their preferred languages into strips of weft fabric. These were all woven together using back strap looms tensioned onto the structural indoor trees. Additionally, the curators, Giulia Casalini and Diana Georgiou, created a sound audio archive piece, using recorded contributions in different languages from the women participants, that was displayed alongside the woven cloth. In an e-mail correspondence with Casalini, she stated that the curatorial intention was to bring together different generations of Bangladeshi women in London, through cross-border dialogue (Casalini, 2020).

The curator's conscious choice of asking Kabir, a young queer artist, to lead the workshop, tied in with marginalised communities of weavers in Bangladesh. Kabir taught the women new, to them, techniques such as the back-strap loom weaving technique, employed traditionally in Bangladesh. Casalini highlighted the significance of the project and the artist's input. Kabir worked with two collectives in Bangladesh and London aiming to save some of the traditional loom patterns - that would otherwise get lost, forgotten or decay - by applying a process of digitisation and reproduction.

This project and workshops contributed to the development of craft political reclamation, considering weaving as resistance, weaving as community, weaving as

healing. The workshops created a space for sharing collective histories and narratives of local and global resistance in 'gendered' textile archives.

The sound archive piece displayed alongside the woven cloth, with recordings in different languages from the women participants, created an inclusive ambience for the different audiences to experience the work on varying levels. The use of multiple platforms of engagement allowed for the works to be seen as more than just a textile, and the audiences experiencing the references in different ways.



Figure 57 Raisa Kabir, workshop part of *Weaving Local* (2019). Photo by Seana Wilson, property of the copyright holder.

This chapter was concerned with exploring the relation between context and content of *kaino-craft* within a cultural framework through a series of practice-led projects.

The contextual review noted, material, skill, and craft knowledge as key tenets for

maintaining craft as a professional practice. It also highlighted the importance for craft to increase its level of public engagement.

The craft participatory events enabled the visitors to become engaged in the creation and development of the craftwork which offered a means of motivation for practice. Seeing participants experiment, play, and engage with the makers' ideas [though their craft] facilitated the removal of preconceptions liberating the thinking process. In doing so, it becomes a vehicle for emancipating the body and mind, inspiring both the maker and visitors to look to the future and encouraging active engagement.

Kaino-craft challenges the aesthetics embodied in craft by analysing methodological approaches embedded within historical and contemporary practice. The term's characteristics provide a tool for interrogating the process of progress, and examines the relationship between material, skill, craft knowledge and culture, demonstrating the importance of the role for craft.

Kaino-craft questions the perceptions of the maker to keep the journey silent, in a studio tacked away from society to be an active member facilitating new knowledge of craft as a process, service and experience. Thereby this practice compliments knowledge of craft and performance categories, enabling the development of new discourses as to the future value of craft.

The argument underpinning this doctoral research is for craft to be considered as a concern for innovation, individual vision, and future cultural concerns, which creates bridges between art, science, society and technology.

In doing so, it inverts the perspective from which craft is predominantly viewed and considers craft as a system of thinking rather than an act of skilful making. The 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.

This chapter offered an insight into the contribution to knowledge made by the investigation of a series of four craft inquiries: experimentation, innovation, collaboration, and participation. This framing claims that everything is possible and invites people to think and to be part of shaping all the possible outcomes, not just consuming the end solution.

Kaino-craft re-examines skill, material, craft knowledge to depart from the conventional perception of what the practice is and tends towards something other, in a form appropriate for the future. Considering making as something to be an expression of knowledge (be it by research, theory or practice-making work making an exhibition), the two case studies that follow in the next chapter defend *kaino-craft* and afford a way of exploring and understanding the field in question.

The investigation of the case studies will apply the model of practice consisting of the four criteria of *kaino-craft* identified in this chapter: Collaboration Experimentation, Innovation, and Participation.

8 KAINO-CRAFT CASE STUDIES

The previous chapter has mapped through examples of contemporary practices the shift within the craft field, the *kaino-craft*, from the traditional essence of craft to a fresh practice novel, new in quality, in development or opportunity. The crafted object has undergone a shift in its once-central role, serving instead as a record of an event or process, a prop or tool, and in some cases disappearing altogether, as contemporary craft practices continue to engage with strategies of performance and participation. Several projects and exhibitions include not mere objects, but also crafts 'set in motion' through performances, events, and participatory projects (Adamson, 2007:4).

The exemplar presented included Mirka Golden-Hann, Geoffrey Mann, Ingrid Murphy, Keith Harrison, and Raisa Kabir. These makers maintained material and skill at the core of their textile and ceramic practice as disciplines (both disciplines are understood through their ubiquitous position within culture and daily experience). Fundamental aspect of their practices is the radical and novel way they engaged with their material. What most of the practices have in common is their temporal nature. Projects like these have opened up new avenues for considering the social and collaborative aspects of craft, as well as the embodied actions and gestures of crafters themselves. Freedom of interpretation is enshrined in a set of aesthetic values that privilege experimentation and innovation.

This thesis argues that it is necessary to think about how the histories and theories of the curatorial and performance art are intersecting with contemporary craft practices. The thesis utilises *mise-en-scène* as a tool to make a re-reading of exhibitions from a distant viewpoint, calling into question some of the traditional ways of viewing or presenting crafts. This chapter concentrates on *mise-en-scène* to unfold space, object and viewer dynamics which are established within the space of its construction, the exhibition space in its expanded sense.

In other words, in both theatre and film studies, *mise-en-scène* refers to the totality of what is perceived on a stage or in a shot, living or non-living, static or dynamic, also, both individually and as a combination. To be more precise, these elements correspond to the conditions of the set, decors, actions and movements of the figures, costumes, furniture, lighting, props and so on. However, this study does not involve a further elaboration on all these elements since they fall outside its limits.

This thesis considers *mise-en-scène* as a technical/descriptive term expressed by Kessler and asserts, it to be almost synonymous with direction reflecting on what Gibbs calls the transformative effect of film style (Gibbs, 2002:59). In respect to craft, the *auteur* curator turns a proposal into an exhibition.

Considerations are being raised of how these novel forms of crafts are being curated, how they engage with the public, and constitute an integral part in theorising *kaino-craft*. With a focus on elaborating upon these ideas and to achieve more thorough discussions in this diverse field of activity, this chapter includes an in-depth analysis of two case studies. Through these two case studies, the intention is to explore *Kaino-craft* by applying the four criteria (collaboration, experimentation, innovation,

and participation) and put forward a way of thinking about curating as a *mise-en-scène*.

This chapter demonstrates the affective potential *mise-en-scène* as curatorial model can have on institutional practice. This examination readdresses not only the traditional role of a curator but also the role the gallery and museum plays in the production of *kaino-craft* work.

The studies hold a particular space-object-visitor relation which involves multiple operations that constantly appear between the exhibition space, exhibition object and the visitor. These operations reintroduce the exhibition in terms of the relational shifts that occur in between the three constituents successively.

The focus of the investigation moves beyond describing what happened, in order to understand the how and for whom.

The two studies are on contemporary makers, ceramic artist Phoebe Cummings and textile artist Celia Pym who are considered as site-related makers, because both makers make *on site* and they create *site in* their work. Moreover, their practices were chosen as they offer two different approaches of *kaino-craft*.

Both practices share the commonality of revealing human connections that exist in objects, echoing Adamson's statement 'every object represents a potential social connection. By better understanding the tangible things in our lives, we better understand our fellow humans' (Adamson, 2018:8). This statement also resonates to performativity as it was reconceptualised by thinkers such as Butler, Bolt, Barrad and von Hantelmann who have pushed towards a novel understanding of materiality.

The important thing to emphasise here, though, is the making site, the 'doing' element of *mise-en-scène*. If we are to describe the installation as performative, then

we are talking of 'enacting' or 'activating' and that, in consequence of it being experienced, creates an aspect that not only enacts in our imaginations but also has an effect within the physical world it inhabits. Von Hantelmann (2010) noted:

Performativity means to recognise and bring into discourse the productive, reality-producing dimension of, in principle, any work of art. What the notion of the performative brings into perspective is the contingent and difficult to grasp realm of impact and the effects that art brings forth... Art's performative dimension signifies art's possibilities and limits in generating and changing reality. (Von Hantelmann, 2010:18)

Cummings's study focuses on her installation *Scenes for a Future History of Ornament* featured in *Fragile?* exhibition at the National Museum Cardiff (2015). In addition, *This was Now* installation at Wolverhampton Art Gallery (2020) has been studied in relation to Covid-19 pandemic.

Pym's study includes her works *First One's the Best*, part of the touring exhibition *What do I need to Do to Make it OK?* (2015); and *Where Holes Happen* in the live events 'mending day' part of *Woman's Hour Craft Prize* exhibition at Victoria and Albert Museum (London, 2018). The case study method involved a range of empirical material collection tools with the purpose of answering the research questions with maximum breadth. Semi-structured interviews were conducted along with visiting exhibitions, observations and attending complementary events to the exhibitions for example, a curator tour or artist talk. The exhibitions were visited in person, as well as online, when and if available.

My experience as a viewer and participant was integral to being able to describe and respond to the presentation of works within them. Collecting empirical material from multiple sources allowed triangulation (Yin, 2009). This combination of multiple sources of empirical material in a case study method were selected as a strategy to add rigour, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to the study (Flick, Kardorff, and Steinke, 2004).

The curatorial strategies in these works were compared or framed, looking into projects such as *Hand+Made: The Performative Impulse in Art and Craft* at The Contemporary Art Museum Houston (2010), *Acts of Making* (2014) Crafts Council and *Material Environments* at The Tetley (2018). These curatorial projects intersect on different levels with those of the case studies, revealing a turn towards the approaches investigated in the thesis.

Grounded in sensual interactions generated through the performance and performative events, these relations are equipped to develop an expanded sensibility and responsiveness in the human. Additionally, performance serves as a site in which to better understand our changing subject position, to imagine alternative human/object relationships, and to offer suggestions toward a more creative and affirmative experience.

Moreover, the studies investigate that the exhibitions are suitable to be seen as a mode of research, as a 'lab' (discussed in chapter 3 The Curatorial).

The decision to examine a ceramic and a textile artist was inspired by Benjamin's essay *Storyteller*. Prominent in Benjamin's account of craft practice in this essay, is the hand that feels and marks its objects, gaining authentic knowledge of the world. His claims were that pottery and textiles (he mainly focused on weaving) are

paradigms of authentic experience and the processes of memory. Crafted objects provide a model of authentic experience, the experience of a person imprinted on to the objects that they bring into being, and textile offers a model of authentic memory, the weave of past and present experience and the utopian possibility. Both artists' practices provided an authentic experience both as creators of objects and activities, but also as creators of experience for their viewers.

Craft as mode of activity translates into craft as a power, an obscure power, nestling in the imaginatively conceived object. And to end then, back to the beginning and thoughts on craft and the curator in telling stories. Benjamin in his essay 'The Task of the Translator', included in *Illuminations* (1999) referred to pottery. This is while contending the impossibility of literal translation, of transmitting a story unaltered from one language to another. He created the metaphor of the action of translation to be the glueing together of fragments of a vessel, arguing that 'these fragments must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another' (Benjamin, 1999:79). Benjamin's metaphor suggested that the fragments must be brought together to remake the narrative which alludes both to Cummings and Pym's practices.

Phoebe Cummings

This study mainly focuses on, the *Scenes for a Future History of Ornament*, an installation commission to be part of *Fragile?* at the National Museum Cardiff, Wales (2015). There is also a reference to *This was Now* (2020) installation at Wolverhampton Art Gallery to comment on the impact of Covid-19 pandemic.

Fragile? curated by Andrew Renton, Keeper of Arts was a complex and ambitious project, requiring not only the co-ordination and management of several largely autonomous elements running in parallel but also the challenge of shaping a coherent visitor experience while maintaining an open and participative working philosophy. The exhibition aimed to address the diversity and beauty of modern and contemporary ceramic practice in its widest sense. Its principal aim was to challenge visitors' preconceptions about ceramics in museums.

Cumming's Practice

Phoebe Cummings works across art, design, and ceramics. Her performative work converges performance art and studio ceramics. Cummings' process and material-based sculptures and installations reveal the fragility and transient nature of life and our own physical and metaphorical mark on the environment. Intricate and detailed, her work responds to the natural world and its interpretation through art and design sources, including porcelain sculpture, botanical illustration, prints, and architectural ornament.

Like other contemporary ceramic artists, for example Keith Harrison and Edmund de Wall, Cummings mainly creates installations. Her practice challenges ideas of what ceramic is, as the emphasis is on the skill, the making process, and the understanding of the material. It is about re-imagining histories and memories, with the intention of creating new interpretations and subsequently, new narratives. This is demonstrated at both Cummings' installations analysed in this chapter.

A fundamental aspect of Cummings' practice is her approach to ceramic as her processes illustrate mastery in handling clay, however leaving it unfired. Cummings

works largely without a permanent studio, and she has mainly developed her work through residencies or by using the gallery space as a temporary workshop. With this, Cummings is challenging expectations of how ceramics are made and experienced. Cummings creates temporary sculptures and installations from raw clay which disintegrates subtly day-to-day, showing elements of destruction and decay change. As it dries, it is external environmental factors that influence the work. Her site-specific works last only for the duration of the exhibition, the clay is then reclaimed and reused, when and where possible.

Her practice juxtaposes with the idea of what ceramics are as her works are almost impossible to possess. Rosy Greenlees, Executive Director, Crafts Council, said:

Phoebe's work is truly original. It encompasses performance art and studio ceramics and defies easy categorisation. Working exclusively with raw clay to create site-specific pieces that change subtly day-to-day, her staggeringly beautiful work asks us to celebrate rather than mourn the passing of time. (Greenlees, 2017)

Exhibition: *Fragile?*

Fragile? was a complex and ambitious project, requiring not only the co-ordination and management of several largely autonomous elements running in parallel but also the challenge of shaping a coherent visitor experience while maintaining an open and participative working philosophy. The exhibition aimed to address the diversity and beauty of modern and contemporary ceramic practice in its widest

sense. Its principal aim was to challenge visitors' preconceptions about ceramics in museums.

Specifically, *Fragile?* explored the contradiction between two inherent material qualities of ceramics – durability and fragility. These characteristics have been a source of interest for contemporary artists and are integral to the cultural status of ceramics: on the one hand an enduring and often defining source of evidence for early cultures, on the other especially in the museum something to protect, keep and conserve.

The exhibition drew upon the Museum's permanent collection, complemented by loans from the Derek Williams Trust, the Victoria and Albert Museum and directly from artists. The museum has commissioned three major installation works in the main body of the show, key to the exhibition, one of which was Cummings' *Scenes for a Future History of Ornament*.

The curatorial intention was not to offer to the public a didactic exploration but rather to provoke conversation and wonder, and to confront their own preconceptions of what an exhibition of contemporary ceramics should be about. Their collection has a rich narrative, and their aim was to present their collections in a very different way. Therefore, the curators decided to place Cummings' work in the first room as they thought this subversive installation which is not ceramic in the first instance was a starting point for the exploration of ceramics as material.

Installation Scenes for a Future History of Ornament

For this commission, Cummings investigated the historic ceramics, archaeology and natural science collections from the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff seeking

inspiration from the many different objects, such as a ceramic candelabrum, botanical specimens, wax models, and fossils. Cummings contemplated the rich collection of a multidisciplinary museum.

Scenes for a Future History of Ornament was a towering structure, an hexagonal pod made of reclaimed theatrical scenery and polythene (Figure 61). The pod was surrounded by cardboard archive boxes (Figure 62). The installation was open, allowing the visitors to walk around it. Only on moving around did the clay elements become visible, peering through the holes, or walking inside the pod (Figure 63, Figure 64, Figure 66). Looking inside the boxes visitors were encountered with a miniature fictional botanical landscape of raw clay with a different scene in each box (Figure 68a-f). The action of stopping and peering inside the box relied on the audience confidently exploring the work for a full understanding, rather than taking one look and then moving away. These scenes evoked a sense of discovery and wonder, bringing materiality, process, and expression to the fore.

Moreover, inside the pod structure, the walls were covered by raw clay which is dry but not solid, and damp, rather springy, a product of collaboration of the artist and the raw clay. It seems that the smell of the air should have been subtle and various. When the visitors were walking inside the structure through the polythene curtain, they could sense the wet clay. Time and the phenomenon of entropy, as in the natural decay of structure, transience, are central to this project. The visitors were experiencing matter changing in front of their eyes (Figure 67a, b).

The abstract patterns, marks and elevated structure were created while Cummings was creating the work. As the raw clay was drying, it looked as though this is how we could visualise memory if we could see it through a microscope. Or, as I pondered,

perhaps there might be a parallel to Danish artist Asger Jorn driving his scooter through the soft clay in a backyard in Albissola, Italy, to make a mural for a Jutland school, leaving unmistakable tire imprints, his marks and traces on his great relief (Figure 58).

Jorn, a radical painter, sculptor, and ceramic artist investigated the relationship of gestural painting and making to expression, the concept of mythmaking, and art's relationship to politics and popular culture. His activities were essentially political, illustrated an emphasis on overt experimentalism, and rejection of traditional aesthetic principles. An interesting account on Jorn's ceramic practice is by ceramic artist Edmund de Wall who explained that the artist's interest was not in making ceramic objects for commercial exhibition, but in the experience of clay as earth (de Wall, 2004:47).



Figure 58 Asger Jorn on a scooter preparing the panel for Aarhus, 1950 Photo property of the copyright holder.

Cummings' installation was playful, provoking visitors to rethink their entire approach to clay. The key aspect of Cummings' display was symmetry where everything was perfectly set up and staged. In the middle of the structure there was a sphere covered with ornaments created using moulds and casting (Figure 65). The sphere could be considered as the moon lit in with a butter-like colour. The moon is a feminine symbol, universally representing the rhythm of time as it embodies the cycle. The phases of the moon symbolise immortality and eternity. It might reflect inner knowledge, or the phases of living conditions on earth, since it controls the tides, the rains, the waters, and the seasons. It is the middle ground between the light of the sun and the darkness of night, and thus often represents the realm between the conscious and the unconscious.

Cummings thought through all the details of the setup, of the wooden structure and arrangement of the archive boxes. She created a model box that included a miniature of the structure and the boxes so that she would be able to visualise, experiment and speculate about visitors' movement (Figure 60). In this sense, Cummings has created a stage on a stage, a *mise-en-scène*.

Cummings and the curators have also considered lighting. The intensity, depth, and angle of the lighting has affected the mood of the scene. The display with the archival boxes, the temporary wooden kiosk structure, and the polythene sheet, recalled a construction site, or an archaeological excavation site. Nothing seemed to be pure, arid, or plain.

The visitors could not see everything at once which might have created a sense of uncertainty. The raw clay plants, flowers and mini structures inside the boxes were grey, sprinkled with ceramic dust. These mini cosmoi recalled Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray's *Élevage de Poussière*, (Figure 59). The puffy clusters of dust could be clouds and the peculiar clay elements could be trees, buildings of earthy or underwater landscapes.



Figure 59 Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray (1920) *Élevage de Poussière*. Photo property of the copyright holder.

What scene the visitors really think they see seems to be unimportant. What is significant is the line of sight, the scene that is revealed to them and how much they can see.

Here should be noted that the importance to consider the line of site was addressed by academic and textiles scholar Lesley Millar. At the introduction of the exhibition catalogue *Lost in Lace: The Exhibition*, Millar stated 'The intention is not to frame and therefore define the point of view but to present overlapping layers. The experience should be one of texture, space and movement through space, of isolation and occupation, contemplation and action' (Millar, 2011:9).

The visitors walking around Cumming's installation had the possibility to choose their own pathway through discovering the mini cosmoi. These mini cosmoi or multiple *mise-en-scènes*, seemed to raise the questions, how arid they were, how fertile they were, where the assertion was that lifeless raw clay and dust and fertile land were

mysteriously somehow both dead and alive. Twomey, who also works with clay in unconventional ways, commented about Cummings' work:

Unfired and uncaring of this state, the work is fragile and alive, seeking a dialogue of the precious and the vulnerable...The work absorbs all it encounters and does it with little regard for permanence and sentimentality toward preservation of the object.

(Twomey, 2011)

This statement resonates with the visitors' comments. For example, a visitor written in one of the available iPads 'This piece makes me feel like I'm living inside something that's also changing but at a different pace' (Conroy and Renton, 2016).

The curators have used digital as well as analogue methods to communicate with the visitors. The visitors had the opportunity to leave comments on iPads (situated in the landing area) or write and display their messages on the wall. In this way the visitors became active participants, and commentators (Figure 69 and Figure 70).

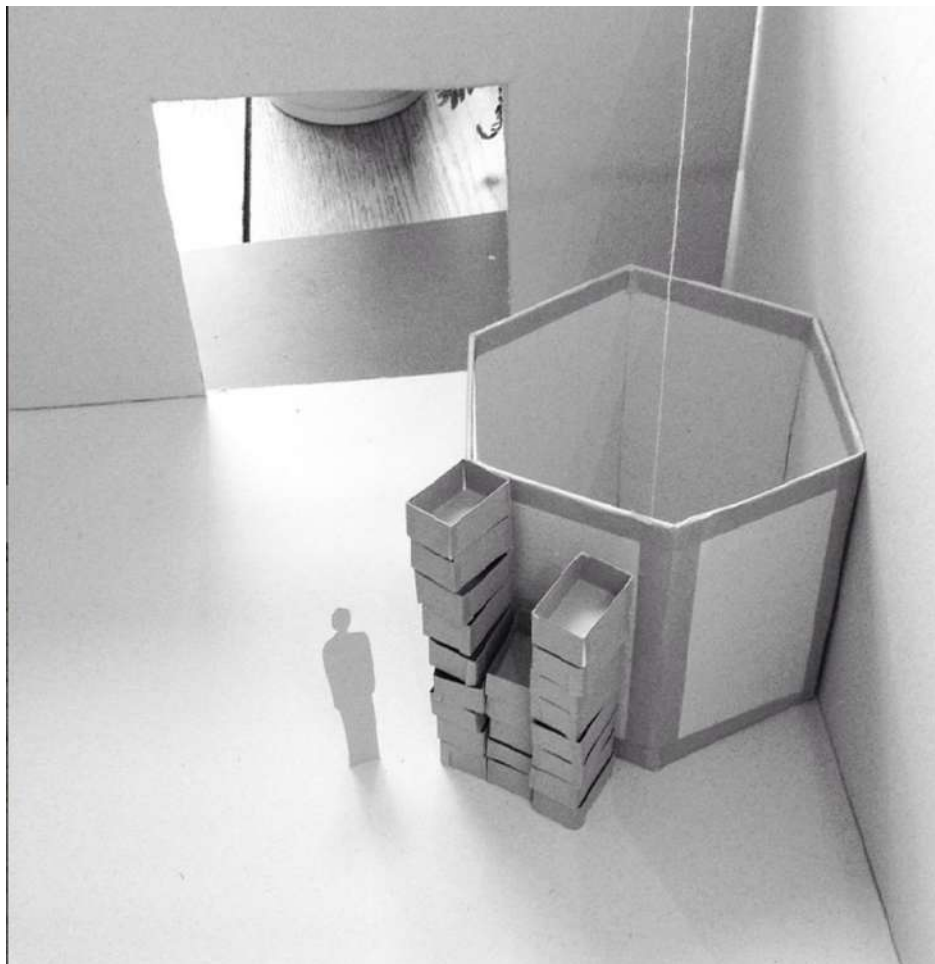


Figure 60 *Fragile?* (2015) Phoebe Cummings Model Box for the *Scenes for a Future History of Ornament*. National Museum Wales, Cardiff Screenshot from a post on Instagram in 2015



Figure 61 *Fragile?* (2015) Installation view Phoebe Cummings *Scenes for a Future History of Ornament*. National Museum Wales, Cardiff. Photo property of the copyright holder



Figure 62 *Fragile?* (2015) Installation view Phoebe Cummings *Scenes for a Future History of Ornament*. National Museum Wales, Cardiff. Photo property of the copyright holder.



Figure 63 *Fragile?* (2015) Installation view, visitors peering through the holes. Phoebe Cummings *Scenes for a Future History of Ornament*. National Museum Wales, Cardiff. Photo property of the copyright holder.



Figure 64 *Fragile?* (2015) Detail installation view Phoebe Cummings *Scenes for a Future History of Ornament*. National Museum Wales, Cardiff. Photo property of the copyright holder.



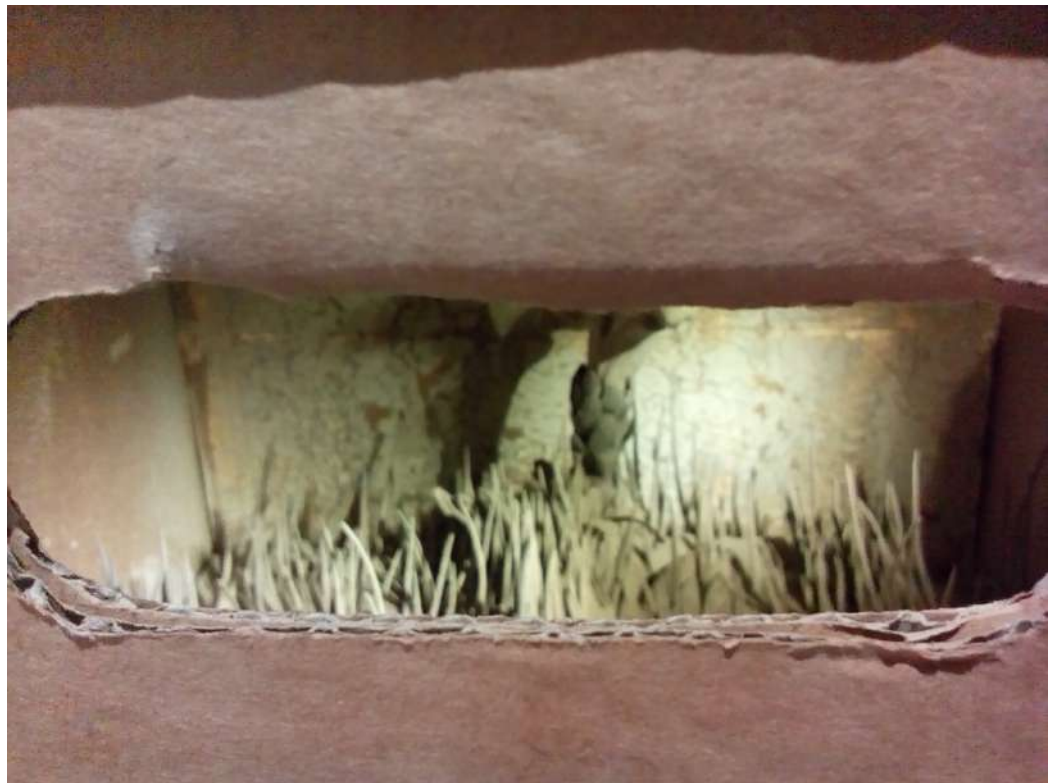
Figure 65 *Fragile?* (2015) Detail of the sphere inside the structure Phoebe Cummings *Scenes for a Future History of Ornament*. National Museum Wales, Cardiff. Photo property of the copyright holder.



Figure 66 *Fragile?* (2015) Installation view inside the structure, Phoebe Cummings *Scenes for a Future History of Ornament*. National Museum Wales, Cardiff. Photo property of the copyright holder.



Figure 67a, b *Fragile?* (2015) Detail from internal face of the installation wall, Phoebe Cummings *Scenes for a Future History of Ornament*. National Museum Wales, Cardiff. Photo property of the copyright holder.



63a



63b

63c



63d

63e



63f

Figure 68a, b, c, d, e, f *Fragile?* (2015) Installation view: miniature fictional botanical landscapes of raw clay, different scene in each box, Phoebe Cummings *Scenes for a Future History of Ornament*. National Museum Wales, Cardiff. Photo property of the copyright holder.



Figure 69 *Fragile?* (2015) Detail from the wall with notes, National Museum Wales, Cardiff. Photo property of the copyright holder.

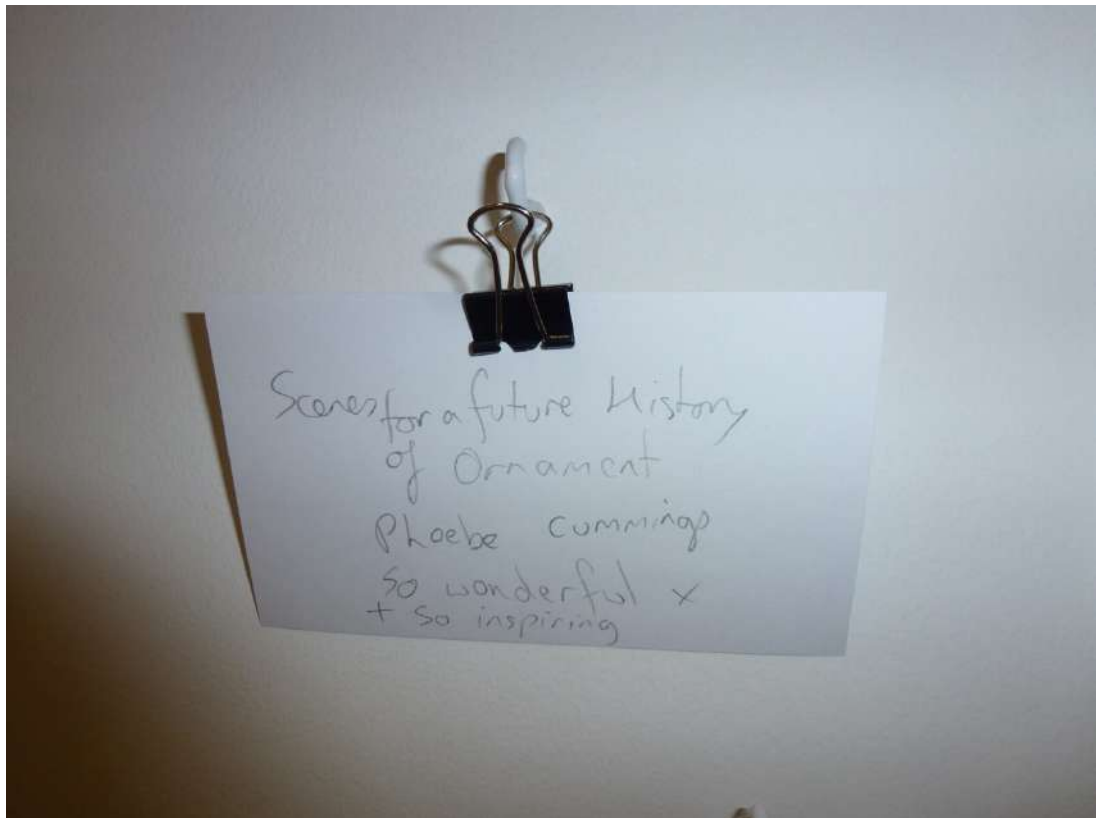


Figure 70 *Fragile?* (2015) Detail from the wall with notes, visitors response to Phoebe Cumming's 'Scenes for a Future History of Ornament,' National Museum Wales, Cardiff. Photo property of the copyright holder.

In Discussion with the Curator and the Maker

I discussed *Scenes for a Future History of Ornament* and *Fragile?* at separate interviews conducted via zoom with exhibition curator Andrew Renton, in March 2020, and maker Phoebe Cummings, in October 2020, both at a time of Covid-19 pandemic total lockdown

During the interview, Renton explained that the curatorial intention was to show objects that extend their understanding of what ceramics are and can be. However, he mainly emphasised in Cummings' approach to the project, articulating on the way the maker considered the museum collections, as a whole, rather than by individual disciplines. Renton acknowledged that the maker's research process helped the curators to review the potentials of the different collections, revealing new possibilities to work together with colleagues from the other departments of the museum in fresh inspiring ways saying: 'Cummings' work made the museum think differently about the potential of the different disciplines of the museum' (Renton, 2020).

I started the interview with Cummings by asking questions in relation to her practice, before moving to ask about the importance of space and her choice not to fire the clay.

Cummings explained that initially her decision to work with raw and to not fire clay came about out of necessity after graduating from the Royal College of Arts as she had no access to a kiln. However, she quickly recognised the possibilities of this novel approach which allowed her to explore the material's aptitude to be unendingly remade. Cummings cogitated that once clay is fired, it becomes static, fixed, dead.

Consequently, by not firing clay she is not fixing it, but she becomes part of the life of the material, and its mutability. Cummings said that this way of working offered new creative possibilities 'it is like it was [working with raw clay], still the same techniques, but it just gave me a lot more freedom' (Cummings, 2020).

In this sense, Cummings meant that her concerns moved from the finished, fixed, fired object to a live sculpture made of a raw material [clay], everchanging responding to the environment i.e., heat, humidity, dust etc.

Cummings continued elucidating the importance of the environment and space in her work. For her, it is fundamental to know and feel the space illustrating the importance to visit the site before she start thinking about the new installation 'so even like noticing things like the way the light moves in the space or like the way you tend to move through this' explaining this experience is not possible with 'just seeing a kind of gallery plan and making' the work (Cummings, 2020).

Specifically, for the *Scenes for a Future History of Ornament*, Cummings asserted her ongoing interest in creating this type of environment which 'somewhat separates it from the rest of the room in a way that you kind of step into it, and you sense this humidity' (Cummings, 2020).

This sense [of the humidity], transience and the setting up the stage to experience it, is something that has become primary in her practice. Cummings ponders how materials perform and enact their own performance. Moreover, the maker stated that by making the work completely on site, it feels much more embedded in the place (Cummings, 2020).

Cummings installation *Scenes for a Future History of Ornament* investigated tactility and diversity of raw clay, demonstrating deep understanding of the material, skill,

and craft knowledge which allowed for new narratives and a novel attitude towards ceramics.

Installation: *This was Now*

In *This was Now* at Wolverhampton Art Gallery (2020), Cummings was invited to create a new work in a time-lapse installation using raw clay within the gallery space, which would continue to evolve over the course of the exhibition. Fundamental to the artist's practice is the application of very traditional ceramic techniques, however the outcome is ephemeral sculpture.

This installation was time-based and would exist more like a material performance rather than a fixed static object. For this project, Cummings was interested in producing a sculpture and wanted to create it over a longer duration, so she started to work two weeks before the show opened. The maker's intention was for the sculpture not to be finished on the opening day. The idea was that she would return every two weeks, to continue working on the sculpture. The concept behind the exhibition was this evolving sculpture which does not have a beginning and an end. At the end of the exhibition, the sculpture itself would share the same fate with all Cummings sculptures; it was planned to be destroyed and the clay taken forward to be used in the maker's future works.

Cummings for this exhibition was inspired by an exhibition that was on display at Wolverhampton Art Gallery at the time which focused on memories and particularly how the memories are being recorded. This reflects and characterises Cummings' own practice. For the *This was Now* installation, the emphasis was again on

transience, the exploration of a way to document the continuously changing sculpture (Figure 71 and Figure 72a, b, c).

The exhibition, in addition to the clay installation, included objects from the Wolverhampton Arts Gallery collection, namely nineteenth century pattern books and Japanese ware that Cummings reflected upon when working on the sculpture, as well as quotes within the exhibition space from literature (Figure 73). The quotes were printed in vinyl and placed around the gallery were related with the idea of transience, feeling and memory.

Yet, what is notable in this exhibition is Cummings' decision to include the visitors as active participants and collaborators in her process of investigating the recording of the memory. This could be seen as a live example of applying the *exhibition as research* methodology expressed by Bjerregaard. Specifically, the public was invited to record their responses by writing or drawing. For this, the curators created a special space in the gallery: a table with seats and some drawing materials (Figure 74). That space was an integral part of the exhibition where people could sit down and reflect, spend some time looking at the sculpture, looking at the changing sculpture, experiencing the changing matter and record their response, as researchers in a laboratory.

Nevertheless, the exhibition faced a premature closure caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. For this, the curatorial team decided to create a virtual version of the exhibition, by creating digital content i.e., videos, photographs, interviews and film, to be posted or listed in social media platforms and the gallery's website. The public was asked to respond to the sculpture from home through these listings and posts.

This gave a different dynamic to the project. However, the virtual exhibition analysis moves beyond the scope of this study, and it won't be further examined.

Cummings' practice is identified as *kaino-craft*. Cummings is questioning materiality by the concern to accord a degree of agency to matter, objects, or things, an agency which has traditionally been reserved for human beings. Her practice seems to reconsider the importance of the material qualities of the body, the natural world, and things in general beyond their reduction to human imposed systems of connotation, narrative, and meaning. This directs to the new materialism theorists for example Bolt, and Bennett who argued that materialism is not simply an account of reality. Their interdisciplinary thinking interweaves ontology with epistemology, politics, and ethics, and argue that the way we get to know the material world, or how we learn to understand the material world differently enable us to move beyond the dualism of biological determinism or unrestricted cultural determination. Bennett in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010) examined the political and theoretical implications of vital materialism through extended discussions of commonplace things and physical phenomena including stem cells, fish oils, electricity, metal, and trash.

Bennett's book showcased that at the heart of her concern is human interest. In the introduction she wrote: 'My claims here are motivated by a self-interested or conative concern for human survival and happiness: I want to promote greener forms of human culture and more attentive encounters between people-materialities and thing-materialities' (Bennett, 2010: ix).

In this sense, Cummings emphasises on raw live clay and allows it to adopt a vital approach which no longer privileges humans, or any living forms, over seemingly

inanimate matter. Moreover, it points to *mise-en-scène* working as a kind of tool, acting on the exhibition. Taking up this line of thought, a materialist aesthetic of exhibition could be developed as concerns of pure sensuous presence which can only be felt, not constructed as a theory to be used for identification in advance.

Cummings' emphasis on the raw clay gives works a sense of function and affect, something to be felt. It seems that her practice moves between two extremes: the unbridled joy of life and the deep sorrow of death. It is a celebration dedicated to nature, providing an opportunity to meditate and contemplate.

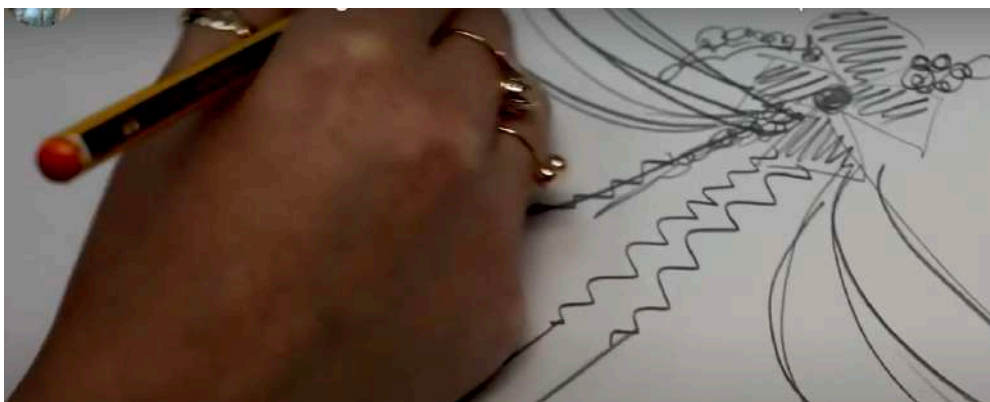
Furthermore, these two examples of Cummings practice have also highlighted the curatorial. The museum and gallery seek to engage with the maker whose work challenges their very structure. The relationship between the artist and host becomes discursive and interdependent. The museum, gallery and the curators become active agents in the development of new practice. By facilitating such work, the institution shifts from a passive collector of objects, keeper and communicator of knowledge (through its curatorial activities), to become a dynamic instrumental agent contributing via practice as research in the development of contemporary craft field and new knowledge. Such a development is achieved through thorough negotiations, a skill essential to *kaino-craft*, as the innovative, experimental projects often require dealing with various restrictions, and health and safety issues which embrace the craft of compromise, resilience, and flexibility.



Figure 71 Phoebe Cummings (2020) Work in Progress *This Was Now*, Wolverhampton Art Gallery. Screenshot from YouTube, At: <https://youtu.be/7IVH93gf2Bo> (Accessed 5 February 2021)



67a



67b



67c

Figure 72 a, b and c Phoebe Cummings (2020) Public were invited to be active in the process of recording the changing work through drawing and writing, which after was displayed across the gallery wall. Screenshot from YouTube, At: <https://youtu.be/7IVH93gf2Bo> (Accessed 5 February 2021)



Figure 73 Phoebe Cummings (2020) Installation view, display of collection of nineteenth century pattern books and Japanese ware. Screenshot from YouTube, At: <https://youtu.be/7IVH93gf2Bo> (Accessed 5 February 2021)



69a



Figure 74 Phoebe Cummings (2020) Installation view, dedicated space in the gallery, 69b including a table with seats and some drawing materials, for people to sit down and reflect, spend time looking at the sculpture and respond. Screenshot from YouTube, At: <https://youtu.be/7IVH93gf2Bo> (Accessed 5 February 2021)

Celia Pym

Pym's Practice

Pym has been exploring mending since 2007, using darning, knitting and embroidery to create intimate works that speak directly to human experience. Her interest was kindled after she inherited, in 2006, a sweater belonging to her great-uncle Roland Pym, an artist, theatre designer and illustrator, which was hand-knitted and repeatedly mended by his sister, Elizabeth Cobb. The great-aunt died before him, so Pym inherited the sweater with many new holes that she mended using a blue yarn. Influenced by her aunt, Pym taught herself to darn, and carefully filled in the thinning areas of Elizabeth's repairs, adding her own marks of care to Roland's sweater. Continuing to repair great-uncle Roland's sweater brought a new kind of understanding to it as a pre-owned object and offered it a new kind of life.

Pym's practice directs to the *Ship of Theseus* paradox based on a Greek legend. According to the legend, the ship wherein Theseus returned from Crete after killing the Minotaurus, had thirty oars and was preserved by the Athenians for centuries. In the course of time, the Athenians took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their places. However, following years of maintenance, repair and replacement of parts, the ancient philosophers pondered whether it was still the same ship as every part of the ship of Theseus had been replaced, over time.

In this context, Pym's practice raises the question if, over time, each hole is fixed, is the sweater still the same? If not, when did it cease to be its original self?

This thinking calls into question the boundaries and flexibility of identity and memory. Ever since Pym has carefully darned other people's clothing, she questioned emotions towards vulnerability, care and repair. She has explored darning in a range of different artistic and community contexts, participating in projects in which people could bring in objects to be mended, or receive advice about fixing and renewing broken things.

Pym's practice aims to draw out memories and meaning through the process of mending from personal textile garments, be it a sock, jumper, or sweater. She is using her darning technique, strategically repeating the process, experimenting with various coloured threads and yarns. Pym in an interview for *Studio International* with Janet McKenzie titled 'I didn't ever see the point of invisible mending' (2018) talked about the sweater, mending but also how a family's history is often told through artefacts, directing to the notion of storytelling through materials. She continued saying 'I liked the sense of making visible rather than invisible mending. I didn't ever see the point of invisible mending. It seemed more important to see the repair, see the damage. Damage and repair go hand in hand' (Pym, 2018).

For Pym the act of mending artfully is a form of caring and memorialisation (Pym, 2018). Mending in its widest sense implies social engagement and responsibility. Underlying many of Pym's works is the notion of mending as an act of healing and repetition and a sense of giving back to people and communities.

Pym anticipated that while she is mending, she is creating a site of discourse, by opening a space for people to approach her for advice and also to talk about the meaning implied in restoring a treasured piece of clothing. Sometimes, the garment

will have been the property of a loved one who has died, so repairing it, she claimed, enables the relationship to continue.

Pym's practice addresses contemporary issues, for example alienation, isolation with others, by bringing in materiality. However, she is moving away from materiality at the same time, in the sense that she is using the garments as medium to initiate a discourse.

Project: Mending and Anatomy

A pilot project titled *Parallel Practices* (2014), coordinated by Crafts Council, aimed to demonstrate the mutual benefits and value of collaboration between biomedical scientific academics and makers.

This pilot project consisted of four collaborations, with each lasting four months and involving a team of at least one craft maker and one biomedical scientist. These pairings stimulated learning and innovation through a focus on the body, materials, and processes.

Pym's was shortlisted following an open call invitation by Crafts Council and King's College to partner with healthcare professionals, or academics, to participate in one of the residencies. The call was for an open-ended project that explored where craft and health science intersect around the practice. So, the research was about process. Pym was paired and worked with Dr Richard Wingate in the Dissecting Room at King's College London. The project, titled *Mending and Anatomy*, questioned the qualities of haptic experiences evoked through touch, the feelings of care and the patterns of wear in material through the intersection of anatomy studies and textiles.

This project brought together a textile and medical specialist making them effective collaborators across disciplines. Their extensive knowledge, specialism, within their field allowed them to make a robust contribution establishing connections across their distinct disciplines, bringing their learning together.

The creative outcome of this residency was *First One's the Best* (2015), an installation including 60 sports socks, made of wool and acrylic yarn (Figure 75). This work was named after the first sock Pym darned in the dissecting room during her residency.

Pym was embedded in the Dissecting Room three times a week throughout the residency from September to January. She was trying to imitate being a member of the medical team, hence wearing her lab coat. This echoes performance theorist Richard Schechner who has written that when he performs, he feels that he is 'not me, and not me either' (Savran, 2001:273). This double negative, and logical contradiction expresses the ambiguity that defines theatre, and in a broader sense any stage, as well as the elusive nature of identity in the first place.

For this project, Pym set up her stage, a mending station, a desk, inside the Dissecting Room (Figure 76a, b). Pym acknowledged her interest in this idea of people generously donating their bodies for other people to learn from them, so this triggered her curiosity about that space, but most of all, about the feelings of the young students in this space. Pym invited the medical students to bring in old, loved garments to be mended (Figure 77a, b and c). When she didn't have any garment to mend, she was cutting and mending sports socks.

The questions raised here concern mending and anatomy, how do they intersect, or where do they interact? Pym's mending station meant that she was bringing the practice of mending human textiles into such proximity to work with what is often

assumed to be dehumanised. The parallel of materiality of the human body, and the worn garment, the cutting of real material, of real people with real stories.

Pym was mending, repairing the damaged garments while the students were cutting up bodies. This performance made evident the parallel between darning worn-out garments and stitching bodies. The parallels of the human dissection and the repair of human possessions. Pym found insightful the conversation with Dr Wingate - they spend a lot of time talking about the importance of working with real material in a physical space - who acknowledge the value for his students to have real bodies as opposed to slides to work on and learn, and discussed the power of touch:

Repairing and mending things. It's always been really critical that you have the real physical object, because the material is a tangible thing, and is stimulating in ways that you can't anticipate. So, stimulating your senses, in a way that is different from looking at a digital thing or reading. There is power in those too, but we were talking a lot about power of touch. (Pym, 2018)

Dr Wingate from his medical position wondered whether there were other things students were learning by having this encounter. Pym, considered the project to be an inquiry regarding the experience of warming up and softening the space through textiles. The students were invited to share their stories of their favourite garment and to consider the essentiality of mending, making them engage more with the project. In addition, the students were calling Pym to witness signs of past surgeries, such as a stitch in the body, that was revealed during the dissection.



Figure 75 Celia Pym (2015) *First One the Best*. Photo property of the copyright holder.

71a



71b



Figure 76a, b Celia Pym (2014) *Mending and Anatomy*, view of the mending station, the desk, inside the Dissecting Room. Photo property of the copyright holder.



Figure 77 a, b and c Celia Pym (2014) *Mending and Anatomy*. Medical students brought in old, loved garments to be mended. Property of the copyright holder.

Pym explored 'mending' in anatomy and the relationship between care and caretaking in textile repair. What the maker's work revealed for the medical professionals seems to be difficult to quantify. However, it could be argued that the instigation of unusual and wide-ranging conversations - that would not be typical in a lab - were inspired by the creative freedom the maker revealed through play and experiment as well as from the experimental project itself.

The Dissecting Room is a place where medical students learn to detach themselves from their emotions while dealing with something deeply distressing. Pym's intervention provided an emotional metaphor, connecting the careful dissection and analysis of donated bodies with the care and respect one is showing for much-loved items through repairing them and making good.

In Discussion with the Maker

During an interview conducted in October 2020 via zoom, Pym talked about this project. She explained that the Crafts Council partnered with King's College for *Parallel Practices* to create a series of residencies, with the aim to demonstrate the mutual benefits and value of collaboration between biomedical scientists and craft makers. Interestingly, Pym noted that it 'wasn't an interdisciplinary work' as it was more about exchange of knowledge of methods through the parallel practices saying, 'It wasn't an interdisciplinary work; it was about what can we learn from each other? So, what are the methods with which we work that we can learn from each other' (Pym, 2020).

So, it could be considered as an open-ended discussion between the different disciplines and its practitioners, craft makers, biomedical scientists, students, and positioned within practice as research.

It seems that the mending station uncovered a playful seriousness in the sense that it proposes a non-place to deal with the motions and effects of the Dissecting Room. Pym reflecting on the project stated 'it certainly felt quite performative, but in a low keyway, because I was trying to look like a team member. I set up the desk with a view to it, looking bright' (Pym, 2020).

Pym engaged in conversations with staff and students about them, their families and career ambitions. She talked about her admiration for the person who donated their body but also for the people who are left behind to grieve for them, thinking about their wider community and families as well.

Pym said that her mending desk became a sort of informal 'fainting desk' when students didn't feel very well and sat with her while they recovered. Conversations with these students enabled reflections on human tissue, the skin, as a very particular kind of worn-out textile, one that's particularly intimately and profoundly bound up with a human sense of self and identity.

A contradiction is that while a dissection room is a place of the dead, its single purpose is to increase knowledge and understanding of the living human body. The *Mending and Anatomy* project enabled reflections on possession of our own body and raised inquiries about damaged physical possessions and their meaning as humans. Establishing this craft stage, a mending desk, within the dissection room created a scene explicitly and effectively about human care: care of mending garment, care for learning, care for both staff and students, care of repair, alongside

the unique human act of handling and caring for another body, human or object before and after death, with respect.

The same respect, a similar concept, but in a very different context, characterised Pym's 'Mending Days' (2017, 2018) at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London part of the *Woman's Hour Craft Prize*.

Project: *Mending Days*

For the exhibition, Pym decided to show two new works, a sweater of a GP and another one belonging to an intensive-care nurse, alongside a text telling their stories and showing their profile picture. Moreover, the mending days resulted in the creation of *Where Holes Happen Map* (2018) display, consisting of a tracksuit, sports socks, gloves, hat, and various yarns (Figure 78). At the end of the mending days each item of clothing was covered with coloured patches of darning showing where damage existed before.

During the mending days Pym invited visitors to the Victoria and Albert Museum London, to bring in their damaged garments. Pym offered to discuss damage to visitors' clothing and offered a repair. From a curatorial perspective it was interesting to discuss with Pym the limitations and the problematics of her initial proposal and the compromises that had to be made for delivering the workshop.

Pym was offered a space next to the Craft Prize exhibition to run four mending days. She set up the room as a stage to present all the clothing and garments the visitors would bring for repair. The mending day was seen as a performance. For each live event, performance, Pym had to set up the room and then take it down at the end of the day. The bright room at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, a space

usually used for seminars and workshops was turned to a live stage for each of the mending days.

Pym carefully set up white canvases around the room which were waiting for the incoming garments (Figure 79). When people were coming in, Pym was placing a paper hanging label, with information about the holes and the story and placing it on the empty canvas (Figure 80). In this way, this live display was an ever-changing scene while being filled with human possessions, emotions, and stories. The room was open to the public. People were able to come in and look at these damaged possessions of other people. Not everyone had to bring in things, and everyone was welcome to walk around to explore.

Pym used this opportunity to consider her own practice differently. She noted the stories of the visitors and used it as data in an attempt to map the holes. She has set up her own rules saying, 'I get quite excited about following the rules that I have created myself for a way to work' (Pym, 2020). Pym was mending the holes in the items visitors brought in and in turn she was asking them to copy and cut a similar hole onto the tracksuit, a pair of socks, hat and a pair of gloves placed on the table. Following this Pym was using the same colour of yard used in the damaged cloth to darn this deliberately made hole.

Pym's intention was to see if there was any patterning to damage on garments and if it would be possible to map that out. For example, if she mended someone's elbow in blue, herself or the visitors would cut the same size hole in a corresponding spot on the tracksuit and fill it in with the same blue used to mend the sweater. Pym said that she mended ninety-four garments. A pattern of heavy damage on the shoulder

and both left and right elbows and back of forearms, at forefingers and thumbs, and on heels emerged.

The tracksuit body and the other items were placed on the tables in the middle of the room (Figure 81). It seemed to be a surgery for mending. Pym would darn these holes later in her studio with the same colour that she would use darning the original damaged item. In a sense Pym was responding to what the participants were making. The idea was to mark out, or map, how the damage was made.

She also acknowledged how this process shifted slightly the way she was thinking about colour, 'because the patterning, the density of the darn and the heaviness of the layering of the darn' (Pym, 2020). Discussing about this process, Pym made a direct link with her project at the Dissecting Room when she was working on the sports stocks saying 'where I was cutting them and darning them and cutting them and darning them' where this repetition enabled her to develop the language of the way those colours could work together and be layered together.

What Pym found interesting was the volume of people coming in the room in comparison to other venues where she has hosted similar events. She said that this created a challenge to speak to visitors as at times there was a queue, which made it difficult to allocate the time required to develop the conversation. The ephemeral performance and installation of the mending days which required her to be flexible and quick in setting up and take down were in contradiction with the actual nature of the event, the mending and conversation as they both require time.

Through these creative acts of mending, it is evident that alongside the damaged materials and objects there are forms of life-giving renewal and restoration. In

mending, it is acknowledged that amid wreckage and despair, it is positioned alongside the reflective work of repair.

The damage in a garment is the echo of the physicality of the body. It seems that this physicality, the materiality, makes these garments, of people we have loved, particularly important. This was also observed by Benjamin when he writes 'Past things have futurity' (Benjamin, 1996:15). This could be interpreted by saying that material memories ensure that the past is always carried with us into the future. By both literally and metaphorically preserving garments and possessions of the past, we are proposing old styles with new life and new meanings.

Mending in its widest sense, often carries a strong sense of social engagement and responsibility. Underlying many of the works is the notion of mending as an act of healing and repetition and a sense of giving back to communities.

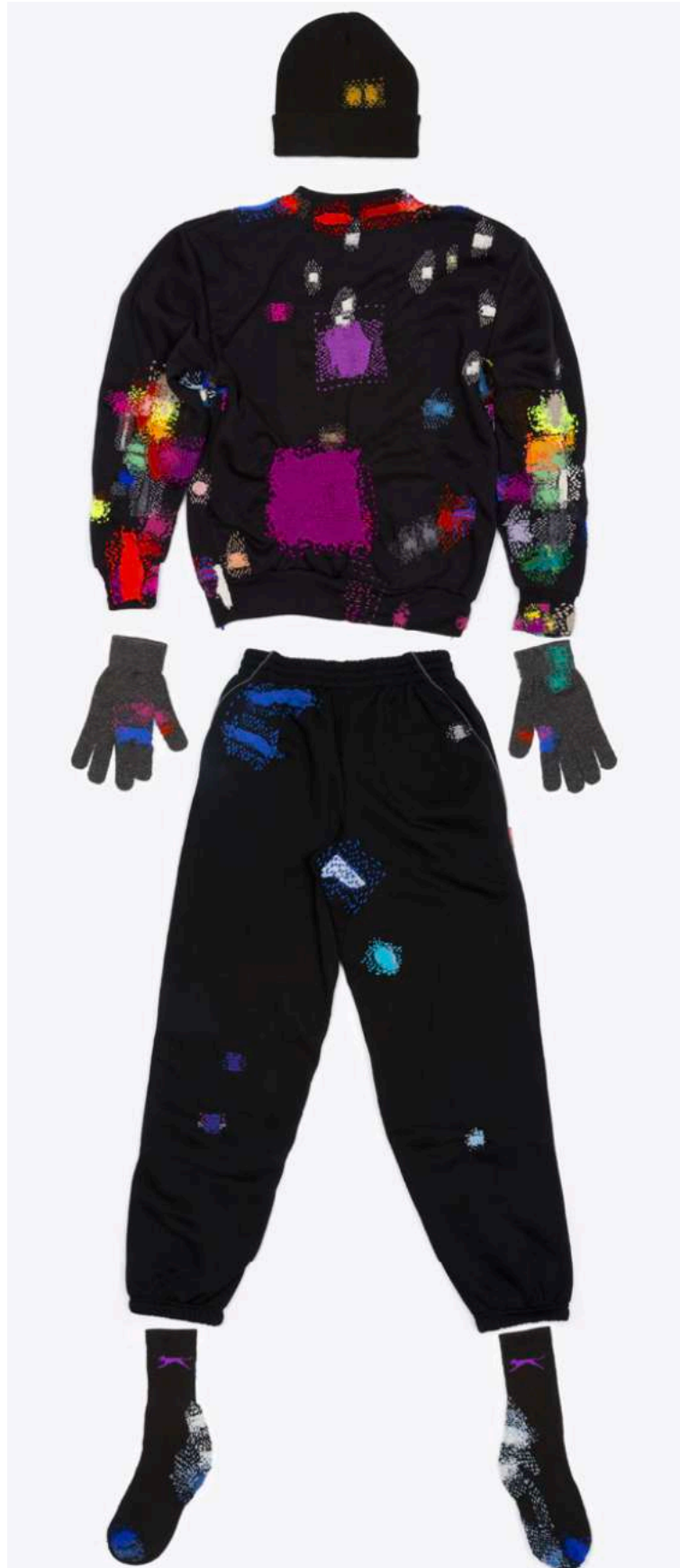


Figure 78 Celia Pym (2018) *Where Holes Happen Map*, Tracksuit, sports socks, gloves, hat and various yarns. Photo property of the copyright holder.



Figure 79 Celia Pym (2018) View of the blank canvases, *Mending Days* Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo possession of the author.

Figure 80 Celia Pym (2018) View of canvases with garments and paper hanging labels, with information about the holes and the story, *Mending Days* Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo possession of the author.

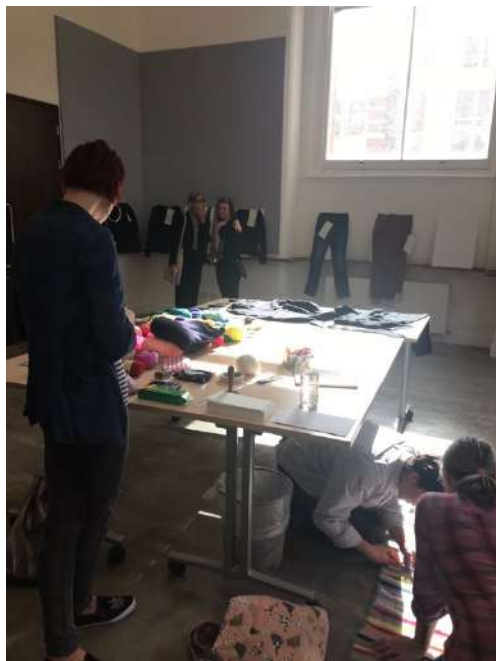


Figure 81 Celia Pym (2018) View of the tables in the middle of the room featuring the tracksuit body and the other items. Pym discussing a garment with a visitor, *Mending Days* Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo possession of the author.

The two case studies of the contemporary craft or *kaino-craft*, denote deep knowledge, understanding of materials, techniques, and skill, and move their practice consciously afresh. The practices demonstrate collaboration between the institutions, professional and visitors, experimentation, and innovation, pushing the boundaries of the traditional notion of clay and darning, illustrating the beneficiary potentials of the transference of skill and participation, as visitors become actively and dynamically engaged.

This chapter has mapped, through case studies, the shifting paradigms of craft practice. Cummings' and Pym's work retain a nexus to clay and yarn as a material, ceramics and darning as disciplines that are both understood through their traditional position within the prevailing culture. Moreover, what both have in common is their engagement with the environment, making to site or making in site and the ephemeral nature of their practice either in the sense of the decay of the sculpture or the live event. Their practices offer an insight into *kaino-craft* where the makers operate in a contemporary field having embraced and exploited methods and approaches that exist both within and outside craft discourse.

Once these expanded methods of practice are employed in an historical setting (at the National Museum Wales and the Dissecting Room, correspondingly), Cummings and Pym deliberately construct a strain through the expectation, established patterns of curation and the introduction of alternative methods of practice.

The host institution as a method of thorough introspection and inquiry welcomes the challenge of normative procedures offered by the unique insights the makers are bringing in. The *auteur* curator, makers and institution as a collaborative creative

force expand the field of craft practice, offering a significant contribution to discourse.

This will be addressed in the next chapter which will examine my major curatorial project *Makers' Tale* at Salisbury Arts Centre (2020-2021) and my project *Hidden History* at South Hill Park, Bracknell (2020) in support of my doctoral submission. This examination identifies the new knowledge and awareness that is developed and carried forward through the process of the curatorial and exhibition as a research approach.

9 MAKERS' TALE AND HIDDEN HISTORIES

The previous chapter examined the practices of ceramic artist Phoebe Cummings and textile artist Celia Pym and tested the model of practice I developed consisting of four criteria to identify *kaino-craft*: Collaboration, Experimentation, Innovation, and Participation. It should be highlighted that both makers demonstrate mastery of skill and use their materials (clay, yarn) within their practice which remains an essential component of their output.

This chapter reflects on the theories and practices examined in the previous chapters. It presents *mise-en-scène* as almost synonymous with direction, reflecting on what Gibbs calls the transformative effect of film style. This is by means of the *mise-en-scène* when the 'director turns a script into a film,' or as it has been applied in my practice, the *auteur* curator who turns an idea and a proposal into an exhibition (Gibbs, 2002:59).

This chapter examines my major curatorial project *Makers' Tale* at Salisbury Arts Centre (2020-2021) and my project *Hidden History* at South Hill Park, Bracknell (2020) to support the thesis argument. The examination of these curatorial projects identifies the new knowledge developed and demonstrates the thesis theoretical underpin of exhibition as research.

Both projects are inspired by craft within buildings, considering that buildings act as time capsules and the craft within them are still located as the practitioners intended.

They are not separate from their environment or seen as isolated single objects but rather have resonance that survives time. One of the doctrines offered by this thesis is that craft practice is a continuous journey that mutates and transcends to adapt to the needs of each society.

The two projects offer different strategies for proving the theories examined about the evolving approaches to curating crafts.

Specifically, *Makers' Tale* exhibition was a result of the collaboration between Wiltshire Creative and the University for the Creative Arts (UCA), Farnham, in association with Salisbury Cathedral. The exhibition explored the movement of ideas between disciplines, the relationships which arise from disciplinary crossovers, and the passing and advancement of skills, through creative media such as sculpture, light work, textiles, music, ceramic, metal, and sound. The exhibition artists were Hermione Thomson (textiles), Peta Jacobs (textiles), Manuela Kagerbauer (metal), Michelle Shields (ceramics) and Cara Wassenberg (glass and metal) as well as composers Dr Harry Whalley together with Akira Brown and cellist Anna Menzies. The exhibition further included work by recent UCA crafts graduates Charlotte Bull, Wendy Irving, Lizzie Lovell and Katie Sims (textiles); Eleanor Cocking and Jamie Dunlop Valentine (ceramics). The work created was in response to a behind the scenes visit to Salisbury Cathedral in January 2020.

Hidden Histories was an installation of miniature vessels by textiles and jewellery artist Alison Baxter, at South Hill Park (November 2020 - June 2021). It was inspired by the rich history of this historic house and focused on women inhabitants' overlooked stories.

Both projects provided insights into how individuals challenge ideas and preconceptions. They revealed how makers look for inspiration and construct meditative spaces in different ways to internally resolve issues within their making process. These projects share the commonality of revealing human connections that exist in objects, echoing Adamson's: 'Every object represents a potential social connection. By better understanding the tangible things in our lives, we better understand our fellow humans' (Adamson, 2018:8).

The exhibitions revealed the makers' as well as my ability, as a curator, to offer a way to engage with people by sharing the thinking process through practice.

Additionally, both projects denote curation as research, reflecting on Bjerregard's concept of exhibition as research. These exhibitions approach the *mise-en-scène* curatorial process and explore new frameworks interpreting craft and curatorial models that shift focus towards the agency of objects, thereby exposing alternate models of relationality.

Engaged within *kaino-craft* discourse, I identify myself as an *auteur* curator in terms of how I operate by enabling an idea or proposal to become an exhibition. A work that employs *kaino-craft* as a model of practice is *Makers' Tale* at the Salisbury Arts Centre, which demonstrates the four criteria as identified in chapter 7: Collaboration, Experimentation, Innovation, and Participation.

Makers' Tale

Makers' Tale was a collaboration between myself and ceramic artist Mirka Golden-Hann, head of visual arts at the Salisbury Arts Centre. I approached Golden-Hann in

early 2019 with an exhibition proposal. My interest to work with her was twofold. Firstly, the Salisbury Arts Centre itself is an interesting site housed in a deconsecrated mediaeval church, St Edmund's, a Grade II listed building taken over by the community in 1975 and since then serving as a community arts centre. And secondly, my interest and intention to collaborate with Golden-Hann was based on her approach to ceramic practice. Golden-Hann incorporates digital technology into presenting her works and installations, often collaborating with artists and professionals from other disciplines to expand and challenge ceramics' broader historical context and tools.

Makers' Tale brought together Wiltshire Creative, University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, and Salisbury Cathedral. Wiltshire Creative is one of the largest Arts Council funded Non-Profit organisations (NPOs) situated in South-West England. The University for the Creative Arts stands at the forefront of academic enquiry into crafts and interdisciplinary practice. Salisbury Cathedral is regarded as one of the leading examples of Early English Gothic architecture, as well as the home of the four, best-preserved- surviving original copies of *Magna Carta*, a vital symbol of justice, fairness, and human rights (Figure 82).

City on the Move

The exhibition was informed by the octocentenary anniversary of Salisbury Cathedral, marking the laying of the foundation stones on 28 April 1220, an act of faith, strength, and craftsmanship. The Very Revd Nicholas Papadopoulos in the exhibition catalogue noted that one of the threads that ties us to those original visionaries remains visible in the Cathedral's Works Yard - in the glazing shop, the drawing office, and the

banker shop, where stone is sawn and carved, and beautiful stained glass is repaired and designed.

This exhibition explored the movement of ideas between disciplines, the relationships which arise from disciplinary crossovers, as well as the passing and advancement of skills. Through creative media such as sculpture, light work, textiles, music, ceramic, metal, and sound *Makers' Tale* highlighted the persistence of craft knowledge within the context of modern creative industries.

Makers' Tale co-curator Mirka Golden-Hann, identified from the beginning the curatorial intention of the project to rebuild a narrative for a significant building which directly linked to a deep knowledge of craft skills. The act of skills sharing is manifested within the Cathedral's works department where masters have passed on their knowledge since 1220. This element became pivotal to the exhibition which showcased the present-day learning of craft skills and their applications within the historical context of skills sharing. This drove the curation of the exhibition in which the work of UCA alumni artists and lecturers was exhibited alongside the works of students.

Makers' Tale focused on creative crossovers and explored ways to consider the process of making for the purpose of expanding the exposition of craft knowledge. The curatorial intention was to highlight the persistence of craft knowledge as well as innovation and experimentation within the context of modern creative practice, and to investigate collaboration and disciplinary crossovers. The project considered experimentation and use of new technology, demonstrating that traditionalism and innovation are compatible, not oppositional.

This project questioned craft knowledge, space, agency, and community. The investigation was through the lens of performativity. This exhibition demonstrated how craft skills are increasingly being valued in other practices and how makers are using their specialist knowledge of materials to diversify into other disciplines. *Makers' Tale* invited the public to view craft as a continuum.

The exhibition, intended to provide a platform for makers and students from the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) to explore the movement of ideas, of making, and the transfer of knowledge, inviting them to tell their own story. Whatever the form of their story, each maker's tale was devotional. This means that their stories, the narratives of making, rooted deeply in time and place, where a set of conditions allowed them to bring these into existence expressed through their craft. What brings these storytellers together is not some timeworn oral narrative or tradition, it is the narrative amplitude of craft which was evident in the students' approach to the project.

The project's association with the Cathedral provided a unique opportunity for UCA students, and tutors, to acquire a rare insight of the vestry, the archives and particularly its textiles collection, as well as to observe the operations of its Works Department with an undisturbed link to the year 1220. Craft scholar professor Simon Olding, in the foreword of the exhibition catalogue, said that there are many ways of looking at craft practice while there are myriad opportunities to engage with its physical and sensory outcomes, noting that craft in a moment pivot from the present to the deep past. He continued by saying that putting to one side the idea of craft as a means of creating the solid unique object, we could consider it to be a companion

to sound and movement, a means of gracing time. In this sense, craft is neither static nor one singular thing, but rather a companion and a bridge (Olding, 2020).

The project highlighted that the workshop is analogous to the university studio, as both are places of learning through materials, places of thinking with silence or ritual music in mind, and the interplay of the past and the present. The works of the students featured in the exhibition are experimental and radically engaged with both traditional and contemporary methods and materials.

The exhibition was expressed in three strands: UCA students from the School of Craft and Design; UCA tutors, alumni and PhD candidate and UCA School Of Film Media and Performing Arts, Music Composition & Technology course. The first strand referred to students from the UCA BA (Hons) Ceramic and Textile course. Following conversations with the course directors, I decided to involve year 2 students, to respond to the brief. This offered an opportunity to explore and raise inquiries about the idea of the exchange of craft knowledge within the university studio and compare with the Cathedral's workshop.

The association with the students also allowed me to explore further the relationships between the students-makers and to develop my practice and skills through collaboration with the tutors, students, and co-curator.

The second strand of the exhibition included work by UCA tutors, alumni, and a PhD candidate who are pushing the boundaries of craft practice, demonstrating and applying craft thinking. Finally, the third strand was a commission to develop a new music composition, *Plangency*. For the new composition I collaborated with the tutors, technicians, and students from the newly founded (at the time) BA (Hons) Music composition and Technology course.

UCA School of Craft and Design: Students

The first strand of the exhibition included the work of UCA students. I have approached the tutors and we decided that *Makers' Tale* would be suitable for year 2. The consideration was that at this stage of their studies, the students would have developed skills and knowledge from year 1, enabling them to respond to the brief. Moreover, year 2 would allow them appropriate time to engage with the project, as we considered that in year 3 they would be preoccupied with fulfilling the requirements to complete their course and on their dissertation. *Makers' Tale* was intending to be part of their professional practice module. Golden-Hann and I presented the projects to the students and staff, inviting them to express their interest to participate. The presentation aimed to attract attention and generate enthusiasm, explained the brief, and set up some key milestones. Part of the project was a visit to Salisbury Cathedral. The visit of the students (now graduate makers), to Cathedral's archives and workshops exposed them to ancient, repetitive workings which could find a validation of their contemporary methods. Specifically, during the visit, students and staff explored the Cathedral's vestry textiles collection and observed the Works Department craft practices, not to catalogue and document, but to deploy and pose questions in multiple dimensions (Figure 83).

Their responses illustrated a great variety of potential meanings, enabling open interpretation. Diana Harrison, UCA Senior Lecturer Textiles, following the visit to the Cathedral said: 'This is a particularly important experience for our international

students, for whom witnessing hidden sites of the Cathedral is a unique insight into our culture' (Harrison, 2020).

Initially we selected ten students to participate in the exhibition. However, due to the postponement of the project, caused by Covid-19 and the limited, or no access the students had to a studio space and material, the exhibition featured the works of six students who responded to the theme of movement of ideas: Charlotte Bull, BA(Hons) textiles; Katie Sims BA(Hons) textiles; Lizzie Lovell BA(Hons) textiles; Wendy Irving BA(Hons) textiles; Eleanor Cocking BA (Hons) ceramics; and Jaime Dunlop BA (Hons) ceramics. Their responses demonstrated an understanding of the act of making and how this may be viewed as a vehicle to rigorous research process. Their approach promoted and supported the creation of new work, seen as embodied research and creative innovation (refer to Appendix B to find QR codes directing to Pre-recorded Panel Discussion, Plangency work-in-progress and the exhibition catalogue, as well as images of a photo journal featuring the students' creative response to the brief).

Making, in this sense, was approached as a broad concept, embracing both material and conceptual practices. For the clarity of this statement and to illustrate my curatorial intentions I will present two examples. Charlotte Bull, BA(Hons) is a textile maker and designer, who creates hand fabricated woven textiles. Bull was intrigued by the Cathedral's stained-glass windows. The cloth, both static and moving, relates to the stained-glass windows. Her investigation explored the way light disperses through the exceptionally rich colours. She embraced a collaboration of dance as well as hand-dyed and painted textiles which led her to create two pieces. Her focus was on the ways the cloth is transformed through laser cut marks. Bull watched the

dye bleeding into its crevices and fibres. This was a reference to the movements of dance by dripping indigo dye onto a delicate wet silk which creates organic lines. Her handwoven textiles are a result of experimentation with leno twisting strands, interlace with the perception of the historical building.

I decided to display Bull's work above what it used to be the altar of the church. The curatorial decision was to create links between the past and the present as well as between the Arts Centre and Salisbury Cathedral, exposing the movement of ideas. The coloured light from the stained-glass windows flooded Bull's cloths. The cloths hanging opposite the windows seemed to be coloured shadows in the air. The coloured transparent cloths replicated an architectural element which linked the mediaeval stained glass to contemporary craft (Figure 84). In this way the master-makers from the gothic days of Salisbury Cathedral practice crossed paths with the contemporary maker and the impalpable essence of her cloths of many colours. The cloths substitute the legends once depicted, on the medieval stained-glass window creating a transitory window for new tales to be created.

Moreover, Katie Sims BA(Hons) textiles explores the possibilities of a composition assembled from individual, unique, handmade components. For *Maker's Tale* she was inspired by the act of passing on skills she witnessed at the Cathedral's Works Department.

Particularly, her inspiration to create a jesmonite blocks installation came from the Cathedral's Stonemasonry Yard, where cut stones are laid out in the yard. Sims was caught by how each stone was unique and handcrafted. With the intention to demonstrate the act of sharing and the transfer of skills, she combined modern and traditional materials and processes, such as papermaking, felt making, indigo dyeing,

rust dyeing, and jesmonite casting to create blocks. Moreover, she experimented with wrapping and unwrapping the blocks, playing with ideas of concealment, and contrasting surface textures. The outcome had a minimalist aesthetic which went beyond the surface detail and asked questions about textiles, what is considered textiles and the very act and process of textile making (Figure 85).

I displayed Sims' sketchbook next to her work revealing her thinking process, for the audience to develop an understanding that thinking, making, learning, and knowing are related with the agency of materials themselves.

My intention was for the visitors to experience how the maker draws inspiration from textile as material and how this knowledge is applied. The makers' experimentations with textile techniques through sampling, wrapping, and unwrapping and testing ideas contributed to an enhanced understanding of the opportunities and challenges of contemporary practice.

Sims' experimentation demonstrated ways in which textile thinking informs the development of new materials, or alternative use of materials. Her work revealed a cognitive mode manifested in the act of making and highlighting transferable insights from both process and outcome.

The student-maker's inspiration from the transfer of skill, as she witnessed it at the Cathedral's Stonemasonry Yard, highlighted tacit knowledge, where memory served as pathways for unconscious thought, fantasy and creating meaning. It is through the maker's 'praxis' that this silent, tacit knowledge was made visible.

My decision to include the student's sketchbooks in the exhibition revealed the creative process showing prototypes, ideas, and concepts, partly formed in searching for knowledge that would enable further iterations until a solution emerged. The

notes and sketches on the pages were seen as visualisation of thinking (Figure 86, Figure 87, Figure 88 Figure 89).

Situated outside of the university studio and located within a site which provides an alternative way of learning, the students' work illustrated the interpretation of this thinking, and the exchange of ideas and knowledge.

The resultant works abided not much physical evidence of the Cathedral yet was clearly related to it through its consideration and assessment of the architecture and materials evidence in the stories of the students. These works were situated within *kaino-craft* discourse through the critical viewpoint evidencing its contribution to the field of practice.

This approach offered an alternative to the curatorial and academic method. As a method of constantly testing my curatorial outputs. The students' showcase of ceramics and textiles works identified relationships between the two distinct practical disciplines, illustrating their shared traditions, skills, and histories. Through the discursive, knowledge was generated from the position of personal experience, tacit knowledge as well as the discourse with the tutors.

UCA School of Craft and Design: Tutors, Alumni, and a PhD candidate

The second strand of the exhibition was the work by UCA tutors, alumni, and a PhD candidate. The exhibition included the works of textile makers Hermione Thomson and Peta Jacobs, metalwork Manuela Kagerbauer, ceramicist Michelle Shields and glass metalwork maker Cara Wassenberg.

The selection of the makers was based on what I defined as *kaino-craft*, featuring fresh, novel, and innovation elements, yet denoting deep knowledge, understanding of materials, techniques, and skill (Figure 90, Figure 91, Figure 93 and Figure 94).

For example, I have selected Peta Jacobs, UCA PhD candidate, who applies textile thinking to question perception, presenting shifting views relative to viewpoint. Specifically, for her PhD research she embraced László Moholy Nagy's Light Vision (1917) question 'Space, time, material, are they one with Light?' to investigate the paradox of immaterial substance, explained by both quantum physics and eastern mystical experience.

Jacobs stated that the scientific and philosophical themes that emerged through an examination of quantum light for her art practice-based PhD were elusive, difficult, and multi-faceted, requiring a flexible methodology to manage and concretise the many strands. Textile thinking provided both the language and processes to enable 'unravelling, braiding, interweaving, and folding together the varied elements of scientific and philosophical thought' with the making. (Jacobs, 2022). Jacobs incorporated textile thinking into the making process both through the manipulation of textile and the recurrent use of motifs, such as red thread.

For the *Maker's Tale*, I selected to include a photograph series titled *Light Dance Ensō*. These photographs have captured the dance of sunlight through dichroic film. The photographs featured shapes and colours which are drawn with light.

Ensō (circle) is a sacred symbol in the Zen school of Buddhism to express a moment when the mind is free to let the body create. The photographs were displayed in the area which used to be the church's altar, on the wall aligned under the stained-glass windows (Figure 95). Each photograph seemed to have become an extension of the architectural element. It was not only the parallels related to the colours and the way the light streams through the coloured glass, but the sacred symbolism that the photographs and glass innate.

In addition, I decided to invite Michelle Shields, UCA Technical Tutor in ceramics, because of her experimental approach to ceramics and particularly, the application of digital processes to develop the materiality of clay. For the *Makers' Tale* I selected her research project *Soft Developables*. Shields used a robotic arm and explored ceramics within the context of digital and hybrid craft.

The display featured Shields ceramic pieces the on-going experiments of her research and a film showing the making of clay and glazes (Figure 96). The experimental model created a clay body which was subverted by the firing process, turning the clay into a geological lightweight expanded structure. Informed by pattern cutting, the robotic arm milled structural toolpaths into the wet clay resulting in soft hybrid developable forms.

For *Maker's Tale*, my intention was to include a 3D printer in the exhibition. However, because of the complexities and limitations of space, I discussed with Shields alternative ideas. Shields agreed to create new work in response to the brief. For this,

we have asked the Stonemason Works Yard to collect dust so that Shields would 3D-print a new body of ceramic works.

We have discussed using the dust as stones from the Cathedral have slowly transformed into a soil-like material, made from grains less than a millimetre across. This alternative usage of stone dust enabled an unwanted, unnoticed, material to become useful and noticed, when mixed with clay and porcelain.

Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 this work was not able to be realised at the time. However, the maker, as soon as she was allowed to return to the university workshop (February 2022), where the appropriate equipment is available, she began her experimentation. Her research has brought up exciting findings about the material and the combination with porcelain. This ongoing research of the materials aims to develop further the understanding of the properties of porcelain when mixed with other materials and will be used to create a porcelain clay for 3D printing. This project is still ongoing, and the maker has started to also experiment in creating glazes using the dust from the Stonemasonry Works Yard (Figure 97).

UCA School Of Film Media and Performing Arts: *Plangency*

The third strand was the commission for a new music composition to reflect the concept of the exhibition, the movement of ideas. Dr Harry Whalley, (UCA reader in Music Composition & Technology) and Akira Brown (UCA Lecturer in Music Composition & Technology), composed *Plangency*, a new music piece which captured the unknown and unnoticed sounds of the Cathedral, and was influenced by the sounds of the making process.

My inspiration to commission a music composition derived from *Woven Space* (2017), a piece by composer Helen Grime, responding to the work of basket maker Laura Ellen Bacon. I attended the performance at the Barbican by the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle. *Woven Space* titled after a site-specific woven installation from willow twigs was installed in Chatsworth Garden in Derbyshire from 2010 to 2015. Grime echoed Bacon's work by weaving sonic fragments and melodic shapes into tapestries of sound that coalesce, disperse, and reform as the textures alternately thicken, lighten and glare through the score's movements.

Plangency was conceived by the reverberation of the Cathedral, bringing together seemingly disparate elements, such as craftsmanship, place and materials, and presenting their indispensable connections through sound. Whalley, in the exhibition catalogue, wrote that the structure of Salisbury Cathedral is astonishing in many ways 'be that through scale, age, craftsmanship or historic and religious significance' (Whalley, 2020:47).

The composers created a piece that aimed to take the acoustics 'out' of the Cathedral into other spaces.

The composers requested an out-of-hours visit when the building would be quiet to allow for experimentation of sound collections without distraction. I liaised with the co-curator, representative of Salisbury Arts Centre, and the Cathedral's technicians to schedule this visit. Whalley, Brown visited the Cathedral with a group of students and tutors from BA (Hons) Music Composition and Technology course (Figure 98a, b).

When I interviewed Whalley on 12 October 2021 in Farnham, he reflected on the project and his experience composing and performing *Plangency*. Whalley started by describing the process creating the composition:

We start by creating a loud noise like the bursting of a balloon. This sound has every frequency and so we can measure with microphones how the sounds decay over time. This 'impulse-response' can then be used to recreate the reverberance of the Cathedral (Figure 99). We also measured the particular resonances and found some really interesting results which will be worked into a new composition [...] The amazing history of Salisbury Cathedral includes makers from so many disciplines, textiles, metal, wood, glass and of course stone. Together, they have created a living monument that stands still and quiet. Yet, it is never really silent.

The building is made from the actions of craftspeople, the noises of these actions are not just embodied in the building itself, but also in the structure, designed to amplify and shape those sounds within it. Our commission attempts to bring these ideas together through the use of measurement, technology and the traditional. It is a collaboration between composers, artists and students of today, with those who have worked on this building throughout the centuries. (Whalley, 2020)

He continued talking about the launch event and the performance by cellist Anna Menzies on 22 September 2021. He explained that himself and Brown, who designed the electronics, successfully transplanted one space into another (Figure 100). Whalley described the process of decision-making and risk-taking saying that they could not be sure how their idea of transplanting acoustics would work, as there was no opportunity for a rehearsal in the Arts Centre before the launch event and the only rehearsal they had was in a much smaller space. Therefore, they had to make decisions on the day and adjust their planning based on their knowledge of their materials and tools.

Whalley explained the process of collaborating with Brown, claiming that composers usually find it difficult to collaborate and tend to work alone. It is notable that for Whalley was the first time he had worked with another composer, collaboratively to develop a music piece. He stated that, apart from having enjoyed the process, it was also a learning curve. Whalley's statement aligns with the thesis argument, considering the exhibition as research and the *auteur* curator who identifies and creates opportunities for the development of new insights and knowledge.

The composition had a musical structure that came from the notes, but the shape came from the rehearsals before (Figure 101). Whalley continued talking about the different stages of composition: a. pre-composition and discussions; b. notes writing and recordings going into the Cathedral; and c. the composition and rehearsal.

With the intention of incorporating the composition into the exhibition, alongside the craftworks, I included a panel featuring a QR (Quick Response) code linking to a segment of *Plangency* (Figure 102). The panel also featured a statement about the composition and a photograph showing the composers and music students

measuring the reverberance within the Cathedral. The objective was for the public to be able to experience a fragment of the musical composition when visiting throughout the duration of the exhibition. In this way the composition became an exhibit item.

Whalley and Browns' piece described the characters of the sound of the ambience of Salisbury Cathedral. The composers set the space in motion by transferring the sounds through the music to be experienced in the gallery space. The cello and electronic music, mostly in the background, spilled forwards at an initial climax and stayed involved, up to a point where the music became submerged and distant.

Plangency gave a sense at times of enfolding the listener through the cello, which maintained its swirling motion of lines upon lines, speeds upon speeds, through a central sequence in which the drive recedes into the distance for a focus on electronic elements. The cello performance expressed the energy of the Cathedral and craftsmanship with tones going forward at times and held back in reserve. At the end, the music was let to fly and disappear in space.

Mise-en-Scène

The exhibition was installed at Salisbury Arts Centre, a Grade II Listed Building: and former Church of St Edmund. The works were displayed throughout the arts centre, on the walls, suspended from the mediaeval beams at the ceiling and on plinths. Even though the works are related to Salisbury Cathedral, the display in a deconsecrated church illustrated novel perspectives and certain parallels with the iconic building.

Notable was the display on what was once the altar of the church. The space is characterised by the stained glass-window. At this space, I decided to display the clothes created by Bull for *Makers' Tale* inspired by her visit to the Cathedral and her encounter with the stained-glass windows; and Jacob's *Ensō* photography series, part of her PhD research project investigation.

Both works were informed by the properties of light. In the Middle Ages, coloured glass and precious stones consisted of a visual spectacle in ecclesiastical spaces which encouraged the congregation to transcend from the material to the immaterial, an experience created by the interplay of light and colour.

I have identified a parallel between the mediaeval space and contemporary art centre. In the exhibition space, the once altar, the visitors became active performers within the *mise-en-scène*: they were entering a purposeful place with spiritual significance (Figure 104a, b and c). Visitors by standing at the front and contemplating *Ensō* were exposed to the manifestation of the artist at the moment of creation and the acceptance of the inmost self. *Ensō* is a Zen symbol of strength and elegance, the circle of life (as a symbol of the start and end of all things) which expresses the completeness or the emptiness of the present moment. The photographs, as well as the cloths created a devotional space.

As an *auteur*-curator, I have reflected on Jacobs photographs and the new works created by Bull, emplacing on opposition: between shadow and light; past and present. In the Salisbury Arts Centre, the contemporary work takes on a ceremonial form and alludes to mediaeval imagery. Specifically, Bull's work, aligned with the building's stained-glass windows, transpose these elements of Cathedral musings into poetical, sculptural narratives of their own.

The *mise-en-scène* proposed a new perspective for textiles (as cloth for Bull or thinking and process for Jacobs) and reflected the mediaeval and the contemporary finding which created a novel poetic and devotional harmony.

Complementary Programme

The exhibition was initially intended to take place in May 2020, to be part of Salisbury International Arts Festival 2020, with themes drawn from the octocentenary anniversary of the relocation of the Cathedral from Old Sarum to its current location. However, the project was beset by uncertainty from the outset, as the original date of the exhibition fell in the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown. *The Salisbury International Festival: City on the Move* was moved online to be delivered as a Virtual Festival on the weekend 29 to 31 May 2020.

In view of the lockdown restrictions, I proposed to co-curator Golden-Hann to launch an alternative presence of the exhibition online. This was realised by creating an exhibition catalogue, which included essays from representatives of all involved organisations and artists' statements, illustrated with photographs of the artwork intended to be displayed in the exhibition. There was also a pre-recorded panel discussion via zoom which discussed the relevance of crafts today and highlighted several novel insights and addressed points arising from the reality of the lockdown. The panel chaired by me, comprised the co-curator Golden-Hann, contemporary craft artists Hermione Thomson, Peta Jacobs, Michelle Shields and Cara Wassenberg composer Dr Harry Whalley and Salisbury Cathedral representative Canon Robert Titley.

The catalogue, panel discussion and an extract from the first recording as work-in-progress from the special commissioned composition titled *Plangency* was launched online during Virtual Festival on 31 May 2020.

This virtual realisation of the project could be seen as paracuratorial in O’Neill’s notion of, which offered the opportunity to consider the materiality of the craft learning experience, as well as the lack of it, from new perspectives. Moving to a digital platform, opened up opportunities for people to engage with the project and experience this alternative form of exhibition that was able to be shared with a much broader and, possibly, previously unreached audience. Furthermore, this event highlighted the fact that curators, as creative practitioners, will always explore ways to apply their existing knowledge to new circumstances. Eventually, the exhibition, after having to be twice postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, was installed at Salisbury Arts Centre from 14 September to 30 October 2021.

Additionally, *Makers’ Tale* was complemented by an associated educational program consisting of an Audio Research Cluster – *Sound in Spaces* seminar with Dr James Armstrong and Dr Harry Whalley on 20 October 2021 and Eco-Resin mixed media making workshop with the exhibition artist Hermione Thomson on 16 October 2021. Theorised by scholars, such as Irit Rogoff (2008), as well as Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson (2010), the complementary programme offered a different educational perspective in the curatorial. The emphasis was not on the object or the music piece but on the process and the use of discursive methods and techniques within as well as outside the exhibition context.

From a curatorial perspective, such a constellation of activities of the project provided an opportunity to encounter with the arts centre audience, reshaping

shared experiences and emphasise on the dematerialisation and beyond the object condition of craft.

Impact

The *Makers' Tale* co-curator Golden-Hann acknowledged the impact of this collaborative project for Wiltshire, which is one of the only two UK counties without a university. The collaboration with UCA offered Wiltshire Creative the opportunity for a direct partnership with an academic organisation which brought progressive practice to the attention of Salisbury audiences.

Moreover, Salisbury Cathedral is an important international landmark, however for the residents of the city who live in its presence it is also a symbol of their homeplace. For Wiltshire Creative, Salisbury Cathedral is a longstanding cultural partner mostly linked to the outdoor programme and musical concerts happening in or around the Cathedral. The exhibition *Makers' Tale* achieved a new extension of this partnership. Through the music composition and content, the exhibition enabled elements of the Cathedral to be embodied outside of its own location.

Makers' Tale and its storytellers communicated a continuum of life and craft making by allowing space, place and the making process become visible and audible within the exhibition. Captured with new technologies, it is no longer so easily hidden from view, yet the very nature of the making process may never be fully revealed. It is a credit to the makers' abilities as storytellers that we can picture the movement of ideas, of making and the transfer of knowledge.

Relating to the format of *kaino-craft* and highlighting the use of the curatorial, *Makers' Tale* produced a novel insight into exhibition as research.

Employing and adjusting a curatorial model I had developed for *Makers' Tale* was to work collaboratively with a co-curator to create a sphere of influence and mutual strength exchange enabling an examination of the craft works. Furthermore, to develop the notion of the *auteur* curator, responding to the unique site and location in line with the research methodology of *mise-en-scène* and exhibition as research.

Figure 82 *Makers' Tale* (2021) This research project brought together Salisbury Arts Centre, Salisbury Cathedral and the University for the Creative Arts.





Figure 83 *Makers' Tale* (2021) Students from the school of Craft and Design visited the Salisbury Cathedral on Tuesday 14 January 2020. Photo courtesy of Mirka Golden-Hann.



Figure 84 *Makers' Tale* (2021) View of the installation of Charlotte Bull. Photo possession of the author.

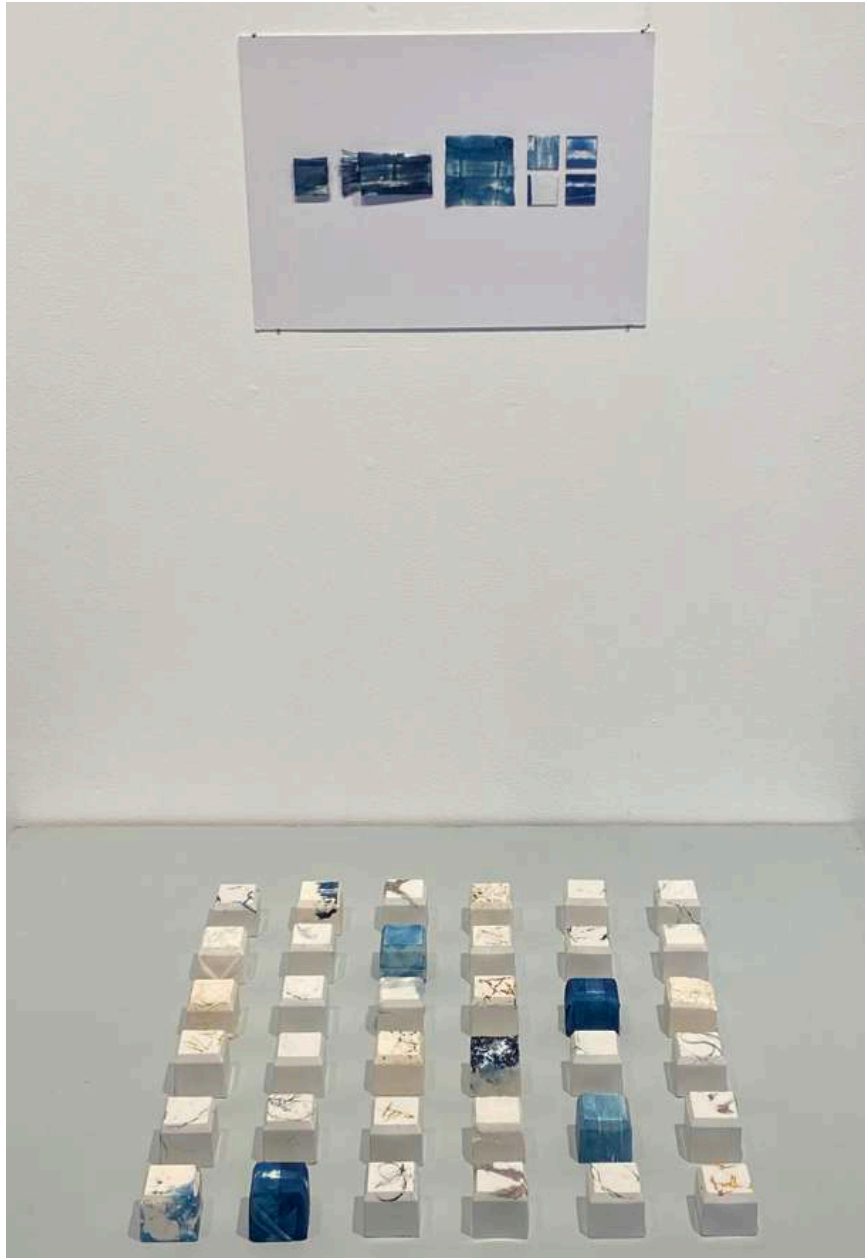


Figure 85 *Makers' Tale* (2021) View of the installation of Katie Sims. Photo possession of the author.

81a



81b

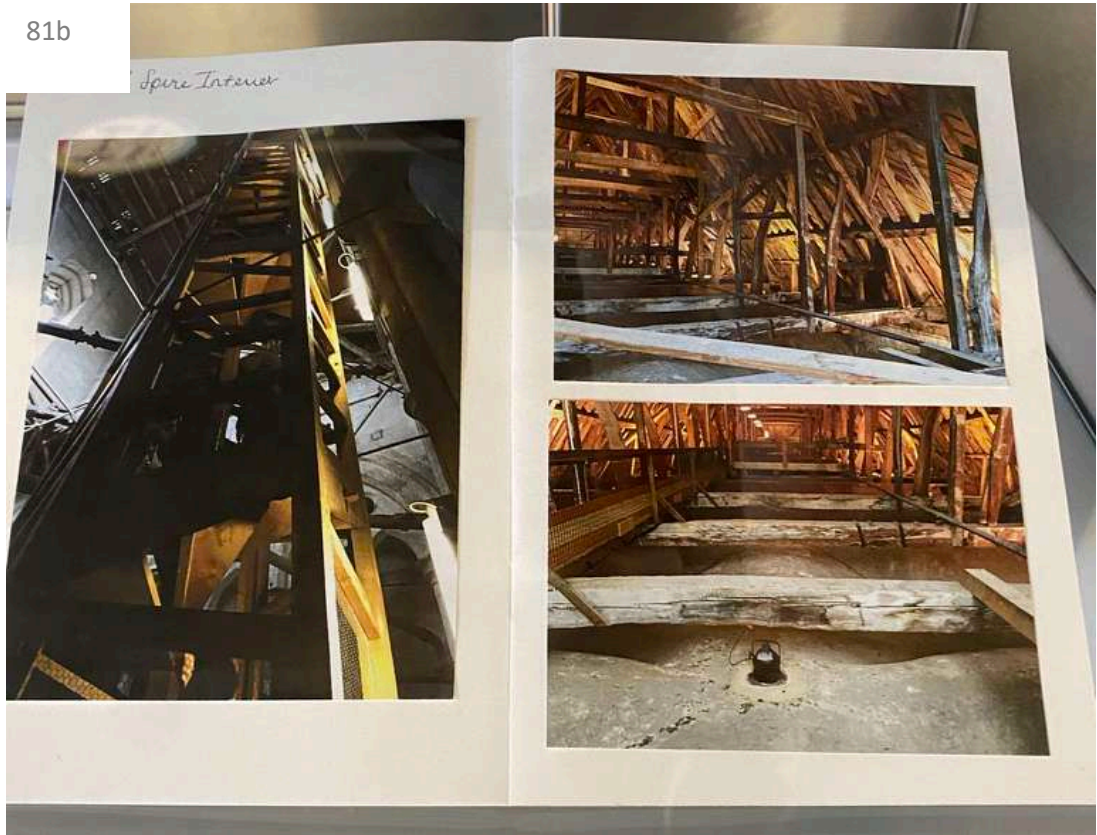


Figure 86 *Makers' Tale* (2021) Lizzie Level sketchbook. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 87 *Makers' Tale* (2021) Wendy Irving, display of felt samples and captions of sketchbook. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 88 *Makers' Tale* (2021) Charlotte Bull sketchbook. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 89 *Makers' Tale* (2021) Jamie Dunlop Valentine installation view featuring the student's creative response, sketchbook, and film. Photo possession of the author.

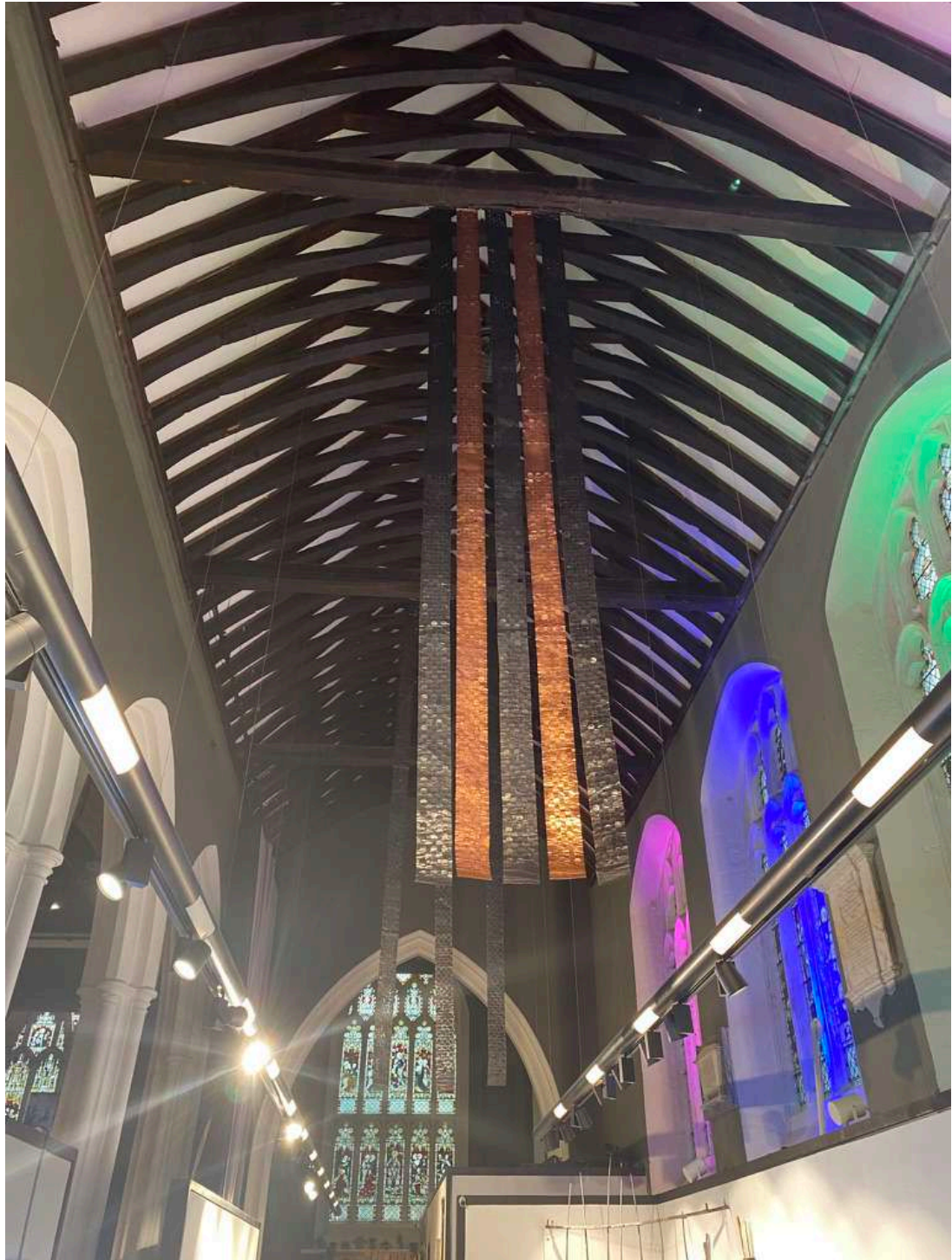


Figure 90 *Makers' Tale* (2021) Installation view Manuela Kagerbauer *Altered Vision*. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 91 *Makers' Tale* (2021) Installation view Cara Wassenberg *One Thousand Degrees*. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 92 *Makers' Tale* (2021) Exhibition view. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 93 *Makers' Tale* (2021)
Installation view
Hermione Thomson,
Presence of Absence Series and *In Conversation' surfaces*. Photo possession of the author.

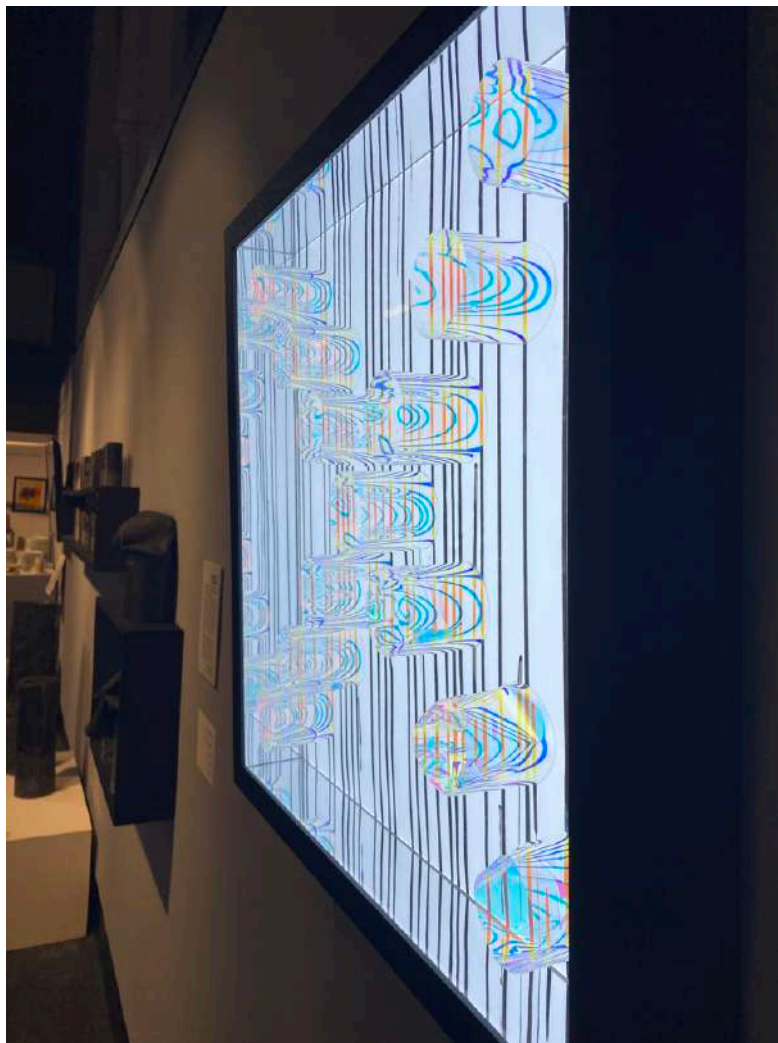


Figure 94 *Makers' Tale* (2021) Exhibition view. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 95 *Makers' Tale* (2021) Installation view Peta Jacobs, *Light Dance Ensō* photographic series. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 96 *Makers' Tale* (2021) Installation view Michelle Shields *Soft Developables*. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 97 Michelle Shields (2022) Glaze experiments using the dust – waste - from Salisbury Cathedral Stonemasonry Works Yard. The material works as a flux in glazes. Photo possession of the author.

93a



93b

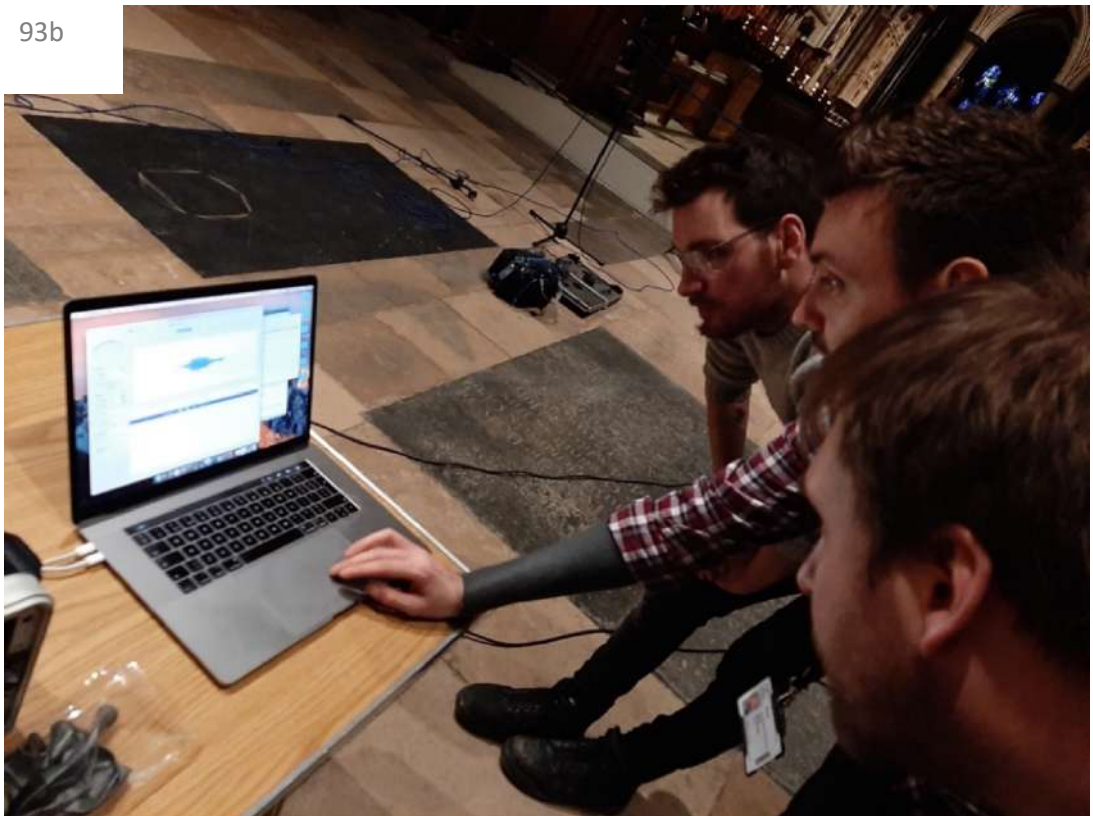


Figure 98a, b *Makers' Tale* (2021) UCA Music Composition and Technology course visit the Salisbury Cathedral. Experimentation with sound collection. Photo courtesy of Dr Harry Whalley.

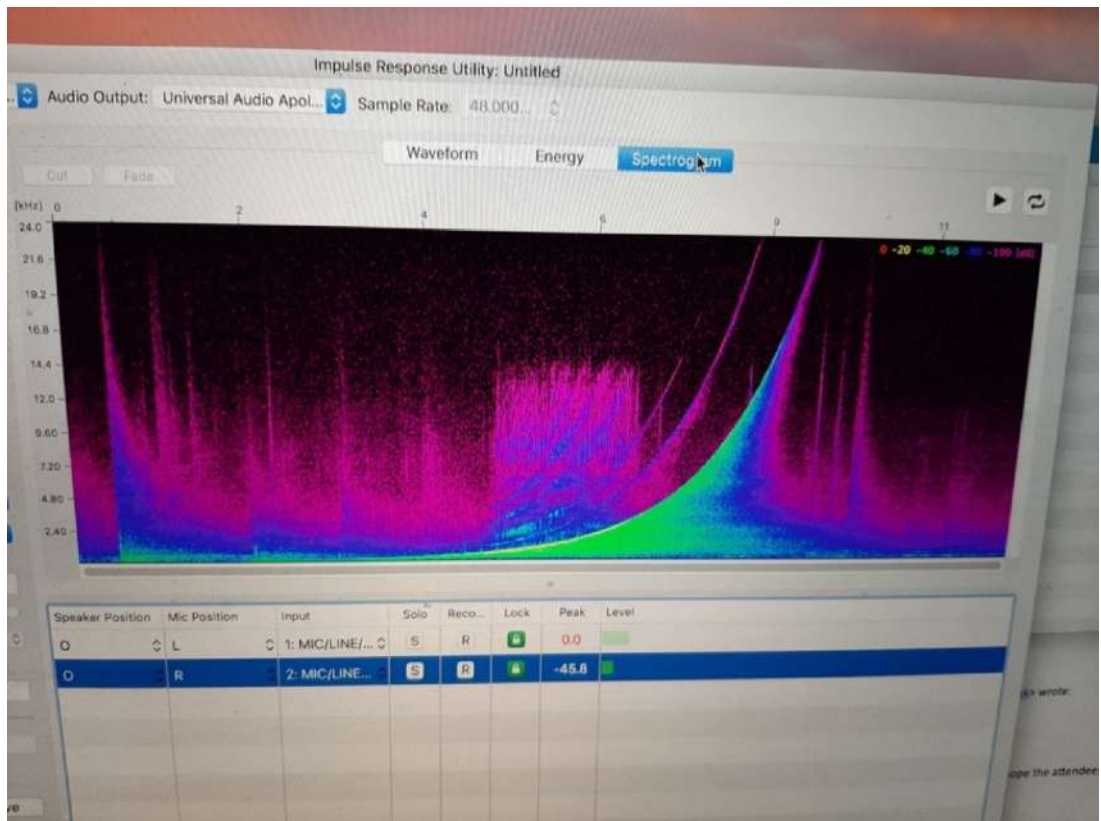


Figure 99 *Makers' Tale* (2021). Impulse response, Salisbury Cathedral. Photo courtesy of Dr Harry Whalley.

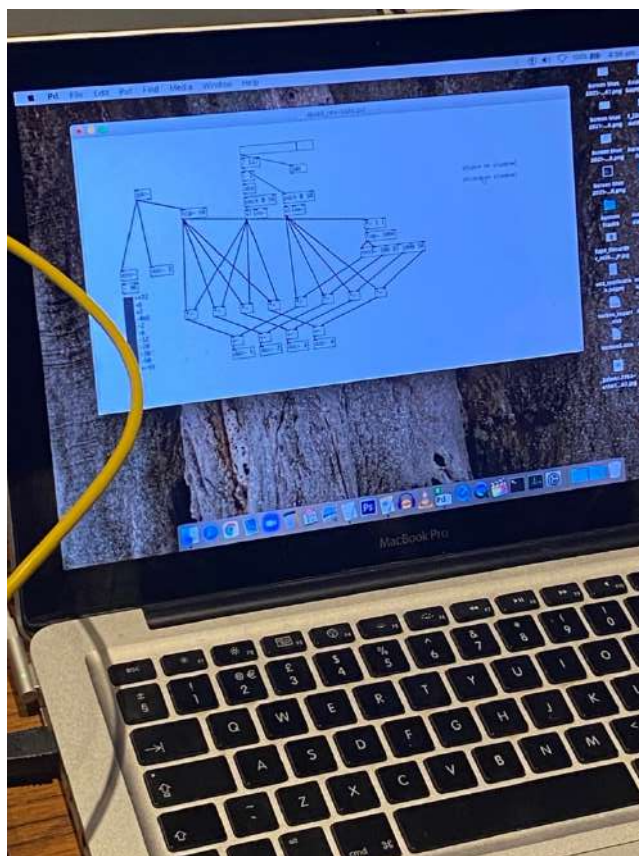


Figure 100 *Makers' Tale* (2021). Akira Brown design of the electronics, to transplant one space into another. Photo possession of the author.

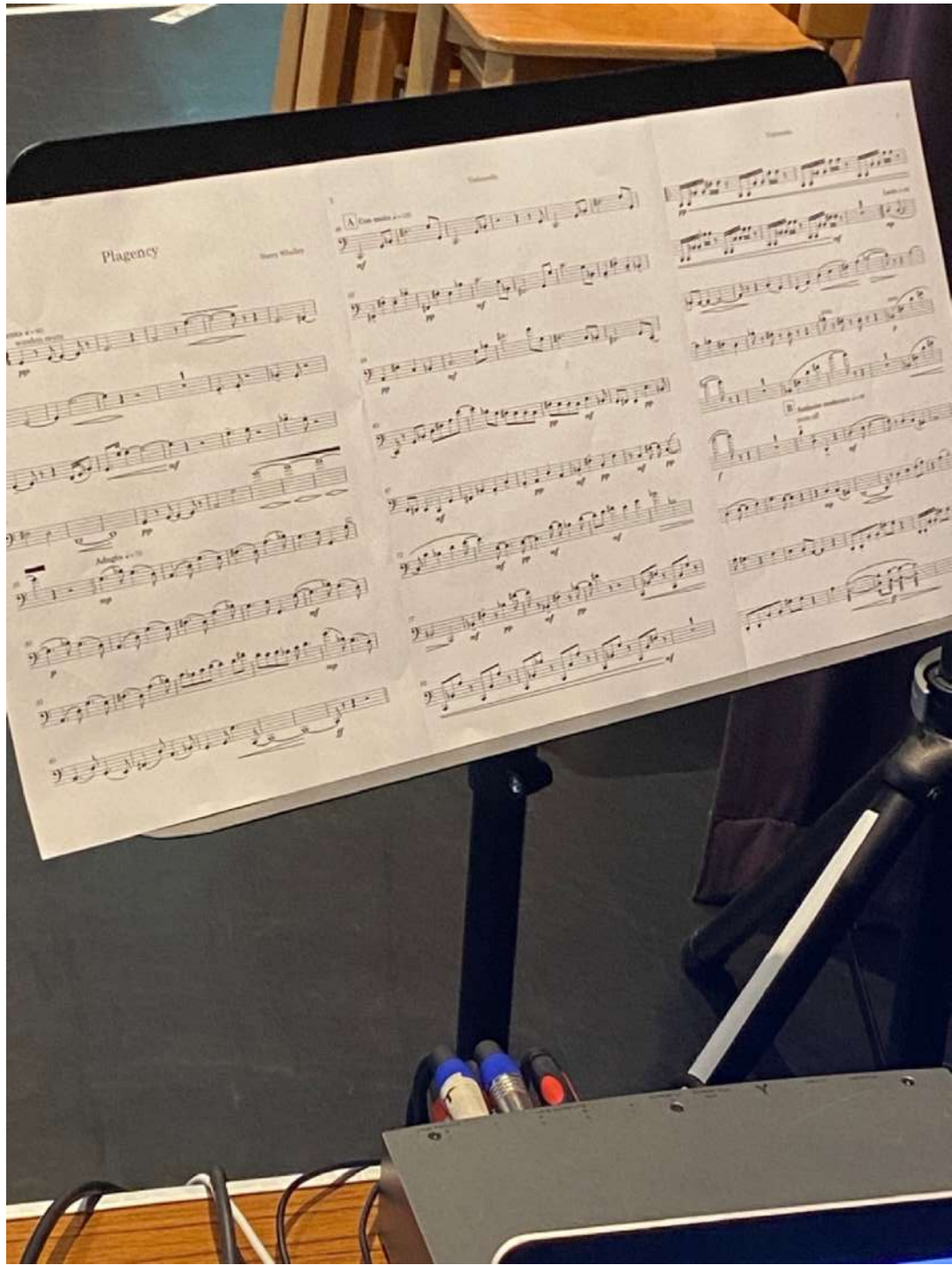


Figure 101 *Makers' Tale* (2021). *Plangency* music composition, notes. Photo possession of the author.



The structure of Salisbury Cathedral is astonishing in many ways, be that through scale, age, craftsmanship or historic and religious significance. The way in which sounds echo, decay and resonate within the space is equally as meaningful. As part of *Makers' Tale*, composers Dr Harry Whalley and Akira Sileas are joining forces in an intriguing new piece that takes the acoustics 'out' of the Cathedral into other spaces.

The building is made from the actions of craftspeople, the noises of these actions are not just embodied in the building itself, but also in the structure, designed to amplify and shape those sounds within it. Our commission attempts to bring these ideas together through the use of measurement, technology and the traditional. It is a collaboration between composers, artists and students of today, with those who have worked on this building throughout the centuries.

Dr Harry Whalley is an award-winning composer of contemporary classical, film and electroacoustic music. Whalley is composer in residence at St Vincent's Chapel, Edinburgh, a fellow of the London College of Music and Reader in Reader in Sound and Music at the University for the Creative Arts.

Akira Sileas is an English electronic music composer. Since 2011 they has focused on the Pure Data software programming environment, as a tool for algorithmic composition. Sileas is a lecturer in Music Composition and Technology at the University for the Creative Arts, Farnham.

Anna Menzies has performed across the UK and Europe as soloist and chamber musician, appearing at major venues and festivals. Menzies is a member of the Gildas Quartet and teaches cello at Chetham's School of Music.

Figure 102 *Makers' Tale* (2021). *Plangency* view of the exhibition display. Photo possession of the author.

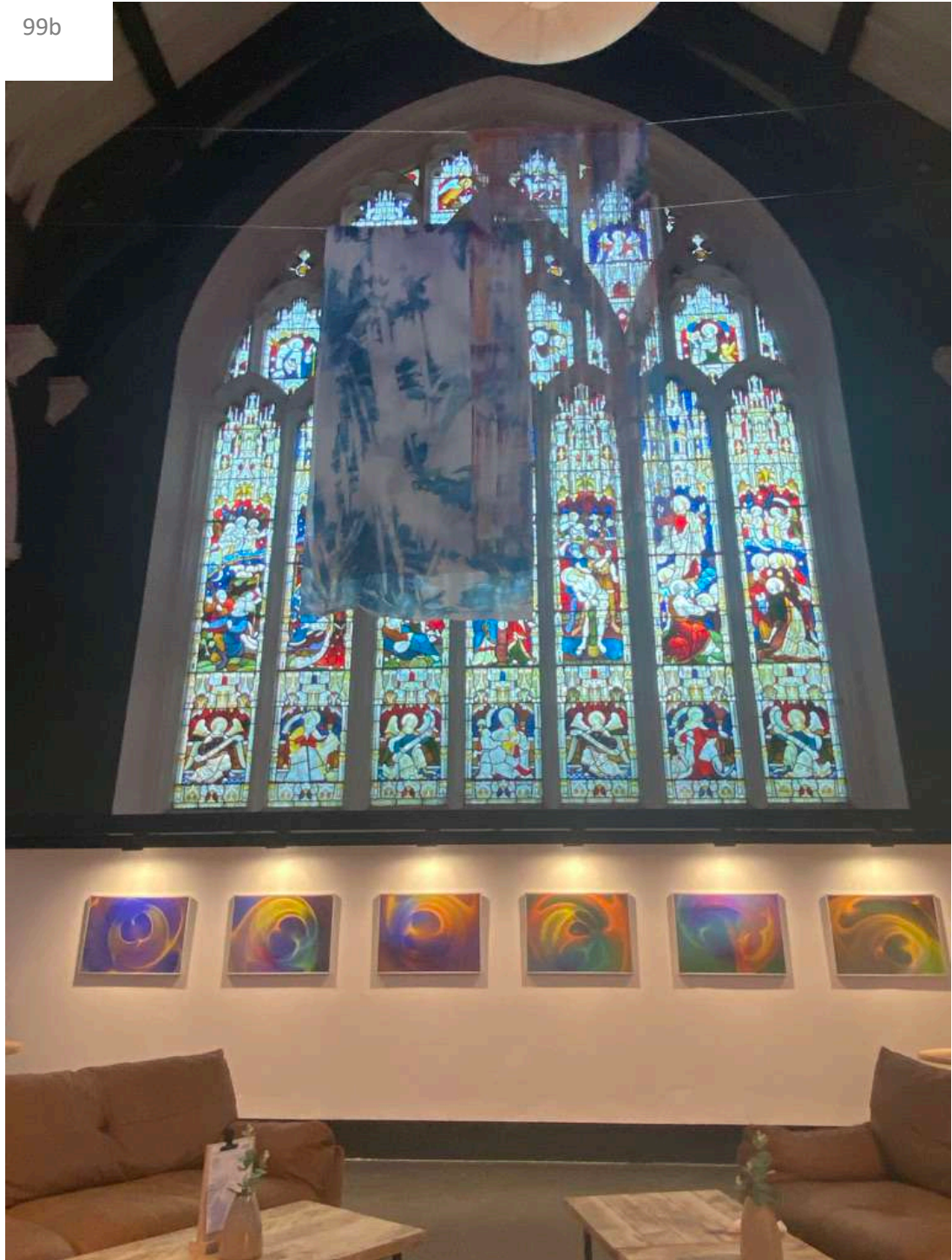


Figure 103 *Makers' Tale* (2021). *Plangency* Anna Menzies cello performance at the preview evening, 22 September 2021, Salisbury Arts Centre. Photo possession of the author.

99a



99b



99c



Figure 104 *Makers' Tale* (2021) Installation view, of the once altar exhibition space. Photo possession of the author.

Hidden Histories

South Hill Park is a historic Victorian mansion with a long history and many owners, including Prime Minister George Canning. The Victorian house that stands today was remodelled over time, lastly by architect Temple Moore in the 1800s for then-owner Arthur Divett Hayter. The mansion was converted to an Arts Centre in 1973, however it has kept a plethora of its original ornamental features including marble fireplaces, and skilfully hand-crafted bronze door handles.

Diane Collin's book, *Who Owned South Hill Park from 1455?*, was the starting point of *Hidden Histories*. Collins, a local author and committed South Hill Park volunteer, worked for several years on this book, realising a wealth of research to create a historical account of the owners of South Hill Park mansion since 1455. The book contained archive images as well as references of its various uses over the years and took a deep delve into its long history.

Hidden Histories was a project instigated from conversations between myself and jewellery-textiles artist Alison Baxter in February 2020. Baxter uses thread, fabric, metal, and plastic to explore the fragility of materials and processes to express fragments of experiential memories. The curatorial intention was to give a different sort of narrative about South Hill Park estate through contemporary craft.

Baxter, reading through *Who Owned South Hill Park?*, focused on the women inhabitants, who often had a supporting role to their husbands' public lives, and until the twentieth century these roles primarily were as homemakers and mothers. Baxter noticed that in the book, the wives were mostly mentioned as an aside, with an emphasis on the men's achievements in association with South Hill Park being

their home. *Hidden Histories*, named after the overlooked females, staged an installation of biographical, site-specific miniature vessels to celebrate women in the history of the mansion

Baxter at the exhibition catalogue, complimenting the exhibition, explained how the history and architecture of the building influenced her work:

The history of South Hill Park as a domestic home was the starting point of this project and exhibition. The elegant rooms, staircases, and decorative plasterwork, commissioned by several different owners, were not enjoyed by the public until the house was developed as an Art Centre and Theatre in 1973.

The vessels I am creating are inspired by the women who called South Hill Park their home and by the internal architecture, particularly the Mirror Gallery with its large, shuttered windows, decorative ceiling detail and the swags embellishing the central mirror. The elegance of this room embodies an historical era when you can imagine women sitting elegantly entertaining their friends. The reality was probably quite different as many had several children so may have been constantly pregnant or recovering from childbirth.

When developing an abstract piece of work, there is often a visual starting point. In this project the visual point was the decorative details of the building that suggested how to evoke the hidden

histories of these women into delicate, elegant miniature vessels.

(Baxter, 2020)

Drawing upon a thoughtful collection of information, these handcrafted vessels responded to each inspiring heroine, while the elemental details of each woman were as impressive as its miniature scale.

Baxter created a series of miniature vessels that reference the female form and the scale of importance these women's histories have been given. She incorporated metal, jesmonite and, predominantly, textiles, to tell these hidden histories. The different materials were used as symbols to reveal or express distinct elements of the characteristics or personality of the women. Textile is a medium with a unique history, closely intertwined with social, cultural, and political values, as much as yarn and thread.

Mise-en-Scène

The exhibition was installed at the art centre's Mirror Gallery, once the mansion's dance hall. The vessels were displayed either in pairs or groups on covered plinths with perspex, placed in the middle of the room, or on their own inside glass domes placed on the windowsills around the room. The plinths were scattered around the Mirror Gallery, looking as though they were swirling and spinning on the wooden floor to the sounds of silent music. The lights were directed to shine directly onto the vessels making the 'ladies' the protagonists.

Entering the space, in the once ballroom, the visitors were becoming active performers within the *mise-en-scène*, as they were moving around the 'ladies' who were seemingly dancing (Figure 106). Here it might be interesting to consider the

auteur curator and the artist who underscore their roles not only as an exhibition producer and a maker respectively, but instead as choreographers.

To stand at the front of these miniature vessels was, not only to closely examine how Baxter carefully constructed her pieces, but also to reflect on the sources of the materials that lend her work its fine aesthetics, and the clear attention to detail (Figure 107). With every cut, every stitch, every addition or omission, Baxter, regardless of whose story she was sharing, showed intention, thoughtfulness, and intelligence as well as a desire to evoke the same response in her audience. The lyrical hues and stitched patterns interwoven with tangling threads were abstractions of the character and persona of these women.

It is noteworthy to ponder that, even though the perspex covers were used out of necessity to protect the fragile and frail nature of the miniature vessels, they offered an alternative reading in the exhibition. The covers created a *dis-play* which could be seen as a metaphor to indicate women's marginalised and alienated position in the society of the time.

Grandmothers

The project included public participation. *Hidden Histories* became more personal and intimate as Baxter, reflecting on her own recent experience of becoming a grandmother, moved on to explore the lives and legacies of those women whose names and stories left indelible marks on society, and who have quietly shaped our way of life today, our grandmothers.

Our grandmothers, through their life experiences, have built up 'funds of knowledge' and skills that they are passing on to their grandchildren thereby developing

intergenerational connections and granting a sense of security and belonging. Even though the role of the grandmother in family life is ever-changing, they occupy major roles, from mentor to historian, to loving companion.

Baxter asked the public to share memories of their grandmothers, or other older female relatives important to them, and responded by making a vessel which in turn became part of the exhibition. There was a dedicated space in the room for these responses (Figure 109).

From this viewpoint, the exhibition included the element of the exchange of stories. I was then interested to explore how eager people are to share their stories and how they listen to each other's narratives. This was inspired and informed by Benjamin, who in his essay 'The Storyteller' (1936) defined storytelling as a mode of communication which offers listeners meaningful wisdom or advice. Moreover, the emphasis on the narrative reflected the primary experience of the world which is personal and for people telling their own story is often an attempt to reach out and connect to the community.

To complement the exhibition I have designed a Family activity *to be used as live research*. Visitors were invited to participate and reflect on an influential female figure through drawing and writing. The visitors' responses accumulated across the Studio gallery wall (Figure 108).

Complementary Programme

Hidden Histories was complemented by an online illustrated catalogue, a family activity pack, and a film I produced to document the interview with the artist and her making process.

Because of the related to Covid-19 lockdown, the exhibition was threatened by a premature closure. However, I took the executive decision to extend the dates of the exhibition and to launch an alternative online version. For this the family activity pack, and the interview film were made available online (refer to Appendix C for QR for the exhibition catalogue and Film: *Studio Visit* as well as caption of Family pack.) Moreover, with the intention to engage with the South Hill Park community within the restrictions of the lockdown I organised an artist talk, delivered by Baxter on 13 February 2021 via Zoom. This was the first time South Hill Park exhibitions attempted a virtual event. There was good attendance and South Hill Park received positive feedback:

It was so interesting to hear about how she [Baxter] learns about a person and then transforms that detail into a resin vessel. [...]it was fascinating to hear more about the women who have lived there - hard to imagine it as a residential home but wonderful to see how Alison captures the essence of some of the ladies via her creativity making the vessels. (email by A.G., 25 February 2021)

Another comment was from a regular South Hill Park visitor who despite having no specific interest in visual arts, found this online event as an opportunity to meet with her friends in a virtual space:

I am not a particularly artistic person, but I found myself interested in attending [...] I thought my friends would be interested to remotely attend something 'together'. I thoroughly enjoyed the

online talk and found the thought process and the stories behind the vessels fascinating and thought provoking. (email by S.U. 25, February 2021)

These feedback examples demonstrated how an exhibition as research and the complementary programme provided participatory opportunities and engaged with the audience in new ways.

Curatorial Process and Method

In line with my research methodology and while considering my knowledge and experience in curating craft and also the particular venue, it was essential to work collaboratively with the maker to allow for the development of the project. Furthermore, the uncertainty and the unknown during the Covid-19 lockdown disrupted the exhibition, demanding a contingency plan, thereby building on my knowledge and determining structure.

This has been a characteristic within my practice that can be traced back to and recognised in my previous works.

Hidden Histories relied on the responses and reactions of the participants to be developed. Baxter following this exhibition has continued to develop *Grandmothers*, seeking to collect more stories.

This exhibition illustrated the development of my aims to provide a model of engagement with the makers and curatorial practice, whilst fulfilling the criteria of new models of practice developed as *kaino-craft*.

This study demonstrated the application of the theories of the *mise-en-scène* and the *auteur* as analysed in the thesis. It offered an original contribution to knowledge by presenting an adjustable model of applying these theories to craft-related exhibitions. Moreover, it demonstrated the creative possibilities that are developed through the discourse that emerged between the maker, the venue, and the curator.



Figure 105 *Hidden Histories* (2020)
Installation view. Photo possession of
the author.



Figure 106 *Hidden Histories* (2020) Installation view, visitors swirling around the displays. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 107 *Hidden Histories* (2020) Visitors looking over the miniature vessels. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 108 *Hidden Histories* (2021) Visitors interaction Visitors were invited to be active and reflect on the miniature vessels through drawing and writing, which accumulated across the Studio gallery wall. Captions from exhibition preview event, 10 December 2020. Photo possession of the author.



Figure 109 *Hidden Histories* (2020) Dedicated space for visitors responses. Baxter asked the public to share memories of their grandmothers, or other older female relatives important to them, and responded by making a vessel which in turn became part of the exhibition. Photo possession of the author.

Considering *Makers' Tale* and *Hidden Histories* process of the curatorial, demonstrated two key points:

- a. The prominence of craft to people and organisations and the way this relationship could be articulated through the curatorial.
- b. The impact of craft curatorial practice in the audiences' experience and engagement.

This study also demonstrated that dialogue has a resonance into developing new narratives. Both projects employed this approach to develop narratives and

commentary between the traditional, contemporary practice and the exhibition-making space resulting in an on-going exchange.

Through the development of these new practices, the curator's practice is expanded, where new knowledge together with skills are acquired. This knowledge can then be used and applied to future projects. The accumulative learning and experience can be employed to allow problem-solving in new and perplexing projects.

A curatorial craft approach emphasised human skills, including a mastery of technique and the ability to use multiple skills to control the making process from start to finish. Moreover, it required embodied knowledge, i.e. knowledge not only from conceptual skills, but also from practical, tacit and contextual knowledge.

It is essential to note that through my curatorial practice, I have employed and expanded on my skills to deliver these exhibitions. My communication and negotiation skills during my interaction with the involved institutions and participants contributed to creating relationships of mutual trust. The mutual trust enabled me to share my curatorial vision, while all members involved felt comfortable to contribute to the project. Moreover, it led to an understanding of collaborative practice which provided a valuable resource of unexploited information and knowledge with regards to craft curatorial practice. Moreover, as an *auteur* curator, I shared my enthusiasm for the project, engaging the students and tutors as well as the co-curator from Salisbury Arts Centre. The project, offered me, as a curator, the opportunity to learn how to work in association or collaboration with a co-curator, share vision and responsibilities. Moreover, I developed a better understanding of the learning process, specifically by comparing that in the university settings and the Cathedrals workshops.

The analysis of these exhibitions demonstrated how contemporary craft curation makes room for pluralistic practices that combine and cross, formerly distinct borders, disciplines, materials, techniques, and histories.

This chapter presents a summary of the research, providing a general overview of the thesis. It describes the contributions this research makes to knowledge in the fields of curatorship, performance art and performativity, within a specific area of contemporary craft practice. Finally, it discusses the limitations of the research and addresses these issues.

This doctoral project analysed the role of the curator and how this role facilitates in establishing a site of exchange, referring to a space where craftwork, site and audience converge and considers that the 'exhibition space' exists where these conditions meet. This coming together of social, spatial, and critical contexts generates a political space that exists within a wider cultural sphere. The term 'exhibition space' is used to refer to the *mise-en-scène* which represents the location where the craftwork occurs.

As was analysed in the curatorial chapter (Chapter 3), the convergence of the traditional space, where the object is displayed, with the place where work is exhibited, has instigated a new discourse which regards the aesthetics of the relationship between artwork, place and audience development. Exhibition spaces now exist in the world, citing real life as their critical horizon, conceptualising the relationships, knowledge production and processes that occur within this context.

The thesis demonstrates that the curatorial practice is very much a holistic action in which all the different elements converge. In reflecting the complexity of the exhibition-making and building a knowledge formulated by experiences and

relationships, the curator is a responsive practitioner who contributes as a collaborator in art's social relations.

This kind of practice takes us beyond the traditional context of craft and requires us to be moved by something that is not yet there while being sensitive to the subtle shifts and development of the collaborative process. This kind of movement requires that we be led by the project and stay open as it is deviating into new directions, then deal with the consequences when this type of practice moves into the comparatively static art institution.

As identified in this study, *kaino-craft* refers to a wave of contemporary makers who have moved on from the conventional essence of craft, yet their work still draws from tradition. As analysed in chapter 7, the prefix *Kainos*, in Greek *καινός*, means novel, new in quality (innovation), fresh in development or opportunity, something not seen before. My argument is that *kaino-craft* denotes deep knowledge, understanding of materials and skill, and intellect with respect to move the practice consciously fresh and relevant to contemporary needs. *Kaino-craft* besides being a term used to describe certain contemporary practices, it is also seen as a methodology which enriches the field and allows for craft to consciously be applied to relevant contemporary needs. *Kaino-craft* as collaboration, experimentation, innovation (fresh and novel) and participation consists of the conceptual agenda for contemporary craft.

Several of the projects included in the investigation showcased craft in motion through performances, events and participatory projects, for example collaborative craft making sessions as a form of public outreach as seen in Raisa Kabir's *Weaving*

Local Voices, public performances of craft-based work and as seen in Phoebe Cummings and Clare Twomey's practices.

In addition, the other examples of this shift in practice are craft projects used as a tool for political actions and aims, *Acts of Making*, Crafts Council (2014), and *Fragile?*, National Museum Wales (2015) .

Projects like these have opened new avenues for considering the social and collaborative aspects of craft, as well as the embodied actions and gestures of makers themselves. Additionally, the crafted object has undergone a shift in its once-central role, serving instead as an event, a performance or process, and in some cases disappearing altogether. This is evident in the practice of Phoebe Cummings, who uses raw clay as a time-based medium to create an installation which changes over time. What might stay in the end, is the clay which was recycled and used in future works.

This practice informed my thinking when developing the concepts of my curatorial projects *Maker's Tale* and *Hidden Histories*. Specifically, for the music composition *Plangency* commissioned for *Maker's Tale*, the sound was the raw material which was experienced during the cello performance. The piece described the characters of the sound of the ambience of Salisbury Cathedral. The composers set the space in motion by transferring the sounds through the music to be experienced in the gallery space. In the end, music became faint and distant.

The thesis demonstrates that craft exhibition has become a stage and a laboratory, not in their traditional notion i.e. a proscenium with its clear demarcation between performance and viewer, or equipped for scientific experiments, but rather, a more

flexible and fluid space within which the viewer can become a participant in the production and relay of the individual works and their meanings.

The exhibition stage proposes a spectacular logic, which is also a subjective logic, in the sense that the exhibition proposes a series of *mise-en-scène* within which the viewer is invited to participate in a process of identification/dis-identification. Curating is considered *a mise-en-scène*, as moving people through the works or installation is like moving actors on the stage. This was demonstrated in *Hidden Histories*, where the visitors swirled through the plinths in the Mirror gallery, once the dance hall, as if they were dancing.

In this sense the craft exhibition is seen as theatrical in one way or another. Curating involves a presentation of craft works analogous to theatrical presentation. Moreover, the contemporary museum/gallery increasingly invites its visitors to attend conferences and seminars, dance and performance, music concerts and so on, in the exhibition space.

This thesis has built a bridge between the fixed categories of curatorship, performance, and craft. It also provided a clarification of the terms 'curating' and 'curatorial' as well as the terms 'performance' and 'performative' and has demonstrated how they are embodied in craft curatorial practice.

This thesis developed a foundation for students, academics, and practitioners to define these terms in relation to their practice and to expand and contribute with their own conclusions. Whether the findings are confirmed or contested, this thesis provides an underpinning to motivate others to continue finding the points of confluence between these disciplines. This consideration will allow for craft to be presented, valued, and understood in more diverse and complex ways.

This study explored how galleries and museums reinforce the new ideas about craft and I have presented a new term, *kaino-craft*, to define this shift beyond the object-centred discipline. The prefix *kainos*, in Greek *καινός*, means novel, new in quality (innovation), fresh in development or opportunity, something not seen before. *Kainos* has a distinct difference from the word *Neo* (*νέο*) which means young. The prefix *kaino* could be applied in any theory and discipline to create a term that holds the essential properties that characterise the practice but disassociate any connotation and baggage that holds it back from evolving and expanding in new directions.

The thesis contributes to the literature of craft as it develops on the existing writings for craft to find a language of its own, but also its own ethos, rather than adapting one of art criticism.

This thesis proposed the curatorial as a methodology, which means several individuals coming together, sharing responsibility for a project to realise, and a trust in one another's work within that as seen in the studies of projects analysed. These projects intended to be polymorphous, complex, and research-based, with many levels and instances of realisation, in a stage of perpetual becoming.

The thesis presented practices by contemporary makers whose work is not about a functional object, but about experimentation with materials and exploration of their materiality. The ephemeral nature of their work means that the only outcome remains in the memory of the audience. Over the course of the performance, the material changes create a physical sense of alteration and development within the audience's perception and understanding of what they are witnessing.

From a performative perspective, this thesis explored methods of research with craft, and the convergence of artistic mediums. The argument relies on techniques of socialisation within making, considering aesthetics beyond traditional use and pragmatism. Through the works of contemporary makers such as Phoebe Cummings and Celia Pym, performative and participatory practices were investigated to expand the concept of craft. The thesis indicated the possibility of multiplying the use of materials beyond their functionality to transition toward ambivalence and hybridity. The artistic projects described in this thesis demonstrated the potential of collaborative practices to modify symbolic images and the historicity of the materials through reconfigurations of their social interactions.

Exhibition as research on *kaino-craft* is to serve the interests of social engagement and craft alike, to bring to the fore practices sustained by different forms of knowledge. What could be considered failure, error, or damage in studio craft, is an aesthetic impulse for the artists mentioned in this thesis. Cummings and Pym questioned normalised techniques and connected them to the historical ritual performance of craft making. Although with different approaches, the craft artists propose a process-oriented practice, rather than an object-oriented attitude to making.

The artists include processes of transformation as the tools for the dramaturgy of their works. This kind of performative practice required to consider not only the points at which different forms of materiality connect with conceptual decisions, but also required to discuss how the audience became fundamental for the creation of the piece. The artworks appeared in the form of immersive installations (in the case of Cummings) or using participatory strategies (in the case of Pym). In both cases,

the open systems set by the artists let things develop over time. The agency of the materials, the environment, and the public is acknowledged and necessary for the work to exist. This was tested and demonstrated in my major curatorial project *Makers' Tale* and exhibition project *Hidden Histories*.

Additionally, both projects created a research surplus, working intensely with archives and collections, testing ideas out in a physical environment, and relating directly to a diverse audience. These projects offered the opportunity through the exhibition making process, to learn more about the topic of the exhibition itself. For example, through *Makers' Tale* I have learned and developed new ways to collaborate with a co-curator. This major curatorial project shines a spotlight on the actions the curators require in building a network of support and producing a consensus on how to move forward.

Through the *Hidden Histories* exhibition, instead of reducing and simplifying the complexity of its theme, I developed an understanding of how to take its theme in different forms that could be experienced by the audience. This was done by moving the inquiry from the missing stories of the women inhabitants of South Hill Park to question the role of a particular woman, the grandmother. By opening up the inquiry to the public, it offered the audience the opportunity to be active participants and develop a creative and alternative discourse and insight.

In the case of participatory performative craft curatorial projects, we need to further investigate how their relationship with creation leads makers, materials, and the public to inscribe a series of practices that make a social experience unfold. The gallery laboratory creates constructed situations which become spaces for the arrangement of new social relationships and thus new social realities.

This research highlighted the importance of the impact of applying film and performance methodologies in formulating craft to understand the difference an audience makes to the conceptual thinking about an exhibition. My curatorial process has the potential to become a generic tool for makers and curators alike to increase the level of innovation within their practice while concurrently extending audience participation and understanding of craft.

The research process and outcomes of the *kaino-craft* model of practice offered a basis to understand the different layers of activity involved. The visualisation through my curatorial projects allowed for an evaluation of the impact of the different elements, providing an insight into the different aspects and their direct effects on practice, through research and intensive engagement.

This is an ongoing project which will be carried on beyond the doctoral study to investigate what is effective for the future of craft.

This craft research contributed in providing an opportunity to both develop public awareness of contemporary craft and to engage with the wider community of makers.

In my major curatorial project *Makers' Tale* and my exhibition project the *Hidden Histories*, both site-related, the following three parameters of a model of practice were identified:

- The *Auteur* curator who recognises opportunities and uses conceptual capabilities to develop the proposal and the narrative.
- The use of storytelling and the approach to apply, e.g., the use of heritage in *Makers' Tale* and the concept of history and family in *Hidden Histories*.

- The realisation process or the relation between concept and physical realisation through developing collaborations; between the curator, institution, and the maker.

In addition to the three parameters, five additional factors were identified as being fundamental to curatorial practice:

- Vision and ability to conceptualise and identify the possibilities, opportunities, and impact of the curatorial project.
- Development of my own curatorial language, by applying the *auteur* model of practice.
- Passion, engagement, and commitment.
- Project management skills and particular development of an understanding and awareness of the limitation of time, space, and resources.
- Dedication to continually develop my knowledge and skills.

Contribution to Knowledge

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 scope of this research project. I have identified that definitions either excluded certain forms of craft or were non-specific as to be true for any visual practice.

To capture the diversity of activities and its fast changing cultural and creative role, and demonstrating the dearth of materials, a new term, *kaino-craft* was introduced.

The thesis challenged the prevalent perception of exhibition-making models. An original contribution to knowledge is the introduction of the key term *Kaino-craft* as a new way of approaching and developing contemporary craft practices. Moreover, the development of exhibitions as a research methodology, which contributes to a more open form of academic research based on practice, creating new environments that support research and demonstrating impact beyond academia. Building upon Bjerregaard's notion of exhibition as research, my curatorial projects revealed new relations between things that we thought were not connected and illustrated new perspectives and interrogations for researchers and curators.

This thesis focused on establishing an understanding of the development of the curatorial practice of craft integrating performance. The new contribution to the field of craft is the use and application of ideas and practices drawn from curation and performance applied as research.

The thesis provides a tool to assess the understanding of the craft curatorial practice and its trajectory. The thesis methodology is intended to be easily repeatable and adaptable. It provides a unique resource enabling visual analysis through the lens of performativity and using tools brought in from film studies and cultivation of the curatorial.

My projects *Makers' Tale* (2020) and *Hidden Histories* (2021) demonstrated the craft curatorial practice being creatively extended by new disciplinary practices and knowledge. The practical outcomes contributed to the discourse of exhibition as research with a focus on craft and resulted in the development of new types of knowledge and experience for the audience. A fundamental contribution to knowledge is the introduction of the term *kaino-craft* and the development of a

model of craft curatorial practice: a study of movement in time and space through craft and curatorial.

Areas for Further Research

Anticipated areas for further research are located in:

- Developing the theory of *kaino-craft* practice, the materiality and mutability of space through the extended notion of material and skill.
- Investigating the impact of the transferable framework of the methodology and methods explored and developed in this thesis in relation to craft curatorial practice.
- Developing further the notion of the *auteur* and *mise-en-scene* in relation to other craft mediums, including glass, wood, metal and digital.
- Investigating further the correlation between the exhibition space and the laboratory.

Following the completion of this doctoral research study, I will explore avenues and opportunities to investigate these areas further, through the organisation of a conference to address the concern of *kaino-craft* and the curatorial research. Moreover, by developing collaborations with institutions and makers as well as curators to create research curatorial projects which will culminate in exhibition making.

Postscript

This research was inspired by my deep interest in craft and curatorial thinking and the way visitors, alongside the makers, become co-creators in exhibition-making. The convergence of the traditional space where the object is displayed and where craftworks create a place for discourse and exchange of ideas and knowledge.

Exhibition spaces seem to become more relevant citing real life conceptualising the relationships and knowledge production and processes that occur within this context. I believe that the curatorial and the praxis of curating offers endless opportunities to learn about other people's perspectives (makers, audience, academics, professionals), and exchange knowledge, expertise, and resources. I have identified that the social relation within the craft practice and the need to engage new audiences is where my craft as *auteur* curator is located. As an *auteur* curator in my laboratory, the exhibition space, I experiment with concepts and transformation of ideas from abstract intangible forms to three dimensional tangible environments, the *mise-en-scene*.

This practice entails the development of insights, knowledge, perspectives, and approaches from different disciplines which could be adopted and employed to enrich the understanding of the curatorial and the craft practice.

Reflecting and paraphrasing the words of textile artist and weaver Anni Albers, life means change and the aim is to add to the discourse with the intention of taking craft forward (Duberman, 2009:160).

Dissemination of Research

Selected Presentations

- 2022 *Textiles in Text: Text in Textiles* at 'Fashion, Photography, Storytelling, And Textiles', Progressive Connexions, Global Inclusive Interdisciplinary Conference, Athens, GR At: <https://www.progressiveconnexions.net/interdisciplinary-projects/storytelling/storytelling-and-textiles/conferences/abstracts-and-papers/> (Accessed 12 October 2022)
- 2022 *Curatorship, Performance, Crafts: A shift in Contemporary Practice* [Online] at 'Worlds within Worlds: in Transition', Research Student Conference, UCA Farnham, and Online.
- 2021 *Makers' Tale*, a joint presentation with co-curator Mirka Golden-Hann, at 'Old Stories, New Narratives' International symposium, Applied Arts Scotland, Online. At: <https://vimeo.com/612753162> (Accessed 12 October 2022)
- 2021 *Makers' Tale: A Continuum Of Life And Craft Making* at 'Worlds within Worlds: Time, Place, Narrative', Research Student Conference, UCA, Online
- 2020 *Performance within Crafts in the Twenty-first century: A Transdisciplinary Approach to Craft Knowledge*, at Making Futures, Plymouth College of Art, UK. Abstract accepted /not presented
- 2020 *Futurity | Changing Perceptions*, a joint presentation with Mona Craven Research Student Conference, UCA, Online.
- 2019 *Crafts in Performance*, Studio Crit of Research Degree Students, UCA Canterbury, UK
- 2019 *Performance Art within Crafts*, at the PhD Symposium part of the International Ceramics Festival Aberystwyth, UK.
- 2019 *Crafts and Music: Intersection and Convergence*, at 'Audio-Research Cluster', UCA, Farnham, UK. At: <https://www.audio-research.com/blog/crafts-and-music-intersection-and-convergence> (Accessed 10 October 2022)
- 2018 *Crafts in Performance*, at 'Temporal Connections' Research Student Conference, UCA, Farnham Maltings, UK
- 2018 *Allusive Crafts: Drawing Words, Writing Letters*, at 'Craft and Text' Conference UCA, Farnham, UK.

Selected Curatorial Projects and Exhibitions

- 2022 *Tansa 探査: Japanese threads of influence Process and Making*, at Mansion Galleries, South Hill Park, Bracknell, UK
- 2022 *The Colour of The Sea*, at Mirror Gallery, South Hill Park, Bracknell, UK
- 2022 *Access all Areas* community project supported by National Lottery Community fund, at Grand staircase gallery, South Hill Park, Bracknell, UK
- 2021 *Makers' Tale*, at Salisbury Arts Centre, Wiltshire Creative, UK
- 2021 *Beyond Trauma*, at Studio and Grand staircase Galleries, South Hill Park, Bracknell, UK
- 2021 *Hidden Histories*, at Mirror Gallery, South Hill Park, Bracknell, UK
- 2021 *Arts and Crafts Bringing Us Together*, community project a response to Covid-19 pandemic, at South Hill Park, Bracknell, UK
- 2020 *Makers' Tale*, at Wiltshire Creative, Online
- 2020 *Sensory Expedition: Colour | Light | Sound*, at Mirror Gallery, South Hill Park, Bracknell, UK
- 2019 *Work-in-Progress...* a PhD y2 part-time exhibition at The Tap Brewery UCA Project Space, Folkstone, UK
- 2019 *Crafts in Bloom*, at Balcony Gallery, New Ashgate Gallery, supported by SST, Farnham, UK
- 2018 *Sounds of Making*, at Farnham Potteries, Farnham, UK
- 2018 *Women Empowered*, Suffragettes showcase, at Sketch.London, UK
- 2018 *Temporal Connections*, Research Student Exhibition at Farnham Maltings, Farnham, UK

Symposium

- 2019 *Guided Conversation*, Making Space in association with Winchester School of Art and funded by Craft UK.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Research

I confirm that I have followed the UCA guidance and obtained the appropriate ethical approval. The Interview 'Consent Form' template was designed primarily for conducting interviews with adults from non-vulnerable populations and dealing with non-sensitive topics. All participants have signed the consent form.

List of Interviewees

Birchenough, Helen, Art Council Southwest Area Chair, Trustee of Wiltshire Creative, via Zoom, 17 October 2021

Bjerregaard, Peter, Curator and Writer, via Zoom, 29 October 2021

Casalini Giulia, Independent Curator, via email, 21 February 2020

Cummings, Phoebe, Ceramic Artist, via Zoom, 9 October 2020

Davies, Siobhan Dancer and Choreographer, in person at Siobhan Davies Studios, London, 15 January 2020

Golden-Hann, Mirka, Ceramic Artist and Head of Visual Arts Salisbury Arts Centre, via Zoom, 13 June 2020

Graves, Alun, Senior Curator at Victoria and Albert Museum London, via Zoom, 17 November 2021

Harrison, Keith, Ceramic Artist via Zoom, 7 October, and 13 October 2020

Léger, Marc James, Artist and Writer, via Zoom 28 April 2021

Piotrowska, Roma, Curatorial Officer at Wolverhampton Art Gallery, via Zoom 16 April 2021

Pym, Celia, Textile Artist, via Zoom, 9 October 2020

Renton Andrew, Keeper of Arts, National Museum Cardiff, via Zoom, 24 March 2020

Spies, Sarah, Choreographer and Performance Curator, via Zoom, 14 October 2020

Stratton, Shannon, Artist, Writer and Curator via Zoom, 18 March 2019

Thirunarayan, Vidya Potter and Bharata Natyam Dancer, in person at Pallant House, Chichester, 11 October 2019

Thomson, Hermione, Textile Artist, in person at Lion and Lamb Yard Farnham, 18 October 2021

Twomey, Claire Ceramic Artist, via Zoom 15 April 2020 via Zoom, 17 November 2021

Whalley, Harry, Composer of Contemporary Classical Music, in person at Lion and Lamb Yard Farnham, 12 October 2021

Consent Form for Interviews

Consent Form for interviews

Working Title: Crafts | Performance | Curatorship: A shift in Contemporary Practice

Loucia Manopoulou, UCA PhD Candidate | manopoulou@students.ucreative.ac.uk

Supervisory team: Professor Simon Olding, Professor Lesley Millar, Professor Martin Charter

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed and/or filmed/photographed as part of the above research project.

Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from UK institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used.

This consent form is necessary as to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation.

Would you therefore read the accompanying information sheet and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

1. I understand that my participation in the PhD research project is voluntary and I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn	YES	NO
2. I give my permission to interview, film, photograph, tape, or otherwise make a video reproduction of me and/or record my voice. I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded and/or filmed. I consent to the use of visual images (photos and/or video) involving me and my work for the purpose of this research. I understand this is an educational research.	YES	NO
3. I give permission to use quotes from the interview(s) (or excerpts of such quotes), the film, photograph(s), tape(s) or reproduction(s) of me, my work, and/or recording of my voice, in part or in whole, in possible future publications of the research (in whole or in part) in papers, journals, and other print media, on television, radio and electronic media (including the Internet), in theatrical media and/or in mailings for educational and awareness.	YES	NO
4. I would like my name used and understand what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised.	YES	NO
5. In the event of withdrawal all documentation relating to my participation will be destroyed and my name will be removed from all the study files.	YES	NO

Name

Signature

Date

Email _____

APPENDIX B

Makers' Tale, Salisbury Arts Centre, Wiltshire Creative, Salisbury

Pre-recorded Panel Discussion: To watch scan the QR code:



Plangency work-in-progress: To listen a short extract from a first recording of Dr Harry Whalley's and Akira Brown's intriguing new composition brought to life by Cellist Anna Menzies, scan the QR code:



Exhibition Catalogue, *Maker's Tale* (2020). To see scan the QR code:





**WILTSHIRE
CREATIVE**



Visiting Salisbury Cathedral





Salisbury Cathedral
Works Yard





Makers' Tale Makers -Artists:

CONTEMPORARY MAKERS - ARTISTS
 PETA JACOBS
 MANUELA KAGERBAUER
 MICHELLE SHIELDS
 HERMIONE THOMSON
 CARA WASSENBERG
 MUSIC COMPOSITION, DR HARRY WHALLEY, AKIRA SILEAS

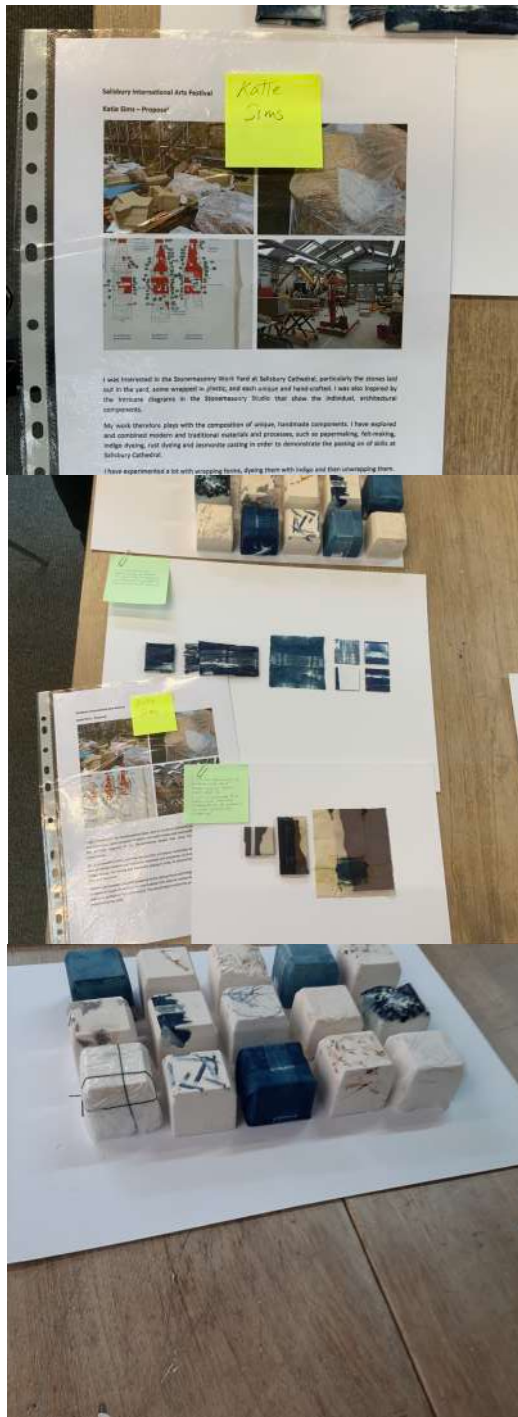
**UNIVERSITY FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS
 SCHOOL OF CRAFTS AND DESIGN**

BA (HONS) TEXTILES DESIGN
 Charlotte Bull, Wendy Irving, Lizzie Lovell and Katie Sims

BA (HONS) CERAMICS - GLASS
 Eleanor Cocking and Jamie Dunlop Valentine



Katie Sims



Wendy Irving

Initial images of wood in the spire which inspired me



The craggy, pitted stone walls caught my attention. The black discolouring of the stones appealed to me as a maker, and inspired a woven wall hanging



The weaving itself was very slow although the loom is so good. I couldn't get into any sort of rhythm because the wool on the warp had slightly felted because of the process it had undergone for the dyeing. The fibres kept grabbing onto the wool in my bobbie, which made it impossible to throw the shuttle. Fortunately, the fabric that was made didn't look felted or like it had excess fluff or bobbles.

Lizzie Lovell



Jamie Dunlop Valentine

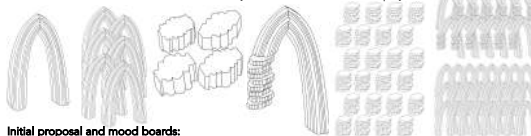


Makers Tale Proposal

Jaime Valentine

Sketchbook work inspired by 2019 visit:

I have lots of drawings and illustrations which inspired my initial ceramic outcomes. These are in the form of individual sheets and not a sketchbook, they could be mounted and displayed.



Initial proposal and mood boards:

Unfortunately, my initial mood boards went missing while we were away from campus during the first lockdown. I would be able to write a paragraph or two explaining my initial ideas to support my work if this would be appropriate.

Work developed for the project and was presented to curators in February/March 2019:

I applied ceramic transfers of my illustrations to torn ceramic slabs and planned to present these with my drawings. I still have this work and thought it would be nice to include as a physical representation of how my ideas have evolved.

I have six other variations of these illustrated ceramic forms



Work developed after or possibly the work developed for the final BA show:

In my current practice I have been exploring layered circular forms. I have a proposal for a new piece of work which I think would be appropriate for the Makers Tale project representing craftsmanship and materiality. Developing my ideas from last year where I looked at repeat patterns and strength I would like to create forms in my present style using natural stone-coloured clays.

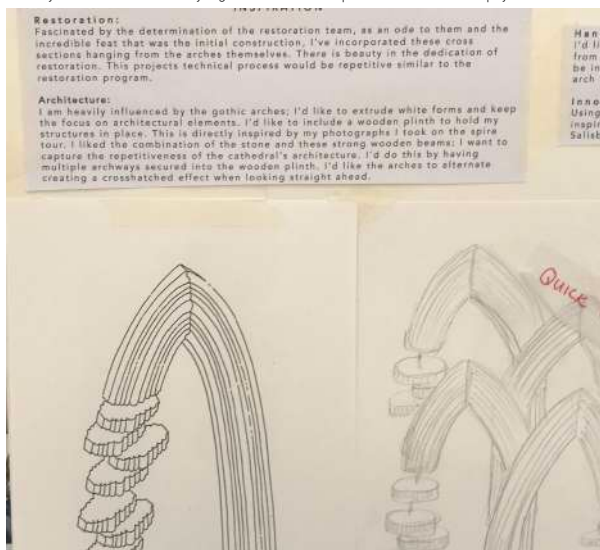
These are some examples of my current work, I would like to combine my current ideas with my Salisbury inspirations.

Selected clay sample



Display:

If I were to make my proposed circular ceramic forms, then they would require a plinth/shelf to be displayed. If possible, I would like to frame and hang some of my illustrations to be presented alongside my ceramic work. I also have my original illustrated ceramic pieces that could also be displayed.



Eleanor Cocking



May 2020, Virtual Salisbury International Arts Festival

Due to the lockdown in May 2020, the exhibition and panel discussion moved into a virtual-online environment.



PANEL DISCUSSION: Relevance of traditional craft knowledge in contemporary society.



**WILTSHIRE
CREATIV**

Salisbury
Cathedral

Salisbury
2020
City on the Edge

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Salisbury Cathedral

The Very Revd Nicholas Pasadopoulos Dean of Salisbury, Canon Dr Robert Titley, Marie Thomas Lee Andrews, Rob Douglass, James Gough, Garry Price, Emily Naish-Salisbury Cathedral Archivist, Salisbury Cathedral Glaziers, Salisbury Cathedral Vestry, and Salisbury Cathedral Volunteer Guides.

Wiltshire Creative

Artistic Director Gareth Machin, Tim Croall, Fiona Curtis, Dave Marsh, Barney Meats, Michael Scott, Holly Tomkins and Amanda Bruce

University for the Creative Arts

Professor Colin Holden, Head of Schools, Architecture and Crafts & Design, Professor Simon Olding, Dr Harry Whalley, Debra Altman, Sharon Ting, Ashley Howard, Diana Harrison, Michelle Shields, Hermione Thomson, Louise Anderson, Akira Sileas, Dr James Armstrong, Joanna Hayward and Emma Rawson.

MAKERS' TALE

Curated by Mirka Golden-Hann and Loucia Manopoulou
Film editing Loucia Manopoulou

APPENDIX C

Hidden History, South Hill Park, Bracknell

Exhibition Catalogue *Hidden Histories*, 2020. To see scan:



Film: *Studio Visit: Making Process of the Miniature Vessels*. To watch YouTube scan:



