



University of Dundee

A reflection on learning crafts as a practice for self-development

Nasseri, M.; Wilson, S.

Published in:

Reflective Practice: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives

DOI:

[10.1080/14623943.2016.1265495](https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2016.1265495)

Publication date:

2017

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication in Discovery Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Nasseri, M., & Wilson, S. (2017). A reflection on learning crafts as a practice for self-development. *Reflective Practice: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, 18(2), 194-205.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2016.1265495>

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in Discovery Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from Discovery Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

A reflection on learning a craft as a practice for self-development

M.Nasseri & S.Wilson

Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, University of Dundee, Dundee, UK

m.nasseri@dundee.ac.uk

s.z.wilson@dundee.ac.uk

DJCAD, University of Dundee

Perth Road

Dundee DD1 4HS

Mona Nasseri is a lecturer on the Ecological Design Thinking programme at the Schumacher College, Devon. She was awarded her PhD by Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, part of the University of Dundee. Her research interest is on patterns of transformation in humans as bio-sociocultural beings and the role of perception and embodied knowledge in such transformation. Her PhD explored the interface of self, craft and sustainability.

Sandra Wilson is a Craft Reader and an active contemporary jewellery designer/maker, researcher and educator at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, part of the University of Dundee. Her work is inspired by living systems and is highly collaborative, working with different disciplines for example life scientists, anthropologists, and psychologists. Central to her jewellery is the potential for the wearer to personalise pieces through their interaction with them. This innovative approach has won awards from the Scottish Arts Council, the Audi Foundation for Innovation and the British European Designers Group. Work is also in the collection of HRH Princess Anne.

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Reflective Practice: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives* on 3 January 2017, available online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/14623943.2016.1265495>.

A reflection on learning crafts as a practice for self-development

ABSTRACT

This paper represents a reflection on craft as a process that stimulates self-development. Central to this approach is the perception of craft, not as a means of production, but as an exercise of relating to the world. The paper suggests that through the dialogue between the mind, body and environment craft practitioners experience a particular form of connection with the world that reshapes their perceptual and conceptual understanding of it. Rather than following an ego-driven tendency to control, a craftsman is exposed to modes of 'knowing' and 'being' that embrace the inherent uncertainty of a complex world. The learning experience of a novice (lead author) demonstrates such a course of development in this paper. In particular, the liminal space that needs to be created for the dialogue between the self and the non-self is explored. This personal narrative is weaved together with the experience of craft masters within different social contexts and value systems (from traditional to modern to postmodern) and their views on the process of being and becoming a craftsman.

Keywords: Craft practice, craft knowledge, self-development, inner process, ego

Craft is generally discussed in terms of the application of skills to small production (Adamson, 2010). Crafting objects is placed at the heart of human evolution and marks the onset of human history. Nevertheless, the concept of craft as we know it today, is a modern invention (Greenhalgh, 2003; Metcalf, 2002). Metcalf suggests that craft is a socially constructed concept originated from the Art and Craft Movement in 1885 and in response to the Industrial Revolution in the UK (Metcalf, 2002). Since then, craft has been developing as a multi-dimensional mode of theory and practice. Depending on the urgencies and value systems of the time and place, some dimensions are emphasized over the others. As Metcalf (2002) puts it: "...the meaning of craft changes as societies change, and people tailor the word to their specific needs and desires" (p. 14).

Craft has been the subject of study in various academic disciplines. Decorative arts, vernacular design, dignity of labour, aesthetic, social awareness, critique of the

mechanisation of human labour, romantic idealism, small scale enterprise, and the politics of work are among the subject areas to which craft has gained academic attention (Dormer, 1997; Greenhalgh, 2003; Metcalf, 2002).

In recent decades, a growing interest has developed around the transformative quality of craft practice (Richards, 1989; Korn, 2013; Crawford, 2009; Crawford, 2015). This dimension of craft is captured by Carla Needleman (1979) where she writes,

A craft is not its object; a craft is how I am when I am making them (and eventually, one would dearly hope, how I am the rest of the time, as a result of what has been transformed in me through craftsmanship) (p. 124).

Craft in such a context refers to a solitary practice through which the craftsperson establishes a particular mode of relationship with tools, materials and the environment in where the practice is taken place.

Despite the increasing interest, academics seem to be reluctant to step into an in-depth exploration of the transformative quality of craftsmanship. Perhaps, unconventional subjective approaches and formats of communication, which are appropriate for such an inquiry, are not well-developed and well-established in academic disciplines. This paper is an attempt to address this dimension using qualitative approach through reflective practice supported by a wider body of academic knowledge.

Through reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action¹, the lead author captures her personal experience of craft practice. In this “view from inside”, in order to directly understand the subtle aspects of self-transformation through practice, she adopted a first person perspective and became a novice again, “My intentions were to contemplate how my perceptual understanding would lead me to discover aspects of my ‘self’ which are

not explicitly known to me”. Her learning experience along with her reflections on her ‘self’ - her bio-psycho-social self - is represented in the grey dialogue boxes. As such the text in these boxes are personal – use the first person and do not include academic references or adhere to academic convention.

Parallel to the practice “view from inside” we look at the socio-historical changes. In this “view from outside” we trace the transition of craft practice through traditional to modern to postmodern eras and explore the properties of craft which was brought forth in accordance to the dominant value system. The authoritarian influences of religions in the traditional time, the power of reason in the modern and the expression of individuality in the postmodern eras manifested in the way craft is taught, learned and talked about in different historical periods and in different cultural settings of the same time.

Craft practice entails tacit knowledge embodied through long-term practice. Craftspeople are constantly on a learning journey that is sometimes taught and guided and other times self-learned and exploratory. By taking this feature of craft into account, this paper closely looks at how craft is learned and practiced - from inside and outside - and what significant qualities are transferred in the learning process.

And finally, in comparing the “view from inside” and “view from outside”, one can identify similar footprints of change in societal transition and personal transformation.

Radical shifts from traditional to postmodern

Historically a craft was learned through an apprenticeship – where the apprentice worked under instruction from the Master who ran the workshop. This was a method of learning by doing. It could be speculated that it was adopted for learning the kind of

knowledge that is not easily communicable through words. An apprenticeship usually lasted around seven years followed by the journeyman period where the apprentice travelled and learned from other craftspeople before finally becoming his own master. This form of education still exists, although certain aspects such as the length and methods of teaching and the system of authority and power dynamic have changed (Coy, 1989; Rauner & Smith, 2010). An apprentice would subject the self to a holistic mode of learning through which visible physical techniques, as well as subtle invisible principles of relationships, would be experienced and adopted.

Despite radical cultural differences and geographical variations, what constitutes the traditional apprenticeship in crafts around the world is strikingly similar. A description of the apprenticeship by Singleton (1989) in a Japanese pottery, Giv a silversmith in Iran, Marchand (2008) in the architectural work in Yemen and West Africa, all entail features similar to those that Sennett (2008) captures in '*The Craftsman*', when describing the medieval apprenticeship in Europe.

Transferring knowledge from a skilled person to a novice, domination of hierarchy and the authoritarian system, the interrelationship of morality, spirituality and religion, and the practice of patience, respect, conformity and humility are among the features with which the traditional apprenticeship is generally characterized (Marchand, 2008; Coy, 1989; Sennett, 2008). It is as much about rules of behaviour and conduct as rules of mastering specific skills (Coy, 1989).

Although apprenticeship as a method of learning skills is still practiced in different forms, some aspects such as its rigid disciplines are not considered the most appropriate means of learning in the 21st century.

The prominent silversmith, Michael Lloyd is also unsure about rigid teaching styles. Lloyd says:

As soon as you start talking about apprenticeship my reaction is to think of it in a traditional context. I guess we were lucky being trained in the late 60s when there was a definition of craft - where you were learning what would allow you to articulate an idea. (M. Lloyd, personal communication, May 28, 2011).

Having experienced the transition from modern to postmodern times, Michael expresses the power of skills and ideas, body and mind working together. However, implicit in his words is a cautionary voice reminding us that ideas of the mind should not be overshadowed by skill and technique.

View from inside

It is with the clay and the pottery that I put my novice self under observation. I primarily try to revive the traditional apprenticeship in the 21st century. The traditional apprentices of the Middle Ages followed strict training before earning the privilege to make things. In my practice it soon turns out to be a pointless trial. Contradictions appear from the beginning when the bonding between my teacher, Sean Kingsley, and myself forms over friendly chats. Sean is the master of pottery and in the clay workshop I am his apprentice. However, when it comes to teaching he says, 'I am an apprentice myself.' We are both learning a new craft; mine is the craft of pottery, his is the craft of teaching, mine is supervised, his is self-learned. I start my practice on the wheel from the first day.

“If you are lucky”, Michael says:

... you'll meet three or four people, charismatic people who become your master and have this great influence on you. And if you are lucky again things like energy and enthusiasm could be contagious and can open your eyes up to new possibilities and to the world. But again I think it can be equally negative if you had a master who is very strictly concerned with the technique and techniques become more important than ideas. (M. Lloyd, personal communication, May 28, 2011).

The idea of the traditional apprenticeship awakens a dormant concern among craftspeople within higher academic education. The concern is that the appreciation of their skills and mastery obscures the value of their thoughts and ideas. To avoid this, it is common among craftspeople to refer to themselves as designers in the acknowledgement of their thoughts manifested through their practice.

The concept of apprenticeship for many people is a reminder of a time before the modern era, when under domination of religious authorities, practices were followed without questioning. After centuries of submission to the authority of tradition and after that, to the rationality of modernism, in the postmodern time, individuality is given a greater emphasis and each individual is perceived as a creative agent, rather than a passive follower (Touraine, 2007; Gergen, 1991).

The craft of the postmodern era stands closer to the fine arts and becomes a means of self-expression rather than fulfilling any utilitarian or decorative means. This is expressed in Michael's words:

The most frustrating thing is to have something you want to say but you don't have the means that enables you to articulate it. To the craftsman the need to learn a new technique comes more naturally when you need it for what you are wanting to communicate. (M. Lloyd, personal communication, May 28, 2011).

In Michael's view, there are only two sides involved in learning and practicing craft. One is the self and its resources (tools and skills), who comes to negotiate an idea with the material on the other side. Both sides are changed through this negotiation. The master is not a craft teacher. The master emerges from and grows through this process.

Nasser Giv, a contemporary Iranian academic, sculptor and jeweller, has a different interpretation of apprenticeship. He does not regard self-expression and learning how to communicate as the ultimate purpose of apprenticeship, but sees it as a stage of purification through which the self passes as it prepares to be communicated with.

Having experienced the traditional apprenticeship himself, Giv believes apprenticeship is more about learning the manner and tenet of humanity rather than learning skills. The master guides the apprentice in the process of strengthening what it takes to enter into the realm of unity and wisdom. He believes:

Apprenticeship is not merely the matter of learning how to carve a stick out of the wood, but is the matter of learning to see the carving as a pathway to conjoin the wood and let the self and the wood flow into each other's being. It means that as an apprentice, your hands are not solely forming the material but also forming your mind. This process of forming and being formed continues to the extent that your transformed mind or wisdom, rather than drives of the society, becomes your guide in your life. (N. Giv, personal communication, October 17, 2011).

In Giv's view, to learn a craft is to learn how to start and develop a dialogue.

Trained as a jeweller, I already have an advantage which some beginners may not have. I trust my hands and believe in their capabilities. Some may say, my mind is formed to make me believe in this way.

I quickly learn how to centre the clay, the skill that, according to some potters, takes months to obtain. This early success, however, leads me to a false belief of 'I already know how' and gives me a status that I subconsciously want to protect. It also gives me an illusion of 'I am right', which turns the clay into an egoistic opponent that I want to win over, rather than a material I need to connect with.

I spend the first few days challenging the material to prove my control over the situation. My hands move stiffly and forcefully on the spinning clay as I try to turn it into a cylinder. It seems that, in the absence of affinity, holding on to a fixed position is the first strategy to receive recognition and imposing power is the first action to make a desired change.

I am preoccupied by my obsession with my 'rightness' and the fear of losing what I have achieved. I hear my own voice rehearsing the structures that provided me with the initial success and 'rightness', and I act according to what I think and hear. My listening, thinking and acting circle around one centre; myself. I only become aware of this later when I begin to listen, think, and act otherwise.

Beginning a Dialogue

... disillusion, the recognition that I am not what I thought I was, that I don't know what I thought I knew, that I can't do what I wish to do, is the payment that opens us to the creative dialogue (Needleman, 1979, p. 49).

The ego, the Latin word for “I”, is the term brought into psychology by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). He originally used the word to refer to the sense of self. Later he modified the meaning to refer to a set of mental functions such as judgment, reality testing, control, intellectual functioning, memory, etc (Snowden, 2006).

Revisiting the term in the postmodern psychology, Lettieri (2007) defines the ego, “... as a self-generating processing system capable of organizing psychological experience in an adaptive fashion to create personal meaning and subjective organization” (p. 714). Whilst ego is an anchor of individuality and uniqueness, it also characterised by biases aiming to preserve the cognitive structures. Greenwald (1980) refers to the ego, as a personal historian that draws personal knowledge from perceived and remembered personal experiences. The perception of events and how they are remembered are shaped and preserved by the ego.

The ego plays a two-fold role in human development. As it preserves consistency and organization of cognition, it facilitates goal focus activities and development. However, as it protects the self from unknowns, it resists the change and adjustment to new conditions, which in the long term, hinders the self from development (Greenwald, 1980; Klaczynski & Narasimham, 1998).

Sean can read my concern or obsession over ‘being right’ through the disconnectedness that exists between the clay and me. ‘It seems that there is no heart connection’ he says and suggests practicing ‘speed throwing’ for a while. I am given only 7 minutes to centre and throw the clay up into a cylinder. It is brainstorming with mind and body. Speed narrows the channel where the clay and I can pass through so we each have to lighten our baggage. I leave out my obsession with ‘rightness’. I simply do not have time to think about it.

My mind and hands and ‘heart’ are unified and focused on this spinning clay on the

wheel. After some '7- minute' practices, I begin to feel that what the clay has left out of the speed throwing experiment is its ego. They truly say the material and the work of craft mirrors the practitioner. Perhaps the reason for being given only seven minutes for this task is to switch the conscious mind off and simply focus on the feelings and the emotion of connecting with the material.

The ego phenomenon has been given contradictory values and criticism for how it drove societies toward individualism since the Enlightenment. On the one hand, ego gave courage and self-belief to individuals to rebel against the domination of dogmatic tradition. It planted and nurtured the ambition of freedom in the minds of men and women (Midgley, 2010). It provided them with an independent status to replace the collective one they had inherited from their families, castes or social classes. It let them see themselves as individuals, separate from their surroundings, and to see themselves as subjects capable of knowing and making changes to the surrounding objects. The ego then propelled mankind towards scientific discoveries and the advanced technologies of the modern time from which we benefit today (Kleinberg-Levin, 1989).

On the other hand, the fragmentation of the self and others as subject and object has brought the earth to perhaps the greatest crisis in human history. As "This metaphysic of isolated subjects and objects" Kleinberg-Levin (1989) comments, "... bequeathed to us a self locked into a world of self-defeating, virtually schizophrenic dualism" (p. 12).

As the destructive consequences of dualism becomes more evident and postmodern pluralistic approaches to reality becomes more popular, overcoming the subject-object, us-them dichotomy finds more urgency. Less than ever before, today's men and women willingly subjugate themselves to the totalitarian authorities or

unquestionably submit to the authority of - so called - objective truth (Gergen, 1991). The authority, some argue, is now placed on the self, whether it is defined by ego or includes it. (Baumeister, 1991; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Gergen, 1991; Touraine, 2007).

The subject of the ego is frequently visited by craftspeople (Crawford, 2009; Korn, 2013; Needleman, 1979; Richards, 2011). Craft practice urges practitioners to constantly calibrate their cognition with their experience of the environment. Embracing the inherent uncertainty of the process requires frequent readjustment of the ego.

The ego, as a protective capacity of the individual's cognition, also appears in a contradictory manner in the craft literature. Richards (2011), herself a potter and poet and the author of *Centring in Pottery, Poetry, and the Person*, points to the two sides of the ego. She refers to ego as one of the greatest senses with which humans are endowed:

There is a sensology that discovers in man a circle not of five but of twelve senses: touch, life, movement, balance, smell, taste, sight, warmth, hearing, word, thought, and ego. The sense of ego is the highest. It is the sense that one has of another; meeting his individuality directly, that there is an I AM as I am (p. 146).

She also regards the ego as *a familiar and beloved tyrant* who imprisons us in our personality: "As ego dies in it ... we are free to live in ways we never thought possible" (p. 59).

Michael Lloyd refers to ego as the source of particularity, which in practice reflects the uniqueness of the practitioner. He says:

The wonderful thing about humanity is that we are all different... Everyone has something different to say. Everybody's dictionary of experiences is a unique one and that is what they are presenting to the world... I don't like the idea of the ego being totally pushed under. (M. Lloyd, personal communication, May 28, 2011).

Craft practice, whether as a long-term journey from apprenticeship to mastery, or as a single practice by a skilled person, begins as a subject-object, self-other interaction and ends as a subject-subject or object-object relationship. As the practice progresses, the duality turns to unity in the way that the work in the hands becomes the reflection of the practitioner (subject-subject) or the practitioner joins the work and both become objects of the process and are transformed by it (object-object). To reach this stage of transformation however, the presence of ego and its whispering voice is hardly ignorable. Perhaps, as Needleman (1979) has put it, "... it would seem that the ego itself must become dedicated to the work of self-transformation for it to be possible" (p. 106).

Nasser Giv believes that practicing humility is the way to overrule the ego and to "...find the abundance. The abundance is the freedom. It is autonomy at its highest possible level." (N. Giv, personal communication, October 17, 2011). Similarly, Richards (2011) notes: "When we are free from external tyrannies, we seek freedom from our inner limitations" (p. 22).

Giv believes that letting go of the ego and setting the self free from its conditions was generally incorporated in the master's system of educating the apprentice in the traditional workshop. As Yanagi (1972), the father of the Japanese Mingei Folk craft movement says: "...take heed of the humble; be what you are by birthright; there is no room for arrogance" (p. 97). Although becoming humble was the

ultimate goal of the master's teachings, its process commonly involved severe disciplines and harsh critique and, some believe, even degrees of humiliation and ridicule (Roux, 2009). This is perhaps one of the most criticised aspects of the traditional apprenticeship within the modern system of education. The idea that an apprentice would be subordinated to the authority of a master and assigned to do apparently irrelevant menial tasks is interpreted as oppressive even taboo in our time. Nasser Giv has a different interpretation of the master's severity of conduct. He disagrees with the humiliation or ridicule of the apprentice by the master, but advocates the rigid disciplines in craft education and their positive roles in the personal development of an apprentice. He believes in the existence of creative energy that is trapped in the self by the ego and that is liberated when the ego is taken out of the way under restrictive commands and expectations. Where the inability to express one's self breaks the ego barriers, one's sights are expanded to the unconditioned, defragmented, and creative self that lies beneath the ego (N. Giv, personal communication, October 17, 2011).

Nevertheless, arriving at the state of humility under an authoritarian system and through an oppressive process - as it was for the traditional apprentice - is undesirable and non-returnable to in our time. Imbued with postmodern romantic flavour Richards (2011) replaces humility with love. Perhaps the love of the maker for the material, for the source of inspiration or for the making arises the desire in the self for an unmediated relationship which is expressed in the process and the product of craft. "Falling in love", as the psychologist, Peck (1978) suggests, "...involves a collapse of ego boundaries and a diminution of the normal sense of separation that exists between individuals" (p. 165). Perhaps it is in the silence of the ego where the self joins the non-self.



Over the ‘Speed throwing’ practice where my own shouting voice of ‘rightness’ is quiet, I hear the weak voice of the clay, but the speed blocks the understanding. Yet, it is enough to make me assume that the practice under pressure is aimed at silencing the self.

It takes a while before a sort of communication appears between my action and the clay’s reaction. I gradually learn to let go of the force and instead use the maximum contact and rhythmic movement of both hands. Being the sole speaker so far, I now try to include moments of silence and listen.

In the silence of the ego and openness to listening to the other, a space for mutual understandings and shared meanings emerges and grows. In this space the boundaries between the self and object dissolve. In craft and design such a non-dichotomous space is most often described as a “liminal space” - a space of in-between-ness! In psychology this is often referred to as the “third space”, (Bhabha,1994: p. 55) an in-between space that enables hybrid identities to be developed².

In this liminal space, we argue, self-discovery happens as deep listening to the other invokes self-questioning in order to evaluate, compare, and associate the newly encountered meanings to already existing ones.

Listening, Isaacs (1999) points out:

...requires that we not only hear the words, but also embrace, accept, and gradually let go of our own inner clamouring. As we explore it, we discover that listening is an expansive activity. It gives us a way to perceive more directly the way we participate in the world around us (p. 83).

The listening in my practice is not solely a matter of hearing the sound of the surroundings, although it is also undeniably effective and important in the process. But in listening to the voice of clay, I tend to connect to an invisible order of things, a kind of connection that cannot be easily described but can be felt. I use the term listening rather than feeling, primarily because it represents a dynamic interaction between entities. It is different from feeling that can happen in solitude driven from imagination, memories of the past and dreams of the future.

The liminal space accommodates mutuality and integration. It allows exchange of information that belongs to both and yet neither of the self or non-self. In this space of in-between-ness, dialogues are born.

What I experience led me to believe that besides perceiving what the clay, water, wheel, speed, and tools can offer me to create an object, there is a possibility for a deeper level of connection beyond the physicality of the clay and the informative role of my senses.

Once I lose the preliminary status and suspend the 'I am right' position, the dialogue starts to progress between me and the work in my hands, the wheel, and even the jug of water at the corner.

Dialogue, as Bohm (2004, p. 7) defined, is a "stream of meanings" flowing among and through those engaged in it and as it develops new meanings are generated and join the flow.

Craft is a dialogue. It gathers intentions, meanings, values and the physical ability of the maker together with the pattern, resistance, texture, strength, and whatever mystery that nature has invested in the material and turns them into a new being with qualities and meanings that did not exist before. The object, however, is not the only outcome of this dialogue. The most significant outcome is the change that has come about in the self through the interplay of the new meanings and understandings with the old ones.

The object begins to emerge from my dialogue with the clay. It is a new being that stands on my intentions and the clay's qualities. Yet, when referring to it, it is neither the clay nor myself.

As my dialogue with the work in my hands develops, I gradually become aware of the flaws in my practice. My hand position on the clay, which I proudly believed had given me the initial marvellous start, works only for a certain size and shape of the clay and fails me in the face of diversity. I now know how to make cup shapes out of 150 grams of clay. I have formed a pattern of conversation between the work and myself. Clay under my hands does not feel separate from myself but an extension of my mind, body and emotions subtly integrated to one another. Nevertheless 150 grams of clay and taller cylinders are total strangers to me. It is not exactly the clay as a whole that I have been in a dialogue with, but it has been the 'cup clay'. My hands move awkwardly and incongruously when the throwing goes beyond the familiar domain of practice.

Sean reminds me of what I had forgotten and failed to implement in my early practices; connectedness. Only in connection, in seeing and feeling together, is

harmony and balance achievable. He simply suggests that while throwing I need to keep my left and right hands connected to each other while they each separately touch the inside and outside of the spinning cylinder. He says, the right hand represents the mind and the left hand represents the heart. Too much pressure of the mind makes the inside space narrow and too much stress on the heart weakens the body. Working separately, they each lead to an out of proportion object.

So I practice the connectedness. I link my hands together while trying to maintain a balanced pressure on the clay. It is not an easy task.

This seemingly simple change only becomes a solution after I achieve some success in losing the previous habit. Time does not stop for me, as the clay on the wheel does not stop from spinning. It is through changing or losing a habit that its strong ties to the body suddenly become visible, whereas in the rest of the time, it is so deeply embedded in the unconscious that the conscious mind can hardly distinguish it from instinct.

This is a new round in my learning process; disintegrating a behaviour that I previously believed to be right and separating myself from a habit, which although it takes me comfortably through a familiar process, imposes limitations on what I can achieve. This process happens simultaneously with adopting a new behaviour. It puts me in the position of a novice in the practice at which I had previously assumed to be relatively skilled.

I connect my hands together by my left thumb while both put slight pressure on the spinning cylinder. Sean points out that I 'think' too much. An undesired inward curve caused by my right hand's excessive pressure, by my mind's desire to control, is common to the most of the cylinders I make.

I am not sure if the right hand representing the mind and the left hand representing

the heart have any scientific validity, but in my practice it seems that I, probably like many others, have been conditioned to control things from the outside. The inside seems unreliable. Things may get out of hand if the pressure from my left hand exceeds a certain point and I do not know where that point is. So I put the mind in charge to be in control, to keep me on the safe side and thereby undermine what is inside, whether it is emotions, intuitions, or something else, I cannot explain.

The rest of my apprenticeship circles around the practice of creating a balance between the left and right hands, mind and body, or as Sean puts it, heart and head. Until, sooner or later, the conscious practice turns to an unconscious habit and then a new tendency arrives and breaks the established pattern of habits to give me access to a broader domain of possibilities.

Meanings that emerge from craft dialogue are distinguished from a verbal dialogue as they embody the consciously exchanged information as well as unconsciously obtained knowledge of the relationship. This is tacit and embodied knowledge, wisdom and intuition that are formed over time (Busch, 2008). Craftsmanship is a whole person dialogue involving senses, thoughts, feelings and intuitions of the practitioner. Beyond a process and activity, it embodies an engaged mode of being and knowing the world.

Discussion

In this paper we have reflected on craft as a process that can potentially create a holistic relationship between the craftsperson and the environment by providing a space for a dialogue between them (perhaps on a sub-conscious level.) We discussed the role

of craft practice in transforming and developing practitioners. We suggest that these changes are the result of a particular mode of knowing and relating to one's own self and to the environment. This knowledge is embodied in essence and responsive to uncertain situations. Learning craft then is a practice that creates channels of relationship between the practitioner and the environment by providing a space for developing dialogue between them.

Liminal spaces remain relatively ill-defined (Land, Rattray, & Vivian, 2014) although it is being increasingly considered in craft practice as well as education. Specially considering how curricula can create liminal states, experiences and learning in a more accessible environment. For some scholars (Haraway, 2006; Ross, 2011) reflective practice is itself a process of "liminal transformation". This is an area therefore that would benefit from further research.

The significance of craft and how it is learned has been different over time and it still is, in different social settings in this contemporary period. Craft changes alongside the evolution of cultures and their value systems. In a traditional setting, learning craft is way of disciplining the self through clear-cut frames and well-established "dos" and "don'ts". Modern cultures awaken the desire for expression of individuality and the postmodern era provides the opportunity for its fulfilment.

The question we, as scholars and craftspeople, need to ask is that "considering social and environmental challenges of the current time, what are (or should be) the significant qualities transferred and achieved through learning, practicing and teaching craft? This is particularly significant in the midst of global problems, mainly grounded in a rational economy and fragmented knowledge. As craft has much to offer alongside many other disciplines in searching for ways to change the current anthropocentric cultures and stop social and environmental destruction.

Notes

¹ Schön (1983) suggest that there are two types of cognitive behaviours one can use to perform reflection on one's own practice (1) reflection-on –action that is a spontaneous, intuitive performance of the action of everyday life or thinking on your feet and (2) reflection-in-action that is thinking back on what we have done in order to discover how our reflection-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome.

² Bhabha developed the concept in the context of identities in a postcolonial world.

References

- Adamson, G. (2010). *Craft Reader*. Oxford; New York: Berg Publisher
- Baumeister, R. (1991). *Meanings of life*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Bellah, R. N., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. M. (1985). *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. University of California Press.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Coy, M.W. (1989). *Apprenticeship: from theory to method and back again*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Crawford, M. B. (2009). *Shop class as soulcraft: an inquiry into the value of work*. New York: Penguin Press.
- Crawford, M. B. (2015). *The world beyond your head: on becoming an individual in an age of distraction*. New York: Pinguin Books
- Gergen, K. (1991). *The saturated self : dilemmas of identity in contemporary life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Greenhalgh, P. (2003). *The persistence of craft: the applied arts today*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Greenwald, A. G. (1980). The Totalitarian Ego: Fabrication and revision of personal history. *American Psychology*, 35. 603-618.
- Haraway, D. (2006). A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-feminism in the late 20th century. In J, Weiss. (Ed). *The International Handbook of Virtual Learning Environment*. Dordrecht: Springer Netherland.
- Isaacs, W. (1999). *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together: A Pioneering Approach to Communicating in Business and in Life*. New Yourk: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group.

- Metcalf, B. (2002). Contemporary craft: A brief overview. In Johnson, J. (Ed).
Exploring contemporary craft history, theory & critical writing. Toronto: Coach
House Books with the Craft Studio at Harbourfront Centre.
- Klaczynski, P. A., & Narasimham, G. (1998). Development of scientific reasoning
biases: cognitive versus ego-protective explanations. *Developmental
Psychology*, 34(1), 175–187.
- Kleinberg-Levin, D. M. (1989). *The listening self: personal growth, social change, and
the closure of metaphysics*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Korn, P. (2013). *Why we make things and why it matters: the education of a craftsman*.
- Land, R., Rattray, J., & Vivian, P. (2014). Learning in the Liminal Space: A Semiotic
Approach to Threshold Concepts. *Higher Education: The International Journal
of Higher Education and Educational Planning*, 67(2), 199–217.
- Lettieri, R. (2007). The Ego Re-revisited: A reply to Frank (2007). *Psychoanalytic
Psychology*, 24, 712–714.
- Marchand, T. (2008). Muscles, morals and mind: Craft apprenticeship and the formation
of person. *Br. J. Educ. Stud. British Journal of Educational Studies*, 56, 245–
271.
- Midgley, M. (2010). *The solitary self: Darwin and the selfish gene*. Durham, England:
Acumen.
- Needleman, C. (1979). *The work of craft : an inquiry into the nature of crafts and
craftsmanship* (1st ed.). New York: Knopf
- Peck, M. S. (1978). *The road less traveled: a new psychology of love, traditional
values, and spiritual growth*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Richards, M. C. (2011). *Centering in Pottery, Poetry, and the Person*. Middleton; Conn:
Wesleyan University Press.

- Ross, J. (2011). Traces of Self: Online reflective practices and performances in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 16, 113-126
- Roux, S. (2009). *Paris in the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Sennett, R. (2008). *The craftsman*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Singleton, J. (1989). Japanese Folkcraft pottery Apprenticeship: Cultural patterns of an educational institution. In M.W, Coy (Ed), *From Theory to Method and Back Again*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Snowden, R. (2006). *Teach yourself Freud*. London: Hodder Education.
- Touraine, A. (2007). *New Paradigm for Understanding Today's World*. Cambridge; Malden: Polity.
- Yanagi, M., & Leach, B. (1972). *The unknown craftsman; a Japanese insight into beauty*. Tokyo; Palo Alto; Calif: Kodansha International.