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Foreword

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FOREWORD

The following question is the underlying essence of this year's catalogue: What is the future of craft? We asked for contributions in response to it from scholars, educators, curators, artists, designers and makers. We hoped that each contributor might have insightful, challenging or provocative things to say and we were not disappointed. For if the lively and committed expressions of interest are anything to go by then the future of craft is certainly secure! We are most grateful to all those who were able to contribute.

Hi Clair, how about this, from my book *Thinking Through Craft* (2007):

Understandably, partisans of the crafts are unlikely to see craft's second-class status within art theory as something to accept at face value, but this resistance has also led to a lack of serious thought about craft's inferiority relative to art... Yet in the very marginality that results from craft's bounded character, craft finds its indispensability to the project of modern art. My central argument, when all is said and done, is that craft's inferiority might be the most productive thing about it.

Dr. Glenn Adamson, *Head of Graduate Studies and Deputy Head of Research, Victoria and Albert Museum*

With the event of promoting 'slow' living etc, mostly demonstrated by 'slow cooking', craft in its essence is already there but the future of craft could depend on promoting this ethos in an ever changing and unreliable world. Craft has a real opportunity with vision, to develop a deeper skin. This can come about through process, and understanding and nurturing processes in particular hybrid processes, bringing new vision to traditional techniques. The Girli Concrete Product developed by Tactility Factory, a diverse working combination between textile designer Trish Belford and architect Ruth Morrow demonstrates this is possible and brings about unique contemporary and yet antique wall surfaces.

Trish Belford, *Textile Designer, www.tactilityfactory.com*

I believe that when forecasting the future, asking the right questions is more crucial than pre-empting answers. So when asked about the future of craft, I chose to pose a series of questions that could frame a new landscape for craft-makers and hopefully inspire some insightful, creative and resilient journeys.

1. Can designers and craft makers play a pivotal role in developing new sustainable products?
2. Can craft become a catalyst to develop new biomimicry models?
3. How do we maintain the value of hand making in the digital world?
4. Can robotic dexterity match the emotional trace of the hand made?
5. How do we reconcile digital craft and traditional skills?
6. Will the return of the repair shop provoke the re-emergence of lost skills?
7. How could craft trigger greater multi-cultural and inter-generational exchanges?
8. What would a computer hacker tell a lace maker?
9. What would a lace maker tell a programmer?
10. When materials become machines, when scientists craft molecules, who is the craftmaker?

Carole Collet, *Course Director and Senior Research Fellow and TFRG Associate Director, Central Saint Martins College of Art and design, University of the Arts London.*

What I do know about craft is that it is extraordinarily resilient, continuously mutating, and always has a capacity to make me think. The complex ways in which it exists within many sectors, such as design, fashion, architecture, fine and applied art, enables it to survive in a rapidly changing world, but sometimes at the expense of it having any clear identity. History and experience have taught us that the future rarely resembles what we predict, but what is certain is that art schools, colleges and university courses are the bedrock of developing future talent and as a means of sustaining established makers, and it is crucial that there is a commitment to investing in craft related courses. There will always be an appreciation of things that are well-made, thoughtful, creative as well as innovative, and that engage with the world we live in.

Andy Horn, *Exhibitions Manager, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery*

Bombarded with the likes of 'Primark' consumerism the appreciation of the personality and care of the individual in Craft based items will surely continue to go from strength to strength. More focus will be placed in having something unique as everyone is swamped with goods that mean nothing and are everywhere. I hope there will be a resurgence in 'Crafts' that are practical and useful pieces so that one nurtures the feeling of keeping and using a beautiful thing until it becomes part of oneself...

Karen Nicol, *Textile Designer, www.karennicol.com*

Craft always has been and always will be of importance in many different ways and for many different reasons. Sometimes craft appears as humble objects invisible in use, sometimes as celebrated artefacts treasured and exhibited, sometimes as ritual object imbued with higher levels of meaning embodied through their design as much as their use. Greenhalgh (2002) has commented on the elusiveness of craft in that it is almost indefinably flexible, and on the persistence of craft owing to this flexibility. However, craft is not just a chameleon. It has some unique strengths: unlike modern art, craft can be personal and cared about within use; unlike modern mass-produced design, it is associated with personal value through its relationship with the hand and the mind of the maker which have shaped it. Characteristically, where either art or design embody these qualities we talk about them as well-crafted. In his latest book on *Stuff*, Daniel Miller (2009) highlights the importance of material culture, how we make stuff and how stuff makes us, and how it helps us to live and manage out human relationships. Craft is at the centre of this relationship.

Greenhalgh, P. (ed.) (2002). The Persistence of Craft. A&C Black. Miller, D. (2009) Stuff. Polity Press.

Dr Kristina Niedderer, *Reader in Design and Applied Arts, School of Art and Design, University of Wolverhampton*

If craft is 'marginal' its job is to become 'exceptional'. Contemplative work, delivered with passion and skill, must always have a place in our cultural life. One job of craft is to make sure that it has a place in ordinary life, too, creating moments of grace and joy.

Professor Simon Olding, *Director Crafts Study Centre, University for the Creative Arts.*

Time, community, intellectual questioning, expertise, hand, technology, responsive, skill based, engaged, professional; amongst others these words represent the contemporary crafts practitioner. Globally there is a call for much needed change in approaches to consumption, community, education and culture: social responsibility. I believe that those willing to commit, dedicate and undertake within the skills associated with crafts hold an innate capacity to engage with and create opportunities in areas that will make a difference.

Nicola Perren, *Course Leader, BA(Hons) Textile Crafts, University of Huddersfield.*

Craft will have a great future! Basic 'ingredients' are:

- Sensitivity to the needs of our future world;
- An open mind to innovation in materials and machines;
- Creativity resulting in new concepts and uses;
- Treasuring our tradition
- A pleasure to make, to obtain and to use.

Tilleke Schwarz, *The Netherlands, artist, www.tillekeschwarz.com*