Editorial

Celebrating Craft

Kristina Niedderer, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK
Katherine Townsend, Nottingham Trent University, UK

Growing craft research worldwide

This issue of *Craft Research* offers cause for celebration. Having been established in 2009 and launched in 2010, this issue marks the journal's 10th volume. We therefore want to use this editorial as an opportunity to review the journey and developments of our journal over the past 10 years.

In the first editorial, we introduced craft research as an emerging field, and launched *Craft Research* in an endeavour to build the field and the understanding of the nature, content, methodologies and context of the expanding field. We started cautiously with one issue per year, but were able to increase to two issues per year from Volume 4 onwards. This was helped partly by the last national research evaluation (REF 2014) in the UK, which effectively increased research outputs and also benefitted the journal, but was subsequently followed by a rise of submissions from countries worldwide, indicative of the developing interest in, and growing strength of the field of craft research.

Over the past 10 years, we have received submissions from an increasing number and range of countries around the world. We have published submissions from 22 countries of all (inhabited) continents, including the UK, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Estonia, Germany, Switzerland, Greece, Turkey, Israel, India, Pakistan, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA, Colombia, Guatemala, Uganda and Ghana. In addition, the subject of the contributions covers further countries, including Ukraine, Cyprus, China, Korea, and South-Afrika. Of the ca. 160 contributions over the last decade, just over half have been from the UK. Further strong contributor countries with well-developed traditions in craft education, and increasingly research, include Finland, Australia, USA, Canada, Sweden and more recently India, New Zealand and Turkey. Having the aim of developing the field of craft, we are particularly proud of contributions from countries with long craft traditions but where academic education, and particularly research practices, are still developing, such as Pakistan, Ghana, Uganda, Colombia and Guatemala. We would like to think that this reflects a growing trend.

Giving a voice to craft research practice

Most importantly, all these contributions offer a rich tapestry of the practices and concerns of the field of craft. A key aim of our journal over the past 10 years has been to focus on the development of craft practice through research, and to provide a forum where the voice of the maker and their research in, through and for craft practice, can be heard. This has been reflected in the different types of contributions we have chosen to include in our journal, as well as the diverse topics that have emerged from the craft research community through the

submissions we have received. We have also produced two ‘special issues’, dedicated to *Transitions: Rethinking Textiles and Surfaces* (6.2) and *Real or Unreal: Crafting Authenticity in the Digital Age* (7.2), where each of us has supported a guest editor - an approach we are keen to explore further.

The different types of contributions include: full research papers, position papers, craft and industry reports, and the review sections: makers portrait, exhibition, book and conference reviews. In addition, the journal offers the ‘remarkable image’ section to acknowledge the visual nature of craft and highlight exceptional work. Overall, the different types of contributions were chosen to cover the distinct activities and outlets through which research into the crafts is practiced and communicated by its protagonists: from individuals to community projects as well as catering for the breadth and scope of critical making from artistic practices to industry collaborations. While we have a regular stream of submissions for research and position papers, we often still have to solicit many of the other contributions, indicating that further development and recognition of these activities and their importance in relation to research articulation is needed, which we hope *Craft Research* will help develop in the future.

A rich tapestry of craft research

The 16 issues of *Craft Research* published over the past 10 years offer a wide range of topics and concerns regarding craft generated by our diverse range of worldwide contributors. They explore craft as it is experienced, seen and practiced by its protagonists. Some views and experiences – often from different parts of the world – coalesce, some are particular to locality or circumstance, some are concerns for the wider field, some for the individual makers. Together, they demonstrate a rich tapestry of a field with great traditions, which faces a number of challenges and changes, but which more often than not uses such changes to regenerate itself, and which appears vibrant and full of opportunities for individuals and communities participating or from which craft traditions grow.

Over the years, we have tried to capture the particular flavour of each issue through the titles of our editorials, and highlighted by the cover images. The topics of the titles can loosely be grouped into three categories: *the (changing) nature of craft*, *meaning making through craft*, and *the social and cultural impact of craft*.

The (changing) nature of craft encompasses research into the history and theory of craft, about its past and current understandings, how these have evolved, different perspectives, shortcomings and new approaches. Theoretical approaches try to trace what the essential characteristics of craft are, such as authenticity, the role and value of skill, or of creativity and innovation. In all of these endeavours, the question of change surfaces regarding the adaptation of craft and its traditions to the conditions and demands of today’s knowledge and digital economies. Our contributions reveal the embodiment of human values in a continuum that spans from vernacular cultures to social innovation, and that is driven by the intrinsic need of multi-modal meaning making. Thus, our contributions span a wide range of conventional and unconventional materials, hand and digital techniques such as, glass,

ceramics, metal, textiles including quilt-making, embroidery, print, knit, wood, paper, plastics, bamboo, ostrich eggshells, and more. Equally, craft practice encompasses the whole range of object manifestations from artworks to industrial products, including sculpture, functional objects, services in the form of well-being groups and similar, fashion, interiors, and architecture. Methods and processes, too, reach from traditional to contemporary approaches, encompassing new and old technologies, new and traditional skills, such as metal patination and enamelling, digital printing and embroidery basketry and mechatronics. Whichever approach is taken, craft researchers critically question the role of craft through their making, and seek to address todays diverse global challenges, including their own and their communities' ecological, economic and social sustainability.

For example, the cover of issue 4.1, *Tracing the essence of craft*, featured Gyungju Chyon and John Stanislav Sadar's, *Little Wonder* (2009) shown in Figure 1, was selected from their corresponding article, *The dematerializing and rematerializing of design* (Chyon and Sadar 2013: 53-72). Based in Australia, the researchers suggested the need for a shift away from material consumption to one more connected with the forces and energy flows of nature through discussion of their project *Liquid Sky*. This window-based installation amplified natural light and airflow conditions, using them to animate the domestic interior through the integration of the 'materiality' of textiles with the 'immateriality' of sunlight and air movement. The need for craft to facilitate experiential, sensorial experiences and values (Pallasmaa 2005) was also reiterated through references to work that connected the maker and user to their environment.

The Glass Art of Shelley Xue, exhibited at Shanghai Museum of Glass in 2013 and reviewed by Stewart (2014) in 5.2 (*Craft innovation and creativity*), illustrated the changing nature craft through the rapidly developing studio glass movement in China. Xue's highly skilled and varied work, encapsulates her deep connections with Chinese tradition, Far Eastern philosophy and the confidence of a young maker (the first Chinese person to achieve a Western doctorate in glass) to express her own emotional experiences, as illustrated by *An Angel is Waiting* (Figure 2). In this personal, ethereal piece Xue crafted glass to resemble feathers (or fur) to mark the birth of her daughter, using "scientific glass tubing fused and slumped together with the addition of enamels…gathered together like sheaves of corn to form a pair of wings" (Stewart 2014: 277).

<Insert Figure 1>

<Insert Figure 2>

Contributions that deal with the *meaning making through craft* include research and discussions about the sensory and emotional aspects of materials and making, and of perceiving and interacting with and through craft objects. Considerations about the aesthetics and cultural meaning complement endeavours to make sense of self and of our rapidly changing world. Emotional expression as well as personal, ecological and social sustainability are at the forefront of makers' concerns in relation to new materials, new technologies and contemporary changes in society. Craft education is thus at the heart of makers' concerns about craft preserving intangible heritage, but also for nurturing a sense of

self and of community and to equip young as well as emerging makers from any strata of life to express themselves and contribute to society through their craft. Fashion, textiles and jewellery are at the forefront here, exploring identity through body adornment, dance, performance, or through creative activity to improve participants' health and wellbeing. In 2.1 *Expanding craft: Reappraising the value of skill,* Christoph Zellweger (2011) was featured in the Portrait Section, with his autobiographical *'26 stitches': Extending the definition of body adornment today*, where he explored the imaginative possibilities of jewellery, highlighting the vulnerability and frailty of the body, through the creation of 'culturally significant prosthesis'. The cover image (Figure 3) featured a piece from *The Incredibles Series* (2010) comprised of a human bone-like form cast in porcelain, coated in soft black rubber, inserted into a glass vessel made by Emma Woffenden. The *Incredibles* used exaggeration as a critical making strategy, in order to explore the spectacular and psychological aspects of body decoration and modification; pre-empting the need for 'Corporeal Design' as a new area of practice (Zwelleger 2010) as evidenced by the expanding field of research into 'crafting anatomies' (Bonington Gallery 2015). In his Portrait of the Romanian-born textile artist, Andreea Mandescru, whose work is featured on the cover of 4.2 (Figure 4) (*Craft, society and the state*), Rissanen alludes to craft as a "kind of collage, a coming together of different disciplines and fields of expertise, to propose new solutions to the challenges we currently face." (Rissanen 2012). For example, other contributions explore place and community such as changes to traditional toy production or basketry in India, or jewellery production in Africa. Yet others investigate experimental combinations of textiles and music, music instrument building – traditional or based on mechatronics, automata or collage.

<Insert Figure 3>

<Insert Figure 4>

This leads us to the third overarching concern of our contributors with the *social and cultural impact of craft.* Our contributions demonstrate clearly that perceptions of craft as backward-looking, nostalgic activity are outdated and that craft makers are strongly committed and politically involved. This permeates a range of levels and activities, from state education, as in Finland – or the increasing lack of it, as in the UK – to the portrayal of the crafts through museums, galleries and curators, which can further or hamper the development of crafts, or change the way in which crafts are perceived in public. Counter to state and institutional interventions, there is also another quieter and more subversive strand: where craft resistance emerges from within our homes, where craft develops its own social life and meanings through our uses of it and the dreams and aspirations we might attach to it. This development includes professional makers as much as communities of lay crafters, in the form of craftivism, DIY or knitting circles, community projects which – promoted through the internet – can grow to worldwide actions, such as the crocheted coral reef, which was made up of handmade elements provided by individuals worldwide, and which toured to raise awareness of the demise of our coral reefs. (Wertheim and Wertheim, 2015). Volume 5.1's focus on *Crafting international communities* celebrated the increasing reach of the journal, reiterated a cover featuring a traditional map, or 'place-story' inscribed on possum skin by

indigenous Australian makers (Figure 5). The artefact related to an article written by Janet MacGaw a researcher based in Melbourne using collaborative craft practices as a research tool to 'de-colonize' herself by exploring indigenous place making (MacGaw, 2014). An image of the UK Pavilion, *The Hive* (2015) by UK based artist, Wolfgang Buttress on the cover of 7.1 (*Craft and emotional expression: connecting through material engagement*) provided a timely reminder of environmental issues facing the global community, by highlighting the serious demise of the honey bee through a sculpture celebrating its connection to human existence (Figure 6). Winning the gold medal and many other awards at the Milan World Expo in response to the theme of 'Feeding the Planet', *The Hive,* now sited at Kew Gardens, London, demonstrates the power of craft to connect on multiple (e.g. the multidisciplinary team involved architects, scientists and musicians) and individual (international audiences of all ages engaged with the installation) levels.

<Insert Figure 5>

<Insert Figure 6>

In this way, craft endeavours can 'craft' international communities, preserve and develop intangible heritage, or empower socially disadvantaged groups. These explorations are driven or underpinned by critical theories such as feminism and queer theory, and which are not shy of taking a political position.

Issues at hand

The question about the nature of craft remains at the heart of craft research inquiry and is surfacing again in issue 10.1. Contributors seek to understand it from various angles in relation to traditional crafts, art, design, industry and sustainability.

Stevenson's review of *The Shape of Craft* by Ezra Shales (2017) is indicative that the understanding of craft, is of wider concern to the craft community. In his book, Shales focuses on what craft is (compared to many others who he says focus on what it is not) and celebrates the 'ordinariness' of craft. Also seeking to understand craft better, albeit from a maker's point of view, Eriksson, Seiler, Jarefjäll and Almevik seek to enhance reflectivity in craft relating to its temporal and spatial processes. They propose the use of time-geography notation based on Hägerstrand (1997) to enable critical reflection of craft processes as well as future planning and improvement of one's own craft. The study is supported by three case studies – forging, table-setting and gardening – illustrating three distinctly different temporal and special settings, ranging from the immediate action confined to the set work space of the smith to the extended environment and duration of gardening.

Continuing the theme of craftsmanship, Salani reviews Ceramic Art Bizen in Shizutani, held in Okayama, Japan, October 2018. The fair was Created by ceramicist Kazuya Ishida, brings together wabi-sabi ceramics and minimalist flower arrangements. In the Bizen style of ceramics, forms are left unglazed and wood-fired over long periods in *anagama* tunnel kilns. The appeal of the style lies in the acquisition of serendipitous marks left by wood ash deposits on the exposed clay. Potters apply the 'workmanship of risk' (Pye 1968; 2007) to

develop a deep understanding of kiln packing and firing processes through vessels that are shaped to strategically exploit the surface effects created by flames, embers and ashes.

Pinski, Kane and Evans report on a simultaneous approach to designing and making footwear by synthesising knowledge and skills established in the material engagement stage of handcraft weaving with the product design stage. The article considers, contextualizes and communicates how they considered the aesthetics and functionality of sandals, and how this is manifest in the final designs. The benefits of the approach include the production of zero-waste, stitch free constructions, but they also acknowledge the difficulties associated with the communication of knowledge generated through craft practice (Niedderer and Townsend, 2010), resulting in a comprehensively illustrated article that documents the tacit nature of their research process using text and visual media.

Similarly, in their craft and industry paper, Tarcan and Cox explore form and aesthetic in relation to method by juxtaposing traditional silversmithing craft and academic product design approaches. In an educational project, students join silversmithing masters for a placement in their workshops, learning traditional skills while bringing their understanding of design to the development of new products.

Esculapio reviews ‘What’s going? A discourse on fashion, design and sustainability’, organised by the Global Fashion Conference (GFC) and the Centre for Sustainable Fashion (CSF), at University of the Arts London (UAL) in late 2018, marking the tenth anniversary of both the GFC and CSF. The event provided a space for sharing deep thinking and discussion about sustainable fashion across education and industry, underlining the necessity to consider its consumption, space and value beyond the limiting definitions inherited from the dominant narrative of Western modernity (Crewe 2017). Themes of Nature and Culture and Power and Society were explored over two days, with workshops facilitating in-depth conversation and experimental research through speculation on what garments could look like if they were informed by more ecologically driven ‘local’ concerns (Fletcher and Klepp 2018).

The Modern Embroidery Movement by Cynthia Fowler (2017), reviewed by Hackney, continues to explore the relationship of craft and society. The book presents a critical overview of the work and lives of American women artists in the first half of the twentieth century, who chose to work in embroidery to develop not only novel material approaches but by doing so promote also feminist and other social and political approaches. Hackney states in here review ‘This book is a powerful reminder that, in the hands of determined, creative, thoughtful, resourceful women, embroidery is a tool for the creation of important art, self-expression, political craft, or life-improving design; it is a means, that is, to subvert lazy assumptions and forge new paths.’

Critical engagement and commemoration also surface in Dixon’s autobiographical Portrait in which he discusses his ceramics-based practice from studio potter to site specific installation. His work with the medium of clay has encompassed numerous hand, casting and surface treatments, including an extensive investigation into printed imagery, applied as visual narrative and political commentary to ceramics. One of his most significant pieces, *Resonate*, brought together mud, memory and materiality in the form of a monumental clay head, made

for the British Ceramics Biennial in 2015. Built from two tons of Staffordshire Etruria Marl clay to commemorate the 5,406 soldiers of the North Staffordshire Regiment killed in World War 1, the sculpture was based on the head of the goddess Nike. Visitors were invited to participate in the installation by attaching white bone china flowers to the scaffolding structure and add tags featuring their own hand-written thoughts, tributes and memories to those lost in the wars.

Future & Thanks

Craft Research is celebrating its role in building craft and the craft research community in all its diversity over the past 10 years. In particular we are proud to help grow the craft research community internationally. Inevitably, in this process, change has to be embraced, and some obstacles have to be overcome. For instance, we are well aware that we are curating this journal from a Western understanding of craft and of academic and research traditions. This has influenced the system, format, and standards we have set and operate in, and which can create barriers for contributors from other traditions. So does language, both the English language and the academic language requirements, which we expect contributors to adopt.

One of the ways we have tried to overcome these obstacles is to work closely with contributors to help develop their contributions for the format and quality we expect for the journal in line with the international academic standards of other journals in the field. This is not a rigid process, but rather it is a sharing, mutual understanding and developing a common language in the face of a common aim. This has made our editing duties often time consuming. This, together with the as yet limited number of submissions received, is the reason for why *Craft Research* has continued to publish two issues per year for now. We hope that over the next 10 years, and with future developments, we may be able to grow the international craft research community and the journal further.

In order to grow the global craft research community, we will continue to reach out and be as inclusive as possible of any issues and topics from any part of the globe. Intellect, as our publisher, offers concessions and free access to many countries with less well-established support systems, which helps us realise our aim. In addition to the traditional publication route, Intellect now also offer the ‘open access’ option to contributors for the publications. By way of change to a more established journal, we intend to update to a modern online-systems-based submission process later this year. Nevertheless, we will aim to keep the process as open and personal as possible to ensure that we continue to support our contributors, and we invite craft researchers from around the world to get in touch to help with and solicit our various contributions, including special issues, reports, reviews and announcements.

At this point, we want to express our special thanks to the many people who have helped us over the past decade to set up and grow *Craft Research*. We wish to thank all our contributors, as well as those authors whose submissions we regrettably had to turn away. Our gratitude also extends to all our advisors as well as to our reviewers for their excellent work. Their constructive advice and feedback to authors is an essential part in fulfilling the developmental role of the journal and in advancing the field. We further wish to thank

Intellect Publishers for their amazing and unwavering support for our journal, in particular our journal's manager, Bethan Ball, and her team.

Kristina Niedderer and Katherine Townsend

February 2019

References

Bonington Gallery (2015). *Crafting Anatomies: Material, Performance, Identity*, Exhibition 7 January- 4 February, Symposium 30 January, Nottingham Trent University, UK.

Crewe, L. (2017). *The Geographies of Fashion: Consumption, Space and Value*, New York and London: Bloomsbury.

Fletcher, K. and Grimstad Klepp, I. (2018). Editorial, *Fashion Practice*, 10 (2), Special Issue: *Fashion and Localism*, pp. 133-138.

Fowler, C. (2018). *The Modern Embroidery Movement.* London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Chyon, G. and Sadar, J. S. (2013). The dematerializing and rematerializing of design, *Craft Research*, 4 (1), pp. 53–72, doi: 10.1386/crre.4.1.53_1

Hägerstrand, T. (1997). Diorama, path and project, in D. N. Livingstone, R. Alisdair and J. A. Agnew (eds), *Human Geography: An Essential Anthology*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 650-674.

McGaw, J. (2014), Mapping "Place" in Southeast Australia: Crafting a possum skin cloak, *Craft Research*, 5 (1), pp. 11–33, doi: 10.1386/crre.5.1.11_1

Niedderer, K. and Townsend, K., (2014). Designing Craft Research: joining emotion and knowledge, *The Design Journal*, 17 (4), pp. 624-647. ISSN 1460-6925

Pallasmaa, J. (2012). *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, 3rd Edition, New Jersey: Wiley and Sons.

Pye, D. (2007). *The Nature and Workmanship of Risk,* New York: Herbert Press.

Rissanen, T. (2012). 'Inlaid fantasies: The textiles of Andreea Mandrescu', *Craft Research*, 4.2, pp.265-275.

Shales, E. (2017). *The Shape of Craft.* London: Reaktion Books.

Stewart, M. (2014) Review of FUSION: The Glass Art of Shelley Xue (2013), Shanghai Museum of Glass, p/bk catalogue, 47 pp., *Craft Research*, 5.2, pp. 271-280.

Wertheim, M. and Wertheim, L. (2015). *Crochet Coral Reef.* Los Angeles, CA: Institute for Figuring.

Zellweger, C. (2010). Upgrade. Perspectives in Corporeal Design, in M. Wiedmer and S. Grand (eds.) *Negotiating Futures – Design Fiction. 6th Swiss Design Network Conference*, Basel, 28-30 October, 2008, Basel: SDN, p.213.

Zellweger, C. (2011). '26 stitches': Extending the definition of body adornment today, *Craft Research* 2, pp. 151–160, doi: 10.1386/crre.2.151_4

Contributor details

Kristina Niedderer (Ph.D., MA [RCA]) is Professor of Design at Manchester Metropolitan University. Previously, she worked at the University of Wolverhampton (2007-2018). She was originally apprenticed and worked as a goldsmith and silversmith in Germany. She then trained as a designer and design researcher in the United Kingdom. Niedderer's research focuses on the role of design to engender mindful interaction and behaviour change. She leads the European project 'Designing for People with Dementia', MSCA grant agreement No 691001.

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

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

Web address: http://www.niedderer.org

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8188-6338

Katherine Townsend (Ph.D.) is reader in fashion and textile crafts in the School of Art & Design at Nottingham Trent University. She is Course Leader for MA Applied Design Futures and leads the Digital Craft and Embodied Knowledge research cluster. Following a career as a practising designer and lecturer in the fashion and textile industry, she gained a practice-led Ph.D. in 2004, 'Transforming shape', which explored the integration of hand and digital technology to design advanced 3D printed fashion and textile concepts. Her current research is focused on how digital craft is informed by experiential knowledge of established practices and technologies.

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

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

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2212-2511

Figures

Figure 1: Chyon, G. and Sadar, J.S. (2009). *Little Wonder*. Liquid Sky installed at the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery. Photography: Gary Annett. © Little Wonder.

Figure 2: Gather series 'An Angel is Waiting', 2012, FUSION (09). © Shelly Xue.

Figure 3: Christoph Zellweger (2010). from the *Incredibles* series, detail, © Zellweger.

Figure 4: Andreea Mandrescu (2011). *Inlaid Skin 1*. © Studio Andreea Mandrescu.

Figure 5: Vicki Couzens (2009). *prangawan pootpakyooyano yoowa*. A possum skin cloak about burial and funeral rites and practices made for the Stony Rises Project, a NETS Victoria Touring Exhibition developed by the RMIT Design Research Institute. Curators: Lisa Byrne, Professor Harriet Edquist and Associate Professor Laurene Vaughan. © Vicki Couzens. Photograph: Margund Sallowsky – RMIT University.

Figure 6: Wolfgang Buttress (2015). *Underneath the UK Pavilion Hive*, Courtesy of UKTI, Photographer Credit – Hufton+Crow 2015.