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EDITORIAL

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Craft between tradition and adaptation

Craft is manifold, evidencing an essential human need to make. This last, exceptional year has shown this as never before. The COVID-19 pandemic and repeated lockdowns have encouraged people to turn to crafts of various kinds and for numerous reasons, but all appear to be linked to the satisfaction of creating something tangible and sometimes lasting.

The pandemic has focused craft in three particular areas: health and wellbeing, whether as a concern for oneself or others, DIY, and online and digital making. These three strands are not exclusive to each other but often closely intertwined.

Health and wellbeing has understandably been at the forefront of people's minds and lives over the last year, both in terms of promoting and maintaining personal mental and physical health. The former has been expressed by many people turning to crafts during the lockdown. Whether this be sewing, stitching, knitting or other home crafts, hobbies and activities undertaken in sheds, or practical house repairs and improvements, from doing up interiors to extensions and gardening.

One characteristic, which all these activities seem to share, is their productivity and the satisfaction people derive from them, including a sense of self-value, ownership and control, which has been much needed as an antidote to the feelings of helplessness many people have experienced in the face of the unfolding pandemic. Another aspect of this theme is the focus and calmness that craft can instil due to the concentration required for the often repetitive, fiddly and painstaking work but also the space for the maker's imagination to wander and process things, akin to mindfulness, allowing the mind to settle as the work progresses (Kenning, 2015).

A second health related aspect is closely linked to the theme of DIY craft, such as the making of masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE) which has played an important part in the pandemic. Here home crafters played a key role by stepping in when the professional health system failed to provide. Many thousands of people around the world cut and sewed masks and scrubs to support frontline staff putting their lives on the line to save and serve others, as well as making and sharing things to help those in need, especially vulnerable people. Home crafters followed and developed DIY patterns and sourced suitable textiles and made PPE, supporting healthcare workers while calling out the shortcomings of 'political power and globalised production through networked craft action' (von Busch, 2010). Hackspaces, universities and fashion companies also provided access to 3D printing, science labs and garment manufacturing technology, contributing at pace to help mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

This activity leads us to the third theme of this editorial: online and digital making. Sharing and discussing the problems and the processes of making in online forums enabled established and new makers - inspired by seeing others work and finding themselves with time to try things out – to create clothing, accessories, toys, artefacts *and* PPE. The dissemination of multiple forms of professional and particularly home-practiced crafts allowed makers to pool their resources and develop knowhow by drawing upon one's own and other's knowledge and skills, taking calculated risks in the preparation and production of objects (Pye, 2007 [1968]). It is notable at a time of unprecedented risk that members of the global craft community eschewed the competitive capitalist system and growth-based production, in favour of a gift economy through the exchange of tangible and intangible things, such as homemade masks or the offer of physical or psychological support.

Two articles by Christine Guy Schnittka and by Addie Martindale, Charity Armstead and Ellen McKinney offer a glimpse into the world of mask making, its motivations and benefits to people involved, as well as the reaction of and relationship with the recipients of such work, revealing the flexibility of craft to adapt to emerging situations. Schnittka's article highlights the benefits of 'philanthropic crafting' through interviews with 27 older adults (aged 60-87) who sewed face masks for hospitals and healthcare centres. Identified as some of the most vulnerable to the effects of the COVID-19 virus, in-depth analysis of the group's pragmatic, altruistic approach strongly evidences the role of textile crafts as 'a source of eudaimonic well-being' (Pöllänen and Weissmann-Hanski, 2020) or put directly, a way of 'keeping sane' by taking things into one's own hands (Gandolfo and Grace, 2009). In 'I'm not a doctor but I can sew a mask' Martindale et al. adopt a netnographic approach to identify the same crafting phenomenon, collating and analysing Instagram hashtags that conveyed home sewers feelings associated with adapting their practice to answer the 'call to action'.

In the first of two Craft and Industry Reports, Marie Segares focuses on 'crochet microentrepreneurs and technology' through a collective case study of five artisans. As with many artisanal crafts, 'crochet', cannot easily be replicated digitally. However, the use of online platforms to disseminate patterns, instructions and workshops is impacting business and product innovations. And while the supportive online ecosystem has made the tradition of 'women's homeworking' (Luckman, 2015) more viable, costs and perceptions of self-efficacy remain barriers to the adoption of new technology. In the second report, Monica Sklar, Katherine Hill McIntyre and Sharon Autry, share a project aimed at conserving cultural craft heritage by 'digitizing a traditional Syrian clothing collection.' The research involves the digital transformation of an assemblage of 100 dress artifacts into a museum-quality, publicly accessible archive and examines the issues faced by private collections holding rare, undocumented items but lacking the funds to exhibit them.

Wei Li and Yiping Liu's paper disseminates two unique Chinese folk-art traditions of 'weaving and dyeing practiced by the Yi people of Meigu Liangshan'. Drawing on field research, the authors explore the crafting process and cultural significance of representative wool garments, the Pizhan and Caerwa, a cape and shawl handwoven and felted, then coloured with natural dyes (Wang and Lv, 2018). The article reinforces the threat to traditional craft communities, including the Yi, a topic debated at a webinar hosted by Fashion Revolution (2021) which asked: 'how do indigenous communities protect their textile cultural expressions and conserve biodiversity?'

Wuthigrai Siriphon's practice as a textile designer and skilled craftsperson is reviewed in Peter Oakley's Portrait which highlights his ground-breaking interpretations of traditional

weaving styles of Thailand, incorporating symbolic uses of motifs, colour and embellishment. In 2016 Wuthigrai became an apprentice under the tutelage of a Master Weaver and expert in supplementary weft weaving techniques typical to the region of Ban Rai, informing his doctoral thesis: *Revealing Localised Design Practice in Thai Hand Weaving* (Sirphon 2019). Geetu Sachdev's paper reflects on the traditional use of 'plants in Indian craft practice as a pedagogical resource'. Plants act as inspiration, metaphor and material within historical and contemporary Indian crafts, reinforced by the centrality of agriculture and religion within living cultural traditions (Sethi, 2019). The paper hints at the wider implications of the climate crisis, our dependence on the natural world but increasing lack of botanical literacy and plant blindness in craft education which the author's research seeks to address.

In 'crafticulation as a method of knowledge creation', Henna Lahti and Päivi Fernström reference the term's use at the Nordfo education conference as: '(Craft + articulation); - how the culture of craft is constantly made, unmade, and remade' (Gulliksen 2009: 199). They proceed to analyse case studies of craft students practice, identifying the different forms of that crafticulation can take. Findings suggest that many use crafticulation for demonstrating concepts by employing tactile augmentations and written reflections to communicate and deepen their knowledge and experience of making (Groth, Mäkelä, and Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, 2015; Hébert, 2015). Ideas around the 'textility of making' (Ingolds, 2009) and the reflexivity of the maker are also central to *Crafting Anatomies: Archives, Dialogues, Fabrications*, edited by Katherine Townsend, Rhian Solomon and Amanda Briggs-Goode (2020), reviewed by Alison Slater. The book showcases the work of twelve individuals/groups of researcher practitioners, exposing the "relationships makers have with the fabric of, and for the body" and building on Adamson's (2019) transdisciplinary definition of craft as concerning the actions and concepts of practitioners who use the body 'as a form of "material intelligence"' (Townsend, Solomon and Briggs-Goode, 2020: 2-3).

The crafts of basketry, bags and ceramics are further areas where tradition meets contemporary culture. Greta Bertram has reviewed the new book *The Material Culture of Basketry: Practice, Skill and Embodied Knowledge* by Stephanie Bunn and Victoria Mitchell (2021), which 'explores how baskets-in-the-making can tell us about our past, build our present and inform our future' according to Bertram. Similarly in the Exhibition Review of *Bags: Inside Out*, reviewed by Kimberley Chandler, she observes that it provides 'evidence [of] the sheer scope and agility of craft that allows for this diversity of making.' The review of Greenhalgh's new book, *Ceramic, Art and Civilisation*, by Graham McLaren highlights the publication's sweeping overview of ceramics which reveals the staggering scale and richness of the uses of ceramics, its artistic potential and the adaptations it has undergone over the centuries.

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We are delighted to present Volume 12.2 of *Craft Research* which contains some additional articles, such as two Craft and Industry Reports and three Book Reviews. As always, many people have been involved in the realization of this issue. We wish to thank all our contributors, and those authors whose submissions we regrettably had to turn away. Our gratitude also extends to all our advisors and to our reviewers for their excellent work. Their constructive advice and feedback to authors is an essential part in fulfilling the developmental role of the journal and in advancing the field. This comprehensive issue is partly a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent worldwide lockdowns, during which time we have received more submissions than ever, so have tried to accommodate as many as is viable.

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