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EDITORIAL

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Shifting craft's horizon: From individual makers to post-anthropocentric models of co-production

Until recently, craft has perhaps been associated most with the actions of a sole artisan or artist maker, involving material focused, skilled practice to create objects that are both aesthetic and useful. In Volume 14.1 we feature individual makers and researchers, alongside groups, who explore both aspects; materials and making from new perspectives and socially engaged, co-production to establish environment-centred (ref) craft connections, reflecting upon and shifting the field into new territory.

The articles in 14.1 support a tangible shift in makers' perceptions of materials and making engendered by the recognition of materiality as a medium for creative development, which in turn entails a more fluid relationship and response to sourcing and working with material. Rather than trying to control materials and their behaviours absolutely, through a more intimate understanding of their characteristics, a synthesis or togetherness emerges between the maker and the matter at hand whereby 'happy accidents' inform creative processes and outcomes rather than being designed out. In many ways this is not an altogether new approach, but draws on Asian traditions, such as Taoism or Zen philosophies, where the imperfect is regarded as an essential expression of the beauty of life (Lao-Tzu, 1937).

Nigel Ash and Patricia Mato-Mora both explore this expanded approach to materiality through different practices. Mato-Mora discusses Miquel Barceló's Ceramic installation in the Cathedral of Palma de Majorca. She uses a Taoist lens (Lao-Tzu, 1937), where 'human organisms and "nature" are understood to be a single integral unity' (Mato-Mora), to understand and explain Barceló's expressive approach to material manipulation and the intimacy it conveys. Despite coming from a different and Western perspective, Ash arrives at similar conclusions in his Position Paper when considering post-anthropocentric models of making. He criticises existing methodologies for understanding 'entanglements with non-human agencies as a prerequisite of post-anthropocentric and post-humanist states of being' and serendipity for their 'focus on anthropocentric outcomes and human agency'. Instead, he proposes that there should be an equal relationship and level of agency between the maker and the material.

This thinking is juxtaposed by a beautifully detailed account of the role of model making in Parisian haute couture jewellery, where precision is key. Told from her own perspective as an apprentice in the sector, Joséphine de Staël explains that the training models act as a lynchpin that links Parisian fine jewellery within and across generations and allows individual traditions to become identifiable with its locus of origin – Paris – in the light of dominant global markets. Also working hands-on with traditions, Asawinee Wangjing's article explores the ancient glass art practices of Myanmar to learn from and adapt them for contemporary craft making. The exploration rediscovers a range of different techniques, many of which had long been forgotten, and which are shown in lavish detail. The aim of the study is

to promote conservation and inform contemporary glass education, to open-up new creative pathways for contemporary glass artists. The topic of traditional artisanal craft is expanded by González-Martín and colleagues with considerations of gender stereotypes in the Spanish artisan sector. The authors consider gender balance and polarisation in twelve different categories, and their causes. Analysis of the study data indicates that gendered, stereotypical roles are inherited from historically assigned divisions of labour based on the craft and the prerequisite materials with which the artisans work.

Another, palpable shift in making practices can be seen in the move towards socially informed and engaged practices. These often seek to address issues of authenticity, empowerment or citizenship through the involvement of communities to give them a voice, by involving them in the decision-making and development of new community-based schemes. Such schemes can be manifold and may concern environmental protection and regeneration, health and wellbeing benefits, or community-building and democratisation. This expanding area of craft practice is exemplified by two contributions in this issue.

In *Socially Valid Tools*, Helena Hanssen and Otto von Busch report on an ongoing research project, *Transforming the City for Play (2021-2024)*. The article challenges the role of studio crafts and Do-It-Yourself (DIY) as solitary practices, by exploring the notion of co-craft, performed by groups of participants who support and rely on each other to create ‘socially valid designs’. The project questions the playground as a dedicated and isolated space for children to play, by enacting the ideas of William Coperthwaite (2007) who believed craft could embody a sociality that practices democracy and that we must not limit it to the evaluation of form or utility, but extend its value beyond the object, into the social and civic realm. The action-based methodology enables participants to act as ‘collaborative crafters’ (Hansson 2021: 83-84) in the rural environment, with the aim of encouraging social intervention in urban development and the ‘design of everyday life’ (Shove, 2007). In Alice Kettle’s self-portrait, in which she reflects on her work, she observes that her aim is to ‘deconstruct ideas of power, powerlessness and territorialisation through stitch, creating human connectivity through cross-cultural, trans-national and socially engaged activities to empower the marginalised, to link communities and influence issues of social justice.’ She does so through bringing together marginalised communities, groups of refugees and those seeking asylum, often women, to use her practice to create solidarity as well as commentary on political issues and situations, a nod to von Busch’s (2022) conceptualisation of material activism as ‘making trouble’.

Kettle also contributes a book review of *Feminist Subjectivities in Fiber Art and Craft: Shadows of Affect* by John Corso-Esquivel (2021), reinforcing themes raised in her own work such as the emerging discourse around the affective sensations of fiber art, its primacy of materiality and making which engage with emotion, desire, and wonder through cooperative and responsive forms and feelings. Fiber Art is also the focus of Ye Zheng’s Exhibition Review of *A Thread, Levitated and Hovering*, staged at The 4th Hangzhou Triennial of Fiber Art, 2022. Zheng reflects on textile craft installations fabricated from natural fibres and discarded manmade substrates which respond to and give glimmers of hope beyond a state of ‘permacrisis’ influenced by global economic networks (Farrell and Newman, 2019).

Stephen Knott’s review of *The Pursuit of Pleasurable Work: Craftwork in Twenty-First Century England* by Trevor H. J. Marchand (2021) which extends from the authors’ experiential craft knowledge of fine woodworking learnt at the Building Crafts College in Stratford, London, into a polemic that seeks to advance craft’s position in the world. Natalie Haskell’s review of *Industrial Craft in Australia: Oral Histories of Creativity and Survival* by Jesse Adams Stein (2021) considers

the somewhat overlooked role of the industrial craftsperson in the manufacturing process and showcases some of the skilled tradespeople involved in manufacturing, from both historical and contemporary perspectives.

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