Doing and Talking: The value of video interviewing for researching and theorizing craft

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Abstract
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This thesis delineates a problem with researching and theorizing about craft. It argues that traditional epistemologies and academic conventions have not given sufficient recognition or value to the epistemologies and lived experiences of craft practitioners, and that they have served to obscure the centrality of practice to meaning. Consequently, there is a need to make craft practice and practitioners accounts more accessible to researchers. It proposes and tests a method using video recordings of practitioners working and interviews with practitioners in the loci of their practice as a tool, which, it is contended, provides a rich source of data about practice so that theory can be generated in a grounded way from practice.

It is argued that the idea of 'the crafts' is a late twentieth-century construct, but it has its roots in an ideological and intellectual tradition, expressed in the writing of the nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts movement. That writing was primarily concerned with the organisation and ownership of labour, with the moral and social purpose of art, and with creativity, given expression through the making process.

Since the 1970s, we have seen the emergence of a legitimizing infrastructure for 'the crafts' as a category, separate from but relating to art and design. The institutional craft world attempted to distance itself from Arts and Crafts ideology and from associations with the rural and the traditional. A key feature of the institutional discourse has been attempts to establish a definition of 'craft' as a singular thing within the sphere of its influence.

The thesis argues that the problematic relationship between theory and practice stems partly from this disjunction between the institutional craft world and the ideological and intellectual heritage of William Morris and his followers. It demonstrates that data gathered using the method proposed could make a positive contribution to emergent discourses on craft as experience.

Within the complexity of the data gathered using the proposed method, concepts and patterns are consistently observed. The subjects are seen to be engaged in self-determined activities which are nevertheless socially situated. They are using knowledge that is embodied and enacted, and which evolves through the practice. The data shifts the focus of critical attention from the objects that are being produced and onto the practice itself. This research method makes craft practices available to the researcher and opens up a critical focus on crafting as intrinsically rewarding activities that are facilitated by learned, embodied competence, based in shared values and standards.

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Biographical Preface

Before introducing the thesis it is appropriate to outline my background, declare my personal interest, and elucidate my position in relation to the crafts.

Because the orientation of my research, which uses filmed interviews as a way of gathering data about craft practice, is phenomenological and ethnographic, it is important to acknowledge the centrality of my own subjective experience to the study. The filmed interviews that are central to my research are a collaborative process in which meaning is constructed through a dialogue (Paget, 1983), in which I am an active participant. Further, my experience places me within a community of shared interest with the subjects, in which I am regarded as an empathetic 'fellow traveller', so that the subject has confidence in my capacity to understand and read the data. It is important not just for me to be aware of this in conducting the research, but also for anybody subsequently using the data for research purposes to be aware of the context in which the interviews are performed, and to take account of to the role that I share with the subject in the construction of the data (Mishler, 1999).

I originally trained as a furniture maker and practiced in that craft for 20 years. I have a view of and position on the crafts which is informed by that experience, but equally pertinent is that the interview is a dialogue between peers. My status as an active participant in the field facilitated the agreement of the subjects in taking part, and my interests and insights contribute to the discourse. This approach has sometimes been described as 'insider-ethnography' or 'auto-ethnography' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

My first encounter with craft was through my father-in-law, the stone carver and letter cutter, Bryant Fedden. Bryant's work demonstrated very fine workmanship. His letterforms were exact and precisely executed, but they also had a lightness, or "bounce" as he called it, that contributed to a lovely sense of balance and harmony. This was partly achieved by carving directly, with minimal drawing out, so that the letters were realised from the start as carved 3-dimensional forms. He exemplified a certain notion of craft as skilful making,

but what was most attractive about the model of craft that he represented to me was its holistic nature. The standard that he aspired to in his carving reflected an aspiration towards integrity in the rest of his life. His workshop was close to the house, and was the focal point for a network of relationships: familial, social, and business. Bryant's practice was at the centre of a lifestyle that was socially and politically engaged, in which work and home, aesthetics and politics, a reflective interior life, and an outward-looking sense of community were part of a whole. He aspired to live in a world of his own making. It seemed both intellectual and practical. From the start then, I had an assumption that craft is not a genre of object but a practice underpinned by ideas, set within a continuum. The focus of these ideas was only partly on aesthetics. Central to my understanding of craft practice were ideas about non-alienated labour and the lived experience of the practitioner. It was only later that I came to frame this understanding within the writings of William Morris, Thomas Carlyle, Karl Marx, et al.

Having studied and worked for some years for a London-based designer, I eventually established a group workshop with Bryant in the Forest of Dean. We made work together and separately, and other people came to assist us and to make their own work.

My experience of being a furniture maker often challenged aspects of my earlier conception of what it meant to be a craftsperson, but I retained a strong sense of craft as an individually rewarding, socially useful practice.

The initial impetus for this study grew out of my research for my MA degree, completed in 2002. I wanted to use the MA as an opportunity to review what was important to me about being a craftsperson and to formalize a theoretical basis for my practice. In the course of my studies I became more aware of contemporary critical debate around the crafts. Although these debates had been on-going since the 1960s, they had been given particular momentum from the mid-1990s by a series of conferences and the publication of their proceedings. Subsequent years had seen a rapid growth in writing about craft, which has continued to the present day. Whilst, in a general sense, this

seemed to be a good thing, I struggled to relate my own practice and experience to this new wave of writing. The focus of critical interest seemed to be on the object – not on its formal or material qualities but as a carrier of meaning or 'content'. Whilst I aspired to produce work that was aesthetically interesting, when I think of our workshop I think more about our mode of working: the process of settling into work at the start of the day; the mindfulness and close attention to the present moment; the cycle of work and shared mealtimes; conversations; collaborations; the proximity to the house and garden; my children running in and out in the summer. I think of it as a focal point, which drew people to it and from which we worked outwards to engage with the world – through our making, of course, but also in ways that were facilitated by our work. This kind of experience apparently fell outside of the critical attention of the new writing.

This research, then, was originally conceived as a way of addressing a *felt* sense of disjunction between practice and theory, between contemporary craft theory and experience. This led me towards seeking to articulate and understand a perceived problem and to consider ways of shifting the critical focus towards the experience of crafting.

> A primary task is thus imposed upon one who undertakes to write upon the philosophy of the fine arts. This task is to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience.

(Dewey, 1980, p.3)

Introduction

The aim of this research is to delineate and address a problem with researching and theorizing about craft. It argues that traditional epistemologies and academic conventions have not given sufficient recognition or value to the epistemologies and lived experiences of craft practitioners, and that they have served to obscure the centrality of practice to meaning. Following on from this, it is proposed that research tools and strategies are needed in order to produce data about practice. It proposes and explores a method, using digital video, for gathering data relating to craft practice, so that craft practice can be better understood and so that theory can be developed that is grounded in the experience of craft practice. The method foregrounds the practice, making it visible and recording practitioners own accounts of their practice in their own words.

The intention is not to develop a single theory of craft. Rather, it is to argue that craft is best understood not as a category of object, or a discrete set of practices, but as a kind of experience. Central to the thesis is the assertion that if we are to understand the nature of the experience then it has to be made available to the researcher, student, critic, curator and theorist.

The thesis argues that a tension exists between currently dominant approaches to critical theory and craft practice and that while these approaches lend themselves to the interpretation of aesthetic objects, they have disregarded craft practice (the terms 'crafting' or 'craft making' are used throughout the thesis as a more useful and exact term than 'the crafts') as a primary source of critical interest. The thesis traces the evolution of this problem through a review of relevant literature, ascribing it to a number of factors: changes in Higher Education since the 1960s that saw art schools incorporated into universities and a greater emphasis on academic content in art school education; developments in state support for the professionalization of craft practices; an intellectual climate that challenged ideas of standards and meanings and, partly linked to these factors, institutional and professional anxiety about the status of the crafts in relation to more clearly defined art and design practices.

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The crafts, as a field, are characterized by diversity and by internal dispute regarding identity (Dormer, 1997: Harrod, 1999). At one and the same time the term 'craft' has come to encompass characteristics that are sometimes contradictory. It can be a particular set of practices and a mode of working that might be applied to a broad range of practices; amateur and professional; 'traditional' and unchanging in its materials and methods, or part of an avant-garde art world; tied to absolute aesthetics or fixated on 'innovation'. This uncertain identity is a late twentieth-century construct that has accrued over time. 'The contemporary crafts' are generally recognized as having some foundations in the theoretical and proselytizing writings of William Morris and his followers in Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The theoretical basis for the Arts and Crafts movement was social-utopian, a response to the products and working practices of industrial capitalism and to other forces that were shaping the modern world in the nineteenth century (Naylor, 1971 p.7). The thesis argues that aesthetics were important to Morris in so far as they were integrated into a wider radical philosophy. Broadly speaking, this philosophy was concerned with the integration of art with everyday life; with truth to materials and 'honesty' in design and construction; with the belief that fundamental to the well-being of society is the fulfilment of its members through meaningful, creative work, and that this work should be organised in a humane manner. Craft was proposed as an alternative to the self-absorption of the Romantic artist on the one hand, and to the dehumanizing effects of industrial mass production on the other. It is this understanding of craft, which emphasizes the value of the subjective experience of craft practice and the impact of the practice of craft on the whole of society, and which does not detach these aspects from its products, that make the Arts and Crafts movement of particular relevance to this study.

In the early twentieth century Arts and Crafts as a movement began to fragment (Greenhalgh, 1997, p.36). The ideal of craft making as offering a viable collective response to the problems of modern industrial capitalism was replaced by an individualist search for an alternative, romantic, anti-industrial, lifestyle, typified by Bernard Leach; the revolutionary socialism of Morris was

translated into a more diffuse dissention. Meanwhile, many of the utopian, radical principles of the Arts and Crafts movement were pursued by Modernist pioneers and adapted to industrial design.

Throughout the twentieth century, writers such as Edward Lucie-Smith, Eric Gill, Bernard Leach and David Pye continued to add to the substantial body of literature. However, these were exceptions, and there was a general dearth of critical and theoretical writing on craft for most of the twentieth century, until the 1970s.

During this period, in the absence of a developed critical/theoretical discourse, craft came to be characterized as a repository of reactionary and relative values, and as a source of individual solace - a retreat from modernity. Some commentators, such as Pevsner (1960), acknowledged the importance of Morris to subsequent design movements whilst describing this characterization as inherent in what they saw as the Arts and Crafts movement's backward-looking philosophy. The incisiveness of its social critique was undermined, in their view, by the popularity of its products amongst the bourgeoisie. Pevsner creates a narrative wherein Modernism supersedes a flawed Arts and Crafts movement, which is a neat and conventional art-historical construct. However, others, such as E.P. Thompson (1976), in *William Morris: From Romantic to Revolutionary,* and Raymond Williams (1962), in *Culture and Society*, offer a more nuanced account in which Arts and Crafts is depicted as forward looking and optimistic, and in which Morris looks backwards in order to learn the lessons of history when shaping a progressive vision of the future.

This thesis argues that Arts and Crafts thinking was more or less coherent, rational and, in some respects, robust. It argues that, contrary to Pevsner's construct, there is continuity between Arts and Crafts and Modernist thinking, and that both could be seen as incomplete projects within the larger project of modernity.

The thesis identifies that since the 1970s we have seen the emergence of a legitimizing infrastructure for 'the crafts' as a category of object, separate from

but relating to art and design. It argues that this infrastructure, which includes the institutions such as the Crafts Council, universities, museums and galleries, as well as writers, critics and curators, has sought to position 'the crafts' within the contemporary art world. Whilst craft as a broad concept has been best understood within wider cultural contexts, this was an attempt to distance them from the ideological positions of the Arts and Crafts movement and from its associations with the rural and the traditional, and to recontextualize craft within a much narrower framework.

The thesis draws on the work of the sociologists Howard Becker (1982) and Pierre Bourdieu (1984) to provide a framework for understanding the process of institutionalization. Becker and Bourdieu are concerned with the socially constructed nature of culture. As they both deal with hierarchies in cultural production, they are useful in trying to understand movements and debates within the crafts. Bourdieu is concerned with the role that culture plays in legitimizing the power and status of economically dominant social groups; Becker provides an analysis of the social factors that determine the level of public acceptance of different forms of cultural expression, and explores the institutional structures and mechanisms by which hierarchies are maintained in the artworld. Both are concerned with establishing how and why some things are accepted as art, whilst others are excluded. Following Becker, the thesis refers to 'the crafts' institutional infrastructure as 'the craft world'.

After the relative absence of public critical discourse on craft during most of the twentieth century, a new wave of critical and theoretical writing and debate was vital to the process of institutionalisation. There has been a particular resurgence since the mid-1990s, when a series of academic conferences and related publications, supported by the Crafts Council, gave new momentum to debates about craft. A key feature of this new writing has been attempts to establish a definition of 'the crafts' (for example: Greenhalgh, 2002, pp.18-28), as a singular thing within the sphere of influence of the craft world.

Integral to, and reinforcing this institutionalizing tendency were developments in higher education, which saw schools of art being absorbed into the new

universities and the subsequent development of a research culture in craft disciplines. Models of research appropriate to art, design and craft still occupy contested territory and there is some debate around what, precisely, 'research' in these fields actually is (Scrivener, 2000). Traditional epistemologies and research methods have not always had an easy fit with practice-based disciplines. Whilst there has been serious and creative thinking about methodology (Candlin, 2001), and post modernism and post structuralism have led to re-evaluations of what constitutes knowledge and how knowledge can be transferred or communicated, important issues about the interface between knowledge and practice remain unresolved. The dominant mode of representing knowledge and of presenting and disseminating research is still the written or spoken word; 'meaning' remains something that is associated with language (Johnson, 1987, p.1; Kress, 1999a, p.159).

As 'the crafts' re-engaged with theory, without a continuous tradition of critical discourse, anxious about identity and status, separated from a strictly functional purpose, and ambivalent about ideological positions, they sought alignment with fine art discourse. Conventions of critical writing from fine art, and inherited perceptions of what criticism/theory should be, were adopted (Koplos, 2002).

One legitimizing convention that can be observed is the idea of a canon of key figures and important objects (Fearnie, 1995). Another conventional assumption has been that a work of art is its content (Sontag, 1961), and the principal interest in the art object is as a carrier of literary meaning. This lends itself to a mode of critical enquiry that is suited to interpreting aesthetic objects rather than to understanding craft as a human activity set within a dynamic totality, where the object may be regarded as only one element in that totality. James Elkins (2009, p.128) argues that, as a result, studio art production and university life are incommensurable with each other. It might be argued that this was a particular problem for craft, which can be seen as exemplifying tacit, embodied, and procedural or process knowledge as opposed to the dominant conceptual/propositional knowledge paradigm.

In the process of institutionalization, criticism and theory became vital to the reception of craft. However, there was a poor fit between the theoretical legacy of Arts and Crafts, which had placed the emphasis on the practice of crafting, and the new institutional paradigm, which was primarily concerned with the interpretation of the 'craft' product. The thesis contends that this led to a limited, cloistered discourse between a small number of makers, whose work had evolved, through the institutional craft world, so that it could more easily be written or talked about within the critical and theoretical conventions of that world. Text becomes the dominant medium and theory prefigures practice. The thesis argues that not only did this discourse exclude many more makers, but that it failed to recognize or value craft as an experience or as a form of knowledge making. Furthermore, if 'the crafts' sought to be understood in the same terms as art objects, then even critics and theorists who had built their own reputations within the craft world began to question whether it existed as a separate field at all (Hill, 2002a: Adamson, 2013). The critical eye looked for 'meaning' and was blind to the qualities that made crafting distinctive and meaningful. The critical tongue meanwhile was incapable of expressing the meaning of craft making (Carter, 2004, p.xi). The language of academic and critical discourse seemed strange and alienating to most people outside of the craft world, including most practitioners (Carter, 2004, p.xii).

Central to the thesis is the need to resolve this problem. It argues that there is a need for approaches to researching craft which give proper recognition to crafting as an experience; which make the experience available for critical scrutiny and which recognize that practitioners are well placed to articulate the intellectual nature of the crafting experience. The thesis seeks to address the question of what kind of research method might elicit useful data about craft practice and proposes a method using an ethnographic approach.

Ethnography is concerned with trying to understand human phenomena. It is concerned with the meaning of actions and events to the people that we are seeking to understand (Spradely, 1979). Furthermore, it recognizes that only some of these meanings are directly expressed in language and that many are communicated in other ways (Spradely, 1979).

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Oral history is considered and critiqued as a potentially useful approach. It is concerned with first-hand experience and is suited to understanding meanings, interpretations, relationships, and subjective experience (Perks & Thomson, 2006). However, the interview remains an essentially literary form, in which the richness of practice remains elusive. We might hear the eloquent practitioner reflecting in illuminating ways on practice, but we cannot witness reflection in practice.

Since a key issue for the method was to give the researcher access to practice and to facilitate greater understanding of practice, film is proposed as a fitting medium. Since the 1960s, video technology has developed to the point where it is readily available and easy to use. As digital video cameras are in common domestic use in the UK and many people are now familiar with being represented on film, the technology is a minimally intimidating or intrusive presence in the research process (Pink, 2007, pp.41-42). It is particularly suited to investigating embodied experience; it shows the subjects in a context and shows them interacting with that context; the complexity of thinking in action can be observed. In the proposed method, subjects are filmed making, then they are filmed again as they watch the footage of themselves at work and are interviewed. The original film provides rich source material, but it is also a prompt for the subject's reflections.

Although the purpose of the thesis is not to provide a particular analysis of the data produced by the method or to construct an overarching theory of craft, it includes, to demonstrate the usefulness of the data, an analysis of the case studies, using a grounded theory approach. The commentary on the analysis is arranged thematically, based on key concepts and theories arising from the data. The method of analysis is not intended to be prescriptive. Many different approaches to analysis could be applied to the material and the potential of the data is not exhausted by the interpretation given.

The thesis asserts that the intellectual potential that is embedded in craft knowledge and the individual and communal benefits that stem from the

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experience of craft making need to be recognized, valued and exploited as we continue to engage with the problems of modernity. The method described in this thesis is intended to facilitate a richer understanding of crafting and to contribute to emergent discourses on the place of craft making in addressing those problems.

Chapter 1 begins by discussing the problem of defining 'craft' in classical terms, and goes on to explore an identity that has an ideological and philosophical foundation in the Arts and Crafts movement. It argues that the movement was not principally concerned with aestheticized material outcomes but with the conditions in which good work might be produced and in which human society might flourish. It contests conventional positions that describe Arts and Crafts as a failed project, superseded by Modernism, but notes its fragmentation in the early twentieth century. Chapter 2 looks at the evolution of an institutional craft world since the mid twentieth century, particularly since the 1970s. It looks at the wider critical climate in which the 'new crafts' sought credibility, as well as describing developments in education and state support for the arts. The chapter observes inconsistencies in the new institutional identity, which contribute to the problematic relationship between theory and craft practices. This relationship is explored further in Chapter 3. Chapters 4 and 5 identify theories that help us to understand crafting as intrinsically rewarding, meaning-making experience. They consider theories of motivation and need, and of knowledge in order to outline theoretical positions and epistemologies that support an understanding of craft as experience; and they argue that this understanding of craft is consistent with Morris's vision for the Arts and Crafts movement. These two chapters were researched and written in tandem with the analysis that is presented in Chapter 8. However, their order in the thesis follows the logic of the narrative structure. Chapter 6 presents a rationale for the proposed method, locating it in the field of visual ethnography: it looks at oral history and video oral history as fields of ethnographic practice and particularly in relation to researching craft; and it looks at related studies and asserts the originality of this study. Chapter 7 gives a detailed description of the proposed method, dealing with issues such as ethics as well as practical and technical details; and it introduces the case studies. Chapter 8 explains the

choice of a grounded theory approach and presents a commentary on the analysis.

Chapter 1: Arts and Crafts

> Definitions and terminology are crucially important. A large part of
> the fruitfulness of scientific thought has come from one simple fact. It
> is that hitherto every scientific term has had an exact definition,
> verbal or mathematical, universally accepted. As a result
> communication in scientific terms between scientists has till recently
> been almost completely effective. Yet on questions of art,
> communication is seldom so much as half effective. There is an
> immense amount of noise and little else. Definitions are the only
> possible basis for communication and we must have them. If they
> cannot yet be made final we must have provisional ones. (Pye,
> 1968, p.49)

In 1928 Bernard Leach put the question 'Who are we? What kind of person is
the craftsman of our time?' (Leach, 1928, p.27). These questions have
surrounded craftspeople since the foundations of the twentieth-century craft
revival in the Arts and Crafts movement. David Pye's (1968) tone in the above
quote from *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*, prepares us for his critical and
detailed analysis of the terminology used by Ruskin in the *Stones of Venice*, but
his writing also reflects the on-going debate about what exactly we mean by
'craft', 'crafts, 'craftsman' and so on.

Although Pye allows that we may have to settle for provisional definitions, the
use of 'yet' in the final sentence suggests that he regards this as a strictly
temporary measure, to be resolved in the future. His assertion that we must
have definitions is based on the assumption that concepts, embodied in
'terminology', are characterized by a set of necessary and sufficient conditions,
and that if we haven't established these conditions yet, it is because we have
not tried hard enough, or because we have yet to discover some vital key. This
essentialist view conforms to the classical theory of categories:

> The classical theory of category structure is based on the idea that
> categories or concepts are defined by lists of features an entity must
> possess if it is to count as a member of that category. Category
> membership is regarded as an all or nothing matter – an entity is
> either *in* the category or *outside* it – even though it is recognised that
> there might be a few difficult borderline cases. Since every member
> must possess all of the features on the list that defines the category,
> there is nothing in the structure of the category that could

differentiate one member from another. They are all equally in the category. (Johnson, 1987, p.78)

'Craft' has been described as a 'salon de refuse' (Dormer, 1997, p.2), or, more optimistically as 'a potential space for a great range of work that defies categorization (Harrod, 2000, p.41). The notion of craft can encompass a wide range of practice; it relates to and overlaps with other descriptors. That it defies narrow or fixed definition may be one of the reasons that craft remains a dynamic and interesting concept. To reflect on definitions of craft is interesting, in that to do so is to explore its myriad meanings and the richness of its associations. However, defining craft in classical terms would be limiting and may not be possible[1].

The identity of 'craft' is something that has been constructed over time. It is an accretion. Arriving at an identity is a process. Acknowledging this, there is a need to set out the field of this study. The following three chapters will look at the way that an identity for craft has been constructed using a narrative that explores the way that 'the crafts' has defined itself in relation to its historical associations and to fine art and design.

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[1] This is not a problem exclusively for craft. For instance, in order to define art Dean (2003) deploys prototype theory, a theory of concepts and concept formation developed to overcome problems inherent in classical theory. The theory draws on Wittgenstein who argued (Wittgenstein, 2001, para. 66) that a concept such as that of a game has no necessary or sufficient attributes, and hence no defining properties, and that games are linked to one another by family resemblance, just as some members of the family may share the same build, others the same eye colour, and others the same gait, without any characteristic being shared in common by all members of the family. A prototype therefore consists of characteristic features rather than defining properties, and according to this interpretation, concepts have indistinct boundaries. Dean refers to Lakoff (1987), who proposed a particular, *radial* structure to concepts in which there is 'a central case or cases (such cases could be prototypes, but they could also be stereotypes, ideals, exemplars, etc.) upon which conventionalized variations are based, but that are not generated from, and cannot be predicted by, general rules; variations on the central case must be learned individually. The variations, or subcategories, are not understood on their own, but rather in terms of their relation to the central models.' (Dean, 2003, p. 31)

Dean suggests that this structure is useful in understanding art as a category, with aspects of central ideas being elaborated and extended radially. He sees a problem in 'how... we are to *identify* works of art, especially in those cases where we are extending art status to contested actions and objects. It is in these cases, where it is unclear whether the *artwork* category should be extended to include works that do not conform to the contours of central, uncontested member' (Dean, p. 32). He proposes that the most natural solution to the problem of art identification is to adopt an historical narrative view (see also Carroll, 2001).

The intention here is not to write a history of 'craft' but rather to construct an identity through a broad narrative. Specifically, the work of this chapter is to base that identity in the nineteenth-century with the Arts and Crafts movement. Romanticism and the industrial revolution will be discussed as part of the context in which the Arts and Crafts movement emerged, and Modernism, against which craft continued to be defined in the twentieth-century.

'Craft', in the sense that will be discussed in this thesis emerges initially out of the thinking and writing of certain figures associated with the Arts and Crafts movement in the second half of the nineteenth-century[2]. The naming of that movement, itself, expresses a division whilst establishing a duality, which defines a great deal of discussion and debate thereafter. The context of this new meaning for craft is the period of the late Enlightenment through the industrial revolution, that is, the later eighteenth-century and the first half of the nineteenth-century, and should be regarded within the wider social changes taking place at that time.

Raymond Williams (1962) in his introduction to *Culture and Society* uses an analysis of language to map out the profound impact of the industrial revolution on every aspect of social, economic and political life. He describes how, at this time, 'a number of words, which are now of capital importance, came for the first time into common English usage, or, where they had already been generally used in the language, acquired new and important meanings' (Williams, 1962 p.13).

Williams (1962, p.13) identifies 5 key words as being particularly important, *industry, democracy, class, art* and *culture*. All of these words have some bearing on the subject but *art* is of principal concern. According to Williams (1962, p.15) until this time 'art' and 'craft' could have been used synonymously, referring originally to intellectual power; skill; dexterity. Both words referred not to things, works of art or craft, but to ability and to the act of production. They

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[2] Evidence for this assertion might be found in the way that contemporary commentators on the crafts have felt the need to address its legacy (see for instance, Pye, 1968, Frayling & Snowden, 1982a, and Adamson, 2007)

are rational and imply knowledge, a system of regular methods of making or doing. This definition included the work of the sculptor and architect, but also embraced the work of the carpenter and weaver. The parallel sense development of both words encompassed interesting additional meanings, such as 'the occult arts' or 'witchcraft'; skill applied to deceive; deceit, guile, fraud, cunning (Soanes and Stevenson, 2005). They came to mean work requiring special skill and knowledge. These associations suggest art or craft as a kind of secret or esoteric knowledge embodied collectively in its practitioners. This sense is expressed by the craft 'guilds', which regulated and protected skilled work, most particularly by the brotherhood of Freemasons (Soanes and Stevenson, 2005).

In the period discussed by Williams, art comes to signify 'a particular group of skills, the 'imaginative' or 'creative' arts' (Williams, 1962 p.15). Furthermore, *Art* now came to denote a special kind of truth. The *Artist* consequently becomes a special kind of person, and *The Arts* a special set of practices, including painting, sculpture, literature, music and theatre, which shared some quality that distinguished them from other kinds of skilled work. With this distinction we see a separation between the artist and the craftsman, although *craft* continues to be used to describe the skill employed in the practice of an art, as, for instance, in the craft of writing poetry.

Williams uses this shift in meaning as a way of mapping a period of revolutionary change, but it also reflects a particular stage in the on-going history of the classification of the arts. Since antiquity there have been attempts to divide and classify the arts. Whilst the Greek word for art, *techn,* which is the root of the modern English word *technique*, embraced what we know as *fine art* along with both handicrafts and science - poetry and music were excluded as belonging to the sphere of inspiration, not skill or knowledge (Summers, 1990, p.238). In the intervening centuries these had become integrated with the arts whilst science had been re-classified. Also, distinction had been made between art that was useful and art that was purely for pleasure. These distinctions, variously classified as liberal (*artes liberals*) and vulgar (*artes vulgares*), or major (*artes maximae*), median (*mediocres*) and minor (*minores*), suggest a

hierarchy, which could be broadly (but usefully and pertinently) described as placing the spiritual over the temporal, the mind over the body, thinking over doing. However, the general divisions of skills and practices remained, to some degree, in flux, and certainly made no division between fine arts and crafts (Summers, 1990, p.238).

The subtle partition of meaning between 'art' and 'craft' corresponds to a whole set of oppositional dualities that characterise this time, which Eric Hobsbawm (1962) dubbed 'The Age of Revolution': machine-made/hand-made; masses/individual; industrial/unindustrial; rural/urban etc., which express the anxiety that accompanied the rapid changes of the industrial revolution. Hobsbawm's (1962, pp.13-16) phrase refers to the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution in Britain, and suggesting that the latter was named by analogy with the former.

The rapid industrialisation of production in England, which began to gather momentum from the mid nineteenth-century on, certainly resulted in enormous upheaval and change, which had a profound impact on every aspect of life at every level of society.

The combination of a number of technical innovations in certain industries, such as textiles and iron founding, and developments in steam power, with the right political, economic and social conditions meant that Great Britain was in a position to race ahead of the rest of Europe in establishing a new industrial economy based on mechanical production and capitalism (Hobsbawm, 1962, pp.13-16).

Whilst the outcome was a massive rise in the GDP and the accumulation of great wealth for some, the effect for the majority was catastrophic. Working conditions in the factories were often miserable, and workers, men, women and children, were exploited for low wages. They worked for long hours at a pace set by the machines. Accidents were frequent. There was a huge migration away from rural communities into the towns and cities that grew up around the new industries. Large tracts of housing were thrown up in close proximity to the

factories. These were overcrowded and often damp, leading to ill-health and the rapid spread of diseases such as cholera and typhoid. Other diseases, associated with particular industrial materials, working processes and conditions were common. At the same time it could be said that working conditions for the poor were often harsh before the industrial revolution, and that, with the effects of various government reports and pressure from social reformers, the material conditions of the working classes did gradually improve in a general way throughout the nineteenth-century (Clayre, 1977).

The dual nature of the industrial revolution was given vivid description by de Toqueville in 1835:

> From this foul drain the greatest stream of human industry flows out to fertilize the whole world. From this filthy sewer pure gold flows. Here humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish, here civilisation works its miracles and civilized man is turned almost into a savage. (Clayre, 1977, pp.118-119)

For good or ill there were massive changes in the way that people lived and worked. The pace and nature of these changes gave rise to widespread questioning of established values, and a variety of critical responses, including another duality - the opposing forces of radicalism and reaction. Both of these forces are manifest in the Romantic artistic and intellectual movement that emerged in Europe in the late eighteenth-century. Romanticism, like 'craft', seems to be a familiar term, easily defined, and yet there is debate about who and what can be categorised as 'Romantic'; whether it should be seen as being a reaction to the reason and rationality of the Enlightenment or as being continuous with the Enlightenment (Day, 1996, p.4)[3]; whether it should be

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3 See, for example:

'...a profound shift in sensibility...Intellectually it marked a violent reaction to the Enlightenment. Politically it was inspired by the revolutions in America and France...Emotionally it expressed an extreme assertion of the self and the value of individual experience...together with the sense of the infinite and the transcendental. Socially it championed progressive causes.' (Drabble, 1985, pp. 842-843)

Or, more amusingly and disparagingly:

'The romantic movement, in art, in literature and in politics is bound up with this subjective way of judging men, not as members of a community, but as aesthetically delightful objects of contemplation. Tigers are more beautiful than sheep, but we prefer them behind bars. The typical romantic removes the bars and enjoys the magnificent leaps with which the

regarded as reactionary, or as the birth of modernism. In truth Romanticism was never as coherent or as fixed as a label implies. It must be seen, like 'craft', as a construct, which embraced a range of thought, sometimes contradictory. Broadly speaking, it can be described as standing in opposition to Neoclassical or Enlightenment norms and values; as having a democratic, progressive impulse, inspired partly by the French Revolution; as being a response to the Industrial Revolution, concerned with a sense of loss as the world changed rapidly; and as giving special significance to the lived experience of the individual and to the faculty of imagination, alongside a profound sense of a superior, spiritual reality. Romanticism proposed a theory of knowledge that placed significance on feeling, empathy and intuition, as well as detached observation and reason (Williams, 1983, p.275). Enlightenment thinkers, typified by Descartes, devoted themselves to the idea of objectivism or a priori knowledge, in which knowledge is innate and exists without reference to human experience. Romanticism, on the other hand, was influenced by writers such as Kant and Rousseau who emphasized the experiential acquisition of knowledge (Russell, 1948, p.705).

In terms of the diverging etymology of 'art' and 'craft', and the categorising of the arts, Romanticism is notable because it merged previously separate 'arts' or 'skills', such as painting, music, sculpture and poetry, into a new category of 'The Arts' (Williams, 1962, p.15). 'The Arts' were bound together by the property of imaginative truth. Again, whilst this is a radical departure from the more objective stance of the Enlightenment, which valued skilful reproduction of classical, rational forms and the observance of rules and standards, it is not an entirely new conception of art. When William Blake insists that his art embodies 'a Representation of what Eternally Exists, Really and Unchangeably' (Blake, in Erdman, 1982, p. 554), it clearly echoes classical thinking. William Wordsworth, writing in his introduction to the *Lyrical Ballards* (1800), a seminal work of the English Romantic movement, wrote:

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tiger annihilates the sheep. He exhorts men to imagine themselves tigers, and when he succeeds the results are not wholly pleasant.' (Russell, B. 1948, p. 19)

Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that Poetry is the most philosophical of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local but general and operative (Wu, 2012, p. 538).

The emphasis on the artist as a special individual, a genius with a heightened capacity for experience, a particular sensitivity or imagination, is something new. A portrait of William Wordsworth (fig. 1) depicts him in pensive mood, against a stormy sky on the top of Helvelyn (a mountain close to the poet's home in the Lake District). It is a heroic image, which inspired Elizabeth Barrett Browning to describe him as 'poet-priest' (Barrett Browning, 1853, line 9). Wordsworth exemplifies the idea of the Romantic artist, experiencing the world with existential intensity, '...he whose soul has risen/ Up to the height of feeling intellect' (Wordsworth, The Prelude, book xiii, lines 204-206). In his long autobiographical poem, The Prelude, Wordsworth describes himself, singled out and educated by nature:

Wisdom and spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That giv'st to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or starlight thus from my first dawn
Of childhood did'st thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things –
With life and nature, purefying thus

figure1: Benjamin Robert Haydon (1842)
Wordsworth on Helvellyn

The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognise
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart

(Wordsworth, The Prelude, book i, lines 401-414)

It is worth noting that, whilst Wordsworth is scornful of *'the mean and vulgar works of man'*, he finds *'high objects'* and *'enduring thing'* in *'life and nature'*. In other words in bodily experience, not solely in a disembodied world of intellect or imagination, or in a purely spiritual dimension. Wordsworth's poetry was revolutionary in that it made reference to, and cherished, everyday life, and it did so whilst recognising the poetic potential of informal, everyday language.

Blayney-Brown (2001), in his study of Romanticism retells an anecdote about J. M. W. Turner that illustrates the way that the Romantic artist placed themselves at the centre of their work, as conduit for, and interpreter of, truth. Somebody had complimented Turner on his painting *Snow Storm – Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* by saying how much it had reminded his mother of her own experience of a storm at sea. Turner replied by brusquely demanding 'is your mother a painter?' It was not his intention to be understood, but rather to show, 'I got the sailors to lash me to the mast to observe it... and I did not expect to escape: but I felt bound to record it if I did. But no one had any business to like the picture' (Blayney-Brown, 2001 p.20). The anecdote suggests a lofty indifference on the part of the artist. However, for Wordsworth, *'passions'* and insights in to *'enduring things'* placed a responsibility on the artist. Another significant characteristic of Romanticism is the politically active artist, engaged in the study and criticism of society. This was an age that included the revolutions in America and France, with their calls for liberty, equality and fraternity, and more general movements towards democracy, *'the breathing of the common wind'* (Wordsworth, To Toussaint L'Ouverture, line 11).

Blake was tried for sedition; Wordsworth eulogized the French Revolution; Coleridge was as well known in his day for his political journalism and social theories as for his poetry (White, 1953); Byron died whilst serving the cause of Greek independence. This level of activism partly validates Shelley's assertion

about poets being the *'unacknowledged legislators of the world'* (Beach, 2012, p.54). These were not dispassionate observers. In the visual arts, responses to the violent upheavals of the age can be seen most clearly in the work of European artists such as David, who was a signatory to the death warrant of his former patron, King Louis XVI, and Goya, whose suite of etchings, 'Disasters of War', with their enigmatic but resonant titles, 'it will be the same', 'nor this', or 'why?' record his human, despairing response to the pointless savagery that he witnessed during the French occupation of Spain. Blayney-Brown (2001) illustrates the shift in artistic sensibility towards the political by examining the genre of history painting. He shows a movement away from the ideal and allegorical narratives that were seen as standing for the broad themes of history and as being appropriate subjects for painting, towards more direct reportage, away from the idealized depiction of heroic figures in heroic attitudes. Painters sought to show key figures of the day as human, whether ennobled or satirised. David's painting *the Death of Marat,* (1793) shows the revolutionary leader, treacherously, as he would have it, murdered in his bath, at once noble and pathetic. Goya's painting *The Third of May 1808* (fig. 2), which depicts the savage execution of hundreds of the ordinary citizens of Madrid by the invading French troops, has a central figure, picked out in a white shirt, dramatically lit amongst the carnage, who is neither a significant historical character, nor especially heroic. He is nameless and his terror seems to stand for the suffering of all the people of Europe.

These history paintings, though depicting ordinary people framed by extraordinary circumstances, still reflected politics on a grand scale. However, the Romantics also proposed the everyday experiences of ordinary people as fit subjects for art, as for example in the work of Courbet and Millet.

figure 2: Francisco Goya (1814) *The Third of May 1808 (Execution of the Defenders of Madrid)*

Allied to the political dimension, and reflecting wider claims towards self-determination was the assertion of Romantic nationalism. From its earliest manifestations Romanticism had been concerned with vernacular language, local traditions and folklore as the basis for authentic national identity. Influenced by the ideas of Rousseau and Johann Gottfried von Herder, Romantic nationalism saw the nation as an organic product of geography and history, which shaped the character and customs of a people (Bowe, 1996, pp.5-24). The visual culture of a nation should be a true expression of this natural state. In England this impulse found expression through the architect and prolific pamphleteer, Pugin, who championed the Gothic Revival style in architecture and design as, not only a rational style of building but an authentic visual language with its roots in an English Christian tradition (Hill, 2008, pp.101-111).

In the course of the eighteenth-century scholars had begun to stress the inherent logic of the structure of Gothic buildings. William Morris was hugely influenced by the early writing of Goethe on the subject and came to see Gothic as a 'logical and organic style' (Morris, 1888a, p.95) whose principles could be applied universally and which was capable of endless development.

The rise of the Gothic Revival coincided with a renewed interest in pre-Renaissance art and a romanticised view of medieval England. John Ruskin, who came to be regarded as one of the most important and original theorists of the Arts and Crafts movement, typifies this idealisation of the middle-ages when he describes the medieval craftsman as expressing 'man's delight in God's work' (Bradley, 1984, p.331). Whilst such a statement expresses nostalgia for a mythical, pre-industrial past it also speaks of a general anxiety about the alienating potential of an industrial model of work. Thomas Carlyle, despairing of the effects of the industrial revolution, had written in 1829 that:

> Men are grown mechanical in head and heart, as well as in hand.
> They have lost faith in individual endeavour and in natural force of
> any kind. (Tennyson, 1984, p. 37)

Ruskin saw a causal association between industrial working conditions and practices, and the degradation of the human personality. In *The Nature of the*

Gothic he argues for 'free workmanship' in the face of increased mechanisation:

> You must make a tool of the creature or a man of him. You cannot make both. Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools, to be precise and perfect in all their actions. If you will have that precision out of them, ...you must unhumanise them.' (Clayre, 1977, p.255)

This anxiety about work was a key source of debate in the nineteenth-century and Ruskin's particular concerns accord with Karl Marx, writing earlier:

> What constitutes the alienation of labour? First, that the work is external to the worker, that it is not part of his nature; and that consequently, he does not fulfil himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not develop freely his physical and mental energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased...
> We arrive at the result that the man (the worker) feels himself to be freely active only in his animal functions - eating, drinking, procreating, or at most also in his dwelling and in his personal adornment - whilst in his human functions he is reduced to an animal. The animal becomes human and the human becomes animal. (Greenhalgh, 1993, p.35)

Again, Ruskin was surely following Marx's theory of alienation when he wrote

> It is not that men are ill-fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and therefore look to wealth as their only pleasure. (Ruskin, 1851, p.163)

This then is the context in which the Arts and Crafts movement coalesces in the latter part of the nineteenth-century, and can be seen as one manifestation of the Romantic response to the process of industrialization. Industrialization was seen as having had a detrimental effect not just on standards of design and manufacture but also, fundamentally, on the material, social and spiritual well being of mankind. Romanticism proposed the practice of art as a moral, educative and humanising experience (Greenhalgh, 1997, pp.33-35). It was a politicised movement that valued the everyday experience of ordinary people as appropriate subject matter for art. Furthermore, it emphasized the importance of individual experience, and of human agency as the basis of morality.

Whilst the Arts and Crafts movement is characterised as a Romantic movement

(Crawford, 1985), it can be argued that many Arts and Crafts thinkers were also reacting to certain aspects of the developing aesthetic impetus of the nineteenth-century towards Romanticism in art, with its emphasis on the artist as a special individual, a dispenser of hidden, sublime truth. The Arts and Crafts movement, in contrast, placed art at the centre of everyday life and saw the practice of creative work as basically human, essential to meaningful existence. William Morris declared that: 'I don't want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few.' (Morris, 2008, p.85), and he asked: 'What business have we with art at all unless all can share it?' (Morris, 2008, p.85)

Morris had perceived a false hierarchical distinction between the 'intellectual' and 'decorative' arts, and in critiquing this distinction he makes a social and political analysis:

> In all times when the arts were in a healthy condition there was an intimate connection between the two kinds of art... the highest intellectual art was meant to please the eye... as well as to excite the emotions and train the intellect. It appeals to all men, and to all the faculties of a man. On the one hand, the humblest of the ornamental art shares in the meaning and emotion of the intellectual... the best artist was a workman still, the humblest workman was an artist. This is not the case now. (Morris, 1910, pp. 165-166)

The movement can be paraphrased as having three basic elements, all linked together in an integrated philosophy: the first was this commitment to the integration of art with the everyday, with life; secondly was the idea of 'honesty' in design and construction; thirdly, and possibly most crucially, was the notion that fundamental to the well-being of society is that its members should be humanely and creatively employed.[4]

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[4] Greenhalgh identifies the Arts and Crafts movement with the intertwining of three elements: the decorative arts; the vernacular and the politics of work (Dormer, 1997, p.25), whilst Crawford (Crawford, 1997, pp. 16-19) describes the movement as being animated by the 'Unity of Art', which opposed the hierarchy in which the arts were arranged in late-Victorian Britain, 'Joy in Labour', associated with the idea of hand-making, in which the ordinary experience of work can become a source of pleasure through the play of imagination, and 'Design Reform' in which the Arts and Crafts Movement can be seen as part of a wider concern for the improvement of design that was prevalent in the second half of the nineteenth-century.

The notion of honesty was a reaction to the tendency of the Victorians to use industrial processes to apply superficial ornamentation to cheaply and poorly manufactured goods. In practice it meant a taste for simplicity of form and surface treatment, and the revealing of constructional detail as decoration. The ideas of honesty and authenticity were bound together in an interest in vernacular architecture and objects of use. 'Vernacular' is a word borrowed from linguists who use it to mean language as it is widely spoken in a region or country. Its use here refers to the unselfconscious and unsullied products of a particular community. It implies a certain modesty and naturalness. Vernacular buildings and artefacts were considered to have evolved as the direct and honest expression of functionalism and to possess the virtue of truth to materials (for example Dean, 1994, pp.153-167). The techniques of working that had developed around locally sourced materials were regarded as efficient and appropriate. Arts and Crafts thinkers looked to rural, pre-industrial communities in search of this unaffected integrity. Morris was at the forefront of a trend when he responded to the lure of the rural life and established a refuge at Kelmscott Manor. He wrote *News from Nowhere* at Kelmscott and gives this description of the house:

> Everywhere there was but little furniture and that only the most necessary, and of the simplest form. The extravagant love of ornament which I have noted in this people elsewhere seemed here to have given place to the feeling that the house itself and its associations was the ornament of the country life amidst which it had been left stranded from old times, and that to re-ornament it would but take away its use as a piece of natural beauty. (Morris, 1993, p.221)

In truth, Morris never really took to the rural life, although it remained an inspiration to him. His attraction reflected a wider renewal of interest in the countryside, in nature and the simple life. This interest was given expression in the writings of Rousseau and Emerson, and of Tolstoy, whose accounts of agrarian collective life on his Russian estates inspired the foundation of a number of experimental Arts and Crafts communities[5].

The legitimate claims of the vernacular to a certain purity based on expediency

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[5] see Thacker (1997) for an account of the Whiteways Colony in Gloucestershire

and local values must be balanced against the nostalgically contrived mythology which must have exercised a strong attraction when placed in the context of the accelerating dynamic of the modernising world. The myth of a harmonious, rustic idyll was evoked by both left and right wing as a template for the ideal society. Walter Crane expresses an attractive but dreamily utopian aspiration when he calls for:

> ...a vernacular in art, a consentaneousness of thought and feeling throughout society. As it was... in the days of Homer, of Phideas, or even of Dante. No mere verbal or formal agreement, or dead level of uniformity, but that comprehensive and harmonising unity with individual variety, which can only be developed among a people politically and socially free. (Crane, 1892, p.15)

Emphasis on the utopian aspects of the appeal of the vernacular should not cloud assessment of the sound basis of Arts and Crafts movement's self-conscious interest. As C.R. Ashbee explained:

> ...in these days the love of country is self conscious. Alas that it should be so, but it is so; we have in these days to understand, to approach beauty again - the beauty of building through the avenue of understanding. (Greensted, 1996, p.77)

The work of the Arts and Crafts movement could demonstrate that the standards of fitness and appropriateness established by traditions of making and building set important and useful examples for contemporary practice.

It is William Morris who most satisfyingly combined the Romantic inspiration of Ruskin with the systematic historical analysis of Marx. Drawing on the writings of Carlyle, Ruskin, Marx, Engels and others he developed an original vision of socialism in which creative work plays a natural and crucial role in building a better world.

Morris saw creative work as empowering the individual worker, as giving the individual political power over the work situation. Industrial workers under a capitalist system were disempowered:

> It was essential to the system that the free labourer should no longer be free in his work; he must be furnished with a master having

complete control of that work, as a consequence of his owning the raw material and the tools of labour; and with a universal market for the sale of the wares with which he had nothing to do directly, and the very existence of which he was unconscious of. He thus gradually ceased to be a craftsman, a man who in order to accomplish his work must necessarily take an interest in it.... Instead of a craftsman he must now become a hand, responsible for nothing but carrying out the orders of his foreman. (Morris, 1901, p.231)

We see here that one of the defining characteristics of Morris's socialism is a concern for the individual as the basis for society:

Well now, to begin with, I am bound to suppose that the realisation of Socialism will tend to make men happy. What is it then that makes people happy? Free and full life and the consciousness of life. Or, if you will, the pleasurable exercise of our energies, and the enjoyment of the rest which that exercise or expenditure of energy makes necessary to us.... Therefore my ideal of the Society of the future is first of all the freedom and cultivation of the individual will, which civilisation ignores. (Morris, 1889, cited in Thompson, 1993, p.260)

Morris had no time for the notion that socialism would kill individuality. Soulless work and poverty were the real enemies of the individual:

the mill hand who is as much part of the machinery of the factory where he works as any cog-wheel or piece of shafting is, need not be very anxious about the loss of his individuality in a new state of things. (Morris, 1884, cited in Thompson, 1993, p.260)

Morris cannot, however, be dismissed as a Luddite. He happily used machinery, where he felt appropriate, in his own workshops, 'it is not this or that tangible steel or brass machine which we want to get rid of ...but the great intangible machine of commercial tyranny, which oppresses the lives of all of us' (Morris, 1901, p.352). In 1885 he admonished T.J. Cobden-Sanderson for the cost of his book-bindings and said that 'some machinery should be invented to bind books' (Cobden-Sanderson, 1926, pp.211-212).

Morris's conviction that the free individual should find fulfilment and expression in their work calls to mind Joseph Beuys claim that everybody should be an artist, that all creative thought is art (Tisdall, 1979, p. 21). At the core of Morris's politics was the conviction that the capitalist system was antithetical to art, that

art:

> ... will die out of civilisation if the system lasts. That of itself does to me carry with it the condemnation of the whole system, and I admit has been the thing which has drawn my attention to the subject in general... I love art, and I love history: but it is living art and living history that I love. If we have no hope for the future, I do not see how we can look back on the past with pleasure. (Morris, 1910, xxii p233)

He believed that good craftsmanship was not possible without good working conditions:

> To expect enthusiasm for good workmanship from men who for two generations have been accustomed by pressure of circumstances to work slovenly would be absurd; to expect consciousness of beauty from men who for ten generations have not been allowed to produce beauty, more absurd still. (Morris, 1910, xxii pp206)

Poor living and working conditions would kill any aesthetic sensibility in the working classes:

> Nature, who will have us live at any cost, compels us to get used to our degradation at the expense of losing our manhood, and producing children doomed to live less like men than ourselves. Men living amidst such ugliness cannot conceive of beauty, and, therefore, cannot express it. (Morris, cited in Thompson, 1993, p.254)

Under such conditions art becomes a cloistered activity. Separated from the lives of ordinary people, art is seen as, '...concerned only in making luxurious toys for rich and idle persons' (Morris, 1884, cited in Thompson, 1993 p.254). Morris's despair at what he saw as the increased isolation of the artists of his time from the rest of society could be seen as prophetic:

> Whatever hope we artists of these latter days have for the future rests on those who have to do with making things. People who have the unhappiness to live vague lives, and to take their surroundings for granted, who look upon art as a kind of superstition of civilisation, a sort of magic growth of certain morbid intellects: these can't help us. (Morris, 1884 cited in Thompson, 1993, p.255)

For Morris, art was a quality embedded in meaningful work:

> the aim of art is to destroy the curse of labour by making work the

pleasurable satisfaction of impulse towards energy, and giving to that energy hope of producing something worth the exercise. (Morris, 1988b)

In the early part of the twentieth-century art came increasingly to be seen as a property centred in the artist rather than in the object or in society. When Marcel Duchamp introduced his concept of the 'ready made' in which an otherwise banal object was claimed as the manifestation of an idea, we see a clear separation of the craftsperson as a maker of things and the artist, unconstrained by the relative values of skill, as an interpreter of the world and a revealer of truth. The philosopher R. G. Collingwood articulated this idea in his book *The Principles of Art* (Collingwood, 1938), in which he makes a specific attack on the ideas of Ruskin and Morris whilst espousing an opposing modern aesthetic theory:

> We must disabuse ourselves of the notion that the business of an artist consists in producing a special kind of artifact, so called 'works of art' or *objets d'art*, which are bodily and perceptible things (painted canvases, carved stones and so forth). (Collingwood, 1938, p.36)

For Collingwood a made object is simply a manifestation of 'an internal or mental thing' (Collingwood, 1938, p.37), which is the work of 'art proper' (Collingwood, 1938, p.37). In this conception, craft is '... only a subsidiary activity' (Collingwood, 1938, p.37) incidental to the purely cerebral aesthetic experience.

Whilst this is consistent with the Romantic conception of the artist, for the Arts and Crafts movement, art was inseparable from craft, from the physical process of making. In other words, thinking and making were one and the same thing. A core belief of the Arts and Crafts movement was that artistic expression happened through the making process. This was both an aesthetic and a political principle:

> For them, skill - regardless of how one characterised it - was part of the infrastructure of making which empowered communities and allowed for the creation of a free, creative society. (Greenhalgh, 1997, p.43)

In many ways the products of the Arts and Crafts movement are very much of their time. Stylistically, there were clear links to other trends such as the contemporary Aesthetic movement and the continental Art Nouveau. The movement made the everyday, domestic environment a fitting site for works of art, produced a wealth of designs for artefacts, and proselytised profoundly influential aesthetic principles such as 'truth to materials' and 'honest' construction. But it is in its fundamental moral and social purpose that the Arts and Crafts movement most distinguishes itself. It does not regard its products in isolation but sees them as being intimately connected to the society that produces them and the individuals who design and make them.

> the Arts and Crafts Movement... means Standard, whether of work or of life, the protection of standard, whether in the product or the producer, and it means that these things must be taken together. (Ashbee, 1908, p. 10)

When William Morris famously declared that you should 'Have nothing in your homes that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful' (Morris, 1910, xxii p. 77), he extends this notion of standards to the consumer. Again, we see art as having a moral purpose and practical place at the centre of daily life for the ideal citizen.

So, here we have a more or less coherent body of ideas: a respect for natural materials and for the integrity of vernacular techniques and styles, and un-alienated labour provided the model and the means by which the social and moral potential of art would be realised. These are the ideas that were given voice in the works of the Arts and Crafts movement but also in a series of texts ranging from Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* through Morris's Lectures and *News from Nowhere* to Ashbee's *Should We Stop Teaching Art?* This accumulation of texts relating to craft emerged from a century of philosophical and political discourse. Paul Greenhalgh, claims that at the turn of the last century:

> ...it could easily be argued that the crafts boasted the most advanced and vociferous theoretical, critical and historical writing. Indeed, Roger Fry, as he brought to maturity his own brand of formalism in the last years before the First World War, felt that he had to specifically address and attack this intellectual powerhouse, as he

perceived its influence to be the decisive one in visual culture. (Greenhalgh, 1997, p. 40)[6]

Perhaps Roger Fry felt that it was necessary to take such a position in order to clear the way for Modernism to enter into the English imagination.

Raymond Williams in his book *Keywords* traces the understanding of the word 'Modern' from its original meaning of 'something existing now, just now' (Williams, 1983, p.208), to the more general sense of 'co-temporary' or 'of the same period' and the specialist application relating to Modernist and Modernism that emerges in late nineteenth-century. He also refers to 'modern' in its comparative sense in relation to 'ancient', as in 'the ancient and modern worlds'. This sense is used by some historians to include all of the post-medieval period. Art and design historians tend to use the term for the period from the mid nineteenth-century, whilst cultural theorists see the Enlightenment as marking the beginning of the modern world. The history of ideas rarely resolves itself in terms of beginnings and endings in this way. Modernity, like other terms used in this thesis, has to be seen as an accumulative concept, part of a continuum. Nevertheless, in historical terms, the Enlightenment does represent a compelling break with the past and the beginning of a period that is still on going, which is characterized by perpetual change. Arjan Appadurai describes the distorting notion of a 'modern moment' marking a break between tradition and modernity, whilst acknowledging that 'the world in which we now live... surely does involve a general break with all sorts of pasts.' (Appadurai, 1996, p.3). The European Enlightenment, a term that, itself, only came into use in the mid-nineteenth-century (Soanes and Stevenson, 2005), but which broadly describes a period focused on the eighteenth, saw the growing application of systematic, rationalist methodologies to all aspects of knowledge and belief, challenging the previously settled orthodoxy of faith, tradition and authority. The period saw the effective inventions of the museum, the dictionary and the encyclopedia. This 'scientific revolution' permeated thinking at all levels of society. Hamblyn vividly describes the 'theatre of science' (Hamblyn, 2001, p.4),

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[6] see also Tillyard (1988) for discussion of the antipathetic influence of Arts and Crafts on early English modernists

in which the public flocked to scientific lectures. The demystification of the material world encouraged faith in the possibility that scientific principles could be applied to improve the conditions of humanity (Allan, 1998. p.15). This positivist, emancipatory belief led thinkers to concern themselves with imagining an ideal condition and led Habermas to represent modernity as a 'project' (Passerin d'Entrèves, & Benhabib, 1996):

> The project of modernity implies a self-conscious campaign, a structured approach to socio-cultural improvement that controls the processes of modernization and addresses its excesses. (Greenhalgh, 2005, p.27)

In this narrative we see how both Romanticism and the Arts and Crafts movement were products of the 'modern project', of the gathering momentum towards Modernism.

The specific terms Modernism and Modernist, which came into common usage only in the early part of the twentieth-century, refer to the tendency of writers, artists, theorists, designers and architects to embrace the fully industrialized age in the most positive way whilst seeking to control its progress for the general betterment of mankind. Modernists saw traditional forms and social arrangements as barriers to progress and proposed a violent break with the past, a total rethinking of the world. This relates particularly to the first third of the twentieth-century, which Greenhalgh describes as the 'ideological' phase of modernism (Greenhalgh, 2005, p.25). It was certainly in this period that the rationalist modern project resolved itself in to, if not an explicit ideology, then a rallying point with which various movements and 'isms' could identify themselves, for example: Futurism, De Stijl, Constructivism, Positivism.

The Futurists, who in some respects exemplified this grouping, published their manifesto in 1909:

> We will sing of the stirring of great crowds – workers, pleasure seekers, rioters – and the confused sea of colour and sound as revolution sweeps through the modern metropolis. We will sing the midnight fervour of arsenals and shipyards blazing with electric moons; insatiable stations swallowing the smoking serpents of their

trains, factories hung from the clouds by the twisted threads of their smoke. (Marinetti, 1909).

And then in 1914 this vision was further developed in a manifesto for architecture:

> ... to raise the new-built structure on a sane plan, gleaning every benefit of science and technology, settling nobly every demand of our habits and our spirits, rejecting all that is heavy, grotesque and unsympathetic to us (tradition, style, aesthetics, proportion), establishing new forms , new lines, new reasons for existence, solely out of the special conditions of modern living, and in its correspondence with the aesthetic values of our sensibilities. This architecture cannot be subjected to any law of historical continuity. It must be new, just as our state of mind is new. (Marinetti, 1914)

In these two passages we see the assertion of logic and reason, and of the heroic, moral and social role ascribed to the artist and designer in making a better world. Again, this is more or less consistent with aspects of Romantic and Arts and Crafts thinking, but we also see a new aggressive rejection of the past and a new romanticized vision of the industrialized world.

Modernism would not resist the escalating pace of technology driven change but would master and reframe it as a progressive evolution towards a prosperous, healthy, humanist society. This ideology would be expressed through styles and formal aesthetics reflecting the logical, modern, machine age. Designers sought an ideal template that could be universally applied like a scientific or mathematical formula.

The visual language of Modernism was exemplified by the Dutch based De Stijl group, founded by the painter, writer and critic Theo van Doesburg and the painter Piet Mondrian. Mondrian had experimented with the principals of Analytical Cubism, which sought to capture the three-dimensionality of things without compromising the two-dimensionality of the painting. This was done by analysing objects into planes of simple form and shade composed in the flat space of the painting. Mondrian simplified this approach until he developed an idiom that he felt was capable of representing the whole range of visual experience – purely abstract and universal. This consisted of square or

rectangular forms, defined by straight horizontal and vertical black lines, and a limited palate of grey and white, and primary colours. This simple formula could be arranged in an infinitely variable set of relationships, with all the elements held in dynamic balance. It embodied a new utopian ideal of spiritual harmony and order.

The simple, anonymous beauty of this idiom, reduced to the essentials of form and colour, expressed both the anti-individualism of the Internationalist Modernist movement and the Modernist aspiration towards the autonomous art object. This conception of art as the object of detached aesthetic contemplation, independent of, and without reference to any other aspect of life, has its roots in the essentialist tradition of Western philosophy, referred to at the beginning of this chapter as the classical theory of categories. Philosophers had sought to distinguish art from other kinds of objects in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. In particular, Modernist thinking about the aesthetic experience had been influenced by the Enlightenment thinker, Immanuel Kant. In The Critique of Judgement (Meredith, 1952) Kant set out to understand art in terms of the aesthetic experience rather than the object. He proposed that aesthetic experience is 'disinterested', meaning that we take pleasure in something because we judge it beautiful, rather than judging it beautiful because we find it pleasurable.

The idea of disinterested contemplation makes a hierarchical distinction between non-aesthetic aspects of an object: its sensual properties; its emotional appeal or any values that it might embody - moral, social, religious and so on (Osbourne, 1970, pp.160-161), and the pure, formal qualities that belong to the aesthetic experience.

This is directly at odds with the Arts and Crafts notion of the purpose of art. Ashbee, for instance, had the seen the Guild of Handicrafts as an educational and social model of how co-operative association could develop the individual's creative capacity. The Guild was to be a site for fostering new relationships of social citizenship in practice. He argued, in a lecture delivered to the Architectural Association in 1892, against those who insisted that 'social

questions and ethics' had no place in art:

> The origin of style lies not in the theories, not in the forms of Art, but in the social relations of men to men ... in the leisure they may have for the thinking out of problems and the creation of forms. In short, the origin of style is a social not an artistic question. (cited Crawford, 2005, p.212)

In terms of the developing etymology of art, the further establishment of these ideas through Modernism marks a significant divergence with Arts and Crafts thinking and a further entrenchment of a hierarchy of categories.

Divergence has become the central premise in narratives describing the relationship between Arts and Crafts and Modernism. It is widely recognised that many of the ideas of the Arts and Crafts movement informed the thinking of initiatives such as the Deutscher Werkbund and Bauhaus, and subsequent Modernist movements (in terms of social idealism, truth to materials, honest and rational construction etc.). Nevertheless, the Arts and Crafts movement is usually described by art and design historians as being in opposition to Modernism, the relationship being framed in terms of the binary opposites described earlier: forward looking/reactionary; rural/urban; machine-made/hand-made. Subsequently craft has become marginalised in the relationship. This is partly based in the perceived antipathy to the machine-age, and the tendency towards sentimental, reactionary medievalism amongst Arts and Crafts theorists. But it is also largely rooted in the way that history has been constructed by art and design historians, with one movement committing patricide on, and thus superceding its predecessor.

Nicholas Pevsner places William Morris in his canon of *Pioneers of Modern Design* but endorses the sense of schism by emphasizing these oppositions:

> He (Morris) looked backward, not forward, backward into the time of Icelandic sagas, of cathedral building, of craft guilds. (Pevsner, 1960, p. 24)

And:

Morris's attitude of hatred towards modern methods of production...
(Pevsner, 1960, p. 25)

Whilst it must be acknowledged that these accusations can all be supported by reference to Morris's writings, it does not reflect the complexity of Arts and Crafts thinking. Morris was a reflective and responsive thinker. Paul Thompson, in *the Work of William Morris* (1993), and E. P. Thompson, in *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (1976), both trace Morris's movement from anti-industrial Romantic to revolutionary socialist. Morris's interpretation of Marx offers a holistic synthesis of utopian vision and rational social and political theory. He looked to the past as a source of disappearing knowledge in the context of rapid industrialisation and the growth of capitalism. He may have romanticised the Middle Ages in his verse, but he was also capable of clear-eyed analysis of history as a narrative of social struggle and change. His understanding fed a vision of the future, which was socialist, revolutionary and optimistic, and resolutely modern. It can just as easily be shown that Morris embraced the use of machinery to take away the drudgery of certain processes. As described earlier, his vision for socialism recognised a role for machinery in freeing up the worker to enjoy more creative work (Kinna, 2000):

> If the necessary reasonable work be of a mechanical kind, I must be helped to do it by a machine, not to cheapen my labour, but so that as little time as possible may be spent upon it. I know that to some cultivated people, people of the artistic turn of mind, machinery is particularly distasteful... it is the allowing machines to be our masters and not our servants that so injures the beauty of life nowadays. (Morris, 1887)

On the other hand, it could be pointed out that many of the early icons of Modernist design, whilst striving to express the machine age, were essentially hand-made in small workshops (Marcus, 2008, pp.345-356). The *Barcelona* chair, designed by Mies Van Der Rohe and Lilly Reich in 1929, for instance, was the product of a complex series of hand processes. It was only in 1950 that it was redesigned to incorporate stainless steel and new welding technology, which allowed it to be put into production in 1953. The uneasy fit between the aesthetic of Modernism and its rhetoric can suggest that it was

essentially a style or convention and not a fully realized philosophy let alone a truth or fundamental law.

Whilst the Arts and Crafts movement had identified itself so closely with the home and the everyday, Modernism, in its theoretical manifestations if not in its practice, orientated itself towards the public sphere. Christopher Reed in his introduction to *Not at Home: the Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture* makes the point that 'The domestic, perpetually invoked in order to be denied, remains throughout the course of modernism a crucial site of anxiety and subversion' (Reed, 1996, p.16).

English Modernists, meanwhile, asserted a contrary individualism in the face of the anonymity of mass production and sought to adapt the international aesthetic to a particular visual language that reflected an idealised English landscape. Pevsner, in *The Englishness of English Art* makes a broad dismissal of the contribution made by English artists to International Modernism:

> The Romantic topography of Christopher Wood and then Mr John Piper, Eric Ravilious, and some others may delight us and be specifically English, but I doubt whether in a future display of twentieth-century painting the English will be among the principal contributors. (Pevsner, 1964, p 193)

Ben Nicholson on the other hand has been described as 'the first English painter of international significance since Turner' (Lynton, 1964, p.129). In particular, Nicholson's white reliefs, made in the 1930s are regarded as belonging firmly to the Modernist canon. However, Beard (2003) has reconsidered Nicholson's work in the 30's. Where the white reliefs are normally presented in the detached context of the gallery or the art book, Beard uses family photographs to show them in the home/studio context, placed in critical relation to other works and to the normal detritus of family life. He uses these images as the basis for challenging the critical distancing of modernist practice from the domestic space of the home. He also describes Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth designing and block printing textiles, which were sold by Heals. This suggests a total practice that is as evocative of Morris as it is of International Modernism. Beard argues elsewhere that Herbert Read's critical

response to pottery had a vital role in shaping his aesthetic theories on non-figurative art (Beard, 2007). He claims that Read's attitude to the applied arts represented a challenge to hierarchical artistic boundaries and was part of a wider attempt to locate modern English art in relation to a pre-industrial national tradition.

So, there was some continuity between Arts and Crafts and Modernism, just as there had been between Enlightenment thinking and Romanticism. Nevertheless, it could be argued that after the flourishing of the Arts and Crafts movement in the early years of the twentieth-century, the years following the First World War saw a loss of momentum and the fragmentation of 'craft' as a descriptor. A shift had taken place in which Arts and Crafts were no longer taken seriously as a viable means of production to rival industrialisation.

This shift marks another division in the developing etymology of craft.

Greenhalgh describes this as a 'degenerative process' (Greenhalgh, 1997, p.36) and identifies three strands, which reflect the bifurcating meaning of craft, all of which have their origins in Arts and Crafts thinking: the Bauhaus, the Woodcraft Folk and the Women's Institutes.

When the Bauhaus design school had been founded in 1919, craft had been at the centre of its programme. In his original manifesto for the school, Walter Gropius had declared:

> Architects, sculptors, painters, we all must return to the crafts! For art is not a 'profession.' There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman. In rare moments of inspiration, transcending the consciousness of his will, the grace of heaven may cause his work to blossom into art. But proficiency in a craft is essential to every artist. Therein lies the prime source of creative imagination. Let us then create a new guild of craftsmen without the class distinctions that raise an arrogant barrier between craftsman and artist! (Gropius, 1919, p.31)

This statement embraces the political and ideological heritage of William Morris and critiques the hierarchies of fine art and craft. But by 1923 Gropius had

redirected the curriculum towards industry. In his essay *Theory and Organization of the Bauhaus* (1938), published in the catalogue of the first major Bauhaus exhibition, he wrote that the 'Bauhaus does not pretend to be a crafts school. The teaching of craft... is meant to prepare for designing for mass production' (Gropius, 1938, p.27). The attachment of Arts and Crafts to hand making and historical precedent was seen as anti-progressive, but the broader ideology would be transferred to and adapted by modern industrial designers and artists.

Greenhalgh describes the Woodcraft Folk movement as 'developing a craft ethic that had little use for art' (Greenhalgh, 1997 p.37). Formed in Britain in 1925, the Woodcraft Folk was instigated as a counteraction to the Boy Scouts movement, which had militaristic and imperialistic connotations. The Woodcraft Folk were sponsored originally by the Labour Party and the Co-operative Society (Davis, 2000) and combined socialist principles with a respect for nature and an interest in vernacular country skills. William Morris is cited as an influence[7], but the Woodcraft Folk are not directly concerned with the decorative arts.

Both the Bauhaus and the Woodcraft Folk drew in different ways on social and political aspects of Arts and Crafts thinking. The Women's Institutes (WI), which advanced craft making as recreational or semi-professional activity but which were resolutely a-political, represent the third strand that Greenhalgh describes. The WI regarded craft as accomplished distraction, or as a highly developed form of domesticity, or, as Greenhalgh puts it, 'a vision of craft void of the original political commitment, a vernacular ruralism with pretensions to

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[7] Members of the Woodcraft Folk traditionally recite a creed at the start of meetings, which is attributed to a poem by Morris:
This shall be a bond between us,
That we are of one blood, you and I
That we have cried peace to all,
And claimed kinship with every living thing.
That we hate war and sloth and greed,
And love fellowship.
And that we shall go singing
Into the fashioning of a New World

decorative art. The women's Institutes are to do with making things in order to enhance the quality of life.' (Greenhalgh, 1997 p.37)

Greenhalgh's examples show how the same root can produce three quite diverse branches. Greenhalgh understands the ideological and intellectual basis for the modern understanding of craft as consisting of three elements: decorative art, the vernacular and the politics of work (Greenhalgh, 1997, p. 25). He observes that whilst the Arts and Crafts movement brought all three together, his examples display partial and different combinations:

> The Bauhaus (craft without the vernacular), the Woodcraft Folk (craft without art) and the Women's Institutes (craft without its politics) are all examples from the interwar period of selective visions from within the meaning of craft as it had been earlier formulated. (Greenhalgh, 1997, p. 38)

There were other key strands with kinship to the Arts and Crafts movement that emerged at this time in which these elements exist in more complicated relation. One strand, which sought to carry forward the Arts and Crafts notion of politicized work, is typified by Eric Gill and the Distributionists.

Distributionism was a 'third way' economic philosophy inspired by Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of 1891, which had criticized the centralizing tendencies of both socialism and capitalism (Riff, 1987, p.35). Hilaire Belloc, who, along with G. K. Chesterton and Fr. Vincent McNabb, was one of the original theorists of distributionism, attacked the inequality of industrial capitalism in which ownership of property and capital was concentrated in the hands of a wealthy elite (Belloc, 1912). According to distributionists, the rest of the population, whilst given limited protection by state legislation, were to all intents and purposes constrained and compelled to work for the elite. Distributionists believed therefore that a just society would be characterized by widespread property ownership and that the means of production should be distributed as widely as possible, rather than being centralized under the control of the state or by a wealthy elite. Distributionism was a holistic philosophy that sought to subordinate economic activity to a wider understanding of human existence, embracing the spiritual, intellectual, social and domestic.

Distributionism valued creativity and proposed a society of craftspeople and peasant farmers. There was an emphasis on small business, the promotion of local culture, and a preference for small production over capitalistic mass production. Such a culture would support the distributionist ideal of the unification of capital, ownership, and production rather than the alienation of man from his work that Morris had associated with industrialization. As such it appealed to many craftspeople who felt allegiance to Morris (Harrod, 1999, p.155). Principal amongst these was the sculptor and letter engraver Eric Gill. With support and advice from the Dominican priest Father Vincent McNabb, Gill formed the Guild of St. Joseph and St. Dominic at Ditchling, Sussex in 1920. The Guild was a Roman Catholic community in which members lived and worked together according to their faith, and was the most important craft grouping inspired by the distributionist cause (Harrod, 1999, p.156). Although it did little to slow the momentum of industrial capitalism, the Guild survived as a community until 1989.

Another significant vision for the crafts, and perhaps the most important for subsequent institutional narratives, that was consolidated between the two World Wars was that of the 'artist-craftsman'. This descriptor was used by Bernard Leach (1976, p. 258) in *A Potter's Book*, first published in 1940, where he makes a clear distinction between the artistic potter and the designer or manufacturer of industrial potteries:

> it should be made clear that the work of the individual potter or potter artist, who performs all or nearly all the processes of production with his own hands, belongs to one aesthetic category, and the finished result of the operations of industrialized manufacture, or mass production, to another and quite different category. (Leach, 1976, p.1)

Leach had been a follower of Morris and had been influenced by Marxist thinking (Harrod, 1999, p.158). *A Potter's Book* had been edited by his friend, Henry Bergen, a committed communist, who had argued with Leach that he was blind to the economic realities of the time. He reminded him that the Chinese Sung pots that they both admired had been produced for an

aristocracy and that his pots were also only bought by wealthy connoisseurs (Harrod, 1999 p.159). However, by the time that he published his book he had committed himself to an individualistic, apolitical stance and sought to achieve a more broadly philosophical synthesis of eastern and western thought:

> We live in dire need of a unifying culture out of which fresh traditions can grow. The potter's problem is at root the universal problem and it is difficult to see how any solution aiming at less than the full interplay of East and West can provide either humanity, or the individual potter, with a sound foundation for a world-wide culture. Liberal democracy, which served as a basis for the development of industrialism, provides us today with a vague humanism as insufficient to inspire art as either the economics of Karl Marx or the totalitarian conception of national life, but at least it continues to supply an environment in which the individual is left comparatively free. (Leach, 1976, p.10)

Unanchored to any clear political path, *A Potter's Book* offers practical guidance to the aspiring craftsperson, and in its autobiographical and philosophical content presents a satisfying, idealised way of life built on simple living and hard work that looks toward fulfilment, not for all, but for the individual. It also argues in its opening chapter, *Towards a Standard*, for the highest 'standards of fitness and beauty' (Leach, 1976, p.1). This suggests pottery as a highly refined and specialized artistic category and is quite contrary to the spirit of Arts and Crafts illustrated by the approach of Ashbee who would select apprentices 'not because the boy would be good at the craft, but because the craft would be good for him' (Crawford, 1985, p. 88). Breon O'Casey makes an interesting challenge to Leach's insistence on a standard and the status of the artist-craftsman when he links his philosophy to the economic theorist Schumacher, in which Schumacher could be seen as standing for Morris:

> ...ten bad potters is better than one good potter. That is, an ennobled human being is better than an ennobled pot. You, Bernard, were concerned with trying to ennoble the pot; Schumacher was concerned with trying to ennoble the person and indirectly the pot. (O'Casey, 2004, p. 39)

In Leach we see the analytical socialism of Morris replaced by esoteric philosophy. Furthermore, the craftsman becomes an artist in the Romantic model, an elevated status that Morris had contested. The conflation of the artist

and craftsman in this way is problematic in both Collingwood's (1938) and Kant's (1960) terms of the aesthetic experience, as well as Morris's. Similarly, Leach's total rejection of mechanical production marginalised the 'artist craftsman' within the wider economy. However, it is this model of craft that was to become institutionalized in higher education and in bodies such as the Craft Council in the second half of the twentieth-century.

The concept of craft that had been articulated in the nineteenth-century by William Morris and others had been challenged in the first half of the twentieth by the momentum of industrial capitalism and the commitment of the Modernists to industrial mass-production. However, it could be argued that it was Morris's followers, those who might be seen as the direct inheritors of the idea, who most muddied our subsequent understanding.

Narratives about craft and Modernism sought to separate craft from art and design. Craft becomes the background knowledge, necessary for industrial design (Gropius, 1938), or a subsidiary activity in support of the detached aesthetic experience (Collingwood, 1938). It has been argued that the crafts have not engaged with the causes and philosophies of Modernism and commentators on the crafts have asserted the importance of addressing the relationship of craft to Modernism (Greenhalgh, 2007), that there is 'an absolute need to address (the relationship) in a satisfactory way before any of us, historians and practitioners alike, can move along in any real meaningful way' (Greenhalgh, 2007, pp.121-128). Greenhalgh acknowledges that this is a cause for anxiety amongst historians and theorists more than practitioners (Greenhalgh, 2007, p.122). Nevertheless, the issue does impact on the continuing status of craft and will be discussed in the next chapter, which will examine the emergence of a new critical context for craft in the 1970s.

The Arts and Crafts movement gives us a distinctive model for craft as a politicized form of creative work aimed specifically at the production of art that is integrated into everyday experience. It came from a particular, nineteenth-century context: in opposition to the effects of industrial capitalism and in keeping generally with the intellectual context of Romanticism. The movement

was Romantic in the emphasis that it placed on experience, in this case the felt experience of work, and of art in everyday life, and in its concern with precedent as a model for the future. It romanticized the vernacular and pre-industrial work practices. It valued knowledge that was embodied and which arose from sensuous, bodily experience. However, it also stood in opposition to the Romantic idea of art as a particular, heightened form of experience available only to the artist as a special individual, sensitive to such heightened experience and singularly capable of interpreting and sharing it so that profound truths could be revealed and vicariously experienced by others. 'Craft' might be regarded as creative work, politicized practices through which the moral and social potential of 'art' could be realized. Modernism took this sense of ethical purpose and optimistically sought to adapt it to industrial mass production – harnessing the unstoppable momentum of the industrial age, directing it as a positive force for improving the lives of everybody, rather than enriching the few at the cost of the many. It regarded 'craft' as a kind of knowledge that was useful to the design of manufactured goods and the making of art, rather than as a necessary, humanizing experience in its own right.

In the twentieth-century, alongside these meanings, 'the studio crafts' emerge as a set of medium specific skills and creative practices for the production of decorative art, and the 'artist craftsman' as an individual in the mould of the romantic artist.

What has been described here is a narrative in which Modernism and 'the crafts' followed divergent paths. But this is not the same as saying that 'craft' was or is anti-modern. It can be demonstrated that the Arts and Crafts movement and the continuing craft culture is part of the 'modern project'. Pevsner's (1960) narrative which posits 'craft' as a spent force whose significance lies in its place as one of the building blocks of modernism, encourages the impression that craft in the twenty first-century is anachronistic. Perhaps rather than seeing the relationship in terms of opposition, of Modernism committing patricide on its predecessor and thus superseding it, we have to understand both Modernism and The Arts and Crafts movement as incomplete projects within the longer modern project. Thus 'craft' can be

reframed not as an anachronistic, reactionary practice in opposition to modernity but as a rational model of production that critiques the impact of industrial capitalism.

Chapter 2: The Institutional Craft World

> ...the conditions in which craft aspires to be art are essentially social...Craft: "becomes" art when it develops an equivalent system of shows, sales, criticism, academic recognition and educational support. This has nothing to do with the nature of the product, which can remain entirely unchanged. The debate is centrally one about social, organisational setting. (Wolff, 1988, p.16)

The previous chapter described an identity for craft by constructing a narrative in which contemporary craft is practiced within an ideological and intellectual tradition, rooted in the theoretical writing of the nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts movement. In this writing craft is seen as both the subject and object of a critical discourse. Much of that writing was concerned with the organization and ownership of labour, with the moral and social purpose of art and with creativity, which is given expression through the making process. Central to Arts and Crafts thinking was the subjectivity of the practitioner, and the effect of the making experience on the maker, as an individual and as a citizen. Whilst the movement became fragmented, the subsequent divergence of craft as a descriptor produced a variety of extensions to the concept.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the emergence, which has escalated since the 1970s, of a legitimizing infrastructure for an avant-garde craft. The chapter argues that this infrastructure, which includes the institutions such as the Crafts Council, universities, museums and galleries, as well as writers, critics and curators, has sought to reposition the crafts as a vital part, not merely of the world of contemporary cultural production but of a contemporary art world. Whilst craft as a broad concept has been best understood within wider cultural contexts, this was an attempt to distance craft from ideological positions, and from its associations with the rural and the traditional, and to recontextualize craft within a much narrower framework.

After the relative absence of public critical discourse during most of the twentieth-century, a new wave of critical and theoretical discourse emerged out of the process of institutionalization. Whilst this discourse has been evolving since the 1970s, there has been a particular resurgence of writing on craft since

the mid 1990s, when a series of academic conferences and related publications, supported by the Crafts Council gave new momentum to debates about craft. The thesis argues that a key feature of this new writing has been attempts to establish a definition of craft as a singular thing that can be brought within the sphere of influence of the infrastructure described above.

This chapter shows that the avant-garde was stimulated by the convergence of a number of forces both inside and outside of 'the crafts': an intellectual climate that challenged ideas of standards and meanings; changes in Higher Education that saw art schools incorporated into universities and a greater emphasis on academic content in art school education; developments in state support for the professionalization of craft practices and, partly linked to these factors, institutional and professional anxiety about the status of the crafts in relation to more clearly defined art and design practices.

It is important to stress here that the purpose is not to contest the legitimacy of that infrastructure, but rather to describe its evolution and to critique the impact of its dominance. The chapter will be partly descriptive and partly analytical. As well as contextualising the aspiration towards fine art status, it will set out and try to think through the social forces that shaped the constituents of the 'craft world'.

The chapter will begin by discussing some theories relating to hierarchies in cultural production and by looking at the wider intellectual context in which the crafts have operated in the last 50 years, before going on to look specifically at the craft world's institutions.

Crafts magazine is a primary source for the chapter as many of the developments and debates around the craft world can be observed through its pages. Not only has it been a principal site for theoretical and critical writing on craft over the last 40 years, but as an official organ of the Crafts Council it has played a key role in establishing a canon of important makers, thinkers, exhibitions and so on that make up the craft world.

Howard Becker (1982) and Pierre Bourdieu (1984) both offer valuable insight into the socially constructed nature of culture. As they both deal with hierarchies in cultural production they are useful in trying to understand recent movements and debates within the crafts. Bourdieu is concerned with the role that culture plays in legitimizing the power and status of economically dominant social groups, whilst Becker provides an analysis of the social factors that determine the level of public acceptance of different forms of cultural expression. Both are concerned with establishing how and why some things are accepted as art, whilst others are excluded.

Bourdieu (1984) sees the struggle for power as the determining factor in Western industrial society. Although he regards economic factors as determining the basic lines of social struggle and creating patterns of social stratification, he argues that economic dominance is not enough, on its own, to maintain the social order. In democratic western societies, for a dominant class to legitimize its position, it is important, or even necessary, to establish its entitlement to social authority on more profound and wide ranging principles than the economic one. In Bourdieu's understanding, taste or cultural preference is therefore seen as a vital factor in maintaining the social status quo.

To explore this Bourdieu (1971a) develops the concept of the 'habitus'. Bourdieu explores the consistency of social background that provides people 'not so much with particularized schemes of thought as with that general disposition ... that one could call the cultivated *habitus*.' (Bourdieu, 1971b, p.194). To be part of a habitus does not eliminate controversy, 'The cultivated men of a given age may have different opinions on the subjects about which they quarrel' but 'they are . . . agreed on quarrelling about certain subjects' (Bourdieu, 1971b p.183). If we think about the art/craft hierarchy in these terms we can recognize the assumptions made by a cultural elite regarding the inherent qualities of particular media or objects: paint and clay, paintings and pots for example, or the value of different forms of creativity and creative expression: individualized, as opposed to collective, for example.

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In *Distinction* Bourdieu (1984) explores the inter- and intra-class cultures of modern France. He makes an analysis of the relation between cultural and economic dominance. Using the concept of 'habitus' he distinguishes between basic and surface dissension to identify the essentially conservative nature of most avant-garde art. Bourdieu's argument is that the economically dominant class, in consolidating and legitimizing its position, derives significant advantages from also establishing its cultural superiority. An elite would naturally lend its support to those artists and their intellectual supporters who could produce cultural forms that serviced its tastes. Bourdieu goes on to explain how the economically dominant class can contain a dissenting, avant-garde art world.

The dominant class's support of the art world creates a new class division of artists and intellectuals who then seek to strengthen their own social position. As the creators of 'high' culture engage in the struggle for social dominance, tensions develop between them and the economically dominant class. Nevertheless, the lure of social privilege continues to moderate their cultural judgments, and their aesthetic classificatory systems remain ultimately compatible with the needs of their dominant supporters. This can be seen in their tendency to foster generally inaccessible and elite cultural forms.

The supporters of 'high' culture also encourage the denigration of popular tastes by their intellectual, and therefore apparently objective, support for what is essentially the self-defined 'good taste' of the dominant class.

Bourdieu (1986) argues that the power to define what counts as art is equivalent to possessing capital. Like financial capital it is a fluid asset which its possessors can reinvest to enable them to continue to define what constitutes 'good art', 'good design', 'good taste' and to maintain the high status of selected art forms. This power acquires additional significance when we consider how we acquire our aesthetic preferences. They are largely absorbed informally within the family and peer group. The subtle nurturing of different artistic preferences within these groups lays the basis of major class differences. Thus cultural tastes become a complex mixture of social and sensuous responses

where the sensuous element generates a physical aversion to alternative habituses:

> ... tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance ('sick making') of the tastes of others ... Aesthetic intolerance can be terribly violent. Aversion to different life-styles is perhaps one of the strongest barriers between the classes. (Bourdieu, 1984, p.56)

The physical aspect of cultural tastes further encourages the dominant class to elevate its own class-based preferences into indicators of its generally superior worth (Bourdieu, 1986).

This analysis provides a useful perspective on the process by which fine artists maintain a differential status to craftspeople and illuminates both the aspiration of the crafts in a hierarchical relationship, and a problem the craft world faces in trying to raise the status of the crafts. The symbolic value of fine art exceeds the cultural capital of craft, invested as it is with use-value.

Howard Becker provides an extension of Bourdieu's general analysis by focusing on the routine institutional structures and mechanisms by which the arts-crafts hierarchy is sustained.

Becker (1982) describes art worlds as consisting 'of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art.' (Becker, 1982, p.34), or 'the network of people whose cooperative activity, organised via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of artworks that the art world is known for' (Becker, 1982, p.x).

Becker's value is in his systematic analysis of some key characteristics of art worlds. In his analysis, Becker doesn't only look at the institutional structures and bureaucratic systems, he alerts us to the role of intellectuals in art worlds in a way that usefully complements Bourdieu's analysis. Becker reminds us that the relative status of craft and fine art, and of the different manifestations of

craft, cannot be explained in terms of any intrinsic, functional or aesthetic, properties.

It would be useful to consider the craft world as an extension of Becker's concept of the art world. The fine art world has more established institutions and has therefore developed a greater homogeneity of background and education among the members of its networks, so that they occupy essentially similar habituses, which is not true of many of the craft world's networks. In terms of explaining the disparity in the status of the fine arts and crafts this could be seen as one of the strengths of the fine art world. The thesis argues that the craft world has aspired to emulate this homogeneity.

Raymond Williams (1962) will also be referenced as a useful guide to the ways that disparate meanings, values, and practices are incorporated into a dominant cultural and social order.

An Inappropriate Practice

Writing in 1990 and reflecting on developments over the previous two decades, Christopher Frayling, at that time Professor of Cultural History at the Royal College of Art, observed that:

> from Victorian times up to the beginning of the 1970s the popular definition of craft had existed as a relative continuum. Then it had become unrecognisable: By the 1970s, with the arrival of an avant-garde for the very first time in the history of crafts, the whole picture had fragmented.... Art college avant-garde crafts at one end of the spectrum, amateur crafts at the other and ne'er the twain shall meet. Shock value at one end, craft as solace - or therapy even - at the other. (Frayling, 1990, p.99)

Whilst craft has been described as retreating from public intellectual discourse in the twentieth century, critical and theoretical writing had become central to fine art practice, to the point where the art object had become secondary to the meaning that it embodied. The philosopher and critic Arthur Danto observed that 'to see something as a work of art requires something that the eye cannot descry - an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an

artworld' (Danto, 1964, p.580). Indeed, in mapping the course of conceptual art Lucy Lippard had given her book the title *Six years: the dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972* (Lippard, 1973). This title epitomized the idea that the object had negligible significance other than as a vehicle for meaning. The site of that meaning could be anything.

Chapter 1 described the emergence of the Romantic idea of the artist as a special channel for truth, but this trend can also be contextualized within a much wider, late twentieth century, social and political phenomenon, which had started before the period of interest here in a number of different ways. Historians and social commentators had, for instance, begun to argue that many existing written histories might be critiqued as subjective or biased, class-based, racist, nationalist, colonialist-imperialist and sexist. They set out to explain and redress previously ignored ideologies and histories.

Modernism, as it advocated the autonomy of the artist (for example Genter, 2010) and the ideal of an autonomous aesthetic in art, came to be seen as a tool of reaction where it denied the historical and social context of art production, or the notion that its 'truths' were not free of culturally constructed value. It could be claimed that the art world had reinforced what was essentially an elitist practice focused on a selective, usually male, standard.

This shift in thinking is associated with the gathering impetus towards Postmodernism. Defining the philosophy and aesthetic of Postmodernism is a notoriously elusive matter (Hebdige, 1996, p.174-175). It can be seen simply as setting out a break with Modernism, and a rejection of late modernist, minimalist, ideals. It is understood as a late twentieth century artistic and cultural shift in which previous perceptions of meaning based on a continuity of conditions – in, for example, the production and consumption of both objects for use and artistic creations - are dissolved and fragmented, to become what might be described as aesthetic experiences. In the wider cultural sense, the condition of post-modernity is exemplified by the way in which the idea of 'production' came to be regarded as not simply the making of material things, but also what could be called cultural production - the transformation of work

itself to become the 'object' of its own activity, a spectacle to be consumed by the viewer as 'experience' (Bourdieu, 1996).

Sandy Nairne described this shift in 1987:

> At an extreme...the post-modern world is seen as totally commodified; culture is flattened out, with little remaining difference between "high" and "low" culture, little argument between fine art and kitsch. or between the "avant-garde" and the academic. The world is reduced to a series of simulacra: there is a new depthlessness, appearance is everything. Nothing is original or authentic because the world is experienced second-hand. There is a new sense of nostalgia as we lose a secure sense of our place in history; all culture becomes a parody of past forms. (Nairne, 1987, p.22)

It also became identified with a particular stylistic shift. Whilst Modernism had rejected figurative, decorative and ornamental, mythological, cross-cultural and historical references, Postmodernism keenly embraced them. Postmodernism came to be recognized as a superficial style, particularly in architecture and design, which 'quoted' historical form and decoration. In art, design, literature, and film-making, Postmodernism 'borrowed from' high art, popular culture, the mass media and kitsch, combining them together as 'pastiche'. In some ways this was evocative of the nineteenth-century 'historicism', in which stylistic references were deployed arbitrarily by industrial manufacturers, which had so provoked the Arts and Crafts movement.

Alongside these stylistic properties were challenges to assumptions regarding the way that meanings are made and valued. These challenges were based in 'cultural theories' that came from a number of sources. In particular, since 1945, a body of literature had developed (mostly in France and coming from linguistic, psychoanalytic and anthropological sources) around the studies of semiotics and structuralism, which explored the ways in which meanings are constructed through 'signs' and perceptions of those signs (this literature will be discussed further in Chapter 3). Archaeology provided related models through the study of the products of the material cultures of different societies; psychology and psychoanalysis sought to explain people's motivations, including the need for creative or symbolic expression (for example Koestler,

1964); and left wing philosophy continued to advocate the democratic expression of this need.

From the 1970s sociological methodology had been used to identify the frameworks within which the arts are produced, understood and valued, and how arts hierarchies are constructed (for example Becker, 1982: Bourdieu, 1984). These hierarchies were challenged from a number of different perspectives: the women's movement, for example, had showed how socially constructed patriarchal attitudes and language had affected perceptions of value.

In the visual arts, the interest in semiotics and cultural theory stimulated a shift towards works that were literary in intention or that had a relationship to meaning that was essentially literary.

So, the increasing importance, from the early 1970s, of theoretical discussion to the field of 'the crafts' can be located within a set of intellectual and ideological approaches, and considered as a product of wider debates that were critical of Modernism in relation to aesthetic, social, historical, political and theoretical issues. Furthermore, this turn was conflated with changes in higher education post 1960 that saw a move away from craft based training towards a liberal arts approach and the canonization of theory within arts education.

Finding a niche in a culture that contested continuity of practice and relative values such as workmanship and fitness for purpose, and where meaning was treated as a literary property, was, at times, an uncomfortable challenge for craft:

> The general view was that craft needed to be defined and then theorised in order to take its place alongside video, time based art and film as an appropriate subject for cultural studies departments in universities. In pragmatic terms this was probably true – theorise or die! But in fact craft objects reified or embodied theory – commenting profoundly on the world of things and on consumption, on fine art, design, mass production and the nature of materials – visually rather than verbally.

> ...the contest between object and word, between textile and text is often an unequal one. At one conference I heard a paper in which a complementary studies tutor demonstrated (with slides) how he had rescued one student from a career making handsome earthenware pots. The students practice was 'liberated' by a course of reading... In no time the student was making tented 'performance landscapes' out of rip-stop nylon, PVC tube, carbon fibre and rubberized cord which commented on the 'constructedness' of nature. It was a curious occasion – a well received paper at a Crafts Council funded conference that seemed to indicate that craft practice was inappropriate in the late twentieth century. (Harrod, 1999, p.464)

The paradox that Harrod describes here characterizes a dilemma for 'the crafts' as it sought to engage with critical theory. It also suggests a further paradox: that cultural theory, which set out to challenge Modernist conventions had become a new orthodoxy with its own conventions to which all fields would be subject – an art historical mode which supported the status quo of a cultural elite.

In order to further understand contemporary crafts' relationship to the new orthodoxy and as it sought recognition by the cultural elite, it would be useful to look at some the institutional constituents of the art-craft world as it fashioned a new social and organizational setting.

Higher Education

Prior to 1960 English higher art education considered design, sculpture and painting to be based on drawing skills and knowledge of anatomy, composition and perspective. However, The National Advisory Council on Art Education, better known as The Coldstream Report (1960), recommended a shift of emphasis away from professional craft-based training towards a liberal education in art. It was a change that had significant implications for art education, in particular for the relationship of studio practice to art history and theory.

The goal of the Coldstream Report was to bring art education into line with undergraduate degrees. This would be partly achieved by including a

compulsory academic element in the new Diploma in Art and Design (Dip. AD). Coldstream intended the history of art to be complementary to studio practice, which was the main object of study. It was recommended that history of art be studied throughout the course and examined for the diploma (Ashwin, 1975, p.98). What was to be taught in the name of complementary studies and art history was, however, vague and was left to the interpretation of the tutor or the institution.

Whilst the Dip. AD legitimated art education by introducing an element of academic work, the lack of formulation ensured that complementary studies remained marginal in relation to art practice. Although The Coldstream Report can be credited with introducing complementary studies into art, it certainly did not guarantee that any critical or rigorous art theory or art history was in fact taught. Four years later the Summerson Report criticised both the 'lack of emphasis given to the study of original works' and the absence of 'serious interest in the social relationships of the arts, either in the past or in our own time' (Ashwin, 1975, p.112).

Moreover, in some ways the Coldstream Report actually exacerbated the divide between theory and practice. The Summerson report describes a:

> ... certain resistance to the whole idea, as if History of Art were some tiresome extraneous discipline which was being imposed on the natural body of art studies. (Ashwin, 1975, p.114)

Complementary studies and art history were supposed to have a strongly supporting role in the newly devised Dip. AD, but, by separating history and theory in the classroom, The Coldstream Report actually designed a separation between art theory and art practice into the system:

> The priority, autonomy and prestige conferred on studio work guaranteed a generally irreconcilable breach between studio and lecture room, practice and theory and history, 'doing' and 'talking'. (Candlin, 2001, p.304)

The Dip. AD, introduced by Coldstream, had originally been conceived of as the equivalent to a first degree (Ashwin, 1975, p.130) and in 1974 when the

National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design (NCDAD) merged with the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), the Dip. AD became an undergraduate degree. Following the merger and the change from Dip. AD to Bachelor of Arts it was declared that 'in future art and design will be regarded and treated as an integral part of higher education rather than an isolated subject area with its own institutions, procedures and validation body' (Ashwin, 1975, p.149).

The shift to degree status provided a catalyst for a further shift away from craft as technical skill towards craft as vehicle for aesthetic and intellectual expression.

Not everybody was happy with these developments. At Hornsey there was opposition to the perceived elitism of the DipAD (Tickner, 2008), and the pottery course at Harrow was the antithesis of the DipAD approach, having been developed with the intention of providing practical workshop training (Harrod, 1999, p.240).

In their study of craft education and training commissioned by the Crafts Council, Ashwin et al. (1998) identified a range of courses that were material specific at both Higher (HE) and Further (FE) Education levels. However, the report suggests that the emphasis of the degree courses is towards design for industry. Institutions had been asked whether they were orientated towards industry or independent practice. The researchers found that 'the questions appeared to swim against the stream of presumptions that art and design courses are predominantly intended for designing for industry, and that to stress craft elements in design courses seemed perverse' (Ashwin et al., 1988, pp.30-31). The emphasis of FE courses, on the other hand, was on the teaching of technical skills, again with an orientation towards meeting the needs of industry.

In 1981 Crewe and Alsager College of Higher Education introduced a course with the title BA Crafts. This was an early identification of 'craft' as an independent academic discipline, distinct from material specific disciplines. The course description emphasized an intellectual approach. Practical teaching was

offered in the areas of wood, metal, ceramics and textiles, but particular weight was given to ideas or thinking as central to the making process. The language used stresses re-definition and originality, and calls attention to the relationship of craft to art and design. The last sentence here confirms the redefined concept of craft as something separate from any traditional associations:

> Your degree is concerned with the re-defined role of the craftsperson in present day society, and the spirit of innovation and vitality being generated in the crafts, and which has the support of such agencies as the Crafts Council.
>
> It is based on the belief that this re-defined role can best be fulfilled by people who have an understanding, through experience, of the essential interaction between art, craft, and design - and that this is best achieved through an approach to art and design education which integrates rather than separates these elements.
>
> The philosophy of the degree is concerned with originality of ideas and ways of working through experiment and personal discovery. Materials are used for their properties and qualities as appropriate to resolving problems and expressing ideas, rather than by reference to any particular craft or skill. (BA Crafts Handbook,1990, pp.2-3)

Other courses followed that suggested a generic understanding of craft, such as the BAs in Design Crafts at Cumbria College of Art and Design, and Art and Craft Studies at Coventry Polytechnic, whilst other degrees were introduced that referred more specifically to particular practices, such as the BA Furniture Design and Craftsmanship at Buckinghamshire College of Art and Design and Siversmithing, Jewellery and Allied Crafts at the City of London Polytechnic.

The Royal Collage of Art played a considerable role in nurturing the artistic aspirations of its students in the early 1970s, with the ceramics department producing graduates like Alison Britton (fig.3), Elizabeth Fritsch, Jacqueline Poncelet and Carol Nicol who all went on to gain attention as leaders in the field of art-ceramics.

Edmund de Waal (2003) in his history of twentieth century ceramics makes the point that during this period:

> The great majority of the ceramicists making 'disagreeable objects',

work that set out to 'challenge', were eventually lecturers in either art colleges or university departments.

And that:

> there was a growing gulf between the kind of ceramics supported by the academy and the studio potters who were making their living from functional pottery and to whom this kind of institutional support was not forthcoming. (de Waal, 2003, p.173)

figure 3: Alison Britton (1987) *Big White Jug*

The Government White Paper, *Higher Education: A New Framework* (DoE, 1991) had a further impact on Higher Education. The paper proposed that the 'binary line' between polytechnic and university education be abolished. This proposition was identified as the key to related changes, among which were: A single funding structure; greater cost efficiency through competition and sharing of resources; a countrywide quality unit and funding related quality assessment by the funding councils.

Under the subsequent *Further and Higher Education Act* (DoE, 1992), the polytechnics renamed themselves universities, enabling them to award their own taught and research degrees. The majority of independent art colleges who had never integrated with polytechnics now merged with universities.

All disciplines in the new HE culture were required to participate in the ongoing Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). The RAEs had predated the *Further and Higher Education Act* (DoE, 1992) but they now equated to funding.

Whilst the awarding of first degrees was a new phenomenon and, unlike in other disciplines, postgraduate studies were not seen as an essential preliminary to professional practice in the arts, there was now a proliferation of postgraduate courses. The role of postgraduates had no direct bearing in relation to the RAE. However, they were seen to add to the general profile of a department (Candlin, 2001). The number of postgraduate students is regarded as indicative of a department's research culture, which is given additional weight if there is a relationship between postgraduate and departmental areas of research. Postgraduates therefore have an indirect effect on the RAE and subsequent funding.

The growth of postgraduate study, as well as being the product of educational reforms has to be understood within the intellectual and ideological approaches described earlier in this chapter.

Crafts Council

The focus of this section will be post 1970, with the constitution of the Crafts Advisory Board, which later became the Crafts Council. However, it is illuminating to first examine what came before. The account given here will not be an exhaustive history, but will show the development of the context for the Crafts Council, as well as on-going concerns about an identity for 'the crafts'.

Post war, the principal organisation exhibiting and supporting contemporary craft was the Crafts Centre of Great Britain. The Crafts Centre of Great Britain had been founded in 1948. Funded by the Board of Trade, its remit, as set out in its *Rules*, was to support 'fine craftsmanship' 'as embodied in the work of the Designer Craftsman in the Fine Arts' (Harrod, 1999, p.211), a bundle of words that did little to aid understanding of the field. Nevertheless, rural and vernacular crafts were excluded, as were 'trades' such as watch making and tool making. These exclusions mark a crucial point in the institutionalisation of contemporary craft and helped to define the boundaries of 'fine craftsmanship' for arts policy makers and institutional support thereafter. In addition to these exclusions, the Board of Trade were clear that the justification for supporting the crafts lay in its role as an adjunct to industrial design, as a point of reference, representing exemplary design and workmanship, as a repository of technical and material knowledge and sensibility, and as a testing ground, where an experimental approach to design and production could be taken (Noel White, 1989, p.210). This was written into the Centre's constitution and also the funding agreement with the Board (Harrod, 1999, p.211-17). It is worth noting that this has been a consistent argument for contemporary crafts.

Despite the exclusions, and the strong vision for the crafts from the Board of Trade and its advisors at the Council of Industrial Design, the craftspeople who made up the Centre's membership were quite diverse, and they all had differing needs. Perhaps not surprisingly, there was ongoing debate about definitions and calls for the membership to be more inclusive. David Pye wrote a paper recommending the inclusion of anyone 'who makes something and makes it superlatively well' (cited in Harrod, 1999, p.214). There were calls for closer collaboration with architects, as had happened with the Arts and Crafts movement, and criticism for not including work by fine artists, like Barbara

Hepworth and Henry Moore (Harrod, 1999, p.214), who were regarded as fellow travellers in some way.

There was a sense that in having to make the case for the crafts in relation to other practices and in the constant debates about what was in and what was out, some vital truth about the crafts' capacity to contribute, in themselves, to cultural life was missing.

The Centre struggled to survive and there was talk of creating a dedicated space within the Design Centre. Misha Black, a member of the Council and Professor of Industrial Design at the Royal College, argued that without the inclusion of craft, design risked becoming a purely technical practice, 'starved of the basic inspiration which came from the arts and crafts' (cited in Harrod, 1999, p.216). However, despite vocal support from some members of the Council for Industrial Design, the fit between the Design Centre and the crafts did not seem comfortable and the proposal came to nothing. Nevertheless an exhibition, *Hand and Machine,* focused, naturally, on craft in relation to design for industry, took place in 1963.

The Crafts Centre in this incarnation was forced to close when it failed to raise the match funding that its Board of Trade support had depended upon.

At this time Cyril Wood was the Director of the Centre. Woods had been a BBC producer and had also worked for the Arts Council. He was very well connected in the art world and was an enthusiast for the crafts, with a broad sense of what they were. He had curated an exhibition titled *The Mark of the Maker*, which had accommodated both a Rolls Royce engine, displayed on a plinth, and textiles by Ann Sutton. In 1964 he published a memorandum, *Preliminary proposals for the establishment of a Crafts Council of Great Britain* (Wood, 1964), setting out a vision for a body modelled on the Arts Council. The Crafts Council would raise funds for the Crafts Centre, develop an index of makers and a programme of education in the crafts. Wood proposed that, rather than the Board of Trade, the Ministry of Education was the most suitable funding body. This once again demonstrates the mutability of the crafts and

raises the issue of where they should be placed and what impact that has on our understanding of them.

In 1966 the Crafts Centre reopened in Earlham Street in Covent Garden, where it developed a programme of exhibitions that took a broad view of the crafts. The Centre supported young makers and created a lively context for showing crafts, for instance holding concerts by Donovan and Yehudi Menuhin in the gallery (Harrod, 1999, p.217). These associations with the creative spirit of the times placed the crafts within the broader context of the arts.

Meanwhile, Cyril Wood recruited a Board of the great and the good for the Crafts Council of Great Britain, which continued to pursue a Government supported body along the lines of the Arts Council. Wood continued to make the case for crafts in relation to industry, the Council's first exhibition, held in 1964, was entitled *Craftsmanship and Industry,* but his vision was broader and more inclusive. The Council established a programme of craft workshops, 'open to anyone with a desire to work with their hands' (Harrod, 1999, p.218).

In 1966, with support from Jennie Lee, Britain's first Arts Minister, the Board of Trade made a grant of £10,000 to support the crafts. The grant was split three ways with £5000 to the Crafts Council, £4000 to the Craft Centre and £1000 to the Scottish Craft Centre. This level of funding would continue until 1970, at which point it would not be renewed. In 1968 the Crafts Council published a paper, *The Hand and Mechanisation: Report on a Pilot Scheme. A Plan for the Future* (Crafts Council, 1968), recommending the formation of a new non-trading, grant making body with a Royal Charter, along the lines of the Arts Council.

In 1970 Lord Eccles, the Paymaster General (with responsibility for the arts, delegated from the Department of Education and Science) announced that he was taking charge of the crafts alongside his responsibilities for the Arts Council and other arts bodies. He would create a Crafts Advisory Committee (CAC) which would advise the Paymaster General 'on the needs of the artist-

craftsman' and 'promote...a nation-wide interest and improvement in their products' (House of Lords, 1970).

Although the term 'artist-craftsman' is no more precise than the 'designer-craftsman' employed by the Crafts Centre of Great Britain in its rules, the use of the descriptor marks a clear shift in emphasis and a new image for the crafts:

> The crafts have long been recognised as an assembly of activities which fall between the fine arts and industry. Hitherto the industrial aspect has been held to be more important and the crafts have been the responsibility of the Board of Trade. Presidents of the Board of Trade, notably Sir Stafford Cripps, have taken a personal interest in the artist-craftsman, but the present Government consider that the time has come to recognize the individual skills of these men and women by transferring responsibilities in relation to their activities to the Minister responsible for the arts. I welcome this change and will try to be of service to the wide variety of artist-craftsmen whose work I admire very much. (House of Lords, 1970)

Following the announcement, Lord Raglan asked what exactly an 'artist-craftsman' was. Lord Eccles did not elaborate on the genesis of the term, first used by Bernard Leach in *A Potter's Book*, but it was obvious what his interest was:

> My Lords, I think that I may say that this is a very difficult definition; but clearly there are craftspeople whose work really equals that of any artist in what one might describe as fine arts; there are others who are really very nearly industrial producers. Our intention is to go for quality first. (House of Lords, 1970).

In the CAC's first published report, *The Work of the Crafts Advisory Committee 1971-74* an explanation is attempted: an 'artist-craftsman' was a maker whose work, 'although often rooted in traditional techniques, has an aim which extends beyond the reproduction of past styles and methods' (CAC, 1974).

In 1981 Peter Dormer interviewed Lord Eccles for Crafts magazine. Reflecting on the setting up of the CAC he said: 'We could have given more money to the Arts Council and asked them to add a new department for the crafts. The second thing I could have done was to add crafts to the Design Council. But the Design Council should be primarily concerned with industry... the crafts bridged

the gap between art and industry' (Dormer, 1981, p.18).

In the light of subsequent developments it is perhaps ironic that establishment support for 'the crafts' as art at this time was at least partly motivated by anxiety and confusion around new directions in fine art practice:

> ...developments within the crafts from the late 1960s onward had a lot to do with three fine art graduates from Leeds Polytechnic who had walked 150 miles to East Anglia with a 10-foot yellow pole tied to their heads; conceptual, minimal and performance art had encouraged the exhibition going public (to say nothing of collectors) to look elsewhere for the values they used to associate with fine art, and they had found these values in the crafts world. (Frayling, 1989, p 17)

Lord Eccles' interest in, and support for the crafts both as a collector and as a minister was a corollary of his antipathy towards the Arts Council. Eccles was a cultural conservative, 'For Lord Eccles, a patrician connoisseur, opinionated, self-assured and a shade priggish, the crafts represented a safe haven, an antidote to the libertarianism of radical theatre, 'happenings' and community arts projects' (Harrod, 1999, p.369).

It should be noted here, for the sake of clarity, that it was the CAC and not the Cyril Woods Crafts Council of Great Britain that would be the official body charged with providing Government support for the crafts from now on. The Crafts Centre and the original Crafts Council would continue jointly to develop as an independent organization funded principally through subscriptions and commission on sales (with some grant aid from the CAC). They restructured and were renamed as Contemporary Applied Arts (CAA) in 1987. An editorial piece in Crafts magazine, All Change at the BCC, explained the reason for this change of name:

> The organization has felt for some years that a name change is necessary to give a clearer indication of the sort of work its membership produces. The new name is descriptive but neutral, without attempting to draw a line between craft and industry, and craft and fine art, and it is hoped that it will clarify the organization's identity and reinforce its area of commitment. (Crafts, 1987, p. 8)

The CAA continues to work as a registered charity representing a selected membership of professional makers from its current premises in Percy Street.

The new emphasis on the artist-craftsman' notwithstanding, the CAC had no independent legal status at this point and was initially managed under the wing of the Council of Industrial Design. It moved to its own premises in 1973 and received its Royal Charter in 1982. In April 1979 the Committee was renamed the Crafts Council and the Committee Secretary's title was changed to Director.

The Royal Charter set out the Council's aims and objects as including 'to advance and encourage the creation and conservation of works of fine craftsmanship.'[8] The emphasis was placed strongly on helping craftspeople at the beginning of their careers to establish themselves in business. The other main responsibility, as outlined in the Royal Charter, was 'to foster, promote and increase the interest of the public in England and Wales.' These aims were reflected in the Council's activities, which, in addition to financial aid to individual craftspeople, included: organizing exhibitions, both touring and in its own London gallery, firstly in Waterloo Place, and latterly at Pentonville Road, Islington; providing an information service which including an index of selected craftspeople as well as a non-selected database; promoting educational activity both at amateur and professional level; organizing trade fairs and supporting British presence at overseas fairs; publishing Crafts magazine, as well as books and pamphlets on a range of craft-related issues; providing grant aid for the support and promotion of craft by the Welsh Arts Council and the Regional Arts Boards in England (later to become restructured as Arts Council England).

The focus of discussion here is the Crafts Council, which had responsibility for England and Wales, but some reflection on provision for Scotland and Northern Ireland is instructive. In Scotland, responsibility rested on the Joint Crafts Committee for Scotland, which had been a recipient of the funding from the Board of Trade referred to earlier. This was restructured as the Crafts Consultative Committee in 1977 with funding responsibility transferred to the

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[8] in Crafts Council Annual reports

Small Business Division of the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board. From 1979 both contributed funding for Highland Craftpoint. This was concerned with small craft businesses in the Highlands and Islands region, until 1987 when its remit, under the new title Craftpoint, was extended to the whole of Scotland. This structure was revised again in 1991, when Scotland by Design was set up. This new body was charged with providing commercial advice to craft businesses as well as organizing trade fairs and exhibitions. While Scottish funding agencies shared some of the Crafts Council's interest in advancing the work of the craftsperson as artist, support in Scotland was directed much more to the idea of craft as a small business activity. Among the schemes it operated were, for example, a setting-up scheme for small businesses and a workshop equipment scheme to provide established businesses with capital to buy tools or machinery (Blench, 1983, p.15).

In 1992 a new organization, the Association for Applied Arts, was formed to promote the interests of craftspeople in Scotland. Its principal concern was to press for extra Government support for artist craftspeople, which was seen to have weakened in the wake of the closure of Highland Craftpoint and the Craft Centre in Edinburgh the previous year. As a result of lobbying by this and other campaigning groups, in 1993 the Scottish Office announced additional funding for craft in Scotland, to be channelled through the Crafts Council and the Scottish Arts Council. Through this, Scottish practitioners would receive the same kind of support as that enjoyed by those in England and Wales, existing services of the Crafts Council would be made available to them, and the involvement of the Scottish Arts Council would ensure a mechanism of support that would suit particular Scottish requirements. (Crafts, 1983, p.13)

Support for craft in Northern Ireland was mainly provided by the Local Enterprise Development Unit, which supported small businesses. This was linked to the promotion of the province's small business sector, in a similar way to that in which the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas (CoSIRA) promoted craft through its assistance to small firms in England. Unlike the rest of the British Isles, Northern Ireland was without a centrally funded support

organization dedicated to the crafts. However support was available through non-government bodies such as the Guild of Designer Craftsmen of Northern Ireland. In 1986 the Guild organized a seminar at which makers and representatives of organisations from the UK and Eire shared their experiences of, respectively, setting up craft businesses and supporting the crafts in their regions. In a report of the event by John Kindness for *Crafts*, he observes that it was clear that the emphasis in Northern Ireland was towards 'the concept of the crafts as an industry rather than the art-orientated, product-led situation favoured by the Crafts Council' (Kindness, 1987. p.9).

In September 1989 the Wilding report *Supporting the Arts* was published. One of its recommendations was that the Crafts Council should lose its Royal Charter and merge with the Arts Council. This move was strongly opposed by both makers and institutions, and in March 1990 the Minister for the Arts, Richard Luce, announced that the Crafts Council would remain independent but that in future it should liaise more closely with the Arts Council (Harrod, 1994, p.19).

In 1997, the recently elected Labour Government created a new senior ministry: the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). On the 24th of July the following year the DCMS (1998) published *The Comprehensive Spending Review: A New Approach to Investment in Culture*. Once again the document recommended that the Crafts Council should be merged into a new body with the Arts Council, and once again there was significant resistance. The outcome was that from the 1st of April 1999 the Crafts Council became a client of the Arts Council (ACE) rather than a non-Departmental public body in its own right. ACE would now take responsibility for national crafts policy and strategy. This was an important change for the crafts that was intended to address the institutional split between the crafts and other visual arts (Buxton, 1999, p.70). Nevertheless, whilst there would now be a single body bringing together support for the arts and crafts at national level, the work with craftspeople and the public that the Crafts Council did would be safeguarded.

The complexity of these arrangements speaks of the diversity of the field and of

the tensions that arose in attempting to institutionalize the crafts.

On paper the Crafts Council's remit has remained relatively open. The objects in the Charter were couched in fairly general terms: 'to advance and encourage the creation of works of fine craftsmanship and to foster, promote and increase the interest of the public in the works of craftspeople and the accessibility of those works to the public.' However, it was clear from the start that the Crafts Council was to pursue a particular 'art-orientated, product-led' conception of the crafts. The crafts would be urbane, professionalized, distanced from ideological positions and rural associations.

The emergence of the avant-garde crafts canon

Tanya Harrod describes the 1970s as:

> ... witnessing a virtual reinvention of the purpose of the crafts. Stripped of ideology and social responsibility, the crafts began to function unashamedly as treasure, remote from the issues of design reform which had surfaced in the mid-nineteenth century, and from the earnest discussions of crafts and 'the machine' and links with industry which had dominated the previous three decades. (Harrod, 1999, p.370)

The emphasis that the Crafts Council placed on 'craft' can be observed through its outputs: the makers selected for support through its setting up grants and the selected index; its publication, *Crafts* Magazine; and through the exhibitions that it staged.

The Crafts Council Development Award, generally known as the Setting Up Scheme, was a central plank of the support offered to practitioners. The scheme has been running since 1973, since when it has awarded over 1500 grants (Barcley, 1991, p.9). In theory anyone who could demonstrate the necessary ability and knowledge was eligible for a setting-up grant, in practice by far the majority were awarded to those with an art-based college education (Bourne, 1991, p.36). The general policy was that applicants must have finished

their studies, be about to set up their own business, or be within 3 years of having done so, and exercise personal control over the making process (Crafts Council, no date). Although the Charter talks in general terms about 'fine craftsmanship', there is no clear definition of what that means. However, certain practices have been excluded from the Setting Up Scheme. A call for applicants in *Crafts* in 1994, for instance, states that 'craftspeople working in restoration, conservation and reproduction are ineligible' (Crafts,1994).

In its early days *Crafts* magazine had reflected the diverse nature of the crafts, the variety of practices that sat within that classification. Looking at the magazine in the seventies This might include: craft as skilled trade, either employed in traditional artisanship, as in an article describing the casting of a bell at the Whitechapel bell foundry (Coleman,1976, pp.29-32) or in a more contemporary context, as in an article about the builders of the Hesketh-Ford formula one racing car (Best, 1976 pp.37-42); craft in the arts and crafts tradition, as in an article by Ray Finch, reflecting on his work with Michael Cardew in the 1930's (Finch, 1976, pp.37-41); craft as ethnographic artefact, as in an article on Indian embroidery from the Thar Desert (Graham,1977, pp.37-39); and craft as art, as in a review of a performance by textile artist Harry Boom (Sutton, 1977, p.45).

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Amongst this diversity of content different models of craft were debated. The July/August edition of 1978, for instance, features a piece titled Sculptors in Limbo in which makers Glenys Barton, Barry Flannagan and Nicholas Pope discuss the possibilities of ceramics as sculpture and the limitations of categories (Barton et al, 1978, pp.32-39). The November/December edition of the same year featured a long extract from a book, Pottery Form, in which the author, David Rhodes articulated a 'traditional potter's philosophy' (Rhodes, 1978, pp.17-21). Rhodes' views have a clear lineage with Arts and Crafts writing:

> Today the impulse to form, and the opportunity to deal directly with
> our own self as projected in tangible form in the outer sphere, is
> thwarted. Mechanisation, industrialisation, division of labour,
> commercialisation and standardisation have wiped out most of the

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formerly abundant opportunities for the individual to function through craft. Great gains bring great losses, and men and women have been left with a feeling of being cut off from themselves with a loss of identity. (Rhodes, 1978, p.19)

For the most part these kinds of articles sit comfortably beside each other and seem to be in the spirit of internal, familial debate, concerned with expanding the boundaries of the category, rather than narrowly defining the crafts.

It is notable that much of the writing in Crafts at this time was by craft makers themselves. This had been a consistent practice since the Arts and Crafts movement. The tradition that began with Morris and, later on, Ashbee and Lethaby, continued with Eric Gill's copious essays and pamphlets, Leach's A Potter's Book and David Pye's writing in the 60s. However, as Tanya Harrod points out, most of the writing in Crafts in the 70s tended to be 'friendly, even celebratory' (Harrod, 1999, p.420). This was not to say that the writing wasn't intelligent and nuanced, or, for that matter, critical. The exhibition reviews in the November/December 1976 edition are full of disparaging comment: 'superb execution is marred by inadequate consideration of the design in the initial stages and overpowering complexity of colours and textures' (Johnson, 1976, p.48), and 'had I seen this exhibition ten or even fifteen years ago, I would have been as unimpressed as I am now' (Glasser, 1976, p.47) for example.

It was quite common during the 70s for the magazine to feature illustrated articles on techniques. For instance, Ray Flavell outlined the basic techniques of glassblowing in a two-part article published in 1977 (Flavell, 1977, p.25).

Interviews with craftspeople usually referred to techniques and to the experience of making. In the article cited earlier, in which Ray Finch recalls working under Michael Cardew at Winchcombe in the 1930s, he gives a long and detailed description of firing the kiln. The description not only gives a clear account of a process, but it evokes a way of life:

> ... The workshop was cleaned, the fires laid, and six barrow-loads of coal wheeled into each fire mouth. Cordwood was also stacked near the kiln and all was made ready. The fires were lit very early in the

morning. Mr. Comfort would keep a slow fire all day rising to a moderate fire by evening. If there were large pots in the kiln this slow fire might be extended by twelve hours or more... at 5 pm Mr. Comfort went home and Michael took over. A kiln log was made out, a friend of Michael's would arrive to help with the stoking, Mariel would appear with a basket of good food and we settled down for a long night. By 9 or 10 o'clock a few pieces of cordwood were added to the coal stoke and by midnight we peered through a spyhole in the chimney to look for faint 'colour' at the vents in the dome... (Finch, 1976, p.40)

Both the tone of the writing and the nature of the advertising in the magazine, which is dominated by adverts for tools, materials and services for makers, suggest that the readership was largely made up of craft practitioners. This is confirmed by the results of a readership survey discussed in an editorial piece written in 1980:

...one in seven of you is a potter, one in six a weaver, one in eight is involved in other kinds of textiles areas, and one in ten interested in woodwork... closely followed by jewellery glass and silver. (Margetts, 1980, p.7)

The particular needs of practitioners as well as the diversity of their interests were also confirmed in the survey:

There was also a widespread call for more articles about setting up a business, selling work and studying a craft... Many avid readers want more about traditional crafts, more from the regions, more from abroad, more about "how it's done", and more about the philosophy of crafts, about amateurs and "undiscovered" professionals. (Margetts, 1980, p.7)

The first edition of Crafts in 1973 had declared a position that was at odds with the content of the magazine in its first decade: The CAC were redefining the concept of crafts, 'art and craft must be allowed to develop freely' (Rogers, 1973, p.21). It reassured its readership of craftspeople that times were changing and their work was becoming less functional – they should allow their work to develop without worrying about where it was going to fit in (Rogers, 1973, p.21).

The original editor of Crafts, Marigold Coleman, was not a specialist. She described herself as 'an ordinary middle class person who likes things and wants to know more about them.' (Sandino, 1991, p.186) She had difficulty finding professional journalists and critics with knowledge and interest in the crafts. It was perhaps not surprising therefore that the magazine would be largely made up of contributions from established craftspeople who would write about what concerned them, and that consequently there might be room for some disparity between the CAC driven rhetoric and the image that emerged from the articles.

It was in the 1980s that, under the editorship of Martina Margetts, professional critics and commentators were drawn into the craft world from the outside. Margetts, writing in 1983, in the tenth anniversary edition of the magazine, described the 'predominantly fine art aesthetic' (Margetts, 1983, p.6) of the edition as reflecting 'the significant and prominent development in the decade'. She says that 'the fine art end of crafts became increasingly buoyant through patronage and student commitment which feeds the professional pool' (Margetts, 1983, p.6). Margetts optimistically declares that:

> the crafts world, of necessity, is becoming more professional, with craft historians beginning to map out an academic pedigree, critics honing the analysis and craft educators outlining a range of careers in crafts. Marketers and investors, here and abroad are keen to be involved, and the media at last show signs of treating the best crafts with a more serious and sophisticated interest. (Margetts, 1983, p.6)

Margetts is describing here the emergence of, in Becker's terms, a classical 'art-craft world':

> When an innovation develops a network of people who can cooperate nationwide, perhaps even internationally, all that is left to do to create an art world is to convince the rest of the world that what is being done is art, and deserves the rights and privileges associated with that status. At any particular time and place, certain ways of displaying work connote 'art', while others do not. Work that aspires to be accepted as art usually must display a developed aesthetic apparatus and media through which critical discussion can take place. Likewise aspirants to the status of art have to dissociate

themselves from commercial crafts or related enterprises. (Becker, 1982, p.339)

Margett's is also evoking Bourdieu's cultivated habitus, an intellectual ghetto in which:

> A work of art... has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded. (Bourdieu, 1984, p.2)

What is missing from Margett's description of the crafts world is practitioners. There is a sense in which a habitus is emerging and developing, into which a new generation of craftspeople must be educated. Through this process 'organizational forms subordinate the artist increasingly to partially or entirely extraneous sources of control' (Becker 1978, p.877).

It wasn't just practitioners who were left out of the equation. The objects of the Crafts Council had included 'to... promote and increase the interest of the public in the works of craftsmen and the accessibility of those works to the public...' In 1984 Lord Eccles, the creator of the Crafts Advisory Committee, wrote to the Minister for the Arts to draw his attention to what he saw as an imbalance in the Council's policies:

> I would like to see more emphasis within the Council on the market potential for craft work of all kinds, not simply for what might be called work of "international" calibre. This means defining a need for attractive teapots as much as "body jewellery". (Eccles, 1984 cited in Harrod, 1994, p.14)

Margetts introduced a Comment section, and it is in these specially commissioned thought pieces that a sense of division begins to be played out. Much commentary is concerned with defining the area of interest, with sorting the sheep from the goats. In a 1986 edition, in a Comment piece entitled 'A Minority Sport', David Poston writes:

> The word craft has become meaningless, through the plethora of interpretations which it has been given. In trying to differentiate between these, I divide the crafts into two distinct categories.

The first category I would call the therapeutic crafts, which stress the occupational therapy aspect of making. The hobbyist gains mainly from the physical aspect of craft work, which is seen as the core of the activity. I would also include in the therapeutic category the maker who is professional, but for whom the craft market, the dogs, the children, the wholefood, the VW microbus and the distinctive clothing are all part of the act. For this person it is above all the sense of identity which he/she gains from what they are doing that is important; romantic therapy if you like...

The second category I would call the cerebral crafts, the use of crafts as a medium for thought. (Poston, 1986, pp.12-13)

The derogatory tone of the description here, along with the cursory dismissal of notions like 'identity' or 'therapeutic crafts', set against the elevation of some craft as cerebral demonstrates a division not only between notions of populist, or traditional crafts and craft as art but between craft as an activity and craft as a product.

Throughout 1982 *Crafts* published a series of five articles with the general title of Perspectives on Craft. Written by Christopher Frayling and Helen Snowdon, they were intended 'to stimulate discussion around some of the meanings which have been attached to 'craft' – both as an activity and an idea – in the last 150 years' (Frayling & Snowdon, 1982a, p.16).

Rather as Roger Fry had felt the need to specifically confront and neutralize the intellectual basis of the Arts and Crafts movement in order to allow Modernism to enter into the English imagination in the early twentieth century, Frayling and Snowdon seem to be attempting to articulate a new identity for the crafts, detached from ideological baggage and unhelpful associations. This identity would have a more comfortable fit with the metropolitan, post-modern craft world then under construction. As such it can be regarded as report from the front line of the new craft movement.

These articles tried to argue for an assessment of craft and its contemporary value. The central problem for Frayling and Snowdon is that:

> ... most accounts of craftsmanship depend for their support on sentimentality and conservatism and ...most discussions of craft knowledge remain at the level of hippie folk wisdom... (Frayling and Snowdon, 1982e, p.13)

This problem can only be resolved by distancing contemporary craft from what is described as flawed philosophy and bad history. Craft has to be minted anew. Ultimately though, Frayling and Snowdon are better at deriding those things that craft shouldn't be, at making the break with the past, than at clarifying what craft should be. The artist craftsman can take their place in the art market, producing high quality, high value individualist work. They should also exploit the 'unprecedented opportunities for artist craftspeople to start batch-production without loss of quality – opportunities which might be lost if too much emphasis is given to fine-art values and the aura of original artworks' (Frayling & Snowdon, 1982e, p.13). Either way art-craft ends up as an adjunct, to fine art on the one hand or industrial design on the other. It could be argued that the contradictions in Frayling and Snowdon's position could be usefully resolved with reference to the very history that they have sought to denigrate. One ideal, described in *Nostalgia Isn't What it Used to Be*, is found in Italy, where:

> a group of small workshops, each equipped with numerically controlled machine tools, have linked up to produce high quality craft goods: these workshops have the great advantages of flexible production, smallness of scale, and imaginative individuals who control all the stages in the production of prototypes. (Frayling & Snowdon, 1982e, p.13)

William Morris might have happily concurred with this vision of happy, free workers making socially useful and democratically priced products.

In the 1980s the Thatcher government had sought to encourage the growth of an 'enterprise culture' (Keat & Abercrombie, 1991), and the development of small business was a key policy. The Crafts Council responded by reframing its support for makers in terms of enterprise. The Crafts Council was able to show that craft businesses had a high rate of survival in relation to other businesses. For instance the Council's annual report for 1990-91 showed that 60% of

craftspeople supported over the previous twenty years had survived the recession and were still trading. This performance was three times better than the national average for business survival over the same period.

The design critic and historian Stephen Bayley, writing in 1979, saw the basis for a craft revival in strictly economic terms. He proposed a crucial role for the crafts as small businesses satisfying the market's appetite for commodities of all sorts, at same time evoking the vision for craft that had shaped the post war Craft Centre:

> It is the concern of the industrial designer to sell his divided labour to manufacturers for interpretation in long production runs; it is the concern of the craftsman to provide the public with what the industrialized system, no matter how perfected it becomes, will never be able to supply. When the crafts have established a pitch in the market-place which is founded on genuine popular appeal, and not on folksy charm, the way we live then will be better than the way we live now, or lived in the past. (Bayley, 1979, p.27)

Bayley wants to define craft in relation to other areas of creative production, this time with a distinct position in the marketplace:

> If craft means anything at all, its meaning must include the ideas of making objects which both incorporate some useful function in their characters and also require some sort of virtuoso skill in their creation. But there is also a statistical part to the definition of craft: a work of art must be unique, or like Tom Keating its creator could end up on the wrong side of the law, but a work of craft can be made in small series of identical units without its purchaser feeling cheated. Thus, there is only one step from craft to industrial design, where so far from attempting the uniqueness of an art object, the industrial designer consciously designs for series production. The crafts should come somewhere in between. (Bayley, 1979, p.27)

In Bayley's terms craft claims to art status have a 'statistical' basis in the singularity of its products. Again, there is an attempt to map out a territorial claim for the crafts, not on its own terms, but as 'somewhere in between', and, in this case, in terms of political expediency. However, craft businesses were not necessarily built on the model of enterprise that the Thatcher government had in mind. As Harrod points out, craft businesses often 'kept going because

of artistic commitment rather than entrepreneurial risk taking' (Harrod, 1999, p.415). Research carried out by Alex Bruce and Paul Filmer for the Crafts Council in 1983 had pointed to the low income of craftspeople from their craftwork: £3,200 for men and £1,700 for women (these statistics relate to full-time workers), compared to the average annual earnings of £5,782 and £4,098 respectively (Bruce and Filmer, 1983, p.65). Bruce and Filmer had conducted interviews with craftspeople as part of their *research and found that craftspeople's motivations were far from entrepreneurial:*

> "I think craftsmen should be reminding people that they are people, not cogs in an industrial machine, that the means of production of simple, beautiful and useful objects is within their grasp, and that such work is good for you - spiritually, socially and practically."
>
> "The crafts movement has political importance as part of a wider movement of ecologists, pacifists etc. in shaping a better future - where people will again appreciate using beautiful things that last and are irreplaceable rather than cheap nasty things that break and are easily replaced."
>
> "I believe most strongly that craftsmen are among those who constitute the life-blood of any nation's skill and wisdom; they must be nurtured and encouraged if the nation is to survive in a spiritual sense."
> (Bruce and Filmer, 1983, p.163)

These quotes suggest a persistent link back to Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement.

Many craftspeople, then as now, relied on alternative employment, such as teaching, or a partner's income to supplement their making. Harrod (1999) gives examples of businesses that were successful in terms of employment and turnover, such as the Dart Pottery and Luke Hughes & Company, but points to the criteria, such as creativity and fulfilment for the workforce, that were given priority over financial success, and which placed craft businesses outside of the entrepreneurial mainstream:

> The commitment and determination needed to run a craft-based workshop fitted the Thatcherite model but, ironically, this commitment was invariably fired by wholly un-Thatcherite ideals. (Harrod, 1999,

Nevertheless the continued inclusion of such articles reflects an important issue for an 'art world'. Which is the issue of 'how to organise art work so that people can make a living at it' (Becker, 1982, p.343).

A *Crafts* article from 1987 surveying and comparing the experience of craft galleries in the North and South of England (Buttery, 1987) suggests that the vocational commitment of craft-makers seems to have also applied to gallery owners: '"our turnover is roughly £60,000 a year", says Sue Sloman, "but we couldn't survive if we didn't do other things. We don't make a decent living out of it."' (Buttery, 1987, p.58), and '... there are those like Tides in Seaford and Nexus, more gallery than shop, which, however admirable their intentions, one suspects will never make any money.' (Buttery, 1987, p.59)

The dichotomy between the institutional narrative and the experience of makers that was evident in the magazine during its first decade continued to surface throughout the 80's. In 1986 a *Crafts* edition themed around 'Ruralism' included an article by the potter Elspeth Owen (1986, pp.46-49) in which she talked to craftspeople in the South West of England and reflected on their attitudes. Written at the height of Thatcherism, and at a time when the emergence of a professionalized, art-school educated class of practitioner was starting to impact, the article reveals scepticism about the new craft world.

Interviews with craft practitioners provide a context for a polemical piece in which Owen writes about the difficulty of working in opposition to, or outside of, a dominant culture, 'by whatever system of values a work is produced, in this country it will be marketed in an economy based on competition and within a social organisation which is hierarchical.' (Owen, 1986, p.49) She reminds the reader that ' ...not all craftspeople are clamouring for a mention in *Crafts*.' (Owen, 1986, p.49) and makes an ardent case for a more pluralistic understanding of craft than the craft world *habitus* supports, in which different traditions of making are respected:

The Director of the Crafts Council, David Dougan, once said that he

wanted a craft object (whatever that is) in every home. What a terrifying slogan, when you realize that that could only happen, given the present structure of society, through media promotion and not through the making of hundreds of independent, perhaps idiosyncratic judgements by all sorts of men and women and children. The discrepancy between high and low culture, the production of stars, of experts and of consumers, the clouding of discrimination by cash values, these cannot be eradicated in a society based on inequality. But perhaps we could make some changes. We could tone down the language in which new work is discussed – even ban altogether some words like "exciting" and "brilliant" and "innovative"... We could show equal respect for all traditions, including the "for love" one...
(Owen, 1986, p.49)

It was not the part of a disgruntled older generation of craft practitioners alone to criticize the new wave. Critical writing from outside the crafts, which had been encouraged by Margetts, was not always supportive of the idea of a crafts avant-garde.

Writing in 1984, the critic Peter Fuller wrote an article in which he identified the diverse nature of craft in order to underline his view that the exclusive nature of the crafts revival since the early 1970s was due to misplaced public funding and promotion. This revival had its origins in the 'more self conscious craft tradition of 'Arts and Crafts' studio-based work, especially in pottery, textiles, furniture-making, glass and jewellery.' However, it had recently 'spawned a non-utilitarian 'artist craftsperson', or 'vanguard' tendency, upon which the Crafts Council and this Magazine (Crafts) have lavished a disproportionate share of resources and attention.' (Fuller, 1984, p.13)

Fuller had been a Marxist art critic, but, in a spirit of reaction that recalled the Tory Minister Lord Eccles, he had turned his attention to the crafts as a receptacle of solid values, having become sickened by the conceptual turn in fine art.

Peter Dormer, who had at one time been a champion of the craft revival, railed against much modern craftwork, the 'irrelevance' of which, had 'caused it to mutate from being the livelihood of working-class artisans into an activity of self-

expression for middle-class aesthetes or quasi-artists' (Dormer, 1988, p.135). What he termed the official contemporary crafts world of museums, galleries and magazines was 'not concerned with sheet metal workers or artisans in concrete, since they represent 'trade' as opposed to the 'aesthetic'' (Dormer, 1988, p.135).

Nevertheless, by the 1990s the position had become firmly encoded as received wisdom. Tanya Harrod's history had ended with the 1980s. In 2000 she was commissioned by *Crafts* magazine (Harrod, 2000, p.37-41) to write an article by way of a concluding chapter to her book. She reflected on a number of exhibitions that had been staged by the Crafts Council during the 90s. She explained this choice of approach by arguing that: 'What craft might be is necessarily defined by the contexts in which it is shown' (Harrod, 2000, p.37). The use of the word *shown*, as opposed to *made* or *used* for instance, is telling here, and is suggestive of a particular context for craft. Writing about *The Raw and the Cooked*, a ceramics show curated by Martina Margetts and Alison Britton in 1993, she feels that:

> Though this was not really borne out by the catalogue text, the visual resonance of the show would have interested a student of material culture. I am thinking in particular of the developing neo-Marxist interest in 'things', in their chameleon qualities and their biographical tendency to change their meaning in response to taste- and waste-making mechanisms in society. The work of some of the artists exhibiting in *The Raw and The Cooked* would have delighted a social anthropologist... (Harrod, 2000, p.37)

When Harrod describes the title of this show as being '...suggestive, implying some interest in anthropological writing' (Harrod, 2000, p.37), the parallel implication that it might imply an interest in process seems to be of secondary importance.

Harrod refers explicitly to theory and its impact on current practice:

> Few graduates from art schools would describe themselves as craftsmen or craftswomen. Most of them have read a good deal of theoretical writing and this is reflected in the direction their work takes. For instance the eroticism, wit and beauty of the shoes, handbags and hats shown in

the 1998 Crafts Council exhibition *Satellites of Fashion* paralleled the kind of serious critical attention being given by cultural historians to the psychopathology of fashion. (Harrod, 2000, p. 41)

Harrod discerns a comfortable transaction between theory and practice in which:

...sophisticated writing on textiles by figures like (Pamela) Johnson and Sarat Marharaj has helped to give a context for equally sophisticated work by such figures as Polly Binns, Michael Brennand-Wood and Caroline Broadhead. (Harrod, 2000, p. 41)

There is a sense, however, that what was being described here was more than the contextualization of work that had a rational based in a wider context.

In 1993 the Crafts Council had published a Four Year Plan. In the plan a number of priorities for action were identified, key amongst these was 'the lack of critical, contextual and historical studies', which was described as 'a major barrier to greater public understanding of the crafts' (Crafts Council, 1993, p.12). Certainly, throughout the development of the new crafts since the 1970s there had been an absence of serious theoretical writing on the field. One of the ways that the Crafts Council sought to stimulate critical debate around the crafts was through a series of Fellowships in Critical Studies in the Contemporary Crafts, hosted by the University of East Anglia and jointly funded by the Eastern Arts Board and the Crafts Council.

The first Fellowship appointment was awarded to Peter Dormer in October 1993 and led to the publication of a valuable collection of new writing on craft (Dormer, 1997). Dormer has been introduced earlier here as a critic of the new crafts. His book, *The Culture of Craft*, contained essays by writers such as Paul Greenhalgh, then Head of Research at the V&A, and Rosemary Hill and provided a useful starting point for trying to understand the crafts in the late twentieth century. It dealt with issues including the meaning of crafts within the broader culture; its historical roots; its relationship to new technologies and the role of critical writing. Dormer problematized the relationship between theory and practice, taking the extreme position that 'Craft and theory are oil and water' (Dormer, 1997, p.219). He took the view that craft represented a form of

knowledge that could only be demonstrated and extended through praxis. Craft, in his view, was 'difficult to write or even talk about with clarity and coherence' (Dormer, 1997, p.219), an ironic position for a writer who had contributed so extensively to the recent literature on craft.

The next fellowship, which ran from September 1995 until January 1997 was awarded to Tanya Harrod. Harrod was an art historian who had been concerned with the crafts throughout her career. She was at that time in the process of completing her major historical study, *The Crafts in Britain in the Twentieth Century* (Harrod, 1999). Harrod's fellowship was concluded with a conference: *Obscure Objects of Desire? Reviewing the Crafts in the 20th Century*, the proceedings of which were published as a collection of essays (Harrod, 1997). These essays explored the history of the crafts and the relationship of that history to contemporary practice.

The final fellow in the series (1997–1998) was Pamela Johnson whose intention was to produce a publication that would become a resource for teaching undergraduate contextual studies (Johnson, 1998, p. 9). The resulting book was made up of papers selected from a seminar convened at the University of East Anglia on the 25th April 1998. Johnson had been a sub-editor and then editor of *Crafts* (1987-8), and was one of the writers and critics identified by Harrod as creating a new context for craft makers (Harrod, 2000, p.41). She had, for instance, written extensively about, and championed the work of. Caroline Broadhead (for example Johnson, 1996: Johnson, 1999), whose work had followed a trajectory since the 1970s from jewellery, to 'body sculpture', such as woven nylon cylinder neckpieces that entirely enclosed the head (Dormer & Turner,1985), to installations that represented the body, which, itself, became increasingly dematerialized, represented by its shadow. After graduating from Central School of Art and Design in 1972, Broadhead's intention was to make a living from producing jewellery, but she found that making work for sale conflicted with her desire to experiment with ideas and materials. Gradually ideas became more dominant than practicalities and she realised that she was making pieces that would be difficult to sell as wearable items. From the early 80s Broadhead would rely increasingly on teaching,

alongside grants and awards, to support her practice (Shirley, 2002).

Johnson called her book *Ideas In The Making: Practice In Theory* (Johnson, 1998) and in some ways she was articulating an idea that was to lead the agenda for the crafts into the next century. This could be seen as an explicit intention as the book is described as a resource for teaching. She notes that 'the turn towards theory in the humanities is a major part of recent intellectual history.' (Johnson, 1998, p.13) and argues for 'the value of the crafts' engagement with the theoretical debates which are now embedded elsewhere across the humanities' (Johnson, 1998, p.13).

The book is structured around five themes, each with an introduction written by Johnson. She also contributes a general introduction and a formal paper entitled *Can Theory Damage Your Practice?* (Johnson, 1998, p.15). Johnson's keynote paper described theory as '...a multiplicity of intersecting texts which attempt to analyze language, human subjectivity, history and institutions in ways which produce persuasive accounts of cultural activity' (Johnson, 1998, p.17). She invokes the canon of twentieth century theorists from Marx, Freud and de Saussure to Barthes, Foucault, Derrida and Kristeva who had contributed to new models for understanding the self, society and signifying systems (Johnson, 1998, p.17). She acknowledges the dangers of being over-theoretical or of allowing theory to dominate practice but makes a persuasive argument for valuing theory in relation to practice. She optimistically suggests that contemporary craft has the potential to traverse the polarities of 'the sensuous, sentimental anti-intellectualism that is the worst of essentialism and... the academicized intellectualism that is the worst of post-modernism' (Lippard, 1989, cited in Johnson,1998 p.21). Not only does craft have something vital to offer cross-disciplinary theoretical debates, she argues, but:

> within the body of critical theory (which the craft communities have
> so avoided) there are the conceptual tools which enable us to
> explore the problematic of oppositions such as theory/practice,
> mind/body, subject/object. (Johnson, 1998, p.15)

In her introduction to *Obscure Objects of Desire?* Harrod had noted that most of

the papers were not written by practitioners, and that this might be a cause for concern (Harrod, 1997). Johnson wanted to address this concern (Johnson, 1998, p.10) and ensured that makers were well represented in her book.

However, her argument contained an admonition for practitioners - they have 'avoided' theory and must now engage with it:

> Those who engage with critical theory elsewhere...develop a way of talking to each other across disciplines. It might be useful if we in the crafts could join in. And, if we are inviting them to enter into the *idea* (Johnson's italics) of making, might not we need to consider the idea of theory ourselves? (Johnson, 1998, p.15)

Perhaps Edmund de Waal was referring to this when he asked '...why is there this rather hectoring imperative at the moment for something called critical writing in the crafts?' (de Waal, 2000, p.1).

Johnson's claims regarding the lack of theory in the crafts and the reluctance of practitioners to engage with theory are belied by the contents of her book. As she had intended, contributions from craft practitioners are in the majority and, on the evidence of their papers, these practitioners at least are well versed in theory and the vernacular of theoretical writing in the arts.

In this instance, Johnson's is the voice of the institutional craftworld, as described earlier by Margetts 'with craft historians beginning to map out an academic pedigree, critics honing the analysis and craft educators outlining a range of careers in crafts...' (Margetts, 1983, p.6), now well developed. However, there is a cloistering effect, whereby a particular class of practitioners has evolved out of this ecosystem to meet the needs of the institutional model. The makers represented in *Ideas in the Making* are mostly academics with practices that are heavily invested in that model, exemplified by Caroline Broadhead. When Johnson insisted that 'if you're going to go out into the world, then you go out leading with what your ideas are, what it is beyond textiles that you communicating' (Johnson, 2006) she was seeking to address the wider constituency of makers that remained outside of the institutional purview, insisting not simply that they engage with critical discourse, but that

they adjust their practice so that it made a better fit with that discourse.

What is illustrated here is the process of what Becker calls a 'typical sequence' (Becker 1978, p.863) in which a new organisational setting is developing, in which 'organizational forms subordinate the artist increasingly to partially or entirely extraneous sources of control.' (Becker 1978, p.877)

Following Johnson's keynote paper, she includes a balancing, dissenting second keynote from artist and art historian Jonathan Meuli, who warned against the danger of imbalance in the western intellectual tradition between theory and practice. For the crafts this imbalance was a particular problem. As Linda Sandino has observed:

> Fine art's symbolic value has consistently outstripped the cultural capital of craft and design, both of which have been conventionally invested with use-value rather than conceptual distinction, based on the Western cultural primacy of the intellectual over the manual, content over form. (Sandino, 2004, p.211)

Nevertheless, Johnson's position was more consistent with the tendency of the craft avant-garde and it would be the dominant one over the next 10 years, into the new century.

This tendency would reach its apotheosis when Rosemary Hill delivered the Peter Dormer lecture on the 3rd of December 2001[9]. She gave her lecture the title of *The Eye of the Beholder: Criticism and Crafts*[10]. Hill's argument is that 'the crafts are dissolving and that craft criticism is therefore coming to an end' (Hill, 2002a, p.44). She describes the crafts in their nineteenth century Arts and Crafts form as a negative phenomena, defined by its opposition to industrialisation and the division between the fine and applied arts. To practice a craft was to make 'a critical gesture against the hierarchies of work and class and economics that dominated the social landscape, like Blake's satanic mills.'

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[9] The Peter Dormer Lecture is an annual applied arts lecture, hosted by the Royal College of Art and held in memory of Peter Dormer, the writer and critic who died in 1996. The lecture aims to continue the debate about applied art and society that were central to Dormer's concerns.

[10] Rosemary Hill's lecture was reproduced in 2 parts in Crafts no. 176 May/June 2002 pp. 44-49 and Crafts no. 177 July/August 2002 pp 42-45

(Hill, 2002b, p.45)   She states that such ideas persisted into the 1960s, when craft was associated with the counter culture. However, she assigns the end of this critical picture to the 1970s 'with the arrival of what came to be known as the 'new crafts'. We might date the new crafts, for convenience and quite credibly, from about 1973 when the Crafts Advisory Committee... published the first issue of *Crafts* magazine.' (Hill, 2002a, p.45) The new crafts had 'found their voice and flourished' (Hill, 2002a, p.47) in the space between art and craft. They were 'the product of a moment of transition' (Hill, 2002a, p.47), but, it is her thesis, that moment has now past and:

> The space in which the new crafts grew up has all but closed over. It has become increasingly difficult for the critical eye to perceive any difference between that section of the crafts that is influenced by and cast in relation to art, and art itself. (Hill, 2002a, p.49)

The crafts were now indistinguishable from art and therefore the critical discourse around it could no longer be distinguished. The concept of the crafts, Hill asserts, is dissolving and with it 'craft criticism' as such is coming to an end (Hill, 2002b, p.44), and this, it seemed, was the highest aspiration for the idea of 'craft' at this time – to disappear. It is Hill's contention that 'criticism has an existence independent from art' (Hill, 2002a, p.44). For Hill:

> ...criticism is as free as thought, indeed it is thought, and – should art or music fail – it may apply itself to biology, philosophy or economics. Wherever it lights it will perceive connections and make distinctions. It will find the words to bring new kinds of objects into focus in our collective eye. (Hill, 2002a, p.44)

The critical idea that had come into being 150 years earlier was now ceasing to engage our critical attention (Hill, 2002a,b, p.44). The reason for this, she claims, was that craft simply no longer existed as a separate category of objects. However, whilst Hill asserts the role of artefacts and practices in shaping the discourse that surrounds them she ignores the function of criticism in shaping the practices and objects that its attention lights upon.

There is a sense that the relationship, discussed earlier, between writers like Johnson and artists like Broadhead was more symbiotic than Harrod had

implied (Harrod, 2000, p. 41). Whilst writers like Johnson did create a context for certain kinds of practice, artists like Broadhead were also making work that could be recognized and written about by Johnson.

The agenda that had been proposed in the editorial of the very first edition of Crafts magazine (Rogers, 1973, p.21) had almost, but not quite, come to pass. By the time that Crafts was to celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2003, the editorial would reflect back:

> In March 1973, in issue 1, an article called The Concept of Craft asked, among others, two questions: `What is Craft?' and `How does it differ on the one hand from industry and on the other hand from art?' 30 years on, a third question follows up the second: `Does it matter?' Certainly today few makers consider the barriers between art, craft and design of such significance. Craft and industry are routinely partners, and many designers happily combine the making of one-offs with the production-line process . . . (and) the term craft is now simply `in-adequate' to summarize the collaborative, interdisciplinary diversity of current practice. (Rudge, 2003, p.1)

This paradox, that craft is 'in-adequate', or that it has disappeared, although its meaning demands endless deliberation, seems to have dogged the prolific discourse that had gathered around the new crafts throughout their evolution. As Linda Sandino comments on Rudge's editorial:

> Rudge's position contains a contradiction commonly seen in contemporary discourses of making. On the one hand, it is felt, `barriers' between design, craft and art no longer matter; on the other, the term `craft' is inadequate to describe the diversity of current practice. Evidently, terminology both matters and does not matter, simultaneously. (Sandino, 2004, p. 208)

Frayling and Snowdon had charged the Arts and Crafts movement with a selective evocation of tradition and 'most accounts of craftsmanship' with 'sentimentality and conservatism' (Frayling & Snowdon, 1982e, p.13). Raymond Williams identifies this notion of 'tradition' as 'points of retreat for groups in the society which have been left stranded by some particular hegemonic development' (Williams, 1977, p.116). All that is now left for them is the retrospective affirmation of 'traditional values'. This fits with dominant

accounts of the Arts and Crafts movement (see Chapter 1). But Williams also identifies an opposite position, in which "traditional habits' are isolated by some current hegemonic development, as elements of the past which have now to be discarded' (Williams, 1977, p.116). It can be argued that this is an applicable description of the process of institutionalizing craft, a hegemonic process in which it is necessary to '...discard whole areas of significance, or reinterpret or dilute them, or convert them into forms which support or at least do not contradict the really important elements of the current hegemony' (Williams, 1977, p.116). Williams points out the vulnerability of such institutional hegemony. The New Crafts were vulnerable because they were contested at points where 'the real record is effectively recoverable, and many of the alternative or opposing practical continuities are still available' (Williams, 1977, p.116). Even within the pages of *Crafts* there has been an ongoing 'counter-hegemony', which has sought to 'recover discarded areas' and 'redress selective and reductive interpretations' (Williams, 1977,p.116). They were vulnerable also because 'the selective version of a 'living tradition' is always tied, though often in complex and hidden ways, to explicit contemporary pressures and limits' (Williams, 1977, p. 117). This chapter has described how in the 1980s the Crafts Council had sought to identify 'the crafts' with the entrepreneurial spirit of Thatcherism in ways that did not fit with all the available data about craftspeople's motivations, or incomes. Furthermore, Williams reminds us that 'hegemony is always an active process' (Williams, 1977, p.115). As it sought purchase in a contemporary art world, the institutional craft world failed to recognize the dynamism of that world. The institutional craft world had sought to supervise a limited definition of craft as a particular set of practices and as a kind of thing. It had created a critical focus that turned away from the experience of 'craftwork' as advanced by the Arts and Crafts movement and towards the object, not simply a 'crafted' object but a 'craft' object. In seeking to define what such an object might be it had made itself a hostage to fortune. In any case, as Rosemary Hill herself observed, 'the new crafts never quite arrived. They certainly never made it to the Tate' (Hill, 2002a, p.47). In order to achieve that aspiration it (craft) would be required to disappear.

It might be argued that craft in its broader senses had not disappeared, but that the fragility of the concept of the 'craft' object, was always at risk.

Regardless of Rosemary Hill's prognosis, ideas of craft have persisted, and indeed throughout the first decade of the 21st Century craft theory continued to develop. As Sandino pointed out, the discourse had matured 'from statements of general principles and issues towards greater specificity' (Sandino, 2004, p.209). Discussions about nomenclature are ongoing, but they seem to have become less urgent, to be of secondary concern. Whilst it may not matter what we called it, ideas that suggest continuing connections to the Arts and Crafts tradition have reasserted themselves. Materiality and embodied knowledge are discussed with renewed interest (for example: den Besten & Gaspar, 2009) and there is a resurgent interest in craft as it relates to socially engaged art practices (for example: Greer, 2007, p.402). Recent literature has fed a new interest in craft philosophy (for example: Sennett, 2008, Crawford, 2009); there is a growing debate around craft in relation to late capitalism, globalisation and sustainability (Hughes, 2009) and new technologies suggest the possibility for new models of industrial production based on autonomous workers in small workshops serving local markets (Woolner et al, 2006). All of which necessitates a reassessment of 'craft's' intellectual and ideological traditions. However, the examination of non-aesthetic values in our culture challenges central assumptions of the contemporary art world. An enormous amount has been invested in the craft world and there is, inevitably, some institutional resistance to relinquishing the hard won, precarious, perch that has been secured on the edge of the institutionalised art world.

The next three chapters will further problematize the craft world by looking not only at what has been excluded from that world but also by analysing the limitations of the emergent institutional habitus in its ability to understand and express important qualities in the crafts.

Chapter 3: Craft and Theory

The previous chapter looked at the development of an institutional infrastructure for a new professional crafts with the establishment of the Crafts Council in the 1970s. It described how definitions and understandings of craft during that period were driven as much by external forces such as political and economic initiatives and the academicization of art schools as by aspirations toward theoretical integrity. This chapter will further explore the subsequent limiting effect on discourse that has attended the institutionalization of craft, in particular it will look at the role of theory and various responses to theory from the craft world.

Tanya Harrod had observed the influence of theory on the new crafts (Harrod, 1999, p.464) and Johnson had insisted that craftspeople engage with it (Johnson, 1998, p.13). It was clear that in the process of institutionalization, criticism and theory played an essential role in the reception of the New Crafts.

The word theory derives from the Ancient Greek word *theoria,* meaning sight, or looking upon, referring to contemplation or speculation (Onions, 1983, p.916). Put simply, a theory can be defined as a speculative attempt to explain observed phenomena (Sinclair, 1993). It can also refer to the rules and principles that form the basis of a particular practical skill, e.g. musical theory (Sinclair, 1993, p.1515). At its most practical, theory can suggest frameworks that provide orderly approaches to understanding experience. Theory also denotes a set of ideas and abstract principles that relate to a particular subject, e.g. *Marxist economics* (Sinclair, 1993, p.1515).

Raymond Williams in his book *Keywords* discusses the development of the word *theory* and explores its meanings by looking at its distinction from the concept of *practice* (Williams, 1983, pp.316-318). He notes the original correlation between speculative and theoretical and goes on to examine a development of the sense of theory as 'a scheme of ideas which explains practice', in which theory is 'always in active relation to practice: an interaction between things done, things observed and (systematic) explanation of these'

(Williams, 1983, p.316). In this sense there is a necessary distinction between theory and practice, but the relationship is neutral or positive, they are not in opposition to each other. Williams qualifies the word 'scheme', noting that 'were a theory open to no objection it would cease to be theory and would become a law' (Williams, 1983, p.317). He remarks that the strength of theory is in its regular and active relation to practice, but that this relationship can become prejudicial. Where practice has become conventional or habitual it 'can be traced to (or made conscious as) a base in theory' (Williams, 1983, p.317), in which theory is understood as doctrine or ideology.

Alongside general definitions this chapter is concerned with 'theory' in this last sense, and as a particular body of ideas, namely those associated with post-modernism and post-structuralism. These ideas had particular influence in the teaching of the arts and humanities under the rubric of cultural theory. The previous chapter noted that cultural theory had been part of the intellectual climate of the second half of the twentieth century, and that this had impacted significantly on our understanding of how meanings are made and how they are valued. It also had a role in the pursuit of academic credibility for the crafts in the evolving higher education structures and in attempts to define and locate the new crafts in relation to contemporary fine art discourse.

Post-modern and post-structuralist thinking originated in the fields of linguistics, literary theory and the social sciences, but it came to have a widespread influence across the arts and humanities. Post-modernism can be essentially described as an attitude of critique, in that it sought to deconstruct aspects of modernized life (Derrida, 1976). It attacks the 'rational' verities of modernism, proposing instead a relativist position. It denied the assumption that meaning could be held by individuals and communicated to others using language which is transparent and that expresses already fixed meanings. Our understanding of the world comes not from any inherent knowledge of reality but from multifarious representations of things, or 'signs'. Although the influence of post-modernism was widespread, many of its core ideas were articulated by French post-structuralist thinkers. The critical theorist Roland Barthes developed the idea that the meaning of things or actions is not fixed, but that their signification

is capable of continually changing in relation to the context in which it is presented. In his book *Mythologies* (1993) Barthes elaborated the idea of a symbolic world, constructed from the signs that attach themselves to objects and actions, in which all of our interactions with the world generate 'myth', adding incrementally to the meanings of events.

This position impacts on the idea of authorship, in which the artist is regarded as an autonomous decision-making being, controlling both the production and the meaning of a work of art. Barthes's essay *The Death of the Author* further undermined the conventional idea of individual genius within the creative process by foregrounding the role of the reader in the creation of the work of art. The reader brings their own life experience to the reading, and makes the reading in a context, which is specific to them, not to the author (Burke, 1998, pp.20-53). Each reader becomes the source of what is present in the art object.

Derrida, a linguist, developed the relativist position further with the idea of *difference* (Derrida, 1976), which rejects the possibility of any stability in meaning or knowledge. For Derrida, language lay at the centre of any system of knowledge, language is a system of signs, and all signs are relative to all other signs. All knowledge is predicated on language and language is not fixed to phenomena in any permanent a priori way. It follows that meaning is not communicable but is continuously produced in an endlessly active relativist matrix.

If we deny any essential link between 'signifiers' and that which is 'signified', between the thing itself and its externally perceived meanings then we are all engaged in navigating our way through a 'forest of signs' (Goldstein et al, 1989), making sense of the world by reading it. The world is text and our perception of reality is a matter of interpretation.

Bourdieu has already been discussed in relation to the role of art and culture in establishing social hierarchies, but should be included here for his contribution to the relativist canon. He demonstrated that there is no fundamental, universal or rational basis for distinctions between pious 'high' and profane 'low' culture. Cultural preferences are contextual, relative and based on levels and types of

education. Like William Morris, Bourdieu argued that art should be removed from its socially sanctioned pedestal and reintegrated with everyday existence (Bourdieu, 1984, p.44).

The iconoclasm of the post-structuralists, as it challenged notions of received wisdom and exposed the structures of social power, opened up new ways of critiquing culture. For instance, art history, as it had developed during the twentieth century, had limited its methods largely to connoisseurship, the analysis of style and iconography, questions regarding quality, the delineation of the canon, dating arguments and the biographies of canonical artists (Fernie, 1995, pp.18-19). It had not been particularly concerned with the social context of the production and reception of art, or the role of art in power structures (Fernie, 1995). Influenced by theoretical shifts, art historians sought not only to change the methods, institutional context and ideologies of the subject, but to address issues such as Western orientated attitudes to race in reference to orientalism and colonialism, and the absence of women from the canons of art history. Politics, psychoanalysis and feminism became part of the language of art history (Fernie, 1995).

Whilst the achievements of cultural theory in foregrounding issues of gender, race, power and environment that had not been given sufficient recognition in the arts and humanities, and in opening up debates about the nature of knowledge, cannot be overstated, it also contained a number of rich paradoxes, not least the extremely literary nature of the critique of knowledge.

Furthermore, the challenging and subversion of Modernist conventions soon became a new dogma with its own conventions to which all fields would be subject. The breaking down of distinctions between high and low culture led to a 'flattening out' of culture (Nairne, 1987, p.22). Everything became grist for the theoretical mill. Rosemary Hill commented on how theory 'goes through one field after another and mows up different subjects and turns them out in suspiciously similar bales' (Hill, 2002b, p.43) - there was particular irony in this case since she was celebrating the end of crafts distinctive discourse. Theory

became a vital element of connoisseurship, integrated into the habitus of a cultural elite. You had either read Bourdieu or you hadn't.

Post-modernism was described earlier as an attitude of critique, and it might be said that the application of post-modern critical theory often starts from a position of disaffection, a desire for change. Nevertheless, relativist scepticism saw no rational basis for the utopian visions of the Arts and Crafts movement and Modernism. Terry Eagleton, an arch theorist himself, evaluated the influence of New Criticism, formalism, (post-)structuralism, psychoanalysis and deconstruction, and found them to be 'a recipe for political inertia, and thus for submission to the political status quo' (Eagleton, 2008, p. 43). He wrote that 'the great majority of the literary theories outlined in this book have strengthened rather than challenged the assumptions of the power-system' (Eagleton, 2008, p.195). They embraced on the one hand the necessity of opposing the status quo (even offering the tools for the job), and on the other were sceptical of pathways towards progress:

> The yearning for utopia was not to be given up on, but nothing was more fatal to its well-being than trying to realize it. The *status quo* was to be implacably resisted, but not in the name of alternative values – a logically impossible manoeuvre. (Eagleton, 2003, p.51)

For craftspeople wishing to engage with theory the legacy of the Arts and Crafts movement, which Gillian Naylor had summarized as being 'inspired by a crisis of conscience. Its motivations were social and moral, and its aesthetic values derived from the conviction that society produces the art and architecture that it deserves' (Naylor, 1970, p.7), became problematic. As described in chapter 2, as craft became codified into a classification and increasingly institutionalized there was a need to distance contemporary practice away from the specific ideological associations of the Arts and Crafts movement. What could be seen as relative, restricting, conservative, elitist values relating to skilful workmanship, when conflated with social idealism, were doubly problematic.

Viewed in these ways, theory represented a way of looking at the world that, whilst it challenged stability in meaning, was nevertheless rooted in a language-

based (literary) system of knowledge; that regarded skill with suspicion, as a relative value, historically and culturally conditioned, and which, whilst originating from the left, was sceptical of idealism. All of which presented particular problems for theoretical craft discourse. Theory had become such that it could not adequately account for craft, or rather, as Rosemary Hill had observed, it became harder to sustain a specific critical discourse on craft (and this at a time when critical discourse had come to occupy an elevated place in an intellectual hierarchy).

The New Crafts and theory

At the *Ideas in the Making* symposium, organised by Pamela Johnson in the course of her 1998 UEA fellowship, she had followed her keynote paper, in which she advocated that the crafts engage with the 'theoretical debates which are now embedded elsewhere across the humanities' (Johnson, 1998, p.13), with a balancing, dissenting second keynote from artist and art historian Jonathan Meuli. He suggested that many who are clever with their hands might be less articulate when it came to writing, and warned against the danger of imbalance in the western intellectual tradition between theory and practice. Without explicit reference, he evokes Bourdieu:

> We currently need theory not just as theory, but also to give value to the art and craft products that have come – somewhat arbitrarily – to serve as symbolically valuable within our society... In the absence of other rational means of distinguishing between objects, theory has come to play a more and more significant role in assessing 'quality' – first in the hands of critics and reviewers and art-historians and, secondly, in those of the makers themselves. In this context, it is the theory or the pseudo-theory that is making the art, and it seems that we can virtually dispense with those irritating inarticulate practitioners altogether. (Meuli, 1998, p.25)

Johnson's assertions about the importance of theory accord with Howard Singerman who, writing about art education in American universities, (Singerman, 1999) suggests that in order to establish credibility within the university system fine art had to become a discipline in a way that would be recognized by other disciplines within the institution, 'it is through the

development of theoretical issues that a medium becomes a discipline' (Singerman, 1999, p.199). Singerman goes on to argue that rather than teaching the technical, craft skills that may once have been regarded as necessary for an art practice it now became more important to teach consciousness of the field and the theoretical skills that were needed to establish and sustain a position within that field (Singerman, 1999, p.212).

If criticism and theory had become vital to the reception of craft then this placed a demand on the practitioner. If the work didn't fit with the paradigm, then it would have to change. Was this the sub-text of Pamela Johnson's admonition for makers to lead with their ideas? We might reasonably assume that she was not referring to the ideas of Morris or Ashbee, but rather something that was more easily recognizable as an idea within the intellectual climate of the time. Certainly the theoretical turn was something that had underpinned the institutionalization of the crafts described in chapter 2.

When Hill, the critic, could no longer discern any critical difference between craft and fine art, she was referring to particular practices that had grown up since the 1970s in response to the influence of theory. Other practices, or aspects of practice, fell outside of the scope of the critical eye – in other words the critical eye had become blind to them. As the critic Robert Clark, writing in the *Guardian* and referring to work that demands to be approached through the senses, said, 'Sometimes it happens that art that is hard to write about is not written about and is therefore undervalued' (Clark, 2004, p.36).

The critical eye, as Susan Sontag (2009, p.4) wrote way back in 1964 in her essay *Against Interpretation*, started with the assumption that a work of art is its content and our main interest in it is as a signifier, a carrier of meaning (see also Carroll, 2009). Meaning being 'first and foremost, something sentences have' (Johnson, 1987, p.1), something principally to be found in language, in words contextualized in sentences. The job of the critic was one of interpretation, and the job of the artist was to provide the raw material, a peg on which to hang a reading, or even a blank canvas on which to project a theory. Margetts (1985) writing in the catalogue for the ceramics exhibition *Fast*

Forward: new directions in British ceramics, declared that these new pots 'need special interpretation. Categories of description and theories evolve, structuralist critics sharpen their dissecting tools. We see the beginning of the potted word' (Margetts, 1985, p.27)

Was it this kind of interpretation that the American critic Janet Koplos had in mind when she observed that:

> art today is expected to have meaning that can be articulated verbally as well as visually. Sometimes an artist doesn't do that so well and it is a critic who fleshes out a concept and furnishes the artist with a vocabulary to use in discussing the work... or the critic who sees everything in terms of their preconceived ideas. (Koplos, 2002, p. 84)

Paul Carter, in elucidating his theory of 'material thinking', observed (and critiqued) the institutionalization of these tendencies:

> Increasingly painters, craftspeople of every description, performers, designers and even architects find that their professional advancement is dependent on being able to put into words what they do or have done... in the present educational environment, they have little alternative but to master the rhetorical game of theorizing what they do. It is a vain, often humiliating, exercise – not because made things cannot bear interpretation but because the rules of the interpretive game deny intellectual recognition to those elements of material thinking that define its distinctive reach as creative research. (Carter, 2004, p.xiii)

A table or a cup invites a limited response in these terms. For the potter who wanted to lead with their ideas it was necessary that they make objects that provided a vehicle for illustrating an idea that had symbolic capitol, as Grayson Perry has successfully done, or objects that 'stand back and describe, or represent themselves as well as being' (Britton, 2010 p.442).

As Linda Sandino has observed:

> Fine art's symbolic value has consistently outstripped the cultural capital of craft and design, both of which have been conventionally invested with use-value rather than conceptual distinction, based on the Western cultural primacy of the intellectual over the manual,

content over form. (Sandino, 2004, p.211)

For many practitioners this prompted a retreat from theory, and that position developed its own thread of theoretical rationalization.

The writer and critic Peter Dormer asserted that 'Craft and theory are oil and water' (Dormer, 1997, p.219). He described craft as a practical philosophy and as a body of knowledge with a complex variety of values. He said that this knowledge is expanded and its values demonstrated and tested, not through language but through practice, and that this makes craft difficult to write or even talk about with clarity and coherence[11]. In support of this position he cites the philosopher Wittgenstein who identified the fundamental distinction between knowledge that can be described in words and knowledge that can only be shown.

There is certainly a tradition of silence in the crafts, of claiming that the work speaks for itself - Lucie Rie and Hans Coper stand out as exemplars of this position, not only did they refuse to speak about their work, but it actually embodied a kind of silence (Jones, 2004). Jones makes the case that Coper's work should be situated and interpreted 'within that post-holocaust silence that echoed around Europe during the years after the Second World War affecting many artists' (Jones, 2004, p.5). Silence, in this way can of course have an eloquence of its own. Silence is not only an eloquence of possibility, the pregnant pause, but it can be a form of argument, of opposition, a dialogical position. This position gathers particular weight as semiotic production in our wider culture becomes more and more complex and profuse.

de Waal, however, regarded silence amongst practitioners as a problem for craft discourse. He pointed out that if there was to be critical writing on the crafts, it would be as well if practitioners contributed to it because if they didn't

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[11] Dormer's assertion here fits with the pervasive dualistic distinction between conceptual/propositional knowledge and perceptually based embodied, experiential and tacit knowledge which is discussed in Chapter 5

other people would and they might not be able to recognize their practice in the results (de Waal, 2000, p.1).

Regardless, a new wave of critical writing gathered momentum and it is perhaps not surprising that it suffered from inherited perceptions of what criticism/theory should be and what sort of language it should use. However, in the proliferating academic and critical discourse there was little that really dealt with craft as an idea. For the most part it remained celebratory, historical, descriptive or interpretive. 'Theory' was liberally cited and used to demonstrate why this object or that represented this or that conception, but where it could be described as dealing theoretically with craft per se it tended to be concerned ultimately with taxonomy, with trying to define craft in relation to art and design.

Howard Risatti's *Theory of Craft* (2007) is just such a case in that it sets out with great care and insistent logic to separate craft from design and fine art. Risatti's intention is to articulate a definitive 'theory of craft'. This is a response to a perceived lack:

> ... the failure to develop a body of theory that is faithful to the craft tradition yet effectively asserts the contemporary relevance of craft practice has left craft consciousness vulnerable to pejorative stereotyping. (Risatti, 2007, p.3)

Risatti's taxonomy is based on the assertion that craft objects are always functional. This is a strict definition, meaning objects that contain, cover or support. Purely decorative objects are therefore excluded from the category of craft. For instance jewellery or ceramic tiles are not craft 'because they are neither containers nor covers nor supports, (Risatti, 2007, p.35). It is through their functional status that craft objects are given a privileged status in Risatti's ontology: 'craft objects are "real objects" in the sense that they exist in the world as tangible things apart from our perceptions and apart from language' whilst the opposite is true of fine art objects: 'as physical objects their existence is socially contingent on a language of signs, so much so that, in a sense, they have little meaningful existence independent of them' (Risatti, 2007, p.86).

Risatti's project suffers on three counts. One is that it comes from a familiar, slightly chippy, defensive position on the crafts:

> Because the craft field lacks a critical theory that is specifically its own, when critical judgements are made about craft objects they tend to revolve around the fine art notion that functional things cannot be beautiful and cannot be art. (Risatti, 2007, p. xiii)

Another is this focus on the object as the site of meaning. In his preface he poses the question 'what is a craft object?' (Risatti, 2007, p.xiii), thus limiting the possibility of understanding craft outside of its institutional framework, as something other than a category of object or a discrete set of practices.

Finally, the project itself seems flawed. Tanya Harrod, reviewing the book for *Crafts*, points out that a 'hermetic body of 'craft theory' may make sense in institutional terms, but it seems anomalous in the 21st century' (Harrod, 2008, p.45).

The chapter on design, *Issues of Craft and Design* (Risatti, 2007, pp.151-206) is illustrative of his approach. He acknowledges parallels between the two categories but applies a brutally reductive analysis to their differences:

> Not only must the designer solve problems of functional shape, he or she, like the craftsman, also invents, elaborates and hones the design during the process of creating it. However, while the craftsman ends with a finished, functioning object, the designer does not. He or she ends up with a drawing or some other type of abstract notation... (Risatti, 2007, p.151)

Not only is Risatti separating the processes of design and craft, he is separating the individual practitioners: 'if the plan is realised as a physical entity, it will be by somebody else or, more likely, by a machine during the second stage of the operation (Risatti, 2007, p.151). For Risatti the difference hinges on the craftsperson's direct encounter with physical matter where a dialectical/dialogical process occurs between idea, form and matter. This denies the messiness of practice, in which craft and design knowledge interact, in which design and production are part of a continuum and the way that even the most abstract and cerebral designer might draw on their embodied knowledge of the material world.

There are aspects of Risatti's thinking that are evocative of Ruskin and early Morris, though they are not acknowledged as such. One of qualities that he attributes to craft objects is that the maker works 'in concert with the material' whilst machines 'force material into forms that have little to do with a material's organic properties' (Risatti, 2007, p.194). He also insists that we should look beyond the surface of an object when interpreting it: 'We must take into consideration how the object was made and how making, as a conscious process, is a bearer of meaning, whether the object is machine-made or hand-made' (Risatti, 2007, p.190). Incidentally, the book contains only one reference to William Morris, in a footnote.

Glenn Adamson also pointed to the shortage of literature that 'deals with craft in theoretical terms' (Adamson, 2007, p.1) and set out in his book *Thinking through Craft* to address that lack. Adamson was in some ways well qualified for the task. He was Deputy Head of Research and Head of Graduate Studies at the Victoria and Albert Museum, where he led a graduate program in the History of Design; he was an editor of the *Journal of Modern Craft* and had written extensively on craftspeople and craft.

Whilst so much literature had been concerned with placing craft within the canon of fine art, Adamson's thesis is that craft should not, indeed cannot, be considered as fine art. Nevertheless, rather than propose a critical approach that is particular to craft he draws on art historical references and theories of art. The perception is that craft cannot be art but that it has to be understood within a hierarchy, in relation to fine art. This contrary position is expressed in Adamson's statement that 'my central argument ... is that craft's inferiority might be the most productive thing about it' (Adamson, 2007, p.5).

The book is organised into five chapters, each dealing with what he describes as 'core principles' (Adamson, 2007, p.5), *Supplemental, Material, Skilled , Pastoral* and *Amateur*. The first of these borrows the concept of the *supplemental* from Jacques Derrida. This is juxtaposed with the idea of autonomy that underpins Greenberg's conception of modern art (O'Brian,

1993). In this sense supplemental is 'that which provides something necessary to another, "original" entity, but which is nevertheless considered to be extraneous to that original' (Adamson, 2007, p.11).

Chapter 2 (Adamson, 2007, pp.38-67) also uses the device of binary opposition to contrast the *material* and the *optical*, where craft is seen as being organised around material experiences and fine art to optical effects. Whilst craft has sought to engage specifically with the material, fine art has sought to transcend it.

Chapter 3 (Adamson, 2007, pp.69-101) addresses the concept of skill. Adamson explores this principle through the writings of David Pye, Michael Baxendale, Joseph Albers, John Dewey, Charles Jencks and Kenneth Frampton. Whilst skill has been regarded as unessential in the fine arts, or, as Jackson Pollock is quoted as saying, 'Technique is just a means of arriving at a statement' (Adamson, 2007, p. 69), it is clearly central to any conception of craft. Adamson describes this chapter as 'the lynchpin of the book, in that skill is the most complete embodiment of craft as an active, relational concept rather than a fixed category' (Adamson, 2007, p.4).

The last two chapters (Adamson, 2007, pp103-163) are concerned with the *pastoral* and the *amateur*, which are described as ideological frameworks in which craft has been structured. The pastoral is seen as central to both 'the ambitions and limitations of craft as a cultural force' (Adamson, 2007, p.105). Pastoral stands in this argument for a more general Romanticism and idealism. Adamson seeks to address what he sees as a core problem:

> To what extent does craft constitute an opportunity for creative freedom, in which critique, perspective and individualism can flourish? And, conversely, to what extent is it simply a Utopian prop, a story we tell ourselves to assuage our anxieties in an increasingly fluid, technological society? (Adamson, 2007, p.105-106)

By juxtaposing diverse examples he achieves a nuanced picture of craft's association with pastoral idealism. However, ultimately his purpose is to demonstrate the 'tragic self-deception' behind the 'laudable idealism' (Adamson,

2007, p.107), in this sense he is not the first writer to use the stick of supposed realism to beat the perceived impracticality of Romanticism.

Adamson describes the amateur as those 'activities done in a spirit of self-gratification rather than critique' (Adamson, 2007, p.139). He is dismissive of actual amateurism, on the grounds that it 'troubles the art world very little in practice.' (Adamson, 2007, p.140), making the claim that the hobbyist is 'integrated into the larger structure of capitalist ideology, in which commodity forms are the primary carriers of meaning' (Adamson, 2007, p.140). More interesting to Adamson is the self-consciously amateur, or more accurately 'artless', stance within a professional art practice, where amateurism can function as a rhetorical device or as a kind of transgressive act, challenging the permissiveness of the contemporary artworld. Adamson's argument doesn't acknowledge that in these cases the idea of the 'outsider' exists in intimate relation to the institution, or the 'inside'. Simon Starling, Grayson Perry and Tracey Emin are credited with the significant achievement of 'rehabilitating craft in the eyes of the British art world' (Adamson, 2007, p.167).

Thinking Through Craft is distinguished because theory is here used as an analytical tool, rather than an end in itself. Adamson is an erudite, lucid and, in some ways, sympathetic observer of the crafts, but his approach is based entirely on thinking through craft as art. He makes the surprising statement that 'I do not think that all craft demands critical analysis' (Adamson, 2007, p.169). Scrutinized in this way, solely through the perspective of the avant-garde, craft is immediately wrong-footed, the analysis limited. Craft is not art but must be understood in relation to art as 'supplemental' and therefore 'inferior'. In the terms that Adamson sets out, this thesis is irrefutable, but it limits the discourse on craft, and the word 'supplemental' seems to be needlessly provocative in its somewhat derogative overtones.

Adamson's use of the idea of 'supplementary' might be reframed in a more positive and less culturally loaded sense if we replace it with the concept of 'relational', not just in the sense of 'relational aesthetics' (Bourriaud, 2002),

which seeks to address the relation between art and everyday life, but in the more general sense that craft, like everything else, is contextually defined.

Adamson like so many of crafts theoretical champions since the 1970s takes a difficult and sometimes contradictory position on craft, typified in this paragraph from his conclusion:

> If people who care about craft above all else are to shake off the air of crabby conservatism that hangs about that word, they must not hold the notions of studio, action, and object as sacred. Fortunately, however, because of their longstanding attachment to these terms and all they imply, it could be argued that those who have invested deeply in craft now enjoy a unique vantage point from which to engage in critical practice – a chance, that is, to become newly relevant to the art world as a whole. (Adamson, 2007, p.168)

The issue of relevance to the art world is regarded here as the highest aspiration for craft. This puts Adamson firmly in the tradition of writers who seem to be both drawn to craft as a site of intellectual interest whilst feeling the need to chastise it for being in some way lacking: Frayling and Snowdon (1982) insist that craftspeople break with their theoretical heritage: Johnson (1998) admonishes them to bend their practice to theory, and Greenhalgh (2007) argues an urgent case for craftspeople to address their relationship with Modernism. Adamson, clearly 'deeply invested' himself, holds the paradoxical position that craft is a conservative idea that must be regarded as subservient to art, but that its very conservatism lends it profound value in relation to art.

Reviewing *The Craftsman* by the American sociologist Richard Sennett in the *Guardian*, another of crafts sympathetic champions, Fiona McCarthy (a biographer of Eric Gill and William Morris), made this comment:

> Sennett alters one's view of craftsmanship by finding so much meaning in the detail. The grip on the pencil, the pressure on the chisel: he persuades us that these things have real significance. (McCarthy, 2008)

This is a curious statement from someone who has written so much about craftsmen and women. A sociologist had given McCarthy an insight into craft

that had apparently eluded her as she observed it from the perspective of critic and historian.

All of the writers mentioned above should be acknowledged as supporters of 'the crafts'. They have all written extensively on the subject and all have, at times, occupied a place in the institutional craft world. However, they have written from the perspective of observers and have tried to understand the crafts through the lens of their own disciplines and through the institutional canon of key figures and significant objects and have sought to establish it as a category in relation to art and design.

The institutional craft world had sought in vain to define craft through a reductive process in order to delineate its sphere of influence. Critics and theorists have subsequently faced a similar problem in trying to frame ceramic sculpture and functional stoneware pots, textile art and tables within the same theoretical orbit.

The next two chapters will further explore the problematic relationship between craft and dominant approaches to theory and will draw on disciplines from outside of the craft world to identify theoretical support for understanding craft, not through its products, but through its practice.

Chapter 4: Meaningful Work

This chapter will reconsider William Morris's conception of 'good work' in the light of literature on the rewards of creative work and recent writing that supports a case for the continuing relevance of Morris's philosophy.

Theoretical scepticism wasn't the only, or indeed the first, challenge to craft philosophy. When David Pye wrote his analysis of 'workmanship' in 1968 he was not simply making a useful contribution to the discourse on terminology. In scrutinizing the language of Arts and Crafts, Pye was trying to redress what he saw as the inchoate nature of Ruskin and Morris's thinking on craftsmanship (Pye, 1995, pp.114-126). He argued that Ruskin had very little understanding of the processes of manufacturing and that his lyrical account of workmanship in *The Stones of Venice* could be dismissed, saying that 'He was making propaganda for a certain strain of naive ornament and for free workmanship' (Pye, 1995, p.118), and that 'He persuaded himself and Morris that by doing so he was offering a cure for the miseries of industrialisation' (Pye, 1995, p.118). Pye's critique of *The Stones of Venice*, and of Morris's subsequent championing of it, points to the imprecise use of language 'He preferred rhetoric to the exact analysis of ideas, and much preferred it to the definition of his terms' (Pye, 1995, p.117). Pye made it his business, in *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*, to redress this issue. In their own broadside to the legacy of William Morris, *Skill – a word to start an argument*, written for *Crafts* in 1982, Frayling and Snowdon (1982c) argued that Pye's real achievement had been to 'divorce manual skill from mental skill (know-how), going directly against the grain of established Arts and Crafts movement opinion.' (Frayling & Snowdon, 1982c, p. 19) In his somewhat reductive way, he had sought to identify workmanship in the purely physical mechanics of process, detached from moral or social purpose. There was a sense that in order to advance as a contemporary practice, craft had to finally rid itself of its attachment to Morris's 'Merrie Englandism' (Frayling & Snowdon, 1982a, p.17).

Williams (1962, p.159) proposed that it was precisely because of the power of Morris's social criticism that his 'regressive' elements, though undoubtedly

present in many of his literary works, have been overemphasized by historians. He suggests that a deliberate attempt has been made to dilute Morris's legacy, presenting him as a Romantic medievalist designer of chintz, in order to neuter his status as a coherent and prescient political theorist, for whom craft was not 'the' crafts of wallpaper design or bookbinding, but rather, in Greenhalgh's phrase, a 'politicized form of work' (Greenhalgh, 1997, p.35). E.P. Thompson (1976) supports this thesis in his evaluation of Morris, which describes Morris's transformation of Romanticism, partly through his encounter with Marxism. Both Thompson (1976, p.803) and Williams (1962, p.160) remind us that Morris was not a gentle Fabian, but a revolutionary socialist.

However, Morris's particular, holistic, brand of socialism, which had been central to craft thinking assumes new relevance in the light of contemporary issues relating to late capitalist work practice and globalisation, and is currently being reassessed (for example Bennett and Miles, 2010)[12].

The idea of work was central to Morris's philosophy, a theme that ran through all of his artistic, literary and political output. Morris's conception of work was modelled on the creative arts. Creative work, in Morris's conception, is a way of relating to the world outside of ourselves and a means of harnessing energy and skill in the enjoyment of making things:

> But a man at work, making something which he feels will exist because he is working at it and wills it, is exercising the energies of his mind and soul as well as of his body. Memory and imagination help him as he works. Not only his own thoughts, but the thoughts of the men of past ages guide his hands; and, as a part of the human race, he creates. If we work thus we shall be men, and our days will be happy and eventful. (Morris, 1888b)

For Morris creative work is not merely compensation for the alienated world in which it takes place, but rather something that forms an organic link between the self and the surrounding material and social environment. The acquisition

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[12] *William Morris in the Twenty-first Century,* a collection of essays, which make a case for the prescience and relevance of much of Morris's thinking. They argue that the crucial economic, ecological, cultural, and social problems that concerned Morris not only remain of great concern almost one and a half centuries later, but that they have assumed an even greater urgency in the light of globalization and the threat of ecological disaster.

of skills grounded in a physical engagement with materials and the pleasures that attach to this formed the basis of Morris's politicized theory of art.

As Regina Gagnier says in her introduction to *William Morris in the Twenty-first Century* (Bennett & Miles , 2010):

> What is important about Morris's taste is not the actual products of his or his firm's artisan and craftsmanship, or even his poetry and romances. These were just by-products of what he valued, the sensuous and intellectual labour of making them. Morris wanted not art but to create the conditions that would create artists. (Bennett & Miles , 2010, pp. xvii-xviii)

It is clear that although Morris's ideas evolved as a response to nineteenth-century industrialization it was not solely or even principally concerned with an aestheticized means of production or material outcomes. At the heart of Morris's concerns were the intrinsic values of being able to do 'good' work. Which is to say values other than external ones, including financial remuneration, cultural capital, institutional approval or success in terms of the institutional rules of the game.

There is a body of theory that attempts to understand the intrinsic rewards for the practitioner associated with creative work, and which fits with Morris's conception. It is in this literature, in which craft is not the main object or is dealt with in an abstracted form, that a theoretical basis for craft practice that is consistent with Morris can be found.

Flow theory and Self-Determination theory are discussed here as examples. Both help us to understand how doing craft is, in Morrisian terms, 'meaningful work'.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, considered to be the originator of flow theory, also known as 'optimal experience', developed the concept from the 1960s on. Csikszentmihayli was interested in the way that artists could become so immersed in their work that they would disregard their most basic needs such as food, water and sleep. He concluded that the artists *practice* must be an end

in itself (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, pp.3-4). Csikszentmihalyi began research on the theory of flow as a way of trying to understand this phenomenon (Csikszentmihayli & Nakamura, 2002). The concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) concerns the experiences of total absorption in an activity and the non-self-conscious enjoyment of it. Csikszentmihalyi's research found that intrinsically motivating activities allow participants to experience pleasurable and fulfilling experiences when the level of challenge in a task is in equilibrium with their competence (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi 1992). When people experience flow, their activity is said to be autotelic (Csikszentmihalyi et al, 2005, p.600), which means that the purpose of the activity is the activity itself. Csikszentmihalyi and his fellow researchers have identified and described a number of elements that are present in the experience of being in flow:

- Clear goals (expectations and rules are discernible and goals are attainable and align appropriately with one's skills and abilities).
- A high degree of concentration on a limited field of attention (a person engaged in the activity will have the opportunity to focus and to delve deeply into it).
- Absorption into the activity, narrowing of the focus of awareness down to the activity itself, so that action and awareness become merged. This is accompanied by a loss of the feeling of self-consciousness.
- Distorted sense of time, in which subjective experience of time is altered.
- Direct and immediate feedback (successes and failures in the course of the activity are apparent, so that behavior can be adjusted as needed).
- Balance between ability level and challenge. The activity should be neither too easy nor too difficult for the subject, although the challenge level and skill level should both be high. The activity must be within one's competence, but demanding.
- A sense of personal control over the situation or activity.
- The activity is intrinsically rewarding, so there is an effortlessness of action.
- A lack of awareness of bodily needs (hunger etc.)

(Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2005, pp.600-602).

Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1992, p.71) observed that to remain in flow, the complexity of the activity needed to be increased by the subject developing new skills to meet new challenges. For example, somebody just beginning to practice pottery might experience flow through the basic preparation of the clay. The challenge is small, but matched to the level of skill. Through practice, the potter's skills become greater and they can take on greater challenges to attain a flow experience. Csikszentmihalyi suggested that intrinsically motivated behaviour requires optimal challenge (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2005, pp.601-602). Too much challenge relative to a person's skills leads to anxiety and disengagement, whereas too little leads to boredom and alienation. It is success at optimally challenging tasks that allows people to feel a true sense of competence.

It is this feature that makes flow a dynamic force in the evolution or growth of consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p.377). Because flow is perceived as an optimal experience, a person will want to continue in that state as often as possible. The flow state can become addictive. However, it drives the self to higher and higher levels of complexity. It forces people to extend themselves, to take on more challenges, and to improve their skills and abilities (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi 1992, p.30).

Building on Csikszentmihalyi's theories, Edward Deci and Richard Ryan developed Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Whilst Csikszentmihalyi's theory could be said to emphasize optimal challenge and the experiences that flow from that as the basis for intrinsic motivation, Deci and Ryan also considered the importance of *autonomy* and *relatedness* (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p.229). According to Deci and Ryan there are three innate psychological needs that are the basis for self-motivation and personality integration. These needs are said to be universal, and innate and include the need for *competence, autonomy* and *relatedness* (Deci & Ryan, 2000: Ryan & Deci, 1985). The need for *competence* is the need that people have to feel

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effective in their actions; the need for *autonomy* is the need to feel that their actions are self- determined, that they have individual agency, and the *relatedness* is the need to interact with, be connected to and experience caring for others. Deci & Vansteenkiste (2004, p.34) argue that human beings have a natural tendency towards growth, which is innate, not learned, and that can be observed across time, gender and culture. However growth doesn't happen automatically but needs to be nurtured by social environment. If this takes place then there are positive benefits in terms of health and well-being, and if it is denied then there are negative consequences.

Craft making is an intrinsically rewarding activity, though it is not a solipsistic one. It draws the maker inwards but not in a way that removes them from the world, rather, as they are drawn inwards by the practice of their work, so they experience a deeper connection outwards, towards the world. A Morrisian conception of crafting is supported by Flow and SDT's recognition of intrinsically rewarding practices. These theories offer us insight into the ways that we can accrue social and human capital through an active involvement with the material world. SDT in particular sees human beings as inseparable from a co-produced environment – we transform our environments and our environment in turn transforms us. This holistic understanding of experience fits with Morris's thinking.

Need theories identify the necessary conditions for psychological growth, integrity and well-being. Viewed in this way, the experience of making is given meaning not simply through its products, nor simply through the nurturing, gratifying experience of the autonomous or self-determined individual but through connectedness via a network of relationships to the wider social context in which the practice takes place. Crafting represents both a means for self-determination and expression, and for the bending of the self toward externally determined standards. Flow is not seen simply as an internal psychological reward achieved by self-determined individuals, but as an experience that is also connected to wider social contexts and actions. Social structure is important in giving meaning to experience and the right socialized infrastructure is necessary for the development of the individual. Again, this is absolutely in

accord with Morris's conception of craft making. It also accords with the recorded experience of practitioners:

> A craft is not its objects; 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). The objects of the craft are by-products, very essential by-products, of the way I work. (Needleman, 1979, p.123)

Andrew Jackson, argues that the fulfilment and rewards of craft making are not only available to the professional maker but are central to understanding the motivations of amateur craftspeople (Jackson, 2011). His doctoral research challenges conventional explanations for the motivations of amateur makers, which have focused on utilitarian notions of economy and convenience, exploring instead motivations that are centred on the material or embodied experience of the making process (Jackson, 2007, p.225).

The second half of the first decade of the twenty first century has seen the emergence of a developing body of literature that makes explicit the relationship between ideas regarding self-determination, optimal experience and craft. This literature marks a significant shift in the theoretical discourse concerning craft and a re-engagement with the nineteenth century ideas of Morris. In this literature craft is detached from a particular set of objects or specific practices and is understood as a necessary human activity. It is notable that this new body of theoretical writing does not emanate from the craft world, but rather demonstrates interest from other disciplines, including anthropology, sociology and philosophy. This is in direct contrast to *Thinking Through Craft* (Adamson, 2007) and *A Theory of Craft* (Risatti, 2007), which both emanate from the institutional craft world, and which contribute to very local discussion of the role of craft. Both were published with support from the Centre for Craft Creativity and Design, an institution that has taken a leading role on craft research in America.

The American sociologist Richard Sennett, who, in his 2008 book, *The Craftsman*, also makes clear the political dimension to these ideas, exemplifies this fresh wave of theoretical writing. Sennett is a social analyst, working in a

tradition of pragmatist thinking that goes back through John Dewey to William James. Broadly speaking Pragmatism is a philosophical approach that considers that the meaning of conceptions is to be sought in their practical effects, that the function of thought is to guide action, and that truth is principally to be tested by the practical consequences of belief (see Menand, 2002, for a history of the philosophical concept of pragmatism in America). Dewey, in his book *Art As Experience* (Dewey, 1980), written in 1934, proposed a theory of experiential aesthetics. Central to his thesis is what he terms the 'continuity' of aesthetic with ordinary experience. He believes it to be the 'primary task' of the aesthetician 'to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience' (Dewey, 1980, p.3). He challenged the view that art should be thought about in terms of its objects, believing that the experience of making or encountering the object was the real work of art. This shifted the critical sense away from the autonomous art object and onto the continuity of experience in which art becomes 'prefigured in the very processes of living' (Dewey, 1980, p.24). Dewey's theory emphasizes that what is important and characteristic about the art process is not its physical manifestations in the 'expressive object' but rather the process in its entirety, where the fundamental element is no longer the material 'work of art' but rather the development of an 'experience'. An experience is something that personally affects your life, giving shape and meaning to life. In this way art is seen as a fundamental human activity, with 'fine art' being simply a special instance. He calls to mind the need theories discussed above and suggested a particular place for craft, with its emphasis on materiality and process, as well as its outwardly directed relatedness, when he says: 'instead of signifying being shut up within one's own private feelings and sensations, it [experience] signifies active and alert commerce with the world; at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of the self and the world of objects and events' (Dewey, 1980, p.19).

Sennett's work previous to *The Craftsman* had evoked the spirit of nineteenth-century deliberations on the role and nature of work. *The Corrosion of Character: the personal consequences of work in the new capitalism* (1998) had

considered the impact of post-industrial work practices based on flexibility and short-term contracts. He shows how under these conditions it becomes harder for individuals to construct coherent life stories with a sense of cumulative achievement. Typically, he uses a personal anecdote to introduce his point. He talks about an encounter with a rootless engineering consultant, Rico, whose father had been the subject of a previous study by Sennett. Rico's father had been a janitor. This was a low status occupation, but through continuity of service he had been able to establish a clear sense of identity based on pride in his work, the respect of his employers and peers, his place within a working class community and the incremental betterment of his family's life. Rico, by contrast had achieved the qualifications that his father had lacked. He had a high status occupation with commensurate financial rewards. However, his professional role has become generic, separated from particular skills; he moves from job to job and city to city on short-term contracts; his only way of building a sense of self is though consumption. He travels to work and feels detached from his family, aware that he doesn't provide his children with the example of values such as loyalty, trust and service that he saw in his father. In *Respect: the formation of character in an age of inequality* (2003) he ascribes a distinctive role for craft, described as doing something well for its own sake (Sennett, 2003, p.13), as a corrective, conferring self-respect. Sennett says that although we live, ostensibly, in a meritocracy where privileges are earned, very few individuals achieve recognition. The endless assessment that we are subject to (in our privates as well as working lives) can be crueller and more damaging to self-respect than traditional hierarchies where privilege was inherited. Sennett ascribes his own self worth as he was growing up to learning the cello to quite a high level. Sennett proposes craft as an answer to the problems of inequality and degraded respect:

> The best protection I'm able to imagine against the evils of invidious comparison is the experience of the ability I've called craftwork, and the reason for this is simple. Comparisons, ratings, and testings are deflected from other people into the self; one sets the critical standard internally. Craftwork certainly does not banish invidious comparison to the work of others; it does refocus a person's energies, however, to getting an act right in itself, for oneself. The craftsman can sustain his or her self-respect in an unequal world. (Sennett, 2003, pp.98-99)

The Craftsman (Sennett, 2008) builds on this kind of thinking. It is not concerned specifically with craft as a creative practice, and certainly not the avant-garde. In Sennett's conception a craftsman can be a parent, a nurse or a Linux programmer as well as an artist working in glass or metal or clay. He believes that 'Craftsmanship names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake.' (Sennett, 2008, p.9), and that making is a thinking activity.

Sennett asserts that 'who we are arises directly from what our bodies can do' (p.291). This is an idea that connects Sennett, through Deci and Ryan's theory of Self-Determination to William Morris and to Marx and Engels, who wrote in 1885:

> By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their material life ... as individuals express their life so they are.
> (Marx and Engels, 2007, p.83)

It becomes clear in Sennett's prologue that *The Craftsman* is part of an on-going argument with Hannah Arendt, one of his early teachers (Sennett, 2008, pp.1-8). In Arendt's scheme for the human condition, she identifies a hierarchy between the world of animal needs and a 'higher' world of art, politics and philosophy. We live in two dimensions: 'In one we make things; in this condition we are amoral, absorbed in a task. We also harbor another, higher way of life in which we stop producing and start discussing and judging together' (Sennett, 2008, pp.6-7). Sennett regards this division as a fundamental philosophical mistake with serious ethical and political consequences. It not only demeans *Animal laborens,* those who labour with their hands, but it fails to recognize that making is one of the foundations of good citizenship, and without this recognition, Sennett asserts, it is impossible to imagine a democracy in which governance is widely diffused, not given over to expert elites. We can only achieve a more humane material life if we better understand the making of things (Sennett, 2008, p.8).

Sennett uses a discursive approach, offering case studies that demonstrate the importance of material knowledge, the central role of the hand in human cognition and the way that skill is acquired through practice and repetition:

> As skill expands, the capacity to sustain repetition increases. In music this is the so-called Isaac Stern rule, the great violinist declaring that the better your technique, the longer you can rehearse without becoming bored. There are "Eureka!" moments that turn the lock in a practice that has jammed, but they are embedded in routine. (Sennett, 2008, p.38)

Having established the idea of the craftsman as a broad and inclusive category, showing that the medieval workshop has its equivalence in high tech industries, Sennett returns to the themes of his earlier research. He finds that under the working conditions of late capitalism, accumulated experience, far from being valued, loses institutional value, and that a sense of community and cooperation is needed in order to balance competitiveness.

Smart technology deprives the worker of the feedback loop that facilitates learning through repetition, 'the smart machine can separate human mental understanding from repetitive, instructive, hands on learning. When this occurs, conceptual human powers suffer' (Sennett, 2008, p.39). When Sennett discusses CAD he evokes Ruskin's notion of free workmanship in describing a disconnection between head and hand in design, the idea of a thing made complete in conception before it is constructed (Sennett, 2008, p.44).

It is in his concluding chapter that Sennett crystallizes his organizing idea with a return to pragmatism. As a pragmatist Sennett is concerned with human experience, and in this book he is specifically concerned with 'the value of experience understood as a craft' (Sennett, 2008, p.288). Sennett discusses the contrasting German terms that contain the English concept of experience: *erlebnis* and *erfahrung*. Erlebnis is concerned with experiences that make an emotional, inner impression. Erfahrung is more concerned with events, actions or relationships that turn one outward and require skill rather than sensitivity. Pragmatism believes that these two meanings should not be divided, that instrumentalism needs to be balanced by attention to 'how it feels'. However,

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Sennett stresses the importance placed on erfahrung by craftsmanship. Craftsmanship is concerned with form and procedure, the 'techniques of experience' (Sennett, 2008, p.289). Sennett has already discussed the idea of craft knowledge as something transparent and communicable (Sennett, 2008, pp.248-249), with shared techniques and standards. Craft refers to objective standards that do not issue from the self. His notion of experience as craft 'contests the sort of subjectivity that dwells in the sheer process of feeling' (Sennett, 2008, p.289). As with Deci and Ryan's theories, this helps us to understand craft as an experience that is both internally embodied and outwardly directed.

Craft in this case is not simply a metaphor. Craft is not only an experience in itself, but it is a shaping experience, which can form a basis for our relationships:

> Both the difficulties and the possibilities of making things well apply to making human relationships. Material challenges like working with resistance or managing ambiguity are instructive in understanding the resistances people harbour to one another or the uncertain boundaries between people. I've stressed the positive open role routine and practicing play in the work of crafting physical things; so too do people need to practice their relations with one another, learn the skills of anticipation and revision in order to improve these relations. (Sennett, 2008, p.289)

Sennett has written about the importance of repetition, learned anticipation and slow revision; the way that practice engenders attentiveness; the incremental embodiment of tacit knowledge, and the give and take of working with material. He argues that all of these things have their equivalence in our social relations and that:

> ... the craft of making physical things provides insight into the techniques of experience that can shape our dealings with others... I argue no more and no less than the capacities our bodies have to shape physical things are the same capacities we draw on in social relations. (Sennett, 2008, pp.289-290)

Sennett refers to Dewey and makes an explicit link between his form of Pragmatism and William Morris:

Both work and play are equally free and intrinsically motivated, apart from false economic conditions which tend to make play into idle excitement for the well to do, and work into uncongenial labor [sic] for the poor. Work is psychologically simply an activity which consciously includes regard for consequences as part of itself; it becomes constrained labour when the consequences are outside of the activity, as an end to which activity is merely a means. Work which is permeated with the play attitude is art. (Dewey, 2009, p.354)

Sennett's claim that 'Good craftsmanship implies Socialism' (Sennett, 2008, p.228) recalls William Morris, in its vigorously assertive tone as well as its sentiment. *The Craftsman* makes a politically charged argument that distinguishes it from much of the contemporary literature relating to craft. But in his general line of reasoning, in making a case for craft as a necessary human activity, Sennett's work is typical of the literature that has emerged in the second half of the first decade of the twenty first century.

Matthew Crawford is also concerned with making as experience. Crawford is an academic philosopher who also runs a business repairing classic motorbikes. In his book *The Case For Working With Your Hands* (Crawford, 2009), which has become a best seller in the United States (where it is called *Shop Class as Soulcraft*), he presents a polemical argument at the heart of which is the dichotomy between autonomy and agency.

Crawford discusses an 'ideology of choice and freedom and autonomy' (Crawford, 2009, p.63) linking these ideas to consumerism, in which such 'heady existentialist slogans' (Crawford, 2009, p.63) are invoked in the name of self-realisation. He describes a paradox in which advertisers often draw on the image of the craftsperson, immersed in their practice, when the product that is being advertised is intended to relieve us of the need for such tiresome practice (Crawford, 2009, p.71). The illusion is that through the product we are engaging with the attractive experience of practice, without the time-consuming demands of the actual practice.

This illusion is central to Crawford's distinction between agency and autonomy. Like Sennett, he illustrates his point by thinking about music. He cites Borgmann's conceptions of 'commanding reality' and 'disposable reality', corresponding respectively to 'things' and 'devices':

> A thing requires practice while a device invites consumption. Things constitute commanding reality, devices procure disposable reality. (Crawford, 2009, p.66)

In the case of music, a thing would be a musical instrument. To learn a musical instrument requires active engagement and 'an ongoing submission... to the mechanical realities of her instrument, which in turn answer to certain natural necessities of music' (Crawford, 2009, p.64). A device, on the other hand, might be an *ipod*, which gives us unlimited access to our choice of music. This gives us a kind of autonomy. His argument emphasizes a distinction between what Crawford calls the 'cult of the sovereign self' (Crawford, 2009, p.206) and genuine self-reliance.

The sociologist Colin Campbell (2005), in *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, describes the origins and mechanisms of consumerism. Campbell demonstrates that consumerism is intimately bound up with what it means to be a human being in industrialized societies. In such societies, consumer products are in the first instance a medium of being, a reflective means of structuring an internalized self in relation to others and the world. Campbell sees the engine of consumerism as 'autonomous imaginative hedonism' (Campbell, 2005, p.77) which allows human beings to gain pleasure from *imagining* a future realized through the acquisition of commodities as much as from their actual acquisition. He argues that the origins of this imaginative power lies in a sense of an autonomous self that he ascribes ironically to the source of nineteenth-century critiques of industrialization, Romanticism.

The sense of self that is afforded by consumption is based in a disposable reality. Indeed, consumerism is characterized not only by acquisition, but by the transience of the consumer's attachment to the objects that they once desired.

Consumption, Campbell argues, is fuelled by its own failure to satisfy our longing for self-realization.

Crawford argues that discussion of agency tends to emphasize the importance of self-directed activity as opposed to activity that is dictated by another (Crawford, 2009, p.206). Labour predicated on external direction is seen as alienating, whilst labour directed by the self is fulfilling or self-actualizing. Crawford's assertion is that real, embodied, agency for the self is achieved not solely through the autonomous imagination or through self-directed activity but through the necessary submission of the self to an external reality: 'human agency... Arises only within concrete limits that are not of our making' (Crawford, 2009, p.64). This accords with STD, where the self-determined individual is subject to externally determined standards.

Crawford is critiquing consumerism and what he describes as the potentially infantilizing effect of technology, and there is an overtly moral dimension to his thesis:

> His (the craftsman's) individuality is thus expressed in an activity that, in answering to a shared world, connects him to others: the customers that he serves and other practitioners of his art, who are competent to recognize the peculiar excellence of his work. Such sociable individuality contrasts with the self-enclosure that is implicit in the idea of autonomy, which means giving a law to oneself. The idea of autonomy denies that we are born into a world that existed prior to us. It posits an essential aloneness; an autonomous being is free in the sense that a being severed from all others is free. To regard oneself in this way is to betray the natural debts we owe to the world, and commit the moral error of ingratitude. For in fact we are basically dependent beings: one upon another, and each on a world that is not of our making. (Crawford, 2009, pp.207-208)

Crawford is not uncritical of Arts and Crafts thinking. Indeed, he refers to Jackson Lears' history of early twentieth century American culture (Lears, 1994), to suggest that Arts and Crafts thinking served as an instrument of bourgeois ideology, cultivating 'certain unattractive' features of modern consumer culture based in 'therapeutic self-absorption and the hankering after "authenticity"'... Such spiritualized, symbolic modes of craft practice and craft

consumption represented a kind of compensation for, and therefore an accommodation to, new modes of routinized, bureaucratic work' (Crawford, 2009, p.29). At the same time, by proposing joy in labour, he claims it was used to justify the socialization of the early industrial working-class into a factory work ethic. Nevertheless, his central analysis is continuous with Morris's writing on the subject of work.

David Gauntlett is a Professor of Media and Communications, with a special interest in Web 2.0. In *Making is Connecting* (Gauntlett, 2011) he explores the idea of making, linking traditional images of craft to contemporary digital creation. He talks about making and connecting in three ways: when we make things we connect materials or ideas together to make something new; making always has a social dimension - we draw on common knowledge, are subject to external validation and others to provide skills, materials, markets etc. - he asserts that we learn better as groups rather than on our own; and that through making things and sharing them in the world, we increase our engagement and connection with our physical and social environments. Gauntlett argues that in the twentieth-century the production of culture became dominated by an elite of professional producers, and that this encouraged a disempowerment of the majority, who became consumers of culture. He believes that this model has been compounded by an education system in which learning and teaching are directed by a national curriculum and standardized testing leading to pupils becoming passive consumers of knowledge, culture and doctrine. Gauntlett calls this the 'sit back and be told' Culture (Gauntlett, 2011, pp.8-11). Gauntlett draws on Arts and Crafts philosophy, applying it to the potential of the world-wide-web to empower the co-creation and dissemination of knowledge and cultural production.

Gauntlett and, in particular, Sennett extend the outwardly directed aspect of craft practice to give it a clear political dimension. Both evoke Ruskin and Morris to support arguments that are firmly rooted in a contemporary context. However, Sennett and Crawford do not simply re-present Arts and Crafts ideas. Their work incorporates a Pragmatic aspect that distinguishes it from the perceived Romantic elements of Arts and Crafts ideas that had informed so

much discussion of the legacy of the Arts and Crafts movement since the 1970s.

What these writers do not directly address is the relationship between the experience of craft and emergent issues of environmental sustainability and globalisation[13]: global climate change; the ongoing turmoil in world financial markets; the peak-oil scenario and related shortages in energy and key mineral resources, alongside the shift of industrial production to developing countries, where non-regulated labour is cheap. However, some practitioners and theorists have begun to consider how craft might be used to engage with social, economic and cultural needs in the face of these issues. These considerations are informed by a broad understanding of craft, encompassing the social and moral aspects highlighted by Sennett, Crawford and Gauntlett as well as nineteenth century, Morrisian Arts and Crafts philosophy. Evidence for this can be seen in the rise of 'craftivism' (Greer, 2007), 'DIY culture' (Levine & Heimerl, 2008) and other politicized movements that combine a notion of craft with political action (Adamson, 2010, p.585) as well the more formal context of academic conferences and journals. In 2009 Plymouth College of Art and Design instigated the first Making Futures conference, for instance. The conference aimed to improve understanding of the ways in which the contemporary crafts are practiced in relation to ecological and sustainability issues (Ferris, 2009). The first conference was focused on the protection of the environment and management of resources, alongside ethical issues in a globalized economy (see the Making Futures website for the full range of papers). The second conference took as its subtitle *The Crafts as Change Maker in Sustainably Aware Cultures*, and took a broader look at the very idea of craft as a productive social force and an agent for change.

The keynote papers addressed craft as a potential agent for personal and social

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[13] Although the issue of sustainability is not addressed explicitly in Sennett's book *The Craftsman*, he describes it as the first in a series of three. The second will deal with ritual in relation to religion and ideology, with ritual regarded as 'a kind of craft' that can be used to shape consciousness, the third will deal with the need to radically rethink 'productive procedures and rituals of use' in evolving the craft of adaptation to the new circumstances that the developing environmental crisis faces us with (Sennett, 2008, pp. 12-13).

transformation. Professor Soper's paper began by discussing contrary positions on nature, setting public anxieties about the loss of nature against the idea of nature as, itself, a human construct. She explored the context of the 'peak oil' scenario, the potentially uncontrollable consequences of global warming and the virtuous circle by which materialist culture 'grooms children for a life of consumption'. Alongside disquiet about environmental degradation and apparently growing awareness that high levels of consumption do not correlate with human happiness she observed a persistent commitment to endless growth - effectively, the uncoupling of economic development from ecological and social concerns. She proposed that the momentum of globalized industrial capitalism will not be slowed by fear of the consequences for the future and that ecological politics, rather than focusing on 'right' ways of respecting and preserving nature, should emphasize 'the conditions of human fulfilment' and consider how these things might be achieved in a more pleasurable and sustainable way. The engine of consumerism is precisely its inability to satisfy our desires (Campbell, 1987). Soper conceptualised an 'alternative hedonism', which challenges consumerist notions of pleasure. Drawing on theories of need and intrinsic motivation Soper identified craft as an example of 'alternative hedonism' in which the satisfactions of creative expression are combined with a sense of agency and connectedness. Soper drew on Morris's *Useful Work versus Useless Toil*, grounding her bigger argument in crafts ideological history. She insisted that the experience of making is not reserved for the professional craftsperson. In saying that amateur making offers a fulfilling alternative to passive consumption she was making a direct response to Glenn Adamson's deprecation, in *Thinking Through Craft* of 'hobbyist' craft as a self-serving bourgeois activity.

Soper described herself as an 'armchair philosopher who has no idea how to make the armchair'. In contrast, Trevor Marchant's paper showed how his research interests as an anthropologist resulted in him becoming immersed in the making process. His original studies in architecture had led him towards anthropological research into building practices in Nigeria. His PhD studies into building-craft knowledge and skill learning had included a lengthy apprenticeship with minaret builders in Yemen. Subsequently, he spent three

years undergoing apprenticeship training in cabinet making in order to study the social relations, professional aspirations and economic challenges faced by fellow woodwork trainees at the Building Crafts College in Stratford, East London. These experiences had supported his research into the rich potential of communication through gesture and action as well as language. He argued that a better understanding of craft skill leads to a re-evaluation and expansion of the definitions of knowledge and intelligence. His research had originally been focussed on knowledge transmission, hierarchies and ritual customs amongst the builders but it had alerted him to the inherent rewards of making itself (Harper, 2012, p.162).

Frayling in his book *On Craftsmanship* (Frayling, 2011) suggests that interest in craft tends to flourish at times of recession. Certainly, the new writing on craft came at a time when global capitalism appeared to many to be foundering and it fits with a general disillusion with the robustness of the 'knowledge economy' and renewed interest in manufacturing, apprenticeships and vocational training. The British coalition government strove to re-brand the national character, inviting us to think of ourselves as a nation of makers (see Hayes, 2009, p.38), and Prime Minister David Cameron, somewhat unconvincingly, espoused an interest in 'the happiness index', describing the need to gauge our wellbeing as one of the 'central political issues of our time' (Stratton, 2010,). Alongside the literature relating directly to craft there was a wider questioning of the role of work in our lives (for example: Alain de Botton, 2009). Nevertheless, the writing described amounts to a growing body of theory that rethinks craft as experience. By detaching craft from a particular set of objects or specific practices that are institutionally sanctioned it allows a broader understanding of craft as something that might be present in many practices. Craft is understood as activity that is intrinsically rewarding and self-directed. It is seen as a nurturing activity, in terms of individual psychological growth and well-being, but also as outwardly directed. Craft is associated with an impulse to learn and to do things well. It is regarded as a form of knowledge which is developed and given expression through our individual experience but which arises from a set of externally determined values and standards, and shared understandings of our experience of the material world. It acknowledges that the value of craft

should be measured in terms of moral and social capital. Insofar as they make reference to crafts ideological past, this seems to be in a spirit of glancing backwards in order to envision, in Professor Soper's words, 'the progressive role of the craft ethos and aesthetic in pointing us towards a future that is both sustainable and humanly fulfilling' (Harper, 2012, p.161).

Alongside this literature there is a parallel discourse that is concerned with knowledge, that shines a light on to craft knowledge. It challenges the socially determined hegemony of propositional knowledge that has a privileged position in western thinking but provides an alternative to the relativist positions described at the beginning of Chapter 3.

Chapter 5: An Epistemology of Crafting

Chapter 2 looked at the introduction of academic elements into higher education for the arts, following the recommendations of the Coldstream report (1960). The aim of which had been to align art education more closely with undergraduate degrees offered by universities. This was described as supporting the evolution of an institutional craft world. But it also codified a perceived duality between mind and body, thinking and doing, or between tacit, embodied, procedural or process knowledge and conceptual/propositional knowledge that seems to be deeply pervasive in western culture. This perceived duality has contributed to the uncomfortable fit between craft and theory.

Dewey had ascribed the authority of the dominant paradigm of knowledge in academia to the 'aristocratic tradition which looked down upon material things and upon the senses' (Dewey, 2009, p.481). He traces the roots of this tradition to the opposition between 'the spiritual and ideal elements of our historic heritage and the structure of physical nature that is disclosed by science' (Dewey, 1980, p.338).

The Judeo-Christian historical heritage referred to by Dewey had been compounded and given theoretical expression by Descarte in the seventeenth Century. Descarte believed that knowledge must be founded in certainty. He believed that the failure to establish certain truth was simply a failure of method. He argued that all we can know with certainty is that we exist as thinking beings, hence his dictum *cogito ergo sum* (Urmson & Rée, 1991, p.74). The world is constituted of physical substance and mental substance, equivalent to the body and the mind. As our sensory bodies can give rise to illusion, truth can only be gained through a process of rational deduction. Rationality may draw on sensory experience, but it is not an attribute of physical or bodily substance. As thinking beings, our true selves are disembodied, transcendental. This gives rise to an ontological split between mind and body.

Kant developed Descartes thinking. Whilst he rejected the notion of the mind as independent of the body, he rigidly separated our cognitive faculties into two components: the material, perceptual and sensible, and the formal, conceptual and intellectual. In Kant's model of knowledge the material is associated with the body and the formal is associated with the organizing activities of our understanding mind. Our bodily experience provides us with particular representations. It is our intellectual capacity that allows us to generalize these representations into concepts that are sharable as objective knowledge. What we can know of the material world is what we have experienced of it, but only once it has been ordered and given structure by our formal consciousness (Urmson & Rée, 1991, pp. 156-164). Thus Kant's model, whilst putting the mind in the body, maintains the ontological gap between the physical body and the rational mind.

Mark Johnson identifies this dualistic point of view as Objectivism, which he paraphrases thus:

> The world consists of objects that have properties and stand in various relationships independent of human understanding. The world is as it is, no matter what any person happens to believe about it, and there is one correct "God's-Eye-View" about what the world is really like. In other words, there is a rational structure to reality, independent of the beliefs of any particular people, and correct reason mirrors this rational structure.
>
> To describe an objective reality of this sort, we need language that expresses concepts that can map onto the objects, properties, and relations in a literal, univocal, context independent fashion. Reasoning to gain knowledge of our world is seen as requiring the joining of such concepts into propositions that describe aspects of reality. Reason is thus a purely formal capacity to connect up, and to draw inferences from, these literal concepts according to rules of logic. Words are arbitrary symbols which, though meaningless in themselves, get their meaning by virtue of their capacity to correspond directly to things in the world. And rational thought can be viewed as an algorithmic manipulation of such symbols. (Johnson, 1987, p.x)

Johnson asserts that these ideas have 'maintained a recurring set of ontological, epistemological, and logical dichotomies that are profoundly influential on Western ways of thinking' (Johnson, 1987, p. *xxiv*).

This inheritance manifests itself as a dualistic stance that lends itself to 'the magnification in higher education of all the methods and topics which involved the least use of sense-observation and bodily activity' (Dewey, 2009, p.471). Dewey describes this position in terms of:

> The contempt for physical as compared with mathematical and logical science, for the senses and sense observation; the feeling that knowledge is high and worthy in the degree in which it deals with ideal symbols instead of with the concrete; the scorn of particulars except as they are deductively brought under a universal; the disregard for the body; the depreciation of arts and crafts as intellectual instrumentalities, all sought shelter and found sanction under this estimate of the respective values of experience and reason - or, what came to the same thing, of the practical and the intellectual. (Dewey, 2009, p.453)

Dewey had been writing in the 1930s of course, but his description found new pertinence as art and design schools made their place within the new university structure and sought to develop a research culture that would be recognized within the traditional university structure. James Elkins, writing about the rise of the practice-based PhD, describes the use of terminology such as 'research' and 'new knowledge' in relation to art practice as problematic and even artificial (Elkins, 2009, pp.111-133). The problem as Elkins sees it is one of epistemology. Whilst the 'experience of making – its exact pedagogy, its methods, knacks and skills' (p.128) struggled to find purchase, the conceptualizing of proposed or finished artworks found recognition in an academic context in which a propositional/conceptual paradigm of knowledge was dominant and in which there was a tradition of knowledge dissemination through verbal and textual means. Elkins consequently observes 'the incommensurability of studio art production and university life' (Elkins, 2009, p.128).

In order to achieve a greater degree of commensurability it is necessary to challenge the dualism described earlier and to accommodate a broader understanding of what constitutes knowledge.

If Descarte and Kant divided the mind and body, Dewey's pragmatism, which sees creativity as having the potential for facilitating the 'complete interpenetration of the self and the world of objects and events' (Dewey, 1980, p.19), brings them back together again. Dewey's emphasis on experience links pragmatism with phenomenology. Phenomenology has its roots in the philosophical works of Husserl (2012), Heidegger (1967) and Merleau-Ponty (1962), which were concerned with understanding the essence of human experience, with what it is to be 'in the world'. Husserl was critiquing the Cartesian separation of the thinking mind, or subject, from the material world of things, or objects (Moran, 2000, p.xiii). This separation became the basis for a notion of objective or disinterested scientific knowledge. The material world was proposed as a determinate structure, subject to mathematical laws, that could only be understood through scientific analysis.

Phenomenology, on the other hand proposes that all knowledge necessarily arises from, and is conditioned by, our particular, subjective experience of the world:

> All of my Knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.viii)

Phenomenology could be criticized from a positivist perspective, as being unrigorous. In challenging the positivist notion of one reality, phenomenology could be seen as inherently solipsistic, suggesting that we are all contained within our individual experience, without a shared reality. However, Husserl recognised that the body is a singularly important structure within the phenomenal field (Husserl, 2012, p.10). The body is the site of our awareness and at the same time is instrumental in shaping our awareness. Husserl observed that there was an affinity, or associative empathy between other bodies, viewed outside ourselves, and our own bodies, experienced from within (Husserl, 2012, p.10). The gestures and expressions of other bodies resonate with our sense of our own actions. Husserl concluded that the subjective field of experience, mediated by the body, is shared by other subjectivities. The phenomenal field is not the isolated domain of a solitary ego, but a collective

landscape, inhabited and shaped by other experiencing subjects as well as ourselves. Husserl distinguished between two aspects of the experiential or phenomenal field: phenomena that arise entirely from within, the product of the individual imagination for instance, and phenomena that are observably experienced and responded to by other embodied subjects as well as oneself. This latter category is still subjective as they are experienced by an individual in ways that are determined by their particular, wider experience as well as by their moods etc., but such phenomena are not merely subjective. Husserl describes these phenomena as 'intersubjective' (Husserl, 2012, p.54), phenomena that are experienced by a collection of sensing subjects. Scientific objectivity was seen therefore as an abstract idealisation of intersubjectivity (Moran, 2000, p.12). This wasn't a rejection of science, rather, phenomenology tries to show how theoretical and scientific practices emerge from and are conditioned by our directly felt and lived experience, and that they only have value and meaning in reference to that experience. As Mark Johnson puts it, objectivity must 'fit with our experiential beliefs' (Johnson, 1987, p.212).

Merleau-Ponty further develops the significance of the embodied nature of our experience. Although Husserl recognised the body as the site of the experiencing self, he still saw that self as transcendental, separate from the body and the phenomena that it observes and reflects upon. Since it is only through our body's senses and its capacity to act and to communicate with other subjectivities that we can experience, Merleau-Ponty asserted that the self must be identified totally with the body (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.33).

The other important figure in the development of phenomenology was Heidegger. One key idea for Heidegger was the distinction he proposed between two categories: 'presence-at-hand' and 'readiness-to-hand' (Heidegger, 1967, p.98). 'Presence-at-hand' he associated with the 'theoretical attitude'. Presence at hand is an approach to 'things' that regards them in an objectivist, analytical mode. This is a position that might be described as 'Cartesian', rooted in a concern for facts or abstract concepts (it was perhaps the presence at hand attitude that Dormer had in mind when he described craft and theory as being like oil and water). 'Readiness-to-hand' is identified with

the situated, connected, way that we encounter things through their use. His example is the hammer (Heidegger, 1967, p.98). Heidegger says that we cannot know a hammer by observing it, but only by using it. This was a significant point about our apprehension of the world in general. For Heidegger the dichotomy between subject and object, or subjectivity and objectivity, is false. The way that things manifest themselves is not as mere objects without context, but as equipment for action, like a hammer, or incitements for action, within a grounded situation. One of the central questions of cognitive science, rooted in the prevailing epistemology has been to work out how the mind represents the world, since mind and world are conceived to be entirely distinct. For Heidegger there is no problem of re-presenting the world because the world presents itself as something that we are already in and of. We come to know the essence of things through our active engagement with the world.

Heidegger stresses this kind of engagement in his analysis of what constitutes the 'work of art' (Heidegger, 1998). He suggests that we may arrive at knowledge in a particular way through such work. He insists in *Being and Time* that, 'the kind of concern which manipulates things and puts them to use ... has its own kind of 'knowledge'' (Heidegger, 1967, p.95).

Heidegger furnishes us with the vital concept of 'Dasein', or 'being in the world'. This concept might be regarded as the ontological foundation of Heidegger's work. The knowing that arises from 'being in the world' is situated, connected and directed and is therefore more authentic (Heidegger, 1967, p.27). For Heidegger, being situated is not simply something that happens to the human being, but it is part of the being-structure of being human, permeating every aspect of our cognitive and pragmatic activities and our social relations:

> The world, in this sense, is not a collection of objects to be observed or contemplated by the mind. Rather, in a primary way, we have our hands in it. The world is "at hand" in an almost literal sense (Heidegger uses the term *Zuhandensein* – being-to-hand). Things are not only available for our manipulation – we find ourselves already immersed in such manipulations or dealings, and the possibilities of such dealings shape our perceptions and actions. (Gallagher, 2009, p.7)

This conception of being in the world could be seen as corresponding to craft practice, and indeed, Heidegger saw a particular place for making in his thinking. Sandra Corse, in her book *Craft Objects, Aesthetic Contexts - Kant, Heidegger and Adorno on Craft* (Corse, 2009), sets out to construct a philosophical basis for reflecting on craft. Corse is addressing the 'studio crafts', which she is interested in as a division of fine art. However, she stresses that craft embodies values beyond aesthetics (or, rather, beyond a narrow definition of aesthetics, as will be discussed in relation to Dewey and Johnson). These include the role of historical materials and techniques, the central role of the hand-made in manufacture, its connection to the everyday and its contribution to a more functional and thus more affordable understanding of the world. On the one hand, she claims that in his writing on art Heidegger is not very different to Collingwood in seeing craft as a subsidiary activity, mediating the production of 'art proper'. On the other, she examines Heidegger's reflections on tools and equipment to understand his theory of dasein as a being in the world necessarily engaged in a network of social and practical relations. She suggests that in his essay *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger argues a special role for craft in disclosing and bringing into being a world. Heidegger had argued that there are technologies (craft) that connect us to the world and others (Mechanical/industrial) that alienate us from it (Corse, 2009, pp.54-56). The practice of craft knowledge might be regarded as exemplifying Heidegger's dasein.

For Dewey, experience is not something that happens in an isolated mind, rather, it is biological, relating to an organism in an environment, and social, in that the environment is intersubjective. Cognition, then, emerges in the interactions between organisms and the physical and social environment with which they engage. Experience is situated: 'In actual experience, there is never any such isolated singular object or event; *an* object or event is always a special part, phase, or aspect, of an environing experienced world – a situation' (Dewey, 1939, p.67). Shaun Gallagher, reviewing the philosophical antecedents to theories of situated cognition (Gallagher, 2009) says that Dewey recognized that 'cognition is a form of action and not a relation between a thinking that goes on in the mind and a behaviour that goes on in the world' (Gallagher, 2009, p.5).

Gallagher associates Dewey's concept of cognition, in which perception and thinking are regarded as active and fully integrated with motor action to the point where they are indistinguishable from each other, with the term 'enactive cognition' (Gallagher, 2009, p. 5). This corresponds to Heidegger's 'readiness-to-hand' and the notion of dasein, in which human beings are situated in the world. Again, craft practice, in which thinking and doing are continuous, might be understood as exemplifying 'enactive cognition'. Both Dewey and Heidegger challenge conceptions of cognitive experience that understand it as narrowly individual, ideational, and passive and both reject a knowledge paradigm in which knowledge is abstract, disinterested and purely propositional/conceptual. Both speak to a model of knowledge that is based in application and action.

The Pragmatism of Dewey and the Phenomenology of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty both inform and are extended by theories of situated cognition articulated by Mark Johnson. Johnson has consistently argued against the Cartesian dualism in which the mind and body are conceived as quite separate entities with distinct functions, which he believes is deeply embedded in Western culture:

> The idea that a human being consists of two metaphysically different types of entity – a 'body' and a 'mind' – that are somehow temporarily yoked together during our habitation of this finite world reveals itself in our foundational concepts, our value system and the structure of our language. We conceive of ourselves as split between our 'higher' cognitive and rational self and our 'lower' bodily, perceiving, feeling, emotional self. What we most truly are – our inmost essential self – is construed to be our rational mind or soul, and this higher self is seen as existing in a continual tension with our bodily nature. (Johnson, 2007a, p.89)

He proposes instead an embodied understanding of being: 'The guiding theme is that meaning grows from our visceral connections to life and the bodily conditions of life' (Johnson, 2007a, p.ix).

In his collaborations with George Lakoff, *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and *Philosophy in the Flesh: the embodied mind and its challenge to Western Thought* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999) Johnson had argued

for the formative role of metaphor, not just in language but in human cognition. Metaphor is seen by Johnson and Lakoff as a fundamental mechanism of the mind. We use metaphor to draw on what we know from our sensual, embodied experience in order to make sense, not just of new experiences, but also of abstract ideas and concepts. Metaphor structures our understanding. They note, for example, that 'the structure of our spatial concepts emerges from our constant spatial experience, that is, our interaction with the physical environment' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.57). Their theory rests upon the ways in which metaphors orient us, structure experience, create coherence and, in their systemic interrelation, allow the creations of abstract meanings or concepts. As well as establishing the embodied nature of our knowing Johnson and Lakoff acknowledge the extent to which our knowing is culturally determined and the implicit role of metaphor in shaping our social consciousness:

> Political and economic ideologies are framed in metaphorical terms. Like all other metaphors, political and economic metaphors can hide aspects of reality. But in the area of politics and economics, metaphors matter more, because they constrain our lives. A metaphor in a political or economic system, by virtue of what it hides, can lead to human degradation. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.236)

They offer an example that is pertinent to this study:

> Consider just one example: LABOUR IS A RESOURCE. Most contemporary economic theories, whether capitalist or socialist, treat labour as a natural resource or commodity, on a par with raw materials, and speak in the same terms of its cost and supply. What is hidden by the metaphor is the nature of the labour. No distinction is made between meaningful labour and dehumanizing labour. For all of the labour statistics, there is none on meaningful labour. When we accept the LABOUR IS A RESOURCE metaphor and assume that the cost of resources defined in this way should be kept down, then cheap labour becomes a good thing, on a par with cheap oil. The exploitation of human beings through this metaphor is most obvious in countries that boast of "a virtually inexhaustible supply of cheap labour"—a neutral-sounding economic statement that hides the reality of human degradation. But virtually all major industrialized nations, whether capitalist or socialist, use the same metaphor in their economic theories and policies. The blind acceptance of the metaphor can hide degrading realities, whether meaningless blue-collar and white-collar industrial jobs in "advanced" societies or virtual slavery around the world. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp.236-237)

Johnson has developed these ideas, further elaborated the idea of 'image schemas' that he had conceived with Lakoff, and asserted the central role of the imagination in making meaning (Johnson, 1987, 2007a & 2007b).

Johnson describes image schemas as central structures of understanding; 'they are not concrete images but 'structures that organize our mental representations at a level more general and abstract than that at which we form particular mental images' (Johnson, 1987, p.23-24). Such schemas arise from embodied patterns of interaction that are not reducible to propositional forms:

> In order for us to have meaningful, connected experiences that we can comprehend and reason about, there must be pattern and order to our actions, perceptions, and conceptions. *A schema is a recurrent pattern, shape, and regularity in, or of, these ongoing ordering activities.* These patterns emerge as meaningful structures for us chiefly at the level of our bodily movement through space, our manipulation of objects, and our perceptual interactions. It is important to recognise the dynamic character of image [embodied] schemata as structures for organizing our experience and comprehension.
>
> A schema consists of a small number of parts and relations, by virtue of which it can structure indefinitely many perceptions, images, and events. Image schemata operate at a level of mental organization that falls between abstract propositional structures, on the one side, and particular concrete images on the other. (Johnson, 1987, p.29)

An example of an image schema given by Johnson is the 'compulsive force schema':

> Its basic structure can be represented visually as shown below. An actual COMPULSION schema exists as a *continuous, analog* pattern of, or in, a particular experience or cognition that I have of compulsion. It is present in my perception of a jet airplane being forced down the runway, or in my understanding of forces acting on continental plates, or (metaphorically) in my sense of being forced by peer pressure to join the PTA. The schema proper is not a concrete rich image or mental picture; rather, it is a more abstract pattern that can be manifested in rich images, perceptions, and events.

FORCE ——————➤☐┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄➤
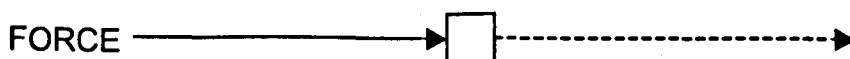
(Johnson, 1987, p.2)

Johnson refers to recent developments in cognitive sciences to support the idea of embodied meaning in which he comprehends an organic continuity of mind, body and environment. This is described as a naturalistic theory that:

> takes as its working hypothesis the idea that all of our 'higher' cognitive faculties (e.g., of conceptualization and reasoning) recruit cognitive structures and processes that operate in our sensory-motor experience and our monitoring of our emotions. Thus meaning and higher cognition grow out of and are shaped by our abilities to perceive things, move our bodies in space, interact with other people, feel emotions and evaluate our situations. (Johnson, 2007a, p.92)

The idea that meaning-making is intimately linked to our sensory-motor system is supported and given a historical, evolutionary account by the neurologist Frank R. Wilson (1998) who argues in his book *The Hand: how it shapes the brain, language and human culture* that the hand and the brain co-evolved (along with their integrated musculoskeletal systems). Wilson marshals a wide range of contemporary research to refute what he calls 'cephalocentric... theories of brain, mind, language and action' (Wilson, 1998, p.60). Wilson states, in a way that accords strikingly with Johnson's thinking, that:

> There is growing evidence that *H. sapiens* acquired in its new hand not simply the *mechanical* capacity for refined manipulative and tool-using skills but, as time passed and events unfolded, an impetus to the redesign, or reallocation, of the brains circuitry. The new way of mapping the world was an extension of ancient neural representations that satisfy the brain's need for gravitational and inertial control of locomotion. Elementary physics, of course, was written into the brain and spinal cord of mammals a very, very, long time ago, and endowed the monkey's limbs with assured, acrobatic genius and hands like computerized magnets. But a new physics would eventually come into this brain, a new way of registering and representing the behaviour of objects moving and changing under the control of the hand. It is *precisely* such a representational system – a syntax of cause and effect, of stories and experiments, each having a beginning, a middle and an end – that one finds at the deepest levels of the organization of human language. (Wilson, 1998, p. 59)

It follows naturally from the idea of embodiment and the central role of the metaphor, that Johnson asserts a special place for the imagination in human

understanding and meaning creation. He elucidates an aesthetic theory that encompasses this position, arguing that 'because aesthetics concerns the emergence of meaning and value through our embodied experience, it should be the cornerstone of our philosophical understanding of human nature' (Johnson, 2007b, p.91). This is contrasted with a narrow view of aesthetics as solely concerning particular kinds of aesthetic experience, where the arts are seen as non-practical, subjective matters of taste (Johnson, 2007, p.89). Underpinning this view, Johnson argues, is 'the pervasive mind body dualism upon which our culture is built' (2007b, p.89). If aesthetics is understood as belonging to sensuous, perceptual, imaginative and emotional aspects of experience, all of which are associated dualistically with the 'lower self' then it is viewed as being too subjective to be the basis of our shared understanding of the world.

Johnson, on the other hand, dwells on an aesthetic theory in which he asserts that:

> ... meaning is not just a matter of concepts and propositions, but also reaches down into the images, sensorimotor schemas, feelings, qualities, and emotions that constitute our meaningful encounter with our world. Any adequate account of meaning must be built around the aesthetic dimensions that give our experience its distinctive character and significance. (Johnson, 2007, pp.xi-xii)

Johnson claims that our sensory-motor experience plays a significant role in our experience of art. He cites Daniel Stern's study of infant development adding what Stern calls 'affect contours' to the concept of image schema as tools for making sense. He describes 'affect contours' thus:

> such as a baby's feeling a build-up of tension within its musculature, or its feeling of a rush of adrenaline, emotion or pleasure. Babies can feel such a growing tension as they stretch out to grasp their rattle, or as they struggle to turn over. Stern observes that these patterns of feeling do not disappear in adults; instead, they are simply appropriated as part of our mature understanding of our world. (Johnson, 2007b, pp.92-93)

Movement, sensation and emotion become the antecedents of meaning, and they also have an aesthetic dimension:

Stern also observes that affect contours play a huge role in our experience of artworks, from dance to music to painting to architecture to drama. For example, we experience the building tension within a romantic symphony, just as we feel a similar affect contour when we wait for a lover to arrive, or when we anticipate some dreaded event. (Johnson, 2007b, p.93)

Stern argues that these 'vitality effect contours' transcend, and are experienced quite separately from, qualities such as narrative or the representation of ideas:

> A composer does not first have pre-   concieved meanings in her head, which she then somehow cleverly expresses in musical pitch contours... Music is not an external sign system we use to express non-musical meanings or concepts. Rather, the meaning exists in the enactment. (Johnson, 2007b, p.93)

Wilson also makes this distinction, pointing out the difference between spontaneous gesture and sign language, where gesture is seen as a direct form of pre-reflective human communication and signing as a code, equivalent to spoken language, whose meanings are pre-determined and may be opaque to those who do not know its rules (Wilson, 1998, pp.185-186).

Johnson argues that meaning in art is always immanent, which is to say that an artworks meaning lies not simply in its specific conceptual content, neither is it a sign that points to something beyond itself, but rather meaning lies in the presentation or enactment of felt experience (Johnson, 2007b, p.95). When we listen to music:

> ... we imaginatively enter into its 'motion', experiencing all of the ways it moves, swells, hops, rushes, floats, trips along, drags, soars and falls. This 'musical' soaring, floating or falling is experienced by us as our felt flow of experience. We feel it in our vital, tactile-kinaesthetic bodies. (2007, p. 96)

If we accept this argument, we might also recognize that through engaging with the crafted object we are able to enter into the experience of the maker, to sense what is was like to handle the material, to make a certain gesture and maybe even to draw vicariously on the intrinsic rewards of making. Dewey (1980) and Johnson (2007a: 2007b) provide an aesthetic theory that draws

attention and gives credence to this possibility. Image schema and vitality affect contours can be seen as mechanisms of inter-subjectivity whereby the viewer enters into the experience of the maker through the crafted object.

The idea that meaning is not just conceptual content has implications for the relationship of meaning to language. Johnson draws on the work of Eugene Gandlin to explore this further. Gandlin shows 'that interfused with the conceptual, propositional and representational aspects of language, there is the felt sense of the situation that is unfolding as our words pour out' (Johnson, 2007b, p.99). He argues that 'the forms, structures, patterns and representations in our thinking (whether in gesture, the arts or language) do not exist independently from the developing sense of qualities, emotions, activities and possible outcomes of our situation' (Johnson, 2007b, p.99). Meaning lies in a combination of our felt experience (which is continuously unfolding) and the reflective, structuring processes associated with language:

> You 'have' meaning, or are 'caught up' in meaning, before you actually experience meaning reflectively. The words, symbols, representations are not independently existing entities that capture or express the felt sense of a situation. Nor does the felt sense exist entirely independent of the words we are speaking. Instead, they are intertwined and develop together. The words are not the meaning, but they carry forward the meaning within a situation. (Johnson, 2007b, p.100)

If we consider that what is meaningful or knowable resides solely in the formal and conceptual then we neglect the vital embodied and situated experience that gives rise to the formal and conceptual. In academic terms, as Elkins had observed, the practice itself becomes insignificant and we concern ourselves with the interpretation of finished, or imagined, artworks.

The formal/structural and the felt/qualitative are not two independent entities externally related, but are interwoven in one continuously developing meaning of a particular situation. It is for this reason that words or formal distinctions are not adequate in themselves.

Johnson stresses that the non-formal, felt aspect of meaning is not vague or

imprecise, although it can seem so when we try to give it formal expression. Words can sometimes seem inadequate when we try to pin down the flow of experience, which is happening as part of a qualitative whole.

The Italian writer Italo Calvino was aware of the problem of describing the flow of experience. In his book Mr. Palomar (1985) he presents his eponymous protagonist as a man on a quest to quantify all phenomena, to identify and name all the parts of his universe. We first meet Mr. Palomar standing on a beach, intently studying the waves. His intention is to observe, in its totality, a single wave, in order that he might have a complete image of a wave, definable, describable, contained in language:

> ...his gaze will dwell on the movement of the wave that strikes the shore, until it can record aspects not previously perceived; as soon as he notices that the images are being repeated, he will know that he has seen everything that he wanted to see and he will be able to stop... If it were not for his impatience to reach a complete, definitive conclusion of his visual operation, looking at waves would be a very restful exercise for him ... and it could perhaps be the key to mastering the world's complexity by reducing it to the simplest mechanism.
> (Calvino, 1985, p.4)

At every point his description is both beautiful and precise, at the same moment it is always inaccurate and inadequate. He has constantly to amend the image and his ambition is constantly thwarted, not simply by the complexity of the phenomena, but by the fact that each moment of the wave is an event within a continuum.

The title of this opening chapter is 'Reading a Wave'.

Calvino understands that experience demands language that is equal to the evolving, unfolding nature of experience. In Six Memos for the Next Millennium he published a series of lectures that were organised under what he described

as 'values, qualities or peculiarities of literature', but which could easily be understood as sensations and transferred to felt experience: lightness, quickness, exactitude, visibility and multiplicity. Here he is talking about exactitude:

> ...Giacomo Leopardi maintained that the more vague and imprecise language is, the more poetic it becomes. I might mention in passing that as far as I know Italian is the only language in which the word vago (vague) also means 'lovely, attractive'. Starting from the original meaning of 'wandering', the word vago still carries an idea of movement and mutability, which in Italian is associated with uncertainty and indefiniteness and with gracefulness and pleasure. (Calvino, 1992, p. 57)

Calvino's writing supports Johnson in his claim that the 'qualitative, felt sense is vague, but only in a rich positive sense, namely, it is full of possibilities that are not yet realized' (Johnson, 2007b, p.100). This attitude doesn't deny the value of written and spoken language as a means of knowledge dissemination, but it does question its hegemony and it also suggests that we need to question whether the kind of language that is traditionally associated with rigorous academic traditions is always appropriate for discourse in practice-based disciplines. Doloughan (2002) and Harper (2007) make the point that if art, design and crafting are to sustain a place in the academy, and if the academy is to be open to new conceptualizations and multimodal inflections then we need to be open to different forms of language:

> Such language is likely to be multi-layered and metaphorical, metaphysical and qualitative, rather than transparent and one-dimensional. It will not seek to exclude the personal and the affective from the cognitive and the social. (Doloughan, 2002, p.62)

The semiotician Umberto Eco reminds us that while verbal language might be our most powerful language, there are other languages at our disposal, and that these other languages may be able to express ideas which verbal language cannot (Eco, 1976, p.176).

In Johnson's model 'knowledge' represents an end point, which is socially determined, 'what counts as knowledge and successful enquiry will be relative to the interests, goals and values of different communities of inquirers (Johnson,

2007b, p.101). This is pertinent to the earlier account of the institutionalized craft world and its shaping effect on practice (Chapters 2 and 3). Following Dewey, he suggests that 'knowing' is a more open process that helps us to move forward in our experience. Art, he argues 'opens up possibilities for meaning and growth' (Johnson, 2007b, p.101) and therein lays its importance.

In common with the relativist ideas that were described in Chapter 3, Pragmatic and Phenomenological thinkers such as Dewey and Heidegger challenge the epistemological paradigm in which reality is fixed. They regard the dominance of the 'presence at hand' position in the Western intellectual tradition as inadequate, as representing an 'impoverished view of meaning' (Johnson, 2007a, p.8). They identify a deficiency in knowledge that is not situated in and connected to our experience. However, they are not relativists. They stress 'the obvious importance of structures of embodied understanding, as shared structures that play a role in what a community regards as "objective"' (Johnson, 1990, p.212).

Craft knowledge might, in this way, be seen as archetypal and exemplifying intersubjectivity. Craft knowledge is enactive, it is shared, passed on from generation to generation, it requires submission to externally determined standards and values, but it is not fixed, it is also imminent, evolving as it is enacted. Johnson, Gallagher et al, rather than seeing meaning alternatively as fixed or as myth, see it as imminent, evolving and inter-subjective.

Phenomenology and pragmatism help us to understand craft, not as a distinct category of object, or as supplemental to art or design, but as a particular heightened or exemplary kind of experience. By drawing on phenomenology and pragmatism an epistemology of craft becomes possible in which meaning is located in the dynamic flow of experience, in which the conceptual and our capacity to form concepts are indivisible from perception and action. This helps us to rethink the interface between knowledge and practice, replacing notions of a hard divide and challenging the traditional hierarchical (knowledge privileging) relationship which is inherent in the academic tradition with the recognition that knowing is not separate from practice. Knowing arises from and within practice,

and practice is the purpose of craft knowledge. In this way practice might be seen as both a means of developing and disseminating knowledge, which in turn challenges the exclusive epistemic authority of the spoken and written word.

Theory has played a vital role in the institutionalisation and critical reception of craft, including the establishing of its credentials within the university. However, the dominant epistemology in the university and the wider intellectual culture, doesn't lend itself to an understanding of the practice of craft as a central site of meaning. Rather, it lends itself to the interpretation of the objects or outcomes of craft production, the objects described by Needleman as 'by-products' (Needleman, 1979, p.123) of the work of crafting. Crafted objects might be used to contain or carry conceptual meaning, but viewed from a 'presence at hand' perspective the craft will always be, in Adamson's terms, 'supplemental' or even superfluous to meaning.

In being subjected to the academic and cultural hegemony of the 'presence at hand' approach there is a sense that craft has been channelled into an uncomfortable dead end, in which it has no distinctive purpose and where craft theory amounts to a subsidiary branch of the hermeneutics of art decried by Susan Sontag (2009, p.14).

To borrow from Sontag, Sennett's social analysis and Johnson's extension of Dewey's aesthetic theories provide a synthesis of pragmatism and phenomenology that lends epistemic validity to an erotics of craft (Sontag, 2009, p.14). Dewey had argued that art is important to us because it provides heightened, intensified and highly integrated experiences of meaning. He proposed that art 'affords our sole demonstration of a stability that is not stagnation but is rhythmic and developing' (Dewey, 1980, p.19). Dewey is in agreement with both Morris and Sontag when he claims that the task of the aesthetician is 'to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience' (Dewey, 1980, p.3).

If this task is to be fulfilled then attention needs to be shifted from the refined and intensified aestheticized object to the everyday events, doings and sufferings that constitute practice. Johnson proposes that we should emphasize the process of 'knowing', rather than the affirmative 'knowledge' (Johnson, 2007b, p.101). Similarly, instead of seeking to define 'craft', the vital role of 'crafting' as a mode of knowing and as a fundamental human activity should be emphasized. However, In order to develop critical understanding, epistemology and useful theory about craft that recognizes the practice of craft as a principal locus of meaning, different models of research need to be evolved so that practice can be made accessible to the researcher.

In his book, *Design History and the History of Design*, John A. Walker presents a methodical analysis of the theoretical and methodological problems faced by another, related, field as it has evolved. He asserts that most of the literature on design amounts to 'partial' studies (Walker, 1989, p.68) that focus on designers, products, styles, design education etc. He cites Marx's analysis in *Grundisse* (Marx, 1993), in which Marx describes production and consumption, distribution and exchange as simply separate moments within a totality. Walker suggests that in narrowly defining the object of study we disrupt 'the totality and continuity of reality' (Walker, 1989, p.68). His critique suggests a model for design history, which shifts the focus away from key designers, exemplary designs etc. and employs a multi-disciplinary approach that seeks to understand design as a human activity, set in a dynamic totality.

Elsewhere, Richard Buchanan has identified the need to understand design holistically, as an activity that takes place in physical and social environments:

> ...more attention should be given to the various conceptions of design held by designers in the past. This would reposition design history from material objects or 'things' to thought and action. In other words what designers say and do, the history of their art as philosophy and practice. (Buchanan, 1995, p.14, footnote 27)

Walker and Buchanan's analysis of their field might just as easily be applied to the study of craft. Unless critical attention is paid to what practitioners say and

do the literature on craft will be always be partial. Carter identifies this as a major problem in understanding what he calls 'Material Thinking' (Carter, 2004). He describes material thinking as a 'collaborative process' that 'occurs in the making of works of art' (Carter, 2004, p.xi). Material thinking presents a way of considering the interactions that take place within the process of making. In this conception materials are not just inert matter to be used instrumentally by the artist, but rather the materials and processes of production have their own intelligence that come into play in interaction with the practitioner. Carter argues that there is a need to invent 'a discourse of creative research adequate to the character of the collaborative process' (Carter, 2004, p.xii), which he describes as:

> ... an intellectual adventure that is peculiar to the making process. Critics and theorists interested in communicating ideas about things cannot emulate it. They remain outsiders, interpreters on the sidelines, usually trying to make sense of a creative process afterwards, purely on the basis of its outcome. They lack access to the process and, more fundamentally, they lack the vocabulary to explicate its intellectual character. (Carter, 2004, p.xi)

It is one of the central arguments of this thesis that the people with the vocabulary to explicate the intellectual character of crafting are those insiders who are engaged in the very action of the creative process, which is to say the practitioners of craft. In order to develop a more holistic understanding and useful critical theory for craft there is a need to encourage craft practitioners to contribute to the discourse and for research tools and strategies that can facilitate such an enriched discourse. Beyond this, there is a need to make accessible to the researcher the contexts and processes of practice and to reveal the way in which those things contribute to meaning.

Chapter 6: Craft and Ethnomethodology

If, as I have argued, craft is best understood as a type of experience and a form of knowing that is situated, embodied and enacted then it follows that we need holistic approaches to researching craft within 'the totality and continuity of reality' (Walker, 1989, p.68). This chapter seeks to address the question of what kind of research method might elicit useful data about craft practice and its role in meaning making, where meaning is understood as evolving and contingent.

The goals of this study fit with a qualitative approach and an interpretive research paradigm. Qualitative research is a term that encompasses a range of practices in social research; it explores and tries to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviour and interactions; and it generates non-numerical data. Typical qualitative methods of inquiry include case studies, in-depth interviews, focus groups, documentary analysis and participant observation. The interpretive research paradigm is based on the view that knowledge is a social construction; and it encompasses a number of research approaches, which have a central goal of seeking to interpret the social world (Higgs et al, 2000). According to Smith (1983, pp.7-8), the investigative approaches of Dilthey (1833-1911) and Weber (1864-1920) are pertinent in that they focused on interpretive understanding, to access the meanings of participants' experiences as opposed to explaining or predicting their behaviour, which is the goal of the empirico-analytical paradigm (or quantitative) research.

According to the interpretive paradigm, meanings are constructed by individuals in unique ways, depending on their context and personal frames of reference as they engage with the world they are interpreting (Crotty, 1998, p.64). In this type of research, findings emerge from the interactions between the researcher and the participants as the research progresses (Creswell, 2002, p.8). Therefore, subjectivity is valued; there is acknowledgement that total objectivity is not part of human experience because we are situated in a reality constructed by subjective experiences. Further, the research is value-bound by the nature of the questions being asked, by the values held by the researcher, and the

ways findings are generated and interpreted (Cresswell, 2002, p.184).

In choosing a particular paradigm, certain assumptions and perspectives are accepted. Craft making involves processes that are frequently tacit and subconscious, and occur in context. It is a phenomenon that cannot maintain its essential and embedded features if reduced or measured, as in quantitative research. Craft involves complex phenomena and there is no single model of practice. In addition, craft is contextually defined (i.e., in terms of persons involved, the social situation, the physical environment in which it occurs); it cannot be regarded in terms of specific, a-contextual processes without regard to the complexity of practice.

The interpretive paradigm is viewed here as the most appropriate for researching craft practice because of its potential to generate new understandings of complex multidimensional human phenomena.

Research Strategies

In designing the research method, the aims described above, along with the wider goal of understanding a human phenomenon and practitioner's experience of it, suggested an approach that drew on the related strategies of phenomenology and ethnography.

A case study approach (Yin, 2009) is used to explore and develop the proposed method.

Phenomenology is concerned with observing and making detailed descriptions of life as it is lived, of 'things in themselves'. Phenomenology as a research strategy has its roots in the philosophical works of Husserl (2012), Heidegger (1967) and Merleau-Ponty (1962) discussed in Chapter 5, which were concerned with understanding the essence of human experience, with what it is to be 'in the world', in this instance, the experience of being a craftsperson, and of doing craft. Husserl was critiquing Descartes separation of the thinking mind,

or subject, from the material world of things, or objects. This became the basis for a notion of objective or disinterested scientific knowledge. The material world was proposed as a determinate structure, subject to mathematical laws, that could only be understood through scientific analysis. This has been a dominant, paradigm in western culture. However, it represents an epistemology that is limited. Craft making is a complex phenomenon. This complexity is related to processes that are reflective (Schön, 1983) and often tacit (Polanyi, 1958) or embodied, at times automatic and subconscious.

Within the positivist tradition in social science and psychology, 'science' is defined as the search for general laws through the application of experimental and quantitative methods. This approach tends to look for patterns and to suppress variability (Mishler, 2001, p.9-10). In a sense that recalls Dean's critique of 'classical' definitions (Dean, 2005) discussed in Chapter 1, this culture argues that there exists a 'reality' that could be captured or represented if only the researcher could perfect their methods.

Phenomenology attaches particular importance to the routine and ordinary features of experience (Denscombe, 2010, p.98). It is humanistic in that it places the experience, ideas and reasoning of its subjects at the centre of the investigation. This perspective affords the subject and their own accounting a higher status in the research. It is contrasted to Cartesian positivism in that it places emphasis on subjectivity rather than objectivity, description rather than analysis and interpretation rather than measurement (Denscombe, 2010, p.93). As a philosophy and research strategy it does not seek to explain the world as if from the outside, but rather to give voice to the world from our experienced situation within it.

Ethnography is concerned with providing detailed, rich, or 'thick' descriptions of human phenomena (Denscombe, 2003, p.304: Geertz, 1973, p.3)[14]. It usually

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[14] Geertz adopted the term 'thick description' from the philosopher Gilbert Ryle (Geertz, 1973, p. 6). Broadly speaking a thick description of a human behavior is one that explains not just the behavior, but its context as well, in such a way that the behavior becomes meaningful to an outside observer. A mechanistic description of a making process might be regarded as 'thin description'. A 'thick' description explores the meaning behind it and its symbolic import in

involves immersion in the field of study, as in the classical anthropological studies such as Bronislaw Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) and Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1943). There is an acknowledgement in the ethnographic tradition of the role of the researcher in the construction of accounts, that the construction of the account will inevitably reflect something of the researchers own experiences. According to Garfinkel reflexivity in ethnomethodology does not mean the exposure of such influence in order to correct bias (Heritage, 1984). Ethnomethodology recognizes that reflexivity is an unavoidable feature of life. It acknowledges that meaning is something that is immanent in the complex relationship between actors, action and context, 'Reflexivity means that members shape their actions in relation to context, while context is being redefined through actions' (Heritage, 1984, p.242). Another key concept in ethnomethodology is 'indexicality' which pays attention to the way that a shared sense of meaning is dependent on context. As Heritage puts it:

> ... the intelligibility of what is said rests upon the hearer's ability to make out what is meant from what is said according to methods which are tacitly relied upon by both speaker and hearer. These methods involve the continual invocation of common-sense knowledge and of context as resources with which to make definite use of indefinite descriptive terms. (Heritage, 1984, p.144).

This is consistent with a phenomenological position. However, it does raise practical and ethical issues, which are considered in Chapter 7.

Ethnography can be described as a *holistic* approach (Denscombe, 2003, p.80), in that it tries to observe the interconnectedness and interdependency of different aspects of the culture that it is observing, rather than isolating particular elements for detailed scrutiny outside of their wider context. Very importantly, it pays special attention to the subject's own understanding of their reality. The ethnographic approach is particularly suited to understanding how

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society or between communicators. Geertz offers the example of 'two boys rapidly contracting the eyelids of their right eyes. In one this is an involuntary twitch, in the other a conspiratorial signal to a friend' (p. 6). From a purely objective stance, both appear the same, but there is a vast difference between the two. Thick description seeks to include the complex social, symbolic dimensions of behaviour.

makers conceptualize their work. As Spradley notes in *The Ethnographic Interview,* 'The essential core of ethnography is this concern with the meaning of actions and events to the people we seek to understand' (Spradely, 1979, p.5). Furthermore 'some of these meanings are directly expressed in language; many are taken for granted and only indirectly through word and action' (Spradely, 1979, p.5).

Oral History

Oral history was originally considered as an appropriate research tool for this study. Oral history is an ethnographic approach, being 'grounded in a commitment to the first-hand experience and exploration of a particular social or cultural setting on the basis of (though not exclusively by) participant observation' (Atkinson et al, 2001, p.4). Oral history is a qualitative research method, using interviews, which is suited to understanding meanings, interpretations, relationships, and subjective experience. Oral history interviews have the potential to reveal interactions, relationships, dynamics, and contexts. The documentation of the interview represents an original artefact that becomes a primary source for further research.

Oral history, which has developed, alongside developments in recording technologies, as a contemporary practice in historical research, reflects a shift in historian's interest towards the experience of 'ordinary people' (Perks & Thomson, 2006, p.2). A good example of popular oral history with this focus is Studs Terkel, the American author and broadcaster who has constructed wide ranging and coherent studies of a variety of aspects of North American life through interviews. Although Terkel has interviewed many national figures the emphasis has been on the experience of the wider public. These studies have been published as books – *The Good War* (1984), *American Dreams: lost and found* (1983), *Division Street* (1967) etc., and edited for radio broadcast[15].

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[15] Many of Studs Terkel's interviews are archived digitally and can be heard online at *Conversations with America*, available at http://www.studsterkel.org/).

Terkel's classic collection relating to work, published as *Working* (Terkel, 1977), uses the cumulative effect of interviews with a vast range of workers, from steel-workers to management consultants, to build up a rounded picture of the phenomena of work. Thompson acknowledges in *The Voice of the Past:*

> ... oral history has a special value to the labour historian concerned with the work process itself – not merely its technology... but the experience of work and the social relationships that follow from it. (Thompson, 1988, p.80)

That Terkel creates his overall impression using the vivid accounts of the particular lived experiences of diverse individuals demonstrates the qualities of oral history that make it useful as a research tool.

There is now a considerable body of theory relating to the collection and interpretation of oral histories (for example: Perks and Thomson et al, 2006). Much of this writing gives serious authority to a reflexive and dialogical approach to ethnographic study. Critical reflection on practice has led to recognition of the socially constructed nature of the interview and the role of the interviewer in the joint production of accounts, challenging positivist assumptions regarding the importance of objectivity.

Oral history is something constructed out of experience and in social interaction:

> Discrepancies between facts and remembered, retold stories are interesting because they reflect the way in which we attempt to make sense of our experience, to order and select, re-interpreting. (Samuel and Thompson, 1990, p.2)

The interview is seen as a collaborative process in which meaning is constructed dialogically. Feminist ethnographer Marianne Paget has described the interview as a conversation, and has analysed the way that the interview is shaped by both parties. (Paget, 1983, p.67)

The use of interviews in researching artist's practice is an established practice in art history. *Audio Arts* (Tate, 2007) established by William Furlong in 1973, as part of his own artistic practice, has developed into an extensive archive of

interviews with artists, including Andy Warhol and Gilbert and George. Rebecca Fortnum interviewed 20 artists, including Tacita Dean and Paula Rego for her book *Contemporary British Women Artists: in their own words* (Fortnum, 2007). In her introduction she makes a case for the value of having access to artists own accounts of their practice:

> ...once we have acknowledged the fact that works of art can never be fully translated into words, a range of multivalent narratives quite happily attach themselves to visual production. And, whilst the artists are here, and willing to answer questions, we have the opportunity to add their voices to any discussion about their work. If it is clear that they do not hold the 'meaning' of their work as a privileged author, then their accounts can often extend our thoughts about their own artworks, often creating different levels of understanding. (Fortnum, 2007, p.viii)

There are particular insights that arise from reflections on the practice itself, which support Carter's view on 'the intellectual character' of practice (Carter, 2004, p.xi).

> ...the potential for thought and contemplation offered by making a work of art is hard to find in other spheres of existence and requires total engagement. It exists in the complete technical and intellectual immersion in the materials and mechanics of making and can occur in any medium. This experience often eludes formal description, yet continually surfaces in these conversations. (Fortnum, 2007, p.v)

Oral history interviews have been widely used by design historians. Sandino, in her introduction to a Special Issue of the *Journal of Design History* devoted to oral histories and design, cites a number of significant examples: Bridget Wilkins' interviews with Milner Gray and Beatrice Warde (Wilkins, 1990 p.123-130) is a good example of the way that oral history can be used to illuminate design methods and contexts (Sandino, 2006, p.276); Judith Attfield uses interviews with the High Wycombe furniture makers *J. Clarke* to show how attention to marginalized groups can offer narratives that are counter to, and which balance, the dominant accounts by the establishment. In this case the subject being the Utility Scheme, which is usually portrayed by design historians as embodying the modern movement's ideal, but which is described here, from within the traditional furniture industry, as government imposed de-skilling of a

work force (Attfield, 2007, p. 53-55).

Choosing Craft: the artist's viewpoint (Halper and Douglas, 2009) draws on a variety of original material, including letters and journals etc. as well as a large number of oral history interviews with influential makers[16], to construct a detailed anecdotal narrative that examines the post Second World War development of the crafts in North America. All of the material is contemporaneous to the subjects and the authors did not carry out any interviews or generate any of the material themselves. They identified more than 150 makers who they describe as being deemed to be important and influential to the field and located any relevant material originating directly from the subjects (Halper and Douglas, 2009, p.xi). The approach was open, with the researchers allowing the material that they collected to shape the narrative. Certain critical themes emerged and the book is organised around these themes into four sections: how the subjects chose craft; their education; the economic realities of a craft practice; and philosophies or critical understanding of craft. The material covers the period from the mid 1940's to the present day. The introduction notes that many fundamental questions surrounding the crafts are recurrent:

> Concerns about technique and technology, ornamentation and utility, tradition and innovation are not the proving ground or battleground of any single generation. Our approach highlights the emergence and resurgence of these central themes and tensions throughout the period without attempting to resolve conflicts or ambiguities about craft's definition or disciplinary borders. (Halper and Douglas, 2009, p.xi)

The authors set out to redress what they see as the poor documentation of the crafts in academic and critical journals (Halper and Douglas, 2009, p.ix). They describe the crafts as marginalised in the art-historical canon and attribute this to craft's historical association with 'artisanal labor' (sic); folk, ethnic, and communitarian traditions; and the anonymous production, often by women, of items for domestic use' (Halper and Douglas, 2009, p.ix), which distanced it

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[16] Most of these interviews are taken from the Archives of American Art held at the Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC

from the values of high modernism. They claim that their approach, which draws on the subjective experience of makers, constructs a different picture of craft from that offered by other literature on the subject, which tend to focus exclusively on aesthetics and to exclude matters, for instance, of lifestyle and economics. This is consistent with the review of the field given in earlier chapters.

The collected material gives valuable insights into craft and amounts to a persuasive account of its development in America. Nevertheless, the decision to focus on identifiable figures in post-war craft history tends to undermine the authors intention of redressing a balance. Having made the observation about the anonymity of much craft production and the common ownership of craft knowledge (Halper and Douglas, 2009, p.ix), it seems anomalous to construct a narrative based on key-figures, in a way that is consistent with the conventions of art-history writing. The coherence of the oral history interviews suggests that they have been edited in transcription. Certainly, although colloquialisms are sometimes used, the pauses, hesitations, repetitions, revisions and sounds associated with the subjects collecting their thoughts, "ums" and "ahs", all of which are part of the normal construction of a conversation, are absent. Have they been expunged in the cause of coherence? The accounts are rendered as a fluent literary medium.

Elliot G. Mishler's (2004) *Storylines: Craftartist's narratives of Identity* uses a series of interviews with craftspeople, or 'craftartists' as he designates them, as the basis for a study of adult identity formation.

Mishler is a social psychologist with an interest in narrative analysis. He introduces his study by describing his shift away from 'quasi-experimental' (Mishler, 2004, p.2), quantitative methods and models of research towards qualitative methods for studying discourse, and sociolinguistic methods of narrative analysis. He also describes the development of his interest in the crafts. As he describes it, his study has three components: the crafts and 'craftartists' lives; issues in adult identity formation and methods of narrative analysis (Mishler, 2004, p.2). He has a subsidiary thesis that work has a vital

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role in forming identity and that craft is unusual in modern work practices in exemplifying this position. Mishler's position on the crafts is idealistic, inspired by William Morris's critique of the dehumanizing impact of industrial capitalist work practices (Mishler, 2004, p.xiv). Whilst recognizing the changed and changing context in which craftspeople operate, he claims some on-going cogency for Morris's critique. In the interview stage of his research he is exploring such questions as: 'how do craftartists sustain a sense of non-alienated work when faced with market demands and the problem of making a living? Do the requirements of craftwork conflict with other obligations and responsibilities to their families? Do the craftworkers view their work within the contested definitions of it as art or craft?' (Mishler, 2004, p.4)

He is clear in acknowledging that his own values frame his research. He places himself and his ideals transparently in the narrative constructed by/with his subjects.

Mishler reflects at length on the development of his methodology and in the process offers a compelling critical review of the field: the study of identity formation through analysis of respondents' life stories. He organizes his reflections by defining four key problems in identity research and theory, which he expresses as dichotomies: universality v. inter-individual variability in personal and career trajectories; continuity v. discontinuities in the achievement of adult work identities; coherence v. contradiction and tension in life stories; individual v. relational conceptions of identity; and narrative as praxis. These dichotomies are constructed to challenge the positivist research paradigm that has been dominant in psychology and the social sciences (Mishler, 2004, p.9). His argument is consistent with the literature on the methodology of ethnographic interviewing published in recent times (in Atkinson et al., 2001, pp.369-382).

Mishler's study is useful here in its reflections on methodology and the analysis of oral histories, but also in that it validates some key assumptions: that craft is always situated and that it has a significant role to play in practitioners sense of self.

Another significant use of oral history approaches to documenting craft is the British Library's *Craft Lives*, which is part of the larger National Life Stories project. *Crafts Lives* records in-depth oral history interviews with British craftspeople, exploring both their personal and their working lives. The project aims to address a paucity of documentation and research on the crafts, providing a valuable resource for academics, historians, students and craftspeople to draw upon (British Library, no date). The *Craft Lives* catalogue contains over 170 titles, with interviews lasting between 8 – 10 hours each (conducted over an extended period). The archive focuses on key figures from the British crafts in the twentieth century and as such reflects the institutional crafts canon.

Oral History as a potential research tool

For the purposes of this research, initial experiments with audio interviews using a digital mini-disc recorder quickly revealed the limitations of this method. It was apparent that audio interviews could elicit rich description of practice and thoughtful reflections on individual contexts. The following transcription of an interview with sculptor, Paul Mason, for instance, gives a vivid description of his intimacy with his material and the way that, working it, he is drawn into a wider contemplation of matter:

> ....but when I started I didn't have any control over it in a way. You know it was actually quite marvellous. Where you went with the form and this idea where you went delving into a kind of endless infinite mass. Plus the fact that as you were breaking it open you were aware of the smell and the texture of it, and the dust of it and very often the shells and the fragments... So you had this amazing excavation of the material. You really felt it was mind bogglingly old. Is it a hundred and sixty million years old? So I was fascinated with material and I was fascinated with the process. And it's taken me quite a long while to work out what it is about the process I think. It was only the other day when I was looking at the stuff in the Cathedral that I'd put up, and I thought quite a lot of this is about surface and the paradox of the material, where something on the surface, when you polish it and you get an amazing sense of interiority if you like and depth and also a sensation of what marble was like when it was forming itself all that time ago. And so you get

notions of the infinite. Even though you are within this object you get all these vast big ideas, immense ideas as we were saying. And then of course when you when you're carving it, you're breaking it off, snapping it open... (Mason, 2001)

Nevertheless, the limits of the purely audio interview become apparent immediately. The interview remains, essentially, a literary form. Mishler (2004), and Halper and Douglas (2009), for instance, are concerned with narratives, constructed in language, transcribed into text. Clearly, there is a great deal that is missing from this data. No matter how attentive we are to the nuances of meaning that are communicated through tone or inflection, how evocative the language is, how rich the description is, phenomena that are embedded in lived experience will remain elusive. As Frisch points out:

> Meaning inheres in context and setting, in gesture, in tone, in body language, in expression, in pauses, in performed skills and movements. To the extent we are restricted to text and transcription, we will never locate such moments and meaning, much less have the chance to study, reflect on, learn from, and share them. (Frisch, 2006, p.103)

Aural recordings cannot capture the physical presence of the subject, the richness of the surroundings, the vital role of gesture in articulating meaning:

> People speak with body language, expression and tone. They respond to and refer to their settings and to objects. Many people learn to communicate not with the precision or brilliance of their words but with energy and effect – as interviewers often learn when they discover a vibrant interview reduced, in the transcript, to a series of leaden, banal sentences.
> (Sipe, 1998, p. 382)

The following transcription, taken from a taped interview, conducted by Glenn Adamson, with the American furniture maker Garry Knox Bennett, illustrates a basic problem with audio interviewing:

> MR. BENNETT: Kind of, yeah. Elah Hays [1896-1986]. Marvellous. I got more out of her -- I mean, she was buddies with Archipenko and people like that, you know. But she was a real '20s sort. And she was quite old even when I was there. She was a little lady, very quiet. But she'd just say -- I remember one piece. I was working in clay, which I've never done any clay, and she says, "Oh, Garry, that's quite nice,

but, you know, you ought to look at that curve." And I'm talking into a microphone here and I'm describing to you a curve, though. It was just like this. [Gesturing.] It had nothing to it.

She says, "You know, if that curve just came up and took another little hook, it wouldn't look like it's dying and drooping." (Smithsonian, 2002)

Bennett is referring to a shape and describing it with a gesture, which is not available to us.

Most crucially, audio recording cannot capture the richness of practice itself. We might hear the eloquent practitioner reflecting in illuminating ways on practice, but we cannot witness reflection in practice, the matrix of thinking and action, we cannot share the complexity of practice. The context of the recordings might help to partially address this and to bring a particular focus to the narrative. For instance, an interview conducted in the workshop might facilitate a deeper discussion of tools and techniques and it might encourage the subject to locate themselves in their practice. However, the interview will inevitably be at one remove from the complexity of practice and both subject and interviewer will tend to draw on conventions of conversation, or intellectual discourse, and narrative construction.

Since a key issue for this project was to give the researcher access to practice and to facilitate greater understanding of practice it was felt that film offered a more natural and satisfying medium.

Video Oral History

Technological developments since the 1960s have made the use of visual methods of recording oral histories increasingly viable (Heath et al, 2010, p.2). Cameras and medium (video tape, digital files etc.) both became cheaper and technical developments have widened the practical possibilities of video as a medium for research and representation. Sarah Pink points out that the nature of a particular camera may impact on the subject's 'strategies of self-representation' (Pink, 2007, p.96). She discusses, as an instance, the impact of the fold out screen, which has become a standard feature of digital video

cameras (Pink, 2007, p. 97). Not only did this aid the framing of the image, but it allowed the individual researcher to operate the camera whilst maintaining eye contact with the subject, thus making the presence of the camera less obtrusive.

At the First National Colloquium on Oral History, held in 1966 at Lake Arrowhead, California, Louis Shores encouraged the audience to make use of new technologies to strengthen their collections. Their value lay in their ability to 'capture voice, movement, and presence' especially for those who were 'demonstrating a particular skill, technique or ability' and for those who 'interacted with their environment in a particular manner' (Ishino, 2006, p.320).

By the 1980s film was being widely used by oral historians, for instance the Schomberg Centre for the New York Public Library used video to conduct a series of oral history recordings in 1980. James Biggs Murray, the Director, argued that:

> more of a person can be perceived from seeing moods, expressions
> on a screen than can possibly be picked up from ... a voice recording
> or ... letters on a ... transcript. (Schorzman,1993, p.2)

As the field developed the *Smithsonian Videohistory Program* (*SVP*) (1986 to 1992) was initiated in order to explore methodological questions surrounding videohistory. The researchers came from the discipline of history and the focus of the study was the history of science and technology. It involved interviews with more than 300 participants and produced over 250 hours of videotape. The researchers were testing the viability of the medium of video as a research tool rather than producing documentary film for broadcast and were clear about not emulating the values of television and film in this respect. They looked at issues such as the archiving and retrieval of the collected visual material, and considered protocols for collaboration with technical specialists and with other disciplines. The visual material was not seen as the principal method of research, but was treated instead as supplementary data to enhance and illustrate findings from more established sources. The programme defined video history as 'the video recording of visual information as primary historical

evidence and involving a historian in shaping the original enquiry' (Schorzman, 1993, p.vii). The research was intended to provide supporting theory for the practice of videohistory recording, to ensure academic rigour, and to locate it firmly within the traditions of the discipline of history. Although use of the medium has continued to grow, there have been no subsequent large-scale studies and the literature on the field remains limited (Sipe, 1998).

In the final *SVP* report the authors found that:

> Video is generally most useful when recording the interaction of people with objects, places or other people, when capturing personality and 'body language', and when exploring a process or documenting the function of artefacts. (Schorzman, 1993, p21)

Although video-oral history is discussed as relevant here, the study is aligned particularly with visual ethnographic practice. Video has come to be used extensively by ethnographers and there is a large body of literature on visual research methods (for example MacDougal, 1997: Pink, 2001; 2007: Pole, 2004: Ruby, 2005: Heath et al, 2010).

According to Pink (2007) the early literature tended to focus on complex and problematic frameworks which were intended to control subjectivity, bias and specificity, and to achieve distance, objectivity and generalizable results (see, for example, Becker, 1986). This was in keeping with an objectivist social science tradition. Pink describes subsequent developments in thinking by anthropologists since the 1990s that have supported a departure from the scientific-realist paradigm. These developments were strengthened by 'critical postmodern' theoretical approaches to subjectivity, experience, knowledge and representation (Pink, 2007, pp.1-12).

Video is a reflexive medium in which the collaborative and constructed nature of the representation is transparent. The underlying epistemological assumptions of the researcher are revealed in the kind of questions that are asked, the way that they are framed and presented (Ruby, 2000, p.156). Pink discusses a project (Pole, 2004) in which the collaborative nature of the medium is evident. She used video technology to explore the social significance of living spaces.

In the study her subjects guided her around their homes and gave commentaries on what they regarded as noteworthy as she filmed them. In this case, although the film is being made by the researcher, the subjects are able to determine the content of the recording. Tim Dant (2004), reflecting on his study of the work practices of car mechanics, discusses the way that video allows the researcher to investigate the relationship between the material and the social in terms of the visual, but also in terms of feel, touch, sound and movement. He goes on to argue that, because of its capacity for play and replay, video makes possible a level of analysis that is deeper than other forms of observation and recording.

MacDougall (1997) raised issues that have an interesting parallel in the relationship between academia and craft practices described in the previous chapter. Whilst visual research methods had been regarded merely as serving to support or augment 'objective' anthropology MacDougall proposed the rethinking of anthropological knowledge in the light of the way that media that gave access to understandings that may only be comprehended by non-verbal means. MacDougal argued that this 'implies a radical transformation of anthropology itself that would involve putting in temporary suspension anthropology's dominant orientation as a discipline of words' (MacDougall, 1997, p.292). He believed that visual anthropology required alternative objectives and methodologies to written anthropology, and that it was in combination that they would best serve the discipline as a whole (MacDougall, 1997, pp.292-3).

It is important to distinguish between film produced for research purposes and film making, where editing, the addition of music and other forms of manipulation are employed creatively to create a narrative selected by the film-maker. Whilst making this distinction it is acknowledged reflexively that any footage is constructed and that what is seen should not be understood as observable fact. Ethnographic knowledge is understood as being produced in collaboration between the researcher and subject rather than as existing as objective reality that can be recorded.

Also relevant to this study is the use of video technology in the training and professional development of health care professionals. There is particularly useful literature relating to the use of video in order to understand and develop clinical reasoning in practice. Schön pointed out that professionals in most fields know more than they can say (Schön, 1983, p.51). However, as Schön also shows, when confronted with an account of their performance practitioners often show a capacity to articulate their tacit knowledge (Schön, 1983, p.297). Unsworth (Schell and Schell, 2008, pp.371-399) describes various ways in which video has been used to assist the recollection of Occupational Therapist's clinical reasoning in practice and to elicit rich description and to develop understanding of the phenomenon of clinical reasoning. An example of a phenomenological approach is Hallin and Sviden (1995) who described the clinical reasoning of six experienced therapists who worked in neurology. They were asked to observe a video of a client performing everyday self-care and kitchen tasks and to 'think aloud' and give a commentary to the researcher on their impressions of the patient (Hallin and Sviden, 1995, p. 70). The purpose of this kind of approach is to gather rich descriptions of the therapists experience in order to gain a deep understanding of what these experiences mean (Unsworth, 2008, p.389).

Video Recording and the Crafts

As the technology has become increasingly available, inexpensive and simple to use, video has been used in various ways for researching and documenting craft.

Principal amongst the precedents for using video to document craft is the work of Recording the Crafts, which was founded in 1992 by Mike Hughes and Wally Keeler at the University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE) as the National Electronic and Video Archive of Craft (NEVAC). NEVAC was founded in response to a perceived lack of resources for teaching about the history of crafts in the twentieth century. This intention was initially compounded and given a particular impetus by the need to record an older generation of makers before their testimonies were lost. The aims of the archive were set out as

follows:

> To gather materials which would act as a resource for those researching the nature of the crafts...these materials would characteristically be in the form of video or sound recordings of people intimately associated with the development of the crafts in Britain in the twentieth century...[and] to develop means of access and dissemination and to develop methodologies for the fruitful interrogation of the texts. (Partington, 2000, p.1)

Since the inception of the archive a Research Fellow into Digital Archiving and the Applied Arts has been appointed. As well as continuing to collect and archive material the Research Fellow has focused on two areas of work: presenting the recordings in accessible forms and on approaches to interrogating the recordings. The videos have been copied onto CD-ROM and will eventually be available online. The digitisation of the archive will allow researchers to access relevant material through tagging and key word searches; and on approaches to interrogating the recordings. One approach to analysis has been to look at small elements of recordings in great detail and then to work outwards from the words spoken to the ideas and concepts suggested by them. There is an excellent example of this approach in Matthew Partington's article for *Interpreting Ceramics*: *Ray Finch and Functional* (Partington, 2001a), in which a 1 minute and 50 second fragment of a 5-hour interview is the starting point for an examination of the discourses surrounding *function* and *usefulness*. The article draws on the whole interview, other interviews in the archive and on wider sources to take in Michael Cardew and the development of the pottery at Winchcombe; the Mingei philosophy of the unknown craftsman; the class system and the hierarchy within Winchcombe pottery; the making of production wares and one-off pots; the influence of G.K. Chesterton, Eric Gill and the Distributionist movement; and notions of Englishness. The article assembles this broad range of discourses without ever straying far from the interview, in a way that suggests an adapted application of grounded theory. This is indicative of the revealing nature of the source material.

If the method described above takes a literary approach, based on the close analysis of language, another project reported in the literature pays closer attention to films capacity for revealing and exploring haptic qualities. *NEVAC* collaborated with the V&A Museum on a web-based oral history project, 'Ceramic Points of View', in which a range of contemporary figures from the ceramics world handle ceramic objects from the V&A's collections. Partington, the director of *NEVAC*, gave an account of the project in an article, *Ceramic Points of View: Video Interviews and the Interpretation of Museum Objects* (Partington, 2006), which makes a useful contribution to the literature. The article begins by criticising audio oral history as being too deeply invested in the use of language:

> It has an oral fixation which privileges the words spoken above the
> visual messages being displayed in the performative act of talking.
> (Partington, 2006, p.333)

and goes on to consider the importance of visual indicators in oral communication. The article also reflects on the problems of displaying ceramic objects in a museum setting, where they are usually shown behind glass. The idea was that by making film available through the museum website, visitors could vicariously share the handling of the objects. In addition, it was hoped that the subjectivity brought by the interviewees would enrich the dry labels used by the museum to identify and classify the objects. The handling of the same pots by different subjects would allow for a comparison between their responses, so for instance there is a description of Colin Pearson and Julian Stair both handling a Hans Coper pot and responding to the weight. To Pearson, who comes from a particular tradition of throwing, the pots fails because of its heaviness, whilst Stair, who works in a more sculptural ceramic tradition, sees the weight as "beautiful, positive". In both cases the visible handling of the pot not only facilitates the verbal reflections, but allows us to share vicariously in the sense of weight. During the handling of the pots the cameraman is instructed to concentrate on the hands and the pots:

> ... because that was here the 'action' was taking place. As director
> as well as interviewer, I had asked the cameraman before hand to

focus on the handling of the object when this happened. If the interviewee was not handling the pot, then the cameraman was instructed to widen the shot to include the interviewee as well as the object. It was clear from the beginning of the project that if we were to give a complete picture of the act of touching, then we had to be able to show it on the videotape... The interviewees all handled the objects and to varying degrees discussed the making processes and techniques involved. Without exception they did this whilst touching the object under discussion. In many cases, it is only when watching the recording that a viewer can understand the subtle link between the words spoken and the touching that is taking place.
(Partington, 2006, p.340)

Partington emphasises the necessity of seeing the interview in order to fully comprehend meanings. The article reproduces a transcript of the interview with potter and critic Emmanual Cooper, where there is an attempt to supplement the speech with description of gestures (the words are shown here in italics):

But the other thing of course, was that he put these pots on a stand [rubs the lower 'foot' section of the pot to indicate this is the stand to which he is referring] *so that it was like incorporating a plinth into the actual pot itself* [hands either side of the pot but not touching]. *And here he allows himself* [points to lower part of the pot] *to show you what the wheel was about because you've got this spiral line running up it* [points with his finger and follows the spiral up the lower part of the pot], *which is a line of growth of course. It is about this whole thing growing up and it, what it does is give the pot an extraordinary sense of formality* [hands either side of the round part of the pot but not touching]. *It roots it in the ground* [indicates the desktop], *it's the plinth* [indicates the lower part of the pot], *it's the object on the plinth, but the object and the plinth are one and the same* [both hands travel up and down the pot].
(Partington, 2006, p.340)

This method of transcription gives a very distant sense of meaning and reminds us of the expressiveness of gesture, and how its absence can alter our understanding of what is being communicated.

The article gives a valuable account of the project, drawing attention to the particular insights into the collections that can be shared with the public through the medium of video and the handling of the pots by knowledgeable and experienced makers. It offers reflections on the method and draws on theoretical writing by Sipe (1998) Candida-Smith (1991) and Johnson (1997) in

order to support the method.

The material in the *NEVAC* archive can be viewed as original source material, entirely open to interrogation and to interpretation, and it is open enough to be revealing in unpredictable ways:

> We started without any particular theoretical position except that with my background as an historian I was quite clear that one had to be careful about the contamination of the sources and also to be careful that one didn't set up an archive which collected materials to illustrate a pre-conceived notion of the history of the crafts, that somehow the history of the crafts had to be drawn from the testimonies given to us, rather than imposed upon it. (Hughes, 1996, p.21)

The range of interview set-ups is broad, however, the emphasis of the recordings produced and archived by *NEVAC* has been historical, with a focus on "key figures". Despite the aspiration for the archive to represent "the crafts", the scope has so far only moved tentatively beyond the field of ceramics. This reflects the particular interests of the founders and the (now historical) association with ceramics at UWE. It is also true to say that ceramics has a well-developed tradition of discourse. Whilst there is some footage of potters making, and revealing discussion of making, the emphasis has not been on examining the making process per se. This was highlighted as a criticism in a usability study carried out by the University for the Arts and Humanities Research Board (Partington, 2001c). However, the criticism here is aimed at addressing the needs of students interested in technique who want more information about methods of making.

Neil Brownsword as part of his (ceramics, practice-based) PhD research (Brownsword, 2006) filmed the workers employed in the ceramic industry in Stoke on Trent. Again, the intention here reflects anxiety about disappearing knowledge as the industry was in decline. This context for the films gives them a poignant, elegiac feeling, but they also capture, articulate, and celebrate the extraordinary pool of accumulated tacit knowledge represented in the Potteries:

> The idea of the film was part archive /oral historical approach - conversation really to get makers articulate their tacit knowledge -

and what the spoken word lacked the film captured beautifully. My approach to this was very organic the structure grew out of an ad-hoc methodology. (Brownsword, 2009)

The films are informed by Brownsword's strong attachment to the Potteries, where his family had been employed for generations, and where he began his own making career before following an art school education. His detailed knowledge of the processes being documented also contributes to the framework in which the films were made. After shooting some initial footage himself, Brownsword collaborated with *NEVAC* to reshoot the footage in order to make use of their considerable technical expertise in film-making. By looking at the skills and knowledge of the 'ordinary' workers the project stands outside of *NEVAC*'s usual emphasis on key-figures.

Catherine Ishino, in *Seeing is Believing: Reflections on Video Oral Histories with Chinese Graphic Designers* (2006), reflects on a series of case study interviews with Chinese Graphic designers. The article considers the value of video in creating rounded portraits of her subjects and reflects on the construction and presentation of video oral histories. Ishino discusses the way that she used her background in broadcasting to produce films that had the narrative clarity and drive of television documentaries. This raises similar concerns to those offered above in the comments on *Choosing Craft: the artist's viewpoint* (Halper and Douglas, 2009), where the authors have a tendency to edit the interviews in the pursuit of coherency. Ishino considers the role of the internet in disseminating video material. As the speed of internet connections improve it becomes possible to access material at a reasonably high standard[17] (for example, TED, 2007).

Andrew Jackson has explored the experience of amateur craftspeople as part of his on-going PhD research (Jackson, 2007). Jackson's work challenges

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[17] A good example of this facility is the TED lectures. Included in this series is a short film entitled The film was titled 'Evelyn Glennie: how to truely listen'. Glennie demonstrates the difference between a straight-forward reading of a musical manuscript and an interpretation, or animated translation, of the symbols on the page. She shows how listening engages the whole body. Obviously, a transcript of the talk would have been absurd, but a purely audio recording would also have been inadequate. Glennie's movements, gestures, body language, precision and so on all contribute to the communication of her theme.

conventional explanations for the motivations of amateur makers, which have focused on utilitarian notions of economy and convenience. He uses filmed interviews in order to explore motivations that are centred on the material or embodied experience of the making process (Jackson, 2007, p.225), and draws on the theories of *flow* developed by Csikszentmihalyi (see Chapter 4) to understand the 'optimal experience' of his subjects. In this model of craft, there are rewards that are intrinsic to the practice and are not solely to do with the product, or the social or symbolic qualities of the activity.

Jackson's use of video oral history is, in some ways, closely related to this study, in that the focus is on the experience of the subject and the making process as a site of meaning. However, the central concern is specifically with the DIY maker as a sociological phenomenon, and more generally with the way that 'householders/inhabitants shape their social, psychological, physiological and ideological worlds and what the future of the domestic environment may become' (Jackson, 2007, p.222). There is little reference in the available literature to the role of the interview and to the use of film.

The examples given above all demonstrate the value of the medium of film in researching craft. They all point to the performative nature of the interview and to the importance of gesture, body language and expression to communication. They draw attention to the interaction with the environment and the information that might be gleaned from the domestic or work contexts in which the subjects locate themselves. They give value to these things alongside more conventional academic sources. They all place particular importance on the subjective experience of the individual. However, whilst Ishino gives an historical overview of video oral history in asserting its credibility as a research tool, there has been little critical writing contributing to the literature regarding methodology, the underpinning theory behind film as a research tool for the crafts. The exception is *NEVAC*, which is the only large-scale, on-going, study of the crafts using videoed interviews. *NEVAC* have applied a systematic approach to collecting subjective accounts of craftspeople's experience and have given methodical consideration to the interrogation and analysis of that data. *NEVAC* represents a significant, unparalleled in fact, resource for

researching craft. However there is further need for material which does not focus on the life-stories of eminent individuals, and which gives particular attention to making practice, in itself, accessible to the researcher. Material that looks at craft beyond the idea of key figures, gives accounts of and explores what craftspeople do when they are making.

In this chapter the academic context for this PhD has been described. The research is conducted using an interpretive paradigm and a phenomenological and ethnographic approach. The traditions of oral history and video oral history practices have been examined and considered as useful approaches for looking at craft, and for collecting data, out of which authentic theory can be generated. Related studies that have used filmed interviews to investigate crafts have been identified and it has been argued that, whilst these studies demonstrate the usefulness of such an approach, there is a need for material that is concerned specifically with understanding craft practice and with finding meaning that is located in the subjective experience of craft practice, from which theory can be developed that is grounded in the practice.

Chapter 7: Research Method

This chapter describes the research method, which sets out to address the need identified in Chapter 6. The method uses an ethnographic approach to studying the phenomenon of craft, and draws on the traditions of oral history and video history research. The method is applied to a series of case studies, which are introduced in the second part of this chapter. Many of the key features described below are elaborated through the case studies. The case studies also show how the method was reflected upon and developed throughout the research project.

The proposed method for collecting data is in three stages:

1. In the first instance subjects are interviewed in their home or workplace. This interview is unstructured and discursive but explores the craftsperson's personal history, their motivations; the formal ideas that they feel have shaped their making and the context within which they work.

2. In the second stage the subject is filmed working. This material forms the source material for the third stage and also represents original material for research in itself.

3. The final stage takes the form of a further interview with the subject whilst they watch the second stage film. The focus of this second interview is on the making processes and those ideas which are articulated through, or are present in, the making, though again this is discursive and allows for broader discussion of any matters which arise.

Equipment

The interviews are conducted with minimal equipment. The camera was a Panasonic NV-DX110 digital video camera. This is a good quality camera, with a good internal microphone, but would not be described as a professional

model used for producing broadcast quality material. The camera is relatively small (200mm x 120mm x 80mm) and once set up is not too intrusive.

Initially an external microphone was used, but in practice it was found that the marginal benefit in terms of sound quality did not justify the potential for making the subject uncomfortable through the additional intrusion of the equipment. The sound quality provided by the internal microphone is good, giving a clearly audible recording of the interview.

The films are recorded on standard DV tape and are presented with the thesis as QuickTime movies, saved onto an external hard-drive.

Interviewing and video set-up

The interviews are described as unstructured and discursive. They are not conducted as a survey and are not guided by a prescribed set of questions. The intention is for the subjects to construct the data about their own practice, in collaboration with the interviewer. The interview is an opportunity to hear maker's ideas, observations and interpretations in their own words and in dialogue with the interviewer (an informed and sympathetic collaborator). The time consuming process of setting up and conducting the films is an opportunity to develop a rapport and to frame the experience as reflective and mutually beneficial. This acknowledges and emphasizes the collaborative nature of the process (Lomax and Casey, 1998, para.1.4).

Each stage of the filming process is carried out on separate days, for the comfort and convenience of the subject. In some cases each stage took place in a different venue, and in most cases the final interview was conducted away from the subject's workplace. This also allowed for some reflection on the content of the footage collected in stages one and two, in order to inform the final interview.

The initial interview takes place in the subject's studio/workshop. This is the choice of the subject, but either way the setting provides a physical context in which the subjects construct themselves and their practice:

> We are interested in people's environments, the rooms in which they lived, the sort of shoes they've got on their feet, the pictures on their walls and so on... (Hughs, 1996, p.20)

A certain amount of background noise is inevitable in such contexts, and although steps can be taken to minimize interruptions and interference with the clarity of the recording, has to be seen as an integral part of the context. For instance, in the interview with Paul Mason, in his home, his children can be heard playing in the next room from time to time and in the interview with Malcolm Martin, in his workshop, within a complex of workshops, the sound of machinery in the workshop below is constant.

The subjects were informed in advance of the purpose of the interviews, how the process would be structured and what use would be made of the material (ethical approval is discussed below).

The research approach is qualitative and reflexive. I acknowledge my personal biography as a maker and researcher with a particular interest in the crafts (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, p.10). In the first stage interview, some questions are prepared in advance, the purpose of which is to elicit some basic information concerning, for example, the biography of the subject and some background to their practice, and to get the subject settled in to the interview process. These questions are open and adapted, rather than being prescribed, as in a pro forma questionnaire. A typical question might be, for instance, 'How did you come to practice ceramics?' or 'why clay?' Apart from these initial questions, the intention is to be responsive and to facilitate the subject's construction of their own narrative. As the method was being developed, and in order better to understand the value of the method, both as a research tool and as an aid to reflection on the part of the subject, the final interview concluded with a question relating to the subject's experience of the filming process.

Certain principles that might be regarded as good practice were learnt and applied with greater levels of consistency, through experience, as the study progressed and as the method developed. These include:

- not asking leading or overly complex questions;
- avoiding talking too much, or offering too much in the way of interpretation, so that the interviewer contributes too much to the narrative;
- allowing for silence, so that the subject has time to reflect, or because silence can have its own eloquence;
- using gestures and body language to encourage or prompt the subject, again so that the interviewer isn't too prominent in the recording, and so that the recording isn't overly punctuated by audible prompts.

Given the anxiety expressed in earlier chapters about critical language and the crafts, it is important when conducting interviews that attention is paid to the actual language of the maker, and that categories and concepts that are outside the subject's experience, and that might have the potential to direct the interview, are not imported and projected onto the interview process. This issue has been a particular focus for feminist theorists, where language is seen as having been dominated by male concepts (Kristeva, 1984, p.ix: DeVault, 1990, pp.96-97). Edward Said, in *Orientalism* (1979, pp.7-9), challenged the capacity of Western writing genres to depict non-western societies. This resonates with the problem, identified and explored in Chapter 5, of accommodating practice-based disciplines in traditional academic contexts.

Although this description has focused so far on the interview element of the method, the observation of the making process is of particular importance. The set-up, the placing of the camera, and the framing of the shots were considered in each case in response to the nature of the practice. Where dynamic movement is involved - in glass blowing for instance - the whole workshop might need to be included in the frame; where the subject is relatively static and the process involves more refined close handling of material - in weaving for instance - the focus might be on the hands. In some cases it was useful to

zoom in to a detail, particularly in cases where a broader framing was used. As much as possible, the changing of the frame is avoided in order to minimize consciousness of the camera and the filming process. Where such changes are considered necessary for practical reasons, the decision will need to be justified. Such changes could be seen as constructive editing on the part of the researcher, in order to tell a particular story.

In the final stage of the method, where the subject is watching the second-stage film, the camera was originally directed on to the monitor where the film was being shown. In later films the camera was directed at the interviewee. The final interview could then be incorporated and presented as a small frame within the second-stage film.

Duration

Each stage lasts around one hour. This was determined, through experience, as being the optimum length of time for the subject to be focused and engaged with the process. The subjects were generous with their time and three one-hour sessions, amounted, with setting-up time, to three half-days. It was important that they felt that this was a rewarding activity and that too much of their time had not been taken up. From a pragmatic perspective, one hour is also the length of a single standard DV tape. Limiting the duration of the process in this way avoided interrupting the flow in order to change the tape. The discipline of this time limit helped to keep the process purposeful and contained.

In the first instance it was thought important to film an entire making process. However, this is generally not practical as most production processes involve multiple stages, over an extended period. It was also seen as unnecessary as the intention is not to capture making processes per se. The making processes that are filmed are seen as case studies, in which particular practices, or parts of practices, are observed closely in order to gain a better of understanding of craft practice in general (Stake, 1995, pp.7-8).

For research purposes the recorded material is kept intact, without editing.

Ethics

Care is taken to make the participants in the study fully aware of the purpose of the films and the use to which they would be put. Participants were asked to sign a consent form giving the researcher the right to use the films for non-commercial purposes: educational and research. It states that any use beyond the scope of the agreement will be made only with the agreement of the interviewee. The form ascribes the moral rights to the interviewee's ideas and artefacts, in keeping with Chapter IV of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. A copy of the form is included as an Appendix .

Pink (2007, pp.98-103) discusses the appropriateness of using visual methods for researching and representing ethnographic knowledge. She draws attention to the need for sensitivity to 'local cultures' with regard to both the technology and attitudes to visual representation. In this research project it is assumed that all of the subjects are used to representing themselves in a variety of ways, visually and otherwise. All volunteered to take part, and expressed interest in and recognition of the potential value of reflecting on their work in this way.

Participants

Participants are regarded as case studies (Yin, 1994; Stake, 1995). Case study research is not sampling research: the unit of analysis is a system of action rather than an individual. A case study can be defined as the detailed investigation of a particular instance of a phenomenon. The study is not concerned with individual life stories, or with the particulars of an individual practice per se, although it pays close attention to these aspects of each case for what they might reveal about the whole phenomena of craft. A case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case in order to illuminate the general (Stake, 1995, pp.7-8; Denscombe, 2003, p.61).

The intention of phenomenological research is to develop a complex and rich description of the phenomenon being investigated. Participants were selected therefore in order to capture information-rich cases that would illuminate what is happening when craft practice takes place: what do practitioners want to communicate through and about their practice; where does craft practice come from and what does it mean? As the research developed, cases were sought in order to address identifiable gaps.

By extending the study to look at a number of individual experiences we can begin to see common features that suggest that the particular realities of those individuals are shared and socially constructed within communities of practice.

Participants self-identified as practitioners whose practice involves craft, and they represent a range of practices and materials associated with craft practice. Included in the sample are makers who produce functional and fine art objects. Two participants identified as fine artists, through their training and the nature of their practice. These were chosen because their work involved 'crafting' and they describe their work as embodying what they see as craft values. Careers in the crafts often combine teaching or other income-generating work with the craft practice, and the sample reflects this. The sample also included a self-identified 'amateur' maker, whose making is not motivated by earning a living. All of the participants had a number of years' experience, so that their skills and craft knowledge had developed and become embodied.

Five participants were chosen, as this offered a representative and achievable range of cases.

Where available, website addresses for each of the subjects is given.

Case Studies

The case studies are introduced below, with some reflections on the

development of the method in practice. This is largely descriptive and the analysis is presented in Chapter 8.

The analysis is based on five case studies: Paul Mason, Malcolm Martin, Tim Parry-Williams, Colin Glen and Penny Campbell, but this account also includes general reflections on an earlier film that was made with glass-blower Chris Comins, as part of an MA research project, which was formative in terms of exploring the medium and suggesting its usefulness as a tool for gathering and presenting rich description relating to the experience of the practitioner.

Chris Comins
(http://www.chriscomins.com/)

Chris Comins is a glassmaker. He began working in glass during the 1970s. He describes this as a period when glass making in England was being invigorated by the emergence of a group of makers who were excited by the potential of glass and were experimenting with the material. Chris developed his skills by working as assistant to some of the key figures from this emerging movement, and he has gone on to have a career as a glassmaker in his own name. He has run a successful glass workshop with a high turnover, employing a team of makers, but since 1998 he has worked alone, concentrating on lower volume production and one-off pieces. He has been a recipient of major awards from both the Crafts Council and Arts Council England. The interviews were recorded during the summer and autumn of 2001.

The initial interview took place at Chris's studio at Noxon Farm, in the Forest of Dean. The interview was filmed using a digital video camera without a separate microphone and with only available light. It was the first time that the researcher had turned on and operated a digital video camera and as such it showed the simplicity of using this technology for this purpose.

In the course of the interview Chris discussed matters relating to his career and its development. The description of his career resolves into a series of revelatory experiences: Chris constructs a narrative suggesting both a journey

and a kind of meaning, searched for and found in his work. The range of the discussion is broad but includes: his initial attraction, firstly to craft, and then to glass-making in particular; the learning of his craft, through both 'osmosis' and a growing familiarity with his material gained through experience; reflections on whether or not it is an 'intellectual' process, a concern which is revisited at various times during the interview; a description of the 'emotional thrill' that he finds in creative work; and consideration of the singular character of the craftsperson and their commitment to particular values in work and life which is 'nourishing' in some way but which is usually reflected in a lack of financial reward.

The film offers useful insights into Chris's career and to his approach to making. Whilst being concerned with the particularity of his experience, the material offers insights that can be generalized and can be seen as rich material for research into crafting.

On seeing the film Chris commented that he had not imagined that he would have that much to say about himself. The interview was unrehearsed and he is not in the habit of articulating his practice. He was surprised to find that he had constructed such a cohesive, and eloquent account. The interview is quite wide ranging but remains strongly focused on Chris as a glassmaker, reflecting the central role of his work in his life

The interview lasted just under one hour. Given the concentrated nature of the interview process this – coinciding with the length of a standard DV cassette - felt like an appropriate duration. Although issues were raised which could have been explored in greater depth or revisited after a period of reflection, it was recognized that an interview is a dynamic process creating time-limited snap-shots, not exhaustive accounts. It would be possible for the interviews to become overworked. The interviews can be cross-referenced with other source material in order to extend understanding.

Chris was then filmed working in the workshop in Herefordshire where he did his blowing. The equipment and facilities here were shared with a fellow

glassmaker. It shows the process of making a glass perfume bottle. The process takes approximately 20 minutes for each bottle. Chris regarded these bottles as a production item and he would regularly spend an entire day making them more or less continuously.

The film shows the workshop environment: shelves of finished pieces; raw materials; tool racks; a row of kilns; etc. The apparent chaos of the scene resolves itself into order once it is animated by the maker. Chris was working quickly and with a sureness of touch; he worked through a sequence of actions which were finely judged and timed; he moved from one point to another and knew exactly where he was, both in the space and in the process. When he reached for the correct tool at any given point, it was always to hand. The relaxed and easy motion and the confident certainty of Chris's actions belied his watchfulness and his readiness to respond to the demands of the material. Despite the precise discipline of working with hot glass, we can see Chris making exact judgments, such as when and how much, without the aid of external resources such as measuring tools. For instance, when Chris is seen blowing into the molten glass, the amount of air introduced at any time is finely determined. At another point we see Chris make a subtle swinging motion with the blowing iron, allowing gravity to shape the flow of the hot glass. This is evidence of the tacit knowledge which is internalized and embodied in the maker. We can also see a dynamic interplay between material, technique and aesthetic.

As the workshop in this case was quite compact and the making process conducted within a limited area, the camera could be fixed in one place and the entire process could be filmed with a wide angle and occasional panning shots, using the zoom to catch details when necessary. Although this may not be possible in all workshop situations, it seems to be the ideal approach as it enables, if not exactly an objective stance, then an unmediated, continuous and cohesive perspective.

Within the research project, the purpose of this material was to provide the basis for a second interview with the subject. However, the interview does not

exhaust the potential of the source material and the two can be viewed quite separately and interrogated in different ways.

The material from stage 2 was transferred to video and played on a television monitor with the subject sitting to one side so that they could view the film. The camera was directed at the monitor. As a starting point, the subject was invited to describe the making process as it unfolded on the monitor. The video was paused at times to allow discussion around a particular point to develop, without the pace of the interview being set by the action.

Again, the discussion was quite broad, going beyond an analysis of the making process depicted, but it nevertheless remained closely rooted in the material. Certain ideas and images assert themselves throughout the interview in different contexts: for instance, there is discussion of the pas-de-deux between the will of the maker and the inherent properties of the material; the image of the dance is evoked again when Chris observes the choreography of his movement around the workspace. There is an account of the origins of the studio glass movement in America; beginning with 'garage glass', in which makers, mostly ceramists, began a simple exploration of the characteristics of hot glass, rejecting technique as restricting, they mostly produced 'gloop'. This playful approach to learning eventually awoke a desire to intervene and to become re-engaged with formal technique. Again we see a tension between substance and intention, which Chris describes as a dance. The process of a developing knowledge and practice that he outlines can be seen as a transferable model for learning. There is some discussion of the level of craft knowledge, confidence and discipline required of the maker to surrender some portion of control to the nature of the chosen material. There is repeated speculation as to what evidence of the process there is in the finished object, and how this might form part of the 'seduction' of the work to the consumer.

Some of the topics and ideas touched on in the first interview were revisited here, and it was evident that cross-referencing between the interviews would offer further insights.

The final interview, combined with the second film, reveals the complex process of making with its interplay of purpose, material, technique and space, the dynamic of thinking and doing. The discursive nature of the interview allows for the unpicking of this dynamic, and a close interrogation of the source material. The discussion draws on anecdotes and subjective hypotheses, which enrich the material and further contextualize it. Again, the interview was unrehearsed and was intended to be responsive to the video footage. Recognizing that the interviewer will always bring a particular perspective, we can also recognize that -far from challenging the authenticity of the material - this adds another dimension for the critical student to engage with.

Whilst pointing the camera at the monitor screen produced an inferior image of the workshop footage, it did allow for a correspondence between the image and the dialogue. At times this correspondence is precise, and at times the images provide a context for the dialogue. Where Chris's hands appear in the frame, the gestures are expressive and enliven the interview. However, the issue of finding an engaging and clear relationship between the interview and the original footage is raised here.

Although the camera used was a good but basic model, and a better lens and microphone, for instance, would improve the quality of the record, this initial case study demonstrated the ease and suitability of digital video as a medium and suggested that there are benefits to using what has become, for most people, familiar, everyday technology.

Whilst the films are intended as research tools and are not for broadcast, they need, if they are to be useful for research purposes, to be engaging. Clarity of sound and image, the choice of image, the pace and focus of the interviews, and so forth, all contribute to the accessibility of the material.

In the course of the interview it becomes clear that the recorded noise on the film of the furnaces, whilst clearly part of the making experience, was a distraction, so the sound level was lowered. Background noise from the street outside was also quite intrusive during the interview. A separate 360-degree

microphone was used, which picked up more extraneous noise, but the principal issue was the choice of location for the interview.

The interviews were time consuming and finding times when it was convenient to interrupt the work schedule of a one-man workshop was difficult. However, Chris found the experience a useful one. He was intrigued to see himself at work and was surprised at how much he was able to say about his work. His notions of the intellectual, or non-intellectual nature of his work were challenged both by the discussion during the interviews and by the evident complexity of the practice that he has, to some extent, assimilated or even come to take for granted.

Paul Mason

Paul Mason (23 June 1952 - 9 May 2006) was a sculptor. Although he was successful in placing his work in a contemporary fine art context and did not identify his work with 'the crafts', he practiced the traditional sculptural craft of carving in stone and marble, and he regarded the 'crafting' aspect of his work as central to its meaning. He studied at Wolverhampton Polytechnic (1971 to 1974) under John Paddison and then at The Royal Academy (1974 to 1977) under Willi Soukop. In 1976 he was awarded the Royal Academy Gold Medal. He exhibited internationally, including at Tate, St. Ives and at the Bauhaus Kunst Archive in Berlin. He created a number of significant public sculptures and took up several high-profile residencies including Tate, St. Ives (1996), where he worked in Barbara Hepworth's studio, and Gloucester Cathedral (2000-2001).

Alongside his sculptural practice Paul taught at a number of art schools and was made Professor of Sculpture at Derby University in 2004, in recognition of his contribution to the field.

Sadly only the initial interview with Paul was recorded as he died before the process was completed. However, as well as having valuable audio content, the film demonstrates the value of the medium in several ways and has

therefore been included in the analysis.

Paul is seen and heard vocalizing insights into his practice. An experienced teacher and explainer of his work, his accounts are eloquent and erudite. However, although a transcript of the interview would have yielded a persuasive narrative and understandings arising from Paul's habits of reflection, it was evident in reviewing the film that there is much that would be missed.

The interview was recorded in Paul's home, which he shared with his wife Emma Talbot (a distinguished painter in her own right) and their sons Zachary and Daniel. Paul is occasionally distracted by the sound of his children and is seen listening out for Emma's return. These 'distractions' are assimilated into the account and ground Paul's discourse not only in his practice as an artist but in his domestic life and his close relationships.

Although Paul's discourse is coherent and to some extent planned (in that he is accustomed to giving accounts of his practice), the role of facial expression, body language and gesture in constructing meaning is clearly evident. Pauses, instead of interrupting the flow of the account, can be observed and understood as Paul collecting his thoughts and making sense. Similarly, gesture is seen as vital to Paul's accounting: his hands are prominent in the framing of the film and at times he is seen to be drawing and shaping his meaning (see for example tape 1, 00:47:00-00:47:30) in a way that strongly evokes his sculptural practice (fig.4). In these instances gesture can be seen to be more than the emphasizing of a point that has been communicated linguistically. The idea that meaning is immanent and enacted is visibly illustrated in these frames (the role of gesture in meaning making is discussed further in Chapter 8).

Exceptionally, this interview lasts for two hours. The first hour is discursive, with the conversation following its own course whilst remaining focused and coherent. It covers a range of topics including Paul's art school education; his interest in materials; the role of the imagination in making sense of the world; the relationship between an individual practice and wider social structures; and the relationship between teaching and his own practice. However, in the
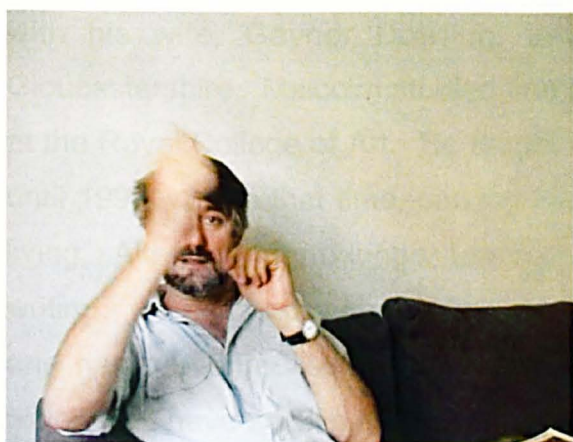
figure 4: Harper, P.W.H. (2013) *Paul Mason, Gestures* [film stills]

second hour the conversation crosses the fine line between an unstructured interview and an involving conversation between two individuals with mutual interests. This confirms the sense gained in the films of Chris that one hour is the optimal length of an interview session.

Malcolm Martin

(http://www.martinanddowling.com/)

Malcolm Martin is a sculptor who carves in wood. He works in close partnership with his wife, Gaynor Dowling, in a workshop close to their home in Gloucestershire. Malcolm studied fine art at the Bath Academy of Art and then at the Royal College of Art. He taught at the University of the West of England until 1993. Since that time, carving has been his principal means of earning a living. Although he no longer teaches, Malcolm has maintained an interest in writing. He has had a number of essays published in catalogues and journals and has presented at academic conferences. Malcolm and Gaynor exhibit widely and have work in a number of national and international collections.

Malcolm is filmed in his studio. For the initial interview Malcolm had arranged work on the bench, which is seen in the background. Tools are also seen hanging behind him. The impression is one of order. However, out of shot, the workshop has a more unruly character. There are scraps of wood and sawdust everywhere, timber, stacked and leant, as well as finished and semi-finished pieces. During the interview there are moments when there is a considerable amount of background noise from the workshop below. This is sometimes intrusive, but it reflects the working environment and in some way grounds the discussion in Malcolm's everyday working situation. Throughout the filming, these contrasts, between the cerebral and the highly physical, order and disorder, planned action and improvisation, emerge as a strong theme.

When filming Chris Comins it had been possible to capture the entire process of making a piece of work, it was then assumed that this was the ideal. In Malcolm's case, however, he will work on a piece over a number of weeks; it

was only in practice that it became clear that a whole process wasn't required and that a small section could provide rich data. However, at this stage, it was decided in planning the film that Malcolm should keep the camera in the studio and be responsible for placing it and turning it on as he saw fit. In this way an overview of the work would be created, which would include representative phases of the process. Another reason for this decision was a response to Malcolm's tendency to explain his actions as he went along. It was assumed that this was due to my presence as researcher. In the event, this continued even after I had left the studio. Although this was not part of the intended method, it is consistent with Malcolm's habits of reflection and is closely tied to the action, so that it adds another element to the data. Altogether, by giving Malcolm a degree of editorial control another aspect of reflexivity is introduced into the account.

That Malcolm talks so much throughout is interesting from two perspectives. Firstly, it reveals how clearly he has thought through what he does; his reflections are always highly considered and elegantly expressed. On the other hand, the very considered nature of his discourse, taken alongside the films, contrasts with the reactive, contingent and apparently instinctive action of his carving.

The filming process runs to 7 hours of footage, excluding the two interviews. Malcolm is seen describing the origins of the piece, in which scenes he presents source material, such as museum catalogues, as well as extensive drawings; roughing out the object, carving; scorching the surface with a blow torch and, finally, finishing with wax. In preparing for the second interview with Malcolm, a single tape is used, taken from the middle of the process, in which he is alone and carving. The selection is intended to represent the process and is not informed by a desire to highlight particular aspects of the practice. However, the first tape of Malcolm is included in the analysis as it does contain material that seems essential to the practice and which is not present elsewhere. The interview is presented as an insert, a box showing Malcolm watching the footage, set within that footage. This seems to represent a satisfying solution to the issue of aligning the interview to the source material,

which was unresolved in the film of Chris Comins.

Filming with Malcolm took place over an extended period. This was partly due to the length of the making process, but also reflects the problems of arranging times which were convenient for Malcolm. As the initial interview was made quite early in the research process and the final interview much later on, the final interview is out of sequence with the development of the other case studies.

Tim Parry-Williams

(http://www.guildcrafts.org.uk/profiles/TimParry-Williams.htm)

Tim is a weaver whose practice encompasses both hand weaving and collaborative design for industry. He studied initially at Surrey Institute of Art and Design, Farnham (now UCA), and completed a Masters degree in Japan. In his studio practice he produces high-end functional textiles, which are used for fashion accessories or interiors. His industrial work is centered on fashion fabric developments, and employs a broad, systematic approach of rigorous applied research, based on very specific project focuses. He has a particular interest in yarn properties, construction and finish, and his work isn't immediately concerned with pattern or colour. Tim spends part of every year in Japan, where he has developed a working relationship over a number of years with an industrial cloth manufacturer.

As well as his making and designing practice, Tim is a teacher, researcher and curator. In these roles he has contributed to exhibitions, conferences, and research projects nationally and internationally.

The initial interview was filmed in Tim's studio in the UK as he prepares a loom for weaving a new piece of work. The workshop is quite small and dominated by the loom. The impression is of a tight space that is nevertheless orderly and uncluttered. All the while that Tim is talking he continues to thread the loom, pausing only to emphasize a point or apparently to collect his thoughts. Tim talks fluently and easily about his childhood, his training and some key

experiences in his working life and there is a sense that the narrative is aided or facilitated by his work. The flow and the detail of Tim's story was so absorbing that it ran beyond the planned one hour limit.

Tape 2 shows Tim weaving. Filming took place in the afternoon in late November. The failing light outside and the strong focus of the work lights inside contribute to a sense of intimacy. The atmosphere is very calm, almost meditative. Before he begins to work Tim takes off his everyday clothes and puts on a Japanese work outfit. This not only reflects his strong connection to that country, but he says that these clothes are ideally suited to the activity of weaving.

The camera is static for most of the filming, with a close focus on Tim's hands. However, there are times when Tim wants to show a particular process and say something about different yarns. At these times the camera is moved to follow the action.

I was present throughout and there is some discussion during the filming. It is clear that my presence affects the process. Tim pauses at times to explain what he is doing or to emphasize something in the conversation. At one point he gets out some yarn to demonstrate a particular quality.

The final film was shot with the camera directed towards the monitor on which the original was being shown. In preparing the film for presentation and review, the interview is shown in an insert. This serves the purpose of attaching the sound track and more or less synchronizing the discussion with the film, although it can be seen that they run at slightly different rates.

Colin Glen

(http://www.hoxtonartgallery.co.uk/artists/colin-glen)

Colin Glen is an artist who uses a variety of media to make work, although drawing is a consistent part of his practice. He studied initially at Goldsmiths University, where he completed a combined degree in Art and Art History. In

2001 he completed an MA in Art History at Birkbeck College, University of London. He has worked as studio assistant to Damien Hirst. His education and work experience associate him closely with the conceptual turn in fine art practice. Colin writes regularly for Art Monthly and AN.

Colin was selected because he uses drawing as an important part of his practice. In an earlier interview, which was conducted in preparation for writing a catalogue essay, he had described these drawings in terms of crafting. He also made the observation that they made him a better father and husband. This fitted with a Morrisian view of art and craft and accorded with the earlier case studies.

At each stage Colin is filmed in his studio, which is very carefully arranged, with minimal clutter and bare white walls - the space has an aesthetic air. In the background there is classical music playing on a radio.

In order to film Colin working, the camera was left for him to set up in what he saw as an appropriate way. Colin is filmed making a drawing of a bottle-rack, similar to the one used by Marcel Duchamp as one of his 'readymade' artworks. The image is artfully framed with the easel to one side in the foreground and the bottle-rack clearly visible to the other side. Between the two hangs a naked light bulb, which is being used to light the object, mimicking the lighting in the Man Ray photograph of Duchamp's piece. For much of the film Colin stands between the camera and part of the prepared board, with his back to the camera. However, the board and Colin's actions are quite clearly visible.

The film shows the early stages of the drawing when Colin is using a very hard pencil. Colin's process involves working over the drawing repeatedly, using gradually softer pencils. At this stage the marks are barely visible to the naked eye and Colin describes 'feeling' or 'performing' the object.

Penny Campbell

All of the case study subjects described so far had identified themselves as

professional artists and craftspeople. The final case study was selected in order to observe the experience of making for an amateur who had not had formal training and did not exhibit their work. The subject would stand outside of the institutional craftworld. In choosing such a subject it was important that it was somebody who, although self-identifying as an amateur, had developed a high level of competence and was committed to further learning and extending their skills. This level of competence and commitment was required for the subject to achieve an 'optimal experience' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Although Penny is motivated constantly to develop her skills and to keep making, she does not aspire to earn her living through her pots.

Penny works as a teacher, where her specialism is languages. She is currently writing a teacher's handbook and her work allows her some flexibility to pursue her pottery.

Penny was filmed working in a pottery class/workshop run in a community pottery, with strong links to the Camphill Trust, which has a number of regular attendees, with various levels of skill and experience. Penny attends the workshop every Monday morning, where she is able to make pots independently, but with support from the tutors if required, and access to the facilities and resources, such as wheels, kilns, and glazes. She has her own handtools. Penny is seen working quietly and with concentration. However, at times there is quite a high level of background noise as people talk, and there are moments when Penny joins in the conversation. Penny was filmed performing four distinct stages of the making process.

Analysis

The purpose of this thesis is to delineate a problem with researching and theorizing about craft, to argue that there is a need for tools that make craft practice more accessible to researchers, and to test a method using video as a useful tool for gathering data, so that theory can be generated in a grounded way from practice. Although the central purpose is not to provide a particular analysis of that data, in order to demonstrate the usefulness of the data, a

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method of analysis using an adapted version of grounded theory was applied. The method of analysis is not intended to be prescriptive. Many different approaches to analysis could be applied to the material. The potential of the data is not exhausted by the interpretation given. The next chapter describes the analytical process and presents a commentary on the analysis.

Chapter 8: Report on Analysis

A primary purpose of this thesis is to explore and evaluate the research method. The intention is not to generate theory as such, but rather to assess how useful theory, grounded in practice and subjective experience, might be generated using a particular research method. In order to demonstrate the validity of the method, a partial, adapted grounded theory approach is used to develop an analysis of the data, looking for significant themes and cross-referencing between the case studies in order to suggest theories and concepts that arise from the data. The purpose of the analysis is not to produce systematic knowledge out of the data, but rather to explore the interrelation of the visual and other forms of knowing. The aim is to make meaningful connections between different forms of research experience and other, possibly more formal, academic sources.

A Grounded Theory Approach

Grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was considered as potentially useful because it is an approach that is concerned with the generation of theories and concepts (Denscombe, 2003, p.110). It challenges the approach whereby theories are developed through an abstract process and are subsequently tested through empirical observation. It is based on the belief that it is better to carry out the research and for the theories to emerge out of the data. It was part of a humanist attempt to tie social science data more closely to the beliefs and concerns of participants, so that social-science practitioners would find in theory a more sympathetic guide to the problems of practice (Layder, 1982). Grounded theory seemed particularly suited to this project, where it is observed that there is an uncomfortable fit between existing theoretical writing and practitioners' experience, that there has been a tendency for theory to lead practice, and that there has been insufficient data concerning practice itself. The central purpose of grounded theory is to develop theory, and in this respect it is distinguished from some forms of ethnographic research, which are primarily concerned with the collection of rich data. With a grounded

theory approach, concepts and theories are developed out of the data through a continuous and systematic process of reference to existing data:

> Generating theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research. (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.6)

Grounded theory demands that the researcher proceeds with an open mind, without reference to existing concepts and theories in the field, working in a spirit of exploration and discovery. It is therefore useful where 'the topic of interest has been relatively ignored in the literature, or has been given only superficial attention' (Goulding, 2002, p. 55). This fits with the rationale for this project, where it is argued that the literature has been partial (see Chapter 3).

Grounded theory comes from a pragmatic tradition and is particularly concerned with being useful in relation to practical activity and routine situations. It seeks to develop theories that are recognizable and of practical use to those involved in the situation being investigated (Denscombe, 2003, p.109).

Grounded theory fits with a phenomenological approach, being concerned with subjective experience. It seeks to understand the subject's view of the situation, rather than taking an objective position, outside of, or above, the situation.

Nevertheless, grounded theory is not primarily concerned with rich description, but rather with the systematic analysis of data, and ultimately with achieving a degree of objectivity. Starting with an open mind, but drawing on literature or experience, a field of study is chosen, and provisional (open to question) concepts are identified as an initial focus. A first site or example is chosen for study because of its relevance to this initial focus. Data is collected, coded and analysed, and the next example chosen in response to the findings and in order to develop emergent theory. The process of research continues in this way until a point of theoretical saturation (Birks and Mills, 2011, p.99) is achieved. This is the point at which new data simply confirms the analysis without adding any

new insight. Through this cumulative, refining approach, grounded research seeks to build strong foundations for concepts and theories that are useful to the field.

The analysis of data, which is a key characteristic of grounded theory, uses a process of constant comparison. Codes and categories are identified in the data (interview material for instance), these might be repeated words, ideas, expressions of feelings, gestures or actions, for example, and further data is collected and checked against these codes and categories, which are subsequently refined. Through this process the phenomenon is broken down, and its basic elements and key characteristics identified. As data accumulates concepts and theories are considered, verified or rejected in relation to the emergent codes and categories. In this way theory developed through the research is firmly grounded in observed, empirical reality.

Grounded theory is relevant to this study in that it offers a systematic approach to generating theory that is rooted in experience, which is meaningful to practitioners, and which is intended to be useful to practice. It suggests a method for analysing the data, which works outwards from the empirical observation. This study is also concerned with developing a method for collecting data through a process of action and reflection, so there is a practical and a philosophical fit.

Thomas and James (2006, pp.767–795) point to the impossibility of freeing oneself from preconceptions and argue that, whilst the practice of constant comparison is useful, grounded theory methods are too prescriptive, such that they restrict the open and creative interpretation that should characterize interpretative research. However, whilst having a clear basis in the original writings of Glaser and Strauss, grounded theory has been adapted and developed, not least in further, separate, works by those authors (see Glaser, 1998, Layder, 1998 and Goulding, 2002). Although it suggests some clear principals, it is not therefore, inflexible. The research presented here diverges from a pure understanding of grounded theory in that it starts with a clear position on crafts, articulated in previous chapters, and demands awareness of

the way that this position informs the research process. In terms of the sample for this study, it begins with a sense of what might be representative of the field, although in the course of the research further needs were identified and additional case studies were sought out.

It is important also to stress that this research is not simply concerned with collecting data for analysis, leading to definitive theory. In keeping with ethnographic and phenomenological approaches the researcher should be seen as being engaged in a process through which knowledge is being produced, in which knowledge is understood as active and evolving (Pink, 2007, p.105). If we accept this point then the stage of theoretical saturation can never be reached, the data is never exhausted and remains open to new and different interpretations.

What follows is an overview of the process of analysis. The approach is complex in application, and the intention here is to present as simple a description as possible. Inevitably, presented in this way the process will seem abstract. The account is elaborated and given form through the analysis of the case studies.

Part of the intention of the method is to collect maker's accounts, using their own words to explicate their practices. However, the aim is not to treat these accounts as text. I have argued (see Chapter 6) that the ethnographic approach, using film, is valuable because it allows us to observe and understand how all kinds of material, intangible, spoken, performed narratives and discourses are interwoven with and made meaningful to social relations, practices and individual experiences (Pink, 2007, p.7).

The data, in the form of the films, is treated as a whole. Analysis is not based on transcriptions. Where reference is made to spoken words, transcriptions are rendered in edited forms for ease of reading, with vocal tics and pauses etc. edited out. These references are transcribed in order to aid the commentary, but readers should refer directly to the films in such cases. The literature on

grounded theory tends to discuss data in terms of text, so some adaptation is applied here.

The Process of Analysis

The individual sets of data are given titles for reference, e.g. Malcolm Martin, tape 3. This is so that it can be more easily accessed thereafter and so that the researcher can more easily catalogue and navigate the material once analysis is begun.

The researcher immerses them self in the data and, drawing on their professional knowledge and experience at this point, identifies key issues. These might be repeated words, gestures, actions etc. These ideas and events are given access codes, which identify their place in the recording (e.g. Malcolm Martin, tape 3, 00:10:34), and noted down. Notebooks are kept for each set of data (film). The pages of the notebooks are divided, so that there is a wide margin for further annotation.

Constant comparison is the heart of the process. At first the films will be compared. Theory will begin to suggest itself. When this happens the researcher will go back and compare data to theory, so that there is a process of continuous cross-referencing.

The results of this comparison are written in the margin of the notes as coding. The task is to identify categories (themes or variables) and their properties.

As coding takes place, certain theoretical propositions occur. These may be about links between categories, or about a core category (a category that appears central to the study). As the categories and properties emerge, they, and their links to the core category, provide the theory. At this point the researcher makes notes that are kept separate from the note-books relating to the individual films. These notes are called memos and are kept in a card index.

As the data collection and coding proceeds the codes and the memos

accumulate.

As the research develops the researcher adds to the sample through theoretical sampling. This is purposive sampling, increasing the diversity of the sample, searching for different properties. In this study it was decided that the sample should be extended to include an artist who did not identify with 'the crafts', and then also an amateur maker who was committed to developing their skills to a high level.

The memos are grouped, like with like, and sequenced in whatever order will make a theory clearest. The literature is accessed as it becomes relevant. Working outwards from the data, literature is used to further develop and support emergent theory. This is in contrast to hypothesis-testing research, where hypotheses are generated by the literature and tested through the research. An eclectic, multi-disciplinary approach is used to reach beyond the existing literature on craft when developing concepts and theories.

It is the process of cross-referencing and comparison, along with the support of literature, which provides credibility in this method. Again, it should be stressed that no claims are made in the analysis presented here for rigour in scientific terms. However, intuition or hunches based on the subjectivity of the researcher which inform the early stages of note taking and coding only work if grounded in the data. The note-books and memo cards provide an accountable and transparent, audit trail (fig.6).

The order of the sorted memos provides the skeleton, and many of the words, for the writing up of the case studies.

Below is a graphic representation of the process. The first four stages are simultaneous and overlapping. In classic grounded theory the last two stages take place once saturation is reached. As this thesis does not recognize the concept of saturation writing up took place once clear themes had been identified through the process of note taking, coding, memoing and sorting.

Data collected and

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│ collated                    │
└─────────────────────────────┘
     ↕
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ Note taking                 │
└─────────────────────────────┘
     ↕
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ Coding                      │
└─────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ Memoing                     │
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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ Sorting                     │
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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ Writing                     │
└─────────────────────────────┘
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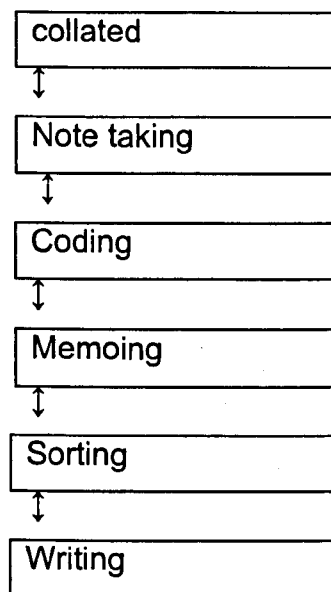
figure 5: schematic representation of the process of analysis

figure 6: Scanned image showing a page of early stage note-taking.

Commentary on the Analysis

The note-taking, memoing and sorting reflected the complexity of the data, but the findings can be organized into three broad themes: intrinsic rewards; social relations and craft knowledge. These themes were cross-referenced with the literature and were instrumental in shaping Chapters 4 and 5. In setting out the findings, discussion is arranged under these thematic headings. The themes are described and broken down into their properties. These can be understood as the criteria for inclusion under a particular category. There is a certain amount of cross-over between the categories. A general instance would be the correlation between the deepening of craft-knowledge and the intrinsic rewards of craft making, and the role that those rewards play in shaping social relationships.

Intrinsic rewards

This category refers to the intrinsic rewards of creative work. That is to say the satisfactions and pleasures of work other than external ones such as financial remuneration, cultural capital, institutional approval or success in terms of the institutional rules of the game. This thesis makes a general assertion that craft should be understood as a heightened form of experience, the nature of the experience was something that the interviewees consistently raised in the films, and it is central to this category.

Intrinsic rewards have been discussed in Chapter 4 in terms of optimal experience or 'flow' (Csikszentmihayli & Nakamura, 2002) and self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985). These theories emphasize the importance of competence, autonomy and relatedness to human beings, in which competence is understood as the need to feel effective in our actions; autonomy as the need to feel that our actions are self-determined, that we have individual agency; and relatedness as the need to interact with and feel connected to others. Self-determination theory argues that humans have a natural impulse to engage with their material and social environment in order to shape their world. In this study the workshop or studio is seen as exemplifying this impulse. The

properties for this theme therefore are: competence, autonomy, relatedness and environment. Close attention was paid to these properties during the analysis, but as they are very closely inter-related in the practice, the commentary is not organised under sub-headings.

In the films the subjects can all be observed at times as being in a state of flow, immersed in their work, attentive and concentrating. The working sections of the films are characterized by periods of stillness. Malcolm can be seen absorbed in the rhythm of carving or standing and contemplating the piece that he is working on as his hands feel the surface and describe his next move (Malcolm Martin, film 3, 00:00:00-00:03:20); Penny braces her hands together as she focuses on drawing lines on her slowly rotating pots (Penny Campbell, film 2, 00:25:33-00:36:45); Colin makes barely visible marks as he seeks to lose himself in the object that he is drawing (Colin Glen, film 1) and Tim's films are imbued with a quietness and intimacy that seems to be a product of repetition and close attention (Tim Parry-Williams, films 1 and 2). The subjects all refer to the pleasures of their activity. Typically, Colin describes his practice in terms of "healing" (00:33:00-00:33:23), and Penny equates her practice to a meditation, "... it is the only thing that I've ever found that totally and utterly absorbs me...this is the one thing that I lose myself in, but I'm very aware of what's happening, of what's going on around me as well" (film 3, 01:03:24-01:03:48). Perhaps it is because she is detached from the demands of a professional making career that Penny talks most freely in terms of enjoyment. Pottery is described as a balance with her teaching career, where "you give so much" (film 3, 00:36:35-00:37:33). She talks about her initial interest in pottery stemming from seeing her aunt and uncle's "lifestyle", in which work was seen as central and positive. She contrasts this with her parent's attitude to work:

> "...having something that you are passionate about. You don't just go to work to earn the money, because that's what you've got to do – my mum even now will say to me "don't work too hard will you", and yet the idea for me is that if you're going to work you might as well work hard and enjoy it – but I'd been brought up with that idea that you didn't really want to go to work but - you had to; what a shame." (film 1, 0022:12-00:22:37)

The subject of 'setting the conditions' arises in different ways throughout the case studies. In introducing Tim in the previous chapter, it was noted that he changes into a Japanese work suit when he is weaving. In addition to the practical considerations described, the putting on of a special outfit suggests an aspect of ritual in which Tim enters into a special place and a mode of being. Tim talks about how "you go into the environment, sit down, pick up the tools and go into a zone" (film 2, 00:08:40). It can be seen that the slow, deft, repetitive actions, the combination of repetition and close attention that working on the loom demands seems to produce a state of mind in Tim that aids his narrative flow. Tim was the only case study to carry on working during this initial interview. He is a natural storyteller and his narrative is more or less linear and clearly focused, but the tone is relaxed and gossipy, which suggests that he is not simply repeating a rehearsed speech; he wanders freely and digresses to tell anecdotes, but there is a strong narrative thread. The effect of the activity on Tim's concentration seems obvious and calls to mind Anna Freud, the pioneering child psychiatrist, who kept a loom in her consultation room because it helped her to relax and concentrate (Freud Museum, 2013). Absorption into the activity is a feature of the flow experience, but what can be seen here is that close attention to the work in hand doesn't exclude other thoughts, indeed it is a creative state. Csikszentmihalyi (1988) noted that flow is a dynamic force for evolution and growth. In the films, making can be seen as a generative act that looks beyond the work in hand towards more, new, work.

Colin describes doing his drawings as being: "about creating a hospitable, commodious place to be" (film 3, 00:58:58) and his purpose in creating such a place is to allow something to happen. Similarly, Malcolm makes the statement that:

> "... all I'm trying to do *ever* is open up a space for that contingency, so it's almost, set yourself a set of parameters whereby something interesting can happen and you don't know what that interesting thing is – it's all about what happens when you're there, with the tools" (film 3, 00:02:28-00:02:47)

There is probably an entire PhD to be written on the role of the radio in creating the conditions in the studio. Colin and Malcolm both have music playing in the background during filming. In Colin's case it is classical music on Radio 3, which is quite a prominent presence in the films. He talks about it in terms of "... setting the state of mind... getting the radio on, having a think about what you're doing for the day" (film 3, 00:00:35-00:00:48). Tim reflects at length on the different virtues of music and talk radio, depending on what he is doing (film 3, 00:16:30-00:23:40) and how he doesn't listen to music whilst he weaves because "it's an emotional tug and it takes me too far away from the work I'm doing" (film 3, 00:19:50-00:19:59).

It would be wrong however to suggest that setting the conditions is enough by itself. Making something happen is also a function of competence and a sense of competence is part of the optimal experience.

In most of the case studies, competence is evident in the sureness with which the subjects handle their tools and go about their work. Contrary to this, there are a number of scenes where Malcolm's control is not immediately evident due to the almost casual way that he uses his tools. At one point he is roughing out a shape on a bandsaw (film 2, 00:26:20-00:41.36). In some ways (not least from a health and safety perspective) the activity looks clumsy and forced. As he handles a large piece of oak on the saw-table the blade screams alarmingly and frequently jams. However, it becomes clear that there is a high degree of accuracy in Malcolm's actions as the desired shape emerges. Malcolm reflects to camera on his use of the machine:

> "I used to do this properly with a tilt on the bed, but what happens
> then is that the pieces try to fall out of the bandsaw. So freehand you
> get better control of the angles and it's not trying to leave you all the
> time." (film 2, 00:40:53-00:41:10)

Whilst Malcolm's method might not be the 'right' way of doing the job, his competence allows him to improvise and to trust his judgement. In another

scene he is carving a piece of work that is standing upright on the bench and is unsecured. Each time that he strikes the chisel the piece moves slightly. During the interview in film 3, I comment on the apparent contrast in his working methods between control and loss of control. Malcolm studies the film and responds by saying:

"... just turning the piece is just about changing the light on it and obviously that's something that you can't do when it's flat on the bench, but it's gaining a sense of the reality of the thing, because the thing that strikes me is that when there's not a gouge on the piece there's hands, there's fingertips and it's really about that, 'oh, what does that actually feel like?' Why is that so important? It's getting a sense of what's happening there and what might happen." (film 3, 00:04:10-00:05:25)

Here Malcolm is prepared to surrender control in order to achieve a better understanding of his process and to explore the piece as it develops. This calculated surrender of control is a function of competence.

As an amateur practitioner, the development of Penny's competence is something that still operates at a much more conscious level than the others and she employs her emergent skills in a very deliberate and self-conscious way. Paul refers to his early experience of carving stone and how important that was to get a growing sense of control, "... for me at the time it was bound up with what I had a real response with, what I felt I had success with, which is really important when it comes down to it on a personal level" (Paul Mason, film 1, 00:01:40). Paul found pleasure in his awareness of achieving a degree of competence, and was encouraged to progress further. As she seeks to develop her competence, Penny says that she doesn't want to use aids or shortcuts to achieve perfect results; she gets more "pleasure" out of relying on her growing competence (film 1, 00:06:50-00:08:51). When watching herself working in film 2, Penny is seen to pay great attention to technique, in a way that the others don't. She makes frequent critical or reflective comment on those aspects of her practice. During one section (film 3, 00:03.33-00:04:40), Penny is 'turning'

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or refining the shape of a pot on the wheel. We discuss the relationship between her hands and the role of the left-hand in feeling the contours of the pot as her right hand applies a tool. I ask a question about "how much is looking and how much is feeling" (film 3, 00:04:10). Penny responds by critiquing her competence and describing achievable goals for the future. Again, she wants to rely on competence in order to reach the desired objective:

> "I think that at the stage I'm at... I get quite a bad back because I'm leaning over to the side and I should just be able to feel but not see it – a lot of people put a mirror behind the wheel so that they can see the pot properly without having to lean over but I need to start learning to feel it totally." (film 3, 00:04:15-00:04:40)

She is aiming to integrate her competence, so that it becomes embodied and less self-conscious. Penny's critical reading of her performance is contrasted with Tim, who gives quite detailed descriptions of technical aspects of the work. In his case this is more in a spirit of explaining.

Competence is also a function of agency; the two are combined in the desire to intervene effectively in order to direct events and to shape one's world. In discussing his art education, Paul makes some reflections that evoke Chris Comins' account of the early studio glass movement. Paul had described his early experience as playful and exploratory in spirit; this was vitally important for his development, and he talks about the way that these early experiences became embodied in ways that we might understand as memories, schema and effect contours. This fed his development and led him onwards in his work. He goes on to reflect on the need to go beyond play and to develop capacity or competence and how he felt that it was something that became neglected and undervalued in art schools:

> "... you didn't get much further than, to be disparaging, 'go and play with it', and you could see that often people weren't getting beyond a certain point. They would just stir it around or break it up and it's very exposing in terms of your own imagination when you are told to

play with something – so the second stage of the play, how you structure the play or how you move on from that, sometimes, wasn't necessarily addressed... and as a result came to appear almost redundant." (Paul Mason, film 1, 00:14:14-00:15:52)

Tim also talks about his early learning experiences, which took place within his family (film 1, 00:00:40-00:02:25). He describes a household in which he was encouraged to be creative, but also to make an active contribution to the domestic chores and to do things well, "from an early age it was - 'can you paint this wall?' - Yes, and do it well and get all the paint strokes going in the same direction" (film 1, 00:01:42-00:01:50). Being creative was highly valued, for its own sake (film 1, 00:01:20-00:01:40), but it had to be directed and to involve the challenge of doing it well in order to achieve pleasure and satisfaction.

Whilst the subjects in the case studies can be observed working in ways that are self-directed and autonomous there is also evidence of a paradoxical relationship between agency and relatedness. Relatedness is discussed more broadly below under the theme of social relations, but it is dealt with in this theme in terms of the idea of 'communities of practice'. Whilst a sense of agency, of being self-directed, is regarded by Deci and Ryan (1985) as a necessary element of intrinsic motivation, Sennett (2008) and Crawford (2009) point out that craft practices draw on shared techniques and objective standards that do not issue from the self. They argue that real, embodied, agency for the self is achieved not solely through the autonomous imagination or through self-directed activity but through the submission of the self to an external reality. Craft knowledge is observed in the films as a form of knowledge which might be developed and given expression through the individual's experience but which arises from a set of externally determined values and standards, and shared understandings of our experience of the material world:

> The process of acquiring craft knowledge is not easily or naturally done by an individual in isolation. Although tacit knowledge is 'my knowledge', it is also communal. For, in whatever craft discipline one

chooses, there is a body of knowledge which shapes our perceptions about our work and our individual worlds. (Dormer, 1994, p. 104)

Malcolm and Tim are both very conscious of working within traditions of making. Tim makes a strong statement about his relationship to the particular traditions of his chosen medium:

"I'm very conscious of being faithful and loyal to the skills and the knowledge that ... I know that allow me to do the work that I want to do." (film 3, 00:51:20-00:51:37)

As he says this we are watching a section of film 2 in which he takes out some fibre to show me and he goes on to say:

"look, I'm taking out this yarn and I tell you about these beans that you sprinkle onto the surface in order to be able to pull up the single thread... and there's no other way of doing it that is anywhere near as efficient and yet it seems completely barmy in our modern, digital world." (film 3, 00:51:25-00:52:02)

Malcolm identifies himself very strongly with carving as a tradition and makes frequent reference to that tradition (see film 1, 00:05:50-00:06:25 for example); he points to "the anachronism of carving" (film 3, 00:42:30-00:43:00) and says that a reason for doing it is precisely to connect with a shared human activity:

"The meaningfulness of still trying to carve... we're establishing, re-establishing contact with that whole history of making that is otherwise just an object on a museum shelf or an unnoticed corner of a cathedral... but that actual, real sense of connection... it leads on to something, a connection between generations or different people that also recognizes a sense of otherness." (film 3, 00:44:28-00:45:36)

Penny's relationship to the community of potters again reflects her amateur status and the specific source of her interests. The standards that she sets

herself come specifically from her aunt and uncle, Joe and Trudi Finch, who have close familial ties to Ray Finch and the Winchcombe Pottery, and the particular tradition that that represents. She aspires towards their standards, and values their criticism, which she describes as "very disparaging when they should be, but they will praise me a lot" (film 1, 00:25:50-00:26:02), but stresses that her competence is far below theirs. She acknowledges that there is a wide range of abilities within the pottery workshop that she attends, but that "there is always something to learn from each other and some inspiration" (film 1, 00:14:15-00:14:45). So for Penny there is a both community of professional potters who she admires and towards whose standards she is aiming, and also the immediate community of mutually supportive potters with whom she works on a weekly basis and within which her developing skills are nurtured.

In each of the films the workshop not only provides the location in which the action happens, they can be observed as spaces that have been shaped around the activity and which in turn impact on that activity. It is evident in the films that the subjects have created their workspaces very specifically around their practices and that the spaces not only house everything that is needed to make the work but that they are immersive spaces that facilitate the experience of the work on a deeper level.

In the commentary on the film of Chris Comins, it was noted that the apparent mess of the workshop was animated and resolved into order by Chris's actions. He moved confidently and quickly around the space and found tools ready to hand at the point where he needed them. He uses the word 'choreography' in response to seeing his actions.

Tools are often described as extensions of the body; indeed, as Baber points out, 'through practice the tool 'disappears' from one's immediate awareness by becoming part of the person and part of the task' (Baber, 2003, p.3). Recent research has demonstrated that when we use a tool, even for just a few minutes, the way that our brain represents the size of our body is altered (Cardinali et al, 2009). In other words, the tool becomes incorporated into our body schema. Jackson in his study of amateur makers uses the term

'competent spaces' to describe the workshop, and argues that the understanding of tools as extensions of the body can be broadened to include the whole workshop:

> For the maker, the workshop is effectively a form of distributed competence – each element enhances and extends their capabilities. (Jackson, 2011)

In the case studies the workshop or studio has been constructed in different, even contrasting ways, but in each case the space can be recognised in this description. They are all immersive spaces, highly constructed and directed towards their practices.

Colin Glen's studio has the feel of a monastic cell. It has clean, white-painted walls and no clutter. In the first interview Colin is perched on a stool with work surfaces visible behind him. To one side of him the work surface has a laptop, notebook and a flask on it; to the other side, underneath a window, is an animal skull; otherwise the surfaces and walls are unadorned. The skull is reminiscent of a *memento mori* and adds to the aesthetic air. In the film of Colin working this impression is reinforced: the camera frames the working area; there is a prepared board on which Colin is making a drawing and beyond is the subject of the drawing, lit by a naked bulb. In the background a radio is playing classical music quietly. The atmosphere is one of calm, order and focus. Colin has constructed the studio as a contrast to his previous workspace, which was in a group situation and where he was part of a "family" (film 1, 00:37:54). In this space he wants to be alone and self-reliant, responsible only to himself and his work. He makes the analogy with the idea of "the shed" (film 1, 00:39:24) as a retreat, a place "not to be anyone" (film 1, 00:39:32-00:39:40). He described the studio as "a place just to be eyes, just to be thought" (Colin Glen, film 1, 00:38:30). He says that he has not self-consciously set up the studio as an installation but that "I need to set all the conditions up right and then I slot in – so it's not me driving it, it's me setting the conditions up and then I become part of the conditions" (film 3, 00:02:40-00:03:15). Colin is describing the studio as both an extension of his capabilities or competence and a place in which he can become literally absorbed into the practice.

By comparison to Colin's, Tim's studio is full of visual stimulation. Behind him can be seen cupboards and drawers, full of yarns and fabric samples. He says that the drawers are "full of yarn treasures" (Tim Parry-Williams, film 2, 00:52:55). In the course of the filming he points out tools, fibres and textiles and tells an associated story for each. At one point (film 2, 00:08) he points out a spindle that was given to him when he was working on a project in Nepal and describes how it came to be given to him. At another point (film 2, 00:50:45-00:52:45) he takes out a box containing some very fine yarn given to him by one of his tutors in Japan and explains how adzuki beans are used to create an even flow when the thread is being unwound. These incidents show how the workshop operates as a repository of memories. Tim says, "I've, shamefully, not done anything with [it] yet. It's one of these treasures, a bit like this [referring to the thread that he is currently using], one of these treasures that I will do something with one day" (film 2, 00:50:46). So the studio contains not only the tools and materials for meeting the immediate needs of production, but it contains the seeds of future projects, it evokes or stimulates possibilities for new work.

Malcolm's workshop also functions, albeit in a slightly different way, as a storehouse of memory, an externalization of his embodied experience. Along with the tools of his craft, neatly organised and ready for use, drawings and books lay open or are propped up on the benches for reference. Amongst the raw materials, off-cuts and finished works there are experiments and works in progress that have been set aside, temporarily abandoned or rejected:

> "... if they're wrong but not too offensive, they sit around in a corner
> of the workshop for a while and they might get re-sawn or they might
> get worked on more or they might just be interesting, and in some
> ways... interesting failures have their value – why?... at the end of
> the day, why wasn't that satisfactory?" (film 3, 00:35:38-00:36:06)

The workshop here acts as a kind of feedback loop: the research that represents the starting point for a particular project is available for reference,

and so too is evidence of the iterative processes that underlie and drive his practice forward.

Penny was filmed in a communal setting. She has her own wheel in a shed at home, but it is too cold in winter, and she doesn't have the range of resources that she can access in the public workshop. She enjoys working at home "burying myself in my shed and hearing people going past on the path – that's nice, and the world is out there" (film 1, 00:14:58), but she also likes to go to the class, where she enjoys the sense of shared activity, of being part of a community and where she gets support from the workshop leader in moving her practice on. In the films Penny seems to 'own' the workshop in a very comfortable way, going about her work, finding what she needs and engaging with the others in the class when she wants. She says that:

> "... it feels like a selfish place that I make for myself... I'll interact with other people, but then I'll just step out and just get on with what I want to get on with and it really is my time and nothing else in the couple of hours that I've got there." (film 3, 00:48:25-00:48:44)

Sadly, it was not possible to film Paul working in his studio, but the still image shown here (fig.7) contains a poignant sense of readiness.

figure 7: Rosenbloom, P. (2006) *Paul Mason's Workbench*

The sample presents a range of environments, each showing different qualities. Colin's studio is, not clinical, but essential, stripped back and highly refined. Drawing is a fundamental practice, requiring at its most basic a mark-making tool and a surface on which to make a mark. Colin wants his drawings to be direct and unmediated. Malcolm's workshop is, by comparison, visually cluttered, full of the contrasts that characterize his practice, at once cerebral, intellectual and highly physical. Tim's workshop is also crowded with materials, samples, tools, dominated by the loom, a complex, highly technical piece of machinery. But it is ordered, systematic. In its way it is as refined as Colin's more unadorned studio.

However, despite their contrasts, they, like Wittgenstein's games, share a familial resemblance (Wittgenstien, 1953). They are all highly constructed and directed towards their practices; they contain the vital ingredients for those practices, their respective tools and materials. All are, in their various ways, intimate, enveloping workspaces, and can be regarded as external representations of their practices.

Social Relations

Craft making affords the total absorption and unselfconscious enjoyment of work, but it is also outwardly directed, forming an organic link between the self and the surrounding material and social environment (Sennett, 2008). In the previous section craft knowledge was discussed as something that is internalized by the individual, but which also involves shared techniques and standards and learning. It doesn't take place in isolation, but is contextualized within a network of relationships involving suppliers, clients, fellow practitioners, other employment, family, friends and the wider society.

It was noted in Chapter 2 that despite institutional discomfort with the legacy of Arts and Crafts ideology, craft makers in practice continued to be attached to idealistic (utopian even) ideas (Bruce and Filmer, 1983). Glen Adamson notes in The Craft Reader that 'When the book is closed on modern craft – if it ever is – the largest number of entries in the index will be found under the heading

'idealism" (Adamson, 2010, p. 135). In the case studies presented here idealism is only briefly framed in explicitly political terms but it nevertheless emerges as a broad conceptual strand that encompasses familial relations, wider social relations, teaching and the idea of communities of practice discussed under the heading of intrinsic rewards.

Paul Mason makes the most overtly political statement when he describes his education. Paul frames his experience of art school education in terms of being part of the post war generation. He associates this with an optimistic attitude, "the glory of garden, the idea that you discover the world anew... after the horrors of the war" (Paul Mason, film 1, 00:08:20), "born under the wings of modernism – a sense of the future" (film 1, 00:16:55). He says that, initially, he was a product of "something that was heavily invested in" (film 1, 00:16:45) and that his open, exploratory experience of education had been built "on the predication that we weren't just... functioning machines... we were encouraged to think beyond food on the table as our parents had" (film 1, 00:23:28-00:24:30). He sees this as a political idea, and relates it to Eco's idea of 'form as social commitment' and:

> "Barbara Hepworth, who also came out with something, the idea that through the making of form you were somehow articulating not only three dimensional structures but you were also talking about psychological structures, poetic structures and ultimately social structures – so that art might affect social change... there was this feeling that you might build a better future by and through art" (film 1, 00:24:40-00:25:20).

Colin also makes a directly political connection, linking his beliefs to his family history: he describes getting a strong sense of social justice from his family (Colin Glen, film 1, 00:43:40-00:51:30) and talks about class, status and the socially determined hierarchical relationship between thinking and doing. In particular he places great emphasis on education as a right. He describes a distinction between his parent's backgrounds: his father came from a prosperous middle class family in Edinburgh, whilst his mother grew up on "the

other side of Edinburgh" (film 1, 00:48:00) and came from a politically engaged and highly driven working class family - her grandfather had been a socialist Labour MP for Paisley. He becomes very emotional when he talks about his mother's educational achievements and seems to ascribe his own passion for learning to his mother's family. In relation to his mother's family he talks about culture and education as a means of achieving a better life:

> "I do believe in trying to refine yourself... I think that everyone is entitled to the best, wherever you are from, and it's not dependent on money, and I think that the problem is that it's all about money now, it's about entitlement through money." (film 1, 00:50:30-00:51:35)

In an early section of film 1 (film 1, 00:03:20-00:06:54) Colin talks about his education at Goldsmiths, where he studied for a combined degree in history of art and art practice. He enjoyed the balance of intellectual academic work and studio practice, but also experiences it as an "uncomfortable" or "conflictual" synthesis (film 1, 00:06:10) and relates this to his background, saying that it:

> "...mirrors sociological elements - in the sense that in my work I've worked both in white collar jobs and blue collar jobs and to have respect for both ways of working and both ways of articulating is something that... has always been important to me. And it's part of my upbringing to have respect for making things manually as well as making things cerebrally." (film 1, 00:06:20-00:07:09)

Throughout his narrative, Colin emphasizes a social role for the artist. When he was studying at Goldsmiths he was described by a tutor as "undoubtedly Romantic" (film 1, 00:33:50) and he frames 'giving and contributing' (film 1, 00:41:30) in ways that conform to the Romantic notion of the heroic/priestly role of the artist described in Chapter 1 (indeed Colin describes being flattered when a priest suggests that he might have been a monk (film 1, 00:37:22)). He talks about periods of withdrawing from the world and of experiencing depravation in order to learn lessons (film 1, 00:29:10-00:30:50), to "find something of value to bring back" (film 1, 00:21:20-0021:26). When he discusses his relationship to

the artworld that is personified by Damien Hirst, for whom he worked at one time, he says that "I wasn't sure what I was giving to that world because in a sense I don't think that I'd found myself..."; he felt that he needed to "look internally and try to contribute something that I thought was worth giving to a community that I was involved in" (film 1, 00:20:00-00:21:40). But Colin is aware of the dangers of becoming too inward looking and of living "solipsistically" (film 1, 00:29:11). He wants to ground his contemplative nature in the real world of relationships and actions, "all the things that you have learned, you want to be able to use valuably in the world" (film 1, 00:27:40-00:27:55). The studio and his drawing practice have become a controlled way of being "absent" in order to be "present" (film 1, 00:40:03). A key outcome of this is that Colin feels that:

"more and more I'm integrated with my family... and it takes quite a long time to actually be able to achieve... to be able to give, to be able to say that actually I am a dad and a husband... so I almost feel like these two are absolutely necessary... I need this in order to be able to do that ." (film 1, 00:38:00-00:39:40)

Tim's family is central to his narrative. It was in his childhood that he had his early opportunities to be creative, with his parents acting as role models, as well as encouraging and nurturing his interests (see film 1, 00:00:00-00:02:26). He learns to do things well and to see value in that. He grew up in the countryside and says that he had to take responsibility for a pony that he kept, seeing to it's needs before he went to school each morning. In doing this he learned to make a connection between meeting those, sometimes onerous, responsibilities and the pleasure that he got from having the pony; he learned a work ethic. Tim acknowledges that these learning experiences provided him with the inclinations, skills and values that help him to make his career (see film 1, 01:33:35-01:35:30). Aside from ascribing these early influences to his family, Tim makes frequent reference to them throughout the films. References often involve occasions where they have helped in some small practical way, such as his mother helping him to pick up his first loom (film 2, 00:25:15). A striking, and recurring, family reference is the making of the fabric for his sister's

wedding dress. He says that he has given a number of talks about the making of the dress and that he has used the title of 'Labour of Love', a title that encompasses both the idea of practices that seem archaic in the modern world and the personal significance of the project (film 3, 00:53:40-00:51:50). So it is clear that family are an important element in his life and work. They not only created an environment in which he flourished as a child, but also continue to play a role as part of the background context for his work. Beyond his family Tim's narrative could be understood as being constructed around a series of encounters and relationships: he talks of the close friendships that he made on his foundation course (film 1, 00:08:44); he tells an anecdote about a Japanese man who his father picked up as a hitch-hiker who becomes a family friend and who helps Tim when he visits him in Tokyo (00:49:19-00:50:54); he describes setting up his first studio in Japan following a conversation "with my good friend Nano" (film 1, 01:11:19) and the gift of a spindle when he worked on a project in Kathmandu, valued because it is personal and intimate (film 2, 00:08:03-00:09:50). These accounts speak of the value that Tim places on relationships and the way that they are bound up with his becoming and being a weaver.

For Penny, it was the idealized image of her aunt and uncle's lifestyle that attracted her to pottery from the start. In an extended passage (film 1, 00:22:07-00:24:11) she describes a way of life that functions within disciplined boundaries but which is based on "freedom" and "passion"; and she talks of working independently, but within a community of potters and artists who help each other out. She sees in her aunt and uncle an ideal of autonomy and connectedness. Her ideal is reflected in the way that she constructs her account of the workshop where she makes her pots. It represents a community of people who respect each other, who share the same values and who are learning together. This ideal is extended to her shed at home where a neighbour who is an artist often drops by:

> "He comes in and he'll comment honestly on what I'm doing or just
> have another conversation that will lead me somewhere else, and
> him somewhere else – and that's lovely, just to have a community of

like-minded people around who just enjoy that you enjoy what you're doing." (film 1, 00:24:18-00:25:05)

At one point Penny says that her teaching allows her to make pots, implying that it is a means to an end (film 1, 00:04:35). However, in the final interview she makes a much more positive reference to her choice of career, in which teaching and making pots act as a balance in her life, "I know I said the other day that's the means to be able to do this, but they kind of go together – because you give so much when you are teaching" (film 3, 00:37:00-00:37:35). Here she suggests that the intrinsically rewarding "selfish" activity of pottery supports her outwardly directed work as a teacher (which has its own rewards), just as her teaching gives her the financial freedom and the time to make pots.

Both Paul and Tim also work as teachers, but in their cases teaching is regarded as integral to their making practices. Paul talks about a trip to the V&A with some students (film 1, 00:56:03-00:58:00) and how, in setting out to enthuse them he is reminded of what excites him. He says that:

> "...from a personal point of view the relationship between working in education and working as an artist is really fantastic – it keeps – one hopes that you can impart some of that interest in things to the student – it's good to remember why you're doing things and also to bring back and focus on why it's important to make things." (film 1, 00:56:52-00:58:00)

Tim realized quite early on that because he was confident about engaging with the loom and he enjoyed deconstructing the technology and explaining it to other people (film 1, 00:14:15-00:14:43) he would like to teach:

> "...using words, actions... to help someone understand something such that they can go ahead and do their own thing and that's incredibly rewarding, to see someone loving doing something through your - that you've been able to help them ..." (film 1, 01:37:25-01:37:54)

He acknowledges that teaching has allowed him to make work in the way that he wants and gives him a quality of life that he might not have otherwise, but says that teaching is something that he will always want to do because it is rewarding in itself (01:37:00-0144:50). This is despite having further ambitions and seeing commercial potential for his textile practice. He describes his teaching as a reciprocal practice in which he has something to give, but in which he gets a lot back. He feels fortunate in that "I do think that I have discovered things in life that I naturally enjoy doing, that I find rewarding, and I can give out" (film 1, 01:44:25-01:44:45).

What is evident from the data is that the craft practices in the case studies do not happen in isolation; they take place within a network of relationships. From the data gathered so far there appears to be a positive correlation between subjects' experience of their practice and the quality of their wider social relations exemplified by familial relationships, teaching and their wider interactions with the world.

Craft Knowledge

In Chapter 5, craft making was described as exemplifying a model of knowledge, or more accurately 'knowing' (Johnson, 2007b, p. 101). Craft knowledge is seen to be embodied, situated and enactive; it is shared, passed on from individual to individual and from generation to generation; it requires submission to externally determined standards and values, but it is not fixed, it is also imminent, evolving as it is enacted. In the analysis particular attention was therefore paid to these qualities.

Throughout the case studies different emphasis is placed on conceptual content in the work. Penny is explicit in insisting that for her, pottery is all about mastery of technique and the experience of making. She doesn't write off the potential for personal expression but, responding to my observation that she has set herself very narrow parameters and that mastery is more important than

experimentation and innovation to her, she says that this reflects her feelings about art in general and asserts that control and reproducibility are necessary precursors to individual expression (film 3, 00:23:50-00:26:08). She is disparaging about 'ceramic art'; she works within a particular tradition of functional pot-making and doesn't feel any compelling need to engage with the broader field. She has never, for instance, visited the ceramics collections at the V&A (00:49:08-00:50:10). Colin and Malcolm, on the other hand, initially foreground the research and conceptual thinking that are part of their practice. However, in the final interviews, whilst watching themselves working, the emphasis shifts significantly towards the practice itself. This could partly be because that is what they are watching, but both make strong statements about the centrality of the experience. Colin talks during the interview about the techniques of drawing, about how the process feels and I press him on how these things fit alongside the intellectual approach that is clearly expressed in the first interview. In response he makes this statement:

> "I hadn't thought about that really, I suppose that's what's throwing up looking at this video – I mean these are things that I'm thinking about as we're talking... the things that you make always have to be a by-product of another process... a drawing isn't just a thing that you present... the drawing is an excuse for the process of thinking or being in the space... all these things are about the by-product" (film 3, 00:18:36-00:20:08)

Colin goes on to express these thoughts about 'craft':

> "I suppose that's what I think a craft practice is – is learning about what you're looking at and learning who you are. That's the crucial thing – the growing that you do through a drawing... when I say learning who you ... it's actually what your presence is." (film 3, 00:20:10-00:20:54)

Continuing this reflection on craft, he goes on to talk about it in terms of directing ones thinking in a positive direction, "like you're trying to craft a

readable image" and compares this to his early work and the dissatisfactions of "free association and the unintentional gesture" (film 3, 00:21:30-00:20:00).

Colin's thoughts on "being in the space" and "presence" link his conception of craft to Heidegger's dasein or 'being in the world', whilst his reflections on directing his actions corresponds to the idea of performing actively in disclosing and bringing the world into being (Heidegger, 1954).

Martin does a lot of thinking and preparation in the way of research and drawing before he begins to carve and he feels that this is important. However, he makes a number of reflections on the relationship between the planning and the actual event of making in which the importance of being responsive and 'in the moment' come to the fore:

> "They are real objects made out of real stuff, they are not ideal objects foisted on the material. They evolve with and through the material." (film 1, 00:07:05-00:07:14)

As he begins to work on the piece, responding to the material and to the emerging shape, he says:

> "...when you get down to these kind of decisions it does get quite performative – "yes, this is me doing it here, now."" (film 2, 00:50:18-00:50:28)

In film 3 he talks about the relationship between the drawing and the thing itself:

> "you can try and be absolutely accurate about the relation between things and you get an absolutely dead thing, and there comes a point where you have to let it move in the direction that it wants to move and suddenly you've got a living thing again." (film 3, 00:32:00-00:32:45)

Martin can be seen making often quite dramatic actions that override the formal decisions that are rooted in the drawings. At one point (film 3, 00:23:04) he suddenly and decisively cuts through a strong carved line. When he watches this sequence he reflects:

> "I think that's fascinating – I suppose that I grew up with a kind of very normal model of thinking where you would weigh up the evidence and make decisions and I suppose that the more I've been trying to actually just be aware of how real thought works, practical, applied thought. There is no conscious, rational decision to do something. It's more about – suddenly that is the only thing to do, suddenly that is the only meaningful thing to do. You are aware that a decision has been taken but in a sense you're witnessing that decision that's come from this whole mind/body system rather than a conscious idea." (film 3, 00:24:22-00:25:20)

Although Malcolm describes his determined action as unconscious it is quite different from the unintentional gesture described by Colin. His body and mind appear to be engaged holistically in making a critical decision that draws on his embodied, experiential, knowledge. This kind of 'automaticity' in problem solving can be recognized as a core property of expertise (Schell and Schell, 2008, p. 52).

The complexity of the relationship between motor, sensory and cognitive systems is evident in all of the films. Malcolm's hands constantly feel the surface and perform gestures. They mimic, or feel what a mark might be like (film 3, 00:11:16-00:12:19). Indeed, it is striking that his hands are in almost continuous contact with the piece. In film 3, I ask him what he thinks of the film, and he is particularly struck by this relationship:

> "...it's the hands! It's that constant relationship with the piece. In a way even when you are standing back, you're feeling with your eyes, but when you are within reaching distance of it there's always that

relationship with it. You are just getting a sense." (film 3, 00:40:15-00:40:44)

In this description looking is ascribed an embodied, direct connection to the hand, rather than being seen as an abstract, distancing device channelling information to a disembodied mind.

Tim's hands are also a powerful presence in the films. His touch seems highly refined and delicate. Like Malcolm, his hands also move restlessly over the surface of the fabric and the loom, judging, measuring, assessing and adjusting, making corrections, effectively thinking and acting in the instant of thinking. As we watch film 2, we discuss the slowness of the work at this stage. He talks about a more ambitious piece of work that he had recently woven. The work was technically and physically demanding and there was a certain amount of time pressure. He says, "it would have been quite a different thing to look at" (film 3, 00:08:35) as he worked quickly and in "autopilot." He goes on:

> ...if I wrote down the things that I was doing and recognizing in doing
> that work, it would be a very long list – of the things that I was aware
> of and that I was in tune with and I was paying attention to... (film 3,
> 00:10:20-00:10:33)

Later on Tim refers again to this list (film 3, 00:54:54) and relates it to 'craft'. He is referring not to a list of separate activities, but to the simultaneous reflection and action of his weaving.

The hands are naturally prominent in the film of Penny working. What is notable here is the way that the hands are in constant, active relation to each other. She comments on this, as she watches herself turning, saying that she hasn't noticed it before, "the right one's doing what the left one says" (film 3, 00:04:03). She is much more aware of it when she is throwing (film 2, 00:51:30-01:10:00), when the hands never work independently (fig.8). This leads to a sense of immersion in the material, "it feels lovely to do that because then you are totally with the clay" (film 3, 00:05:15-00:05:36).

In the films and in all of these descriptions the importance of our sensory-motor experience in meaning-making is evident. This importance is strongly evoked and given poetic expression by Gaston Bachelard in his meditation on matter, *Water and Dreams*:

> ... the hand also has its dreams and its hypotheses. It helps us to understand matter in its inmost being. Therefore it helps us to dream of it. (Bachelard, 1983, p. 107)

figure 8: Harper, P.W.H. (2013) *Penny Campbell* [film still]

Bachelard made a special claim for clay as providing an elemental experience of matter. He compared the working of clay unfavourably with sculpture, which he saw as a reductive process. However, Paul Mason was excited by the way that his practice opened up material knowledge for him and that the knowledge gained through his specific practice could be generalized (film 1, 00:02:05-00:03:47),

"... and you see this in other things, so it's not just about the material itself, you make connections with other things, other materials and other systems as well – and that is – the way it leads people out is really exciting." (00:02:20-00:02:31)

Craft knowledge becomes literally embodied through learning, repetition and practice over long periods. Tim describes returning to weaving after a short period of absence and says, "... my body suddenly – I think my bones and muscles hadn't been doing what they like to do in this work - came to life again" (film 3, 00:09:00). Tim talks a lot about learning and the practical considerations that have shaped the tools and the practice. He feels that there aren't any short cuts to learning how to do things well and, ultimately, efficiently, and how this sometimes frustrates his students, who want to get to the result (00:44:35-00:49:15). In film 3 he talks about hands, but goes on to say that he is aware of having learned posture or certain ways of using his whole body in space during his time living in Japan and that these have "a quiet relevance working as a craftsperson" (film 3, 00:53:22-01:00:40). This relevance includes such things as how he sits at the loom. He suggests that this can sometimes feel counter-intuitive at first and has to be learned.

Analysis Conclusions

The purpose of the analysis in this thesis is to demonstrate the usefulness of the data. Within the complexity of the data, concepts and patterns can be observed which are revealing about the nature and centrality of practice to meaning making. The sample is composed of a range of practices that include fine art and design, and professional and amateur practitioners. The findings

are consistent across the range. The subjects are seen to be engaged in self-determined activities which are nevertheless socially situated. They are using knowledge that is embodied and enacted, and which evolves through the practice. The films shift the focus of critical attention from the objects that are being produced and onto the practice itself. This is not to disregard the significance of the objects. Quite apart from the role that they clearly occupy within the practice, in most of the case studies they are the means or part of the means by which the subjects earn their livings. However, the films make craft practices available to the researcher and open up a critical focus on craft as intrinsically rewarding activity that is facilitated by learned, embodied competence, based in shared values and standards. As well as being rewarding to the individual, craft work can be seen as outwardly directed and capable of generating social capital.

The analysis does not exhaust the material. It raises questions that could be the subject of further research. Working with the existing data there could be a narrow focus on particular aspects of practice. The interviews were unstructured but they raise issues that could be explored further through additional interviews that addressed specific questions. An example might be the category of social relations, which could be developed further. The study could also be extended to include other skilled workers. This would be consistent with a grounded theory approach, where further data is gathered in response to initial findings.

The analysis substantiates a conception of craft which is supported in literature and which is consistent with William Morris's vision of 'useful work'.

Conclusions

The principal aims of this research are to delineate and address a problem with researching and theorizing about craft and to propose and explore a method, using digital video, for gathering data relating to craft practice, so that craft practice can be better understood and so that theory can be developed that is grounded in the experience of craft practice.

In this thesis I have argued that 'the crafts' are an institutional construct that became established in the late twentieth century. I have argued that the institutional model has struggled to find purchase within the prevailing intellectual culture of its day, that dominant academic conventions have not given sufficient recognition or value to the epistemologies and lived experiences of craft practitioners and that this has led to a problem with researching and theorizing about craft. I have argued that there is a need to make craft practice and practitioners' accounts more accessible to researchers. I have proposed and tested a method using video recordings of practitioners working and interviews with practitioners in the loci of their practice as a tool that provides a rich source of data for analysis.

The method uses readily available and easy to use technology and, as described in Chapter 6, could easily be replicated by others to add to the corpus of knowledge about craft practice. The thesis demonstrates that not only does the method foreground the practice as a site of meaning but that it give access to the accounts and rationales that makers construct about their practices. The method is shown to provide a vehicle whereby practitioners can articulate their practice in their own voices and in ways that are natural to them. The method gives a multi-modal representation of practice in which there is a rich interplay between the visual, aural and spoken material.

The data challenges certain 'art-historical' conventions such as the idea of a canon of key figures and important objects, the assumption that a work of art is its content and the focus on the object as a carrier of literary meaning. It shifts the critical focus onto the practice itself. It supports an understanding of

'crafting' as a fundamental human activity set within a dynamic totality, where the object may be regarded as only one element in that totality. The study supports a craft discourse which shifts the critical focus towards, and gives credence to, an understanding of 'crafting' as an experience that takes place within the totality and continuity of reality. It is in this focus that the thesis claims to make an original contribution to the production of knowledge about craft making.

In this thesis it is argued that 'craft' should be understood as a verb, not a noun. It is not a category of thing but rather a particular approach to making things. This approach was given a theoretical and ideological underpinning in the nineteenth century by William Morris and his followers in the Arts and Crafts movement. Craft making was celebrated as socially useful and individually fulfilling creative work, and was proposed as part of an alternative to industrial capitalism.

In the course of the twentieth century a studio craft movement evolved that sought to acquire, in Bourdieu's (1984) terms, symbolic capital similar to that of fine art, within a hierarchical social structure. It did this by partly adopting the academic and institutional mechanisms of the fine art world. 'The crafts' came to be treated as a discrete set of practices and particular kinds of objects, although attempts to clearly define 'craft' as a category have been inconclusive. The institutionalisation of craft therefore involved a process of inclusion within, or exclusion from, an ill-defined category. Thereafter, critical debate has often been mired in issues of nomenclature and of how 'craft' relates to 'art' and 'design'.

Integral to the process of institutionalization was the academicization of art school education, which in Britain began with the Coldstream Report in 1960 and culminated with the incorporation of art schools into the new university system in the early 1990s. In the new system schools of art were subject to the HEFCE Research Assessment Exercise and were obliged to evolve a 'research culture' that was equivalent to that of established academic disciplines. The nature of 'research' and 'knowledge' in relation to art practice and its place in

the academy has proven to be problematic and is the subject of on-going debate (for example: University of Hertfordshire, 2000-2008). This thesis argues that the problem is one of epistemology: the conceptualizing of proposed or finished artworks had a comfortable fit in an academic context in which a propositional/conceptual paradigm of knowledge was dominant and in which there was a tradition of knowledge dissemination through verbal and textual means, but the practice itself was harder to accommodate and came to be regarded as the means to the end, 'supplemental', in Collingwood and Adamson's terms, or even redundant. To paraphrase Hill (2002a, p.49), the critical eye, failing to discern any difference between 'the crafts' and art or design, became blind to craft making as a site of critical interest.

Whilst I have argued (Chapters 2 and 3) that the problematic relationship between craft practice and critical theory has its roots in the evolution of an institutional craft world, many within that world have ascribed the problem to the legacy of the Arts and Crafts movement and have sought to distance the 'new crafts' from it's ideological stance. However, William Morris's ideas continue to find support in literature that comes from outside of the institutional craft world. Theories of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2005) and 'self-determination' (Deci and Ryan, 1985) help us to understand craft making as an intrinsically rewarding experience that is founded in natural human impulses: to seek challenges; to interact with and to want to shape our physical and social environments; to connect with others; to learn and to grow. Pragmatic thinkers such as John Dewey (1934) and Richard Sennett (2008) argue for the individual and social benefits that follow from these experiences, facilitated by the practice of skilful creative work.

The work of writers like Dewey and Sennett challenges the dehumanizing effects of industrial capitalism and it challenges the dominant ideologies of the established art world. Dewey provides an aesthetic theory that opposes a purely cerebral notion of the work of art and proposes that art is important to us because it provides heightened, intensified and highly integrated experiences of meaning. The art object is not autonomous, but it exists within a continuity of experience. Mark Johnson (2007a) builds on Dewey's ideas to develop an

aesthetic theory that is based in a sense of 'knowing' that is embodied, situated and which is evolving as it is acted out (see Chapter 5). This is contrary to the dominant epistemology of the academy, where there is a perceived divide between knowledge and practice. This not only presents an alternative epistemology to that which currently dominates the university, but it supports an understanding of craft making that is consistent with William Morris.

These theories support a re-evaluation of the place of practice within academic study. I have argued that practitioners are the people best placed to explicate their practice (Chapter 5), and that their voices need to contribute to academic critical discourse that is concerned with practice. In addition, research tools are needed to gather data on practice that can make practice accessible for academic study. The method that is described in this thesis and demonstrated through the case studies is intended to address this need. The films make craft practice and makers' accounts of their practice accessible to the researcher; and the analysis of the case studies demonstrates the potential of the method for representing and providing insight into craft.

Furthermore, the films are a reflective tool for the maker and give the researcher access to those reflections. The participants in the research all exhibit a high level of eloquence during the interviews. In the initial stages of selecting the sample, subjects were identified who were known to be capable of providing rich data. Thereafter subjects were selected because they represented a range of practice and in order to extend the scope of the sample, not necessarily because they were known to be articulate. It has been noted that craft practitioners are sometimes reluctant to talk about their practice (De Waal, 2000). In this research the subjects were interviewed in familiar surroundings, by somebody who was regarded as sympathetic and informed; the intrusiveness of the technology was minimized and, in the final interviews, the subjects were addressing a representation of their own practice. Furthermore, the subjects are seen and heard using their own, everyday, 'language' as opposed to the formal conventions of academic communication. These could be seen as optimal conditions in which to elicit responses. It is clear in the films that even where, as in the case of Penny Campbell, the

subjects are not used to talking about their craft work, the method facilitates them to draw on the habits of reflection that are a necessary part of their practice.

The participants in the study all refer to the value that they found in making the films (for example: Penny Campbell, film 3, 01:11:45-01:14:00 and Malcolm Martin, film 3, 00:40:00-00:40:36), as well as in watching them. They found themselves working with a heightened sense of consciousness. Additionally, the films revealed to them or brought to the fore surprising or unconsidered aspects of their practice.

The method allows us to scrutinize the practice over an extended time. Tim refers to a "list" (film 3, 00:10:20-00:10:33) of things that he is doing simultaneously, even as he appears superficially to be repeating a simple pattern of movements. Over time it is possible to observe the complexity of the process. We can see the close attention of the subjects as they become immersed in their work and become aware of the nuances of their actions.

The idea of making as a performance is raised by Malcolm (film 2, 00:50:18-00:50:28) and Colin tries to articulate something about performance being more than acting out a preconceived meaning (film 3, 00:17:00-00:20:08). Colin sees performance as a meaning-making activity. Making can be recognized here as 'enactive cognition' (Gallagher, 2009, p.9), where 'meaning lies in the presentation or enactment of felt experience' (Jonhson, 2007b, p.95). As well as this being pertinent to the footage of the subjects working we can see that as they are speaking, they are enacting, or reaching for, their meaning. Johnson draws our attention to the role of gesture as enacting or realizing meaning (Johnson, 2007b, p.93). He emphasizes that gesture represents an act of meaning-making as opposed to the expression of pre-conceived thought:

> Gestures are bodily enactments of meaning. They are not uses of bodily motions to express some pre-conceived thoughts. Rather, the gesture itself brings the meaning into existence. Gesture is the very incarnation of meaning-making. (Johnson, 2007b, p. 93)

An audio recording or a printed transcription would have missed what can be seen in the films to be vital acts of meaning-making. In the films we see that the tools are not simply instruments in the hands of the makers, but that they are incorporated into their bodies. Similarly we can see that the subjects are fully integrated into the environments of the workshop, so that they truly inhabit or, in Heidegger's terms, 'dwell' there (1967)(see Chapter 5). Furthermore, as our attention is drawn to the practice by the method, we become aware that our felt sense of the maker's experience is present in the work, that it becomes part of the content. We follow the marks left by Malcolm's gestures and enter into the conditions of his practice, and, similarly, with Colin's absorption in looking at the object that he is drawing, the stretching out and slowing down of time that Colin experiences slows down our own gaze. Our eyes move across the surface of the drawing and, to borrow Malcolm's phrase (film 3, 00:40:15-00:40:44), we 'feel' it with our eyes. The slowly learnt and embodied material knowledge of the makers is communicated through the object and, it could be argued, recognizing this inter-subjective exchange, that in terms of meaning, these qualities transcend the propositional conceptualizing that Colin explores in the initial interview. It could also be argued that this further validates a multi-modal approach to the communication of knowledge.

I have stressed that the analysis presented in Chapter 8 is not exhaustive. The data might be examined using different analytic approaches. The lines of enquiry identified through the analysis suggest possibilities for further developments, including extensions into other spheres of practice, which would allow comparisons to be made. Using purposive sampling the scope of the study might be extended to include skilled work not normally associated with creativity, such as surgery and car mechanics. This might be in order to extend and test notions of crafting and creativity that encompassed other forms of meaningful work. Working with the existing data there could be a concentration on specific characteristics of practice such as the use of tools or attitudes to tradition. It would be useful to conduct further, more structured, interviews with the existing sample in order to explore specific issues identified in the findings. The theme of social relations, for instance could be explored more deeply, with proper consideration of the potentially sensitive nature of this area. Although it

did not arise during the final interview, once the camera was turned off, Malcolm revealed that he would be going on to visit Gloucester Prison, and that this was something that he did every week as a Buddhist lay-visitor. One of the things that he does with the prisoners is teaching 'mindfulness'.

Consideration needs to be given to the future archiving of the data so that researchers can easily access it. As the thesis raises questions regarding the place of practice within the academy, wider dissemination of the findings also has to be considered in order to contribute to existing debates.

Craft discourse is dynamic and evolving and the core assertions of this thesis: that practitioners' voices should be prominent in that discourse; and that practice needs to be made accessible to researcher, student, critic, curator and theorist, assume particular significance at a time when new debates are opening up. There is evidence that during the course of writing this thesis, there has been a shift in critical discourse about craft. The importance of making has become a critical focus of conferences and Arts and Crafts ideology is being rehabilitated (for example, Harper, 2012, p.162; Bennett and Miles, 2010). Some of the Crafts Council's rhetoric is re-engaging with the importance of making per se. Writing in the foreword to the catalogue for *The Power of Making* (Charney, 2011), Rosy Greenlees, Executive Director of the Crafts Council and Mark Jones, Director of the V&A, point to the universal impulse to make things with our hands and the empowering nature of making. They refer to the rise of 'social crafting groups' and 'the desire to make together in a social context' (Charney, 2011, p.5). Glen Adamson, writing in *Crafts*, has declared that craft is no longer in need of saving (Adamson, 2013, pp. 38-39). One of the driving forces behind this shift has been renewed interest in making in the fine art world. Charles Darwent noted this trend when reviewing the 'Craftivism' exhibition at Arnolfini in Bristol in 2010:

> So a show called Craftivism at the Arnolfini in Bristol is timely. In the past few years, there has been a Ruskinian resurgence of hand-making in post-Brit Art British art. The most startling evidence of this is that Hirst himself, once the high priest of the hands-off, has begun to paint: badly, it is true, but to paint none the less. The work of the

latest Turner prize-winner, Richard Wright, is all about the hand – its intimacy, its secrecy and, most subversively, its skill. ("Well-made" has long been a term of abuse in British art schools.) And beyond this pair lies a whole hinterland of artists for whom craft is not just an unhappy necessity but a badge of honour: potters, embroiderers, bookbinders, weavers and wood turners. This change is bound up with 21st-century politics, in particular with an anti-globalist mood which expresses itself in a taste for the local and hewn. (Darwent, 2010)

Alongside these changes, new technologies are being adopted by craftspeople and are suggesting new models of industrial production that are not predicated on centralized *mass* production and globalized distribution (for an example of the spread of this phenomenon see http://fab.cba.mit.edu/about/faq/). Such technological developments create a new context for Arts and Crafts ideology in which its continuing relevance can be reasserted. A business model that uses new technologies in this way is a London based furniture company named after one of Ruskin's most coherent essays on economics, *Unto This Last* (Unto this Last, no date). Unto This Last use CAD and CNC technology. The model is based on a small craft workshop employing a skilled workforce that works co-operatively but with individual workers having a high degree of responsibility and autonomy, and which serves a local market. The software that they use optimizes the use of materials, there are no warehousing or packaging costs and transportation is minimal. In this way they are able to compete on price with mass manufacturers, whilst not being subject to the wasteful and dehumanizing tendencies that William Morris identified with mass manufacture.

However, whilst these shifts have taken place, institutions that have been heavily invested in the craft world seem resistant to change. The Craft Council's public profile is largely based on *Crafts* magazine and the annual *Collect* and *Origin* exhibitions. On this evidence there remains a gap between the institutional rhetoric and the actuality of the most visible institutional output, with the Craft Council appearing to be largely concerned with promoting luxurious object d'art and with establishing a canon of 'important' makers. The content of the *Power of Making* had, to a great extent, eschewed the democratic values expressed in the exhibition texts in favour of a diverse range of intimidatingly highly accomplished and technically complex objects, most of whose common

feature was their extravagance.

Meanwhile, arts education is under threat from a number of quarters. The English Baccalaureate was introduced into schools as a performance indicator in 2010, with school students being awarded the qualification if they score a C grade or higher in English, maths, science, history or geography, and a language. This has led to fears that many schools, especially in the state sector, have begun to marginalize arts subjects as they are not counted as indicators (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2013).

In higher education, cuts to funding have impacted particularly on art schools (Batty, 2011). Research commissioned by the National Arts Learning Network (NALN) and reported under the title *Endangered Subjects, A review of Practice at Seven Leading UK Universities* (2009) indicated that craft-based courses were under particular threat:

> For the purposes of this data collection the term 'Endangered Subjects' is defined as those traditional subjects for which the overview of application data evidences a consistent decline; for which there is a fragile employment sector; and within which continued course provision is perceived to be at risk. This definition places an emphasis on craft, but is mindful not to exclude other art forms such as traditional music, dance and drama and rural and environmental crafts. (Wright, 2009, pp.1-2)

Various reasons for the threat to craft based courses were suggested, including the amount of space and resources that they require and the lack of clear career paths after graduation[18]. The report's conclusion recommended that, rather than trying to justify endangered subjects in terms of vocational training, the value of the cognitive developments facilitated by craft learning and making, and the broader benefits that they might have within a knowledge-based economy should be emphasized:

> The 'products' of *Endangered Subjects* are not just the artefacts, but the creative hands-on process and the people who make them: the

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[18] In justifying the closure of the long established and highly renowned Ceramics BA course at the University of Westminster, a senior manager was quoted as saying that 'the trouble with clay is you can't store it on a memory stick' (http://home.wmin.ac.uk/ucu/news.html).

material process; 'crafts'; the practitioner; not for short-term employment but for life long learning through practice. (Wright, 2009, p.38)

Although post-modernism and post-structuralism have sought to interrogate attitudes towards language and knowledge and greater credence is being given to 'multi-modal' means of presenting and disseminating research, the written word is still privileged within the university (Kress, 1999b, p.179). The films used in this study demonstrate that textual communication can be enriched by other forms of articulation and exchange; and I have demonstrated that they help to articulate insights into the nature of the crafting experience and of experiential knowledge that would otherwise be elusive.

The idea of 'crafting' is thriving, refreshed by interest from sociologists, anthropologists, cognitive scientists and philosophers and, indeed, from the world of fine art. I have shown in this thesis that the intellectual potential that is embedded in craft knowledge and the individual and communal benefits that stem from the experience of craft making are recognized by a wide range of disciplines. However, the institutional mechanisms whereby craft knowledge is transferred are fragile, and within 'the crafts' own institutions craft knowledge and experience have not always been valued. The method described in this thesis can make a useful contribution to emergent discourses on craft making.

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Appendix 1

Paul Harper, Researcher
Articulating Craft
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