



Disruptive Difference - Transnational Craft Dialogues

School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester - 17 February 2012

Disruptive Difference was a one day symposium which explored how cultural and geographical dis/location is changing craft practice, and how notions of national and cultural identity are contributing to experiences of craft nationally and internationally.

The event was organised by **the shape of things** in partnership with the University of Leicester's School of Museum Studies, and New Walk Museum & Art Gallery, Leicester.

Below are the notes from six workshop sessions held during the event. At each session there was a short presentation followed by a chaired discussion. Contributing to each session was one of the plenary speakers. Each session lasted 45 minutes.

Morning workshops

Queering the museum and radical craft interventions

Why use the tactics of intervention? What can craft contribute to these tactics and to this debate on contesting cultural paradigms? Where do audiences fit into all this?

Introductory presentation by Andy Horn (Birmingham City Museum) & Maria-Anna Tseliou (School of Museum Studies)

<http://www.bmag.org.uk/news?id=128>

<http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/research/phd-student-research/Maria-AnnaTseliou>

Chair – Dr. Janet Marstine (School of Museum Studies)

Note-taker – Catharina Hendrick (School of Museum Studies)

Andy Horn began discussion by setting out the background to the exhibition 'Queering the Museum' in Birmingham. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, in conjunction with ShOUT! Festival, allowed artist and curator Matt Smith access to their collections and galleries to tell the stories which museums usually omit, representing the LGBT community (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community). Part of the

challenge was turning the traditional on its head and a queer eye was cast over the museum although representing a diverse group with different histories was an obvious challenge.

A green carnation became a 'signifier' in the museum space giving a nod to 19th century gay history where men wore green carnations. Matt used ceramics to bring this conversation out in to the galleries with a personal narrative with 19 objects. Ceramics is ideal for meaning-making as the clay is poured into a mould and was seen as appropriate for this kind of intervention. Figurines have a place in history and have often been used to express an event, political character/conflict etc.

The objects were brought out of store and rearranged and new artworks were specifically commissioned to uncover, draw out – and on occasion wilfully invent - the hidden stories in the Museum's collections. Hence, the exhibition was subtle in context and not too didactic. Such interventions can therefore subvert an object which ordinarily would not exist.

The question was 'how do you represent everyone'? and 'how do you include/exclude'?

Decorative objects are inherently appealing with form and changing personas. Such change transforms the object through humour and re-appropriation.

Maria-Anne Tseliou set out the evaluation of the exhibition. Responses from visitors revealed that 58% came for a general visit and 42% specifically came to see the Queering the Museum exhibition. One third of visitors liked the idea of the exhibition and how objects were repositioned in a new way. One third of visitors enjoyed everything, however, 2 visitors remarked that the dispersal of the project was too subtle, but, nevertheless, they understood the reason why it was designed like that. 40% of visitors noted that it facilitated discussion of issues and 4 interviewees highlighted the fact that the exhibition succeeded in bringing the issue of re-interpreting the collection and looking at the exhibition in a new way was evident. 75% of respondents gave a positive response to the appropriateness of gay and lesbian cultural representation in the museum whereas 26% of visitors felt that the exhibition was appropriate in certain circumstances (e.g. temporary exhibition being key reason). Overall, the curatorial approach was felt to be effective as well as the interventional methodology of the exhibition and its features.

Janet opened the floor to questions/comments:

Q. Surprised that only 4 people brought up the point about the exhibition succeeding in bringing the issue of re-interpretation of the collection and displaying it in new ways.

A. (Maria-Anne) – This exhibition was undertaken to raise visibility of the issue of hidden histories (LGBT). The artist mentioned that this exhibition allowed visitors to see the museum in a new and innovative way.

(Janet) - How is the project part of PhD research?

This exhibition subverts the normative museum and the case study is one example of this and how such exhibitions choose to exhibit gay/lesbian interventions in a new way.

Q. Has the museum collected any of the pieces?

A. (Andy) – Two pieces were donated to the collection, one example being ceramic tiles called ‘Jake’s Progress’ – a figurine in the collection paired up with a same sex object. This piece questions normative practice and the many identities it touches upon.

Q. (Janet) How did the artist Matt relate to other museum staff and were there any issues of organisational change?

A. (Andy) – The ShOUT! Festival was the impetus for the exhibition and Matt submitted a proposal to the museum (Andy was receptive to the idea). The artist succeeded in getting Arts Council funding for this project. As a result Andy talked with museum staff at his level and got ‘buy-in’ for the exhibition. There was a deliberate attempt to keep the plan away from senior management until the project was almost finalised. Andy felt that it was appropriate for the organisation to hold this exhibition and that it needed to be done. Matt was given access to the museum collection and worked with curators to come up with ideas and make pieces for the exhibition. One of the weaknesses was the poor marketing budget which, if available, would have been used to build new audiences.

Q. How successful was the ShOUT! Festival and museum audience cross-over? (Did ShOUT! Festival audiences come to the exhibition and vice-versa)?

A. (Andy) – Unfortunately, there is no way of measuring how many people came from the Festival to the exhibition except for interviews carried out by Maria-Anne. It is not possible to map audiences.

(Maria-Anne) – The interview responses revealed that audiences to the exhibition were spread across the gallery.

(Andy) – It is noteworthy that the ShOUT! Festival targeted a particular audience whereas the museum shows to a broad audience and normative.

Q. (Janet) - Was there a strategy for choosing objects from within the collection?

A. (Andy) – The artist (Matt) chose the objects based on what he thought was visually appealing to him.

(Janet) – There is a sense that the whole museum was ‘animated’ by the issue throughout the space.

(Andy) – There was a question about where to position the pieces in the museum and some placements brought up interesting contrasts. For example, the ‘drag’ object placed within the male portrait gallery suddenly elevated all the portraits to all men being ‘gay’. The exhibition facilitated great richness for the audience to frame the objects and create personal meaning-making.

Q. Was there any debate about the decision-making process and did you encounter any resistance to the development of the concept? Was there a political reaction or any other resistance?

A. (Andy) – This exhibition brought staff together and the quality of the objects supported the message. Andy admitted that he was nervous about the exhibition as he was relatively new to the organisation. The director was not immensely positive on the programme (the museum is managed by the City Council) as there was fear that the exhibition would attract negative media attention. That underlying fear was there but the exhibition did well and so any such fears was unfounded.

Q. Is such an exhibition inherently political to some extent?

A. (Andy) – The artist's intentions (Matt) and approach was a personal one. He is undertaking a PhD research which will consider other approaches to such exhibitions.

Q. Is there a way to measure the impact on the curatorial approach?

A. (Andy) – This exhibition was able to give curators confidence in trying new approaches. For many curators the approach was very different and new but for one curator they were very aware and comfortable with the artist and the exhibition. The fact that the artist was articulate about the project and expressed a strong vision brought staff and curators together. Hence, the collaboration was a successful one.

(Janet) Artists are diplomats, confidantes and can bring issues together to comment in a critical way. Matt was aware of Fred Wilson and how to work with a museum, be a strategic thinker and be the 'museum therapist'. However, Fontenot was frustrated by LACMA (Los Angeles Contemporary Museum of Art) and is keen to see commissions from within the museum. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that compromises need to be made on both sides.

(Andy) – All front-of-house staff and technical staff were on board for the project and welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the process. This opportunity has left a legacy of equal opportunities within the museum. Every staff member can engage and contribute to the exhibition process.

(Artist who worked with Bristol Museum) – It is important to include all staff at the museum and to enhance this inter-personal process. The artist deliberately involved staff at the Portrait Gallery at a 'rapping workshop'. Hence, the museum staff can become an interface between you, as the artist, and the public.

(Andy) – This engagement process enables things to be done better which is a great legacy for museums in the future.

(Janet) – This collaboration process reinforces the long-term effects which can occur once projects are completed on staff and the organisation.

(Artist) – World of curation is new experience to her. However, this approach is a fantastic way of introducing 'new ways of looking' i.e. through feminist perspectives, a woman of colour – how you can foresee an entire exhibition designed for both people making it and outsiders/visitors coming in to the museum.

(Janet) – Part of her role at the School of Museum Studies is teaching the MA Museum Studies programme. As a result interpretation strategies are moving away from the authority of institutions to participatory approaches – such strategies asks questions, seek engagement from visitors and change things in important ways with source communities. There is a shift where we see 'co-creation', many voices being represented and multi-vocal interpretation.

(Andy) – There are multiple strands which the museum recognise following the exhibition – within the collections contemporary artists connect with objects and marry this with their interests; single objects become part of the collection; strategies are being employed such as working with community groups to give their voices; however, you must ask the question 'can you cover all voices?', what do you as a visitor connect to – identity, an issue, religion, sexuality, gender etc? Ultimately, however, it is important to remember that institutions are difficult to change and take time to change.

(Janet) – There has been a historical disconnect between learning and the curatorial approach, and changes are occurring to bridge this gap. Sadly, learning teams get cut in hard economic times so it is important to keep this approach alive.

Curating Difference

What prevents more curators & commissioners contesting dominant cultural paradigms?

Introductory presentation by Nima Poovaya-Smith <http://www.alchemyanew.co.uk/index.html>

Taking part - Carol Tulloch <http://www.transnational.org.uk/people/19-carol-tulloch>

<http://www.camberwell.arts.ac.uk/ccwgraduateschool/ccwstaffresearchprofiles/caroltulloch/>

Chair - Samina Zahir <http://www.hybridconsulting.org.uk/samina-zahir>

Note taker - Lisa Jacques

Nima Poovaya-Smith presented, *Connect: People, Place, Imagination* – a project that she directed for Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Bradford in 2008.

NPS was wondering whether we (society) were making a problem of the subject of contesting dominant cultural paradigms, or reinforcing the subject.

I am not talking about cultural contesting, I will talk about my project, Connect. This project is the part of the permanent collection at Cartwright Hall, using their collections to make connections between works of art from different cultures and times. It is displayed in the universal themes of People, Place and Imagination. For this project I was able to consider the ‘pleasure principle’ – you buy what you like and rationalize it retrospectively.

<http://www.bradfordmuseums.org/venues/cartwrighthall/index.php>

We looked at fine art and craft distinctions and the confluence of cultures, the back stories of art that intersect in unexpected and interesting ways. Take one object and put it in a context you wouldn’t usually see it in, and it takes on a different radiance.

One was the ‘stories of love lost and flight’, where there are 3 pieces depicting the state of marriage. There are literal connections that are visual, but also the stories connect the pieces. So we looked at icons and had Andy Warhol exhibited alongside a Bollywood poster - and these have synergies, lives played out in the glare of publicity.

Pursuing radiance piece has wit and lightness and there is a succinct telling of stories within this collection.

It’s important to find out the stories of different pieces, so they can be placed alongside other pieces that have similar stories but differ in the extreme visually.

Some of the displays are representative of materials, for example the glass collection which has Syrian glass, Venetian, Indian, Bohemian, and Lithuanian glass all displayed as one collection.

'To be truly international you have to be truly local' reference to links made from Bradford connections to international connections with some of the collection pieces. Art works don't need visas to cross over boundaries!

The Bradford benefactor of the 'tree of life', made from Tasar silk, had a silk factory in India. Nilesh Mistry, Museums Officer for International Art went to India to see a master block printer (referencing the print from the silk) and Brenda King, a textile historian <http://www.textilesociety.org.uk/events/event-details.php?textile-event=265> was then able to create the story for this piece. We make pieces come alive in the collections at Bradford.

Q&A

SZ – What prevents curator's enjoyment of going beyond the breadth of learning, seeing and engagement?

- It needs multidisciplinary projects where there are teams of people that are able to provide the depth of knowledge.

NPS - We have this at Alchemy, we are the dominant partners, we raise the money and this shifts the power balance. The power is where the money is sighted. We build up reserves and can say no to the money. If the project is not going the right way be prepared to give up and walk away.

CT – I find the pressure is on time, the process of funding and the confirmation of the funds are very tight to the project deadlines. The time constraints are usually reflective of funding. I found that to build up a network of relationships and friends gives you that external support that can turn a tight timeframe around and make the project happen more quickly.

- Networks/networking is an important reservoir of good will.

Bharti Parmer – Visual Artist – What prevents curators contesting cultural paradigms?

- It's about courage, inter-disciplinary is deeper than multi-disciplinary.

- At mac <http://www.macarts.co.uk/> the curator is the programmer and it requires different modes of thinking to work multi-disciplinary.

NPS – Are we talking inter- or multi-disciplinary? – The art form changes.

Jasia McArdle – I work in Public Art where artist, architects, planners, engineers have to collaborate to make the site specific art pieces work. This is difficult, as we all have a visual language, but although we speak the same language we may not have the same meaning i.e. 'rhythm' means something different to everyone. We need a glossary for 'multi-disciplinary' working that can be shared within and beyond the art world.

- Part of local and international is that it relates to your audience, and you can engage anew with your existing audience, which will benefit from different ways of presenting work.

- Bilston Craft Gallery <http://www.wolverhamptonart.org.uk/bilston> work to a localist agenda.

Dena Bagi - Has anyone any ideas on how to discuss and provoke the same thoughts about contemporary objects?

Disruptive Difference or Common Issues?

Seven International students from the School of Museum Studies talk about how craft in their country both reflects national identity and contests dominant cultural paradigms

Hanne Faueryby, Emiko Ota, Yue Yi, Mariela Velasco, Fu-Chun Wu(Julie), Lida Vásquez, Mhairi A. Gowans

Taking part – Steve Dixon

Chair – Kathy Fawcett

Note-taker – Hugo Worthy

KF introduces students: The students are from many different international backgrounds, all studying at Leicester University's Department of Gallery and Museum Studies. They will each give a short presentation exploring the themes of the conference.

Much of what they have to say relates to crafts subversion of social norms. At the same time by challenging the conventions around national and international roles they are able to show craft as an important marker of cultural heritage.

The young speakers show many different ways for craft and design to be used to engage with issues shared across the globe.

And it shows that craft can engage with contentious subjects.

Hanne Faueryby

Danish Crafts - Craft Profiles: Anne Black, Louise Campbell and Ole Jensen

I wish to present on Danish crafts. They are difficult to define as they are not so much small scale hand crafted production as global production. Danish crafts are funded by government ministry set up in 1997. There was no crafts institution before this. Danish crafts are branded at an international level through fairs, conferences etc . Craft is perceived to be the avante-garde of design - a combination of the skill of workmanship with artistic freedom.

These three makers well represented in department stores (images of chair by Louise Campbell: porcelain jewellery by Anne Black; washing up bowl - Copenhagen design by Ole Jensen

Danish craft is the space for innovation between art and design

More info: www.danishcrafts.dk

Emiko Ota

Japanese Tea Ceremony meets Contemporary Performance.

I am looking at a project in which the traditional Japanese Tea ceremony meets contemporary performance art. Kimura Toshiro Jinjin is an artist whom 'performs' the Japanese Tea ceremony in outrageous clothing. His performance name actually means 'Japanese tea ceremony'. As a part of his performance the audience make a bowl. He delivers his performances in every part of town, from parking lots to parks. Because it happens in forgotten parks etc it is an opportunity to re-find local identity and rethink Japanese culture. His performances change each time, so they are one off pieces. It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see him.

Yue Yi

The case of Ai Weiwei

I wish to talk about the contemporary artist Ai Wei Wei. Unilever sponsored Ai's project at Tate Modern. The project, which consists of many millions of sunflower seeds was manufactured in Jingdezhen. The city has a declining ceramics industry. He hired skilled workers to deliver sunflower seeds. I ask whether the individual ceramic works become art works? I believe not, and that Ai has nothing to help change ceramics industry.

Mariela Velasco

Mexican Contemporary Design: Between 'high art' and 'popular culture'.

I want to look at Mexican design. It is a country in which traditions have not yet entirely disappeared and the modern has not yet entirely arrived. The country has a very important indigenous population. Since the '30s popular or folk culture has been embraced and recognised. By recognising lower cultures the government legitimised the dominance of high culture. Recently a designer called Ignacio Ruiz Gutierrez designed the La Cuera Chair. He works with leather embroidery from the centre of Mexico. The name La Cuera just means leather chair. His chair is exhibited in Mexican Museum Modern Art. It is a fusion of high art and pop culture. The La Cuera Chair is a demonstration of a design culture that blurs bounds between high and low culture.

Fu-Chun Wu

Embrace traditions - Contemporary Craft In Taiwan: Franz

Franz is the German name of the Taiwanese founder. Franz is a company based in Taipei. It has its production centre in the city. It is a high end manufacturer that utilises traditional ceramics skills. It blends traditional techniques and elements with art nouveau; oriental with European Porcelain tradition for display and use; merging of imagery such as flowers and dragons. There are markets in both Taiwan and Germany. Collaborate with luxury goods brand LANVIN on porcelain dolls. These dolls have dropped the oriental influence of previous work. Co-branding creates added value for Taiwan and so is a fantastic collaboration. However is there a risk that contemporary co-branding will destroy Taiwanese tradition?

Lyda Vásquez

Contemporary design leading the craft market for sustainability in Colombia.

I want to look at sustainable design in Columbia. Artesanias de Coloumbia is an organisation that connects designers with traditional craftsmen. Designer led practices ensure that there is a market place for

traditional crafts that are otherwise at risk of dying. It is a government funded project. I was working with experts in filigree to manufacture jewellery for me, when I worked as a designer. Contemporary design saves skills.

<http://www.artesantiasdecolombia.com>

Mhairi A. Gowans

Lolita, Craft and the Internet

How online craft created a global fashion culture. Lolita fashion is based on rococo fashion found in Japan. As it became popular it went from underground subculture to become part of mainstream media through literature, film and pop music. As it began to appear on the internet it became a global phenomenon. It was hugely expensive to buy the fashions and have them shipped from Tokyo. So the best thing to do was for the community to make it themselves. People began to make things for themselves, but they also produced other pieces which they sold through online retailers like Etsy. There is now vibrant Lolita market place on the internet. It has become a global subculture that entirely transcends and breaks down national identities. Lolita is a community more than it is a market place.

Questions

Floor: How do you see the relationship between high culture and low culture?

Mariela Velasco: A hybrid culture developed and the products circulate through both the traditional channels of entertainment (TV etc) and the high-brow contexts, such as the museum.

Floor: How do you define a craft person? Is design separate from craft? Should organisations support craft skills or conceptualisation of craft?

Hanne Fauerby: Scandinavian craft is linked inextricably with design. Design takes on and utilises craft but the art world has less interest in craft. Design brings these skills into people's homes.

Floor: There is a fine line between exploitation and collaboration. Where does that balance lie?

Lyda Vásquez

There is a clear line between helping and exploiting groups. Artisans de Columbia was set up to support and professionalise artisan practice. Artisans de Columbia enables makers in Columbia to support them to generate an income for themselves and sustain craft skills that would otherwise be at risk of disappearing.

Mhairi A. Gowans

Summing up - In this process we have found there are more commonalities than difference.

Afternoon Workshops

Transnational curating

What impact do International collaborative projects have on contemporary crafts in the UK and abroad?

Introductory presentation by Professor Catherine McDermott - Curatorial collaborations between Britain and China.

Chair: Hugo Worthy

Note-taker: Catharina Hendrick

This discussion session considered curatorial collaborations between Britain and China and what impact international collaborative projects have on contemporary crafts in the UK and abroad.

Catherine suggested summarising some of her thoughts on the MA Curating course with the Design Museum. MA course is now in its 11th year – one third of its students are Asian - from China, Japan, Korea; one third from other international - USA and Australia; and finally one third are home students - UK. Wanted to use international diversity and started to specialise and focus on cultural diversity and curating and then specifically talking about China as a case study. She wanted to share some of her experiences in this discussion.

We are working on Chinese projects and since 2004 have delivered two a year. China do not understand curating too much but when we start working with the museums and Universities we notice two things: 1) an obvious point perhaps – only Chinese objects in the museum, Chinese collections had not bought internationally, so for example had not bought Aztec objects or a Rodin; 2) museums invested in a big government initiative, quality of curation, input, exhibitions and design are fantastic and they build lots of museums but many of them are totally empty.

We wanted to go and sell our UK expertise on curating and share ideas and work together and build international collaborative projects with China. However, one of the struggles is the language.

You have to go and offer something valuable and thoughtful and useful to the partner you wish to engage. Wanted to offer a scholarship programme and the candidates would make wonderful ambassadors and build up a fellowship over the next 5 years. However, there are great protocols in China and different procedures and approaches than in the UK so offering a scholarship scheme was not feasible and another approach was required. Catherine established a curating scholarship funded by the Sino-British Fellowship for a Chinese curator and travels to China regularly. Curating graduates are doing well in China and one of them who works at Long Marsh Gallery is active in design and exhibition. Continuing good collaboration is ongoing. Spoke with CAFRA regarding language and trying to get the best for exhibition design and interpretation.

Worked closely with the British Council – a good example is Shanghai EXPO in 2010. Britain's pavilion was the best. Did a series of follow-ups following EXPO to develop a legacy. Set up collaboration with Kingston University, the China Academy of Art and the V&A (e.g. China Year set up by Prime Minister David Cameron). The Design Museum Workshop worked to produce a magazine which was launched in London Design Week and carried out an online curating project where students worked together on New Work, best of degrees shows (Graduate Design Show) with UK and China Academy. We went to the British Council and showed them that we are good at design projects and, subsequently they have commissioned us to deliver a project on science curating which will be delivered to 40 Chinese Universities. This will be shortlisted to 20 Universities.

Hugo opened the floor to questions/comments:

Q. (Hugo) – Do you see differences working internationally in Higher Education Institution (HEI's) and art display institutions?

A. (Catherine) – The Universities in China have a much more government policy capability. So, for example, the China Academy bought the Bauhaus Collection and the University are delivering this project in terms of design, curation and interpretation. Thus, the partnerships are contractual yet dynamic.

Q. Social protocols are delicate and complex, but what sort of timeframe would be needed for delivery of such projects in China?

A. (Catherine) – I'll answer a slightly different question. How do you overcome a major obstacle which is language – I have no desire to learn Mandarin. What communication would you use - are you using English to deliver the project? If so, you would need to do some risk assessment. You need to know what you are getting into. How would you cope with language of communication being in Mandarin? How will you manage the project? Need to find a way to resolve these issues. Got to think what do you want out of it and how would you cope with that?

Q. (Janet) – You mentioned that the museums in China were 'empty' – did you mean audiences?

In your collaborations have you approached them about curatorial and learning collaborations, how have you found your partners in terms of issues of community engagement?

A. (Catherine) – They are empty of both objects and audiences.

China Academy of Art and CAFA are the two top art colleges in China with a high understanding of their own brand. This is the fifth curating project which is delivered and administered online by Kingston University to share resources with China. China Academy has now set the brief for the project which is about the cultural and community development of the Grand Canal, and the project is wrapped around community engagement. This will be negotiated within a timeframe of between 5 to 10 years.

Q. Do you think that the prototype can be converted to other countries?

A. (Catherine) – Yes, we are doing a project in Africa. I am working with one of my graduates in Harare in Zimbabwe on the African Materials project with makers from the Lupane Centre in Bulewayo. This is an online brief which connects our makers with the Business School and Design School at Kingston. We also have a brief to offer to Johannesburg VT University and take resources and do some mentoring. We have offered it to the Graphic Design School in Harare but for logistical reasons we have not been able to sign it off. Idea is a bit like DreamLab about communicating science and I would argue that this project could also be used to engage people in Buenos Aires or Lagos. Idea is we could use this as a 'gift' or offering that has a value but we are not going to charge for it. So, what do we get out of it? Students won't be able to fly around with expensive tickets long-term so we can teach and learn a generation to talk online so we have done a few with Seoul for example. Students like it but there needs to be a protocol element of course.

Process is quite simple – Korean group doing project would be divided into teams and they all work on the brief and load up their proposal online or speak to their tutor and receive online feedback from a number of people, different 'cultural perspectives', which is the added value.

Q. Query broadly if people in the room have similar experience of what people might see as the challenges in taking specific contemporary craft discussion, and curation internationally. My experience of going to

China some time ago from the West Midlands with a curator's group was that there was a very broad view of the arts and contemporary craft sector. There is a debate around the status of the practitioner, difference between traditional master craftsmen, skills and where the place is in galleries and the commercial side of it. It's a challenge to establish a contemporary craft debate in this country. What are people's thoughts about that?

(Hugo) – Just to add to that, as a curating design course do you find shifts in the taxonomy of what craft is and what design is in different environments?

A. (Catherine) – Eleven years ago we called it 'Curating Contemporary Design' because it seemed a good thing to do but design and crafts.... We do a lot of work with the Crafts Council and we did a curating crafts conference which is very central. At the heart of the African project is that it is about making materials; UK Universities and arts schools have no making capacity anymore, yet the experience of making is very strong in Africa. We have marketing and other skills so the two combined make a very interesting but equal partnership. That's the premise. To go back to China, I have a bit of difficulty selling the idea often in the UK but no problem selling it in China. They were more interested in my Africa project than my DreamLab science communication project because in China the Universities have been charged by government directives to focus on heritage, the craft and saving of traditional skills; they are alert to what is happening during the Chinese industrial revolution and the crushing of 'China-ness', so they are alert and engaged and they definitely have this high on the agenda. When they establish new art schools or design schools they invest a lot of money in studios whereas we don't (Lucien Studio, China for example). They don't have the same discipline division as there tends to be in the UK. They see if you are a gifted person you can go off and do textiles, glass or other choices (rather like the modern movement in 1920's Britain).

Q. Curation projects – were they for encouraging local artists, using collections or to bring people from abroad to China?

A. (Catherine) – No, the driver for every project that I do is to get a job for all my students on the course. That is the major concern but also to engage them with what are the contemporary interesting and important issues that they can contribute to. We believe, that communicating science is one of the big curating challenges that curators need to address - that was the driver. We also believe that the lack of making skills is an issue and that challenges is another equally important driver for where we are going and where we should be going. That is why we focus in on those. We are also interested in curating in healthcare environments for example, as we think it is another area that is coming up and a challenge. Eventually in an ideal world all of that will benefit the way we live and future wellbeing.

Q. (Hugo) – Sophisticated model for 'knowledge exchange' – what kind of evaluations do you have beyond those of job outcomes for students, tracking how that knowledge is moving around?

A. (Catherine) – DreamLab is monitored and evaluated by a very extensive British Council process. A substantial amount of government money was invested in the project (upwards of £500,000) and so evaluation is carried out with samples at interview and feedback of responses. With regards to the Africa project we have allocated some monies for evaluation from a tiny budget. We know quite a lot about the science DreamLab project evaluation which came through in 2010.

Emerging international craft markets

Where and what are emerging International craft markets?

Introductory presentation by Sara Makari-Aghdam - Emerging markets for traditional contemporary Middle Eastern craft with particular reference to guild systems and the handmade objet d'arte

Taking part – Karin-Beate Phillips

Chair – Annabelle Campbell

Note-taker – Ruth Hecht

Q. How do people classify themselves, as artists or craftspeople? How does this affect the markets they go to? What does it affect if something is sold as an artwork or a piece of craft?

K-B P: These can be seen as very Western concerns - many cultures don't have the distinctive concepts of 'art' or 'craft'. It's only in western eyes that there is that distinction.

SM It is the work which goes into it and the skill used to produce the work which determines who buys it.

Q. If society doesn't stand still, should craft traditions remain static to survive?

K-B P: In other countries people don't appreciate their own cultural traditions / craft... but we appreciate them.

Comment: is it right to say 'we like these things, we appreciate them - you don't - so I want you to stay doing traditional things'. Do we have the right to do that? Surely it's more important that they have schooling first, rather than conforming to our ideas of what's right. Who are we to say that they should weave because we want to sell it?

K-B P: It's their right to work and earn money and use that to pay for doctors, etc. By working they can determine what money they get; people are doing it of their own volition – it's their enterprise.

Comment it's not great that a family is working in the fields growing cotton. Who are we to say that this is a good thing?

K-B P: It's important that people are doing what they want... They have a different standard of living to us in the West.

SM Craftspeople have migrated from Iran, making it possible to see what's going on in the rest of the world. Working with Middle Eastern culture - specifically Iranian culture – is very difficult – it's hard to be apolitical in a political world.

Q. It's a problem when a living tradition comes to an end - what happens then?

Comment: We end up with a Tradecraft model - people take western designs and they get made by people in India, etc. for re-import into the West. Is that right? Shouldn't people be encouraged to do their own designs? Shouldn't prices be high - the equivalent of luxury goods - to reflect the time it takes to make the goods?

Talking about 'indigenous craft' is very condescending - everyone is 'indigenous' to somewhere. The real issue is who has intellectual property over the goods.

SM With the Iranian guild system the authorship is very clear. The markets for the work are Middle Eastern - people want to invest in authentic Middle Eastern pieces, although there's also a Western celebrity market for the work.

AC Without a doubt, new international markets for craft and new international makers are emerging and that will change the future of craft.

Exploring future directions in Craft through teaching international students

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Introductory presentation by Maiko Tsutsumi

Taking part – Rosa Nguyen

Chair – Deirdre Figueiredo

Note-taker – Lisa Jacques

Overview

Maiko Tsutsumi presented her educational pathway, work, influences and the work produced by her international students on the MA Designer Maker (Visual Arts) course at Camberwell College of Art. An interview with the course tutor, Maiko Tsutsumi can be found here;

<http://www.camberwell.arts.ac.uk/courses/coursesbylevel/graduateschoolcourses/madesignermakervisualarts/>

Notes

MT presentation

MT's initial studies were in traditional Japanese lacquer work and wooden furniture; she then went on to work for furniture makers and to work in metalwork. MT then progressed to testing new materials to find her own way of communicating about 'self'.

MT lived in Japan for 25 years and this has influenced how she relates to objects and her thinking. Study in Japan is taught in a traditional way with an apprenticeship. Craft in Japan is very much to do with the everyday, learning skills through cooking, just doing, playing and having fun and then relating these to craft skills.

How they (MT and her peers) present was very international, the language as text wasn't the only way to communicate; where you are from creates the identity of your work. Their furniture was the starting point to their identity. A practitioners' thinking is a medium to transform what is around in the culture and how to transform it. They start with a trend and then undo their work.

MT responding to the MA Designer Maker (Visual Art) course she leads: it's about creating and exploring new identities for makers. The students have a special relationship with materials but don't know what to do with it, they felt they didn't fit in on 'craft', 'fine art', 'product design' courses and this course provides what they weren't allowed to do on their undergraduate courses within the disciplines. The course encourages students to use their diversity in terms of where they come from and their subject area, they can learn from each other.

'What is the agenda for us designer makers today?'

From MT experience Indian students come here (England) to learn design and then go back to India to work with craftspeople. They pay respect to the craft skills, and work with craftspeople to value their skills and collaborate. Collaboration between makers/designers and designers/makers then happens.

Professional identity for students – you must be able to present yourself as something, change the shape of how you present yourself, find your own identity.

<http://madesigner.wikispaces.com>

Q & A

DF – She has been aware of international students increased desire to study on craft courses, many of whom have become British Citizens and their work exported out and shown in Chicago, San Francisco etc. as work by British artists/craftspeople.

What is the influence of those international students, and how it has it changed the direction of craft?

Is anyone charting this? Or is it just happening and evolving?

MT – This was big in the '90s - there were British designer/makers who were international artists; I was part of this alongside my peers.

RN – That's the nature of London (international), for me London is not solely representative.

Steve Dixon <http://www.artdes.mmu.ac.uk/profile/sdixon> - On the course in Manchester there is not such an international focus but it is growing, we are seeing more Korean students, a critical mass.

- Is there a difference with masters and undergraduate students? (With regards to their international status)

- Yes, there are more international students on post graduate courses and the mix is different we have seen more Chinese students.

- Do you think the universities in India and China will take over UK courses?

- This seems to be the case.

RN - Our University send staff to teach in China and are now looking in Scandinavia. However a lot of International students stay in England to be part of the Culture they have created.

Ruth Singer <http://www.ruthsinger.com/index.htm> – Do you see any difference in students that have done their undergraduate in England – do they have different practical skills?

MT – No, it's an attitude, its how you relate, and its how you process materials, that's why the designer/maker course is liberating.

- Are we equating British craft with English craft?

MT - Look at what we share rather than how we are different. No prioritising, I have never presented myself as a Japanese teacher or maker; you can play the card if you want but I don't.

DF - Because of the impact of the students that have come and stayed we are more receptive to other cultures, partly because of a generation of makers that have come in. It will be interesting if immigration changes how that will impact craft.

- I think it will; taken by a number of experiences I have had today.

- Craft is a connection to useful everyday objects and how they creatively develop consciousness.

- These are old questions and discussions that have resurfaced in a new way (reference to the discussion) - it helps to refresh our perspective.

DF – (with regards to international students) I think you really begin to discover yourself when you are out of your comfort zone, away from home. You find yourself when you are at a distance and this is what international students do well.

Kathy Fawcett, NWM&AG, Exhibition Manager - One thing to reflect on is young people from poorer backgrounds and how they will be affected.

Titles of courses are changing, the vocational aspect this has an impact on your employability.

Taslim Martin, Artist - The word 'craft' encompasses a lot, it always has done.

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