Contents

Editorial — Issue 1, 2009 ......................................................... 1

Migratory Practices: introduction to an impossible place? ........ 3
Amanda Ravetz and Jane Webb

In the Spaces of the Archive .................................................. 25
Caroline Bartlett

Developing and Defining Migratory Practice for the Museum .... 51
Emma Martin

Listening when others ‘talk back’ ........................................... 75
Kay Lawrence

Beyond the seas ................................................................. 101
Stephen Dixon

Beneficial appropriation and corporate exploitation:
Exploring the use of ethnographic methods in art, craft
and design .............................................................. 127
Hamid van Koten

About craft + design enquiry ............................................... 151
Welcome to the first issue of the Craft Australia Research Centre journal craft + design enquiry. The journal aims to advance high quality research undertaken by craft, design and related sectors by publishing research on specific themes and areas. Papers will be peer-reviewed by an international panel and published online yearly.

The journal will provide a forum for debate and contributors will be academics and/or practitioners from art, craft, design areas, material culture, anthropology, cultural studies and allied areas. We invite papers that conform to the usual conventions of academic publishing and papers that test less conventional or alternative means of documenting and disseminating research about the field. In this sense the journal will be unique in encouraging practitioners to critically analyse and evaluate knowledge gained through their experience as makers. At the same time it will provide a forum for researchers from a variety of disciplines to share insights into the field and, additionally, we welcome collaborative pieces between artists and writers or others with an interest in the field.

The Craft Australia Research Centre will make a call for papers once a year but for this initial publication we have — because a good opportunity arose — taken a different approach. Papers from the conference, ‘Migratory Practices: exchanges between anthropology, art, craft and design’, held in the United Kingdom in September 2006, were put forward by the organisers at Manchester Metropolitan University, MMU, and it is these that form this first issue. The aims of craft + design enquiry and those of the conference we thought entirely congruent in expressing an interest in extending debate about relationships between art, craft, design and other disciplinary areas, in this case anthropology.

It is not always possible to replicate conference presentation formats in a journal of this nature and not all of the papers are included here. Those published, all peer-reviewed, engage with a range of topics debated at the conference including making, ethnography and fieldwork and the ethics of anthropological and artistic production. The craft + design enquiry journal is very happy to be able to present these papers and we thank our colleagues at MMU for their collaboration in the development of this issue.

craft + design enquiry has made a first call for papers about the area of cross-cultural exchanges in craft and design to be published in 2010 A further call for papers will be announced in October. For this, and for future issues, we look forward to receiving papers that interrogate ways in which discourses surrounding practice might be given voice.

Craft Australia Research Centre Committee
Migratory Practices: introduction to an impossible place?

By Amanda Ravetz and Jane Webb

Amanda Ravetz lives and works in Manchester and is a Research Fellow at MIRIAD, MMU. She has a PhD in Social Anthropology with Visual Media from the University of Manchester. Her interests cross-cut the fields of anthropology, film and contemporary art. She is currently drafting a book Rethinking Observational Cinema with her colleague Anna Grimshaw.

Jane Webb is a Senior Lecturer on the Contemporary Crafts degree programme at MMU Cheshire and a freelance writer concerning the crafts. She has a PhD in Design History and Material Culture from the University of Wolverhampton. She is interested in challenging the relationship between the written and practice and explores both visual and textual methods in her historical research.

Abstract: This essay serves as an introduction to five papers first presented at a conference held in the UK in 2006. Migratory Practices called on scholars and practitioners to report on crossings between the fields of anthropology, art, craft and design. The aim of the conference was to consider the under-acknowledged contribution of craft and design to the growing dialogue between contemporary anthropology and art.

In this essay we consider some of the discourses that surround the term ‘practice’. We originally used ‘practice’ in our conference title to acknowledge a possible relationship between the merging of theory and action implicit in this term, and the newly explicit crossings between anthropology, art, design and craft. Here we look further into this relationship, while also asking what other assumptions about human beings, art and making have underpinned apparent differences between the four fields. Taking two historical moments, we suggest that in western contexts, shared assumption about what it means to be in, and act upon the world, have at various times, underlain all four fields. During the nineteenth century art, craft, anthropology and design each conceptualised the relationship between human beings and the material world using categories such as ‘object’, ‘technology’ and ‘skill’. In the twentieth century, these categories were increasingly blurred through the development of more processual perspectives on how non-human and human worlds interrelate; and at the beginning of the twenty first century, we find a concern for organic notions of skilled practice emerging across all four domains.

Having established these historical connections, and after considering a number of concrete examples, we introduce the five papers. The projects they report on convey the rich insights that result when craft and design become active and visible participants in the art/anthropology debate.
Context

*Migratory Practices* has its origins in a conference convened by Amanda Ravetz and Jane Webb at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) in September 2006. The conference title reflected our interest in exploring the practice-based movements between art, anthropology, design and craft. In convening the conference we did not want to suggest that boundaries between these areas should be dissolved, but rather to examine exchanges that highlight the merging of theory and action, signalled by the term ‘practice’. The added metaphor of migration was intended to suggest that within a global intellectual context, there are innumerable ways in which makers’ and academics’ activities are developed and intertwined. Drawing on contemporary theories of geographical migration, we too sought to go beyond the dualities of stasis and movement, place and migration, highlighting instead then “…plurality of experiences, histories and constituencies” that direct what it means to migrate or be located.¹

Earlier in 2006, whilst working in separate areas of the same institution² we discovered that not only had we both studied anthropology at different points in our careers, but that we were both concerned with how theory and action come together through ‘practice’. At the time Ravetz was working on a project modelling and testing an ‘aesthetic’ ethnography, drawing inspiration from examples of contemporary art.³ For a brief time she had been a lecturer at Manchester University’s Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology one of the few programmes in the UK to offer a visual media course centred on ethnographic filmmaking. Despite the emphasis on visual practice at GCVA, she had found the exclusive focus on ethnographic filmmaking inhibiting to the use of other visual media and methods. In 2004 she moved to the Manchester Institute for Research and Innovation in Art and Design (MIRIAD) to pursue alternative forms of visual enquiry and to explore how the methods and subjects of anthropological study might be fused through material forms other than ethnographic film.

Webb, alongside freelance work, was writing and running the material culture units of the MMU Cheshire Contemporary Crafts degree programme. This involved introducing students to theoretical issues in ways that would resonate positively with studio practice, a task hampered by the relative lack of critical writing about craft. She had also begun to develop materially-based ways of pursuing and communicating historical research. During her work establishing a programme for contemporary crafts students, she had become aware of the overlaps between makers’, designers’ and anthropologists’ interests. Furthermore, it seemed important to acknowledge that alongside contemporary activities, craftspeople and designers had historically been deeply entangled

2 Webb as a lecturer at MMU Cheshire, Ravetz as a research fellow at MIRIAD, MMU.
3 For a description of some of this work see Ravetz, A. 2007 “A weight of meaninglessness about which there is nothing insignificant": abjection and knowing in an art school and on a housing estate”. In Harris, M. (eds.) Ways of Knowing? New Anthropological Approaches to Method, Learning and Knowledge, Berghahn, Oxford.
Migratory Practices: introduction to an impossible place?

with ethnographic research. In line with Ravetz’s interests, Webb had observed the potential for visual practices to embody and expound anthropological critique.

The catalyst for the conference was Webb’s involvement as critical writer on the Here and There project (HAT2) – a series of artists’ exchanges offering residencies for artist-makers in South Asia, Australia and Britain. HAT2 had developed from an earlier residency programme aimed at jewellers from Britain and Australia and was therefore biased towards craft. A requirement of Webb’s writing commission was to provide a forum for discussion of the critical implications of the cross-cultural residencies that formed part of HAT2. A conference seemed an appropriate form through which to do this.

Framing the conference

Until recently, there were two zones of contact between anthropology and visual practice - the museum, with the exhibition as the material form of exchange; and the cinema, centring on video and film (Bouquet 2001; Grimshaw 2001). In the last few years however, a third space has opened up. Writers have pointed to new links between contemporary art and anthropology, suggesting these might form the basis for an extension of anthropology’s aesthetic and epistemological repertoire. But during this time little has been said about how craft and design fit in this conversation. Are these fields included under the category ‘contemporary art’ for the purposes of the art/anthropology debate? Or have they been conveniently ignored?

Craft in particular has played the role of ‘other’ to the fine arts and industrial design since at least the nineteenth-century (Adamson 2007:2). Because of this, we felt it too simplistic to simply substitute craft and design for art in the exchanges between anthropology and visual practice. In order to integrate craft and design into the debate, we invited three keynote speakers who could ‘stand for’ the different fields. To represent disciplinary positions as both firmly established and yet open to dialogue, we invited Moira Vincentelli, Tim Ingold and Roy Villevoye to provide points of reference around which our conception of ‘migratory practices’ could be explored.

Questions of practice have become central to recent discussions about art and anthropology. Tim Ingold has suggested that despite their different outcomes, both art and anthropology are exploratory knowledge practices, relying on inherently creative and perceptual ways of learning about the world.

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4 See for example Marcus and Fischer 1986; Marcus and Myers 1995; Pink 2004; Grimshaw and Ravetz 2005; Schneider and Wright 2006; Ingold 2007; Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009.

5 As things turned out our call produced only one or two design-focused contributions and at this point we decided to reconsider our initial plans for four keynotes. We have retained the category of design in this essay, with a contribution from designer Hamid van Koten. We hope that our attempt to insert craft into the art/anthropology debate will soon be properly extended to design.

6 http://www.abdn.ac.uk/creativityandpractice/background.shtml
Schneider and Christopher Wright (2006) also see art and anthropology as complimentary, though unlike Ingold, they argue that the convergence between them rests on the practices of appropriation each field has developed in order to negotiate culture and cultural difference.7

Our own use of the word ‘practice’ was intended to evoke these and other debates and to foreground the interconnectedness between making, knowing and communicating in all four fields. Inviting presentations under five headings,8 we sought contributions that would report directly on the migrations between art, anthropology, design and craft. By suggesting groupings that could apply to all subject areas, we hoped there would be scope for participants to illuminate the plurality of experiences that characterize crossings between the four fields.

Questions of practice

As we looked more closely at the way the relationship between human beings and the material world have been engaged with in each field, we began to see connections between these different discourses, giving us new perspectives on our own and others’ cross-disciplinary work. What follows is an evocation of two ‘moments’ we have discerned in what, at times, have seemed to be the parallel trajectories of anthropology, art, craft and design. In exploring these, and in the subsequent section that looks at contemporary examples of practice,9 our intention is to suggest the rich contextual landscape from which the papers emerge.

Our first ‘moment’ focuses on a period between 1830 and 1890. In Britain the mechanisation of industry had reached its peak. A number of writers, artists and anthropologists responded to these changes by considering the possibilities of a return to a simpler relationship between making, production and people. While those interested in craft focused on what was happening in Britain, the nascent discipline of anthropology turned its attention to discovering the ‘origins of mankind’ in geographically and culturally remote sites. But despite choosing different locations and timeframes, craft theorists and anthropologists shared a conviction that material objects held the key to schematising - and manipulating - technological and social progress.

The second moment takes us forward by almost one hundred years to the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, when practice began to be theorised as something independent of the technological manipulation of material. The visual arts, 7 “Appropriation should be re-evaluated as a hermeneutic procedure – an act of dialogical understanding – by which artists and anthropologists negotiate access to, and traffic in, cultural differences” (Schneider 2006:36).
8 The five headings were ‘extending the art/anthropology debate’; ‘fieldworks’, ‘making and ethnography’; ‘ethics’ and ‘crossing borders’.
9 Despite wanting to include craft and design alongside art, both at the conference and in this collection, we faced a problem that the majority of contributions were from those defining themselves as artist-makers. Fine art thus slips in and out of view in this essay.
sociological and anthropological theory began to consider the practices of everyday life - for example cooking, walking and eating - as things of interest in their own right. Some even suggested that these overlooked habits could be seen as modes of resistance in an unprecedented era of consumption (Highmore 2002: 6-13). Practice came to be considered an independent principle, one distinguishable from, though connected to, the materiality of the world.

**Moment One**

In 1834 Augustus W. Pugin set forth two visions of the relationship between everyday life and architectural practice (Pugin 1969: appendix illustrations). The first was a medieval society with its associated feudal economies and socially supportive, small-scale communities - symbolised by a hands-on craft-based aesthetic. The second evoked a modern industrial society, dominated by centralised schemes for controlling a population. This was epitomised by the anonymous design of the minimal and mass-produced factory building. By contextualising his craft-centred manifesto in this way, Pugin drew an analogy between the qualities associated with types of making and forms of living, a relationship that was to be actively pursued by William Morris and Charles Ashbee among others (Lambourne 1980: 9).

Morris's ambition in founding the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Company in 1861 was to focus on the decorative arts, particularly as they could be applied in architecture (ibid 1980: 18). Central to his philosophy was the idea that by reclaiming individuated production in this area of design, the alienation of the worker suffering under the mechanisation of factory production, could be challenged. But even in Morris's workshops, workers undertook repetitive production processes, a practical necessity that seriously undermined the liberating environment he had envisaged (Harrod 1999: 17). The inconsistencies between Morris's ideals and what he was actually able to do, led him to establish the Socialist League in 1885, editing The Commonweal magazine as its voice (Lambourne 1980: 27). He had come to believe that only through a socialist revolution might craft be truly liberated and liberating (ibid: 30).

In a more utopian spirit, Charles Ashbee attempted to sidestep capitalism and its associated factory conditions by founding the School and Guild of Handicrafts in 1888. Ultimately this led to a social experiment in which Ashbee relocated one hundred and fifty East-end workers from London to Chipping Campden (Ashbee 1977). Ashbee believed that the Arts and Crafts movement, as he termed it, was part of a three-way revolution in tackling the effects of mechanised industrialisation, working alongside, but not identical to, socialism (ibid: 5-9).

In giving workers back their creative lives, connecting them to their craft and the object of its production, Morris and Ashbee both hoped that other positive changes to living conditions would follow. But the social and economic
conditions surrounding their projects limited the power of their theories, and
they became aware of the danger of creating “...a nursery for luxuries, a
hothouse for the production of mere trivialities and useless things for the rich”
(\textit{ibid}: 9). Though both tried to resist this, the generation of a new style that
was suggestive of hand production, such as the ‘Tudric’ and ‘Cymric’ metal
ware ranges, produced by Liberty and Company, commoditised the very notion
of hand-making, translating its apparent authenticity into economic value
(Lambourne 1980: 65). By naming these wares with historical or indigenous
titles, British department stores like Liberty aligned hand-made objects with
the ‘ethnic’ goods, also fashionably used to represent ideals of pre-industrial
production. Hand-crafted objects were marketed by their primitivism or their
ability to evoke in their consumers, a nostalgia for pre- industrial, pre-colonial
societies (Cheang 2007: 2-7).

The early modern school of social anthropology also gained its distinct identity
at the height of the modern industrial age. There are strong parallels between its
underlying vision and that of a creative life based in craft knowledge as articulated
by Pugin, Morris and Ashbee among others. But unlike these thinkers, members
of the early modern school of Anthropology shied away from addressing
questions of industrialisation directly, turning instead to what they saw as still-
existing sites of pre-industrial life. Focusing on questions of human origins and
using technology as a measure of progress, anthropologists like Edward Tylor
(1871) and Lewis Henry Morgan (1877), took technology, tool making and the
creation of artefacts as indicators of the relative sophistication of any given
group. Notwithstanding the geographical distance between themselves and
their contemporaries, their vision of material culture as \textit{progressive}, mirrored
that of the arts and crafts movement, both drawing a strong parallel between
technology, the production of objects and (ideal) social organisational forms.

Nineteenth century anthropology was enchanted by non-industrial material
culture. The categories ‘ethnographic’ or ‘native’ art, craft and design, were
extended to include many of the objects encountered and collected by
anthropologists, and also those gathered by travellers and missionaries. The
analysis of these artefacts often overtook any real curiosity about, or engagement
with, those who produced them. Objects were seen as representative of culture,
but separable from lived experience. The Pitt Rivers museum in Oxford, though
now appearing somewhat whimsical with its cabinets of curiosity, reflected, at its
inauguration, a modern scientific trend in museology. Designed as a “typology”
by its founder Henry Lane Fox (Pitt Rivers), the acquiring, organisation and
assessment of objects was arranged in “...a sequence that suggested the
possible evolution of a particular class,” from primitive to more complex (Smith
2001: 10). Thus the object became a sign for the classification of the society
from which it derived.

While the Pitt Rivers museum reveals the depth of the faith placed in objects
up until the end of the nineteenth century, the convention of using artefacts to
demonstrate typologies had already begun to change. By the beginning of the
twentieth century, anthropology’s concern for all forms of visual and material
practice - for example photography, objects, and art - was eclipsed by a new fascination with whatever lay beneath the surface of social life. The study of material objects, and the visual methodologies that had been so central to the early modern discipline, gradually became symbols of something simplistic, even archaic. In the British and US schools of anthropology, explorations of ‘invisible’ social structures were quickly established as the proper focus of academic interest.

During the early years of the century, a new methodology for anthropology was born. Iconic of what has been called ‘the fieldwork revolution’, the work of British anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski emphasised the centrality of being and living in the field. Understood as an immediate experience between the anthropologist and his or her subject, this demanded a different orientation from that appropriate to objects removed from their contexts. It has been argued that Malinowski’s emphasis on the fieldworker and their experience was a decisive moment for visual and material practices in anthropology. The subjectivity of fieldworker, exposed to the field like light-sensitive film, - and ‘developed’ on their return home - soon usurped the place of the photograph as evidence (Pinney 1992:82). This shift from interpreting the circumstances of life through the production and appearance of objects, to a new engagement with ‘underlying’ structures of lived experience, came to a head in what we have identified as our second ‘moment’.

**Moment Two**

In British and US anthropology, the study of artefacts alienated from their contexts, alongside the study of making, had all but disappeared during the first half of the twentieth-century. Evolutionary theory was eventually superseded by the development of a new form of cultural analysis. Structuralism, a system of social interpretation derived from the linguistic work of Ferdinand de Saussure, attempted to resolve the difficulties inherent in interpreting the patterns underlying social experience. The focus was on illuminating the invisible, organising structures of societies (*langue*) - kinship systems, for example. While the actions of structures could still be evidenced through the visible activities and outcomes of rituals and objects (*parole*) (Tilley 1992: 6-8), two things had now changed. First, all human activity took on potential significance; and second, observable phenomena were not important in themselves but rather as indicators of social patterns which were now seen as the true object of study.

Importantly however, although structuralism and the new science of semiology promoted methods of visual analysis significantly different from those of an earlier, and by now, eclipsed, object-focused period, semiotics and structuralism did allow a belated return to an apparently object-based interpretation of society (Buchli 2002: 9-12). Crucial to this return was that objects ceased to be seen as static visual phenomena and became viewed instead as sites upon which human actions converge.
By the late 1960s a number of challenges to structuralist conceptions of human life had begun to emerge. Pierre Bourdieu through his work on ‘the theory of practice’ effectively adapted structuralism in order to address questions of human agency (Margolis 1999: 65-66). Bourdieu shifted emphasis away from organising structures, towards the agency of individual lives and experiences in creating social forms. This ‘structuring structure’ as Bourdieu termed it, was given the name ‘habitus’ - a concept that greatly influenced a new generation of anthropologists. The concept allowed human agency to be understood as a force both structured by and generative of the communal organising structures. Objects, rituals, everyday actions and skilled activities were all important elements in this dynamic making and re-making of society. Skilled production thus became one of a number of creative forms of practice and objects that could be viewed as part of a constant process of change.\textsuperscript{10}

A similar shift, from static object to object as a site of action, can be seen during this period within craft and design. During the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, design moved its concern from ‘high’ modernism to an interest in artefacts, including popular architecture, that were part of the everyday mass-market. Indeed, the very act of designing was now extended to embrace everyday acts.\textsuperscript{11} The idea that skilled practice could encompass ordinary actions and that specialist design knowledge was less important than everyday know-how, was actively pursued by designers. For example, Alison and Peter Smithson worked with the Sugden family to create a bespoke dwelling for their clients, based entirely on the family’s patterns of behaviour (Hawkes 1997: 45). Ettore Sottsass’ design of the Olivetti Valentine typewriter with Perry King in 1969, was presented as an “anti-machine”, capable of reconfiguring the relations between designer and consumer (Labaco 2006: 39). In opposition to industrialisation, the product did not dictate the conditions of its use; rather its purchase, portability and function would allow the consumer to actively re-invent the object according to their own personal needs (Blauvelt 2004: 21). In both instances, it was less the object and more the practice of everyday life that was important, with the ideal relationship between the designers and consumers significantly bypassing the object.

This focus on practice, as a thing in itself, was simultaneously played out in the anti-design movement as well as action painting and sculpting during the 1950s and 1960s. Though these impulses in art, design and craft come from disparate places, they all put the process of interaction centre stage. This frequently resulted in objects that were less about meaning-making than about a perpetual expression of process. Furthermore, this ‘process’ was not the skilled practice of the past, but evidence of a more general sense of action associated with apparently unskilled activities such as dripping and splashing, or even destructive acts like tearing and ripping (Slivka 1999; Schimmel 1999).


\textsuperscript{11} Victor Papanek championed this approach: “all men are designers … [d]esign is composing an epic poem, executing a mural, painting a masterpiece… But design is also cleaning and reorganising a desk drawer, pulling an impacted tooth, baking an apple pie…” (1972: 3).
In his exploration of Abstract Expressionism, a movement in which both artists and craftspeople began to engage directly with materials, using them as an expressive form, Glenn Adamson points to differences in the way the work was received (2007). Abstract work in paint and the development of action painting found a clear acceptance with fine art audiences, while the expressive clay of the Otis group was perceived by many as an aspirational leap from craft to fine art (ibid: 47). Adamson traces this difference in reception, to distinctions between visuality (in fine art) and tactility/sensuality (in craft) (ibid: 49). But what is noteworthy in the context of our discussion here is that action painting effectively bypassed the physical presence of the artwork in favour of a new connection between artist and viewer. In craft on the other hand, despite the genre of the functional ceramic vessel coming under increasing attack, the relationship between artist and audience was less pronounced than in the other fields. The primary exchange continued to be one between material and maker.

Until the end of the nineteenth century, anthropology, art, craft and design each focused attention on the relationship between people and social aspects of production and on the evidence that objects could provide of this. By the mid twentieth century, social and material production had lost their singular association with an activity tied to a product. For anthropology, material and visual culture had already long been eclipsed by a shift towards the hidden structures of social life. During the first part of the twentieth century the art object began to be dissolved as linguistics and semiotic theory influenced these areas. But for craft and design, the focus on objects remained. Designers like Sottsass and the Smithsons began to explore and challenge functionality; and craft too began to consider function more iconically. Still, craft maintained the centrality of the relationship between materials and maker and in the 1960s in particular, it was this attachment to the expressive construction of objects, in opposition to challenges to making in other areas of artistic and industrial production that transformed craft into an important subculture. Craft retained its presence as ‘other’ in this respect. But as we shall see, in recent years the alterity of craft has begun to be dissolved.

**Contemporary debates about practice**

If our two moments reveal points of divergence and convergence between our four fields, the contemporary call in many fields for more holistic perspectives on human activity in the world have come to influence all four fields in comparable ways. In anthropology, prior to the work of post structuralists such as Bourdieu, the era of the machine along with the alienation of the worker’s judgement, personality and creativity influenced the understanding of all forms of making and production. But by the 1980s, substantial numbers of anthropologists were

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12 Craft as ‘subculture’ was quickly absorbed as 1973 saw the highly successful launch of Crafts magazine and of The Craftsman’s Art exhibition. During the 1970s the aesthetic of the handmade became central to consumerism.
working to dismantle the (mechanistic) dualities at the core of the discipline – including those between biology and culture, body and mind and individual and society; new perspectives on human-environmental relations now began to come through.

One effect of this was the gradual replacing of the category of technology in anthropology with the idea of skilled practice (Lave 1988; Lave and Wenger 1991; Ingold 2000). In tune with this, anthropologists such as Jackson (1996), Ingold (2000), Stoller (1997) and Taussig (1993) developed phenomenological perspectives on social life that drew new attention to the importance of embodiment and the senses in understanding social worlds. With particular reference to James Gibson, Ingold, for example, developed the concept of a “sentient ecology” (2000: 25), proposing that human beings engage with and are part of the world, not through the dualistic workings of mind and body, culture and nature, but as a “singular locus of creative growth within a continually unfolding field of relationships” (Ingold 2000:4-5). From this perspective, knowledge could be approached not as a matter of mental planning followed by practical testing, but of being, living and engaging practically in the world. In tune with the legacy of ‘moment two’, life is shown by Ingold to be a matter of ‘enskilment’, with the very actions of living understood as a type of apprenticeship in which learning is continually undertaken.¹³

The emergence of new phenomenological perspectives in anthropology has been especially significant to those wanting to pursue work that diverges from discursive or ‘culturally-constructed’ models of social life. One of the questions raised by these newer perspectives is how anthropologists might present innovative and yet accurate explorations of the affective dimensions of experience. It is in part a commitment to this question that has profoundly influenced debates within anthropology about its techniques and representational forms, impacting on the visual practices already sanctioned within film and the museum and allowing for new dialogues between anthropology and contemporary art to emerge.

The benefits to anthropology of engaging with contemporary art’s material and sensual practices reside partly in how these might enable anthropologists to extend their own sensory repertoires, better equipping them to approach and represent other cultures (Schneider and Wright 2006:13). But it is also the case that the work of Ingold and others has allowed those committed to the visual in anthropology to challenge certain discourses previously used to interpret such

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¹³ For Ingold, skilled practice has at least five important characteristics: Intentionality and functionality are immanent in the activity itself. Skill is not as Marcel Mauss said, just technique of the body. Rather it is co-ordination of perception and action in a richly structured environment. Skilled practice is not application of mechanical force to exterior objects but requires care, judgment, dexterity (Pye 1968: 22, Ingold 2000: 353).

Skilled practice cannot be reduced to a formula and therefore cannot be due to transmission of formulae. The novice observes other practitioners through his own perceptual engagement with surroundings. Apprenticeship involves practitioners introducing novices into context that afford select opportunities for perception and action. Design does not precede form, rather by bringing perception to environmentally situated action, form is generated.
work (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009). Once recognised as more than an adjunct to existing forms of anthropological knowledge, visual practices hold the possibility of different ‘ways of speaking and knowing’ from those traditionally sanctioned by the field (MacDougall 1998:63).

A small number of anthropologists have begun to explore how anthropological research might be approached as creative practice. In 2005, Wendy Gunn curated the exhibition *Fieldnotes and sketchbooks: challenging the boundaries between descriptions and processes of describing.* Rather than setting out to be an exhibition of artistic, architectural or anthropological works, Gunn aimed to reflect upon disciplinary ways of working, knowing and describing. Those who took part were each allotted a wall-mounted cabinet to work within. The research of which the exhibition was part, concluded that art’s, anthropology’s and architecture’s notational forms grow from practitioners’ skilled ways of moving through and attending to the world, directing a viewer’s attention along those same ‘paths’ (Gunn 2005).

In the area of museum studies, once dismissed as an archaic hangover from an earlier age, Mary Bouquet has led the way in developing the exhibition as a form of contemporary anthropological practice (2001), something that has influenced younger anthropologists. Alyssa Grossman recently carried out fieldwork in Romania into post-communist memory, looking at the links between memory and material culture. With collaborator and artist Selena Kimball, Grossman produced *The Memory Archive* at Bucharest Museum. Writing about their work together, Grossman and Kimball describe the tension between their practices, leading them to install Grossman’s film of people talking about their memories of significant objects and Kimball’s animations of these same objects, on facing screens (2009). Their juxtaposition of anthropological and artistic practice reminds us that the dynamic tensions between social and aesthetic concerns must somehow be negotiated when art and anthropology meet.

The opening out of design from the 1970s also generated new questions about craft as a human practice. As had happened with design, the characteristics of craft practice were re-evaluated particularly during the 1980s and 1990s in Britain. But while function was re-examined and challenged, rather than demoting craft practice as designers had done with design, the critical focus was on what made working with material distinct as a skill. This examination resulted in an analysis akin to Ingold’s, where the physical nature of undertaking craft took on terms such as “intelligent making” (Press and Cusworth 1998). This inferred a fluidity of mind and body versus a purely mechanistic understanding of craft as unthinking action. In the ensuing years between moment one and moment two, craft had begun to develop a new relationship with fine art. Where once craft had played the role of liberating practice in the face of industrialisation, it was now viewed as little more than a mechanical activity requiring little thought compared to conceptually driven art forms (Adamson 2007; Veiteberg 2005: 62–87).

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14 Aberdeen Art Gallery, 6th April - 4th June 2005
The notion of craft as unthinking and uncritical was a central concern for Peter Dormer in *The Art of the Maker* (1994). He deconstructed the prevailing prejudices about craft practice as mechanical, utilitarian, unimaginative, uninterested in aesthetics, rule-based and inhibiting to creativity (1994: 8). But like many writers on craft, Dormer called on Michael Polanyi’s writings to establish a new framework for considering and understanding craft practice. This drew attention away from specialised practices and into considerations of how craft practice operates in parallel to the non-formula, flexible, and organic actions and learning within everyday life (1994: 20). The expansion of craft into a broader category has resulted in work more able to explore and critique the relationship between maker and materials rather than defend a philosophical position. Work such as that of Maxine Bristow, Caroline Slotte and Susan Collis examines the conditions of craft in society by implicitly commenting on more focused analyses of skilled practice such as those of David Pye.

Alongside Polanyi, the understanding of workmanship defined by David Pye provided an important legacy for thinking about practice within the craft world. Pye wrote *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* in 1968 in which he identified a workmanship of certainty and a workmanship of risk – the former that of industrial manufacture, the latter that of craft (1968: 4). However, as design and craft expanded as terms, the opposition of a workmanship of certainty and risk was critically re-examined, providing the core for a conceptual yet very materially-orientated body of work. For some makers, such as the glass artist Keith Cummings, a critical positioning to Pye has emerged through his creation of repeatedly cast objects, parodying the isolation of craft as a skilled practice centred on exquisiteness, singularity and task-orientated labour (Cummings 1989). In aesthetic opposition, but driven by the same focus, the work of Maxine Bristow, Caroline Slotte and Susan Collis derives from a practice of such mechanical repetition (or at least the appearance of it), that the constructed objects teeter perpetually between certainty and risk.

In addition to this individual re-examination of making within craft practice, there has also been a more profound questioning of what actually constitutes craft and design practice. This can be compared with the re-examination of methods in anthropology. A challenge to the ideal of the singular iconic designer has come about through projects that are task centred rather than designer centred. 15 Collaborative ventures such as The Design Transformation Group (DTG), established in 1995 by Nick Udall, Cristiaan de Groot and Maxwell Young, have focused on the build up of a critical mass of methodologies for creative and critical practice through events (DesignQuests) that encourage active ways of interaction between designers and theorists by “stepping confidently into… play with ‘not knowing’” (Udall 1997: 1). At these events, design and ways to it can be created from any starting point. 16 In craft in the 1960s and 1970s, collaboration

15 For example, the design collective Droog residency at Oraniebaum in Germany (Williams 1999) and the ‘Design Noir’ project by Fiona Raby and Antony Dunne. (Rattray 2007).
16 Strategies might include the use of lying, dating a chair, marching through a town on the Isle of Wight, or getting lost.
and democratisation was an important part of its role as subculture, (though one might argue that it has performed this role at least since Pugin’s time). Thus collaboration has not been embraced as a new method to create craft. However, projects such as *A field of silver: silver in a field* work in a similar way to the events designed by the DTG. The project brought together ten jewellers for a three-day workshop in a field in South Oxfordshire and provided each maker with only a piece of flattened silver by which to create new works. By taking makers out of their familiar environments, the organisers asked participants to re-examine the trusted methods of their own creativity. Inevitably makers called on many more skills -- such as opening a gate or collecting berries -- than their identifiable ‘skills as makers’ might superficially suggest (Anon 2000: 30-31). Other collective projects such as Pixel Raiders have brought together craftspeople utilising digital technologies (Johnson 2002).

It is clear from all these examples that the concerns of craft, design, art and anthropology are being aligned in new ways, due on the one hand to ‘visual practices’ embracing of ‘the everyday’ and the ‘invisible’; and on the other to a new ‘phenomenological turn’ in anthropology that has seen some anthropologists looking again to sensory, visual and material forms. If a new and more expansive idea of practice has allowed these different constituencies to come together, then this has also enabled each field to draw new and closer connections between making, thinking and communicating.

**The papers**

As we have seen, fascinating moments of convergence and divergence underpin the contemporary interest in ‘practice’. Although it is tempting to imagine that migrations between the fields of art, anthropology, craft and design have only happened recently, it’s clear that they have shared significant ways of thinking about human action, culture and the material world. The five papers presented here expand on this historical legacy, showing that as with other forms of migration, movement between disciplines can be intentionally sought after and prepared for, or unexpectedly encountered. The circumstances that attend such movements often indicate something of the underlying assumptions that drive practices within anthropology, art, craft and design.

The first two contributors to *Migratory Practices* to be discussed here demonstrate the rich results that arise from transplanting making into the realm of curatorial and museum practice. These papers examine the potential interplay between artistic practice and curating from both an artist’s and a curator’s standpoint and are the result of both participants identifying the need for exchange across disciplines. However, this awareness and acceptance of the requirements of migration does not result in the papers relaying a seamless or necessarily easy experience. Rather these papers indicate what occurs when disciplines have developed with mutual aims and some exchange of methods and when practice begins from a relatively developed starting point. As we shall see, particularly in
the second of the two papers from Emma Martin, advancing a new position that attempts to incorporate the mixed history of interchange between disciplines is not easily translated to the level of institutional practice.

Caroline Bartlett’s paper discusses archives of texts and textiles that she has worked with as an artist over the last nine years. Bartlett’s attention to materials has led to a focus on the tensions between individually meaningful and publicly memorable objects. In one poignant example she tracks the shift in status of a personally meaningful object to one that has become almost historically meaningless. On its first appearance in the archive of Sir Richard Burton at Orleans House, an envelope full of pressed flowers was labelled “the last flowers that my darling culled the day before his death”, a touching and emotional acquisition. However, Bartlett notes how over time and through decomposition, the label is transformed to “an envelope containing a few small brown fragments”. Here the artist identifies how the loss of individual agency as a means to understand this object, has profoundly changed the meaning and power of the object.

By thinking through materials and their manipulation as a whole, Bartlett is able to expose the subtle and underlying ways in which archives are constructed. As a practitioner in textiles she not only evokes the history of objects, but the inhabited world of the conservator. In a series of detailed photographs, the artist examines the intricate work of these professionals. By focussing on the hands alone, she reveals how the tacit understanding of cloth and its preservation informs critical decisions and silently shapes how history is recorded. As with the painstaking practice of Bristow et al, the conservator works to produce results, the ultimate aim of which is their invisibility. Yet like these contemporary artists, the work is no less critically significant.

The relationship between the object, classification and the curator is also examined in Emma Martin’s paper. Martin has been curating the South Asian collections for National Museums Liverpool (NML) for over a decade. Her experience, and the very physical ordering of the status of the museums in Liverpool with the fine art collection (top of the hill), seen in isolation from the ethnography collection (bottom of the hill), demonstrates how the impact of colonial history is still huge within the organisational structures governing knowledge and history. In her paper Martin argues how by being open to creative practice undertaken in South Asia, it becomes possible to challenge the established and bigoted classification of skills and materials in British museums. By discussing the isolation of the sculptor Sonabai Rajawar and her experimentation with traditional artistic practice, Martin reveals how the actual circumstances of production in a small village in India have led to large changes in the infrastructure of NML. Martin demonstrates how categorical terms such as ‘art’ and ‘ethnology’ have provided the basic division for the museum collections she works with. These, she argues are inadequate to communicate the realities and complexities of skilled practice and everyday experience.
In these two papers it is the practice of making that has provided either the illumination of, or the challenge to, traditional historical and ethnographic classifications within museums. The inclusion of Rajawar challenges the opposition of art and craft, innovation and tradition that has dogged the split between (literally) ‘high’ art and ‘low’ craft in Liverpool. Bartlett’s ethnographic study of archivists and conservators, entitled the *Bodies of Knowledge* series and purchased by the Victoria and Albert museum in London (V and A), has similarly challenged the V and A’s institutionally-established collection boundaries.

As has been noted, migratory practice is not always something that is chosen or anticipated and the second group of contributors to this collection - Kay Lawrence, Stephen Dixon and Hamid van Koten – describe projects that have resulted in a reflection on personal philosophical positions and ethical difficulties of migration. A consideration of these papers can also be used to indicate the status of migratory relationships across different disciplines. Many, like artistic practice and ethnographic work or oral history, have a relatively underdeveloped association.

Kay Lawrence is a non-Indigenous Australian textile artist and lecturer who discusses a collaborative project *Weaving the Murray*, undertaken to celebrate the Centenary of the Federation of Australia. Intended to bring together artists from indigenous and non-indigenous communities, Lawrence explores the difficulties in this type of collaboration. Interviewing most members some years after the end of the project, she is able to deconstruct the experience of creating this multi-media art work within a concentrated and pressured period of time, noting the many areas in which misunderstandings took place, as well as moments of positive productivity. Lawrence notes that for the formally educated non-Indigenous artists, the intention to construct a conceptually-driven finished textile art work veiled unacknowledged assumptions. For the indigenous artists however, some of whom were educated both through a formal system and in the family tradition, assumptions were about processes of collaboration and the personal qualities of practice required to construct the various pieces. This opposition of motives and expectations resulted in the sense of ownership between the parts of the finished piece being divided and contentious, alienating even to the present day at least one of the Indigenous artists.

Australia is also the site for Stephen Dixon’s paper. Dixon is a British ceramicist who was engaged on a three-month residency (through the HAT2 scheme) in Melbourne, Australia in order to challenge his own preconceptions about craft. However, he found the colonial history of Australia and the present experiences of place in both indigenous and non-indigenous contemporary society complex and difficult - his own position problematic. Dixon’s typical role when constructing work in Britain is that of a social commentator, a satirist, but in Australia the intimacy with which the artist understands and inhabits contemporary British social politics was lost. As such he instinctively began to create work that centred on narratives of migration itself – convict love tokens, and the myths and migrating material history of Captain Cook. The works began to explore the penal system, the stories of Ned Kelly, and the bureaucracy that symbolised the
power of colonialism, with his own position as author purposefully clouded - his imagery multi-layered and graphically contested. At times this visual confusion is overt with image, text and mark laid on top of each other, vying for authority and space. At other times it is hidden – the surfaces seem minimal, yet it is the materials themselves that provide the story of contested place. Dixon uses his practice as a critical tool for expressing the complexities of place, identity and migration and crucially the role of the artist in relation to these.

Though geographically far removed, the contribution by Hamid van Koten who is an industrial designer, draws on similar themes of transience and movement. In his contribution for the collection he tells of the reconsideration of his own design practice through an engagement with people and place. Working on a large community project in Ullapool, a small fishing village on the east coast of Scotland, van Koten began to see that the experience of the habitual, tidal rhythms of the community could be translated into communal architecture and furniture that enhanced the perception of the local community who inhabited the transient landscape. Ullapool seemed initially to constantly shift its identity, yet as van Koten realised, it was this change that also provided its stability and cohesion. In the work he produced, he felt he had enabled the community to visually and materially express their poetic existence. In his paper for this collection, van Koten opposes this ‘sympathetic’ process with the cynicism that has come to pervade much of contemporary design practice. He outlines how ethnographic techniques are being used to boost economically-driven cycles of consumption, rather than enhancing human social experience.

All three papers demonstrate the realities of migration. Challenging one’s own practice by taking on different projects, or journeying to new locations, is not always a matter of choice and can bring unexpected difficulties for which we may be ill-equipped. Yet all three reflections demonstrate how venturing into new philosophical and geographical territories can provide important opportunities to reflect on the understanding of our own theoretical positions and skills. Furthermore, that in recording and analysing these experiences, one begins to establish a critical identity for this form of migration for others to build on.

**Conclusion**

In seeking a context for the *Migratory Practices* collection, we have recounted something of our personal motivation, of the historical background to contemporary discourses of ‘practice’, and of contemporary points of connection between anthropology, art, craft and design.

Though all four disciplines have been involved in considering what we now term questions of practice, the focus for each was once object centred – a way of forging the construction of a discipline, design movement or craft genre. This earlier emphasis on stasis and objects is being transformed however through the current emphasis on the fluidity of social and material processes. Yet this
Migratory Practices: introduction to an impossible place?

has not resulted in a loss of identity for disciplines, but rather as Tim Ingold noted in his keynote paper for the conference, revealed them to be continuous with everyday life, able to work alongside one another. In effect, like the status of objects described in moment two, anthropology, art, craft and design could now be approached as excitingly entangled, unfinished and unresolved ways of knowing the world.

Rather than being seen as interdisciplinary models for the future however, these papers offer us something more modest: a glimpse of what happens when those from disciplines we tend to assume operate through mostly different textual/visual/material registers, actually report on what they do. The title of this introduction uses the phrase the ‘impossible place’, (originally used by Walter Benjamin and quoted by Hal Foster in his essay about the artist as ethnographer in 1996). This raises the possibility that migrations between anthropology and arts practice might lead to something of an ethical, aesthetic or intellectual dead end. Yet the image of an impossible place might also be a suitable metaphor for what these papers reveal. If viewed as a closed, merged and finished object, the image of place contradicts the open-ended, and often imperfect, ways of living and engaging with people, places, stories, events and institutions that these reports evoke. But if place is understood as event, as gathering, the impossibility is to consider place/field/discipline as something impermeable, something that does not have inward and outward flow.

As we noted above, our initial goal was to include craft and design within the more established debate between anthropology and art. In doing so we have not wanted to pin down what craft, design, anthropology or art can or should be, while also attempting to acknowledge what they individually offer. But it is perhaps appropriate to finish by reflecting briefly on the benefits of allowing craft and design to enter the art/anthropology dialogue. In constructing our two moments around what is now called practice, we noted that craft, more than design, has sustained a continuous relationship between maker and material, not diluting this intimacy in favour of a newly pronounced connection between artist or designer as conceptualiser and audience. Craft has often been considered rather naïve for retaining its interest in the material, but a new theoretical interest in craft suggests it may be this very quality that has finally let it back in from the cold. Jorunn Veiteberg identifies the intimate connection between craft and materials: “Craft insists on the physical dimension more than other art practices (2005:33) she writes. She then quotes Linda Sandino on the importance of materiality itself: “…if matter matters, then it is the best place to locate an exploration of our relationship, not only with things themselves, but also to the materiality of those things (2005: 33).

It is this very insistence on the fundamental relationship between maker and material that we believe makes craft so pertinent to the contemporary debate between anthropology and art. While, through moment two, art, anthropology and design eroded the ‘thing in itself’, treating material as a surface for

17 For example The Journal of Modern Craft and Textile, both published by Berg.
the projection of some other concept or meaning, craft held firm. Later, anthropologists and sociologists came back to the material world, this time folding it into an investigation of enskilment, creativity and practice - and a new interest in things - not as sites of meaning, but as meanings in themselves (Henare et al 2007). Thus craft, in its maintenance of the centrality of material itself, has taken on a new and perhaps unexpected relevance. In turn, this has allowed crafts practitioners some freedom to critically explore in material ways, their own and others’ contexts for practice, rather than having to defend their position. As Adamson has so astutely commented “…craft is not a defined practice but a way of thinking through practices of all kinds”(2007: 7).

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*Anthropology is NOT Ethnography* Radcliffe-Brown Lecture 2007


In the Spaces of the Archive

By Caroline Bartlett

Caroline Bartlett has worked with several museum collections and archives including the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Whitworth Art Gallery and her work is in various major UK public collections. She has exhibited in numerous exhibitions in Britain and abroad.

Abstract: In this paper, I offer an explanation of my own working art practices as set within the context of the spaces of the archive and presented as a series of questions arrived at through action, illuminated in turn by anthropological theory. Over the last few years I have examined various museum collections, archives and encyclopedias in relation to the way these knowledge systems both represent and promote the formation of individual and collective identities, memories and value systems.

Artifacts located within museological and archival systems can be powerful sensory and social forms in which different meanings and memories are embedded, but their significance can be obscured rather than revealed by the systems which control them. How we experience these objects within the physical, material, social, and political spaces of the archive leads to questions about how these sets of relations interact and what can be understood from this. In this vein then, and in the context of the tactile and sensory orientation of my own textile art practice, I look at four of my site-specific works produced in relation to the spaces of the archive: Overwritings (1999), Storeys of Memory (2001), Bodies of Knowledge (2002) and Conversation Piece (2003), focusing in particular on the latter, and show how investigation into different collections has prompted the making of new aesthetic objects which comment on and attempt to draw out these relations.

Introduction: In the Spaces of the Archive

Writing about art practice carries the danger of presenting doing and thinking as separate, whereas as a practitioner, my experience is of a movement between thought, skill and intuition that occurs in an almost seamless way and which is not easily explicable within a linear trajectory. Finding a means to represent not just the work, but how it comes to fruition is therefore not easy.

I think through fabric. As a material it is fundamental to my practice not only in substance but also for what it can suggest. Fabric has tactility and connectedness temping one to reach out and feel it between eager finger tips. In touching, past bodily experiences are evoked; visceral responses, layered memories, associations and emotions. My investigation of the archive is driven by questions related to this; for example around the tensions between innate,
personal and spontaneous recollection and the conscious, public ways in which we remember, around the potential of materials and objects to activate recollection and association, and around the role played in this by sensory experience.

In formulating such questions, I draw on other disciplines (such as anthropology) to illuminate my thinking and enter into investigations within the context of the spaces (physical, material, political and social) of the archive and of an examination of narratives generated by objects in parallel with sourced or accompanying textual documentation. I come to each collection looking for insights into the way that the archive functions and find that the manner in which I experience the object or collection, (sometimes with privileged access not normally available to the public) becomes the pivot on which to base my interrogations. The insights into institutional and museological practices which are opened up then become reflected in the site-specific work created as a response to this encounter. The work takes material form through an engagement with craft-based processes and a continual adjustment to the demands and inspirations of each work as it unfolds and develops. The processes of production, of moving the work forward in terms of making, are also one of enquiry.

The ‘archive’s considered here are the collection of Sir Richard Burton at Orleans House, the furniture collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the archive at the Wiener Library, the textile collection at the Whitworth Art Gallery.


For this London Arts Board craft development touring exhibition entitled ‘The Artist’s Journey’, I was one of three artists commissioned to produce work in response to the collections of Lord Leighton at Leighton House and Sir Richard Burton at Orleans House. I was presented with two archival boxes housing the carefully preserved fragments of Burton’s life (1821-90), gifted by Lady Burton to the nation. I was permitted (with gloved hands) to unwrap the contents; a splinter of wood, an odd shoe. There was poignancy in these disparate objects, a sense of absence that is a recurring theme in collections like these. Stewart (1984: 139) suggests that a personal memento of individual experience has value to ‘its possessor’ because of its relation to life histories, and that with items such as these, ‘the sensual rules’ with ‘its perception by hand taking precedence over its perception by eye’.

However, the act of releasing the object from its wrapper also brings its own frisson of satisfaction and opens up a space for imagining. Steedman (2001: 79-81) writes about the space of memory and, refers to the ‘topoanalysis’ of Gaston Bachelard (1958) and to the particular resonance he attributes to ‘objects that may be opened’. Steedman relates this to the archive in terms of its ‘psychical phenomenology’. She alludes to the archive as a place:
‘...to do with longing and appropriation ... a place where a whole world, a social order, may be imagined by the recurrence of a name in a register, through a scrap of paper, or some other little bit of flotsam.’

The very experience of unwrapping and handling the objects in these boxes, gave rise to a very personal sensory response opening up a richness of meaning not necessarily directed purely by their original, literal function - and there was more.

Upon his death, Sir Richard Burton’s wife, Isabel had destroyed many of his papers in an effort to sanitise her husband for Victorian society. Her inventory of Burton’s personal effects, together with the collection’s records demonstrates how stories of human lives get lost or altered in their telling and re-telling. In itemising each object, Isabel had been attentive to its biographical significance, but in the collection’s records these descriptions had transformed into the objective language of the museum, logged with the dry efficiency of another mode of knowledge. Thus ‘The last flowers my darling culled the day before his death in Casa..., Trieste’ had become ‘an envelope containing a few small brown fragments’. ‘A splint of the “Prometheus” struck by lightening 16 October 1861 having my husband on board. Deo Gratias. Isabel’, had become ‘Thin fragment of wood with broken end, shaped as a paper knife and 6.5” long’. The effect was to disengage the objects from their meaning and ability to resonate with the viewer through a more subjective understanding.

‘It is not the physical characteristics of objects that make them biographical, but the meanings imputed to them as significant personal possessions.’
(Hoskins 1998: 195)

She further suggests that objects loaded with biographical meaning are often associated with ‘life transforming events’ and that ‘...such events can attach themselves to ordinary objects and fix them in memory as markers of the extraordinary.’

The result of this research was the production of Overwritings, a paired artwork in which texts taken from both inventories were juxtaposed, standing in opposition to each other. Whilst the textual information which accompanied the objects drew attention to the way meanings could be lost or changed in their representation, the collection also raised issues about how our perspective of historical events may shift in focus as our values change and how this in turn might be manipulated. For instance, artefacts in the collection included a ‘bundle of eight spears of assorted lengths made from wood and metal’ and Sir Richard Burton’s pistol. Were the spears trophies, mementoes or gifts? I juxtaposed images of the spear and pistol within the final work. Presented to us today, in this combination, such artefacts might suggest uneven battles in an age of imperial conquest, whilst to Burton in the Victorian era and in personal terms, they meant something completely different.

The textual information accompanying the collection of Burton’s personal possessions uses the objective language of the museum giving authority to
a certain version of reality which is in contrast to the inventory provided by Isabel which incites the imagination. The objects themselves, so disparate and seemingly insignificant, have a certain poignancy amplified in this instance by my experience of the privileged handling of them, ritualised by the wearing of protective white gloves. As objects, the collection is made significant by their connection to the historic figure of Sir Richard Burton. It is the text of Isabel which animates them and which mirrors her desire to keep an edited view of her husband’s memory alive in the cannon of history.

**Bodies of Knowledge (2002 in ‘In Context’, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.**

‘In Context’ was an exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London in which members’ of the 62 Group of textile artists were invited to respond to the collections. Principally a museum dedicated to applied arts, the Victoria and Albert Museum was founded with the remit of raising design standards with the intention of educating and improving public taste through the showing of ‘fine examples’. As described by Conforti, (1997: 23-47) this provides the museum with challenges as it is faced by conflicting issues of scholarship, the practice of connoisseurship and those of accessibility. It became a model which other museums followed.

A visit to some of the spaces of the furniture collection left me with a sense of the furniture as abject objects which seemed to be in storage awaiting a better fate, jostling together across geographic and temporal space. Confined within a delineated area, the destiny of these objects was one of being appreciated for their looks rather than as objects to be sat in or contextualised with other artefacts of their time; singled out by their museum environment to be preserved for posterity against the forces of wear and tear and the human touch. What are the implications of such aestheticisation of objects of this kind and how are we to apprehend and relate to such artefacts thus removed from the context of their use or production? The visit prompted questions not only about the challenges facing a museum of applied arts in presenting their collection of objects in a way which meaningfully furthers the understanding and engagement of the audience, but also about the determining factors in how these objects had been selected for collection. How were the cultural values of the institution which housed these objects reflected in the choices which had been made? What forces were at work in determining ‘value’?

The evolution of a ranking of the senses, giving primacy to sight, and the development of a hierarchy of the mind over the body in Western culture, have been much explored (Corbin 1986; Synott 1991; Howes 1991; Stewart 1999; Jütte 2005). The high status given to sight as a primary means of knowledge and understanding has particular implications for forms of artistic production, in which a more complete understanding and appreciation of such objects might be intended to come, not only through sight or reference to tactility, but
through touch itself. Using an object may give us fresh insights. How does it feel? How does it perform in relation to its intended function? Is the weight of the artefact in fact light although it looks heavy? Does it attract or repel? The actual handling of an object may inform us in ways which might be physical, psychological or symbolic. Does it signify something other than what it appears to be? Its meaning and power may lie in areas beyond the act of viewing alone and may be intelligible and meaningful only to the individual or to a particular social group.

When objects are placed in galleries or museums, an act which immediately attaches a particular cultural value or significance to them, they can lose their potential to be experienced and understood except through sight and our appreciation can be diminished as the manner in which we experience them does not necessarily suggest or reveal their full value. In the exhibition 21:21, The Textile Vision of Reiko Sudo and Nuno (2005, James Hockey Gallery Farnham, then touring), curator Lesley Miller challenged this effect by introducing handling samples of the fabric on display. Monitors in the exhibition space played forty video interviews in which a diverse range of people each responded to the question ‘What is cloth to me?’ (Becker and Miller, 2005). In addition to supporting textual information, emphasis was placed on using alternative methods of imparting knowledge as a means of understanding and explaining the potential of fabric as social forms not just as physical objects. The form of presentation also acknowledges the importance of the experiential to our appreciation of the objects and addresses differentiation in the ways in which we can learn from encountering an object.

How does something based in the experiential and sensorial realm fare when translated into words? What language do we use to transform the immediate and holistic nature of sensory experience into the linear world of verbal and written description? Fletcher (1989: 37-8) refers to the inadequacies of language to fully describe the nature and meaning of material symbols and behaviour, particularly as ‘non verbal message patterns’ are often unconscious and the specifics of the messages they send out are differently encoded. Words alone cannot fully explain an object and an analysis based on vision also cannot tell the full story.

This ranking of the senses has affected the formation of art hierarchies, dictating the kind of art which is most valued in the West, and resulting in the separation of practices into 'fine art' and 'craft'. With emphasis being placed on the viewer’s distance and on ideas of detached contemplation, the object may become disconnected from the social and cultural functions it had in the past. Rowley (1999: 1-20) discusses the evolution of the art craft divide and argues that comprehending the art object became conceived of as ‘an intellectual, aesthetic act’ whilst objects of symbolic and practical use, close to everyday activity, ‘acquired a patination of use rather than a provenance of value’.
Rowley goes on to refer to the anthropological study of ‘biographical objects’ by Hoskins in which Hoskins concludes with the suggestion that an object can become ‘a way of knowing oneself through things’ (1998: 198). She connects Hoskins’ ideas with:

‘... the perception of many craft makers that objects may validly act as vehicles by which identity and memory may be organised and expressed. From this perspective, objects are imbued with meaning through use and, in turn, they enable personal and cultural experiences to be constituted as meaningful. This does suggest a conceptualisation of creativity different to that of the critical tradition of art, with its’ strong emphasis on representation and reflection. Through objects, identities are forged.’ (Rowley, 1999: 17)

This insight into the symbolic and social function of an object, and the means by which meaning and value might be constructed, has been an important point of departure for me in considering issues at work in the archive. Questions are raised about the way objects perform in the world, and about the relationship between the object, the context of its presentation and the way in which we then experience it both collectively and individually. How do we make sense of this experience and how might this be expressed, in what form and with what intention? How does an artwork or crafted object produced in response to the museum environment then perform in the context which generated its production?

*Bodies of Knowledge* is a series of works (still in progress) in which interventions are made in a set of eight encyclopaedias published in 1934, each volume being treated in the light of a different museum collection. The encyclopaedia is viewed here as a microcosm of the museum system; similarly underpinned by an approach to universalism in the assembling of knowledge, and in that it also reflects the governing ideologies and hierarchies embedded in such bodies of knowledge. (Bartlett, 2002). Such systems are active in determining what we choose to preserve, which stories to tell, how and why we tell them and to whom. Subjected to scrutiny, the very process of collecting (which involves placing objects in order) can reveal the underlying ideologies of the cultural structures of which it is a part and against which changing perceptions in the way we view the world around us can be mapped (Elsner and Cardinal, 1994). Changes in social and cultural conditions are reflected back in changes of meaning and the value attributed to the objects ‘in care’.

*Bodies of Knowledge Volume V; Arbiters of Taste* pulls together the encyclopaedia and the museum in relationship as arbiters of taste. An implied reference is made to the Victoria and Albert Museum, as an ‘encyclopaedia of treasures’. Open at pages on Interior Design, the text of encyclopaedia (Volume V) belies objectivity in the use of prescriptive language about aesthetic choices, advising readers to ‘rip out ugly Victorian fireplaces’. Set into the encyclopaedia are a series of rings printed with images of chairs from the collection.
The embroidery rings appear as a framing device around which are printed excerpts taken from the interior design section pertaining to perceptions of quality. The Art Nouveau chairs depicted in the smaller rings on the margins of the work are particular in their reference to the donation of thirty-eight pieces from the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1900. As described by Wilk, (1997, p. 345-6) this collection was abhorred by the critics and ‘banished’ to the Bethnal Green Museum. He explains how this controversy contributed to the museum’s disaffection from collecting new work on the basis that ‘perspective and distance are required in matters of taste’ and quotes the director, Harcourt Smith (1914), in his acknowledgement that it became the museum’s policy (in place until the 1970s), to show ‘very little which is not at least 50 years old’. Ironically, these very pieces were later recognised and valued as prime examples of their type. An incident such as this highlights issues concerning curatorial and institutional decisions which authenticate and legitimise public memory and culture. How are such decisions to be made and appraised against ever changing cultural values?

This work was first exhibited in 2003 in the Textiles in Context exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum. In 2004 it was acquired by their Department of Furniture, Textiles and Fashion. Inserted back into the museum it began its own journey as a cultural artefact caught up in the complications of museum politics and taxonomies. Prichard (2005: 152-3) refers to this work in raising the question ‘how do we reconcile traditional museology, with its narrow parameters and genre hierarchy, with twenty first century artistic practice?’ Traditionally, objects in cabinets of curiosity:

‘… were arranged according to their material base and these arrangements were replicated in the creation of specific museum collections and departments, (Furniture and Woodwork, Textiles and Dress, Prints, Drawings and Paintings), …further divided into geographical areas.’
Prichard cites *Bodies of Knowledge Volume V; Arbiters of Taste* as an example of the dilemma posed in categorising such work: ‘as textiles, textile art, art installation, text?’; and asks which collection should acquire it: ‘Furniture, Textiles and Fashion; Word and Image; Sculpture?’ She notes that ideas of tradition are being deliberately challenged in material practice through ‘an unravelling of fixed definitions’, and that much contemporary work no longer sits ‘neatly into established material and technique-based categories’, raising issues for contemporary collecting policy. Museum curators are faced with difficulties around how to ‘rethink and disrupt age-old categories and definitions’ in response to changes in the cultural climate.

*Bodies of Knowledge Volume V; Arbiters of Taste* seeks to highlight the fact that the status awarded to objects as having an aesthetic or even historical value may be subject to slippage. What might be taken as stable and given - the museum quality of the work - is in fact open to and part of, an ongoing process of redefinition and reconfiguration within the context of the collection and its relation to the world outside. The collection is subject to the instability of changing patterns of taste which are both reflected in and determined by the choices made as to what merits collection.

Positioned according to material, and presented in ways which foreground the act of seeing, the object becomes limited in its ability to awaken in the audience suggestions as to how it might be conceptualised by other means. How do we take these aestheticised items (once a part of lived experience) from their protective confinement and make their states of being tangible? How do we keep them alive and relevant?

*In Bodies of Knowledge Volume V; Arbiters of Taste* (figure 2) a red padded chair rises out of the text into the material world and there is a small shoe pinned to the page as though sloughed off by its owner- a shoe which has migrated from another collection and another encyclopaedia. The printed image on one of the stretched surfaces shifts from monochrome to colour and objects are shown placed in the context of a period installation - but there is an ambiguity here. Is that the gloved hand of the curator that we can see or is it just a part of the furniture?
On Holocaust Memorial day 2001, I was invited to attend an event at the Wiener Library, then housed in Devonshire Place in London. This is an archive which documents the history of National Socialism and its aftermath, alongside other incidents of genocide. In the company of writers, journalists and other interested parties, I was introduced to the contents of the cramped basement beneath the pavement of this London townhouse. Within the labyrinthian corridors, former pantries and dead ends, small spaces were tightly packed with periodicals, propaganda pamphlets, a collection of anti-Semitic hate letters, diaries, documents relating to the Holocaust, newspaper cuttings, photographs showing people, places and the burning of books and the Torah. Shelves from floor to ceiling were lined with boxes and files brimming with memory; conduits of the dead and living. The labels themselves engendered a chill; Buchenwald, Auschwitz - and in the context of this collection, captions on filing cabinets - such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, conjured up momentous events; a fragmented chain of evidence of histories, cultures and peoples systematically erased. Eye-witness accounts, in which there is an implicit absence, thus lie side by side with anti-Semitic propaganda bearing testimony to the power of words to unfold or conceal terrible truths, or to rework them with ideological motivation. Individual
objects in the form of files, photographs, cuttings, documents came together with a powerful potency in a compacted underground space. Disturbingly, this collection cites not only the past but continues to grow as it records current and ongoing acts of genocide around the world.

On one of several subsequent visits, I encountered a team of volunteers who met once a week to painstakingly remove staples from propaganda pamphlets and other materials. They then stitch the pages back together with linen thread to preserve the texts for posterity as enduring witnesses to the atrocities of the past and as bulwarks for the future against the tide of forgetting.

The word ‘text’ derives from the Latin textus (something woven, a tissue, a style) from texere/textum (to weave). The word ‘line’ derives from the Latin linea (a linen thread), and from the adjective lineus (pertinent to flax). Text can become tangled, distorted and unintelligible, it can persuade and deceive. ‘To weave’ can mean to pursue a devious discourse (Onions, 1966). My response to the archive drew on this etymology.

Fig. 3. 2002. Storeys of Memory I. (Linen fabric, bookbinding thread). 33 x 101.5 x 3 cm
Photographer Peter Massingham.

Constructed from fabric, Storeys of Memory I, (Fig. 3) is book-like in form but there are no pages to be turned. The fabric has been printed and then treated with processes by which the black ground is bleached out or ‘discharged’. Text is implied but is broken and incomplete, surfaces are partially erased, and some are reworked. The centre is folded, backwards and forwards. A cutting of the threads which hold the pleats together suggests a release of the secrets between the folds. Lines are stitched back in with linen bookbinding thread, knotted and bound to anchor them to the cloth. There is an implicit absence, a suggestion of erasure and destruction. The piece attempts a non-descriptive correspondence to the tensions at work in the archive.

This work was commissioned in 2003 by the Whitworth Art Gallery, as a response to the gallery's textile collection. The project began with the arrival of a book entitled *The Whitworth Art Gallery: the first hundred years* (1988), outlining its history and collections. An initial site visit and orientation introduced me to the building, to the curators and to the conservator who worked with the collection. I was shown the different storage systems including individually crafted items made to protect and support particular garments or textiles Figures 4a/b), and also the original catalogue card index (in the process of being superseded by a computerised system).

Fig. 4a./4b. supportive, protective covers for items in the textile collection. Whitworth Art Gallery.

The textile collection houses thousands of articles, drawn from different times and places, diverse in their histories, methods and systems of production, functions, social, economic and political roles and symbolic meanings. This collection epitomises a huge criss-crossing of cultural terrain, in which the object is re-contextualised yet again, passing in and out of diverse systems of valuation over the course of its existence (Appadurai, 1986), and becoming classified here as an example of its kind.
Fig. 5. piece of Coptic textile from the collection, heavily eroded and consequently stabilised on net. Egyptian 800-999

Once they have entered the museum environment and assumed collectible status, these objects are formed into new associations and groupings and become subject to museological systems of categorisation, display and conservation. Scholarly expertise is brought to bear on the objects as attempts are made to piece together missing and objective information. Histories are reconstructed around them and interventions are made to conserve them against damage and the erosion of time. The more personal history of the object may be unknown in terms of its production, ownership and usage and knowledge of it will always be incomplete. As noted in my explorations of the archive pertaining to Sir Richard Burton its history may also be largely suppressed in favour of a different and more ‘official’ version or through the use of a seemingly ‘objective’ valuation system.

Seremetakis (1994: 134-5) states her concerns as being:

‘...with how intrinsic perceptual qualities of objects express their sensory history, and how this salience can motivate and animate their exchange and shared consumption.’

With reference to the work of Thomas (1991) she discusses the under-estimation and devaluing of the emotive in considering how it relates to systems of gifts and exchange and suggests that:

‘The apparently “idiosyncratic” investment in objects and substances may be the tip of a submerged social language of materiality that has
not achieved formal legitimation, but which may have a firmer grasp on the mutable structures of experience in which all things undergo recontextualisation into novel and as yet unnarrated constellations.’

What stories can be understood from these objects in the Whitworth textile collection? What ‘secret lives’ do they have? What is their sensory history? How do they carry meaning and for whom? How is our perceptual understanding of these objects formed? Are new values, social narratives and meanings being created between objects and indeed in the history of the institution itself and is this an ongoing process? What is the space between personal and public enactments of memory?

My first impulse was to explore items marked by wear and tear, damage and repair as evidence of the relationship between the textile use and human experience: faded remnants, holed and threadbare, pieced, patched and darned, steeped in traces of human contact of both user and maker. How could these markings be used to indicate the elusive nature and incompleteness of our systems for remembering?

Fig. 6. section of cotton lawn from the collection with stamped design and embroidery completed in broderie-anglais, produced as piece work, Belfast. Nineteenth Century.

I examined a whole range of diverse objects and began to investigate these ideas through over exposed photographs and through entries in my sketchbook.
These were made not as a means of direct observation or recording of the objects but to achieve an imprinting of their qualities onto my unconscious in an attempt to get to ‘know’ them, and to find ways of evoking certain qualities through faded, incomplete interpretations in which the identity of objects becomes blurred (Fig. 6). The notes and the photographs which merely recorded the object were put aside and I attempted to use recall and my senses to guide my creative and subjective representations.

This subjective approach to damaged articles was in deep contrast to the museological systems in which they existed. As my investigations progressed through observation back in the collection (as opposed to within my studio), I became increasingly aware of both the preventative and interventionist hand of the conservator, and the ‘objective’ recordings of the curator and archivist. What could a closer examination of these practices reveal about the hidden histories of these objects and their relationship with the institutional structures which contained them?
Fig. 8. original catalogue card.

Whitworth Art Gallery.

I returned to my data, the catalogue cards (Fig. 8, Fig. 9) which I had photocopied on my first visit. I elicited a murmur of shocked disbelief from the archivist in response to my request to look at further catalogue cards, randomly selected and totally independently of the textile item itself.
Taking this one step further, I considered what the phrases could suggest, removed from their context:

**two loom widths**

**white selvedge stripes**

**stencil placed 54 times along the length of the sash**

In terms of the institutional histories of the textiles, these cards demonstrated the shifting patterns of archiving, as systems moved from recording and annotating by hand, to the type written, to the digitally stored, with the content continually expanding into additional categories. I wondered if these cataloguing systems could be used to convey the poetry of the object - or did they just represent apparently ‘objective’ ordering systems and institutional power?

Those recorded by hand bore the traces of their author through the individuality of the handwriting, suggesting a correspondence between them and the textiles. Removing them from the context of the objects they described, I started to extract and re- categorise information on the cards, for example, according to types of damage:
small brown stain visible on top edge

signs of foxing

bloom from subsequent wetting edges partly torn

very much folded

damaged by movement

or according to the activities various textiles had been subjected to:

cut and removed with tweezers

snipped with scissors

Then there were the more personalised contributions of individuals which hinted at intimate knowledge:

mounted on net (and washed) by H.W.

stitch identified by A.M.

information from B.K.

The catalogue cards recorded the official history of the artefacts but there were indications of other histories being formed; the private recollections of those who had cared for these textile items, the stories of relationships between individual people and individual objects.

Meanwhile, the conservator was working on stabilising a damaged Coptic tunic ready for display. The holes were highlighted in differently coloured thread, each hole categorised by the colour of the thread in relation to priority of attention (Fig. 10). Observation of conservation practice highlighted its forensic nature; the analysis of detritus embedded in the cloths (seeds, hairs etc.), and the materials, tools and methods involved in treatment. The very act of exposing the article to scrutiny can affect it; textile fibres become brittle; bonds that hold the molecules together can be broken by ultra violet light; colours fade where exposed to light but remain as evidence in the folds; items can get dusted with minute particles from our own bodies.
Fig. 10. conservation in progress of a Coptic tunic.

Fig. 11. one of Japan’s ‘Living Treasures’ preparing cloth for dye resist.
Engaged in intensive, detailed labour involving a high level of skill and knowledge, the conservator’s hands moved in repetitious activity, evoking for me ideas of durations and rhythms, mortality and immortality, connecting the past to the present, maker with object, through a deepening familiarity. I was reminded of my own archive of photographs taken whilst travelling and researching different forms of textile production in various parts of the world; the visibility of the hand in both a conceptual and literal sense. In Japan I had been able to meet one of the country’s designated ‘Living Treasures’ and observe her preparing cloth for resist dyeing by a method known as Shibori (Figure 11). She described to me the importance of the rhythms of the body in making work of excellence; a measurement by touch rather than wholly through sight.

Evident here is an intense relationship between object and maker in which the physical engagement with materials is allied with deep body knowledge developed and played out over time, through practice and accumulation. I know from my own experience, that the act of making something is experiential and sensorial; the smell, sound, feel and appearance of materials. Dampness and dryness, tightness and looseness, resistance and absorption - these are aspects of tactility which as Susan Stewart (1999: 32) states:

‘...given the synaesthetic aspect of all sense impression, these qualities often come yoked to others. We apprehend them as part of the phenomenon perceived and they are taken up in the relation between aspects of the thing and aspects of the body.’

The rhythms of the body, time and the physical sensation of how a material works and feels under conditions imposed upon it or embodied within it, combine in the repetitious aspects of the making process. This opens up for me a space for contemplation, for ‘listening’ to the object as it comes to fruition and for asking speculative questions such as ‘what if?’ Skill, sensory experience and repetitious activity are also carried down into conservation practices and perhaps the space which is opened up for the conservator is one for imagining and connection.

In relation to objects in museums:

... materials also become precious because they must be conserved or maintained with care in order to exist; they store our labour, and our maintenance of them is a stay against the erosion of time. Those works of art that we cannot touch are repositories of touch and care - the touch and care of their makers and conservators. (Stewart 1999: 30)

The collection had become for me, a site where the subjective and objective collided whilst these words offered a lens with which to view it.
Conversation Piece (Fig. 12, Fig. 13) as described ‘in conversation’ with the collection’s deputy director and conservator (Harris, 2004), is the work resulting from this research and is comprised of fifty two embroidery hoops presented in ten groupings. Layered in stacks, each hoop is stretched with images printed on silk crepeline (an almost transparent archival fabric). Imagery comes into and out of focus according to viewing angle, half materialised and appearing to be on the verge of dissolution. Dyed using clamp resist, the coloured grounds fade in and out as though affected by light damage, but follow a gradation from pink through to blue in the series of smaller hoops. Reference is also made here to the exacting dyeing and colour matching techniques which are part of the textile conservator's training. Pulled threads in the base-cloth form a grid, an organising structure; a reference perhaps to institutional systems.

There are many pairs of hands represented here, engaged in rhythmic activity, motion and rest, suggestive of time and care. The repetitious activities involved in making and conserving are recorded in the diaphanous printed and layered images. Images taken from my own photographic archive, of the hands of makers engaged in various forms of resist work, are interleaved with those of the conservator, and suspended over images of their personalised tools and written material from the Whitworth archive.
Fig. 13. 2003. detail of Conversation Piece, based on the personalised tools of the conservator layered over information from the archive. Photographer Michael Pollard; G10.
Collection of the Whitworth Art Gallery.

Fig. 14. 2003. detail of Conversation Piece. Photographer Michael Pollard; G10.
Collection of the Whitworth Art Gallery.
Textual reference printed on the hoops suggests vulnerability and fragility, and refers to the activities of carers of the collection as they have endeavoured to fill gaps in the history and detail of the object, piecing together information across time and space: *stitches identified by A.M. Conservator* is connected to maker in a shared and intimate knowledge of the object.

Alongside my developing relationships with objects and cards, the dialogue with conservators and curators both expanded and re-focused my thinking. It was instrumental in the development of the piece; every time the work went slowly, conversations with these informants would re-direct my thinking in an unexpected way, giving me new ideas to follow up. The title of the piece refers specifically to this process, as well as to the potential relationships between artefacts in the collection.

This dialogue was not altogether without tensions. A change of conservator half way through the project brought with it different perspectives and a reconsideration of certain practical processes, such as the long-term stability of my work. French (Harris 2004: 15) explains that she, like other textile conservationists, chooses materials such as ‘translucent fabrics and the finest of threads’ which look invisible, ‘in order not to distract the attention of the observer from the appearance of the textile’ and ‘overwhelm the original’. In using such fabrics for a creative rather than conservation purpose, she suggested my own artwork would itself have conservation ‘issues’ for the future. Our discussion around the use of conservation methods to slow down such deterioration, and recommendations made, influenced the finished work; for example, the wood of the embroidery hoops was treated with an acrylic varnish and the silk crepeline was scoured in purified water to remove its dressing prior to printing.

The research for this project involved interviews, observation, note-taking and photography. My sketchbook was the site for reflection, where information and ideas were gathered, initially with no clear idea of outcome. It included elements which acquired particular significance and value only in due course. Written notes, photographs, references and quotes were accompanied by diagrams and renderings of thought processes. As the project progressed, material explorations became key and ideas were synthesised and clarified through making and through the application and development of appropriate skills and the making of aesthetic decisions. There is a filtering process which takes place partly through intuition but also through the making of rational judgements. The sketchbook charts the processing of information into visual form; the retracing of steps, testing, selection and refinement of ideas, before moving to the final stage of production; it becomes in itself a form of archive.

As an artist working within the spatial, social and political spaces of the archive, I see my contribution as one of asking questions, drawing out relations and providing material and insights which take a different form of presentation from the written texts of other disciplines. Many of the questions I am asking are shared with anthropological (and archaeological) practice and are indeed influenced by it and by other disciplines. The outcome here, however, is a subjective and
personal commentary; a reflective visual interpretation resulting from research through investigation and the activity of making. The work does not attempt to draw conclusions, but by referencing touch and the hand work involved in the ‘crafting’ of the object and the activity of preservation and conservation, may give insights into the interactions and less visible relationship between maker, conservator, object and institution.

Fig. 15. 2003. Conversation Piece in situ at the Whitworth Art Gallery. (Embroidery hoops, wool, archival tape, silk crepeline). 272 x 74 x 5 cm.
Photographer Michael Pollard; G10.

Issues of conservation are applied in this and, yes, the artwork is exhibited on a plinth under a Perspex cover. For anyone who comes to view the work, there is a sample which can be touched, handled and even smelt. However there is evidently a paradox here in the fact that this and other site-specific works produced in the studio in response to the archive, now inhabit the space of the museum. Here they become subject to the very practices they interrogated, fated to be institutionally framed and reconfigured within the ideological systems of collection and presentation- systems which also both sustain arts practice and valorise it.

The deployment of museums and archival systems into objects for inspection has had implications for the direction of my studio practice (as opposed to works conceived as described, with a site-specific dimension which addressed the spaces of particular archives as their starting point). My personal journey through these museological systems, the way in which the work evolved and the questions this raised for me has led me to consider the relationship between the actual activity of making and the production of a created, crafted object and to posit this as an encapsulation of past activities. Old works are being reconfigured to make new - a retracing of experience, a ‘storing’ of activity. These re-workings respond to the original and reinterpret them, and allude to the human gestures embedded in the making of the original object.

The four works explained here were created as a response to experiential encounters with four different collections and sets of artifacts. The distinct nature of the collections, and how the objects were experienced in their environment, raised different but interconnected questions in each instance about the relationships between museological systems, the objects in the collection and the histories and meanings with which these objects were imbued within
a wider cultural framework. The sense made of these experiences and the research incurred is manifested in the works described which attempt to evoke these often hidden relationships. Connections made may be visually obvious or implied and are evident in the progression of the work but are non-linear in their path.

If the spaces and practices of the archive can provide a context against which we can measure ourselves and our responses to the sets of relations in the world around us which we inhabit, create and reconfigure, what means do we use to analyse, structure and explain such an activity? As the narratives generated by objects are incomplete and our ability to comprehend them is variable according to how we experience them and what we bring to this experience as individuals, so also are the ranges of the languages of description and explanation we use; be they visual, experiential, textual or verbal. The story can never be complete. The term “Migratory Practices” suggests movement from one place to another. It conjures up the crossing of permeable borders and relocation, mobility in the field, the establishment of networks of different routes. It suggests fluidity between disciplines which otherwise might be discrete: a dialogue between places, times, media and ideas, the whole and the part. From these migrations we can learn and form new perspectives.

Illustrations

Figure 1: 2002, Bodies of Knowledge Volume V; Arbiters of Taste. (1934 encyclopaedia, embroidery hoops, silk crepeline, pins). 34 x 84 x 5cm. Photographer Michael Wickes. Collection Victoria and Albert Museum.

Figure 2: 2002, detail of ‘Bodies of Knowledge Volume V; Arbiters of Taste’. (1934 encyclopaedia, embroidery hoops, silk crepeline, pins). 34 x 84 x 5cm. Photographer Michael Wickes. Collection Victoria and Albert Museum.

Figure 3: 2002, Storeys of Memory I., (Linen fabric, bookbinding thread). 33 x 101.5 x 3 cm. Photographer Peter Massingham.

Figures 4a/4b: supportive, protective covers for items in the textile collection, Whitworth Art Gallery.

Figure 5: piece of Coptic textile from the collection, heavily eroded and consequently stabilised on net. Egyptian 800-999.

Figure 6: section of cotton lawn from the collection with stamped design and embroidery completed in broderie anglaise, produced as piece work, Belfast. Nineteenth Century.

Figure 7: detail of sketchbook, showing an interpretation of a faded textile subjected to ‘recall’.
Figure 8: original catalogue card, Whitworth Art Gallery. Figure 9: original
catalogue cards, Whitworth Art Gallery. Figure 10: conservation in progress
of a Coptic tunic.

Figure 11: one of Japan’s ‘Living Treasures’ preparing cloth for dye resist. 23

Figure 12: 2003. detail of Conversation Piece in which the hands of makers
engaged in repetitious activity are interleaved with those of the conservator.

Figure 13: 2003. detail of Conversation Piece, based on the personalised tools
of the conservator layered over information from the archive. Photographer

Figure 14: 2003, detail of Conversation Piece. Photographer Michael Pollard.

Figure 15: 2003, Conversation Piece in situ at the Whitworth Art Gallery.
(Embroidery hoops, wool, archival tape, silk crepeline). 272 x 74 x 5 cm.

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Developing and Defining Migratory Practice for the Museum

By Emma Martin

Emma Martin is Head of Ethnology at National Museums Liverpool (NML). She is currently developing contemporary collecting programmes, in collaboration with colleagues in India, for NML's permanent collections. Alongside this she is undertaking research focusing on colonial collectors based in the Himalayas in the early 20th century.

Abstract: Using National Museums Liverpool (hereafter NML) as a case study, this paper will examine the challenges facing the museum as it begins to respond to the development of migratory practice. For the purpose of this paper I intend to define “migratory practice” as the movement of artists and artwork across historical definitions of practice and curatorial departments. I will be assessing how curators can challenge accepted definitions of art and ethnography by engaging with these crossings or migrations and by examining the restrictions of the current and historical classificatory and interpretative tools used in the museum.

There are several historical, ingrained factors that will make migratory practice a difficult concept for museums to embrace. Chiefly, colonialism weighs heavily on the museum conscience having played a conspicuous part in the development of the museum and specifically in the language that came to define and classify the collections found within the museum. These outdated and narrow viewpoints are still prevalent in museum today, visible in the architecture, displays and most pointedly the collections. These viewpoints, which define and separate the museum collection into “high arts” and “low arts” (Sheikh, 2006) are discussed through NML’s South Asia collections, reflecting a system of museum classification and collecting that makes it difficult for the artist and the museum curator to cross between tightly controlled conceptual borders.

However, it is possible to breach these borders and a series of case studies relating to changes in collecting and interpretation practice are presented for consideration. Juxtaposing the work of rural and urban artists raises questions regarding the difficulties of using outmoded classification systems when acquiring and interpreting objects for the museum, and mechanisms for approaching work that isn’t exclusively “fine art” or “ethnography” are discussed. New collaborative ways of collecting and commissioning are described, suggesting ways in which museum curators can bring global perspectives to the historical and colonially influenced collections and displays.

The paper concludes by offering alternative curatorial interpretation devices, reversing the accepted Western display techniques of “ethnographic” exhibits and “fine art” galleries.
Introduction

Museum displays and collections can act as sites of remembrance for changing critical theories and approaches to curatorial practice. Throughout the 20th century, and into the 21st century, curatorial thinking has been influenced by dialogues with the discipline of anthropology. The question arises then; will the museum respond to the development of “migratory practice” and more specifically how are collaborations between the disciplines of contemporary art and anthropology challenging museum curatorial practice?

I will consider the significance and the tangible results of these collaborations and the challenges facing the curator responsible for acquiring and classifying both “art” and “ethnographic” objects for museum collections. I hope to raise issues surrounding the concept of the “border crossing” as discussed by Schneider & Wright (2006) and to examine how the traditional Western museum taxonomies of “art” and “anthropology” become contested reference points when practitioners will not or do not wish to conform to a particular set of museum criteria. My discussion will establish a predominately South Asian context drawing on my experiences of curating Asian, and particularly South Asian collections, for over a decade. As a country subjected to Imperial rule, India and its arts and crafts underwent a process of colonial classification in the mid 19th century as a result of the development of world exhibitions, the most famous of these being the Great Exhibition of All Nations (more commonly known as the Crystal Palace Exhibition) held in London in 1851 (Dadi, 2006). The classificatory systems that were put in place to categorise objects for the great exhibitions were a cultural manifestation of emerging colonial theories. Discussed and published by colonial officers stationed in South Asia in the 19th century these systems helped to categorise and contain the enormous diversity of many colonised peoples and their material culture. This categorisation of material culture, and more specifically objects, formed the backbone of later Western art historical narratives, and by extension the hierarchies of Western museums and their classification systems. It is my intention to explore one aspect of that history here and its impact on current patterns of British museum collecting.

The Colonial Hangover

I begin by setting out an historical framework for the current difficulties faced by museums, using the permanent museum collection as my focus. I use my own institution, National Museums Liverpool (NML),¹ as an example, in an attempt

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¹ NML is the only UK national museum based solely outside of London. Its collections are diverse ranging from slavery to space sciences, ethnography to maritime history and from fine arts to zoology.
to shed some light on the historical reasoning for the segregation of collections and the enduring colonial connotations inherited by the curator working in a post colonial world.

The creation of NML was closely tied to the British Empire with its collections and buildings reflecting the imperial achievements of Britain and specifically the achievements of Liverpool, as the second city of the Empire. The city's wealth generated by the 19th century maritime trade is revealed through the objects donated to the city’s museums by Liverpool's sea captains, merchants and colonial officers. This Imperial celebration was not just confined to the museum’s objects and buildings, but filtered through every aspect of the organization, permeating the classification systems used to order and define a diverse range of collections that reflected the city's global reach.

This definition and separation of disciplines, which laid the foundations for the collecting and cataloguing processes adopted by NML, are well over 150 years old, but shockingly they still govern how and what we collect today. The classification systems set down in the 19th century facilitated the partition of art and craft practices from the west and what Gulammohammed Sheikh describes as ‘art and craft practices on the periphery of western understanding i.e. the rest of the world’ (2006). This created the assumption that Western art or the “high arts” was solely concerned with the urban educated practices of painting and sculpture, and the urban industrial arts including textiles, ceramics, glass and metalwork, while the anthropological pursuit of ethnography focussed on the periphery, or the “low arts”, and what Sheikh defines as the, “rural/tribal object defined as ‘pre modern’ or ‘traditional’”. This labelling of place and practice illustrates a hierarchical classification of objects that is alive and well in today’s museum and still holds great influence over the curating, collecting and displaying of objects at NML.

**Display Segregation**

This is physically born out in NML’s architecture, displays and exhibitions. NML’s main suite of museums and galleries are to be found on William Brown Street, a sloping site picked by Liverpool’s 19th century philanthropists. There should be no prizes for guessing that the Walker Art Gallery sits with pride of place at the pinnacle of the hill, while the museum of natural sciences (known as World Museum), which incorporates Zoology, Ethnology and Egyptology, resides at the bottom. Could this positioning of gallery and museum have been intentional, reflecting the perceived value of the collections housed inside? The two museums employ distinct display techniques. Once inside, the Western history of Fine Arts and Decorative arts displayed at the Walker Art Gallery focuses on key movements and prized individual artists who fit into the euro-centric view of the art world (Fig 1).
While the World Cultures gallery at World Museum geographically focuses on the carvings, textiles, costume and domestic items that colonial officers sought to collect as a definitive representation of specific cultures colonised during Empire (Fig 2).
In recent years the concerns of the collector and their reasons for collecting have formed an important part of anthropological - and by extension - museum collection-based research, presenting many museums and their audiences with in-depth knowledge regarding the collectors of ethnographic objects. While the museum curator’s knowledge of the colonial context is widened, often the knowledge associated with the maker’s identity, unrecorded by those same colonial collectors, remains hidden. The World Museum displays compound this concept of the anonymous, timeless maker as they place the visitor within a ‘time limbo’, as at a glance it is unclear if these displays represent the past or the present. There is little sense of a historical or a contemporary context and where there is a focus on named individuals they invariably are the collector of the object rather than the maker.

Departmental Structures

Away from the gallery displays, the colonial construct remains just as strong behind the scenes. Taking the Fine Art department as an example, its curators have responsibility for aspects of the fine art canon, including British Art, European Art and Works on Paper, Ethnology curators are responsible for Asia, Africa, Oceania and The Americas respectively, all enormously complex and layered continents that are impossible for one curator to ever properly research or represent. The demand for greater numbers of specialist art curators in comparison to the Ethnology department is not borne out by the size or importance of the collections with the Asia collection, for example, containing almost 20,000 objects, while the Fine Art department holds around 10,000 objects. This imbalance in resources and specialist staff only reiterates the peripheral importance bestowed on the ethnographic collections both in the formative years of the organisation and in its current guise.

The structures put in place have without a doubt affected NML’s collecting processes and also the types of practice collected. The fine arts remain in the tight parameters of painting and sculpture, while the decorative arts focuses on ceramics, textiles, glass and metalwork, the majority of which come from the urban art schools or industrialised urban practice. In contrast the ethnography collections predominately represent the rural, hereditary, ‘pre-modern’ traditional crafts. What the museum classification system promotes, in this case, is the notion that only the urban educated artist can be included as a modern or contemporary artist within the fine art discipline, while the rural artist must stay within the boundaries of the pre-modern or traditional collective, confined to the categorisation of ethnographic.

Sonabai Rajawar: Defying Classification

Curatorial staff at NML are increasingly pushing against these classifying restraints and the dichotomy of the aesthetic/anthropological approach as described by Clifford (1988), which places art works by individuals strictly
within the art exhibition, while the collective (anonymous) work of cultures are represented through anthropology displays. Indian curator Dr. Joytindra Jain takes this concept a step further in his essay for the exhibition catalogue *Other Masters: Five Contemporary Folk and Tribal Artists of India* (1998) when he argues that the anonymous, unchanging rural artist has become the counter to the ingenuity and innovations of the western artist and that due to market forces and the increasing interests in Indian handicrafts in the second half of the 20th century, the rural artist has been forced to remain within a timeless tradition. If the rural artist becomes an innovator, responding to the contemporary environment, there is the sense that the authenticity of the tradition is lost and the artist is therefore compromising an unchanging practice. As Jain rightly points out, this concept of the unchanging rural artist is a colonial construct. This need to preserve and represent became an important aspect of salvage ethnography during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, at a formative time in the development of anthropology as an academic discipline. By working with innovative rural artists museum curators do have the opportunity to unpick many of the presumptions that underpin these notions of the unchanging traditional artist. In 2005 NML had the opportunity to commission work for the permanent collections, from one such artist. Sonabai Rajawar (ca.1931 - 2007) was a renowned sculptor from Chattisgarh state in Central India (Fig 3).

![Sonabai Rajawar](Fig_3_Sonabai_Rajawar_2005_by_Nick_Gordon)
Developing and Defining Migratory Practice for the Museum

Championed by Jain, Rajawar was celebrated in Other Masters: Five Contemporary Folk and Tribal Artists of India as exemplifying ‘artistic innovation and expression’ (1998). Rajawar sculpted vivid mythical and pastoral clay relief panels and figures for approximately sixty years, until her death in August 2007 (Fig 4).

Fig. 4. Sonabai Rajawar, 2003, Chherta Festival with Krishna Ca, (Clay, cow dung, straw, pigment),.
Photograph by Nick Gordon

She was married at 15 to a widower and lived in isolation with her husband in their home on the edge of the village of Puhputra, in Sarguja district. It is not the practice of Rajawar’s community to place women in isolation, so her situation although familiar to some women in India was exceptional for Rajawar and her community.

As a result, during the early years of her marriage she had no female contact, only that of her son and husband. At this time she began creating clay bas relief sculptures populating her home with, as she described them, ‘friends’ placing the young Rajawar in bustling dances of harvest and in scenes from the Hindu epics.

Rajawar’s work was inspired by the important festival known as chherta, which is celebrated on the full-moon day of pus (December). Chherta celebrates the end of a successful harvest and throughout the Sarguja district all Rajawar houses
are repaired, re-painted and adorned with elaborate wall-paintings and clay relief work, with great rivalries between the women, as each strives to create the most beautiful decoration (Fig 5) (Jain: 1998).

Fig. 5. 2005, decorated doorway, Puhputra, Chhattisgarh, India. Photograph Nick Gordon

Rajawar’s circumstances provided her with the inspiration and the impetus to incorporate new elements into a practice that had been locally abstract and minimal in its use of colour and design. She introduced new techniques of construction, new motifs personally connected to her life experiences and increasingly she devised new colour palettes, which included chemically based pigments. Rajawar’s personal situation eventually changed, allowing her to have contact with other women and village members, which in turn brought her work to a wider local audience and finally to the attention of the Bharat Bhavan, an innovative centre for contemporary rural art in Madhya Pradesh. This wider contact resulted in museum exhibitions and installations, national craft awards and the development of Government funded initiatives that allowed younger members, including male sculptors, of the local community to train with Rajawar.

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2 The surname denotes affiliation to the farming community.
Developing and Defining Migratory Practice for the Museum

and develop their own skills and narrative themes. While the practice began as a response to one woman’s personal situation, the younger generation of sculptors are increasingly travelling throughout the state and in some cases nationally and internationally, drawing inspiration from the environments and practices they encounter.

Rajawar’s Legacy

Atma Das Manikpuri, a sculptor from the Sarguja area was one of Rajawar’s apprentices (Fig 6).

As a young man he had thought of training at the regional art school and in preparation he had used the course reading list to familiarise himself with the work of early 20th century European painters, particularly the Cubist work of Picasso and Matisse. Circumstances prevented Manikpuri from undertaking his art studies, but a profile on Rajawar in the local newspaper provided a new focus for his creativity.

Fig. 6. 2005, Atma Das Manikpuri.
Photographer Nick Gordon
While he initially created copies of Rajawar's clay relief, he was eventually able to take part in the training scheme spending time with Rajawar and studying her skills. While developing his own skills he also began to develop his own narratives, in some cases following Rajawar’s lead, creating sculptures with a local context, such as local festivals and agricultural scenes, while in other pieces he drew on his own experiences using the Cubist painters he had familiarized himself with in preparation for his art school studies as inspiration (Fig 7).

Fig. 7. 2005, Atma Das Manikpuri Elephant of Many Parts (Clay, cow dung, straw, pigment).
Photographer Nick Gordon

Diversity in Contemporary Practice

The practice developed by Rajawar and continued by the younger generation of sculptors shows that the contemporary and the traditional do not have to be uneasy bedfellows and that the use of traditional practice should not imply an anonymous, mechanical, uninspiring and unchanging practice. As Clifford & Marcus (1986) state modernity is a complex overlaying of many traditions and cultural traces and it is useful to bear this in mind, rather than falling back on the simplistic oppositions between traditional and contemporary. Rajawar's work is reflective of a specific place and set of conditions and as a result it is a striking contrast to the contemporary work created by Western art-school
trained artists, supported by the Western art markets and by extension art museums. However, this contrast, this ‘otherness’, should not automatically classify Rajawar’s work as ethnographic, simply because it does not fit neatly into the western paradigm. Thomas McEvilley highlights this when he states, ‘When one culture regards the objects of another, those objects are instantly incorporated into an alien framework, they are helplessly interpreted through some habit of thought different from the habit of their makers’ (1992). This is particularly pertinent in the museum context, as the placing of Rajawar’s work into a gallery space directs the visitor and curator alike to reach for the familiar language of Western art history to interpret this new and unfamiliar work.

Challenging these internal and institutional interpretations is not easy and it would be foolish to suggest otherwise. There is undoubtedly a need to create new forms of ‘intellectual and creative currencies tradeable across frontiers and cultures’ (Rangasamy, 2006), but this is an enormous undertaking when an organisation’s language and identity are tied to ingrained colonial thought processes. However, small steps can be made and there are mechanisms that can be put in place to question these assumptions and preconceptions and it is to these that I now turn.

**Contemporary Collecting**

The commissioning and collecting of panels and sculptures from Rajawar in 2005 was the first example in nearly 20 years of contemporary collecting by NML from the Indian sub-continent. My visit to her home and the acquiring of specifically commissioned pieces set in motion the redefining of the Ethnology department’s collecting policy and indeed future collecting programmes at NML.

One of the first initiatives in the Ethnology department following the visit to Rajawar’s home has been to develop partnerships with other organisations creating dual curatorial roles between external South Asian organisations and NML. Developing international partnerships is high on NML’s agenda and although joint exhibition and events programming are becoming ever more part of the museum’s practice, the actual building of permanent collections had not, until now, been part of that collaborative process.

During the 2005 International Folk Art Conference held in Chandigarh, North India, I met Minhazz Majumdar. Majumdar is a writer, promoter and co-director of The Earth and Grass Workshop, a crafts development agency that works with urban and rural artists across central and eastern India. Even though our meeting was brief it was clear that we had much in common, particularly our desire to bring greater parity and wider attention to contemporary Indian rural arts and artists. Over the course of 2006 we discussed ways in which new perspectives could be brought to NML’s South Asia collection, which would give it a greater relevance for today’s museum visitor. This was not a straightforward task, as the historical collection largely consists of arms and armour, much of it collected, or bagged as official loot, following the various battles that took
place across the Indian sub-continent in the 19th century. As the collection was so biased towards colonial encounters, and indeed the collection has a predominately masculine edge, it was clear that we needed a fresh approach. Majumdar and I decided that we needed to bring a balance to the collection, with a future focus centred on women, who are almost invisible in the current collection, and additionally on the equally under-represented rural artist. Towards the end of 2006 we successfully applied for funding, from which we developed a three-year pilot collecting project called Collecting Contemporary India. The aim of the project is to collect a body of work from two artists, per year, for a period of three years, allowing The Earth and Grass Workshop and NML to develop relationships with specific artists, track developments in their work and create a visual and oral record of their working practices during the year. The need to move away from an ahistorical presentation was a pressing issue, so it was agreed that we would additionally collect works from emerging artists working closely with or in a similar style to our chosen artist, and likewise, if the opportunity arose, we would collect from artists who had heavily influenced our chosen artist.

To challenge NML’s collecting practices the final choice of artists has been handed over to The Earth and Grass Workshop, creating another dimension to the idea of migratory practice, with the curatorial role being shared with an external organisation that has not previously been involved in the curatorial process. Both Majumdar and I felt this was an important step to take, which would enable The Earth and Grass Workshop to choose artists who might not have been considered by a western curator.

Fig. 8. 2005, Montu Chitrakar,
Courtesy of Minhazz Majumdar
In this, the first year of the project we have worked with two very different artists, Montu Chitrakar, a scroll painter and storyteller from Bengal (Fig 8) and Puspha Kumari, a painter from Mithila, Bihar, an area renowned for women’s wall and floor painting (Fig 9).

I would briefly like to share with you two of the newly commissioned pieces, from Kumari. Kumari’s response to The Earth and Grass Workshop’s brief has been to create a series of pieces, including a triptych, on the place and role of women in Indian society. The *Phases of the Moon* discusses the central role of women in day-to-day life and the presence of the feminine throughout the cosmos, represented here by the lunar cycle (Fig 10).
This theme is continued in a second piece entitled *Which Came Before – The Seed or the Plant?* which focuses on the female life-force and by extension the feminine power (Shakti) that man is impotent without (Fig 11).

Kumari’s artistic path will resonate with many artists who have encountered difficulties in the early years of their careers, particularly in relation to the tension between making a living and maintaining one’s artistic integrity. Due to the popularity of Mithila painting as a cheap tourist souvenir, artistic innovation, as found in Kumari’s work, was difficult to place within the market and as a result floundered due to a lack of knowledgeable buyers. Kumari had the difficult choice to make between making a living, reproducing ‘traditional’ paintings for the tourist market, and creating innovative pieces that had still to find a market. Kumari did have to resort to reproducing popular Mithila paintings early on in her career, but has now attracted a group of international buyers and patrons, which has enabled her to develop her own themes and style.
This three-year project is just the first stage in a long process. It is hoped that the success of the project will allow The Earth and Grass Workshop and NML to turn their partnership into a long-term venture, allowing the partners to return to the initial artists chosen for this project and again commission new works from them over an extended period, allowing for the documentation of changes and influences in their practice throughout their careers. While this project has been very much based within the Ethnology department, there has been growing interest from the Fine Art department and discussions are underway to host an exhibition of the new works in the Walker Art Gallery at the end of the three-year
project. This would be an important first step to creating a more holistic NML collecting and display policy, which would see works displayed outside of the accepted art gallery/ethnographic exhibit paradigm.

Adeela Suleman - Migrating Artist

While the project described above clearly focuses on the rural contemporary artist, NML is also developing proposals that will allow both the ethnography and fine art curators to work together to develop a series of residency programmes for urban based artists from Pakistan. Of particular interest is Adeela Suleman, a Karachi- based artist who challenges the museum classificatory system and the dichotomy between “high art” and “low art”, referred to at the beginning of this paper. Her practice poses something of a conundrum for NML when considering how her work would fit into outdated collection areas.

Working with artists like Suleman, will be an important step for NML’s curators, challenging preconceptions regarding the appropriateness of certain objects and installations for specific collections. As long as accepted hierarchies of high art, low art and at the very bottom, ethnography, remain, it makes significant changes to institutional thinking incredibly difficult to implement. However, ignoring artists who are challenging these systems is not an option and indeed artists like Suleman can play a significant role in helping to re- or de-classify museum collections. Working with artists, like Suleman, can potentially make collections and curators more receptive to those practitioners travelling across what had previously been tightly prescribed classificatory borders, allowing museums to respond more effectively to the development of migratory practice.

Suleman’s work is inspired by her personal experiences of living and working in Pakistan and through her practice she looks to understand and comment on the realities of Pakistani culture and politics. In 2002 she created, for the 2nd Fukuoka Triennale, an installation piece entitled Salma, Sitara and Sisters – Motorcycle Workshop (Fig 12).

This work deals with the issues of nationality, class and gender through the common sight of women travelling on a motorcycle. This everyday activity takes place in a unique way in Pakistan. Women sit on the motorcycle in a side-saddle position with their husband driving; while both help each other to balance themselves and more often than not their children. This everyday occurrence gives an insight into the gender relations, exploring how women sit on the motorcycle, and class relations, particularly the fact that motorcycles are predominately used by the lower classes and lower middle classes; and finally comments on the uniqueness of the Pakistani context.

Suleman takes on the male dominated space of the truck workshop creating a showcase of accessories and implements for the female motorcycle passenger. Offering a full service of custom-designed pieces Suleman creates fantasy solutions for circumventing the gender imbalances placed on the woman as she rides in a sidesaddle position (Fig 13).
Fig. 12. 2002, Adeela Suleman, Salma, Sitara and Sisters – Motorcycle Workshop (Mixed media).

Courtesy of Adeela Suleman.

Fig. 13. 2002, Adeela Suleman, Salma, Sitara and Sisters – Motorcycle Workshop (detail), (Mixed media).

Courtesy of Adeela Suleman.
Her work reflects a society where economic, social and gender inequalities are an everyday fact, but by building a parallel universe, she creates a situation tailored solely to women. Suleman incorporates found or everyday objects into her work, whilst also incorporating the skills and techniques of the craftsman working in an urban environment (Fig 14).

Fig. 14. 2002, Adeela Suleman Salma, Sitara and Sisters – Motorcycle Workshop (Helmet detail), (Mixed media).

Courtesy of Adeela Suleman.

When discussing this piece Suleman recalls the laughter that rang out through the real motorcycle workshop that she worked with when she went to discuss her ideas with the men who worked there (Fig 15).
While they initially found her ideas and intentions somewhat bizarre, a genuine rapport developed as she began to work closely with the men to produce, some extremely practical, but simultaneously, utterly fanciful pieces reflecting the visual language of her environment. With this installation Suleman addresses the complex nature and the practicalities of living in urban Pakistan. She examines the male-female relationship on the motorcycle, highlighting the closeness required of the situation and its variance from the social norms of Pakistani society. As Salima Hashmi comments ‘Suleman’s work crosses many borders between fantasy and function, industrial production and craft and between the gender roles’ (2001).

**Conclusion**

In the 21st century people and objects are less defined by practice and place than previously. The lives of individuals span many continents both virtually and physically, gathering influences and concepts along the way. This fluidity is increasingly represented in contemporary objects, raising urgent questions for museums regarding established collecting practices. Possibly most pressing
of all is how to deal with colonial legacies inherent in collecting policies and classificatory systems? Museums need to engage with new systems which can better articulate the changes taking place across the world in the 21st century.

I return to Rangasamy’s (2006) call for new intellectual and creative currencies, but in reality how would this manifest itself? As Rangasamy implies, it would be impossible to find one overarching language that could be used to interpret museum collections. Of course, not all museum objects can or should be classified as solely ‘art’ or ‘ethnographic’, and geographically speaking it has become increasingly difficult to classify an object as strictly Indian or British for example. However at a very practical level the interpretative methods employed by the museum curator are a good starting point for shifting perceptions. As museums look to globalise their permanent collections and exhibition programmes, there is also a need to globalise the curatorial perspectives. Major museum exhibitions, including the multi-venue ArtSouthAsia programme held in 2002, are increasingly asking international curators and artists to curate museum exhibitions, bringing new insights to those collections and challenging the accepted status of certain aspects of the collections held by the host organisation.

When this paper was originally presented in 2006, it was suggested to me that there should be an opportunity for curators with specialist ethnographic or fine art knowledge to exhibit objects from the other’s collection area. The ethnographer would employ anthropological techniques to display a group of Rembrandts, discussing the cultural traditions of this particular type of painter, including trade and exchange, kinship and ritual festivals with their individuality as a painter considered unimportant. Objects from the ethnographic collections would be displayed with minimal context, the name of the object, and most importantly, of the artist enough to elicit a knowing nod of the head from the visitor. While I have yet to see an ethnographic exhibit of Flemish painters, there have been attempts in India to display the works of rural artists using a fine art mode of display. Bharat Bhavan, an arts centre in Bhopal, which has a remit for collecting contemporary rural arts has presented a large number of rural artists in ‘one man shows’. The founder of the centre, Jagdish Swaminathan (1928-1994), was an artist, but more importantly, a promoter of rural arts and an advocate of rural artists and their right to be accepted within the contemporary art world. He was instrumental in displaying the work of rural artists in individual shows and interpreting their work without an ethnographic context. This is still unusual almost 20 years after Swaminathan first proposed this curatorial practice.

It is clear from the few examples that I have presented in this paper that the effects of ‘border crossings’ will increasingly have implications for the development of museum curatorial practice. With Western constructed value

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3 SHISHA, a South Asia arts agency based in Manchester, UK developed, in collaboration with South Asian curators, a multi-venue programme of exhibitions entitled *ArtSouthAsia*.  
4 Many thanks to Dr. Sharon Macdonald for suggesting this idea.
systems continuing to form the basis for the language used to define and separate practice and place, a solution to these issues is clearly some way off. However, greater levels of exchange between artists, curators and collections can affect how “art” and “ethnographic” objects are interpreted, valued and collected in the future.

Acknowledgements

My thoughts have been greatly influenced by a series of events that took place prior to the writing of this paper in 2006. In particular two major exhibition programmes played an important part in enabling me to articulate my internal arguments regarding the classification of high art and low art. The SHISHA programme ArtSouthAsia, held across several venues in the Northwest of England in 2002, was a major revelation and my first experience of seeing rural and urban arts from South Asia displayed and interpreted together. Secondly, the 3rd Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale hosted by Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery in the Northwest of England in 2006 allowed me to question my own assumptions regarding the type of objects historically collected by the Ethnology department and helped to shape my understanding of the department’s future collecting priorities. Finally, I travelled to Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in 2005 as part of an Arts Council England professional development programme. The lively and often challenging conversations with colleagues in those countries regarding the classification of art and artists and the colonial legacies of the language we unconsciously use to define and separate practice and practitioners has had a direct impact on this paper.

Finally I would like to thank Dr Stephen P. Huyler who introduced me to Sonabai Rajawar’s work and who made the commissioning of work and the visit to her home possible.

Illustrations

Figure 1: View of temporary exhibition space, Walker Art Gallery, Courtesy of National Museums Liverpool, p.5.

Figure 2: View of Buddhist display, World Museum, Courtesy of National Museums Liverpool, p.5.

Figure 3: 2005, Sonabai Rajawar, Photograph by Nick Gordon, p.8.

Figure 4: 2003, Sonabai Rajawar, Chherta Festival with Krishna Ca. (Clay, cow dung, straw, pigment), Photograph by Nick Gordon, p.8.

Figure 5: 2005, Decorated doorway, Puhputra, Chhattisgarh, India, Photograph by Nick Gordon, p.9.
Figure 6: 2005, Atma Das Manikpuri, Photography by Nick Gordon, p.10.

Figure 7: 2005, Atma Das Manikpuri, *Elephant of Many Parts*, (Clay, cow dung, straw, pigment). Photograph by Nick Gordon, p.11.

Figure 8: 2005, Montu Chitrakar, Courtesy of Minhazz Majumdar, p.13.

Figure 9: 2007, Pushpa Kumari, Courtesy of Minhazz Majumdar, p.14.


Figure 11: 2007, Pushpa Kumari, *Untitled*, (Paper, ink) Courtesy of National Museums Liverpool, p.15.

Figure 12: 2002, Adeela Suleman, *Salma, Sitara and Sisters – Motorcycle Workshop*, (Mixed media), Courtesy of Adeela Suleman, p.16.


Figure 14: 2002, Adeela Suleman, *Salma, Sitara and Sisters – Motorcycle Workshop (Helmet detail)*, Mixed Media, Courtesy of Adeela Suleman, p.17.

Figure 15: 2005, Truck decoration workshop, Karachi, Pakistan, Photograph by Emma Martin p.18.

**Bibliography**


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Listening when others ‘talk back’

By Kay Lawrence

Kay Lawrence is a visual artist working in textiles and former Head of the South Australian School of Art, University of South Australia. Her work in community tapestry and as designer of the Parliament House Embroidery, installed in the Great Hall of Parliament House in 1988, activated her interest in how communities express their relationship to place through story and art making. A continuing thread in her practice as an artist and writer on contemporary Australian textiles practice has been the ‘unsettling’ legacy of white settlement on Indigenous Australians and their land.

Abstract: This paper addresses the ethics of inter-cultural collaborative art practice from an Australian perspective, through examining aspects of the project, Weaving the Murray. Anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose in her recent book, Reports from a Wild Country; ethics for decolonisation (2005) notes the legacy of white settler society in Australia, claiming that ‘We cannot help knowing that we are here through dispossession and death’ (Rose 2005, p.6). This is a shocking proposition and an uncomfortable position for white Australians. Yet to ignore this reality is to concede to the continuation of a present violence against Indigenous Australians. This is perhaps not now enacted through dispossession and death, but through another type of violence that sets the past aside and ignores the ‘vulnerability of others.’ (Roth 1999, p.5)

Rose suggests an ethical position that ‘would replace (this) violence with responsive attentiveness’, an attentiveness to place and people, located in the here and now, that takes account of the past, and is based on listening to Indigenous Australians talking back ‘in their own terms’ (Rose 2005, p.5). When listening however, it is also necessary to pay attention to ‘silence’ to consider why words fail and how not-speaking can be used as a strategy of resistance. This paper reflects upon the ideas that underpin Rose’s ethical position as they were played out with varying degrees of success, in the inter-cultural collaborative project, Weaving the Murray.

The project Weaving the Murray brought together three Indigenous artists (Rhonda Agius, Nici Cumpston and Chrissie Houston) and four non-Indigenous Australian artists (Kirsty Darlaston, Sandy Elverd, Kay Lawrence and Karen Russell) in 2001, to design and make a collaborative art work to celebrate the Centenary of the Federation of Australia in 1901. As part of the celebrations the three south eastern states of Australia, New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia conceived a project that would symbolise the ideals of Federation. The project would focus on the role of the Murray River connecting the three states and their communities along its 2570 kilometre length. It was conceived as ‘a celebration of democracy’ through; ‘The artists (working) with communities
along the river to weave a cultural map of the river from source to sea which will be given to the people of Australia as a lasting reminder of the Centenary of Federation’ (Centenary of Federation 2001).

Fig. 1. 2001. The artists (left to right) - Sandy Elverd, Kirsty Darlaston, Rhonda Agius, Chrissie Houston, Karen Russell, Nici Cumpston, Kay Lawrence. Photograph Nici Cumpston.

The Weaving the Murray installation and exhibition, shown at the Art Gallery of South Australia and exhibited during the 2002 Adelaide Festival, was a great public success. However, the success of a collaborative project can also be measured by how the difficulties and tensions that inevitably arise during the designing and making processes are negotiated and resolved.

In discussing these issues this paper draws on material from a previous paper (Lawrence 2005) and interviews that I conducted with the artists three years after the project was completed, where they talk candidly about the success and failure of the collaborative process. With the permission of the artists, excerpts from the interviews are included in this discussion. The paper concludes by reflecting on the importance of understanding each other’s terms of reference and listening respectfully, as well as talking, in order to develop an ethical practice of inter-cultural collaboration.

What does it mean to listen to people in their own terms, to understand their terms of reference? For this to happen, three conditions need to be met;
1. Understanding the reality of another’s experience. This includes both empathetic listening and knowledge of what has happened in the past.

2. Understanding their social and cultural protocols.

3. An awareness of how your own terms of reference (that are often quite unconscious) may shape how information is received and understood.

Yet for many white Australians living in cities in southern Australia, contact with Indigenous Australians, where these processes can take place, is not part of daily life.

In South Eastern Australia, the focus of this project, Indigenous Australians make up less than 4% of the population (Arthur and Morphy 2005, p.70). It has been the norm for white Australians to know little about the rich complexity of Indigenous society and culture, other than sensational reports in the media that highlight shocking conditions and dysfunctional communities. Such reports run the risk of reinforcing negative stereotypes without addressing the painful history of dispossession and death that lie behind the present problems experienced by Indigenous Australian communities.

Rose’s suggestion of ‘responsive attentiveness’ indicates the importance of open engagement with history, with the present and with people. Yet one of the impediments to this process is the unconscious power and privilege conferred by being white. Indigenous feminist scholar, Aileen Moreton-Robinson has argued that the first step in this process of engagement must be the interrogation by white people themselves of these ‘taken for granted’ certainties of privilege and power (Moreton Robinson 2000). Only then can we understand our own unconscious terms of reference and be better able to understand the views of others.

Fig. 2. Map showing the Murray River in south eastern Australia
In some ways the collaborative focus of *Weaving the Murray* provided a perfect opportunity for engaging with Indigenous Australians. Not only were three of the artists Indigenous, but in order to understand the meaning of the River for the Indigenous and settler communities living on its banks, we undertook a process of community consultation. We conducted library research into the past history of the Murray River and its symbolic role in the process of Federation, as well as making two trips along the length of the river, visiting local museums and meeting with community groups, and collecting stories and artefacts that told the official and unofficial histories of the river. We interviewed people from Indigenous and settler communities ranging from the Country Women’s Association (CWA) to Indigenous elders. We listened to the stories that people told about their lives, their feelings about the river, and how it has changed over time. Listening to people was central to the project. Their stories were incorporated into both the sound-scape and the final installation. However we needed to be alert to gaps and absences in the stories we were told.

At our first meeting with the local CWA in Corryong, at the very source of the River, Rhonda and Chrissie, two of the Indigenous artists decided not to come, as Nici noted in her interview.

‘A couple of the Indigenous people weren’t keen on contacting CWA groups due to past bad experiences. This was alleviated by them choosing not to attend our meeting with the CWA in Corryong. I thought that it was interesting in this meeting when someone asked about the local Indigenous people and we were told that, ‘there weren’t any local Indigenous people living here, they just came and went’. (Cumpston 2004)’
None of the Indigenous artists are shown in this photograph taken by Nici of the artists with members of the Corryong CWA. But their absence in the photo symbolises a more significant absence of Indigenous people in the stories we heard in Corryong.

In their stories of the river, people talked about the first settlers, the first white baby born in the district, clearing the tea tree and planting willows, as well as the farming practices, the floods, the wayward nature of the river. Corryong resident Len Hogg told us ‘The River in those days really wandered about. It cut into the bank and black dirt, six or eight feet just goes.’ (Hogg 2001) The local Indigenous people were described in the same terms as the river as wandering, as not settled ‘there weren’t any local Indigenous people living here, they just came and went.’ This implied that Indigenous people did not belong to the area, and reflects a misunderstanding about the nature of Indigenous Australian people’s connection to country. This connection is forged, not through settling in one place, but through moving across the land and conducting ceremonies to care for the country. Diane Witney, Administrator of the Winal-Gidyal Aboriginal Education Centre in Albury told us that in fact Corryong was on an Indigenous trade route from Tumut to the mountains. So for the local Indigenous people, close relationship to country was always characterised by coming and going.

During the process of community consultation we noted that this absence of Indigenous people in the local histories often went unnoticed and un-remarked, their absence a sort of ‘natural’ phenomena like the river that did not need investigating, and the role of the settlers in their displacement, erased from memory and not interrogated. This was particularly disheartening for the Indigenous artists as Nici mentioned in her interview.

‘Instead of going to local museums it was preferred to try and find the local Indigenous people and to visit them and talk about things. As we didn’t have a lot of time this could prove to be problematic. We also found ourselves just spending time by the river, talking and sharing our own stories of family. It was difficult also because of a lack of information about Indigenous people in most museums. It was hard to get enthusiastic when none of the information was about our own Indigenous culture’.

(Cumpston 2004)

It became important for us to breach this silence, to seek out the stories and the artefacts of local Indigenous people and make reference to Indigenous culture and knowledge of the River in the installation, Weaving the Murray. This knowledge could then be inserted into the public domain through the exhibition and publication.
I will just mention one example of Indigenous knowledge communicated to us by Doug Nicholls from Swan Hill who showed us ancient forests of river red gums, the Barmah Forest and the Nyah Vinifera forest, under threat through logging, cattle-grazing and the regulation of the flow of water in the Murray. As Nici noted:

‘Doug explained that the Indigenous people would have travelled along these backwaters in dug out canoes. The ring trees were very obvious from their position on the water, but to us on foot they were not so obvious. Opposite each ring tree was a Barri ground, a midden representing years of occupation on the land. There were old bones, charcoal, shells, and many very long beautiful rushes growing from the fertile remains of the Barri ground. The ring trees were used as a sign, they were a pointer to an area of abundance. People knew they could find shelter, food and protection there.’ (Cumpston and Lawrence 2006).

Doug told us about the ring trees along the banks of the backwaters of the Murray, where branches of a river red gum have been formed into ring shapes as a sign of proximity to a Barri ground, a fertile area able to sustain large groups of people meeting to conduct trade and ceremony.
For Doug, the ring tree symbolises the importance of Indigenous knowledge in maintaining the health of the River, knowledge that until recent times has been largely ignored. It is perhaps apt considering the current state of the River, that a dead rather than a living ring tree, is included in the Swan Hill Museum.
The community consultation process undertaken as part of the research for the project enabled us to meet Indigenous people along the River and listen to their stories and in so doing, fulfil the first part of Rose’s suggestion for an ethical approach to collaboration. As we noted in the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition, our intention was to; ‘Re-present to the river communities, their stories, their daily experiences, their hope and concerns for the health of the river. Textile processes provide the means to speak the unspoken, to tell previously disregarded stories. The artwork acknowledges difference while symbolising the connections between communities’ (Russell 2002).

While there is not space in this paper to present further details of the consultation process, it did enable us to be attentive to people and place, to take into account stories of the present and the past, and connect Indigenous and non-Indigenous histories in the final installation.

So we could give something back to the communities who had been so generous in sharing their stories with us, on our second trip we conducted informal weaving workshops to share our skills with people from the towns. We also ensured that the catalogue of the final exhibition was sent back to the communities and the final artwork itself was toured to key river towns after the launch in Adelaide.

Fig. 7. January 2002. Sandy Elverd, Kirsty Darlaston, Rhonda Agius, Chrissie Houston, Karen Russell Nici Cumpston, Kay Lawrence, Weaving the Murray Art Gallery of South Australia.

Photograph Michal Kluvanek. Collection South Australian Museum.
I would like to briefly describe the work itself, as it was seen by viewers in the first showing of the installation in the Art Gallery of South Australia in January 2002. The central focus of the installation is the Ngarrindjeri story of the creation of the Murray River, told here by Rhonda.

‘Long ago in the dreaming an earthquake shook the land forming a long trench. Then came a second tremor, upheaving rocks and soil. From the centre of the earth emerged Pondi the mighty Murray Cod. He was far too large for the trench, so thrashing and weaving his way across the land, he formed the Murray River and all of its tributaries. As he moved along it filled with waters, all the way from where he emerged at the foot of the snowy mountains in the east, to as far as Lake Alexandrina to the west.’ (Russell 2002, p.10).

The river is formed by Pondi the giant Murray cod whose journey across the land formed the river channel and whose death created all the fish in the River.

Fig. 8. 2001. Sandy Elverd, Kirsty Darlaston, Rhonda Agius, Chrissie Houston, Karen Russell Nici Cumpston, Kay Lawrence Pondi. (Coiled rush). 50 x 125 x 30 cm.
Photograph Michal Kluvanek. Collection South Australian Museum.
Fig. 9. 2002. Sandy Elverd, Kirsty Darlaston, Rhonda Agius, Chrissie Houston, Karen Russell Nici Cumpston, Kay Lawrence, Flooded Gums: (Eucalyptus wood, salt, stainless steel wire, clips, height variable). 300 x 200 cm.
Photograph Michal Kluvanek. Collection of South Australian Museum.

The grid of hanging, salt-ringed sticks and branches surrounded by a soundscape of voices from Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities describing how the river has changed, tells a different story, one of environmental degradation rather than creation.

Fig. 10. 2002. Sandy Elverd, Kirsty Darlaston, Rhonda Agius, Chrissie Houston, Karen Russell Nici Cumpston, Kay Lawrence, The Long Community: (Plant fibre string stitched and coiled). 50 x 100 cm.
Photograph Michal Kluvanek. Collection of South Australian Museum.

‘We belong to a long community of the river. It’s the same body of water if it flows past Corryong, down the Condamine.’ (Tuckwell 2001)
The Long Community, a string of words inspired by this comment by Frank Tuckwell and made from plant fibre string, speaks of the river connecting communities along its length over time. But it has been lack of agreement amongst these communities, divided by state boundaries and conflicting interests, and a failure to recognise the importance of Indigenous knowledge in deciding how the river should be managed that has exacerbated its slow decline. This is visualised in the photographic image of dead, flooded trees created by Nici Cumpston. Her image ironically recalls the ring trees and an ethos of understanding and caring for country by Indigenous communities that has much to teach white Australia.

Fig. 11. 2001. Nici Cumpston, Flooded Gums at Berri. (Silver gelatine print). 120 x 210 cm.
Photograph Michal Kluvanek. Collection of South Australian Museum.

Fig. 12 2001. Sandy Elverd, Kirsty Darlaston, Rhonda Agius, Chrissie Houston, Karen Russell Nici Cumpston, Kay Lawrence, The Mapped Landscape. (Mixed media). 150 x 400cm.
Photograph Michal Kluvanek. Collection of South Australian Museum.
On the wall facing *The Long Community*, another grid, *The Mapped Landscape* brings into order a disparate collection of vernacular textile objects that reference the domestic and rural labour that supported the trade, fishing and farming practices that formed the economy of the River. While referencing the mapping and naming practices of the settlers as they sought to control their environment, the grid also alludes to the anxiety underpinning the process of colonisation, as noted by Sydney Moko Mead ‘Without the fixed grid of named features we would be total strangers on the land – lost souls with nowhere to attach ourselves.’ (Mead 1984)

One of the aims of the Federation was to unify the states and resolve disputes over resources of national importance like the Murray River. Yet the following texts reveal that little has changed during the first 100 years of Federation.

‘The river in fact belongs to three colonies……Broad principles and not narrow jealousies or pettifogging quibbles, should rule in this matter–the Murray ought to be the great agent of Federation.’ The Melbourne Age, (31 May, 1889) ‘One of the great hopes for the future, rather than thinking like South Australians, Victorians we’re starting to think like Australians…. that the great river will be placed under the control of a national body’ (Tuckwell 2001)
The consequences of this failure to unite the three states in the management of the Murray is signalled by two string bags that mark how the introduction of crops like cotton and irrigation practices, have damaged the health of the river. A traditional Indigenous netted bag made from plant fibre string is hung alongside its counterpart, netted with salt-encrusted, cotton rags and hung with a tag that links clearing the country to the rise of salt levels: ‘Settler Australians dreamed of greening the inland, but the salt rose, the white death, turning the dream into a nightmare.’ (Wahlquist 2000) These tags, rather than identifying each object with date and provenance, provide images and texts that suggest alternative readings, unsettling the fixity of the grid.

Within the grid, European and Indigenous cultural practices are sometimes combined to form hybrid objects that refer to stories of connection between communities as well as stories of displacement. A mat coiled with plant fibre and a tea towel suggests the possibility of entwining Indigenous and settler knowledge to tell a new, more positive story of recognition and cooperation between black and white in managing the River.

‘A story is like a river. And like a river it trickles from the source until it flows, flows, flows. Down mountains of the mountains. Branching onto the land the land the land. Flowing. Spiralling. Flowing towards the sea.’ (Figiel 1999, p11)
Like the river described in the tag attached to the coiled mat, this new story (should it eventuate) has the potential to grow and spread its meaning far from its source.

While *Weaving the Murray* critiques the dream of Federation, a unified nation symbolised by the Murray River, it also suggests through its imagery and through the way it was designed and made as a collaborative process, the possibility of connection and reparation. It suggests that Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities *can* work together to acknowledge and repair some of the mistakes of the past.

**The collaborative process**

The collaborative process, through which we undertook the project, working closely together for over a year, offered an ideal opportunity for us to exchange views, to talk and to listen to each other. This was largely a successful process but as is often the case in large projects needing to be completed in an unrealistically tight time frame, we came unstuck at times. The interviews that I conducted with the artists revealed that the most intractable of our problems arose from unspoken assumptions and un-interrogated differences in our motivations and terms of reference, resulting in things that were either not said or were not easily heard. It is this that I would like to discuss now.
Motivation

We came into the project with different motivations, different backgrounds and different world views. Not all of these differences were acknowledged or even conscious at the time, but they profoundly affected the collaborative process and persisted in people’s interpretation of events as is evident in the interview material presented in this paper.

The main focus of the project, as noted in official publications was to create an artwork that would remain as a legacy of the Centenary of Federation celebrations; *Weaving the Murray* was commissioned by the Centenary of Federation, South Australia to be a lasting legacy of the 2001 Centenary of Federation celebrations in Australia. (Centenary of Federation 2001) However while there was an assumption that we were all working towards the same goal, an examination of the motivations of the Indigenous artists, revealed in their artist’s statements and interviews, shows that, rather than being interested in creating a legacy for the Centenary of Federation, it was the process of creating the work, of keeping the ‘story alive’ that interested them.

Nici ‘There is a spiritual connection between the river and the communities who live alongside it (I) feel compelled to share this knowledge in order to raise awareness of culturally significant sites.’ (Russell 2002, p21)

Rhonda ‘The various stories of Pondi join the Indigenous people across the country. It is important to keep the story alive. The once mighty Murray will never be the same, but (I) hope it won’t be just another muddy creek in another hundred years.’ (Russell 2002, p.20)

Chrissie ‘I had a head think about it and the Indigenous aspect of Federation was a bit of an affront, but I thought if we don’t say what we think, people will never know…. its better to do something than to sit around moaning.’(Houston 2004)

Making physical connection with country and other Indigenous communities along the length of the river through the community consultation process was not just a form of research but integral to the maintenance of their culture and the health of the river. For them, the Federation of Australia in 1901 signified loss of culture rather than connection, and the opportunity to re-create these connections was finally more important than the production of a lasting legacy for the nation.
Terms of Reference

Like our motivations, the terms of reference of each of the members of the group, our socially and culturally constructed ways of thinking and working, as well as our expectations were largely un-stated. In fact they were mostly unconscious when we began the project. It was only later, during the interview process when the participants reflected on their experience that these differences began to be articulated. Differences in education and ethnicity were particularly important in shaping how we approached the project and each other. They shaped our attitudes to leadership and ownership and were cited by most participants in the interviews as contributing to the tensions we experienced. I will discuss each in turn.

Ethnicity

In each of our entries for the catalogue, written as the project was being completed, the Indigenous artists highlighted their ethnicity and language group affiliations, indicating the importance of ‘race’ to their identity.

‘Rhonda Agius born at Raukkan, Point McLeay, an elder of the Ngarrindjeri community, is the founding member of the South Australian Aboriginal Language Centre, Vice Chair of the Ngarrindjeri Native Title Committee, the State delegate for the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
people and a member of ‘Mildrin’, an Indigenous consultative team that negotiates River Murray management with government.’ (Russell 2002, p.20)

‘Nici Cumpston, born in Australia of Aboriginal, Afghan, Irish and English descent.’(Russell 2002, p.21)

Chrissie Houston, ‘Pitjantatjara (Western Desert Region) is her cultural language group.’ (Russell 2002, p.22)

But ‘race’ or ethnicity was not mentioned in the biographies of the Australian artists. Their ‘whiteness’ was taken for granted and ethnicity unexamined. As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, Moreton-Robinson has defined ‘whiteness’ as a culturally based system of preference and privilege that is largely unconscious and taken for granted as ‘normal’ by white people. She notes that unsettling the ‘taken for granted’ certainties of whiteness is most likely to occur in close social and working relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people where differences cannot be sidestepped but must be addressed. (Moreton Robinson 1999, p.28) This certainly happened in our collaboration. Differences in our terms of reference sometimes collided, sparking flare-ups and resulting in tensions, unexplainable at the time but on reflection, understandable.

‘(White) people don’t know some things and if they were more aware they might behave differently, they were coming from a white perspective. Rhonda and I talked about it a lot. All the decision making was coming from a white point of view. I had a conversation with Rhonda. We felt we were only here for (token) Indigenous reasons.’(Houston 2004)

As Chrissie suggests here, ‘white’ views often dominated the decision making process, in an unspoken assumption of power by the white artists that made her and Rhonda feel marginalised. The silence around this issue, the lack of awareness amongst the white artists that the dominance of their white perspective was an issue, and the unwillingness of the Indigenous artists to speak about their concerns, undermined the open and frank communication so important in collaboration.

Education

As ‘white perspectives’ shaped the way decisions were made, differences in education shaped our approaches to art practice. Kirsty, Karen and Nici and Kay were professionally educated in the visual arts at university art schools. Rhonda, an Ngarrindjeri language specialist learnt weaving at the age of eight from her grandmother, as part of her cultural heritage rather than as an ‘art’ practice. Chrissie specialised in ceramics, learning her craft in an Indigenous context at the Taoundi Aboriginal Community College, and Sandy completed a Bachelor of Arts and a Graduate Diploma in Community Cultural Development.
While, between us we had a rich range of professional experience in varied disciplines, the nature of the project ensured that we drew heavily on our experience in community art practice and textile skills. But underpinning our approach as well were the unspoken codes of the art school, with an emphasis on producing conceptually developed, sophisticated, and innovative works of art.

An academic approach to art practice

These codes surfaced in the interviews when a number of the artists noted that an ‘academic’ approach to the creation of the work was undertaken without interrogation. As Kirsty noted, this attitude excluded other areas of experience and skill;

‘We all came from different levels in our practice. In the project art experience and weaving skills were important. We didn’t recognise the richness of Rhonda’s experience...you and I and Karen came from a University background, came from an academic approach. This in itself excluded others (who) didn’t read the work on the same number of levels. The university itself is an institution with unspoken codes of behaviour, ways of doing things.’ (Darlaston 2004)

One of the unspoken codes of an ‘Art School’ approach to art-making is the emphasis on the conceptual underpinning of the work, considering the ‘meanings’ to be conveyed, an intellectual rather than intuitive approach. The emphasis on the conceptual basis of the work did not carry the same weight for all of the artists.

‘Don’t be offended but I have this idea of academics and laypersons. Academics come to things in a cold-hearted, factual way.......Now when I’m doing art myself, its more of a feeling thing, the love of doing a thing, compared to the education side of doing things. I feel a thing more than I theorise it.’(Houston 2004)

As Chrissie noted, ‘making from the heart’ was not openly discussed. Had it been, we may have been able to recognise our own emotional investment in the work, and been able to acknowledge our own use of and the value of intuitive ways of working. Another of the codes of the art school is the emphasis on the product, the art-work itself. While the process of developing the work is regarded as important, ultimately the significance of an art-work is judged by the quality and eloquence of the work itself. This is different to the significance of cultural objects for Indigenous Australians, where it is the association of an object with a place and its associated spiritual forces invoked through ceremony that is important. As Chrissie indicated, it is the collecting and making processes accompanied by song and story and their value in binding the community that is deemed important rather the object alone. ‘Meeting the old people on the trips and the stories they told, sitting and listening to all the information (was the most important aspect).’ (Houston 2004)
Community cultural practice

There are analogous practices in community art that also focus on the importance of process in creating a sense of community; working together to share ideas and skills; giving space to people to tell their stories; respecting and acknowledging people’s contribution to the project. As Sandy made clear, these practices were well understood and used in the project.

‘We worked as a team at Underdale... we helped Rhonda to be involved by picking her up and taking her home after meetings. It was very inclusive. We were open to each others thoughts and ideas. On the whole it was an open environment and as a group we were considerate of our different backgrounds, experiences and skill bases.’(Elverd 2004)

Yet while at the time we may have thought we were being open and inclusive, the later interviews reveal unspoken tensions. Perhaps our attempts to be helpful could have been seen as patronising? The Indigenous artists did not always reveal their views, let alone feel like equal partners in the project. Nici mentioned that ‘feelings weren’t always out in the open,’ (Cumpston 2004) while Chrissie noted that ‘All the decision making was coming from a white point of view.’ (Houston 2004) The silence around these issues meant that they weren’t addressed and persisted. Later, Kirsty reflected on the difficulty created by these unspoken differences; ‘We think we’re coming from (their) point of view, we think were being open. You can try and have an open dialogue, but there’s personality conflict, not everyone is open and willing to say what they think in a situation.’(Darlaston 2004)

When we were able to discuss our differences, the problems were usually resolved and we were able to work as a team. In fact, during the interviews, as the participants noted and Chrissie stated, our capacity to work through problems was one of the strengths of the project.

‘Working as a group was successful even if we didn’t always agree. On the second trip Kirsty and I had a no-speak time in Albury. I thought she was taking over, but we got through it, we worked it out. Working out problems, realising we were a team and not individuals. We had to work as a team to do the job.’ (Houston 2004)

However as well as having a community focus, Weaving the Murray was also a public commission with the expectation that we would produce a museum quality artwork. There were times when the necessity to produce a well-made product in a short time frame, undermined the effectiveness of the collaborative process. Negotiating these tensions without fully understanding the differences in our motivations and terms of reference proved difficult.
Cultural protocols: leadership and seniority

In any collaboration participants take on different responsibilities. Rather than discussing how we would negotiate our roles at the beginning of the collaborative process, responsibilities were often just assumed without discussion, thereby thwarting expectations about the roles and responsibilities of members of the group. All the artists noted this problem in the interviews, succinctly summarised here by Kirsty. ‘Rhonda was used to being deferred to as a senior indigenous woman whereas I, as the youngest, thought that it was a six way dialogue, that we all had an equal say.’(Darlaston 2004)

Leadership roles were just assumed rather than negotiated. According to Indigenous cultural protocols, Rhonda’s seniority as an Indigenous woman was recognised but only in relation to the parts of the project that drew on Ngarrindjeri stories and skills leaving her in an anomalous position. While Kirsty had expectations that we would all work as equals, she noted in the following exchange that equality in decision making was difficult to achieve when there was an established teacher/student relationship between some of the artists.

Kirsty

‘Leadership (was another issue). Who runs the project, who is the dominant personality, how do others react to this’?

Kay

‘I know that I was bossy and took over’.

Kirsty

‘You took on the leadership but it could have been more democratically done... For Karen and I, we came out of a mentoring relationship with you, yet in the project we were supposed to have equal status.’(Darlaston 2004)

Lack of clarity or discussion of our expectations about the roles we would take on in such a large and diverse group, contributed to small on-going tensions that were mostly resolved day to day but sometimes festered, undermining trust between the artists.

Cultural protocols: Ownership

However it was in relation to questions about ‘ownership’ that we came unstuck. Working collaboratively always raises questions about acknowledging and valuing the contribution of all the participants. In our case our collaboration was made more complex as we tried to reconcile Indigenous protocols about cultural responsibility with group ‘ownership’ of the work.

‘In a collaborative project, how do you decide who owns what part? I never thought of the grid as being the white part of the project. (Making) all
the objects gave us a way of coming together. I didn’t feel that I owned any part of the project, that any part belonged to me… The grid was meant to be about different crafts (from) culturally diverse backgrounds, how white ‘grid’ mapping took over… this became to be seen as the ‘white’ section of the project and Pondi as the Indigenous (section)… Rhonda felt that the Indigenous parts belonged to her… I always think of Rhonda saying ‘just let us have Pondi.’ She was quite passionate.’ (Darlaston 2004)

While the overall design was developed by the group as a whole, in accordance with Indigenous protocols of ‘ownership,’ Rhonda as a senior Ngarrindjeri elder took responsibility for designing and supervising the making of those parts of the design that referred to Indigenous stories and artefacts and used Indigenous textile processes. However, as Kirsty noted in her interview, this led in a subtle way to some parts of the work being perceived as Indigenous, and others as white, although this was never openly discussed.

While Rhonda took responsibility for the design and making of Pondi, as the work developed it became evident that Rhonda had less experience than some of the other artists in coiling a form of that size. In order to support her and get the work done, everyone contributed through coiling the body and the fins and making spots, with half the group meeting three times a week to complete Pondi at Nici’s house as she notes below.

‘We decided to come together to work on Pondi as there were problems with us all working independently and time wasn’t on our side. We worked together at my place to weave parts of Pondi and to listen and edit the recordings. We shared many hot dinners and had long conversations about our journeys along the river.’ (Cumpston and Lawrence 2006).

Sandy mentioned that working at home rather than in the institutional context of the art school enabled the Indigenous artists to feel comfortable and get the work done.

‘While we worked on different elements people supported each other. Nothing could have just been done individually, but in a group we were able to make it successful and find solutions to problems. I felt I was living at Nici’s for a couple of months making Pondi and working on the sound’! (Elverd 2004)

Rhonda finally completed Pondi at home. However when she bought in the completed form of Pondi, just before the installation of the work none of the artists felt able to mention their reservations about the final form. Later when we were installing the work in the gallery (with Rhonda unable to attend), everyone agreed that the final form was not quite right especially the way the head of the fish related to the body. As the key focus of the installation we wanted Pondi to be ‘right’, but our silence about our reservations about the final form when Rhonda presented Pondi to us, revealed our anxiety about critiquing her work and offending her, both as the custodian of the story and as a maker.
On reflection we did not handle this issue well, giving precedence to an idea of ‘quality’ rather than Rhonda’s cultural authority and responsibilities. I rang Rhonda from the Art Gallery during the installation process and asked if she minded if we inserted a bit of weaving between the head of Pondi and the body. She was clearly surprised but agreed. However later, having had a chance to think about it, she rang back and said she was not happy with others doing it and we should return Pondi to her, so she could do it herself. By then it was too late, we had cut the head from the body and were busily coiling the insert. Our regret at the way we handled this issue was evident in the interviews.

‘Working in such an intense (environment) sometimes you have to let go and say there’s no resolution... In relation to reweaving the section of Pondi, I think it was very negative thing and I think we couldn’t have done anything else!’ (Darlaston 2004)

‘At the time we didn’t know how to raise the problem without Rhonda thinking we were criticising her work, when she had greater ownership of Pondi because of her indigenous heritage and links to the river...The story of Pondi is part of her people.’ (Elverd 2004)

The rushed decision to ‘improve’ the form of Pondi, and ensure the work was completed in time for the exhibition, forestalled a frank discussion with Rhonda about our reservations, and what could be done to make sure everyone felt happy with the result. As a result she did not attend the opening of the exhibition.

**Conclusion**

As Sandy reflects below, discussion at the beginning of the project about how we would manage and resolve issues could have helped us to avoid this quandary.

‘In future, at the beginning the team should talk about how to take criticism so it’s not taken personally... We never looked at conflict resolution as a group at the beginning. It would have been useful to do this as a group, to discuss resolving conflict or issues in a safe environment. Not to take criticism personally, respecting others ideas and opinions. This would have helped when we got to the issue of Pondi, and would have made it easier to bring up difficult issues.’ (Elverd 2004)

Kirsty also pointed out in her interview, that at the beginning of the project, we missed the opportunity to talk about what we each wanted from the project, to discuss and negotiate our individual contributions.

‘At the beginning we should have said what we wanted out of the project. There was a general discussion about this at the time (but we could have asked) what roles are needed, some leadership, some administration, some liaison, (these roles) needed to be clearly set out.’(Darlaston 2004)
Taking the time to talk to each other, listening attentively to pick up the undercurrents beneath what was being said (or not), would have enabled us to reflect upon and better understand the different practices and terms of reference that we each brought to the project. Interrogating the silences that marked lack of awareness, unspoken differences or resistance would have enabled us to bring problems to the surface for discussion and resolution. What I learnt from conducting the interviews was the importance of raising issues and the necessity for open and frank dialogue in collaborative practice. This of course cannot happen without trust and trust is hard to develop when you don’t know where someone is coming from.

Rhonda declined to be interviewed about the process of making Weaving the Murray. Her silence is perhaps more eloquent than any statement.

The afternoon that I spent interviewing Chrissie, getting to know her in a way that had not happened during the project, talking about family, her life as well as the project, listening in a way that enabled her to be frank about our mistakes, made me profoundly aware of the importance of listening attentively when others ‘talk back’ and paying attention to silence. This is particularly important for non-Indigenous Australians whose taken-for-granted certainties resulting from positions of privilege and power can deafen their ability to hear and understand another’s point of view. As Deborah Bird Rose suggests, and I have tried to show through reflecting upon some of the issues that arose in Weaving the Murray, an attitude of ‘responsive attentiveness’ is key to the development of an ethical practice of inter-cultural collaboration.

Illustrations

Figure 1: 2001. The artists (left to right) - Sandy Elverd, Kirsty Darlaston, Rhonda Agius, Chrissie Houston, Karen Russell, Nici Cumpston, Kay Lawrence. Photograph Nici Cumpston

Figure 2: Map showing the Murray River in south eastern Australia

Figure 3: 2001. The artists and CWA members, Corryong NSW. Photograph Nici Cumpston.

Figure 4: 2001. Rhonda Agius and Doug Nicholls in the Nyah Vinifera Forest, Victoria. Photograph Nici Cumpston.

Figure 5: 2001. Nici Cumpston Ring Trees. (silver gelatine prints, hand colouring). Dimensions variable.

Figure 6: April 2001. Doug Nicholls with ring tree, Swan Hill Museum. Photograph Nici Cumpston.
Figure 7: January 2002. Sandy Elverd, Kirsty Darlaston, Rhonda Agius, Chrissie Houston, Karen Russell Nici Cumpston, Kay Lawrence, Weaving the Murray Art Gallery of South Australia. Photograph Michal Kluvanek. Collection South Australian Museum.

Figure 8: 2001. Sandy Elverd, Kirsty Darlaston, Rhonda Agius, Chrissie Houston, Karen Russell Nici Cumpston, Kay Lawrence Pondi. (Coiled rush). 50 x 125 x 30 cm. Photograph Michal Kluvanek. Collection South Australian Museum.

Figure 9: 2002. Sandy Elverd, Kirsty Darlaston, Rhonda Agius, Chrissie Houston, Karen Russell Nici Cumpston, Kay Lawrence, Flooded Gums: (Eucalyptus wood, salt, stainless steel wire, clips, height variable). 300 x 200 cm. Photograph Michal Kluvanek. Collection of South Australian Museum.

Figure 10: 2002. Sandy Elverd, Kirsty Darlaston, Rhonda Agius, Chrissie Houston, Karen Russell Nici Cumpston, Kay Lawrence, The Long Community: (Plant fibre string stitched and coiled). 50 x 100 cm. Photograph Michal Kluvanek. Collection of South Australian Museum.

Figure 11: 2001. Nici Cumpston, Flooded Gums at Berri. (Silver gelatine print). 120 x 210 cm. Photograph Michal Kluvanek. Collection of South Australian Museum.


Figure 13: 2001. Detail from the Mapped landscape, string bag and salt bag. (Netted plant fibre and cotton string, salt). Photograph Michal Kluvanek.

Figure 14: 2001. Detail from the Mapped landscape, coiled mat. (Plant fibre and cotton tea towels) Photograph Michal Kluvanek.

Figure 15: Jan, 2002. Launch of Weaving the Murray at the Art gallery of South Australia. Photograph Trevor Cumpston.

Figure 16: 2001, Chrissie in the Nyah Vinifera forest. Photograph Nici Cumpston.

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Beyond the seas

By Stephen Dixon

Stephen Dixon studied Fine Art at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and Ceramics at the Royal College of Art, graduating in 1986. His work features in numerous public and private collections, including the Museum of Arts & Design, New York, the British Council, the Crafts Council, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Royal Museum of Scotland, and the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco. He is currently employed as Professorial Research Fellow in Contemporary Crafts at MMU Cheshire, investigating the contemporary printed image in ceramics. Specific research interests include the British satirical tradition (in both printmaking and ceramics), commemorative wares and ‘pop’ culture, and the development of socio-political narratives in contemporary ceramics.

Abstract: This paper describes a practice-led research project undertaken in Australia in 2006, in which I sought to explore the relationship between radical changes in cultural/geographical environment and the production of unique forms of material culture. In this case the shift in environment was brought about by migration (enforced or otherwise) from the UK to colonial Australia, and the crafted artefacts of the colonial period (and after) were taken as representative of a particularly Australian material culture. As a maker it was important to me that this research was developed primarily through practice, supported by museum/archive study and fieldwork in Australia. The project therefore proposed a range of historical Australian artefacts as the subject of study, and my own creative practice as the vehicle of study.

In section 1 (fieldwork), I describe the initial boundaries of the project, list the research questions, and consider the project’s location and its context within the wider objectives of the Here and There (HAT) project. Specific artefacts and objects are identified and described, as representative of a unique material culture. Section 2 (reflective practice) considers some of the ethical issues encountered and describes the evolution of my research focus during the early stages of the project, particularly the discovery of depression era ‘making-do’ artefacts, and a growing interest in Australian folk narratives and ‘icons’ of popular culture. It then describes the development of a series of works made in response to the initial Australian fieldwork over the following two years of studio practice in the UK. Section 3 (conclusion) reflects upon the outcomes of the study - in particular the practical and conceptual changes undertaken in my creative practice as a result of the project - and lists the exhibitions, conferences and articles through which the ‘Beyond the Seas’ project has since been disseminated.
Section 1. Fieldwork

Beyond the Seas was a practice-led research project in which I explored the ways in which cultural and geographical dislocation influences craft practice and the creation of material culture. This question was investigated through the medium of my own creative practice, informed by research on location in Australia. The crafted artefacts produced by early colonial settlers and their descendants, and also those of Indigenous Australian makers were the main subject of my study. I was interested in exploring the ‘hidden’ narratives and knowledge embodied in these objects, the ways in which life experiences can be infused into an object through the hand (and mind) of its maker. It was therefore important that the research was developed primarily through practice, supported by periods of museum and archive study and research on location in Aboriginal communities in the Pitjanjatjara lands. The intention behind my own (albeit temporary) re-location was to gain an insight into the more profound instances of dislocation experienced by colonial period transportees and settlers.

Fig. 1: An example of re-located practice, Iron man, (enamelled tin plate).
Found and re-worked on location in Adelaide, Australia, March 2006.
Context and Location

The Beyond the Seas project was co-funded by the Arts Council UK and the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and was developed within the context of the Here and There (HAT) international research exchange project. The HAT Project was a programme of International Fellowships for the Contemporary Crafts, which created opportunities for critically engaged and established designer-makers to undertake practice-based research in a range of international contexts. Over a period of two years from 2006 to 2008 the programme of thematically linked fellowships built a network of artists and hosts, collectively exploring practice-led research, documentation, exchange, dialogue, collective evaluation, and critical writing. ¹

My project hosts were the Jam Factory Craft and Design workshops in Adelaide, South Australia, where I was based from January to April 2006. I was given open access to a wide range of technical studios and facilities, and was welcomed into the wider creative community of Adelaide.

Fig. 2: Work in progress, Jam Factory studio, March 2006.

¹ The HAT project is available at http://www.hat.mmu.ac.uk/
The Jam Factory additionally facilitated a research trip into the Pitjantjatjara Aboriginal lands in the Musgrave Ranges on the northern edge of South Australia. A permit is required to legally enter these homelands, and a guide with local knowledge is recommended. I was fortunate in being able to travel with Colin Koch, then Director of Ku Arts, on one of his regular support trips to the Aboriginal Arts Centres at Ernabella, Tjungu Palya, Freegon and Indulkana. I also had the opportunity to travel to Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra to visit important museums, archives and collections.

Australia, the subject and location of this research project is a contested territory, as can be seen in the different approaches to its mapping. A map taken from the perspective of a British geographical text-book of 1919, asserts Imperial ‘ownership’ of Australia through its depiction in British Empire pink.

This anachronistic view of Australia has of course been challenged in a number of ways. For example, another map ‘Tribal Boundaries in Aboriginal Australia’, compiled by the Australian anthropologist Norman B. Tindale (1974), gave a detailed breakdown of the Australian continent into tribal regions and territories, with clearly defined tribal boundaries. This map provided an academic repudiation of the colonial view of indigenous Australians as nomadic wanderers, and was influential in the movement towards Native Title begun by the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territories) Act of 1976 and continued by
the Mabo Case of 1992. Another view of a more ancient land occupation and ownership is asserted by a contemporary indigenous painting of Australia, a detail from a world map, painted in 2006 by Peter Nyaningu, a tribal elder of the Ernabella community. Though the cartographic representation of Australia follows a western model, the painting technique references a more ‘authentic’ identity. The Pitjantjatjara Aboriginal homelands occupy the square black area in the centre.

![Detail from a map of the world (2006), painted by Indigenous artist Peter Nyaningu.](image)

**Research Questions**

At the outset I was interested in the material culture and crafted objects of settlers in Australia who came from Britain. What did the artefacts made and used by these British settlers reveal about the effects on them of emigration? For example, did these colonial artefacts differ from artefacts produced in the UK? Were new forms of artefact created, and if so why? I began with a broad subject review (or rather, ‘object’ review) in museums, libraries and archives in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra and discovered a number of answers to these questions. This survey led to the expansion of the chronological remit

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2 The most influential of these were the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, and the Aboriginal Cultures Gallery at the South Australia Museum, Adelaide.
of my research beyond the immediate settler period, to include artefacts made by later generations of Australian makers. The survey revealed some uniquely Australian artefacts; convict love tokens and tattoos, bush toys and furniture, utility quilts and domestic textiles, many of these produced as a direct result of their makers’ experiences of cultural and geographical dislocation. These objects are characteristic of an evolving ‘making-do’ vernacular tradition, influenced by economic hardship, a harsh and unforgiving environment, and a scarcity of resources and familiar materials.

Artefacts

It will be useful at this point to examine and describe some examples of these ‘dislocated’ objects, bearing in mind their stylistic and chronological diversity. I should also point out that some of the illustrations in this section are based on the original source objects/images, but have been ‘mediated’ through inclusion in my own practice.

Convict love tokens were made by de-facing and re-engraving George III cartwheel pennies. They were produced throughout the majority of the transportation period\(^3\) by British convicts awaiting transportation to Australia, and sometimes made for the convicts by professional engravers who plied their trade on the prison hulks moored in the Thames. The tokens were made in anticipation of the convicts’ separation and dislocation, and given as keepsakes to the loved ones they were unlikely ever to see again. Although most remained in the UK, they have been described as ‘the first truly Australian artwork’ (Schofield and Fahy, 1990). Sometimes crudely drawn and often misspelled, the love tokens both embody and evoke the personal tragedies and hardships faced by the convicts. Their messages are often both personal and poignant (Field and Millett, 1998). One typical token carries the inscription:

Accept this dear mother from your unfortunate son. Thos. Alsop.
Transported July 25th Aged 21, 1833.
On the reverse is the rhyme:
The rose soon drupes and dies, The brier fades away,
but my fond heart for you I love,
shall never go astray.

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3 Convicts were transported to Australia from 1787 to 1868, love tokens have been dated from 1780 – when convicts were imprisoned in de-commissioned warships moored in the Thames prior to their transportation – to 1856.
Additional evidence of the troubled state of mind of these transportees might be seen in the iconography of convict tattoos, which often depict ‘Faith’ (a crucifix), ‘Hope’ (female figure with anchor) and ‘Charity’ (female figure with small children) and the names of husbands, wives and loved ones. The craft of tattooing using soot from oil-lamps as pigment was a common practice both on the prison hulks and during the long sea voyage to Australia, and was a primary means of identifying convicts for the colonial authorities. Many of these images (such as those in the convict dissection samples held in Guys Hospital Museum, London.) are typical of the iconography of contemporary material culture, and can also be seen in the popular prints, ceramic wares and engraved glassware of the period. However, the dating of recorded tattoos shows that at least 40% of convicts were tattooed while awaiting sentence or during transportation. Documented images of handcuffs, the symbol of the prisoners’ broad arrow, kangaroos, snakes and references to ‘the land of sorrow’, would tend to support these statistics (Maxwell-Stewart and Bradley, 1998).
Quilted textiles were another type of artefact produced during the voyages of transportation. The Quaker and prison reformer Elizabeth Fry, supported by the British Ladies Society for the Reform of Female Prisoners, supplied the convict women of Newgate Prison with the necessary fabrics and sewing materials to produce patchworks during their journey, to be sold on arrival in Australia. Each woman was given 2 pounds of patchwork pieces, 9 balls of sewing cotton, 24 hanks of coloured thread, 100 needles, pins, tape, bodkin, thimble and scissors. The Rajah Quilt, made by several unidentified women on the transport ship ‘Rajah’ bound for Van Diemens Land in 1841, and now in the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, is the only known surviving example. Though the circumstances of its making are exceptional, the form and techniques of the Rajah Quilt are typical of English patchwork textiles of the period. A more original Australian textile form, known as the Wagga or bush rug, was developed later, during the depression era of the early 20th century, when ‘making-do’ became an economic necessity. The Wagga was a type of utility quilt, and was made by sewing patches of recycled fabrics (often from menswear suiting pattern books) to a coarse jute or cotton backing of flour sacking. Waggas were often made by men (typically farmers and shearsers) and the direct and crude methods of construction reflect the rigours of rural Australian life.

Similar recycling principles were broadly applied in a domestic context. This widespread practice of ‘making-do’ was officially advocated in the ‘how-to’ booklet *Makeshifts*, produced by the New Settlers League of Victoria in 1923. Organisations such as the New Settlers League were set up to assist new settlers, particularly agricultural workers ‘to accommodate themselves to new circumstances’ (Jupp, 2001: 312). *Makeshifts* offered practical guidance on the manufacture of furniture and kitchen utensils using packing cases, kerosene cans and oil drums as raw material. (Interestingly, *Makeshifts* was sponsored
by kerosene manufacturer British Imperial Oil). The booklet was so popular in depression-era Australia that an enlarged edition was re-published the following year.

This makeshift flair, practicality and eccentricity can be seen in the extensive McAlpine collection of Bush Furniture in the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. Typical of this is a food safe or bush pantry made in Queensland c1925, from a disused oil barrel (Object ref. 92/305). “It appears that the maker was inspired by the ‘Rotary Kitchen Canister’ advertised in Anthony Hordern’s 1923 mail order catalogue, and went to elaborate lengths to create a home-made replica. The skill needed suggests that the maker’s normal farm work may have involved using sheet metal to make rudimentary water tanks and roofing. A fine example of ‘making-do’, involving the salvaging of a commonplace refuse item and transforming it into a useful piece of furniture…”

![Image of Makeshifts booklet]

Fig. 7: ‘Makeshifts’ instruction booklet, Published by the New Settlers league of Victoria, 1923.

In addition to colonial and settlers’ artefacts, I was also searching for historical objects which told something of the relationship between settlers and indigenous Australians.

Although Captain Cook noted in his journal that very few western artefacts were of interest to aboriginals at first contact “unacquainted...with...the necessary

conveniences so much sought after in Europe, they are happy in not knowing the use of them as they seem’d to set no value upon any thing we gave them, nor would they ever part with anything of their own for any one article we could offer them.” (Cook, J. in Hughes, R., 1987, p. 399) It is clear that Aboriginals were very interested in acquiring those European objects, artefacts and materials which they judged to have practical uses, fish hooks, knife blades and axe-heads for example. Indeed, instances of more culturally complex artefacts migrating across cultural borders do exist. One example of an artefact making this cultural crossover is the so-called King-Plate.

Fig. 8. Umbarra, known as King Merriman, with king plate.
These were copied from a regimental brass throat-plates or ‘gorget’ which identified military officers, and were prized as both a decorative artefact and an indicator of status within tribal groups (Troy, 1993). Their popularity amongst Indigenous Australians (and in parallel amongst Indigenous Americans in colonial America) was encouraged by the colonial authorities, and their adoption supported the imposition of European systems of social hierarchy in order to subvert traditional Indigenous social structures.

Kimberley Points provide a further example of artefact migration. In this instance, indigenous artefacts were adapted to exploit the availability of new materials. Stone spear points, flaked on two sides, were traditionally produced in the Kimberly Region of the Northern Territories. They were both practical and aesthetically prized, and were collected and traded throughout aboriginal Northern Australia. Glass provided a perfect alternative material, and though rare was known to Aboriginals before European colonisation through trade with Indonesian Trepang fishermen. (Trepang or sea cucumber was native to Australia, and was prized in Chinese medicines as an aphrodisiac.) Following European colonisation, discarded bottle glass, along with porcelain from dinnerware, became more readily available, and was adopted and recycled by Indigenous spear-makers. Colonial expansion and the construction of the overland telegraph line introduced another source of raw material, in the form of ceramic telegraph insulators. The combination of these new materials, together with an increased demand from non-indigenous collectors has arguably led to the transformation of Kimberley points from ‘authentic’ ethnographic objects to ‘virtuoso tourist art’ (Harrison, 2006: 63-68).

Another type of Indigenous artefact to survive the transition from pre-colonial to post-colonial society is the bush toy. Traditionally, wood and bark discs featured in Aboriginal child’s-play as a game of target practice to teach spear-throwing skills. Such objects have their contemporary counterpart in the push-along vehicles made by the Arrernte children of Central Australia. What has changed in recent times is the availability of ‘new’ materials. Traditional organic materials (wood, bark, sinew and resin) have given way to manufactured materials such as recycled tin and fencing wire, and traditional imagery (animals and birds) has been supplanted by motorcycles, trucks and helicopters. My travels to the Aboriginal art centres in the Pitjantjatjara lands led me to encounter the most iconic and ubiquitous of contemporary Indigenous artefacts, the dot-painting on canvas.
Muecke and Shoemaker (2004) have described how this art-form recently evolved: “For a long time Aboriginal plastic arts were tied to specific places, bodies and ceremonies and were not produced for sale or exhibition. In the 1970s, people were encouraged to produce paintings on bark or canvas, and a new chapter began in the history of Australian art, as an authentic and ancient set of images reasserted itself over the more ephemeral art forms of the settlers. Far from being fixed, these images were original and modern, yet continuously reaching back to the Dreaming cultures for inspiration.”

Much debate has centred upon the ‘authenticity’ of this painting tradition, but authentic or not, the international commercial success of Australian Indigenous art is beyond question, and contributes an estimated 50 million US dollars per annum to the Australian economy (Muecke and Shoemaker, 2004).

In my visit to the Pitjantjatjara lands I saw at first hand how the Art Centres provide an invaluable service to the Aboriginal artistic communities: maintaining market networks, technical and social support structures, and promoting the long-term viability of Indigenous Australian arts.

Much of the acrylic-on-canvas painting has maintained a traditional orientation, informed by kinship-related dreaming and relationships with the land. However, a younger generation of Indigenous painters have begun to challenge this viewpoint, exploiting the formal traditions of Indigenous painting, whilst engaging
with contemporary social and political issues. For example, Indigenous artist Gordon Bennett’s works question ‘settler’ values, and are highly critical of a national identity forged in the absence of what he describes as ‘The Australian Other’.

Section 2: Reflective practice

My early period of research had therefore identified a number of object types and individual artefacts, which had been ‘defined’ by their makers’ experience of colonial dislocation and economic austerity. It also brought to light some important ethical issues, and revealed the potential for new avenues of research through practice.

Ethical issues

A number of ethical issues were raised, both by the initial preparations for the project, and by the experiences gained during the residency and in the field. These issues include cultural sensitivities around the imperial/colonial legacy, engagement with Aboriginal Protocols, and reflection on the context of my own ‘political’ craft practice. Consideration of these issues, some of which were not anticipated, informed both the context and direction of the project.

The pervasive legacy of the British Empire, its traditions, institutions and the monuments to its heroes, can be seen throughout Australia. Imperial monuments abound, in all of Australia’s major cities. In particular, memories of colonial Australia’s bleak beginnings are preserved in the edifices of crime and punishment. The prisons at Hyde Park Barracks and Darlinghurst, both built by convict hard labour, still survive the former as a museum of penal history, the latter more surprisingly as home to the National School of Art.

Old Melbourne Goal has now become a monument to the memory of the goldfields robbers and bushrangers of popular legend. The death masks of these criminals, cast in plaster after their execution, now decorate the prison cells, including that of Ned Kelly, executed there on 11 November 1880.

Several more artefacts illustrative of the brutality of the colonial penal system can be seen in the museum at Old Melbourne Gaol, most memorably for me the calico ‘silence hood’, designed to prevent recognition and communication between prisoners.

Cultural sensitivity was also a major ethical issue in the Aboriginal communities. I had hoped to document the work done at the Indigenous Art Centres while ‘in the field’, but quickly encountered Aboriginal protocols around the taking and ownership of images, which made photographic documentation of this stage of the project difficult.
Protocols also (quite rightly) prevented the taking of anything from the homelands without specific permission. An example of dealing with this was the finding of a dessicated skeleton of a perentie (a monitor lizard) discovered in the Malilanya cave, a historical Aboriginal site near Ernabella. I was excited by this discovery, which unlocked a latent interest in the incorporation of animal bone into clay bodies (the principle of bone china). I began to plan a project, which proposed to incorporate local Aboriginal myths relating to the perentie, within a bone-china ceramic object made from the calcined bones of the lizard. The idea was that this lizard-bone china artefact would then be returned to the homelands. However, despite local permission to take the skeleton away, I wasn’t convinced that this was acceptable within the terms of the protocols, and so the lizard was left where it was found in the Pitjanjatjara lands.

Nevertheless, the ‘bone-china’ idea had taken root, and as an alternative to perentie bones, the return trip to Adelaide was spent collecting bones from the plentiful road-kill along the edge of the main highway. (These were mostly bones from Kangaroo and Emu, co-incidentally the iconography of Australia’s coat of arms.)

My collection of kangaroo and emu bones were turned into bone ash at the Jam Factory studio (by calcining in the kiln and grinding to a fine powder) and posted back to Manchester, for further development in the studio there.
Evolving research interests

‘Beyond the Seas’ presented me with an interesting dilemma: how to operate as a ‘politically-engaged’ maker in a politically unfamiliar environment. Even after a short while in Australia I was aware of cultural and political issues, which, on my own territory, I would have readily engaged with. However, I did not feel comfortable in attempting this, as I felt that my knowledge of Australian history, culture and politics was superficial, at best that of an informed ‘outsider’. To some extent I had anticipated this, and had chosen to examine issues indirectly, through their effects upon the making of artefacts, rather than attempting to tackle them head on. All of this resulted in a very different approach towards working in the studio at the Jam Factory, where I was keen to develop a more experimental approach to making and materials.

Perhaps inevitably then, the development of new attitudes to practice in residence and the consideration of ethical issues in the field resulted in some reshaping of my research interests within the project.

In addition to my initial interest in the development of colonial artefacts and the concept of making-do, I had become interested in the ‘iconisation’ of particular individuals, and in the narratives that have emerged around them. Predominant in this line of enquiry was the folk-hero Ned Kelly, whose death mask I had encountered at the Old Melbourne Gaol museum. The Ned Kelly story is the stuff of legend, born into a poor family of Irish immigrants, Kelly was apprenticed to a bushranger at the age of 14, a life of petty crime then escalated into bank robbery and murder, and an epic man-hunt culminated in the famous shoot-out with police at Glenrowan.

Fig. 11: Detail of ‘Cargo 2’. Image taken from the death mask of Ned Kelly.
The story is graphically depicted in a series of paintings by Sidney Nolan in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. There is undoubtedly a popular identification with the story, as a metaphor of the poor settler society struggling against the casual brutality of the mother country, and the inherent racism and political corruption of the colonial authorities.

The potency of the legend is reinforced by the image of Kelly’s homemade suit of armour. Roughly hammered out from plough mould-boards, the armour is now widely regarded as an Australian national treasure, and is revered as such in the State Libraries of Victoria in Melbourne. The popularity of the story can also be seen as an expression of independence, the Ned Kelly story has become one of the first truly Australian post-colonial narratives.

I had also become interested in the inter-relationships between history, heritage and popular culture. Captain Cook’s ‘annexation’ of New South Wales in 1770, leading to British colonisation in 1788, is celebrated by one section of Australian society, as epitomised by Cook’s cottage (actually the home of his parents) being ‘transported’ brick by brick from Great Ayton in North Yorkshire to Fitzroy Gardens in Melbourne in 1934, to become another iconic national treasure, and arguably the ‘oldest’ building in Australia. (Fig. 12) Yet there is an alternative view, as many Australians regard these dates as the commemoration of ‘150 years of misery and degradation imposed upon the original native inhabitants by the white invaders of this country.’ (Ferguson and Patten, 1938)
A New Body of Work

The ‘Beyond the Seas’ research residency was completed in April 2006, but work on the project continued in the studio for the next 2 years. A number of research strands emerged in the studio, developed through models, marquettes and sampling. The inter-relationship between heritage, pop-culture and craft practice discussed earlier was explored through the house-image (the crafted house-form is a long term research interest of mine). This had developed into a model based on contemporary photographs of the Kelly family home at 11 Mile Creek, near Greta, Victoria, combining the constructional logic of ‘woodcraft’ models with ‘making-do’ materials; waxed cardboard fruit and vegetable boxes from Adelaide Central Market.

Fig. 13: Model of Ned Kelly’s family home in Greta, Victoria.

A further range of artefacts, constructed in a number of materials, explored the theme of masks, cages and outlaws. The silence hood from Melbourne Gaol was re-made and re-interpreted, and the grid-structure of prison/cage echoed in a group of hypothetical and impractical tool-forms. These pieces combine elements of making-do, by using recycled barbeque grills as source material, at the same time making reference to the contemporary Australian lifestyle.
To support the narratives in these early pieces I constructed an ‘alphabet’ of iconic Australian images. An archive of line-drawings was turned into screen printed transfers, and sampled onto a variety of objects and artefacts. One of these was a series of ceramic tiles, titled ‘field notes’, which formed a visual diary of the project. Though they were not made ‘in the field’, they represent an informal note-taking, recording and experimentation consistent with the experience of fieldwork.

‘Cargo 1’

Some of these images also appear on a series of plates, as an assimilation of the Australian experience into my established ceramic vocabulary. These plates are contained within a custom-made recycled steel trunk, shaped to follow the circular form of the plates, which has the superficial appearance of a colonial period hat box. The quilting of the trunk makes reference to The Sidney Nolan painting depicting Ned Kelly’s sister quilting his armour. The textile linings are made from a collection of old and new Australian tea towels, (indicative of both domesticity and tourist souvenirs) mixed with English chintzes, the combination

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5 Nolan, Sidney, 1947. *Quilting the Armour* a painting in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.
of which state the aim of the piece to explore cross-cultural exchange. The box and its ‘cargo’ aim to act as metaphors for the transportation and objectification of convicts sent to Australia.

**Fig. 15. Cargo 1**

**Bush Pantry**

The making-do attitude of settlers and indigenous Australians was consciously carried into the studio, transfer printing the ‘alphabet’ of Australian images onto second hand enamelled tin-plates and vessels (originally collected on location in Australia) which were displayed in a ‘bush pantry’ made of reclaimed architectural timber. The ‘staging’ of the objects in this way is evocative of the need for ‘making do’ in a new and harsh environment, yet also signals a nostalgic pride in this past for modern Australians.
Fig. 16. Bush Pantry

The re-firing of the enamelled wares produced unpredictable surfaces, the bubbling, crazing and bloating of the enamel surface evocative of the rigours of outback living.
Beyond the seas

‘Cargo 2’

I also printed onto ‘op shop’ (charity shop) second-hand ceramic plates, and experimented with printing onto ‘sampled’ plates, which were re-cast from plaster moulds taken from colonial period originals collected in Australia. These sampled plaster moulds were also used in a piece entitled ‘Cargo 2’ which returned to the Kangaroo bone ash collected in Australia for both its subject matter and its material.

Fig. 17. ‘Cargo 2’ (Stacked plates).

This series of stacked plates, cast from kangaroo-bone china, was partnered with (and imprinted by) a series of stamps, made from the same china body and pewter. Pewter was selected as a material in reference to the engraved pewter plate left nailed to a tree by the Dutch navigator Dirk Hartog, the first western artefact to find its way onto Australian territory. (25 October 1616)
The stamped images symbolise a distillation of my original Australian alphabet: Captain Cook; the death mask of Ned Kelly; a kangaroo skeleton; the sailor’s farewell; a convict transport; Australian flora and fauna. This reductive selection of popular images represents a highly personal, invented, view of Australia, yet also documents the development of the research. The intention behind the choice of the stamp as image/object was to reference the cold and clinical bureaucracy of the colonial period and evoke the de-humanising nature of the colonial transportation policy and its associated penal regimes. In addition, the process of stamping my own images into these re-cycled/re-made plates became an act of possession, of ownership.
Section 3. Conclusion.

In the course of working through this project, I discovered what might happen to creative practice when taken out of one context and relocated to another. In the historical case of the settlers, the process of relocation resulted in the creation of unique and extraordinary artefacts (love tokens, tattoos, waggas and bush furniture) and the appropriation and adaptation of existing forms of artefact (bush toys, king plates and Kimberley points).

From a personal perspective the self-imposed ‘rupture’ in my creative practice was an invigorating experience, resulting in a new engagement with artefacts, materials, and narratives. The project forced me to reconsider my ‘normal’ practice, and gave me the freedom to explore a wider range of materials, processes and attitudes to making. The concept of ‘material’ as a deliberate contributor to narrative (in ‘cargo 2’ in particular) has been a revelation, and the most significant outcome to the development of my practice.

Since its completion the project has had several public showings:

A group of the transfer-printed enamel pieces were shown in the exhibition ‘Surface Tension’ at the Jam Factory in March 2006, and a selection of the collaged ‘alphabet’ plates was exhibited at SOFA Chicago in November 2006. A selection of work in progress was shown in Here and there: the Hat Project exhibition at the British Council in New Delhi in March 2007. Finished works were shown in ‘Meeting in the Middle’ at Alsager Arts Centre in February 2008 and in ‘Travellers Tales’ at Contemporary Applied Arts, London, in March 2009.

Two articles by Stephen Bowers, on the ceramic residencies at the Jam Factory, have been published: ‘Home and Away’ (Journal of Australian Ceramics) Vol 45#2006, and ‘Wandering Stars’ (Ceramics: Art and Perception) no.65 2006.

The project is also extensively documented on the HAT website. (www.hat.mmu.ac.uk)

Illustrations

Figure 1 An example of re-located practice, Iron man, (enamelled tin plate). Found and re-worked on location in Adelaide, Australia, March 2006.

Figure 2: Work in progress, Jam Factory studio, March 2006.

Figure 3: Map of Australia and New Zealand, from a British geographical text-book of 1919. Figure 4: Detail from a map of the world (2006), painted by Indigenous artist Peter Nyaningu.

Figure 5: Detail of ‘Cargo 2’. Image of a convict transport ship, from a convict love token.
Figure 6: Adam and Eve, image taken from a convict tattoo.

Figure 7: ‘Makeshifts’ instruction booklet, Published by the New Settlers league of Victoria, 1923.

Figure 8: Umbarra, known as King Merriman, with king plate. Photographer William Henry Corkhill, c. 1900. National Library of Australia.

Figure 9: Racked canvasses at Freegon Art Centre, awaiting transport to galleries in the coastal cities of Australia.

Figure 10: Bones laid out for identification in the ceramic studio at the Jam Factory.

Figure 11: Detail of ‘Cargo 2’. Image taken from the death mask of Ned Kelly.

Figure 12: ‘Captain Cook’s Cottage’, Fitzroy gardens, Melbourne.

Figure 13: Model of Ned Kelly’s family home in Greta, Victoria.

Figure 14: ‘Mask’ and ‘Hood’.

Figure 15: Cargo 1

Figure 16: Bush Pantry

Figure 17: ‘Cargo 2’ (Stacked plates).

Figure 18: Cargo 2 (Stamps).

Figure 19: Captain Cook, detail of Cargo 2.

Bibliography


Beneficial appropriation and corporate exploitation: Exploring the use of ethnographic methods in art, craft and design

By Hamid van Koten

Born in Rotterdam Hamid van Koten came to Britain to study Middle and Far Eastern philosophy. He also acquired practical skills as a furniture maker, and in 1993 he graduated from Glasgow School of Art in Product Design. Since then he has been the director of the VK&C design consultancy and has worked on a wide range of projects, including industrial, exhibition, interior, and architectural design as well as public arts commissions. He has exhibited in the UK and Internationally and has won a number of awards. His work has been much published. He now lectures in Cultural Studies at the School of Design, University of Dundee.

Abstract: Recently there has been a move towards incorporating ethnographic practices into the research phase of the design process. Groundbreaking work has been done by design consultancies like IDEO (2001), and by trend-predictors such as The Future Laboratory. Large corporations (BMW, Philips and Mark & Spencer) employ ethnographic methods to gather data on the use of their products, their retail outlets, and their customer’s relationship with their brand identity. Video diaries ethnographic fieldwork, and co-design tool kits (Sanders, 2002) are rapidly becoming the new means for product and service development.

Though there are many advantages to the incorporation of anthropological perspectives and working methods into the design environment, (e.g. providing the design team with a more holistic and more meaningful approach to problem formulation) there is also a need to look critically at this migration of practices. This paper will explore the re-contextualisation of these methods and will examine if this is merely a further refinement of strategy, employed by a corporate class, to maintain and stimulate the late-capitalist mode of consumption. These methods may thus be the latest addition to the array of marketing tools, co-existing with the traditional focus group, the market research questionnaire, concept testing, customer satisfaction studies, and so on.

The paper will also seek to compare and contrast this migration into the design profession with the application of ethnographic approaches to identity and place as employed by arts and crafts practitioners. Both of which disciplines, unlike design, are much more aligned with the transparency of cultural production of pre-industrial settings. Ethnographic methods provide powerful means for designers, artists and craft people alike, to interpret and understand specific social networks and symbolic structures, and they are able to translate these into
meaningful visual expressions of personal and community identity. The paper will use a few examples from design and art in order to illustrate the diverse uses of ethnography; including a large community arts project, completed by the author, at Ullapool, a small fishing village on the West coast of Scotland.

Ethnography in commerce

The use of ethnographic methods in commercial settings can now trace a history of at least 20 years. When we speak of ethnography in this context, the primary aim of its application lies in utilising the data acquired, in order to understand how humans form meaningful relationships between themselves, objects and their environment. However the ethnographic data gathered is not necessarily recorded in writing for further analysis or indeed disseminated via writing, but the insights gained are applied to a process of production. Ethnography in a commercial context, or one of artistic production, might often employ other means for recording data distinct from writing, such as video, photography, akin to visual anthropological methods, but also - as we shall see - more interactive means for co-creation.

Reluctant at first, industry wondered what the value of ethnographic data collection might be, but rapidly began to realise that methods like these are a powerful way to access what people value and find meaningful in their lives. At the Harvard School of Business ethnographic research is now advocated as an essential component of the commercial environment (Nussbaum, 2006). Education elsewhere is beginning to follow suit, and so, as ethnographic methods are likely to become the new competence to be instilled in budding designers, marketers and managers, questions about these methods and their effectiveness need to be considered.

Changes in the commercial process

It was not until the late 1970s that company managers began to realise that apart from marketing, the design of products and services has a significant impact on sales. Suddenly then there was an influx of management theory covering the subject of design, how it should be managed, used as a strategic tool, be part of an overall company identity and so on. Since then there has been a strong emphasis upon the rationalisation of design activity. Design was no longer a form of applied art but a structured process with logical stages, and should be managed as such (Design Council, 2007). Whilst setting up as a design consultant in the 1990s I did some advisory educational work in secondary schools. During this time a number of educational directives were advocating design skills and grasp of design process as core competencies, the teaching of which was to be embedded in the national curriculum. In secondary schools, the teaching of design skills became a battleground between the arts departments,
who claimed it historically, and the crafts and technology departments, hungry - it seemed - for this new knowledge. Home economics also was persuaded to take on board the design process as an important curriculum component.

The design process is often visualised as a series of stages: Research, concept, development, final product, and implementation. Presented in this way, the design process is an almost mechanical exercise and has, arguably, descended to us from the Bauhaus, which saw design as the application of artistic skills to a growing manufacturing culture (Gagliardi, 2007). In keeping with the Modernist paradigm of social and egalitarian distribution, the Bauhaus focused on production - its processes, and the suitably geometric formal language, and its material capabilities - as a means to serve all people and to address universally all needs. Since the 1950s this model has almost reversed itself, from a production focus to a consumption/market focus. In our post-industrial culture where the emphasis has shifted to the production of services and knowledge it is particularly the early, research stage of the design process that has come to the forefront. No longer do designers start out with a social, universal conception and then utilise available resources and industrial processes to benefit a large market with perceived equalitarian needs, but now the initial starting point has become a specific submarket or even specific individuals within a designated submarket group. In this new model of business practice a critical understanding of the target group is thus fundamental for designers (see Figure 1).

![Diagram of design process]

Fig. 1. Changes in the commercial process. A new breed of companies (e.g. Dell Computers) has emerged which assemble or manufacture products only after these have been ordered and paid for (Image VK&C Partnership, 2006.)

The latter half of the previous century moved from what were a rather crude, but effective set of demographic groupings, to the development of differentiated markets tied to differentiated lifestyles. Demographic profiling based upon income brackets, class and professional status was overtaken by psychographic profiling and lifestyle analysis. Since then lifestyle groupings have further fragmented into loose dynamic clusters of individuals with overlapping value sets. It is these value sets that are now important drivers in product development and design (Dodd, 2001).
In a globalised economy fewer and fewer corporations are actual producers. For many companies their main operating activities are marketing, distributing and selling. Companies nowadays must engage in cultural analysis in order to gain an understanding of what codings are required to match their products to consumers. By codings I mean the semiotic level of objects, the values that the objects signify through their appearance and context (Krippendorff, 1989). Nowadays designers as well as design students acquire an understanding of the markets and the users for which they make proposals. Designers gain a perspective on how people will engage with and make sense of a product. An understanding of end users, how they think, feel and act, has become vital to business success (Sanders, 2006). Parallel with this evolution of the commercial process, there have emerged analytical tools for understanding the consumer - door to door polling, the focus group, lifestyle questionnaires, user testing, consumer satisfaction surveys, online surveys, the supermarket loyalty card and so on. These are all progressively more sophisticated forms of market research. This type of consumer understanding was traditionally gained quantitatively, through marketing questionnaires, and more qualitatively by focus groups. But these methods are beginning to show their limitations and no longer appear to function. Market research questionnaires can reach only so far. People reply according to how they imagine their behaviour, and according to how they believe they should respond (Raymond, 2003).

We can question people about concrete characteristics e.g. the price of a product, its size, or the speed with which it operates, ease of use, and so on. Symbolic and emotional associations are much harder to capture. Responses to these are often sub- and unconscious and more difficult to articulate. Even focus groups can only provide limited insights. The artificiality of the focus group, its setting and make up and its specific intention all limit the flow of information. But apart from that there are certain things people will simply not talk about, no matter how relaxed the focus group atmosphere might be. To give an example of this: in recent years the Miller Brewing Co. noticed a significant and inexplicable drop in the consumption of its low alcohol product Miller Lite. They asked ethnographers to do field research by visiting clubs and pubs. They observed something that most men might be reluctant to admit to in interview or questionnaire: that it is increasingly women who are influencing what men drink – and women simply were not responding to the traditional masculine cues of the Miller ads. Consequently we have seen Miller Lite campaigns change from what was a very macho oriented approach (extreme sports, telling tales, female catfights) to a softer and more inclusive approach, in order to address these “new emerging bar cultures” (McCracken, 2006).

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1 In *The Order of Simulacra*, Baudrillard suggests that polls and questionnaires can no longer operate as a means for gathering genuine responses, he says: “[…] it is impossible to obtain a nonsimulated response to a direct question […] there is total circularity in every case: those questioned always behave as the questioner imagines they will and solicits them to.”

2 For a critique on the focus group see e.g.: http://www.artsci.com/areaascr/ritred.htm
To stay with *Miller*, previously the company conducted an extensive ethnographic study into its consumer base. This was in order to find out what the key characteristics are of a typical *Lite* drinker, and especially what distinguishes them from drinkers of *Miller*’s main competitor *Budweiser*. An anthropological analysis of recorded male drink behaviour found that *Miller Lite* drinkers form a social bond around the drinking behaviour “Miller is favored by groups of drinkers, while its main competitor, *Bud Lite*, is a beer that sells to individuals.” If we look at their advertising campaigns then we can see this clearly reflected in the way the respective brands are promoted.

![Image of Budweiser and Miller Lite advertising](http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/81/evverymove.html [accessed: 15/12/06])

This example demonstrates that, although quantitative surveys and focus groups are still in use, corporations that truly seek to understand the behaviour of their consumers have found their way to these observational forms of research, appropriated from the ethnographic and anthropological disciplines. If corporations can understand the rituals and values their potential consumers respond to, than they will be able to utilise this in their brand communications via advertising and promotion.

As anthropology deals primarily with the understanding and decoding of human behaviour in order to uncover the symbolic relationships between humans and their environment, the marketing promotion and design of products would seem to be its ideal territory. Recently then there has been a new momentum toward the practical application of ethnographic methods in both the early and later stages of the design process (Sanders, 2006).

**Anthropology versus Design Ethnography in a design context**

The methods by which anthropologists penetrate deeper into our symbolic worlds are somewhat contrary to the skills we traditionally equip designers with.

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3 For more details on this particular study see: http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/81/evverymove.html [accessed: 15/12/06].
Designers are generally keen to initiate close involvement with the subject of study and like to offer up solutions, backed with (at times opinionated) rhetoric. They will ultimately need to achieve some sort of conclusion by a certain deadline and for a certain price. Ethnographers - though constrained by time and money - are traditionally trained to do the opposite and to avoid too much close exchange with subjects of study (although inevitably this does happen) or at least to be aware of the ‘skewing’ that may result from this involvement. Ethnographers are trained to neutralise their impartiality by means of formal methodology. (For a discussion and critique on this see: Fine, 1993.) For many designers this may well be a counter-intuitive way of working, as design is still generally understood and taught as a problem solving activity. Designers therefore tend to operate in a solution-focussed mode, often jumping to conclusions before really taking stock of all the available information. Ideas spring up in the designer’s imagination, disrupting what ideally would be a neutral and observational mode of engagement. Furthermore the information gathered by ethnography is much more fuzzy than the research material gathered by designers from their initial investigation. Designers tend to be interested in data they can apply in the short term, in opposition to ethnography where everything is relevant in the first instance and is analysed in a wide context. Thus the motives for observation and data collection are somewhat different for an ethnographer from those of a designer.

As Paul Skaggs (2005) suggests:

Observational research is similar to ethnography in process, but the results the designer is looking for are different than what the anthropologist is looking for. The ethnographer is looking for generalities; the designer is looking for specifics. The ethnographer is concerned with analysis; the designer is concerned with synthesis. The ethnographer is avoiding making judgements; the designer is required to make judgements; the ethnographer looks at prolonged activity; the designer requires information quickly.

Skaggs comments highlight some of the problems with the commercialisation of the ethnographic method.

In the case of the female influence on male beer drinking behaviour, discussed above, an anthropologist would no doubt prefer to assess the significance of this data within a much wider and longer-term context, and with regards to human relationships - questioning a number of things, such as whether there are social shifts underlying these changes in drinking behaviour? Are those shifts significant with regards to gender relations? Do they denote a changed attitude in men towards women or vice versa? Designers and advertisers will be more interested in what the implications are for the market and the marketing of the product. They might ask very different questions like: Should we change the way we position our products in the market place? Do we need to change the text and imagery of our advertising materials, perhaps our labels? Should we even change the shape of the bottle? What should the future pub look like? Perhaps we need to focus on wine bars instead?
Another example of the application of ethnographic methods in a commercial context is that of HomeLab, a project undertaken by the Dutch electronics company Philips. HomeLab is a comfortable hotel-like environment into which people are invited and where they live with, use, and then share their views on, the latest electronic aids for living. The place is not unlike the Big Brother house, and has been criticised by ethnographers for doing second rate ethnography by avoiding the more ‘authentic’ home environment. Rather than going into homes of people and installing these new devises, Philips does not seem to take account of the fact that when people are placed in an artificial environment, they are likely to behave in artificial ways (Shaffer, 2005).

Perhaps a more successful example of traditional observational research in action is that of IDEO, the design consultancy that claims to be the first in taking up ethnography as a tool for design development (Kelley, Littman, 2001). When the Bank of America commissioned IDEO to come up with a new concept for a bank account, IDEO utilises a mixed methods approach to research, in the process they commissioned a number of observational studies into how customers used their banks. Through close observation of the selected group (‘boomer mothers’) the ethnographers noticed that, for speed and ease of calculation, many people round up their pennies to the nearest dollar. They also noticed that this particular group of bank users seemed to find saving very difficult to do. From these observations IDEO proposed an account that gives clients the option to receive their statements automatically rounded up. A further option suggested by the company was that customers could divert the ‘change’ into a personal savings account or to a charity of their choice. This new “Keep the Change” account proved so popular that in the year after its launch the bank gained 700,000 new account holders and opened 1,000,000 new savings accounts (IDEO, 2006).4

4 For more on IDEO’s method: http://www.creditunionbusiness.com/html/sales_marketing.html [accessed: 15/12/06]
Another example is the Future Laboratory, a London based trend research consultancy, with an international research network. They do briefings to large corporations on newly emerging consumer behaviour and trends. Much of their research comes via email from a worldwide virtual network. Information is received in response to questionnaires that are then sent back by recipients sometimes with relevant images. The Future Laboratory also engages ethnographers to undertake qualitative research.

Fieldwork - they believe - always wins out over focus group work. This is because in a focus group people speak from memory, which is at best unreliable, whereas observational research allows for direct contextualisation between product and user behaviour (Raymond, 2003).

In 2001 the Future Laboratory was contracted by BMW, who had just bought the British Mini production plant. The German company was keen to explore and understand the ‘ordinary’ Mini driver, as this was a market very different from that of the traditional BMW customer. They commissioned the Future Laboratory to do an ethnographic study, comparing BMW drivers with drivers of small cars. BMW drivers were interviewed, then provided with a camera and were asked to record visually what they thought important about the car they owned. The images that came back were revealing and contrasted dramatically with how they spoke about the cars. (See Figure 5.) Verbally BMW car owners claimed that their choice of car was all about “spirit, personality, space” (Raymond, 2003, p.189), however the photographs they submitted showed a rather clinical detachment and a rational attitude to the cars. Most images were of “clean hubcaps, pristine engines, streamlined steering wheels, sleek surfaces and
foldaway tool kits” and with very little reference to people and “paraphernalia that suggest personality, spirit or emotion in the traditional understanding of these words” (Raymond, 2003, p.189).

The Future Laboratory ethnographers similarly recorded the way that small cars were used and found that when questioning ‘ordinary’ car users they seemed to place very little emphasis upon the meaning of the brand they drove. When asked why they had chosen their car they referred to practicality, convenience, size, and cheapness. Buying a car for the sake of a brand name they perceived as decadent and even ethically irresponsible. However when probed further these drivers all turned out to have an ‘ideal’ model and brand that they related to, e.g. classic Mini, Morris Minor, VW Beetle and so on (Raymond, 2003, p.192).

This method of researching consumer motivation revealed how large gaps can occur between what people say and what they mean, and furthermore what they do in practice. The Future Laboratory demonstrated that observational research is a means to bridge these gaps and can provide profound insights in how people relate to products.
In a similar way to some of the other examples already mentioned, the Future Laboratory have also been employed to address negative retail trends such as that of Marks and Spencer, who, in an attempt to address the loss of custom, commissioned the Future Laboratory to investigate its retail environment. Ethnographers were paired up with elderly and disabled shoppers and then followed the consumers from their home environments (having established a knowledge of their existing wardrobes) into the shops in order to understand and identify their specific needs and wants. All was recorded for later analysis. (See Figure 6.) At the end of this research period a whole range of recommendations were made to M&S in order to achieve a retail environment which would be much more inclusive for the elderly and impaired shoppers.

Fig. 6. The Future Laboratory. 2004. (Reproduced with permission.) After analysis of video ethnography many recommendations were made to Marks and Spencer for improvements to their retail environment.

**Tools for Conviviality**

The examples provided so far, in effect, treat the consumer as the subject to be designed for. In contrast to this Elizabeth Sanders believes businesses (and designers) need to go one step further. She suggests that we no longer need to just observe what people do, and then design with that in mind, but we need to involve people directly in the design process. People, she claims, no longer want to be treated like consumers but want to be actively and
creatively involved in new product development. It is this creative dimension of the end user that has been ignored by our industrial culture and, in the future, designers, she suggests, will merely provide ‘scaffolding’ (Sanders, 2002) for end users to construct their own products. To enable this co- or participatory design process she has developed a series of tool kits (see Figure 7).

Sanders refers (and to some extent legitimises her work) by drawing on the writings of Ivan Illich, in particular his book *Tools for Conviviality* (1973). However it is not clear if Sanders suggests that her toolkits are actually “tools for conviviality” or whether these are still to be invented in the future, or indeed if they already exist in other forms. There is perhaps an irony in Saunders’ utilisation of Illich’s theories because at the time of writing - the early 1970s - there was a residue of optimism for social change and a belief in the political process. Illich envisages not mere tools for conviviality but a restructuring of our industrial culture, a “society-wide inversion of present industrial consciousness […and] institutions” (Illich, 1973, Ch. II, p14). For Illich it is not merely inventing new tools but it is the mastery and control over these tools that needs to be addressed. Even if Sanders aligns herself with this Marxist spirit, in reality her work, interesting as it is, fuels the research process of a corporate culture, keen to capitalise on our inner dreams and creative fantasies.

Others have argued that these new convivial tools already exist in the form of interactive devises, networks and environments (Flichy, 2007). Perhaps laptops are convivial tools in the sense that they provide a relative freedom as to where we work, and allow us to combine and switch between ‘work’ and ‘leisure’, study and entertainment, connect us with others and so on. But certainly the means by which laptops are produced is by no means convivial, and the production of electronics has stimulated the industrialization of non-western countries in exactly the way in which Illich argued was to be avoided. The people that make the tools that, perhaps, liberate us, they themselves most definitely are not free.

It would be unfair to single out Sanders here for this critique. The point is that without a change in consciousness, tantamount to a real shift in world trade
policies and industrial practices, we will remain on a path of unsustainable development and maintain the inequalities that go with it. Tools in themselves are not the issue, but it is the ideological constructions they are embedded in, which need to be questioned and evolved. Thus to return to all the examples of applied ethnographic methods given above we might query the motives behind the crossing of disciplinary boundaries and the adaptation of ethnography out with its traditional context. If this is merely at the will of commerce in pursuit of profit, we need to question if indeed this is beneficial appropriation or corporate exploitation.

**Ullapool and Intuitive Anthropology**

Although I identify with, and my training is in, a design discipline some of my work has been in the realm of public art. After being shortlisted for a project in 1998, I was invited to stay for an artist residency up in Ullapool, a small fishing village on the West coast of Scotland. At Ullapool the building of a new - and long overdue - High School had begun, and the local community committee had managed to secure £100K in lottery and matched funding for artists to develop art projects around the school. As is so often the case by the time this funding for art became available a large amount of building work on the school had already been completed. It was thus important to work quickly so that the work would be integral to the architecture rather than providing an ‘add on’ or ‘stuck on’ piece of art.

![Fig. 8. VK&C Partnership. 2000. For nearly 20 years the Ullapool high school was housed in ‘temporary’ portacabins.](image)
Fig. 9. VK&C Partnership. 2000. The new high school under construction.

Fig. 10. VK&C Partnership. 2000. Ullapool visual investigations.
During my stay up there I was pleasantly surprised by how the community opened up to me - a complete stranger. I spent many evenings in the local pubs and, never short of a drink, gained instantly new friends, some of which I am still in touch with today. Though I have no formal training in ethnographic methodology I imagine that artist-in-residence programmes are not unlike ethnographic fieldwork.

During my stay I collected data, impressions, source material both from these social gatherings. I took many photographs (see Figure 10). I proposed to run a few workshops with some of the children that were about to move into the new school building. These were done with the help of the school’s art teacher and took the form of free expression by means of discussions, drawings and small models used to visualise their ideas. The children were asked to express what Ullapool means to them and then how they might design a new school. They were encouraged to let their imagination go wherever it wanted and we got some wonderful ideas like slides and chutes coming off the roof, indoor fountains and swimming pools. They then made a number of drawings and sketches but were specifically encouraged to work with small models (see Figures 11 and 12).

Fig. 10. VK&C Partnership. 2000. Reception desk with waterfall, model by pupil.
Fig. 11. VK&C Partnership. 2000. Swimming fish railing, model by pupil.

Fig. 12. Google Earth. Ullapool in its geographical setting.
Much of the visual language that the children employed was inspired by the unique position of Ullapool: perched almost between water and land. The presence of water in the form of Loch Broom and the Atlantic Ocean dominates the landscape (see Figure 13). After subsequent visits to Ullapool I also began to understand its ‘tidal’ nature: in the winter Ullapool and its population contracts and its economy mainly revolves around commercial fishing. In the summer it expands to at least twice its size as it absorbs a huge number of tourists. Thus tides, cycles, flow and water became the themes underlying our proposals.

I brought back all the source material gathered in this way to the studio in Glasgow where I sat down with my partner and we would use these narratives, photos, sketches and models to generate ideas for art / design projects suitable for the school environment. I would then take these back up in the form of presentation boards and present them to the wider community of Ullapool by means of small exhibitions. We would note the feedback and develop ideas further after which I presented them to a committee of community representatives and other stakeholders: the Scottish Arts Council, the Highland Council, the school’s architect and the contractors. Remarkably we navigated through this process, which was in a sense like designing by committee, but more accurately could be understood as a form of participatory design or designing by consensus. In this way of working the voices of all stakeholders are equally represented, it is the artist/designer’s task to facilitate the dialogical process and, ultimately, synthesise the outcomes into a plan of action and implementation. (I do remember some anxious moments nearing the implementation stage of this project as we tabled new proposals for the landscaping around the building; we had to persuade the quantity surveyors to reconsider significant amendments to the existing bill of quantities.)

Information thus was gathered by the following means:

- Photographs of landscape and built environment
- Interviews and discussions
- Workshops
- Exhibitions and feedback sessions
- Committee meetings

This information gathering is a process we might call ‘intuitive anthropology’, which no doubt many artists will be able to relate too. Unlike the previously discussed contrast between a designer and ethnographer this way of working brings together the exploratory and non-closure approach of the ethnographer with the synthetic and goal orientated mindset of the designer. The ethnographic method here is employed to understand the relevant values and conceptions of the local residents and by finding visual correspondences allowing these to become encoded in the proposed art works.
During the process of idea refinement and final implementation we identified a number of opportunities for pupils, parents, teachers and local businesses to get involved. For example - the outdoor furniture was designed by us but was manufactured by the Ullapool Boatbuilders, a small local company. They engaged a number of pupils to work with them in the construction, finishing and installation of all the seating and rubbish bins for the schools surrounding landscape. We found that this way of engaging the community in all the stages of the design process created a strong sense of involvement and ownership, resulting in a sense of appreciation and care for the final outcomes and an understanding of the symbolic language of the forms. It was also very transparent to them how the money was spent and how the pieces were made, where the materials had come from and what processes and people were involved. The project allowed for the Ullapool residents to reflect upon and rethink their identity as derived from a sense of place. The final works installed are markers of this process and provide places and objects for contemplating Ullapool and its role in the 21st Century (see Figures 14-19).

Fig. 13. VK&C Partnership, 2000. Concept exhibition boards for seating and floor design.
Fig. 14. VK&C partnership, 2000. Implementation drawing for floor design. The lines are a symbolic representation of the flowing, tidal nature of Ullapool, its location between sea and land and of the local crofting plots which can be clearly identified in the surrounding landscape.

Fig. 15: VK&C Partnership, 2000. Exhibition drawing for reception desk. Inspiration was taken from pupils’ ideas, landscape and location.
Beneficial appropriation and corporate exploitation

Fig. 16. VK&C partnership, 2000. Finished floor and reception desk.

Fig. 17. VK&C Partnership, 2000. Exhibition drawing showing outdoor seating, bins and railings around car park. The visual vocabulary is derived from nautical forms.
Conclusion

Ethnographic research methods and anthropological analysis do appear to be part of a set of new migratory practices, and they are likely to embed themselves firmly into management, marketing and design practice, and subsequently education. What we need to be critical of is the level of popularisation and appropriation. Driven by management directives alone we are likely to see a similar exploitation as that which occurred in the beginning of the last century with the absorption of psychology into corporate culture (Ewen, 1996). As the goal of management driven strategies are generally short term and project based, a designer’s ethnographic research may provide short term, commercial benefits. But, if aligned to management theory alone, ethnographic practice is unlikely to contribute to a more sustainable human future.

What I have attempted to do in this paper is to explore and, on occasion, critique how ethnographic methods have migrated into a diversity of commercial contexts related to advertising, marketing and design. I have also looked at an application within community art, and demonstrated how, used in this context, an ethnographic approach allowed for more community engagement and a sense of ownership, something difficult to achieve by other means.
We could bemoan the loss of the traditional anthropological frameworks from which these methods originate and the superficiality and appropriation of these methods or techniques for the short term gain of a corporate culture, or even in the application of a community arts project. But perhaps also there is another side to this and research into people's behavioural motives may well provide us with an understanding of how to change our patterns of consumption to those that are more sustainable, and find ways in which we can uncover what truly fulfils us as human beings. For artists and designers anthropology has a wealth to offer when it comes to understanding the symbolic systems and discourses within which we as humans operate. It can aid our understanding as biological, symbolic and as aesthetic creatures, our relationship with nature and our contingency upon it.

Illustrations

Figure 1: Changes in the commercial process. A new breed of companies (e.g. Dell Computers) has emerged which assemble or manufacture products only after these have been ordered and paid for (Image VK&C Partnership, 2006.)

Figure 2: Budweiser (left) promotes its Lite brand by depicting individuals in drinking scenarios, whereas Miller targets group drinkers by showing ‘male bonding rituals’. (Images: Budweiser, Miller, 2007, no copyright infringement intended.)

Figure 3: Philips, 2004, (Reproduction permitted). Philips HomeLab. Temporary residents are observed while they test and comment on new electronic products.

Figure 4: Keep the Change, IDEO’s innovative new bank account. (IDEO, 2006, no copyright infringement intended.)

Figure 5: Photo diaries illustrate the contrast between ‘ordinary’ car drivers and BMW owners. (No copyright infringement intended.)

Figure 6: The Future Laboratory. 2004. (Reproduced with permission.) After analysis of video ethnography many recommendations were made to Marks and Spencer for improvements to their retail environment.

Figure 7: E. Sanders. 2004. (Reproduced with permission.). Co-design toolkit developed by Sanders.

Figure 8: VK&C Partnership. 2000. For nearly 20 years the Ullapool high school was housed in ‘temporary’ portacabins.

Figure 9: VK&C Partnership. 2000. The new high school under construction.

Figure 10: VK&C Partnership. 2000. Ullapool visual investigations.
Figure 11: VK&C Partnership. 2000. Reception desk with waterfall, model by pupil.

Figure 12: VK&C Partnership. 2000. Swimming fish railing, model by pupil.

Figure 13: Google Earth. Ullapool in its geographical setting.

Figure 14: VK&C Partnership, 2000. Concept exhibition boards for seating and floor design.

Figure 15: VK&C partnership, 2000. Implementation drawing for floor design. The lines are a symbolic representation of the flowing, tidal nature of Ullapool, its location between sea and land and of the local crofting plots which can be clearly identified in the surrounding landscape.

Figure 16: VK&C Partnership, 2000. Exhibition drawing for reception desk. Inspiration was taken from pupils’ ideas, landscape and location.

Figure 17: VK&C partnership, 2000. Finished floor and reception desk.

Figure 18: VK&C Partnership, 2000. Exhibition drawing showing outdoor seating, bins and railings around car park. The visual vocabulary is derived from nautical forms.

Figure 19: VK&C Partnership. 2000. Completed seating and landscaping.

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