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CRAFT • MATERIAL • MEMORY

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Photo: Jenny Leunig, 20 June 2013. This image is referred to in 'Les Tricoteuses: The plain and purl of solidarity and protest' by Liz Stops.

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Themed Section

Craft • Material • Memory: an editorial introduction

Anne Brennan and Patsy Hely

The call for papers for this issue of *craft + design enquiry* invited articles which addressed the resurgence of interest in connections between craft, material and memory in the context of global change. It is easy to see this interest as a reflection of a similar impetus in the nineteenth century, when the Arts and Crafts movement's framing of handmaking in the context of tradition and continuity provided a comforting antidote to the storm of change and dislocation which modernity brought to Europe.

The recent strong interest in making connections between craft and memory can, however, also be explained by developments in the intellectual landscape of the last three decades. These include the rise of cultural and memory studies, for example, and the shift in the priorities of history away from grand narratives of nationhood to an interest in the 'small' histories of ordinary people. These academic developments have themselves been a response to the historical and cultural changes wrought within our increasingly globalised postcolonial world. Rather than offering a reassuringly unified image of the past, however, they inscribe memory and history as fragmentary, contingent and multi-vocal.

Over the course of the twentieth century, craft has struggled to define itself first in relation to the prescriptive and exclusionary frameworks of the art/craft debate and, more recently, in relation to the overlapping but distinct preoccupations and histories of design. Cultural studies, with its interdisciplinary focus, has provided useful models for rethinking craft's histories and meanings. Rozsika Parker's foundational work, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (1984), became a touchstone for both women artists and craftspeople interested in retrieving the invisible and domestic histories of women's textile practices. Even now, 30 years after its publication, echoes of its influence can be found in some of the papers in this issue.

The Subversive Stitch encouraged practitioners and writers to think about craft's histories and cultural meanings in its own terms rather than those prescribed by the art world. In more recent years, a resurgence of interest in the cultural significance of objects and the discourses of 'thing theory' have opened up a new field for thinking about craft and its artefacts, including the ways in which

objects might become the hosts for both cultural and individual memory. In considering these developments, however, we were also conscious that the linking of the terms 'craft' and 'memory' has also often become a trope in which memory is invoked as an unproblematic conduit to a nostalgic fantasy about the past. In proposing this issue, we were interested to test whether it is possible for these links to suggest a more complex engagement between craft and memory and whether indeed these links are being critiqued or subverted.

The decade of *The Subversive Stitch* saw a shift away from craft's preoccupation with material and, since that time, defining craft through its relationship to materials has come to be seen, almost universally, as retrogressive. A number of threads in recent scholarship, though, suggest new ways of thinking about materials as more active participants in craft and design are currently being developed. For example: current interest in the area of phenomenology, with its focus on experience, tactility and embodiment is creating renewed interest in materiality; practitioners are responding to contemporary ecological imperatives around material use and sustainability, and new material formulations called for by digitally based production methods are generating interest outside traditional craft areas, and reflecting that interest back to practitioners. In the light of this, it is interesting to note that we received very few papers whose primary concerns engaged with materials and materiality. A number of papers, however, addressed these issues tangentially.

In reviewing the submitted papers we were struck by the ways in which they addressed issues that were canvassed in issue 4 of this journal, *Relational Craft and Design*. Relational aesthetics seems to have been a useful tool for addressing connections between craft and memory, with a number of papers exploring projects where a broader community of users become active in the processes of making meaning.

Liz Stops's paper is a case in point. She recounts the activities of Knitting Nannas Against Gas (KNAG), an organisation of politically concerned citizens who use knitting as protest against coal seam gas mining exploration in their local rural area. Their most common artefacts are small knitted versions of the logo of the Lock the Gate Alliance, knitted banners for use at blockades. Another resonant knitted item has been the yellow beanie that is often seen being worn by both activists and politicians at protests. We see this as KNAG's version of the Liberty, or Phrygian, cap. The craft skills invested in the products of the group's knitting are unimportant, rather it is the symbolic resonance of a group of women knitting, and the forms the knitted outcomes take, that have power. Stops draws an analogy between this community and the *tricoteuses* of the French Revolution, describing how knitting — a peaceful, non-combative, but in both contexts, a somewhat unsettling endeavour — is used to bear witness.

Sam Bowker focuses on relationships forged between Cairo's close-knit group of tentmakers and the global community of quilters. He describes how the tentmaker's materials and techniques have changed and outlines the ways in which the form of the tent has evolved in response to the needs of

the local audience on the one hand, and a growing international audience on the other. Bowker finds inspiration in a collaboration between the tentmakers and communities of quilters in Australia, America and other Western centres; a coming together where, he recounts, both sides have agency. The project acknowledges that the tentmakers' long traditions are anchored in the same modern world as the quilmakers. By placing the traditions of the tentmakers alongside the heritage of Western textile techniques, Bowker argues that a broader historical and critical framework to the benefit of both parties is created.

A different kind of community is invoked by Mae Finlayson and Karen Hall. Using a narrative structure in which the voices of theorist and practitioner alternate, they explore what happens when found, unfinished works are reworked and recontextualised, or, in their words, revived. Their discussion focuses on a cache of materials and unfinished embroidered works found on a market stall, a son's collection of his deceased mother's handiwork. Hall and Finlayson's paper grapples with the 'troubling status of the unfinished object [that] exists both in its incompleteness and its physical persistence'. They set their objects off on a trajectory unimagined by their original author. In this sense, then, repurposed objects might be said to resist finality and are simultaneously both old and new.

The unfinished object is addressed again by Emma Peters, exploring Elisa Markes-Young's relationship with the collection of textiles brought to Australia by her family when they emigrated from Poland to Australia. Peters addresses the way in which Markes-Young incorporates textiles from the collection into new objects in her home. A pillowcase and tablecloth, embroidered by three generations of women in her family and still unfinished, have been inserted by Markes-Young into a set of curtains. Peters discusses Markes-Young's project in terms of the challenge of working towards sustainable design. Specifically she invokes Jonathan Chapman's theory of emotionally durable design, which foregrounds the emotional and mnemonic connections that can be forged between user and object as a way of prolonging its useful life in the world. In this way, she argues, a more lasting and conscious relationship with the value of objects is formed, a relationship that allows users to bypass the economic models of consumption that drive design.

In both these papers, communities of makers in the past are brought into conversation with makers in the present through the material legacy of an archive of unfinished objects. But this conversation is open-ended and contingent: the interventions of Hall, Finlayson and Markes-Young do not complete the works, they simply extend the process of making in ways that do not foreclose on meaning, or indeed on possible new forms the unfinished items might take in the future. In this way, the unfinished object is released from its status as a relic of the past and becomes an active text upon which it is always possible to inscribe new meaning. In this exchange between communities of makers, in which meaning and authorship are constantly being destabilised, it might also be possible to read an analogy for the ways in which time and memory operate to fashion and refashion an ever-shifting, contingent narrative about the past.

Belinda von Mengersen addresses the unstable narratives of memory in her paper, which is also directed at Markes-Young's engagement with her family's collection of textiles. In this case, the paper explores Markes-Young's body of work *The strange quiet of things misplaced*. Von Mengersen describes the way in which Markes-Young, who has no formal training in traditional stitching techniques, reinvents the stitch patterns of the textiles from memory in a mimetic process analogous to drawing. This process, von Mengersen argues, operates as a form of performative encounter with her medium that both explores and comes to represent the elusive and contingent nature of memory itself.

Another type of performative encounter is addressed by Sabine Pagan, who considers new ways in which meaning might be shaped in craft and design. Pagan considers the potential relationships between maker, wearer and viewer in contemporary jewellery, adapting the theoretical work of the architects Juhani Pallasmaa and Peter Zumthor to explore embodied relationships with forms and materials on the body. In an account of her project *Hand over*, Pagan describes how a series of rings is distributed to friends to be worn for a set period of time. The embodied experience of wearing the rings is fed back to Pagan by the wearers, and this information is subsequently built into the making of a further series of rings. Her project acknowledges and makes visible the ways in which the constant physical association between object and the body creates meaning in a way that is continuous and open-ended.

Dialogue between makers and wearers is at play also in the paper submitted by Martha Glazzard, Sarah Kettley, Tessa Acti and Karen Harrigan. Originally submitted for the Open Section, the ideas it raises are echoed in other papers, prompting us to include it in this themed section. Community is central to their project especially in the way in which responsibility for constructing meaning through making and performing spreads across a network of participants.

Their paper documents a collaboration between a group of interdisciplinary makers and practitioners on one side of the English Channel and a dance company working on the other. The brief was to develop costumes exploring relationships between garments, emotions and specific body parts for a dance performance. Glazzard et al. explain their approach to the project and the flexible methodology they developed through play, locating its genesis in Bruno Latour's actor-network theory. They point to 'difference' as being an important consideration in their development of the costumes, difference between participants' experience, conceptualisations, intentions and expectations. The final costumes they describe as mirroring their approach; that is, capable of being inhabited and interpreted in multiple ways by their dance collaborators.

Latour and others conceptualisation of the term 'thing' provided the group with a rich and very relevant theoretical framework and their choice of costume material — a responsive, flexible stretch fabric — could not be more appropriate in providing metaphoric resonance with the project's theoretical dimension. Material here, then, becomes an active participant/actor and the authors acknowledge this role in saying 'the fabric dictated a large part of the method'.

Drawing on Arjun Appadurai and Cornelius Castoriades ideas about globalisation and the social imaginary, Katherine Moline and Jacqueline Clayton call for ‘a richer understanding’ of the potentials offered by interdisciplinarity. In invoking Appadurai’s terms ‘production knowledge’ and ‘consumption knowledge’ as part of their argument, their paper connects with ideas raised in other papers in this issue.

Their paper addresses two contemporary museum interventions, Onkar Kular’s, Noam Toran’s and Keith R. Jones’s *I cling to virtue* (2010) at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum and Gwynn Hanssen Pigott’s *Pleased to meet you* (2012–2013) at the Museum of Anthropology, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

In the latter, Hanssen Pigott’s selection ignored classifications of discipline, genre, material, or time of making, and the viewer was instead invited to seek their own reference points within the tableaux. *I cling to virtue* took the form of an entirely fictional biographical narrative created by an artist, a designer and a poet. The narrative unfolded through a collection of objects, digital works and photographs, followed in 2011 by a photographic catalogue and in 2013 by a statement of practice by the artists. Both exhibitions, they argue, gave the viewer greater responsibility for determining meaning. In the case of *I cling to virtue*, the viewer was required as well to attend to its meanings as they unfolded over time.

Conclusion

The papers in this issue reflect a variety of approaches to its theme. Some are literal engagements with the concept of memory, exploring work that addresses memory itself, or work that addresses relationships with objects from the past. Others are directed towards and engage with the histories of craft practices and what these might mean in the present. None of the papers in this issue, however, address memory as a way of endorsing a theoretical or historical status quo. Craft is neither represented as a nostalgic historical panacea for the ills of the present, nor is it even presented as a discrete practice, with the maker as central to its forms and meanings. Indeed, in considering relationships between craft, material and memory, the papers in this issue have utilised a plethora of interdisciplinary strategies to reframe the ways in which craft and its practices operate in a contemporary globalised world. The focus of this issue, then, has not been on the object *per se*, but on the notion of craft as an activity that is social and located within a matrix of community relationships. Positioned here, it acts as both an instrument for charting social and cultural change and as an actor within those very changes.

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encompass the ways in which private and public memories are configured in institutions, such as the memorial and the archive. She has undertaken a number of projects in archives and museums.

Dr Patsy Hely is an artist working primarily in the field of ceramics. Her work is held in many public collections including the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Musée royal de Mariemont, Belgium; the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; and the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. Her PhD, 'Ceramics and the Articulation of Place', was awarded in 2007 and her research interests include colonial ceramics and the intersection of British and Australian ceramic histories. Academic positions have included the ANU School of Art (2002–2014) and Southern Cross University (1986–2001); she is currently an emeritus fellow at the ANU School of Art.

Les Tricoteuses: The plain and purl of solidarity and protest

Liz Stops

Abstract This paper focuses on the use of knitting as a protest tool by the Knitting Nannas Against Gas (KNAG), a group formed to combat the development of Unconventional Gas Mining (UGM) in the Northern Rivers of New South Wales. KNAG is socially and politically motivated, but not aligned to any political party. The group's 'Nannafesto' emphasises care for community and country while protesting against corporate greed. I situate KNAG within a broad historical and contemporary framework of similarly motivated movements that have used knitting as a tool for social, cultural and ideological influence. I also elaborate on the act of knitting as a form of witness bearing, a means to facilitate calm persistence, a strategy for processing ideas and an instrument for reinforcing the threads connecting community.

In this paper I outline investigations into knitting as a tool for social and political action, as demonstrated by the activities of the Knitting Nannas Against Gas (KNAG). KNAG is a loosely structured organisation that was established in Lismore in the Northern Rivers district of New South Wales in June 2012 by long-term residents Clare Twomey and Lindy Scott. Twomey, an artist and parent, and Scott, a childcare worker and grandparent, turned their organisational and creative skills to initiating KNAG as a tool for effective protest against Unconventional Gas Mining (UGM). UGM encompasses a number of mining opportunities that are present in the geology of northern New South Wales, with coal seam gas (CSG) being the most commonly known.

KNAG engages in a variety of activities, for instance, knit-ins at government offices; knitting objects that reinforce, nurture or protest; farm gate protests; rallies; and blockades. Here, I dwell particularly on the KNAG potential for community nurture and the role the group plays in political subversion and disruption. This discussion is placed in the broader context of historical and contemporary politically motivated craft actions.

As a member of KNAG I have shared many knit-ins and participated with KNAG and hundreds of others in gas mining blockades since late 2012. I am also involved with groups endeavouring, through non-violent direct action (NVDA), to prevent gas exploration and production companies drilling exploration wells in my local area, the Northern Rivers of New South Wales. One company in particular, Metgasco, holds widespread gas exploration licences and a limited CSG production licence for this region. In response to community action, Metgasco withdrew from exploratory activities here in March 2013, having been active in the area to varying degrees for over ten years. Months later, though,

the company expressed its intention to return and, in February 2014, the NSW state government approved its application to drill an exploration well at Bentley, seven kilometres from my home.

KNAG is socially and politically motivated, but not aligned to any political party. The group is closely affiliated with the Lock the Gate (LTG) Alliance, whose members seek to prevent massive industrialisation of the rural landscape of the Northern Rivers by UGM ventures. A close connection with the LTG Alliance is referenced through KNAG's use of the LTG Alliance logo of a yellow triangle superimposed with black text. This is used on banners at knit-ins and on a variety of knitted objects. Local property owners wanting to make clear their affiliations have attached LTG Alliance triangles to entrance gates, fences or trees on the perimeters of their land.



Figure 1. Lock the Gate Alliance triangle secured to property entrance

Photo: Liz Stops 2013

The term 'Les Tricoteuses' commonly refers to women who sat knitting at the base of the guillotine in silent protest at their enforced exclusion from political participation during the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution. According to Henry Stephens, in 1789 market women marched to Versailles as heroines (1891: 358–59). They received medals and were encouraged to hound the aristocracy, 'playing an important part in the street history of Paris ...' (Stephens 1891: 358). In 1793, however, they were excluded by decree and deprived of

active participation in political assembly. They then became more widely known as Les Tricoteuses, or knitting women, sitting in the Place de la Revolution, watching the guillotine as they knitted, having lost any active power for good or harm. Although they were perceived as callous, Ann Galloway suggests that they could have been 'handling stress by handling objects' (2006).

KNAG members have observed a similar marginalisation of ordinary voters in the present day, whose voices have been stifled by politicians under the sway of powerful corporations. Beverly Gordon's view is that 'textile-making is an important form of speech' through which women can be empowered and find their voices (2011: 211). Knitting serves that purpose for KNAG members, who feel they are unrepresented by politicians. In the same way that Les Tricoteuses took their craft to the streets, KNAG has also rendered the domestic public. Galloway questions why knitting in public can be unsettling and whether it is due to the intrusion of an activity that is usually considered private into a public space, or perhaps the fear that those knitting will not want to engage with those around them:

A woman knitting in public is self-possessed, she almost flaunts her ability to be productive when others can't, to create when others can only consume. From this emotional politics she can also claim moral righteousness, and in the multi-tasking dimension, she can claim superior skill and challenge the notion that public space is unitary or unified in process and product. (2006)

As well as being a reminder of Les Tricoteuses, knitting as a tool for protest is linked to other historical connections with craft activism. In 1908 the British women's suffrage movement, drawing on the banner-carrying tradition established by the trades union movement from the 1830s, demonstrated for their cause carrying finely embroidered pennants (Parker 1996: 197–98). Suffragette banners were uniquely devised and well finished, combining embroidery, paint and collage. They were intended to evoke 'femininity represented as a source of strength, not as evidence of women's weakness' (Parker 1996: 197). Gordon proposes that '(i)f threads serve as connectors that literally and figuratively tie things or people to one another, then intertwined filaments are particularly potent images, as they are strong and durable' (2011: 25). Similarly, the women who participate in KNAG initiatives seek to highlight enduring strength and a determination to be heard. One way they demonstrate such determination is through persistent lobbying via knit-ins outside the offices of state and federal politicians, often accompanied by applications for an audience or letters stating concerns.

An inspiring example of persistence and enduring strength in women's activism is portrayed in the 2008 documentary *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, directed by Gini Reticker, which tells the story of Leymah Gbowee who challenged the Liberian dictator Charles Taylor in 2003, bringing together Christian and Muslim women in a non-violent movement against Liberia's civil war (Fork Films 2008). Gbowee helped organise, and then lead, the Women of Liberia Mass Action for

Peace. She emerged as an international leader who changed history, marking the vanguard of a new wave of women taking control of their political destiny around the world (Gbowee & Mithers 2013).

The Nannafesto, which can be found on the KNAG website, emphasises care for community and country while protesting against corporate greed. The group operates autonomously, but in consultation with the LTG Alliance and other similarly concerned organisations. All KNAG members engage in NVDA training before participating in any activity that has the potential for confrontation, such as blockading properties against drill rigs. Police, UGM workers and landholders are all treated with respect while implacable determination to prevent environmental destruction and community division is retained, the catchcry being, 'non violent but non negotiable'.

The name, Knitting Nannas Against Gas, was purposefully devised. 'Knitting' and 'Nannas' are words that immediately conjure a nostalgic image of older women exuding trust and love. Nostalgia 'has come to connote a yearning for some real or imagined time and place in the past that is suffused in sentiment and purged of pain' (McCalman 2006: 73). It might also form a 'collective search for identity' (Davis 1979: 107–08) when societal norms shift and previous certainties dissipate, as happens when people discover that their rights have been eroded. Crafts, such as knitting, can also be thought of as 'vehicles for nostalgia' (Pocius 1994: 127) because of their long historical lineage. The acronym KNAG, with its silent K when verbalised, injects humour into perceptions of the group and affirms the persistence and determination of its members.

Strands of wool passing through hands to needles during knit-ins serve as reminders that threads are 'a component of many human stories across different cultures' (Gordon 2011: 23). Theseus, for example, trailing a thread to mark his pathway back to Ariadne, after slaying the Minotaur; the prince in the Brothers Grimm fairytale *The Spindle, the Shuttle and the Needle* following a magic spindle to find his bride; and the thread that, according to Hindu scriptures, links worlds and beings (Gordon 2011: 23). Kate Darian-Smith suggests, in relation to the warp and weft of the loom, that the two elements together establish history while affirming memory and the purl and plain of knitting might be similarly regarded (Hamilton 1994). KNAG's craft-based protests build an archive for the future while drawing on collective knowledge of the past. In this way memory and history 'nourish each other' (Hamilton 1994: 13) as participants build a strong sense of group identity.

Knitting can also facilitate thought processes that lead to effective strategy development. According to Claire Pajaczkowska, '(o)ne of the most misguided conceptions of epistemology that arose from the anxiety of monotheisms, and their cultures is the belief that thought emerges from inactivity' and she argues that 'thinking arises through making' (2005: 243). She also suggests that 'thinking is first, and foremost, a fabrication' and the 'impact ... of bodily

awareness of movement is represented through an image of vitality' (2005: 243). Galloway expresses the view that 'knitters can sometimes enter a fluid state of thinking that is superior to (the) usual clunky, solid state of mind' (2006).

Knitting takes place at meetings and at actions. In meetings knitters are always busy, and at actions, for instance when maintaining vigils to detect machinery movement at exploration sites and company depots, a ball of wool and needles are always at hand. It is a means to an end, however, not an end in itself. KNAG's founders saw knitting as a means of taking purposeful action towards social and political change by tenaciously bearing witness to mining activities: they believed that knitting could serve as a vehicle in this process. Twomey, however, continues to emphasise that 'it's not about the technical excellence of the knitted object' (2013). Andrea Black and Nicole Burisch also note 'the radical potential of a particular craft activity rather than its finished end-product', shifting emphasis away from a polished object towards a political and conceptual focus (2010: 610).

Gerald Pocius considers how the nature of craft may have changed when objects become the symbol for social issues and are less important than what they represent (1994: 129–30). He also questions why 'crafts become a symbol of a group', concluding that 'we make something and somehow connect ourselves' and that 'craft is no longer primarily that which is useful or pleasing but objects that settle our uneasiness about who we are' (1994: 129–30). Art historian and initiator of the Viral Knitting Project (VKP), Kirsty Robertson, refers to knitting as 'a sophisticated technological metaphor for networks of connection outside of and against the globalization of capital' (Pentney 2008).

The VKP was a collaborative endeavour to combine the links between computing and knitting with an activist agenda of questioning increased surveillance and the tightening of security after 9/11 (Robertson n.d.). As Beth Ann Pentney proposes, knitting 'can be readily politicized for different purposes by different groups and individuals' (2008). KNAG members have observed and discussed how, through knitting, networks have been formed and used for activist goals by people who may not usually identify as activists, or even knitters. Rather, they are people who have been denied a voice and are seeking to address that situation. Twomey and Scott exemplify this in that they have no prior experience of political activism and are not adept knitters.

Gordon, referring to cloth, argues that the '(i)images of entwinement ... the idea that we are all threads entangled together ... symbolise the idea the whole is much more than the sum of its parts' (2011: 25). Knitting can be viewed in the same way, the VKP being cited as collaborative and interactive (Robertson n.d.). KNAG operates similarly. The group is composed of a floating pool of participants who are mostly older women. As a consequence, it is possible to draw upon a vast range of life experience and skills. Many KNAG members are old enough to have retired from paid employment, are usually child free and, although leading busy lives, may be more able to commit to the sometimes gruelling KNAG timetable than younger women whose participation may be

enthusiastic, but is always fleeting due to family and work commitments. Men of varying ages often attend knitting actions though, to date, none have taken up needles.

Pajaczkowska, drawing on the work of Levi Strauss, discusses weaving in terms of ‘transforming the “raw” material of nature into the “cooked” language of culture ... animal hair or vegetable fiber is transformed into a medium for human relationship’ (2005: 233). Knitting can perform the same function. For instance, the VKP sought to ‘incorporate knitting as protest into knitting as communication’ (Robertson n.d.). Similarly, in maintaining vigilance, KNAG uses both the act of knitting and the objects knitted to calmly and peacefully communicate persistence, diligence, solidarity and determination.



Figure 2. KNAG banner on Metgasco fence

Photo: Clare Twomey 2012

Providing information is a strong component of the group’s Nannafesto and motivates many KNAG actions. Between June 2012 and January 2013 Nannas regularly conducted tours of known exploration well sites and equipment depots in the Northern Rivers. Each tour functioned as an introduction to the impact of UGM exploration for those who were not familiar with the industry. Importantly, tours served also as an opportunity for bearing witness: changes at the sites were photographed to document such things as a decrease in stored equipment at depots, or an increase in vehicle traffic at a well site. Such

indications of increased activity were useful as an alert for follow-up actions. On tours, a photograph was taken of the KNAG banner draped alongside mining company signs; these images were archived on Facebook.

An artifact was always left behind during these excursions as a reminder that company undertakings were consistently observed and recorded. Usually this would take the form of a yellow yarn triangle that echoed the LTG Alliance version, arranged as if to prevent workers opening the depot or well-site entrance.



Figure 3. Yellow yarn triangle on Metgasco gate

Photo: Clare Twomey 2012

This kind of soft barrier is a deliberate tactic that is often deployed by KNAG members. Although in reality the yarn is easily detached, its presence sends a strong message of vigilance to workers who may visit the sites, as well as to their management. It is a strategy also deemed significant by the Revolutionary Knitting Circle (RKC), a Canadian group most politically active in 2007. According to Pentney, soft barriers 'are symbolic of local alliance and represent the rejection of economic progress in the form of corporate wealth ... at the expense of local producers and citizens' (2008).

Extended soft barriers have assumed huge importance at blockades. As well as using tied strands of yarn to symbolically secure gates, Twomey and others have knitted soft barriers many metres long, some of which are thrown across gates and roads that are in imminent danger of invasion by drill rigs. The following image details such an event at Glenugie in December 2012, where Metgasco was attempting to import equipment to drill an exploration well. This blockade was successful and the drill invasion was delayed for seven weeks.



Figure 4. Metgasco truck with heavy equipment running over soft barriers

Photo: Clare Twomey 2012

The same barrier, having grown considerably longer through a succession of knit-ins, was draped on a tripod installed over an entrance gate to a projected drill site at Doubtful Creek in February 2013. Here, Twomey sat atop the tripod knitting and filming while 300 blockaders below her attempted to prevent the passage of a truck bearing a drill rig. Charged by police, but subsequently acquitted, her tripod, including the knitted length, was bulldozed once police had cleared the area of people. Twomey's torn and muddy knitting, however, was rescued from the bulldozed pile and now acts as a 'memory cloth' (Gordon 2011: 212), a marker and reminder of a significant event. Describing how a 'tear or rent in the social fabric' can be 'a tactile metaphor for a collective trauma or destruction'. Pajaczowska notes also the 'reparative functions of darning, patching and mending' (2005: 240). Twomey, however, seeing no reparation, has resolved to leave the knitted length unmended until mining companies leave the area and the social fabric is restored.



Figure 5. Clare Twomey with soft barrier

Photo: Liz Stops 2013



Figure 6. Clare Twomey filming blockade proceedings while locked-on to a tripod

Photo: Liz Stops 2013

The KNAG soft barrier is a symbolic gesture and, as such, is connected to the works of contemporary artists who act to disempower war machines by covering objects used in warfare or duplicating them as a knitted object. Marianne Joergensen's *Pink M.24 Chaffee* was conceived as a protest against the involvement of Denmark, the United Kingdom and the United States in the war in Iraq (Joergensen). An ex-World War II tank was covered with pink knitted and crocheted squares made by volunteers from many European countries and the United States. For Joergensen, 'the tank is a symbol of stepping over other people's borders. When it is covered in pink it becomes completely unarmed and loses its authority' (Joergensen in Pentney 2008). Black and Burisch affirm that if 'the blanket is read as a petition, each panel ... acts as a stand-in for a signature, but instead of being delivered pleadingly to a government elite, this gesture defiantly occupies public space' (2010: 611).

Barb Hunt's work, *Antipersonnel*, operated similarly by duplicating landmines in pink yarn, transforming a destructive object into one that can do no harm, to show that 'knitting functions as a metaphor for recuperation, protection and healing' (Hunt: 2005). Wrapping, in many contexts, can signify care, nurture and reassurance, from swaddling babies to enfolding fine china to binding mummies and even covering teapots (Gordon 2011: 26). KNAG members shared such aims when they were invited to attend ANZAC celebrations in April 2013 at Acland, Queensland, a small town with an original population of 400 that now, decimated by coal mining, is reduced to one lone resident. Invited by artist Nicki Laws and past residents to shine a light on the damage done to community by mining, Twomey's 28-metre knitted length was wrapped around entrance posts to the town common (Summers 2014). By framing the view to the common, attention was drawn to a place lost to use; a place that had been the scene of many fondly remembered community events, which is now deserted space.

The KNAG soft barrier in the form of an ever-lengthening symbol of empowerment and optimism also has similarities to Kris Lindskoog's *I Want to do Something Kind for the Planet*, and Germaine Koh's *Knitwork*. Lindskoog knotted a 61-metre friendship bracelet from embroidery thread and his aim was to eventually make this work long enough to circle the equator (Black 2006). Since 1992, Koh has been knitting a gigantic scarf, which will be complete when she dies (Koh 1992). Made from unravelled used garments it records the 'passage of time and effort ... is both sublime and resolutely absurd ... both rigorous and formless' (Koh 1992). Twomey's promise is to continue knitting her yellow and black length until UGM has been halted in Australia.

Hunt also suggests that there is 'a close association of knitting with caring for the body' (Hunt 2005). As a nurturing gesture some KNAG members have fashioned cushions for protestors, or 'protectors' as they prefer to be called, who may be uncomfortably immobilised for long periods of time when locked-on underneath large machinery. Many hours of immobilisation might be required as the police assemble personnel and equipment to cut through sections of machinery while maintaining safety. Although police may remove cushions, the gesture of placing them under and around the person who is immobilised can still offer physical and emotional support in taxing circumstances. In addition, knitted sleeves have been threaded onto lock-on chain to prevent blisters on the skin of the wearer. Considerate acts such as this 'refocus attention on the value of small personal gestures that can accumulate into a declaration of caring and hope' (Hunt 2005). In such instances, knitted items may be destined for destruction, but nonetheless, damaged work, if recovered, is labelled and displayed at subsequent events.

Yellow and black hats are the most ubiquitous of the functional knitted objects that are worn by KNAG and its supporters. 'Clothing can seem to hold the energy of a particular quality or status' (Gordon 2011: 31) and KNAG hats, as symbols of allegiance, are sold to raise funds and offered to people deemed deserving, such as those who actively engage in protests and blockades and to those politicians who have stated their opposition to UGM.



Figure 7. Cushion and chain sleeve; lock-on comfort provided by KNAG

Photo: Liz Stops 2013

In June 2013 at Parliament House in Canberra, the entrance to the building was temporarily blocked by anti-UGM activists, including a few Nannas, effectively closing down the main entrance to the nation's seat of power (Carroll 2013). As they arrived, politicians who had been vocal against UGM were offered a KNAG hat. Knowing the implications, and due to a strong media presence, some refused. Christine Milne, Leader of the Australian Greens, Larissa Waters, an Australian Greens Senator, and Bob Katter, leader of Katter's Australian Party, however, accepted the gift and, therefore, the association with KNAG and the subsequent publicity.

Triangles are knitted in many sizes, echoing the LTG Alliance versions, and are sometimes sewn together to fabricate larger structures resembling banners or flags. According to Gordon, '(o)ne of the reasons flags can be such potent symbols is that they move with the wind. When a nation is represented by a waving flag, that nation is symbolically alive and active; it is a dynamic presence' (2011: 33).



Figure 8. Christine Milne and Larissa Waters wearing KNAG hats

Photo: Jenny Leunig 2013

KNAG members also initiate and engage in social actions that promote care for community, such as hosting fundraising events for specific causes associated with the anti-UGM movement. In 2012 a group of Nannas travelled to the Tara and Chinchilla gasfields in Queensland and witnessed the degradation of land and divisions within community that have occurred due to massive industrialisation of the area in the development of CSG. They were struck by the poor health of residents, particularly children who lived not far from gas wells. Expensive medical tests were required, for which the affected families were personally liable. In order to help pay for the tests, Nanna Anne Thompson organised a concert she titled *The frack off the rig gig* in March 2013 for which local musicians performed voluntarily. Hosted by the Lismore Workers Club, it was well supported by the local community and raised many thousands of dollars, which formed part of a fund dedicated to the medical care of the Tara community.



Figure 9. Bob Katter wearing a KNAG hat

Photo: Jenny Leunig 2013

In another instance, during the blockades at Glenugie and Doubtful Creek, many arrested protectors were potentially subject to heavy fines. Nanna Judi Summers organised a screening at a Lismore cinema of *Promised Land*, a movie depicting the infiltration of a rural community by a CSG company. Although fictional, the plot echoed some of the tactics that had been deployed locally, and that had resulted in divisions within community, and sometimes even within families. Money raised from this event helped pay arrestees' legal expenses.

A KNAG presence at blockades, rallies or meetings with politicians is highly valued by protectors. During blockades various roles are undertaken, including arrestee support. This includes briefing those who choose to place themselves in an arrestable situation as to what psychological and physical extremes they might experience. It also involves following the police vehicle in which the arrestee is transported to the police station and then assisting that person in whatever way is necessary, including ensuring that he or she has food or extra clothing and is taken home when released from custody.



Figure 10. KNAG banner

Photo: Clare Twomey 2013

Knitting is conducted by a group in the midst, sometimes, of mayhem, as police attempt to break the ranks of protectors. Dean Draper, a key player in the Doubtful Creek blockade observed that the presence of knitters has a calming effect on protectors, UGM workers and police alike (Draper 2013). A cluster of women knitting in the midst of potentially volatile circumstances has the power to defuse aggression and even generate humour. Who could resist smiling at Nanna Jenny Leunig, knitting in hand, her T-shirt printed with 'NO CSG' on the front and 'HANDLE WITH CARE, NEW HIP REPLACEMENT' on the back as she warned the policeman in charge of breaking the Doubtful Creek blockade of her medical condition. He organised a safe place for her to participate, ensuring she could bear witness away from the melee. Leunig's diversion, although legitimate, helped de-escalate and disrupt the inherent violence associated with a large contingent of police intent on breaking a several-hundred-strong blockade.



Figure 11. View of Glenugie blockade

Photo: Liz Stops 2013

Pentney discusses the importance of challenging ‘truth-claims and taken-for-granted certainties that often marginalise and silence groups of people’ (2008). The presence of an orderly group of knitters is a direct contradiction of the ‘extremist’ or ‘lunatic fringe’ label touted by politicians and mining executives (Hinman 2013). Black expresses this contradiction as ‘the simultaneous unruliness and gentleness of public knitting ... when a large roaming group of knitters occupies a public place or place of power with a non-violent action ... that creates a constructive dialogue’ (2006: 611). In this instance, KNAG operates in a similar way to the RKC who, Robertson notes, used ‘knitting and crocheting as ways of highlighting the media exaggeration of violence among protestors, of creating community-based, collaborative and grassroots actions, of crossing lines of age and gender ...’ (Robertson n.d.).



Figure 12. Jenny Leunig questioning NSW Minister for Planning Brad Hazzard at a Tamworth parliamentary sitting, November 2012

Photo: Clare Twomey 2012

Knitting quietly does not indicate timidity, but it does indicate persistence. Leunig's determination to be heard exemplifies KNAG principles. She, Twomey and Louise Somerville drove six hours from Lismore to Tamworth for the last state parliament sitting for the year in November 2012 in order to have their questions on UGM answered by the premier of New South Wales, the minister for planning and the minister for resources and energy. Figure 11 shows Leunig, having being passed over at question time, walking forward trailing her knitting, insisting on a response to her question.

Another similarity between KNAG and the RKC is the choice to knit on the 'doorsteps of corporate headquarters' (Robertson n.d.). To this end, purposeful witness bearing also takes place regularly on road frontage outside Metgasco's Casino office. KNAG members, with banners flying, sit knitting on the road verge for two hours at a time. The intention is to put the company on notice and remind the CEO that, although the CSG mining enterprise has gained approval from the NSW state government, no social license has been given.



Figure 13. Knitting on the road verge outside the Metgasco office, Casino

Photo: Clare Twomey 2012

Another form of bearing witness, this time at political headquarters, is the gathering and knitting that has taken place every Thursday since June 2012 outside the Lismore office of the local state member, to reaffirm to him that he should properly represent his constituents. Lismore council commissioned a survey in conjunction with council elections in September 2012 and 87 per cent of the local population voted against CSG mining (Harlum 2012).



Figure 14. Nannas outside Thomas George's office

Photo: Clare Twomey 2013

The opportunity for community engagement at that site has been maximised by distributing information to, and engaging in discussion with, passers by. According to Black and Burisch, the 'interactions and discussions that take place during group knitting also act as an accessible forum for teaching, sharing, and promoting activist strategies and politics' (2010: 611).

Just as the warp and weft of weaving can be viewed as a metaphor for social interaction (Creighton 1994: 111), so too can the plain and purl of knitting. Facebook has been a useful and consistent connection with a local, national and international audience and its use has resulted in widespread popularity and increasing awareness. The threads of social connection made possible through Facebook can be seen as metaphorical of stages of the knitting process, of casting on, dropping stitches and of building patterns. Between 13,000 and 30,000 people visit the site each week. Access to social media and the platform for supportive communication that it provides has encouraged KNAG groups to form in different locations. Enthusiastic knitters from several other states and countries have been keen to adopt the Nannafesto and emulate KNAG methods of non-violent but determined confrontation. They are not all fighting against UGM, but have all adopted knitting as a basis for their activities. For instance, a KNAG branch is attempting to protect old growth forests from logging in the Toolangi State Forest in Victoria (Twomey 2013): the forest is the habitat of the

endangered Leadbeater's possum. Protectors there have been issued with an injunction to remain 150 metres from log trucks. As a consequence, a knitted work of the same length has been constructed to measure out that distance at each confrontation and KNAG in Lismore has contributed a ten-metre length to the project.

KNAG believe that it is important to maximise any opportunity for publicity and local media are encouraged to attend and document events. KNAG activities have been consistently reported in local newspapers the *Northern Star* and the *Lismore Echo*. KNAG featured in *Risky Business*, a documentary made by Al Jazeera about CSG mining in Australia that screened locally on Fox TV in January 2013. In January 2014 Rani Brown's documentary *Knitting Nannas* won highly commended in the Flickerfest GreenFlicks Award for the Best Environmental Short Film (Flickerfest 2014). KNAG members were also declared Climate Heroes for 2014 by the Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC).

Conclusion

The craft of knitting with its many associations in Western cultural memory of care, calm, nurture and diligence underlies all KNAG projects and KNAG is firmly embedded in historical and contemporary craft activism. Although craft may be perceived by some as old fashioned or irrelevant, I have shown here that it can also function as a powerful strategy to examine and challenge contemporary issues and materially, socially and ideologically contribute to the crafting of culture.

By engaging with the knitting strategies of KNAG, people from diverse professions and different political persuasions have been able to collectively develop a sense of empowerment. No longer helpless in the face of corporate might or political disregard, knitting has provided a language with which to speak.

Dr Liz Stops works in a variety of media, devising representations of landscape that respond to and interpret her research into historical British colonial occupation of Australia and current corporate colonisation, with an emphasis on environmental implications. Liz tutors in the 3D studio of the Visual Arts Department at Southern Cross University.

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The symmetry of *khayamiya* and quilting: International relations of the Egyptian tentmakers

Sam Bowker

Abstract The tentmakers of Cairo or *khayamin* (derived from the Arabic word for tent, *khayam*), can demonstrate ongoing engagement with changes in the usage, composition and production of their traditional craft: *khayamiya* (Egyptian tentmaker appliqué). These changes have resulted in new patronage from quilters, moving *khayamiya* from a locally marginalised folk product to global recognition as a spectacular Egyptian craft. This collaboration highlights the long-term engagement of non-Egyptian audiences by the tentmakers, who have responded to changing local conditions and attitudes by directing their work to the interests of foreign collectors, rather than the local Egyptian market. In turn, this has prompted new evaluations of their largely unexplored history.¹

By reviewing these changes, it will be shown that contemporary *khayamiya* serve longstanding cultural imperatives that are both Egyptian and non-Egyptian. For over a century the tentmakers have engaged with orientalist imaginations without losing their cultural foundations. Their collaboration with quilters presents a logical continuation of their adaptability to exigencies that has enabled them to sustain their distinctive and diverse craft. In turn, this mutual engagement has resulted in the deeper contextualisation and reappraisal of *khayamiya* as contemporary craft.

Introduction

It is an archetype, verging on cliché, to present a case study of an exotic non-Western craft, threatened with extinction by an array of modern and global developments in commerce, politics, society, and design, that has been ‘rescued’ by integration into an established craft paradigm for a Western bourgeois audience. Regardless of their veracity, such narratives influence both popular and academic interpretations of such ‘exotic and endangered’ crafts. Such perceptions may

¹ I was first introduced to *khayamiya* by my mother, quiltmaker Jenny Bowker, whose close friendships with the tentmakers of Cairo prompted her voluntary work as a spokesperson for this largely unrecognised textile art form. After a chance encounter with Matisse’s *Interior with Egyptian Curtain* (1948), I realised that the origins and art historical implications of *khayamiya* had not yet been explored. My current research addresses this gap.

misrepresent craftspeople, who have created their own market by actively serving such paradigms in a manner that has evolved over generations. This is the case for *khayamiya*, also known as Egyptian tentmaker appliqué.²

In a previous issue of this journal, Kevin Murray called for a ‘symmetry of opportunity’ to be established between all parties involved in international cultural and material craft collaborations (2010). This paper considers if symmetry has been achieved in the collaboration between tentmakers (as designers and producers) and quilters (as collectors and curators) by assessing the interaction of these crafts, their historical resemblance, and their situation in the present regarding institutional recognition and social esteem.

Exhibitions of *khayamiya* in quilt contexts, and the presence of tentmakers during such exhibitions to demonstrate the craft and discuss their work, acknowledge the postcolonial demand to hear the voices of the makers of cultural goods. This also reinforces and retains the ‘ethnicity’ as well as the authenticity of *khayamiya*, which is described by curators in terms of being historically and culturally ‘Egyptian’. The juxtaposition of *khayamiya* in quilting exhibitions also reveals the relationship between Western and ‘other’ craft heritages, situating both disciplines in a broader framework to the benefit of all parties.

While retaining the capacity to change in response to new commercial and cultural imperatives, the design integrity of *khayamiya* provides a substantial part of their value to non-Egyptian audiences and curators. It has also led to a re-evaluation of the historic interaction between tentmakers, their craft and non-Egyptian audiences. This has already resulted in a ‘symmetrical’ reassessment of *khayamiya*’s cultural roles for both the tentmakers and Western audiences. These developments can be directly attributed to the engagement of the international (especially American, European and Australian) quilting community with the tentmakers, due to their support of *khayamiya* as an ‘exotic and imperilled’ craft with many parallels to their own.

² ‘*Khayamiyya*’ is arguably a more accurate transliteration from the original Arabic, but the ‘yy’ is alien to English-speaking audiences.



Figure 1. An Egyptian tentmaker (*khayami*) working on the Street of the Tentmakers, Cairo, 2006

Photo: Jenny Bowker



Figure 2. *Khayamiya* in local context, prior to an event in the City of the Dead, Cairo, 2007

Photo: Jenny Bowker

***Khayamiya*: Technique and context**

Khayamiya is a spectacular aspect of the living craft heritage of Egypt. It is traditionally hand-stitched by skilled men (*khayamin* or tentmakers) along the *Sharia Khayamiya* near Bab Zuweila in Cairo.³ They sit cross legged with their backs supported against a wall to appliqué small patches of coloured cotton across a canvas backing, which is discretely marked out with a carefully ponced design for guidance. The process is handwork, using a needle, thimble, and large pair of tailor's scissors. Cotton pieces are cut loosely and folded with precision to be sewn into specific shapes. The work is laborious, sophisticated, and surprisingly fast. Basic sewing machines are only used to join large panels together when constructing giant street tents or *suradeq*.

Contemporary *khayamiya* use soft commercial cottons and Egyptian-made threads in a vast array of colours (colour selection is an important consideration in *khayamiya* design), but historically the tentmakers used cottons tinted with

3 This is the 'Street of the Tentmakers', also known as the *Khan el-Khayamiya* or Tentmaker's Market. To be more accurate in architectural terms, this covered street is the Qasaba of Radwan Bey. It consists of parallel rows of small shops occupying the ground level of a pair of two-storey buildings. These buildings are linked by a bridge-like ceiling that shades the entire street from Cairo's sun and persistent dust. Such covered streets were once typical in Cairo, but this is a now-rare example.

vegetable dyes, as these were most accessible in Egypt prior to the 1920s, as well as recycled scraps of clothing. In these respects, the historical techniques of quilting and *khayamiya* are remarkably similar. Contemporary *khayamiya* meet the ‘quilt’ definition of ‘three layers held together by thread’ because there are usually two layers under the appliqué (a heavier canvas and a soft face) but Khedival (1867–1914) *khayamiya* consist of appliqué over a canvas backing.

Handmade *khayamiya* originally took the form of large and elaborate tents or pavilions, like the magnificent ‘travelling palaces’ of the Ottoman Empire. Such decorative textiles still perform conspicuous roles in Egyptian public and private life, as they are hired as backdrops and venues for weddings, funerals, feasts and many other celebrations. Handmade *khayamiya*, however, has been largely replaced by mass-printed panels of fabric or ‘imitation *khayamiya*’. These printed fabric panels are appealing to consumers because they are cheaper, lighter, and easier to display than handcrafted versions. Though imitation *khayamiya* has made this textile art form more ‘accessible’, it has also undermined the ability of the tentmakers to sustain their skilled profession.

Publishing *khayamiya*: A brief literature overview

In historic terms, the tentmakers have largely avoided academic scrutiny. The earliest English-language commentaries on the *khayamiya* were written by Douglas Sladen in 1908 and 1911. Sladen’s opinions are a rare record of European attitudes to *khayamiya* in the early twentieth century, coinciding with the transition in style from Khedival to the touristic. He makes several distinctions, based on his personal taste, between good and bad tentmaker work, differentiated by subject matter rather than craftsmanship. He admires the older specimens of Khedival *khayamiya* that once hung in mosques and older Egyptian homes, and acknowledges the cultural and celebratory roles played by *khayamiya* for Egyptians, which have remained more-or-less consistent to this day.⁴

Sladen’s aggressively opinionated account dismisses the departure from Khedival forms towards the touristic as a degradation of the art form, describing the tentmakers as ‘vulgar imitators’ of the ancient tomb painters. His Eurocentric perspective is exaggerated by his suggestion to the reader that a ‘far better result’ would follow from copying the work of English cartoonist Lance Thackeray, specifically the *Light Side of Egypt*, a satirical overview of tourists and their Egyptian associates (Sladen 1911b: 239–40).⁵

4 He describes their local use ‘in enormous quantities for decorating the insides of the canvas pavilions, which they erect on any provocation, sometimes in the street for a wedding, or the return of a pilgrim from Mecca; sometimes in a regular encampment for an occasion like the birthday of the Prophet; and which they use a great deal in mosques’ (Sladen 1911a: 143–44).

5 Examples of Lance Thackeray’s cartoon work can be seen here: <http://www.maryevans.com/lb.php?ref=16801>.

The tentmakers are the most hopelessly vulgarised of all the denizens of the bazaar; elsewhere I have inveighed against them for prostituting their art by substituting coarse caricatures of the ancient Egyptian tomb paintings for the beautiful texts and arabesques which are on the awnings and tent linings they make for Arabs. (Sladen 1911a: 72–73)

Another account of the early touristic *khayamiya* was recorded by Mary Roberts Rinehart in *Nomad's Land* (1926), which was also cited by Blaire Gagnon in 2003. Rinehart describes the 'pharaonic' appliquéd decoration of her expedition tent in highly favorable terms, 'no ordinary tent this, but one of the finest specimens of the tent-maker's art ... in strong and primitive colours, a gorgeous thing' (Rinehart 1926: 32).

In contrast to Sladen's account, which does not appear to have been known to subsequent researchers, other studies have presented a sympathetic perspective on the pressures that have driven adaptations within the *khayamiya*. John Feeney's illustrated 1986 article for *Saudi Aramco World* outlined the historic and present-day situation of the tentmakers in terms of their local consumption and cultural context as an increasingly marginalised craft profession. Likewise, Caroline Stone's 2010 article for the same journal ('Movable palaces') examines the material and social history of the decorated tent in the Middle East, drawing on research into the Ottoman period by Nurhan Atasoy (2000), thus expanding on Feeney's documentation.

Denise Ammoun's text discusses the work of the tentmakers within the context of other living Egyptian crafts (1991: 51–57). More recently, Robert Bowker (the author's father) provided an overview of the socio-economic situation of the tentmakers, which considers their marginalisation from aspects of the Egyptian tourism sector and lack of government intervention on their behalf (2010: 153–55). John Gillow's survey of Islamic textiles includes reference and illustrations for both Khedival and touristic forms of *khayamiya*, which is unusual in published accounts so far (2013: 91–93). Heba Barakat's *Beyond Boundaries* catalogue features the most thorough analysis currently dedicated to a single *khayamiya* specimen, the 'Egyptian Wedding Tent' in the collection of the Museum of Islamic Art in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (2003). Peter Alford Andrews has published the most extensive scholarship on the tents of the Middle East through his *Felt Tents and Pavilions: The Nomadic Tradition and its Interaction with Princely Heritage* (1997) and *Nomad Tent Types in the Middle East* (1999). Neither Barakat nor Andrews examine touristic *khayamiya* in depth, presumably because, for the most part, touristic *khayamiya* are not actually 'tents'.⁶

Published Arabic references to *khayamiya* are rare and challenging to access, though perhaps the most accessible is Ashraf Abdul-Yazid's 2003 article for *Al-*

6 Rare examples of complete tents in the touristic form exist in private collections, including those of Randy Pace (c. 1910–1920s) and Jeanette Martin (c. 1950–1960s). Sladen also described their use as walls for a restaurant in the Karun Hotel in Fayoum (Sladen 1911a: 239–40), the exterior of which has been recorded in postcards, as well as Rinehart's 1926 account. Khedival forms are more frequently encountered as complete tents today.

Arabi. This text is most noteworthy for Abdul-Yazid's reference to the research of Ismat Ahmad Awad, who collected tentmaker terminology for specific aspects of their design. These Arabic terms demonstrate articulations of this craft that are yet to be presented to an English-language audience, and provide yet another corollary with quilting, which has a descriptive design lexicon of its own. Popular articles, such as those seen in Egyptian news media (Al-Sayyed 2012; Ramadan 2010; Aly Shawky 2011) and the *New York Times* (Sachs 2000) or *Sydney Morning Herald* (Wroe 2008), are also useful to gauge increasing public interest and glimpse chronological changes in the Street of the Tentmakers. It is noteworthy that all of these articles make reference to a primary concern of the tentmakers being engagement with non-Egyptians via tourism, rather than local consumption of *khayamiya*.

Primary references to *khayamiya* beyond Egypt

References to *khayamiya*, especially the touristic form, can be seen in English-language craft and interior design publications throughout the twentieth century, although this term was not used until 1986. They were praised in newspapers as versatile and charming objects ('Egyptian tent work' 1926). Applications of *khayamiya* to 'brighten up dark corners' ('Egyptian cloth' 1930) or within a 'peasant colour scheme' ('Martha' 1939), or to decorate fancy-dress balls ('The Lord Mayor's Ball' 1926; 'Near and far' 1923; 'La Donna' 1954),⁷ demonstrate the availability and popularity of touristic *khayamiya* beyond Egypt. Egyptian tentmaker work appears to have been especially popular in Australia in the 1930s, given that it appears in announcements from Sydney to Albany, Tasmania to Townsville ('Very special auction of high class furnishings' 1932). Some advertisements claimed that Australian retailers received them from London-based exporters, indicating that the trade in touristic Egyptian crafts historically benefitted non-Egyptian retailers (Advertisement 1929). Prices by size were listed in newspaper advertisements, demonstrating that these were relatively accessible decorative objects, even when exported beyond Egypt (Myer Emporium 1930/1931).

Newspaper records also show the recurrence of *khayamiya* in Australian quilt and textile craft events, including Brisbane ('Australian exhibition of women's work' 1907) and Hobart ('Egyptian cloth' 1944), though they were not exhibited as a distinct genre of textile craft until 2007.⁸ Touristic forms were featured and illustrated as 'typical' of tentmaker appliqué by Sheila Paine (1990: 99) and Mary Gostelow (1982: 201) in their accounts of global embroidered crafts, both written for craft practitioners and researchers. These are similar in several respects to Octavia B. Simpson's 1928 article for *The Embroideress*, which was cited by Blaire Gagnon as an early study of tentmaker appliqué in a Western

⁷ In 'The Lord Mayor's Ball', *khayamiya* use is illustrated in a black and white image.

⁸ This exhibition was the first *Stitch like an Egyptian* in the Melbourne Quilt Convention, curated by Jenny Bowker with tentmaker representation by Ahmed Naguib and Ayman Ahmed.

craft context. Earlier still is an anonymous *Every Woman's Encyclopedia* article (1910–1912) that describes and illustrates 'Egyptian patch-work' as durable, decorative and inspirational for amateur projects.

The use of complete 'Egyptian tents' is recorded in Australia at public and private events ranging from festivals, social charity events, and weddings around the Federation era.⁹ Given the rarity of these complete tents and their chronological proximity, it is possible that some of those sources are referring to the same tent in different contexts. Their sparse descriptions may encompass both touristic and Khedival forms of *khayamiya*.

Collecting *khayamiya*: The role of 'touristic *khayamiya*' beyond Egypt

Interest from Western quilters does not reflect the recognition of *khayamiya* in museums and art galleries. *Khayamiya* is under-represented in collections of Egyptian material heritage. Unless collected by museums of Islamic art or wealthy textile connoisseurs, *khayamiya* were generally exposed to the dry and dusty open air of Egypt for extended periods. Since most specimens were enormous pavilions or *suradeq*, relatively few historic examples have survived. Moreover, these older specimens are seen as 'folk art' (at best) and are not consistently valued by Egyptian audiences, such that *khayamiya* are rarely represented in Egyptian museum collections today.

⁹ References to *khayamiya* (Egyptian tents) in Australian newspapers from 1897 ('Easter fair', 1899 ('Matrimonial'), 1900 ('The Sydney City Mission') and 1917 ('Social world').



Figure 3. Unknown tentmaker, *Khedival Khayamiya*, c. 1890–1910, hand-turned appliqué cotton on linen, 2830 x 1660 mm

Photo: Bowker Collection, 2013

Elaborate nineteenth-century Egyptian tents (*fustat*, *diwan* and *suradeq*), and individual *khayamiya* panels (*siwan*) are, however, featured in a handful of public and private collections around the world.¹⁰ The most comprehensive of these collections belongs to the Bowker family, followed by the survey collection in the British Museum, and the spectacular specimens in the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art in Honolulu. Henri Matisse's extensive textile collection also featured a Khedival *khayamiya* panel, as depicted in his 1948 painting *Interior with Egyptian Curtain* and recorded in his studio in photographs by Henri Cartier-Bresson in 1944 (Dumas 2004: 196–98).¹¹

Such collections of Khedival forms of *khayamiya* are exceptions to the rule. Khedival *khayamiya* tend to be cumbersome in scale, and their use of Arabic calligraphy may have alienated those not literate in Arabic. As Sladen noted, dramatic wall sections or complete tents were 'too expensive' for most tourists (1911b: 106–07).

To engage with the Orientalist perceptions and expectations of Egypt held by foreign visitors (including tourists and soldiers),¹² 'touristic' *khayamiya* were developed by the tentmakers in the late-nineteenth century. These feature Pharaonic and folkloric (*balladī*) images, as well as being smaller, cheaper and more symbolically accessible to Europeans. They are arguably more 'cheerful' for Western tastes than the earlier Khedivals.

Their Pharaonic content is indebted to books of reproductions published by Western authors, such as Georges Perrot and Charles Chipiez (*A History of Art in Ancient Egypt* 1883), in which conclusive links can be seen between the sequence of illustrated plates and adapted compositions used in touristic specimens. Tentmakers have reported that their regard for such appropriation is based not upon verisimilitude to the original, but instead the ability to interpret or combine multiple sources into a 'new' design — a trait that can also be seen when surveying Khedival *khayamiya*.

10 Khedival forms of *khayamiya* are notably well-represented in the British Museum, London; the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago; the Semitic Museum at Harvard University; the Saunders Museum, Arkansas; the Islamic Arts Museum, Malaysia; and the Doris Duke Collection at Shangri-La, Honolulu.

11 The distinctive appliqué technique of the tentmakers may have influenced Matisse's use of painted paper cut-outs in his subsequent career, given similarities in the design and technical features of both art forms.

12 The Australian War Memorial features a 1944 photograph by Laurence Craddock Le Guay in which Australian soldiers are holding a large touristic *khayamiya* amongst other souvenirs collected in Cairo. Another photograph of the same era (by Dorothy Vines) depicts the interior of the Sisters' Mess Tent of the 2/1st Casualty Clearing Station in Amiriya, furnished with touristic *khayamiya*.



Figure 4. Unknown tentmaker, *Khedival Khayamiya*, c. 1890–1910, hand-turned appliqué cotton on linen, 2830 x 1660 mm

Photo: Bowker Collection, 2013



Figure 5. Unknown tentmaker, *Touristic khayamiya*, c. 1910–1950s, needle-turned cotton appliqué on linen, 1440 x 1440 mm

Photo: Bowker Collection

Though touristic *khayamiya* have been linked by scholars and retailers to the popularisation of Egyptian themes after the excavation of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922, they were in fact widely traded both in Egypt and on the secondary 'curio' or interior design market since the 1890s. They remain present on the international antiques market today, often described as 'vintage Egyptian tapestries'.¹³ Some have been linked by their retailers to Art Deco or Egyptian Revival trends, but examples have been found featuring influences from a range of twentieth-century design movements. They were also exported by retailers,

¹³ Most retailers appear only vaguely aware of their origin or context, and have inaccurately linked them to the Arts and Crafts movement, American folk art, or Egyptian Revival quilts.

such as department stores and interior designers, as evidenced by Australian newspaper advertisements for David Jones and Myer (1930/1931), and Liberty of London (Gillow 2013: 93).



Figure 6. Unknown tentmaker, *Touristic khayamiya*, c. 1920–1930s, hand-turned appliqué cotton on linen, 670 x 1350 mm

Photo: Bowker Collection



Figure 7. Unknown tentmaker, *Touristic khayamiya*, c. 1920–1950s, hand-turned appliqué cotton on linen, 1350 x 470 mm

Photo: Bowker Collection



Figure 8. Unknown tentmaker, *Touristic khayamiya (folkloric)*, c. 1910–1940s, hand-turned appliqué cotton on linen, 440 x 440 mm

Photo: Bowker Collection



Figure 9. Unknown tentmaker, *Touristic khayamiya (folkloric)*, c. 1910–1940s, needle-turned cotton appliqué on linen, 440 x 440 mm

Photo: Bowker Collection

The emergence of these objects as souvenirs, carrying designs that were quite unlike the abstract patterns and Islamic motifs that defined the Khedival *khayamiya*, was a dramatic departure from the previous roles of the *khayamiya* in Egyptian society.¹⁴ Unlike the Khedival preference for *khayamiya* of an architectural scale, the most popular format for touristic *khayamiya* are small square cushion-like panels, modest rectangular panels (typically 45 cm x 100 cm), and door-sized panels or archways.

¹⁴ Some rare examples of hybrid Khedival–touristic forms are known, such as the archway in the collection of the Museum of Man in San Diego, acquired by Emily Michler in the 1890s. This is Khedival except for the panel featuring a Pharaonic vulture, which has been positioned in a manner that reflects its origin as an ancient architectural motif over temple and tomb entrances.

Issues facing *khayamiya* in Egypt

The architectural scale of *khayamiya* is still relevant to its persistent cultural value in Egypt. They are used as a colourful spectacle to distinguish all manner of festivals and celebrations, including weddings, funerals, *Moulid* festivals, the *iftar* feasts of Ramadan or the farewell and reception of Hajj pilgrims, as well as graduations and political rallies, and even just for ornamental value. In practical terms, *khayamiya* is still seen as a versatile outdoor textile, to be hired out and repaired if needed. Since the 1970s this function has been served by printed-pattern fabrics that imitate the designs of authentic *khayamiya* appliqué. Lighter and cheaper than appliqué panels, these fabrics have undermined both the need for and social status of handmade *khayamiya*. Many tentmakers now sell lengths of the 'imitation *khayamiya*' alongside their handcrafted appliqué in utilitarian acceptance of this new product.¹⁵

Other Egyptian applications of *khayamiya* have been discontinued. Perhaps the most status-affirming historic application of the *khayamin*'s skills was the making of sacred *Kiswa* textiles for shrouding the *Ka'ba*, as well as the camel-borne ceremonial canopy known as the *mahmal*, once used to parade the *kiswa* to Mecca.¹⁶ Local festivals that once marked the end of the Nile floods ceased after the construction of the Aswan High Dam, removing the recurring need for *khayamiya* panels and pavilions (*siwan* and *suradeq*).

Though texts (Sladen 1908: 391), photographs and paintings reveal calligraphic Khedival *khayamiya* panels in use inside affluent Egyptian houses during the late-Ottoman period, this application is rarely seen today amongst Egyptians. The finest handmade work retains its association with funerals, which makes it unwelcome in domestic settings, despite the visual appeal and its iconic role in Egyptian heritage.¹⁷ Interestingly, only touristic *khayamiya* (and their descendants) are now made with the expectation that they will be displayed *inside* homes. This has resulted in a commercial imperative towards finer work, in terms of design, subject matter, composition, colour use, overall scale, and stitch quality.

15 Applications of this fabric have been seen across a variety of products, including clothes, upholstery, bags, books, and interior design, as well as awnings and tents in the manner of true *khayamiya*. In 2006 Tonya Ricucci documented a damaged hand-appliqued *khayamiya* bearing patchwork repairs using colour-matched 'imitation *khayamiya*' fabric, demonstrating the interchangeability between these approaches to *khayamiya*.

16 *Kiswa* are grave shrouds laid over important sarcophagi or mausoleums, but most famously appear as vast black, gold-embroidered, drapes over the cube-like structure in the heart of Mecca called the *Ka'ba*. The *Ka'ba* is the point towards which all Muslims face when they pray, as indicated by the position of a *mihrab* (prayer niche) in every mosque. The *mahmal* was a tent-like structure carried from Cairo (and other cities) to Mecca, accompanying pilgrims from that city on the *Hajj*. Although some believe the *mahmal* was the 'package' for the *kiswa*, this is mistaken — it was usually empty and served as a symbolic centrepiece for a ritual parade.

17 Godfrey Goodwin describes the use of 'Ottoman grave-tents' and their associated symbolism in Egypt (1988: 61–69). Jenny Bowker also notes that wealthy Egyptians 'just do not think the work is beautiful. [Instead, they] aspire to the faded elegance of old French tapestries, and think *khayamiya* too bright and brash' (Bowker 2013).



Figure 10. Imitation *khayamiya* in use in Cairo

Photo: Jenny Bowker, 2008

To accommodate new cultural and commercial imperatives, the tentmakers have repeatedly reinvented their craft. Adaptive and entrepreneurial, they have focused their craft on the preferences of international audiences. The result is a diverse range of styles within contemporary *khayamiya* that combine the practical design of the touristic with appropriations from Islamic art, especially derived from ornaments from mosque architecture.

Collectively, the changes in the use and production of *khayamiya* between the mid-nineteenth century and the present are remarkable. They have adopted forms so far removed from the original Khedival *khayamiya* that many of the living Egyptian tentmakers are unaware of the full extent of their own visual and material heritage. This distance threatens the ‘symmetry of opportunity’ between *khayamiya* and quilting, for as the tentmakers are exposed to design influences from other cultures, they will adopt aspects of them. If familiarity with the foundations of their own craft can be restored through exposure to *khayamiya* made beyond living memory, then the tentmakers may respond to new influences without compromising the core design integrity of *khayamiya* as a unique textile art.

Engagement with *khayamiya* by quilters since 2000

The emerging interest in *khayamiya* at a popular level by quilters and in terms of subsequent research by academics marks a critical point in the history of this craft.

Betty Wass conducted field research into the socio-cultural continuity of *khayamiya* in 1979, focusing on the touristic forms typical at that time.¹⁸ Her research notes also reference two Arabic theses prepared in 1972 and 1975 (cited in Gagnon 2002: 138–41). Wass's fieldwork was further developed by Gagnon towards her master's thesis in 2002, which contributed to Gagnon's 2003 article 'Egyptian appliqué' in *Uncoverings*, the research papers of the American Quilt Study Group. Gagnon thus published the first academic framework dedicated to the touristic forms of *khayamiya*.

Gagnon's investigation positioned touristic *khayamiya* within contemporary critical discourses of tourist arts. Gagnon's research is valuable not only for her systematic approach to material analysis and its implications for future *khayamiya* research, but for arguing persuasively for the cultural authenticity of this form of *khayamiya* (Gagnon 2002: 5–17). In brief, its metamorphosis was a necessary adaptation in order for this craft to survive:

Egyptian tourist appliqués are traditional because they are an innovation that embodies both continuity with the past and adaptation, through a process of performance as the tentmakers hand down their craft from generation to generation. This process of adaptation and confirmation is the process of cultural construction, it is what keeps history moving forward into the future. In following, Egyptian appliqués are authentic because tradition is the vehicle through which objects become authentic. Authenticity is not only negotiated in the production of the toured object, it is also formulated in the experience of the tourist. (Gagnon 2002: 116)

It is noteworthy that Gagnon is a quilter, and it was her interest in touristic *khayamiya* in the collection of the University of Rhode Island that prompted her investigation into this craft. She also remarks upon the perception of integrity and authenticity of touristic *khayamiya* as a craft when collected by quilters:

As a quilter, [she] was drawn to an art form that she was familiar with and which she understood, particularly concerning craftsmanship: 'What attracted me to this is that it was all done by hand.' She purchased [two] out of respect for the workmanship of the 'artist' ... Intuitively, this informant recognized the standards of craftsmanship outlined by the tentmakers and verified through this study. (Gagnon 2002: 122)

Gagnon's connection between *khayamiya* and quilting is paralleled in the work of Jenny Bowker, who first encountered the work of the tentmakers while visiting

18 This was partly published in *Islamic Art from Michigan Collections* (1982), and several of Wass's fieldwork photographic records can be seen via the online collection of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Cairo in the 1980s. By 2005, when she moved to Cairo, Bowker was a well-known professional quiltmaker, and immediately saw links between quilting and the appliqué of the tentmakers.

I saw the quilt shows as a perfect audience for the men, as the fact that there were parallels — and because much of the audience would have tried hand stitching — meant that the audience would be aware of just how difficult the work was to do, and because of this, an awareness of the skill the men applied to what they made. (Bowker 2013)

I had intended to take only tentmaker work — then realised that one of my favourite things to do was just watch the men work. They use 12-inch shears, heavy crowbar needles, and hanks of loose fabric — and their big hands tuck and trim and stitch so fast that photos are just a blur of movement. (J. Bowker 2010: 56)

Drawing on her network in the Australian quilting community, Bowker curated the first international exhibition dedicated to contemporary tentmaker appliqué.¹⁹ Exhibitions curated by Bowker have now been held in Australia, France, Spain, the United Kingdom, and several locations in the United States, including major American Quilter's Society (AQS) exhibitions at Grand Rapids, Lancaster, and Paducah. Tentmakers have been present to demonstrate their skills and speak on behalf of their profession (and fellow Egyptians) on every occasion.

To reach the most diverse and receptive audience for this craft, Jenny Bowker's exhibitions were held as events of special interest within large quilting exhibitions (at state or national scale). These were commercial exhibitions from the perspective of the tentmakers, who were paid all proceeds once their work had been sold. All accommodation and transport costs for the participating tentmakers were covered by sponsorship. In 2013 an alternative model was used to bring the tentmakers Ekramy Hanafy and Hany abd el-Qadir to Canberra, in which tuition fees for classes in their hand-appliqué techniques covered their airfares to Australia from Cairo, and their payment was made through a silent auction of their own *khayamiya* at a Canberra Quilter's Inc meeting.

In 2012 the tentmakers and the AQS collaboratively developed an unprecedented three-year contract to exclusively promote and sell the work of the tentmakers in the United States. The work is purchased directly from the tentmakers in Cairo on behalf of the AQS, then sold to American audiences with a markup that covers the costs of transport and accommodation for the participating tentmakers and the work being exhibited. This should provide the entire street with a reliable income source and generate awareness of *khayamiya* in the US market. (Bowker 2013)

19 *Khayamiya* was featured as a decorative carpet-like 'prop' within the 'Assuan Village' in the Earl's Court Exhibition in London in 1907, according to postcards depicting this colonial ethnographic exhibit. Bowker's work, however, was the first exhibition to display *khayamiya* for their own sake, on its own terms.



Figure 11. The *Tentmakers of Cairo* exhibition at the Birmingham Festival of Quilts, 2011

Photo: Jenny Bowker

From the first tentmaker exhibition at the Australasian Quilt Convention in Melbourne in 2007, founding principles were established to ensure fair representation of the tentmakers in all subsequent exhibitions. The most important of these was to ensure that all tentmaker businesses were represented in every exhibition, and featured both a high standard of work and the diverse design repertoire of the tentmakers. The tentmakers are highly competitive with one another and protective of their designs, so this was a challenging process.

It is essential that English-speaking tentmakers are present at every exhibition.²⁰ These men engage audiences with their hand-appliqué techniques (as their speed and skill consistently strikes quilters with surprise), and explain the design, use, and context of their work in Egypt. These are aspects of *khayamiya* retailing which developed independently in Egypt, where English-speaking tentmakers typically work in public on the Street of the Tentmakers whilst Arabic-speaking craftsmen work 'behind the scenes' in nearby workshops. The implication of their participation is that only tentmakers who can acquire passports and visas can lend their voice to international exhibitions. A degree of charisma and public speaking skills are also required, but this is also true for tentmakers working as retailers in Cairo.

²⁰ The first exhibition to *not* feature a living tentmaker was the author's exhibition *Khayamiya: Khedival to Contemporary*, which used a short video by Kim Beamish to lend Hossam Hanafy's voice to the exhibition.



Figure 12. Hosam Hanafy presenting *khayamiya* appliqué to quilters in Birmingham, 2011

Photo: Jenny Bowker

Khayamiya in quilt exhibitions feature tentmaker work alongside tentmakers working. Given historic precedents for such ‘ethnic’ Egyptian demonstration work, such as colonial world expositions, the ‘display’ of such craft practice is considered with great scrutiny. Their responses to questions are entirely their own, sometimes assisted by a translator if one is available. The tentmakers wear exactly what they would wear normally, and they make what they would normally make in Cairo. As Bowker explained when asked about the significance of their physical participation:

It is important that the men are there to demonstrate in the exhibitions I have organised. It is partly to let people see how fast they stitch, how simple their tools are, and how skilled they are — but also to establish their clear ownership of the work. One thing that I have truly sought to change is that all work to be sold in exhibitions is signed. At first we asked for the tentmaker to sign it, and found that some shops were simply making up names rather than giving credit to a worker. Then we asked for shop names, followed by the stitcher’s name, and it started to work. This gives ownership and additional provenance for the work, but many tentmakers still cannot see a lot of point in adding their signatures. (Bowker 2013)

The term *khayamiya* is used when describing this craft form, but this Arabic term is less easily remembered (and incongruously spelt) compared to English

equivalents, such as ‘tentmaker appliqué’, or even ‘Egyptian quilts’.²¹ The exhibition title often used in quilt contexts — *Stitch like an Egyptian* — borrows from the conventions of quilt workshop titles, both as a literal description and pop cultural pun. As *khayamiya* becomes more familiar to Western audiences, the tentmaker’s own term for their craft may be used more widely in English.

The patronage of quilters has also been crucial to the successful crowdfunding campaign for the independent feature-length documentary *The Tentmakers of Chareh el-Khiamiah*, currently being produced by the Australian filmmaker Kim Beamish.²² This is the first documentary account of the life and work of the tentmakers from their own perspective, including their active engagement in quilt exhibitions beyond Egypt. Much as this paper does, Beamish seeks to increase awareness of contemporary *khayamiya* beyond quilting audiences, and situate their collaboration with quilters as the most recent manifestation of the tentmaker’s ongoing engagement with international audiences. Several other projects are also currently underway to bring the quilter’s endorsement of *khayamiya* to other Western and Egyptian audiences, ultimately seeking to build a more sustainable commercial, academic and cultural basis for the tentmakers of Cairo.

Quilts and *khayamiya*: Relationship analysis

When referring back to Murray’s call for a re-evaluation of global collaborations between crafts, in terms of patronage and peer review, the tentmakers could not find a group more ideally situated than the quilters. Quilting is international, quilters recognise excellence in craft, and quilting audiences appreciate both long-held tradition and experimental innovation. Quilters combine an experiential pragmatism with a sincere appreciation of craft as a labour and an aesthetic. This is translated in both popular and academic approaches to quilting, and provides an appropriate foundation for the study of *khayamiya*.

Quilters have generated independent platforms for the display, peer review, and publication of quilting as craft and contemporary art. Quilting is both a craft and a thriving industry, simultaneously demanding the recognition of its past and encouraging the sustainable continuation of the work to new generations. By contrast, the tentmakers are a small and competitive group of skilled workers, driven by professional demand but culturally and geographically isolated. The ‘amateur’ or ‘hobbyist’, so valuable to quilting as a popular craft, simply does not exist amongst the Egyptian tentmakers. Broadly speaking, quilting is still perceived as women’s work, but *khayamiya* are primarily the products of sewing men.²³

21 Note that the latter term is never used by the curators of these exhibitions. ‘Egyptian quilt’ is a descriptive adaptation developed by Western quilting audiences and widely seen on social media, such as Facebook.

22 The film’s website can be seen here: <http://www.chareh-elkhiamiah.com/> (Global release in 2014/2015).

23 Gender is a striking difference between the *khayamin* and contemporary quilters. Tentmakers, with few exceptions, are men. *Khayamiya* is conventionally seen by Egyptians as men’s work. The



Figure 13. Mohammed Hashem (Senior), *Khayamiya*, c. 2012, needle-turned cotton appliqué on linen, 2230 x 2230 mm

Photo: Bowker Collection

The affinity between *khayamiya* and quilts consists of similarities and juxtapositions. Whilst quilts have faced the challenge of being perceived as horizontally displayed utilitarian objects, *khayamiya* have always been accorded with the tapestry-like ‘dignity’ of vertical display, even in a strictly functional context — though perhaps this has been offset by their exposure to harsh outdoor conditions (dust, heat and direct sun) versus the indoor security afforded to quilts. Quilts serve private needs within domestic contexts, whilst *khayamiya* were public displays for a wide range of outdoor ceremonies. Quilts

reverse is true of quilters. Both gender discrepancies are the product of complex cultural gender roles between Egypt and the West, manifested in the places where quilts and *khayamiya* are made, the functions expected of these objects, and the social values of quilting and *khayamiya* respectively.

are privately owned objects that can aspire to retire as family heirlooms, but *khayamiya* screens are hired objects for public display, sometimes repaired but usually discarded as rags when faded.



Figure 14. Hossam Hasham, *Khayamiya*, c. 2010–2012, needle-turned cotton appliqué on linen, 1200 x 1200 mm

Photo: Bowker Collection

Both crafts have struggled to be seen as ‘art’. Neither has yet found their due representation in museums and art galleries, though this is changing — especially for quilts. Both are a form of folk art, ancient in origin, and made with similar techniques, materials and technology. They are both concerned with display, ornament, and embracing the power of decorative arts to transcend the functional into the spectacular. For much of their history, both quilts and *khayamiya* were made anonymously. They both embrace a complex heritage,

and recognising their shared context as contemporary craft is mutually beneficial. Their interactions thus present the critical ‘symmetry of opportunity’ requested by Murray. Regarding Murray’s comments on Western perceptions of innocent primitivism, the tentmaker’s craft is not regarded with such praising condescension — rather, it demonstrates continuity with historic skills that cannot be delegated to sewing machines.



Figure 15. Tarek Fattoh, *Mihrab*, c. 2009–2011, needle-turned cotton appliqué on linen, 1890 x 950 mm

Photo: Bowker Collection

Further, the significance of interaction with quilters beyond Egypt has real effects on the esteem of *khayamiya* within Egypt, especially amongst the tentmakers themselves. As Bowker mentioned when interviewed:

One of the things that stood out for me is not that the world has responded so brilliantly to seeing what the tentmakers can do, but that the tentmakers have seen for themselves that what they do has importance and is beautiful. They are walking taller, and suddenly Egypt's lack of interest in their art form does not really matter any more. (Bowker 2013)

Bowker described the immediate effects of this recognition as illustrated by the reactions of the tentmakers at the 2007 convention in Melbourne after being swarmed by crowds of fascinated quilters:

Both [Ahmed Naguib and Ayman Ahmed] are so utterly humbled by the interest of Australians in what they had believed was an unimportant and menial skill. (Bowker 2007)

The challenge that is now facing the tentmakers of Cairo is the ability to promote their own voices internationally, addressing the aspects of their heritage and craft practice which resonate with Western audiences in particular. Although they have demonstrated the capacity to change their craft to suit new audiences, their ability to independently organise their own participation in international exhibitions has not yet been tested. Should this happen, the balance of complex commercial interests in the Street of the Tentmakers will be tipped towards that entrepreneurial tentmaker. It is possible that misjudging the design relationship between 'exotic' *khayamiya* and 'familiar' quilting could jeopardise the mutually beneficial symmetry between these craft disciplines. For this reason, increasing the tentmaker's awareness of their heritage — including Khedival *khayamiya* designs from beyond living memory — will prove vital in establishing their cultural foundations for future international engagement. To sustain integrity, whatever form they may take in the future, the designs of *khayamiya* can never be anything other than 'Egyptian'.

Tentative signs of a revival are now emerging in the tentmaker profession, which had been in decline since at least the 1980s (Feeney 1986). Trained tentmakers have returned from alternative careers to support family businesses; others because their previous professions provided poor conditions and lower social status (Ramadan quoting Saeed Mokhtar 2010). Some have tertiary qualifications, and have chosen this profession over other careers because they enjoy the nature of this craft (Bowker 2013). On the basis of their entrepreneurial pursuit of new designs and clients, and following international exposure, some tentmakers have recently opened their own *khayamiya* shops, independent of their former employers (such as Hany abd el-Qadir and Tarek Abdelhay), which has ruptured traditional employer–apprentice workshop relationships. Few young Egyptians, beyond the tentmaker families, however, are being trained in *khayamiya* craft methods with the expectation of developing careers in this field.

This is a contrast to two photographs from the turn of the nineteenth century, which depict large *khayamiya* panels sewn in simultaneous collaboration by adult men and boys.²⁴

Conclusion

When the touristic succeeded in market terms, it could be said that the Egyptians lost ‘their’ *khayamiya*. In an ideal future, perhaps demand for handmade *khayamiya* will be maintained not by foreign interest, but by and for Egyptians. Given the economic situation of many Egyptian homes, this is not a likely outcome. The international support of this craft is essential to its survival and continues to drive adaptations which ensure that *khayamiya* remains a contemporary manifestation of Egyptian craft and visual culture.

The emergence of both academic and popular interest in the Egyptian tentmakers celebrates the history of Egyptian craft and design, and demonstrates the potential for the *khayamin* to determine their future on an international stage. Their unique craft has moved from their original local market through to an international audience of collectors, scholars, and appreciators from a diverse range of backgrounds. Once quilters endorsed the tentmakers at a popular level, academic interest could promote *khayamiya* to audiences with other means of influencing the institutional recognition of this art form. The recognition of *khayamiya* as an important and vital art form to regard and display within a cultural context of national identity and social history would be a positive development not only for the tentmakers, but as a case study in international collaboration that has not compromised the integrity of ethnic crafts.

The Egyptian tentmakers have shown how the usage, composition and production of cultural goods has shifted and changed to address international market demand for their craft. This has led to the re-evaluation of their craft as a cultural and design practice, and prompted new interest in their history. Quilters have played a significant role in this re-evaluation, but maintaining the memory of *khayamiya*’s origins will be essential to the ongoing vitality of *khayamiya* as an Egyptian art form with a global audience.

²⁴ Zangaki Brothers, *Carpet Makers* (c. 1880s) and Donald McLeish for National Geographic, *Tent Makers* (1921).



Figure 16. Detail from a contemporary *khayamiya* (2010) by Mohamed Hashem in the Bowker Collection

Photo: Aaron James Neal

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Unfinished business: Craft and revivification

Mae Finlayson and Karen Hall

Abstract Reactivating incomplete and discarded domestic craft projects is an exploration of how such objects can mediate between presence and absence. Contemporary creative work that gathers and reclaims the unfinished projects acknowledges, extends and plays with their rich materiality as well as the dormant stories embedded within them. Using unfinished objects can be a way of speaking to loss and absence, and an assertion of the presence of other voices in the act of repurposing. A material dialogue, created through the trace of the hand and the repetitive labour of crafting, emphasises the potential within these discarded objects. The tension between the implied presence of the first maker and the displacement of the past through revivification is the entry point to nostalgia, a label that implies both being out of place as well as out of time. While nostalgia is often seen as an innately conservative practice, functioning as a reductive stand-in for the richness of the past, we take up Svetlana Boym's (2001) argument that the impossible longing of reflective nostalgia can be productive, humorous and utopian. This essay explores the interplay of past and present in the process of finding, remaking and repurposing.

Introduction

Unfinished craft articles retain their makers' touch — material touch upon literal material. What happens when that presence becomes absence? This absence becomes especially curious when the making has been started, and then stopped, and left incomplete. These incomplete projects tantalise with the dormant stories embedded within them — what was this object intended to be? Why has it been left unfinished? What will happen to it? While such unfinished work may be the simple detritus left behind by a developing craft practice, or sacrifices in the face of insufficient time, energy and creative space, it also offers eloquent possibilities for engagement. Taking up these discarded objects to reactivate them — to insert the presence of another maker, and to resolve the work in a way unintended at its origin — creates a dialogue between past and present, presence and absence, materiality and memory.

In this essay we discuss the implications of intervening in unfinished objects as a mode of creative practice, and consider how these interventions interact with the contexts in which the objects were started, halted and revived. The particular focus will be on domestic textile items, particularly craft projects, both produced from commercial kits or instructions and self-defined. Formatted as a dialogue between practitioner (Mae Finlayson) and theorist (Karen Hall),

we use recent works by Finlayson to illuminate our discussion. We begin by considering the implications of unfinished projects — the ways in which they speak of absence and presence. We propose that the mediation created by intervention in the object creates a dialogue between makers. We then move on to the tangible nature of these objects: their existence as the product of often intensive and repetitive labour, which creates a trace or signature of the original nature imprinted upon the unfinished object. The repurposing of this object, therefore, requires material intervention, the touch of another set of hands forming a countersignature. The materiality of objects, and their persistence through time, also poses a challenge for their re-imagining: what meanings are constructed as these objects are found, selected and brought together into assemblages both in informal working collections and through exhibition? To what extent can we see the objects asserting some form of agency? Finally, we offer a theoretical frame for understanding this work, drawing on Svetlana Boym's (2001) model of restorative nostalgia as a way of understanding the temporality of unfinished objects that, in renewal, can both acknowledge the past while opening into the future.

Monumental floss

I met Janis at the local Sunday flea market. He told me he had recently returned home to Launceston from Spain to see his mother before she passed away. He sat amongst a huge display of handwoven rag rugs and hand embroidered wall hangings. In front of him was a trestle table covered in small mountains of doilies. Fine, delicate, hand-crocheted doilies in traditional neutral cottons and chunky, sparkly ones in pink and green and blue. Tablecloths, shawls and side runners hung from rails, all made by hand — by Janis's mother's hand/s. In the piles I found a lace fish, it was white and gold and as light as a piece of paper. Janis told me it was made to go onto the arm of a chair and its pair was still at home in the lounge — he said he would bring it to the market for me one day, but not just yet in case it upset his father. On the ground at his feet were opened suitcases and broken cardboard boxes bursting and spilling with both loose and bagged-up yarns, wools and cottons. All the leftover (or not yet got to) raw materials that had been knitted, knotted, stitched and hooked to form the crafted artefacts that surrounded Janis.

As I picked out bits and pieces he told me how he remembered coming home from school to find his mother and her friends sitting around the kitchen table drinking Greek coffee and chatting and laughing and making. He told me some of his mother's friends had come to visit him at the stall. They held up doilies, reminisced and recognised particular pieces. They remembered and retold particular stories. For them, visiting Janis's stall was something like visiting a memorial to pay their respects to a lifelong friend. For me, visiting Janis's stall was (and is) something like visiting a temporary memorial to pay my respects at a monument to vast quantities of human time — tangible time.

In my studio, looking through the things that I had bought from Janis, I was affected by the unique beauty in the irregularly shaped hand-rolled balls of yarn. Some were huge, some were small, and they all had similar but slightly differing shaping. They were mixed in amongst machine-wound cones and balls, also beautiful, but in the exacting way that can only be produced by machines, just as the hand-rolled has beauty in the imperfect individual way that can only be produced by humans. I threaded a mixture of balls of neutral cottons, rayons and wools onto a string — like giant soft beads. I hung the string over a beam that carried the weight of the surprisingly heavy assemblage. The string of beads hovered just above a stacked spire of wool sitting, totem like, on the floor. The totem was nestled in a richly crocheted and scrunched-up tablecloth. When this was exhibited people said it looked like a stalactite and a stalagmite. It made me think of the way we were taught to remember which was which in school: stalactites hang and hold on tight, while stalagmites grow with all their might. There is a gap left between the hanging string of yarn beads and the wool totem. A void — a negative space where you might imagine there used to be a connection.



Figure 1. Mae Finlayson, *All my love, Anon. (soft beads)*, (detail), 2013, yarn, dimensions variable

Photo: Mae Finlayson

Monumental loss

What speaks from the space of loss? How can other voices enter here?

In taking up craft materials that have already been worked by another maker, the space between making and remaking seems loaded, heavy with possible narrative and meanings. That space — a gap, surely — is also a provocation to imagine what might have been there. I suggest that there are two positions at stake here: firstly, that in deliberately gathering unfinished craft objects, rather than simply starting with new materials, Finlayson and other practitioners engaging with unfinished objects acknowledge that these things have a particular power from their previous accretion of meaning. The implications of this position are discussed further below. Secondly, that in remaking, the actions are a dialogue, a collaboration that is always fraught with loss — two makers, one of whom must always be marked by absence and possibly failure.

The absence of the initial maker is part of a wider series of concerns in the value and status of craftwork, such as is being discussed here. Illustrating the disconnection between a named maker and their work, Grayson Perry's introduction to his exhibition, *The tomb of the unknown craftsmen* (British Museum, 2011), states that 'the central idea behind my exhibition was about celebrating ego-less creativity' (quoted in Klein 2013: 265). While Perry points to the role of anonymity as, at some level, laudable and enabling freedom, the 'named' status of the exhibition itself sits as an ironic contrast to his claim. Other art projects that engage with unfinished craft objects place negotiation of naming of original makers and their stories at the heart of their work. Rachael Matthews' 2009 exhibition *UFO (UnFinished object) project administration service*, part of the Jerwood Contemporary Makers 2009 show, and its accompanying blog (2009–2011), documented unfinished knitted works and asked for volunteers to complete them. Each item was accompanied by a narrative, sometimes brief and plausible and, at other times, an elaborate fantasy that speculated about the object's origins, intentions and reasons for failure. Original stories and the original maker are evoked here as a projection, a space not bound by truth, but like Perry's celebration, part of the liberation of these objects into new forms.

In contrast, Hazel Connors' and Felicity Clarke's *The unfinishable* (2012) takes a more stable approach to connecting unfinished textile pieces with their original makers. Connors and Clarke invited submission of unfinished pieces that 'somehow you can't discard or rework' and '[o]n reflection, there are reasons why it has come to a halt and can't be completed'. Submission of works includes both the piece and a questionnaire (2012). While the final form of the textile work, a circus tent-like 'Extravaganza' made from submitted pieces, did not overtly gesture towards the original makers, accompanying works did. A film piece and book matched objects with their stories, while badges for contributors to wear and ongoing documentations of original makers revisiting their pieces on the project blog accumulated to emphasise an ongoing connection with the makers. The stories accompanying the pieces often emphasised loss and

memory, and the transmutation of the unfinished works into the shared space of the Extravaganza became an act of catharsis. For Clarke and Connors, the repurposing of these objects required a witnessing of the stories of loss that leave these objects hanging in the world.

The intervention of a second maker into the absence created by the unfinished object, therefore, requires the second maker not only to take a stance on how they will engage with the object's prior existence and the narratives embodied within it, but also to find a mode of intervention. Is the role of intervention to complete the work on its own terms, to attain some state of wholeness, however bizarre or illusory that might be, or to re-imagine the object while refusing closure? The concept of nostalgia, originally a manifestation of homesickness as disease among seventeenth-century Swiss mercenaries (Boym 2007: 7–8), starts with absence: nostalgia is a doubled absence of a person from their place, a void present for both the place and the person. Nostalgia is spatial dislocation as embodied condition.

Tracing hands

Talking to Janis made me think of him being small and his mother and craft. It made me think of me being small and my mother and craft. When I was growing up my mum was always reinventing her creative self. She was a stained-glass artist, a knitter, a dressmaker, a hairdresser, a ceramicist. The new classes and equipment and materials were always bought and used with initial manic enthusiasm and a sense of forced happiness. Like this is what she'd been looking for, this was it, this would make her complete. Every new project was a squeaky clean new beginning. But ultimately, like many of the projects, she remained incomplete.

I produced a series of works for an exhibition called *All my love, Anon*. The name of the show was inspired by the letters and sentiments that I unearthed in some of the second-hand gatherings I had hoarded, and also a thank you to the 'accidental donors' of unwanted craft paraphernalia I had repurposed.

I looked at cones of yarn as visually charged objects in their own right and used them as armature, exposed in parts so the colours and rhythmic crisscrossing of the wound lines could be seen. I stretched doilies over the cones like skins — held taut in place by dressmaker's pins, sometimes silver, sometimes gold. The pins pull and cluster and define the edges. They pierce the tiny empty spaces of each delicate outer stitch to trace and visually emphasise the 'path of the hand' outlined shape. The outlined shapes are irregular and imperfect because the hand-looped stitches are irregular and imperfect. Imperfect perfection. The repetitive actions of the human hand are irregular and imperfect.



Figure 2. Mae Finlayson, *All my love, Anon.*, 2013, installation view

Photo: Mae Finlayson

Hands and traces

The palimpsest traces of making in the works shown (Figures 2 & 3) stand in for the embodied action of the makers, asserting their tangible presence at different times. The materials themselves hold cumulative imprints that show that retracing and remaking is not about overwriting, but instead forms a material dialogue. Constructed through repetitive action, the traces of the hand, and thus traces of the makers, operate as ‘signature’, inescapably impressing corporeal presence into material form. These traces thus disavow absence, for some part of the maker always remains.

The idea of the signature stands at a remove from the subject. Elizabeth Grosz, drawing on Jacques Derrida, notes that ‘[t]he signature, as pre-eminently forgeable, transformable, iterable, recontextualizable, provides no guarantee of authenticity, no residue of the full presence of the subject’s politics’ (1995: 13). In this sense, the signature is constituted by the text — by the object — not imprinted upon it. Lee Mingwei’s *The mending project* (2009) threads the signature into a pre-existing object. Mingwei has commented that ‘[u]nlike a tailor, who will try to hide the fact that the fabric was once damaged, my mending was done with the idea of celebrating the repair, as if to say, “something good was done here, a gift was given, this fabric is even better than before”’ (2013). Mingwei’s work asserts the artist’s intervention as an inescapable reminder, framed as a utopian

and redemptive act. Yet this claim for improvement and celebration relies on the retention of Mingwei's ideals, a memory not guaranteed in the material work itself. To the extent that the connection between artist and mended work can be severed or forgotten, the signature here remains an unstable signifier, a fragile attempt at completion.



Figure 3. Mae Finlayson, *All my love, Anon. (stretched doily)* (detail), 2013, yarn, pins and embroidery hoop, dimensions variable

Photo: Mae Finlayson

Grosz also notes that the signature is not self-contained — it demands a witness, a countersignature (1995: 13–14). The act of witnessing, in the case of Finlayson's and other artists' repurposing of unfinished objects, is not passive, but an active intervention that directly enters a countersignature into the space of the object. In doing so, this action creates recognition that 'as a product the text is an effect of *labor*, a work on and with signs' (Grosz 1995: 20) and that this labour is tied to the corporeality of the labouring body. The responses to the unfinished works are not purely visual, but tactile. The signature within the works invites sensorial immersion. The tracing action of hands over hands goes beyond mechanical repetition to become an act of profound intersubjective empathy. For Sera Waters, such repetitive crafting 'speak[s] of the physical proximation between art and body, including endurance [and] intimacy' (2012).

The recognition of labour in the unfinished craft projects discussed here is not about economic value, but prioritises a different range of human experiences and expressions. Waters argues that the labour of highly repetitive and therefore physically demanding craftworks should be seen not in 'their economic guises, but hold[ing] value in terms of the output of human energy ...' (2012). To recognise this output of human energy is to insert a different system of value, which places symbolic actions above productivity as judged by the marketplace or the celebrity status of the artists. By reactivating the suspended energy in found and unfinished craft artefacts, the artists valorise the already accumulated repetitive gestures. The revivification of the unfinished object forms a tribute that also attests to the labour of the second maker.

The labour of crafting, and particularly of reworking, takes a specific material form and cannot be divorced from the medium. Ian Farr argues, with reference to Rosalind Krauss, that art practice supported by and aware of the specificity of its medium takes a stance against forgetting through the assertion of materialised memory. The 'remembering' of the medium, therefore, is a 'recursive process' that 'involves invoking the procedure itself' (2012: 15). In this context, materiality is far more than just a set of objects, but a series of rules, devices and constraints that, in unfinished works, we can see being negotiated between the original and subsequent makers.

To insist upon the materiality of the unfinished object also invokes an object-centred temporality that exceeds human time. Discarded craftworks may be profoundly humanised objects, constructed and invested with human labour, but they continue on after having been discarded. The troubling status of the unfinished object exists both in its incompleteness and its physical persistence. In the face of this unsettling presence, discarding the unfinished object, either in response to an invitation from practitioners or through the mundane strategies of putting it in the rubbish or donating it to an op shop, can function as an expulsion or even exorcism. The removal of the object, a tangible reminder of failure, can be an act of liberation. The afterlife of these unfinished objects in spaces like op shops and markets points to their liminal status as neither easily recognisable commodities nor complete artworks. They remain in stasis, waiting for activation. Michaela Giebelhausen (2006) argues that human intervention is

required to take objects from speaking in ‘murmur[s] of the lost worlds they were once part of’ and to frame them as ‘audible documents’. This framing is not the authoritative stamp of a single true meaning, but can be ‘impeded, reflexive, fragmented, a both/and of complexity and contradiction’. The object, persistent and persisting, stands as witness, requiring interpretation to be brought into human time.

Back of my car

I am continually hunting and gathering other people’s ‘little failures’ — I compulsively buy up the ‘small wrongs’ to make right — I want to join together the separated and somehow stem the loss.

There are stories of loss and nonfulfillment ‘literally’ and metaphorically hidden within my gatherings. I have a collection of ‘self improvement’ books and magazines — instructional guides on the activities that can distract us from real life. On the inside of a ‘how to play great tennis’ publication, a hand-scribed message reads ‘To my Darling — perhaps this can improve the relationship’. What an odd place for such a heartfelt cry for help. There is comfort in the thought that, if we just follow the directions correctly, everything will work out.

I have been collecting discarded textile craft materials for years and years. After 15 years of living in London I shipped a full container back to Australia. At first, while studying, it was a cheap way of making artwork. But when I began to think about why I chose certain items over others, why I set certain rules for my selections and their end use, I knew it was becoming more than simply a means to an end. In terms of ‘rules’, I will sometimes buy a bag of half-used rolls of wool that have been put together in the sorting space of an op shop. They may have been inadvertently curated into their clear plastic by a volunteer according to their colour or gauge — I will limit myself to only using those wools for a work — using someone else’s aesthetic choices, however random or unintended they may be. But I might just as easily change the rules, and leave the wools sealed in their soft display casing to stand alone as a found assemblage, or add it to others to become part of a bigger whole. Through this process I am making these objects my own by making decisions on what to take while, at the same time, playing with limits of decision-making by using the decisions of others as my starting points.

My car is both a vessel and a vessel. One for travelling in to take me to the garage sales, the op shops and the flea markets; and one for holding and containing the contents of my acquisitions. I am absorbing the thrown out, forsaken craft projects of others to build my own never-ending craft project.



Figure 4. Mae Finlayson, *Back of my car*, 2013, digital image

Photo: Mae Finlayson

Back to the future

The curatorial perspective — of collection, categorisation, and selection of objects — emphasises the agency of the person, but really, thinking about the looming pile on the back seat, does this seem an assertion of control in the face of threat? For Finlayson, gathering and holding these objects before reuse is another investment of time and labour and a continual negotiation with the physical presence of these objects as a burden to be carried. In this sense, the presence of the human is always in correspondence with the agency of the non-human object of the non-human. Jane Bennett asserts the ‘radical kinship of people and things’ (Bennett 2005: 463) formed through assemblages, in which both people and things are present as actants within a network. The agency of one element in the network does not compromise the agency of another.

The significance of this back seat assemblage lies also in its status as a personal collection rather than an institutional one. While Finlayson employs a curatorial aesthetic, in the form of rules and boundaries for exclusion and inclusion, she is not bound by ethics of conservation or directives of inclusiveness and universality. Beyond a need to hold and preserve, this collection forms a reservoir of possibilities, where the dialogue between objects acts as an expressive mode. An open-ended approach to assemblages is liberating, allowing the objects to combine and recombine, to speak and be silent, and to hold agency alongside the makers. The ‘ego-less creativity’ can here encompass makers and objects, placing all these elements in a dialogue in which the necessary asynchronicity of the makers is bridged by the temporal continuity of objects.

The revivification of unfinished objects, which resists a linear chronology, suggests reflective nostalgia as a conceptual frame. Using materials inscribed by the past does not require that their subsequent use match or mirror their origins. Boym (2001) identifies a typology of two forms of nostalgia, restorative and reflective. While restorative nostalgia tries to reconstruct and therefore return to the lost home, reflective nostalgia ‘thrives on *algia* (the longing itself) and delays the homecoming — wistfully, ironically, desperately’ (Boym 2007: 13). Finlayson’s repurposing of unfinished craft objects does not seek a reconstruction, but instead acknowledges the impossibility of resolution, taking it into the realm of reflective nostalgia. Boym argues that reflective nostalgia ‘reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgement, or critical reflection’ (2007: 15). Grappling with loss and absence, reflective nostalgia holds this space by refusing to retreat into a fantasy of restoration. Instead, reflective nostalgia opens onto a future that is undetermined, but not isolated from the past. The revivification of unfinished objects does not have to replicate the past, but can borrow from it.

Reflective nostalgia, which eludes both teleological progress and the lure of a golden age, is a productive explanation for the lure of unfinished craft objects as materials for creative repurposing. The work of re-imagining these objects

also calls us to consider the modes through which reflective nostalgia might work. The tangible traces of labour in the objects, carried out by original and subsequent makers, point to the vital nature of process. We suggest that these objects point towards understanding reflective nostalgia as constantly coming into being, a continual reimagining and reinvention that cannot ever be finished.

Conclusion

Unfinished craft objects pose a series of problems and potentials: their tangible presence asserts their agency as objects, while they simultaneously gesture to the interrupted labour of their construction and their disconnection from their original maker. As the starting point for a process of revivification, unfinished objects are imprinted in an asynchronous dialogue where the subsequent maker must consciously address choices of selection, assemblage and intervention. In returning to these objects, subsequent makers open a space to speak of loss, absence and nostalgia.

If nostalgia is the product of dislocation, its expression in the form of craftwork is a potent remaking of that dislocation. Craft, with its embedded and embodied tradition — the choice of techniques, patterns, materials — can be a way of replicating and thus remaking the past, of summoning it one stitch at a time into the present. In considering the links between craft, making stitch and nostalgia, we emphasise that memory is active. If memory, framed by nostalgia, is not a site, space, or hallowed and frozen object, but an open-ended process, it can enable affective and playful dialogue between makers in the repurposing of objects. The absence within the unfinished object invites its revivification into an afterlife, carrying the past into the future.

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The mnemonic qualities of textiles: Sustaining lifelong attachment

Emma Peters

Abstract This paper uses Jonathon Chapman's theory of emotionally durable design to explore how memory is invested in and lends value to textile artefacts, thus ensuring their enduring preservation. Through an examination of the works of Elisa Markes-Young, John Parkes, Sara Lindsay and Ilka White, the paper argues that a greater understanding of objects with mnemonic qualities provides new ways of challenging object obsolescence for art and design practice, thus offering a model for sustainable design.

Introduction

Sustainable design is not only concerned with the physical qualities of an object, but with the experience and meaning invested by its owners that stimulates memory, develops connection and value, and subsequently ensures the object's enduring existence. Sustainable design incorporates social, economic and environmental factors into the creation of objects, environments and services, and is informed by seminal writers such as Victor Papanek (1985) and William McDonough and Michael Braungart (2002).

The emotional considerations raised by sustainable design have motivated new approaches to the creation of objects. The theory of emotionally durable design, developed by Jonathon Chapman (2005), reconsiders design thinking to encompass the potency of emotional attachment to objects. The theory underpins this paper's premise that mnemonic relationships between humans and objects have an effect upon sustainable practice.

This paper is concerned with handcrafted personal possessions that are associated with individual and family memory. There is much literature on public memorial sites and objects and the ways in which they embody collective memory (cf. Stewart 1984; Nora 1989; Bennett 2003; Rowlands & Tilley 2006;). Mnemonic qualities of privately owned objects are acquired once we confer our personal stories and experiences upon them. An object has no faculty for memory (Kwint et al. 1999), however, it can be *associated* with memory. Interactions with a mnemonically enriched object can activate memory and its accompanying emotions. The capacity for an object to accept the investment of memory on the part of its owner can contribute to building this connection. In this paper, I will use M.L. Richin's writing on possession meaning (1994: 504–21), French sociologist Violette Morin's work on the biographical object (1969 cited

in Hoskins 1998: 8–11), and D.W. Winnicott's theory of the transitional object (1984: 229–42) to build on a discussion of the types of meaningful relationships we have with mnemonic objects.

I am a contemporary textile practitioner and my work seeks to understand the particular qualities of cloth that foster the development of enduring mnemonic relationships. The social nature of cloth allows for the effortless transference of personal memories. Haptic interaction begins soon after birth and continues until death. Cloth lies next to the surface of our skin for most hours of the day, providing protection, insulation and a means to express or disguise ourselves. Those who recognise in handmade textiles the signs of skilled workmanship and investment of time regard such artefacts worthy of memory association. As R.W. Belk (1990: 671–72) states, we demand the authenticity and uniqueness of an object before it can become representative of our significant personal memories. I propose that cloth's haptic quality, and its intimate and daily connection with our lives, provide a relevant domain for the study of mnemonic objects.

The paper explores the way in which Australian textile artists Elisa Markes-Young, Ilka White, Sara Lindsay and John Parkes work with links between textiles and memory. I argue that their focus on memory and emotional connection to textiles offers a model for more permanent ways to value designed objects, allowing them to operate as examples of emotionally durable design.

Memory and emotionally durable objects

Chapman's theory of emotionally durable design is a response to the urgent need to address sustainability in the creative fields. He endeavoured to look beyond reactionary solutions, such as recycling, by developing a deeper philosophical design foundation to reduce rubbish and landfill.

Our challenge as designers, artists, makers and consumers is to resolve issues of obsolescence without compromising the environment. The fundamental concern, as Chapman points out, is the preservation of user engagement with the object over long periods of time, and ideally, as close to forever as possible. To achieve this, the future 'life' of the object needs to be considered in terms of material quality, workmanship, functionality and the object's ability to *engage emotionally over time* (Chapman 2005: 112). The emotional engagement that results from the mnemonic qualities of an object can effectively contribute to an object's longevity.

Neuroanatomical evidence shows how emotion has influence upon the formation, consolidation and retrieval of memory (Buchanan & Adolphs 2004). More significantly, the retrieval of memory involved in reminiscence can generate an emotional response. Psychologists describe this as one of the *directive functions* of memory (Philippe et al. 2011). Remembering has an impact upon our current emotional state (LeDoux 1992; Schwartz, Weinberger & Singer 1981, cited in Philippe et al. 2011), and is based upon how the original experience was perceived

(Deci & Ryan 2000, cited in Philippe et al. 2011). In the instance of objects triggering memory, the subsequent emotion is an affective one. Memory sustains self-identity, and consequently engenders a greater sense of value for the object.

Layers of memory over time

Markes-Young, a Polish-born German artist residing in Perth, explores concepts of memory through textiles, and discusses her inherited tablecloth and set of pillowcases that display characteristics of emotionally durable design. The tablecloth is embellished with traditional embroidery techniques of white and black stitch (herringbone, satin-stitch, buttonhole wheels) upon crisp white linen. The ornamental stitching was begun by the artist's great-grandmother, continued by her grandmother and mother and is yet to be 'finished'. The pillowcase, also in white linen, has an intricate filet lace panel. Markes-Young has repurposed the pillowcases with the addition of a second, larger piece of white fabric to act as curtains in her home. She recounts the origins of both pieces:

My mother was generous enough to give me a few pieces from her collection when I left home. I love them all, but one of my favorites is a tablecloth that my great-grandmother made, or rather started to make, because it's still unfinished (Figure 6). It consists of nine embroidered pieces of linen. My mother did some work on it years ago but the pieces still need to be joined. Maybe I'll do it one day. Or maybe I will use them to make something else, as in the case of the pillowcases with filet lace that became curtains for my kitchen window. (Markes-Young 2013)

It is rare for an object to survive beyond one generation of a family. Markes-Young's tablecloth and curtain have existed across four generations and two continents. These pieces possess key characteristics of Chapman's emotionally durable design theory. Emotionally durable design places emphasis on an object's capacity to acquire new significance as it passes from owner to owner. It also values the marks of wear an object acquires over time. The quality of the linen fabric has ensured the physical survival of Markes-Young's pieces, and skilled stitch work has encouraged each owner to invest in preservation of the fabric. The yielding quality of the tablecloth and pillowcases have allowed for each owner to add their own embroidery stitch. The function of the pillowcases has been modified to suit new contexts, environments and eras. The pieces have also been charged with each owner's personal memories and experiences, layering and reconfiguring existing meaning. The longer the textiles last through repurposing and remaking, the more meaningful they become. The emotional and mnemonic qualities ensure that objects are valued and treasured for ongoing periods of time.



Figure 1. *Tablecloth*, n.d., black and white cotton thread on linen, outline, herringbone and satin stitch, buttonhole wheels, crocheted edging, approx. 1200 x 1450 mm. From the collection of Elisa Markes-Young, started by Stanisława Leciejewska, embroidery continued by her daughter Aniela Hadasik, continued by Renata Markes

Photo: Christopher Young



Figure 2. *Curtain*, n.d., cotton voile, linen pillowcase with crocheted filet lace insert, approx. 1050 x 1100 mm (pillowcase approx. 800 x 800 mm). From the collection of Elisa Markes-Young, gifted from Gisela Plett's linen collection

Photo: Christopher Young

Repurposing memory & cloth

Chapman notes the problem of materials outlasting the life span of a product (2005: 9) and the disposability of items before their functioning life ends (2005: 20). Parkes successfully combats these issues by reclaiming and repurposing fabrics from op shops to generate new and meaningful artworks. Parkes engages with public and private meanings that production, status, economic cost, time, use and ownership ascribe to cloth. During a conversation with the artist (2013a), Parkes explained that employing entirely salvaged fabric adds layers of meaning to his work through the memories of their past. Such materials include handkerchiefs, blankets, pillowcases and clothing that have known and unknown histories.

His work, *rest in peace* (2011), takes the form of a woollen blanket, cotton sheeting and pillowcase fixed together with lines of repeating and visible hand stitch, while the edges hang loose and expose each layer of cloth. In this work, Parkes refers to the closure and off-shoring of prominent Australian textile manufacturers by allowing the commercial labels on the source textiles to be exposed:

The labels in a work, 'rest in peace', were left visible because they are all companies that either no longer exist or no longer manufacture in Australia ... hence 'rest in peace' was to the memories of these Australian onshore manufacturers ... (Parkes 2013b)

In *rest in peace* the ghostly memories of once operational factories and places of employment are resurrected and presented as a patchwork of reclaimed fabrics. Parkes mourns, commemorates and revitalises the forgotten quality and status of local manufacturing through his use of labour-intensive stitching and piecing. The mnemonic quality of *rest in peace* looks at a bygone age whilst reflecting on a burgeoning interest in returning to locally produced goods. The quality of the cloth and the investment of time and handwork gives the work significance and value. The potential of each piece of cloth is restored with this act of salvage and reinvention, ensuring a prolonged existence as an artefact of social commentary.



Figure 3. John Parkes, *rest in peace*, 2011, woollen blanket, cotton sheets, pillowcase, pillow, linen thread, 2480 x 1280 mm

Photo: John Parkes. Courtesy of the artist



Figure 4. John Parkes, *rest in peace* (detail), 2011, woollen blanket, cotton sheets, pillowcase, pillow, linen thread, 2480 x 1280 mm

Photo: John Parkes. Courtesy of the artist

The 2009 work *genes/Jean's* takes a personal approach to incorporating memory from repurposed textiles. The wall hanging is made from a partial bedsheet bordered by vivid red fabric, filled with numerous layers of fabric

in between. Parkes lays worn cotton fabrics together and binds them with seemingly haphazard stitching, reminiscent of scrawling text within a diary. Rips, tears and frayed edges are commemorated rather than mended and hidden, suggesting the past histories of the fabrics. The cloth has particular significance to the artist and represents 'My grandmother, my childhood, my adulthood in the cloth, bound together' (Parkes 2013a). The flannelette pyjamas of his childhood lie between a pillowcase that has the literal and metaphorical imprint of his grandmother's cheek and another that was slept upon by the artist when living in Perth. It is at the moment of disintegration that he begins to memorialise the ingrained private meanings, or memories, cultivated over time in his work. 'What is cloth without human contact?' he asks (Parkes 2013a). After the process of making, Parkes intentionally wears or sleeps with the fabric, sometimes for many years, continuing the very personal relationship he has with the textile.

The months and years of wearing, using and stitching the fabrics 'empower[s] them with all of my thinking' (Parkes 2013a). The constant physical engagement with the cloth affixes values of private possession to the original public meanings of the cloth, generating a powerful example of the mnemonic quality of textiles.

The works *genes/Jean's* and *rest in peace* demonstrate how cloth can gain worth beyond economic or exchange value. Richins coins the term 'possession meaning' to determine two sources of object value, public and private. He suggests that the private meanings of possessions derive from an object's original public meaning and are then layered with the owner's personal experience of the object. Each person or society forms a unique relationship with objects based upon their individual experiences of the object, 'where the owner's personal history in relation to the object plays an important role' (Richins 1994: 506). These experiences are memories that we tie to the object, establishing it as 'mnemonic', and 'emotionally durable'. Richins's theory of possession meaning can be applied to Parkes's work, which commemorates the layered memories invested in cloth to generate meaningful work of cultural and personal significance.



Figure 5. John Parkes, *genes/Jean's*, 2009, recycled cotton cloth (pillow cases & pyjamas), cotton & linen thread, cotton yarn, 1640 x 480 mm

Photo: John Parkes. Courtesy of the artist

Biographical narrative & identity

An important aspect of emotionally durable objects is their ability to 'be seen by the user to resonate with and be symbolic of the self' (Chapman 2005: 38).

Memory's impact upon identity is well documented. It has been confirmed that the integration of past and present selves through memory contributes to 'the sense of continuity of identity' (Addis & Tippett 2004). An object that represents some aspect of personal identity through the memories it holds acquires a strong relationship with its owner.

Lindsay's *Cinnamon and roses* (2004) tapestry was created with personal family memory at the heart of the work. Cinnamon sticks, rose petals, linen, lace, naturally dyed muslin, cotton, and silk intertwine to create an elongated textile. The work's vast length, variegated stripe-work and colour-blocking is recognisable as an evocative timeline. It is only in conversation with Lindsay, however, that the meaning of the work is revealed (Lindsay 2013). The artist discloses the stories she remembers of her grandparents living in Sri Lanka, a place she herself had not visited until recently. The timeline begins in their past and reaches into her present, with each year marked with a new colouration or fabric. Scented materials and recovered fabric from the artist's grandmother's wedding dress are interlaced for a multisensory experience of family heritage that triggers significant memories of birth, death and marriage. *Cinnamon and roses* (2004) is a catalyst for otherwise unspoken memories delivered through a sensorial record. Like family trees and ancestral records, the tapestry documents past events that continue to impact upon the artist, the collective identity of the artist and her family.



Figure 6. Sara Lindsay, *Cinnamon and roses*, 2004, cinnamon sticks, rose petals, linen, lace, muslin (dyed with tea and turmeric), cotton, silk, 380 x 4490 mm

Photo: Jeremy Dillon. Courtesy of the artist



Figure 7. Sara Lindsay, *Cinnamon and roses* (detail), 2004, cinnamon sticks, rose petals, linen, lace, muslin (dyed with tea and turmeric), cotton, silk, 380 x 4490 mm

Photo: Jeremy Dillon. Courtesy of the artist



Figure 8. Sara Lindsay, *Cinnamon and roses* (detail), 2004, cinnamon sticks, rose petals, linen, lace, muslin (dyed with tea and turmeric), cotton, silk, 380 x 4490 mm

Photo: Jeremy Dillon. Courtesy of the artist

The biographic narrative of *Cinnamon and roses* can be explained in terms of Morin's writing on the 'biographical object'. Morin's journal article, 'L'objet Biographique' (1969, cited in Hoskins 1998: 8–9), classifies objects in terms of their intimate, or detached, relationship with human beings: *l'objet biographique* (the biographical object) and *l'objet protocolaire* (the protocol object). Morin argues that biographical objects are those that represent their owner's personality, individuality and life experience. They define time, space and identity for the owner, bearing witness to everyday experiences, and are eternally entwined with their human counterpart (Morin 1969, cited in Hoskins 1998: 8). Conversely, protocol objects, or public commodities are easily replaced, ubiquitous and disconnected from the personal (Morin 1969, cited in Hoskins 1998: 8). They resist the inscriptions of their owner's life, or alternatively, they are not given the opportunity to be so inscribed. I suggest that the biographical object, based upon Morin's work (1969, cited in Hoskins 1998: 8–9), can be given the function to hold, store and reveal personal experiences if the owner chooses. They can also be created for the purpose of securing and documenting memory, as *Cinnamon and roses* does for Lindsay. The extraordinary skill involved in its making, and the tactile beauty of this piece has led to its being exhibited nationally and internationally. The private memories associated with it remain hidden yet the work resonates strongly with the public audience for its evocation of emotion, indicating that a biographical object embedded with personal memory can operate on both private and public levels. Once retired from exhibition, the piece will remain a significant documentation of identity for Lindsay and her family due to its mnemonic associations and emotional connection.

Memory transference

A biography is traditionally regarded as a written document. Morin's reference to this word in describing particular objects suggests that a personal narrative can be transcribed by means other than text. The transference of memory to others through writing, spoken words or imagery is complex. Like a trustworthy secret keeper, documents provide a space where personal narratives are shared only with the permission of their owner. Without specific direction the significance, detail and emotional milieu of a memory can be misplaced. This problematises how it is possible to inherit or adopt another's biographic object. We cannot spontaneously adopt the same emotional connection towards the object as the original unknown owner. Wear, scratches, fading or damage may suggest that the object was well-loved, but we must build and bestow our own experiences upon the object to form an emotionally durable relationship with it.

It is possible for humans to forge meaningful attachments to objects with unknown histories, as revealed in conversation with artist Ilka White (2012). An incomplete patchwork bedspread holds memories of rest and renewal for the artist. This quilt was found by chance in a second-hand shop. Bright fabric hexagons of 1940s, 1950s and 1960s prints were semi-stitched in place by an anonymous maker of unknown origins. Some still have backing cardboard

cut from old cereal boxes, held in place with tacking stitch waiting to be removed. The traces of the making process that are still visible in the quilt hint at the abilities of its maker, but do not retain any other details regarding the identity of the maker. The workmanship and skill in the quilt was immediately recognised by White, who purchased it and later used it on her own bed. During a concentrated period of recovery from major illness the bedspread became a constant companion. Despite the unknown origins of the quilt, White developed an emotional connection with the item. She speaks intimately about this period in her life:

I have very fond memories of the beautiful early morning winter sun, coming from the east through these windows, and my bed was right there, my head was just where those pillows are. And the sunlight at that time of morning in the winter was absolutely beautiful (and) it would come in on that bedspread, so I have very pure memories. My mind was still recovering so I wasn't thinking much further than my present tense. I spent almost two months almost entirely in the present tense and it was so delightful. All that caught my attention in those moments for those months was the sunlight, the bedspread, the colours, the joyful flowery nature of it, and my being. Full stop ... That was really amazing. I hadn't realized, I don't think, creatively how important that rest was until some months after I recovered enough to be out of bed and getting back into my life. (White 2012)

Through White's experience of respite, recovery and revival, the quilt became a valued possession. Through constant visual and physical contact with the quilt, it became imbued with the sensory memories she describes. The emotional durability associated with the patchwork quilt is a consequence of these embedded memories. The capacity for textiles to transfer existing and embed new memories remains an important reason for why the artist treasures this and other similar textile artefacts within her collection.

Object and owner relationships

White's patchwork quilt is an example of the way in which bonds are made with objects that are associated with significant experiences, adding to the purely practical or ornamental role of the object. The fragile and affective relationship between owner and object is full of meaning and can be useful for maintaining self-identity during times of upheaval. This brings a sense of comfort and security, highlighting another valuable quality of the mnemonic object.



Figure 9. Unknown artist, *Patchwork quilt*, n.d., cotton fabric, cotton thread, cardboard backing pieces, 1800 x 2100 mm

Photo: Danielle Chau

The theory of ‘transitional objects’, developed by Winnicott, (1984: 229–42), presents an example of an affective relationship between possession and possessor that correlates with White’s relationship with her patchwork quilt. The psychoanalyst and paediatrician focused his research upon childhood attachment to certain objects, characteristically soft blankets or toys, and their capacity to calm and comfort. Winnicott saw these transitional objects as an aid in the child’s growing perception of the inner and outer world (1984: 242). His focus is on a period of change and upheaval in the child’s development, in which she/he is beginning to understand external reality, to gain a sense of ‘objective perception’ and the ‘capacity to create, think up, devise, originate, [and] produce an object’ (1984: 230). The transitional object plays an important

role in navigating these changes as it ‘gives room for the process of becoming able to accept difference and similarity’ (Winnicott 1984: 234). The object, via haptic playfulness and illusion, provides continuity and consistency during periods of disruption. The relationship between the child and the transitional object ultimately enables a sense of calm, develops individual identity and fosters creative imagination whilst change is occurring (Winnicott 1984: 242).

The types of objects used by children, such as blankets, pillows and toys, are most often textiles and have characteristics that promote a strong sensorial and emotional attachment. When asked to describe their objects, children often mention texture as a primary quality (Lehman et al. 1995: 443–59). Touch is the initial sensation developed during infancy, where the skin is a receptor for experience and perception of the world (DeLong et al. 2007: 38). Haptic, or bodily, engagement with soft materials may remind the child of a parent’s skin, which is associated with wellbeing and security. The tactile interaction with transitional objects is often repetitive and habitual (rubbing, twisting, stroking), encouraged by the pleasant sensation of softness. A cognitive and affective response is evoked through such engagement and cultivates a strong relationship between the child and their object.

The transitional object, or what Lehman, Arnold & Reeves name the attachment object (1995: 443–59), has qualities that are entirely unique, particularly from the perspective of the child. The object is frequently regarded as distinctive in physical character and absolutely irreplaceable due to the experience it engenders. This perception can be so extreme that if the object is washed, it no longer has the potency that it once did. Time spent together and the conferring of experience as memory to the object further cements attachment, making it an essential aspect in our constantly shifting lives.

I suggest that objects can provide emotional grounding during any period of transition, not only in childhood. White’s relationship with her patchwork quilt embodies characteristics of the transitional object through the physically intimate contact established between the quilt and White’s body, and the way in which her relationship with the quilt was able to provide comfort during a time of emotional adjustment. The associated reaffirming memory of rest and resilience can also provide White with a grounding reminder of her own capacity to journey through and out of a difficult period, providing a representation of both vulnerability and strength that offers a meaningful, visceral and affective connection that can continue to reassure during similarly challenging circumstances in the future.

Mnemonic objects & affect

In understanding how mnemonic qualities enhance the emotional durability of an object, we can begin to consider how we might design and create such robust items. Chapman admits that once the object is out in the world, it is difficult to influence how the object is valued and used.

It is clear that although a designer can certainly elicit within users an emotional response to a given object, the explicit nature of the response is beyond the designer's control; the unique assemblage of past experiences that is particular to each user; their cultural background and life journey determine this. (Chapman 2005: 100)



Figure 10. Ilka White, *Spring Summer 11/12*, 2011–2012, silk organza, inherited fabrics, thread, cloth collage (appliqué), each piece 920 x 630 mm

Photo: Ilka White. Courtesy of the artist

The patchwork quilt became influential to White's subsequent body of work, *Spring Summer 11/12* (2013). In this series of wall hangings, cotton appliqué tessellates across gossamer silk organza. Hues range from sun-bleached pales to permeated brights. Each fabric segment comes from the artist's inherited collection of fabric and was instinctively positioned and placed (White 2012). There are qualities of handwork, piecing, intuition, segmentation, and hue that the pieces share. More importantly, both the patchwork quilt and *Spring Summer 11/12* represent White's unique memories of a critical time in her life and her re-emergence into her practice after some years. She describes her process and thoughts of creating *Spring Summer 11/12*:

And so what felt possible started to be laying out my inherited fabrics from my grandma and looking at what it suggested being made into. It ended up being made into a series of hangings, applique fabric collage. Which was very different from the way I had worked previously. Aesthetic, palette and technique and everything. I was surprised as anybody. Even as I was making it, it felt like I was channeling something for elsewhere. Even as every piece went down, and even when I decided it was 'right' and it stayed there I thought, 'Fancy that being right! Who'd of thought?' It was a strange creation time. (White 2012)

White's emotional relationship with the patchwork quilt influenced the making of *Spring Summer 11/12*, which became a reflection on her return to health. The wall hangings are a tangible response to her convalescence and recovery. White also tells, however, of their 'universal appeal' (White 2012) while on show. This appeal is reflected in the fact that the hangings were purchased by collectors and so have a meaningful life beyond that attributed to them by the artist. It is evident that their composition, fabrication and palette allude to White's story, but are also able to produce an emotional response from others. It is the affective response to concepts of memory that maintains their survival in a new context.

Conclusion

In a world already groaning with the burden of disposable objects and manufactured waste, how can we responsibly create new 'things'? We cannot keep generating objects with tenuously short-term life cycles to the detriment of the earth's resources. Likewise, we cannot quell our natural instinct to create, make and consume. The responsibility lies with designers, artists, makers, consumers and collectors to rethink how we generate and respond to objects and the consequent relationships we have with them.

Chapman's theory of emotionally durable design allows us to understand that the sustainability of an object does not stop with the designer. It can be perpetuated through the emotional relationship a person has with an object. Memory is an important component to building such a relationship, as the work of Markes-Young, Parkes, Lindsay and White demonstrate. The evocation of memory through cloth can be addressed by textile practitioners in manifold ways to achieve a variety of registers. Repurposed cloth presents undisclosed meanings that are developed and supplemented with the intervention of textile practitioners. Family history is conveyed through the adaptation of inherited textiles, made apparent by Markes-Young's tablecloth and curtain. The original public meaning of cloth is supplemented with intense haptic engagement to comment upon the value of textiles, as by Parkes. Reflection upon family memory through interlacing of inherited fragments with non-traditional textiles is demonstrated by Lindsay's *Cinnamon and roses*. Finally, new textiles can be inspired by significant transitional life stages, attested in White's work, *Spring Summer 11/12*. Each artist ascribes memory to their work in distinctive and varied ways.

The textiles discussed in this paper are a testament to the creative approaches used to embed cloth with memory. The making of mnemonic textiles provides a rich and meaningful field to explore for the benefit of sustainable creation of artefacts. Textiles' haptic nature, proximity to the body and the time invested in creating them elevates their possession value. This value goes beyond the economic by authenticating and sustaining our identity through the memories they represent and, in turn, we work to preserve them.

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The strange quiet of things misplaced: Craft, material and memory in the work of Elisa Markes-Young

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Abstract This paper will consider the relationship between the performative nature of craft and the transformation of memory, as exemplified in the work of Elisa Markes-Young. Particular reference will be made to her series *The strange quiet of things misplaced* (2007–2011), which is based on memories of domestic linen from her Eastern European childhood. This discussion offers a provisional reading of the series, relating to the concepts of craft, material and memory, and considers how devices like encounter and mimicry can elicit both memory and improvisational craft practices. Markes-Young, who has no formal training in traditional textile techniques, describes her process as a literal activation of memory through making, giving rise to the question: ‘Can the techniques of material practice provide the means for not only creation and reflection, but also an altogether new “encounter” between the artist and her work: occasioning both new works and enriched memories?’ Such a proposal contrasts with the popular conception of artists drawing on memory to inspire their artworks: here, it is suggested, memory is encountered, activated, and enhanced by physical and conceptual craft practice.

Introduction

Memory is a mystery. We imagine it as being some sort of a cupboard where things are stored and pulled out when needed. But sometimes things are misplaced and it's only then, when our memory has failed us, that we brood over its nature ... (Markes-Young 2011: 19)

Elisa Markes-Young has been exhibiting extraordinary, abstract, hand-embroidered textiles regularly since 2002, when she immigrated to Australia with her husband, New Zealand-born photographer Christopher Young. This was not her first such move: at 16, in the early 1980s, Markes-Young and her family left Poland for Germany. Aspects of this complex cross-cultural experience can be seen in her recent series, *The strange quiet of things misplaced* (2007–2011), an extensive body of work in which Markes-Young focuses on her unique history and the fallibility of personal memory. Her works incorporate drawing on stretched canvases, overlaid with complex yet irregular handworked net-like stitching. This needlecraft does not follow regular stitching patterns: instead, it mimics them, through a process that is part intuitive, partly dependent on

recollection. The lace-like incompleteness of these patterns and how they fold back upon themselves disrupts expectations of uniformity. Such tangible irregularities mimic the imperfections and conceptual slippages of memory.

Personal memory and her doubts about its capacity to reproduce clear images of the past that she longs to remember are enduring themes for Markes-Young. This yearning permeates her work, seemingly intensifying her awareness of the 'fragility and fallibility' of memory. Could it be this fallibility that compels the artist to attend to her memory through the daily practice of needlecraft?

In Markes-Young's work there is a complex dependence between material (the threads), craft (the tension which holds them in place) and memory (represented through the use of entropic patterning). This discussion will focus on the dynamic relationship between material, craft and memory within this evocative series.

Encounter and memory

Encounter: 4. An idea that suddenly presents itself, as it were, by accident; a happy thought. (*The Oxford English Dictionary* 1989)

Markes-Young describes how she uses craft practice to encounter memory through her series *The strange quiet of things misplaced*, and how closely aligned this is with her sense of place:

After multiple migrations I don't really belong anywhere and my memories are the closest I have to a home. They — together with the associated fallibility and fragility — form the core of my artistic practice. (2011: 19)

Memory is a shifting site and, for Markes-Young, an encounter with memory is both conceptual (ideas-based) and physical (material or craft practice-based). This discussion of her work focuses on a dialogue between concept and practice and how craft, material and memory pollinate each other. It seems that the unfixed nature of memory operates as a poetic device for the artist, both in her understanding of the enigmatic concepts of memory and her personal migrant history, and also in the way she works with craft techniques and materials. Visually, through a series of net-like images and disrupted pattern structures, Markes-Young's work reflects the workings of memory itself.

Within the visual arts, the term 'encounter' usually relates to the way a viewer perceives a work. This discussion, however, considers the encounter between artist and artwork at the site of investigative, process-based practice. As craft theorist Sue Rowley explains, 'many artists ... invoke craft precisely to reflect critically on questions of ... temporal experience' (2012: 235). Here, perhaps, is a key to the sense of authenticity that radiates from Markes-Young's work. Rowley's words also provide recognition of, and a context for, Markes-Young's need to entertain, to engage with, her own memories. This particular, highly focused craft practice is, in fact, a questioning of her own sense of lived

experience and also the insecure and fluid nature of her memories. Such encounters seem to offer little comfort: taking the form not of nostalgia, but of rigorous interrogation. The resulting sense of unease may be identified in the following definition of ‘encounter’:

1. To be faced with something, especially something new, strange, unpleasant, difficult or dangerous;

To meet somebody unexpectedly. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's English Dictionary of Current English* 1995: 379)

The suggestion of conceptual, metaphorical and physical ‘tension’ in this word, and its application to an understanding of Markes-Young’s series, implies a possibility of transformation and encourages close looking. The concept is not without precedent: visual art theorist Mieke Bal has used ‘encounter’ to describe an act which takes place during the process of research in the visual arts (2008: 206), linking the concept to both research and imagination. For Markes-Young, then, in whose work the connection between personal research into memory and imaginative making practice is intrinsic, ‘encounter’ encapsulates an essential, yet uneasy relationship.

Encounter and memory as ‘performative paradigm’

As Estelle Barrett discusses, the dynamic of an encounter, whether physical or ‘conversational’, can be considered a performative paradigm (2010: 118). Such enunciation has the power to activate thought, and thus memory, in new and sometimes unexpected ways. In Markes-Young’s work, the performative meeting of memory, craft and technique enables incipient aspects of understanding, thinking and feeling. And while Barrett uses the concept of ‘performative paradigm’ to describe creative practice as research, it is also used to contextualise philosopher Julia Kristeva’s notion of revolt or transgression — the exact kind of ‘revolt’ or, in Markes-Young’s work, ‘encounter’ — that is required by creative practice. For Kristeva, such a revolt entails moving from confining language structures and conventions into what she describes as ‘poetic’ or freeing territories. For Markes-Young, these freeing territories take the form of subverting and adapting formal stitch and design structures taken from memory. The resulting work is at once informed by, and utterly independent of convention. Such an encounter with memory occurs when working with textile materials and craft techniques. And memory itself could be described as a poetic concept of unknowable parameters. It is not a timeline, nor linear, and is therefore not akin to the formality of biography. Within memory, timeframes are displaced and disarranged; shapes only partially visible. For Markes-Young, knowledge of, and encounters with, such shifting territories have become devices which inform both her creative research practice and her pursuit of a sense of ‘home’.

Drawing from memory

Markes-Young's work in *The strange quiet of things misplaced* operates outside the conventions of needlecraft practice, using what she calls 'faux' techniques. With no formal training other than a few basic hand-embroidery and crochet stitches learned as a child, Markes-Young has developed her technique in an abstract manner. Her starting point is often a memory: in particular, childhood encounters with traditional Polish textiles gifted to her father, a medical doctor, in lieu of a conventional fee. Rather than revisiting this collection, however, Markes-Young develops, or 'draws' her own patterns and stitches in an intuitive way in response to images summoned up by memory. With no vocabulary of stitches at her disposal, Markes-Young innovates, employing the childhood learning tool of mimicry: it is as though she imagines how such patterns or techniques should look. The result is that her works mimic, rather than reinterpret, traditional motifs. She references traditional stitch structures and patterns but disrupts their original logical or symmetrical flow. A simulation of traditional needlecraft patterns is thus employed and then disrupted, or extrapolated.



Figure 1. Elisa Markes-Young, *The strange quiet of things misplaced* #27, 2011, acrylic, pencil, pastel, wool, cotton and silk on Belgian linen, 1100 x 1100 mm

Photo: Christopher Young. Licensed by VISCOPY Australia

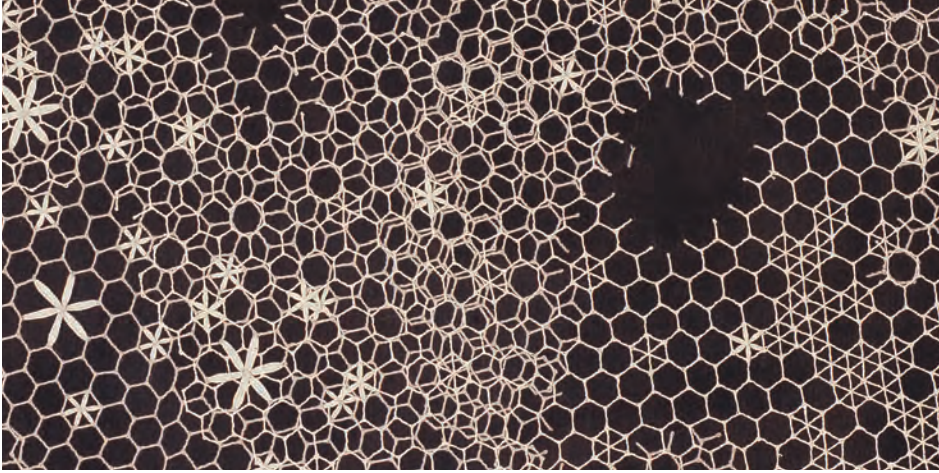


Figure 2. Elisa Markes-Young, *The strange quiet of things misplaced* #28, 2010, acrylic, wool, cotton and silk on Belgian linen, 1100 x 550 mm

Photo: Christopher Young. Licensed by VISCOPY Australia

Working in this way means that, effectively, the patterns used in this series cannot be fully planned, laid out or completed in advance. Instead, this intuitive way of working contributes to the disrupted patterns of the resulting work. These pieces initially appear to contain logical patterns, but on closer inspection the viewer observes their imperfections and deviations. Markes-Young's use of minimal craft techniques and materials in a spontaneous way operates as a form of drawing. Her pseudo patterns within this series are improvisations, resisting conventional order and hinting at erasure and deconstruction.

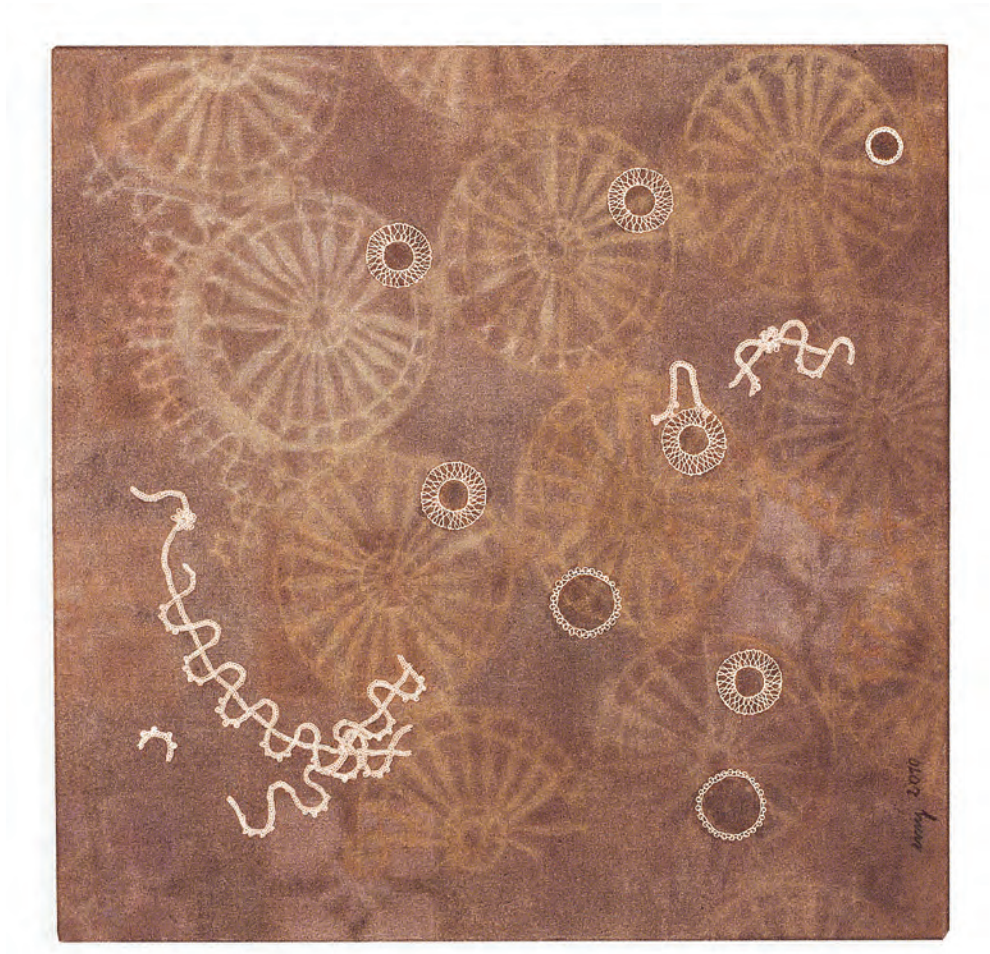


Figure 3. Elisa Markes-Young, *The strange quiet of things misplaced* #38, 2010, acrylic, pencil, pastel, wool, cotton and silk on Belgian linen, 550 x 550 mm

Photo: Christopher Young. Licensed by VISCOPY Australia

In *The strange quiet of things misplaced* # 27 (2011) and #28 (2010) a honeycomb pattern unfolds across the canvas like a net. Initially, this pattern seems obvious, but upon close inspection, the dysfunctional and interrupted qualities are apparent, with net-like shapes overlaid and deconstructed. The entropic breakdown of pattern structure is exaggerated by entwining multiple threads of different weights. The threads are bound against each other like a net structure pinned flat, but they are also independent and multiple, rather than flowing in a continuous line. At certain points stitches have been missed and a hole appears in the net. This is the most obvious sign of a dysfunctional pattern, and demands re-examination.

These works mimic the conventions of looped net making. In *The strange quiet of things misplaced* #27 and #28, the net form provides a visual metaphor for memory as it is experienced: sections of longed-for logic are distorted, intertwined, overlaid, and 'misplaced'. This is also visible when the tension holding the threads taut gives way and the net changes direction to fold back upon itself. Similarly, #28 seems to further develop the metaphor: encapsulating Markes-Young's relationship between the visible (created) and invisible (intangible) aspects of memory, and suggesting that, no matter how tightly the 'net' of memory is tensioned, it will almost inevitably yield.

In *The strange quiet of things misplaced* #38 (2010) this same tension has riven the work, and, with fragments adrift from the pattern, there is a resulting sense of disruption.

There are often relationships between two or more pieces within this series and they share one number, with *The strange quiet of things misplaced* #34 (2010) and #37 (2011) being examples. In the pair titled #34, the pattern at first appears to follow the needlecraft convention of symmetry; then it starts to shift and distort. In the second piece, only fragments of the original pattern remain, and these appear to have reconfigured themselves into a new, more organic pattern structure.

In some works within this series, including #28, #29, #30, #33, #34, and #38 (all 2010), this sense of disruption also mimics a basic textile weave structure and how it might be broken down over time by wear. This type of mimicry, another form of the dissolution of pattern, is particularly visible in #29 through a dissolving grid-like structure. It seems that, in this series, and these examples especially, the use of intuition and the need for mimicry have led to improvisation and innovation.

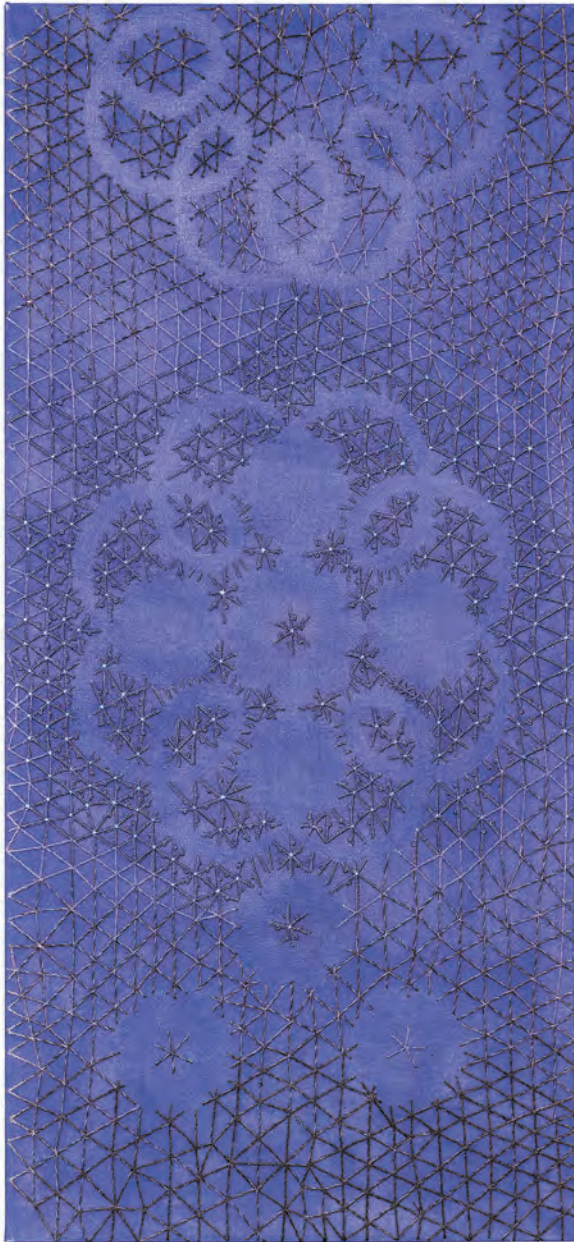


Figure 4. Elisa Markes-Young, *The strange quiet of things misplaced #33*, 2010, acrylic, pencil, pastel, wool, cotton and silk on Belgian linen, 550 x 1100 mm

Photo: Christopher Young. Licensed by VISCOPY Australia

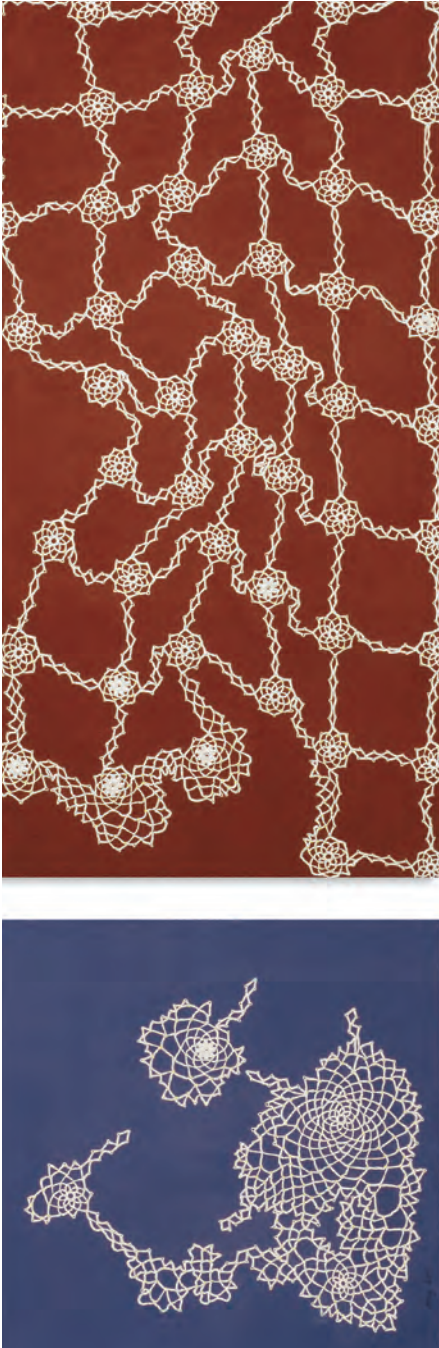


Figure 5. Elisa Markes-Young, *The strange quiet of things misplaced* #34, 2010, acrylic, wool, cotton and silk on Belgian linen, two panels, approx. 550 x 1100 mm and 550 x 550 mm

Photo: Christopher Young. Licensed by VISCOPY Australia

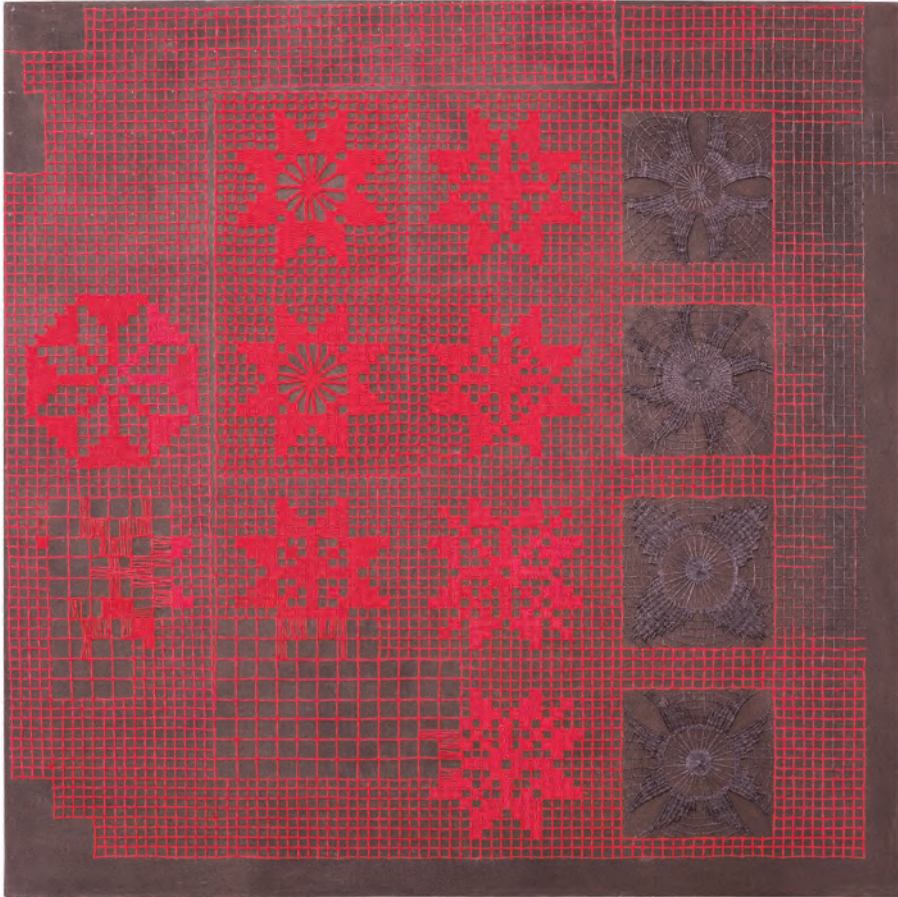


Figure 6. Elisa Markes-Young, *The strange quiet of things misplaced #29*, 2010, acrylic, wool, cotton and silk on Belgian linen, 1100 x 1100 mm

Photo: Christopher Young. Licensed by VISCOPY Australia

Craft and memory can both be read as poetic devices within this work. Markes-Young mimics and improvises upon traditional craft practices so as to mirror the elusive qualities of memory. The directness of her process, which uses both traditional drawing materials and thread, allows the work to be seen as a performative gesture, bound by improvisation. If poetry can be language freed from itself, as Gaston Bachelard implies (1998), then perhaps ‘drawing’ such as Markes-Young’s can be craft techniques freed from themselves. In the introduction to *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement*, Bachelard considers the restrictions of language in his discussion of a phenomenology of movement: ‘language, conditioned by forms, is not readily capable of making the dynamic images of height picturesque’ (1998: 10). Bachelard’s philosophical process is his attempt to go beyond ascribed limitations of thought and language, as he explains:

in the realm of imagination transcendence is added to immanence. [Where] going beyond thought is the very law of poetic expression (1998: 5).

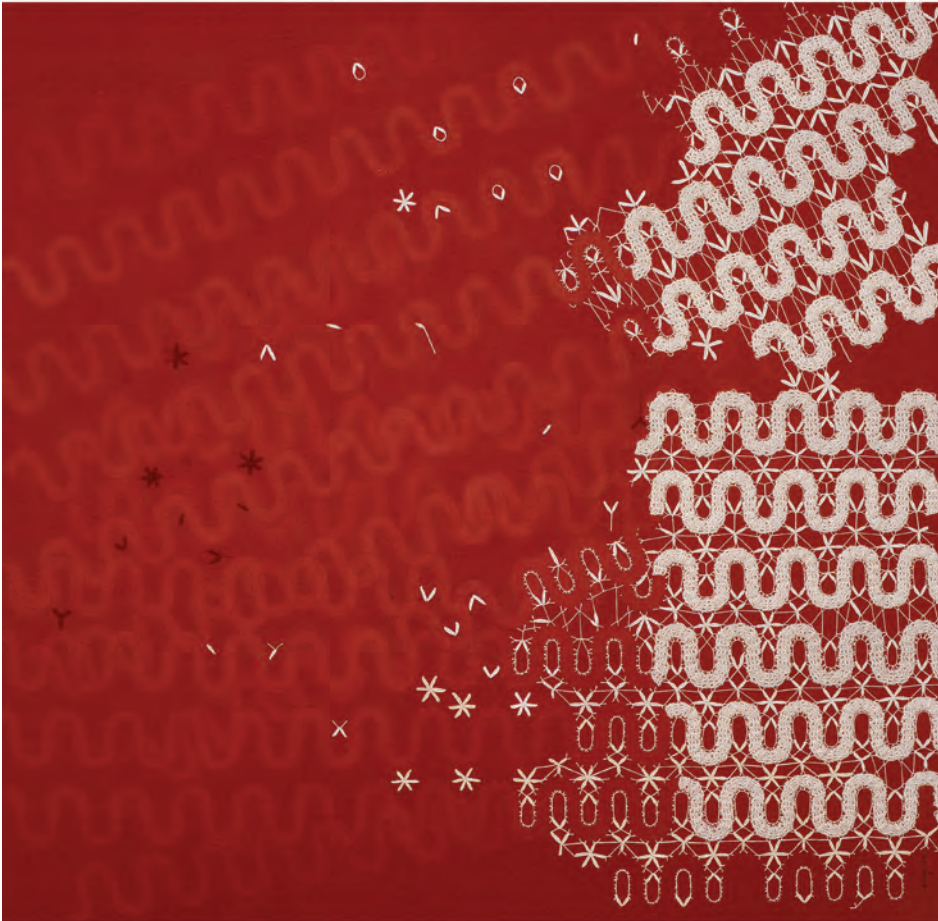


Figure 7. Elisa Markes-Young, *The strange quiet of things misplaced* #30, 2010, acrylic, pencil, pastel, wool, cotton and silk on Belgian linen, 1100 x 1100 mm

Photo: Christopher Young. Licensed by VISCOPY Australia

In this series, it would seem that drawing, as a process embedded within conscious craft practice, is used to transcend limitations of memory and technique: to trace points of transition or shift. It thus reflects the liminal and conceptual territory of memory to which Markes-Young has given form in these works. As such, the series — in its effort to elude restriction or convention while representing and exploring memory — aspires to something akin to Bachelard's 'poetic expression'.

Memory and transformation

You have to begin to lose your memory, if only in bits and pieces, to realise that memory is what makes our lives. (Buñuel 2011: 2)

In addressing the way in which she refers to the fallibility of memory in *The strange quiet of things misplaced*, Markes-Young cites recent research into memory and the brain:

We've long known that the passing of time and current circumstances has a bearing on memory yet we always presumed that our recollections, at their core, were permanent. Research now indicates that memory doesn't possess these levels of accuracy and permanence, rather it is fluid and pliable — every time we remember we invent the past. (2011: 19)

The works in this series have a numerical sequence; however, there are gaps that indicate missing or incomplete works. These gaps are part of the larger, overall pattern of work. They visually inscribe a metaphorical relationship to the elusive concept of memory. Often, only fragments remain. These fragments of pseudo textile patterns are developed through mimicry, which Markes-Young describes as 'mock'-crochet, 'mock'-tatting and 'mock'-needle weaving. This description offers us an insight into her working process: a system of ongoing encounters with memory through mimetic technique. Her conceptual and physical explorations function as creative research through the catalysts of encounter and mimicry.

Markes-Young describes the significance of how her imperfect, net-like structures are read, with the fragments and imperfect patterns of this series performing the transmutability of memory:

I also like the idea of the artwork being read not just from left to right but being ambiguous as to the direction in which the narrative unfolds. The work is puzzle-like and seemingly random in its configuration, reflecting the inherent confusion when memories are challenged. (2011: 19)

The net-like structures can also be read in another way: Markes-Young, like other migrants, describes a sense of existing between past and present, of being caught between three different countries. The exploration of memory and imagination through craft practice becomes a metaphorical way of navigating the complexity of this crisis of identity. The net structure is a deceptively transparent barrier that is psychologically binding.

Freud uses a metaphor to describe memory that includes the capacity of transparency in 'layers' of memory (1961). The Mystic Writing Pad is a device developed from tablets used by early cultures, made from clay, wax or wet sand. Designed to capture temporal, drawn marks and capable of being easily erased so that a new drawing can be made, the Writing Pad is Freud's metaphor for the human mind, including perception, inception, storage and the concept of different layers of memory being formed over time. Such layers and their

inherent permeability are reflected throughout this series of Markes-Young's. Freud suggests that there are several levels to the collection and storage of memories: the conscious, the semiconscious and the unconscious. Information withheld in the memory is largely in an unconscious space that can be drawn into consciousness, or triggered, through some associative connection (1961). For Markes-Young, this associative connection seems to be triggered through craft practice. Freud's theory explains why our memories are relative to, or evoked by, other events in time and place. This idea of the physical metaphor and the trigger of contemporaneous lived experience gives us a sense of how memories are remade and reactivated through the kind of imaginative and intuitive encounter undertaken by Markes-Young within this series.

Inscribing memory in motion

In *The strange quiet of things misplaced*, Markes-Young conducts a conversation with memory. She describes contemporary research into memory and the act of mining her own memory for fragments to harness within her practice. Both forms of research yield a similar result: the understanding that memory is fallible and intangible, illusory and constantly subject to reconfiguration.

Markes-Young mimics traditional textile techniques in a dialogue between memory and making, and attempts to re-engage with the site of that remembered experience of traditional Polish needlecraft, as though her child-mind had carefully traced each line. These pieces masquerade as needlecraft; they mimic twining, needle-weaving, crochet and knotting. Markes-Young appears to use these 'mock' techniques for their ability to enact the provisional capacity of drawing to transform line. These pieces, and the acts of making they reflect, are quiet and gestural. The elaborate 'mock' techniques and faux-pattern work seem to operate as a form of transformational encounter between memory, and both concept and method: an almost-silent discussion between self, work and memory. The resulting work 'performs' this transformational encounter, bringing nets, disrupted patterns and the fragmented and fluid nature of memory into the same conceptual space. It is this transformation made visible that links material, craft and memory so deftly within this series.

Memory and memoir

Memory is both subtle and inherently fallible, inevitably undergoing transformation. Each work in the series may be read as pages in an open book, or as an alternative kind of memoir, for its 'pages' follow the sequence of Markes-Young's memories of traditional textiles from her childhood. An alternative memoir, it must encompass not only the possibilities and limitations of memory as conceptual territory, but also the cultural margins of the artist's multiple migrations. Markes-Young has described her experience of migration

as a kind of ‘enforced isolation’,¹ an acknowledgement of the direct implications of misplaced cultural and linguistic identity. Within the pattern of this series, she navigates such complexities through making: engaging in an alternative kind of dialogue. In this way, the work enacts Barrett’s performative paradigm (2010: 118). It does this through its encounter with memory, through the use of drawing as a performative practice in which mark-making operates as a trace, and through the poetic and transformative potential of craft practice and its physical materials.

Memory, in relation to contemporary visual art practice, has been linked by Joan Gibbons with the convention of autobiography: a mirror-like, raw exposure of personal ‘experience’, or perhaps a confessional (2007: 9–28). Markes-Young’s approach seems to resist this. Instead, her practice could be described as an oblique form of memoir, akin to Drusilla Modjeska’s proposal that, ‘we think of memoir as the mapping of a mind rather than (or as well as) the recreation of experience’ (2002: 196). A model such as Modjeska’s operates in opposition to the more visceral autobiographical projects of artists like Tracey Emin, which, in the words of Gibbons, act as a form of ‘externalisation of personal memory’ (2007: 9–28). For Markes-Young, accessing memory through the practice of craft is a performative practice. Rather than autobiography, her craft is an act of engaging with or encountering memory. As Modjeska points out, the relationship between memory and autobiography is never straightforward. It is not ‘the simple evacuation of the forgotten or repressed’, but instead, ‘it [memory] is complexified by a conflation of the past and present’ (2002: 196).

There is a sense of flux in Markes-Young’s imperfect works, where gesture and movement are constantly at play through both the slow building-up of repetitive pattern and its disintegration. In her works, the ratio of wear is as important as the construction of the web-like layers, if not more so. This duality inscribes in the work a sense of both the entropic and the poetic qualities of memory.

The need to look closely at Markes-Young’s work in *The strange quiet of things misplaced* draws the viewer in, making it operate as an aesthetic and conceptual net. The gestures visible within this work express sensitive nuances that are measured and carefully drawn and tensioned. Memory operates as a poetic tool for making, performing the role of both catalyst and lens. Memory is drawn in thread, using imperfect pattern structures that encapsulate thread’s unique capacity to twist and spin, to ply and knot, to weave a web. Intersections and linkages are at once strong and weak, held in place by the tension of interlacing. Some elements of these works are only partially visible, or visible in certain lights, as, for example in *The strange quiet of things misplaced* #27, #33 and #30. In these works, the light is like another metaphor for memory: dappled, diffused, sharp, but never still or fixed. Rowley describes the confluence between ‘past-present’, which ‘becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living’ (2012). This seems an apt illustration for Markes-Young’s compulsion to attend to and engage with memory through her work.

1 E. Markes-Young, 2013, personal communication, June.

Drawing attempts to capture the transience of memory, thus it becomes a poetic device that performs that set of fleeting nuances in a focused attempt to reclaim, re-see or reactivate the site of memory. Modjeska considers that, with the construction of memoir, 'the question isn't so much one of truth to a narrative that exists outside the text as of fidelity to the creative process' (2002: 196). She suggests that the importance lies with the way in which the materials or memory are articulated. For Markes-Young, this means that memory is observed as a threshold state where invention, speculation and fabrication occur alongside, and in response to, retrieval. It is the fluidity of that encounter that she attempts to transcribe within this series. As Modjeska observes, 'discovery and invention can live very close to each other' (2002: 196). Markes-Young's work is motivated by the dynamic slippages and integral transformation at the heart of retrieval. It is this elusive space between discovery and invention that resonates within *The strange quiet of things misplaced*.

Craft, transformation and navigation

Craft — verb (t) 9. to make or manufacture (an object, etc.) with skill and dexterity. (*Macquarie Dictionary* 2005)

If we consider 'craft' as a verb, it relates to the act of crafting something, or making with dexterity and skill. Can this definition apply to *The strange quiet of things misplaced*, in which Markes-Young mimics traditional needlecraft? This faux needlecraft is used as a drawing method to provide an encounter with personal memory, the resulting work 'performing' and enacting the concept of memory. This discussion proposes that when craft practices are employed in this subversive way, they can be described as a type of poetic device. Within *The strange quiet of things misplaced* Markes-Young's detailed works become imperfect maps for the tracing of memory's elusive threads, knots and gaps: and while she encounters and attends to her memory, a subtle catalyst for transformation is found.

While the foundation of Markes-Young's work is an ongoing encounter between the artist and her memory, there is also, perhaps, evidence of active participation or elaboration by the maker. Rowley, in the context of craft and storytelling, suggests that 'the rhythms of making ... are the heart-beats of human sociability' and that, furthermore, 'the temporalities of craft are somehow bound up with those of the human body' (2012: 234). It seems that in Markes-Young's series, the crisscrossing of temporal space is given physical form not only in the works themselves, but in the process by which they're created: the time, the detail, the active and close attention that needs to be paid to their making. The physical 'crafting' of the works offers a powerful echo of the constant transformation of the concept and site of memory that Markes-Young explores. That a physical act of crafting can provide a tangible, perhaps even inseparable, framework for conceptual realities offers a potent tool for reading Markes-Young's series. For, as Victoria Mitchell explains, 'Making and speaking ... are both primarily tactile and

sensory ... through the senses, touching and utterance share common origins in the neural system' (2012: 161). Enunciation, therefore, through the encounter of craft practice, activates thought and transforms memory. Markes-Young's work may, then, be viewed as both a physiological and psychological encounter with memory and the gesture of making as an utterance of that encounter. The description of a relationship between sensorial and speculative awareness also offers another explanation as to why Markes-Young's conceptual and material accounts of her work are inseparable.

During the conceptual and material construction of this series, Markes-Young appears to have followed a personal and unique set of navigational tools. Such a process may require, as Bal discusses, a kind of circumnavigation, or following of the object's 'signs' during the research process (2008: 206). This indicates the need for a receptive or open approach, a readiness to consider a material or idea from multiple angles. For Markes-Young, it is the unknown that links concept and material practice: the physical encounter with material practice that allows for the conceptual leap to occur, and something of the unknown to be revealed. Sometimes this kind of strategy is most resonant when the pattern is not known in advance — not charted or navigated. A certain willingness to allow the project to unfold, to follow its direction, to pay close attention, is useful.

While there may be a shape, a sense, the intuitive work must essentially be done at the site of making to enable transformation. Ideally, this process of working-out should remain fluid, intuitive, responsive to encounter and nuance and should, overall, be provisional. In its capacity to draw together mimicked, 'invented' processes that evolve and respond to the shifting conceptual grounds of memory, *The strange quiet of things misplaced* can be seen to employ craft as a transformative device capable of performing physically, conceptually and poetically the provisional and serendipitous nature of memory.

Drawing: Casting a net

Anita Taylor considers drawing to be:

propositional, preparatory, visionary, imaginative, associative, factual, generative, transformative or performative. (2008: 9–11)

Throughout this series, Markes-Young appears to employ textile material and craft practices as a form of drawing because of their unique capacity for performing the propositional and the provisional in the various ways that Taylor describes. The works lend themselves to a clear challenge of defined notions of what the practice of 'drawing' may encompass or accomplish. In addition, it seems that the inherent mimicry of needlecraft techniques in the series allows for a provisional, intuitive, inventive and innovative approach to craft practice as a type of 'performative' drawing.

Pattern and entropy

The use of entropic or disintegrating pattern is integral to the capacity of these works of Markes-Young's to articulate the elusive qualities of memory. Initially, these patterns are deceptive. At first glance, they resemble items of found domestic textile craft, but all elements are in fact made by hand and no found textile objects are used. The patterns appear to comply with conventions of traditional needlecraft, but they in fact only mimic them. In fact, the patterns are not regular or symmetrical: they are disrupted and ultimately entropic, visually describing the perceptual breakdown and absences of memory.



Figure 8. Elisa Markes-Young, *The strange quiet of things misplaced* #37, 2011, acrylic, pencil, wool, cotton and silk on Belgian linen, seven panels, various sizes

Photo: Christopher Young. Licensed by VISCOPY Australia

The patterns are vital elements of the work, but not because of the deception they imply, for this is simply a type of camouflage. Instead, they 'perform'

the subject of the work, the shifting territory of memory. The net-like patterns encounter entropic disruptions, operating as an intuitive and innovative drawing method, and enacting a poetic approach to visual interpretation. Markes-Young's patterns can be seen to act as a model for the way in which memory sits outside conventions of autobiographical or logical narrative.

Markes-Young describes her intention with the disintegrating patterns as follows:

With this piece, *The strange quiet of things misplaced* #37, I'm particularly interested in the layering of patterns over each other and how this affects the perception of individual elements. Areas of shadow repeat and emphasise the play of positive and negative space whilst also drawing attention to the disintegrating patterns and their reappearance elsewhere on the canvas, changed. I'm fascinated by this distortion and the progression towards it. (2011: 19)

Pattern can be perceived as a device in craft practice. Jane Graves argues that pattern has been fundamental to design history and rational ideology (2012: 116). She proposes an alternative dual reading of pattern as both positive and negative where 'pattern eludes, evades, and troubles our gaze' (2012: 121). Such an alternative dual reading speaks of Markes-Young's ability to both build up and break down patterns in *The strange quiet of things misplaced* #37, engaging attention through discomfort or the unexpected. As the patterns within the works both employ and disregard expectation and tradition, the viewer is drawn in and then challenged.

Roger Caillois defines the concept of entropy as a 'dissymmetry': a breakdown that moves in one direction, where entropy operates as a type of erosion. This is linked to his description of a 'boundary condition' achieved through a process of mimicry. Caillois describes how insects who camouflage themselves through mimicry in the natural environment may enter a psychotic state where they can no longer distinguish the boundary between themselves and the surrounding environment. Further, as cited by Alain-Bois and Krauss, Caillois links this to a psychological condition experienced by 'schizophrenics who feel themselves dispossessed ... by the space around them': where their sense of self and personal identity becomes disrupted (cited in Bois & Krauss 1996: pp. 39–40).

These perceptions of a transformational state can be useful in reading aspects of Markes-Young's series. Markes-Young reports how an inability to feel a sense of belonging within a new cultural space propels her to examine her memories. Entropy, through the breakdown or erosion of pattern becomes a physical and psychological tool to address both the disconnected sense of self and the ambiguity of memory. Further, it can be perceived in relation to the pursuit of a compulsive practice and Markes-Young's descriptions of the lived experience of multiple immigrations. For Markes-Young's series, as an encounter and re-encounter with personal memory and identity, compulsively performed through a reflexive craft-based practice, such a concept could be read as camouflage: a psychological strategy related to the ongoing construction of personal identity as a migrant. Rowley's reminder that 'craft ... and performance become intricately

bound up in our sense of identity, our understanding of the past' (1997: 76), emphasises our awareness of Markes-Young's dealings with her own identity through this series.

Markes-Young's series reflects again and again the capacity of entropic patterns to mimic the incomplete, cyclic, and open-ended nature of memory. Of her use of patterning in this body of work, she says:

they were chosen for their potential to be built out, transformed, completed and complemented with other motifs and techniques or broken up or unravelled until they became another pattern.²

Far from being mere adornment, these patterns, together with their unexpected disruptions, form the genus of the work, seeming to drive both concept and practice and the urge towards the poetic. The performative capacity of pattern-making and their heterogeneous deviations enact the sense of what is known, what is unknown, what is yet to be known and what will remain unknowable about memory.

David Brett's descriptions of how textile structures emerge and patterns evolve provide an insight into the intuitive development of Markes-Young's works. As Brett suggests, the process and crafting of cloth and fibres 'is itself a generator of more or less complex forms and structures' (2012: 2). The works in this series, with their complex incorporation of patterns done and undone, created and then subverted, are each created from small, simple, repetitive process. The hand-stitching and 'invented' or 'imagined' embroidery techniques represent both intricacy and concentrated focus, together with the most humble manual engagement: the needle, the thread, the hand. They are, as Brett reflects, both 'the most manual and the most abstract' (2012: 2).

In Markes-Young's work, the intuitive and mimetic aspects of her craft practice allow the instability of memory to be presented through pattern and entropy. Entropy is present in these works which are constructed from a process of 'drawing': 'playing with pattern and randomness, giving testimony to the entropy inherent in "nature"' (K. Hayles, cited in Langhill 2002: 27). Through the fusion of the grid and the material on Markes-Young's stretched canvas, an entropic entity is created: order and disorder, reminiscent of the instability of personal identity and memory, residing side by side.

Conclusion

Markes-Young suggests that it is a mistake to objectify memory as a form of metaphorical shelter: a safe space into which it may be possible to psychologically retreat, for memory is not solid. Instead, it is shifting, intuitive

² Markes-Young, 2013, personal communication, June.

and possibly, as Freud suggests, at least partially transparent (1961: 229). The performative 'act' of craft both activates and transforms memory and offers a dynamic tool for creative research in material practice.

As the ultimate poetic device, for Markes-Young, memory serves as a tool for both thinking and making. The artist considers her personal memories despite, and perhaps in part because of, their enigmatic qualities in representing a sense of home. This discussion has focused on a provisional exploration of how this work may be read. It considers Markes-Young's belief in memory as elusive, shifting and flawed. It observes how the work is able to 'perform' the encounter with memory through material and craft practice. This understanding of memory as a poetic rather than a practical rational device evolved in response to a complex personal cross-cultural history, of that threshold space of the immigrant, of the gap between departure and arrival. It has also evolved, however, through the encounter with practice, or the performative endeavour of craft. The poetic occurs here because, although Markes-Young's work requires the labour of needlecraft, it frees itself from accepted conventions through mimicry, imagination and entropy. The dynamic of Markes-Young's work remains as elusive and ambiguous as its subject matter: and therein lies the intrigue.

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Crafting new spatial and sensorial relationships in contemporary jewellery

Sabine Pagan

Abstract The body occupies a significant place in both contemporary jewellery and architectural practice. The wearable object is made for the body and, therefore, invites the presence of a wearer, even if only metaphorically. Similarly, our built environment is constructed in relation to the scale of the human body and to accommodate our actions as users of architecture. Yet, important to both practices is the relationship between the object — jewellery or architecture — and the body beyond its physicality.

This paper examines embodiment from a cross-disciplinary perspective. Drawing on Jack Cunningham's model (2005) *maker-wearer-viewer* as a framework, I propose an extended schema that integrates the object within the relational dynamics, with the aim to investigate the embodied relationship between object and wearer.

Underpinning the research is a case study that I conducted on the sensorial qualities of Peter Zumthor's architecture, in particular Therme Vals. The study demonstrates that the embodied experience of the architecture by the user contributes to the development of these qualities.

In this paper, I argue that the transposition and testing of this concept in jewellery generates new relational variables, from which a new methodology of practice in jewellery informed by architecture emerges.

Introduction

At first glance, the disparities in scale, function and purpose of architecture and contemporary jewellery conceal their shared characteristics. A closer analysis, however, reveals that the body is an inherent feature of both disciplines. In architecture, the scale of the human body operates as a measuring tool around which the concept of shelter is designed. The architectural space is inseparable from that of the body, enabling a range of human activities to take place within it. The body, however, is much more than a physical entity through which the scale and presence of an object is determined. The body extends beyond human anatomy into the concept of embodiment, a phenomenological proposition that originated over a century ago and continues to influence philosophers, artists and architects today.

In contemporary jewellery practice, the body primarily functions as a physical platform from which a range of themes, including but not limited to social,

cultural, historical and political issues can be addressed through the wearable object. Yet, as with architecture, the body in contemporary jewellery is also used as the basis for exploring new conceptual lines of enquiry, as a way of testing 'thresholds of wearability', including, for example, concepts of embodiment from the viewpoint of both the maker and wearer.

In the context of this paper, I examine embodiment from a cross-disciplinary perspective. Drawing from Swiss architect Peter Zumthor's phenomenological approach to architecture, I am re-imagining the role of the jewellery object in the relationship between maker, wearer and viewer, which was first suggested by contemporary studio jeweller and academic Jack Cunningham (2005). Cunningham's research into narrative jewellery is underpinned by his viewing the communicative nature of jewellery through a triangular relationship between maker, wearer and viewer. For Cunningham, a piece of jewellery, the brooch form in particular, is the conduit through which this relationship unfolds. The jewellery bears the maker's histories and experiences that, when worn, becomes subject to the wearer's personal interpretation. By wearing the object the wearer instigates new meaning, which s/he can then communicate to the viewer. While Cunningham's model has value in recognising the role of the jewellery object in establishing a dialogue between maker, wearer and viewer, in my view, it also has limitations. Cunningham's proposition does not take into account the role of the tangible object within the relationship, omitting to address the sensorial characteristics that are significant to the manner in which the wearable object is made, interpreted and experienced.

Through the making and disseminating of a series of rings, I propose to extend Cunningham's model by presenting a new relational schema between maker, wearer, object and viewer. This circular schema acts as a permeable environment from which an array of new relational variables and cycles are formed, with the aim of imagining, experiencing and interacting with the world in new ways.

Within this schema, the object is able to operate as a conduit or extension of bodily experience and, in the process, to become the embodiment of the wearer/user. Drawing from the work of architects and theorists Christian Norberg-Schulz and Juhani Pallasmaa and Zumthor, amongst others, this paper examines the embodied relationship between object and wearer.

Jewellery as architectural construct

The link between architecture and contemporary jewellery is an important aspect of my current doctoral research that investigates similarities between architectural landscapes — where natural and built environments are interdependent — and the relationship between the wearable object and the body. My creative work has always been informed by architectural constructs. Using the ring form as a vehicle through which to examine spatial relationships between inside/outside and solid/void, I create compositions of geometries to suggest architectural

spaces. The intimate scale of jewellery enables me, for example, to transform an architectural detail into a feature of the wearable object as a way to create miniaturised abstract architectural models. The shift in scale, however, is more than mere reconstruction of physical spaces; it also transforms our bodily and spatial relationships with the tangible object. As Karen Franck notes:

Our bodies are porous and permeable, taking in sensations, matter and information as well as producing them. We may begin to realize that our bodies are so very open to objects, people and surroundings, that they extend beyond the boundaries of our skin, into the world, incorporating into them what is different from us. We may notice that bodies are always moving (even ever so slightly), changing, and acting with intention and initiative (even when lying in bed and refusing to get up). And we may rediscover how much architecture, at many different scales, can support and enhance the activities and experiences of daily life (Franck & Lepori 2007: 47–48).

In jewellery, however, these bodily relationships are not always possible. During an exhibition featuring my architecture-inspired rings, peers from the fields of art and architecture highlighted the problem of not being able to have a tactile engagement with the work on display. It was argued that, while the rings invited curiosity through their architectonic features and the juxtaposition of materials, their static position in the exhibition prevented a full understanding of their qualities as wearables. Exhibited as artefacts, their materiality appeared to have been lost, and this disconnection was emphasised by my decision as the maker to remove all evidence of the making process. Figures 1 and 2 are testimony of such an approach; surfaces have been stripped of any hammer or file marks, of any signs that infer human intervention, leaving the pristine circular voids as the only elements that suggest a possibility for physical interaction.

Making through ‘being’

As a contemporary jeweller, my interaction with materials is mostly immediate. Through making, I have developed a unique visual language based on material knowledge. This sensibility towards materials is the result of years of experience, during which I have acquired craft skills through tacit knowledge. As a maker, I transpose ideas into ‘matter’, but their successful materialisation is underpinned by my engagement with materials through the senses. This relation between the materials used and the body of the maker is an important characteristic in the crafting of an object that emanates from the fusion between the activities of the hand and the mind (Sennett 2008: 119–20; Pallasmaa 2009: 50–59). This process is described by phenomenologists as ‘making through being’. It is also described by Maurice Merleau-Ponty as ‘being as a thing’ (1976). These concepts are extensively explored by Pallasmaa. He argues that, through the design process, the experienced architect is able to imaginatively occupy the space s/he is creating, and therefore to engage in a multi-sensory experience that supersedes the mere visual representation of a drawing or model (Pallasmaa

2009: 59). This approach is also evident in the practice of Zumthor. Trained as a cabinetmaker prior to becoming an architect, Zumthor's knowledge of materials is inherent in his work. In the same way that Pallasmaa describes the relationship between the craftsman and his materials as a collaborative one, where the maker ought to 'listen to his material' (Pallasmaa 2009: 55), Zumthor talks about the 'poetic quality' of materials (2006b). He believes that materials can become poetic only if the architect is 'able to generate a meaningful situation for them, since materials in themselves are not poetic' (Zumthor 2006b: 10).



Figures 1 & 2. Sabine Pagan, untitled, ring, 2011, sterling silver, monel, 30 x 21 x 8 mm

Photo: Grant Hancock

In contemporary jewellery practice, the notion of embodiment has also been extensively explored.¹ Some jewellers have done this directly by choosing to use their own bodies as a way to coalesce 'object' and 'body'. These include, for example, jewellers who use surgical intervention to nest jewellery under their skin, or body piercing, or use the skin as the generator of the jewellery, as in *Blistering* by Tiffany Parbs. By controlling the pouring of hot wax on her finger, Parbs creates an ephemeral ring out of a reaction of her own body (den Besten 2012: 136–37).

Other jewellers have addressed embodiment more indirectly, through the exploration of the emotional potential of the qualities of the materials they use. These emotional transactions are open-ended, allowing the wearer and/or viewer to overlay them with their own associations and interpretations. For example, the notion of embodiment is evident in the work of Karl Fritsch. The material qualities of his jewellery, in particular the ring form, are achieved through the making process and the wearing of the work. Using wax, Fritsch sculpts his jewellery directly with his hands. The wax blanks are subsequently cast in metal and left raw. As a result, fingerprints, impurities and oxidation marks provide unique visual and tactile characteristics that, together with the inclusion of faceted stones, contribute to the materiality of the work. At times, old ring mounts are embedded within new ones, imbuing the work with past histories and experiences. Rüdiger Joppien notes, however, that for Fritsch the concept of embodiment — the amalgamation of old material with new, and the role of the hand in the making of the work — is not complete until the work is worn (cited in Baines, Fritsch & Rothmann 2010: 14). One can assume that by wearing the ring, seeing and feeling the textural marks left by the maker's hand on its surface, the wearer's own embodied experience gradually filters through their hands into the ring, imbuing it with its own presence and stories.

My interest in the embodied potential of jewellery was triggered by an investigation into the role of my own jewellery as worn and unworn rings. Originally, the rings that I developed for my doctoral research used the wearer's hand purely as a topographical environment, where skin, fingers and knuckles are part of a terrain on and around which I build architectonically. In this way, the rings form an integral part of the hand. Once detached from the body, however, and displayed in an exhibition setting, the same rings could be said to operate less effectively. Alternatively, this absence could indirectly signal an implied body and thus draw attention to the potential connection between body and object.

In architecture, if we consider the 'user' as the equivalent of the wearer in jewellery, we can affirm that their role is one of a critic, for it is through the user's engagement with the work that the work gains integrity. This open-ended relationship with the user is particularly evident with architects who use a phenomenological approach in their work. This method of operating provides the architect with new foundations for further making and knowing. In his essay

1 For further details and examples, see den Besten (2012: 125–39).

responding to Paul Carter's *Material thinking* (2004), Cameron Tonkinwise explores the notion of *knowing through making*, in which he argues that the 'knowing' of the maker is only determined by others. He notes,

The ultimate arbiter of how much making does involve knowing things of newness and significance, will always be those others not involved in the making, particularly those that come long, and longer, after the making. (2008: 2)

If the act of knowing is attributed to the 'other' — here the user — then I argue that, through an embodied experience of architecture, in time the user contributes to enriching its materiality and, thus, generating new meaning.



Figure 3. Sabine Pagan, *Site #2*, ring, 2009, 9k yellow gold cube (handmade), surgical steel mount (rapidprototyped), 35 x 35 x 12 mm

Photo: Emily Snadden

The implications of these observations prompted me to rethink the relational role of my work in the context of contemporary jewellery. On this basis, I was interested to undertake an extensive case study of Zumthor's sensorial architecture to test the idea. While I am aware that a number of contemporary jewellery practitioners have developed their own methods to examine concepts of embodiment, I felt that drawing from architecture might reveal approaches not yet employed in the realm of jewellery practice, such as the way in which materials and surroundings contribute to our experience and memory of sensorial architecture. I was also interested in the shared aesthetic sensibilities of Zumthor's architecture and my work.

Experiencing the architecture of Peter Zumthor

In 2010 and 2011, I conducted a series of research fieldtrips, with the aim of experiencing firsthand Zumthor's unique architecture. I chose to focus my research on his building, Therme Vals. At the time, as a jeweller and gemmologist, the gift of quartzite samples from Vals had been enough to entice me to visit the site. Made from feldspar, quartz and mica, the stone displays stunning shades of grey traversed by white streaks from which, depending on the cut and light, silver speckles shimmer. From large block to thin bricks, milled or cut by hand, its surface sandblasted, polished or left raw, the diversity in application of Vals quartzite as a material is an important characteristic of Therme Vals. There are 60,000 stone slabs of various sizes, cuts and textures featured throughout the building as floors, stairs and walls.

Therme Vals baths

Therme Vals is a building that houses thermal baths and belongs to a larger hotel complex. Situated in Vals, Switzerland, the small village has long been known for its spring from which water is collected and subsequently distributed to both the Valser factory — where the Valser brand of water is bottled — and Therme Vals baths. Situated at an altitude of 1250 metres, access to the village is only possible by road, and the postal bus is the only public transport. The narrow and winding road runs across the steep valley and, in some areas, the turns are so sharp that sounding the horn is the only way to signal one's presence to a driver coming in the opposite direction. Tunnels along the way are evidence of the many rock falls and avalanches the valley has endured over the years. On each side, the rock face streams with water and, in winter, the same landscape reveals beautiful icicles. The 30-minute trip to Vals is an important part of the journey to Therme Vals. It provides visitors with an understanding of the setting in which Zumthor's work is situated, and the significance of his architecture in contributing to a sense of place. From the bus stop, only a long flight of stairs and a small sign indicate the route that leads to the baths. At the end of the stairs, the building stands proud.



Figure 4. East façade of Therme Vals

Photo: Sabine Pagan, 2010

In his study of Therme Vals, Vincent Mangeat uses an analogy of a cave to discuss the architect's innovative approach to materiality, blending both architectural and geological tectonics with the aim to create a unique architecture, where the building sits in symbiosis with the environment (2004: 53). Partially buried in the mountain, the building's stone walls act as an extension of its mountainous surroundings and sit comfortably among the roofs of local houses, all made out of the same material. From uphill, the grassy roof gives away little of what lies underground.



Figure 5. Detail showing Therme Vals building protruding out of the slope

Photo: Sabine Pagan, 2010



Figure 6. Typical Vals stone roof

Photo: Sabine Pagan, 2010

Inside, the notion of erosion produced as a result of a continuous contact between water and rocks has been used as a metaphor for carving out the building into an arrangement of various pools. Each has a distinct size, temperature and sensorial function: *Flower bath*, *Sound bath*, *Fire bath*, *Cold bath*, *Indoor bath* and *Outdoor bath*. The placement of these pools as well as the *Sounding* and *Drinking stones* is ambiguous and, together with a deliberate lack of signage, bathers must rely on their senses to navigate through the space. The building is transformed into a labyrinth where the element of surprise is fundamental to the experience of the space (Mangeat 2004: 53–55).

As I descend the stairs the warm water slowly engulfs my body. The confined passageway forces me to move along the wall. A narrow opening draws me in. I traverse. Inside, the intimate scale of the bath is surrounded by tall stone walls, from which even the slightest whisper echoes; their jagged, unpolished surface creates a unique texture for both the eye and the hand. Leaning against the brass rail, I gaze, feel and listen. It's so beautiful.²

I visited Therme Vals a number of times over six months, as a way to familiarise myself with the location, and witness the changes in the building through the seasons. This has proven indispensable to my understanding of sensorial architecture. Therme Vals is about engaging our bodies with stone and water, and the seasons bring contrasts in the experience of these materials. Both have the capacity to warm up or cool down our bodies accordingly. For example, even during the coldest winter months, the outer pool is warm enough to bathe in. Snow, rain, fog or sunshine all bring a particular atmosphere to the experience of being exposed to the elements while submerged in water. Exposed to the sun, the stone radiates heat and invites our bodies to walk, sit or lie on it; by contrast inside, the cool properties of the same stone soothe our feet when stepping out of the *Fire bath*. Through the seasons, the light changes, affecting the intensity of reflections through the interstices, the glass windows and the water, modifying the appearance of the stone walls. Whether outside or inside, full-size windows frame the landscape, projecting the view across the mountains and drawing the visitors in.

I documented my visits to Therme Vals mostly through notes and photographs and later re-examined them following visits to other buildings designed by Zumthor: the Sogn Benedetg church, not far from Therme Vals; the Kunstmuseum, Bregenz, Austria; the Kolumba Museum, Cologne, Germany and, more recently, the Steilneset memorial, Vardo, Norway. Points of reference started to emerge; I noticed the weight of the doors, the interstices that elegantly divide and lighten floors, walls and/or ceilings; the low steps on stairs and their adjacent brass rails, fitted neatly in the floor, away from walls.

In his buildings, Zumthor demonstrates a consistent phenomenological approach to orchestrating architecture, placing the body at the centre of its experience.

2 Extract from author's diary, research fieldtrip to Therme Vals, Switzerland, December 2010.

Through my experiences of Zumthor's work and, in particular, of Therme Vals, it became clear that the process of walking to these sites — which are not always, but often, isolated — formed an integral part of my experiencing of the work. By repeating this process, without realising it at the time, I was creating a new method for my contemporary jewellery.

Atmospheres

In his book *Atmospheres: Architectural Environments — Surrounding Objects*, Zumthor (2006a) discusses his attempt to identify what inherent characteristics are at play when creating atmosphere in his architecture. He proposes 'The Body of Architecture', 'Material Compatibility', 'The Sound of a Space', 'The Temperature of a Space', 'Surrounding Objects', 'Between Composure and Seduction', 'Tension between Interior and Exterior', 'Levels of Intimacy', and 'The Light on Things' as qualities that, in his view, form the essence of presence in architecture. He also notes, however, the influence of 'Architecture as Surroundings', 'Coherence' — when place, use and form come together — and 'The Beautiful Form' as personal, sensorial attributes that move him at a much deeper level. Together, these titles reveal the architect's phenomenological approach to thinking about and making architecture. In the context of my research and jewellery practice, and drawing from my personal experiences of his work, it is these last three qualities that most resonate with me. As Pallasmaa has observed, 'Architecture is born out of the body, and as it is experienced, it returns back to the body' (Pallasmaa 2012, cited in Deane 2013: 3).

Influenced by both Zumthor's account of sensorial qualities, within which the embodied experience of architecture holds a significant role, and Pallasmaa's proposition of the 'cycle' generated by the performative relationship between the body and architecture, I have developed these concepts in my jewellery.

The experience of the 'user'

In both architecture and contemporary jewellery the sense of surprise, or the unexpected, is fundamental to the making of rich experiences for the user. Zumthor's ability to envision how future users will inhabit his architecture plays a significant part in the success of his work. For example, Therme Vals and Steilneset depict a unique atmosphere that is grounded in materiality and place; however, unless the user experiences the work, this atmosphere is superfluous. The sensorial qualities of his buildings have been imagined by Zumthor, constructed by others and now experienced by users. In this way, one can see the emergence of a cyclical condition generated by the interrelations between the architect, the building and the user. Seen in this way, one can argue that the role of the user also contributes to the meaning of the building through their embodied relationship with its materiality.

My research transfers this concept to the relationship between maker/wearer/viewer that is typical of contemporary jewellery practice. Drawing from the

cyclical relationship proposed by Pallasmaa, I propose a circular trajectory along and across which maker, object, wearer and viewer move and intersect with one another, creating new possibilities for spatial and sensorial relationships. Using this schema as a framework in the *Hand over* ring project, I test the proposition that the wearer contributes to the meaning of the ring object.

***Hand over* ring project**

Hand over is an ongoing jewellery project that proposes to use temporary wearers in the making of a series of rings that explore an embodied relationship between maker, object and user. Informed by my understanding and experience of Zumthor's architecture, each ring I make is documented through photographs and subsequently handed over to a wearer. The wearer is then asked to wear the ring continually for a given time and to document their relationship with the work. The aim is to examine how the limited time spent wearing the ring affects the wearer's sentimental attachment to the ring. If new sensorial characteristics develop as a result of the wearer's relationship with the ring, how will these subsequently be interpreted by the maker, wearer and viewer? The significance of the research is to demonstrate the permeability of my new schema, using a temporary wearer as a method to activate the potential transformative condition — physical and/or conceptual — of the ring, as a way to imbue qualities that cannot be paralleled in any other form. In doing so, I argue that the role of the temporary wearer contributes to the *making* of the work, generating a new methodology of practice in contemporary jewellery.

The ring

In my jewellery practice, the ring occupies a significant place. As the maker, I find the hand the most interesting and challenging part of the body to work from. Metaphorically, I see and use it as a site. Rarely still, the hand reflects an ever-changing landscape to which anything built must adapt itself. Unlike the brooch, for example, the ring's location on the hand means that it is as much visible to the wearer as it is to the viewer. The intimate contact between the body and the ring is conducive to the wearer interacting with it. Often this is done unconsciously, out of boredom or anxiety for example. But rings on hands also signify other kinds of relationships, ones that develop as the result of wearing them 'out in the world'. My research examines the nature of these relationships along with the role of the loop as a symbolic part of the ring. I am interested in its mutable role, defining absence when the ring is exhibited off the body, yet also providing the means for it to be worn on the body. In the context of my research, the loop of the ring is also used as a metaphor to represent the circularity of the relationship between maker, object wearer and viewer.

maker-wearer-viewer

In 2005 Cunningham curated an exhibition entitled *maker-wearer-viewer: Contemporary European Narrative Jewellery*, in which he invited more than 70 makers from 20 countries to submit wearable work that explored the genre of narrative (2005). While concepts of body and wearability are themes that have been and continue to be the object of research by makers, curators and critics in contemporary jewellery practice, Cunningham's proposition to establish a dialogue between maker, wearer and viewer as a way to explore the narrative genre provided a new perspective at the time. For Cunningham, the nature of his investigation has eventuated from examining the transformative character of the narrative, when the jewellery object imagined and realised by the maker becomes a wearable object worn by others.

The narrative object can be ambiguous in its communicative character. It relies on the viewer's subjective interpretation. A dialogue is consequently established between the maker, the originator of the artefact's statement, the wearer, the vehicle by which the work is seen, and the viewer, the audience who thereafter engages with the work. For the wearer ... there exists a certain authority to re-interpret the object. The potential to make her/his own personal statement is therefore significant. (Cunningham 2005: vi)

For jewellery critic Liesbeth den Besten, however, Cunningham's relational proposition is problematic. She argues that, if the exhibition focuses on the narrative genre, the relational message itself should be featured within the title *maker-wearer-viewer*, to better acknowledge the communicative nature of jewellery (den Besten 2006). While my work isn't informed by narrative, I too believe that, as it stands, the relationship maker-wearer-viewer does not fully describe the potential for the interpretation of contemporary jewellery. In Cunningham's proposition the wearer 'is the vehicle by which the work is seen' (Cunningham 2005: vi). It suggests, therefore, that the work is appraised by the viewer only when *worn* by the wearer and doesn't attend to the fact that, more often than not, the exhibition setting or photographs are important platforms to view contemporary jewellery. In this instance, the exhibited/ collected/ published object is dislocated from its origins as a worn object. Consequently, the inherent quality of the jewellery object as a wearable becomes secondary, transforming the role of the wearer into that of a viewer and thus altering its relationship with the object. This shift forms an integral part of the maker/wearer/viewer discourse that, in my view, should be considered within the schema.

If the work is appraised off the body, then the relationship between maker/wearer/viewer and the object becomes fragmented through the absence of the wearer's tactile engagement with the work, but also through the absence of the role of the wearable as the conduit between the wearer and viewer. Thus, the wearable is deciphered through the visual realm only, leaving notions of materiality in the territory of the imaginative. The physical space one creates

by isolating the tactile and functional aspects of the wearable from the viewer prevents the sensorial characteristics of the work from being experienced, and also prevents the maker from exploring new possibilities.

Proposition: Wearing as making

The *Hand over* ring project explores ways in which the relational role of the wearer creates new meanings for the work, and makes visible how these meanings can then be incorporated in the processes of making new works. The creative work from which findings will be drawn is at its early stages and the examples below are far from conclusive. By presenting the significance of Zumthor's architecture on creating atmosphere, however, and through the account of my own experiences of his work, I have established a framework and defined a new method for the development of my current body of jewellery work.

Site #3 — ring experiment

First exhibited in *Archetype*, *Site #3* was not made with the intent to become a 'testing' device.³ The ring was made prior to my various research field trips and, thus, did not carry the same concerns about materiality and place that inform the current development of test rings. I see *Site #3*, therefore, as the model from which the research proposition originated, but *not* as a sample ring to test the proposition. *Site #3* was my first attempt in using digital technologies to create wearables. I was interested in examining the characteristics of the traditional handmade approach alongside that of the digital, to create a series of cubes as architectural features to be set in my rings. While *Site #3* was entirely drawn on CAD, it was subsequently cast in different elements and materials: the loop structure in surgical steel and the cube in sterling silver. Distinct in their colours and hardness, I wanted the base to portray a sense of permanence and strength against the more fragile and precious cube presented as the ornament.

During the exhibition, a conversation around jewellery being exhibited as artefacts triggered the idea to examine the meaning of the relationship maker, wearer and ring in this context, which led to the setting up of an experiment. I gave *Site #3* to a colleague, a landscape architect, with the premise that she would wear the ring continually for a month. The timeframe was random, yet important, for it affirmed an end point to the experiment. Despite the ring not being the most comfortable for daily wear, the wearer soon became accustomed to it and, at the conclusion of the project, shared her regret at having to return it.

3 *Archetype* solo exhibition was held at the gallery Zu Design, Adelaide, October 2008.



Figure 7. Sabine Pagan, *Site #3*, ring, 2009, sterling silver, surgical steel, 38 x 25 x 11 mm

Photo: Emily Snadden

Observations and questions emerged as soon as the experiment was over. Was the wearer missing the physicality of the ring, the relationship between the object and her body, or the short-lived ‘ownership’ of the ring? Would the outcome have changed had the ring belonged to the wearer? During the period of the experiment the physical characteristics of the ring changed little. The corners of the cube had been rounded as the result of daily wear, but there was not enough transformation to question whether dints and marks could potentially bring a sensorial quality to the work. How would the viewer engage with this ring in contrast to the original one? Does the story of the wearer who contributed to bringing new meanings to the ring affect the viewer’s interpretation of the work?

Using *Site #3* as the foundation to build my argument, I am currently working on a series of test rings that are to be worn for a period of up to three months. Unlike with *Site #3*, the rings are informed by my experience of embodied architecture, as opposed to architecture as a ‘building’. This time, therefore, the rings have been made with the intent that the experiments may generate elements of chance and curiosity. For example, through daily wear, the ring will be exposed to conditions that trigger wear and tear that I may have anticipated, but couldn’t possibly control. The aim is to examine how the qualities Zumthor has identified as important to creating an atmosphere can be interpreted and adapted to jewellery. For example, the quality he names ‘Between Composure and Seduction’ addresses the significance of movement in architecture as both a spatial and temporal art. For Zumthor, it is important to seduce the user of

the space by creating an atmosphere that lets them wander throughout the building as opposed to directing them. Of course, given the dramatic shift in scale, a literal transposition of such an approach into jewellery is impossible. This doesn't, however, prevent rethinking ways to engage our body with the object. In *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Susan Stewart positions the body in relation to both the landscape, as the gigantic, and the miniature world. She notes,

We are enveloped by the gigantic, surrounded by it, enclosed within its shadow. Whereas we know the miniature as a spatial whole or as temporal parts, we know the gigantic only partially. (2007: 71)



Figures 8 & 9. Sabine Pagan, *Inside(out) between*, 2012, sterling silver (also heat treated), monel, 31 x 30 x 8 mm

Photo: Grant Hancock

The ring can be experienced as a spatial whole; it is small enough to be viewed from all angles. In my work, however, I use spatial relationships between interstices and intersections of solid/void, interior/exterior as a way to draw the wearer into the work, in the realm of their own memories and imagination. My interpretation of architectural qualities into jewellery is applied through subtle elements, prompting both the wearer and viewer to experience them over time and depending on the 'conditions' of the environment they find themselves in. Standing inside, outside, moving the hand, grasping things with the hand, shaking hands are all elements that will affect the conditions in which the embodied characteristics of the ring are lived and experienced.

Bathing light— testing the proposition

Early winter morning. Silhouettes slide silently across the water. Roofs, pastures and peaks are barely visible behind the thin layer of fog. A matter of minutes and all will be revealed. In the background, the sound of streaming waterfalls. Eyes closed, I feel the air crisp and cold brushing across my face. Immersed and leaning against the stone, my body is comfortably warm. Time passes. Stepping out of the water, I move briskly; my skin cringes at the contact of the freezing air; the heavy brass door is in sight again. I enter. One last glance; the light is now shining through the fog. Stone and water are awake.⁴

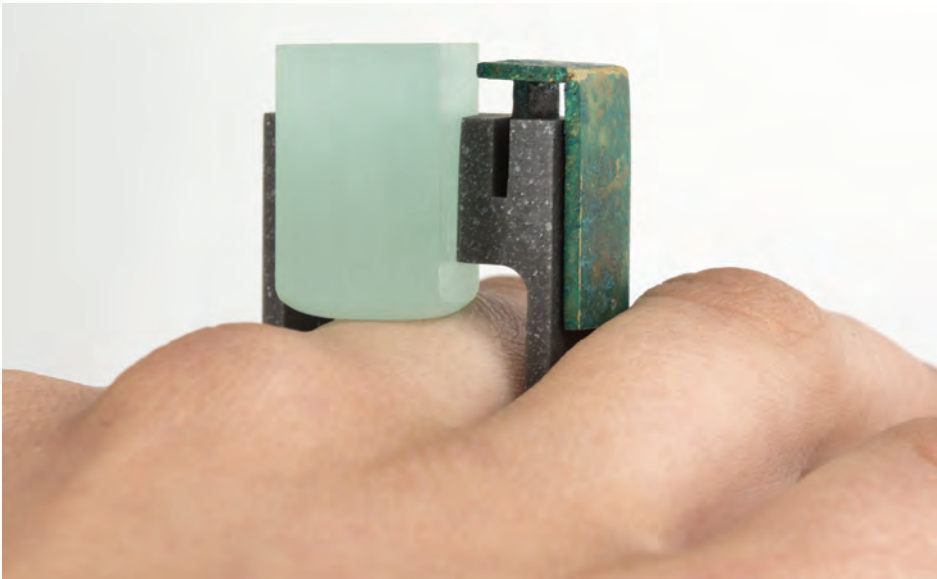


Figure 10. Sabine Pagan, *Bathing light*, 2013, corian, marblo, patinated brass, 40 x 30 x 12 mm

Photo: Tim Crutchett

4 Extract from the author's diary, research fieldtrip to Therme Vals, Switzerland, December 2010.

My research uses the exhibition context as a way to present my proposition to include a temporary wearer as part of my method of making new contemporary jewellery works. Similar to material and process investigations where the maker does not always have full control of their actions, the wearer's input brings new meanings to the work. At times their temporal embodied experience of the object is visible through alterations in the physical characteristics of the ring's surface. Other times, the meanings are conveyed in other forms, through documentation of their experiences presented alongside the object.

Moving away from the traditional round or square openings that tightly encircle the finger, *Bathing light* suggests an alternate space, one that holds the ring in place while permitting light to pass through the void. When unworn, the ring is not immediately recognisable as a ring, but could also be read as a sculptural or architectural model. Here the design process takes into consideration not only the loop as the functional element that enables the ring to become a wearable object, but also the way it signifies 'absence' when unworn.

As stated before, while the physical properties of some of the rings in the *Hand over* project will be subject to change as a result of being worn, others, such as *Bathing light*, will not. The materials they are made out of are not prone to marking or developing patina, especially within the first three months. In these examples, textures and patinas are applied when the rings are first made. Either way, however, the project is not only reliant on the materials' transformation across the short duration of the experiment. It also seeks to transfer the method that I developed during my research field trips as a user of architecture into the realm of my contemporary jewellery practice.

Upon receipt of *Bathing light*, the wearer was briefed on the intent of the research. She travelled across the globe wearing it everyday. Its presence as a relatively large ring attracted attention; it was pointed at, commented on and touched by others, contributing to her own daily life, her story. Then it broke. Using elastic as a temporary solution to hold components together, she continued wearing the ring before handing it over on her return from overseas. At first I wondered what the unexpected and premature outcome would mean in the context of my research, but soon was convinced that the breakage of material as well as the wearer's solution led to the ring reaching new potentials.

I have now the opportunity to amend the ring in a way that would not have been possible without the input of the wearer (breaking the ring). The experiment, therefore, brings new openings; some rings may be beautified by the action of wearing, and subsequently exhibited in their new form; some may be used as models for generating others; and, others might be transformed multiple times through my input as the maker and that of the wearer as a contributor. Without a timeframe, the cycle could last indefinitely.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have examined how a phenomenological approach to architecture can inform the development of a new methodology of practice in contemporary jewellery. Through my firsthand experience of various works designed by Zumthor, I have identified the significance of sensorial qualities in our engagement with architecture, and proposed to test its application in contemporary jewellery practice.

This knowledge served to identify the limitations of Cunningham's proposed relationship between maker, wearer, viewer. In response, I have developed a new circular schema, in which I have demonstrated how the relational dynamics between maker, wearer, object and viewer can be expanded to encompass the concept of embodiment. While the *Hand over* case study is still in its preliminary stage, my research suggests that the performative role of the temporary wearer in the project can make valuable contributions in the meaning and realisation of the ring through materiality.

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Her cross-disciplinary research focuses on relationships between contemporary jewellery and architectural practice. In particular, it examines our perception of sensorial qualities in objects and their influence on our memory.

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Experiential collaborations from garment to costume: Play and the thing as design outcome

Martha Glazzard, Sarah Kettley, Tessa Marie Acti and Karen Harrigan

Abstract Nottingham Trent University (NTU) textile, fashion and interaction practitioners were invited to collaborate with a Danish dance group to contribute a collection of costumes for performances concerned with emotion and the senses, with the ultimate aim of understanding the qualities of audience engagement with dance. This paper discusses the designers' use of play as a methodology, and its relationship to the philosophical notion of the *thing*, or how artefacts are brought into being. This provides a framework for the deliberate attempt to preserve a level of ambiguity in the outcome of the design process, such that the creative engagement of other stakeholders is explicitly supported. Epistemological and methodological developments have been the result of a number of *differences*: between the practices and experiences of the design collaborators; between the conceptualisation of costume as static and a need for something new, yet relevant to the themes of emotion; and between the designers' intentions and expectations of how a garment might be used, and the dancers' response to the garments. Outcomes are discussed as moments in a complex and ongoing process, when meanings temporarily coalesce, only to be opened up again. Such a conceptualisation of design has major implications for how we think about methodology, evaluation, material and expertise.

Introduction: Sensing Dance, the costume team, and project constraints

In 2012 we, as textile, fashion and interaction design practitioners at Nottingham Trent University (NTU) (United Kingdom), were invited to collaborate with the Ingrid Kristensen Ballet Company (Denmark) as part of an existing research project, Sensing Dance. This series of dance experiments was funded by the Danish Arts Council, the Region of Southern Denmark and the Municipality of Odense as well a number of smaller sponsorships, and ran from 2010 to 2013. Kristensen's approach allowed for freedom in the evolution of the final outcomes, but put emphasis on the interdisciplinary connections made between the researchers, collaborators, dancers, audience and objects. The project aimed to test different modes of interdisciplinary creative production for increased audience engagement through all the senses, and included collaborations with neuroscientists, branding specialists working with scent, a phenomenological philosopher, interaction designers working with the concept of serious play,

a sculptor, and new media production. The company's approaches included large-scale installation works, gift-giving, invitations to the audience to take part in familiar dances, the use of warm-up exercises, site specific performances in the urban landscape, and laboratory-based enquiry with professional dancers. Before our involvement, a number of public performances and events had already taken place (Kristensen 2013). This paper presents an analysis of the collaborative, practice-based research that took place between us and the dance company in the creation of costumes for a dance piece to mark the end of the project.

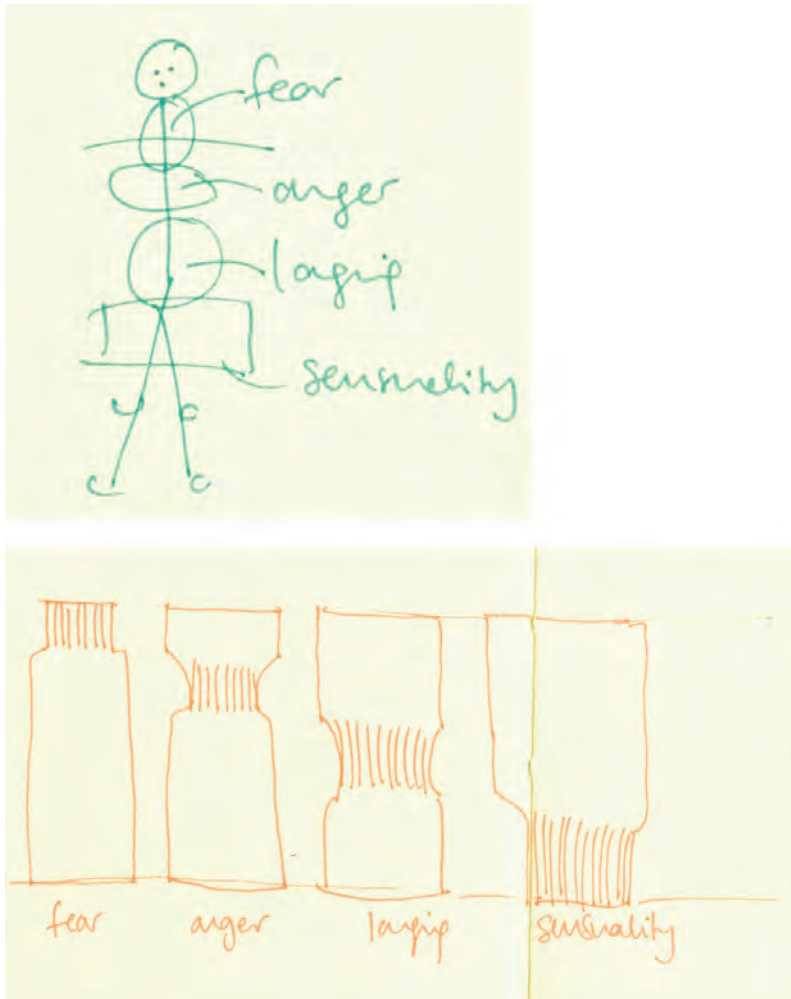


Figure 1. Notes from meetings: mapping emotions to the body, 2012, sketches on paper

Photo: Sarah Kettley, courtesy of the artist

The framework for this final performance was provided by Kristensen's conceptualisation of emotions as having a physical relationship with certain parts

of the body (Figure 1); the role of the design team was to develop a collection of costumes for the shift from longing to anger, which we were invited to explore through the garments' relationship to the stomach and the throat respectively. These design outcomes had to support in some way the understanding of audience engagement with dance performance and, if possible, increase that engagement. A significant consideration in scoping the project was the time constraint, which precluded the development of computationally interactive garments; however, we believed that fundamental questions about interaction and engagement could still be asked without recourse to 'smart' systems and materials, and that any outcomes would not only support future collaboration with the dance company, but might also contribute to design research. The research aim was to reflexively analyse practice and design outputs through the lens of open design for human engagement.

The costume team at NTU comprised (in alphabetical order): Tessa Marie Acti, embroiderer; Martha Glazzard, knit expert; Karen Harrigan, pattern cutter; and Sarah Kettley, concept and project lead. We were also joined in the early 'play days' by Fiona Hamblin, a jeweller working in mixed media and found objects. Later sections of the paper give details of the exploratory play days, and particular attention is paid throughout to the interplay between different and familiar aspects of practice. Kristensen is also referred to throughout the paper, as the creative director of the Ingrid Kristensen Ballet Company.

Open design and thingliness

This section describes how 'open design' informed our work, while the next discusses this in relation to definitions of 'thingliness'. During the project, the NTU team had a meta-level goal of continuing our theoretical investigations of open design for user engagement and creativity, an interest since coming together to work with novel stretch sensors in 2008. This view shares characteristics, but is not completely synonymous, with the emerging concept of 'open design' to be found within the discipline of product design, where it has come to stand for a user-led innovation process enabled by shared ownership (without dependency on legal design protection, for example) (Billing & Cordingley 2011). In the practice-led work of the team with stretch sensing on the body, and in Kettley's earlier work in digital jewellery, openness had been explored through the removal of technological features, ambiguity in the representation of information, minimally predefined functionality, and the emergence of practice as an aspect of craft (Kettley et al. 2010; Kettley 2012; Kettley 2013). In this way these previous projects have attempted to support user meaning-making and creativity, through opening up instead of closing down definitions of use, experience and ownership, and this is what we conceptualised as 'open design'. The Sensing Dance project represents a new stage in the evolution of our collective practice, which includes smart materials and systems, but which

is not defined by them. The concept of *thingliness* now allows us to reflect on the evolution of this conceptualisation of open design, as well as providing a tool for tracing the changing status of our design outputs.

Differences/things

In Bruno Latour's actor-network theory (ANT), the word 'thing' (after the German 'Ding') is conceptualised as having two meanings — it is at once an issue or controversy, and the gathering of actors that comes together around an issue (Latour 2005). These actors include not only individuals, but also ideas (in this case, for example, of what a costume is), and infrastructures (research funding and institutions), technologies, skills and practices. While this conceptualisation is taken from ANT we have also been influenced by Christiano Storni's use of it to account for the emergence of new practices and forms in the design of a range of jewellery (2012). At the same time, the designed artefact oscillates between states of openness or thingliness, and definition, or object-hood. Storni traces this to some extent as the design concept for a finger ring evolves in his case study of collaboration between two jewellers, but his paper does not extend to the life of the artefact beyond this process; that is, as it is presented to the jewellery fair, selected by retailers, or purchased and worn by customers — he points the reader to the socio-technical literature for this. We feel that our design efforts will benefit from a conceptualisation of our outputs as being more thing than object, and from being confident in our ability to design for, trace, and evaluate such oscillations.

As Storni points out, a thing comes into being because of difference; aspects of an artefact cause actors to come together to work through possible meanings (2012: 92–94). We encountered many such sites of contention or 'thingliness' as we developed the costumes and in the following sections we discuss the three that we see as most influential throughout the project. These were:

1. differences between the practices and experiences (methodologies) of the design collaborators
2. differences between the conceptualisation of costume as static and a need for something new, yet relevant to the themes of emotion
3. differences between the designers' intentions and expectations of how a garment might be used, and the response to the garments from the dancers.

1. Difference: Practices and experiences

The first site of difference was afforded by the range of disciplines brought into play by the individual practitioners in the team. Based on previous experience, this was framed positively as an integral part of the interdisciplinary approach, and managed through the use of intense shared workshops or play days. In these, initial investigation into form and process took place with all design

collaborators sharing techniques and materials from previous work to develop the ideas of 'longing' and its being represented through the stomach. The themes of stretch, gaps, and crossing those gaps were brought forward from previous group work (Glazzard & Kettley 2010; Kettley et al. 2010: 253) and combined with Kristensen's suggestions on how 'longing' might be embodied (Figure 1).



Figure 2. Experimentation with knitted tubes on mannequins, 2012

Photo: Martha Glazzard, courtesy of the artist



Figure 3. Draping fabric on the mannequin to define shape, 2012

Photo: Martha Glazzard, courtesy of the artist

During the play day, individuals' perspectives and ideas were put forward in an open forum. Practitioners brought fabric, yarns, props, pins and cameras, amongst other objects. Individuals, pairs or small groups conducted their own experiments. Some of these experiments involved draping fabric on stands (as

shown in Figures 2 & 3), considering form and techniques, and some were material exploration with movement. Human gesture and interaction formed a part of the design process. We assumed there would be, and tried to allow for, an element of stretch and force between dancers or between each dancer and his or her costume.

Tubes of knitted fabric (knitted on an industrial, circular knitting machine) were used to plan the basis of each garment. The elements brought from previous practices and interests were experimented with to see how they might attach and interact with a fabric ground (the tubular fabric). Because of each practitioner's extensive experience in handling and learning the properties, behaviour and possibilities of fabrics (Aldrich 2007: 5), it was possible to be unstructured in the design process. This methodology permits changes and developments in reaction to external and self-imposed limitations that are introduced during the project.

1.1 Individual practices and observations

Though different practices were involved in the designing and making of the costumes, each practitioner was considered equal with their individual expertise bringing specialist knowledge to the project. Both Glazzard and Harrigan approached the design task from a pragmatic perspective and included the aspects of time, material and machinery limitations into the design process (Eckert 1999: 33). From experience of working on collaborative garment design tasks where the end user is remote and unseen (in this case unknown), they adopted an approach that fed inspiration from the materials and techniques available to them both physically and through their making experience. Exploring the dichotomous relationship between material play and mechanical exploration, Acti's methodology questions the value of mass-produced embroidery and, in this collaboration, she explored the artistic application of long thread structures (Figure 4). These structures were used to attach knitted tube garment forms together to create interactive costume pieces. The same slits were used to provide openings for wearers, and a hoop form to match one of the other garments was used to create cohesion between the outfits.

Glazzard and Harrigan both have garment-making experience and initially addressed the design task as a garment-making project utilising their experiential knowledge. Issues to be considered included asking — Who is the wearer? and What do we know about their size and their requirements from the costumes? In reality we knew very little about the individual dancers' sizes or heights, or even the exact number of dancers. Because of these unknown variables the garments were designed free-sized, allowing stretch and movement, while retaining strength against the dancers' movements. These design decisions used experiential observations from knowledge of knitted fabric structures and garment production. Knitted fabric was specifically used to provide stretch and movement for the dancers and large, seamless tubes could be produced to create large tubes without traditional weak points caused by seams. In order to make the tubes into garments, holes were added to provide loose and adaptable head/arm/leg openings. Keeping these holes away from the centre

of the tubes provides fuller shapes to benefit a performance outcome. Draping and modelling on mannequins and stands was used as a key method (Amaden-Crawford 1989; Joseph-Armstrong 2013) to determine silhouette, length and practical make-up decisions. This experimental method allowed for a 'fabric-led' approach (Glazzard & Breedon 2012: 105). These stages were not acted out in a linear order, but were often considered concurrently or in alternating, circular and iterative manners, with experiential observations and methods feeding into the task-specific questions and considerations.



Figure 4. Long thread embroidery and knitted tubes during development, 2012, mixed fibres

Photo: Sarah Kettley, courtesy of the artist

The fabric dictated a large part of the method. In fashion and knitwear practices, there is an established history of reacting to the fabric (Aldrich 2007: 5). By choosing to work this way, the designers impose limitations on themselves, which is often beneficial in the design process. Various constraints imposed by the original brief, the end users, the play day decisions and the group-working method had already been imposed, but this still left a huge number of creative possibilities for the designers (Francis & Sparkes 2011: 59). Because of the practice of Harrigan in pattern cutting and Glazzard in knitted textiles, the process of working in a fabric-led manner around the properties of the knitted tubes was a logical step. In this method, the material dictated the processes. Traditional knitwear sewing machinery (such as a seam-cover) was used and, where possible, the natural tendency of the fabric to roll was used as a design feature, rather than being hidden. In the slits for example, the fabric was rolled back and hand-finished for security and strength. This would withstand rigorous use by the dancers by being firmly secured at weak areas, but stretch would not be constrained as it would when using a machined seam.

Because of experience in building collections of garments for fashion or knitwear contexts, Glazzard and Harrigan employed many methods known to clothing designers in the assembly of fashion collections. Some of these considerations, such as using a limited colour palette, limited fabric types, and producing garments for multiple bodies/wearers, were developed in communications with Acti and Kettley to create the final garments. The collection required similarity across garments, but with differences in features. Each garment had groupings with another garment to provide the look of a clothing collection; that is, a combination of some feature, colour, fabric or shape that created a visual tie-in with another garment in the collection (Frings 1999: 179). These considerations were developed to fit the given brief and the extra elements were devised by group discussions and the play days.

This process allowed the designers to be confident in their experience of making garments, while the outcome was to be a costume. In this way the design process was allowed to remain similar to the normal process for these practitioners. Individuals' confidence grew when more autonomy was established for the garments to be developed within existing design knowledge frameworks. The transformation (or thinging) of the garments was external to this design process. Glazzard and Harrigan's key concerns as designer/makers were the professional and robust finish, strength and suitability of the garments, elements of closure and definition, criteria set by the design brief, but also imposed by disciplinary expertise.

2. Difference: Costume as static, new, emotive

The second major site of difference or thingliness in the process was the conceptualisation of what a costume is or should be. Design itself has been described as always being concerned with redesign, of being largely concerned with the known object rather than the unknown thing (Latour 2008); in previous

work we have found that different craft and textile related disciplines work with levels of object-hood and openness in different ways and in this project, these differences were tested further by the term *costume*, and our conceptualisations of what costumes are, should be, or might be. Generally speaking, we were aware that costumes are normally organised around a given narrative or known character in a specific cultural context; in dance, functional considerations are generally concerned with ease of movement dependent on a given genre of dance. Given the brief, however, we did not expect to make costumes that used such aesthetic codes, but sought to use practical skills to work towards an emotional outcome, developing an abstract semiotics of emotions in relation to movement (Sandhu 2008: 7). A far more comprehensive approach to a literature review in this area is still needed to further underpin our investigations, but in the meantime, we have been aware of work that puts the body at the centre of an indeterminate design process (Wilde & Anderson 2009), that highlights the networks of actors involved in the creation of meanings through garment forms which invite movement (Bugg 2008; Candy 2007), and of the shift towards the performative in fashion theory (cf. Entwistle & Wilson 2001). Therefore it can be seen that while the term ‘costume’ normatively embodies closure and a predetermined system of signs, the team were open to experimentation with a view to the design outcome remaining open and engaging. Just how the costumes engaged the dancers became apparent when images were sent to the team showing the dancers opening the packages of costumes for the first time (Figures 5 and 6).



Figure 5. Dancers' first reactions to the costumes, 2012

Photo: Ingrid Kristensen, courtesy of the artist



Figure 6. Dancer's initial reactions to the costumes, 2012

Photo: Ingrid Kristensen, courtesy of the artist

3. Difference: Intentions, expectations and responses

The third and most surprising site of thingliness only became apparent in the reaction of the dancers to the garments. This difference was crucial in transforming the garments into costumes.

From the approaches of the designers to the documentation of the design process and final outcomes it was clear that the ideas were framed within the context of how they would function as conventional garments. The language used was indicative of such thoughts — garments were referred to as ‘trousers’ and ‘tops’ and the loops as ‘scarves’ or ‘accessories’. Openings were considered for legs, arms, and heads accordingly. There was a recognition that the end use of the garments probably would not adhere to these conventions, but for the process it was necessary for effective communication and to observe familiar conventions for the designers in using a shared reference point in language of which each practitioner could share an understanding (Eckert & Stacey 2000: 524). As such, a set of guidelines was prepared by the designers to help the dancers approach the garment forms for the first time, including images of the forms being held or manipulated on stands (Figure 7 shows a proposed way of wearing the garment).



Figure 7. Designers' ideas of how dancers would dress the costumes

Photo: Sarah Kettley, courtesy of the artist

An excellent example of the discrepancy between the designer and the user in this case is the use of the knitted 'loops' (Figure 8). The loops were cut from the remaining circular fabric and demonstrated large amounts of stretch in the play day session. For this reason, more were made and sent with the garments

as accessories or props for interaction. On receipt of the loops, the dancers wound whole bodies into the loops, not as accessory, prop or garment, but as costume (Figure 9).



Figure 8. Knitted loops during development, 2012, mixed fibres

Photo: Sarah Kettley, courtesy of the artist



Figure 9. Knitted loops during performance, 2012, photograph of performance

Photo: Anders Vejen Andersen, courtesy of Anders Vejen Andersen and Ingrid Kristensen & Co

Had the development of the costumes taken place using discussion and physical input from the dancers, the final costumes would arguably have been

different, with a different set of actors in place (Storni 2012). The addition of further agendas may have clouded the simple creativity of the designers and prevented self-directed confidence in each individual's skill and input. Had we known that all the dancers might have climbed into one garment, we would have altered the size or shape, which would, ultimately, not have provided the same effect during the performance. In fact, in rehearsal and performance with the costumes, dancers approached them from their own perspectives and transformed the fashion and garment-based ideas into performance, space, structure and body extensions. This highlights the importance of difference (the necessary condition of thingliness) for working between the production of a garment through one set of experiential knowledge and the enaction of a costume through another set of experiential knowledge.

Conclusions, new audiences and further work

We borrow again from Storni here to describe the creative engagement that undecideable design outputs, such as the costumes, are intended to invite. He used the term *tendency* to discuss the creative forces brought to bear on artefacts, showing that at any moment they may be subject to other actors' *thinging* (opening and multiplying) or *objectifying* (fixing and stabilising) tendencies (2012: 109–13). For the purpose of our work we draw on this to identify user or audience engagement as the willingness to actively engage in thinging tendencies, which allows us to approach some kind of meaningful evaluation of the work.

In discussion the dancers revealed that they found a freedom in having bespoke outfits, rather than modified garments, with which to experiment. They were not limited by the constraints of the designers' preconceptions of either the garment forms, or of the choreographic process, images of which revealed the costumes playing a significant role in the development of the performance. Images of the group trying on the pieces for the first time show packaging lying discarded around the studio floor as if on Christmas morning — there is a palpable air of excitement (Figures 5, 6 & 12). Feedback from the dancers after the Sensing Dance performances spoke of their unusual chance to develop story and character in response to the garments, and the way this sense of agency carried into performance to be reciprocated by the audience; in their terms, they found the audience to be more receptive to their 'invitations to connect' through movement and expression. Instead of 'smart' textiles and computational wearables engaging audiences through technology, it seemed that the open nature, or thingliness, of the costumes had a powerful and complex effect on the relationship between performer and audience.



Figure 10. Installation of Sensing Dance costumes at Fragile?

Photo: Sarah Kettley, courtesy of the artist



Figure 11. Installation of Sensing Dance costumes at Fragile?

Photo: Sarah Kettley, courtesy of the artist

Featured Photos: Anders Vejen Andersen, courtesy of Anders Vejen Andersen and Ingrid Kristensen.

An invitation to show the costumes and images of Sensing Dance at another event has provided further reflection on the costumes as things. The Fragile? Symposium marked the end of a European project on dance and sight-impaired performers, and included the premieres of three dance pieces, invited talks, a site-specific performance, and a series of demo workshops (Fragile? 2013). In this case the costumes were not on a body, but were hung inanimate from hooks attached to a ceiling grid in a corridor of the Astra building of Tallinn University (Figures 10 & 11). An integral part of the exhibit was three large full-colour photographic montages of the costumes in performance with Kristensen's dancers. As a whole, the arrangement of textiles and images aimed to invite the whole body of the visitor into the space, and to involve them physically and emotionally.

Reactions to the work were visceral: visitors reported that it was disconcerting, even 'creepy', and that the costumes reminded them of shed skins; the images of dancers wound tightly in the loops, straining against the fabric, made them anxious, while the hooks used to display the work had the unintended effect of reminding them of flesh and flayed animals. The work had not been designed for the Fragile? choreographic processes, but was invited as an example of an approach to design which puts the agency of the individual at the centre of the

process (Kettley 2013). While it is interesting to observe that the visitors had similar emotional reactions to the costumes as the dance audiences, in fact, the criterion for success for the designs is their openness to new interpretation; that is, their ability to segue between object and thing.



Figure 12. First encounters between dancers and costumes, 2012, photograph of

rehearsals

Photo: Anders Vejen Andersen, courtesy of Anders Vejen Andersen and Ingrid Kristensen

From this work, we suggest that supporting the performer's engagement with their materials (direction, choreography, narrative, scenography, costume) through open design is an important strategy for audience engagement. We now plan to take forward our methodological learning from this practice-based reflection in the form of a large five-year dance research project, which will introduce new 'smart' technological actors to the shared practice. We hope that our work will contribute to debates in interaction design practice around audience engagement, through demonstrating the potential power of design outcomes as open *things*.

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Reworking the archive: Experimental arts, memory and imagination

Katherine Moline and Jacqueline Clayton

Abstract Over the past 50 years institutional critique has become a part of the contemporary programming of museum exhibitions produced by practitioners in design, craft and visual art. Challenges and critiques of orthodoxies in museology have developed in response to changing social practices. This paper considers two site-specific installations, *I cling to virtue* (2010) by Onkar Kular, Noam Toran and Keith R. Jones at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and *Pleased to meet you: introductions by Gwynn Hanssen Pigott* (2012–2013) at the Museum of Anthropology, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Both works invited visitors to engage with the artists' invented arrangements and to attend to subjective responses as authoritative readings of museum display. In other words, they questioned institutionally directed interpretation and brought key aspects of globalisation into view. This paper first describes the installations, then places them within the framework of globalisation and the social imaginary proposed by Arjun Appadurai and Cornelius Castoriades. It discusses concepts of the heterogeneity of globalisation within the framework of the social imaginary evoked in the installations and analyses the works in these terms. The replaying of historical material in these works, we contend, questions the negative implications of globalisation. Further, the definition of interdisciplinarity framed by the social imaginary provides fertile ground for reconceptualising specialisation. When seen within the social imaginary, the experimental approach to curatorial and exhibition norms exemplified by the two installations provides intriguing models for intervening in the archives and histories of design, craft and visual art.

Introduction

Creative interventions enacted in museums by designers, crafts practitioners and visual artists are an increasingly visible element in the exhibition schedule of public institutions. As an art historical tradition, these interventions have focused institutional critique and questioned norms and conventions of art exhibition. Institutional critiques that we see as pertinent to the works we will discuss shortly include: a museum invented in a Brussels home, *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*, by Marcel Broodthaers (1968); the arrangement of artefacts retrieved from a museum storeroom in Andy Warhol's *Raid the ice box* (1970); Hans Haacke's *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan real estate holdings, a real time social system, as of May 1, 1971* (1971), which traced the ownership of New York tenement buildings and the social relationships thus defined; the interrogation of racism in museological practices in installations such as *Mining the museum* by Fred Wilson (1992); Andrea Fraser's *Little Frank and his carp*

(2001), shot at the Museo Guggenheim Bilbao — an eroticised response to the architectural spectacle of contemporary museums and the Schildbach Xylotheque 'Wood Library' by Mark Dion for Documenta 13 (2012). Over the last two and a half decades, museums have taken the critique of their practices as a force within the institution. The exhibitions we discuss in this paper were, for example, developed by the invitation of the respective museums in which they were installed.

In a comparison of two recent museum-based interventions affiliated with design and craft, we consider how such installations evoke tensions between history and memory, institutions and individuals. *I cling to virtue* by British designer Onkar Kular, American-born English artist Noam Toran and US poet Keith R. Jones (2010) and Australian ceramicist Gwyn Hanssen Pigott's interpretive arrangements of objects exhibited as *Pleased to meet you: introductions by Gwyn Hanssen Pigott (PTMY)* (2012–2013), each foreground the past and the present in suggestive ways. These are not the first reflexive projects that interrogate the relationships between museum, archive and artefact in craft or experimental design discourse (Rock & Sellers 1998; Guixé 2007; Perry 2011). We contend that the two interventions discussed in this paper differ from these critiques in their engagement with contemporary issues of migration and heterogeneity. When seen within a framework of globalisation informed by Arjun Appadurai and the concept of the social imaginary proposed by Cornelius Castoriades, the installations open up some ways in which practitioners provoke insights. We propose that these examples of creative practice exemplify the distinction Appadurai makes between the *production knowledge* and the *consumption knowledge* of objects, which is his analysis of careers of artefacts and insistence on context as the critical factor in their interpretation. If seen within the social imaginary, where institutional practices are said to reflect the fantasies of society, the experimental approach to curatorial and exhibition norms in the two installations is revealing.

I cling to virtue

The installation *I cling to virtue (ICTV)* presented the personal effects, photographs and video montages of Monarch Lövy Singh, a fictional character, half Ashkenazi Jewish and half Punjabi Sikh. Developed as a collaborative project by Toran, Kular and Jones, the title of the work invoking the family motto of the American Kennedy family. As a site-specific installation in the Jones Gallery of the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), the work resembled the miscellany of private residue. 26 ceramic rapid prototypes of everyday things presented odd conjunctions of anomalous objects in museum vitrines. The objects were accompanied by a booklet (2010), a photographic catalogue published the following year (2011), and a statement of practice by the artists (2013). The layers of *ICTV* mirrored the structure of memory: fragmented, delayed and partial.

Monarch's family legacy was framed retrospectively in 2013 as a composite of the memories of all who viewed the exhibition. As we will shortly discuss, Hanssen Pigott's curatorial narrative is understood, also, to subsume the experience of her audience. Similarly, both exhibitions entered the discourse on fact and fiction and the assumptions by which objects are read into the authoritative narratives of history. *ICTV* questioned the authenticity of history via the evidence of Monarch's family treasure trove. Relics such as a Bar Mitzvah cake, a Sikh comb, and a McDonald's burger container prompted curiosity about the family's travels and heritage. The combination of items seemed to present the effects of globalisation and defined their heir as a global citizen. Some objects were arranged in pairs, such as a toffee hammer and a force-feeding tube, a model freight ship and a commemorative Olympic torch.



Figure 1 . Onkar Kular, Noam Toran and Keith Jones, *Olympics*, 2010

Photo: Diego Trujillo

The installation's ambiguous display provoked questions about the conventions of design. Such experimental practices have a long-running history in design discourse. They have been variously described as 'counterdesign' (Ambasz 1972: 223), 'critical' (Dunne 1999: 12), 'postmodern' (Poynor 2003: 11), 'strangely familiar' (Blauvelt 2003: 14), 'design fiction' (Bleeker 2009: 6), 'design factions' (Auger 2013: 9) and 'speculative' (Dunne & Raby 2013: 4). Unlike design-art that features limited edition designs by artists (Coles 2005, Williams 2009), experimental design keeps the disjuncture and gaps between disciplinary fields in play. We use the term experimental design here because it includes a range of approaches to design critique through practice. We consider experimental design as bordering contemporary art and significant for the density of its reflections on the fluidity of historical design discourse and the shaping of design futures (Moline 2007, 2012).

Two recent descriptors qualify aspects of experimental design that are shared with other emergent practices in visual culture. Technologist and artist Julian Bleeker (2009) contends that design fiction explores how design objects embody narratives about issues surrounding technology. Echoing accounts of critical design by Anthony Dunne (1999), Bleeker also foregrounds the issue that troubles design traditionalists: its characteristic quality as ‘both real and fake’ (2009: 8). Designer James Auger concurs. He suggests that ‘design factions’ describe the difference it makes to the reception of projects if they can ‘pass as real’ and audiences can suspend their disbelief (Auger 2013: 9–10). Shortly, we will discuss how the differences between fake and real are pertinent to *ICTV*.

ICTV presented a child’s tricycle in a glass vitrine at the centre of a circular room around which Monarch’s family ephemera was displayed in glass-fronted cabinets. In places, a video monitor occupied a cabinet shelf. The monitors presented two video sequences. In *Corridor* the camera slid up the hallway of a hospital ward at the end of which a woman’s face flashed on-screen as the camera turned the corner to confront an identical hallway and a repetition of the sequence. It was as if an elderly patient stalked the ward and remembered the face of a friend at the end of each lap. The second video, *End credits*, showed video portraits of 14 people who turned to the camera in the style of film credits of a bygone era. Some smiled. Others gazed into the distance. The acknowledgements for the video named members of the Kular and Toran families and hinted they were the actors depicted.

The booklet accompanying the exhibition opened with Kular, Toran and Jones’s reflections on memory and fiction. The artists’ refusal to reduce memory to a simple narrative is reflected in the description on the cover (2010) that presents the ‘memoirist’ as a ‘fiction-maker’ and memory as a ‘fiction-machine’. At the same time, the booklet framed how the objects were to be interpreted: as the family’s possessions that ‘crisscrossed’ and were ‘penetrated by a larger world, more its possession than ours’ (cover). The booklet’s account of the fallibility of memory, perhaps as a stand-in for history, was thereby positioned in the global context. The artists’ doubt about the reliability of history and memory implicitly asked museum visitors to question what they saw before them.

The timeline featured on the inside covers of the booklet presented a series of clues for the unravelling of the family narrative of migration between 1906 and 2001. Like a whodunnit, it commenced with the birth of Monarch’s great-grandfathers in India and Lithuania. The chronology allowed the viewer to construct a family tree of four generations leading to the birth of Monarch in 1972. Family anecdotes were interspersed with dates for political events, such as the foundation of the British Union of Fascists in 1932. Each page in the booklet described an item on display — it was up to the viewer to connect the dots. No matter how mundane the objects appeared at first glance, they were contextualised by constructed narratives and political events presented in the booklet (Kular et al. 2010).



Figure 2. Onkar Kular, Noam Toran and Keith Jones, *End credits*, 2010

Photo: Courtesy of the artists

Connections between snippets of family gossip were developed through the cross-referencing of object, caption and timeline. Some captions were ambiguous, as they told interlinked family memories of events in the manner of a shaggy dog story. The display of the toffee hammer and force-feeding tube was described, for example, as the representation of the conflict between a mother and her daughter. According to the caption for another item, a pair of women's gloves, a failed attempt to swim the English Channel led to a romantic rendezvous. Apparently, Monarch's grandparents met when his grandfather Zalman rescued his grandmother Judith by taking her hand and running from journalists as she came ashore. He visited her the next day with a gift of gloves to warm her cold hands.

Doubt was introduced when Zalman was said to be a 'notoriously unreliable narrator' (2010: 18) who connected each of his improbable tales to a pair of women's gloves. The family mythology of chance meetings, strife and ill-considered liaisons brought together several allegories that alluded to the inconsistency of memory and any story that creates a sense of closure or totality, even those told in museums. The distortions of history, central to the *ICTV* experiment, were amplified in a statement of practice by the artists in combination with a review of the work published three years after the exhibition (Hayward et al. 2013). Here they referred to their practice as experimental. They claimed that 'part of that experiment lies in creating, or construing a built world' (2013: 98) and providing a 'counter-memory' (2013: 99) within the museological context. As a belated preface, the review suggested that the work subscribed to Roland Barthes's (1977) thesis of the death of the author and the birth of the

reader. Indeed, discovering the work via this retrospective preface created the sensation of travelling backwards through time to remember an exhibition of someone else's bricolage.

The whodunnit flavour of omissions and false clues scattered throughout *ICTV* evoked another work, which is also concerned with artifice and artefact, by Toran, Kular and Jones — the *MacGuffin Library* (2008). This series of rapid prototypes, as an exploration of connections between fact and fiction, and fake and real, connected design practice and film history. The title refers to the MacGuffin, a narrative device exploited by Hitchcock to divert audiences to attend to one storyline until the twist in the narrative direction at the conclusion of the film. In short, a red herring: a falsity presented as fact. *ICTV* expanded this idea beyond film and fantasy into family and historical archives. Through the linking device of Monarch, *ICTV* extended the artists' exploration of imaginary worlds, fact and fiction, as an experimental design. Constructed in a winding narrative it was, at times, opaque. We propose that this sequential work, in progress since 2010, is illuminated by ideas of the social imaginary by Castoriades and Appadurai. Within the concept of the social imaginary, where institutions are understood to mirror the fantasies of society, we interpret *ICTV* as engaged with a complex of ideas that connected ephemerality, the obscurity of history, globalisation and the institutions that reflect society. We will expand on this analysis shortly.

Pleased to meet you: introductions by Gwyn Hanssen Pigott

Hanssen Pigott achieved international recognition for her simple, vessel forms: porcelain bottles and beakers exhibited as groupings or ensembles that reference the still life paintings of Italian artist Giorgio Morandi. For Hanssen Pigott, Morandi's paintings of domestic vessels exemplified a metaphoric capacity for simple objects to conjure the human setting of which they had been part. The most conventional and everyday objects, Hanssen Pigott contends, 'evoke so much that is inexpressible in any other language, about humanness' (2004: 25). It is this observation that informed the projects which she subsequently enacted in museum settings and are the subject of this discussion.

In 2007, Hanssen Pigott curated the installation *Parades* for the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington. From the museum archive of East Asian ceramics accumulated by the nineteenth-century industrialist Charles Lang Freer, Hanssen Pigott selected 72 ceramic objects that were assembled to produce seven tableaux. In constructing the groupings, the artist paid little attention to established museological systems built on didactic intent and correspondences of geography, function, material or technology. Instead, according to the Freer Curator for Ceramics, Louise Cort (2013), Hanssen Pigott chose objects that combined to educe the narrative that triggered their selection.

In staging the work, each tableau was installed and titled to suggest the referent around which it had been composed. The work *Remembrance*, for example,

comprised nine ceramic vessels glazed in subdued colours of taupe, brown and blue, devoid of all but minimal surface embellishments. All were austere vertical in their configuration: some had lids preventing a view into their interior space. The grouping, which grew to include a tray for wine cups and several Sung bowls, emerged from Hanssen Pigott's initial fascination with a dark green-glazed Han dynasty covered jar used for tomb burial. Discussion of the object between Hanssen Pigott and Cort focused on the entwinement of personal and political events in which they 'started talking about death, the Vietnam war, etc'. From that conversation, according to Cort, the 'dark work took form' (2013). The role of individual and community memory in the construction of historical knowledge is central to understanding both the methodology and modes of reading Hanssen Pigott's project. Debates on memory and history are various (Adamson 2013, Augé et al. 2004) and will be considered shortly in relation to interpretations of the social imaginary. Most pertinent to this discussion is the argument for the persistence of the past in the present, via individual and collective memory and the constitutive effects of each (Nora 1989, Clayton 2010).

Following the Freer installation, Hanssen Pigott was invited to enact a similar project, *PTMY*, at the Museum of Anthropology (MOA), University of British Columbia, Vancouver, exhibited November 2012 – March 2013. Again, a museum's entire inventory, in this case 38,000 artefacts sourced worldwide and representing centuries of applied human technology, was made available in order that the artist would 'invent' (MOA 2013) arrangements to contribute to the elucidatory function of the institution. Ignoring key indices of conventional museology, such as country of origin, date of production, material and provenance, Hanssen Pigott drew together 120 disparate objects that included swatches of tapa cloth, a string of glass beads, finely woven baskets and small lacquer bowls. The objects were arranged into 18 groupings, some included her own ceramic pieces. Each collection was shown in an imposing, freestanding, glass case typical of orthodox museum exhibitions.

Hanssen Pigott explained her selections at the MOA in language that distanced her from the didactic rationale often associated with the museum. Her process, as she described it, employed spontaneous and instinctual appraisals that conjured formal and poetic associations between objects: 'I usually would start with an object that enthralled or intrigued ... and then I'd search around for companions that suggested themselves to me, perhaps as a foil, or a folly, or family ...' (Conner 2012: n.p.). *PTMY*, as the name implies, 'introduced' and juxtaposed objects of dissimilar typology. That is, artefacts that were unlikely to be exhibited together in the conventional archival exhibition. Cort speaks of Hanssen Pigott's installation as an egalitarian series of introductions that drew into public view objects hitherto 'overlooked', 'ignored' and that 'had rarely if ever been on exhibit' due to their state of repair or the hierarchies of historical and cultural value ascribed by the norms of the institution (2013). In exercising her curatorial sensibility, Hanssen Pigott dislocated objects from their assumed value, breaching orthodox museological approaches to object selection and exhibition development. Hanssen Pigott's

invented narratives brought together the unfashionable, the comely and plain and, in so doing, raised questions about the authority of the museum and the locus, construction and communication of knowledge.

The artefacts selected by Hanssen Pigott occupied all quadrants of the display case. Like elements of a diorama, they were arranged according to their role in a vignette conjured by the artist. In some instances, objects were attached to the upper frame of the case, suspended over or dropping into the setting of which they were part. In one cabinet a translucent, white garment hovered over two small, Han dynasty figures, the remnant detail of their white clay exterior brought into focus by the fabric above. The finesse of their surface and elongation of form was underscored by their proximity to a flat, chunky, lidded container and two squat, skin vessels.



Figure 3. Gwyn Hanssen Pigott, *Pleased to meet you: introductions* by Gwyn Hanssen Pigott, 2012, installation shot

Photo: Ken Mayer, courtesy of the UBC Museum of Anthropology

In another cabinet, several small bamboo whisks were placed opposite a large, palm leaf fan that extended horizontally toward two unfinished baskets with unwoven canes spiralling into the space of the cabinet. In language consistent with the sensibility around which the installation had been curated, arts critic Robin Laurence described this grouping in terms that underscored an aesthetic and sensory response, where ‘impact’ is ‘created’ through ‘the impossible

lightness of their being and the delicate network of shadows they cast' (2012). In the installation at MOA, as at the Freer Gallery, descriptive case labels were minimised. Explanatory texts were 'purposefully positioned away from the cases, so that visitors would confront the groupings ... for what they were *visually* and *viscerally*' (Cort, personal communication, 19 June 2013).

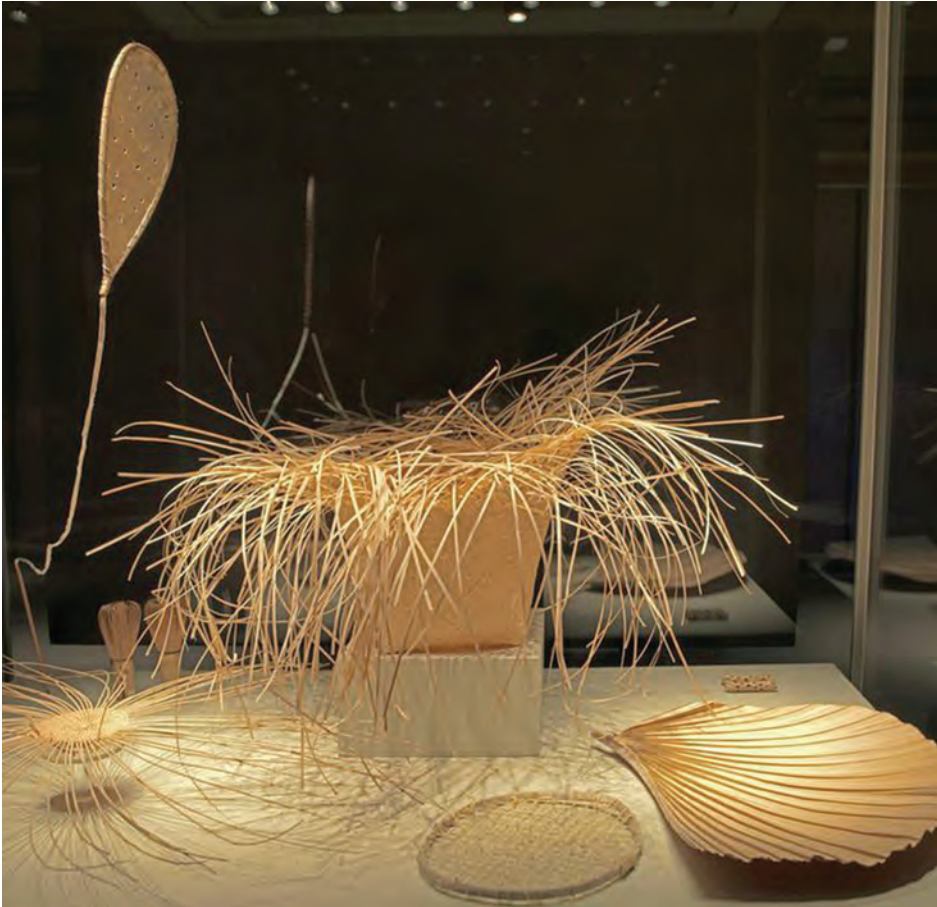


Figure 4. Gwyn Hanssen Pigott, *Pleased to meet you: introductions by Gwyn Hanssen Pigott*, 2012, installation shot

Photo: Ken Mayer, courtesy of the UBC Museum of Anthropology

The MOA's employment of an artist to demonstrate imaginative play (in essence to model the fantasies that are possible when confronted with a collection of historical artworks and artefacts) prompts questions about institutional authority and expert knowledge.

Appadurai's and Castoriades's concept of the social imaginary

In short, Castoriades's theory of the social imaginary questions the usual categorisations of social strata and contends that institutions are manifestations of the beliefs and fantasies of the individuals who comprise society (1997: 71). Within this framework, museums can be seen as the institution of history, a shared construction that is formed by collective beliefs about a society's structures and experiences of the past, and a funnel that directs and perpetuates these views.

In his elaboration of the theory, Appadurai grants substantial agency to the subject and argues that globalisation produces heterogeneity, rather than the homogeneity with which it is often associated (see, for example, Woodham 1997). He contends that when new images and ideologies are 'indigenised' (Appadurai 1996: 32), that is, appropriated and modified to fit local customs in new contexts, they produce difference. In understanding the effects of globalisation, 'context is everything' (1996: 76). Appadurai's emphasis on context is one explanation for why societies respond differently to institutional configurations. He insists that 'what we need to avoid is the search for pre-established sequences of institutional change' (1996: 73). From our perspective, when the expectation of repetitions of the habitual is acknowledged, difference becomes evident.

Just as context is critical to Appadurai, so too is the site of encounter. He speaks of 'poles' in 'careers' or 'life histories' of objects (1999: 41) and, in so doing, draws attention to the movement of objects from the point (or pole) of production to the point of consumption and the consequent disjunction in knowledge. As they transition between these points, objects thus embody difference and discontinuity. Appadurai uses the term 'production knowledge' (1999: 42) to denote the point at which material, technical and culturally encoded understandings are most strongly anchored. In other words, when there is greatest clarity of intention attached to the object's creation. This knowledge is fractured as it moves to the point of consumption where a different form of knowledge, consumption knowledge, is produced. Inevitably, consumption knowledge is generated from, and subject to the technological, intellectual and cultural landscape into which it has been relocated and it differs from knowledge at the point of production. Accordingly, the distance travelled and the complexity of movement over time and space will exaggerate the discrepancies between production and consumption knowledge.

Linked to his insistence that context trumps all when it comes to the analysis of history, Appadurai (1996) values ephemerality, stating that incremental change is characteristic of the contingency of contemporary society. In his words, the 'inherent ephemerality of the present' and the 'aesthetic of ephemerality' is key to understanding contemporary cultural engagement (1996: 78). By ephemerality, Appadurai means that which moves through time as opposed to being of its time. He extends this argument to suggest that cultural practices that engage with ephemerality are now a 'serious form of work' that he defines as 'the social

discipline of the imagination' (1996: 82). He rejects suggestions that the pleasure of consumerism and appropriation is the result of tensions between 'fantasy and utility' or 'individual desire and collective disciplines' (1996: 83). Instead, he proposes that it is the tensions between nostalgia and fantasy that produce pleasure, because 'the present is represented as if it were already the past'. From this perspective Appadurai asserts that ephemerality motivates many characteristics of contemporary practices, such as the increasing pace of the fashion cycle and the transitory nature of lifestyles on television and the mass media. Novelty, according to Appadurai, is merely a symptom of a new logic where 'desire is organized around the aesthetic of ephemerality' (1996: 84).

Appadurai's focus on the aesthetics of ephemerality is fundamental for understanding how the social imaginary operates in institutionalising fantasy. His contention that globalisation produces heterogeneity rather than homogeneity, in sum, is based on his insistence that context is the key factor to understanding how different cultures change the appropriation of globally distributed ideas and goods. Against this background, Appadurai stresses ephemerality as the condition and symptom of 'a new role for the imagination in social life' (1996: 31), where the imagination is framed as a social practice. This extends the proposal by Castoriades that the 'social imaginary' is 'instituted' in the bodies and structures established by each society. These structures develop from a culture's particular conception of social order, therefore they reflect the subjectivities of its dominant ideologies and history. Since the social imaginary also creates the structures which frame science and reason, so in Castoriades's terms, institutions are formed by significations that 'refer neither to reality nor to logic' (1997: 73).

For Castoriades, the social imaginary establishes institutions that add meaning to human experience (1997: 147). Here, Castoriades can be taken to mean that institutions are the embodiment of the social values inherent in a particular context. Yet, in his view, when institutions become overly specialised, they fragment human experience. One remedy he recommends for social fragmentation is interdisciplinarity (1997: 89). His rationale for this argument is the entwinement of two principles: 'society cannot exist without institutions' (1986: 95), while at the same time, 'society does not exist separately from those individuals of which it is comprised' (1997: 89–90). According to these principles, each individual is a 'walking fragment of the institution of society' (1986: 92). In other words, individuals are seen as contributing to the fantasies that combine to create the social imaginary. When specialisation fractures the social imaginary, interdisciplinarity can resuscitate the imaginative connections necessary for institutions to reflect social mores. From this, Appadurai surmises that the social imaginary, where imagination is seen as the cultural practice that shapes societies, is fundamental to understanding contemporary cultural trajectories as they occur in specific contexts.

An analysis of *ICTV* within the terms of the social imaginary

As an experimental work situated in a museum, we see *ICTV* as engaged with the precepts of the social imaginary described by Appadurai and Castoriades. The work prompted audiences to question the veracity of museum exhibitions of objects presented with educational wall texts that purport to explain their meaning and value. The authoritative flavour of museum labels (listing their material, chronological and geographical characteristics) presents artworks and designs as artefacts and dislocates them from their conceptual context. *ICTV* interrupted this empirical framing of objects as so much natural history by inscribing objects with family folklore. Imbued with personal associations, the booklet revealed that the narratives surrounding objects are embellished and distorted over time. The scraps of gossip recorded in the booklet foregrounded the selection of objects in museum settings as an act of imagination. Such processes, like memory, are always incomplete. The work thus alluded to the fragmented nature of current institutional practices.

Drawing from Castoriades, we see such fragmentation as a product of over-specialisation in institutions that separate human experiences. As he sees it, a remedy for increased fragmentation is interdisciplinarity. It is this aspect of *ICTV* and *PTMY* — the breaching of the disciplinary boundaries between design, craft and visual art, that operates as institutional critique in the contemporary context. Themes that run through the two installations are the representation of the partiality of historical records and the finding of connections between what were once discrete disciplines.

We contend that, unlike previous generations of institutional critique, these experimental works question the separation by institutions of creative practices according to historical definitions of disciplinarity and specialisation. They frame the fragmentary effect of specialisation in relation to issues of the migration of fugitive objects through time. According to Kular, Toran and Jones an aim of *ICTV* was to ‘substantiate a relay among many expressive cultural forms’ (2013: 97). The multi-authored bricolage of *ICTV* demonstrated the decontextualisation and recontextualisation of objects when museums display artefacts in somewhat arbitrary, albeit traditional, categories. Moreover it challenged the traditions of connoisseurship in museological distinctions between fake and real, fiction and history. The insertion of contextual folklore surrounding each object questioned the museum as a repository of facts. At the same time it inscribed the objects and films with the historical events of the twentieth century. This combination cast the viewer in the role of connecting the disparate elements of the work. The effort required to connect the objects, historical dates and narratives comprising *ICTV* is not inconsiderable and the installation, as presented, required the viewer to undertake that work.

ICTV diverged from other experimental designs engaged with museum practices by explicitly and intricately connecting the ephemeral status of creative production to the contingency of historical and political events. The

density of the work may also be one explanation for the relative silence on the work in design or visual art discourse. We suggest that further than the reader's agency in Barthes's analysis of the death of the author, the work evoked the social imaginary explored by Appadurai and Castoriades. Moreover the curated collection or legacy of Monarch's family in its whodunnit of clues makes historical processes visible.

Like the white gloves featured in the tales of Monarch's grandfather Zalman, the exhibited objects were connected to the linking device of the figure of Monarch. From our perspective, Monarch was in fact a MacGuffin. Although presented as a narrative of Monarch's family legacy, *ICTV* focused the realities of a globalised society that, in its heterogeneity, defaults to increasing fragmentation and specialisation. The artists' attention to contingency is demonstrated in the timeline that mixed personal with political events that led to the Lövy Singh clan residing in the United Kingdom. According to the statement of practice, the ambition of the work was to 'draw out and round out [Monarch's] larger world' and find a strategy to connect it to 'our historical moment' (Hayward et al. 2013: 96). The installation provoked ideas of migration, colonisation, appropriation and assimilation in the juxtaposition of ceramic replicas amid museum collections of bequests from notable families and the state.

The migratory histories of many, if not all, families were reflected in the Judeo-Indian (Ashkenazi Jewish and Punjabi Sikh) name Lövy Singh and the explanation that the ephemeral objects were emblematic of 'the intense upheavals and expansions of the last century' (Kular et al. 2010: cover). In the context of mass migrations, the narrative of the Lövy Singh clan is evocative. In the context of civil unrest about multiculturalism, we see *ICTV* as amplifying the institutionalisation of the social imaginary that surrounds these events in museological practices of collecting. The work thus alluded to the processes of the migration of people, cultures and artefacts and the ephemeral condition such translocations manifest.

The social imaginary — where institutions cultivate and make concrete the stories societies tell — was reflected in Monarch's family archive of relics and interconnecting tales. In his description of the social imaginary, Castoriades notes that its meaning 'refers neither to reality, nor to logic' (1997: 186). An example of how the social imaginary operates in *ICTV* was exemplified in the caption for a farm scene constructed in Lego. Here Monarch confessed that his grandfather once told him a story that he was forbidden to repeat (Kular et al. 2010: 9). Instead, he constructed the tale in Lego bricks, reconfiguring the scene in various arrangements as he tried to understand the complicated world of adults. The claim that Monarch stored the Lego in the attic on the evening of his grandfather's death, left the museum visitor to construct their own narrative about the family secret. From our perspective, the anecdote playfully repositions the museum as society's attic. Rather than see this as a criticism, the Lego farm is a symbol of the museum as the institutionalisation of society's fantasies, its social imaginary. We see the opening up of museological

categories and practices by contemporary interdisciplinary practitioners (in this case intermingling art and design in experimental design) in counter-histories, such as *ICTV*, as an interruption to further social fragmentation.

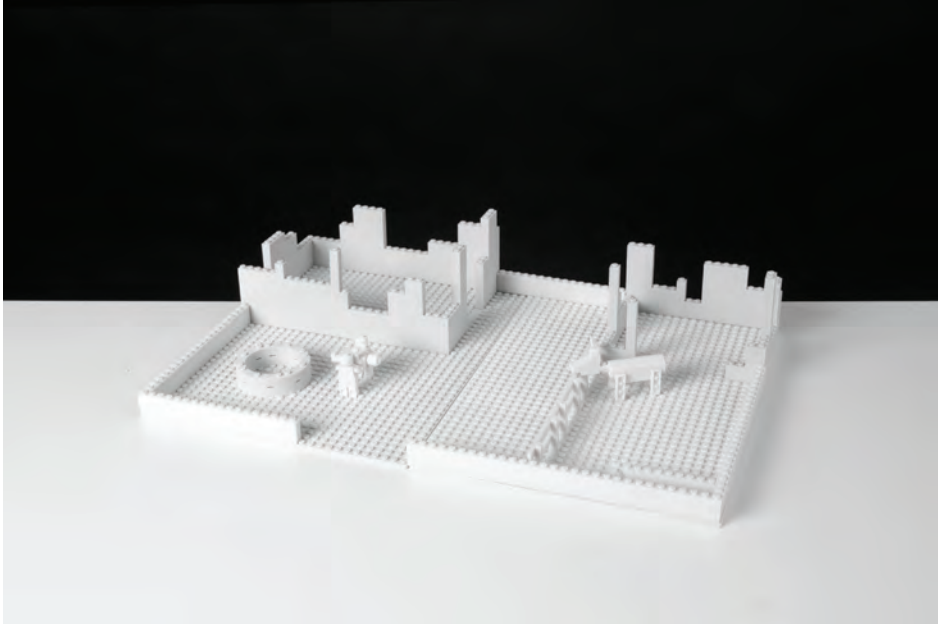


Figure 5. Onkar Kular, Noam Toran and Keith Jones, *Lego farm*, 2010

Photo: Diego Trujillo

In sum, *ICTV* recombined issues of interdisciplinarity, the effects of globalisation and recast the museum as an assemblage of fugitive objects that symbolise the social imaginary. The chief apparatus with which it layered this narrative, we suggest, is Monarch, the heir to the family legacy. When seen as a MacGuffin, the focus shifts to the social imaginary of global history and how it may be defragmented. As Auger notes, design fictions and experimental design explore ‘complex human desires or fears’ (2013: 10). In the migratory culture of globalisation, *ICTV* prompted viewers to rethink the plight of populations seeking to escape civil unrest. The multicultural bricolage of most urban metropolises is no longer seen as cosmopolitan, but instead, divided. The two principles of the social imaginary proposed by Castoriades illuminate *ICTV*: ‘society cannot exist without institutions’ (1986: 95), and that ‘society does not exist separately from those individuals of which it is comprised’ (1997: 89–90). His claim that each individual is a ‘walking fragment of the institution of society’ (1986: 92) is exemplified in *ICTV*, particularly when the artists state that *ICTV* ‘... is less an effort at resolving these tensions or contradictions than a restaging of them’ (2010: 99). Here they implicitly refer to dichotomies, such as pure and impure, insiders and outsiders.

An analysis of *PTMY* in relation to social imaginary

A curatorial project by an artist conversant with the practices of crafts production, *PTMY* was constructed around aesthetic markers that may be considered central to the craft tradition. These included the concrete indicators of material and form, as well as more nuanced aspects of process, colour and surface; in other words, a language of aestheticisation. We see this project as moving beyond mere aestheticisation, however, to provoke questions about ascriptions of legitimacy in the construction of historical knowledge and the authority of institutions in the validation and circulation of practices designated as art, design and craft. In this sense, *PTMY* underscored the differences between consumption and production knowledge noted by Appadurai. It drew attention to the presumed locus of knowledge in an organisation such as the MOA and the role of the curator, as well as audience understandings of the curated museum experience. That is, the fragmentation of experience exemplified by the highly specialised institution.

The assumptions that accompany audience expectations were captured in a review of *PTMY*. Here, Laurence (2012) spoke of the exhibition's 'marvellous sensibility' and claimed she was 'captivated' by 'new sets of visual dynamics [that] emerge'. Yet ultimately, Laurence saw such dynamism as 'troubling' *because* the exhibition was 'different ... from what we expect of an anthropology museum', lacking the pedagogical markers of case labels and wall text to guide the audience in interpretation. In Appadurai's terms, Laurence is looking for insights on the production knowledge associated with each object, the preserve of the professional curator, to be elucidated via the lens of contemporary scholarship and distributed in explanatory data, such as exhibition notes. Appadurai's insistence that consumption knowledge is distinct and disarticulated from production knowledge, and his emphasis on context, opens up and legitimises the form of knowledge that is generated at the point of consumption: that is by the viewer engaged in the act of viewing the exhibition.

In the socially constructed landscape of the contemporary museum, therefore, the *PTMY* audience is construed as expert in its interpretation. *ICTV* used the device of an exhibition booklet to hint at the unreliability of a family history it had constructed, thereby underscoring the fragmentary nature of the museum and its practices. For *PTMY*, the *absence* of labels was employed to similar effect, alerting visitors as constituents of the social imaginary to the nature of their individual agency in producing meaning and to its difference from externally generated information, the product of institutional specialisation. Like the viewer unravelling clues in *ICTV*, the *PTMY* visitor is invited to make meaning from attending to the fine detail of objects that comprise each tableau.

On reflection, Hanssen Pigott's process in gathering culturally disparate, unnamed objects around an aesthetic sensibility may be read against colonising practices of collection, including those of contemporary 'styling', the province of design for marketing and the tendency that Marxist commentator

Wolfgang Fritz Haug describes as rendering the fields of culture and marketing 'indistinguishable' (2000: 41). Laurence (2012) described viewers as 'seduced' by the 'visual delight' of Hanssen Pigott's arrangements, but the intent and effect of these interventions are the antithesis of the rapacious collector. In *PTMY*, Hanssen Pigott arranged artefacts of diverse geographic and temporal origin such that each had the effect of highlighting the presence and particularities of another. The delicacy of a white Korean garment, for example, called attention to the faded passages of white slip that define the features of a Chinese clay figure directly below. By definition, a museum of anthropology represents a vast, centralised depository of globally sourced artefacts and its archive typifies the saturation of information and objects associated with globalisation. But at the point of viewing *PTMY* tableaux, Appadurai's contention that such a deluge manifests heterogeneity — awareness of the particular and the local — is brought into play.

Museum publications identified Hanssen Pigott as a guest invited to select, arrange and configure MOA artefacts (MOA 2012). Defined as a practising visual artist, she is a visitor to the museum, separate from specialist museum professionals who administered the project, and, in that sense, part of the general audience group. In other words, a representative of museum visitors. By inserting her own works among the arrangements in several cabinets, Hanssen Pigott restated her presence and the authority of her process, a form of selection described by MOA curator Carol Mayer as originating from 'different sensibilities ... and sense of aesthetic' (2013). The *PTMY* installation removed artefacts from their museological designation and reframed them in relationships that were intended to trigger references shared by the audience of which Hanssen Pigott was construed as part. Cort (2013) pointed to the enactment of this strategy in the development of the earlier work *Remembrance* at the Freer Gallery, a response to discussion of the Vietnam War as it has entered the collective community memory. Hanssen Pigott was placed as both agent and archetype of the audience, sharing cultural memories and the sensibility upon which her references were based. In Castoriades terms, 'a walking fragment of the institution of society' (1986: 154).

At the MOA, Mayer described aesthetic and poetic devices such as 'translucency' and 'materiality' around which the groupings were aggregated (2013). In this location, the elimination of both titles and case notes gave the visitor no recourse to externally generated documentation explaining the premises of their selection, so that interpretive readings of the works were separated from curatorial expertise. Hanssen Pigott's identification with the audience bridged the fragmentation that Castoriades associates with specialisation, to restore viewer connections with the cultural practice of the social imaginary. *PTMY* places the museum and its disparate collection of objects within the frame of the social imaginary, alerting us to the mechanisms with which individuals both constitute and are constituted by the institution of society.

Conclusion and implications

Several characteristics distinguish the installations and interventions of *ICTV* and *PTMY*, including their background specialisations, their materiality, context and process. Yet both works question assumptions upon which the museum exhibition is conventionally assembled, around disciplinary specialisation. Each work contests the definition of objects in serving the didactic claims of singular, authoritative constructions of cultures, geographies and technologies. In so doing, they raise provocative questions about globalisation and demonstrate more fluid strategies with which to reflect on the tensions between history and memory, the institution and the individual.

While both installations explore the social imaginary created by the institutional practices of museums, they engage differently with Appadurai's observations of production and consumption knowledge. In ceramic prototyping, *ICTV* manufactured a simultaneous moment of production and consumption. By this we mean Kular, Toran and Jones produced ephemeral or ghostly objects consumed as invented artefacts from family narratives. The *ICTV* artists thus manufactured stories to create a span of time in a fake history that evoked significant issues in current events concerning migration. From our perspective *ICTV* engaged with and extended how the social imaginary, described by Castoriades and Appadurai, operates. That is, *ICTV* manifested the attic-like appeal of museums, such as the V&A, and allowed viewers to entertain the fantasies and family narratives that such collections can evoke.

As with the *ICTV* artists, Hanssen Pigott recombined objects to construct tableaux that conjured poetic and narrative associations of her own invention. She stripped away labelling devices that contributed to the interpretation of each artefact in its conventional museum setting. *PTMY* combined objects from different historical periods, but was unconcerned with their 'real' histories and relative antiquity. Accordingly, the work deactivated the centrality of time between production and consumption as the key to understanding the recombinations around which each tableau within *PTMY* was constructed. The interpretation of the artefacts relied on the engaged, imaginative work of viewers constructing meaning from the past in the present, at the point of 'consumption', independent of the logic of the museum.

PTMY underplayed the point of production and its associated knowledge as a factor in interpreting works; it compressed time and relied on an exercise of the imagination to construct meaning. Nonetheless, Laurence's (2012) critique of the exhibition refers to the disjunction between curatorial purpose assumed of the anthropological museum by its regular visitors, and the less familiar approach employed by Hanssen Pigott. The 'unsettling' (Laurence 2012) recalibration of expectation and interaction demanded by *PTMY* produced an unintended effect in highlighting the disjunction between production and consumption knowledge

in different contexts over time, and the institutional determination of the museum in mediating knowledge. Despite these differences, both works re-imagined history via partial memories and, thereby, re-imagined alternative futures.

Further, both installations evoked the idea of social groups and the changes to specialised knowledge that is required when interdisciplinarity is revalued. In the case of *ICTV*, notions of family and the layers of cultural background of which we are all made, featured as reflective of a history that is, at best, partial, fragmentary and always contingent. In *PTMY*, markers of human community were structured as a reflective narrative in the performative space of museum display. We suggest the two works discussed here thus provide models for rethinking the past and the present within the terms of interdisciplinarity suggested by Castoriades. Whether or not history is irrelevant, as some descriptions of design infer (Julier & Narotzky 1998), or inescapable, as definitions of craft as a truth to tradition suggest (Yanagi 1972), interrupting the historical record, as exemplified in these interdisciplinary works, contextualises institutional critique in a wider defragmented definition of creative practice than has been seen for some time. That is, the artworks encompass aspects of design, craft and visual art. Our analysis is that, as such, they evoke Appadurai's and Castoriades's thesis of the social imaginary: it is people who make institutions and history. Further, the artistic approaches of Kular, Toran, Jones and Hanssen Piggot *blended* with curating and drew out the distinction between the production knowledge and consumption knowledge of objects, and the need to understand context. Concurring with Appadurai, we see context as the critical factor in the interpretation of such projects.

In conclusion we contend that, when seen within the social imaginary, where institutional practices are said to reflect the fantasies of society, the experimental approach to curatorial and exhibition norms in the two installations model timely alternatives. *ICTV* presented new work with contemporary rapid prototyping technology, albeit in ceramic, a material associated with ancient civilisations. That is, it referenced the collection of the V&A without reproducing it. *PTMY* drew from a repository of artworks and archeological objects separated at their origin by time, geography and material, and assembled them in a manner that implied the conventions of museology. In both works, the invented arrangements invited viewers to attend to subjective responses as authoritative readings of museum display. In this they pointed to how the currents of heterogeneity in contemporary globalisation demand richer understandings of interdisciplinarity informed by the social imaginary.

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Over the last two decades she has engaged questions on the role of objects in definitions of place and self, producing a range of installation-based responses that have been exhibited in Australia and overseas.

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Open Section

Introducing the Open Section of *craft + design enquiry*

This issue of *craft + design enquiry* marks the introduction of an Open Section to each issue. This will enable the journal to broaden the publishing opportunities for scholars and artists in the field of craft and design. Papers on any subject relevant to craft and design are solicited for this section and will be subject to the same peer review process as the themed section.

In this issue, the Open Section publishes Siobhan Campbell's paper 'Craft and the archive: Museum collections and memory in a Balinese village'.

Craft and the archive: Museum collections and memory in a Balinese village

Siobhan Campbell

Abstract This paper examines the different forms of indigenous agency embodied in a museum collection and identifies personal relationships as a constructive platform from which to understand objects in collections of material culture. Specifically, it describes the results of a field investigation to gather Balinese responses to the Forge Collection of Balinese Art at the Australian Museum. This approach reflects the broadening vision in museum practice and scholarship over the last decades, recognising that most museum institutions describe themselves as the custodians or guardians of collections and seek to engage with the indigenous communities that produced them. Most people in the village of Kamasan in East Bali, Indonesia, have recollections of the late collector and anthropologist Anthony Forge, given that only 40 years has passed since he lived in the village with his family. This paper relates some general responses to his collecting project before considering the complex and productive relationship between Forge and the artist Mangku Mura. Not only is it apparent that the relationship between artist and anthropologist–collector had implications for the material form of art produced in the village, and subsequently housed in the museum collection, it shows that traditional artists produce their art in defiance of conventional understandings of ‘traditional’ art. While this paper is an occasion to reflect on the applicability of a particular field methodology and approach to other cultural collections, it also points to the wider implications for interpreting ‘traditional’ practices by opening up to debate ideas about timelessness and originality in the context of changing social relations.

A broadening vision in museum practice and scholarship in recent decades has led museums around the world to re-envision their mission as the custodians of collections in their care. Along with this has come greater acknowledgement of the agency of indigenous people in the process of making museum collections. This paper describes one attempt to engage with a community of Balinese artists in relation to a collection of Balinese paintings housed at the Australian Museum in Sydney. Initially collected during the 1970s by the English anthropologist Anthony Forge (1929–1991), the return of the museum ‘archive’ to the village of Kamasan highlights the reciprocal ways in which relationships between artists and anthropologists work. Given that only 40 years have passed since Forge conducted his research in the village, most people in Kamasan still remember the collector. Their responses generated new perspectives on the impact of Forge’s collecting and research on the people with whom he worked and on the trajectory of Kamasan art. In addition to describing the ways that Forge is

remembered, this paper examines collaboration in terms of the role that Forge played in the career of the artist Mangku Mura (1920–1999) and the critical role that Mangku Mura played in interpreting the art that Forge collected.

The Australian Museum houses a major collection of more than 200 Balinese paintings collected by Forge. The anthropologist, from whom the Forge Collection takes its name, became chair of the newly established Department of Prehistory and Anthropology at The Australian National University in 1974. Immediately prior to his Canberra appointment, Forge spent a year doing fieldwork in the village of Kamasan in Bali. His selection of Bali as a field site was partly motivated by a desire to extend his comparative perspective beyond the insights he had gained during previous fieldwork amongst the Abalam in New Guinea (Forge 1966, 1973). From October 1972 to September 1973 Forge purchased 104 of the paintings now in the Australian Museum collection; he made shorter fieldwork visits in 1977, 1979 and 1986. Forge purchased a combination of old paintings, some that had belonged to temples or family collections, and new works by living artists.

Although few twentieth-century anthropologists paid serious attention to material culture, Forge belongs to a small group who produced well-documented collections in the course of their research (Campbell 2014). Even though Forge was not under commission to make the initial collection, buying art was always an explicit part of his field investigations. The Australian Museum did not become involved with his collecting project until 1975, when Forge offered his collection of paintings for sale. After acquiring his initial collection, part of which was exhibited at the Australian Museum in 1978, and commissioning a further collecting trip in 1979, little interest was shown in the collection until 2009, when I was offered the chance to conduct research on the Forge Collection.¹ By this time, the practice of collecting material culture by anthropologists was subject to higher levels of scrutiny than four decades ago, when Forge assembled the collection.

This is not to say that Forge was unmindful of the ethics of collecting or the implications of buying art while working in Kamasan, rather that, in today's museum environment, collection interpretative strategies are now informed by the principle of intercultural exchange. In fact, Laura Peers and Alison Brown (2003) identify attempts to engage with 'source communities' as one of the most important developments in the history of museums.² From July 2010 – April 2011 and September–December 2011 I conducted fieldwork in Kamasan to investigate local appraisals of Forge as a collector and to gather new insights about the paintings he collected. Visual material was a key component of my

1 The research was made possible with a postgraduate scholarship funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage Project between the University of Sydney and the Australian Museum, 'Understanding Balinese painting: collections, narratives, aesthetics and society'.

2 The term 'source communities' refers to: 'groups in the past when artefacts were collected, as well as to their descendants today. These terms have most often been used to refer to indigenous peoples in the Americas and the Pacific, but apply to every cultural group from whom museums have collected: local people, diaspora, and immigrant communities, religious groups, settlers, and indigenous peoples' (Peers & Brown 2003: 2).

research. I took photographs of all the paintings in the Forge Collection, as well as images of people and places that Forge had photographed. This methodology has been used by others to draw out stories about collector identities and collected objects.³ Formally, the process is known as visual repatriation or photo-elicitation, and is described as a way to understand ‘the differing perspectives and interpretations that source communities have of history and knowledge, and of their methods of narrating this information’ (Dudding 2005: 218).

Following Rodney Harrison et al. (2013: 4), in the ensuing discussion this paper attempts to go ‘beyond the observation that indigenous people and ethnographic objects had (and continue to have) agency’ to consider the broader implications of such agency. This is preceded by a brief introduction to the visual art of Kamasan, leading to an explanation of why this kind of art has often been regarded by Western observers as belonging to the condition of craft. While such categories are not really pertinent to Kamasan understandings of art, and say more about ethnocentric bias in the minds of foreign observers, the examples cited throughout this paper show that Kamasan artists produce works with unique characteristics and individual histories of articulation. While these qualities might support the contention that paintings fit a category of fine art, there is considerable scope to rethink how notions of skill and individuality are conceived in relation to the way Balinese artists work.

Kamasan art

Most of the paintings Forge collected come from Kamasan, a village located between the east coast and the mountain ranges of Gunung Agung on the island of Bali. This area of Bali is something of a backwater compared to the urban sprawl characterising the south of the island, yet Kamasan has a central place in Balinese history. Historically, Kamasan was home to communities of artisans working in the service of the pre-colonial rulers of Bali, the most pre-eminent of whom was based in nearby Gelgel and later Klungkung. Kamasan village itself is divided into wards (*banjar*) reflecting the specialised services provided by members of the commoner castes to the ruling court as goldsmiths (*pande mas*), smiths (*pande*) and painters (*sangging*).

Kamasan paintings are produced to be displayed in temples and on ritual occasions. Even when produced for different spaces and contexts, paintings generally comply with standard formats. Firstly, flags are produced in pairs with the same image on both sides, so a pair of flags consists of four pieces of painted cloth. Secondly, there are narrow-strip paintings (*ider-ider*) which hang around the eaves of pavilions (*bale*), and shrines (*gedong*), and may be

3 For instance, Haidy Geismar and Anita Herle conducted a particularly evocative study of a historical collection of photographs from Vanuatu. Their work explored ‘the resonance of photographic images’ in communities; they also related the photographs to the intellectual history of anthropology as an academic discipline and to the social history of anthropology as a cross-cultural enterprise (2009: 3).

up to 15 metres in length. The narratives depicted on *ider-ider* are viewed by moving along the painting from right to left, sometimes in reverse order, or in complex combinations of these. The third type are rectangular (*langse*), which are hung as curtains to screen offering platforms. They often have lengths of imported printed fabric sewn along the bottom and Chinese coins with holes in the middle (*kepeng*) attached to the top edge. Fourthly, there are roughly square cloths (*tabing*), which are most often hung over the wooden backboards of offering platforms. The narrative on the latter two types of cloth is divided into scenes. These scenes might be even rows of a standard width, or one large and several smaller scenes. Different calendars, including the 35-day calendar (*palelintangan*) and the earthquake calendar (*palindon*), are produced in the same format. Cloths are also made for ceiling spaces (*lelangit*) to provide cosmic orientation (*pangideran*) in the context of certain rituals.



Figure 1. Unknown artist, *Hanoman*, c. 1900, *kober*, natural pigment on cotton cloth, 490 x 530 mm, Forge Collection E074236

Photo: Emma Furno, courtesy of the Australian Museum

Kamasan art is narrative in that paintings depict versions of stories and myths found in written, oral and performance genres. Kamasan art is closely related to shadow puppet (*wayang*) theatre and painted figures are depicted in almost the same manner as flat Balinese shadow puppets except in three-quarter view. The stories come from epics of Indian and indigenous origin, relating the lives of deities, the royal courts and sometimes commoner families. These narratives serve a didactic and devotional function and the stories acquire many layers of meaning in the context of their display. They are intended to gratify and entertain the gods during their visits to the temple, as well as the human participants in ritual activities.



Figure 2. *Idar-idar* on temple shrine in Pura Kawitan Pasek Gelgel, Kamasan, 2010

Photo: Siobhan Campbell

When displayed in temples and family compounds, paintings are hung only for the duration of festivals or ceremonies. At other times they are folded, or rolled, and stored alongside other ceremonial equipment. Paintings are normally produced on cloth (*kain belacu*) made from cotton grown on the island of Nusa Penida or imported from Europe. They are also painted on bark cloth (*daluwang*) sourced from around the archipelago and on wooden boards or panels (*parba*) that form the back of bed-like offering platforms (*taban*).

Paintings were once found in temples and royal courts throughout Bali and, until the early twentieth century, several villages around Bali practiced a similar style of painting. Today this art continues to be produced by small numbers of artists in other Balinese villages; however, Kamasan is the only village where this style predominates. The most important distinction between Kamasan and the other visual art traditions of Bali is that the style of Kamasan has not been superseded by newer styles that took root in other Balinese villages (see Vickers 2012). There is a tendency to describe these distinctions in terms of the conventional craft and art divide. Certainly, some aspects of this 'traditional' painting context have seen Western observers relegate Kamasan painting to the condition of craft, regarding its makers as artisans rather than artists (Cooper 2005: 5). This legacy dates back to at least the 1930s, when resident Western artists described Kamasan art as repetitive, imitative and lacking originality and thus of little aesthetic distinction. The subjectivity of such categories is apparent in their criticism of Balinese artists for their failure to depict everyday life while admiring their technical virtuosity (Covarrubias 1937).

The Forge Collection was assembled at a time when at least some visual anthropologists, including Forge, were questioning this interpretive frame. Forge recognised that this tradition was not subject to cultural decline, but rather, to ongoing rearticulation. In particular, he wanted to demonstrate how paintings could be regarded as original in the context of their collectivities, explaining why he focused on the work of individual artists. In the contexts of viewing Forge's photographs that I took to Kamasan, the families of artists also confirmed the significance of particular artists within their family histories when they picked out photographs that they wanted to reproduce and keep for themselves, a process that Haidy Geismar (2009: 292) refers to as 'taking images back'. The photographs not only enacted tangible connections with the past, enlarging and displaying them transformed the photographs into statements of prestige. By reclaiming photographs of artists in their family histories, people asserted the agency of their own kin groups in the art history of the village, emphasising the high value placed on locating oneself within a lineage of accomplished artists. These acts might be taken to problematise the notion that this tradition is without an art historical trajectory.

The Forge Collection revisited

Attempts to revisit Forge's work would have been decidedly different if not for the fact that so few people have left Kamasan. Even though most of Forge's key collaborators are no longer alive, their descendants live in the same house compounds. Superficially and despite cosmetic changes, such as asphalt roads, temples having been refurbished in dark grey andesite, and extensions to family compounds, the layout of the village has changed little in 40 years. Families have remained where Forge left them and even family members who have migrated to urban centres for work, or married into other villages, regularly return to Kamasan.

In my initial introductions to people in the village it was quickly established that there was no need to explain who Forge was. It seemed that everyone I spoke to knew of '*Tuan* (mister) Anthony', a somewhat archaic term of address for foreign males that was used almost exclusively for addressing Europeans from the colonial period until the 1990s. His imposing physical form and smoky cigars made a big impression on children; however, the most popular story related to Forge is about his flight into the village by helicopter. This incident took place during the filming of a BBC television series *Face values* in 1977 and elevated Forge to legendary status in Kamasan eyes. Even people who were too young to have witnessed the spectacle had heard of Tuan Anthony landing the helicopter. People talked of running from their homes to watch the powerful beast descend; the wind from the propellers mowing down the coconut trees planted around the perimeter of the field in its wake.

Recollections of the larger-than-life figure extend to the Forge Collection too. Many people commented that Forge assembled the biggest collection of Kamasan art; this impression is probably related to the visibility of his collecting activities as well as to the circulation of the catalogue in the village. People witnessed the collection grow in size over a period of months and were well-informed about what he was doing. Forge's own field notes relate that, shortly after his arrival in the village, he attracted a regular stream of callers offering paintings and other old wares. They usually waited outside his house in the early morning or called by in the evening. Some of these people were established traders; however, the majority were female residents of the village, acting as agents for the owners of paintings or temple communities. Sometimes Forge purchased on the spot, but in many instances negotiations extended over several days.

Today the women of Kamasan describe how they went around nearby villages to locate paintings to sell, from which they generated income by commission. Much of the day-to-day talk about Forge was predicated around discussions of these sales. Their stories reveal that the monetary value of paintings is not determined solely by the material form of objects, there is an arbitrary component based on the intended function of the painting as well as the means of the person buying it. These distinctions were famously described by Arjun Appadurai (1986) as the 'regimes of value' in which objects circulate. Ni Wayan

Kartini, who sold one painting to Forge, had no recollection of the narrative subject of the painting. Her strongest recollection of the transaction was that it had been a well-compensated one. Although she failed to recall the rupiah figure, Ni Wayan Kartini said that the currency value was low and that paintings were inexpensive, pointing out that although the amount would seem like nothing in today's terms, the profit was enough to purchase rice to feed her young children for several months.

As the latter remark suggests, there was no intimation that Forge was unfair in his dealings, or in the prices he paid for paintings. His residence in the village, however, took place following a period that Forge himself described as 'unmitigated disaster' (1980: 228). By this he was referring to the state-sponsored purge of alleged supporters of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) from late 1965. During this period, murders were often perpetrated by fellow members of the same ward and, in the years following the violence, these families continued to live side by side. Local conditions thus gave rise to a situation that senior artist Nyoman Mandra said was opportune (*untung*). Nyoman Mandra suggested that Forge was only able to assemble such a vast collection because people needed money and were willing to sell paintings.

In Bali during the 1970s increased tourist numbers, coupled with decreasing reliance on the agricultural sector, also resulted in greater prosperity in some parts of Bali and more lucrative opportunities for artists to sell their work. Most people in Kamasan describe the last two decades of the twentieth century as the most profitable years of their art industry. These years came to an end in 2002 when bombings reduced visitors to a trickle.⁴ According to this locally defined timeline, Forge was the earliest collector in recent history and it is generally held that his collecting project stimulated the village art industry in the years following. Although Forge was certainly not the first foreigner to visit Kamasan and collect art — community memories extend back to the 1930s when foreign artists went to the village — this goes some way towards explaining why he is remembered as an exemplary collector. Forge's presence in the village is equated with steadily improving fortunes.

This also partially explains why Forge's removal of the paintings from Kamasan did not elicit remarks about cultural loss. Although stories lamented the fact that Bali's manuscript literature (*lontar*) was removed by the Dutch colonial authorities, people did not envisage Forge's collecting project along similar lines of cultural appropriation. Many people became sentimental when looking through images of the Forge Collection, regretting that they no longer had old paintings in their families. These feelings, however, were tempered by a sense of pride that their art was collected and displayed overseas. People also commented

4 A series of bomb attacks in tourist resort areas of South Bali in 2002 and 2005 resulted in hundreds of human casualties and a major economic downturn impacting thousands of people who were directly and indirectly employed in the tourist economy. The events also gave rise to a kind of cultural crisis, often discussed in the context of the *Ajeg Bali* movement. This movement debated the position of Bali within the Indonesian nation state and questioned the flow of immigrants from other parts of Indonesia into Bali (see Schulte Nordholt 2007, MacRae 2010).

that foreign museums were better placed to take care of their paintings, an insight heightened by their experiences of storing old paintings. Many times when a painting was brought out from under a bed or cupboard, new evidence of rodent or insect activity were revealed. Comments about Forge as a collector were also made in the context of recurrent media reports about the theft of sacred objects from temples around the island (see McGowan 2008; Hauser-Schäublin 2012). Media coverage tended to stress the role of the international art market in motivating the thefts, though the conversations I heard amongst Kamasan residents seemed to hold the Balinese collaborators who knowingly removed objects from temples in greater contempt.⁵

To balance the generally convivial and positive evaluations of Forge, I now turn to the transgressions held against him. This is not to claim that people openly criticised him, rather to acknowledge that his collecting project gave rise to certain resentments. Frictions are to be expected in the conduct of any fieldwork, but are probably heightened when fieldwork involves buying art. In Forge's case they were largely the result of his close affiliation with artist Mangku Mura. This relationship has important implications for understanding how a particular individual was involved in the making of the Forge Collection. The following discussion covers two main points. After providing some brief background details about the artist Mangku Mura, I explore a painting he produced for the Forge Collection in some detail so as to explain why the painting might be taken to embody the mutual interests of artist and anthropologist. Secondly, I discuss how Mangku Mura's agency is expressed in subsequent interpretations of the collection by describing his involvement with an old painting that Forge collected.

Mangku Mura

When Forge arrived in Kamasan, the 50-year-old Mangku Mura was well established as a painter and went on to become one of the most successful Kamasan artists of his generation. His work was widely collected in Bali, as well as by museum institutions and collectors internationally. Despite outside recognition, within Kamasan, Mangku Mura is perceived as an outsider because, unlike most Kamasan artists, he was not born into a family of painting descent. By the time he took up painting he had completed primary school and was working alongside his parents as a sharecropper. Initially he apprenticed himself to one artist and, once he had learnt how to draw (*ngreka*), he began to earn money to support himself. He then moved on to new teachers and spent time learning alongside several key artists. This unusual system of learning led him to appropriate different elements from each teacher and is believed to account for his idiosyncratic style. As a young man Mangku Mura also studied to become a lay priest (*pamangku*).

⁵ Cases reported in the press include *Bali Post* (19 September 2010) and the *Jakarta Globe* (8 September 2010).



Figure 3. Artist Mangku Mura, 1977

Photo: Anthony Forge, courtesy of the Australian Museum

To this day, people in Kamasan attribute a share of Mangku Mura's success to Forge. Forge was aware that his dependence on Mangku Mura was controversial, however, Mangku Mura's inherent capacity and willingness to talk about paintings made him an indispensable collaborator. Forge's methodological approach to studying art was premised on the notion that talking to and observing artists at work was more important than analysing the formal elements of paintings. Forge's financial support and confidence in the artist presented the opportunity and the means for Mangku Mura to pursue an extensive range of narrative work. The painting *Sukrasena* is a case in point. On the one hand the painting can be taken as a measure of the complex intercultural understanding between Mangku Mura and Forge. At the same time the painting reveals a lot about how artists work within a given tradition. This narrative had never been the subject of a Kamasan painting, yet, while he created something new, Mangku Mura also drew on narrative plots and allusions to a corpus of stories that were familiar to many Balinese viewers.

Mangku Mura was a brilliant storyteller. Many visual artists draw analogies between their role as storytellers and that of puppeteers (*dalang*) and, while the following elaboration only hints at the parallels between Balinese visual and performing arts genres, at the outset it should be emphasised that artists like Mangku Mura do not regard paintings as inanimate. His words have the capacity to bring the painting to life. When Mangku Mura completed this painting, Forge made an audio recording of him narrating the story scene by scene. The

recording was transcribed in Balinese, and then translated into Indonesian by Forge's research assistant, Ida Bagus Wijana Purnama. The description given here is based on my translation of the transcription.⁶

Sukrasena

The painting is a 17-metre long *ider-ider* produced on three separate pieces of cloth. The story, progressing in scenes from left to right, begins with a story that is common to the painting tradition, in which the god Siwa devises a plan to test the faithfulness of his wife Giri Putri. In fact, Mangku Mura depicted the same story of Siwa and Giri Putri as part of his painting *The story of Kala* (Forge 1978: 30). The key points of this story are that Siwa feigns illness and, informing Giri Putri that only the fresh milk of a cow will cure him, sends her down to earth to procure the milk. On earth, Giri Putri meets a boy herding a cow, actually Siwa in disguise, and obtains the milk on the condition that she makes love to him. She returns to heaven and Siwa drinks the milk. He instructs his son Gana to ask his mother how she obtained the milk. Giri Putri is trapped into lying and caught out by Gana, using a chronicle (*tenung*) recorded on a palm leaf manuscript to foretell the past and future. Furious, Giri Putri grabs the chronicle and throws it into a fire. Gana is only able to retrieve fragments, which explains why the chronicles in Bali no longer consistently predict the future.

In most conventional narratives Giri Putri is banished from heaven to earth and takes the form of Durga, the goddess of the temple associated with death and decay (*pura dalem*). In this painting Giri Putri takes the form of a pig. The next scene takes place on earth as the king of Tulembang embarks on a journey through the forest with his retainers. Coming upon a coconut tree, they pick the fruit and drink the milk. One of the coconut shells is cut in half and the king urinates into it, declaring that whoever consumes the liquid will fall pregnant. Siwa has descended from heaven and witnesses the vow; his spirit enters the urine of the king. When a thirsty Giri Putri arrives on earth as a pig in the next scene, she drinks the liquid in the coconut shell and gives birth to a baby girl called Rare Cili. Meanwhile, the supreme power Sanghyang Licin punishes Siwa for the unreasonable tests he set for Giri Putri and Siwa too is banished to earth in the form of a black dog.

⁶ In this sense my description is too reductive to adequately reflect Mangku Mura's mode of storytelling as I have been forced to omit many tangential stories and to convey the relevant details as succinctly as possible.



Figure 4. Mangku Mura, *Sukrasena* (detail 1), natural and acrylic pigment on cotton cloth, 300 x 17050 mm, Forge Collection E0742221-23

Photo: Emma Furno, courtesy of the Australian Museum

At this point the now mature Rare Cili is working at her weaving loom when it falls into the garden below. She declares that she will marry whoever retrieves the loom. The black dog, which is of course Siwa, fetches the loom in his mouth. Rare Cili has no choice but to fulfil her oath and marry the dog. She soon falls pregnant and gives birth to a boy called Sukrasena. As Sukrasena grows older he incessantly asks his mother about the identity of his father. Rare Cili tells him to cease asking about his father, but advises him to take her black dog to help protect his crops. When Sukrasena spots a sow amongst his crops he orders the dog to chase it away. The seemingly useless dog approaches the sow but does nothing; Sukrasena becomes so enraged that he withdraws his dagger (*kris*) and kills the dog and the pig. Returning home to inform his mother, Rare Cili admonishes him for his lack of compassion and tells him that the dog was his father and the sow his grandmother. Sukrasena weeps in sadness and withdraws his weapon, intending to kill his mother, when Siwa appears.

The murder has released Siwa and Giri Putri from their animal forms. Now Siwa appears on earth in the form of an elderly ascetic and orders Sukrasena not to kill his mother. He grants Sukrasena protection and tells him to visit the king Prabu Dadah in Tulembang. Siwa says he should first take a heavenly nymph called Luhtama as his wife. This part of the narrative is based on the story known as *Rajapala*. Sukrasena departs for the garden of Sumbrewijaya in search of his chosen wife and sees the nymphs descend from heaven to bathe in a pool. While they are bathing he hides Luhtama's scarf, which is her means of flight. Left behind when the others fly back to heaven, she marries Sukrasena and shortly after gives birth to a son called Jaya. Not long after Luhtama falls pregnant again.

The elderly ascetic (Siwa) reminds Sukrasena to depart for the palace of the King of Tulembang. On arriving, Sukrasena reports to a chief minister, claiming that Prabu Dadah is his grandfather. The minister almost beats Sukrasena to death before the king intervenes. Sukrasena relates the events that followed from the king's journey through the forest when he urinated in the coconut shell. Realising that Sukrasena is indeed his grandson, the king resolves to place him on the throne and Sukrasena takes leave to collect his family. In his absence Luhtama has given birth to a second son called Sura and, having fulfilled the promise she

made when he captured her, asks Sukrasena to permit her to return to heaven. Despite telling her that he is to be crowned king of Tulembang, Sukrasena fails to convince her to stay and becomes so angry that he unwittingly kills their youngest son when he throws him on the ground. Left alone with his eldest child, Sukrasena combines the names of both sons. On their way to meet with the king, Sukrasena tells Jayasura that, as he is now to be appointed king, he will no longer be of the commoner (*sudra*) caste, therefore he should not be addressed as father (*bapa*) in low Balinese but as father (*ajung*) in high Balinese. The painting concludes with Sukrasena's arrival at the palace. Upon ascension to the throne he is released of his low-caste status and becomes a noble (*gusti*).



Figure 5. Mangku Mura, *Sukrasena* (detail 2), natural and acrylic pigment on cotton cloth, 300 x 17050 mm, Forge Collection E0742221-23

Photo: Emma Furno, courtesy of the Australian Museum

Mangku Mura concluded his oral retelling of the story by saying that the painting was about 'how Sukrasena became the king of Tulembang and the story by which Muslim people all over the world describe their origins.'⁷ What may be taken as a somewhat perplexing conclusion can be explained with reference to further contextual information about the circumstances of the commission.

In the first instance it was Mangku Mura who persuaded Forge to commission him to paint this story. The artist was inspired by a drama performance that had taken place in the village some weeks earlier. Although Forge, who had not seen the performance, agreed to the commission, he was concerned that the story was 'contentious and potentially defamatory' (Field Diary, 17 June 1973). Mangku Nengah Latra, Mangku Mura's eldest son, was a young member of the drama group and he explained that the objective of the performance was to inform the predominantly Balinese Hindu audience why Muslims do not consume pork and dislike keeping dogs. From the perspective of Kamasan residents, the latter restrictions are pertinent as their neighbours in the customary village of Gelgel include a community of Balinese Muslims. This community is believed to be descended from the retinue of Javanese retainers who arrived in Bali in the sixteenth century with the establishment of the Gelgel court. Their mosque, the oldest in Bali, stands in close proximity to the Hindu state temple (*pura dasar*).

7 Mangku Mura stated in Balinese: *mangden presida sami uning ring paundukan wantah penyeneng ring tulambeng ngentosin prabu dadah sampunika kawastanin sukrasena cerita puniki ketuluh antak agama islam masumi sane nganggen unduke rauh mangkin anggane ring seluruh dunia puniki.*

Despite ostensibly being about the origins of Islam, Mangku Mura's narrative was related in the same manner as Hindu stories of creation and it fits narrative patterns familiar to Balinese artists. Mangku Mura told his children that in the mid-1950s, when he left his young family and went to the island of Nusa Penida in search of work, he stayed alongside Muslim villagers and studied traditional healing and treatments which involved the recitation of Arabic mantras. The duration of his visit to Nusa Penida is not clear, yet it was evidently an important episode in the life story he recounted to his family. It explains why they believe he was familiar with systems of Islamic belief.

More generally, Islam is not necessarily an alien doctrine to Balinese people. It is found in religious texts of the nineteenth century and there is a painting in the Forge Collection depicting a story with Islamic origins known as *Menak* (see Vickers 2005: 301–03). The *Sukrasena* shares features with the *Kebo Mundar* story related in Balinese manuscripts and paintings; this story relates that the first person to bring Islam to the island of Lombok was descended from a pig and has a dog convert communities through trickery (Vickers 1987: 48). Mangku Mura, however, did not pointedly identify the figure of Sukrasena as Muslim, nor does Sukrasena attempt to convert anybody, although he did engage in an act of trickery in finding a wife.

The major narrative sequence of the *Sukrasena* is the story of a commoner overcoming tribulations to be revealed as the rightful royal heir, a relatively common theme in other Balinese stories (Cooper 1997). In the painting the ascent to the throne by a commoner is not only sanctioned by divine powers, it is orchestrated by the deities. Mangku Mura's engagement with issues of hierarchy in the painting fits more generally with Forge's theoretical perspectives on Kamasan art. This is what Forge had in mind when he described artists who appeared to accept the established hierarchy of Balinese society, yet undermined or mocked it in their paintings (Forge 1978). In this sense we might also understand that the painting refers to entrenched hierarchies amongst commoner artists in the village. As mentioned above, Mangku Mura was considered to exist outside the official lineage of village painters, yet he was able to circumvent this hierarchy through the patronage of foreign collectors like Forge. Through this patronage Mangku Mura was able to take his art practice into new domains.

For our purposes the *Sukrasena* makes clear the reciprocal ways in which relationships between artists and anthropologists work. This narrative was one that Mangku Mura felt was important to paint, a request to which Forge acceded, even though it is clear that Forge did not share his enthusiasm. The *Sukrasena* stands out as an important painting for demonstrating how artists develop new narratives, and thus make changes within an artistic tradition, yet it was not included in either the Australian Museum exhibition of the Forge Collection in 1978 or in the exhibition catalogue. In one sense Forge was able to momentarily disregard the contentious painting, but reviewing the collection brought Mangku Mura's enthusiasm back to the fore.

There are many ways in which the personal relationship between Mangku Mura and Forge is embodied in the Forge Collection. The example below explores their relationship in terms of the interpretation of an old painting and the museum catalogue. One of the most treasured and expensive paintings that Forge acquired in Kamasan was an old work for which he lacked any contextual information about the narrative depicted. Significantly though, in terms of subsequent interpretations, the painting was reproduced in the Australian Museum catalogue (Forge 1978). Mangku Mura reacquainted himself with the old story depicted in the painting and reintroduced the narrative into religious ceremony.

The Australian Museum catalogue

In general terms, people in Kamasan believe that the catalogue generated renewed interest in their village and played a role in promoting Kamasan art to the world. The catalogue also had an impact on the paintings they produced. Similar circumstances have been observed in other Indonesian contexts, where traditional artists have access to catalogues from overseas exhibitions. For instance, Jill Forshee (2001: 61) describes textile producers in Sumba copying motifs from older Sumbanese textiles illustrated in exhibition catalogues and incorporating the motifs in new cloths. Andrew Causey (2003: 156) also talks of catalogues as the 'greatest exposure to traditional forms' among Toba Batak wood carvers, and explains how they are used to reproduce and replicate artefacts.

Kamasan artists continue to refer to Forge's catalogue, though many use well-thumbed black and white photocopy reproductions of the original. Even if the close relationship between Mangku Mura and Forge had gone unnoticed during fieldwork, the catalogue leaves no doubt as to the nature of their collaboration. Statements and responses collected from Mangku Mura resound through the text, describing how the artist was 'persuaded' to undertake certain commissions, what Mangku Mura 'said' and how he 'described' things. More than that, the catalogue contains photographs of the artist and various family members, as well as his paintings and sketches. Since few people commented on the catalogue text, in evaluating how the catalogue was received in the village it is more pertinent to think about the visual presentation. By virtue of the catalogue, Mangku Mura's renderings of popular stories have circulated within the village. In particular, the publication of one old painting resulted in the circulation of a new narrative amongst artists.



Figure 6. Unknown artist, *Jaratkaru*, natural pigment on cotton cloth, 1500 x 1600 mm, Forge Collection E074161

Photo: Emma Furno, courtesy of the Australian Museum

As mentioned above, *Jaratkaru* was amongst the most expensive paintings that Forge acquired. Purchased from the couple Pan and Men Soka, Forge underscored the high value of the painting by noting that the vendors intended to use the proceeds towards the purchase of a motorbike (Field Diary, 21 May 1973). It was unusual for Forge to pay such a high price given that there was no contextual information about the painting or the narrative depicted on it.

The painting in question had various scenes of punishment on it similar to those found in the well-known story of *Bima Swarga*, relating Bima's mission to the afterlife to rescue the souls of his step-parents. Despite consulting with several artists Forge had no success in identifying the narrative. There was also an inscription written in Balinese script (*aksara*) on the bottom right-hand corner of the painting, stating that the scene was painted from a manuscript (*lontar*) and giving a date equivalent to 1303 Saka (1381 AD). Naturally, Forge concluded that this could not possibly have been the completion date for the mid-nineteenth century painting. He explained these unresolved issues in the catalogue, writing, 'it has so far proved impossible to identify which particular story this is' or 'any particular artist who had painted it' (1978: 42–43).



Figure 7. Mangku Mura, *Jaratkaru*, natural pigment on cotton cloth, 1350 x 1550 mm, Forge Collection E076405

Photo: Emma Furno, courtesy of the Australian Museum

Ultimately Mangku Mura successfully resolved the narrative ambiguity. When Forge went to Kamasan in 1979 he took copies of the recently published museum catalogue. On the same visit he purchased a new version of the same painting by Mangku Mura. Mangku Mura had correctly identified the old painting as *Jaratkaru* from the *Adiparwa* (the first book of the *Mahabharata*). Jaratkaru is the name of a brahmana man whose failure to marry and reproduce condemns his parents to suffer in hell. The figure of Jaratkaru appears in the top right-hand corner of both paintings, talking to his mother and father who are hanging from a tree. To rescue them from this terrible fate, Jaratkaru must take a wife; he marries a woman of the same name, the daughter (or sister) of serpent-king Basuki (Zoetmulder 1974: 68–69). They have a son called Astika, who later saves the serpents from death in a sacrificial fire (*yadnya*) ordered by King Janamejaya to avenge the death of his father, killed by the serpent Taksaka.

The *Jaratkaru* story became something of a favourite for Mangku Mura. In addition to the initial version he produced after receiving the museum catalogue

in 1979, there are several other *Jaratkaru* paintings in circulation.⁸ One was made for the home of the late artist and is displayed during rites of passage (*manusa yadnya*), including the first birthday ceremony (*oton*) for the late artist's great-granddaughter pictured here (Figure 8). Officially held when a child is 210 days old (six Balinese months), the child ceremonially touches the ground for the first time and has her head shaved clean to remove the impurities of birth.⁹ The same offering platform was decorated with an *ider-ider* of the *Bima Swarga* story, mentioned above. In this setting the two narratives, with their shared iconography and narrative elements, complemented each other. Both had a direct bearing on the ceremony as the narratives make explicit reference to the responsibilities of children to their ancestors.



Figure 8. The *Jaratkaru* painting on the temple shrine in the family compound of Mangku Mura, Kamasan, 2011

Photo: Siobhan Campbell

⁸ One version, in a private collection in the United States is illustrated in T.M. Hunter (1988). Another version belonged to the collector Leo Haks and was sold through a Singapore auction house in 2011 (Borobodur Fine Art 2011).

⁹ At birth a child is considered a reincarnation of a purified ancestor and may not touch the ground or enter any temples until a ceremony is held to welcome the soul into the body. The first birthday ceremony (*oton*) cleans the impurities received at birth, partly from contact between the head and the genitalia of the mother on exiting the womb (Eisemen 1990: 84–95).

Conclusion

The replication of the narrative tells us something of Balinese conventions regarding originality. By creating several new paintings from an old one, Mangku Mura demonstrated that artists maintain inventories of narrative and rework them time and time again, subjecting each version to individual variation. That is, each time a painting is produced, components of the story are reordered and rendered anew. Artists actively distinguish between the works of different artists; they single out personal embellishments and recognise the individual traits of particular artists. In one sense the art is conventional because artists work according to certain parameters and adhere to strict proscriptions in terms of iconography. They each interpret these stylistic boundaries in different ways, however, introducing innovations while maintaining that they belong to an unchanging tradition of great antiquity.

Mangku Mura's identification of the narrative painting of *Jaratkaru* serves as an example of the transformations prompted by Forge's collecting project. A momentarily forgotten narrative was reinstated and went on to function in multiple contexts: within Balinese ceremony and alongside other Balinese fine art in a Singapore auction house (see Borobodur Fine Art 2011). Mangku Mura's response to the *Jaratkaru* painting tells us that Kamasan art moves in and out of categories. It cannot be categorically described as entirely religious, fine art or tourist art, as many observers are wont to do. Rather, paintings communicate on different levels. When the *Jaratkaru* is part of a life cycle ceremony in a Balinese compound, it is linked to a set of ritual behaviours that contextualise it in terms of local meanings. As Howard Morphy (1992: 101) reminds us, paintings also 'have a meaning quite independent of their use in a particular ceremonial context'. Paintings can be 'specific' to a certain context and 'of more general significance' at the same time.

Many of the recollections related above refer to Forge's activities in Kamasan in the context of paintings becoming commodified objects. In these contexts paintings circulate in settings and in a manner that 'might well be regarded as deeply inappropriate in other contexts' (Appadurai 1986: 15). Engagement with collections in a contemporary context thus has a significance that goes beyond making assertions about indigenous agency within the collection. In this instance engagement with the creator community highlighted collecting in terms of exchange relations and the economic values it presented. While these responses have implications for more general understandings of the commodification of Balinese art, there is little doubt that Forge's written analysis of the village was secondary to his symbolic role as a patron and collector of art.

Beyond amusing recollections of the foreigner in their midst, the ways that people in Kamasan talked about and related to the Forge Collection suggest the potential for ongoing reassessment of the museum collection. The various anecdotes are just as much a comment on present interests and priorities as they are about earlier engagements with Forge and his collecting project.

Gathering new perspectives on the collection reaffirms the sense that museum professionals and academics are not the sole authorities with respect to the knowledge contained in collections. The key message here is that collections are not ahistorical; museums can look to collected objects to track changes in communities over time. In doing so, museums embracing the spirit of community engagement are now challenged to reflect these changes in the museum collection.

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Current calls for papers and announcements

The *craft + design enquiry* blog site

Further information about *craft + design enquiry* is available online on the *c+de* blog at craftdesignenquiry.blogspot.com.au

Next issue — *c+de*#7 (2015)

The next issue of *craft + design enquiry* #7 (2015) is 'Landscape, Place and Identity in Craft and Design', edited by Kay Lawrence. The call for papers is now closed. This issue is due for publication in mid-2015.

Call for theme proposals for future issues of *craft + design enquiry*

c+de is calling for proposals from readers for themes for future issues of the journal. Proposals should be submitted in writing to the *c+de* Editorial Board including why the theme would be of interest to the craft and design sector (two page maximum). These submissions may also include suggestions for an editor/s with expertise that is relevant to the proposed theme. For further information contact jenny.deves@anu.edu.au

Call for papers for *c+de*#8 (2016) 'Global Parallels: Production and Craft in Fashion and Industrial Design Industries'

The *c+de* Editorial Board welcomes Tiziana Ferrero-Regis, Rafael Gomez and Kathleen Horton, from Queensland University of Technology, as the Guest Editors of *c+de*#8 with the theme of 'Global Parallels: Production and Craft in Fashion and Industrial Design Industries'.

Contributors to *c+de*#8 are invited to submit Expressions of Interest for either the Themed Section or the Open Section by following the *Steps to Submitting a Paper* outlined below. Expressions of Interest close on 30 April 2015. For contributors invited to submit papers, the deadline for full papers is 30 June 2015. *c+de*#8 will be published in mid-2016.

Open Section — call for papers

The Guest Editors and the *c+de* Editorial Board invite submissions to the Open Section exploring any aspect of contemporary craft and design. Expressions of Interest for the Open Section are assessed by the *c+de* Editorial Board. All invited submissions to the Open Section are peer reviewed and selected for publication in line with *c+de* procedures for the Themed Section.

Contributors to the Open Section of *c+de*#8 should follow the *Steps to Submitting a Paper* outlined below. Expressions of Interest close on 30 April 2015. For contributors invited to submit papers, the deadline for full papers is 30 June 2015.

Themed Section — call for papers

‘Global Parallels: Production and Craft in Fashion and Industrial Design Industries’

Guest Edited by Tiziana Ferrero-Regis , Rafael Gomez and Kathleen Horton of Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane. They write:

This special issue *c+de* aims to explore questions of design and craft across fashion and industrial design industries in the current global context. In light of de-localisation of manufacturing practices and increasingly complex supply chains, the alternating place and meaning of ‘skills and craft’ in the context of these vast global industries, and the transformational role and status of the designer in a market that is equally flooded with fast fashion and disposable ‘on trend’ lifestyle products, we seek to examine how the two worlds of fashion and industrial design intersect in terms of production, craft and design.

The geographical distribution of manufacturing in the fashion industry and in industrial design has changed radically in the past 25 years, with much of the production and jobs shifting to low-income countries. The globalisation of production has generated long supply chains of many mediators that are employed neither to solve problems nor invent new styles. In the fashion industry, mediators ‘translate’ pre-existing trends into products at a pre-identified price point and for a specific market. In this respect the term fashion designer is something of an anachronism. Typically, in both fashion and industrial design, the notion of design is bound to the creative celebrity designer (think Karl Lagerfeld or Steve Jobs) who is synonymous with brand or corporate identity. In both industries, however, teams of ‘invisible’ design mediators, whose roles and responsibilities are defined largely through market and industrial imperatives, are scattered across the supply chain and the globe.



Figure 1. *The Wasteland* collection by Maison Briz Vegas, Paris 2011, top and shorts made from recycled T-shirt fabric, with original hand-block prints

Photo: Carla van Lunn



Figure 1. Ellaspede Design Studios 2012, design process, sketching and conceptualisation

Photo: Tammy Law Photography, courtesy of Ellaspede

Design mediator, or product developer, is a rather less romantic term than designer, but one that has far more industry cachet. Industrial changes in both fashion and industrial design have shaped and re-oriented conceptual definitions of 'design', and introduced the product developer. Thus we argue that the currency of this term is vital in understanding not only the nature of contemporary fashion and industrial design practice, but also the status, profession and evolution of 'design' as it is applied across both fields.

We would also like to explore the rise of independent design practices that have purposefully engaged with a reinvigorated idea of craft and local production in response to globalised design production. In these models, design and manufacture is often reconnected via an engagement with craft practices. Therefore, while design and craft have often been posed as oppositional forces (one representing industrialisation, planning and management, and the other standing for the handmade, the material and the authentic), both the fields of fashion and industrial design are witnessing innovative new models of practice linking artisanal values with post-industrial design processes, thus instigating the rise of a new-age designer, one which indeed embraces a more holistic approach.

This issue of *c+de* invites contributions in the following areas:

- re-orientation of the definition of 'design' in fashion and industrial design
- the emergence of the 'product developer' and ambiguities between design and product development
- the spectrum of possibilities afforded by craft production
- the creative process and diffusion of creativity along the supply chain
- design and innovation in local manufacturing
- design and/or product development in the future.

Dr Tiziana Ferrero-Regis is senior lecturer in fashion history and theory, School of Design, QUT. She has a professional background in advertising and fashion and has published in several journals on a range of topics that include memory and history in cultural representations (*Recent Italian Cinema: Spaces, Contexts, Experiences* 2009), the politics of fashion, the role of the designer, and fashion and film. From her visits to communities of women workers in the textile and clothing industry in India in the mid-1980s, she has developed a research focus on the division of international labour and sustainability.

Dr Rafael Gomez is an industrial designer and design researcher. He is a lecturer in industrial design, School of Design at QUT, and has practiced for over a decade in industrial design, graphic design, branding, high-end visualisation and projection graphics for small, medium and large enterprises. As a founding member of the Design and Emotion Australia Chapter, his research focus is the converging of design, emotions and experiences with health and medical devices in everyday life. He has written extensively on design and emotional experience with portable

interactive devices and automotive design and continues to forge national and international collaborations with a view to establish research strength in the Asia-Pacific region.

Kath Horton is head of fashion in the School of Design at QUT. Her research and teaching focuses on the aesthetics and politics of fashion across both historical and contemporary contexts. In 2010 Kath founded the stitchery collective, a platform for collaborative fashion design projects. Through both her theoretical and practice-based projects Kath explores the possibilities for alternative forms of engagement with fashion in the 21st century.

Steps to submitting a paper for *c+de#8*

Step 1

Themed Section: Expressions of Interest (one A4 page) are invited to be submitted before 30 April 2015 to jenny.deves@anu.edu.au. The Guest Editors will review abstracts and respond promptly to contributors.

Open Section: Expressions of Interest (one A4 page) are invited to be submitted before 30 April 2015 to jenny.deves@anu.edu.au. The Editorial Board will review abstracts and respond promptly to contributors.

Step 2

If invited to submit a paper, contributors to both the Themed Section and the Open Section, are required to complete and submit their final papers by 30 June 2015 to jenny.deves@anu.edu.au. Submitted papers must meet the style requirements outlined in the *c+de* Author Guidelines and be accompanied by a *c+de#8* Lodgement Registration Form (copies available from jenny.deves@anu.edu.au or the *c+de* blog craftdesignenquiry.blogspot.com.au).

About craft + design enquiry

Focus and scope

craft + design enquiry is an open access, peer-reviewed, online journal promoting and disseminating the research excellence generated by and about the craft and design sector. *c+de* investigates the contribution that contemporary craft and design makes to society, establishing a dialogue between craft and design practice and cultural, social and environmental concerns. It interrogates and expands the international recognition of Australian craft and design.

c+de welcomes submissions from across the field of craft and design including artists and practitioners, curators, historians, art and cultural theorists, educationalists, museum professionals, philosophers, scientists and any others with a stake in the future developments of craft and design. Issues of *c+de* are published annually.

c+de is published by ANU Press. Specialist guest editors are appointed to each issue. Calls for papers are announced annually. Each issue of the journal will contain both a Themed Section and an Open Section (for papers on any aspect of craft and design research). Submitted papers to both sections are peer reviewed and selected papers are published in *c+de*.

Peer review process

c+de is a peer-reviewed journal. The *c+de* Editorial Advisory Panel, composed of internationally recognised experts and academics, provides reviews in the fields of their expertise. Each paper is reviewed by at least two peers. The double-blind review process preserves the anonymity of contributors and peer-reviewers. Reviewers may request changes to papers.

Contributors are asked to ensure that their identities are not revealed within their paper and that the paper is not submitted to other publications during the review process with *c+de*. If favourably reviewed, and at the discretion of the *c+de* Editorial Board, the paper will be published in *c+de* journal.

Open access policy

This journal provides immediate online, open access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge.

Publishing house

c+de is published by ANU Press, which produces fully peer-reviewed research publications and is recognised by DIISRTE as a commercial publisher, enabling ANU Press authors to gain full recognition under the Higher Education Research Data Collection scheme.

The primary focus of ANU Press is the electronic production of scholarly works. All works are also available for purchase through a Print on Demand (PoD) service.

History

Established as an initiative of the Craft Australia Research Centre, *c+de* was developed in 2008 by Craft Australia and The Australian National University (ANU) personnel and first published by Craft Australia in 2009. In 2012 *c+de* relocated to ANU, where it is hosted by ANU School of Art and published by ANU Press.

***craft + design enquiry* personnel**

Editorial Board

The members of the *c+de* Editorial Board are drawn from ANU, other tertiary institutions, and the network organisations of the Australian Craft and Design Centres (ACDC). This membership covers a broad range of expertise in training and professional practice in craft and design.

The Editorial Board is responsible for defining the policy and objectives of *c+de*, for determining themes, appointing guest editors and overseeing the management of the journal. The current membership of the Editorial Board is:

Anne Brennan, School of Art, The Australian National University

Louise Hamby, Research School of Humanities and the Arts, The Australian National University

Patsy Hely, School of Art, The Australian National University

Peter McNeil, University of Technology Sydney

Kevin Murray, Melbourne University, RMIT University

Avi Amesbury, Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre

Suzie Attiwill, RMIT University

Jenny Deves, Managing Editor — *ex-officio*

Guest editors

Each issue of *c+de* features a Themed Section that is overseen by a specialist guest editor appointed by the Editorial Board. Guest editors to date:

Amanda Ravetz, Editor, *Migratory Practices in Craft and Design*, issue 1, 2009

Louise Hamby, Editor, *Cross Cultural Exchanges in Craft and Design*, issue 2, 2010

Kevin Murray, Editor, *Sustainability in Craft and Design*, issue 3, 2011

Peter McNeil, Co-editor, *Relational Craft and Design*, issue 4, 2012

Rosemary Hawker, Co-editor, *Relational Craft and Design*, issue 4, 2012

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Anne Brennan, Co-editor, *Craft • Material • Memory*, issue 6, 2014

Patsy Hely, Co-editor, *Craft • Material • Memory*, issue 6, 2014

Kay Lawrence, Editor, *Landscape, Place and Identity in Craft and Design*, issue 7, 2015

Tiziana Ferrero-Regis, Co-editor, 'Global Parallels: Production and Craft in Fashion and Industrial Design Industries', issue 8, 2016

Rafael Gomez, Co-editor, 'Global Parallels: Production and Craft in Fashion and Industrial Design Industries', issue 8, 2016

Kathleen Horton, Co-editor, 'Global Parallels: Production and Craft in Fashion and Industrial Design Industries', issue 8, 2016

Editorial Advisory Panel

The Editorial Advisory Panel provides advice to the Guest Editors of each issue and to the Editorial Board through provision of reviewing services. *c+de* relies on the specialist expertise represented by the Editorial Advisory Panel. The Editorial Advisory Panel, building with each new issue, currently includes:

Lindy Allen, Museum Victoria, Australia

Keith Armstrong, Queensland University of Technology, Australia

Suzie Attiwill, RMIT University, Australia

Anne Brennan, The Australian National University

Patricia Brown, Kingston University, United Kingdom

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c+de works with the member organisations of the Australian Craft and Design Centres (ACDC) network, a group of peak organisations from all states and territories in Australia representing the professional craft and design sector and, with NAVA (the National Association for the Visual Arts), a peak body for the visual arts, in communicating with the professional craft and design sector across Australia. The ACDC network organisations and NAVA engage with the sector at a local, national and international level offering services and programs supporting sustainable practice. They are:

Artisan (Brisbane Qld) www.artisan.org.au

Australian Tapestry Workshop (Melbourne Vic) www.austapestry.com.au

Canberra Glassworks (ACT) www.canberraglassworks.com

Craft ACT: Canberra Craft and Design Centre (ACT) www.craftact.org.au

Craft (Melbourne Vic) www.craft.org.au

Guildhouse (Adelaide SA) www.guildhouse.org.au

Design Centre Tasmania (Launceston) www.designcentre.com.au

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Form (Perth WA) www.form.net.au

JamFactory: Contemporary Craft and Design (Adelaide SA) www.jamfactory.com.au

Object: Australian Centre for Craft and Design (Sydney NSW) www.object.com.au

Sturt Contemporary Australian Craft (Mittagong NSW) www.sturt.nsw.edu.au

Territory Craft (Darwin NT) www.territorycraft.org.au

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NAVA, the National Association for the Visual Arts www.visualarts.net.au

ACUADS network

c+de works with ACUADS , the Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools, in communicating with the tertiary sector across Australia.

ACUADS, the Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools www.acuads.com.au.