



## **The Crafts Council Collection: Behind the Scenes**

The Crafts Council Collection is managed by the Exhibitions and Collection Team which forms part of the Programmes Department headed by Claire West, Director of Programmes and this team sits alongside Maker Development, Participation and Learning and Market Development/ Events.

Annabelle Campbell, Exhibitions and Collection Manager, is responsible for the Collection and has worked at the Crafts Council for over 5 years and has a background in both curatorial practice and academia, with most recent experience at the Geffrye Museum and at Kingston University.

She is supported by two new appointments: Renee Pfister, Collection Management Officer, who has vast experience of collection management and loan services having worked at Tate, British Museum and most recently with Sir Anthony Caro; and Verity Clarkson, Collection Research Officer, who has lately completed a joint supported PHD (Brighton and RCA) and lectures on Dress History at Brighton University.

Annabelle also heads up the Exhibitions function of our work, supported by two Exhibition Officers who develop and co-ordinate a wide range of exhibitions, partnerships and programmes: Sarah Turner, who is specifically charged with online exhibition development seeking links to the Collection and Charlotte Dew, who has key responsibility for all aspects of our highly acclaimed touring programme. We are fortunate to be working with Paul Reynolds as an RCA/ INSPIRE Fellow.

Recommendations for acquisitions to the Crafts Council Collection are submitted via an external Advisory Panel, members selected for their diverse experience, geographical location, subject/ discipline knowledge. These Advisors have a two-year tenure. The recommendations are viewed by an internal Selection Panel comprising senior Crafts Council colleagues and Trustees on a quarterly basis. Whilst funds remain tight, the consideration as to what to purchase is more and more challenging, however, those works we are able to acquire are merited on their quality, timelessness, story they tell and how they can be best used to showcase, educate and profile the best in contemporary craft.

Exciting prospects for the Collection include enhanced digital presence through a new CMS system, online projects and exhibitions; development of new acquisition strands and exhibition programmes; enhanced research, archives and documentation.

## **On Collecting: The Value of Public Collections**

As well as serving to record the past, define the present and educate for the future, collections present the material evidence of creativity; they inspire, enthrall and enlighten.

## **Continued**

Public collections are catalysts for creativity: access to the real object in a collection can offer new experiences for all. They can promote dialogue, debate and questioning, as well as underpin learning, creativity and cultural awareness for everyone, helping to make sense of the world around. Public collections are an invaluable resource for research and scholarship.

Alongside the pedagogic, inspirational and archival value of contemporary collections, the fiscal and economic value should not be underestimated.

Permanent collections of contemporary work are central to the public sector's direct support and patronage of artists and makers and contribution to the cultural market. They also enable individuals as private collectors to make informed choices about their own purchases. Whereas in the 19th century public collections evolved through the gifts and bequests of wealthy private collectors, it is now often public collections, which inform and stimulate private collecting.

## **The Crafts Council Collection: A Contemporary Craft Collection**

The Crafts Council was founded in 1971 and incorporated under Royal Charter 10 years later. The Collection forms an integral part of our function- to showcase, promote and celebrate contemporary craft. The Crafts Council Collection is an active working collection and provides a range of loan opportunities for UK museums and galleries and works are represented in a range of exhibitions both online and physical.

For over 40 years the Crafts Council Collection has, and continues to identify, acquire, document and make accessible the best and most interesting examples of contemporary craft.

The Collection comprises 1400 + objects and reflects a national overview. The primary craft disciplines are represented as well as the unexpected such as video, plastics and light, and works that embrace digital innovation. Alongside established names, we ensure that work by emerging makers is acquired. Traditional and functional objects, as well as experimental work that pushes the notion of craft to its limits, are represented – the linking factors being quality of making and inherent understanding of materials that the makers demonstrate.

Work is acquired chronologically, purchased within 5 years of making, providing a unique snapshot of contemporary craft practice for any one year. Our acquisition policy stems from our drive to encourage critical debate within the craft sector - to challenge and provoke views of what contemporary craft is, could be and should be.