

**Craft Matters Speech Notes**  
House of Lords terrace, Tuesday 9 March 2010  
Afternoon Tea 3.30-5pm.

**Speakers:**

- Professor the Baroness Young of Hornsey, OBE
- Joanna Foster, CBE, Chair, Crafts Council
- Rosy Greenlees, Executive Director, Crafts Council

**PROFESSOR THE BARONESS YOUNG OF HORNSEY, OBE**



Thanks you all so much for coming.

This event is a celebration of Craft and an affirmation that it matters - to everyone in this room and to the 6000 who have, so far, signed up to the Crafts Council's Craft Matters initiative even before this full public launch.

Craft Matters enormously to me, mostly demonstrated through my passion for jewellery.

And it matters to some of the people who have signed up for all sorts of reasons: here are two quotes that particularly struck me:

*Creating something from raw materials in one of the most basic of human instincts and one of the most important. It allows us to connect both with our environment & other people. Jacqueline Calladine*

*As the initiator and Director of UNESCO's programme for craft development in the world from 1988 to 2008, I have witnessed across the continents how much crafts constitute the wealth of the poorest and a unique resource for cultural and socio-economic development. I am convinced that in this era of globalization, crafts is the most visible and concrete way to discover, understand and appreciate the diversity of cultures. Mr Indrasen Vencatachellum, Paris*

I'd now like to hand over to Joanna Foster, Chair of the Crafts Council to tell us more about why craft matters.

## **JOANNA FOSTER, CBE, CHAIR, CRAFTS COUNCIL**



Craft Matters to me in so many ways, both personal and professional. I've chosen this quote from the signatories to Craft Matters so far:

*Things that are made by hand with skill and love, and made to last, matter to me in a world increasingly littered with mass-produced throw-away stuff. Ama Bolton*

But why should it matter to everyone else?

It matters because:

- In the UK, we have 35,000 professional contemporary craft makers producing a combined turnover of over £1 billion each year – and they are part of a wider sector that includes over 88,000 people employed in craft professions contributing nearly £3 billion GVA to the UK economy.

- Looking just at our own Crafts Council events, 30,000 visitors to Origin 2008 and Collect 2009 spent over £3 million on contemporary craft

- There is a demonstrable hunger to see, learn about and experience craft by people who are neither professional makers or experienced collectors:

11% of the UK population visited a craft exhibition in 2008/09

17% of participated in a craft activity in the same year.

over 250,000 people visit the Crafts Council's own website every year for information

It matters because it is an important part of the Creative Industries – one where creativity and innovation flourish, where the combination of mind, hand and eye results in objects being made, sold and used – whether that use is practical or to give pure pleasure.

It matters because this creativity and innovation also feeds other Creative Industries from fashion to architecture to films to gaming.

It matters because we are currently acknowledged as world leaders in the field.

Craft is a feisty, independent-minded, sparky, polished gem. It often (but not always) resists scale in an economy which often seems focussed on little else. It demands the maker's time and skill and, in turn, commands a price based on that time and skill – and it repays that price through the pleasure of the objects themselves and the knowledge of the time and skill that has produced them. In terms of value, it is true ethical production.

Contemporary craft sits on the borderline of culture and industry – some might say uncomfortably but also to its advantage. It reaches back to traditional processes and embraces new ones. It uses materials that it has used for centuries, and engages with the new. It embraces digital developments as tools and, increasingly, in craft practice itself.

But most of all, it matters because of the people – the professional makers who lie at the heart of craft, the public who enjoy making, seeing, buying and learning about it, the future generations who will make continue to make it their own.

**ROSY GREENLEES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CRAFTS COUNCIL**



And Craft Matters to me because of the objects themselves – in particular three objects that I possess express my love of craft

- the first is a pot by Svend Bayer which I bought when I visited his studio in my twenties. The texture, colour and the weight of the pot all express what is wood fired stoneware – it is functional and beautiful
- the second was a present for a 'significant birthday' in 1996 Michael Marriott set of drawers made from sardine cans – quirky, funny, inventive – but prescient in using recycling materials
- more recently - this pin by Hans Stofer – intellectually engaging, questioning what objects are and how they are used

This selection may be questioned as to whether it is craft – but for me these objects make me think, are precious to me, hold meaning and represent the spectrum of what is craft today. I firmly believe in a comment on Craft Matters that states:

*I am a maker - soon to graduate - and I want there to be a future out there for me and others like me. Emily Gardiner*

And in a very personal comment that illustrates the effect craft can have on people's lives:

*Since being forcibly retired through ill health it had been my lifeline. No matter what problems there are I can retreat into my craft and everything is fine again. Roberta Orchard*

And as the Editor of Crafts Magazine says "craft is having a moment". It's everywhere:

- On television in the heritage processes of Mastercrafts;
- on radio through the implicit making of the works featured in Neil McGregor's brilliant History of the World in 100 Objects through to The Archers - young Pip Archer's unsuitable boyfriend flirted with ceramics long before he flirted with Pip.
- And I'm sure any "Archers Addicts" would agree that there is a storyline just crying out to be done about Pat and Tony's new willow-beds

But I digress... Elsewhere there is the nomination of the Leach Pottery amongst a strong list for the Art Fund Prize and the maker designed ranges in stores from Habitat to Fortnum's – not to mention Ron Arad's wonderfully well-crafted work at the Barbican.

A disparate list and I could go on but suffice to say: craft is part of the here and now.

And if we – and the people who have signed up and continue to sign up to Craft Matters – have their way, it will be a significant part of the future too.

But while there is much to celebrate, there is also much that can be done to Make Craft Count even more.

So, if I am allowed to have a dream for craft in the future, it might look like this.....

- Craft would again be well-represented in schools. Every child has the right to properly engage with making and to discover – and develop - their haptic sense – as well as their optic and aural senses.
- Contemporary craft would be understood as the viable career choice that professional makers know it to be.
  - Routes into craft as a career would be diverse, readily available and clearly understood by pupils, students, teachers, parents and career advisers.
  - Craft courses at HE level would be recognised for their economic, social and indeed academic contribution
  - Portfolio careers would be valued for the flexibility and resourcefulness that they encourage.
- The full spectrum of craft practice from heritage craft to studio-based contemporary practice to the furthest flights of academic research would be recognised.
- Public understanding and interest in craft would have produced a very robust market – one on which we will all thrive

And – our Craft Council mantra – that everyone in the UK would have the chance to make, see, collect and learn about craft would go without saying!

There are many organisations here in the room today who are working to make this vision a reality, from the Devon Guild of Craftsmen to the National Glass Centre, Dazzle and Craftspace.

At the Crafts Council we are collaborating with partners across the country to make possible:

- Schemes to improve knowledge of craft as a career, and then the CPD support needed throughout a maker's career
- Exciting and innovative exhibitions and the research and development required to bring them together
- Origin and Collect, which continue to develop and evolve as the core of our UK market development work – and we welcome the growth of other high-quality opportunities around the UK, joining them in recent years
- Our research programme, undertaking and disseminating evidence to underpin the tenets that the sector believes to be true.
- New schemes to support and encourage craft teaching in schools, already positively mentioned by Ofsted in the assessment of a pilot school.
- And, if I may again digress for a moment, I cannot let this opportunity pass without announcing our delight that, thanks to a very generous grant from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, we will be able to kick-start a new national schools programme, Firing Up, later in the Spring.
- Working with a number of national and regional organisations Firing Up will help to reinvigorate the teaching of craft in schools through work with clay and the reintroduction of the use of kilns. We will announce more details in a few weeks, but for now our sincere thanks to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for making this part of our vision into a reality

And what can you do? Plenty – depending where you fall on our Make – See – Collect – Learn continuum.

But for this afternoon, the most important thing that you can do is join with the thousands of people who have already signed up to say why Craft Matters to them. Tell the world why craft matters to you. See why it matters to others.