

Making Value:
craft & the economic
and social contribution
of makers

Executive summary

Mary Schwarz and Dr Karen Yair

Welcome

Making Value is one of the most significant pieces of research undertaken by the Crafts Council in the past decade. It sites craft squarely within the creative knowledge economy and provides fresh, vibrant evidence of the entrepreneurship, energy and integrity that makers bring to their work. It shows us the challenges makers face in making the most of the new opportunities they are opening up across the creative spectrum. And it gives us the message – loud and clear – that craft has a unique role to play in a changing economy and society.

The research comes at a crucial time. The past 15 years have been incredibly productive for the UK's creativity and innovation, and craft has been a part of that success. The craft sector now makes a £3 billion contribution to the UK economy, and represents 13% of those employed in the UK's

creative industries. The total market buying original craft is 11.3 million people, far bigger than that for fine art. The value of sales of original craft doubled between 1994 and 2004. And however the world has changed, we believe that craft has a substantial part to play in the future.

Making Value helps us to show the great contribution of makers in many different contexts and in sometimes unexpected ways. While many craft businesses are small-scale, they display great creativity, innovation and resilience. *Making Value* helps us to make the case for craft with authority and conviction, through the working lives of makers themselves.

Joanna Foster CBE, Chair, Crafts Council
Rosy Greenlees, Executive Director, Crafts Council

Preface

The Crafts Council's ambitious research programme is designed to inform our advocacy work, support the development of progressive craft policies and programmes, and equip makers and other craft professionals with robust sector intelligence.

When Mary Schwarz and I embarked on the *Making Value* project in January 2010, it was from this starting-point, and with the objective of identifying the distinctive contribution of craft knowledges and craft thinking to makers' work across industry sectors and community and education settings.

Our work would have been impossible without the generous support of the makers we interviewed, each of whom has given time and energy to the

project over a period of several months. Mary and I would like to extend our warmest thanks for each maker's contribution, and also to thank the Crafts Council colleagues who have supported us in writing this report.

Making Value raises questions and challenges for the way in which craft is supported by Government, to fulfil the potential it identifies in a time of economic, social and political change. I look forward to the debate and dialogue in coming months.

Dr Karen Yair
Research and Information Manager
The Crafts Council



1 + 2
 Non-Luer, medical connection system, Professor Paul Chamberlain with Dr Rebecca Lawton, Dr Peter Gardner and Dr Phillip Bickford Smith, 2007
 Photos: Paul Chamberlain, 2007

The ability to understand how people engage with the material world is an aspect of crafts knowledge which has found life-saving application in product design. The Non-Luer medical connection system has been designed to reduce the potentially fatal risk of drug delivery

tube mis-connection, by allowing tubes hidden from view to be distinguished from each other and connected by touch. Its designer, Professor Paul Chamberlain, describes how his approach mirrors the craft of furniture making he has also practised, in its testing and modelling of different solutions in response to users' reactions. The Non-Luer system concept is currently undergoing patenting.



3
 Pupils working with Jon Williams on a Beaufort School/Creative Partnerships/Craftspace project with Anand Chhabra and Harmeet Chagger, Birmingham, 2006

When he is not contracted to run workshops with disadvantaged young people in schools and children's centres, Jon runs leisure courses and corporate away-days from his Herefordshire studio.



Pupils at Beaufort School for children with special educational needs, work here in clay with Jon Williams on a Creative Partnerships/Craftspace project. Jon encourages the children to explore the sensory qualities of clay in any way they wish, endorsing what they do and setting up ways for them to take it further, raising self-esteem and encouraging creativity in the process.

Executive summary

Research background

Making Value: craft & the economic and social contribution of makers is a qualitative research study commissioned by the Crafts Council to explore the characteristics of portfolio working makers and appraise their contributions to a range of industry sectors and community and education settings.

Portfolio working is prevalent in the contemporary craft sector: other quantitative studies show 65 – 70% of makers creating their careers in this way. *Making Value* is the first ever focused investigation of the nature and impact of these makers who are working ‘beyond the making, exhibition and sale of a craft object’.

Of the portfolio working makers we interviewed, over three quarters work in other industry sectors; over half in community contexts; and just over a third work in education settings. And nearly a third of them are making across at least two of these three areas. We have found makers engaging in a far greater range of places, and with more different types of people, than has previously been realised or recorded.

From fashion to film, hospitals to heritage, manufacturing to mental health projects and from retailing to residential courses, these makers are highly motivated in applying their practice to make a difference. Their stories provide a rich and nuanced picture. Setting these within the context of our literature review, we have been able to identify and analyse the distinctive qualities of craft knowledges and craft thinking that makers apply in this work with others.

Portfolio working makers: the picture

Makers with a portfolio practice take on multiple roles, consciously presenting themselves in different ways for different audiences, markets and areas of work. They have a deep sense of integrity about their creative identity and distinctiveness, which informs where, with whom and in what ways they choose to work. Moving with agility between different projects, they find creative impetus in their engagement in other sectors and settings. They are excited by how different elements of their portfolio practice creatively feed off each other and do not always see a distinction between ‘own work’ and ‘other work’. Makers are keen to collaborate and always actively looking for learning. They

demonstrate resourcefulness and resilience, using entrepreneurial strategies to sustain a successful portfolio practice.

Makers work in the wider creative and cultural industry sectors, and beyond. They have developed their craft knowledges and craft thinking into valuable consultancy services. They apply their understanding of the emotive qualities of materials to design which enhances narrative and characterisation in film, television, the performing arts and digital media. They contribute to economic growth in sectors such as manufacturing, driving innovation in products and processes through their materials knowledge. Their particular understanding of how people relate to material qualities and objects, in both a functional and emotional sense, informs distinctive contributions in fields as diverse as healthcare and cultural tourism.

Makers are engaged in community based projects in a wide variety of settings, facilitating people to work from their interests, concerns and existing skills to find new ways of expressing themselves. Unlike any other creative practice, craft participation uniquely offers people the opportunity to work with materials, make objects with meaning and permanence, while engaging in conversations that build individual worth and community value. In terms of craft and the social contribution of makers, the practice and the people give material voice to those who are often ‘hard to hear’. Through making, participants attain a sense of achievement and ownership; experience the enjoyment of the immediacy and concreteness of materials; and build confidence, self esteem and a sense of value.

Makers working in education settings take a focused, individual pupil centred approach, creating an environment in which pupils can follow their fascinations with materials and gain confidence through the achievement of making something. This increases pupils’ sense of autonomy and control, which can have positive impacts on their personal and academic development. Pupils learn specific craft skills, become more aware of the origination and characteristics of materials and also develop more general, transferable skills such as coping with problems and finding that ‘things don’t always go right’, but that they can learn from this. Makers are able to work with more freedom than is often allowed to teachers, in turn giving the pupils more freedom, enabling them to follow different making paths to express themselves as they need and want.

Craft & the economic and social contribution of makers: main findings

Making a portfolio practice

Makers:

- Find their work in other sectors and settings particularly significant for the creative impetus it provides, with different elements of their portfolio practice creatively feeding off each other, to the extent there is not always a distinction between 'own work' and 'other work'.
- Express strong motivations in terms of making a contribution through the application of their practice 'beyond making for exhibition or sale', whether this is in other industry sectors or community and education settings, or indeed both.
- Take on multiple roles, with a considered and outward facing approach to presenting themselves in different ways for different audiences, markets and areas of work.
- Show resourcefulness and resilience, using entrepreneurial strategies for managing a successful portfolio practice.
- Evidence a deep sense of integrity in relation to their creative identity which informs where, with whom and in what ways they choose to work.
- Determine their varying patterns of work across a year and over years, informed by their choices regarding work and professional development.
- Experience challenges similar to other portfolio workers in the creative sector and beyond, in respect of the demands of finding work, dealing with uncertainties and financial instability, and finding a balance when juggling different activities.
- Move often from their initial education and training into other practices, working in cross- and multi-disciplinary ways, challenging the adequacy of some of our current terms for describing work.

Making value in industry sectors

Makers:

- Work in cultural and creative industry sectors including architecture and interior design, retail and advertising, film and television, performing and visual arts, cultural heritage and fashion; as well as in manufacturing, leisure, events and tourism.
- Contribute directly to economic growth and innovation, within and beyond the creative industries by producing:
 - New, patentable materials innovations and manufacturing processes
 - Provision of enhanced visitor experiences in tourism destinations, with substantial impact on local economies
 - New and successful product innovations featuring strong person-centred orientation that improves quality of life
 - Enhanced narrative and characterisation in film and television and digital environments.
- Apply their craft knowledges and craft thinking to make an economic contribution by bringing:
 - Materials knowledge: an in-depth, tacit knowledge of the material world and specific material qualities
 - Reflective dialogue: exploring materials and processes and reflecting on what they find, stretching existing possibilities to create new innovations
 - Understanding of people and objects: an intimate understanding of how people relate to material qualities and objects, both emotionally and in a functional sense
 - Passion for materials and the material world: makers' love of materials and material exploration drives their work.
- Engage with clients in ways which site their work clearly within the creative knowledge economy, not simply providing clients with artefacts, but also applying their specialist skills, knowledges and ways of thinking into uniquely valuable consultancy services.



1
Still from *Skellig*,
Annabelle Jankel 2009,
with fabric by Arantza
Vilas and costume design
by Phoebe de Gaye, 2008
Photo:
Phoebe de Gaye, 2008

2
Souvenirs Entomologiques,
Arantza Vilas, 2007
Photo: Michele Panzeri
www.panzeri.co.uk

An understanding of the emotive qualities of materials can enhance narrative and characterisation, both in creative and digital media and in the performing arts. Arantza Vilas' interest in ageing and transformation is shown here in her exhibition piece *Souvenir Entomologiques*, and in her work on the television drama *Skellig* (Annabelle Jankel/Feel Films 2009), where the 'papery' quality of her custom-made fabric was used to convey the *Skellig* character's emergence and transformation.



3
Graffiti*d installation at
the British Ceramics Biennial,
Stoke-on-Trent, Cj O'Neill with
Unity and Nicholas Roach, 2009
Photo: Lloyd Reis, 2009

Young people deemed Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) work here with Cj O'Neill and Nicholas Roach from Unity, creating an installation in ceramic and graffiti as part of the 2009 British Ceramics Biennale in Stoke-on-Trent. Cj's work focused on encouraging the young people to overcome fears of making mistakes, and on creating

something concrete which they were proud to own and see profiled in the media. Working in ceramics also offered some kind of redefinition of positive opportunity, within an industry with negative connotations for young people in Stoke.

1



1
Angharad October, Melanie Tomlinson, 2008
Photo: Bogdan Tanea, 2008

2
Tin Flowers: workshop participants' work with Melanie Tomlinson during Routes to New Roots 2009, Craftspace, and the Community Integration Partnership working together to develop a sustainable craft social enterprise
Photo: Ming de Nasty, 2009

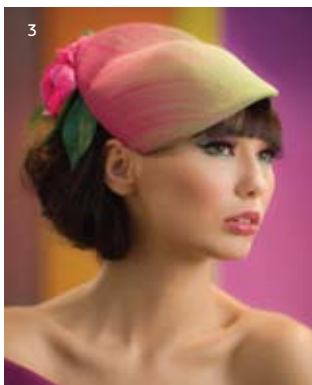
Newly arrived women work here with Melanie Tomlinson and Craftspace, on the Birmingham Community Integration Partnership's Routes to New Roots project.

These workshops enable participants to work with materials which hold different meanings in different cultures, and to capture a precious feeling, idea or memory in an object to be treasured. They also inform Melanie's exhibition work, which explores the stories of those considered mis-represented or misunderstood, in pieces such as Angharad October, 2008.

2



3



3
Babylon - Hat Collaboration, Ptolemy Mann and Yasmin Rizvi for Rizvi Millinery, 2008
Photo: © Adam Parker, 2008

4
Kings Mill Hospital final visualisation. Colour specification by Ptolemy Mann, for Swanke Hayden Connell Architects, Nottinghamshire, 2006
Computer visualisation: GMJ, 2006

The breadth of possible applications for a specialist knowledge of materials and processes is illustrated by Ptolemy Mann's work, which extends from developing bespoke fabrics for Rizvi Millinery, to colour consultancy on major public sector construction projects such as Kings Mill Hospital for Swanke Hayden Connell Architects.

Ptolemy's work, which also incorporates fabric design for mass production with Christopher Farr and work for exhibition and sale, demonstrates the entrepreneurialism of makers adopting a portfolio career.

4



Making value in community settings

Makers:

- Bring materials knowledge, with making and facilitation skills, to enable people to experience for themselves the creative and social benefits from participation in craft.
- Work in community organisations, arts venues, environmental charities, youth groups, health projects and specialist centres, for example for children or for people with a disability.
- Offer a supportive, empathetic approach that enables learning and development in participants, with the following key social impacts:
 - Sense of achievement and ownership: from experiencing the immediacy and concreteness of materials and always being able to produce something that belongs to them, to be kept for themselves or shared with others
 - Development of employability: from newly acquired skills, confidence and abilities developed through making craft work
 - Experience of enjoyment and the development of imagination and skills: from engaging with the transformative nature of materials that hold meanings, and developing manual skills, including the use of tools and equipment
 - Development of focus and concentration: from sustained manipulation of materials
 - Experience of freedom and autonomy: from being allowed and supported to experiment without boundaries
 - Development of confidence, self esteem and sense of value: from a focus on the quality with work being produced, not the situation of the participant, with opportunities to display work and pass on newly acquired skills
 - Experience of inclusion and social interaction: from a shared activity that invites and enables conversations and connections.

Making value in educational settings

Makers:

- Work in early years, primary, secondary and special education.
- Play a distinctive role in these settings:
 - Taking a focused, individual student centred approach, creating an environment in which pupils can follow their fascinations and find a positive role in group activities
 - Enabling sustained involvement and freedom of expression, providing a different range of activities and materials that engage students who do not usually become absorbed in normal classroom work
 - Encouraging experimentation and risk taking, supporting positive learning through 'trial and error' and focusing on processes rather than outcomes
 - Working cross curriculum, for example using weaving to teach science, mathematics and history
 - Supporting teacher development, encouraging creative approaches and enabling staff to feel confident in, and comfortable with, co-learning
 - Enabling participation in craft disciplines not normally found in school, such as felt-making and weaving
 - Providing an insight into the world of professional making, showing their work, talking about professional practice and educational opportunities.
- Enable pupils and students to:
 - Gain confidence through the processes of making and the sense of achievement provided by producing something
 - Increase their sense of autonomy and control, which can have positive impacts on personal and academic development
 - Learn specific craft skills
 - Become more aware of the origination and characteristics of materials
 - Develop more general, transferable skills such as coping with problems and learning through trial and error.

Support for developing and sustaining a portfolio practice

Makers:

- Benefit as Higher Education students from preparation for portfolio working when:
 - they are involved in live projects
 - makers are visiting lecturers
 - the programme includes a professional practice module
 - research departments actively model portfolio working through their own engagements with different sectors and settings.
- Show a high level of commitment to their continuing professional development (CPD).
- Look actively for learning opportunities of different types, consciously making time to undertake CPD – including ‘taking learning’ from their work in different sectors and settings – as part of their portfolio of practice.
- Value development grants and support schemes for providing validation, access to key contacts and often peer support as well as the specifics of the particular scheme.
- See mentoring as the most highly effective form of support.
- Take time to attend courses which support, develop or extend their creative or business practice.
- Maximise the networking potential of any CPD opportunity and also invest time in establishing networks, which are often the impetus for collaborative work.

The distinctive contribution of craft and makers

The value of ‘craft’ in contemporary economy and society is not limited to the value produced by those identifying themselves as makers, or solely held within the objects they produce. Craft is increasingly understood as a distinctive set of knowledges, skills and aptitudes, centred around a process of reflective engagement with the material and digital worlds. Makers are engaged in this process across industry sectors and community and education settings, acting as what Richard Sennett calls ‘sociable experts’, with distinctive and beneficial ways of collaborating with others:

The craft of making physical things provides insight into the techniques of experience that can shape our dealings with others... Material challenges like working with resistance or managing ambiguity are instructive in understanding the resistances people harbour to one another or the uncertain boundaries between people (Sennett, 2009).

Our aims for *Making Value: craft & the economic and social contribution of makers* are that:

- Makers, craft businesses, students and educational institutions will use these exemplars of activity ‘beyond the making, exhibition and sale of a craft object’ as advocacy and as inspiration.
- Policy makers will be informed by a current understanding of the range of applied craft practices and makers’ economic and social contributions.
- Support and delivery agencies will develop partnerships and programmes which create new and relevant opportunities for makers, users of and participants in craft.

We hope this report serves to elucidate and invite debate on what is such a significant aspect of the distinctive contribution of craft and makers to the economy and society.

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key featured makers.

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