



**Crafts Council**

**Research Strategy 2009 – 2012**

**Research Projects 2009 - 2010**

# Research Strategy 2009 – 2012

## 1. Aims:

In establishing a strategic research and evaluation programme, the Crafts Council aims to enhance its capacity to:

- Engage effectively in the public policy arena;
- Plan and deliver progressive, high impact policies and programmes;
- Support partner agencies and contemporary craft makers in their work.

## 2. Objectives:

In support of these aims, the Crafts Council's research objectives are:

### 2.1. To bridge the evidence gap:

We will develop and maintain robust sector intelligence which:

- Provides a clear yet nuanced picture of the nature and value of contemporary craft practice;
- Charts and anticipates sector trends and the economic, social, cultural and political contexts for contemporary craft practice;
- Articulates the value of contemporary craft against public policy agendas.

In 2009 – 2010 we will:

- Commission four research projects, designed to address selected thematic priorities and to identify current and future craft sector trends; in partnership with other agencies where appropriate (see section 5 for detail):
  - Hidden Economic Value research;
  - Learning and Social Value research;
  - Consumer Attitudes research;
  - *Crafting Futures* study of graduate career patterns.
- Work to increase crafts sector representation within wider cultural sector, creative industries and other public sector research programmes, through engagement with key partners and research networks (such as the DCMS Cultural Sector Research Network and the Design Council Research Forum).

## **2.2. To harness available sector intelligence:**

We will gather, connect and disseminate available intelligence, in order to improve partnership between the academic and public sectors and in particular to support evidence-based approaches to crafts sector development.

In 2009 – 2010 we will:

- Plan the first in a series of annual conferences, providing a forum for research dissemination and debate, connecting research with public policy, and enhancing crafts research and practitioner networks.
- Introduce bi-monthly, online briefing notes, updating makers, researchers and partner organisations and agencies on key research and policy developments.
- Relaunch our research web pages with enhanced content and links, to provide a hub for contemporary crafts research in the UK.
- Work to ensure that key policy documents – such as the Craft Blueprint (2009) – and sector lobbying activities are informed by relevant research.
- Work with Creative & Cultural Skills to investigate the potential for incorporating craft sector data into the annual DCMS Creative Industries Economic Estimates.

## **2.3. To support the craft research sector:**

We will support the continued development of a dynamic and sustainable crafts research sector, and promote connections between academic and public sectors.

In 2009 – 2010 we will:

- Work with partners – both directly and through our conference, website and a proposed Craft Research Network - to:
  - improve communication and collaboration between crafts research centres;
  - connect academic research and public policy;
  - influence the research funding environment.
- Promote interdisciplinary and international working within craft research, in partnership with other agencies where appropriate.
- Support individual academics and research centres, as required, in:
  - engaging with craft makers / businesses for research purposes.
  - drafting research proposals which articulate potential impact against public policy agendas.

# Research Projects 2009 - 2010

## 1. Hidden Economic Value

The prevalence of portfolio working in contemporary craft is well established within the sector. Makers are increasingly bringing their specialist, materials-based creativity, knowledge and skill to consultancy within the fashion, design, media and communications sectors, as well as to the development of innovative learning, tourism and leisure experiences. Moreover, the dynamic between different aspects of makers' practice appears to be playing an increasingly significant role in their creative – as well as commercial - development.

The nature and value of this increasing pluralism in contemporary crafts practice is currently under-researched and its impact on other industry sectors – and the businesses within them - is poorly understood. There is a strong need to address this knowledge gap, if support agencies are to advocate effectively on behalf of the sector and to position it effectively within a post-recession economy.

The implications of a pluralistic practice, for makers, educators and support agencies, are also under-explored. The emergence of crafts knowledge, skill, creativity and reputation as key business assets, and the evolution of routes to market, demand a re-appraisal of craft pedagogies and models of continuing professional development (CPD), if educators and support agencies are to design and deliver forward-facing policies and programmes.

This qualitative study will use narrative to articulate where and how materials-based creativity, skill and knowledge are adding value to other economic sectors. Allied to this, it will produce a series of illustrated case studies, which together will articulate the wider economic value of crafts knowledge clearly and vibrantly.

In addition, the study will explore the implications of a pluralistic professional practice, for educators and agencies engaged in supporting contemporary craft. The proposed methodology centres on interviews with makers and sector specialists, supported by a focused literature review.

The study will connect with the *Crafting Futures* research (see below), whose objectives include identifying the prevalence and nature of pluralistic practice in graduate craft makers' careers.

Overall, the study will significantly enhance craft support agencies' capacity to advocate effectively on behalf of the sector and to deliver policies and programmes which meet sector needs within a post-recession economy.

## 2. Learning and Social Value

Craft makers engaging in the delivery of learning and community arts services operate within a landscape which has been revolutionised in recent years.

Participant-centred ways of working have moved into the mainstream and become embedded in accreditation schemes such as the Young Person's Arts Awards. At the same time, policy makers and funders have recognised the value of the arts and creativity within social agendas as diverse as community development, offending behaviour and terminal illness.

Education infrastructures have also developed. Whilst craft's position in the school curriculum has weakened, new opportunities have emerged for creative facilitators to engage with young people, both in partnership with schools (eg through the Extended Schools and Specialist Schools initiatives and through Creative Partnerships) and in informal learning settings (eg Sure Start Children's Centres, Youth Offending Teams).

The distinctive value of materials-based learning and play, the acquisition of craft skills and the shaping of ideas into craft objects, has not been fully articulated as they relate to this new landscape of social, health and educational engagement. Neither has the effectiveness of current pedagogies, across the full range of formal and informal learning settings, been questioned. Perhaps as a result, craft learning in schools has diminished, and its place within new educational, social, health and regeneration programmes has not been firmly established.

This knowledge gap needs to be addressed, if sector support agencies are to create more opportunities for people to engage meaningfully with contemporary craft and for more makers to work as teachers and skilled creative facilitators.

This qualitative study will provide a robust case for materials-based learning in education and community settings. Illustrating its points with case studies, it will identify the unique benefits of creative engagement with materials and processes in these contexts. Relating the resulting findings to the current policy landscape and infrastructure, it will also identify current challenges and opportunities for craft, in engaging effectively with informal learning and community agendas.

Overall, the research findings will support craft sector support agencies in advocating for a place for craft, both within the curriculum and in new and emerging, publicly funded, arts-based learning programmes. In addition, it will enable agencies to offer current and relevant information to makers engaging in learning and community arts settings, and to seek funding and partnerships which add value to current policy priorities.

Again, the research will connect with the *Crafting Futures* research (see below), and exchange between the two projects is anticipated.

### 3. Consumer Attitudes

Recent years have seen a shift in consumer demand, towards value-centred products, services and experiences which meet emotional – as well as functional – needs. As markets evolve in response to recession and towards a new, post-recession economy, there is a need to understand how these values – and their associated behaviours – may shift and settle into new patterns of consumption relevant to contemporary craft.

This study will review and update the Arts Council England (2006) study, *Making it to Market*, drawing on current evidence of consumer spending, relevant trend forecasting data, and interviews with key makers and sector specialists. It will:

- Identify the impact of overall trends in consumer values, as they relate to the contemporary craft market.
- Identify market niches with positive and negative growth potential, within the current economic climate.
- Update the estimates of market potential and the consumer profiles provided by *Making it to Market*.

This information will be vital to future planning activities for sector support agencies engaged in market and audience development activities, as well as to makers themselves.

By providing forward-facing market intelligence, the study will provide a strong basis for advocacy work and future planning, as well as essential information for contemporary craft makers.

#### 4. *Crafting Futures*

This study, currently underway in partnership with the Institute of Employment Studies (University of Sussex) and University of the Arts London is investigating the value of a crafts education and its impact on graduate career paths.

A 'bolt-on' to the major *Creative Graduates Creative Futures* survey of art and design graduates graduating between 2002 and 2004, the study drills down into the crafts data, to elicit detailed data of specific interest to the contemporary craft sector yet comparable with other educational disciplines within art and design. It will also produce some longitudinal findings, through comparison with the 1999 *Destinations and Reflections* study.

Amongst other findings, the study will produce:

- An analysis of craft graduate career paths and business models.
- A focus on pluralistic models of crafts practice, and the factors influencing their development.
- The influence of ethnicity and disability on career progression.
- The range and influence of different forms of CPD (continuing professional development) on career progression.

The study will support the Crafts Council in its future work, in particular by contextualising its own CPD programme evaluations. In addition, it will contribute a broader perspective and understanding of influencing factors on career progression to the economic and social value studies planned (see above).

# Research Projects 2010 / 2011

A number of research projects are under consideration for the year 2010 / 2011, and will be announced in due course. The following projects are scheduled to proceed early in the year, and the Crafts Council is actively seeking partner engagement.

## 1. Baseline sector data research and methodology review

The Crafts Council has undertaken two major socio-economic surveys – in 1994 and 2004 – of the contemporary crafts sector. These surveys have provided essential impact and profiling data, informing policy making and planning across the craft sector and beyond. However, the survey base has been restricted to members of the Crafts Council's National Register of Makers (NRM) and of associated craft guilds, societies and associations. This has limited the comparability of the data produced with that relating to other creative industries sub-sectors, and in turn the usefulness of the data in terms of advocacy and sector positioning within the creative industries.

2009 saw the development of a new methodology for surveying crafts businesses / practitioners (see *Craft: Impact and Footprint*, Creative & Cultural Skills 2009). This methodology enables the aligning of the craft sector with other creative industries sub-sectors. However, the data it produces can neither distinguish between traditional and contemporary craft, nor provide the depth of profiling data provided by the Crafts Council's own surveys.

This study will build on the above studies, to produce and pilot a revised approach and methodology for craft sector data collation which will enable comparability and disaggregation, and provide the basis for more frequent and consistent data updating.

The study will produce:

- A replicable framework and methodology for collecting and updating sector impact and profiling data (both quantitative and qualitative).
- Baseline statistics, directly comparable with the 2009 Creative & Cultural Skills research, and disaggregating between NRM / guild, society and association members and the wider contemporary crafts sector.
- Sector profile information, comparable with that provided within the Crafts Council's earlier, socio-economic surveys and with that produced by the forthcoming Creative and Cultural Industries Workforce Survey (Creative & Cultural Skills 2009).

With appropriate partnerships in place, the study could be expanded to provide similar and comparable data for the traditional crafts sector.

The study will set a new precedent for contemporary crafts sector baseline research, which will inform both planning and advocacy work for the Crafts Council and its partners, and enable effective positioning of the crafts within the creative industries sector.

## **2. Higher Education Review**

This study will review trends in craft education at first and postgraduate degree levels, between 1998 and 2010.

The study will:

- Map shifting trends in student demand, evidenced by application, take-up and completion rates.
- Chart supply-side changes relating to course availability; stated course ethos, focus and pedagogy; course structure; and available teaching resources and facilities.
- Identify factors influencing trends in supply and demand.
- Analyse the implications of the identified trends, in relation to current understandings of contemporary craft practice, markets and graduate career paths (see research projects 1 – 4 above).

The research methodology is anticipated to include a literature review, a survey of Heads of School in HEIs, and a number of in-depth interviews.

# Appendix: Consultees

Consultation relating to the Research Strategy was undertaken with Crafts Council staff and national public sector / academic partners. Further consultation, specific to the planned research projects, will take place as each project progresses.

- **Arts and Business:** Joanne South (Research Manager).
- **Arts and Humanities Research Council:** Susan Amor (Head of Knowledge Transfer).
- **Arts Council England:** Catherine Bunting (Director of Research) and Yvonne Harris (Director of Evaluation).
- **Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, Birmingham City University:** Professor Jack Cunningham (Head of the School of Jewellery)
- **Council for Higher Education in Art and Design:** Christoph Raatz (Executive Secretary).
- **Creative & Cultural Skills:** James Evans (Research Manager).
- **Department for Children, Schools and Families:** Carole Willis (Head of Research and Analysis).
- **Department for Culture, Media and Sport:** Adam Cooper (Head of Research) Ed Pickering (Principal Statistical Analyst).
- **Design Council:** Mel Taylor (Evaluation Officer), on behalf of Ruth Flood (Head of Knowledge and Research).
- **National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts:** Hasan Bakhshi (Director, Creative Industries).
- **University College Falmouth:** Dr Katie Bunnell (Lecturer & Research Cluster Leader) and Dr Justin Marshall (Research Fellow).
- **University of Dundee (Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art):** Prof Mike Press (Chair of Design Policy).
- **University of the Arts London:** Dr Jane Harris (Reader & Director of Textile Futures Research Group) and Simon Fraser (Course Director, MA Design).
- **University of Wales in Cardiff (Cardiff School of Art and Design):** Dr Cathy Treadaway (Reader in Creative Practice).