

**Crafts Council  
Public  
Programmes**

## **Artisa Curatorial Fellowship**

Machine ghosts and scissorhands:  
reclassifying a craft collection

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Curatorial Fellow 2019





Left: Teapot (Longer of Two) & Teapot (Smaller of Two), Walter Keeler, 1980, Crafts Council Collection: P242 & P243

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# 1

## Introduction

### Machine ghosts and scissorhands: reclassifying a craft collection

‘Ghost in the Machine’ was a phrase coined by British philosopher Gilbert Ryle in his book, *The Concept of Mind* (1949). It was a critique and exploration of the mind-body duality where, ‘mental and physical activity occur simultaneously, but separately.’

I find this concept really useful when thinking about the craft-maker as an embodiment of intelligent making: evolving, adapting and, finding new possibilities during the process. In *The Nature of Art and Workmanship* (2007) furniture maker David Pye asserts that, ‘the difference between craft and design is that craft seeks to flawlessly repeat whereas design seeks to find unknown possibilities.’ My research into reclassifying a craft collection considers this notion critically and examines craft as a place where unknown possibilities can be born.

The ambition of my Artisan Curatorial Fellowship was to present making, or craft, as a state of relentless curiosity and rigour. This was to be presented as a curated exhibition but is now in digital form due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

It’s a celebration of craft and of its makers being incapable of leaving well enough alone; of finding materials, tools and construction as a playground, and not being able to turn off the mind and become a human machine. As a maker myself, taking time to explore at depth the nuances in the process of making led me to a proposition for a new classification of objects within the Crafts Council Collection.

Left: Expressive Proverbs,  
works from Jingdezhen by Attua  
Aparicio Torinos, 2019. Credit:  
Peter Guenzel



## Context

## How I developed new themes to categorise objects in the Crafts Council Collection

As I began this fellowship, I was absolutely sure that there was a way to bring craft and industry together into a shared discussion about making. I felt I could shine a light on the commonalities and skillsets, and that by blending ideas around small-scale studio production (craft) and larger scale mass manufacture (industry), we could redefine the visual and material language of the objects that we live with.

However, I am no longer convinced about scale of production as a useful defining factor in how 'craft' and 'industry' might relate to each other. What I *am* sure of is that we are losing a lot of our making knowledge, our diversity of materials and our nuance of process. This is a result of the loss of craft disciplines being taught: from slipping off school teaching curriculums, loss of creative making courses in higher education, and the loss of making and hand skills in our everyday domestic sphere.

Most everyday utility objects that were once made using local craft processes are now industrially manufactured, and this is creating a huge potential of skills and techniques being under-utilised or lost altogether. *Power of Making*, curated by Daniel Charny and presented by the Crafts Council at the V&A Museum in 2011, examined contemporary attitudes towards skill and craft. 'The knowledge of how to make – both everyday objects and highly-skilled creations – is one of humanity's most precious

## Context

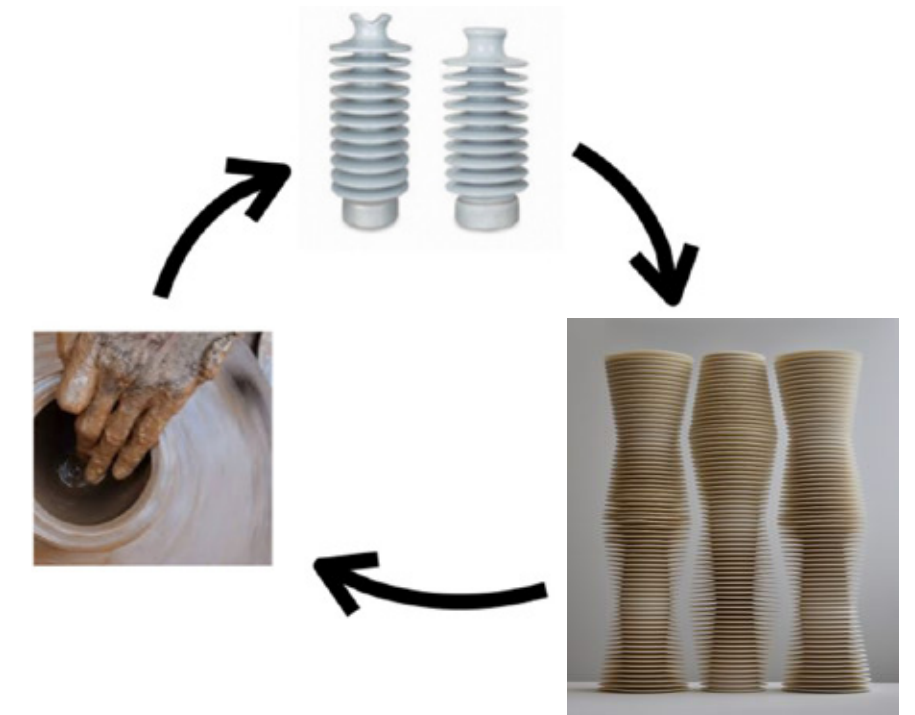
resources,' writes Daniel Charny. Additionally, in the report, *Making it Local*, published in 2010, the Crafts Council highlighted the importance of vernacular making as a, 'valuable local asset to be preserved and utilised.'

My current conclusion (and it is very likely to evolve as my research continues) is that *making* is an enduringly complex verb - it defies the categorisations and segregations of being craft or industrial.

The outcomes of either craft or industrial processes can be identically repeated en-masse or as one-offs (below); they can be enormous or tiny; the materials can be local or from a thousand miles away - and the same goes for the audience. I feel that each can be a rich source of reference and influence for the other - for both the audience and maker.

Right: We can infer a common visual language between the repeated forms of the industrially manufactured ceramic electrical insulators (top right) and Nicholas Lees' ceramic Triptych (below right). Diagram by Shai Akram 2020.

Image: (below-right) Triptych 19.35, Parian Porcelain, Nicholas Lees, 2020





## Context

Instead of looking at differences and definitions, I propose to look at the characteristics that could unite and enhance our understanding of the making of objects and work from there.

A reasonable parameter is to explore the value of human involvement during the making process. In particular, a response to, and an understanding of, a material that is too nuanced, too tacit to automate; a decision making with tools that require complex factors to be considered simultaneously, a sensory understanding, or even an ability to quickly identify and correct potential errors unseen by an automated machine.

This proposal is founded in and celebrates the ideas around ludic activity, the playfulness within making and the avant-garde. It draws inspiration from designer Rei Kawakubo, Creative Director of clothing company, Comme des Garçons, who defied categorisation while celebrating playfulness by looking at how things are made and thought about in order to create a remix of identities.

As with Kawakubo's work, it takes a *person* to make those decisions. Human intelligence is manifested through hands, tools and machines.

Right: Kawakubo was interested in the reconstruction of the cloth as well as the body, even where to place the mouth!

Image: Jones, Terry (ed.), Rei Kawakubo: VA. Taschen GmbH, 2012. Courtesy of TASCHEN



## Context

I explore this dichotomy where a well established process meets the 'usual rules don't apply' celebrated in the avant-garde, and allows a jump of the imagination to find a 'why not' outcome that defies the usual methods of making in the practice of craft.

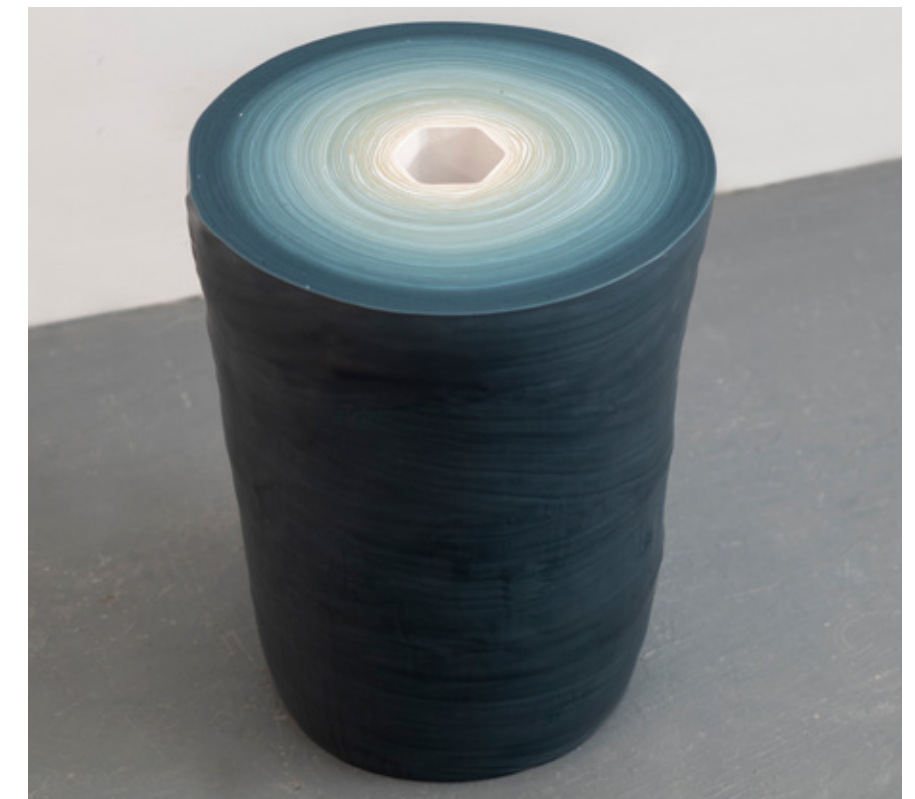
Designer-makers Study O'Portable illustrate this idea in their work, Fuzz Side Table (below). Taking the making process of the traditional Baum Cake and translating it into an entirely new context, Study O'Portable built up layer upon layer of Jesmonite in a wide range of hues to create this piece. The outer surface gets more and more blurred as the layers build up while the inner core retains an accurate and sharp outline of the former.



Above: Traditional method of making Baum cake.

Image: Baumkauchen.BMK

Right: Fuzz Side Table, Study O'Portable. Image: Courtesy Gallery FUMI



## Taxonomy of making

### Context

The intention of this project is to use the Crafts Council Collection, a national collection of postwar contemporary craft, to develop a taxonomy of making, coupled with a clear methodology for indexing and exposing the sequences and possibilities held within each process.

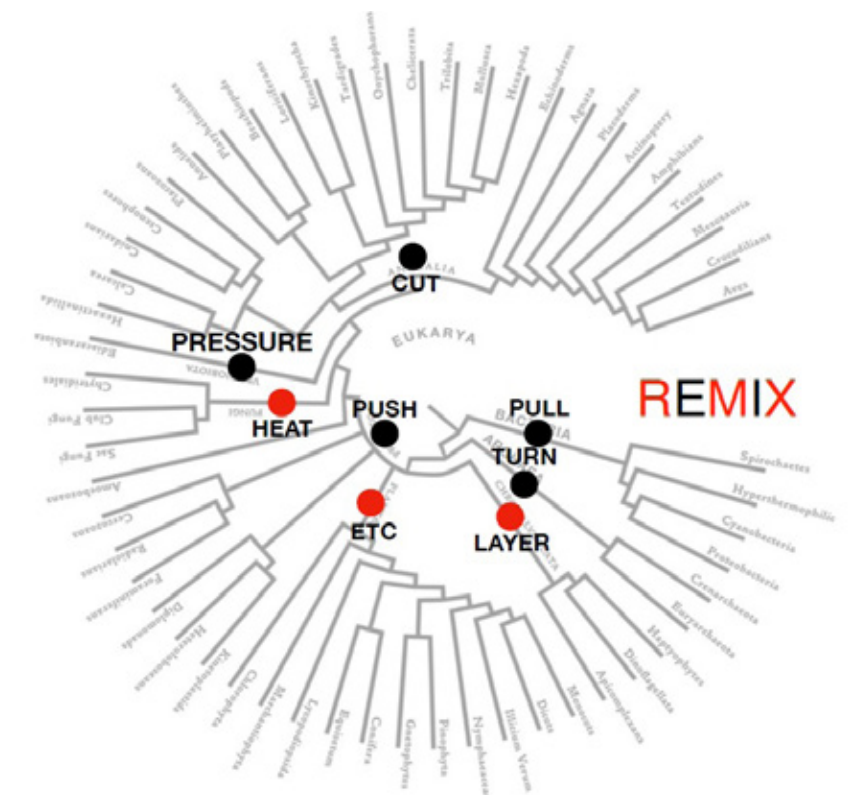
During this fellowship I explored the following related ideas and provocations which enabled me to group objects into the three themes I identify in Chapter 3:

- 1: What makes a craft process particular? Is it a unique sequence, is it materiality, scale, location, history or outcome?
- 2: Is there a vocabulary for making? Are there distinct conceptual units of 'language' that link seemingly unrelated crafts?
- 3: What can be learned by exploring craft processes as a taxonomy of actions that goes beyond material or outcome? What are the implications for innovation?
- 4: Where are the edges that separate one process from another? How far can we push the edges

### Context

before one craft blends or morphs into another? When is it altered beyond recognition and need a new name?

This fellowship is just the beginning of my exploration where I identify 'words' or 'verbs' that are arranged and rearranged during the journey of a material to an object of craft making. The process of making can be a remix of actions, and to identify these verbs and elevate them as worthwhile categories in the classification of a craft collection makes the journey of understanding craft so much deeper and more meaningful.



Right: Remix, a proposal for a taxonomy of making. Image: Shai Akram, 2020



# 3

## Reclassifying the Crafts Council Collection



### Research themes

The overarching aim of my research was to:

- Expose processes as a language by material, scale or outcome;
- Identify and explore the 'words' or 'verbs' that are arranged and rearranged during the journey of a material to an object of craft making.

Focusing primarily on single-material objects in the Crafts Council Collection, I began intuitively classifying them by three research themes relating to core production values.

The criteria for selection required each object to have been clearly impacted by the active intelligence of a human hand, i.e. someone making a decision.

The three research themes are:

#### 1. Variations on a blank

- Items that share a repeated starting point or common and uniform repeated part. The beginning is often the same before hand manipulation interrupts the making process.

#### 2. Disrupting a process

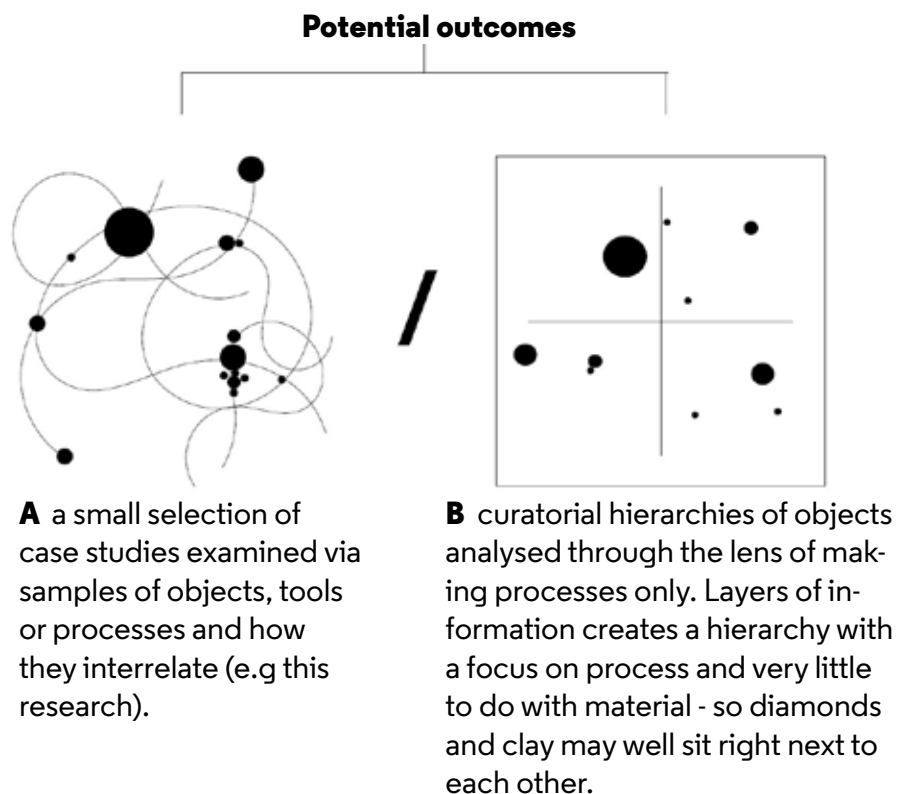
- Items that demonstrate mind and machine working together or a deviation from the usual rules to challenge the limits of tools and technology, and bringing a voice or authorship to the process.

Left: Variation on a blank.  
Pot, Hans Coper, 1972, Crafts  
Council Collection: P40.  
Photo: John Hammond

## Research themes 3. Off-plinth

- Items that are removed from their usual context (e.g. a factory floor or foundry workshop) into new environments that shift the focus from outcome to process. Not necessarily a physical object, these outcomes are often performative or ephemeral, taking established processes into trackless new territories.

By studying the Crafts Council Collection, I aim to stimulate the current discourse of what craft or making is through this research, ideally via objects, processes and materials that are now obsolete and have been replaced by industry. In doing so, I discover potential and differing outcomes of categorising a collection.



Right: Potential outcomes of categorising: grouping objects by identifying making processes vs existing curatorial categories of the collection (i.e. date, maker, etc).

Diagram: Shai Akram, 2020

## Research themes

The ambition of this project is to amplify the action of making and catalyse new and unexpected applications of existing processes.

The themes used to group objects from the Crafts Council Collection (and contemporary discourse) all share the same foundation or interest - the relationship between maker, material and process and how this translates into authorship and new possibilities. The groupings have blurred edges, the examples have been chosen intuitively, and many objects could belong in more than one theme simultaneously.

I provide a text for each theme that connects the projects chosen yet remains open enough to provoke conversation and in some cases are illustrated with experiments of the making process conducted along the same lines as the objects themselves.

Right: a performative exhibition called, FACTORY, by Rita Floyd and Neil Brown-sward, showcased the skills used in the process of making at the Icheon World Ceramic Centre, Korea in 2017. China flower maker Rita Floyd and mould-maker James Adams, two artisans with long careers working and residing in Stoke-on-Trent, restaged their former practices.

Image: FACTORY with James Adams, courtesy of Korea Ceramic Foundation, 2017





## Variations on a blank

### Theme 1

This looks at repeated, uniform, moulded parts, manipulated by hand during the making process but concentrating on constant, repeated starting points. While looking through the Crafts Council collection, maker David Leach, for me, sums up the intuitive exploration of these surfaces: “I am making an increasing number of such bowls decorated variously.”

This theme looks at how the hand manipulates the repeated outcome, or share a repeated starting point or assembly of existing repeated parts. For example, when making a ceramic mug (below), each handle is cast in slip (a watery clay mixture), trimmed and cut by hand to contour the shape of the mug. Each handle is then affixed by hand, using slip as adhesive. When fired, the two pieces become one. The established consistency of the process allows space for intervention and disruption.

Production Process



Right: the full production process of making a ceramic mug as illustrated by the Liling Huarui Ceramic Company. Image: Liling Huarui Ceramic Co. Ltd, China

## Variations on a blank

### Theme 1

The Stacked Bottles by Granby Workshops (below) questions conventional slip-casting using plaster moulds to create a perfectly repeated form. Usually each mould is dedicated to a single shape with additional versions required for different sizings and openings.

Here, the moulds are rethought as modular systems allowing for multiple configurations and a range of outputs built from a kit of interchangeable building blocks. The exterior of each piece is left unfettled where the seam lines remain rather than smoothed off, so that the imprints left over by the moulds can be seen. These become part of the distinctive decorative mark on the objects' surface.



Right: Stacked Bottles, Granby Workshop, 2019. Photo courtesy of Granby Workshop

## Variations on a blank

### Theme 1

These objects from the Crafts Council Collection share a common starting point and making technique but have become different typologies by the addition (or omission) of a simple action like pulling a spout into the rim.



Above & middle: Consistency of these groups of objects really bring into focus the makers subtle manipulations of height, diameter and volume. Above: Jugs, Peter Hanauer, 1983, Crafts Council Collection: G27. Photo: Todd-White Art Photography. Middle: Jug & Jug & Bowl, Gwyn Hansen-Pigott, 1998, Crafts Council Collection: P454c, P454b & P454a.



Below right: Pot, Hans Coper, 1975, Crafts Council Collection: P13

## Variations on a blank

### Theme 1

Below left & top right: I really enjoy how easy it is to 'read' the parts that make up these objects by Hans Coper. It's a composition of forms that have been made separately and then combined together beautifully. Top right: Pot, Hans Coper, 1972, Crafts Council Collection: P40



Middle & below right: When I look at these objects by Walter Keeler, I can see him with an array of forms and shapes, composing these objects from line, tube and volume. The final shapes are so characterful and the separate parts remain distinct yet united by the same glaze.



Middle: Teapot, Walter Keeler, 1985, Crafts Council Collection: P377. Below right: Teapot with Lid, Walter Keeler, 1984, Crafts Council Collection: P339





## Variations on a blank

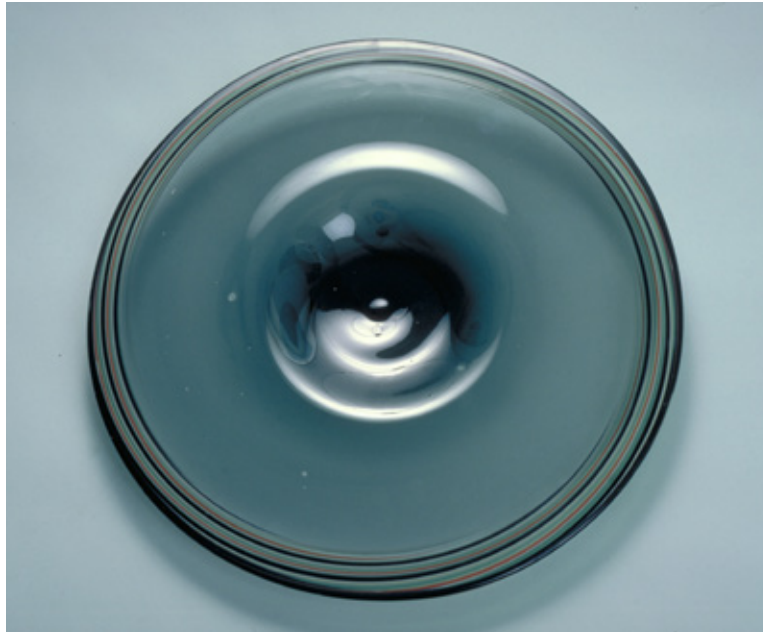
### Theme 1

Right: The lines orbiting this plate reveal so much about how this object was made and the way colour is applied to rotating hot glass.

Top: Black Plate, Annette Meech, 1980, Crafts Council Collection: G23.

Right: When making these small vessels I can imagine the maker having a series of identical forms (or masters) and interacting with each 'blank' to create these textural surfaces across each different plane.

Right: Pot, Jacqueline Poncelet, 1975. Crafts Council Collection: P183, P184a, P184b



## Variations on a blank

### Theme 1

Right: These three forms created by David Leach have so much in common - the authorship and hand of the maker is visible and connects them - yet are all distinct and distinctive.

Top: Bowl, David Leach, 1977, Crafts Council Collection: P149. Middle: Brush Decorated Porcelain Bowl, David Leach, 1977, Crafts Council Collection: P138.\*\* Below: Cup and Saucer, David Leach, 1976, Crafts Council Collection: P121



## Disrupting a process

### Theme 2

In this theme, I identify mind and machine working together or - as a deviation from the rules - challenging the limits of tools and technology by bringing a voice or authorship to the process. I look at the idea of disruption in two ways through a) swatches and explorations and, b) disrupting an established process.

'Swatches and explorations' revel in the process to find new and unexpected outcomes. Here, the joyfulness of making and the curiosity of the maker is manifested in objects that invite others to enjoy how those objects were made.

Right: *Nella notte buia* by Bruno Munari, 20th century avant-garde artist, designer and book-maker, published experimental books primarily aimed at children. Munari explored new techniques of printing within the field of publishing. Each of his 'book-objects' visually express the playfulness and curiosity of the maker.

Right: *Nella notte buia*, Bruno Munari. Courtesy Corraini Edizioni (1996)



## Disrupting a process

### Theme 2

'Disrupting a process' celebrates the intervention with tools or techniques that appear to be embedded within the process. A maker might decide to change how things are made as a process of exploration, research or curiosity.

I feel that these objects illustrated in this theme are the physical manifestations of that moment of throwing away the rule book and asking, *What if I...?*

Right: Chicago-based designer Yuting Chang conceived of a way to build the traditional blue and white pigments often found on porcelain into the very structure of her ceramics, which she named Plycelain. Through slip casting, a process in which the artist can switch between colours within the mould, Chang is able to incorporate up to 29 alternately pigmented layers that are visible on cut surfaces.

Right: Image by Yuting Chang. [www.yuting.studio.com](http://www.yuting.studio.com)





## Disrupting a process

### Theme 2



Above: B-Set, Hella Jongerius, 1997, Porcelain glaze. Photographer: Gerrit Schreurs

In B-Set, Hella Jongerius disrupts the usual precision of the industrialised slip casting process. Usually the slip is carefully calibrated and dryness of moulds is monitored to ensure the consistency of wall thicknesses. She leaves the slip in the moulds for different lengths of time, resulting in a variety of wall thicknesses, working with the process in a gentle, easily reversed intervention that produces a curious variety of outcomes.

## Disrupting a process



Above: Chlorophyllia - Spring Reseda Pink & Spring Green, Ptolemy Mann, 2019. Image courtesy of Ptolemy Mann

I have always been fascinated by the work of Ptolemy Mann - textile artist, designer and colour consultant. In her series, Chlorophyllia she uses colour variation in the weaving directions, using hand-dyed woven thread to create these magically gradiented textures. These acute yet subtle moments of intervention in the process of making creates something unexpected and powerful. Mann's work embraces the making process using the raw material to create infinite outcomes.

## Disrupting a process

## Disrupting a process

### Theme 2



The Human Trace tableware was created in 2017 as part of the People from the Porcelain Factory project, organised by anthropologist and curator Ewa Klekot and ceramist Arkadiusz Szwed. It was carried out in one of the oldest ceramic factories in Poland, Ćmielów, established in 1790. The porcelain tableware keeps visible the touch of the workers' hands, revealing the role of the 'human factor' in industrial manufacturing.

Top right and middle: The Human Trace/People from the Porcelain Factory, 2017. Images courtesy of Arkadiusz Szwed

### Theme 2



The project aimed to highlight the often hidden role that humans play within industrial processes. The Ćmielów factory workers wore cobalt infused gloves to permanently tattoo their interaction with casts coming out of the moulds. It's a moment that is usually hidden from the consumer. On firing, the cobalt turns dark blue and visually amplifies where the makers have disrupted the process.

For years, I have found the paradox that a human hand is usually the only tool nuanced enough to make an industrialised object more 'machine perfect' fascinating - it's an idea that comes up repeatedly in my own work.

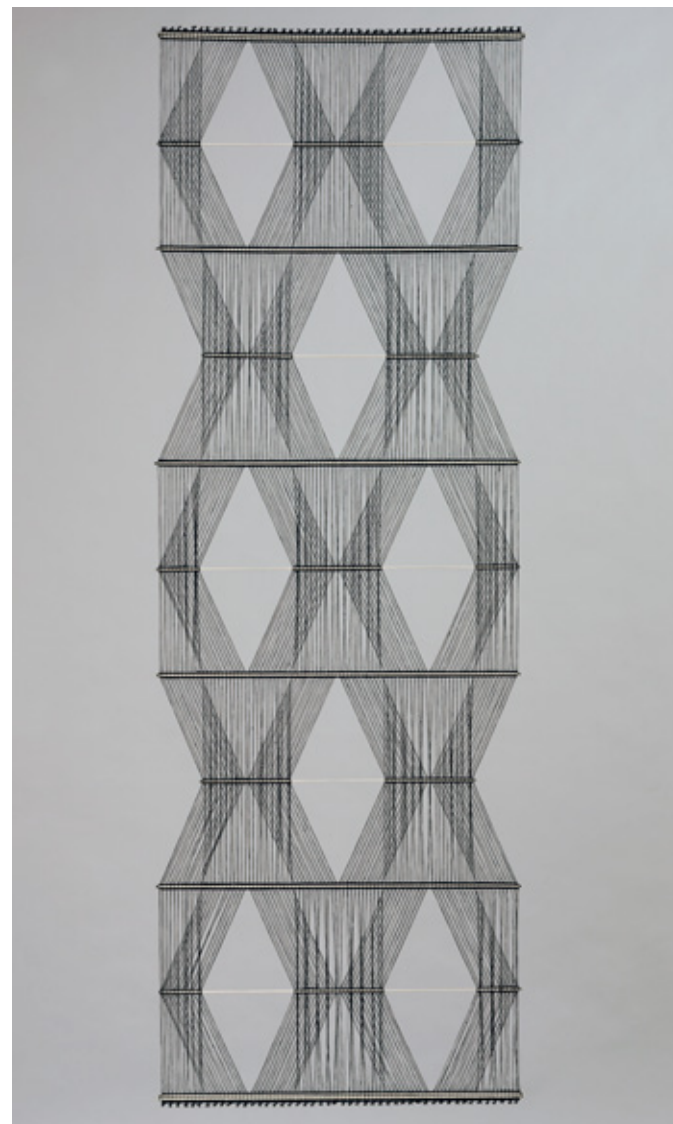
Above: The Human Trace/ People from the Porcelain Factory, 2017. Image courtesy of Arkadiusz Szwed



## Disrupting a process

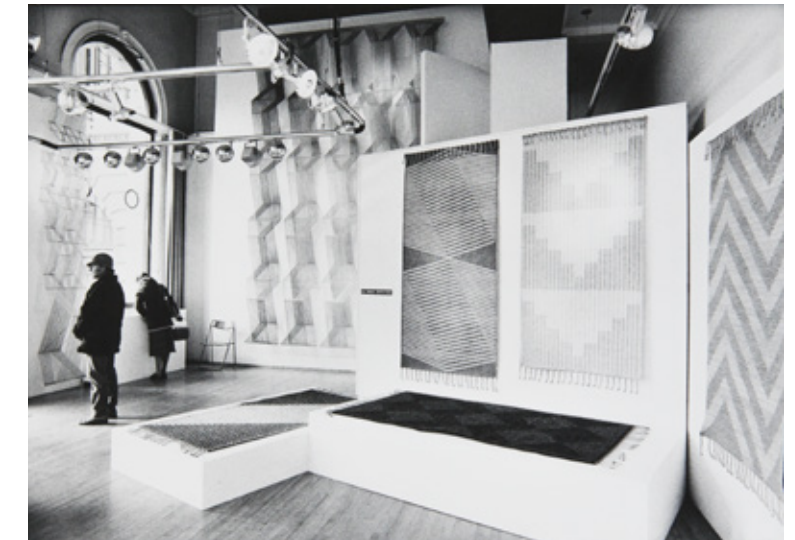
### Theme 2

Right: This group of woven objects illustrate the idea of disruption that can occur through swatches, such as the Tablet Woven Belts (right) and of disrupting an established process in weaving, seen in the wall hangings (below and top right) by Peter Collingwood. By taking the objects off the loom and into a spatial environment at this huge scale really amplifies the process - we can get up close to see the stitches and experimental woven rhythms that have been initiated and explored through the physical outcomes.



Above: Tablet Woven Belts, Peter Collingwood, 1982, Crafts Council Collection: T66. Photo: Heini Schneebeli. Below: Macrogauze 132, Peter Collingwood, 1973, Crafts Council Collection: T16. Photo: Heini Schneebeli

## Disrupting a process



Top-right: Photograph, Installation view of 'Weaving', photographer unknown, 1981, Crafts Council Collection: AM171

Middle: Leaflet (detail) 'Weave at Sea', BI Discovery Cruises, 1981, Crafts Council Collection: AM138. © P&O Heritage Collection

'Weave at Sea aboard SS Uganda, 3 - 16 November 1981' advertised a weaving programme led by Ann Sutton and assisted by guest weavers Bobbie Cox, Fiona Mathison, Peter Collingwood and Geraldine St Aubyn Hubbard. Weave at Sea offered 'a unique opportunity for weaving enthusiasts to...learn the skills of weaving...while cruising through the Mediterranean'. Ann Sutton was pushing the usual boundaries of sharing an established craft practice with a new audience at sea!

## Disrupting a process

### Theme 2

Right: Maker Tavs Jorgenson developed a special process called the 'Reconfigurable Pin Tooling' technique. The flowing surface of a glass sheet can be poked and manipulated for infinite compositions of pointy landscapes.

Right: Large Pin Bowl, Tavs Jorgensen, 2012, Crafts Council Collection: 2013.3



Bottom & top right: There is something so intriguing about the decisions made while these teapots are put together - how did maker Edmund De Waal decide when to sculpt the final form and when to embrace the irregularities as it emerged on the wheel? I like to imagine that he left the rim overshoot at the top of the pot so that he would have a place to thread the handle that came entirely from the process.



## Disrupting a process

### Theme 2

Top right: Teapot, Edmund de Waal, 1995, Crafts Council Collection: HC128

Below left: Teapot, Edmund de Waal, 1995, Crafts Council Collection: P434



Right: The salt glazing variations on these pots are retained to become integral to the finish. Teapot (Longer of Two) & Teapot (Smaller of Two), Walter Keeler, 1980, Crafts Council Collection: P242 & P243



## Disrupting a process

### Theme 2

Above: Soft Urn by Hella Jongerius really expresses a playful approach to both the process of casting but also the idea of the archetypal vase. I've seen this piece in many different scenarios - squashed, folded and full of blooms! I always thought that it was an interesting shift of material - it has the water tight quality needed in a vase but partnered with flexibility where we expect rigidity to create a surprising visual language.

Above: Soft Urn, Hella Jongerius, 1993, Crafts Council Collection: HC593

Below: The beautiful spirographic pattern carved into this turned piece by David Pye exposes so much mastery, joy and skill of the maker.

Below: Box, David Pye, 1977, Crafts Council Collection: W17



## Disrupting a process

### Theme 2

Right: These objects have all the elements needed for an archetypal wine glass - a stem, a bowl and a stand. But the hand and mind of maker Jochen Holz are so evident here as he chooses combinations and pushes just how fluid to leave the vessel.

Right: Coloured Wine glass, Jochen Holz, 2019. Photo: Sylvain Deleu

Below right: Attua Aparicio's project 'Expressive Proverbs' gives faces to 100 reclaimed plates using waste borosilicate glass. Aparicio's intervention layers up on top of the previous marks of the makers, and the visual unity of the mass produced plates work as a series that is really exciting and celebrates the moment of an idea finding a material voice.

Below right: Expressive Proverbs, works from Jingdezhen by Attua Aparicio Torinos, 2019. Photo credit: Attua Aparicio







### Theme 3

## Off-plinth

Outcomes that stray from the established route, boundaries or sequence - where processes turn up out of context, are amplified or re-appropriated for a new audience or application. I consider these as 'off-piste', experimental and challenging.

Off-plinth celebrates making techniques taken out of industry and into the 'world', where the craft-making expertise normally hidden within the factory is celebrated in front of an audience, bringing a sense of surprise when we encounter it in the wider world.

I feel that this can also be extended to areas of industrial manufacture that involves sensory craft by the maker - such as the 'nose' within the perfume industry. Perhaps it's hidden because the market values the industrial (machine) over the primitive (hand), and enjoys the 'disinfection' of the object during the industrial process as multiples lose all traces of the human hand and the outcomes become identical.

Projects that take industrialised crafts out of the factory and into the wider world are especially appropriate when discussing the role of the senses, of curiosity, and ambition in making.

Left: Fay Toogood's Coat combines ideas about interiors, fashion and sculpture. The unusual use of rubber seam welding is taken out of context and brought into the gallery as a wearable exhibit (see page 37).

Coat, Faye Toogood, 2015, © Faye Toogood, Crafts Council Collection: HC1069.1. Photo: Stokes Photo Ltd.



## Off-plinth

### Theme 3

Sand sculptures created by design studio Parsons & Charlesworth recontextualise the tool used in the ceramic process known as 'jollyng' to cut the shape's profile in the sand. Tim Parson's Great Grandfather invented this device for sand sculptures, as seen in his family photo below.



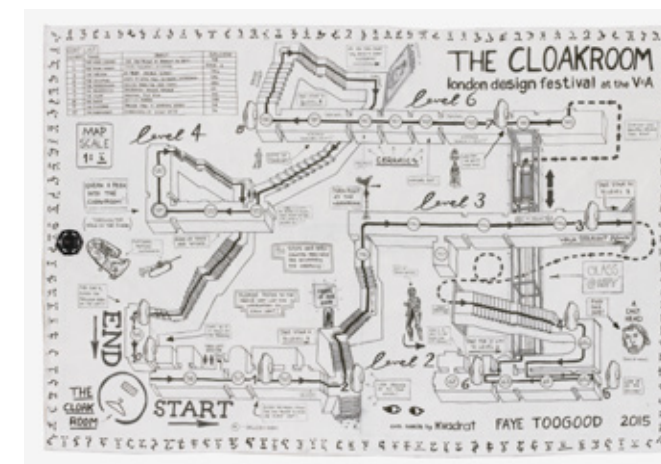
Above: Tim Parson of Parson & Charlesworth, uses the 'sand-castle maker' which borrows from the ceramic process, 'jollyng', to create sand sculptures. Photo by Jessica Charlesworth.

Below: Tim Parson's Great Grandfather invented the device to create sand sculptures, as seen on a family holiday from 1948. Image: Dorothy Parsons (nee Ingham) and family. Image courtesy of Dorothy Parsons.



## Off-plinth

### Theme 3



Right: Each coat was made of Kvadrat's Highfield, a high-tech compressed-foam textile used in residential and commercial interiors. After cutting and stitching the coats arrived at Faye Toogood's London studio for hand finishing. Pigmented black silicone was hand applied to reinforce the seams and individualise the backs. Digitally printed, washed cotton maps were attached to the inside of the coat by a large popper and depicts a trail through the V&A Museum directing visitors to the other components of the installation. Visitors wore the coats and became walking 'rogue' elements of the exhibition and an extension of the map itself.



Coat (right), with detachable map (top), Faye Toogood, 2015, © Faye Toogood, Crafts Council Collection: HC1069.1. Photo: Stokes Photo Ltd

This coat is one of 150 used in Faye Toogood's 'The Cloakroom', an installation for London Design Festival 2015 at the V&A Museum. A unique mask design was painted on the back. A digitally printed cotton map is attached to the inside of the coat by a large popper and depicts a trail through the V&A Museum directing visitors to the other components of the installation. Visitors wore the coats and became walking 'rogue' elements of the exhibition and an extension of the map itself.



## Off-plinth

### Theme 3

Above: This ethereal bench by Shin & Tomoko Azumi exploits an unexpected yet magical moiré effect of everyday shopping baskets and trolleys. Taking the process out of the supermarket and into furniture allows the perfect rhythm of the lines to shimmer as they overlap as we move around the objects. Above: Wire Frame Reversible Bench, Shin & Tomoko Azumi, 2006, Crafts Council Collection: W156

Right: The cushioning quality of the industrial felt used by Jane Atfield (usually used to buffer impact between moving parts of machines) is put into the new context of furniture. The material is used to simultaneously create structure, comfort and replaceable layers during its life cycle. Right: Felt Chair and Footstool, Jane Atfield, 1992, Crafts Council Collection: W105.1 & W105.2

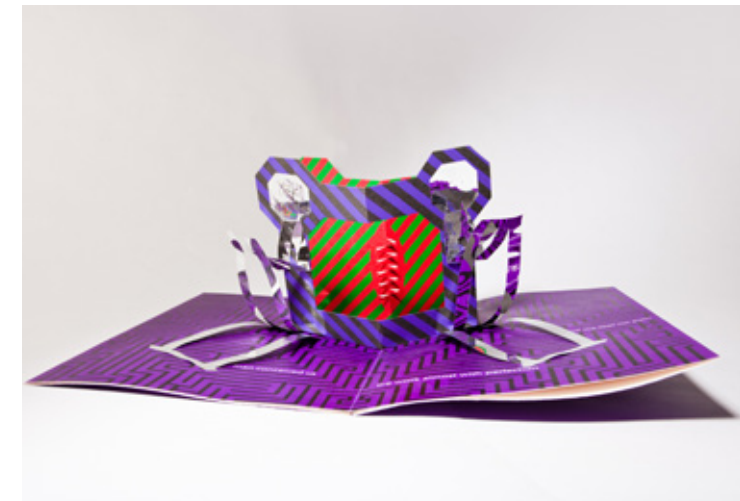
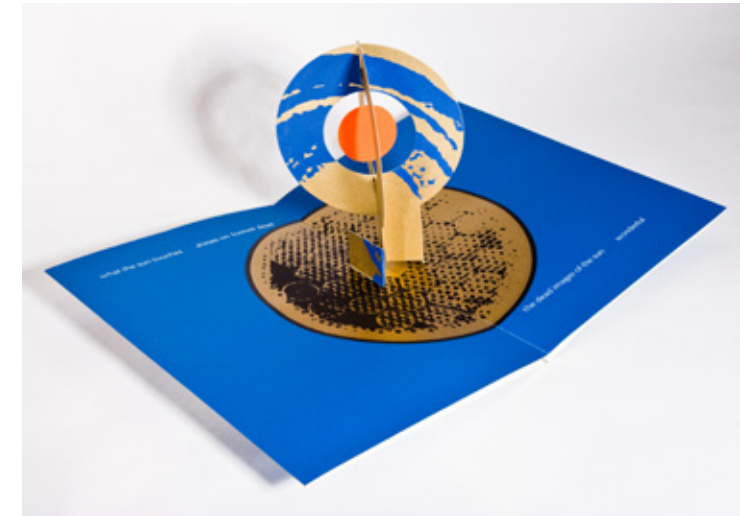


## Off-plinth

### Theme 3

Top, middle & below: Taking pop-up books to a new audience, this object could easily fit in the previous theme (experimentation), but I chose to put it here because the kinetic pages take the reader on a spatial journey through Ronald Kings's Bluebeard's Castle. The text, typeset by Walter Taylor in the form of butterfly wings, conveys the history of the Bluebeard story, in particular Bela Bartok's opera on which the visual theme of this book was based. I feel like this prospectus sits across the boundaries of set design, way-finding and information guide.

Top, middle & bottom: Prospectus, Bluebeard's Castle, (containing 9 pop-up designs) Circle Press, c.1972, Crafts Council Collection: AM150. © Ronald King (Circle Press)





## Off-plinth

### Theme 3

Right & far right: Perfume Sir? and FACTORY are examples of performative exhibitions that bring 'making' techniques out of an industrial setting and into the 'world'. We experience craft and making 'off-plinth' and these performative pieces are content in and of themselves - regardless of outcomes or their usual contexts in production.



'Perfume Sir?', by Design Marketo X Le Labo was a multi-sensorial exhibition inviting designers to create an object inspired by *Poivre 23*, a scent by perfume makers Le Labo and renowned French perfumer Nathalie Lorson. The event happened over four days during the London Design Festival in 2013, where designers could explore the scent of pepper, making multi-sensory objects in a limited run.



Above and right: 'Perfume Sir?', Design Marketo X Le Labo, 2013, London. Courtesy of Amandine Alessandra for Design Marketo

## Off-plinth

### Theme 3



Right: FACTORY was staged at Icheon World Ceramic Centre, South Korea, a country which acknowledges the 2003 UNESCO convention (unlike the UK) to safeguard intangible cultural heritage, craftsmanship and the environment to transmit their skills and knowledge to others.

Above: FACTORY with Yongjun Cho, 2017. Image courtesy of Korea Ceramic Foundation

Below: FACTORY with Rita Floyd, 2017. Image courtesy of Korea Ceramic Foundation

Neil Brownsword's research into North Staffordshire's ceramic heritage culminated in a show of six performances by ex-industry artisans and Korean master potters, entitled FACTORY. As a performative installation it reflected upon notions of place, skill, people and material objects left behind following the process of industrial change.

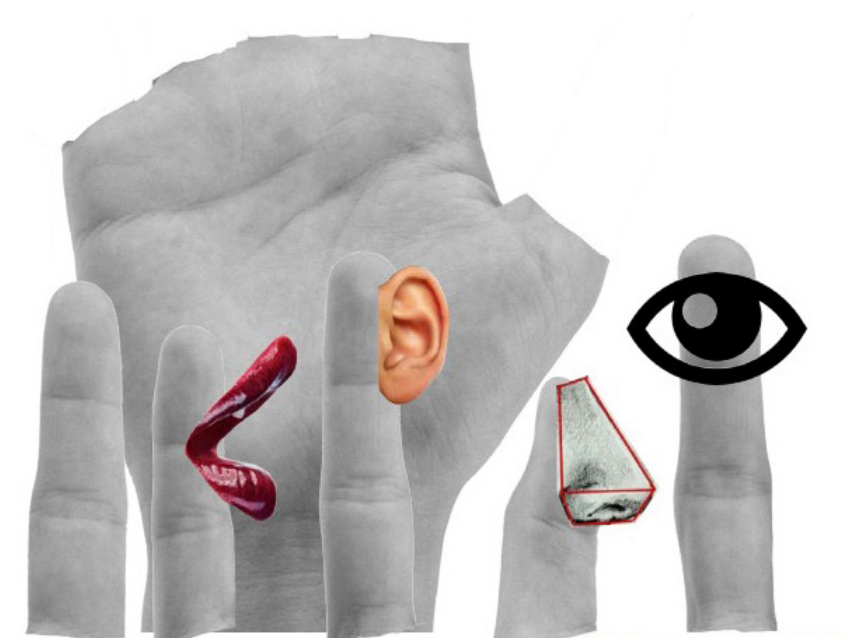


# 4

## Conclusion

### Machine ghosts and scissorhands: reclassifying a craft collection

In this document, I set the scene for conversations about how hand, heart, mind and machine can work together to create new typologies, visual languages and the joy of making ideas. In doing so, the potential outcomes of collections and typologies of classification need to evolve, become more discoverable and reflect the way that making today is an active and changing enquiry.



Left: Fuzz Side Table by Study O Portable. Courtesy Gallery FUMI. The object playfully mimics the process of Baum cake making - rolling and layering to build up the cylindrical form.

Above: Making as an active and changing enquiry, where hand, heart, mind and machine can work together to create new typologies. Montage: Shai Akram, 2020

My curatorial criteria for reclassifying a craft collection has been to move away from the existing focus on materials, makers and purposes - instead this research proposes the use of models of production (from industry to unique studio, and in between) as categories to group objects and typologies. As I explored in Chapter 3, my research brings items together under different umbrellas, making new connections, relationships and stories.



## Conclusion

In the exhibition, 'La Manufacture: Labour of Love', at The Lille Métropole 2020 World Design, curator Lidewij Edelkoort observes that, "at the start of the 21st-century, the discipline [of craft and making] returned to the human hand. It came as an antidote to the disconnected nature of industrial design. However, the hand [still] wanted to be stimulated by some form of mechanics." Edelkoort compares this phenomenon with Edward Scissorhands. "Designers began hacking printers and reconstructing looms, inventing new [bespoke] half manual, half automated machines. It's a beautiful period in which man and machine began working hand in hand."



Above: Man and machine working hand in hand. Edward Scissorhands: unless you can make it, it only ever stays an idea.

Image: Edward Scissorhands. Credit: Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 1990/Buzzfeed

The outcome, then, is an optimistic, actionable proposition for reclassifying a collection as a resource for making in the future. Because, unless you can make it, it only ever stays an idea.

### Shai Akram

Shai Akram, Curatorial Fellowship

## Credits and permissions

### About Shai Akram

Shai is a maker-designer and co-founder of Studio Alt Shift, a London based practice set up in 2006 with Andrew Haythornthwaite. The practice is dedicated to the design and research of spaces, furniture and lighting.

[studioaltshift.com](http://studioaltshift.com)

### About the Artisa Foundation

The Artisa Foundation is a charity that fosters professional development in The Arts, working with universities, museums and other cultural bodies to develop new awards, fellowships and residencies that can support creative talent and innovation.

The foundation focuses on supporting the development of curatorial roles within leading arts organisations, offering graduates a multifaceted, immersive experience to act as a steppingstone towards the next stage of their career.

[artisaorg.uk](http://artisaorg.uk)

### About the Crafts Council

Founded in 1972, the Crafts Council is the national charity for craft. We inspire making, empower learning and nurture craft businesses. We believe craft skills and knowledge enrich and uplift us as individuals, and, in doing so, will change our world for the better.

[craftscouncil.org.uk](http://craftscouncil.org.uk)

Shai Akram, Curatorial Fellowship

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This is the inaugural Artisa Crafts Council partnership curatorial fellowship. Selected from an open call, Shai Akram was appointed Curatorial Fellow in November 2019.

### **Selection panel**

Zoe Whitley, Director Chisenhale Gallery  
Matt Smith, artist, curator  
Annabelle Campbell, Curator: Creative Partnerships & Programmes, Crafts Council  
Adriana Paice, Director, Artisa Foundation

### **Crafts Council Project Team**

Malaika Byng, Editor, *Crafts* magazine  
Annabelle Campbell, Curator: Creative Partnerships & Programmes  
Emily Collins, Digital Manager  
Hannah Ford, Programmes Producer  
Natalie Melton, Creative Director

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Adriana Paice, Director, Artisa Foundation

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