



Interact: Contemporary craft in a digital future

A Craft Australia Online Forum

Teachers' resource

The *Interact* forum site is an excellent teaching aid for students developing a profession in the crafts. It presents relevant issues that can be discussed in class and online. *Interact* can also be used by teachers and students as a research resource containing a diverse range of information on topical issues for the contemporary craft sector.

Below is an overview of the articles that appear on the site and suggested discussion points. To read and print out articles and discussions go to <http://www.craftaustralia.com.au/phorum/index.php>

Interact articles and discussion points

Choose one or more articles to discuss as a class. Read the article then use the following questions to stimulate discussion in class and then include your responses on the *Interact* site.

'Translating concepts into Applied Ideas' by Jane Andrew

Jane Andrew is the former Executive Director of Craftsouth Centre for Contemporary Craft and Design, a not-for-profit Industry Association of over 300 designer/makers and artists in South Australia. For *Interact* her article 'Translating concepts into Applied Ideas' examines the capacity for creative industries to function in a new economy and discusses how Craftsouth's Applied Ideas project addresses these possibilities.

- How do craftspeople engage with industry?
- What kind of skills and training do you think you would need to work with manufacturers and retailers?
- Do you see yourself developing a practice that engages with industry? Why/why not?
- Do digital technologies make it easier for craftspeople to engage with industry

'Untitled' by Suzie Attiwill

Suzie Attiwill is a Senior Lecturer in Interior Design and the School of Architecture and Design RMIT and maintains an independent practice designing exhibitions, curatorial work, writing and working on a range of interdisciplinary projects in Australia and overseas. Her *Interact* article 'Untitled' looks at the role of language in defining practice, the practice of defining, the connections made by names and the power structures that underpin these relationships.

- Suzie Attiwill asks about writing and speaking in languages that pick up on craft qualities rather than using the language of art criticism that privileges the idea over the physical process of making. How can language be used to favour process? Can you think of examples of language that might draw on craft qualities to discuss your work?
- Have you ever written or given talks about your work? Does discussing your work have an impact on its development?
- If you prefer not to write about your own work, why not?

'Handmade at the heart of things' by Grace Cochrane

Grace Cochrane is Senior Curator of Australian Decorative Arts and Design at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. In 'Handmade at the heart of things' she discusses the place of Contemporary craft practice in a global economy and in relation to new technologies. She gives an overview of the shape of crafts practice in Australia in the new century. This article has been reproduced with permission from Object: Australian Centre for Craft and Design and appears in *Object* Magazine Issue 44 June 2004.

- Grace Cochrane discusses the concerns facing tertiary institutions that run craft courses in Australia. As students what are the issues that affect your development as craft practitioners?
- Do you have access to the resources you require to develop your technical and conceptual skills in your course?
- Does your course have enough staff and physical resources to support students?
- Do you plan to continue your education into postgraduate study, if so why?
- Have you thought about how you will establish your practice after you finish studying?

'Zero to one thousand to nothing' by Robert Cook

Robert Cook is Associate Curator of Contemporary Art at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, adjunct research fellow at the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage at Curtin University and a board member of Form. For *Interact* he throws down the gauntlet in 'Zero to one thousand to nothing' and asks what is the function of craft writing, who reads it and why do it?

- Why write about craft?
- Do you read articles about craft in magazines, online or in other media?
- Have you ever reviewed an exhibition or had your own work written about? If so describe the outcomes of this experience?

'The argument against design' by Peter Hughes

Peter Hughes has been Curator of Decorative Arts at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery since 1999. His *Interact* article 'The argument against design' discusses the fate of The Practices Formerly Known as the Crafts, discussing the relationship between craft and design and the problems associated with changing names.

- Do you call yourself a craftsperson?
- What's the difference between a craftsperson, a designer/maker or a designer?
- Does it matter what label you give yourself? Why/why not?
- Is the word craft outdated?

'A match made in heaven' by Susan Ostling

Susan Ostling is a Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at Queensland College of Art Griffith University and a ceramicist who has exhibited widely in Australia and overseas. More recently her practice has shifted to curating exhibitions. In 'A match made in heaven' Susan Ostling ponders the proposal that we are natural born cyborgs and explores the potential for digital possibilities in making objects.

- Do you use digital technologies to make your work? How does this inform the development of your work?
- Do you use email, discussion lists or have a website? Does this inform your practice?
- What do you think is the future of the handmade object?

'What's in a name' by Gilbert Riedelbauch

Gilbert Riedelbauch is a practising artist exhibiting nationally and internationally. Since 1994 he has been Senior Lecturer in Computer Aided Design and 3-Dimensional Computer Applications at the Australian National University, School of Art. His article 'What's in a name?' discusses the technological options for students embarking on tertiary training in contemporary craft, the significance of names and naming in situating the practice of making objects. This article is also published in *Object* Magazine Issue 44 June 2004 in the *Interact* feature.

- What are the issues that have informed your choice of training?

- Does your training involve any professional development or business development components?
- Does your training incorporate digital technologies in the making of your work or in areas such as digital communication, networking, website design etc?
- Are the different components of your training given appropriate attention for your needs?

'Ceci n'est pas un 'basket' by Margie West

Margie West is Curator of Aboriginal Art and Material Culture at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in Darwin and has thirty years experience in museum curation and Indigenous cultural issues. Since working for MAGNT she has been involved in a range of programs including heritage maintenance and museum development for Aboriginal communities. Her article 'Ceci n'est pas un basket' discusses the way useful fibre items constructed by indigenous inhabitants of Arnhem Land have become objects of desire circulating in the Western cultural context of contemporary craft and the 'way indigenous language is slowly being translated to a wider audience and with it, and assertion of cultural value that certain outside narratives have obscured for decades.'

- Margie West discusses the relationship between the objects Arnhem Land artists make and the language the artists use to describe and refer to them. Do you think the way objects are named and described affects the way you see them?
- How would you expect to see a work of Aboriginal art displayed in a city art gallery? Do you think it would be handled and displayed differently in the community where it was made?
- Do these different contexts have an affect on what the objects mean?

Contact: Craft Australia
Suite 7 Level 1 National Press Club
16 National Circuit
Barton ACT 2600

Telephone: + 61 2 6273 0088

Facsimile: + 61 2 6273 6088

Email: craft@craftaustralia.com.au

Craft Australia supports and encourages the dissemination and exchange of information. You may download, display, print and reproduce material produced by Craft Australia in **unaltered** form (retaining this notice) for your personal, non-commercial use or use within your organisation. All other rights are reserved.



Craft Australia gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance it receives from the Australia Council for the Arts, the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body.

