

Pathways to Making explored how craft interacts with the digital world and with non-standard ways of working.

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The first speaker [Tanya Harrod](#) presented a huge variety of makers who are working in digital and non-standard ways including digital methods of production to work which references our adoption of digital lifestyles.

[Annie Catrell](#)'s work uses digital intervention to explore craft practice

[Karina Thomson](#) has recently moved from traditional production to digitally-produced craft pieces. Rapid prototyping machines (3D printing) can be used in collaboration, making pieces at home using downloaded software. The Swedish craft group SUB used this idea to create project-based work where public brought objects and described them whilst others created absurd clay models which didn't quite replicate the original objects. [To me this brings to mind whether people are able to adequately describe a made object if they are not a maker of similar pieces, and whether the person making also needs the technical language to understand a description].

Tanya also talked about how digital technology has transformed traditional crafts through increasing knowledge and sharing opportunities. She talked of the rise of *Neo-folk making communities*; and their regeneration of ancient crafts (pole lathe turning, embroidery etc) with the power of internet, for example wood turner [Robin Wood](#) has a very successful series of You Tube instructional videos. In this way traditional craft is brought into present day by use of digital technology.

But it is worth remembering that the way internet technology is able to support amateur makers is very different to professional makers using digital technology.

Another area of interest is *symbolic crafting*; where craft history is explored to comment on importance of labour and our increasing distancing from how objects are made. Forma Fantasma – Italian designers using local materials to explore localism.

[Zoe Sheehan Saldana](#)'s work demonstrates the complexity of simple objects by showing we are unable to create even the simplest objects such as matches. She also commented on how traditional crafts folk paper cutting, cyanotypes, plaster moulding are becoming popular and that there is child-like reverence for these trad-craft techniques.

[Droog's honeycomb](#) vase is a case in point: ultra-slow prototyping made by bees.

See also: <http://audioboo.fm/boos/1368276-tanya-harrod-new-folk-art-mitmpath>

Session 2

Conversations about new technology in craft

Showed film about [Heidi Hinder](#) artist and maker.

Money no Object craft and technology residency with Watershed. Heidi is a jeweller working in precious materials and often works in collaboration with museums. Before this residency she had no knowledge of digital technologies, was intrigued but not skilled in the area. She was interested in the concept of value – materials, social value etc. Her research-based work including looking at bacteria on coinage and thinking about how digital technologies have changed human interaction. She is interested in objects that create and trigger experiences and wanted to explore the idea of money becoming obsolete. Her process is about thinking through making, creating wearable technologies and making financial transactions through movement. She created **Hug** brooches to make payment; increasing opportunities for human interaction in a digital world and adding emotional value to a financial transaction. The pieces created in the residency used Oyster-card

swipe technology embedded in jewellery, so people had to make physical contact to make the two sensors communicate and make the payment transaction, such as hugging. Her initial idea was that this kind of technology might be used in museums or cultural institutions for making donations, purchases in shops and cafes etc all on one site.

She applied for a craft / technology residency with Watershed, with this idea in mind, but no idea how to actually achieve it digitally.

Watershed aims to bring together technologists, academics and artists to collaborate. They do not offer rapid prototyping etc but are more interested in location-based technologies and allow space for creative collaborations to occur. They have weekly open studios, talks etc. Digital culture is often referenced in objects and technology is used in the making process but Watershed are interested in how technology can be embedded in objects to enable them to communicate. She also mentioned about how craft can help make technology more visible as it is so often invisible; with the idea that this would make it more 'human' and allow us further interaction with technology rather than seeing it as 'other'.

Victoria Tillotson talked about coding as craft: using software as a craft material to produce objects & experiences. She also touched upon the idea of intervention into established patterns which brought to mind Amy Twigger Holroyd's research on knitters interacting and changing knitting patterns.

Session 3

The conversation between collaborators Helen Carnac and David Littler discussed how their work has morphed and developed and changed over time in and out of craft.

David's work is bringing together two separate worlds he has worked in; textiles and DJ-ing which for him allows him to make work which really represents who he is. He created a live project called *Sampler culture clash* bringing beat boxers, DJs & performance poets together with embroiderers, machine hackers, knitters etc. Inventors and pioneers. Social space to discuss, talk and develop process. No performance or end product. <http://www.samplercultureclash.org.uk>

Helen talked about the importance of walking in her work and David's active listening as part of their work; neither is actually making but is integral to their own sense of their own work, such as training yourself to listen to and become aware of all sounds and how vibration creates soundwaves. Helen collects things whilst walking and is interested in how other people collect and how their bodies interact with space. She recently worked on a project called *Side by Side* working in collaboration with a dancer after being invited by Siobhan Davies Dance Company. They were interested in documenting *process*. The dancer Helen was paired with described herself as a Maker – using her body and space rather than tangible material. The process began by sharing vocabulary; creative process is very similar; use words, research, writing and reading process. Both Helen and David have explored the idea of working without material – David has now moved entirely to performance (sonic properties of stuff) rather than making but for Helen she decided that materials are vital to her practice.

<http://www.siobhandavies.com/sidebyside/about/helen-carnac/>

<http://youtu.be/gjwIAuRJkTs>

Gareth Neal

Worked with Fred Baier which got him interested in working with digital design whilst teaching work gave him opportunity not to have to make money. His *Ann* table developed through making a mistake, it was made by hand rather than CNC machine. When he first exhibited it, it was assumed that it had been or should have been made by machine not by hand. Gareth is interested in the

relationship between craft making processes and manufacturing limitations. He realised that the general public had no idea how things are made and when invited by CAA to exhibit, he wanted to be making furniture in the exhibition to engage with the idea of making.

He's interested in furniture making tradition, partly through living in the furniture-makers area (now Olympic park...) particularly veneer companies. He created *Urban picnic project*: took over urban spaces and created pieces made of veneer-work using traditional stringing (type of veneer detailing).

He was invited to take part in the bodging project (making chairs using coppiced wood) by an academic; with the idea that taking people out of their comfort zone would be interesting. The idea was to create work for Milan furniture fair. Gareth created a chair-bench that invited people to sit together <http://www.bodgingmilano.co.uk>. This project worked with a different set of designers in its 2nd year and has created amazing career developments. Working in a different setting, working immediately without a detailed plan was very freeing. The group have continued to work together for fun as a team. One of the projects they took part in was creating commissions for Lloyd Loom. Five designers spent a weekend in the factory experimenting to create new objects, drawing three-dimensionally and using creative expression rather than worrying about the quality of the product. 13 prototypes were created by 5 makers using existing components rather than new pieces. It was fascinating to see how makers can affect manufacturers processes.

Woodland project

Gareth decided to attempt a project creating a chair using no no electrical power in the making, transportation and sale. He chose to do this after discussion with other Bodging Project makers who were exploring the heritage & environmental footprint of production (one maker had chair manufactured in China for John Lewis which enabled it to be cheap but at high environmental cost). Gareth explored zero-carbon production using woodland in Herefordshire. He found a retailer (SCP), and it was funded by University of Brighton. The team cycled to Herefordshire, camping en route and made pieces on site using materials from the site, then cycled back to shop (although pieces have not sold!). He has also worked with traditional Orkney chair-makers using modern interpretation of traditional furniture.

Exhibition of Bodging Project at Harley Gallery http://www.harleygallery.co.uk/event.php?pg_id=3&ev_id=604

Ndidi Ekubia

Ndidi talked about her experience of mentoring through the Walpole luxury products scheme. She started with degree in Wolverhampton followed by RCA then a Bishopsland residency and then set up own practice. Her work involves exhibiting, direct sales & commissions at shows such as Collect.

Mentored by [Grant Macdonald](#) (Master Silversmith) to look at business aspects of her practice. He highlighted that she makes a lot of speculative work – makes what she wants to make and hopes it sells (which it does). He also highlighted that communication was important – she talked a lot to buyers and he noticed how important that was. They also looked at her working space and how effective that was and resulted in her making space for an assistant. After mentoring process took time off from exhibitions and re-assessed exactly what she wanted to do. Has different price ranges: top end commission work, mid-range in galleries. Studio is open for people to understand making process. Film of her working process http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwN2rDT2_9M&feature=youtu.be <http://www.ndidiekubia.com/>

Jennifer Collier
Portfolio practice

Graduated 1999 in Textiles – a traditional course but she now works in techniques she has developed herself. She Juggles lots of different income streams; exhibitions, craft fairs, trade shows & selling direct to the public, plus private and public commissions. Workshops became a major part of her income stream so she decided to open Unit Twelve in 2010. Unit Twelve hosts exhibitions, has artist studios and she runs workshops there (including workshops by exhibiting artists, as well as Jennifer's own workshops). Jennifer runs and manages the gallery and workshops programme with support from husband, although there is a constant evolution and development of the way it works.

The gallery gives offer for visitors, and it is interesting to see inside people's studio. It is designed so studio spaces can be seen really easily, open to the public (with counter top to keep some privacy). Running your own venue allows you to show all your work and your working space to see inspiration, working processes etc. Visiting artists workshops happen once a month. The workshop programme allows established makers to develop new experimental ideas, as well as new makers to learn about running workshops. Exhibition programme keeps people coming back. Public love how home-made it is and that is is a low-budget family-business it is.

Studio places for other makers: Jennifer requires makers of hand-made products, high quality and only craft makers. Membership is often dictated by practicalities of the spaces available and making practice. Very specifically want craft makers in both studios and exhibitions, not fine art or other media.

Exhibitions- she finds people through meeting them at shows, some send in information which is kept on file if relevant. Open exhibition once a year allows new makers to show their work.

Plan exhibitions a year in advance if possible, sometimes 8 months ahead.

Q- Impact on personal practice? The Gallery has had a big impact but there were always lots of other pulls on her time. Trying to persuade groups to come to the studio instead of their venue is a challenge. Realistically she has 1 day per week making time; doing orders not developing new work and runs workshops every weekend - a total of 2-3 days a week running workshops. Mentoring (Kate Stoddart, an East Midlands based independent curator) 3 years ago enabled her to take time out and make a completely new body of work, Mentoring from. It was a very successful experience and has transformed her practice.

She had no funding to start up the business and finds it easier to be self-funding so they can make their own rules. Started small with the gallery and running workshops and then expanded into larger space adding on newly-converted building by adding studio spaces and having larger space for running workshops. Open to the public Thurs – Saturday. Studio tenants have to be there 1 day per week during opening days so there are people to open and people to talk to.

In first year Jennifer's own work funded the gallery but since then it has started to earn its keep. Mostly gets dedicated and serious audience who have travelled specifically to get there, and those who come are serious buyers and will buy.

Publicity: national publications have been really supportive; Pretty Nostalgic magazine and other interiors and craft publications have featured the gallery. People travel long distances rather than local audiences. Local papers and local art audience is limited, so she is trying to promote the gallery to a national audience. Selling exhibitions are not terribly lucrative, but bring regular visitors in; work has to be seen regularly to sell. The gallery's contract for exhibitors aims to be really fair for makers; they always take care of work and send it back in same packaging and pay for return post. Jennifer does not do sale or return / shop-based work and is not planning to run a shop or to buy in cheap work to turn a profit as she feels it devalues the work of other makers work

so does not help in the long run.

Jennifer exhibits at BCTF every other year and thinks it is a really good place for getting stockists / exhibitions. She still gets consistent orders despite not doing it every year.

Www.unittwelve.co.uk

Karina Thompson talked about mentoring with June Hill. It has taken 2-3 years to see the results of mentoring. She talked about developing her own opportunities, establishing if something is the right fit before applying rather than applying for everything. She is now more interested in using networks to find opportunities that are what you want to do – being proactive not reactive.

Final discussion

Q

For established businesses, what is the benefit for them to work with makers?

Breaking routines, trying new things, getting out of the safe zone.

Q what about the importance of notation within the field of craft – not good in craft field.

[recording of techniques and processes]. Digital realm came along in time to help preserve, explain and support notation of making processes. Our culture relies on written word to pass on information which gives the impression that craft is lacking in some way, but is this really relevant to craft? Accept and acknowledge that craft is learned through making although digital technology has enable people to share their making process and document how something is made. Meanwhile there is a big difference between watching and interacting. Not the same process, not personal, not tactile or interactive. There is tension between sharing making process but without giving away secrets. Interesting to see how little school children get chance to make and the importance of having school groups interact with craft and craft makers.

Q; Projects you wished you had done.....Gareth Neal talked about opportunity with BMW which he turned down!

Watershed talked about project that they managed to find a really small pot of money for a project that they hadn't really got capacity for, and the project has really taken off, despite starting from only £500.

Discussion of how long it can take to get things off the ground – processes are slow, both in terms of funding and also creative development.

Www.Watershed.co.uk :: ished section is R&D

www.pmstudio.co.uk - residencies

Importance of knowledge of handmade is still valid and vital in the development of digital practice.

Anna Colette Hunt developed an app to support her work which has been downloaded 3800 times. She thinks most of the people who downloaded it probably hadn't been to show or knew the maker so really opens up potential to attract new people to craft who wouldn't have been interested in craft before.

Discussion about batch production versus handmade products. Lush Designs moved from handmade lampshades into designers for production. Ndidi thinks designers will move more and

more to manufacture but hopefully support manufacturing in Britain.

Questions about learning about digital techniques; how do you find access to this training?

Swap skills

Tutorials and videos related to specific software

Black Country Atelier run workshops and courses

Hack spaces – workshop spaces usually volunteer run with tools, enthusiasts to support you making & developing things. Cross over with organisations with means – such as universities. Interesting networks of people

http://hackspace.org.uk/view/Main_Page