

Institution: University for the Creative Arts
Unit of Assessment: 34 Art & Design: History, Practice and Theory
Title of case study: Communities of Practice in Contemporary Craft
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The University for the Creative Arts has a longstanding commitment to the history, practice, and theory of craft. The research of the Crafts Study Centre (CSC) and Anglo-Japanese Textile Research Centre (AJTRC) has long championed the work of craft practitioners in order to find new ways of thinking through creative practice. This curatorial work, public facing in nature, has contributed to the personal, professional and creative development of a range of craft practitioners by offering an enquiry-led platform for the exploration of craft as profession. Though this research has brought numerous benefits to a wide range of people and organisations, this case study explains specific qualitative and quantitative benefits brought to a number of craft practitioners by this work.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Our research on craft focuses on the material practices and processes of making. As such the creative practitioner as ‘maker’ is central to our concern. Research has been conducted through curatorial practice and associated publications and public programmes. Through this work, researchers have sought diverse critical contexts for disciplinary and wider understandings of specific modes of craft practice and production, in a bid to elucidate more fully the social, economic and cultural values of modern and contemporary craft. Research-led curatorial practice has established a model of collaborative production that offers critical exploration of contemporary craft. In its emphasis upon the work of the creative crafts practitioner, this research extends beyond the specific individual practitioners who have been the subject of exhibitions and shows, to embrace a wider community of practitioners who have participated in group shows, events and intellectual programmes.</p> <p>The Crafts Study Centre offers a unique focus for craft research and has been an externally funded and fully accredited University Museum and Gallery located at UCA since 2000. With its significant archive of modern and contemporary British craft, and rolling programme of international contemporary crafts exhibitions, residencies and publications, it operates as a strategic institutional and sector hub for craft-based inquiry at the interface of history, practice and theory. Directed by Professor Simon Olding, the CSC also includes Kenyan-born ceramicist Professor Magdalene Odundo OBE. Olding has curated numerous solo and group shows including CSC touring shows <i>Matthew Burt: Idea to Object</i> (2008), and <i>Alice Kettle: Allegory</i> (2010), as well as collaborative partnership exhibitions with the Ruthin Craft Centre, Wales, and the Center for Craft, Creativity and Design, North Carolina, USA.</p> <p>The Anglo-Japanese Textile Research Centre was established at UCA in 2004 to consolidate and build upon the longstanding research of its Director, Professor Lesley Millar MBE. Placing the practice of making at the heart of its enquiry, this research explores continuity and innovation in contemporary textile skills, materials and practice, and offers insight into the different cultural and generational perspectives that shape and explore contemporary textile practice in both its professional and amateur forms. By situating the practitioner within a wider network of cultural organisations, funders, museums and galleries, this research has offered an international platform for the creation of new work. The research has pioneered and influenced modes of cross-cultural and cross-generational exchange and collaboration for more than a decade, as evident in <i>Textural Space</i> (2001), <i>Through the Surface</i> (2003–5), <i>Cloth and Culture Now</i> (2008), <i>Cultex</i> (2009–11), <i>Transparent Boundaries</i> (2012–14) and <i>Cloth & Memory</i> (2012–13).</p> <p>Professor Millar was awarded the MBE for services to Higher Education (2011), and the Japan Society Award for significant contribution to Anglo-Japanese relations (2008).</p> <p>Major Awards and Selected Project Funds:</p>

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- Simon Olding: AHRC: Core funding scheme for museums and galleries, Aug. 2006–July 2010: £220,500
- Simon Olding: Heritage Lottery Fund – Collecting Cultures: grants for developing Museum and Gallery Collections: ‘Developing a National Collection of Modern Crafts’, 2008–11: £185,000
- Simon Olding: HEFCE: Museums, Galleries and Collections Fund, Aug. 2010–July 2015: £350,000
- Lesley Millar: Daiwa Foundation/AHRB: Fellowship, 2003–5: £52,500
- Lesley Millar: Arts Council England, funding 2001–2013: £403,723
- Lesley Millar: Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation grant and Daiwa Anglo Japanese Foundation grant for Bite-Size exhibition, 2011: £8,000

3. References to the research

- Millar, L., *Cloth and Culture Now*, exhibition, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, UEA, 29 Jan.–1 June 2008; Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester 17 Sept.–14 Dec. 2008; The Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in London, 23 Jan.–19 Feb. 2009 (REF2014)
- Millar, L., *Cultex: textiles as a cross-cultural language*, exhibition, Gallery F15, Moss, Norway, 4 April–14 June 2009; Gallery Hå, Bergen, 4 Sept.–17 Oct. 2010; The Hub, Lincolnshire, 30 Jan.–18 April 2010; Rugby Art Gallery and Museum, 22 June–22 Aug. 2010; Prefectorial Museum of Modern Art, Okayama, Japan, 21 Dec. 2010–30 Jan. 2011; Museum of Modern Art, Gunma, Japan, 9 July–4 Sept. 2011 (REF2014)
- Millar, L., *Bite-Size: Miniature Textiles from Japan and the UK*, touring exhibition, Daiwa Foundation, London, 31 Oct.–14 Dec. 2011; Gallery Gallery, Kyoto, Japan, 25 Feb.–10 March 2012; Nagoya University of the Arts, Tokyo, Japan, 11–23 May 2012
- Light, V. and Olding, S., *Martyn Brewster: prints 1975-2007*, Canterton Books, 2008 (REF2014)
- Olding, S., *David Colwell: making chairs; Fred Baier: the right angle; Richard La Trobe-Bateman: making triangles*, a series of three exhibitions of contemporary furniture makers, Crafts Study Centre/Ruthin Craft Centre, 2010–12 (REF2014).
- Olding, S., *Alice Kettle: Allegory*, exhibition at Crafts Study Centre 24 Nov. 2009–13 March 2010; Dorset County Museum, Dorchester, 1 May–26 June 2010; Craft in the Bay, Cardiff, 24 July–19 Sept. 2010; Farfield Mill, Sedbergh 25 Sept.–14 Nov. 2010; Willis Museum, Basingstoke, 15 Jan.–19 March 2011

4. Details of the impact

The research-led programme of activities undertaken by the researchers of the Crafts Study Centre and the Anglo-Japanese Textile Research Centre has made UCA a hub of critical craft debate and research which draws together a diverse range of practitioners from across the broadly conceived fields of craft, as identified by *The Craft Blueprint: a workforce development plan for craft in the UK* (2009) which named the CSC as a specialist craft research centre in the UK. These activities afford critical reflection upon personal practice in the context of a discipline. They provide a critical platform for the presentation of work that engages and interfaces with existing and new audiences, which in turn informs and expands the education, scholarship and research of crafts.

Solo and retrospective shows are undertaken in collaboration with the curatorial researchers at UCA, and afford the creative practitioner a means to explain and explore the nature of their personal practice and work. *Fred Baier: The Right Angle* (2011–12) presented a body of work, past and new, which testified to his often radical approach to making furniture which traverses the fields of art and design. This exhibition was one of a series of three CSC/Ruthin Craft Centre contemporary furniture exhibitions curated by Olding which received 54,252 visitors in total. To mark the occasion of Baier’s solo show, the Crafts Study Centre was supported by the Artfund and the V&A/ACE Museum Purchase Fund to commission a new piece by him, *Cube in a Cube*, currently on show at the CSC. Following the presentation of *Fred Baier: The Right Angle* at the Ruthin Crafts Centre, the artist received further commissions and was one of two artists commissioned to create the *Ruthin Art Trail* – <http://www.artfund.org/what-we-do/art-weve-helped-buy/artwork/11812/cube-in-a-cube> and <http://www.ruthinarttrail.co.uk> [8].

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The exploration of discipline through exhibition is a mode of enquiry central to the work of UCA researchers. In particular, research-led critical enquiry in the field of textiles has led to the creation of new work by many international practitioners including Maxine Bristow (UK), Jeanette Appleton (UK), Anniken Amundsen (Norway), Lise Bjorne Linnert (Norway), Machiko Agano (Japan), Reiko Sudo (Japan). Amundsen has collaborated on several projects and states that 'each one has been equally challenging and rewarding, and major factors in my artistic development.' [1] (p.16) [7], whilst Bristow has valued the emphasis upon process, stating 'the opportunity for open minded speculative making is a luxury. A project where the declared outcome is a focus on the documentation of process as much as product, is therefore something of a rare treat.' [1] (p.26) [9]. UCA research has enabled creative collaboration both within and beyond specific craft disciplines. Describing her collaboration with Anniken Amundsen on *Through the Surface* (2004–5) and *Cultex* (2009), Japanese artist Machiko Agano stated 'I also experimented with some new developments, and through much trial and error created a new way of working. If I had not been involved with this project, perhaps I would have waited much longer to try out these new techniques. In this sense, this project had a very profound meaning for me personally' [3] (p.38) [6]. The 2010 exhibition *Alice Kettle: Allegory*, at the Crafts Study Centre, then touring, curated by Olding, afforded the embroiderer the opportunity to collaborate with the ceramicist Stephen Dixon in the creation of new work. The artist sold seven pieces of work with a combined value of £9,930 to private and public collections [10]. UCA research has explored the bounds of what is understood as craft practice. Collaborative research-led presentations include *Desconocida: unknown*, a political art project by Norwegian textile and performance artist Lise Bjorne Linnert (UCA Epsom, 10 Feb.–20 March 2009), and *Side by Side*, a six-week residency project run by the CSC and the Siobhan Davies Dance company that saw craft practitioner Helen Carnac work alongside and collaboratively with dance practitioner Laila Diallo (CSC/Siobhan Davies Studios, 2012) – <http://www.siobhandavies.com/sidebyside>. UCA research on craft has led to sustained and enduring international networks and collaborative enquiry [1].

Since 2001, AJTRC exhibition outcomes have toured major venues in the UK, Japan and beyond and attracted an audience of over 600,000 visitors. All exhibitions have been extended and supported by interactive digital media, websites, and publications that prioritise the artist's voice and document their creative processes, as exemplified by the web journals created during *Cultex* (2009) [3]. In 2011 the AJTRC launched the *Transitions and Influence Gallery of Contemporary Textile Artists* – <http://www.transitionandinfluence.com/gallery/home.html>, a curated website and directory dedicated to showcasing individual practitioners. While bringing new audiences to the work of craft practitioners, the research activities of UCA have also led to the purchase and acquisition of work by museums and collections. These include six pieces of work by the artists Aune Taamal, Agneta Hobin, Masae Bamba, Hideaki Kizaki, Zane Berzina, and Dzintra Vilks featured in *Cloth and Culture Now* (2008–9) being bought by the Lloyd Cotsen Textile Traces Collection at the Museum of International Folk Art, Neutrogena Wing (Santa Fe, USA) [4]. Work from previous projects is now in the Contemporary Art Society Collection (six pieces) at Nottingham Castle Art Gallery and Museum, and the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto.

Education, scholarship and research beyond the gallery are of central concern to UCA researchers who have established and sustained relationships with makers and practitioners over many years. Olding had written about the work of CSC exhibitor Martyn Brewster (*Colour and Form: Martyn Brewster, Peter Hayes and Phil Atrill*, 2010) since 1997 before co-authoring the first monograph on the artist's work as a printmaker. Exploration of practice through publication is a key part of a broader programme of practitioner and public pedagogy that offers an intellectual infrastructure for the crafts. Researchers have led an extensive programme of Artists in Residence that since 2008 has supported over 100 developing practitioners [2]. The programme is designed to bring new professional practitioners into the wider community of the university and its research centres and affords them the opportunity to create, exhibit and sell new work. 2013 sees the launch of *AIR 4*, the fourth Artist in Residence specific showcase and exhibition curated by Olding at the CSC, and the appointment of The Morfudd Roberts Textile Fellowship, which follows the Founder Fellowship of Modern Craft undertaken in 2012 by Dr Stephen Knott. Since 2010 the CSC has been a partner in 'Hothouse', a scheme run by the Maker Development Team of the Crafts Council that draws upon specialist expert partners to mentor emerging practitioners. This partnership is undertaken as

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part of a wider programme of practitioner development activities which have included:

- *Memory and Touch: an exploration of textural communication*, conference at RIBA, London (AJTRC, 2008)
- *Setting the Scene*, symposium, in collaboration with London Metropolitan University (CSC, 2013)
- *Unravelling: the symposium*, in collaboration with Unravelled Arts (CSC, 2013)
- *Working With/In Japan*, public seminar series (AJTRC, 2010–14)
- *How to Sell Craft*, workshop in collaboration with New Brewery Arts, Cirencester (CSC, 2010)
- *How to write about Craft*, workshops held across England, Wales and the USA (Olding, since 2011) [2]

Since 2008 researchers at UCA have worked with eight MPhil/PhD students whose research-led practice benefits from the platform and network of the university's craft research. Beverly Ayling-Smith, PhD student and Graduate Assistant (AJTRC) has exhibited her work in *Cloth & Memory* (2012); a piece of this work, *remembering, repeating and working through*, is now held in the permanent collection of the Whitworth Art Gallery. Ayling-Smith has also had a solo show at Gallery Gallery, Kyoto, Japan (2013), and contributed 'Cloth, Memory and Mourning' to A. Nanda and P. Bray (eds.) *The Strangled Cry: The Communication & Experience of Trauma* (Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2013) [5].

The development of audience through education is central to the work of the AJTRC and CSC and is fundamental to a shared ethos of advocating craft at all levels of the national curriculum, and in further, higher and continuing education. While the CSC has an ongoing educational programme of lectures, seminars and school activities, all projects by the AJTRC have specially commissioned teachers' packs targeted towards GCSE, AS/A Level, and school and college visits. In addition to this, exhibitions offer educational guided tours and workshops aimed specifically at the student practitioner. Educational activities reach out beyond the exhibitions and galleries, and contemporary craft practitioners are central to, and benefit from this work. In 2011–12, five craft artists worked with the CSC to engage 239 students from three primary and three secondary schools in Farnham, and evaluation of the education programme noted that one school, Farnham Heath End changed their Scheme of Work to include 3D making as a direct result of the workshop led by furniture maker and CSC exhibitor Fred Baier [2] [8].

The Archives and Collections of the CSC and AJTRC extend the craft research community and have supported 511 research visits to the CSC, including repeat visits from scholars from America and Japan working on specific collections. The positioning of UCA, and in particular the Farnham campus, as a centre of craft research and practice is evidenced by the town council's recent decision to designate Farnham a 'Craft Town'. The designation was initially proposed by a seminar chaired by Olding on behalf of the Crafts Council and Craft Net, entitled 'How to Plan the Town of Craft' (March 2011); this led to a policy paper 'Crafts in Rural Communities', published by the Crafts Council, which in turn led to the collective civic redesignation of the town in 2013.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[1] Artists' statements published in Millar, L. (ed.), *Bite-Size: Miniature Textiles from Japan and the UK* (2011), catalogue to accompany the touring exhibition.

[2] Sara Roberts, External Evaluation of 'Developing a National Collection of Modern Crafts' 2008–11 Heritage Lottery Fund 'Collecting Cultures' project (December 2011)

[3] L. Miller (ed) *Cultex: textiles as a cross-cultural language*, exhibition catalogue and project documentation (2009), and web journals <http://www.cultex.org/index.php?sid=4&id=50>

[4] The Cotsen Foundation for Academic Research: http://www.cfarfoundation.org/cfar_default.cfm

[5] <http://www.clothandmemory.com/cloth-memory-2012/>

[6-10] Details of named individuals submitted separately.