

## **2008 North Carolina Think-Tank**

The 2008 North Carolina Craft Think-Tank marked the seventh year CCCD has convened leaders in the field of craft. The number is limited to no more than 24 participants to allow for a meaningful dialogue on each of the topics. Topics discussed are introduced by participants then opened to the full group for discussion. Initiatives identified in past retreats have led to project and programs for both CCCD and institutions throughout the country. The 2008 session major points were recorded by CCCD director Dian Magie and assistant director Katie Lee and outlined in this report.

The event begins on Thursday with an optional tour that changes each year. The 2008 tour included: a) visit to the future site of the UNC Asheville Craft Campus, located adjacent to the closed Buncombe County landfill, as a demonstration of energy alternatives and green building; b) Energy Xchange, a residency program on a landfill north of Asheville that uses methane to fire glass furnaces and clay kilns; c) Penland School of Crafts. Thursday evening participants gather to meet at the opening dinner held in the CCCD gallery. Friday and Saturday are spent in discussions outlined in the report. The Think-Tank closes with a reception and dinner, held in 2008 at the Blue Spiral I gallery in Asheville. CCCD books all rooms of a downtown Hendersonville Inn for participants, providing one-on-one networking and social gatherings. A number of research projects and publications can be traced to sidebars that took place at breakfast or on the Inn's veranda.

The seventh annual North Carolina Think-Tank, convened by the Center for Craft, Creativity and Design, was held April 3-5, 2008. This annual Think-Tank began in 2002 to bring together 18-22 leading authors, curators, academics and artists to discuss how craft can be advanced in academia and the curatorial world. Participants are from throughout the U.S. with representation from craft programs in other countries. CCCD makes every effort to balance the participants geographically, by subject and discipline, and role in the craft world. Readings relevant to the topics, from diverse perspectives, are sent in packets to each participant prior to the two-day meeting. In 2008 each participant received the first issue of the peer reviewed journal, *The Journal of Modern Craft*. One to three participants are asked to lead discussions on each topic, then the topic is opened for full discussion by all participants.



Tour of future site of UNCA Craft Campus.  
L to R: Brent Skidmore, Paul Harper & Alan Elder



Tour of Penland printmaking & letterpress studio.



Tour of Penland woodworking studio  
L to R: two artists/students & Director,  
Jean McClaughlin



Tour of Energy Exchange glassblowing  
studio



L to R: Paul Harper, Dian Magie, Stoney  
Lamar, Brent Skidmore, Kelly L'Ecuyer,  
Robert Milnes, Cindi Strauss



L to R: Robert Milnes, Dian Magie, Cindi  
Strauss, Michael Sherrill, Jodi Servon



L to R: Paul Harper, Ezra Shales, Kelly  
L'Ecuyer, & Grace Cochrane at Inn.



Closing reception and dinner at Blue  
Spiral I in Asheville, NC.

2008 Think-Tank participants

**Grace Cochrane**, freelance curator and writer; 1988-2005 curator and senior curator, Australian decorative arts and design, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, AU (2006)

**Kim Cridler**, Assistant Professor, metalsmithing and jewelry, University of Wisconsin-Madison, WI (2007)

**Martin DeWitt**, Founder and director, Museum of Art, Western Carolina University, NC

**Kelly H. L'Ecuyer**, Ellyn McColgan Assistant Curator of Decorative Arts and Sculpture, Art of the Americas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

**Alan C. Elder**, Curator of Canadian Crafts, Decorative Arts and Design, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Ottawa, CN

**Catharine Ellis**, Fiber faculty, Haywood CC Professional Crafts Program; President CCCD Nonprofit/Foundation Board, NC (2007)

**Paul Harper**, Director of ALIAS, furniture design and making, currently studying for his PhD at London Metropolitan University, London, UK

**Robyn Horn**, sculptor, wood/metal, Windgate Foundation board member, AR

**Lydia Matthews**, Associate Dean of Academic Programs, Parsons, The New School of Design, NY (2004, 2005)

**Robert Milnes**, Dean, College of Visual Arts and Design, University of North Texas, TX

**Rob Pulleyn**, clay artist; developer Marshall School Artists Studios; publisher Lark Books 1979-2005; CCCD nonprofit/foundation board member.

**Jody Servon**, Assistant Professor, Director of Catherine Smith Gallery, Appalachian State University, NC

**Ezra Shales**, Assistant Professor, Alfred University, NY

**Michael Sherrill**, sculptor, clay/glass/metal, '06 Kohler resident artist, NC

**Brent Skidmore**, Director, UNC Asheville, planned Craft Campus, studio furniture, NC

**Chris Staley**, Professor-in-Charge of the Ceramics Area, School of the Arts, Pennsylvania State University, PA

**Cindi Strauss**, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Decorative Arts and Design, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, TX (2007)

***Joining the Friday afternoon discussion, the following Windgate Fellowship recipients:***

**BenJohnson**, 2006 graduate Kent State, BFA in Glass

**Andrea Donnelly**, 2007 graduate NC State University, BFA in fiber

**Tim Maddox**, 2007 graduate, Kendall College, BFA in wood/furniture

**Jennifer Livingston**, 2007 Museum Intern at Woodson Museum, Appalachian State University

**Friday, April 4, 2008**

SESSION 1

***How is the World Wide Web connecting the maker with the market? How can professional makers become better educated in alternative methods of marketing their work? How can universities prepare their craft/design students who plan craft as an entrepreneurial business?***

Supplementary reading/blogs:

- *The Heartbeat Economy: surviving in a global world.* Keynote podcast, by Peter Day, BBC Business commentator. Keynote for Smartworks Symposium, by Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. (CD in packet)
- Listing of blogs recommended by 2007 Think-tank participants
- [www.designspongeonline.com](http://www.designspongeonline.com)

Discussion leader: **Grace Cochrane** introduced the topic from the following outline:

**Marketing:**

**A: Devolved to personal**

- (Notes intended to follow Grace Bonney's more detailed discussion of blogs).
- There are many good examples where makers do all their advertising and selling through websites, e-newsletters and now blogs. This is probably a good solution for people selling mainly on their own account through eg. their studios or through crafts fairs.
- However, to date most marketing has been carried out through agents: mainly dealer galleries. These people act on behalf of their makers, in promoting, finding wide audiences and buyers, and usually working with the makers to develop brochures and so on.
- Recently, most have established web-sites to advertise exhibitions, and provide resumes and information about content.
- They aim to build up relationships with buyers and audiences, and many are reluctant to pass on contact details that encourage buyers to go directly to the maker and therefore affect sales. There are also continuing issues with responsibilities to dealers, if a maker places work in neighbouring and competing dealerships.
- Blogs that encourage personal contact between buyers and makers is a new way to go, but there are issues to consider if makers also want to maintain relationships with their dealers. Most galleries can hardly keep up with web and email, let alone the chat demands of blogs.
- **Issue:** makers have to be aware of these changing relationships and responsibilities when getting involved in direct marketing. Those with websites and blogs can refer readers to gallery agents.

**B: Specialist to universal:**

- There will still be a role for print publications: journals, magazines, catalogues, monographs.
- Many of these are specialist in their approach, content, readership and marketing (ceramics, glass, wood, jewellery and metalwork, textiles etc) or seek links with art.
- It is difficult to reach new audiences through this kind of marketing.
- In market terms, the target is not only collectors who will be drawn to specialist publications, but also people who simply want these kinds of objects around them for 'lifestyle' reasons: to have in their houses; to know the maker; to identify with the values...
- I think there could be more attention given to placing the crafts in contexts of homes and public spaces, through journals of eg. architecture and interior design, and food. There would be 'lifestyle' stories about the makers to appeal to this audience, and photographs of



objects in a context. (Ceramics and textiles were presented in modern interiors in the 40s and 50s).

- The message from people looking at business and manufacture in the global economy (like Peter Day, <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/smartworks/> for video of talk) is that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be about personal, intimate links between makers and consumers, so for crafts people 'this century is yours if you want it'. This implies consumers wanting to identify with real designer/makers through objects (or the look of it), often through 'mass-customisation', and effective personal attention in supplying it.
- **Issue:** The crafts might have to review how marketing works, ie. that it has an 'angle', a 'story', a 'target' – and a context. That may mean redefining the breadth of what the crafts are, who wants them and where they look.

#### SESSION 1 **DISCUSSION:**

*The group discussed challenges and opportunities presented by the ever increasing ability to connect via the internet.*

##### Challenges:

*How can the internet provide the intimacy between artist and collectors/customers sought by many collectors/customers?*

*How is the internet going to impact the relationship between gallery and represented artists. The gallery/artist relationship depends on issues of ethics, contracts, and now website design and development both by the artist and the gallery. Is the gallery actively promoting online? Is the information on the artist accurate? If the customer finds the artist through the artist's website should there be a gallery commission? Over the next decade, will galleries close as the marketplace shifts or will they provide the virtual as well as actual location for the object, and become the "search engine" for the consumer interested in objects and makers?*

*Can the internet be the aesthetic public square? The American Craft Council is entering this arena (see [www.americancraftmag.org](http://www.americancraftmag.org)) for blogs. For a taste of the power of the online public square see [www.imogene.org/blog/2008/03/09/confessions](http://www.imogene.org/blog/2008/03/09/confessions) written in reaction to the SNAG presentation by Bruce Metcalf and Andrew Wagner (editor, American Craft Magazine) in a panel titled "D.I.Y., Website, and Energy: The New Alternative Craft." There were 125 responses to both the review and the panel presentation that carried over into the magazine, and many websites.*

##### Opportunities:

*The internet can be used to market an idea, or relationship rather than a product. Pots in action at [www.ayumihorie.com](http://www.ayumihorie.com) is an example of the internet request for customers to send in a digital image using their favorite mug, plate or bowl, and how they use it, creating a personal connection between the artist and consumer.*

*Where is the online forum similar to Craig's List or websites like [www.Chowhound.com](http://www.Chowhound.com) for craft? Movies are evaluated by both critics, your friends, or other specific groups and this approach could be applied to craft. If you are traveling to a city, where can you find out consumer recommendations of galleries or artist studios?*

*Could there be an internet suffix .art (like .com or .net) for galleries, museums, artists?*

*Online and DIY exhibitions are being curated collaboratively, internationally, and not top-down. Open Source ([www.opensource.org](http://www.opensource.org)) is a software that allows for concurrent input or online collaboration. Artist Stephanie Syjuco ([www.stephaniesyjuco.com](http://www.stephaniesyjuco.com)) placed a call on the internet for artists to create a knock-off in crochet of a luxury handbag, and send in a digital image of the work, that led to a knock-off of the knock-offs.*

Marketing online has exploded in the DIY movement with websites like [www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com), [www.getcrafty.com](http://www.getcrafty.com), [www.Knitknit.com](http://www.Knitknit.com), and blogs such as [www.designsponge.com](http://www.designsponge.com), and [www.renegadecraftfair.com](http://www.renegadecraftfair.com). The limited edition professional craft focused on the interior design industry can be found at [www.guild.com](http://www.guild.com) (an early entry) and [www.artfulhome.com](http://www.artfulhome.com). Most of the fine craft online is still found through gallery websites, and juried websites that are specific to a medium, i.e., [www.woodfiredceramics.net](http://www.woodfiredceramics.net).

## SESSION 2

***Increasingly museums are being gifted with major collections and endowments relating to contemporary craft/decorative arts. What curatorial challenges do craft collections present within the institutions? How can craft exhibitions enhance audience development and the educational mission of the museum? There is a lack of serious press coverage for craft related museum exhibitions– how can this be addressed?***

Discussion leaders: **Kelly L'Ecuyer, Martin DeWitt, Alan Elder**

### Supplementary readings:

- Jonathan Sweet, *What museums do with objects*, *Object Magazine*, Issue 54, pp 30-34
- Timothy Anglin Burgard presentation, Session 1, *Contemporary Craft: Museums, Galleries and Alternative Spaces*, in *Shaping the Future of Craft*, American Craft Council, 2006 National Leadership Conference.
- Paul Greenhalgh *Worrying About the Modern World*, *American Craft*, Oct/Nov 07, pp. 121-126.
- Raphael Rubinstein *Critical Mess, Art Critics on the state of their Practice*,

Discussion Leader: **Martin DeWitt, Founder, Museum of Art, Western Carolina University**  
Mission, policies and procedures should guide the acquisition of any new collection. The challenges are developing resources, identifying adequate storage space, and the technology support needed for the collection. Driving some acquisitions is donor relations, and how the collection relates to developing other resources for the museum. If the museum has a clear curatorial plan, that identifies all resources needed, this will help when approached by a donor wanting to gift a collection.

Discussion Leader: **Alan Elder, Curator of Canadian Crafts, Decorative Arts and Design**,  
When I joined the Canadian Museum of Civilization in 2002, I was charged with the development of a design collection to join the Museum's craft collection. The beginnings of the craft collection can be dated to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Initially, the collection of handmade objects was the responsibility of the Museum's History division, but a designated position responsible for craft was established within the Museum's Cultural Studies division in the mid-1980s.

There was no similar responsibility for a design collection in a Canadian national institution before my arrival at the Museum. The modern industrial notion of design had been constructed in opposition to the Victorian and Arts and Crafts emphasis on the handmade. Rather than one person being responsible for the conception and making of an object, industrial design separated the efforts of the designer and the maker (or makers). The Museum had acquired industrially produced objects before my arrival, but they were collected under the aegis of 'design'. Because the Museum focuses on the role of objects as reflections of their time, we collect and display objects that have been traditionally referred to as 'craft' as well as those that fall into the category of 'design'.

After I joined the Museum, Omer Arbel's 2.4 Chair appeared in publications such as *Wallpaper* and *Dwell*. The chair intrigued me for many reasons: one was my difficulty understanding how to

categorize it—was it craft, design or architecture. Arbel had trained as an architect, but is interested in creating furniture designs as well as buildings and interiors.

From the beginning, Arbel planned to produce the chair in a limited number. A great deal of handwork went into the chair: developing prototypes, constructing the mould, pouring the resin and polishing the final product. And each chair in the edition was different—consisting of different colours of resin, poured into the mould by Arbel alone.

If 'craft' refers to an object that the maker has had a role in its conceptualization and its making, can Arbel's chair be considered craft? Does his interest in pushing the boundaries of materials place Arbel into the realm of industrial design? Or, because of his educational background, should we consider the 2.4 Chair to be a personalized piece of architecture—a machine for sitting? How do we develop parameters for craft in our public collections? Are we hampered by too tight of an idea about craft and design and nomenclature?

The Canadian craft collection includes the Massey collection of over 900 functional craft objects gifted to the museum in the 1980's. Beginning in the 1970's Seagram's offered awards to national craft artists (not just functional) that were such an important recognition that there are examples of artists working outside their medium. This collection now includes about 2000 objects from the 1970's to present day. In the past the museum was about building a collection. The paradigm has shifted to now looking at holes in the collection and dealing with donors that might contribute work that will fill these holes. This has also led to important relationships between museums, with one museum sharing duplicates in their collection to fill the hole in another museum.

**Discussion Leader: Kelly L'Ecuyer, Ellyn McColgan Assistant Curator of Decorative Arts and Sculpture, Art of the Americas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.**

The MFA Boston is a *big, old* institution, and there is a question of where contemporary craft fits into this encyclopedic collection. Curatorial tastes and preferences in collecting change over time. When the MFA was founded in 1870, its mission was similar to the V&A and centered on the ideal of "art, industry and education." Many of the museum's founders were connected to the Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston, and various initiatives related to craft and art education in Boston. So in those early years, the Museum collected what were then contemporary decorative arts and crafts, like a Tiffany mixed-metals pitcher made and accessioned in 1876. As the interest in craft changed over decades, some work was de-accessioned. In the early twentieth century the MFA de-accessioned Rookwood pottery that today would be valued as important examples of the late nineteenth century Arts and Crafts period. For decades, from the 1920s to the 1970's, modern craft was not added to the collection in any meaningful way. Right now, it's probably one of the fastest-growing areas in our collection.

The MFA Boston's collection of studio craft really began with the "Pleased be Seated" program of the 1970's (copied by many museums). The founding curator of the Department of American Decorative Arts and Sculpture, Jonathan Fairbanks, commissioned studio furniture makers (using NEA grants) to make gallery seats that were accessioned into the collection. Since then the MFA has amassed a huge collection of American studio craft, 1940 to the present.

The divisions in a large museum are sometimes referred to as silos and they can be somewhat idiosyncratic. At the MFA, contemporary painting and sculpture is collected in the Department of Contemporary Art, but because of institutional tradition and curatorial interest (going back to the 1970s), studio craft remains part of the American department. Other departments also collect contemporary works – fiber arts in the Textiles and Fashion Arts department, contemporary ceramics and baskets in the Asian art department, and some studio craft in the Art of Europe department. The museum has formed a Craft Strategy Team to encourage communication and collaboration between these various departments in the field of modern craft. The Museum will

also exhibit significantly more craft and decorative arts when its major renovation and building project is complete in 2010. The American Wing will display art in all media from the Pre-Columbian era to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The West Wing will be remodeled as a Contemporary Wing, which will include a large gallery for craft and will also attempt to better integrate modern craft and other art media.

There is a generation of craft collectors who are beginning to give collections to museums and plan their estates. Some issues arise when donors wish to give very large collections – numbering in the hundreds of objects – to a museum. Often craft collectors find it easier to give everything to one institution, and don't want to separate the collection because of their love of the objects together. While this is generous, it raises questions of storage, display, conservation, connoisseurship, and interpretation. It becomes especially tricky when the collector is also a major donor to a capital campaign. Museums must make sure that while the donor benefits from a tax advantage for a charitable gift, that at the same time the museum can actually use and maintain the art for the benefit of the public. The collection must fit into the Museum's collecting strategy and must be cared for and made accessible to the public, whether through display or publication or on the web. All of this requires a great deal of time, space, expertise, and money. Curators are naturally acquisitive, but when it comes to huge collections, we have to ask ourselves, how much is too much?

## SESSION II. DISCUSSION

*Historically museums have been built upon collections. **In the next 10-15 years there is going to be a massive transfer of craft collections to major museums.** Prior to 1970, only a few U.S. museums collected studio craft, such as MFA Boston and Minneapolis. When MFA Houston began collecting contemporary craft in 1990's they were considered to be on the front end.*

*Collector restrictions can limit how the collection will be displayed and interpreted. It is important for curators to encourage donor flexibility. Perhaps there could be a session at SOFA or Art Basel Miami with curators and collectors outlining some of the issues and options of donating collections.*

*For example, as more museums develop studio craft collections, the loan or exchange of work that are duplicates for one museum, and fill a hole in the collection of another museum, should be an option for curators. There is a collegial nature between curators of craft, and willingness to share a collection (if allowed by the gifting collector). This is easiest for museums within a region. An option is for the collection to remain together digitally, while duplicate work is loaned or gifted to museums needing this work to complete their collection.*

*One suggestion from the group would be a compiled museum "wish list" identifying the "holes" in museums collections that would be a resource for collectors and museums with duplicates.*

*Curators agreed that craft shows have the highest attendance within museum programs, because they are accessible, and people enjoy hearing about the process.*

*Partnering university curatorial studies programs with museums needs to be encouraged, giving students an opportunity to learn of the issues for curators working with craft collections.*

*Since only a small percentage of any museum collection is on public view, opening storage areas for viewing is another option such as the Arizona State Museum, Ceramics Research Center.*



**SESSION 3. Friday afternoon sessions related to academia, through several topics.**

**SESSION 3-A. *What changes in program or degree requirements would be most helpful for graduating BFA craft students to prepare them to enter the field professionally? How important is it for the maker to study the history of craft?***

Discussion leader: **Kim Cridler**

Discussion introduced by Windgate Fellows;

2006 Kent State graduate, BFA Glass, - **Ben Johnson**

2007 North Carolina State graduate, BFA Textiles – **Andrea Donnelly**

2007 Kendal College graduate, BFA wood/furniture – **Tim Maddox**

Discussion leader: **Kim Cridler, University of Wisconsin-Madison, metals:**

This begs the question of what it means to enter a field professionally. And I am going to insert a romantic plea for the liberal-arts-education/do-you-want-fries-with-that school of thought. I don't work at a trade school teaching my students to become bench jewelers, which, by the way, I consider to be an entirely reasonable thing to pursue. I teach within the parameters of a craft discipline in an art department at a research university. People come into my classroom and they are not sure of their potential, their capacity. It is my responsibility to teach them not only a certain set of tools that deal specifically with the physical properties of metals, or what's hot in the marketplace (and how to look beyond that). I want them to awaken their imagination, to develop critical perspective, to learn to take responsibility for the past and to hold that up to the future, to cultivate discipline, curiosity, and the willingness to be wrong and fail, and hopefully the determination necessary to build a practice that is embedded in both the pleasure and pain of creative work and to find a way to make it last a life time. In short, I want them to learn how to be better human beings through craft.

There is value in a liberal arts education. Trade schools that create specialized training for artists, such as art school where they produce the next round of New York gallery artists and fresh-out-of-grad-school art professors, or a craft program that specifically caters to create products ready for consumption at AAC shows are looking at the problems and questions fundamentally attached to an artists success in the market place. For me, that is shopkeepers calling the shots, and it is boring.

The things that matter about a liberal arts education, the things that matter in art and literature are things that concern all of us. It is broadly interdisciplinary, as is the history of my discipline. Talk to me about the real and urgent physiological and psychological issues of being human. Power, love, status, desire, longing, mourning, commemoration.... physiological needs of hunger, protection, containment, support. That is my discipline, that is Metals! I feel it is necessary to reinvestigate our inheritance from craft, from utility, from ornament. This history is as broad as possible, it reconciles us to life. In my view each discipline within craft and the history of the field as a whole must be studied for its own content and ways of knowing, history, formats, materials, functions, and meanings to have the potential to contribute.

What I see in the DIY movements and in students lining up for interdisciplinary studies is a desire for art to serve humanity rather than art – that artists are concerned for their audience (empathy) and the place of art within a social context. This is not a new idea, Danto was wrote about this in the 80's with his directive that art making should be in the serve of humanity rather than the art world (86 Philosophical disenfranchisement of Art); John Stewart Mills dealt with this issue 100 years earlier, of art not serving the new, but the needs of humans. Well, this material, this potential is what craft is all about. The root relation to utility, craft as serving physiological and psychological needs; the physical process of synthesizing concept and material, or craftsmanship; as an antidote to the consumption of mass-produced commodity; and an opportunity to make objects as a measure of the hand, and by extension, as a measure of humanity-all these things live in craft.

I am in favor of providing students with a broad perspective of the career opportunities available to them through this discipline, but I am unwilling to have them watch the finish line before they even learn how to make work, before they even learn what it is within themselves that commands them to make. I think they need to have a safe place to risk and fail and learn how to try again – that is a rare and precious opportunity. Then students should be going out into the real world, testing their ideas, finding ways to make a living and gaining experience.

I left grad school and knew how to make a living – I worked at Starbucks! They have great health benefits even for part-time employees. But I had something more precious. I had a practice; something I felt I had to do and I knew it was broad enough to provide me with a lifetime of meaningful work.

**Ben Johnson, 2006 Windgate Fellow, glass** I began school taking business classes that pleased my parents but not me, so I switched majors to the arts. This beginning actually really helped me after graduation. Kent State University’s program introduces students to all crafts. The class that I think was the most valuable, was a one-semester class called “Professional Practices” at the very end before graduation. The course covered opportunities, gallery relations, contracts, shipping, etc. and it was a lot in one semester and could easily cover two semesters. Making art is only a part of working professionally, you need an understanding of business and how to connect with your audience and market your work. Another part of the Kent State program that was very valuable was visiting artists, and internships with professional artists. This provides more real world experience – and much more of this is needed before graduation.

**Andrea Donnelly, 2007 Windgate Fellow, textiles** When I entered NC State University, I began as a biology major, switched to psychology, then entered the College of Design, that introduces entering students to all design areas including textile, landscape, interior and architectural. It wasn’t a program about crafts, since other craft mediums were not present. Textiles were a large part of the Annie Albers Design program. I fell in love with textiles. It was a help to begin the program after initially studying other subjects in my undergraduate career. My preparation for life after graduation was based on relationships with individual teachers. The school offered a “Contemporary Issues” class but this was on why you make art, not practical issues. Senior studios have been phased out. Applying for the Windgate Fellowship was a learning experience in preparing a proposal. My recommendation would be more visiting artists, it is like vitamins! Also include more seminars about resources in the community and how to search for these kind of things. I am now in a Penland concentration, that is filling in the gaps in my education – surrounded by craft artists.

**Tim Maddox, 2007 Windgate Fellow, wood/furniture** I began Kendall College of Art and Design as an illustration major. Required to take a selection of courses, I took a woodworking course with a charismatic teacher (Brent Skidmore). The most important educational experiences were in the humanities, art history was important but I regret the lack of a history of craft course. The most important part of the program visiting artists - to see how they operate in different areas.

### SESSION 3-A GROUP DISCUSSION

*Chris brought forward four steps in the creative process (learning how to learn) “unconscious incompetence; consciously incompetent; consciously competent; unconsciously competent (the sweet spot).”*

*The common thread from all three graduates was the importance of bringing real life into practice. Some of the suggestions that came from the group and graduates of ways to improve the programs for students graduating with a BFA in craft media:*

- *More experience with collaborations in problem solving. Craft education emphasizes individual production too much. It helps to bounce ideas off other students in developing solutions.*
- *There is too much emphasis on individual critiques rather than integrating process and product with other courses.*
- *Themes that relate to humanities and sciences would be valuable, with outside people coming in from all areas showing the inter-relationship between art and other subjects. Professional consciousness is emphasized today – with theory and practice integrated, as well as studio and the humanities.*
- *Creating a sense of community in order for students to broadly value their educational experience is lacking in most colleges and something students must find on their own. Recommendations for creating a community setting for students (from graduates) include lunch time pot-lucks, a movie (relating to arts/crafts/design) a program blog.*
- *Visiting artists are most important, and programs should include more.*
- *Internships with professional artists, like Kent State's Blossom program, placing students as an intern with an artist over 16 weeks of the summer, provides a practical grounding that is so important entering a career after graduation.*
- *Alumni would be one way to continue mentorship after college, and it would be an important asset to alumni relations.*
- *General debate on the value of a general education vs. emphasis on practice. As an undergraduate taking liberal arts courses "one whako course" might be more important than a professional practices course.*

### SESSION 3-B

***As a museum intern, what were the most valuable educational skills that helped in your internship, and what areas could be strengthened in preparation for working with craft in museum collections and exhibitions? How important is it for a curator to experience making?***

Discussion leader: **Jodi Servon**

**Jennifer Livingston**, 2006 Windgate Intern, Woodson Museum

Discussion Leader, **Jodi Servon, Assistant Professor, Arts Management, Appalachian State University**

Internships are valuable experiences for students considering careers in museums and art organizations. These opportunities enable students to familiarize themselves with the culture and inner workings of art institutions. Typical internship programs expose students to the areas of curatorship, exhibition design and production, education and public programming, public relations and development, administration, and registration. When working in professional settings, interns are able to experience different management and leadership styles as well as organizational structures. These learning experiences help students identify opportunities that are attractive — or unattractive — for future employment. In this session, we will address internships and what we hope students will learn in these situations.

In addition to internships, we will discuss how to best equip students with an educational foundation for a range of museum careers including: curators, collection managers, education coordinators, and exhibition designers. Some questions to consider: While we may agree that it

is important to be trained as skilled writers, thorough researchers, effective problem solvers, does it significantly benefit students to be capable artists, and to be knowledgeable about visual culture, theory and art history? Should studying craft be treated differently than other artistic disciplines? What coursework would we recommend? How can the effectiveness of coursework be assessed? Are there other relevant experiences that we would recommend to students to make them attractive candidates for employers?

Today, curators enter the field from wide ranging academic and professional backgrounds. Some curators receive degrees in public history, curatorial studies and arts administration in addition to degrees in art history and studio art. Depending on the scale of the institution, curators have different responsibilities and relationships with objects in their care. At some institutions, curators are asked to conceptualize new exhibitions, write catalog essays and prepare didactic text in addition to handling objects and cultivating relationships with donors and lenders. While at other institutions curators are more focused on research and writing. How does their educational background impact their performance as curators? Is it essential for curators to have made art in an academic program to be effective professionals? If so, why?

With the emergence of additional professional degree programs, is the field able to accommodate all the graduates that are produced? What accountability do colleges and universities have for assisting students with finding employment? What expectations do institutions have for people entering the workforce with an undergraduate degree? Masters degree? Doctorate?

#### **Jennifer Livingston, 2006 Windgate Museum Intern, Woodson Museum**

I worked with three artists over 12 weeks for a program called “Big Red Carved in Stone.” This was a very hands-on residency, working with the artist residencies, assisting them and documenting and updating materials on the website, working on publications relating to the exhibit. Each of the artists were different to work with from wanting help with the construction to only occasional feedback.

#### **SESSION 3-B DISCUSSION**

*An effective internship must have the commitment of the museum, and mentor/curator identified. There should be a start date, a specific number of hours, specific schedule, with interns keeping logs.*

*In a large museum it should be understood that undergraduates are not going to be allowed to handle objects. If the student wants the type of experience Jennifer had, as an undergraduate, the smaller museums would be the better match.*

#### **SESSION 3-C**

***What are the pros and cons of establishing a Ph.D. as the “terminal degree” for studio craft faculty?***

Discussion leaders: **Paul Harper, Chris Staley**

Discussion leader: **Paul Harper, Director of ALIAS, furniture design and making, studying for Ph.D. London Metropolitan University.**

It is only in the last 30 years that courses in UK schools of art have had degree status, and unlike other disciplines, postgraduate study has not, until recently, been seen as an essential preliminary to professional practice. However, as we have seen changes in the Higher Education (HE) sector in which schools of art and design have become parts of the new universities, we have seen a proliferation of post-graduate level study. All disciplines in the new HE culture are expected to participate in ongoing research assessment. This participation has been driven by government funding equated to research ratings. Models of research appropriate

to art, design and craft still occupy contested territory. There is some debate around what, precisely, 'research' in these fields actually is. Whilst this has led to some genuinely creative thinking about methodology, about what constitutes knowledge and about how knowledge can be transferred or communicated, there has also been some, deserved, scepticism from other disciplines. Some practitioners who teach have taken to calling their practice 'research', and research funding has sometimes been regarded as just another way of supporting that practice.

In other academic disciplines there are established conventions relating to the theory and practice of research, shared knowledge foundations and understandings of criteria for attainment.

Of course, much creative practice can be framed as a process of investigation, but this is not quite rigorous enough for the academic context. The bid for academic credibility has seen undergraduate students having to prove themselves through academic modules such as 'professional development' and 'contextual studies' (which have tended to reflect the hegemony of cultural studies across the humanities), and a growing preoccupation with assessment procedures. For students this has tended to produce false expectations of a professionalized career path and a conservative attitude to learning that is antithetical to the speculative, experimental and progressive spirit that one might hope to find in our schools of art. Furthermore, students often experience a gap between their academic studies and their studio practice. For Phd students this gap can amount to a crisis. They invariably reach a point where they say "I just want to get this over with so that I can go back to making work!"

If we accept that the proper goal of research in art, craft or design should be more and better art, craft and design then the gap has to be healed. Much work is still needed to resolve the contested territory of practice-based research. If you choose the doctoral route then you will need to establish an infrastructure within your schools of art that will demand more (unconvincing) PhDs to feed itself. At this time would it be more useful to encourage more research into practice and to develop an open, mutually respectful dialogue between researchers from a range of disciplines and art and craft practitioners? Out of which could emerge a more meaningful epistemology of practice, and a sound basis for a research culture.

Only in the last 30 years have there been any degrees associated in the craft programs. All areas are expected to participate research and research assessment. Models of research still occupy contested territory – Exhibitions count as a "research outcome" = ---preoccupation with assessment procedures.

**Discussion Leader: Chris Staley, Professor-in-Charge of the Ceramics Area, School of the arts, Pennsylvania State University.**

An argument can be made that the Arts are the most important subject being taught in schools today, precisely because of its subjectivity. We live in a time of such rapid change that we should be asking questions about the consequences of these changes. More than any other discipline the Arts are defined by the questions they ask.

One of the most talented graduate students I have ever worked with almost failed his oral exams. His ceramic work was stunning. Yet he was a person of few words and had a difficult time answering the questions he was asked by the faculty on his MFA graduate committee. He did pass but was so upset by the whole experience that he later asked me "Do they ever teach love at this university?"

Three books I suggest relevant to the discussion: *The Absent Body*, by Drew Letter (DeCartes, I think, therefore I am) ; *Has Modernism Failed?* (art is a noun, craft is a verb) and Walter



Benjamin's essay, "Cezanne's Doubt." Also the quote from *Young Men and Fire*...it is in the world of slow time that the art and world come together."

### TOPIC 3-C DISCUSSION

*If there is an interest in "moving up the academic ladder" in an administrative role, a Ph.D. is required, but it is not necessary for the development of an artist.*

*In academia funding for a doctoral student is 3-4 times that of a MFA student. Art educators and historians do not get hired without a Ph.D. and the requirement in design fields is being discussed heavily in the U.S.*

*Academic institutions are corporate driven because the university receives more money. Research funds go to universities, research centers of excellence, with PhD candidates, and research grants keep the university running.*

*Corporate model may also have influenced grading system, trying to make art quantifiable and measurable.*

### SESSION 3-D

***How can craft research and scholarship be encouraged at the MA and Ph.D level?***

***Discussion on RFP for university to sponsor a seminar with peer-reviewed papers read.***

Discussion leader: **Robert Milnes**

Discussion leader: **Robert Milnes**, Dean, College of Visual Arts and Design, University of North Texas.

Graduate Student Symposia On Craft History and Criticism

Graduate student symposia on research are sponsored on many topics in the arts, humanities, business, engineering and social sciences throughout the nation. Different than craft or art symposia that focus around an exhibition and the work of the individuals involved in the show, which often feature a presentation by the critic/museum curator generally selecting the works in the show, or a group of professionals in the field talking about their work or the current state or future of the field, they focus on scholarly, publication focused research within a discipline. They stimulate research, aid in the professional development of graduate students, and disseminate scholarly information in the field.

They bear organizational similarities, in some cases sponsored by faculty and in others sponsored by students. The (most often) university-hosted symposia generally follow the format of having a keynote address by a major figure in the field and one to two days of presentations by graduate students or panels of graduate students. The presentations are screened in advance, and then, in many cases, analyzed and discussed on site by a panel of faculty, perhaps including the keynote speaker. Larger examples include panels oriented around themes with moderators; smaller sessions may include individual or small panel presentations either focused on a single conference theme or in the smaller examples, more open-ended. Proceedings from the symposia are then distributed in print and/or online.

Examples include:

"Certified Authentic? Counterfeits, Copies and Constructions" The Seventh Annual Graduate Student Symposium at the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture." <http://student.bard.edu/~kn362/> student sponsored 2008

New College (Florida) Conference on Renaissance and Medieval Studies:  
<http://faculty.ncf.edu/MedievalStudies/index.html> (*institutional sponsorship*)

University of Michigan Mechanical Engineering Graduate Council student symposium:  
<http://me.engin.umich.edu/Gradcncl/Symposiums/s03/> *student sponsored*

The annual University of Arkansas College Art History Symposium  
<http://www.uca.edu/news/index.php?itemid=1246>  
which, in 2005, featured speaker Howard Risatti! *Faculty Sponsored*

Looking Closer: AIGA Conference on Design History and Criticism (2001)  
<http://www.aiga.org/content.cfm/events-looking-closer> *professional organization sponsored*

And indicating their prevalence in some fields, even a metasite on Medieval and Renaissance symposia:  
Adrienne DeAngelis's Resources in Art History for Graduate Students: Symposia of Renaissance and Baroque Interest" <http://www.efn.org/~acd/RenBaroque.html>

This session will discuss the possibility of creating and hosting an ongoing symposium for graduate students working in the area of Crafts History and Criticism. Discussion topics will include symposia themes, potential hosts, formats, and funding sources.

#### SESSION 3-D **DISCUSSION**

*As the last session of the day, this did not receive a lot of discussion, but endorsed by the group as a way of encouraging and recognizing graduate research in the field.*

### **SATURDAY, April 5, 2008**

#### SESSION 4

***What is the status of public and private foundation support for studio craft in the U.S. compared to Australia, Canada, England, Europe? In what ways could the support in the U.S. be encouraged and increased?***

Discussion leaders: **Robyn Horn, Grace Cochrane, Alan Elder, Paul Harper**

Discussion Leader: **Robyn Horn, sculptor, Windgate Foundation Board Member**

I am certainly not an expert on the status of public or private foundations in the US, and their support of studio craft. I can only speak for our foundation and offer comments about our approach, which I think is unusual. Windgate is a family foundation set up to donate to non-profit organizations, and we have a few board members who are supporters of studio craft. Many foundations require major documentation for grants. Because we are more involved with most of the craft organizations who apply for grants, we have more of a personal relationship sort of approach to things. We have found that challenge grants are very effective, and give the non-profit organization a way to leverage a grant in a most beneficial way. Most of the challenge grants we have offered have been matched by private donors, not by other foundations. From our perspective, approval of a grant relies heavily on the aspect of the non-profits leadership and staff. And it is generally easier to obtain funding for programs rather than for operating expenses. Having never served on any other type of foundation board, I have no idea what the criteria for decision making is for others.

Foundations set up mission statements and limit their focus just like non-profits do. I'm not sure what would be involved in changing a mission statement, or adding an interest like studio craft to a foundation's agenda. In a family foundation, the areas of interest are indicated by the

interests of the individual board members. Increasing general interest in studio craft would be beneficial not only to encourage private donors to contribute, but to instill an interest in craft in those who might establish a family foundation.

One of the limitations I have noticed is that some foundations as well as private donors seem to be medium specific. The wood collectors support wood programs, but would not consider sponsoring a ceramic exhibition. There are similar support groups for most of the main areas of craft. It is difficult for artists who do not fit nicely into a particular medium to be invited to participate in exhibitions or to indirectly benefit from a grant from these support groups.

There is an organization called Grantmakers in the Arts which has a conference every year. I have considered attending to see if there might be other attendees who would be open to supporting studio craft and the visual arts. Most seem to support the performing arts.

There is a Tipping rule that applies to grants in the U.S. No more than 2/3 of a charity's support can come from a single source over a two year period. So non-profits are forced to explore multiple sources for their funding which is healthy. Foundations rarely donate to a newly established non-profit, but want to see a track record from the organization to inspire confidence. A well established non-profit can benefit from publicizing grants that come from influential foundations. To some, a grant from the NEA is like a nod from the art cardinals that this organization is worthy. So finding a way to increase the NEA's interest in studio craft could not only help with a craft organization's funding if they got an NEA grant, but can encourage additional funding from both private donors and private foundations.

I did some research on the NEA web site, and it's difficult to tell about some of the projects, but very few seem to deal with the visual arts, and fewer still with studio craft. And most grants seem to be fairly small and for a specific program. As Dian mentioned, it might be a perfect time for the American Craft Council to take a leading role in approaching the NEA, and encouraging them to think of studio craft as a major category. Under the ACC's new leadership, we have a good opportunity to change things. But Andrew will need a supporting membership and board to help him with such a major endeavor. Maybe several craft organizations need to combine efforts to make our voice heard.

Discussion Leader: **Grace Cochrane, 1988-2005 Senior Curator, Powerhouse Museum, Australia**

**A: Public support:**

- Most support in Australia and New Zealand comes directly through government arts funding bodies. These cross all artforms.
- State and Federal governments provide capital and recurrent funding for major art galleries and museums. Regional areas also funded by local govt.
- Cultural funding bodies for arts organisations and artists in all artforms:
  - Australia: the Australia Council for the Arts, and funding bodies in each of the eight states and territories (Arts Victoria, Arts Queensland etc). They often share projects and organisational funding. (Craft Australia and state crafts/design organisations are funded primarily in this way.)
  - New Zealand: Creative New Zealand: Toi Aotearoa.
- Austrade, and NZ Trade and Enterprise, have some initiatives to do with export than can benefit the crafts.
- In Australia there is a Cultural Gifts Program, where donors of funds and (agreed) objects benefit from tax incentives.  
<http://www.ato.gov.au/nonprofit/content.asp?doc=/content/30662.htm>
- There are some federally-funded initiatives in Australia to seek partnerships with the private sector, eg.

- <http://www.abaf.org.au/> Australian Business Arts Foundation: a company of the Australian Government, est. in 2000. Promotes private sector support for the arts: through Partnering, Volunteering and Giving. Works with the business sector, the arts and cultural sector (organisations and individuals), the philanthropic sector (foundations, trusts and individuals), and local Councils.
- The ARC (Australian Research Council) offers funds for research projects through universities; mostly they seek 'industry' partnerships; orientation was generally towards science, although arts projects also receive funding.
- A number of university research centres, eg. RMIT University's Design Research Institute.
- CHASS: Council for Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences: advocacy/forum (eg. arts and the government's 'innovation agenda'.) <http://www.chass.org.au/>

#### Issues:

- This infrastructure provides opportunity to collaborate across government levels and with private sector.
- Govt. bodies can assess arts employment, audiences etc from eg. Aust Bureau of Statistics; they can develop strategies and programs as a result of broad discussion and analysis (refer Arts Tasmania's *An Island Inspired* document.)
- Refer new federal governments ideas summit [www.australia2020.gov.au/](http://www.australia2020.gov.au/) .
- Some good programs for sustainable arts practices (mentorships; MMM: maker to manufacturer to marketplace; Springboard etc).

Discussion Leader: **Alan Elder, Curator of Canadian Crafts, Decorative Arts and Design, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Ottawa, Canada**

In Canada, most support comes through government bodies and public policy. Massey report after WWII was the basis of the founding of National Library and National Council for the Arts. Crafts was not a part of the original mandate. Final report included reports, initially did not recommend funding of crafts, where FINE ARTS should be funded. When in 1957 Canadian Council was formed crafts was included that funded individual artists.

In the 70s and 80s people were receiving fewer grants, so the Chalmers family lobbied the Canadian Council with funds to support craft artists and projects. The fund also supports work of researchers. Impact of that is that other parts have been opened up to craft.

Canada Council and National Council offer a \$70,000 research grant for an artist in residence program to allow artists work with industry. An example is looking at rapid prototyping, a cross between craft and industry such as artist Lilly Younge with textile and plastic jewelry.

The Samuel & Sady Bromfman Foundation \$1.5 million endowment, provided that one of Governor General's Award to craft.

Canadian Council funding has been increased. Each province has a state council and each support the craft. The Ontario Arts Council integrated Design into Arts and Crafts, but then stopped. Quebec is the only one supporting only design, and is the strongest in the country.

Foundation support is not as strong as in the US. Three family foundations have been the main support for craft.

The challenges in Canada are that most arts/crafts programs are dependent on Government funding and therefore subject to changes in Government. The progeny of the three families have other interests – there is a need to develop a whole new generation of funders. There is a perception among foundations that arts/crafts museums and organizations are funded by the government therefore do not need private support.

Discussion Leader, **Paul Harper, Director of ALIAS, London**

Principal funding in England is the Arts Council of England, nationally organised into 9 regions. In the South West region there is a .5 post allocated to the crafts, although other officers will also have some responsibility for supporting craft makers. Grants require a 10% match, and individual artists, as well as organisations, can apply for funding. Arts Council effectively had a 30% cut last year when funds were pulled for the Olympics, including the “Cultural Olympiad”. Priorities for funding will follow strategic goals and governmental policy objectives. Some organisations will have a ‘regularly funded’ status, which works in three-year funding cycles. Last year many organizations funding were cut. Theatres were able to launch a successful lobbying effort, with the support of high profile actors acting as spokespeople, and some cuts were reversed. Similar efforts for visual arts are harder as artists who have a wide public profile tend to be regarded with derision or fear.

Lottery Funding is enormously important but is not totally focused on arts - shared with heritage sport etc. For example, the Olympics will be disproportionately funded through the Lottery. Local authorities have very small funding, usually employed as seed funding.

Crafts Council offers some direct support for a small number of makers, through Development Award for new makers. Also currently offering ‘Sparkplug’ award for curators and exhibition development. Other support in terms of learning resources, exhibits etc. In truth has very little impact on vast majority of makers.

Private foundations are smaller, often have narrower agreements, and are more restricted in funding arts projects. There are however a small number of Trusts that are devoted largely to supporting the arts – such as Esmée Fairbairn.

The Jerwood Foundation offer an annual prize for the applied arts. Until this year the prize has been rotated by media, but it has been relaunched as Jerwood contemporary Makers, with a shortlist drawn from a range of disciplines. The award will have a 3-year cycle and instead of one maker getting the prize, £30,000 will be divided between all of the selected exhibitors – this year 7 makers.

Economic development is a source of support for design particularly. The emphasis is on support for ‘Creative Industries’, an unhelpful descriptor that has been used to embrace everything from individual artists to film production companies. Development agencies have begun to assert a more focussed business model in describing creative industries and subsequently funding has been more clearly directed in terms of economic benefit – they employ measurable objectives such as job creation, growth in tourism etc.

Researchers receive support from academic Research Councils. This has become a significant source of funding for certain kinds of practice, associated with academic institutions, that can be described in terms of ‘research outcomes’.

Staffing is probably the hardest thing for arts organisations to fund. Such posts are usually vital - example of Project Development post for Sculpture Trust, which has been crucial in building relationships; raising the profile of the Trust locally, nationally and internationally; fund-raising; providing support for artists etc.

There is free admission to publicly funded museums.

#### **SESSION 4 – DISCUSSION**

*England, Canada and Australia have support for craft at the federal level as well as state level.*



*There will be a new national US administration as of 2009, and a new appointed Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts. Each Chair shapes the NEA to their particular area of interest – for Ivy it was folk art, youth and community programs; for the current chair the interest is poetry, language arts, and the “fine arts.”*

*After the 1994 U.S. election of the “Moral Majority” and their efforts to eliminate all funding for the arts, the NEA budget was drastically reduced. This resulted in a limitation of one grant application a year from an organization. For a museum, this means the craft/decorative arts program must compete internally with other museum programs for the opportunity to submit a grant request. Individual artists grants were eliminated after the 1990 Mapplethorpe political debate.*

*The other loss for the arts, was the passage of “No Child Left Behind” focusing on testing of math and reading skills, is that most children in public schools since 2000 no longer receive art and music in the classroom. Connections, networking and bridges need to be made to decision makers and private foundations (like the Gates Foundation) to recognize this loss and need for creative thinkers in the economy of the future.*

*In what way can there be a collaboration of craft organizations to support a NEA Chair appointee that favors craft support from the federal level? Can the American Craft Council take a larger role in this advocacy? Strategic partnership will be key to include Americans for the Arts, a national arts advocacy organization.*

*On the positive side in the U.S. there is a generational shift in philanthropy, with endowing of positions, making it permanent and releasing these funds for other difficult to support needs – like utilities. ACC could take a role in encouraging this type of philanthropy for the health of the field.*

*There needs to be national advocacy for the incentive side of funding. It has long been recognized that craft/artists are responsible for revitalizing cities. What tax or other incentives can be encouraged to assist with the craft industry. Arkansas and Kentucky communities are marketing with various incentives in craft magazines for artists to move to their community. While large incentives are offered to manufacturing firms (often closing soon after locating as they are outsourced) there isn't the same support for the craft industry, one of the strongest components of the “creative economy.” There needs to be advocacy with economic development agencies for the entrepreneurial small niche business – of which crafts are one of the strongest. Creative Capitol, a nonprofit funded through foundations is the economic development approach for the arts – providing funds for artist development over five years.*

## SESSION 5

### ***What are the tensions and opportunities of digital technology, new materials, and multiples for makers of studio craft?***

Discussion leaders: **Catharine Ellis, Michael Sherrill**

Supplementary readings:

- Reskin: *Wearable Technology Lab*, Stephen Barrass, *Object Magazine*, p.46.
- *Digital Craft Aesthetic: Craft-Minded Application of Electronic Tools*, J.R. Campbell, *New Craft-Future Voices, Conference Proceedings 2007*.

Discussion Leader: **Catharine Ellis, Fiber faculty, Haywood Community College**

I can speak only of these issues in the textile field. I have been an educator at Haywood Community College's Professional Craft Fiber Program for 30 years with a focus on

handweaving. I taught students to design, weave on hand looms (some with computer interfaces), make multiples, access technology when available and be open to the possibilities of new materials as they prepared to become studio craftsmen. At HCC we have been working with the traditional model, promoting the “idealization of the autonomous craftsman” (Ezra Shales, “Technophilic Craft” American Craft, April 2008). It’s the model we’ve known for years and I cannot stress enough the importance of learning about materials and process in a “hands-on” fashion.

But a recent development in my own work has caused me to question a great deal.

My own fabrics incorporate the woven structure (hand-woven) with a dye technique (hand dyeing). Both the weaving and dyeing are integral parts of the finished fabric. Several years ago I realized that it probably wasn’t necessary for me to weave the fabrics by hand provided I could design them. But there was no easy access to industrial weaving. I ventured into a partnership with several other people to explore the idea of translating my original process to industrial production. We had fabrics woven in a mill and worked with industrial dyers, only to learn that the hand process was not easy to translate directly to industrial process without some serious R&D.

In the meantime The Oriole Mill, a small specialized Jacquard mill, opened right here in Hendersonville, NC. During the last year I have focused on learning Jacquard software , exploring a much expanded design vocabulary, and learning the opportunities and limitations of industrial weaving, while continuing to dye my fabrics by hand.

During these last months I have begun conversations with other weavers and textile artists who might be ready to think about textile production in a new way. These are dialogues that need to take place within the field of textile artists/makers. There will be prejudices to break down, and opportunities to explore and education to be expanded. Until now, only a select few handweavers and designers have had access to mill production for “one-off” art pieces.

I have committed to continue working with The Oriole Mill to develop new products for the marketplace and continue the process of textile education. Next summer I will co-teach a class at Penland with Joy Boutrup, Danish textile engineer, which will explore industrial production and hand finishing.

#### Tensions-Opportunities-

Multiples-Not making “art”

Reputation of the artist among peers

Boredom or stagnation

Damage to the body

Easier to make a living

Greater number of customers

Streamline by working with others

Refinement that comes with repetition

Digital technology-Appropriate technology may be hard to access or time consuming to learn

Temptation to “skip” the hands on learning

Fear of “selling out”

Giving up control

Rapid pace and so much information to process.

Expense

May not be appropriate to traditional craft markets

Efficiency: learning, designing and making

Allows one to control some processes more

Opportunity to create new products (such as Jacquard and industrial weaving)

Access to digital interfaces such as Jacquard looms, printing  
Greater flexibility to interpret designs  
Partnerships with others and industry  
Opportunity to develop new markets-New materials -Not always easy to access  
Requires staying up to date  
Requires research and development  
Often requires partnerships with industry  
R&D often leads to new ideas

Discussion Leader: **Michael Sherrill, sculptor, clay artist, owner Mudtools**

Anecdotal – technology has never scared me, but is a way of realizing visions in one way or another. It is possible to make the technology human; to make the digital world work for us. Tool making has made me think of multiples in structure. As it relates to other artists, technology is moving so fast, there is a big learning curve. To make this possible I have relied on partnerships that do not take away from final project.

For my Mudtools company ([www.mudtools.com](http://www.mudtools.com)) designing tools for the ceramic artist, it requires partnerships with companies and engineers who will work with me on the design to produce tools. I want personal time to work on art, so this is about thinking smarter rather than trying to work it all out myself. A company with laser polymer equipment, making rapid prototyping available in Western North Carolina, has become a partner. Their labs and cad systems can take the design and identify how the tool can be designed.

## SESSION 5 DISCUSSION

*There is a myth of the solitary artist working alone in his/her shop – a review of history from Paul Revere to Tiffany to Chihuly can break this myth. There has been a long tradition of the artist/craftsman developing a design, that is produced in limited edition by apprentices. This is the importance of the upcoming history/text.*

*There is a gap between design and technology, requiring collaboration that works best where the artists is grounded in the materials and knows the process very well.*

*The educational system is set up academically to reward the individual through the grading system, while collaboration and team building experiences are much more valuable in preparing for a successful career.*

*The small specialist industry that markets to a niche market, and behaves like a craft industry, is the best potential partner for limited edition production. If the artist/designer develops the prototype, it is the small industry that can put it into production. Economists point to this approach as the future of economic development rather than the large manufacturing. See the Innovator's Dilemma, by Clayton Christensen, and Co-opetition by Barry Nalebuff and Adam Brandenburger. The Medici Effect by Frans Johansson, managing director of Medici Capital Management, "looks at how individuals, teams and organizations can create an explosion of remarkable ideas at the intersection of different fields, cultures, and industries."*

*Architecture programs, modeled on the Rural Studio concept of MacArthur Award winner Sam Mockbee ( such as the Studio 804 at Kansas State University), give students hands-on experience in problem solving through a collaborative and community based process.*

*Olin, an experimental and unbelievably successful engineering school in Needham, Massachusetts, teaches us a new way to think about the relationship between learning skills and the successful practice of a discipline. They brought together professors from diverse backgrounds--liberal arts scholars, designers, scientists, engineers-- who invented a radical*

*approach to curriculum. From day one, before they learn any skills in "101" type courses, the freshmen students are given something vaguely familiar, like a heart monitor thing for your finger. They are assigned to work in collaborative teams and together they have to figure out how this finger monitor works, and make their own version that is functional. No one told them how to do this, or what sorts of information they would need to access in order to be successful, but after two weeks, all five groups came back with some sort of funky version of the thing that actually worked. This gave them a huge amount of confidence in their research and design ability and they discovered the importance of particularly kinds of knowledge that they wished they had known more about. As a result, they were eager to take those rudimentary courses since they understood their value. They understood that skills could be learned along the way in the service of trying to create something--the concept drove the desire for acquiring skills, and not vice-versa, as we are usually taught. (Lydia Mathews)*

## SESSION 6

***The language and relationship of craft to design and "fine" art is internationally debated. How does the inter-relationship differ for universities, museums, and makers?***

Discussion leaders: **Brent Skidmore, Cindi Strauss, Rob Pulleyn**

Supplementary readings:

- *Craft and Design. What's the Distinction?* Essay by Howard Risatti, American Craft, Feb/Mar 2008
- thinking through craft, by Glenn Adamson, introduction and book review
- *Simon Starling: Crafting the Modern*, by Tag Gronberg, Journal of Modern Craft, vol. 1, issue 1, pp 101-116.
- *Placing Craft*, by Tanya Harrod, paper in place(s), edition 03, 2006; Think Tank, A European Initiative for the Applied Arts.

Discussion Leader– **Brent Skidmore, Director, UNC Asheville Craft Campus**

Howard Risotti's perspective seems to be weakened by the lack of distance needed from the examples cited, time within the university or something else. His stance on the handmade, and human touch, are where the power lies. But his, and that of Tanya Harrod's, separating and distancing craft from design seems inappropriate and unnecessary. It has been my experience, as a maker and an educator; those in design are willing to unite with craft. I don't think design is as abstract process as they both seem to put it. Design is so focused on function.

Part of me wants to say that we should all "shut up and make something". For it is this "making" that makes the connections to human like no other if one is a maker. But for those not, is it the function, the handmade or sheer joy that exist at our core that another human has made this object and I am therefore "connected".

Confusion for our students exist in how we present (house) disciplines within the university complex. I am a product of such a system.

Glenn Adamson's, Thinking Through Craft..."open to debate and dissent as well as affirmation" Bingo! But not so different than art in this way.

Humans have been searching for meaning for some time, this is not a result of industrialization. No, instead as we moved from using our hands to walk, we began to make. What cognitive affects lie within this evolution? Are we mostly sane because of a century of making?

Discussion Leader - **Cindi Strauss, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Decorative Arts and Design, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston**

For centuries, art museums have aimed to categorize the works that they collect so that their presentations tell a story. Whether that story is organized by media, era, influence, geography, or some combination of the above, directly affects the visitor experience, in

particular, the educational lessons of that experience. Art historians and academics reinforce these canonical structures. Overall, it is easier to digest a century's worth of art and culture if works are organized into categories and definitions are developed.

The problem with this tried and true formula is that it does not adjust to the way art has been made in the contemporary (and some would argue, modern) era. Artists seek inspiration from a variety of sources, use a plethora of materials, and are trying out any means possible to achieve their desired aesthetics, often with confounding, boundary-breaking results. In this crux lies the brilliance of the creative spirit, but at the same time, it presents problems for a profession that has traditionally categorized art. How do we develop a language that accounts for the type of work that is being made right now? How can it take various viewpoints, including the maker, historian, collector, and curator into account? The conversation about design/craft is a hot topic right now and it offers a good case study from which to discuss these issues.

For museums, the design/craft issue can be either a very straightforward or complicated problem. First and foremost, the degree of engagement with these issues depends on what type of museum we are talking about. For self-defined craft or design museums, or defined craft or design collections within a larger museum, there is a need to have some type of definition and structure. Often that definition exists on a sliding scale that does not always serve the best interests of the object. Works are shoehorned, sometimes, uncomfortably, or without thought to the larger context into separate craft or design categories. Language to support these aims is developed. Often it seems as if more attention is being paid to why an object is or is not craft/design, than to the object itself.

Museums that have one collection that encompasses decorative arts/craft/design as a whole do not have the same kind of pressure to defend curatorial choices on the basis of which realm an object exists in. Rather, it is all about the art itself. The freedom that this allows - to judge an object for its artistic and cultural merit - encourages curators to think about the objects in many different ways without having to rely on certain constructs. While museums also generate plenty of research and analysis of the objects that it collects, until the collecting of and theories about these objects are equal to the spirit and intention in which they are made, we will continue, as a profession, to go around in circles on this issue

**Discussion Leader— Rob Pulleyn, ceramic artist, developer Marshall School Artist Studios**

It frequently feels to makers that there are institutions, individuals and organizations that are having an active art/craft/design conversation and establishing definitions, however tentative, without due regard to the makers themselves. These definitions and inter-relationships of these terms are reflected in the way colleges and universities structure their courses, how critical writers parse the work and establish criteria, how academic and commercial galleries choose and display work, how collectors approach the work and how journals present and discuss the work. Many makers listen to the conversation without due regard to the effect it has on how their work is perceived by others and how they perceive their own work. Is this the result of their lack of interest? Have makers absorbed popular clichés which include the cerebral, struggling artist, the benign, poor crafter and the product obsessed silk t-shirted designer? One might argue that the craft/ art/ design nomenclature is for others to establish, but there is an immediate and important effect it has on how work is viewed, displayed, critiqued and, importantly, compensated for, and makers must be active participants in the conversation.

**SESSION 6 DISCUSSION**

*Within academia it is important to try to break down the “silos” that prevent collaboration. Craft courses in glass, metal, wood, fiber, and clay may be found in a Design Program, Fine Arts Department, or many other divisions that serve faculty and administration. Students are seeking to cross these boundaries.*



*Artists need to define the work they create through the lens of the museum, gallery, or collector. Galleries need to define work for collectors, who only take the work seriously if it is priced high. Anecdotal stories of work re-priced higher with results of better sales. Now the collectors are approaching museums with their collections.*

*The price defines when the clay object is a vase, “vaz” or vessel. In academia, it is important for the museum on campus to be separate from the art department to avoid using art department terms.*

*There is a dramatic need for more critical writing on craft to raise the discourse on craft. Writers who are also artists, like Edmund De Waal of the Craft Research Centre in England, give artists a voice to talk about their own work, not filtered through the gallery.*

*In England, there is a major difficulty in trying to position craft in post-modern theory – it just doesn’t fit. No one is talking about making. Definitions are important but we keep revisiting and never resolving the conflicts. There is no term that is overarching – craft/arts/design – that doesn’t come with baggage. In Australia organizations and centers are redefining themselves with a new connotation – such as “Object” the name of a center and magazine.*

*The Craftsman by Richard Sennett, was recommended by several for his discussion of the social currency of craftsmanship and how that relates to the emerging economies of the Anglo world.*

*There is an importance of “touch” in relation to craft objects. The museum program “Please be Seated” takes advantage of this.*

## SESSION 7

***How can we find commonality or shared values between the disparate populations and practices that now fall under the craft/design banner, and what criteria can be used to navigate the shifting landscape as old boundaries erode?***

Discussion leaders: **Lydia Mathews, Ezra Shales**

Supplementary readings:

- *Statement* by Liesbeth Den Besten, The Netherlands for 2004 Think Tank, Edition 01,
- *Smartworks: design and the handmade*, Grace Cochrane, introduction

The discussion leaders combined their presentation, alternating back and forth, to lead off the conversation. **Lydia Mathews, Associate Dean of Academic Programs, Parsons, The New School of Design**, and **Ezra Shales, Assistant Professor, Alfred University**.

This question begs further definitions of terms, as shared values are easy to generate in the abstract and more difficult to delineate without becoming more specific and differentiated to the point of specialization.

Different places to debate criteria:

Critical language: how we define craft and design as makers: perhaps a less useful starting place because the terms are too specific as generational, historical, and cultural constructs. E.g starts with the assumed ‘I’ or royal ‘we’ too much; opacity of term ‘applied art.’

Aesthetics/ Formalism/Connoisseurship: the danger of understanding things only in aesthetic terms and finished “crafted” or “designed” products: too disparate, too based upon context, moreover, problematic in terms of loss of meaning. e.g. the horrified face of one who is told that the beautifully crafted antique salad bowl they are eating out of was once a chamber pot?

Exchange-value: the danger of understanding this phenomenon only in economic terms dictated by the art/craft/design marketplace: the rise and fall of different niche markets has eroded differences between craft/design/art more than it coming out of the desire of individual artists, museums, or schools, e.g. google 'art' or 'craft' or search these terms on e-Bay. Also, the interest on the part of contemporary curators to "discover" works and include practitioners from "other" formerly more marginalized fields.

Use-value: a comparative analysis in terms of 'everyday' use (or 'function') is often one way to think of a union or overlap of craft/design but is a mapping that leaves out restraints and pressures of multiple constituencies. i.e., a gallon milk container and sterling pitcher are incomparable.

Pedagogy: Value of 'design thinking' as a system defined in social terms, from an analysis of needs and constraints to a concern with reception and changing function as well as environment. E.g. collaborative (thinking through teamwork), inquiry-based (analysis drawing on statistical criteria and also psychological-emotional resonance), connectivity (commonality as a social interface in flux, not as a stable value), distributive network (knowledge building – socially generative), thematic (reconnects media instead of isolating them), contingent (assumes temporal and relative value, not 'ars longa vita brevis' "(art is long, life short).

## SESSION 7 – DISCUSSION

*Applied art may be a better term, fine and applied art rather than "high art" and "low art." Applied art may be more inclusive, and is used in all the courses in Australia for both crafts and design fields.*

*In the museum world "applied and decorative arts" referred to the function associated with the object, and function was considered "low art."*

*Simon Starling's work is an example of the overlap.*

*The Bauhaus is the early model of the design/art/craft applied arts approach.*