

**Craft Think Tank – hosted by the American Craft Council,
Center for Craft Creativity and Design and crafthaus
October 17 – 19 2013
Montreat Conference Center**

Notes and Agreed Actions

Key Points captured from Think Tank

The following questions were asked and covered at the 'Think Tank' and these points were captured.

1. What drew you to craft? What is your relationship to craft? Why is craft important?

Family influence/upbringing/parents/school

There are some deterrents to craft - the main one being the bridge between maker and marketplace

There is also an inferiority complex amongst some craft people i.e art and design is superior!

However, there is a spiritual power and completeness to craft

Craft is not exclusive it is inclusive. There is room for everyone and this could be a key selling point to entice others to join

2. How can we 'own craft by using the right language'?

Key words discussed that could help elevate craft:

Intelligent

Mysterious

Clever

Transactional

Team spirited

3. It was agreed craft has some great attributes. The main attributes the meeting agreed upon were:

Craft is a meaningful way of life

It is an iterative pursuit of the guilty

It combines the best of traditional skills with the best of contemporary technology

It is the best of man/woman/hands and machine

It is nurturing and evolving

4. Some key challenges craft faces, particularly visually are:

How to combine/show the perfect and less perfect craft in a contemporary context

How to depict/show handicraft i.e unfinished and the perfectly finished

The need to show the transformation of the process

There is a need to try to capture the community spirit, passion and team work of craft not just the process i.e maybe we should not always show makers on their own in a lonely studio

5. What do craft need to overcome and change as a behavior to help grow the understanding of craft and the gain more traction?

Answers captured:

"Makers are sexy and making craft is sexy" - "It is not dull!!" "You need craft in your life"

There is a meaning to craft

Craft needs more exposure

Craft needs sponsors i.e famous people, senior practitioners/craft people to support craft

6. The power of brand building - a session was held to discuss the power of a brand. Various case studies were discussed and some films were shown.

It was agree that the meetings favorite case study, which was considered to have greatest relevance to the meeting and craft was - **the Innocent brand - the big knit.**

Why? It showed a collective and eclectic group taking part in an old craft in a contemporary way.

It was fun, open, demonstrated anyone could take part:

<http://thebigknit.co.uk/>

7. Semiotics - Joel Du Bois called in via Skype to present a semiotic analysis of craft. Semiotics is a study of symbols signs and the language and history of craft. This was presented to the Think Tank attendees/team. Please see a separate report attached that captures the key points and opportunities.

It was agreed that the semiotics clearly demonstrated that the market is ripe to 'drive the brand of craft forward'. People are tired of mass production and want to see, buy and value hand crafted items.

8. Lisa Witter also called in by Skype to discuss how vital behavior change is as part of the actions needed to move craft / brands/movements forward.

It was agreed that:

A plan would be drawn up to overcome the barriers for change

To identify what the triggers for change could be

To identify the motivators for change

The attendees/team would aim to develop a 'headline poster' to show and describe what craft is about. A poster that could help facilitate behavior change for the brand of craft.

9. Towards a Mission Statement/Declaration as to what craft is

The attendees to the Craft Think Tank split into teams to consider and develop a Mission Statement for Craft'. The teams looked and captured how they would like people to Think, FEEL and ACT about craft.

The following are the key outputs:

Group 1 – “Think”

The purpose of the brand of craft is to effectively communicate the purposes and values of the craft community.

Engender respect by demonstrations and actions of the values and purposes of the craft community.

Leadership through openness, flexibility and trustworthiness.

Group 2 – “Feel”

Provide topics that offer emotional attachments:

Provide craft experience that makes people included by speaking a language they understand;

Offer accessible entry points that allow people to experience craft;

Provide “moments of delight” and belonging.

Form of self-expression. Be part of a community while retaining individuality.

Supporting their countrymen – what they already know and do is part of the group at large.

Group 3 – “Act”

HEAR: Craft is everywhere – different, fun, unexpected, and fulfilling. It creates independence; it’s rebellious and connective.

USE: craft adds meaning to your home environment and creates connections in your community.

Start or elevate a movement like Empty Bowls.

**TALK: spectacle, public projects like Knit the Bridge, AIDS quilt.
Economic and environmental sustainability.**

**Real stories of emotional connection through craft. Use craft to
open conversation.**

The groups then debated the expressions above and wrote a suggested statement to describe craft and help build the brand. The description used by an organization called the D&AD, which is a UK, design and creative body was used as a guide and inspiration:

D&AD - <http://www.dandad.org/>

"The home of the talented and skilled, the imaginative and the curious, the restless

and the bloody-minded.

Commercially savvy, sometimes romantic, often cynical and occasionally rather weird.

A source of information and ideas of professional development, support and inspiration, interesting people to talk and nice things to look at. All creative life is here."

9. **Towards a defining and inspiring statement about the brand of craft. The following was developed by a team of attendees and presented:**

Craft is culture's bridge to the past and the future.

We are a world of makers, shapers and compassionate disruptors.

We are creative minds and thoughtful hands at play.

10. A poster with content to help promote the brand of craft and behavior change

The following was presented by a team of attendees as a suggested content for a poster/piece to explain and promote the brand of craft:

Headline - Everyone makes their mark

Body copy:

We are open

We are accessible and inclusive to makers and everyone who appreciates craft

We are authentic

We demonstrate honesty and integrity in what we do

We are involved

We inspire discovery and participation

Strap line - We have a rich history and we are always taking the road less traveled

It was agreed by all at the meeting that the statement/definition of the brand of craft and the suggested text for a poster was a great result. The meeting/team discussed next steps and how to progress the great work and output for the Think Tank.

11. Next Steps

- **To develop the work to be socialized with:**

ACC members, makers, and other people associated with craft

- **Gain feedback from all attendees, (post the Think Tank)**
- **Consider how to create an outreach**
- **ACC and Fenton to liaise and develop a package for distribution**

12. Further comments from attendees

- **It was suggested ACC should take the lead in driving the 'craft of brand' activity forward.**

Chris Amundsen agreed

- **A momentum is kept up for this work as such enormous and positive progress had been made**
- **The meeting agreed that the headings/main words (beyond the one presented) that could be considered as alternatives were:**

World of makers

Compassionate disruptors

Creative minds

Thoughtful hands at play

- Closing comment - The meeting agreed the Think Tank had good focus and thanks were given to all.

Notes taken by: Elly Woolston