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DESIGNER CRAFTS PRACTICE IN CONTEXT

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DESIGNER CRAFTS PRACTICE IN CONTEXT

Abstract

This research attempts to identify patterns of successful independent practice among contemporary visual arts practitioners for the purpose of increasing understanding of the structures of and activity within the visual arts in England. The intention is to draw conclusions regarding how such practice can be facilitated and supported.

Specifically it looks at a particular kind of practice in the area of design craft, and at the organisations charged with the responsibility for state provision, setting this critique in a context of a historical and social perspective.

Much of recent conventional practice in the visual arts is considered to have a narrow view of what constitutes acceptable practice and is based on the gallery-based fine arts model. This model is a dubious base line from which to encourage a healthy range of independent practice, and is of little use to the practitioners in this study, and others of similar intent. The practitioners encountered in this research might be considered applied artists, as they have a need to engage with a public during the processes of conception, creation and selling of their work.

The patterns have been documented with the assistance of concepts regarding small business, particularly a subsector called micro business. Micro business has recently been identified to describe a pattern of activity which is not conducted for profit or with goals of expansion. The motivation behind micro business is to maintain self determination.

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

This research looks at contemporary independent crafts practice. It considers the place of craft within contemporary visual arts and attempts to identify the predominant modes of practice in the craft milieu. It examines the effect historical antecedents and influences have had on the perceptions and practice of makers, networks, neighbours and interested others. Independent self-employed practice is further refined into different strands of activity which can be distinguished by ideology, workstyles and organisational settings. Within one of these strands - labelled design craft - evidence is presented of successful independent practice in a variety of patterns. The identification and examination of such patterns could inform other makers, mediators, educators and policy makers in their encouragement and support of larger numbers of people in viable independent practice within the crafts milieu. This is seen to have implications for others who are operating as independent practitioners in the visual arts.

Work which once seemed to fit happily in the jurisdiction of crafts has evolved to form new relationships with its neighbours in the visual arts, industry and society as a whole. To more fully understand the contemporary practice of the individual makers and the practice of the mediators and educators, it was necessary to trace craft's changing definitions, mythology, organisational settings and shifts in perceptions. The research attempts also to interweave the information and understandings from within the crafts and the visual arts

milieu with, albeit selective, evidence from the wider social context. A main purpose of the research is to counter the mythology which suggests the prospect of a grim and unprofitable future for the majority of people choosing careers as professional self-employed visual artists of all kinds.

In some regards, the specific area of the visual arts being examined can be viewed as a new area of activity, only identifiable since the mid twentieth century. It can be seen as an evolving response, in part, to the dilemma of a role for crafts in an industrial and post-industrial Western economy. Part of the appeal of craft as a profession is its uniqueness as a particular way of work. In this sense it offers a haven from what is perceived to be the predominant work ethos. It is seen as a respectable profession offering the autonomy of self determination and relative economic independence. This sector has also provided a haven for some fine artists and fine art graduates.[1] In this context it can be seen as a retreat from dominant trends in the fine arts world and from the attendant ideology.

The research builds on information from earlier studies and reports, particularly Brighton and Pearson (1985) and Bruce and Filmer (1983). These were surveys concerned with identifying the variety and nature of visual arts activity. The Economic Situation of the Visual Artist by Brighton and Pearson focused on the milieu of professional fine artists.[2] Working in Craft by Bruce and Filmer surveyed the socioeconomic conditions of craftspeople.

Brighton and Pearson (1985) were particularly useful to this work in providing a model of the structure of an art

world (a specific social system) and insights into the differing perceptions and intentions of artists. Bruce and Filmer (1983) provided information on the tensions caused by conflicting ambitions among craftspeople who also identify with fine art aspirations and role models.

Brown (1985) and Channon (1987) looked at the business aspects of independent visual arts practice and provided valuable information from a different perspective than the first two. Brown's A Profile of the Business of Crafts is an analysis of the results of five surveys and studies conducted in the crafts milieu between 1977 and 1982 and pinpointed areas where further research was needed to fill in a picture of the structure of the craft sector. Channon's Marketing Skills for Craftspeople is based on research of craftspeople in the South West.

A shared strength of these four reports is their contribution to the demystification of the visual arts milieu and specific sectors within it. This process of shedding more light on the visual arts also begins to delineate the structures, operating principles and practices of the visual arts milieu. This research seeks to further expose these structures, principles and practices.

In contrast to these earlier undertakings this is an attempt to provide an integrated and more comprehensive view of a narrow slice of a particular area of visual arts. The specific sector of design craft is considered to be adjacent to the segment considered by Brighton and Pearson and part of the segment covered by the three other studies mentioned.

I conducted research within the sector, drew on selected historical material and have added insights from

contemporary disciplines other than the visual arts. I have tried to illustrate both a broad and a specific picture, elucidating some of the contributing factors which seem to be relevant to the primary task of gaining understanding of successful self-employed practice in the visual arts. My approach has been similar to that described by Sparke (1986)

> "The picture...thus presented emerges as the sum of its parts rather like the way that a picture 'painted by numbers' only makes sense when it is finished even though glimpses of the final image can be grasped along the way."[3]

Little comprehensive research has been done in this specific visual arts sector, although the Filmer and Bruce report was comprehensive in providing a preliminary mapping the the independent, self-employed sector of the crafts in England and Wales. Writers and researchers such as Frayling, Dormer, Snowden, Houston, Freeman, to name just a few, have added insights on some aspects of the contemporary crafts milieu and its allied fields. The work of two American sociologists, Howard Becker and Jerry Neapolitan, have also contributed to our understanding of this field.

Researchers in art history, social history of art and sociology of art have looked at other parts of the visual arts milieu as have cultural economists. Design history is still a fairly new area of study. Craft history as a distinct discipline is just beginning. Of necessity therefore, this work reflects a synthesis of ideas extrapolated from a variety of sources.

The designer craftspeople encountered during the specific study work independently and are self-employed either part or full time. Most of them have created, or feel confident that they will be able to create, successful

professional careers. This is, in part, determined by attitudes related to their confidence in their abilities to determine their successful combination of activities. They may call themselves by any combination of labels; artist, craftsperson, designer or maker, or by the specific name related to their media. It must be noted that the perceived degradation of the term 'craft' has led to the majority not using it in self-definition.

These people do not fit the most common stereotypes of visual artists. For they are not poor, misunderstood creators of autonomous work who are unable to find a public willing to support and appreciate them. They do not aspire to become a superstar of the gallery and collector art or art craft world. Nor are they producers of work which some in the visual arts establishments may call 'too commercial' and lacking in artistic integrity.

They do not feel they fit easily under the ambiguous umbrella term of craft. They occupy a middle ground between what are our most common or folk understandings of art, craft and design. They have different perspectives, intentions, needs and opportunities from other groups of visual artists, including those of their closest neighbours, artist craftspeople and craftspeople.

Brighton and Pearson (1985) suggested two definitions of professional artist:

1.those who define themselves in a public and practical way as wanting to make a living from their art, always looking for ways and means to sell themselves and their work, and

2. those for whom the definition of artist means a personal exploration, making sense of one's life.

Many of those questioned for the study do not subscribe to either definition exclusively. They are trying to balance the tension created by subscribing to elements of both. Often to have the first definition as part of their repertoire means that these and similar visual artists are considered by some in the visual arts milieu to be of lesser stature and not 'real' artists.

The study also analyses the role and practices of the state provision through the Crafts Council, Regional Arts Associations and others in terms of their relevance to this particular sector of activity. Although, of necessity, there is some criticism of those who are in a position to influence the visual arts as a whole and specifically the crafts milieu, the intention is to be constructive throughout this analysis. Most of the detailed information, and consequently the main focus, is on the situation in England but information from Scotland, Wales and further afield has also informed the discussion.

Some initiatives by state providers have contributed to the success of these and similar visual artists. The analysis also seeks to show, however, where this provision has been lacking. In the same manner I have looked at some educational provision within art schools - for their influence is undoubtedly a major one. Some educational and training opportunities outside the art schools are also included.

Certain biases in this work are already evident. It does not endorse a concept of a hierarchy of inherent aesthetic values of visual arts activity, but recognises

a hierarchy of both financial value and access, related to a socioeconomic hierarchy of support.[4] It is my contention that the dominant course of recent conventional practice in the visual arts as a whole, and especially crafts, is bound up with a particular view of what constitutes acceptable visual arts practice. This view appears to be grounded in an implicit assumption that contemporary policy and practice, for most visual arts receiving public support, should be patterned on the gallery-based contemporary fine arts model. This influences the thinking and practice of policy makers, funders, educators, administrators and other mediators as well as practitioners throughout much of the visual arts. Of particular interest here will be the practice of those connected with what has been known as the craft, design craft or art craft segment.

The gallery-based model is considered to be of dubious value as a base line from which to encourage a healthy range of visual arts practice in general, and is of little use to the visual artists in this study, and others of similar intent.

Gallery-based models present various constraints. Of most relevance to this discussion are two restrictions in particular:

1. Gallery-based models provide limited opportunities for only a few visual artists, and

2. The gallery format may be considered to be in conflict with some of the products and the aspirations of the visual artists in this research and others of similar professional intent.[5]

It seems that inherent in a gallery-based model are the principles of scarcity, rarity, and hierarchy of visual arts pursuits. An essential element in a gallery model is, therefore, the practice of denying access to many who aspire to participate in this arena.

The concept of hierarchy would have us believe that fine arts in a gallery setting represent the apex of achievement for the visual artist. The galleries themselves are seen to be in hierarchical order. This notion also subscribes to an ascending order of quality of work to be found within galleries. Thus visual artists are to be encouraged to work their way up the ladder to the sanctified gallery environment where 'true art' can flourish beyond the confines of the crass socioeconomic environment. Those who mediate and legislate on behalf of the visual arts often see a primary responsibility of their role as having to provide these rungs on the ladder through a variety of exhibition opportunities. To follow such a course of action denies the limitations of gallery and exhibition modes of practice.

Galleries also define, and thereby restrict, the concept of what constitutes visual arts products because only certain kinds of visual art works fit in to the gallery environment. Explaining this Cork (1974) said,

> "The National Gallery is the prototype of art's official containment ... All the disparate kinds of commission have dropped away, one by one, and in their place a single, uniform space has asserted its dominance, ... regarded as the automatic repository for art work, ... [its] natural destination ... a universal solution to where art can find a place in contemporary society... [and] a system of presentation which rips art out of the specific social contexts which produce it."[4]

The gallery-based model for visual arts other than the

contemporary fine arts of a certain kind has influenced the work of practitioners who would not necessarily have had aspirations to operate exclusively in that milieu.

In the case of much within the crafts milieu in particular, the gallery setting does not always enhance or do justice to the work. The problems which can arise include those noted by Coatts (1988) in her review of the Tex-style exhibition.

> "The exhibition as an experiment highlighted the eternal problem of the functional crafts - that they do not speak loudly enough on their own (and why should they?) in anything other than a domestic setting, in use or in a very much scaled-down and sensitively planned gallery. It is because such works fare better in a shop, where their tactile qualities can also be legitimately appreciated, modern craftspeople have wisely (or unwittingly) responded to the situation with ever larger and more arresting works - exhibition pieces."[7]

The gallery setting can also undermine one of the essential elements of much craft, that of function, and can distance the objects from any sense of usefulness, other than objects of contemplation. A similar concern was expressed by Banfield (1984) talking about an exhibition of machine art at MOMA in New York in 1934.

> "MOMA's purpose... was not to show people how they could add meaning to their lives by buying useful objects that were also pleasing to the eye. Rather it was to display machine-made products that could be experienced-well, almost-as fine art."[8]

In order to examine the gallery-based model more closely it is useful to think of it as a concrete expression of a set of beliefs. These beliefs concern the nature of contemporary fine art and the nature of other kinds of visual art and visual artists. These beliefs, to be discussed in more detail in the ensuing chapters, highlight what I consider to be a view of the visual arts

which reiterates and gives form to elements of myths relating to the specialness and separateness of a particular kind of 'Art'.

Visual artists such as those in this study subscribing to both a private and public definition of art and artist, often combined with notions of craft and craftspeople; design and designer, do not find the gallery-based model to be the most useful or the most suitable venue or opportunity. For these practitioners have a strong need to engage with a public, their customers, or an audience. This engagement with their social milieu during the processes of conception, creation, showing and selling is not in keeping with orthodox gallery practice. Further, the gallery-based model emphasises the autonomous product of individual artists, and thus generally excludes the work of those who work in collaboration.

The recent expansion of public art schemes can be seen as an attempt to broaden the opportunities for artists beyond the gallery. However the dominance of the orthodoxy of gallery-based models has influenced the implementation and practice of the schemes. Apart from issues such as the public display of private art (rather than truly public art) and the method of selection through (often publicly funded) mediators, the style of an implementation of programme often precludes the participation of some designer makers and other visual artists of similar intent.

By documenting patterns of success in the visual arts beyond the gallery-based model, alternative models will be available for new entrants to the field, and for those still attempting to build careers. It is hoped that providers, mediators, educators and policy makers will be

encouraged to extend their understanding of what the range of what may be considered appropriate aspirations, opportunities and practice. Thus fewer visual artists may choose to pursue a career struggling for acceptance in the limited gallery-based worlds. And non-gallery practice will once again be a legitimate, sanctioned choice of activity.

Fine artist superstars and their Art Market dominate both the general and the art press and thus are the most public of the visual arts. Other spheres of activity including both the Craft World and the Design World also have a share of superstars who garner relative amounts of public attention. But we know little of the worlds of those visual artists whose aspirations and career goals are different, more modest perhaps, and integrated into other segments of society than that of the gallery and the collector. There appear to be large numbers of visual artists quietly creating a decent living for themselves, often without much recognition or appropriate support from the state or the visual arts public agencies.

Walker (1990) suggests that the traditional Art History practice of emphasising a particular model of individual romantic artist has provided the model for some of the more recent study of design history, and discusses the inappropriateness of such practice. It is to be expected that craft history is likely to find similar limitations if it continues to develop along similar lines.

The visual arts milieu as a whole is a highly fragmented and diverse sector of our society. This research is not attempting to make a comprehensive analysis of the visual arts in their entirety. Instead, the material and ideas reflect a particular combination of biases towards the

visual arts, based on assumptions which are not necessarily commonly shared.

The denial of the concept of a visual arts hierarchy is one bias. The research is also based on the belief that acceptable self-directed contemporary visual arts practice includes a wide variety of activity which can be described as:

1. Producing autonomous work which is
   one-of-a-kind,
   small batch production or
   designed to be produced in larger numbers

2. Working to the brief of others to create
   something which is integral or complementary to
   its environment, its context.

3. And various other combinations of
   employment and self-directed practice.

Further, present parameters and understandings in the visual arts are considered to be social constructs which change over time and are not necessarily shared in this or other cultures. Thus they are not based on eternal truths, but have risen from a series of historical antecedents and social conditions.

One of the challenges for those of us who would document and describe the contemporary situation of any group is recognising that the group is in a state of continual flux. Relationships with other segments of society, and particularly to those in positions of power, are shifting and will continue to do so. These shifts force changes and realignments to occur. It is only possible to observe some patterns of behaviour and of relationships,

to look for signs of newly emerging patterns, or revived, renewed ones, and to look for signs of those patterns which are exhausted, or are no longer appropriate to the changing milieu. The picture which is thus built up is based on constellations of behaviours and attitudes which are then ascribed labels. However it is important to bear in mind that actual social discourse is far less precise and constant than this method might suggest.

A further challenge is the lack of shared language and agreed definitions about the visual arts. For instance, the words 'artist', 'designer' or 'craftsperson' conjure up a divergent set of meanings within any group of people. And it is common practice to individually use these, and other words regarding the visual arts, in both specific and generic senses. It appears that many of us use these words in a somewhat archaic sense, based perhaps on historical myth, on past understandings and on a one-dimensional view relating, in the main, to the fine artists. So 'artist' conjures up a picture of a particular kind of painter, 'craftsman' conjures up an image of a particular kind of potter or weaver. Wherever appropriate in the text, I have attempted to explain my meaning of both these 'historic' words and of words and phrases which may be unfamiliar in this context.

I do not enter into extensive discussion of the aesthetic content of the work. This thesis is influenced by the position described by Janet Wolff (1981) who said, "The aesthetic form originates in social processes, class relations and structural features of society." The discussion which follows chooses to focus on these social processes and structural features.

It is hoped that a review of the evidence presented will raise some questions:

Are there indeed career patterns which can be useful models for others in the design craft sector?

Would these patterns be of value for visual artists of similar persuasion to those identified but choosing to operate in different sectors?

What shifts in policy and provision by state-supported organisations and quangos might enhance these patterns of practice?

What implications does such a shift have on those who would educate and advise both the makers and the mediators?

Are there any implications in regard to the audience, the customers and the general public?

Can the more detailed understanding of the operation of successful enterprise in this field inform the understanding of those who are interested in small business?

How does this kind of endeavour relate to other parts of the visual arts and to the wider social milieu?

2. BACKGROUND

This work has grown out of my long-standing interest and involvement in the field. Twenty years ago, after a career in teaching and educational administration, I studied textile arts and briefly worked as an independent maker. In 1977, in Vancouver, I took over the management of a group of two hundred craftspeople in a co-operative association, providing marketing, promotional and other support, including professional development, through a range of activities. We established and ran a gallery, a shop, special events and exhibitions.

The professional development aspect consisted of practical activities related to learning and improving professional practice both for the group and for individuals. I also set up and taught professional practice seminars. Recognising the limitations of our own resources and information, I developed contacts with others in Canada and the United States, and to a lesser degree with people in the UK. This led to running a number of conferences designed to inform both practitioners and mediators, primarily about appropriate business practice. I was also interested in developing a sense of context for contemporary craft practice, through increasing understanding of practice in other cultural settings.

During the eight years of managing the association, I witnessed the tensions and frustrations caused by the conflict between the artistic ethic and the potential opportunities which were seen to be too commercial, and therefore out of the bounds of acceptable practice.
This conflict affected not only the makers but also the mediators who were working directly to support the

makers' activities. It also influenced the decisions of policy makers and public attitudes.

Within the fluid, changing membership of the group strands of practice with different goals, ideologies, workstyles and market opportunities became evident. A pattern of response developed which attended to these differences through allocation of resources and provision of services.

My contact with others outside the organisation reinforced these ideas first evident in the early 1980's and led to my decision to develop these two particular ideas with further research. The first was the dissonance between the operational mythologies of visual artists and craftspeople relating to their concepts of the profession of artist and the attitudes and skills required to function successfully as an independent business person. During the six years of my research and related activities I have found this disharmony (and for some, an incompatibility) is evident in this country and manifests itself in a variety of attitudes and practice. The individual practitioners in this study were selected partly to identify a model of practice which had integrated a visual arts ideology with good business practice.

The other thread I have attempted to elaborate is the concept of different but equal strands of practice. These strands, while obviously not discrete, can assist understanding of this sector of the visual arts.
I argue that this concept of identifiable strands can be useful in a number of ways. Specifically it might address matters concerning the boundary between art and craft, and assist providers to develop appropriate and different strategies. My continuing practical work of teaching

and consulting with makers indicates that another benefit of such an analysis is the contribution it can make to their personal development of clarity of purpose and sense of order to a hitherto seemingly chaotic professional sphere.

My background and interest in sociology, psychology, and communications has provided insights and direction to some of the literature and research beyond the specific visual arts material. It has also influenced the style of interviews with makers and mediators. I tried to avoid the seduction of some elements of the mythology surrounding artists and art. In particular I am referring to those elements which support ideology and behaviour which is potentially damaging to professional independent practice, such as the concept of a hostile and alien environment, the passive role of visual artists, and the importance of talent to success at the exclusion of other factors. This stance was assisted by my experience of working directly in the field.

My extensive background in the North American social sciences has influenced my tools of interpretation and analysis. Thus my sociological understandings might be explained by Ernest Becker (1962),

> "Man's answers to the problem of his existence are in large measure <u>fictional.</u> ...embedded in a network of codified meaning and perceptions that are in large part arbitrary and fictional...if we do not understand this we understand nothing about man...He must at all times defend the utter fragility of his delicately constituted fiction and deny its artificiality."

Becker and others, such as Joseph Campbell and Peter Berger to explain that one of the mechanisms we develop for maintaining these fictions, is myth making. Myths thus contribute to, and reinforce, meaning in our existence. They are part of the serious business of

life. This sense of the word 'myth' is described by Williams (1976), when he speaks of an alternative meaning of 'myth' 'as an account of origins...[as] an active form of social organization'.

Thus this research has a purpose similar to that Ernest Becker wrote as the task of social scientists,

> "to attempt to come to grips with the fictions that constrain human freedom, with the ideas, beliefs, institutions that stifle the intelligent, responsible self-direction of the people."

Joseph Campbell outlined what he saw as the modern problems in Western societies in terms of a lack of cohesive myths, brought about in part by the rapidity of of the rate of change.[11] In the microcosm of the craft milieu this might help explain some of the conflicting ideologies all operating under the same label.

My background in humanistic psychology led to the early decision to seek to identify successful practice in this research.[12] Thus, attention was given to the attitudes of those who feel successful and those who do not share this opinion, in the belief that attitudes can and do influence behaviour and by extension, opportunities. When setting up the survey of practitioners I looked for people who were satisfied with the independent practice they had established. I have also developed this concept of attitudes and satisfaction by restructuring my professional practice courses to include assertiveness and confidence building.

My interest and work in small and not-for-profit business management is also long standing and has added to this research, particularly regarding the relevance of appropriate business attitudes and practice. For the most part, the self-employed independent visual artist

shares little allegiance with the predominant small business models, primarily because the visual artists is most often not interested in expansion of the business beyond a level they can cope with on their own or with a little help. These visual artists, however, have much in common with a particular, hitherto quite invisible, group within small business in general called micro-business. This micro-business refers to self-employed people running one or two person businesses primarily with the intent of independence. The research considers the compatibility of such visual artists with micro-business. In a lesser way the business management experience has informed my analysis of state provision in this sector.

Thus the background I brought to this work is, to some extent, multi-faceted, integrating a variety of experience and learning. In some senses, it is the background of an outsider which can I hope, be useful for generating some insights of a different order than those of people who have spent their working life entirely in the visual arts.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This research was started formally in early 1985. It has consisted of reading within the literature relating to arts management, visual arts in general and craft and design in particular. I attended visual arts meetings, conferences, special events, and had discussions with makers and mediators. I have also drawn on literature in other fields mentioned in the preceding section.

In preparation for the study of successful designer craftspeople I drew up an initial contact list of approximately fifty practitioners who appeared to represent designer craftspeople who were satisfied with the independent career pattern they had created. I then contacted the makers, explaining the project and asking if they would be willing to take part in the research. Thus some makers were able to de-select themselves, and I was able to continue with a group of twenty two. These people who had agreed to participate were subsequently interviewed or asked to fill out a questionnaire, and to send additional information such as articles about themselves, publicity materials. Most of the twenty two have an active programme of making themselves visible through a variety of methods such as attending trade shows, retail sales events, and professional meetings, as well as getting media coverage. Therefore I have tracked their progress through these channels as well as keeping in personal contact with some of them since this aspect of the study started in 1988.

Because of my previous work in sociology, psychology and communications I was particularly careful in my approaches to and with makers, for I was concerned to reduce the impact of my preconceptions on the information

I was to gather. Obviously there are limitations in such an approach, since the decisions to look into certain matters and to not delve into other issues set the terms of reference. The framework for collecting information was influenced by my perception of the possibility of successful and satisfactory independent careers in the visual arts, specifically in the design craft sector. And undoubtedly I influenced the results of the study by my choice of elements I considered to be contributing factors to this success. It can be argued that years of work in this field, operating in different roles combined with the empirical and theoretical aspects of my background in other fields, made it possible to make informed and potentially useful decisions and choices.

There was particular care taken with the wording of the questionnaire and the letter. I tried to avoid confirming some of the stereotypical responses such as, the difficulty of working as an independent craftsperson, the struggle to deal with administrators, the conflict between ideals and reality. The questionnaire was provided ahead of time to those who agreed to be interviewed, with the suggestion that it could form the basis for the meeting. The initial meetings usually took place in their studios and lasted one and a half to three hours. The makers were to discuss the matter of successful independent practice in their own terms. Open ended questions and non-judgemental comments were used where possible. The notes and tape recordings of the meetings were then analysed to delineate patterns and draw the conclusions discussed in Chapter 10.

Other more informal discussions with visual artists and specifically designer craftspeople have been recorded where appropriate to the discussion. The comments and concerns of the students who have attended my visual arts

business courses, many of whom do not consider themselves to have created a satisfactory pattern of practice, have also informed this work.

Interviews were conducted with some people at the Crafts Council, in Regional Arts Associations and educational institutions to find out the range of their activities and the operational ideology without disclosing the parallel research with the makers so that it would be possible to examine the compatibility of the two. Again, I used the style of presenting a loose framework for discussion, and recording the meetings. Regional Arts Associations were also surveyed by postal questionnaire regarding their provision.

Interviews and discussions were held with others participating in the field, such as writers, researchers, gallery managers and agents, event organisers and shop owners. The Scottish Craft Development Agency and Craftpoint were also contacted, and the Welsh agencies concerned with craft were also investigated. However this work does not presume to have adequately researched Scotland and Wales. Information about the state supported activities outside of England are considered primarily with the purpose of enlightening understanding of the English situation.

Discussions with Dr Eric Moody and his colleagues at City University were valuable for clarifying this work.
Exhibition catalogues, appropriate magazines, conference reports, policy papers and journals were consulted.
The research also examined some of the existing provision of professional training and career development within art schools, and other professional practice training initiatives outside the art school network.

4. OUTLINE

The next five chapters are intended to provide some information regarding the historical antecedents and social surrounds of contemporary design craft practice.

This research and analysis begins in Chapter Two with a discussion of the historical development leading to the contemporary labels used to describe visual artists in general and the practitioners in this sector in particular. It illustrates the confusion and lack of shared definition in the field.

Chapter Three outlines my perspective of some of the issues regarding the social context of contemporary visual art and artists. In Chapter Four there is a discussion of the mythology, past and present, attached to our notions of artists and craftsmen.

Chapter Five discusses what constitutes success for the independent visual artist. It also gives a description of the elements of running a successful micro business in the visual arts, looking at some of the specific problems and identifying some similarities with micro businesses in other fields. The sociological concept of art worlds, a tool for understanding the structures of this visual arts milieu, is discussed in Chapter Six.

In the remaining chapters the discussion is more focused on the crafts milieu. Chapter Seven examines the tradition of craft, pointing out that some of our contemporary understanding of craft is rooted in developments occurring in the last century.

Chapter Eight outlines the development of organisations and state provision in the craft milieu in the last fifty years.

Chapter Nine discusses ways of refining analyses of groups within the milieu. It describes three particular areas of contemporary independent self employed practice, labelling these craft, design craft and art craft.

Chapter Ten discusses the concept of design craft. It introduces the practitioners encountered in this research and draws on some secondary material, such as the studies mentioned earlier to help define a specific set of patterns of practice.

Chapter Eleven compares the practitioners perspective with their milieu and points to some of the elements of disharmony. The role of the state agencies, specifically the Crafts Council and the Regional Arts Associations is outlined in more detail. Some of the work of the educational institutions is discussed.

Chapter Twelve reconsiders the concept of successful independent practice in the light of information from a group of designer makers. It discusses the shortcomings in current provision of training, advice and other provision and makes some suggestions.

Chapter Thirteen is the conclusion where there is a review of the arguments and some recommendations.

Notes and References for Chapter 1

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1. Researchers of the crafts milieu, Bruce and Filmer (1983) and Channon (1987) have mentioned this fine art background of craft practitioners. Also mentioned in Artworkers by Bill Farrington et al (1988).

2. This research asked visual artists to define themselves as artists. As a result the information was collected from some practitioners working with what some might consider craft materials (ie fibre) with a fine art intent. This distinction of intent is discussed in Chapter two.

3. Penny Sparke (1986), Introduction to Design and Culture in the 20th Century, from the introduction.

4. I note but do not investigate the concept of gender based issues concerning this hierarchy of the visual arts, or ethnicity. The question of class is briefly discussed, but not seen as central to the argument.

5. Feldman (1982) The Artist, itemizes seven of the problems of gallery models in the conclusion to his chapter on Gallery Idols. His list is mainly concerned with the disproportionate influence of such a system of favouring the few at the expense of many, and the corresponding loss of opportunity to attend to what he calls 'the visual and aesthetic needs of a democratic society'. This concern has been expressed in a variety of ways by more than can be enumerated here, including Moody and Pearson, but as yet does not seem to have had much impact on the policy makers at a national level.

6. Richard Cork (1978) 'Collaboration Without Compromise' a lecture given in Aberystwyth at a symposium called Art: Duties and Freedoms.

7. Margot Coatts (1988) 'Tex-style at Smith's Galleries' a review of the exhibition of the same name in Crafts 92, May June, 1988.

8. Edward Banfield (1984) in The Democratic Muse: Visual Arts & The Public Interest

9. op cit and Moody (1989)

10. see Ernest Becker (1962), The Birth and Death of Meaning, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) The Social Construction of Reality. Joseph Campbell's writing includes over twenty books, however the ideas I have referred to were discussed in conversations on mythology, prepared in the United States and shown on BBC2 last year.

11. The humanistic psychology movement included people such as Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Clark Moustakas, Rollo May, Fritz Perles, Thomas Szasz, and Eric Berne. Primary interests in the movement is personal growth and fulfilment of human potential.

Chapter 2 WHO IS AN ARTIST? LABELS AND HOW THEY HAVE CHANGED

Definitions are attempts to draw boundaries. What is outside as well as inside the boundary of the definition needs to be considered. Since decisions to define are arbitrary and social in nature, it is useful to look for historical changes in the use of labels and terms over a period of time. The following brief discussion is limited to the evolution of terms relating to visual artists only in the Western and predominantly English-speaking world.

The complex of contemporary interpretations of the label 'artist' stems from the contemporary use of the term in both the generic and in a specific sense. First, in the generic sense, 'artist' is still commonly used to describe a person practising any one of a number of 'artistic' pursuits, such as painting, acting, writing and so on. This, as explained by Raymond Williams (1976), has come from the sixteenth century use in the sense of artist being a practitioner of one of the arts, or more specifically one of the seven arts in the classical period: grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. In the classical world those who painted and produced statues, pots, textiles, furniture, jewellery (the visual artists of today) were considered to belong to the artisan class. Their skills were considered to be manual, and of a lesser value than the mental skills of those deemed to be artists.

Williams continues

> "from the beginning of the seventeenth century there was an increasingly common specialised application to a group of skills not hitherto formally represented: painting, drawing, engraving and sculpture."

This is the beginning of the second, more specialised but still generic use of the term artist.

The third contemporary, and more specialised, use rose to prominence one hundred years ago. The narrowing of the definition grew, in part, out of a further distinction being made between artist and artisan. This led to one of the commonly-held contemporary views that artists are predominantly painters or sculptors. These artists were now considered to use their intellect, while other visual artists used intelligence. In this century some of those who had been historically classified as artisans have also laid claim to the title of 'artist', in an attempt to elevate their stature. This may well be part of the ongoing process of attempting to change labels for perceived social benefits of higher status, with roots in what were, as Pearson (1982) says, "the arguments made for the intellectual status of the painter and sculptor by, among others, Leonardo".

Confusion and disagreement can arise when we do not make explicit which definition of artist is operational. Who is and is not an artist? As Brighton & Pearson (1985) point out, no one can be accused of fraud if they choose to call themselves an artist, because the profession of artist is an open profession, in the sense that there are not restrictions on entering it. The same can be said of designer and craftsperson. Researchers such as Jeffri and Channon have more recently examined this issue of self-definition, which will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Thus the label 'artist' has changed from meaning someone other than those practising the manual skills of painting, sculpture, pottery and weaving in the ancient world, to the definition of liberal arts including

painters and sculptors in the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe, to the more specialised definition of artists meaning visual artists in the 18th and 19th centuries, leading to the most common contemporary specific use of referring primarily to painters and sculptors.

Today the specialised use of the label 'artist' is often synonymous with the term 'fine artist'. Also it is sometimes used in a less overt, narrower way to define those who Eric Moody (1985) refers to as the Avant Garde - artists "seeking to make an original and personal contribution, through individual effort on self-defined tasks, cognisant of their place in art history".

For some time visual arts practice has been expanding into new fields such as printmaking, photography, film and video. More recently, since the middle of the twentieth century, more people have been encouraged to take up visual art study in higher education and to enter the visual arts as a profession. The visual arts now embrace a wide diversity of practice. Attempts to segregate and specialise, to define, within the visual arts has become an increasingly difficult task.

One solution to the problem of labelling has been to refer to people by the medium they work with. So we have painters, sculptors, photographers, filmmakers - titles which indicate the materials the practitioners work with. Weavers work with fibres, potters work with clay, and so on. A useful solution? Not when it is confused with the historical concept that those working as painters and sculptors are the only people entitled to the label of 'artist'. For this label of 'artist' still carries notions of superior worth and stature, of intellectual pursuit. As tapestry maker Kate Russell said,

> "I would say I'm an artist...because of the connotations of being called a craftswoman. It has the sound of the unthinking maker, even though I don't think that good craft is made unthinkingly."[1]

This definition by media is now under stress in part because of the fragmentation and diversity within the visual arts. Not all people working with clay can be labelled as potters, or all who work with fibres, weavers. And some of those previously defined as fine artists - the painters and sculptors, have chosen to work in what were once more clearly 'craft' media.

The differentiation became more significant with the introduction of the concept of 'fine artist' and the attendant rise in stature of these practitioners. In the last century the struggle for recognition of the artistry of those working in other visual art media began to gather momentum. The most recent impetus for this redefinition of what constitutes art and who is an artist has been strengthened by those who work in traditionally non-fine artist occupations but having been educated in art schools, consider they have equal right to the label of 'artist'. This seems particularly true of many of those who originally studied the 'fine arts' of painting and sculpture, and have turned to working in traditionally non-fine art media, expecting to retain their title of 'artist' or 'fine artist'.

To define on the basis of metaphorical content in the work itself (or lack thereof) would reclassify a great deal of what appears fine art as not, or as 'purely decorative'. And 'decorative' is still used in a pejorative sense - seen to signify work of a lower quality. Such definitions would perhaps elevate (the operative word) some work in other media to 'art'. Recently there are some who insist that work in any

media, produced by an 'artist' thus becomes 'art'. Pearson (1982) locates this development as

> "discernible in the Romantic movement and before; but it reached its logical conclusion in this century...Person and context defined the object; the object did not define the person."

A third classification system is closely allied to the second. It considers the degree of intent of the practitioner to produce work in response to inner motivation and for contemplation, regardless of the media used for that expression. Thus, if a visual artist is 'other-directed', that is, accepts a commission to work to someone else's brief, they are not 'artists' - definitely not 'fine artists'. Unless, perversely, the person accepting the brief is already established as a fine artist. This is an imperfect solution still, which relates most closely to the contemporary manner of disseminating the 'artistic' or 'non-artistic' product. For instance; galleries show art. What is in the gallery, therefore, must encompass what we can call art - made by people called 'artists'.

There are at least three different motivations to use the label 'artist':

1. The term is seen to have cachet. There are a number of perceived benefits and privileges accorded to one having the status of artist in contemporary society.

2. The term, used in an umbrella sense, is seen to avoid the necessity of distinguishing between visual artists using different media in different ways.

3. The term is used to express the intellectual intent of the practitioners.

Those who see the solution to this labelling and defining dilemma as classifying all who work in visual communication as 'artists' are not necessarily providing a more elegant answer. It may be ultimately useful to abandon the finite labels. To many people within the visual arts, the terminology is of little interest, or at most an annoyance. But failure to take the distinctions of meaning into account can have a variety of implications. Two of the most serious are that mediators and providers give misleading impressions of the scope and nature of their activity, and that some visual artists may hold conflicting opinions vis a vis artists and craftspeople which makes it difficult for them to focus their efforts.

The labels 'craft' and 'craftsmen' have been considered outside any official definition of art at least since the Renaissance, although not outside some descriptions of the tasks of an artist. The craftsmen and artisans in classical times were considered of lower stature than those who practice the arts. Now the public definitions of 'crafts' and 'craftsperson' are usually associated with what Eudora Moore [2] called the "spirit of the hand", describing people with high level virtuoso skills and respect for the materials and techniques they employed. The craftsman is seen to be in an honest business, creating useful and beautiful objects, while the extensions of the word, crafty or craftily do not conjure up the same honesty.

As fine art ascended, the terms 'craft' and 'craftsman' became devalued. Art and craft were still quite distinct concepts until the nineteenth century. However the

continuing struggle for craft to be embraced as a legitimate part of the visual arts was in full swing by the end of that century. In Victorian England the term 'visual arts' officially referred to painting and sculpture, although this narrow definition was contested by many. The late nineteenth century gave birth to the Arts and Crafts movement, which was primarily interested in what we now call contemporary craft. By the turn of the century some studio-based craftsmen and women had started to add the prefix 'artist' to their label. Early in this century the label 'Artist potters' proliferated. Indeed the potter, Bernard Leach[3], was one of the first to write of the artist-craftsman, a term which has been widely used in the last twenty years. Originally this artist craftsman label was an attempt to separate the work of the serious studio craftsman from what was considered the moribund practice of much handicraft at the time.

Those at the helm of the most recent revival of craft twenty years ago also struggled to rename and thus uplift at least the work of a specific kind of practitioner using craft media. In the seventies and early eighties the Craft Council, and its counterparts in other parts of the Western world, embraced the term artist craftsman. The Crafts Council stressed that its focus was on the work of this new breed for most of this period.

This use of the term, artist craftsperson, developed two additional purposes beyond the earlier one. First there was the motivation of revising the public concept of craft. The second motivation was to identify a new category of visual artist - the art-school trained, fine-art inspired person working in a craft medium. This is redefining some craft as art in a different sense to that of Leach and his contemporaries. This latest

attempt at redefinition was seen to assist the attempts to have the craft work being judged and accepted on fine art terms.

So the term 'artist craftsperson' has had a different connotation in the last ten years. These are not craftspeople seeking acceptance for fine craft embodying the craft ethics of virtuosity, truth to materials and using recognisable forms with modest intentions of producing beautiful and useable objects. This new developing definition of artist craftsman refers to a group of practitioners who, to varying degrees, are either pushing the concepts of craft forms or approaching what had been traditionally craft materials with the intent of artistic exploration and expression, with no or little regard for notions of craftsmanship.

Another attempt to cut adrift from what were considered unsavory connections with craft was the decision of the British Craft Centre in 1986 to rename itself Contemporary Applied Arts. An announcement of this change of name explains,

> "Craft has come to be associated in the minds of much of the general public with worthy, homespun and the (frankly) boring, and despite many years of trying to encourage the attitude that craft can be more than macrame plant holders,, tbeeeaee still very many visitors who come expecting to see just that."[4]

Why applied arts? - A term less used now than earlier in the century. The British Craft Centre announcement goes on to say,

> "Contemporary applied arts is a neutral but descriptive phrase, neither emphasising the avant garde, nor ignoring the traditional, but defining that area of work made by serious artists of great integrity and professionalism, in ceramics, glass, textiles, metalwork etc."

Artists indeed! And usurping one of the few positive attributes of the crafts worker - integrity.

The labels of 'applied art' and 'decorative art' are only two examples of attempts to rename some of the visual arts. Early documents of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (now the Society of Designer Craftsmen) show that discussions over labels brought such suggestions as Applied Arts, Decorative Arts and also Arts of Design, Arts not Fine, Combined Arts.[5]

Craft as a label seems not to have found favour with some practitioners a hundred years ago. Fine craft was used by some such as Farleigh in the middle of this century.[6] The self-consciousness and lack of confidence in this field, and a consistent feeling of being in the shadow of the perceived higher status fine art milieu continues to plague many of the participants, leading them to endless debates regarding the meaning of craft and art. When 'fine craft' was used in the 1980's it, like the new version of artist-craftsmen, meant the artefacts aspiring to a place in the, then contemporary, fine art venues.

It is worth noting that this one area of the visual arts which is of primary interest in this study has engendered a plethora of labels including the new labels of designer/makers, designer craftspeople and artists-in-craft. Since these apply to the people who are the subjects of this research it is necessary to explain the working definitions operative in this paper.

It is most useful to delineate these by patterns of practice and attitudes, although some attempts have been made by others to delineate by the aesthetic content of the work. Many of the practitioners encountered during

the research do not rigidly adhere to any one set of attitudes and practice, and may change their label and vary their practice according to the opportunities presenting themselves or the opportunities they want to create for themselves.

Artists-in-craft seems to be the most appropriate label for those adopting the posture of contemporary fine artists while working with a traditionally craft material. These practitioners are attempting to produce autonomous, one-of-a-kind objects, mainly in response to personal exploration, with the intention of showing that work in a gallery, and subject to the same kind of interpretation and criticism as the work of fine artists.

Designer craftsmen, designer makers and artist craftsmen are often used interchangeably as labels for those who have a slightly different stance, stemming from an orientation to good craft. The labels can be useful, however, for identifying different perspectives. All may refer to practitioners producing original work which may be one-off or small batch production and are less constrained by, and committed to, gallery-based practice. The labels may be useful to delineate the differences in willingness to work in response to another's brief, if at all, or at least for some of their time. Kenneth Clark, editor of the Journal of the Society of Designer Craftsmen says, "design is concerned with people, purpose and production - art need not be."[7] He would distinguish between visual artists using design as part of their label as those who are innovators in visual media willing to work to commission for all or part of the time.

A designer maker, then, can be considered to refer to someone who is both an innovator in design and a skilled

maker. Similarly, a designer craftsman would be a practitioner who considers the skills of designing and good craftsmanship to be of equal worth. The rise of the use of the term 'maker' in the seventies was an attempt to avoid what were seen to be the negative connotations of the label 'craft' and also a response to craftsman. In recognition of a gender bias in the term craftsmen, craftsperson and craftspeople are seemingly gaining more currency in recent years.

Designers have not always executed their own designs and may work in tandem with craftspeople who are skilled makers or interpreters, but not innovators. In contemporary usage, however, some who make and design are choosing to label themselves designers. Ashwin et al (1988) confirmed this in a survey of six hundred practitioners.

The word 'design' has also been subject to changes of meaning through history. As John Walker (1989) says

> "During the Renaissance 'disegno' (which in practice meant drawing) was considered by art theorists such as Vasari to be the basis of all the visual arts...All artists engaged in design as part of their creative activities... Designers as such only emerged later as a result of the growing specialisation of functions which occurred in Europe and the United States as part of the industrial revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries"

It is worth noting the current expansion of the word 'design' into everyday parlance. It has been embraced by many to apply to activity and products outside the narrow sphere of subsidized contemporary visual arts practice. As John Walker explains

> "During the 1980's...the words 'design' and 'designer' took on a new resonance They became values in their own right...'the design' was being perceived as a desirable attribute."

There is little evidence that the terms 'craft', and 'craftspeople' have enjoyed similar increasing respect in recent times. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of those whom others might label 'craftspeople' have chosen to create new hyphenated labels for themselves. It is also evident that the widespread use of the word 'designer' has been seen as some as part of a marketing hype and in the wider socioeconomic sphere there is now some cynicism regarding its use. This does not yet seem to have affected the adoption of the designer label within the visual arts milieu. Ashwin et al (1988) reported that designer was the most commonly used label in their study. The art schools and others providing higher educational opportunities for potential craftspeople label their courses design, rather than craft to the degree that very few courses have craft in their title.

The label of artist still holds a higher position than the craftsman in contemporary Britain, while designer has a more ambiguous meaning, depending on the context within which it is used.

This brief analysis seems to be a useful step towards unravelling the confusion surrounding our use of the terms about art and artists. It must be emphasised again that the distinctions discussed here are not necessarily agreed by visual arts practitioners and their mediators and audience.

The lack of clarity of terminology can be considered from another point of view. There are <u>some</u> practitioners who are able to use the situation to their advantage. They positively seek to take advantage of a combination of opportunities this linguistic muddiness provides. These visual artists may appeal to the 'quasi-art' craft gallery network by stressing their own uniqueness of individual,

thoughtful, 'artistic' craft and also operate in the 'designer-craftperson' mode by either undertaking commissions and briefs or producing and selling small batch production work. Hence the labels they use, and others use to describe them, may be 'artist', 'artist-craftsman', 'designer-craftsmen', or other hyphenated labels such as 'artist-blacksmiths', 'designer-jewellers', 'glass artists'. It may be that the visual artists who feel confident to use whatever label is appropriate to the situation to hand and to conduct multi-faceted careers and practices could provide role models for other visual artists. They are exhibiting a response to the confusion of those who surround them which is crafty in the sense of astuteness and cunning.

The practitioners encountered during part of this study were not asked to define themselves, but some did give themselves labels. These included;

4 ceramists 3 potters
3 weavers 1 jeweller
1 rugmaker 1 studio glass maker
1 toymaker 1 woodturner
3 furniture designer makers,

Two called themselves artists. None called themselves craftspeople or hyphenated crafts to their label. Yet as will be shown later in more detail, most of them identified with opportunities and organisations which carry the craft label.

The people who seem the happiest to operate with the label of craft in their appellation and in the places of public exposure are those who are less connected with the official institutions and educational bodies.

Jeffri (1987) investigated this question of definition and her team came up with three basic categories. These they

labelled the marketplace definition, the education or affiliation definition and the self or peer definition. From their 560 returned questionnaires they found that the most important reasons for considering someone to be a professional artist were in the category of self and peer definitions. (This survey was not limited to visual artists). One of the most interesting implications of this evidence is the matter of influence of peers, which has not been discussed in detail in other research.

Jeffri's research suggests a further elaboration of my suggestion that some practitioners have been observed to 'capitalise' on the linguistic confusion. These makers have the advantage of being able to hold a self definition and also to 'manage' what Jeffri calls the marketplace definition. In these cases, the marketplace has been refined by the makers to an understanding of multiple markets, with different operational labels.

Pearson and Brighton spoke of private and public definitions of artists. These practitioners balance a variety of definitions from different publics, while maintaining a private definition. The balancing of public and private; self and marketplace definitions can be viewed as a matter of personal choice or as one of social necessity, perhaps even an imposition from a hostile philistine world.

It is possible that the degree to which visual artists can hold the position of personal choice is influenced by their understanding of their milieu. Brighton and Pearson identified the handicap of the lack of such understanding among the visual artists they researched. This handicap has also been evident in some of the visual artists encountered in the course of this study. This would to point to the necessity of mediators and educators to be

willing to address the clarification of the 'limits' of their definitions.

Undoubtedly, the differing constellations of attributes, expectations and attitudes hanging on the labels of artists, craftspeople and designers could and sometimes do provoke tensions, misunderstandings and conflicts for many of the practitioners and those who deal with them.

The makers who are likely to be most subject to these tensions and conflicts are those attempting to participate in arenas which operate with narrow but unspecified definitions. In the area of visual arts under study, the problems occur most often on the perceived borders between fine art and contemporary craft, particularly relating to gallery-based activity. Thus the problem is not a new one, but can be identified as part of the debate within this area of visual arts since the emergence of 'fine art'.

John Houston, quoted by Edward Lucie-Smith (1981), says

> "Our modern reactions to the words craftsman and artist are the result of innumerable struggles about status and expression, marketing and sensibility."

No doubt these struggles will continue.

Notes and References for Chapter 2

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1. Kate Russell was interviewed in Women and Craft, edited by Gillian Elinor et al (1987).

2. Eudora Moore, former advisor to the National Endowment for the Arts Crafts Project in Washington, USA, in conversation in Vancouver, Canada, July 1986.

3. Bernard Leach (1951) A Potter's Portfolio wrote "The potter is no longer a peasant or journeyman as in the past, nor can he be any longer described as an industrial worker: he is by force of circumstances an artist-craftsman...in the work of the potter-artist ...designer and craftsman are one."

4. This is from a Press Release from Contemporary Applied Arts, 1986.

5. The early documents of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society were discussed by Meg Sweet in 'From Combined Arts to Designer Craftsmen' in Craft History One published 1988, Combined Arts.

6. John Farleigh was the first director of the British Crafts Centre. His role in the organisations of the time is discussed in a little more detail in Chapter 5.

7. Kenneth Clark in conversation, April, 1986.

Chapter 3 SOCIETY AND ITS VISUAL ARTISTS

This research is predicated on the assumption that the visual arts can better be understood by acknowledging their social context. This is not meant to reduce the analysis to generalisations, treating visual art as no different from any other human activity. But visual artists have had, and continue to have, a permanent relationship with the society beyond the visual arts world. Even the most alienated and marginal artists have social reference points, and can be considered socially integrated. As Kuspit (1982) says

> The magic of art is collectively created... there can be no inner devotion to the task of art unless there is a healthy respect for the social reality that makes the task sensible."

This work follows some of the traditions of those whose work may be classified as sociology of art, social history of art, or the new art history. This includes the work of Wolff, Becker and Pearson and Brighton. It is intended to build on others' work in the fields to further discover connections, structure of relationships and patterns of behaviour. Thus it hopes to further expose what Janet Wolff calls the "mutual interdependence" of the arts milieu and the society at large. For it is not only within the visual arts that we will understand the recent changes such as those in funding patterns, the development of art outside the galleries, the expansion of opportunities for visual artists or the apparent changing expectations of today's art school students.

Art is not simply a reflection of its social context, but as Ades (1986) says

> "It is bound up with the social and economic movements of its time as well as conditioned by artistic tradition and aesthetic ideology."[1]

Attempting research in this field provides a number of challenges which have been mentioned and implied, but are worth reiterating. One is the tendency to think that the collective action described as fixed and static. It must be kept in mind that reference is only made to patterns, collections of behaviours and abstracted models.

The second relates to our tendency to confuse generic and specific labels, such as where discussions of visual artists refer actually to only the gallery-based, self-employed fine (and would-be fine) artist. Or to use craftsperson in a specific rather than generic manner. Brighton and Pearson (1985), stressed the great differences that exist in the visual arts - differences of intent, forms of work, communities, support and economics.

The last is the inclination to be so interested and involved with the group we are studying, we can become seduced by the mythology and wrapped up in the internal workings of the group. If we go so far as to recognise the value of considering the social context, we may still be in danger of treating the context as what Wolff called "a backdrop to providing descriptive detail".

The arbitrary nature and relativity of attitudes and ideology concerning artists, craftspeople and their society could be well illustrated by examination of the differences in attitudes towards, and provision for, visual artists throughout Europe and North America. Social constructs indeed, which perhaps suit more

properly the power structures within a society, rather than the society at large. I mention just a few examples to elucidate. Consider the Netherlands, with its experiment of putting visual artists on the state payroll and the Scandinavian countries who think of their visual artists as cultural workers.

At a Cultural Economic conference in 1986 a Danish municipal cultural officer was explaining new initiatives for visual artists in his city - to take the form of free, centrally-located studios and workshops. And what would be expected of the artists? Nothing except their commitment to create. [2]

Both Canada and the United States have been slow to take up the notion of state responsibility in providing for the visual arts, thus much more grassroots activity by artists, and their supporters, developed prior to state involvement and definition of artist. This historical situation in Canada (with which I am more familiar) has led the artists to feel more empowered to argue and negotiate on their own behalf. This was particularly true away from the centres of state power, such as the West Coast of Canada. This does not eliminate tensions of different kinds surfacing, such as complaints about the growth and supremacy of arts bureaucrats. It is worth noting, however, that the Canadian Crafts Council was formed and funded by the state in greater response to the constituents' pressure than was evident in the creation of the Crafts Council of Great Britain. From my position as an interested 'outsider', returning to England five years ago, I was struck by the lack of a public voice of the practitioners in the visual arts.

Although it not the intention of this research, one could also look more closely at the differing perceptions of

the visual arts between a small community and a metropolis such as London. For it appears that in smaller communities where some, if not most, of the visual artists are not drawn to attempting to participate in a national and international scene, the relationships between the visual artists and other members of their community are able to develop in a more straightforward manner and are less clouded with mystique. The visual artists are seen as more integral to the community.

When living and working in a capital with international stature such as London, however, the visual arts milieu is more complex. It is more stratified and specialised with, in most cases, the visual artist having less direct contact with other than a specialised, interested community. Also, it can be difficult to look beyond the influence of the international superstar scene, the work of the major quangos, the pressure of historic collections and national specialised and general press, and to observe the other strata that exist.

Even if aware of these influences, it is easy for the researcher to give a distorted picture of the condition of the visual arts activity and succumb to giving an inflated notion of the weight and importance of the international strata and the visual arts which receives the most media attention.[3]

Visual artists need to be seen as a diverse lot, with differing groups of publics and enthusiasts. The social integration of visual artists varies in kind rather than in quantity. As Feldman (1982) says "artists are as unlike as hermits and movie stars".

These differences may be described in terms of the perceived hierarchy of the visual arts directly related

to the larger social hierarchy of prestige and power. Perhaps a more accurate description is what Bourdieu (1984) calls a "social hierarchy of consumers" rather than a hierarchy of value intrinsic to the art or artist. Because more research has been conducted in, and more attention paid to, the fine art milieu, this concept might at first appear more relevant in that sector. A social hierarchy of consumers, however, is now also becoming evident in the crafts milieu, with the advent of the gallery-based art craft sector. The visual artists who participate in this sector are seeking, and making new connections with, a different kind of consumer from the former craft consumers, although some consumers have moved along with this development in the crafts. Some of the consumers of art craft have more in common with the presumed higher status of fine art buyers and collectors.

To claim that some visual artists (usually the self-employed gallery-based artists) are free, and work in an unfettered way, can be misinterpreted to deny some form of connectedness to the society they are part of, albeit perhaps subconsciously. As Janet Wolff (1981) says, "artists are subject to taste preferences, ideas, and aesthetic notions of those who influence the market."

There are social constraints on any visual artists, even the greatest 'stars'. To continue to promote the notion that if a visual artist strives to be a gallery-based, self-employed fine, or nearly-fine, artist they will be able to create what they wish, as they wish, is to promote a fallacy. It is hoped that the damage of such practice will become more evident in the ensuing chapters of this research. However, as Neapolitan, (1985) says,

> "Artists internalize the desires of their audience to a large degree, but that does not alter the fact that indifference to audience demands is an important shared orientation."

Perhaps we take the notion of freedom too literally. It is possible that the freedom which best serves the visual artists is the freedom associated with the notion of professionalism, the earned authority and respect of a professional to be able to create without undue influence. I suspect this is what Raymond Williams (1979) means when he writes

> "the first duty of an artist is to be free, and the first duty of provision in the arts is to ensure that freedom."[4]

He goes on to say this freedom of the artist is to do with the rights as an individual and the rights as an artist.

In a study on provision for the plastic arts by the Council of Europe (1976), eight reports from different European communities were compared. As Moulin, the editor of the report says, "despite the difference in approaches, no country had satisfactorily dealt with the dilemmas of freedom and security for the visual artist".

This leads to us to consider the position of the state in relation to the visual arts. As the representative of society, the state sets the tone for, and reflects the relationship between, art and those with power in the society.

Britain has a long history and strong tradition of leaving the majority of self-employed artists to operate relatively unaided in the market place. Though the state agencies' attitudes and practice have become considered orthodoxy and the market for certain kinds of art has been supported through patterns of subvention. For a much fuller description of this see Moody and Pearson.[5]

The Council of Europe report goes on to say

> "Economic coercion is subtler and more insidious when the artist's livelihood depends almost entirely on demand as expressed through the anonymous mechanisms of the art market."

John Pick has elaborated a number of models of state involvement in the arts and discusses the motivation for states to support the arts in general. His models are:[6]

> The glory model, where art is seen as an aggrandisement of the powerful, with collections of great artifacts in grand arts institution and the international stature of stars.
>
> The reward model, where art is supported for the enjoyment of the privileged, deserving groups
>
> The commercial model where art is seen as an investment with expectation of return on that investment.
>
> The political model where art is used as a political tool
>
> The model of arts as good for the populace, educative, palliative.

In this country a plurality of intent is evident. Art at the level of national institutions and, to a large extent, the national quangos, would fit the glory model or the reward model. 'High arts' deemed worthy of support by central government money. Local authorities' support traditionally has been closer to the fifth model of art as good for the populace.[7]

As the patterns of state involvement, led by changing central government policies, emerge, the commercial model is being introduced with less commitment to the glory and reward models. At the same time as central government limits spending through quangos, pressure is being brought to bear for local authorities to redirect some of their spending to pick up and share some

of the costs of supporting the high art. It is yet to be seen if new patterns of co-operation will perhaps be at the expense of the local authorities' previous interests in providing different kinds of art activity for their community.

Britain led the way in the Western world for the establishment of arms' length funding agencies, or quangos, for the arts starting in the post-war period. Although it is explained later, the early decisions to form the Arts Council and the Design Council left out provision for the crafts. State involvement with the crafts through a funded national body did not happen until 1971.

Superficially the system of arm's length state support of the arts seemed to provide the most ideal world for artists. For, we were to believe, such a system provided artists with maximum freedom and independence and thus would perhaps encourage the flourishing of genius. It is becoming increasingly more evident that the system has had many limitations and has reinforced a particular set of social conditions and attitudes about what constitutes art.

Hans Haacke (1984) said,

> "the gospel of art for art's sake [which] isolates art and postulates its self-sufficiency, as if art had or followed rules which are impervious to the social environment...[when] products of consciousness can not be created in isolation."

Not even the state funded quangos can cocoon visual art in all its forms from these influences. In fact the artists will always be limited by their context and by the opportunities it provides. As Kubler (1962) says,

> "The individual in search of personal expression, when confronted with the local stock of possibilities available to him...must select the components he will use."

Kubler speaks of the "gradual accommodation between temporal and formal opportunities." The kind of compromise all artists have to deal, involving personal interests and public opportunities - although talk of compromise is reserved for discussions related to money.

Calls for a more overt and integrated role for art have brought charges of Philistinism despite what people like Duvignaud (1972) say

> "When we come to analyse the new conditions which affect art we find no proof that more widespread audiences have lead to a lowering of quality except, if in a very naive way, one equates high artistic value with a small output of work."

Most certainly in recent decades the notion of these fine arts mixing with commerce and business has been considered at the least distasteful, and potentially damaging to artistic integrity. This attitude has undoubtedly been passed on to students and various kinds of practising visual artists who were connected, if only marginally, to the self-employed, gallery-based world. Thus have we inculcated in many minds within the visual arts milieu a distrust for business and commerce, and a naïveté which ill-prepares the visual artist or his organisations to operate effectively in a world other than that of state subsidised activity. The expanded profession of arts management may be one of the most troublesome groups to encourage to modify their views, since, as artist-by-association, some feel they have a lot to lose by adjusting their perceptions.

Whether one approves or disapproves of capitalism it is a fact of contemporary life throughout the Western world. We are immersed in late-stage capitalism with transnational corporations (and some of their employees) as the new holders of power and money. As with other

visual artists at other times in history, we are faced with a change in masters. Our inability to come to terms with this change breeds opportunities for the most negative kinds of commercialism and financial exploitation to occur. So a corporate leader, at a conference on sponsorship of the arts in the United States a few years ago, urged his corporate colleagues to also sponsor the arts. His reason for encouraging this activity was not altruistic but the mentality of 'the bottom line'. The promotional value was worth ten times the cost of the sponsorship. Arts sponsorship thus was seen as one of the best bargains for the promotion of large-scale capitalism.[7]

The concept of the artist standing apart and above society is certainly evident in the philosophy and workstyle of many within the arts, who are conditioned by this mythology. But there is no evidence of ongoing financial support for many self-employed visual artists other than what they generate for themselves. This self generated income may come from participation in the art markets or, more likely, through other opportunities outside the gallery networks. So to continue to promulgate notions of arms' length funding for all but a few visual artists and their venues is doing a disservice to the wider community of visual artists.

There is no doubt that late-stage capitalism does not appear attractive to many of us. It seems tied up with mass marketing, hedonism, hype, insatiable searches for the new and different, always leaving one with a sense of dissatisfaction. The gap seems to widen between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. But tied up with it the visual arts are and, contrary to <u>their</u> mythology, the contemporary international Art World and Art Market shows the strongest connections with capitalism. Some

contemporary visual arts people decry treating art as commodity, while it can be countered that the 'problem' is far from a new one.

Capitalism of the mid 20th century variety has probably contributed in large measures to the emphasis on the autonomous work of the self-employed gallery-based visual artist. With the cult of personality widespread beyond the confines of the arts, the visual artist is in danger of becoming as much of a commodity as the work he produces. This cult of personality is most evident within the visual arts Artworld, and is an essential part of the sustenance and maintenance of the Art Market. For as Moody (1989) says, "reputation relates directly to the price of the work."

This orthodoxy of the dominant Art World, a reflection of similar patterns in other sectors of the society, has been handed on to new potential entrants to the Art World. Kuspit (1984a) wrote that

> "young artists are taught to search for a marketable identity, something the capitalist public will find of intense and immediate interest."

What does the consumer find of interest and of value in the work of these creators of autonomous products? Hughes (1985) writes of the new art audience, "there is a uniformity of taste,..an insecure obsession with mutually recognisable signs of status".

These signs of status, the Art Market has taught us, are partly to be found in the concepts of uniqueness and of scarcity. Good Art and Artefacts are luxury goods. For some consumers there is a sense of the magic of creation, a spiritual nature. Art is the product of a person who may be considered to be unalienated from his work.

There is also a sense of the power of association, the esteem of being a purchaser as appreciator of 'good work'. Wolff stresses the active involvement of the audience, not passive as is sometimes believed.

Neapolitan (1985) has studied the Art-craft sector, and it's objects in the United States and says

> "Art-craft objects are intended to serve and are used primarily as decorative and expressive objects first and as utilitarian objects secondly, if at all..a large part of the appeal is the ability to own them, express one's self through them and incorporate them into one's life and environment. Ownership and appreciation of art-craft objects requires neither great wealth nor knowledge of art history and theories."

It may also be that a factor contributing to the rise of the market for art-craft objects has been the alienation and lack of understanding potential consumers felt regarding much of the recent contemporary painting and sculpture.

Virtually no research has been undertaken regarding the audience for contemporary studio crafts. We seem to take as given that there is a social role for makers and a need for craft skills and products. Further investigation may show that the role has some hidden elements we have not yet understood. Since much of what is done is no longer producing essential items and only some of the work is seen as an alternative to fine art are these sufficient reasons to explain the activity?

The radical shift of the last century of these strands of crafts activities becoming the province of certain kinds of middle class people would be a theme well worth investigating further.

Regarding the output of these makers, as suggested

earlier, there is a hierarchy of consumers. Some of the makers interviewed had a fairly clear picture of their clients and mediators, suggesting that for the design crafts there is probably an identifiable group of people who 'consume' their work. One suspects that there is indeed a great deal of 'folk knowledge' which could be gathered regarding the consumers of contemporary craft.

Dormer (1990) has suggested that that there is a currency to the concept of handcrafted for another reason, the implication of a power relationship between purchaser and maker. He explains

> "This relationship is traditional; it is the age-old one in which the client expresses his or her financial (and moral) superiority over others by exercising his ability to buy unnecessary labour."

If visual artists are to recognise and come to terms with their places in society and the niches available to them, further analysis and research would be of great value. For visual art producers cannot compete with many of the contemporary modes of production in the industrial sense. Not all of them can appeal to an audience in the same style of that of the Art World and Art Market. They will need to follow the directions by those who have found successful ways of operating in various specialised arenas adjacent to mass markets or to the traditional fine art venues.

The literature on corporate involvement with the arts suggests that one of their primary motives for purchase and for sponsorship is a sense of status-by-association with mutually agreed excellence. Hence the difficulty for those not 'ordained' by the status-givers to command large prices or even attention. But corporate interest is also in decorating their environment and much visual

art work which has not necessarily been sanctioned by the art power brokers fulfils this purpose.

Ours is (and some of us hope has been) an age of specialisation and authority of expertise. There has also been a lack of understanding and involvement on behalf of many outside the visual art milieu regarding much of what is being labelled the best of the new visual art. Hence the rise of mediators who both create and interpret our sense of who is an artist and what is art. This is not a new phenomenon, if one looks into the history of collecting, commissioning and purchasing the visual arts. It does seem to be an enhanced role for some in contemporary times. We have seen a proliferation of public supported, and private, enterprise willing to act as mediators. New masters in the form of corporate buyers and supporters are creating new conditions and opportunities for the visual arts. It is of some concern that many current mediators are usurping and defining these opportunities in terms of their current orthodoxies and agendas.

The importance of knowing and understanding audience and customers is being more widely accepted in the visual arts. Marketing is less an anathema. It remains to be seen, however, how the mediators and teachers will rise to the challenge of providing appropriate information and opportunities for the new situation. It is possible, and to be hoped for, that this change heralds a validation of the variety of what has hitherto been considered inconsequential practice.

There is the danger that the language may change but the practice and mythology may stay the same. It is to be hoped that more within the visual arts will attempt to

reintegrate with different sectors of the wider community. There appears little evidence of any serious change in the relationships between the gallery-based contemporary fine Art World and its patrons, other than the nouveau riche and the young professionals joining in the role of consumer and collector. Indeed there is no motivation to change. Where change does seem likely to occur (for the health of the visual arts industry) is in the spheres of business, architecture, home products, fashion, interior decoration. Full advantage of the potential development will only be realised, however, if more visual artists develop an attitude which will allow them to take advantage of the opportunities which already exist or can be created.

Eudora Moore, at a conference in Vancouver in 1983 spoke of visual artists as a modern equivalent of the remittance man.[8] The suggestion is that some Western societies, namely the English-speaking ones, have encouraged the training and the profession of visual arts as a safe channelling of some of the children of the well-to-do into professions which put little demand on their society. In exchange the people thus marginalized are given the status of a 'specialness'. and a calling which is 'asocial' and 'ahistorical'.

The trend of governments to cut back on their involvement and their funding is not exclusively a British problem, nor is it only an arts problem. So too with changing patterns of provision of higher education as institutions here and in North America are being encouraged to seek out non-governmental funding. Art schools have necessarily been caught up in this change of policy, with those departments seen to have the least obvious relevance to a new set of social priorities being most under threat or under pressure to take on new

directions. This does not augur well for the future of various visual arts educational provision in this country.

Business, institutions, and government are all shrinking their core work force, leading to more people, not only in the arts, left to work on their own. The research on graduates from various visual arts courses suggest self-employment is an important option for a career. Enterprise and small business are now the new buzz words.

But some of those who believe the pursuits of the fine arts and the related nearly-fine art programmes in other disciplines have tried to argue their case based on the sovereignty and special status of art. The argument has become more tenuous now with new political and economic agendas.

Some of the quangos and their major client organisations had also come to believe the arts were above the concerns of other social activity, and independent of political and economic conditions generally. Art with a capital A has become defined as that art receiving public subsidy, often difficult to understand except by the cognescenti. Thus non-profit activities, supported by supposedly disinterested state bodies are the true art, distinguished from profit-making or commercial activities which are pure entertainment or, in the case of the visual arts, 'decorative'. The Crafts Council has also subscribed to this mentality to some degree, although there have been some significant differences in their approach and practice.

The situation for visual arts and artists is fluid in our society. Individually and collectively people within the visual arts milieu respond in an idiosyncratic fashion to

ideas regarding the separation or integration of visual artists into a wider social milieu.

The visual arts, in common with other art forms, no longer connect with any one sector of society. Janet Wolff (1981) talks of

> "The actual separation of the artist from any clear social group or class and from any secure form of patronage as the older system of patronage was overtaken by the dealer-critic system which left the artist in a precarious position in the market."

It is important therefore to consider changes in the surrounding fabric, changes and patterns of the relationship between visual artists, their masters and their publics and changing patterns within and without the visual arts world, if one seeks to have a comprehensive understanding of this milieu.

The foregoing discussion is best described as wide-ranging rather than comprehensive. For further developing an understanding of Society and its artists the next chapter looks at the mythology and mystique surrounding artists and craftspeople.

Notes and References for Chapter 3

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1. Dawn Ades in 'Reviewing Art History' in The New Art History, 1986.

2. In conversation at the International Association of Cultural Economics Conference, Avignon, France, May,1986.

3. One way to illustrate this relativity of social constructs would have been to compare and contrast the English, Scottish and Welsh situations. In this research the Scottish and Welsh situations have only been investigated briefly, and are discussed only in passing with regard to some of their craft provision.

4. Raymond Williams in the Introduction of Art: Duties and Freedoms a symposium at Aberyswyth, 1978.

5. See Eric Moody (1989) The Art Market and the State in Britain and Nicholas Pearson (1982) The State and the Visual Arts.

6. John Pick's models were originally discussed at seminars at the Department of Arts Policy and Management, City University. These appear in a slightly different form in his book (1988) The Arts in a State.

7. The incident was told in conversation with Alvin Rees, author of Culture and Company, in Vancouver, July 1986. I believe the corporate speaker was someone from Mobil Oil.

8. Eudora Moore in conversation, Vancouver, November 1984.

Chapter 4 THE MYSTIQUE OF ARTISTS AND CRAFTSMEN

Throughout history the mystiques of artists and craftspeople have undergone a series of transformations which now have accumulated to present a complexity of attributes. This chapter briefly signposts some elements of their historical development, to contribute to an understanding the mystiques in their most common contemporary guises, and discusses their purposes.

Feldman (1982) said

> "We cannot overestimate the importance of the mystique. it began as a means of establishing human identity; it persisted as an instrument of social and economic protection; it survives as a spiritualized artistic ideal."

The contemporary mystique surrounding artists can be described through a constellation of attributes ascribed to the artistic personality. These might include labels such as free, inspired, alienated, individual, creative, unique, genius, eccentric, independent, special, impulsive, compulsive, erratic, irrelevant, marginal, struggling and passive. A quick look at the historical development of the concepts embodied in some of these is in order.

Feldman (1974) says,

> "It appears that classical artisans persuaded themselves that they worked for religious and cultic purposes as much as to earn a living... each trade labouring under the protection of a particular divinity ... thus began the mystique...first cultivated in the brotherhoods of architects, carpenters, stonecutters, sculptors, painters and mosaicists of the ancient world... transferred to social, religious and artistic associations know as colleges or corporations."

This notion of the spiritual nature of the visual arts professions is still evident today. During the Renaissance, however, it separated into two strands, with the uplifting of the artist-painter and sculptor from the ranks of artisan, while the craftsmen and artisans continued to work in fraternities called guilds, operating in somewhat similar ways, with similar ideals as in classical times.

This gradual change in status of the artist was assisted, in part, by the arguments of people such as Alberti. Thus a new mystique developed. Painters and sculptors were to be emulated as people with special skills and talents; people with genius; people who were more cerebral (thus distinguished from artisans), using intellect rather than just the hand skills of artisans. These distinctions continue to have a potency in contemporary debates regarding art and craft.

My dictionary defines genius as consummate intellectual creative or other power, the special spirit of any individual. But this should not necessarily be seen as an ahistorical condition, free of sets of social conditions. Kubler (1962) points out,

> The universal genius of the Renaissance was a qualified individual bestriding many new tracks of development at the fortunate moment in the great renovation of Western civilization."

Weisberg (1986) who has researched this specific matter of genius (and creativity) says

> "Any attempt to locate genius in either the artist or the work alone is doomed to failure...because genius is the interaction between a work of art and the sensibility of an audience, and the tastes of the audience can change."

None the less, our concept of genius was developed and extended particularly in the Romantic period. And in the twentieth century we have inherited the layered and compounded mythology of artistic genius. As Kubler continues,

> "Our concept of artistic genius underwent such fantastic transformations in the romantic agony of the nineteenth century that we still today unthinkingly identify genius as a congenital disposition and as an inborn difference of kind among men instead of a fortuitous keying together of disposition and situation into an exceptionally efficient entity."

Examining the myth of genius, Weisberg (1986) presents convincing evidence to support his claim that

> "Genius is a characteristic that is bestowed upon an individual through the subjective response of an audience...[There] is no guarantee that posterity's judgements are permanent."

Whether it is the attribute of genius or the overall mystique of the artist it is worth thinking about our tendencies to rewrite history in terms of current mythology. As Owen Kelly (1985) wrote

> "Phrases such as 'artistic temperament' and 'artistic sensibility' [have been] applied retrospectively across time and space...the work of people like Michaelangelo who was a master craftsman, a superb painter and decorator to his contemporaries, was revalued and he was promoted from the ranks of artisan to the lofty heights of misunderstood artist."

Ideas developed in the nineteenth century also laid the foundation for our modern mythology of great artists as unique individuals. It is worth noting Williams' (1976) comments that,

> "Individual originally meant indivisible... individual can be found in the sense of essential indivisibility in medieval theological argument...the emergence of notions of individuality in the modern sense can be related to the break-up of medieval social, economic and religious order ...there was new stress on a man's personal existence."

Evolving from this new emphasis on personal existence were the concepts of personal expression and inner direction which have reached new heights in our century.

Since the 1950's we have developed the notions of the importance of freedom and inner direction for the artist. For the rest of us such freedom from worldly constraints is an ideal to which we can never hope to aspire, but want as a dream. Perhaps that is why we wish to impose these notions on our artists. But the dream can backfire for the artists, as Lasch (1985) explains,

> The initial exhilaration that accompanies the discovery of fully developed interior life, a life liberated from..everything narrow, stifling, petty and conventional... ignores the need for a public common life... [and thus] leads to an impoverished private life as well."

Another important concept in our contemporary mythology of art and artists is that of originality. Williams locates the introduction of this somewhat later, in the eighteenth century, saying

> "original...in the sense of an authentic work of art as distinct from a copy...[then changed to] a sense close to new."

Williams summarises this constellation of concepts, saying,

> "Here an unusual number of keywords in a new philosophy of art, nature and and society are used together and interact...the new use of a kind of work distinguished by genius, growing not made and therefore not mechanical, taking its material from itself and not from others and not merely a product of art and labour. Originality then became a common term in praise of art and literature,...a work was good not by comparison with others, or a standard, but in its own terms."

It is interesting to consider the parallel social changes and relationships with artists. The eighteenth century saw the expansion of a markets, dealers, new customers.

And in recent times the concept of original fits nicely with the needs of our capitalist market economy with its insatiable need for novelty.

Williams sees uniqueness as a qualitative category, a concept of the Romantic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The Romantics built on the notions of free or liberated imaginations from the earlier period of the Enlightenment. Williams says of the Romantic period,

> "An extended sense of liberation from rules and conventional forms was also powerfully developed ...in art and literature and music...a corresponding sense of strong feeling, but also of fresh and authentic feeling, was ... important. The romantic hero developed from an extravagant to an ideal character. New valuations of the irrational, the unconscious and the legendary or mythical, developed alongside new valuations of the folk-cultures within which some of these materials seems to be found, and in a different dimension, alongside new valuations of subjectivity."

Art for Art's sake thus appeared and has become for some, art for artists' sake - with emphasis on the importance of the personal inner experience of the artist and disdain for all but the cognescenti.

Thus over a long period of time the mystique has developed and compounded. Starting with notions of the artist being an inspired, hard-working and skilful person in the Classic period, the Renaissance added the concepts of uniqueness and genius. The Enlightenment contributed ideals of individuality and independence; the Romantics gave us the concepts of freedom and transcendence embodied in godlike cultural heroes. And the twentieth century has compounded the vision to add notions of eccentricity, alienation, passivity and personal struggle both in terms of realising an inner vision, and being at odds with the world.

The contemporary mystique may, and often does, include many of these attributes. The mystique can then be part of the package which draws entrants to the field of visual arts to seek higher education at Art Schools. The mythology is often confirmed and solidified into (albeit unwritten) codes of practice. Kuspit (1984) said of the students he taught in art school,

> "They aspire to the same tired ... myth of elitist non-conformity...they want success on their own, unique terms - as everyone does... there is a heroic streak to it: the desire to be a genius...[radicalising] difference into transcendence. The transcendent role accorded difference... [and] is tied to the correlate myths of self generation and of radical independence and freedom of art."

The myth also has potency and currency with the media. In Picture This: Media Representation of Visual Art and Artists Hayward (1988) said

> "There is after all, much in the myth of the inspired individual artist working (often in the face of considerable adversity) to transcend everyday reality and produce a cultural artefact (which then mysteriously assumes the status of 'art'), which recalls the intensity of saintly religious conviction or the nobility underlying classic tragedy."

The myth translated appears in various guises continually; most recently an example was in an advertisement announcing the reopening of the Courtauld Institute Galleries.[2] Talking of Monet and Renoir as impoverished, Van Gogh as tortured by hallucinations. Gauguin as starving and ill, Toulouse-Lautrec as 'disfigured and stunted' the copy continues

> "These poor wretches, often scorned by both society and the artistic community are today household names."

How close are these notions of the artistic mystique to the most common constellation of attributes of a contemporary craftsperson? Not very, recalling the comments of the Contemporary Applied Arts, that crafts

are associated with boring, predictable, lacking in originality. Although there is still a mystique of magic attached to visual creators, be they craftsmen, or other visual artists in their work of transforming raw materials into finished products.

The modern crafts mystique had its roots in the notions of classical times and the medieval period mentioned earlier, of a spiritual nature to their work, a calling perhaps. Changes and developments of the mystique coincided with social changes involving new patrons and new roles for some makers. The somewhat romanticized interpretations of the dignity of the craftmen and women producing work by hand in time-honoured ways using certain 'craft' materials such as wood, fibre, clay, metals was elaborated in the nineteenth century, in attempts to uplift the profession. The items thus produced were always useful and perhaps beautiful. The craftsmen and women were seen to work individually or in small groups, most often in serene, preferably rural isolation. Craftspeople were seen to be dedicated to their work, skilful and hard-working, alienated first from industrialism and in this century from the crass consumer-oriented and pressured world of more ordinary men.

We owe a great deal of this mystique to Ruskin and Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement in the last century, as they reacted to the industrialisation of crafts and laid the foundation for modern crafts activity. In part the mystique is a mixture of idealism and nostalgia for simplicity and a genuine calling for a more humane lifestyle.

The fallacy of this interpretation of the earlier historical position of crafts people has been documented

by various writers, particularly Frayling & Snowden (1982) and Dormer (1990). In more recent times it may be seen as part of the development of the heritage industry.

Also, some of this mystique harks back to what Feldman (1974) said in his description of the artisans in classical times

> "It was [the] religious motive as much as artisans' pride that made it difficult for the ancient craftsman to cut corners, to use shoddy materials".

Christopher Frayling (1990) notes most of this mythology was still present in what he calls the prevailing ideology of craft around the time of the Festival of Britain in 1951.

John Houston (1988) talks of crafts and craftsmen being used as part of the propaganda during the second world war and immediately thereafter as being

> "promoted within a frame, emphasising such qualities as sincerity, singularity, trustworthiness, Britishness...[and] essential honesty."

The craft mystique has been challenged most recently with the development, in the 1970's of what Frayling (1990) has called an avant garde in craft. These avant garde practitioners and their mediators carved out the territory and attendant mystique of the Artist Craftsman, 'mark2'. For when Bernard Leach used the term two decades earlier, he intended it to describe a constellation of attributes of the serious, professional studio-based craftsperson, still firmly rooted in the craft mystique.

The avant garde of craft, however, were interested in sharing the mystique of the contemporary fine artist and rejected much of the craft ideology. There were others

who have chosen to try to adapt and develop the existing mystique to include new practice and newly developed intentions of practitioners.

Those craftspeople, designers or makers who also see themselves as artists similar to fine artists, and choose to embrace the attendant mystique may feel the opposing tensions of the two mystiques. One particularly important tension is caused by the incongruent contemporary myths of inner direction versus producing work which is of use to others. Related to this is the notion of the necessary alienation of the artist, which is at odds with the crafts mystique.

Reconsider the notion of an implicit hierarchy in the visual arts professions, with fine artists at the top, and thus in a position or condition to be aspired to by other visual artists. The impact of this hierarchy encourages many within the visual arts to adopt the fine artist/artist mystique. There are ambitions to be considered special, unique, a genius, a person of special vision and talent and a hero - with licence to work and live without all of the usual social constraints. The attraction cannot be denied - particularly when it gives a reason to exist and to continue to work regardless of the financial returns of even minimal economic sustenance. Such a notion is not far removed from the condition mentioned earlier of the spiritual nature and rewards of the pursuit and profession. However important transformations of some of the visual arts professions from lower class labour to middle and upper class occupation of choice have occurred which are then supported by this contemporary version of the mystique.

A character in Tom Stoppard's play Travesties described an artist as,

> "someone who is gifted in some way that enables him to do something more or less well which can only be done badly or not at all by someone who is not thus gifted."

Becker (1982) discusses this last quote saying,

> "We think it important to know who has that gift because we accord people who have it special rights and privileges. At an extreme, the romantic myth of the artist suggests that people with such gifts cannot be subjected to the constraints imposed on other members of society. We must allow them to violate rules of decorum, propriety and common sense which everyone else must follow or risk being punished. The myth suggests that in return society receives work of unique character and invaluable quality."

It is interesting to note Becker's comment that,

> "Such a belief does not appear in all, or even most societies...It may be unique to Western European societies and those influenced by them."

It should also be a concern that if we were to continue to promote the notion of all visual artists being artists, sic. fine artists, we encourage many others to embrace the mystique, to become what they think 'artists' should be, and to create work suitable only for the fine art style venues - the galleries which already cannot support those who would like to participate in this milieu.

Visual artists now are inheritors of this artistic mystique and more. The cult of the personality as mentioned earlier has become more evident, emphasising the Romantic heroic qualities of particularly the international art stars.

Kuspit (1984) wrote,

> "The idols of personality and personal experience are false in that they are not the sources of creativity, the system is. It is important to realise that the magic of art is collectively created."

But, as hinted in the last chapter, it suits the particular system of the Art World and Art Market to encourage these idols.

The mystique is of dubious value for the majority of competent visual artists who are not aspiring to be or who are already embraced as, artistic geniuses and stars. For it has been too readily translated into maxims such as business acumen is damaging to artistic talent, and the work of genius will be recognised automatically, with the artist playing a passive, introspective role.

Thus many competent visual artists may be hampering their own opportunities to be successful and independent, by their perceptions that professionalism is judged in terms of an 'artistic' posture which denies the legitimacy of the necessary knowledge and behavior.

Because of the dominance of the Art World, Art Market, the orthodox mystique affects the practices and conscience of many in the visual arts. In these other spheres the mystique can give meaning to the work of arts administrators and is thus perpetuated by some visual arts mediators, keen to be associated with special culture heroes. It has been further reinforced by some staff within the art school system who do not need to or choose to be public about their art.

The system of collective activity is a network of interested parties - as an art world. Specialness, uniqueness, otherworldliness may be admirable qualities in the hype of the Art World, Art Market superstar, but are of questionable value to those visual artists who choose other life styles and work styles. Maintaining the notions of individuality and solitary pursuit also

obscures the extensive collaborative activity in the visual arts world of shared visions, workspaces and deliberate collective working.

In a range of manifestations the dominant mystique of artist influences art practice. For some visual artists adoption of the mystique can present varying degrees of conflict and tension, which can inhibit their ability to develop a successful and sustainable pattern of practice.

Of equal importance is the fact that the dominant Art World, Art Market mythology can influence the decision, planning and activities of those who would support the various areas of endeavour in the visual arts. The mythology thus utilized as guiding principles, especially by publicly funded visual arts bodies, is in its most dangerous form for it denies the legitimacy of a variety of visual art activity. It needs to be recognised that an analysis and clarification of the mythology surrounding artists and craftspeople is likely to be primarily of interest to those dissatisfied with the current dominant visual arts practice and mythology.

Through a variety of pressures and shifts outside the arts milieu and within, there are changes and adjustments taking place affecting the mystiques of artists and and craftspeople and their effects on practitioners. The younger people entering visual arts professions seem to be equally concerned to develop both their artistic abilities and to acquire knowledge regarding the non-artistic activities they will need in order to build successful independent careers.

If one accepts the concept that reality is a social construct held together by shared myths, mythology is thus essential to the operation of social systems, including the visual arts milieu, with its plurality of activity.

Notes and References for Chapter 4

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1. From Peter Fuller's review of the exhibition The Maker's Eye, at the Crafts Council gallery, referring to Donald Winnicott - no further reference given.

2. The advertisement for the Courtauld Institute Galleries was sponsored by Yellow Pages and appeared in The European, weekend of July 27 - 29, 1990. The advertisement is headed "They didn't suffer poverty, illness and destitution to be remembered for their tablemats." It continues "Now, mercifully, a new gallery has opened in London which offers everyone the chance to see many of the most famous paintings of the Impressionist period as they were meant to be seen....no one meeting this rather quiet, non-intellectual businessman [Samuel Courtauld] could ever have guess that he possessed such unerring and courageous artistic judgement."!

Chapter 5 THE BUSINESS OF SUCCESS IN THE VISUAL ARTS

What is success in the visual arts? For the purposes of this research success is seen to be a constellation of concepts, based on the notions of prosperous progress or achievement. Success can only be measured against goals and aspirations held by individuals. It is not to be defined in specific terms. As DeBono (1986) says "perhaps the simplest definition is to set out to do something and to succeed in doing it".[1]

Success is taken to mean a condition achieved by independent visual artists who have created a professional practice which has two distinct elements. This condition affords them a feeling of satisfaction and contentment regarding their creative activity and a level of financial reward compatible with their needs. It may mean an income of £5,000 or of £30,000 and does not place value judgements on any specific notions of income or artistic or peer recognition. At the heart of this definition of success is the notion of self-determination and confidence.

It is the argument of this thesis that by this definition many independent visual artists are successful. Further, many of them consciously or unconsciously conduct their activities with a fair degree of what might be termed good business practice and acumen.

Understanding and elucidating their <u>modus operandi</u> from a business perspective, rather than an art history perspective, can provide useful case studies and role models for other visual artists and their mediators. That is to suggest it is worth not only looking for aesthetic ideas or to discuss progression of development

of artefacts or develop greater understanding of the creative processes in action. It is also potentially useful to also look at attitudes and activities which contribute to satisfactory self-determined practice. Obviously to be concerned about such matters is to old a belief that visual artists' capacity to determine their future is not just a matter of artistic talent.

Edward De Bono goes on to say that to be successful "you have to be lucky, or a little mad, or very talented, or to find yourself in a rapid-growth field." For the visual artist, we have too often suggested that success is related to only the amount of talent or genius an artist possesses.

By most definitions the visual arts would not be considered a rapid growth field. Luck, however, is seen to be related to visual arts success, if only expressed by the visual artists who have not yet achieved recognition and acceptance in the worlds in which they are attempting to participate. A more widely held view in the visual arts, particularly the fine arts, emphasises a passive approach to luck. Thus, the 'best' will succeed; they will be discovered and rewarded.

The potential of closer examination of the working patterns and attitudes of some of the 'successful' artists brings to mind what DeBono says, when discussing luck,

> "The passive attitude...tells you that there is nothing you can do except wait for luck...the positive attitude is ...that you are very ready to spot opportunities and it also means that you may generate such opportunities deliberately."

Luck is commonly seen to be a matter of external forces which we cannot influence, only gratefully enjoy. It

could also be argued that luck is also to do with one's openness - the ability to see beyond the confines of a narrow path and a willingness to take advantage of opportunities. One successful visual arts entrepreneur once told me "I look at every person I meet, every chance encounter, from the point of view of potential help to my business". And he went on to explain how, in this manner, he found new customers, new ideas, new supporters, new leads in directions he had not previously anticipated.

'A little mad' would fit into some of our mythology of what it takes to be an artist. The 'Van Gogh' personality is the classic caricature of this.[2] DeBono explains his concept of madness as indicating single-mindedness - determination and persistence which are he says, "qualities you may have by temperament or as a strategy". This single-mindedness is similar, if not so romantic and dramatic, as ideas of the compulsion or inner drive of the artist. Much of the literature regarding small businesses emphasise the necessity of these same qualities of determination and persistence.

DeBono is concerned with success in much broader terms. Yet his suggestion regarding talent also is of particular interest to the business of being an artist when he says, "make the most of your talent and do not expect it to be enough by itself."

Success is best seen as a combination of these three elements of luck, determination and talent.

Many visual artists have chosen to be in this profession for a combination of reasons. It may be the appeal of the life style, or to do with a long standing interest in visual expression. The choice may also be related to

notions of career or vocational satisfaction - the pleasure of doing things they enjoy.

As mentioned earlier, visual artists may plan to work for a salary in an arts or arts related activity, to work independently creating artistic 'products' or to work in some combination of the two. They may also decide to keep their creative activity, although paramount to their life aspirations, separate from money-making activities. This separation may be an initial strategy while they enhance their skills and build a reputation. It may also be a long term strategy, if they find satisfaction in a related career such as teaching.

These personal lifestyle choices are seen as distinct from any definition of success related to economic considerations. People enter the visual arts most usually for these reasons of attractiveness of the lifestyle, coupled with an idea of talent or inclination. There are some who are attracted by the status of artist, since artists can be seen as culture heroes - symbols of an idealized self-fulfilling, and spiritual life.

It is important to note that there are those who become visual artists for quite different reasons. It may be an alternative, particularly after working in other occupations. This has been documented recently in the research of Channon (1987) and Ashwin et al (1988). In Ashwin a survey of six hundred craftspeople resulted in, fifty per cent having had a previous career. To be an independent visual artist may be a deliberate way of dropping out of more regimented work, or a way of becoming marginalised. Some also enter the visual arts primarily for the perceived economic potential of producing 'artistic' products. And some of the current

art school students seem to be more interested in the future economic opportunities as well as developing their talents. Some of the artists in this study, although trained in fine art, have chosen to work in a craft-orientated manner partly because of the financial opportunities which are available.

This research focused on visual artists who are involved to some fair degree in independent (though not necessarily individual) work in the visual arts, rather than those who spend their working lives in full-time employment. Nor is it focused on any of those who are not looking to obtain some fair measure of economic sustenance from their artistic work. Thus adequate financial return is a factor in the aspirations and goals relating to the definitions of success for the individuals in the group I am suggesting they represent.

Brighton and Pearson (1985) talked of the personal and public self-definitions of visual artists. It has been commonly understood that 'true artists' hold the personal, private definitions and goals as the preeminent ones. Although these artists might include public endorsement and recognition as part of their idea of success, the dominant driving force of visual art activity is the uncontaminated self-expression of the artist. But it is also evident that some visual artists believe in a more public or social definition, which embraces the concept of using artistic skills to produce for others, as of paramount or at least equal importance.

The visual artists encountered in this study have arrived at what may be considered a balanced view of both the public and private definitions of the artist and have included these in their perception of success. In fact, the degree of the dominance of the public or private

aspirations dictates both their actions and their attitudes. DeBono says

> "The [English] attitude [towards success] attributes all success to a small talent plus a great deal of of salesmanship. This enables the less successful person to feel just as good as the successful person except that the latter has used salesmanship (often much despised in England) to market the talent."

In the visual arts milieu, and most certainly in the Art and Craft Worlds, salesmanship and business acumen in general has been seen as a negative quality. Thus it is not to be developed or even discussed - certainly not to be acknowledged and praised. The concept of salesmanship does have a hard aggressiveness to it and, as such it is used to push away and argue against many potentially useful skills and attitudes. Variations on the notions of commercial attitudes as damaging to true artistic endeavours, have been commonplace.

Those visual artists who produce independently, with some measure of expectation of exchange of money for their art activity, are 'in business'. If financial expectations, at least to sustain their lifestyle, are therefore part of the visual artists' definition of success, it is prudent to examine and understand their business attitudes and acumen.

The visual arts sector is increasingly more visibly populated by those who see it to have both an attractive lifestyle and potential vocational opportunities. The variety of patterns of success which can now be documented can give a more complete picture of how individuals operate outside or alongside the dominant gallery-based practice.

Being 'in business' actually relates to all visual artists expecting money in return for their work, including gallery-based visual artists. The tendency of some Artworld and Craftworld participants to dismiss the work of non-gallery-based artists as irrelevant or too commercial is an interesting extension of the current mythology. To continue to reinforce a distinction between the commercial and non-commercial practice obscures the nature and workings of the gallery and collector world.

Artists, like other professionals in business, have choices about the extent of the overt nature of this business activity. Many exhibit good business practice without using the terminology of business.

Certain business skills and attitudes are coming into the language of artistic discourse. Marketing, for instance, is now more common parlance in the arts in general. There are arts mediators, and people from the business and education sectors, who see this growing concern in the arts milieu as providing opportunities. So there is a plethora of courses, conferences, consultancies, articles etc regarding 'marketing the arts' and 'improving business skills'. This research intends to critically evaluate some of these new trends, to highlight good practice, and identify where some initiatives may be limited in their ultimate effectiveness.

There is concern that much current practice has some serious limitations. Some of these include:

1. Failure of the mediators, particularly in the public sector and in education, to have a

comprehensive understanding of appropriate business concepts.

Professional practice segments of fine and related art courses are still only a very small, optional section in most colleges. The common practice of inviting a number of ex-students to speak with current students is often done without a framework for discussion and analysis.

Most public agencies while starting to implement some programmes and activities are hampered by the lack of a cohesive understanding of the particulars of running a successful small business of this kind in the visual arts. Staff who are in place to assist with professional practice and business skills often seem to have fragmented knowledge in the area, in terms of a clear understanding of the range of visual arts occupations, and the implied attitudinal issues.

2. Resistance or reluctance of the mediators to acknowledge the parallels of the visual arts and other spheres of economic activity.

This has surfaced in the notions such as the arts as different from other activity in all significant respects; artists having the monopoly on the use of the word creativity; artists as unappreciated, undervalued; the failure of society to provide for its artists. All non-art business is interested in profit.

3. Failure of the 'business experts' to try to identify the nature of the visual arts sector.

There are similarities with the arts sector and with

other spheres of economic activity. There are also differences within the arts, and in many cases parallels between a particular strand of arts activity and an activity outside the confines of art. There are many differences between performing and visual arts in terms of business strategy and planning which need to be studied and elaborated. We need to look for the qualities which are unique to the visual arts and also at the diversity within the visual arts.

In terms of small businesses, there is a class of activity which is finally being recognised as significantly different from mainstream small business. The difference is crucial in terms of intent, values and goals. This newly identified category of micro business, or one-person business, more aptly describes the <u>modus operandi</u> of the majority of independent visual artists. And an examination of the micro business indicates some important distinctions might be able to be made in terms of the differences between micro business and self-employment, which would further clarify our understanding.

4. Contamination of researchers and business advisors in terms of adopting and helping to perpetuate the mystique of artists and craftsmen.

It has been popular sport in the visual arts milieu to quickly polarise discussions of money. Artists are concerned only with the production of their art; art and money don't mix; creativity and business don't mix; artists can't understand money: they can't deal with bureaucracy and so on. All these maxims have been part of the mythology and mystique of artists and art in recent years.

In fact many of the 'non-business' attitudes attributed to artists are also shared by many other independent self-employed business people. The motivation to be 'one's own boss' relates to the importance of an independent life and work style, which is not only the prerogative of the artist. Artists and others choosing this self-directed life all have to come to terms with doing or delegating tasks and activities which will support the primary purpose of their endeavour. To promote the notion that it can or should be otherwise is to perpetuate disabling expectation among the visual artists.

Success in the independent sector of the visual arts can, and should, be measured in terms both of the personal satisfactions relating to the development of the work - the artistic or creative aspects, and to the economic satisfactions of earning enough money to continue to do the things that visual artists consider important.

The visual artists in this study have been chosen to illustrate the some of the possible variations of a specific kind of visual arts practice. They have successfully dealt with the tensions created by goals of aesthetic development and economic goals.

Mediators, enablers and educators who are now attending to the business side of independent visual arts practice have looked to the small business and enterprise sector for advice and ideas. This is now appearing to be in need of a more refined approach, as research regarding small business is beginning to uncover a pattern of what has been called small business, which is now being labelled micro business. In the United States this has sometimes been called lifestyle business. What

distinguishes this business style from what has been considered the mainstream of small business is motivation and aspiration. For these small micro businesses are not interested in growth and profit. The motivation is to provide a self-sustaining endeavour.=

Where visual artists and others of similar business aspirations have found difficulty in accommodating and incorporating business advice and information it has often been that they have been encouraged to develop their activities into a kind and scale of business which is unpalatable to them. For many, the reaction has been to withdraw and reject the business advice. Thus the mythology of the incompatibility of art and business is confirmed.

One of the few books to deal with micro business in a practical way is Running A One Person Business by Whitmeyer, Rasberry and Phillips (1989). In it they say

> "the one person business is business as a statement about who you are and what you value...creating meaningful work that parallels all that is important in your life...From the owners of one-person businesses we often hear...they don't want their businesses to grow large, and they are not interested in becoming wealthy...what they do want is greater degree of personal working autonomy than is possible within other career structures.

Few of the people they have interviewed and worked with are visual artists. They are social activists of 1970's, people with other life commitments and women who choose this style of work as a way of avoiding of male hierarchies. The concept of this kind of micro business would seem to be quite appropriate to the visual artists of this study and those of similar intent.

Whitmeyer et al outline what they think are the important ingredients to be successful in one-person businesses.

They call these "tradeskill, market focus and co-operation". Tradeskill includes being realistic and persistent; minimising the risks and learning the non-creative side of running the business. Market Focus is self explanatory, but does not mean the same as market led - they are not suggesting producing specifically according to market demands. Their third requirement for success, co-operation, they explain as forming networks for information and support. This goes beyond the notion of subcontractors and other professionals providing expertise and includes the emotional support which is so valuable to any isolated individual business person.[4]

Their concept of micro business is a pattern of operation in which there is a core of one or two people running the business with a network of assistance in the form of professionals and subcontractors adjacent to the main enterprise. Thus it is not like larger small businesses who take these professionals and subcontractors in as employed staff members. It is the pressure by wellmeaning advisors to encourage new responsibilities to take on staff which can cause consternation to the micro business owner.

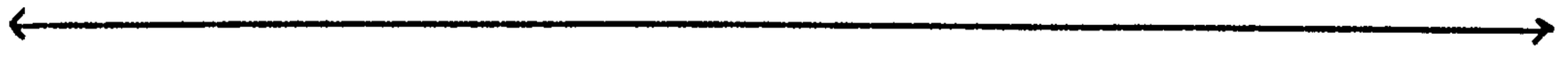
The pattern Whitmeyer et al suggest is similar to that described by Handy (1989) of what he calls a shamrock organisation. His shamrock organisation has three parts consisting of a core group with some occasional part time staff, and affiliated, but self-employed professionals.

This concept of mini business also introduces a distinction not yet explored in detail in the literature. That is the distinction between as Whitmeyer et al says,

"just making a living as an individual and running a one-person business."

Making a living as an individual refers to what has commonly been known as freelance work and implies a more passive business style than that of a one-person business. That is to say a freelancer is looking for occasional attachments with other people's enterprise, whereas the micro business enterprise is generating more of its own activity.

The distinction between orthodox small business and employment is best thought about as a continuum. The visual artists encountered in this study are representative of various positions between these two.



small business	micro business	freelance	employment

5.1

The continuum of small business, micro business & freelance.

Notes and References for Chapter 5

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1. DeBono's comments are taken from his book Tactics: The Art and Science of Success, published in 1985 by Collins.

2. Griselda Pollock explains some of this in 'Artists Mythologies and Media Genius, Madness and Art History' in Picture This: Media Representations of Visual Art and Artists, 1988 edited by Philip Hayward.

3. Discussed this concept of micro business first with Susan Bell, small business consultant and researcher, in conversation in Vancouver, December, 1987.

4. Whitmeyer, Phillips and Rasberry have been work as consultants teachers and writers, running their own micro businesses in the San Francisco area for up to twenty years. They have now produced a number of books considering different aspects of this subject from a practical and popular standpoint; the three of most relevance are Whitmer et al's The One-Person Business Book, and Phillip and Rasberry's Honest Business and Marketing Without Advertising.

Chapter 6 ART WORLD: CRAFT WORLD

Since the early 1970's a handful of people have analysed the visual art milieu in terms of a system, a negotiated environment or a network. These include Brighton & Pearson and Becker. The term 'art world' is used in both this specific analytical sense, by those of us following on from their work, and in a more general sense which is found scattered in the literature. I have used this analysis to identify the craft world or worlds. For the art world concept can be applied to various segments within the overall visual arts milieu. These segments may or may not overlap.

The art world most elaborated in the literature is that of Pearson and Brighton (1985), delineating a specialist culture of contemporary art in Britain. They described their art world as

> "a particular culture of art which centres in this country around certain institutions, the Tate Gallery, the Art Council and its client institutions, the art schools, a few art magazines and a minority of commercial art galleries. Broadly speaking this art world is concerned with the international modernist, avant garde tradition."

Brighton and Pearson explained their artworld analysis as a means of describing "the corporate economy of art and corporate aesthetic judgements" of "a particular culture of art...which institutionally is <u>the dominant specialist culture of art</u>".

This culture or network of Brighton and Pearson will be referred to as the 'Artworld', while the generic term will be written as 'art world' (as suggested by Moody). The Artworld produces 'Art' by 'Artists' more commonly known as contemporary fine art gallery-based work and practice.

Becker, an American sociologist, uses the term 'art world' to denote

> "a network of people whose co-operative activity, organised via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things produces the kind of art works that the art world is noted for."

It is important to think of this system as a shifting coalition; a network rather than a tight organisation. In systems theory, it would be called an open system. The main output of the system is the distribution of certain kinds of art.

Becker stressed his principle of analysis is the network of co-operation and of social organisation. He said his work may be considered the sociology of occupations applied to artistic work, looking at art as a social phenomenon.

These parallel and overlapping concepts of art worlds are useful tools for this research for understanding the internal workings and patterns of such networks and also the situation of those adjacent to an art world. Following on from Brighton and Pearson, it is evident that the Artworld they describe strongly influences other sectors of the visual arts, such as the crafts milieu. Also, by extension of their concept of the Artworld as a framework of analysis of the crafts milieu, a less precise and distinct art world emerges, which I have labelled the Craftworld.

Some of the implications of this network, or systems analysis of most relevance to this research are:

1. That the network or art world is socially constituted and created.

2. Art worlds are primary means of maintaining the current mythology and practice relating to visual art and visual artists.

3. That art worlds can not and will not accommodate all who aspire to be part of them.

4. That some art worlds, such as the Artworld of Brighton and Pearson, and the attendant Art Market, dominates public consciousness.

5. That this domination limits the vision and activities of many other visual artists, their supporters and their publics.

The Artworld, and to a lesser extent (since the stakes are not as high) reflect particular ideologies which the power structure (the State) hold. Pearson's The State and the Visual Arts and Pick's The Arts in a State both discuss this in more detail. Moody (1989) also contributes to this analysis.

The predominant Artworld also harnesses the dominant media channels and thus affects the perceptions of the wider society regarding our general understanding of the visual arts. Again to a lesser extent, the Craftworld performs in a similar way.

Brighton and Pearson also point to the influence of the Art Market in this regard. Alloway (1982) discussing a New York-based network, spoke of a 'triumvirate of artists, collectors and dealers' - an alliance for the purpose of furthering the work both as a cultural sign and as an object on the market. This triad had

> "a monopolistic hold on art which acts to limit its interaction with society. Galleries largely control our access to art

> both as an object for contemplation and for purchase ... (the dealers) exercise a disproportionate influence on public thought about contemporary art ... the exhibition schedules of galleries provide the subject matter of most art writing ... the bad effect comes specifically from the galleries' uncontested dominance of the network of information and their restriction on taste, not from the buying and selling as such."

Brighton and Pearson more extensively describe the contribution and participation of the state funded sector institutions - the Arts Council, the art schools and the Tate gallery.

Attempts to more fully understand the links and connections, the boundaries, operating procedures and mythology of this Artworld is made more difficult by the phenomenon commented on by Brighton (1987)

> "In Britain one qualification for being in power in the Artworld is to be ignorant of the kind of discourses that offer accounts of the structures of power...art is supposed to have no ideology and no political economy."

Brighton and Pearson's Artworld is a small sector of the visual arts milieu in terms of numbers of people involved, numbers of art works, or even the total value of sales of art work. It dominates public thought about contemporary art through its control of the media, as Alloway suggested. In much of the general press, coverage of the visual arts is primarily in the form of information about galleries, temporary exhibitions and the market for certain kinds of fine art which fits the description of Brighton and Pearson's Artworld.

Keeping in mind the earlier discussion of contemporary mystiques - the notion of genius, and scarcity of supply, for example, which are of most use to the Art Market, the dominant Artworld cannot, and will not, accommodate all who aspire to be part of them. As Becker commented

> "both participants in the creation of art works and members of society generally believe that the making of art requires special talents, gifts or abilities, which few have, some have more than others, and a very few are gifted enough to merit the honorific title of artist".

This is not a question of aesthetic decision as much as an institutional one. The Artworld decides the boundaries of acceptable art, and acceptable artists on the basis of the space available. As Becker explains

> "that such large scale editorial choices made by the organisations or an art world, exclude many people whose work closely resembles work accepted as art. We can see too that art worlds frequently incorporate at a later date, works they originally rejected, so that the distinction must not be in the work, but in the ability of an art world to accept it and its maker."

From the Artworld's perspective it is necessary to maintain a pool of aspirants adjacent - 'in the wings'. And indeed, Brighton and Pearson (1985) observed that

> "over the last twenty years it has become this specialist culture of art in which most art school graduate artists have sought recognition."

Becker explained this aspect when he wrote,

> "Art world participants think a large number of people, not just the very best, worth bothering about, for practical reasons, that you have to encourage many in order to find the few and that there is no telling when some one not worth bothering about will suddenly become worth it after all ... Art worlds deal with the contradiction between thinking only a few are worth caring about, and actually paying attention to many more, by distinguishing between the great artists, however that is defined and whatever words are used to express it, and those who are competent."

A problem thus created for those who are marginalised by the Artworld, is the limitation of opportunity imposed by the lack of this 'public acceptance'. Pearson and Brighton, and Moody discuss this point in terms of the question of reputation, professional standing and the

economic value placed on their works. Brighton and Pearson estimated art prices of Artworld art in the thousands compared with top prices in non-Artworld art in the hundreds.

Here, then, is the breeding ground for the 'starving artist' syndrome. The aspirants must be seen to be producing similar work, abiding by similar conventions, and engaged in art-world approved secondary activities or occupations. Otherwise it may be necessary, if taken up by the art world to rewrite one's history, attempting to destroy evidence of activities deemed unacceptable.

Becker also spoke of the Artworld art becoming accepted as the standard way to make art. Thus the concept of art worlds can help explain how even seemingly genuine 'alternatives' to the dominant tradition come under the influence of the dominant mode. Hence the concern of some of us regarding the trends in so called public art.

An art world is not likely to expand of its own accord, regardless of the numbers of aspirants. Expansion, if any, would more likely be in response to market pressures,in response to a significant expansion of numbers of potential consumers and collectors.

Becker comments that

> "the aesthetic current a world will certify as sufficiently good to be displayed roughly the amount needed to fill the display opportunities."

Some of the marginal artists are what Becker calls 'mavericks', as opposed to the 'integrated professionals'. The integrated professionals use available materials to produce works which in size, form,

design, colour and content fit into the available spaces and into people's ability to respond appropriately. Mavericks were, however,

> "artists who have been part of the conventional artworld of their time, place and medium but found it unacceptably constraining. They began their careers as conventional novices but their innovations violate the conventions of the art world, and they are identified as potential trouble makers. If and when mavericks succeed they do so by circumventing the need for art world institutions, they recruit followers, disciples and helpers often from the ranks of the untrained and unprofessional and create their own networks of co-operative personnel, especially new audiences."

An art world, as with other social systems, keeps people with innovative ideas on the outside, for innovators inside could force the art world participants to devise new forms of conventional practice.

Becker continued

> "The work of these mavericks is often incorporated into the historical corpus of the established art world whose members find the innovations useful in producing the variation required to rescue art from ritual."

When whole groups of visual artists attempt to be accepted by an art world, such as artists working in craft media, video or photography, Becker suggests the following are necessary prerequisites:

> 1. That the work that aspires to be accepted as art usually must display a developed aesthetic apparatus and media through which critical discussion can take place.
>
> 2. That aspirants must dissociate themselves from related crafts or commercial enterprises.
>
> 3. That aspirants must construct histories which tie the work to already accepted arts and emphasise those elements of their pasts which are most clearly artistic."

He continues, saying that if none or all of these prerequisites have the desired effects, then another

strategy is to create a network, or small art world of one's own.

Now if we consider visual artists working in traditionally craft media, we can identify many attempts by individual makers and their mediators to be included in the fine art gallery-based Artworld. The Artworld has actually taken up a very few of these individuals. They are usually art-school trained, and identify with fine artist role models, and would most fit in the category of artists-in-craft, while calling themselves artists. Also some have been accepted onto the fringes of the Art Market, most notably through the 'applied arts' of the auction houses. Such a move may be more to do with the boom in collecting, rather than a reassessment of the 'artiness' of the work. For there is little evidence of work in craft media in the galleries of the Artworld, despite the serious efforts of some makers who have been aspiring to join this world. Society has renamed some craftsmen artists in posterity, such as Bernard Leach, Hans Coper and Michael Cardew. But, for the most part, the work of the craftsperson has been left outside the fine art worlds.

The response of some in a particular part of the craft milieu has been to create an art world. This can be called the Craftworld - capitalised, as Brighton and Pearson's Artworld, to distinguish it as an attempt to elevate and separate a group of practitioners and their supporters and mediators.

Lucie-Smith was one of the first to identify this;

> "There are definite signs in the years since 1977 that what one may call a 'craft hierarchy' has been set up. Some of the signs are crudely financial...there is the fact that an antiquarian market has been created...collectors are investing quite large sums in the work of youngish craftspeople who were unknown ten years ago...[and] the crafts have begun to

> attract a kind of intellectual interest which was never theirs before."

The Craftworld has its flagship gallery at the Crafts Council, a network of other galleries including Contemporary Applied Arts. It has some 'stars', some collectors, a handful of writers and the Crafts magazine. Not everything in the Crafts magazine, however, supports and endorses this Craftworld.

This Craftworld has emerged in the last twenty years, and can be seen to be carrying on many of the activities of an art world. But the Craftworld differs from the Artworld because of this youth. Codes of practice do not yet appear to be so firmly established. Memories of past mythologies, relating to crafts as a whole are still potent, with talk of function in the artefacts and of skill of the craftsperson still widespread. The work of people more rooted in the craft may also appear in these Craftworld venues.

Becker says, "craft can get redefined as art when participants in an art world borrow from the craft or take them over." This may be considered contaminating the craft ideology. He goes on to say

> "the same activity, using the same materials and skills in what appear to be similar ways, may be called by either title, as may the people who engage in it...but craft can and does exist independently of artworlds as a work ideology, an aesthetic and a form of work organisation."

However some of those visual artists working in a craft medium who wish to participate in a fine art milieu (aspiring to the Artworld) or to participate in the Craftworld, have appeared to be aggressively non-utilitarian in their work, and espouse allegiance to the ideology of these worlds. Some of the Craftworld

stars and other participants still incorporate some of the more traditional ideology and aesthetics of the crafts along with the new values of the emerging Craftworld.

It is within the Craftworld, and the activity adjacent to it, that confusion over labels and intent seems to be most evident. It remains to be seen if this is a temporary condition due to the youth of the Craftworld, or if the muddied definitions and mixed intentions will remain a more long lasting feature. As Freeman says (1990), "The craft world needs to take stock of its ideological position." There is the opportunity for the Craftworld to develop a structure which is more unique and appropriate to their milieu rather than continue to develop their'quasi-art' based structure.

Fine Art has spent a long time distinguishing itself from craft, and it now resides deep in the public consciousness that craft is not fine art, and to many, not art. But since the ascension of fine art was a push away from much of what some still consider valid ideology in the craft milieu, it is unlikely that there will be any mutually agreed accommodation between fine art and craft.

Notes and References for Chapter 6

The primary references for this chapter have been:

Laurence Alloway (1984)
Network: Art and the Complex Present,
Ann Arbor, UMI Press

Howard Becker (1982)
Art Worlds,
Berkeley, University of California Press.

Andrew Brighton & Nicholas Pearson (1985)
The Economic Situation of the Visual Artist,
London, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

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Chapter 7 THE MODERN CRAFT TRADITION

What follows is a look at the contemporary craft traditions and some of its antecedents. The state of writing about craft and its history remains fragmented and random. A situation that has not changed a great deal since Frayling and Snowden (1982) wrote that most of the publications regarding craft

> "are really about the circumstances surrounding the crafts: recipes, catalogues, albums and autobiographies; reassuring souvenir brochures...There seem to be no books...about craft as an activity."

They concluded that "the concept of craft as a special kind of knowledge has proved extremely difficult to write about".

Academic historical writing about the crafts is in its infancy. The Journal of Art History devoted an issue to craft history in 1989. Other landmark recent publications on craft history includes Houston's anthology (1988), Craft Classics Since the 1940's and Combined Art's Craft History, Volumes One and Two, (1988 & 1989).[1]

Edward Lucie-Smith's The Story of Craft: The Craftsman's Role in Society published in 1981 remains the only attempted social history. However this book is directed primarily at a popular market and is seldom mentioned by other writers, researchers and critics. Undoubtedly it is flawed, standing in such isolation, but it has been useful for providing some information.

Frayling (1990) wrote, "the crafts have an ambiguous history". That history is ambiguous within the bounds of

the contemporary folk definition of craft. It is compounded by the fact that antecedents to some current practice are inextricably intertwined with what we now understand as the more recent history of art.

Although craft as a method of production and work has played a role in most of human history, the roots for some of the strands of our craft milieu have a much shorter history. I refer to the studio-based work pattern of individuals or small groups of craftspeople. Peter Dormer (1989) made a similar point when he wrote

> "For all their familiarity of form or process, the crafts of potting or weaving or woodworking in the late twentieth century are supported by an infrastructure which is quite unlike that of previous ages."

The particular pattern of studio-based crafts in the twentieth century version is significantly different from the craftsmen of earlier periods on two counts. One is the transition regarding craft objects, which now have (to varying degrees) a function of contemplation as well as one of usefulness. This developed when domestic functional products were machine made rather than handmade. The related transformation was the adoption of the studio crafts as largely an occupation of choice and a middle class activity.

There are various dimensions to be considered in understanding contemporary crafts; the social role of the makers, the goods and services they provide (and to whom), the infrastructure, and the concept of craft as a kind of knowledge. While there is much to discuss regarding the aforementioned, it is also imperative to remember that the craft milieu in our own time embraces much more than studio-based practice. As Bayley (1989) writes

> "There are three principal sites of craft production: in the factory, the studio and the home. While much valuable historical research has been done in each of these areas... insufficient attention has been paid to the need to unite consideration of the activities and social structures characteristic of these sites into one evaluative framework."

Lucie-Smith (1981) locates the roots of modern craft practice as firmly established by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He says,

> "The craftwork of the time can be divided into three categories. In the first place, there were the sophisticated urban craftsmen, in close touch with fashions in design, which changed with ever-increasing capriciousness and rapidity. Secondly there were provincial craftsmen, influenced intermittently by urban fashions, but basically content to repeat utilitarian designs... Finally, there were the crafts which were practised at home - people, mostly women, making objects without thought of resale. At the lower economic levels these activities were undertaken out of necessity: higher up the scale, they served as a pastime."

Here are the three strands mentioned by Bayley above. All continue to some extent today.

By the Eighteenth Century the separation of the fine artist from the craft sphere, or perhaps more correctly the social elevation of the fine artist had been accomplished. Harry Davis (1985) explains the process from a contemporary crafts practitioner's perspective,

> "a coterie of successful autocrats, businessmen and bankers in Florence attracted to their circle some outstandingly talented craftsmen and elevated what they did into a new category which was given a new name. It became known as fine art and these talented men, who were accepted into this circle were renamed and their descendants were henceforth known as Artists."[2]

Career patterns between the fine artist and the craftsman of the day were considered by Lucie-Smith by comparing Sir Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Chippendale. He says,

> "Chippendale never aspired to be more than a successful businessman, running a workshop which undertook more and more extensive commissions...However successful he became, he did not expect to be received by his clients as a social equal. Reynolds, on the contrary, saw success in terms of recognition, as well as of money."

Obviously the simplicity of the argument may be open to dispute. This notion of different ambitions and the more moderate intentions of craftspeople, however, has been part of much thinking surrounding the crafts.

As urban life developed, so did the 'sophisticated urban craftsman', finding new clientele with money to spend on luxuries (a mode of consumer practice formerly only available to the uppermost elements of society). This strand of hand-crafted luxuries has led unbroken to the studio-based independent craftspeople we most commonly think of in connection with contemporary crafts. It also led to a sector of crafts, perhaps best described by the style of Fabergé - that is, creating extremely expensive artifacts and novelties in workshops, or small manufacturing establishments, for the most wealthy.

In the the eighteenth century some of these city craftsmen became craft dealers. Others relied upon intermediaries to make contacts with the clients or potential clients. But who were the craftsmen and women? Lucie-Smith's comment that in this sphere of craft practice there was still a "firm separation between the conception of the piece and the actual making of it" is a reminder of those anonymous makers employed by the workshop owner.

He describes the country craftsman as running a "usually more modest, less elaborately organised workshop, perhaps with one or two assistants to help him". The design of

the country craft primarily showed the "influence of technical logic", suggesting a concern for inherent properties of the materials, constraints and opportunities of processes and dictates of function. This country craft was sometimes affected by fashion, if somewhat tardily. Good and practical designs were repeated to the satisfaction of the craftsman and his clients. This element of craft work has also carried through to the remnants of rural and traditional craft today.

Of particular interest to some other contemporary writers, such as Filmer, Fuller and Dormer, is the enterprise of some of these city-based craftsmen. They were creating medium scale 'industry', using the appropriate technology of the day. The suggestion of these contemporary writers is that such models might give some inspiration to create alternatives to the predominant model of individual studio-based craft workers today, which is a more usual interpretation of craft practice than is often realised. Discussions about the crafts producing prototypes for industry or taking advantage of new technologies have been going on for 100 years. The question of economy of scale should not be ignored for the independent crafts person and small workshops.

The effect of industrialisation on crafts has been written about by many, both emotionally and dispassionately. Much of the writing may yet prove to be an oversimplification of social problems, read as the impact of industry and the machine, when they could also have been read as the impact of a new social order caused by the development of both industrialisation and capitalism.

The Industrial Revolution did not destroy, or at least threaten, all the crafts at a single instant. It was a more differentiated process of industrialisation affecting specific craft sectors at different times, in different manners.

It is largely true that industrialisation, and later the development of mass production techniques, usurped the position of those craftspeople producing essential items for their society. The reaction in the late nineteenth century to this overwhelming social change has continued to influence the crafts, particularly those interested in current studio-based craft activity.

The role of individual crafts people and their handmade goods is still debated in a now post-industrial world but the nineteenth century spawned some of the most eloquent thinkers and activists who first began to deal with these issues. But the process of industrialisation and development of a capitalist economy and new social order did not totally eradicate the demand for craft work. The production of some country crafts continued to fulfil an essential role in rural society. Some of the city-based crafts also continued finding new consumers. A group, made rich by the advent of industry and further development of capitalism also became interested in their products, as part of a display of their new social positions. Generally the process of industrialisation expanded the trend of the acquisition of artefacts, which had started with the increase of mercantilism and trade in the 16th century.

It has been tempting for some making contemporary interpretations of the latter half of the nineteenth century to have reached some questionable conclusions.

It would erroneous to suggest that only William Morris and others considered to belong to the "Arts and Crafts Movement" were concerned about the impact of social changes on the crafts. In the latter half of the nineteenth century there were others intimately connected with the visual arts who were equally, if differently, attempting to deal with the issues. Not all shared the moral and political perspective of Morris and many in the Arts and Crafts movement, but were still concerned about the survival of crafts.

It is equally questionable to rely on the perspectives of some of the leading figures of this movement as historically accurate and historically complete interpretations of craft 'traditions'. On further investigation this may not prove to be the case. For instance, Frayling and Snowden(1982) and Dormer (1990) talk about the distortion of facts regarding the situation of the Medieval crafts and craftsmen caused by the overwhelming nostalgic interest in the Medieval period.

There is also a danger of distortion of historical material if one is not vigilant in attempting to understand the operative definitions of the period.

The social concerns of those who were interested, if only partially, in the position for crafts and craftspeople by the latter half of the nineteenth century included the following:

1. Protecting and reviving the handwork skills, which were now considered to be unnecessary, and replaced by the machine.

2. Reacting against the 'dehumanisation' of work

or the maintenance of what Fuller describes as the 'aesthetic dimension of work'.

3. Improving the design of manufactured goods produced by the new industrial methods.

4. Seeking better working and living conditions for the lower classes in the cities.

The solutions to these concerns were manifest in a variety of ways including:

1. A retreat from the cities which also led to renewed interest in country skills and life styles.

2. Attempts to create an alternative means of craft production to the industrial model which had developed.

3. Looking backwards to the Medieval period for inspiration for crafts style and a somewhat romantic conception of the presumed attendant lifestyles.

The latter part of the nineteenth century saw the developments of new concepts relating to craft. Some of these, which linger with us today, are not necessarily essential prerequisites of craft work but a reaction to the conditions of the time. Hence our continuing debate about craft versus industry and handmade versus machine made.

Concern regarding the quality of industrial design was probably behind the calls for designer and maker being one despite the fact that some of the best known

craftspeople of the period were capable of making as well as designing in practice, they also employed others to work to their designs, thus following on from the earlier practice mentioned above.

It is salutary also to remember that some of those involved in the Arts and Crafts movement, and probably others in this new found profession of studio craftspeople, were well educated and from well-to-do backgrounds. It is likely this was part of the early transformation of crafts from a lower class to a middle class occupation.

Ruskin wrote "It would be well if all of us were good handicraftsmen of some kind, and the dishonour of manual labour done away with altogether".[3] Dormer (1990) attributes this attitude as connected to the transformation of this strand of craft practice to the middle class and the production of unnecessary goods.

This leads us to William Morris whose multifaceted concerns addressed many of the points mentioned at the beginning of this chapter as necessary to understanding crafts - as a practice, a way of knowing, as a social role, an occupation, a source of potentially socially beneficial objects and inspiration.

Morris's emphasis was on creative labour, rather than Ruskin's emphasis on the dignity of manual labour. As Morris put it, "That thing which I understand by real art is the expression by man of his pleasure in labour". From this principle he developed many other concepts and arguments.

The craftsman as envisaged by Morris was potentially the model for integrating art, life and work. For in the

self-determining craftsman, labour was not alienated as through the predominant social relations in industry. The craftsman owned and controlled the means of production; a sharp contrast to the situation of many who had been absorbed into industry.

Morris was particularly interested in improving the lives of the working class through practice of craft, although in 1892, he,

> "expressed regret that the craftsmen who worked for him at Morris and Co. had been offered so little creative initiative 'except with a small part of the more artistic side of the work I could not do anything ...to give this pleasure to the workmen, because I should have had to change their method of work so utterly that I should have disqualified them from earning their living elsewhere."[4]

This is not to deny the potency of his argument. The appeal of the contemporary crafts as a profession is very often this control of work and life, and the satisfaction and pleasure which this can bring.

Farleigh (1950) expresses similar sentiments in his introduction to his series of interviews with craftspeople.

> "It is indeed a satisfactory life, when ...the sole responsibility is one's own, when the things that are of real importance to one's work and one's pleasure are within the confines of one's own workshop...the atmosphere of work that is conceived and carried out from beginning to end by a small group of human beings who can accept work as an important part of the process of enjoying life."

Farleigh talks of the craftspeople's independence; "an independence that is apparent in their pride of work; but it is a gentle independence annoying no one but the cynic envious of such resolved lives".

Morris was concerned about the distinction between the higher and the lesser arts and argued that this distinction was false and lead to the degradation of both. The resurrection, development and continuation of craft also was seen as offering a remedy and an alternative to the design of manufactured goods. Both these concerns continue to be in contemporary debates in the crafts.

The nostalgia of the Arts and Crafts movement for a simpler and rural life, led some to seek to create their enterprise in the country. Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft was one of the better known examples of this. The eventual collapse of the Guild was in part due to this retreat from the city since, as Lucie-Smith says, "its market...was essentially an urban and luxury one".
Inspiration drawn from the idealised past and from the seemingly idyllic country life led the the Arts and Crafts Movement to overlook the activity of contemporary city-based craft.

Ashbee's and the Guild's dilemma, shared by Morris and others in the Arts and Crafts movement was, as McCarthy (1988) says, that of being economically dependent on that section of society they claimed most to despise. This dilemma strikes a chord with many studio-based craftspeople today.

The concern for improving the social conditions of the lower class intertwined with the concern for the threatened aesthetic of the crafts and arts which peaked in the 1880's. Borzello (1989) described the strong feeling among many of the well educated about "art's power to improve the lives of the poor and the poor themselves" which she says "grew from Victorian notions of the visual arts [referring only to painting and

sculpture] as a force for social good". Borzello says this concept was translated into two particular arguments:

> All should be educated to appreciate "high art, with eternal values" and
>
> The definition of Art "should be widened to include craft"

Here then are some of the earliest attempts to align what were the beginnings of the modern studio-based practice of craft, with the fine arts of the day. For the most part these attempts were unsuccessful, however eloquent and persuasive the arguments. The problem was seen by some as the need to influence the selection of objects for exhibition. This is a forerunner of those who argue in similar ways in our own times, and can be an argument which overlooks the other opportunities and venues which might in fact prove more suitable for craft.

Walter Crane, arguing for the former, wrote in 1887,

> "art exhibitions have hitherto tended to foster the prevalent notion that the term 'Art' is limited to the more expensive kind of portable picture painting, unmindful of the truth that the test of the condition of the arts in any age must be sought in the state of the crafts of design."[5]

Crane was instrumental in the formation of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, set up in response to the continuing refusal of the Royal Academy to show works other than painting and sculpture in their exhibitions.

Some of those in this new group felt that exhibitions had merit both of a personal nature for the craftsman, and also public value related to this question of equal

artistic merit for craft. Naylor (1988) quotes a circular sent in 1888 to invite craftsmen to display in the first exhibition,

> "It has not been possible for a craftsman to test his work by the side of others, or by careful selection of examples to prove that there are artists in other ways than oil or watercolour...In short there is no existing exhibition of art which gives an opportunity to the designer and the craftsman as such to show their work under their own names, and give them at least a chance of the attention and applause which is now generally monopolised by the pictorial artist."

The formation of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society did not necessarily help the cause in the manner the original group had hoped for. Borzello points out this helped the division between art and craft to "become institutionalised into two organisations".

Borzello continues

> "within a few years craft workers desirous of recognition for the artistic element and quality of their work began to put the adjective 'art' before their product."

Perhaps this was in recognition of this failure to make much impact on the acceptance of craft as equal to fine art. It appears that the labels, 'art' and 'fine art' had appeared in connection with the crafts at least as early as the 1860's. Peace (1988) says William Morris described his firm as "Fine Art Workmen in Painting, Carving, Furniture and the Metals".

The proponents who argued for the inclusion of craft in official definitions of fine art failed, and as Borzello says, "barely dented the standards values and products of fine art".

She comments also that since the challenges remain outside, as alternatives, they "strengthened the identity

and confidence of the fine arts." And the crafts 100 years later still, Freeman (1990) says, "are unable to offer a significant challenge to the dominance and prestige of the fine arts."

In other quarters, arguments about what constituted the 'proper' education of craftspeople and artists were continued. For example, the institutions providing training opportunities for craftsmen stated,

> "teaching proportion, perspective and drawing are not compatible with the occupation of artisans, and might mislead them and interfere with their proper callings."

It was at the end of the nineteenth century, however, that the Central School of Art and Design was established, stating that it provided

> "for apprentices, pupils and workmen engaged in and connected with artistic handicrafts the best instruction in art and design as appropriate to their industry."

Over the next decades the system of training by apprenticeship was to die out as a means of preparing young craftspeople for their profession.

Ashwin et al (1989) commented on the period that "during the 1890's many of the leading figures of the Arts and Crafts Movement took influential positions in the colleges of art and design". It appears then that some other schools of art also began to teach craft. These new educational opportunities contributed to the legitimising of the profession of craft and contributed to women's participation in this revival and the development of craft as a middle class interest.

A common thread of much of the interest and activity at the time was the newer concept of crafts - studio crafts,

in whatever form they manifested. This could be seen as a merging of the home-based leisure pursuit of craft with a notion of earning a living producing nonessential items for the middle and upper classes who could afford such luxuries. Distinctly different from the idea of crafts as a trade, was the fact that at least some crafts activity was becoming an occupation considered a suitable choice for middle class men and women.

There were some visual artists at the same time who were interested in working with the existing and emerging technology. For instance Christopher Dresser, through Linthorpe art pottery, was producing "ornamental rather than useful objects, quasi-sculptures, produced by openly industrial means".* This was quite contrary to what had been a dominant strand of thought about the essentially 'handmade' quality of work in a craft medium.

Meanwhile there were two strands of rural crafts more or less adjacent to the work of the Arts and Crafts movement. As Lucie-Smith writes, one was the conservative element which remained intact and unself-consciously healthy. These craftspeople repeated patterns of items such as chairs, jerseys, baskets, and smocks. The other element he identifies as a simplified version of city crafts.

In 1952 Peter Floud put on an exhibition of Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts at the Victoria And Albert Museum.[10] He wrote (1953) about the comparison of the older work with the contemporary crafts,

> "perhaps the most unexpected fact to emerge from such a comparison is that the main pivot of current arts and crafts doctrine, and indeed the main criterion normally employed today in defining

> craft-work - namely the identity of designer and craftsman...received little attention in 1893."

He continues,

> "the present day emphasis on this point derives...from the second generation...in the first decade of this century by men such as Lethaby who were preoccupied with the application of craft principles to the training of art students and to education generally. It was this later generation, by first stressing the didactic and therapeutic value of craftwork paved the way for the present-day belief that craft products have a special value in that they express the individual personality of the maker in a direct unmediated way that is impossible in the case of work, even handwork, undertaken at second-hand."

A further interesting point regarding the changing face of what is considered craft is brought up in Floud's discussion of the artefacts on display in 1893

> "The most striking result of this shift in emphasis is that whereas the highlights of the 1893 exhibition were the woven hangings, the printed velveteens, the silk damasks and the wallpapers, designed for enterprising firms ...the staple exhibits at all present-day craft shows are the studio pots and the individually executed hand-weavings - two categories which did not so much as exist in 1893."

Houston (1989) commenting on Floud says,

> "He had identified a pioneering strain of original design that was much broader than Arts and Crafts movement activity...he suggests that present-day crafts ideas have narrowed activity still further by emphasising the value of designer and maker being the same person."

In the early 1900's, although the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement was still evident, some of the contemporary activity became known as the Crafts Movement. Houston (1988) says the Crafts Movement was the Arts and Craft movement after the architects defected. He continues,

> "their defection made each craft autonomous, free to evolve, free to stagnate. As industrial design became the new crafts, developing harmoniously within the Modern movement and in architecture, the hybrid artist-craftspeople scattered in their separate searches for the new

> authority of their own traditions, their own aesthetics."

For the studio-based crafts the period between the wars in this century was much more low key than the activities of the late 1800's. All the strands of rural crafts, studio based craft, design for industry, hobby and home crafts and city-based craft continued, with the addition of what might be called the small enterprise sector developing - the craftsmen and women who were producing (perhaps) original work of varying quality and skill. This last sector was, for the most part, finding a home for their products in the gift and tourist trade. And it was probably, in part, a reaction to this sector which helped to push some of the studio craft to identify and emphasise the artistic elements in their own work.

Also as much of the mainstream of fine art was moving further away from craft into abstraction and surrealism, some trained fine artists moved into the crafts, or what they saw as the applied arts. Thus, in various manifestations, the crafts seemed to offer a haven and a retreat from other social developments. In general, most of what was conducted, either as part of the fine arts or most of the crafts had become a marginal activity.

Fuller's (1979) analysis of the social changes is useful at this juncture.[11] He wrote that the emergence of the monopoly capitalist system at the turn of the century led to the vanishing of the individual, entrepreneurial capitalist which had supported the dominant fine art of their period and thus "began the withering, atrophy, and shunting out towards the margins of cultural life of the academic, professional Fine Art tradition". He continues his argument explaining this transition not as the end of social interest in visual art,

> "this is not to say that the new monopolists and their burgeoning corporate empires did not require artists to produce static visual images for them, as every ruling class in every known culture had done in the past. On the contrary they had an insatiable, unprecedented greed for images...the dominant form of the static visual tradition was advertising."

Thus the fine arts were moved aside by the new needs of the new ruling class. The crafts changed from being predominantly a trade, producing essential and luxury goods, to having a large component which was a middle class vocation, producing only nonessential goods.

As Dormer (1990) says, "craft became more 'art'like". At least in some quarters, as some of the studio-based craft renewed its claim for the perceived higher status of the fine arts. Although a selling point for much craft was still a rejection of what industry had to offer. Davis (1985) remembers

> "a growing practicableness with status and prestige... the title of Artist Potter began to be heard more and more... Staite Murray was saying 'an Artist potter must at all costs avoid involvement with function...an apprentice became a student, the potters place of work became a studio."

It was this studio-based group who continued the idealism of the Arts and Crafts Movement. They translated this idealism, in various degrees, into anti-machinery and anti-industry stances, while other craftspeople worked to produce designs for industrial production. The 'anti'-ethic, combined with the aspirations to be fine artists, may well have been the beginning of the notions of the alienation of ideas related to the practical management and marketing of their work, or, as Davis says, these other concerns "seemed to sanction an indifference to practical and economic issues". The individualism, which is now such a dominant element in today's studio crafts, seems to have been steadily

gaining acceptance in these inter-war years.

One cannot leave the period without making note of the strong influence of women and the supportive networks they set up in this period. Women started and ran many of the major specialist outlets of the time including the Red Rose Guild in Manchester, the Three Shields Gallery, Modern Textiles, Dunbar Hay and the Little Gallery in London. Women's independence was on the agenda more widely at that time, not only with the political struggles concerning women's rights, but undoubtedly influenced by other social pressures such as the toll of the Great War on the numbers of marriageable young men. Thus for a variety of reasons these women were able to play a role of greater import than the women in the first 'revival' of craft fifty years earlier. Anscombe (1984) talks of this influence of women between the wars in this century and says,

> "This supportive network which emerged to publicise and sell craftwork enabled scores of women - and men - to earn a living or at least supplement their incomes through craft work in the 1920s and 1930s."

Anscombe talks about the revival of some of the late nineteenth century idealism being translated into notions about a simple life. Part of this philosophy was what Davis described as the "voluntary acceptance of what some would call poverty, but which others would prefer to call simplicity". But we should not forget this was also the period of the Depression. It is true to say that outside of periods of high unemployment, many modern day craftspeople have chosen a different life style to the predominant hoses. This choice has not been the exclusive prerogative of people in the crafts.

Anscombe and Wolff have raised questions of the social and economic value of occupations or professional spheres. Both have suggested that the value of craft alters at times in history when certain crafts are seen as primarily men's work or women's work; that the perceived value and status of crafts may be gender based and vary historically as men become more or less interested in the crafts.[12]

The dominant public opinion and that of the mainstream fine art by 1940, was that craft had become boring, irrelevant and uninteresting, which led Harry Norris to say (1950)

> What have been dismissed as the decorative crafts - the producers of elegant trifles - are in reality the focus of all the determination and creative thinking directed to the development and perpetuation of the craftsman's way of living and working...this group does not comprise mere opportunists: they are the people who are slowly building up a modern tradition of the crafts."[13]

Postwar Britain was interested in products in new materials and bright colours. Scandinavian design was popular. Ashwin et al (1988) pointed out that higher educational provision had changed very little in the intervening years. They continue, saying that although the National Diploma in Design, introduced in 1946

> "made explicit provision for a very large number of named crafts...however the vast majority of the craft options were pursued by very few students, the majority of whom fell within the categories of painting, sculpture and what we would today call graphic design."

At this time fine Art had become part of the propaganda of free art in a free world. And Fuller (1979) suggested

> "the Fine Art tradition has acquired a relative autonomy, through its institutions, practitioners, and intellectuals which allows it to reproduce itself like the Livery companies or the Christian Church, long after its social

> function has been minimalized and marginalized."

He continues, explaining why, in his view, the Fine Art tradition did not become even more irrelevant and marginal

> "Politics stepped in to save it...the early Arts Council reports make clear that this policy was intended to show the world that in the so-called 'Free World' artists produce works of great beauty and imaginative strength."

This political decision resulted in, Fuller suggests, the fine arts becoming incestuous and lacking a real social purpose by being cut off and set apart, supported by government 'arms length' support. And one could argue there may be some parallel in the situation of the crafts milieu. I agree with Fuller; this does not mean the Fine Art tradition should have been allowed to atrophy and die, nor should such a fate have befallen the crafts. What is more to the point is that the methods of government intervention and subvention are in question.

In the 1950's and 1960's crafts appeared mainly in the specialist shops, a few galleries and gift and tourist shops with some work continuing to be on display in sympathetic larger retail outlets such as Heals and Liberty's. In these years the seeds were being sown within the crafts milieu and by events and developments external to the crafts which would influence the next set of changes, or what has been called the next Crafts Revival.

Johnson (1989) calls this a period of transition

> "from the middle-class (often monied, often rural) idealist 'oddball' version of the inter-war years craftsman to the art-school trained, state-supported, (often urban) breed of today."

The National Advisory Council on Art Education published two reports at the beginning of the 1960s, which proposed radical reform of provision. Ashwin et al say these reports "suggest important shifts of attitude to the crafts", such as in this quote from the first, (Coldstream) report

> "Yet another course might group with painting or with sculpture a crafts subject such as printed textiles or ceramics."

They comment on this as a "presumed alliance between fine art and craft...seen partly as a way of enriching and and diversifying fine art studies" but also as a way of "integrating areas of study...[which] were studied as an end in themselves". A separation of fine and applied arts which was to have a major impact on the crafts milieu also. For under the new label of Three-Dimensional Design fell most of the crafts provision which the report suggests would have a more vocational flavour when they said, "The students in this areas may eventually be employed in industry or they may work as studio craftsmen or become teachers". This gives a new dimension to what Farleigh had spoken about in 1950 as fine craft. Was fine craft interpreted here as a term related to new definitions of fine art, to be pursued as an end in itself? Ashwin et al conclude that in these two reports

> "crafts tend to be defined by a process of assimilation or exclusion, such as assimilation to fine art or exclusion from other provision in terms of level or orientation."

The reports recognised there may be some students who might intend to work as self-employed people in traditional crafts, and predicted "students in this category will never be numerous" thus schools should attempt to provide them with "suitable training wherever

practicable". Ashwin et al comment that with (or perhaps in spite of) the Coldstream reforms many schools "were able to build up courses which suited students who wished to become designer/makers".

What did occur in some schools at this time was some cross breeding between fine arts and crafts. Some have suggested that as a result the crafts were contaminated.[14] As contemporary fine art became increasingly more difficult to understand by practitioners as well as those who might have been their potential audience and customers, some of the emerging 'fine crafts' became a substitute area of interest. Queensberry (1979) said the recent success of crafts was in part because they were

> "accessible expressions of contemporary creativity and can best fulfil our acquisitive needs. The nature and scale of contemporary crafts suits them to our domestic environment."[15]

Some students in fine arts began to experiment with what had traditionally been craft materials. This invasion of fine artists brought with it the attendant mentality of rejecting the ideas of usefulness, skill and function, re-enforced by the concept of self-contained and personal exploration unhampered by social concerns and applications. It also was layered with notions of producing work which was challenging - challenging the current conventions of both producing and enjoying craft. Some in the fine artists had come to believe the necessity of being apart from the society and developing a disdain for the general public. All these notions were to have an influence on many in the crafts milieu.

Meanwhile in the joint report on The Structure of Art and Design Education published in 1970 Ashwin et al say "All references to craft...relegate it to a peripheral

position, inferior in status to the elite mainstream." They continue "The idea that craft could be fully consistent with professionalism, exquisite design, and earning a living is not particularly evident."

Further afield, the momentum was gathering for another social movement reacting against the establishment, now focused on rejection of mass consumerism, technology, synthetic materials and again, city living. Middle class unemployment, interest in constructing simple and creative lives which would be self sufficient and self defined...all these factors contributed to another craft revival in the 1970's, echoing Morris' ideas nearly a century before.

But our understandings of what contemporary craft was and could be were being irrevocably changed - starting in some circles of art-school-trained studio-based crafts people. Specifically they gave new meaning to the concept of 'artist-craftspeople'. The popular definition of craft was probably closer to what Bayley (1979) said,

> "if craft means anything at all, its meaning must include the ideas of making objects which both incorporate some useful function in their characters and also require some sort of virtuoso skill in their creation."

But the debate was heating up within the crafts milieu. As Hunt said in the same year,

> "although some craftspeople insist on creating works of art that are unique and therefore provoke a debate on definitions, the legitimate future of the crafts will be defined by their economic purpose, not by technique."[i♣]

And Queensberry noted,

> "a large percentage of students in colleges of art style themselves 'artist-craftsmen'. This complex hybrid could be said to owe more allegiance to a late romantic ideal of spirit-struggling

-to-express-itself-through-art,than to a useful wedding of art to industry."

Since the beginning of the 80s the debate about the conditions and the role of crafts has escalated and expanded. The different strands of crafts activities have continued with blurring around the edges in some cases. But plurality of purpose and workstyle is quite evident.

For the kinds of craftspeople of most interest in this study the historical developments have indeed given them conflicting notions of what 'the craft tradition' means in the present. Freeman (1989) said "their behaviour is therefore rarely free from ambiguity and contradiction". Labels of art, craft and design are used quite interchangeably and have therefore lost any sense of clear and shared understanding provoking further confusion.

What seems to have happened is a further fracturing of the crafts milieu introducing a number of anomalies. The people most likely to happily adopt (with perhaps slight modification) the early modern craft traditions are also the people happiest with the appellation of craftsperson and seem to be furthest removed from the main state agencies concerned with craft provision. So some industries and city-based manufacturers of luxury goods embrace a notion of fine craftsmanship as do the thousands of makers who populate the country and heritage industry fair circuit or are the members of the many guilds and societies.

The people who are part of, aspirants to join or are adjacent to the state-supported Craftworld are less content. This is not to belittle the positive effects of the art school trained gallery-based crafts activity.

There has been immeasurable value in the efforts of many to redefine and expand what crafts might entail in the late twentieth century. Their efforts and concerns have revitalized and energized the whole craft milieu in many ways.

What must be faced is that there is not a single interpretation of a crafts tradition, but many. All have a legitimate right to practice under the umbrella of craft, accepting the diversity of historical tradition which has informed their current practice. The worry for the future is that the most public voice of craft seems to dismiss much of what is practised and enjoyed in that milieu.

This discussion has only touched on the nature of crafts as a human activity, as a way of knowing. Questions remain regarding its appeal as an occupation or a preoccupation.

One element is that of transforming materials into something new; using hands (or by extension tools and machinery) in conjunction with the mind. A primary interest is the pleasure of creating. This might mean a combination of what Pye (1968) talks about as the judgement, dexterity and care of craftsmanship, which he called the highest form of workmanship. Farleigh extended this to say there was the potential to combine the pleasure of making things with the not too distant prospect of earning a living, although Pye has suggested that perhaps an amateur stance is preferable since the need to make money may distort craft practice.

Crafts practice also offers the potential of self-determination and self direction, leading to the integration which Morris spoke of, of pleasure and work.

In a letter to his grandson, Leach says "This is the day of the artist craftsman not of the journeyman potter. That means that any young person taking up a craft today as a vocation only justifies himself (or herself) by finding something to voice or say. That is his life, or true character, extended into his pots."[17]

He explained how the contemporary phenomenon of craft can connect with the modern tradition as well as earlier historical forms and processes when he said,

> "I began to realise (visiting the museums in Tokio) how generations and generations of creative work had accumulated and lay behind the wisdom of the craftsmen of today. Somehow we have to select from this the worlds offertory, and express ourselves and all that has been done as an integrated product resolved and belonging to our own country."[18]

Harry Norris is quoted as saying "Morris and others later built up the modern handcraft movement and made a claim for the right of a man to be free in his work, to exercise his free will and creative energies in his work, and to be what Eric Gill called a responsible man, one responsible for the form and character of his work."[19] In the case of the craftsperson this suggests not to be solely directed by the requirements of their medium.

Farleigh offered an eloquent comment on the modern craft tradition when he said craftspeople exist today because the practice of craft is a "very human activity - this subtle combination of freedom of design, response to material, human understanding and love of making...a work of activity that reveals infinite possibilities for further enjoyment."

Notes and References for Chapter 7

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1. Houston's anthology "samples...opinion about the crafts in Britain since the Second World War" from "people professionally committed to discussing the aims and means of a past or present crafts world". Craft History, meanwhile, aims to "provide an international forum for original research relating to all aspects of the historical and theoretical study of the crafts in their widest sense" and is "committed to the presentation of writing which extends understanding of the crafts, their significance, and history". Unfortunately the latter has ceased publication after two issues. Craft History appeared in two volumes, published in 1988 and 1989. Edited by Justin Howes and Margot Coatts, it was published by Combined Arts in Bath.

2. This is from the text of a lecture Harry Davis gave for Craftsmen's Potters Association in 1984, reprinted in Ceramics Monthly 93, 1985. Harry worked with Leach in the early days of the pottery in St. Ives.

3. Ruskin, quoted by Lucie-Smith

4. Reputed to have been said by Morris at the end of his life; from Lucie-Smith

5. From Naylor's 'Formative Years of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society 1888 - 1916' in Crafts History volume 1 (1988). She says Walter Crane, with Benson in 1887 formed a working committee called 'The Combined Arts' to begin organising a National Exhibition of the Arts and an exhibition society. The first exhibition was held in the New Gallery on Regent Street, October 1988.

6. From David Peace's 'The Combined Arts: Origins of the Society of Designer Craftsmen' in Crafts History, volume 1

7. From Borzello (1989), attributed to Cockerell.

8. From Borzello (1989)

9. Dresser's work is described by Lucie Smith. He says 'sometimes [Dresser] lost control of what was done to his designs.' and discusses this in terms of Minton, but at Linthorpe, 'he seems to have enjoyed almost total control...Linthorpe ware is marked with Dressers' facsimile signature and and thus in one sense stakes its claim to be both 'original' and 'artistic' But it was mould-made, and turned out in large quantity by means of standard factory production methods...Linthorpe wares offered a challenge to the Ruskian theory of crafts. In some ways it is a challenge which has not as yet been satisfactorily answered.'

10. Peter Floud originally wrote about the exhibition for The Studio, April 1953. This was reprinted in Houston's Craft Classics (1988). Floud concluded 'present day arts and crafts doctrine, by emphasizing individualistic and subjective criteria, and especially by insisting on the identity of designer and executant, defines the crafts much more narrowly than did the accepted theory of 1893. It would be valuable if the movement took the opportunity of this jubilee to consider the extent, if any, to which the present difficult position of so many of the crafts is connected within this change.'

11. From Fuller's 'Fine Art after Modernism' in Art:Duties and Freedom, 1979, Aberystwyth

12. from Janet Wolff 'Social Context' in 'Comment' Crafts magazine, 94, September, October 1988. Isabelle Anscombe (1984) in A Women's Touch. undoubtedly this has been raised by many others, but it was not a priority for this research to investigate the question in more detail. It is also mentioned in Picture This, edited by Hayward in 1988.

13. from Farleigh's (1950) The Creative Craftsman, Farleigh interviewed a number of craftspeople including Harry Norris.

14. Eudora Moore included discussion of this concept in the talk she gave at a conference in Vancouver. Becker discusses the concept at some length in his chapter on Arts and Crafts in Art Worlds (1982).

15 & 16. quotes from Stephen Bayley (1979) 'Craft, Art and Design, a report on a discussion on current distinctions with Victor Margrie, David Mellor, David Queensberry and Martin Hunt' in Crafts 38, May/June 1979.

17. Leach's letter was reprinted in Houston's anthology, Craft Classics

18. from Leach's A Potter's Book.

19 Norris was interviewed by Farleigh in The Creative Craftsman

Chapter 8 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE RISE OF STATE PROVISION

An understanding of the development of networks and organisations sheds some further light on contemporary craft practice and will expose what Dormer called the 'significantly different infrastructure' of crafts. Roots of some of the present day systems can be traced back to the brotherhoods of classical times and the guilds of the medieval times. This discussion, however, is limited to the last fifty years and includes the development of intervention by the state.

In the thirties there were already a number of Societies, Guilds and Associations in operation. These were set up for the purposes of being meeting places for exchange of information and support, perhaps with group activities such as selling and exhibiting. There were national organisations focused on a particular area of craft interest. Some of these encouraged the formation of local groups or chapters. Many groups were formed with only a local regional focus and embraced a variety of kinds of crafts people.

There were a few organisations operating nationally with an interest in crafts as a whole. One of these, The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, had been established in 1888. This organisation continued, through the thirties, to perform an important role and service by organising exhibitions. Various practitioners have since commented on the importance of these exhibitions, which were considered prestigious and and extremely useful events.

The Red Rose Guild, based in Manchester, was another major national organisation established in 1921, originally for the purpose of holding exhibitions. The Guild was organised through the efforts of Harry Norris and Margaret Pilkington. The Red Rose Guild had a more comprehensive interest and programme than that of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. This included a magazine published in the 1940's called 'Crafts'. [1]

The Central Institute of Art and Design was influential at that time and Noel White (1990) attributes the CIAD with bringing together representatives from "some forty bodies concerned with the arts and crafts" in 1942.
A primary concern of this federated group regarded the effect of wartime conditions on craftspeople. As Noel White describes the problems,

> "the craftsman was throttled ...by controls on premises, materials, energy and the direction of labour. The plight of the crafts was desperate and brought men and women together to confront and cajole the government."

Discussing this committee, Johnson (1989) says

> "The short term aim was to deal with the stranglehold of wartime bureaucracy, but, long term, the committee was poised to negotiate formal support and funding."[2]

The argument to enlist this government recognition was made in a Central Institute of Art and Design Report circa 1943

> "Craftsmanship implies an intimate appreciation of material and a spontaneity of design expressed throughout the states of production, and requires of the craftsman self-reliance, adaptability, initiative and imagination."[3]

The report argues for these qualities as essential to the reconstruction after the war, as necessary complements to 'machine industry' and mass production, but requiring

government subvention saying

> "even in peace time British craftsmen found it difficult to maintain their activities in competition with machine industry."

Noel White (1990) makes reference to a government report of 1942 which included the development of the crafts sector as an element of British reconstruction after the war.

The committee of crafts organisations also supported the British Council exhibition of British crafts. The initiative for this exhibition came from Sir Lionel Faudel-Philips, a member of the British Council's Fine Arts Committee 1940. He had had the idea to

> "widen the scope of the Committee by organising an exhibition of modern British Craftsmanship to visit the Dominions and selected foreign countries."*

The British Council's exhibition was primarily organised by those who Noel White called "knights of the establishment". He describes these in more detail,

> "the Directors of the Victoria and Albert Museum and National Gallery, senior civil servants and titled grandees sympathetic to the arts".

Once the chosen artifacts were gathered together some of these people were a little disappointed. This suggests a lack of understanding and appreciation on the part of these 'knights' for what was actually happening in the crafts milieu. Major Longden, of the British Council, suggested adding "some trade pottery to add fine colour, for one must remember that the potter craftsmen have confined their efforts to schemes in white, grey and brown". Contributors to this exhibition were Bernard Leach and his contemporaries. The exhibition opened at the Metropolitan Museum in New York on May 20th, 1942.

Noel White (1989) suggests that the activity leading up to this exhibition has been useful for a number of reasons; the exhibition 'occasioned important assessments of the crafts at the time by the established authorities'; preparation for the exhibition caused a survey to be made of craft workshops which then generated some 'statistical information with which to belay Whitehall'; the exhibition also provided a stimulus and focus for the co-operative activity of a number of societies and associations.

The major organisational 'players' in the crafts milieu at this stage were the Central Institute of Art and Design, The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and the Red Rose Guild. One person who stood out in the ensuing struggle to win more and ongoing attention for the crafts sector was John Farleigh of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. Farleigh was also a council member of the Central Institute of Art and Design and had been involved in the organising of the British Council eehhbbiittoon. Hee wass aàtoo aa reeppectedd eenggaveer aadd illustrator.

Farleigh was keen to establish a permanent exhibition for crafts and saw the Board of Trade's proposed Council for Industrial Design as a potential place for this to happen. In order to convince government that this should happen he negotiated with first the Board of Trade, and later the COID to persuade them that his Society was 'very much concerned with design for machine production'.[5]

Early in 1947 the Council of Industrial Design council approved Farleigh's request for a grant, with the understanding that the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society would be the lead body. Farleigh gave assurances that

his Society would bring in the Red Rose Guild and other main craft associations.

The Crafts Centre of Great Britain * opened at Hay Hill in London 1948, after extensive meetings to draw up constitutions and agreements between five societies and the long search for suitable premises. The Centre was non-trading and non-profit-making. Dora Billington recalls 'funds were raised, partly from the constituent Societies, partly from the generous donations of friends and members, and for a limited number of years from a Government grant.' Farleigh had asked for £4,000 p.a. for five years. The council of management of this centre included representatives from the Arts Council, the Rural Industries Bureau and the Council of Industrial Design.

The Hay Hill centre was described in a notice in 'The Studio' in 1950 as a permanent exhibition space for 'fine craftsmanship'

> "a term...to define the work of the man who designs as well as makes, and excels at both."[7]

It seems that in this period there was little suggestion that craft should be aligned with fine art, or even with the arts in general. Craft was conspicuously absent from the Britain Can Make It exhibition at the end of the last war. It was also considered outside the remit of the Dartington Enquiry into the Visual Arts in 1946.

The creation of the Centre did not bring the harmony and co-operation among the founder groups which had been hoped for. Johnson (1989) says that in the next ten years "the formal organisation of the crafts was a minefield of factions and power struggles". At least some of these disagreements centred around the policies and procedures of the British Crafts Centre. These

disagreements led to the formation in 1964 of a (not the) Crafts Council of Great Britain, with a gallery at Waterloo Place.

In the late sixties government funds were given to the Crafts Council of Great Britain, the Crafts Centre of Great Britain and the Scottish Crafts Centre; all of these were membership organisations at the time. The money came from the Board of Trade, in recognition of the perspective shared by some craftspeople and some interested civil servants that the future of crafts lay in their potential connection with industry. The connection with Trade, rather than Arts has continued in Scotland producing a very different response to the concept of state involvement in assisting crafts.[8]

It is unfortunate that the disagreements were, and still are, often seen as 'squabbling' and the inevitable outcome of the conflict of the temperaments of craftspeople. The essential individuality of craftsmen is stressed, suggesting the inability to co-operate. The more likely struggle for control of a new source of funds, power and route to legitimacy might be a more appropriate analysis.

Craftspeople, as Noel White (1988) said

> "would fight against handing over their destiny to the grey men of administration, without whose skills no government would hand over the large sums of money required as subventions."

Craftspeople's desire to set up their own groups to control their own affairs, and to be in charge of any government support continued. On August 1, 1970 sixteen craft bodies met and agreed to form the Federation of British Craft Societies. In a promotional leaflet put out by the Federation in 1975 • they explain the reason

for their inauguration

> "There had long been a concern over the number of societies that craftsmen had set up over the years. As soon as it became known that the Government was planning to assist the Crafts it was realized that these separate societies needed to concert their efforts and speak with one voice if they were to be heard or helped. It was suggested that, while retaining their individuality and autonomy, they should group themselves into a Federation."

This federation submitted two memoranda to the minister with responsibility for the arts, Lord Eccles defining the needs of the crafts. In making his decisions regarding the crafts Eccles (1981) seemed to respect their position saying he was interested in helping craftspeople 'in the ways they wanted help'. His first step was to establish the Crafts Advisory Committee. The primary purpose of the CAC was to advise Eccles on the needs of the crafts and one of the first tasks was to attempt to 'rationalise existing craft organisations'.

Eccles gave an initial grant of £45,000 to the Crafts Advisory Committee through the Department of Education and Science. In their first report (1971-1974) the CAC said this move was significant, and indicated a recognition of the 'contribution made by the artist craftsman, alongside painters, sculptors, composers and writers, to the cultural pattern of the community'.

Lord Eccles has since explained his decision to set up the Crafts Advisory Committee in a little more detail. He saw it as

> "a new organisation in parallel with the other two [the Design Council and the Arts Council of Great Britain]...it seemed right, as the crafts bridged the gap between art and industry."[10]

Thus the division between art and craft became more firmly institutionalised. Of equal import to further

debates and developments was the use in the charter of the CAC the "fateful phrase" as Eccles said in that same interview, "artist craftsman". The CAC was charged with the responsibility of attending to the needs of the artist craftsman", which Eccles has since claimed to have been a typographical mistake, overlooked in the draft of the charter.

The CAC, in their first report explained the phrase

> "It has decided to be content with a wide interpretation which covers those craftsmen whose work, although often rooted in traditional techniques, has an aim which extends beyond the reproduction of past styles and methods."

Victor Margrie, a respected potter, was appointed as secretary and later director. He continued to head up the organisation until the mid 1980's. Under his guidance the CAC quickly developed a range of activities and projects including the loan and grant schemes to makers; the index and the register of craftspeople; the magazine, Crafts; and the information service. Enthusiasm and optimism were high, and the work of the CAC was emulated and admired internationally. However that 'fateful phrase' certainly contributed to the discontent which was to follow.

The CAC played a hand in the merger of the Craft Centre of Great Britain and the Craft Council into the British Crafts Centre in 1972, carrying out that early task of rationalisation. Although the British Crafts Centre was supposedly an independent membership organisation it appears there was a strong connection between it and the Crafts Advisory Council. For quite a few years the CAC had representation on the council of management of the British Crafts Centre and vice versa. The British Crafts Centre (now Contemporary Applied Arts) also continues to

be a major revenue client of the Crafts Council, although the size of the grant is gradually reducing.

In 1973 Sir Roy Strong invited the Crafts Advisory Committee to set up a shop at the Victoria and Albert Museum. This they did, with the assistance of the British Crafts Centre until 1979, when the Craft Advisory Committee decided to continue the shop on their own.

In these early days, the CAC also financially assisted and used the expertise of the Federation of British Craft Societies. The first report of the CAC acknowledged the Federation's help with the setting up of CAC's special projects grant scheme and the Federation made recommendations of those most worthy of support.
The relationship extended to appointing Heather Child, the chairman of the Federation to the CAC in 1974.

The first Crafts Advisory Committee's annual report talks about working regionally through the Federation, local guilds and societies. These craft groups were not, however, to be the official allies of the Crafts Advisory Council in the regions. That first CAC report signals a different agenda, talking of enlisting the help of the Regional Arts Associations to organise regional selections for a major exhibition called The Craftsmen's Art to be held at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The Crafts Advisory Committee 'gave support' to the Regional Arts Associations for their assistance.

There could have been a number of reasons why CAC aligned with the RAA's rather than the guilds and societies. It is possible that the problems already encountered regarding the intermission struggles, as well as the matter of different concepts of acceptable standards

might have contributed to this administrative decision. There may have been a concern that some of the societies were difficult to deal with, whereas the RAA's were more impartial and more open to the suggestions and agenda of the CAC, since many had no prior experience in the crafts. Also the RAAs were already receiving funding from the ACGB and for the CAC to align themselves with this network held at least the potential of strengthening the alignment of craft with other official arts.

The guilds, societies and associations thus gradually lost access to positions of influence and never received much of the ensuing state funding. Today some of these organisations receive small amounts of funds from Regional Arts Associations and limited mention in the Crafts Magazine. The Federation, however, finally lost its grant in 1979.

The guilds, societies and associations are far from extinct, even if they have little official encouragement and support. In the list of Crafts Societies and Associations published by the Crafts Council recently there are fifty national groups listed, with one hundred and sixty eight regional branches and fifty independent regional groups. The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society continues under its new (1961) name of the Society of Designer Craftsmen, producing a quarterly journal, holding meetings, events and exhibitions. Some of the regional guilds, such as those in Cornwall and Devon run their own retail and exhibition outlets. Others vary in the traditional interests of arranging meetings, holding sales and exhibitions etc. New groups are still being formed as groups of craftspeople recognise the value of co-operation and collective action. There is an energy and strength inherent in this activity which, while valuable for the participants, has not been encouraged to

develop as a cohesive and co-operative force and voice in the crafts milieu.

In the first years of the Crafts Advisory Council they assisted West Midlands Arts Association to fund a position of craft officer, as a pilot scheme. In the following years this trend of craft officers, or visual arts officers with part time responsibility for the crafts in Regional Arts Associations, has expanded to all associations except Greater London Arts. In 1973 the Welsh Arts Council appointed a craft and design officer, with contributions towards the funding of the post from the Crafts Advisory Committee and the Design Council.

The Crafts Advisory Committee was renamed the Crafts Council of Great Britain in 1979, although their remit remained to be concerned with craft in Wales and England, with Scotland independent of the Council. In their 1977 to 1980 Annual report, the Crafts Council says this change of title

> "emphasised the parallel between the work of the Crafts Council and that of other bodies, the Arts Council and the British Film Institute."

Nothing here about the suggestion of a bridge between art and industry. In fact the report goes on to say

> "there still remains some uneasiness at the inclusion of the crafts under the general art umbrella...some are afraid that the crafts will lose their traditional identity."

The Council did not seem to share this uneasiness.

What has been seen by many commentators as the Crafts Council's long flirtation with Art was defended in that same Annual Report,

> "the policies of the Crafts Council are occasionally interpreted as being favourable to those working within the

> context of the fine arts. Not so, the Council is seeking a wider appreciation of the self-evident truth that aesthetic content is not the prerogative of the painter and sculptor, nor even the maker of one-off objects, but is often present in the work of those making simple objects for everyday use."

Quite a change in language from the description of the artist craftsman in the first report. Although this would seem indicate a position of embracing a wide variety of practice and intent, the Council's most public activities through the gallery at Waterloo Place and through Crafts Magazine along with the developing public connoisseurship mentality described by Moody (1989) added to the uneasiness of many interested parties.

The major players in a Craftworld were beginning to be identifiable, and complementary in their interest in an fine art-like, gallery-based practice, receiving state subsidy. Such aspirations could only be entertained because of some disarray about a contemporary definition within the contemporary fine art milieu and the aforementioned disillusionment with current fine art practice by some artists, mediators and audience.

In that 1977-1980 Annual Report the Crafts Council says,

> "It is ironic that the aesthetic content can give...objects an inflated monetary value which separates them from their domestic purpose, whatever the original intention of the maker. The label of function glibly used in definition of the crafts, thereby becomes obsolete."

Up to 1978 the British Craft Centre was running both a retail outlet and an exhibition programme at its premises on Earlham street in London. That year the Centre announced the retailing would cease because of extensive losses in the previous years.[12] The Centre would in future concentrate on the exhibitions, which could be sustained within the grant of £80,000 from the Crafts

Council. But at the time the revenue from the sales in the shop amounted to £84,260. The Centre, countering criticisms from craftspeople argued that

> "exhibitions are necessary, because not every craft is easy to show in the circumstances of a commercial gallery."

Thus an agenda was becoming clear, that limited funds should be directed to one strand of craft activity. The Centre gave other supporting arguments for their decision; that their own retailing had a bad effect on private shops and galleries and that the centre was considered unfair competition because the BCC received subsidy. They also claimed their retailing was less important because there were many other retail outlets for craft work.

The response from some crafts people pointed to what would be an ongoing dilemma of this policy shift of major Craftworld participants. Breon O'Casey wrote a letter to Crafts Magazine in which he said

> "Living from exhibitions is a desperate business; bad for the soul, bad for the nerves and bad for the pocket. As Peter Collingwood once said "The only truthful non-abstract statement I can make is I weave. Please buy my weaving."

He went on to point out only a few people would benefit from an exhibition programme. His argument that the figure of £84,260 in sales was important to the craftspeople who benefited from them seems to have been ignored by the British Crafts Centre at the time. They hoped to smooth the waters by saying

> "We intend to create eventually a centre where, for instance craftsmen may meet... or produce discussion groups or events, or provide a meeting place where they may see their clients."

And rightly, some of the people excluded from the Crafts

Centre with the closure of the retailing side were annoyed and frustrated to lose this venue. The offer of a meeting place was small consolation.

The move by some of these Craftworld players into new territory, with new rules, agendas and much of the paraphernalia of an art world left many makers and interested others adrift. They were not comforted when the third Crafts Advisory Committee Annual Report re-emphasised their intention to "continue to seek for the work of the artist craftsman the same serious critical attention accorded the work of other visual artists". [13]

One should not ignore the fact that the motivation behind many of these policy and programme decisions in these directions was complex and well meaning. There was a feeling that promotion of the new craft, under the rubric of art craft would elevate the public perception and reception, and thus improve the income of the makers. This elevation in status also looked as though it might finally be possible to reunite art and craft. Twenty years on, an assessment must surely be that although there has been some success both in the matter of incomes and alignment with fine art, the 'fallout' did a great deal of internal damage by fragmenting the crafts milieu.

When the CAC changed to the Crafts Council in 1981 they revised the mission statement. According to Tony Ford, the present director, and longstanding member of the Council staff, the Crafts Council's charter sets us the task "to encourage the creation of works of fine craftsmanship".[14] He goes on to say

> "I understand the term 'artist craftsmanship' was rejected on the grounds that is was open to misunderstanding."

In foreword to the 1980-1981 report, the Council's chairman spoke of another motivation. He says

> "The encouragement of excellence does not get everyone's blessing, because excellence is beyond the reach of most of us; so out from the arsenal of disapproval comes the prejudicial word 'elitism.' To give fair wind to the pursuit of excellence ...is not to neglect, but rather to offer encouragement to those whose aims are more modest."

It may seem unfair to focus on the Craft Council's initiatives in regard to one sector of the crafts milieu. But there is shared concern among people outside the Council and its network of patronage that development of that art-like sector seemed to become a preoccupation, at the expense of other sectors and activities. For the Council's public appearance seemed to suggest that becoming more art-like meant in some ways becoming more Arts council-like with the attendant mentality of patronage and patriarchal attitudes.

The notion of 'the contamination of craft' through this fine art influence is the issue. The Crafts Council currently still provides a variety of services and activities for non-fine-art craft. But the high visibility art-like craft has had the negative effect of alienating a community of people who are interested in craft, but not interested in the new version of art craft.

Despite the Council's record of continuing to provide the other services, including grants and loans, the slide index and register, the information service, the magazine, those in the crafts milieu who have not felt they have been treated as equally valid and worthy remain among the Council's strongest critics. (These services and their relevance to designer makers is discussed in Chapter 11.)

In the discussion of art worlds Becker suggested that if a group is attempting to join an art world it is necessary to disassociate itself from what were previously related crafts enterprises, and to construct histories connecting the work to already accepted arts by emphasizing the artistic elements of their pasts.

This sense of cutting off roots and traditions in order to be seen as more acceptable to the fine art establishment may indeed be a hidden agenda of the Craftworld. Our sense of history in the crafts even of the last one hundred years has definite biases. It gives a particular art-history-like interpretation of the Arts and Crafts Movement and William Morris and leapfrogs through the intervening years isolating individuals and stressing the artiness of their work. This may be in part due to the fact that by the time the Craftworld began to develop, the society at large had embraced the cult of the personality, as part of the maturing of the capitalist economy.

In 1988 an opportunity to present part of craft history was the centenary of the founding of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. The Society of Designer Craftsmen (the descendant of the earlier society) had plans for mounting a major survey exhibition of the Society's activities from 1888 up to the present. The Crafts Council chose not to support the plan, no doubt agreeing with the opinion of others in the Craftworld that the work of the society since the 1920's had shown a decline in 'standards' and had become irrelevant to the dominant craft ethos.[14] So much for the likes of Farleigh, who had illustrated Bernard Shaw's 'The Little Black Girl in Search of God', Bernard and David Leach, David Pye, Michael Cardew to name but a few. It is true the Society is not part of the dominant Craftworld but that may be

due in part to its attendance to the equal validity of aesthetic and technical matters, and their members' interests in producing useful things of beauty.

Other major players, some of the Art Colleges offering craft courses, have a different way of handling this matter of history. The history they offer their students is art history.

Another element of Becker's art world concept might explain the Council's current preoccupations. He goes on to say if this rewriting of history doesn't work (and it appears to not be working in the sense of a wholesale embracing of a sector of art-like craft into the fine art Artworld) then an alternative is to create an art world of one's one. The emerging Craftworld as mentioned in the last chapter is not purely for the practitioners of art-like craft, but has been art-world-like in creating stars, through various select and selected activities such as the Crafts Council's collection, their index, and their exhibition programme.

A third dimension to the Council's current activities has muddied the waters, and may yet dilute and divert these preoccupations. That is the astonishing rapidity of developments in the Council's marketing programmes during the last four years.

Central to this development is the Chelsea Crafts Fair. The fair was run for seven years by Lady Phillipa Powell with little interest and involvement of the Crafts Council and grew to be a successful and popular event. In the mid eighties Lady Powell felt unable to carry on running the fair. She eventually persuaded the Crafts Council to take it over in 1987 and commented at the time it was a rare example of the time of an activity moving

from private to public control.

This has since provided a major showcase for the Council, and has undoubtedly given them an argument against the critics who would complain about the emphasis on art-like activities. It is probably too early to tell if the Crafts Council's connoisseurship has affected the Fair significantly.

The Council's move to take over the Fair, if reluctantly in some quarters, does seem to have strengthened the position of those who wanted the Council to be involved in providing a variety of opportunities for strengthening the economics of the crafts milieu. And indeed this strengthening of the crafts economy has been part of the Council's platform of priorities in recent years. It has never been adequately spelled out just what the Council meant in this regard, particularly in terms of who was and was not included in their concept of craft. Undoubtedly there are many of the 20,000 and more craftspeople in the country who do not feel the Council's recent activities have assisted their economic situation. It appears that the Council is still guided by the concept of the necessity of developing the top of a perceived hierarchy in order to fulfil their mandate.

In 1989 the Crafts Council launched a trade and retail exhibition called "Creative Eye". Unfortunately this coincided with the demise of the Direct Design shows organised by Joe Tebbits for the five years prior to this. The suggestion has been made that the Council's decision precipitated the eventual collapse of Joe Tebbits' activities, although undoubtedly there were other factors internal to the organisation as well as problems inherent in the nature of the Direct Design Shows. Unlike Lady Powell and her team, who saw the

Chelsea show as a labour of love on the part of the organisers, Tebbit and his team were attempting to earn, albeit modestly, an income from the exhibitions. Also, he was interested in the interior design and home furnishing market, which is a notoriously difficult market to deal with, particularly on the small scale of designer-maker production. Large scale work, with the therefore necessarily high price tags, aimed at clients who are considered to be difficult to attract, is not an easy marketing proposition.

The decision by the Council to launch their own show instead of supporting or collaborating with this pioneering private enterprise is yet to be explained. Creative Eye is a far more mixed event that the Direct Designs shows were, in terms of appealing to different buyers including those from the more lucrative and established gift market. Sadly the venue and the editorial choices made by the organisers have thus excluded a number of design craftspeople interested in working with the interior design, home furnishing market on a larger scale.

Meanwhile, the British Crafts Centre changed its name in 1987 to Contemporary Applied Arts. Although, in theory it has remained a membership organisation, membership did not automatically grant the right of exhibition, or access to the revived retail space. Since 1988, members have been 'selected' by the Director and the Shop Manager, with the approval of the Council of Management. The membership has fallen from eight hundred in 1983 to three hundred in 1990. Their Craftworld alignment with promotion of the art-like craft and chosen design craft in gallery settings is evident in their emphasis on their own exhibitions and their participation in events such as the Chicago International New Art Forms Exposition, and

various art fairs in Britain.

This kind of organisational setting which might not yet prove to be the most suitable for most craft activity. Frayling (1990) predicts much 'artcraft' will fail to reach minimum set prices in auctions in the next few years and Dormer has often commented he feels the 'artcraft' track will prove in retrospect to have been a blind alley. The decision of the Crafts Council to give the Contemporary Art Society money to buy objects for the CAS Art Market in recent years would then become questionable. It suggests that the Council shares the anxiety of many craftspeople, that most of the work which would like to be considered artcraft cannot appear in the fine art sector without support.

Wilding (1989) in his report to the Minister of Arts made the suggestion that the Crafts Council should disband and some of its activities be merged with the Visual Arts Department of the Arts Council. This indicates both the success and the failure of the Crafts Council. Success that, in some senses, it is recognised that the 'Is Craft Art?' argument has had its day. Craft is part of a contemporary broad understanding of the visual arts. Some contemporary craft has similar intentions to contemporary fine arts. The failure is that the Council and their World have not had the courage and the will to establish the concept of 'equal but different' for the crafts as a whole in relation to the other visual arts, particularly fine arts.

The crafts could still be in danger of disappearing from the state-supported arena, even though the Crafts Council has won a temporary reprieve from the plans to disband it. The rally of support for the Crafts Council against the Wilding proposals surprisingly drew strength from

many sectors of the crafts milieu that had felt abandoned and ignored by the Council. An aftermath of this rally would seem to be a reopening of debate among the various interested crafts groups and sectors. And this from a sector which is characterized as not being able to work harmoniously for a common good.

The Crafts Council is currently taking stock of its role and is showing interest in taking advice from a wider representation from the crafts milieu than they had felt necessary in the recent past. The director of the Council, Tony Ford, has published an open invitation to interested members of the crafts community to participate in the discussion. Whether or not this process will result in any significant changes remains to be seen.[15]

It may be the Council is too entrenched in current patterns of practice to make any significant moves. What would be in order is a more overt acknowledgement of a variety of craft traditions (with both long and short histories) all with equal legitimacy to practice proudly under the umbrella name of craft.

Notes and References for Chapter 8

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1. From John Farleigh (1950), The Creative Craftsman,

2. From Famel Johnson's report on a seminar held at the Crafts Council in 1988 in 'One Hundred Years of Grumbling', in Crafts History, volume two, (1989).

3. From Justin Howes' 'Documents of the Craft Revival' in Crafts History, volume 1.

4. From James Noel White's 'The Unexpected Phoenix 1: The Sutherland Tea Set' in Crafts History , volume 1 (1988).

5. From James Noel White's 'The First Craft Centre of Great Britain: Bargaining for a Time Bomb' in Journal of Design History, Vol 2, 1989.

6. The original 5 groups involved in the British Crafts Centre were the Red Rose Guild, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and the Society of Wood Engravers, the Society of Scribes and the Senefelder Club of Lithographers (according to Dora Billington in the Journal of the Society of Designer Craftsmen, 66, March 1990.

7. The notice in the Studio was reprinted in Houston's Craft Classics, attributed to Gordon Russell in his foreword to the exhibition Craftsmanship Today in 1965.

8. From the first report of the Crafts Advisory Committee, 1971-1974.

9. The Federation published a folder of pamphlets describing their collective work in 1975, called Craft 75.

10. Lord Eccles was interviewed by Peter Dormer and reported in Dormer's 'History Man' in Crafts, November'December 1981.

11. The closure of the British Crafts Centre's retail shop and the correspondence is discussed in Crafts magazine, July /August 1979.

12. From the 1977-1980 annual report of the Crafts Advisory Committee/Crafts Council

13. From a briefing paper sent with a letter to some craftspeople, distributed in September 1990.

14. The Society for Designer Craftsmen received a token £400 towards the centenary activities. See Tanya Harrod's Review of 'Textiles of the Arts and Crafts Movement' in Crafts, 95, November/December 1988 for a vitriolic attack on the current Art Workers Guild and the Society of Designer Craftsmen.

15. Tony Ford has written an open letter encouraging debate in Crafts, 106, September/October 1990.

Chapter 9 CRAFT, DESIGN CRAFT, ART CRAFT, DELINEATING CONTEMPORARY INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

The problem, if we are to improve our understanding of those who work in contemporary craft media, remains how to piece together adequate definitions. In thinking of craft as a way of knowing and a way of working - as a category different from fine art or design, the most common practice, as described in Chapter 2, has been to distinguish those who 'work in craft' by the materials they work with. Yet the contemporary Chambers and Shorter Oxford dictionaries do not have this definition of craft as items or artifacts made of certain materials. In the dictionary context the definitions emphasise the idea of occupations related to skill, dexterity, which is similar to definitions of art.

This chapter concentrates on delineating some of the distinctions that can be made under the umbrella of contemporary craft practice.

Contemporary folk understanding emphasises the materials. The primary materials used by craftspeople are considered to be clay, textiles, wood and glass. This distinction by materials is one of the first classification systems Bruce and Filmer (1983) used when they surveyed craftsmen and women for the Crafts Council. Their figures show 82.6% of their estimated 20,000 craftspeople were working in these four media. The system of this division by raw materials showed its inadequacy when they identified two small sectors. One category described products, not materials, and was called "toys and instruments". The other was what they called a residual category of "rural and minor crafts". Again no mention of the materials. Minor referred to

specialisms in which only a few people worked. One wonders how they classified those who were making plastic jewellery.

If one follows Becker (1982) that craft as a folk term, refers to "ambiguous conglomerations of organisational and stylistic traits" it becomes less important to discuss the raw materials than these other organisational and stylistic patterns in the crafts milieu. The identification of these patterns, coupled with attendant attitudinal differences, could profoundly inform those interested and involved in the crafts to more appropriately provide for and strengthen the practice of individual makers.

If we take as an example the raw material of clay, it might first conjure up an image of pleasing domestic ware such as a bowl, a jug or a teapot. If we take bowls as an example, the variations in organisational patterns become quickly apparent. A range comes to mind which might include:

Mass produced and mass marketed bowls in any shopping emporiums

Handmade bowls in a crafts shop in a seaside town

Bowls on exhibit in Liberty's one off shop

Bowls (probably called vessels) in the Contemporary Applied Arts and

Bowls (probably called sculpture) in a fine art exhibition or auction sale.

Now Picasso's bowls might come to mind. In this case the medium is not the message.

Thus the place of public exposure as well as the medium is an indicator of craft activity. The blending into the neighbouring fields of fine art and industry becomes apparent. The medium can but need not be used to produce

what we vaguely know as craft. The place of public exposure has an equally strong influence on making decisions regarding art, craft or industry.

The concept of workstyles has also been identified as part of the definition of craft. If we consider occupations or preoccupations in this regard, the figure below provides a simplistic framework.

Bayley's (1989) three principal sites for craft activity were Factory, Workshop and Home. In the diagram I have used these to examine some of the matters regarding workstyle. Here Factory includes commercial production and industry; Workshop includes studios; and Home refers to non paid activities both essential and leisure.

	Factory	Workshop	Home
predominant life interest	usually yes	yes	possibly
way of earning a living	yes	usually yes	possibly part
self determined work style	usually not	yes	yes
control over design and production	usually not	usually yes	usually yes

9.1

Work sites & Work styles

A fairly obvious problem with such a simple classification framework lies in the complex patterns of practice and intent of individuals. This leads to identifying three particular issues.

1. There is considerable middle ground between factory and workshop in which issues relating to size of the operation, use of machinery and technology, and conditions of workstyle are debatable.

Tony Ford (1990), director of the Crafts Council, wrote in Crafts magazine,

> "while we have been openminded about the use of machinery, we have become worried about long runs or very large workshops."[1]

This indicates that implicit in the Crafts Council's attitude is a model of a craftsperson operating individually, in a partnership or small workshop, producing work largely by hand, or with limited mechanical assistance. Some of those who are outside the Crafts Council's sphere, but still operating under the rubric of craft do not share the Council's concern in this regard. Perhaps the matter should be a moral concern, regarding the condition of labour, harking back to some of the concerns of the last century. What is the dividing line between Wedgewood and the other potteries and the design craftsman who employs eight, ten or more people? Perhaps it is a matter of unfair competition.

2. There is equally middle ground between the sites of workshop and home. Sometimes this is expressed in terms of professional and non-professional, elaborated in arguments regarding the unfair competition of people who occasionally enter the market place, pricing at a much lower level than those who are attempting to earn a living primarily from their craft activities.

3. Within the workshop category a distinction can be made between those who are concerned with working to original designs and concepts and those who are using their skills or craft knowledge in to work to another's design brief, ie, constructing models, or in the heritage, conservation and restoration fields.

From here the field of discussion narrows as I am primarily interested in those who are independent, self-employed craftspeople, earning all or part of their living from their practice. Thus the worksites and workstyles excluded are those of Factory and Home.

Within the remaining Workshop category the craft practice in which the element of design is not the prerogative of the maker is also not of primary interest to this analysis. Therefore those who primarily work to others' design briefs, those who copy for the heritage industry, those who work in the fields of conservation and restoration will not be included.

Three elements for distinguishing crafts activity have now been discussed, materials, public exposure, and workstyles and work sites. Public exposure, however, is only part of a broader element mentioned by people such as Becker, Wolff and Neapolitan; that of organisational settings, which I take to mean networks and affiliations which will be discussed in more detail in the remaining chapters.

The fourth element, which can be used to make distinctions, is the matter of ideology. My dictionary defines ideology as a way of thinking, a body of ideas which may either be political or economic or both, and form the basis of sectarian policy. Ideology permeates

the three elements already identified, and yet can also be considered separately. It influences attitudes and, conversely, the attitudes (which are more observable) indicate the ideology. This may make ideology sound like a fixed set of ideas, which fortunately or otherwise is not the case.

The conflicting and contrasting groupings of attitude and practice are legion within the crafts milieu. They lead to endless debates (of which the following list is just an example) regarding

the appropriate number of people engaged in a workshop or studio
the appropriate use of machinery and technology
the appropriate level of production
originality of design,
quality of workmanship,
respect for materials,
acceptable craft media
acceptable things to do with craft media
the importance of function
the importance of acceptable forms
attention to audience and public
aesthetic issues
metaphorical content

Although some of these issues have been debated <u>within</u> the crafts sector for a hundred years, the influence of neighbours to these debates is also evident. The industrial, commercial neighbour has brought some matters into the discussion. The contemporary fine art neighbour has brought in others.

Individuals within the crafts milieu deal with this polyglot of attitudes and concerns by clustering into

like-minded groups. Theoretically, these groups should then develop a shared set of conventions complete with a recognised set of codes, signals and practice. But because the crafts milieu continues to present an ambiguous and fluid set of situations, new connections and patterns can and do emerge.

Four determinants, none discrete and precise, can now be said to be indicators of particular kinds of contemporary craft activity; ideology, workstyle, raw materials and organisational settings. It would be foolish to suggest any of these elements can stand alone or is preeminent. But it does appear that the entrant into this world of crafts has a number of choices to make regarding options of ideology, workstyle, materials and organisational settings. Having made some decisions regarding one or more of these elements, others will fall into place.

Peter Collingwood gave a talk at a conference in Ipswich in 1985, where he explained how he entered the field.[2] He was already in a professional career (a doctor) and planned his move to become a self-employed weaver for three years. Looking at the new milieu he was about to join, he considered his options and decided he would weave rugs. I suggest that these early decisions, to a self-employed weaver designing and making rugs, dictated some of the other conditions of work style and site, the ideology, the materials and the organisational settings he would be part of.

One of the researched group of design craftspeople had previously been working in the performing arts. She joined the ranks in order to escape the treadmill of her first profession and to create a home-based business. In considering her options, influenced in part by her art school training twenty years earlier, she chose a field

in which she would work to commission in architectural sites and public spaces. This kind of activity has very specific organisational settings and networks which she exploits. Again, ideology, materials and other conditions are, in a manner, predetermined by these initial decisions.

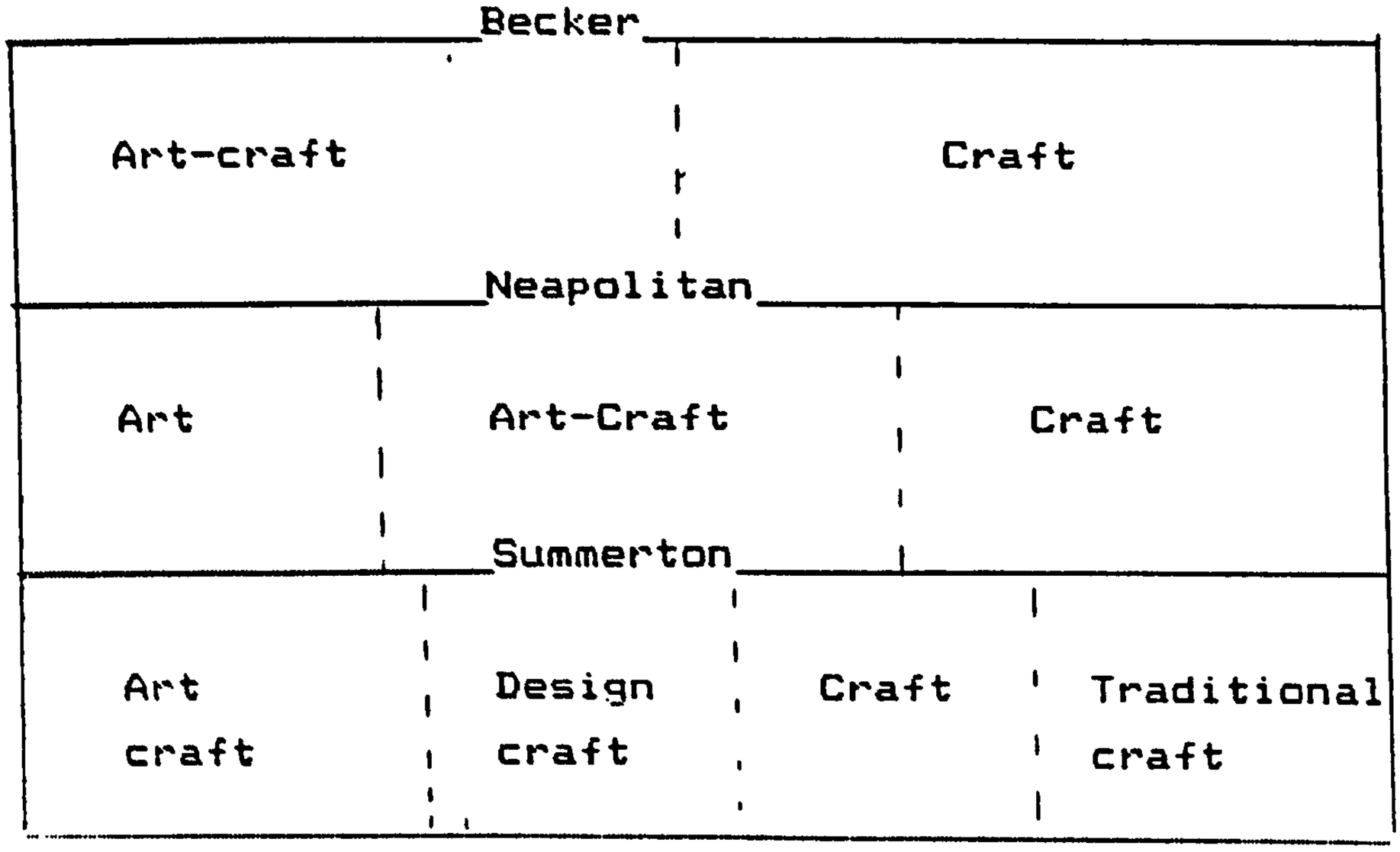
One of the younger people of the group said an early influence was the fact that both parents are practising visual artists. Ideology in this case was the first decision, which led to other options, and ultimately to some of the other four elements falling into place.

Conversely, some visual artists have experienced being categorised by others as craftspeople purely because of the raw material they choose to work with.[3]

Within the crafts milieu there is a finer distinction often made regarding the company one keeps. Many successful makers are astute in choosing the appropriate organisational settings. It is this sort of knowledge which could be invaluable to those who are not so successful.

Becker (1982) discussed craft in its relation to art, and specifically in the context of his delineation of the concept of art worlds. He originally made distinctions between art, craft and the middle ground which he called art-craft. Becker's ideas were applied by Neapolitan (1985) to investigate what he called the art, art-craft and craft sectors in craft media workers. Both these men are American, and their classifications have been useful to this work.[4] Different labels might apply on this side of the Atlantic. Specifically, the design label is and has been more important in our context.

The following diagram shows the development from Becker to Neapolitan to my classifications of self-employed contemporary craftspeople.



9.2

Shifts in Definitions of Craft Sectors

To illustrate the difference between the sectors in the diagram the example of a basket maker will be used.

If he made lobster pots for the local trade, following patterns and methods little changed for generations, executing these pots with technical skill, proud of their function and perhaps their beauty, he would be operating within the strand of traditional craft.[5]

If the basket maker took the products to the local market or shop, where the items might be purchased for a variety

of purposes including, but not limited to the original functional one, the label of craft would be appropriate. The concept of unnecessary labour appears.

If that person embellished the product beyond the confines of the elements necessary for the basket to perform its original function, and chose to distribute and show it at the Chelsea Craft Fair or 'quality' craft shops, the label of designer craft would apply. It is here the concept of luxury goods appears.

If the basket maker used the original traditional design as a starting point for experimentation, for instance, with other materials and shapes, and ignored the element of function in the finished product and took these to show and sell in galleries, where they would be admired for their sculptural qualities, the label art craft would apply. The concept of contemporary fine art appears.

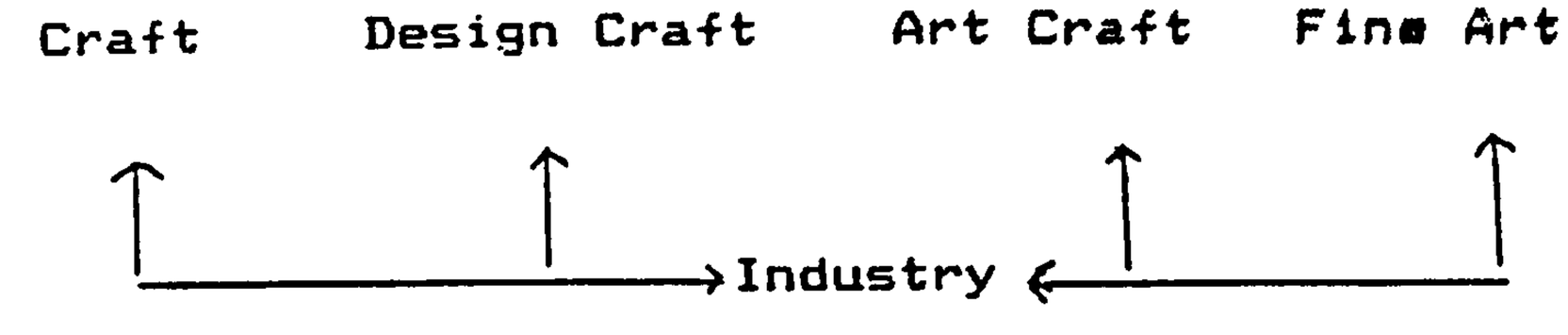
Changes in setting of crafts as they are sold might well come from others rather than the maker. As Dorothy Wright said in Crafts Review in 1960

> "Stanley Bird knows that his fishing baskets are objects of beauty because people from Heals and Primavera have told him so; and it suits him because it means another market for his ware. His personal judgement would be, more likely, that they are good, well-made baskets, as they have to be to do their job." ←

It is worth noting that in any of the first three categories unnecessary labour and luxury products might occur as a result of the maker's love of 'special' materials, or interest in particularly fine workmanship, or an 'eye' for beauty, as defined and appreciated by others.

The category of traditional crafts will be excluded from further discussion. For the most part, people working within that field do not subscribe to some of the ideology which influences practice in the other three sectors. I am referring to the characteristics of originality and innovation.

It is useful to recall the discussion in chapter 2 regarding labels for the remaining three groups. I see these definitions as part of a continuum (not a hierarchy) from those straddling the fine art and art craft groups to those I label craftspeople. This would suggest that the dichotomy between art and industry may be insufficient, although it has contributed much fuel for the debate and dissension in the crafts. If the axis is realigned to fine art - craft, and then the relationship to industry examined, it becomes obvious that industry is adjacent to, and potentially interested in, various activities along the axis. So someone working in art craft has both possibilities and relationships with industry as do people in other sectors. Industry can raid any of these categories for ideas to produce on a higher scale, or to 'hire' the expertise. Equally artist, craftsperson or designer can 'hire' industrial production, or develop into an industry. The diagram on the next page illustrates this point.



9.3

Art, Craft and Industry

The art craft sector contains those who are adopting or adapting the posture of fine artists while working with a traditionally craft material. The organisational structures they are working within (or aspiring to work within) are what are known as gallery-based. They primarily work alone producing one-off pieces for exhibition. The ideology and attendant attitudes reflects a self-preoccupation producing 'self-referencing objects' - personal exploration, with little concern for potential customers or clients. They often rate critical attention more highly than sales. I would say Hill (1988) when talking about "the sort of work which makes the greatest claim to intellectual depth" is referring to this art craft group. An example of the participants in the art craft sector is Judith Duffey, talking about her work in the catalogue for the exhibition Cross Threads. She says,"

> "I incorporate sewing with machine over the knitted extensions which produces a crisp linear form thatt cean bee useed aas aan interlacing element or as a kind of 3-d drawing extending from the solid form."

Another example is in the catalogue for the exhibition New Spirit in Art and Design where Robert Cooper's work is talked about as follows;[9]

> "these leggy constructions are quasi ritualistic; with their appeal to primitive cauldrons and water authority header tanks they are like post industrial figurines."

If the makers in this sector accept a commission, there is little room for a client's brief, other than perhaps in terms of money to be spent and approximate size.

There are two streams within this group which can be traced to their backgrounds. That is to say there may be a distinction in whether they feel rooted in the fine arts and are choosing craft materials to carry on their fine art activities or they feel rooted in the crafts, but use some of the work styles of the fine arts to explore and develop the possibilities in handling of the media, in techniques and in forms. The former I would distinguish as artists-in-craft, the latter more truly art-craftspeople.

The design craft sector is more firmly rooted in the crafts. Their ideology shows more concern than the art craft sector about skills, materials, forms and function. So although some might argue against his inclusion in this sector, Walter Keeler (1990) is placing himself firmly in this group when he writes, [9]

> "All my pots are functional. It is a fundamental justification and a challenging starting point. If the pots could not be used, I would not bother to make them."

Similarly, Lois Walpole, in her section of the catalogue for the Cross Threads exhibition, writes,[10]

> "I usually begin a design knowing that I want to make a particular shape or use a certain material - everything else is then worked out to arrive at something that I hope ends up being both functional and visually arresting, and perhaps amusing."

As Becker pointed out,

> "To speak of usefulness implies the existence of someone whose purposes define the ends for which the objects or activities will be useful."

The organisational setting for designer makers is different, but may overlap with the art craft sector or with the craft sector. In other words, people operating in the design craft sector are not as narrowly confined to gallery-based practice as the art craft sector. They are also willing to accept commissions with a more detailed brief.

Lucinda Leech wrote about her work [11]

> "I design and make one-off pieces of furniture to commission...I enjoy working with customers to design original pieces of furniture which fulfil their needs, and I regard incorporating customers' requirements as a challenge rather than a limitation."

Inherent in the designer craft work style and ideology is a concern for originality and innovation, and elaborated 'high design'. What they produce is useful, but of interest to those who can afford to pay for this ingenuity, attention to detail and embellishment, and quality of materials. They are further distinguished from those in the art craft sector by the extent to which they are concerned about the consumers of their products or services. Most of people encountered in this research would fall into this sector.

It is in delineating a difference between the craft and the design craft sectors that the strength of Becker's

arguments for the importance of organisational setting becomes the clearest. The differences can be seen particularly in places of public exposure. For although there are shops , craft shops, galleries, exhibitions and markets, to name but a few there is a great deal of difference, in the kind of work they show, their attitudes and their customers. Just as in considering Woolworths and Harvey Nichols. So in the crafts milieu the difference is between:

Harrogate Craft Trade Show and Creative Eye,
Greenwich Craft market and Chelsea Craft Fair

A common explanation of the difference is to talk of the difference in quality, with the suggestion that the latter of each pair of examples offers better quality. Some of those encountered in this research, however, have operated in both sectors, and continue to do so. Or they might start in the 'lower quality' settings and move to the others. Quality can be used as only part of the argument. It is true that much of what is evident in the crafts sector does not necessarily have the same combination or degree of technical or design skills as what is in the design crafts sector. However as Laurie Short wrote in a letter to Crafts magazine, "quality is a moveable referent."[12]

Equally important is the fact that setting can enhance or degrade work, or give an overall impression which can not necessarily be applied to all the individual parts. By way of example of this point I relate an incident from my own experience. In Vancouver I was responsible for putting on an event similar to the Chelsea Craft Fair for eight years. In 1983 an irate customer appeared at a shop we operated a few miles from the fair and complained bitterly that the Fair had become an art fair, with attendant high prices. She gathered up a few small and

relatively inexpensive craft items to explain her point saying these were the kinds of things she had wanted to purchase, not the art craft at the Fair. I pointed out that all the items she had assembled were available at the Fair she had just left. The problem seemed to be this of the overwhelming impression created at the Fair. This is also an indication of the problem mentioned earlier regarding the alienation of some groups when confronted by new, seemingly hard-to-understand and appreciate craft.

Many people work in the craft sector out of choice, rather than because what they do dictates their participation in this sector. The ideology of this sector is more concerned with notions of hand made, operating in public events and places labelled craft - craft shops, craft fairs, and so on. They are more interested in small scale production, attractive useful domestic objects, will take on commissions with a wide variety of briefs. Perhaps a stronger impulse among this group is to do with the independence of running their own businesses, and the opportunities that that independence provides.

Bruce and Filmer reported that there were about 20,000 craftsmen and women working in England and Wales. If their estimates of growth were correct there would now be 22,000. Their report implied that most of these craftspeople, about 15,000, were attempting to earn some money from their craft, and consequently were self-employed.

It is difficult to calculate how to assess the group in terms of these suggested new categories of artcraft, design craft and craft. By an educated guess the Art craft sector is by far the smallest of the three sectors

and probably numbers no more than five hundred. It is also likely that many of these are operating part time. There are limited organisational settings for practitioners in this sector and it is here an art world is most recognisable. So if Becker's theory of how art worlds operate is correct, one would expect the group to stay small and exclusive.

Judging by these organisational signs, particularly considering the most obvious public settings, the Craft sector is by far the largest of the three. There are over one hundred private promoters of craft fairs in England alone. Each of these organise a number of events. The number of craft shops or shops selling craft as part of their product range has never been calculated, but those who see Crafts magazine as relevant and choose to advertise in the classified section number over a hundred.

The Design Craft sector is thus in the middle, yet would appear to be quite large. The organisational settings for this Design Craft sector are to be found in style oriented shops, in some of the shops and galleries dedicated to good craft identified by the Crafts Council, in the interest of sympathetic retailers such as Designers Guild, Harrods, Harvey Nichols, Liberty's, and Next, in events such as Chelsea Craft Fair and Creative Eye. The full range of patterns of practice in this particular sector, however, is difficult to identify. In part this is because of a number of people who have chosen to work primarily to commission, and thus can be quite invisible. Their work does not fit in to much of the main visual art or specific craft organisational settings. They often may carry as part of their ideological baggage an independence which makes them uninterested in joining associations or contacting

seemingly appropriate public agencies.

Participants in the Design craft sector, being in the middle of three flexible groupings can cross to either one of the others, or build a hybrid practice which allows them to participate in more than one sector at a time. It is less common for similar activities to happen between the Art craft sector and the Crafts sector.

Combined with the concept of craft and art worlds, this analysis suggests that the most distinct evidence of what Becker might call a developed art world, complete with makers, galleries, critics, collectors seems to be in the artcraft sector. The Craftworld which can be thus identified, however, is still developing and dealing with the conflicts of the differing ideologies of art and craft, experienced by varying degrees in many participants. This conflict leads to indecisiveness and lack of agreement as to what belongs inside and outside the Craftworld.

Interestingly, self-definition is an unreliable indicator of participation in any one of the three sectors. As was explained earlier, many in the craft milieu reject the term craft out of hand as a suitable appellation, preferring to call themselves by some term seen to be more descriptive of their endeavour.

At the same time they are willing to accept and use whatever combination of labels seem appropriate according to who they are dealing with. A better indicator of individuals subscribing to, and participating in, any of the three sectors is to examine their primary identification with the different structures of provision and opportunities.

The anomaly arising out of this situation is that there are many who take advantage of named crafts activities, such as the Crafts Council's services, or the marketing opportunities under the name of craft fairs and exhibitions, without wanting to label themselves as craftspeople or describe their work as craft work.

Bruce and Filmer attempted to identify some of the common threads among the makers in the crafts milieu by saying

> "all of them are working largely by hand, high levels of skill and design, and all of them seek to produce objects that are aesthetically pleasing and suited to their function."

The first part of their definition 'working largely by hand' is reminiscent of the concept of identifiable workstyle. The next two, 'high levels of skill and design' are shared conventions throughout the milieu although precise agreement regarding interpretation of these is not. To produce something 'aesthetically pleasing' is a common thread, but also with extreme variations of interpretation. The importance of function, though hotly debated in some quarters, is most likely a shared convention in most of the milieu.

In the next chapter the Design craft sector is examined in more detail. The purpose is to more precisely map the conditions, practice and ideology of what appear to be some of the groups within the ambiguous, fluid occupational area of Design crafts.

The tendency of many writers, researchers and policy makers seems to be to view the crafts milieu from one perspective and extrapolate this perspective as an understanding of all who practice in the crafts, or all who matter in the crafts (the true believers!). This is not just a problem of those in the Craftworld.

Another way of dealing with the complexity and variety has been to pay nominal attention to the diversity of practice and then attempt to treat the sector as an, albeit unwieldy, commonwealth. It is hoped that this foregoing discussion and the next chapter might prompt a different path.

It seems important before leaving this discussion of contemporary practice to comment on the term 'gallery'. As Brighton and Pearson (1985) discussed, there are many different kinds of fine art or art galleries. This is true also in the crafts milieu. Galleries range from operating in the same manner as contemporary mainstream fine art venues with a 'stable' of artists (such as the Michaelson-Orient Gallery) to being retail shops selling with a permanent stock of goods. A common practice in the crafts milieu it refers to a space where the owner or manager selects a group of work to show, perhaps around a theme, or perhaps extends an invitation to a maker to put a collection of his work on display. There is no doubt that gallery is seen by many as a useful 'promotional' label and in the more general sense is referring to the definition as a place where objects are put on exhibition or display. When I have referred to gallery-based practice I am talking about the former, rather than the latter.[13]

On the next page is a diagram to summarize some of the differences between the three sectors of art craft, design craft and craft.

1. Craft	2. Design Craft	3. Art Craft
Functional & decorative For home and personal use	Decorative & functional for interior design or fashion & accessories	Art-like product non functional
Need not be original design	Original, often innovative design	Unique
Made mainly in small batches. Work is usually technically competent	Made in small batches, or one off, perhaps repeatable designs Technically competent	One-offs, may be in themes Idea more important than execution
Primarily for consumer gift market	Primarily for high end consumer market or interior design & architectural market	Primarily for collectors, art buyers
Direct sales from workshop, own retail space & ie. mail order house parties	Direct sales from studio or workshop or group sales events	Direct sales from studio
Crafts fairs, temporary and permanent	Selected craft fairs	
Mediators are agents, retail owners and buyers.	Mediators are agents, public agencies, retail owners & buyers	Mediators are galleries public and private
Reached through trade shows	Reached through trade shows registers & exhibitions	Reached through exhibitions, registers & media

9.4

Distinctions of Craft, Design Craft and Art Craft Sectors

Notes and References for Chapter 9

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1. Tony Ford wrote in 'Comment' in Crafts, September/October 1990.

2. Peter Collingwood was speaking at a conference in Ipswich in the spring of 1985.

3. Penina Barrett discusses this in regard to decisions made both by media and by gender in her essay 'Art or Craft...Who Decides?' in Craft Matters, published by the John Hansard Gallery 1985.

4. Becker's analysis is described in detail in his chapter on arts and crafts in Artworlds. Neapolitan, another sociologist has refined the argument with three studies conducted in the mid 1980's and reported in American Sociological journals.

5. I have used 'he' for the basket maker in recognition that much of what is discussed as a paid occupational category in the traditional crafts usually refers to male oriented activities. The female oriented traditional crafts were often unpaid activities (or with extremely low financial returns).

6. Dorothy Wright wrote this in 'A Norfolk Craftsman' which first appeared in Crafts Review 5, 1960. It was reprinted in Houston's Craft Classics.

7. Duffey's comments were in the catalogue for the Cross Threads exhibition in Bradford, spring, 1990.

8. The Spirit of the New exhibition was at the Crafts Council Gallery June to November 1987.

9. Walter Keeler was describing his work in Ceramic Review, August, 1990.

10. Lois Walpole was writing in the catalogue to accompany the Cross Threads exhibition, Bradford, 1990.

11. Lucinda Leech wrote about her work in The Designer Craftsman, October, 1986.

12. Laurie Short wrote his comment in a letter appearing in Crafts November/December 1986.

13. Marina Vaizey made a distinction between exhibitions and anthologies, describing exhibitions as having a narrative impulse and thrust which makes the whole greater than the parts which could be applied to distinguish between some of the 'exhibitions' of crafts. 'How to Help the Artist' by Marina Vaizey appeared in the Sunday Times, November, 1986.

Chapter 10 DESIGN CRAFTS, A CLOSE-UP

The purpose of this chapter is to explore and expand the concept of the suggested category of Design craft and to look for patterns of activity within this group. Patterns that emerged over the course of this research have been confirmed and elaborated by the questionnaires and interviews with a number of makers, and by more informal research and meetings with others at various events. There do seem to be indications of some similarity of ideologies, workstyles, organisational structures. All are working with raw materials which have been considered within the domain of crafts.

It is to be hoped that the reader will not find the style of presenting the information too arid. I was concerned not to produce information about a number of personalities but abstract from them information which might build and strengthen my concept of strands of practice.

First I will present and discuss some of the evidence of the research with the select group of twenty two makers. The conclusions which have become apparent about this group, in terms of ideologies and workstyles are:

1. They are equally concerned about quality of the design, the attractiveness and the workmanship of what they do.

2. They are all producing their own original and unique work. That does not necessarily mean only producing one-off pieces.

3. They retain control over the making process, although they may have assistants to help.

4. They see themselves primarily as practitioners, although they may take on,additionally, work such as teaching or doing other paid work.

5. They actively seek places to sell and ways to get their work exposed and are motivated by a desire to make a living from what they do.

6. They are mostly willing to undertake commissions. Those who do not are selling repeatable designs in small batches to retailers.

7. Their work is easy to appreciate and is following forms which are recognisable.

8. They are concerned about the quality of the material they use.

The twenty two people participating in the research would fit in the category defined as Design craft, rather than those of Art craft or Craft. As a group they have been operating as independent, self-employed designer craftspeople from two to over thirty five years. They range in age from the mid-twenties to mid-sixties. Of the twenty two, thirteen are women and nine are men. Six are located in Greater London; six are in the west and southwest; four are in the east and southeast; two are in the northeast and one in the midland. [1]

All the group consider they are self employed, or operating tiny or small businesses. The size of their enterprise varies;

1. 3 work entirely on their own

2. 10 work primarily alone
   drawing on a network of professional expertise
   and services and occasionally hiring assistants
   to help

3. 3 have the assistance of a small number
   of part or full time assistants and also draw on
   a network of other professionals.

4. 4 are partnerships and employ some regular
   and some occasional assistants and also draw on
   a network of other professionals.

5. 1 is a partnership with 12 subcontractors
   and draws on a network of other professionals.

6. 1 is a partnership with 7 to 9 employees and
   draws on a network of other professionals.

The three who work on their own have been self-employed for the shortest time - two to three years. The group of ten fit the model of the one-person business described by Whitmeyer et al. That is, they work primarily alone, hire some occasional help as needed, and have a network of other self-employed professionals who provide a variety of expertise and services. The next three are slightly different from the Whitmeyer model, in that they have decided to have some regular employees. The last six are in partnerships of which all but the last one could be considered variations of the Whitmeyer model.

The two largest enterprises have been operating the longest - the partnership with the twelve subcontractors for fourteen years, and the other for over thirty-five

years. This is not to suggest that in the course of time all will develop into larger operations. It does suggest that the complexity and size of business takes time to develop. The three women who have been working for ten or more years have chosen to stay as one person businesses with minimal ongoing or occasional help.

As mentioned in Chapter 2 none of this group call themselves craftspeople or hyphenate crafts to their label. And yet twenty one of them identify with activities that do carry the label of craft including the activities of the Crafts Council. Fifteen had had some contact with the Crafts Council by listing on the register, applying for grants or participating in the Chelsea Craft Fair, Creative Eye or the Crafts Council's sponsored events overseas.

The remaining seven do not consider the Crafts Council activities to have any relation to their work. For example, one of these considers a connection with the Council would be damaging to the connections and clientele he is developing. Another has been working for over ten years making wall hangings for interiors and public spaces. She established organisational connections with galleries and agencies here and abroad early in her career, and sees no need to seek involvement with the Council.

All of the twenty two say their work as designer craftspeople is now paramount in their lives, although two women have children under three and are doing their designer craftwork part time for the moment.

The average profit for the full time makers in Filmer and Bruce's study (1983) was reported to be £3249 for men and £1733 for women. While there have been questions

regarding how this figure was calculated, it is commonly understood throughout the crafts milieu that this is not a field offering quick and large financial returns. Without analysing the overall picture in more detail I would agree with Brown (1985) that

> "the proliferation of statistics on the subject of income must be more closely scrutinized and further work done on the subject to obtain and maintain a clearer and more reliable overall picture."[2]

In researching the twenty two makers a number of points related to this matter of the financial side of their business arose - levels of income, how they managed to start up and if there were significant other sources of income.

I decided not to ask for figures related either to income or profit, which could sink into the quagmire Brown was hinting at. I also avoided using the word 'profit' as I see it as relating to capitalist ventures, where there is an interest in creating excess money through a differential between the price the market will bear and the cost of production, which implies among other things, keeping the employee costs to a minimum. I believe the concept of profit is either irrelevant or contrary to the ethos of the kinds of businesses these people are running. In keeping with the practice in the worker co-operative sector, I refer instead to surplus of income, which more often than not means these makers can increase the amount they can draw from their activities, after expenses.

The group were asked if they felt the income they generated from their business activities was adequate. Because of the selection process, where, for the most part, I was looking for people who considered themselves successful, not unsurprisingly the overwhelming majority

said yes. Only one was not satisfied. Seven said their financial return was nearly at the level they would like. One, who had been in business for six years, starting up immediately after art school, said that although the return was adequate, it did not yet provide enough for her to buy property in London. Thus thirteen were satisfied with the remuneration from their self-employment.

If one takes into account the amount of economic spin off in terms of numbers of paid assistants and paid outside professional expertise for this group, it suggests quite a contrary picture to that given by Filmer and Bruce. The difference I suspect is not only a matter of my information being collected nine years later, and confirms the difficulty in judging this matter of economic viability. However this apparent comfortable economic standard has been confirmed, if only by rumour and comment by a number of others. It may be useful to investigate this matter of financial return in more detail so that these rumours could be substantiated into figures showing what range of economic activity is currently occuring. In this manner, choices by those self employed or potentially so could be more informed.

It is probably true to say this last decade has been one of the growth of professionalism in business aspects for quite a few practitioners. It also is true that there is a predetermination on the part of some to make a living from their practice, and an attitude which enhances and sustains their business.

Obviously the setting up costs varied widely and these differences were not investigated. But when the members of the research group were asked how they started their business a number of factors came to light. Some (2 men

and 3 women) said spouses provided financial support in the early stages of setting up.

Seven secured part time teaching positions soon after finishing their training, and maintained (or are maintaining) this work while they develop their independent practice. There may be a significant difference in attitude here which is at odds with the predominant mythology, for none of this group saw this teaching as something they were 'forced' to take up. In her excellent contribution in Making Ways, Carole Pemberton suggests that in the early stages of creating a successful independent career, earning money through other work such as teaching is a legitimate component.

Some of the nine who switched from another career had savings from other employment to invest in their new venture, and some still work part time in their first profession to bring in some income.

Handy (1989) discusses in a wider social context than the visual arts what he calls "portfolio careers" as a common pattern for the future. Multiskilled designer craftspeople creating a mixed portfolio of avenues for earning money may be role models for this new endeavor which should be encouraged rather than criticised. The legitimacy and good sense of a mixed practice could well be a matter for those who mediate on behalf of the independent or would-be independent makers to take into account.

Another way of getting started was through seeking funding from various sources. Five had been on the Enterprise Allowance scheme; three had received Crafts Council setting up grants; one had received financial help and advice from the Prince's Youth Business trust.

Four identified the Rural Development commission, formerly COSIRA, as a useful source of support both at the beginning and as their business was developing.

Getting started also involves finding premises. Some started working from home and continue to do so. Some have free work space in property owned by family and friends. One spoke of his search for appropriate low cost space throughout the country which led to him locating in Wiltshire. Another moved to a new district because of the guarantee of subsidised workspace from a local Regional Arts Association. One had found her workspace in a property subsidised by a Local Authority, and another had found low cost premises on National Trust property.

It was interesting that among this group was the recognition that being successful in their endeavor could need more than talent. A small number of the younger makers had looked for assistance in the form of business training. Two had attended the Design Enterprise Programme, a course for Design Graduates run by London Enterprise Agency. One attended a Graduate Enterprise course at Durham University. One attended short courses on setting up a small business at London Enterprise Agency. One attended my Business Skills for Visual Artists course at CityLit in London. Two attended short courses on Marketing Skills for Craftspeople in the West Country. This willingness to learn new skills brought about by their decision to be self-employed also took the form of seeking advice from within and outside the crafts sector. Some consulted the Regional Arts Associations and small business information centres.

It seems appropriate at this juncture to begin to look at the makers in more detail. I have chosen to divide them

into groups by the raw material they use, then discuss the different patterns of practice. It is hoped this method will reinforce the argument of the inadequacy of considering solely the raw materials as a marker of distinction. The distribution of this groups' interest in raw materials is as follows:

7 work with clay
5 work with textiles
5 work with wood
2 work with metal and stones
2 work in mixed media
1 works with glass

A. The people working with clay describe their main activities as designing and making;

bone china bowls
decorative ceramics
ceramic murals
decorative objects and functional ware
domestic earthenware
ceramic decorative features for walls and floors
pottery

Four of the seven form a subgroup who concentrate on producing a limited number of repeatable designs. These four women have been working for 6 to 10 years. They attend trade shows and list large shops, small shops, craft shops and galleries as their main clients. Their products are quite different. Two produce work which is moulded in a small number of shapes with surface design incorporated to the preparation of clay for the moulds. Both these women talk of their work appealing to a design conscious public.

In contrast, the other two in the subgroup enjoy the spontaneity of hand painted surface decoration which conforms to a limited number of themes. There is humour in the work of both. One of these supplies similar shops and galleries to the first two. The other's style is quite different and has been influenced by early English folk designs. Her distribution is also through large and small shops but they are not the 'design conscious' ones of the other three. The shops are still concerned with quality, but are not looking for the same kind of sophisticated work. The first three have exhibited through Chelsea and Creative Eye. The last one has exhibited at Harrogate Trade show. She has not felt that the London shows are appropriate for her market, and for the most part concentrates on more local sales. Also she still sells from her workshop and undertakes small commissions, which the others no longer do.

The fifth person working with clay is now primarily working to commission, doing large tile murals in public spaces. She also undertakes private commissions for interior decoration or architectural work. She has been working for six years. Although she would like to work only on large scale commissions she has recognised the need to develop some smaller autonomous or speculative work to make and sell in between the other work. She has an established line of highly patterned glazed garden ware with a limited number of surface designs and shapes which she sells direct and through small shops and galleries. She is also developing tile designs, which can be bought individually and in series for domestic interiors, which she plans to sell through interior design shops and high quality tile shops.

The sixth produces repeatable designs of domestic ware and some one-off exhibition pieces. Established for over

thirty five years, he has a network of shops and galleries keen to have his work and also sells direct from his pottery.

The last person working with clay has a more mixed approach and has been producing tiles, plaques and ceramic jewellery for five years, much of this is speculative work. She designs and makes mosaics on commission and sells designs for textiles. She exhibits at Chelsea and Creative Eye, trade shows, Contemporary Applied Arts, is listed in a number of indexes and registers and sells direct from her studio. Not surprisingly she mentions overwork as a problem!

B. The five people working in textiles describe their work as designing and making;

ikat wall hangings
batik pictures, panels and collages
handwoven floor coverings
rugs
fabric collages

The woman producing hangings has been working for 13 years, originally producing clothing which she sold to 'upmarket department stores'. Her first hanging brought dramatic results. As she says, "I had immediate success. I was offered a show with a very important New York Gallery after they saw and sold my first wall hanging in a week". She produces autonomous work, but primarily works to commission. She deals with corporate art agencies and also participates in occasional invitational or juried exhibitions here and in the United States. She is also listed with appropriate registers and indexes, such as those run by public art agencies and Art and Architecture.

The woman working in batik makes pictures, wall hangings and cards. She also makes silk screened clothing accessories, thus for the most part she makes autonomous products. She then seeks to sell the work by participating in local fairs, selling to local shops and from her studio in a small town. Of the group, she is one of the least satisfied with her career, although she has been working for about twenty years.

The man producing the floor coverings has only been in business for two years, after making a switch from a professional career. He makes some speculative work and also accepts commissions. He has exhibited and sold through through Creative Eye, the Contemporary Applied Arts and the Contemporary Textile Gallery.

The rugmaker also switched careers and has only been making rugs for 4 years. She produces a combination of one-off speculative work and works to commission. She does not like to repeat themes and designs. The work of producing the rugs is long and labour intensive. As yet she is not as successful as she would like. However she uses trade shows, sales and exhibitions, as well as the Contemporary Textile Gallery, and is listed in some registers and indexes.

The last person does fabric collages. This woman also took up this as a second career six years ago. She works on themes, producing speculative work. She accepts commissions and orders for multiples based on these themes but all pieces are one-offs. Her primary contacts are through Crafts Council activities here and in New York, and through some museums, galleries and shops.

C. The five people working with wood describe their work as;

producing wooden toys and playthings
finely turned decorative wooden vessels
designing and making furniture (3)

The toymaker, in business for three years, produces speculative, small batch work which he used to sell direct through a weekly craft market and to retailers through one trip to Harrogate Craft Trade Fair. Now the primary exposure is through the British Toymakers Guild Annual Show at Kensington which he says "has brought in enough (too much!) work." Although his work is produced in small batches he says of one of his products, "I'm a little bit trapped by their success but I develop and change them weekly...making new discoveries, so it's ok".

The man making the finely turned decorative wooden vessels for the last eight years, took this up as a third career, although both his previous careers were related to the medium. He concentrates on speculative, one-off work, which he exhibits and sells through shops and galleries, Crafts Council related activities and other fairs.

The three furniture designer makers produce prototypes of pieces they are willing to make in small batches and some bespoke pieces. They have been working for five to nine years. They rely on contacts with interior designers and architects, and some private clients to generate sufficient business. Two also attend trade shows related to the interior design and architectural markets, such as Interior Design International, Business Interior Design Exhibitions. They also and use registers and the press aimed at this sector. Two of them exploit the opportunities provided by the Crafts Council and their

Regional Arts Council while the third deliberately avoids this connection. Although all three are based outside London, they see their primary contacts as London-based.

D. The two people working primarily with metals and stones describe what they do as

jewellery

silversmithing and jewellery

The woman who makes jewellery has been working for 7 years. She makes speculative work in small repeatable batches or themes, and one-off pieces. All her work is in semi-precious materials. Much of her jewellery is sold direct from her studio, or at group sales and exhibitions she and her colleagues arrange at various locations in her area. Some of her customers collect her work and so will work to commission. She has sold to some of the big shops, Liberty's and Harvey Nichols and attends some of the London fairs, such as the Goldsmiths Fair and Chelsea. She has also been commissioned by a dance group and Glyndebourne to make costume jewellery. Interestingly she has had two residencies through her local RAA. She was the only person in the group to consider a residency.

The gold and silver smith has been working for fourteen years designing and making primarily repeatable, speculative designs in silverware and jewellery. He will also do private commissions. He exhibits and sells at fairs in London such as Chelsea, and Goldsmiths' and at the International Gift Fair. He also exhibits and sells at local fairs and events. Through this exposure he sells to shops and galleries in the UK and abroad. "The silverware is mainly sold through high quality independent retailers, and the jewellery mainly through

galleries and specialist contemporary jewellery shops." Participating in Chelsea and Creative Eye has been his only contact with the Crafts Council so far.

E. The two women working with mixed media are producing what might be called work for architectural and interior settings. Most of their work is one-off to commission, designed to be a focal point or integral or complementary to its setting. They design and make some speculative pieces for exhibition purposes, similar to the furniture designer makers' prototypes. Or they might make small 'experimental pieces' which they sell from their studios. One of them has exhibited at Creative Eye. More important to both of them, however, is being on public and other registers and indexes and getting their work in the specialist interior design and architectural press. One, living in London, has made personal sales appointments with some interior designers, and plans to do more of this promotional work.

F. The woman working with glass makes 'decorative vessel forms' including some vases, perfume bottles and paperweights, and has been in business for three years. She exhibits and sells through craft fairs and galleries, here and abroad, making speculative one-off pieces. She also sells some work direct from her studio.

Here then, is the variety of enterprise of twenty two makers. To speak of them all as ceramicists, potters, woodworkers, or in any way to try to understand them by the materials they work with masks a variety of products workstyles and interests. Also emerging from this discussion, is evidence of attitudes and practice which may be seen to cover a spectrum from bordering on the art

craft (such as the rugmaker or fabric collage maker) to the craft (the toymaker or the production potters).

The style of the questionnaire and survey did not encourage the designer makers to consider the dichotomy between aesthetic impulse and the dictates of the commercial nature of their endeavour. The matter did arise, however, in several discussions. As one person put it, "One of the most important aspects of success is achieving a balance between the creative and commercial". Finding a balance is most likely part of feeling successful about their enterprise. Failure to find a balance which is personally satisfying inhibits the maker as in the comment from the least happy of the group that "selling is necessary but time consuming and thoroughly objectionable".

It was interesting to discover that some of the people who have chosen to make repeatable designs maintain an element of variation within those designs. From the toymaker, saying he varied the product slightly each week and the potters who paint on decorations, to the woman taking orders for work in themes, while preserving her opportunities for spontaneity within her framework; the dictates of her own exploration of those themes, influenced partly by the materials to hand. The latter is a particularly noteworthy example of a style of practice which I have also observed in North America. That is, the successful 'bulk'-marketing, in a sense 'wholesaling' of fairly expensive essentially one-off work. Repeatable designs handled in these ways, and in the manner of the other two production potters, where handmixing of the coloured clays produces inevitable variations in the final product - these are some of the ways the makers find to comply with market demands for consistency and their own requirements for ongoing

exploration, development and spontaneity. Perhaps there is need to refine the understanding of what small batch production does and could mean.

These people respond to market demands finding specific niches within the market. And their personal necessities or personal values are interpreted into different work styles and patterns. Different settings require different emphases. A celebrated Canadian potter once told me of his different attitudes when he opened the kiln after a firing. "If I am thinking in a craftsman's way, I look for the uniformity and similarity in the pots; if I am thinking in an artist-craftsman's way I look for the individuality, the uniqueness." This dichotomy crops up in many conversations and reports.

Kate Russell talking about her work said

> "there's the speculative, more experimental side - the tapestries - which I think I'd have to call 'art', then there is the more decorative functional work, like rugs and blankets which I make to commission."[3]

One of the most negative aspects of the long discussions and debates regarding art, craft and design is the encouragement of such concern to categorise different aspects of activity. In the group researched such a dichotomy was not at issue.

The comment from Kate Russell also brings up the matter of commissions. Since the rapid expansion of interest in public art and large scale commissions it is all too easy to think only of work of such a nature when referring to commissions. It is worth remembering that commissions have a more general meaning in terms of speaking of a kind of practice which might be chosen by a variety of makers in a variety of contexts. As Crowe(1988) pointed out,

> "historically the commissioning of artwork

> was the most usual form of sale because most art was custom-made. Even today there is still considerable scope of art and craftwork to be made to order."

The range of activity in the field is also worth investigating in terms of the extent of the brief from the client. Twenty of the group consider commissions as a significant part of their activity. It varies from the designer craftspeople having repeatable designs which they will personalise in some fashion, to creating within a previous style or a theme, to developing a new concept with a vague brief from a client which might involve considerations of money and space, to executing to a fairly tight brief, even to the extent of reproducing a preconceived idea for a client. The literature as yet speaks little of this diversity of commission opportunities. Refinement of the concept could be of value to practitioners, clients and mediators.

It is also interesting to note that some of the designer craftspeople have found a fairly narrow niche in the market, while others have chosen to have a variety of avenues for their work. Fourteen of the group are selling or exhibiting abroad, mainly in the United States.

Another way to understand the ranges of practice in this sector would be to attempt to distinguish between the 'products' which are produced in the studio or workshop and then offered to select mediators and clients and the work which is in varying degrees produced in response to a specific request from a mediator or client.

One way of distinguishing between these two primary strands of practice would be to refer to them as being 'product-led or market-led' using marketing terminology.

Such labelling is not altogether satisfactory for, in the case of product-led, it denies the subtle influence of the market or of the perceived constituency on the practitioners' decisions regarding the product. And similarly, market-led denies the sometimes profound influence of the practitioner and peers on the constituency.

It should also be obvious it is equally simplistic to refer to the distinction as one between art and industry, or between art and craft. It is best, therefore, to see the two strands as representing a spectrum of activity. The decisions to work primarily in one or other end of this spectrum, between autonomous products and bespoke work, or to mix practice are influenced by a number of factors which are both personal, public and economic. The personal factors are largely related to preferred work style. The public factors are largely related to modes of practice within the arena(s) in which the practitioners are operating. The economic factors are to do with size of the business and the risk factor - that is to say, if the chosen work style and 'product' is large scale in terms of costs of materials, time invested and ultimately the price, most small enterprises cannot afford to produce a great deal without the prospect of someone to buy. Here is the dilemma of a fine artist, or a craftsperson embracing the fine art ideals. But an approach chosen by these designer makers is to seek commissions which could in a way be viewed as commercial patronage. The debate about the duty of the state to make provision for the experimentation and personal development enters again.

Adopting a mixed style of practice practically helps develop a wider base for their endeavour and allows more versatility in the ability to exercise creative powers

and strengthen business opportunities. It may also prove to be a temporary strategy towards finding a niche or niches at various stages in the practitioners' careers.

There follow four charts which attempt to show the diversity in practice in terms of what the designer craftspeople offer and the organisational opportunities they can and do take advantage of. These charts are refinements of the proposed model at the end of the last chapter. Since the range of practice related to fashion and accessories was not extensively represented in the selected group I have not attempted to chart that. Also I have excluded the toymaker from the model as he has different publics, mediators and markets.

One of the main reasons for presenting this material in such a form is to more fully explain the opportunities which <u>do</u> exist for the distribution of designer craftspeoples' wares and services. The style of presentation is also to reinforce the concept of identifiable patterns of activity. Distribution of craft is usually considered, within the milieu, to proceed mainly through dedicated craft outlets (i.e. where only handmade goods are sold) a selection of sympathetic retailers including giftshops, and through galleries. In order to show that the market distribution is actually bigger and more differentiated than what seems apparent I have developed the following models. These could be developed for other categories of artefacts and artistic work with attendant opportunities and distribution channels.

Design craftsperson offers	tableware, silverware, lamps, vases, decorative pieces planters
Production mode	small batch, repeatable designs one off, may be in themes
Distribution mode 1. Direct	a) from workplace, perhaps b) small events organised perhaps with others
2. Retail fairs	Chelsea Craft Fair, Goldsmiths Fair, selected other fairs
3. Trade fairs a) dedicated to craft b) sympathetic to craft c) mainstream	Creative Eye, perhaps Harrogate Craft Trade Show, Top Drawer ie. Interior Design International & some international shows
4. Retail outlets a) dedicated to craft b) sympathetic to craft c) mainstream	selected craft shops and galleries style shops, gift shops looking for originality shops in cultural institutions product specific shops and departments within stores
5. Agents, agencies & other mediators	private agents public agencies with selected lists interior design and home furnishing publications public and subsidised galleries & museums

10.1

A Model for Small Home Furnishing Products

Design craftsperson offers	furniture and rugs
Production mode	small batch, perhaps repeatable designs, perhaps one off, may be in themes
Distribution mode 1. Direct	from workplace, perhaps
2. Retail fairs a) Dedicated to craft b) Mainstream	 Chelsea Craft Fair, perhaps selected fairs Ideal Home, perhaps
3. Trade fairs a) dedicated to craft b) sympathetic to craft c) mainstream	 Creative Eye, perhaps Top Drawer Interior Design International & some international shows
4. Retail outlets a) dedicated to craft b) sympathetic to craft c) mainstream	 selected craft shops and galleries, perhaps Contemporary Textile Gall. style furniture and interior design shops, perhaps departments within large stores, perhaps
5. Agents, agencies & other mediators	private agents for interior design public agencies with selected lists interior design and home furnishing publications public and subsidised galleries & museums

10.2

A Model for Large Home Furnishing Products

Design craftsperson offers	wall hangings, tapestries,
Production mode	one off, may be in themes repeatable designs, maybe
Distribution mode 1. Direct	a) from workplace, perhaps b) direct mail and personal canvassing
2. Retail fairs	selected craft fairs, perhaps
3. Trade fairs a) dedicated to craft b) sympathetic to craft c) mainstream	ie. Interior Design International & some international shows
4. Retail outlets a) dedicated to craft	selected craft shops and galleries occasionally
b) sympathetic to craft	interior design shops and showrooms, corporate art showrooms
c) mainstream	
5. Agents, agencies & other mediators	private agents working with interior designers, architects, property developers, corporate art public agencies with selected lists interior design and home furnishing publications public and subsidised galleries & museums

10.3

A Model for Wall Hangings and Tapestries

Design Craftsperson offers	textiles, furniture, murals, floor coverings, surface treatments. architectural detailing
Production mode	bespoke, may be in multiples, may be variations on past work, may be of own design or to other's design
Distribution mode 1. Direct 2. Retail fairs } 3. Trade fairs } 4. Retail outlets }	from workplace, perhaps {May use select shows and {venues for promotion and {contacts
5. Agents, agencies & other mediators	a)Private agents b)Public Agencies with selected lists c)Interior Design showrooms d)Corporate Art dealers e)Architecture, design and furnishing publications f)Public and subsidised galleries & museums

10.4

A Model for Commissioned Design Craft For Interior and Architectural Settings

The foregoing charts point up the different opportunities and venues for different types of products, with only a few areas overlapping between the small work which can fit in gift and home furnishing venues, as well as studio craft and design venues and activities, and the larger work which has fewer options for distribution and for production.

What is perhaps not so clear is the minimal interest in, and impact of, galleries other than those where there are opportunities to sell or to reach potential clients and mediators. Running a design craft business successfully usually means being economical with time and resources and making choices regarding the suitability of different venues for exposure. One wonders how often the apparent commercial intention of the design craftspeople is seen to disqualify them from consideration by some curators. Among the designer craftspeople there may also be a recognition that their work might not suit a gallery environment.

The Chelsea Craft Fair and Creative Eye, both run by the Crafts Council are obviously quite significant to many designer makers, but are of little use to the people wanting primarily to work on commission, or those concentrating on large work. Although the larger trade events may be an option, the expense of participating in them is difficult for some design craftspeople.

Space is limited at both these Crafts Council events, which then dictates who is chosen, who applies and what can be shown. In comparison, other similar events in France and in the United States are more spacious, allowing for more participants, more space to exhibit, and more space for the public.* The, now defunct, Direct Design Exhibitions attempted to provide more space, having clearly recognised the needs of those producing larger scale pieces for home furnishing, interior design and architectural clientele. These other events also have been initiated on a broader premise of what constituted good work. This is in part an indication of Becker's concept of art worlds choosing enough to fill the spaces available.

The matter of different patterns of practice is not wholly to be explained in the previous charts. It would be improper to conclude this analysis without a further refinement to allay the suggestion that the areas represented in the charts indicate discrete activity for all makers. From the group of designer craftspeople in the study it is possible to identify eight distinct patterns of practice. These are presented in the table on the next page.

The twenty two designer craftspeople fit into these patterns as follows:

Pattern 1	Four	Pattern 5	Two
Pattern 2	Three	Pattern 6	Three
Pattern 3	One	Pattern 7	Three
Pattern 4	Two	Pattern 8	Two

These patterns should be seen as propositions which could be refined and elaborated with further research. What is hopefully clear at this stage is that the stereotypical images of contemporary craftspeople as either making a number of small items and taking them to market, or of creating a number of personally inspired works for a limited number of collectors and galleries ignores a number of patterns and styles of work. Further it suggests there <u>are</u> a number of identifiable patterns, rather than just a chaotic and random diversity of practice as numerous as the numbers of practitioners.

1. Items and sets made in small batches, perhaps with variations. Work is distributed through wholesale channels. No direct selling to users.	5. Work to commission in architectural & interior design contexts. Of equal importance are items and sets, in small batches which can be wholesaled.
2. Individually unique items made, sometimes to a theme. Work is primarily distributed wholesale to venues sympathetic to consistent one-offs or direct to client.	6. Mainly commission work in architectural & interior design contexts. Also produce a few repeatable designs to sell direct to clients. Will also make to others specifications.
3. Items are either made in repeated designs or are individual, unique. Distributed through some wholesaling & direct to through own outlet.	7. Items are all unique and individual for interior design. Equal interest in selling ready made items to client and to obtaining commissions.
4. Objects are made in repeatable designs or are one-offs. Distributed through wholesaling and direct to client. Also commission work significant.	8. Mainly commission work in architectural or interior design contexts. A few individual unique pieces produced.

10.5

Patterns of Practice

Notes and References for Chapter 10

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1. Many of the people participating in the research asked not to be identified. Because some of their work is unique and has received a fair amount of publicity in the general press I have slightly altered the information regarding their products in order to concur with their wishes.

2. Brown in A Profile of the Business of Crafts explains in more detail the problems of obtaining accurate information regarding financial matters. Most of the studies he compared, including his own. had chosen to ask questions regarding turnover, on the basis of this being a less sensitive question than income. Bruce and Filmer asked for profit figures. Profit obsures the issue in that as Brown says "several interpretations are available which could lead to widely differing 'honest' answers". Both these approaches miss another crucial point. When I asked Eudora Moore how she would like me to introduce her at a conference in Vancouver she replied, "Tell them I share the craftsperson's proclivity to good living, good food and good wine." The standards and values held by many crafts people are different, but not necessarily indicative of a 'lower' standard of living. It was for some of these reasons I decided to consider the matter from the point of view of adequacy.

3. Kate Russell's comments were reported in Women in Craft, Gillian Elinor et al, editors, 1987.

4. I am referring to the exhibitions and fairs organised by American Craft Enterprises (a subsidiary of the American Crafts Council) and the Ob'Art trade exhibition held in Paris.

Chapter 11 DESIGNER CRAFTSPEOPLE and ORGANISATIONAL PROVISION: MATCH OR MISMATCH

The purpose of this chapter is to look at design crafts people and the predominant modes of practice in the provision of opportunities for the crafts. In chapter 9 I suggested there are four facets contributing to understanding design crafts activity; ideology, workstyle, organisational settings and raw materials. Of most use to this discussion will be the first three. However it is worth re-emphasising the limitations of classifying by materials. I suggest that classification in this manner is archaic and no longer suitable in view of the number of people using the same material for different purposes, the ways of combining materials and because of the new materials used by visual artists generally. But some who mediate on behalf of craft are still fascinated by the range of what the imaginative practitioners can do with similar materials. Hence, many registers and catalogues of fairs list primarily by materials. Some recent exhibitions continue on this theme - Silk, linen or clay as the starting point for exploring the current range of practice.

Staying with the exhibitions for the moment, a different principle was the starting point was behind the Oxford Gallery's second Garden exhibition last year. They gathered together a number of what might be called applied art and design craft all looking at home in a garden setting, if appealing to different tastes. This was also the point of the Craft House at the Gateshead Garden Festival this summer, and of the Design for Living exhibition at the Gardner Centre in Brighton in

1988. This would seem to be of more use to both the makers and the public, in the sense that a social purpose, a social connection is paramount in the presentation of such exhibitions. This is also to be found in Sharon Plant's innovative showhouse in North London.[4] Changes in thinking along these lines suggests the re-ordering of some current practice of registers and listings. It takes into account that the client or the public are likely to be more interested in purpose than in the material used. For example, if a potential client is looking through a register to satisfy a need, perhaps to find something to display on a lobby wall, it make sense to not have to decide one's options in terms of the raw materials employed, but in terms of a group of work of similar intent, and visual artists interested and capable of completing such commissions. Now that's good business and good marketing practice.

There were three other elements suggested as important to understanding the different craft sectors - ideology, workstyles and organisational settings. To recap on the ideology of this sector of design craft, the participants are:

1. Interested in designing and making their work (or controlling the making of their designs).
2. Equally concerned for aesthetic and technical elements in their work.
3. Interested in customers wanting to own, admire and usually to use their work.
4. Interested in creating a successful independent practice, complete with adequate financial return.
5. Concerned for quality of materials and attention to details.

Their workstyles include:

1. Designing and making small batches of products to sell.
2. Creating prototypes and making a limited number of multiples.
3. Creating a number of unique items to sell.
4. Working to commission, retaining the varying degrees of decision making in the brief.
5. Needing time to experiment and develop new ideas.
6. Attending to non-making activities in order to maintain freedom of self-determined practice.
7. Interested to develop more efficient and effective ways of making, distributing and promoting their work.

To examine state provision for the independent crafts person, it is logical to start with the work of the Crafts Council. If presented with the above information their response most likely would be to say they do attend to, and provide for designer craftspeople. The Council would say they are doing this through a number of activities. I have ordered the following list on the basis of provision for the practitioner from before setting up as self-employed, to that available during a practitioner's career.

1. The Council runs a week-long residential course for students in the last term before graduation on the realities of independent practice, called 'Creativity and Professionalism'. One student from each college or polytechnic is invited to attend, with the intention that these students take back information and share it with others in their courses.

2. They offer some setting up grants to individuals within two years of setting up. People receiving these grants are also invited to attend business related seminars, have regular visits from Council's staff and are given advice on developing their business.

3. Various staff members give talks and participate in conferences. They also give personal help and respond to personal enquiries.

4. Through their own marketing activities of the Chelsea Fair and Creative Eye, they are attending to the needs of the designer craftspeople.

5. They also promote designer craftspeople through other marketing events, exhibitions and activities.

It is an impressive list, and is only a small portion of the work the Council does. When one more closely examines the list, however, what becomes evident is the idiosyncratic decisions the Council makes in the process of selection.

Tony Ford, Director of the Crafts Council, recently wrote

> I have no doubt that the Council gives good value for its £2.5 million grant with work in education, exhibitions, sales promotion at home and abroad, with Crafts magazine and grants to individuals and the Regional Arts Associations but we have had to make choices."[2]

It's precisely those choices which are open to debate. The problem rising into view concerns the rationale for selection. In its current leaflet, describing its activities, the Crafts Council says its mandate is to

promote fine craftsmanship in the decorative and applied arts. Admirable and appropriate sentiments - but throughout the leaflet what also becomes evident is that the implementation of this promotion still carries the legacy and ideology of promoting the few to the benefit of the sector as a whole, with the use of phrases such as 'works of special merit', 'work of outstanding craftspeople', 'work by leading British makers'. If we had a shared understanding of excellence there would not be such a debate.

The support of the few for the benefit of the many becomes open to question when the Council's rationale is examined. The position of support for the chosen few stated by Goodden nine years ago is defended by the director, Ford, this year when he says

> "By supporting [a number of individual. makers] we should gradually be improving standards of work across the whole sector; by exhibiting their work we should be increasing the interest of the public for all crafts, and by finding ways to push up the prices for a few, we should be improving the crafts economy as a whole."[3]

Although the argument is old, the ripple effect, there has never been any conclusive evidence to support the continuation of this platform. It is highly unlikely that standards could be developed and agreed upon, even within the art craft and design craft strands. Regarding the second part of the quote, there is a fair amount of anecdotal evidence that the opposite is true. That is to say that continued exposure of a certain kind of craft to the exclusion of others is more likely to be damaging to the other sectors. Even more dubious is the practice of presenting hitherto easy to understand and relate to forms of craft in a Craftworld form, ie through art-like exhibitions or through the Crafts magazine, rips these crafts out of their context. Equally questionable is

any attempt to artificially inject difficult craft into other craft venues. And finally, there is no evidence to support the suggestion that stimulating one part of the craft economy will strengthen the craft economy as a whole. In short, if the Council wishes to continue this practice and seriously believes this is the way to improve the overall situation of the crafts, it behooves them to research the success or failure of their policy.

The practice of promoting the few is more likely to provide evidence of the Council's move to participate in the Craftworld and attendant Craft market, much in the style of the collusion of the Art Council in the Artworld and Art Market as discussed by Moody and Pearson.

Equally, although Ford suggests that the selectors are changed from time to time, there are those who suggest there remains a hegemony and a consistency of choice which is arbitrary. It supports Becker's art world concept again, of the chosen few inside the provision and promotion of the Council and company, with many hopefuls adjacent, who will be admitted when space becomes available. But definitions of quality are not consistent.

To illustrate this arbitrariness, one designer craftsperson, after quite a few attempts to share in the largesse of the Council and company, was accepted this year. His work has not significantly changed since his last application. The spaces available have changed with the recent expansion of exhibition places at Chelsea Craft Fair (through changing exhibitors in each of the two weeks of the fair), and the concurrent event of Chelsea in California to be held this October.

A similar experience during my period of administration in Canada led the management team to consider this matter of arbitrariness, and devise ways to make explicit and public the 'worldview' or operational hegemony.

A consistent complaint from those who are rejected by the Council is the lack of any information to help them understand why their work is not deemed suitable. These disputes arise in regard to matters of access, particularly since the Council is now operating Chelsea Crafts Fair and Creative Eye, the two most prominent marketing events for design craft in England.

Since the Council implies that they and their co-selectors have chosen the best, the non-selected not only have to deal with the blow to their confidence by the rejection, but also experience the frustration of not knowing the criteria for selection, and often feel, quite rightly, that their work is of equal merit to the selected. Also they are thus denied the opportunity to participate in potentially useful events.

This notion of selecting and supporting 'the best' puts the Crafts Council in line with other state-supported arts institutions following John Pick's glory model. 'High arts' are now 'high crafts' deemed worthy of support by central government money.

There is another problem to do with this indisputable 'good eye' mentality, that of a perceived hierarchy in crafts. The hierarchy, which is not a shared convention, puts the work closest to the fine art, art craft, at the top - and perhaps of a chosen few of what I would call design craft.

The hierarchy is hinted at with comments such as in the

1988-1989 Annual Report of the Crafts Council, when it explains the decision to participate in the Chicago New Art Forms Fair. The report says

> "This event... provides an opportunity to promote more significant pieces to dealers and private collectors."

And who did they take to this Fair? Four artists "chosen to illustrate the range and variety of new art forms". Fair enough, given the title of the exhibition, but why choose to participate in this exhibition if not to keep in line with the preoccupations heretofore mentioned. Significance is also relative, and can be described quite well in terms of art worlds.

Many of us would agree that some work 'sings' and some does not, but this is not the same. It is a question of what people describe as the vitality, the integrity, the love, the unity, integration self-evident in some objects. It can be the work of professionals or amateurs, trained as visual artists or not.

The Council's right to choose and to manipulate the craft distribution systems extends to a scheme briefly mentioned in the 1988-1989 Annual Report. Called the 'stock scheme', the report explains the activity, saying "outlets can exhibit for sale a group of objects they might otherwise be unable to stock". This implies a pattern of subvention influencing the market for crafts in yet another sense. The report continues, talking about "the increasing saleability of more expensive pieces".

In 1989 two Americans, owners of one of the most reputable craft galleries came to England to look for English crafts. They wrote their impressions of their trip for the American Crafts Report,[4]

> "Throughout our travels...we saw contemporary and design conscious crafts in shops and galleries...[In these craft shops and galleries] the same artists seemed to pop up again and again...however we found the prices to be...higher than most of our customers are used to paying for comparable pieces."

Perhaps the 'good eye' of the Council's company contributed to what the Americans had noticed.

Some in the Crafts Council despair at having to continually defend what many see as the art craft emphasis of its work. Tony Ford has consistently denied this bias in recent years. The problem could well be in part a deflection of the frustration many experience when faced with the Council's closed connoisseur-like activity and mentality.

Another dimension to this perception can be explained as the 'Bricks at the Tate' syndrome. The New Spirit in Craft and Design exhibition opened in June of 1987 in the Crafts Council Gallery. It may have been for the Crafts Council what Andre's Bricks were for the Tate - just enough to convince the uninitiated that the Crafts Council had abandoned any connections with traditions in craft in one of its most public activities. The 1987-1988 Annual Report says the exhibition was intended to shock and amaze, which it certainly did. Although there was work in that exhibition which might fit into a category of design rather than art craft. The impact of presentation perhaps at work again.

In that same discussion of the stock scheme the report continues "of particular interest is a group of work specifically intended to complement the 'New Spirit' exhibition". Double trouble, when this chosen, subsidized work enters another area of the market. For what purpose, if not that stated by Tony Ford earlier, to

push up the prices of a few for the good of all. The reasoning is dubious on the grounds that the appearance art craft in hitherto non-art craft venues, can have the effect of alienating an existing clientele. The clientele for the two kinds of work do not necessarily overlap.

It may be that the Council's only hope of shedding the image of it's attention to art craft is in fact to either downplay or consciously separate itself from that sector. It appears the Council may be taking the former path at the moment. In the last few months there has been a new promotional campaign for the magazine which emphasises its connections with the decorative and applied arts, rather than the previous campaign of 'even the magazine is a work of art'. It is to be hoped that the shift is not purely a cosmetic manoeuver.

If there is a genuine will to change the direction or emphasis of the Council, the task will include attempting to inform the perceptions of those who write about the craft, and indeed the press in general. Others outside the crafts, in other non-orthodox gallery-based visual arts practice have a similar problem. Much of the general press, if they deal with the contemporary visual arts at all feel what is called for is a column devoted to exhibitions or galleries. Thus a lot of the non-gallery activity in the crafts does not have an obvious place in an editor's mind. As Rosemary Hill (1988) pointed out, much of her writing about the crafts ends up in print under a variety of headings; Style, Shopping, Options, Grassroots, Observatory, Fashion and Design." The headlines themselves often leave something to be desired in the public perception of craft - 'Crafty Dodge' is but one recent example.

Hill goes on to suggest this is just one symptom of public confusion regarding the place of craft in contemporary Britain. Probably the Council and others in the forefront of the most public of the crafts milieu need to take this as an indictment and indication of their need to address the situation. Beryl Downing wrote in 1987, "Could somebody please tell me what the Crafts Council thinks it is about? It seems to be having an identity crisis."[6] As are the rest of the interested community! Peter Hall reported on the first Creative Eye exhibition in 1989.[7] He said that in the opening speech, the word 'craft' popped up four times in one sentence despite the fact that the Council had deliberately kept it out of the title of the show. I suggest it might not be unreasonable to suspect that the Crafts Council would be staging an event where one might find craft and craftspeople.

In the last chapter I stated that fifteen of the twenty two designer makers surveyed had been involved with the Council in some way. And the reader may rightly query if this does not contradict the foregoing discussion. If their involvement is looked at in more detail it does not counter the seemingly predominant orthodoxy of state-supported connoisseurship of certain kinds of craft. It does help to confirm some of the various strands of the Council's activities outlined in chapter seven - alignment with the Artworld, building a Craftworld and the more nebulous provision for contemporary craft. In some ways these strands indicate a two, if not three layer provision provision of support, which receive different amounts of investment of time and money. It can be argued that the relative amounts are not concomitant with the size of the sectors. Which is not surprising if one starts from the premise of

supporting the few for the good of all.

Twelve of the group have taken advantage of the Council's register, which is a free service offered to any craftsperson in England, Scotland and Wales. Since it is free and a maker has only to send in a picture and details on a short form, it would be good business practice to register. This is a non-selective card list of over 3000 makers, organised by the materials they use and housed in the information section of the Council. The register is not to be confused with the index, which is a selected group of five hundred 'outstanding' craftspeople. For these 'stars' there are detailed files of slides and press cuttings, arranged by names of craftspeople and the materials they work with.

Seven people had received setting up grants, so had been chosen by the Council at a very early stage of their career. It is too early to say if this selection will influence other more prestigious choices, such as being on the index of selected craftspeople, or having their work included in the Crafts Council's collection. Being the recipient of a setting up grant is one of the criteria for selection by the shop at the Victoria and Albert Museum (the other two are being on the index, or work in the collection).

Ten of the group have exhibited at the Chelsea Craft Fair or Creative Eye, (three were at Chelsea prior to the Council's involvement). There is no doubt that these two shows have not been central to the Council's strategies but are now undoubtedly having an influence on the image and work of the Council. From the maker's perspective it is true these are important and prestigious events and useful in business development terms, for the direct sales, the promotional value and the contacts available.

However none of the craftspeople use these events to the exclusion of others.

Some makers have also pointed out the value of the Chelsea and Creative Eye events as a forum for exchanges of information and ideas among the participants, much in the way the guilds and societies can provide similar opportunities for meetings. Compared to my experience elsewhere, there is a dearth of such opportunities here. Yet it seems there is such a wealth of potential of self-help and mutual support to be gained from facilitating such forums.

The Chelsea Fair by tradition, and by space limitations, is primarily gift orientated for the private client. The advent of Creative Eye is an interesting, if young, departure to a focus on trade buyers, coinciding with the Birmingham Spring Gift fair, with some days set aside at the end for the general public. It would be unfair to criticise the event after only two years, since it is likely to take another two or three to be able to adequately judge its impact and success.

But some of the patterns of practice mentioned at the end of the last chapter are not served well, if at all by these two events. Particularly I refer to those patterns which have a major interest in architectural and interior design commissions of large scale pieces.

In summary, this comparison of the designer craftspeople and the Crafts Council would seem to indicate that although the Council does provide activities of some use to the makers, a great deal of expenditure of time and money would seem to have been tangential, if not at odds with the makers' preoccupations and needs. Leaving aside the connoisseurship element, what has not been attended

to in the manner to which it might have been, is the area of the non-aesthetic development of independent makers. Development in this area has been negatively influenced by the Council's interest in alignment with the contemporary fine art and with their contribution to the formation of the Craftworld. If one thinks back to the discussion earlier in this paper regarding labels, mystiques, and status, designer craftspeople can be left adrift, feeling they are in an inferior position not only to the contemporary fine arts, but also to the chosen. Further discussion of this is in the next two chapters.

The Regional Arts Associations also support the crafts primarily through funds provided by the Crafts Council. The RAAs all basically provide a similar service through a crafts officer or, in three cases, through a visual arts officer. Greater London Arts' provision is the most recent and with their new non-media based administrative structure there is not a designated officer for crafts. Up until quite recently provision for the crafts in London had remained the responsibility of the Crafts Council. Undoubtedly this arrangement helped fuel the debate about the London bias of the Council.

In 1988 I surveyed ten of the RAA's to investigate their provision. In the summer of 1990 I contacted them all again and received up to date information from five. The pattern of funding and programmes seems to have remained fairly constant in that time. Nine of the RAAs give grants to individual craftspeople for training, travel & marketing. Consistently the guidelines for support suggest a broad view of professional craft practice in the regions. It is also common to support local organisations and exhibition venues, to arrange residencies and placements (mainly in schools) and to run

a register of visual artists which includes craftspeople. Most offer short training courses in aspects of business and professional practice and all say they are willing to give advice on request. Three RAA's send out regular newsletters or bulletins.

Some provide printed information sheets on a number of topics - useful contacts, craft fairs, local crafts guilds and societies, guide to galleries etc. Southern Arts has recently published a resource book for professional makers.* Researched by Anne Channon, the book gives information on premises, sources of advice, finance, selling, publicity, exporting, training, professional services and a bibliography.

Interestingly only nine of the designer craftspeople I investigated had sought to make connections with their local regional arts association. This low figure is in part explained by the fact that some are London based and would not have had a RAA to deal with. Those who had contact with their local RAA had applied for, and mostly received, marketing grants. One had received a commission through the RAA register. One had also applied for residencies.

Some RAAs actively promote the visual arts, crafts and craftspeople in their region. It is unfortunate more current information on five of the group was not received in time for this study, for the apparent differences may be due to the different times of collecting information. These last two years have generally seen more interest in marketing and promotion in the arts.

The second questionnaire asked about the registers - particularly if they were being marketed and monitored. Eastern Arts have promoted their register through talks

and receptions with groups in the community including architects and interior designs, galleries and local authorities. They are receiving 75 to 80 enquiries a week on average. Leaflets or other promotional literature about the visual arts registers are already in use or planned.

Although these registers and indexes are set up with good intentions, it remains to be seen if they are as effective as they might be in having any impact on actual sales and commissions. When the Crafts Council was discussing their index in the 1988-1989 report they comment that many enquiries were from students in schools and colleges. That is not to diminish the importance of registers and indexes from this educational and more general promotional role. But the registers do have a potential role in marketing and business development, which is useful to all of the patterns of activity I have outlined and extremely important to some patterns, which do not have as well developed organisational opportunities.

Overall it appears the crafts officers, some with very limited budgets and resources, are providing services which could be of use across the spectrum of the craft milieu. The kind of information collected did not allow for analysis regarding how the work of RAAs does or does not provide for the specific patterns delineated at the end of the last chapter. Analysing the printed materials and policy statements would not suggest one pattern of practice is favoured over another.

Some RAAs are actively concerned to show how all the visual arts including craft can fit into their community. It confirms the suggestion I made in Chapter 4 regarding the greater opportunities for social

integration in settings which are not so dominated with the national and international activity of London. Some of the craftspeople based in the regions, however, ignore their local communities and concentrate on opportunities in London. Others have developed a mixture of local and London connections. It may well be that these decisions are determined partly by the kinds of clients and markets the makers are looking for. This could be a useful area of enquiry.

A discussion of state provision in terms of its relevance to the needs of designer makers must, of necessity, include the art schools and colleges, for they are undoubtedly a major entry point for this career sector. Of the group I surveyed all had taken some form of higher education in art, craft or design. Of the twenty one, three had studied fine art. The others had taken combinations of Btec and diploma courses and B A's (and their precursors) related to craft media, such as three dimensional design, mixed media, ceramics, textiles, and furniture making. Two had gone on to take MA's and two took specific post- graduate diploma courses.

The flaws in the art school provision for the needs of students intending to become self-employed independent visual artists have been well documented and will not be rehearsed here. There is agreement in the main that the courses do little to prepare their students for the 'real world'. Discussion regarding this criticism focuses on a variety of themes. One is the idea that art school students do not have time to deal with such matters because of the existing programme. Fallacious as this argument is, it seems not to be noted that it is a simple matter of priorities. Professional and business concerns have not been high on the agenda. And why should they be, if the primary concern is

self-development of conceptual, creative ideas? A variation of this theme is that a course within an art school should not concern itself with such matters. As a result, although the Filmer and Bruce study concluded this matter was one for 'immediate attention' in 1981, reiterated by Channon in 1987 there is not a great deal of change yet to be reported.

The change that has occurred is not necessarily going to provide an adequate response to this need for attending to non-creative issues in educational provision. Professional and business concerns are not the same as professional and business studies courses. The tacked-on course elements of professional and business studies have been a fairly recent response to the criticism of existing courses. The crucial problem with this 'remedy' is its separation from the core course design and content. A few hours of business studies in any course is not enough, if the prevailing mentality within the course is to encourage the mystique of fine artist - fine craftsperson at odds with and out of place in an alien world. No short burst of professional and business studies will equip the potentially self-employed to have the conceptual framework - the ideology and attitude to confidently build a successful enterprise, let alone the skills required for this aspect. Neither should such matters be of concern only for the proportion of students who are considering self-employment. As long as students are planning to earn their living in a manner related to their education, a sense of application and relevance to the social milieu and and matters regarding personal management need to be on the agenda.

The problem is not uniquely an English one, but there may be some distinctly English elements to it. I refer to what seems to be a particularly English attitude

regarding success and commercialism which was noted in the discussion of the Business of Success. Coupled with the notion of crafts practice being one of the professions, and an arts profession at that, changing current practice in higher education faces some fairly ponderous issues.

The Crafts Council, in recognition of this matter, held a conference in April 1990 called Making It. The conference was billed as a national forum on strategies for preparing students on degree and diploma courses for life in the craft. The purpose of the conference was also to discuss the 'Creativity and Professionalism' annual conferences for students. This was in recognition that the intended 'ripple' effect of inviting one student from each course to attend with the expectation that the student would share the experience with others on their return to their colleges did not seem to be working. Coming out of the conference were two suggestions. The first, in regard to the student conference was that the conference should be opened up to include tutors. The second was a plea for the preparation and dissemination of more resource material. I understand the Council is looking into implementing both these suggestions.

The problem, in part, may be to do with some of the people at the core of higher education. How equipped are they for understanding, let alone imparting information and attitudes regarding successful independent enterprise? How many share an attitude that teaching in art schools allows them to carry on personal practice which requires and desires no audience, no client, no exposure, no social contact - or perhaps the occasional gallery showing? There are people of a different persuasion teaching in art colleges, to be sure. The designer craftspeople interviewed who also teach would be examples.

A question of hegemony is also apparent. In 1987 I conducted a two day seminar for teachers of art, craft and design on business and marketing trends.[10] There seemed to be an underlying sense that the teachers were pleased to have the opportunity to share their ideas and gain more information. Some hinted that similar discussions were not encouraged in their institutions.

As business and professional studies are seen to be peripheral in most cases to the main tasks at hand, the courses are not necessarily planned with the forethought essential for maximum effectiveness. In some cases a few 'experts' are invited in to speak, without much briefing, and the resulting inappropriate sessions can be enough to have a reverse effect to that intended. More confirmation of the incompatibility of art and business! Sometimes a number of ex-students are asked to present a talk. While this has the potential of being extremely useful, there seems to be a danger again of insufficient briefing and lack of provision of a context or framework. When discussing the patterns in the last chapter I suggested there are two tendencies evident when people talk about the crafts, that of generalising about the milieu (or what is thought to be important about the milieu) from one perspective and secondly, taking the position that the milieu is made up of as many variations of practice and opportunity as there are participants. Either of these two are in operation with the presentation of these living case studies. What is called for is a more orderly and comprehensive framework of understanding of the milieu.

A third tendency I have recently observed is that of separatism. For example, when art schools seek to enlist the longer term help of people with business expertise, the tendency is to keep the 'business expert' at arms

length - encapsulated, as it were, in an enclave. It is to be hoped that this tendency will not be developed to too great a degree, for both would be the poorer.

For the most part, this matter of business studies and new professional attitudes is one with a short history. It seems inappropriate to further dissect the variety of work being done in the field at this time. Given that the allied field of small business studies is also not yet refined to the point of adequately understanding micro business there is probably much experimentation and development yet to occur in the understanding of these special business forms.

There has been some talk of adding a business studies course on as a postgraduate option. One such pilot course was the Graduate Endeavour Programme at West Surrey College of Art & Design entitled Earning a Living in 1987. The course was intended for students from a wide range of subject areas within art and design and ran for seven weeks. It would seem from the first report that the course was well received by the participants. The course was a mixture of lectures, discussion, workshops, study visits and personal research. Mic Claridge, one of the organisers, reported at the Making It conference that to mount such a course had been expensive, and needed special funding. He also felt there was a need to be more specific in the targeting - undoubtedly a recognition of the wide variation of intentions and patterns of practice in the field of visual arts.

Undoubtedly there will always be people, such as those researched, who manage well without increased business awareness and training in their higher education courses. To improve the rate of success, both in the speed with which people can develop their businesses to a

satisfactory level, and in the numbers who are able to do so would surely be a goal of developing this element in higher education provision.

There is another matter left to be discussed in this area of education and training, that of opportunities for mid career training for those already well past their art school years. This has been identified by various researchers including Bruce and Filmer, Channon and Ashwin et al. As mentioned earlier, many of the RAA's say they are now providing training, but to research the quality and the takeup of these were considered beyond this particular research. Two of the arts management training centres, Newcastle and Leicester offer occasional courses. I understand some have been cancelled for lack of take up. Bath College of Higher Education offered two short courses funded by the Training Agency. And CityLit in London offers an evening course. The question of effective delivery and appropriate style of presentation arises and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

In light of the information gathered from some of the design craftspeople courses are not the most suitable means of providing this mid-career assistance. As with much of the preceding discussion it is easy to interpret provision in terms of 'giving to' rather than 'providing the conditions for'. Forums and other avenues for the exchange and sharing of information should be an essential part of provision for this stage.

So does the primary provision for crafts match or miss the mark in terms of design craft? The simple answer is yes and no. To a large measure the makers researched would be quick to acknowledge the value of their initial

education in their current careers, and for those who choose to teach part time they appreciate the opportunity to do so. It is also true to say that their post-school development of successful enterprise has been randomly assisted by the main state provision. For the most part these people have taken or attempted to take advantage of the programmes and opportunities on offer when it has suited them. Particularly if they were unfortunate enough to be consistently rebuffed by state supported agencies for craft they have had the resilience to find other networks and sources of support, including the support of seeking other paid employment.

In terms of these practitioners' current relationship with the art schools, the Crafts Council and the RAAs there are two points to be made. One is that an increased understanding of (or should I say listening to) these and similar makers on the part of the institutions could lead to addressing some of these issues of infrastructure provision, rather than direct provision. The other is that it does not appear the successful craftspeople are drawn into assisting the programme planning and informing the practice of these mediators and educators to the extent that they might. This would seem to be most at odds with current practice at the Council. Residing in the Council and the RAAs, however, are a huge amount of collective knowledge and information regarding successful practice in various aspects of the crafts milieu. Unfortunately this is dispensed in a most ineffective manner - largely in a one-to-one situation on request as officers' time allows.

Also, duplication of effort is involved in the RAAs preparing and distributing information sheets (and some do not) when there could be a collective approach, dare one suggest, co-ordinated by the Crafts Council.

A co-ordination and streamlining of effort, such as the original mandate of the Wilding report seems to have intended, could free time and resources for other purposes.

When much of this research was undertaken in 1988 there had never been a meeting of all the Regional craft officers. To my knowledge there has not been one since. The same is true in the educational sphere as people suggested Making It was the first opportunity of its kind. Inventing and reinventing the wheel! The lack of co-ordination and of the promotion of a comprehensive view of the crafts milieu must surely rest with the Crafts Council. One awaits with interest the developments following the current round of consultations, but it is unfortunate the Council has not had the courage to have more public debates.

The successful designer craftspeople encountered during the study see their activity in a holistic fashion. That is, they recognise and attend to the variety of tasks involved in maintaining their endeavour with more or less equal respect, if not enthusiasm. One of the first benefits they could draw from those who would support, advise, train and deal with them, is respect for their ideology and their workstyles. This would seem to be the case within parts of the Council and among most of the Regional Arts Associations and in some of the Educational provision, if only in the superficial acceptance of a random variety of practice. To some degree this acceptance has been a recent development, as it has become less de rigueur to speak about money and markets.

The previous director of the Crafts Council, Dr David Dougan used to talk about creating the situation where every home in Britain would have some contemporary craft

in it. Whatever one thinks of the sentiment, and his rationale, it is the bottom line, so to speak. The designer craftspeople encountered in this study share the aspirations of many others in the field wanting to make a decent living from the self determined practice of their craft. State provision is less than adequate to that task, at the moment. Surely it is the time for the Crafts Council to abandon the 'feed the few for the benefit of the many' mentality and lead the way to a better understanding of the contemporary needs of the crafts milieu. It does not require a bigger budget, but a bigger mental attitude.

In the next, the penultimate, chapter the matter of how to facilitate success is discussed in more detail.

1. Sharon Plant used to run the independent gallery and shop, Aspects, in London. She now runs (and lives in) the 'Aspects Applied Arts Showhouse' in North London. This shows a variety of work in context and has a slide register of 500 makers. Open by appointment only.

2 & 3 Tony Ford wrote his comments in 'Comment' in Crafts, September/ October, 1990.

4. Written by Deborah Farber-Isaacson from Mindscape Gallery, Evanston, Illinois, the article was reprinted in Artists Newsletter, August 1989.

5. Rosemary Hill made the comments originally at the 1988 Centennial Study Day of the Society of Designer Craftsmen at the Victoria and Albert Museum. They were reprinted in The Designer Craftsman, May 1989.

6. The comments were made by Beryl Downing in her article 'Crafty Dodge' in The London Evening Standard, Thursday August 6, 1987.

7. Peter Hall's review appeared in The Designer Craftsman, May 1989.

8. The Southern Arts publication is called a resource book for craftspeople, published spring, 1990. Other RAAs are considering producing similar reference books.

9. The seminar was an INSET course for teachers of adult education and further education in the Inner London Education Authority.

Chapter 12 FACILITATING SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE

A clarification of the concept of 'business' will assist this discussion of how to facilitate and maintain successful independent practice. Any visual artist who expects some kind of financial recognition for the work he or she does, or remuneration for artefacts they create, is, in fact, in business. Phillips and Rasberry (1981) express a similar point of view when they talk about business as basically an exchange or transaction between two parties. Both parties have something to offer to the exchange; both receive something in return.

From that starting point the visual artist who primarily seeks support in terms of state patronage in any form, such as grants, residencies and so on, is no different from the one who chooses to seek support in terms of sales or commissions from the private sector. The concept of business as the antithesis of true Art has no place here. This does not deny the distaste many of us feel for rampant capitalism, especially in the form of mass marketing. As the people encountered in this study and others have demonstrated, however, there is the opportunity to establish successful small scale enterprise in a variety of settings.

Those who choose to get financial rewards other than by selling their artefacts - by offering their expertise perhaps, are also in business. Thus my definition of 'in business' could include those who look to use their talents by teaching occasionally or part-time. The successful practitioners surveyed do not make a distinction between seeking part-time teaching and selling artifacts, or seeking commissions. They consider the teaching as part of their entrepreneurial portfolio

and the primary purposes of developing this portfolio is self-determination and self-management.

Kate Bishop, a clothes designer, is one of the people Whitmeyer et al (1989) refer to regarding one-person businesses. She quotes Christopher Marlow: 'There is only one success - to be able to live your life in your own way' and goes on to explain "I feel successful because I can make a living doing the work I like to do". Being in control of one's own enterprise or business can be a liberating, creative and exciting activity. Although it must also be noted there are some for whom the prospect is not so positive - those who are quite nervous of the prospect of having this degree of responsibility.

Modern British art schools have been acknowledged for their preeminent position as models of higher education in which creativity and individuality have flourished - self determination of a kind. This has not been the lot of those choosing other forms of higher education. How perverse, then, that this art school system and other state provision for the visual arts usually empowers only in a one-dimensional way. For freedom and self-determination are limited, for the most part, to the creation of artefacts or development of self-expression through working with materials. If the development of art is primarily a personal exploration, social or public matters are of no concern.

The modern version of the Romantic mythology helps to maintain this condition, coupled with the notion of the separateness, isolation of the 'best' artistic endeavour, which then requires artificial support. Lasch's (1985) suggestion of the stereotype of artists as symbolic of a freedom which is beyond the reach of many may also be

part of the ideology which maintains this situation. The part of the crafts adjacent to the contemporary fine arts have been influenced by this ideology. However, Bruce and Filmer (1983) noted there were a large number of the wider constituency they interviewed who were not touched by these concerns.

This separation of high Art (and the art which aspires to have a similar set of conditions and privileges) has also given rise to the expansion of a profession of arts administrators. Some of these mediators may re-enforce this separateness in their desire to participate in the arts. Thus they can become interpreters and providers. In so doing they may give validity and purpose to their own activities in the same manner as those in other 'helping professions'. It is in the interest of 'helpers' to maintain a number of potential people to 'help'.

Although there are a number of people who do not subscribe to the mythology, it seems to have been the predominant school of thought in recent years. Thus the models of successful practice and discussion of facilitating this practice must take into account this backdrop.

For evidence such as that in chapter 10, of those who are instigating and sustaining independent practice, if discussed in the orthodox sectors of the milieu, are rarely analysed in terms of how they work from a 'business' or self-management perspective. What follows is an elaboration of some of the business or organisational elements observed in the group of makers.

Essentially, the basic characteristics of this group are a combination of attitude, talent, technical knowledge,

persistence and realism. The talent and technical knowledge for most of this group, was initially developed during their education in art colleges.

The attitude they share is best exemplified as a public definition of their art profession - that is they have chosen a practice which involves the public at some stage from the conception of an artefact to the completion and distribution, with the intention of making a living from their practice.

Persistence and realism, along with characteristics of willingness to take <u>calculated</u> risks, to continue learning about all aspects of their endeavour and to develop networks of contacts for business and personal support are similar to the characteristics of many successful entrepreneurs outside the visual arts milieu.

Most writers on entrepreneurship would say some 'lucky' entrepreneurs have developed these characteristics early in life through role models of family and friends operating successful enterprises. However such characteristics can also be learned and developed.

I suggest that much good practice in art school courses is likely to provide a basis for developing the characteristics, if it can be unshackled from the ideology which precludes its application to spheres outside that of purely personal artistic development.

Confidence is one of the most important keys to developing successful independent practice. Frayling (1990) recognised this matter of confidence when he wrote

> "the feeling throughout...[Bruce and Filmer's report is] that there is a wealth of untapped talent which lacks confidence to take off and fly."

Confidence is achieved, in part, by feeling well equipped to deal with the tasks and situations at hand. The successful people encountered in this research have this confidence; the unsuccessful do not. To instill and foster this confidence, the logical step is to pay more attention to identifying all the tasks and skills involved in independent practice, not only those to do with conceptualising and making artefacts.

Furthermore, the successful consider their activity is holistic - that one part begets, enhances and supports the others. A concomitant requirement is to be realistic about the allocation of time and energy the holistic successful enterprise requires.

Dale Chihuly, a successful American glass blower spoke at a Business of Craft conference in Vancouver in the early 1980's suggesting that his actual 'making' time in the studio amounted to no more than a quarter of an average week's work. Yet there seems to be a preoccupation with discussing and facilitating the 'making' in this milieu.

Chihuly concluded one of the essential preconditions for successful independent practice was learning to love all aspects of one's business. Perhaps 'love' is asking too much - but respect for all aspects is essential.

The tasks at hand for those who would be independent are management tasks. They include planning and management of time and of resources. As such they are already inherent in some of the project work in art courses. But the management of time in the holistic enterprise means spending enough time on a variety of other tasks.

The tasks and skills can be broken down into four groups. First there are the tasks to do with making;

with conceptualising and designing; with feeding the 'muse within' through research and quiet time.

Secondly there are the tasks of day-to-day administration of keeping the workshop or studio well equipped and supplied, dealing with information in terms of paperwork, correspondence, telephone calls, dealing with day-to-day money matters.

The third set of tasks are related to context; to paying attention to those who are or might be interested in participating in that transaction mentioned at the beginning of this chapter - the customers or clients. If one were to label this set of tasks it should be called marketing rather than selling. Selling is usually a one-directional one-off activity, marketing is two-directional and potentially long term, in the sense of developing understanding and appreciation of those interested others.

The fourth set of tasks are managerial; having an overall understanding to guide and focus practice. This also involves making plans, setting goals and objectives, gathering information and analysing what is happening. It's knowing where one wants to go, checking progress and making decisions and making plans - it's cyclical and ongoing. Pemberton, at the beginning of the book Making Ways competently addresses this point.[1]

The mere mention of these tasks in some circles often draws a reaction of horror and concern that there is not enough time or the inclination to learn and implement these tasks. As hinted earlier in this discussion, however, people have often developed the skills to deal with these tasks in at least one area of their lives - such as in making artefacts. Some non-paid occupational

life activity could also be analysed to elicit a similar set of tasks. This sort of exercise is often part of Women Back to Work courses for instance, drawing on the organisational skills involved in running a home.

It is not necessarily a matter of learning many new skills, but about learning to apply skills in different situations. Thus the attitude to consider this application as legitimate and necessary is crucial. It is also perverse to see dealings with one set of interested others as valid and another as not. The skills involved in successful grant applications for example can be called advanced marketing skills.

The issue of time to deal with these matters was challenged in the last chapter as a question of priorities. The argument often seems to be indicative of distaste for business and commerce, which is not only prevalent within some sectors of the visual art milieu.

The suggestion that these concerns are beyond the mental capability of an artist (or potentially damaging to the 'muse') is also an expression of choice rather than necessity. Unfortunately this position may be reinforced by well meaning mediators, with statements which support the mythology of poor, starving, misunderstood artist.

At issue is the fact that starving in a garret is not a necessary precursor for 'good' visual art - indeed it is likely to do more harm than good. Those who do find it difficult to adopt anything other than the starving artist posture point up the inadequacy of the state intervention and educational systems.

It is true to say entrepreneurships does not suit

everyone, by virtue of temperament. This suitability, or lack thereof, is not the prerogative of the visual artist. It does not suit people who prefer to be in the company of others, nor those who find the 'riskiness' more than they can cope with. It is this very question of riskiness, however, which could be reduced by equipping the visual artist with more information and the attitude with which to minimise risk. Further, exposure of the structure of the professional visual arts world, including the 'marketplace', would be of use. This would elaborate and frame information about the contexts and choices available. The Cranfield School of Management (1990) in discussing small businesses says "information is the bedrock on which sound business decisions are made".

Another consideration regarding the suitability of entrepreneurship is, as Ranson (1989)[2] suggested, to do with life cycle, in the sense that people raising a family might prefer the option of employment over developing self employment. This might explain the high proportion of second career craftspeople found in the Channon (1987) and Ashwin et al (1988) studies.

It is also true that some would-be self-employed visual artists are in such a position by default, not by choice, usually as a result of lack of employment opportunities. It may be that they require more assistance and support initially than those who choose independent practice for more positive reasons.

The successful designer makers of this research have learned to apply themselves to these 'business' matters outlined above (to varying degrees of course). Another observable element in their successful practice is that

they enjoy what they are doing. This brings to mind what Benjamin Franklin wrote,

> "If you want to enjoy one of the greatest luxuries in life, the luxury of having enough time, time to rest, time to think, time to get things done....remember there is only one way. Take time enough to think and plan things in order of their importance....Let all your things have their places. Let each part of your business have its time."

Satisfaction, pleasure, confidence and attitude are all facets of successful practice. If one is not interested in attending to the matters of independent practice holistically, it should not be undertaken or encouraged. Paid employment with the practice of art and craft as a private pursuit is more in order.

It is commonly understood that to set up in any micro or small business is time consuming (sixty or more hours a week is often quoted) and takes up to five years to establish. Although this does appear to be a fairly general rule, some exceptions are worth noting. One of the most successful of the designer craftspeople interviewed operates part time - approximately three days a week. She has made this choice because of family commitments, including a very young baby. A striking feature of this successful part-time designer maker, and some of the others, is her clarity of purpose and the distinct focus of her work, leading to a high degree of both efficiency and effectiveness.

The question of facilitating successful practice has different dimensions - the range of 'provision' which might be considered; the differentiation between the 'sophistication' relating to various career stages and the overall enhancement of the crafts economy.

Consider first the different stages of careers. I identify these stages as pre-career, start-up or beginning a career, mid-career and advanced career.

Pre-career might be considered to be when people are in education, acquiring the rudiments of the skills and techniques they will require. I take this education to be not only in diploma and degree courses, but also in other settings of adult education provision, private schools and personal learning.

Start-up, as it suggests is the period at the beginning of establishing self-employment and involves the time of setting up prior to actual trading, and the first two years of trading.

Mid-career refers to the period from three to ten years after self-employment began. Advanced career refers to the period after ten years of practice. The styles of support and the content of support vary from one stage to another.

I add the advanced career stage to suggest there are needs, which if not previously addressed should be dealt with here. I refer to matters of pensions, provision for post-career days, although the concept of retirement is not often part of self-employed people's thinking. Many craft practices take a physical toll on the craftspeople which might eventually force them to abandon their primary practice. This issue is rarely discussed. Another matter rarely dealt with is the concept that a successful business can be sold, with a value calculated on the basis of reputation, client lists, stocks, premises, materials and equipment.

The researchers who have previously mentioned the need for mid career training and assistance have identified an number of issues. These have included improving and updating technical skills, improving and expanding production levels, sharing of information, improving their market awareness and business acumen. These could be summarised as matters to do with business overhaul. That is, taking time out from day to day activities to step back and consider the holistic enterprise. Ideally this is also the best time to be dealing with pensions and post-career options.

The two earlier stages require a great deal of information which assists understanding the professional milieu. This should include both the broad range of activity not just orthodoxy, and the patterns and frameworks of opportunities within the milieu. Also preparation for successful career requires encouragement of the attitudes necessary for success, and an introduction to the non-making tasks required for the holistic micro business.

Some writers, such as Greenhalgh and Tyler [4] have commented on the questionable practice of encouraging young graduates to immediately set up in independent practice. It is worth considering such a point of view. There is evidence that some manage quite successfully to do so. London Enterprise Agency researched the graduates of their Design Enterprise Programme (known as DEEP) and found that seventy per cent were still in business two years later. It must be recognised, however, that the students they accepted for the course were hand picked after a rigorous selection process. DEEP has space for less than 20 students this year, and it is the only graduate enterprise programme specifically for art and design graduates. At the Making Ways conference it was

reported that the programme is in danger of losing its funding this year. Some of the people in this study had attended other general enterprise programmes for new graduates at other locations in England, but the total number of places available is under two hundred a year.

There remains the gap between predominant attitudes in art schools and the enterprise and small business start up training which is available. The training attached to the government's Enterprise Allowance scheme is limited in amount and questionable in its consistency and suitability. Such does not bode well for all but the most persistent and enterprising, and even they are likely to take longer to establish their businesses than need be the case. Some courses are available through other sources, such as one run by the Management Centre at City University in conjunction with the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths. This course runs for one week and has forty places. Other enterprise agencies and some co-operative development agencies also run start up courses. This is not to say that courses are essential, and other support and assistance needs to be considered. The Training agency has been conducting an 'occupational mapping' exercise regarding self-employed craftspeople for the last year, but no report is yet available.

From my experience of running start up courses for visual artists, and others interested in small enterprise, an alternative model is worthy of consideration. That is a combination of short courses, professional business consultancy, networking opportunities - particularly in the form of mutual support - and a system of 'mentoring'. Mentors are people who can provide role models and specific encouragement which can only come from intimate knowledge of similar experience. Some of the designer makers encountered in this study

already perform as mentors in an informal manner. Such can also be found in some guilds and societies. To develop such activity in a more formal way takes imagination rather than large amounts of financial investment.

Assistance and provision at different stages would be best dealt with through a variety of formats. While courses, both long and short, work experience programmes, visiting lecturer programmes and introductory printed information and videos are suitable for the first two stages, they would not necessarily be for the last two.

At the last two stages there is often a need for more specific consultancy and development in the context of the existing business. The main consultancy on offer within the sector is either inhouse (within the state agencies charged with provision for the craft) or minimal funding for one day consultancies. It would take further research to discover whether the inhouse consultancy is appropriate to the needs of makers in mid-career. Some designer craftspeople have taken advantage of the Marketing Initiative through Department of Trade and Industry, which is not geared to deal with micro business which does not share the desire of the larger enterprises to expand and show profits. Some have taken advantage of the Rural Commission's consultancy and business services and have found it useful, if from a general background of small business.

What is lacking through official channels is the opportunity for these in mid-career to meet in various forums to share experiences, to network, as it were. There is already a profound wealth of untapped business acumen here. At the moment it is shared informally through meeting places such as the guilds and societies,

the professional associations and through fairs and markets where design craftspeople exhibit. A great deal could be done to facilitate meeting opportunities and networking, perhaps through a series of information centres or by working to strengthen the existing network of guilds and societies.

A number of peripheral and supporting material is becoming available such as books and videotapes. These have been prepared and distributed from outside the sector and within. The Crafts Council's book, Running a Workshop is a good example, as is the Design Council's book and video on Costing for Designer-Makers. These and the other books available which purport to be about visual arts independent practice would be more effective if there was an understanding of the structure and range of activity within the visual arts milieu in general and the crafts milieu in particular.

Two of the books show why this sense of structure and different sectors would be useful. Crowe and Stokes (1988) wrote Art Design & Craft: A Manual for Business Success, which although it has some very sound advice seems to have had different chapters written by different people aiming at different visual artists. For example, after having said in the introduction that the book is for "fine artists, designers and craftsmen and women", Chapter two 'Preplanning' starts

> "You may be a student looking towards your finals, an employed craftsperson, or an amateur considering turning professional. Whatever your situation, if you are reading this book you either intend to or would like to set up your own craft workshop."

What happened to the designers and fine artists? Do they not need to preplan? After some more general information for self-employment, the financial sections apply mainly

to production craftspeople, although this is not explained. The marketing chapter refers to artists and craftspeople, although the case study is of a craftsperson. The next chapter on promotion begins talking about the artist,

> "Nowhere is the uneasiness that artists feel for business more obvious than in their attitude to promotion."

and proceeds with some useful general information. Is this artists in the generic sense, or specifically referring to gallery-based contemporary fine artists? If the reader does not share this uneasiness should they question their right to define themselves as artists? The chapter on dealing with galleries is called the "Artist/Gallery relationship" and then discusses how artists and craftspeople can work in this context. So artists are part of the Chapter heading, but are seen as different to craftspeople in the text. And so it continues. There is much good information in the book, talking about the attitudes required for good practice, and made less effective by not elaborating the differences in different styles of practice; and perhaps inadvertently contributing to the myth of the difficulty of being an independent self-employed visual artist.

The other example is Making Ways, edited by David Butler. The book is subtitled 'The Visual artist's guide to surviving and thriving'. In the introduction it states the book is aimed at all those who are

> "involved in activities encompassed in the broad and blurred definition of fine art - painters, sculptors, photographers, printmakers, film and video makers; and those artists and craftspeople who see their future in terms of one-off or small scale production work."

Although as I have mentioned earlier there is some excellent material in this book, it shows a

one-dimensional view of how all the above visual artists can 'distribute' their work. After the introductory chapters, fifty pages are devoted to exhibiting in galleries and other spaces. The next forty pages are devoted to public art and residencies. The rest of the book deals with teaching, community work, promotion, financial support through funding and sponsorship, business matters of tax, insurance, and so on. Those artists and craftspeople interested in small scale production work will not get much help here!

These two examples support the earlier conclusions about the tendency to consider the crafts milieu as encompassing a diverse and random number of practices in an ambiguous common ground, or of having a one dimensional view which is then assumed to suit all who call themselves artists, craftspeople or designers. To not address these different practices, different ideologies and different social settings is a grave matter, for it can not facilitate good practice if the message is so muddled.

Before leaving this question of support for the holistic practice, it would be useful to consider some of the examples of practice outside of England. Highland Craftpoint, among many other services, provides bulletins, with business and market information and conducts appropriate market research for the crafts milieu. It might be argued that the information is geared to the craft and designer craft sectors, as well as small manufacturing businesses engaged in the gift trade. However, the information contained in the bulletins is of use to these sectors, and does not have an equivalent in England. There is no reason, other than the ideological one, why similar information could not be provided for other sectors of the visual arts. Dealing

with primarily the same sector in Wales, the Welsh Crafts Council offers some similar information through a database which can be accessed by any interested party; maker, buyer, or interested others. Although there was talk two years ago of the Crafts Council of Great Britain developing a similar database (for craftspeople's use), nothing has yet been publicised.

This brings up the matter of strengthening the infrastructure. The state providers are in a position to develop and distribute information on business and marketing in a more coherent and structured manner. This would require both an attitudinal and a policy switch, however, based on the concept of providing services for a larger constituency than at present.

In regard to the retail activity through shops and galleries, it has long been my concern that craft from any sector should not be 'ghettoised' - that is, encouraged to be channelled primarily through specialised or dedicated shops, agencies and galleries. Evidence, from the designer craftspeople in this study and others, would suggest there is a far wider distribution network available which could be encouraged and developed. Thus a wider set of connections could be made in the social milieu. Identifying what already exists in this regard would be a useful starting point, which could be developed by state providers. It is probably true that there are not a sufficient number of good shops, agencies and galleries to support the number of practitioners. This is precisely why there is a need to expand beyond the dedicated group. Conversely, it is worth considering if what needs to be nurtured is not, in fact, the idea of working 'to order' rather than the current emphasis on producing 'products' in speculation. Some of the designer makers encountered are doing just that.

Peter Hall, in his review of the first Creative Eye[5] said

> "If the show fails to attract designers and architects, it is because of the Crafts Council's failure to address the content to the needs of its target audience."

He goes on to say

> "This, Latham admits is a symptom of the whole industry. One of the aims of Creative Eye, he says, is the professionalisation of exhibitors - they've got to perform in a way that the business world understands."

I suggest that the Council, with the experience of two of these exhibitions and and numerous trips to other trade shows, including quite a few in New York, should have to hand a vast amount of information which could be made available to the industry to assist that 'professionalisation' to develop.

But Latham's comment brings up another matter which the Council and other providers, could be dealing with on behalf of their constituency. That is to do with helping the world, hitherto outside these sectors of the craft milieu, to understand the way good craftspeople 'perform'. There is an underlying sense that the accommodation and adjustments are one-sided, when it should be considered that compromises based on understanding could be a mutual affair. The two designer makers mentioned who 'wholesale' one-offs illustrate this point. Similarly such has been one of the effects of the massive American Craft Enterprises events in the United States. The potential buyers and commissioners are quite happy to negotiate and deal with craftspeople who are businesslike. That does not have to mean craftspeople who produce in large quantity or on a scale beyond their capabilities. It does mean craftspeople who are confident and capable in all aspects of their enterprise.

The infrastructure would be further developed with more talk of money, particularly in regard to commissions. By way of example, the Association of Illustrators produce a book for new illustrators in which they give such details of recent commissions as the brief, length of time to complete the commission and the amount of money the illustrator received.

The Council and the Regional Arts Associations would undoubtedly say they do a great deal of the above on request. The suggestion is that they could be more effective, and of more assistance to the many who do not contact them, by working in a more public manner.

There one last point to be made in connection with the matter of infrastructure. There is a responsibility of state providers to more fully investigate the needs of their constituency. This analysis might lead to recommendations for adapting government legislation and programmes in order to enhance the socioeconomic situation of individual visual artists in a different manner.

There has been a similar exercise recently in Canada, resulting in a paper called the "Status of the Artist", and a standing committee of the Canadian House of Commons making some recommendations for such changes.[7]

An American example dealt with concern for the artist in a slightly different way. Joan Jeffri (1987) conducted a survey for the New York Foundation for the Arts to identify what she called "Work-Related, Human and Social Service Needs" of independent artists working in fourteen disciplines of both performing and visual arts. In particular Jeffri was looking at artists' requirements in matters such as legal and accounting

services; credit and space; health, pension and welfare, which she concluded "are often distinctly different from other workers' needs".

Ultimately facilitating successful practice also involves longer term strategies to do with nurturing a climate in which more people see visual artists, their artefacts and talent as relevant - dare one suggest useful? To paraphrase a recent comment of Eric Moody's, "the way to improve the markets for art is to talk of applied art". As was once said to a meeting of the Society of Designer Craftsmen, "You ought never to underestimate the degree of public ignorance about your existence".

Notes and References for Chapter 12

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1. Carole Pemberton, former Careers counsellor at Brighton Polytechnic, wrote the introduction and chapter one, entitled 'Looking at Yourself' In both she is encouraging artists to realistically appraise their situation and to consider what their values are regarding their visual art practice.

2. Brian Ranson wrote of his research in 'Craftwork, Ideology and the Craft Life-Cycle' which appeared in the Journal of Design History, Volume 2, Numbers 2 & 3, 1989.

3. This quote attributed to Benjamin Franklin was reprinted in the Training Agency's student workbook for the Business Growth Seminar, 'Effective Management'.

4. Paul Greenhalgh's comments appeared in 'Mixed Economy' in Crafts, 99, He says "craftspeople should not be unduly encouraged to live solely, by their work in the first ten years" Susan Tyler's comments were in 'Tylers' Dozen' in Crafts 94, September/October 1988. She asks in what other professional are young graduates expected to cope with the complexities, anxieties and costs of setting up independent practice?

5. Peter Hall's review appeared in The Designer Craftsman, May 1989.

6. The Association of Illustrators book is called The Survival Guide, published London, 1990.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Gabriel Marcel once said

> "A problem is something met with which bars my passage. It is before me in its entirety. A mystery, on the other hand, is something in which I find myself caught up, and whose essence is therefore not to be before me in its entirety."

I have attempted to shed some light on the mystery, not to solve a problem. Yet the picture which emerges from the preceding discussion has remained complex and multi-faceted. By drawing on a number of interlocking and overlapping perspectives this has been an attempt to enlarge on contemporary understanding of studio craft. The main perspective has been from within the craft milieu with knowledge gleaned from the social sciences. This has been an idiosyncratic and hopefully enlightening approach.

A primary purpose of this study was to search for patterns of successful practice in the design craft sector. The evidence from the practitioners does indicate such exists. Further research could refine and extend this concept of patterns. I also have suggested there are ways to understand this practice which are different to those embodied in the current specialist approaches. The patterns and the strands of activity connect with different organisational structures and settings, which are not necessarily recognised or appreciated by those who would educate or provide for these visual artists.

It has been common practice to distinguish craft from other spheres of visual arts in terms of raw materials.

The significant differences appear to be in regard to ideology, work styles and settings, not raw materials. Elaborating these differences increases understanding within the sector and may also contribute to understanding independent practice in other sectors of the visual arts.

The initial intention of this study was to deal in more depth with a select number of makers. Early in the research it became apparent that to focus on the few would be to commit an injustice, for the importance of the concept of networks became obvious. The sheer weight of the numbers of non-makers but highly involved and committed individuals made their presence felt. This suggests that further research in the field should take into account these networks.

It is sad that the label of 'craft' is seen to be so degraded in our own time that many within the milieu, including serious makers carrying on in the studio craft traditions avoid using the word. There are steps which could be taken within the craft milieu . Efforts to reclaim and write crafts' history should be encouraged. It would be useful to make connections between that history and strands of contemporary practice.

The struggles for power and ascendancy have been a divisive and draining influence in much of the craft milieu in the last hundred years. The beginning of these struggles seem to coincide with the change from craft as a predominately lower class occupation to a middle class preoccupation or occupation of choice. The attempts to uplift part of craft has in some senses backfired. Those within the crafts milieu who have been most vocal and influential have helped to create and maintain the public perception of much craft as boring and, inadvertently

perhaps, contributed to alienating an audience who thought they understood 'fine craft' until the last decade.

The latter chapters may appear highly critical of the state provision. The criticism is meant to be constructive, by illustrating both the myopia which does not allow for the diversity of valid practice and the attitude which does not yet attend to a holistic concept of independent studio craft practice. Undoubtedly there is and has been useful work, conducted with good intent on the part of many in the Crafts Council. The research which remains to be done to properly understand the state provision for craft would need to more fully address the concept of interlocking social systems and political motivations of which the Council is a part. For the provision is a product of, and a reflection of a social system which extends beyond the crafts practitioners.

Although I have attempted to be objective, inevitably the reader will find biases which have remained invisible to me. Whatever those may be, the work was inspired by respect for practitioners and concern that they and others like them be better understood. For the combination of their pragmatism, sensibilities and skill has a place in society. The most successful and satisfied of these designer makers are putting into practice many of the ideals expressed by Morris one hundred years ago. As Dormer says "the metaphoric content of handicraft rests in its expression of a way of labour and a way of life".

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