

Introduction

Personal Background

As a practicing ceramic artist (i.e. sculptor) and vessel maker (i.e. potter), I wonder about the tensions between the conceptual and expressive nature of art and craft in my work. Recently, I have become interested in exploring the historical development of art and crafts concepts and looking at clay as a medium which serves as a nexus for the articulation and expression of art and craft values in an information age.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper into the nuances and features of craft is not to highlight the dichotomy between art and craft or to attempt to bring about a synthesis of these two ideas. Rather, the purpose is to discover and examine tensions and issues that exist for the artist-craftsperson today, when longstanding views of what constitutes art and craft are dissolving, and reformulated ideas of art and craft are taking hold. For example, while some art critics such as the late Clement Greenberg informed by a Modernist sensibility emphatically declared that “craft is not art” (Metcalf, 2007); a contemporary postmodern notion of art embraces limitless possibilities within its fluid practice (Brown, 2009). This poses an opportunity to seriously re-examine conceptions today. Underlying this exploration is the assumption that craft objects richly communicate information, ideas, and feelings and that the concept of craft is a fluid, dynamic construct.

Western History of Craft – The Traditional Paradigm

It may be helpful for the reader to place the current issues surrounding contemporary concepts of art and craft in a historical context. Figure 1 depicts key moments in the abbreviated history presented in this background as reference points for the discussion.

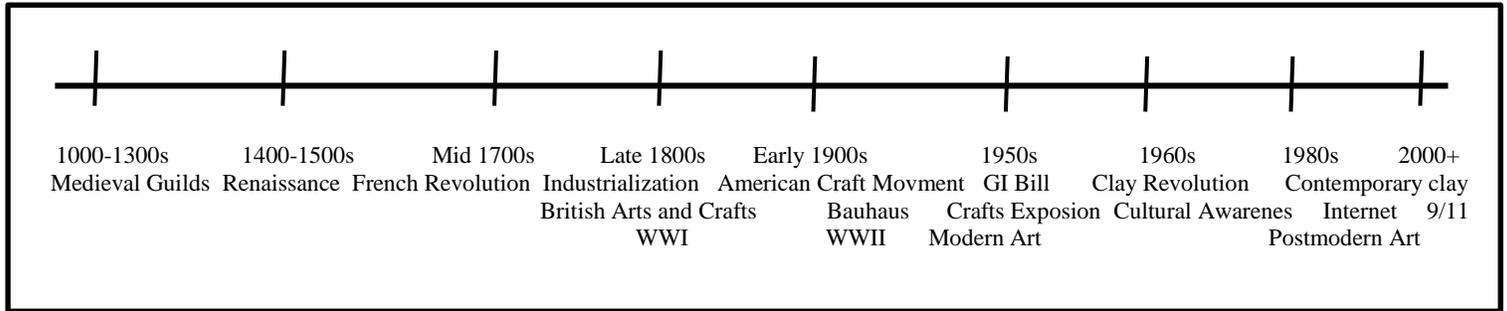


Figure 1. Timeline of significant events related to changing conceptions of art and craft

Medieval and Renaissance Influences

The historical information in this introduction serves as a context to understand particular aspects of craft which have to do with notions of making and manufacturing in relationship to creativity, community, and utopian ideals. This presents an expansive view of craft beyond the studio craft tradition. Cultural anthropologist and historian Larry Shiner (2001) describes the medieval guild as a key social institution which contributed to our contemporary understanding of craft. During the Middle Ages, in various urban centers throughout Italy, Germany, France and England, painters worked with carvers, masons, and gilders in the construction of alters, panels, and other ornamental features of churches and palaces. Royalty and religious leaders of the Church served as patrons for the work, but the terms and conditions of the contracts for producing this work were established by the guild. Since a guild negotiated and established terms of contracts for this skilled labor, it served as a powerful labor organization. Craftsmen and women couldn't work in those specialized skilled trades unless they were members of a particular guild or workshop. In addition to creating some control over what today we would call the labor market, it also appears that the guild operated as a professional organization. Apprenticeship was the instrumental means by which craft guilds ensured that historically accumulated knowledge, skills, and standards were passed on to its younger, newer members, both male and female (Shiner, 2001).

Don Wallance (2010), a noted American designer, clearly summarized the historical development of our concept of artist from that of craftsman. He said, “Before the Renaissance art and craft, artists and artisans, were identical concepts. The word ‘artist,’ as distinguished from ‘artisan,’ apparently did not come into use until the 16th or 17th century. The expression ‘fine arts,’ as distinguished from ‘useful arts,’ did not come into use until the 18th century” (p. 560).

A gradual shift in the ideas and practices of artisans and artists took place over centuries in the context of cultural, political and economic as well as aesthetic changes. For example, during the Renaissance, through the rise of the merchant class, an art market developed driven by the needs and wants of wealthy individuals who desired to be memorialized through portrait painting (Fariello, 2005). Aspiring, young, and talented portrait painters attended art academies to advance their skills. Art academies served both aesthetic and financial purposes. For example, some Renaissance painters, coming from the art academy, could work as “free agents” and side step the Guild’s contract system by negotiating fees or prices directly with their merchant patrons (Shiner, 2001). Art academies also championed and cultivated particular aesthetic values such as mimesis or imitation, the vestiges of which can still be seen today in community art institutions such as the Art Students League in New York City (Gunduz, 2012).

One of the key aesthetic values of Renaissance portraiture was that of likeness which epitomizes the project of mimesis or representation in art. A portrait was considered successful if it looked like or resembled the subject or the sitter. A portrait could convey the person’s identity such as his or her social or economic status by depicting a particular setting, clothing, and other accoutrements. Painters traditionally had been forced to choose between either the imitation of nature, including people, or the imitation of great exemplary art work from the past as a basis for their aesthetic choices (Fariello, 2005). During the renaissance era, the success of an artist

became associated with painterly technical skills and compositional inventiveness. Values in visual art became attached to novel pictorial compositions and treatment of space.

Simultaneously, attributes such as imagination and creativity became identifying characteristics of artists, leading the modern concept of creative genius. For example, changes in the content and style of painting can be seen in the choice of media, the spatial treatment of the composition, the modeling of the figure, and the choice of subject matter by comparing Giotto's *Mourning Christ* with Leonardo da Vinci's portrait of *Ginevra de' Benci*.



Figure 2. Giotto di Bondone *Mourning Christ* c. 1305 Fresco, Padua



Figure 3.

Leonardo da Vinci
Ginevra de' Benci, c. 1474-1478 oil on panel
National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund

It is interesting to note that despite the formal differences in each composition such as the rigid sculptural qualities of Giotto's figures and soft and radiant skin of *Ginevra de' Benci*, both artists

paid attention to the expressive or emotional qualities of the subjects in each painting.

Additionally, it should be noted that the traditional history of Western art is told primarily through painting. This speaks to a traditional practice of linking the identity of the maker with the medium. The painter, by choice of media, enjoys the status and identity of an artist.

European Influences of the 18th Century on conceptions of art and craft

Several other significant historical developments led to a further distinction between artists and craftsmen. For example, the emergence of revised copyright law is a case in point. At the onset of the 18th century, British copyright law was changed to assign ownership interests in published writings to authors which had previously been assigned to craftsmen-printers (Shiner, 2001). Evolving copyright law reinforced the concepts of creativity and originality as central to the role of artists and writers, not trades or craftspeople.

More significantly, the modern idea of an art museum emerged from the French Revolution. During the French Revolution, the monarchs were overthrown and thousands of people decapitated. Many of the artifacts from the palaces which were being ransacked were removed and put into the Louvre. This historical event had two outcomes on our concepts of art. One outcome was to strip away the political or social value of the royal artifacts, which had functioned in the palace as tokens and symbols of power. Objects were isolated and removed from their original context and use, making them autonomous. The second outcome was to provide a setting where the act of looking at an object for its own visual qualities was given intrinsic value. Visual encounter with art objects was termed aesthetic experience. The primary purpose of fine art shifted to providing aesthetic experiences. From this point forward, the Modern concept of art, consisting of autonomous aesthetic objects, and the concept of a museum, as a place to view and appreciate art, took hold. It may be argued then that the museum as a

modern social institution contributed to the dichotomy and separation of art from craft, which defined art as a field of autonomous aesthetic objects and experience (Metcalf, 2007).

British Arts and Crafts Movement: forging ideas of craft as a distinct practice and lifestyle

The English Arts and Crafts Movement was spawned by John Ruskin, a preeminent British 19th Century art critic and social commentator, and his followers C.R. Ashbee and William Morris (Greenhalgh, 1997). The Arts and Crafts Movement of England of the late 1800s was a response to rapid changes brought on by industrialization affecting work (employment) and the quality of life (job displacement due to mechanical manufacturing and environmental degradation resulting from construction of coal burning factories). In order to counteract increasing alienation in the workplace and to restore aesthetic quality to everyday, popular objects, Morris and Ashbee set up their own guilds and workshops to design and manufacture well-crafted items, in a purportedly egalitarian and collaborative type environment. These advocates proclaimed no separation of art from craft, and advocated that everyday useful objects could be enjoyed in the privacy of the home and were equally deserving of aesthetic attention as other art forms. Craft was tied into instrumental use, not only the production of goods for everyday use, but also explicitly in the formation of a social good or order achieved through the work of craftsmen, which we may think of as a craftsman lifestyle (Greenhalgh, 1997).

Today we might consider this a romantic lifestyle choice, but attempts to link a positive quality of life on a large social scale, connecting workplace employment, manufacturing (largely by hand or substantially through technology) and community resources (such as schools and hospitals) has been the focus of many utopian craft traditions. For example, a sustainable community was created by leaders of the Steinway Piano Factory in Astoria, Queens.

In 1870, William Steinway bought the deserted plot of land [in now Astoria, Queens] that would eventually become the site of the Steinway & Sons New York factory. At the time the area was undeveloped, so William created Steinway Village, a town where employees, most of whom had also emigrated from Germany, lived and worked. In addition to housing, Steinway built a post office, school, and even established a lending library for employees, which later became the Steinway Library, now part of the Queens Library System. Today, two of the original employee apartment buildings are preserved (and occupied) on 20th Ave and 41st St. William himself lived just a few feet away in the Steinway Mansion (Carey, 2010).

These ideas carry forward even in today's contemporary society, especially with high tech manufacturing which still requires people with skilled, trained hands capable of controlling sophisticated machinery executing complex tasks, relying on a present mindfulness and people committed to quality. For example, some production and manufacturing centers in China are conceived of as corporate campuses which provide health, education, food, and housing to promote a quality way of life and a highly productive work force. To that end, corporations and leaders aspire to wed utopian lifestyle with work and manufacturing. For example,

Music Group Founder and CEO Uli Behringer announces the company's plans to construct a massive new campus that will house its operations in China. My goal is to make this a place where talented people can attain their life goals without compromise...The new campus will be home to nearly 5,000 employees and is to include more than 3 million square feet of automated factory space.... The campus will also offer housing for almost two thousand company employees and include on-site educational, child-care and health facilities. The Music Group has commissioned international consultants to advise on-site development, livability and environmental concerns to ensure long-term satisfaction for workers and minimal impact to the surrounding ecosystem (MIX, 2012).

Perhaps the notion of craftsmen as product maker and hence industrial manufacturer takes the notion of craftsman too far, but where do you draw the line? Certainly a Steinway piano is the result of craftsmanship. Only the sounding board is produced by entirely mechanical means and that happened relatively recently. A traditionalist notion of craft would be tied to the notion of being made by hand (or predominantly by hand) or by working in some particular material such as wood, metal, fiber, glass, or clay (Adamson, 2012; Falino, 2012; Koplos, 2010).

In focusing on the studio concept of craftsman, working alone or in a small group, the notion of a skilled craftsperson, working in light industry or manufacturing gets overlooked. Craftspeople in a manufacturing industry are often referred to as technicians, assembly line workers, or perhaps artisans. If a worker's role or responsibility has something to do with the look or appearance of the thing being produced or manufactured, he or she might then be referred to as a designer.

Today, it is popular for craftsmen and designers of three dimensional objects within the studio crafts tradition to be called "makers" (Koplos, 2010; Zee, 2012). A closer look at industrial models which rely on people who directly participate in the assembly process might support the notion of extending the idea of craftsperson to the factory worker who uses manual skills and judgment in the production of everyday useful objects, such as the Faberware® coffee pot or Keurig® coffee brewing systems. This is distinct from the studio craft tradition where the creator is conceived of as the designer, manufacturer, and marketer of theoretically one-of-a-kind expressive goods.

A continuing historical examination will explore the ongoing emergence of craft as a distinct, though not always universally agreed upon, concept and as a unique cultural practice. Additionally, a focused study of key developments in ceramic art in America will shed light upon some of the tensions and dimensions within which ceramic artists and makers operate.

Key Developments in American Ceramics

Historically, there are several developments in American ceramics that exemplify art and craft thinking and practice. The American arts and crafts movement which occurred approximately from 1860s to the 1920s emulated ideals from the British arts and crafts movement which migrated to the United States (Koplos, 2010). Roycroft, a community of furniture makers/craftsmen who lived in a community together in East Aurora, New York under

the inspirational leadership of Elbert Hubbard typified this idealism of meaningful life and labor (Roycroft, 2012). In the domain of ceramics, the American arts and crafts movement was exemplified by art pottery produced at studio factories such as Rookwood Pottery, or conversely emerging centers and colleges such as the American Woman's League which highlighted women's as well as men's talent, ingenuity, and inventiveness. Notable among women ceramic artist and leaders were Adelaide Asop Robineau at People's University and Maria Longworth Nichols at Rookwood (Clark, 1979; Harrod, 2006; Koplos, 2010; Peterson, 1996).



Figure 4.
The Aladdin Vase , 1882
Maria Longworth Nichols



Figure 5.
Scarab Vase (The Apotheosis of the Toiler), 1910
Adelaide Asop Robineau

These highly stylized and tightly controlled aesthetics in American art pottery, based on European norms, was shaken loose by Japanese Zen aesthetics popularized by national tours and

workshops led by Shoji Hamada and Bernard Leach who echoed a craftsman creed of “truth to materials” and embraced the spontaneous and accidental (Clark, 1979; Dietz, 2012; Leach, 1940; Peterson, 2000). The work of Bernard Leach and Shoji Hamada, based on the Japanese *Mingei* Folk Art Movement, introduced wood firing and a subdued, earth tone palette to an American audience in the early 1950s. This aesthetic continues to influence a wide range of functional pottery produced throughout the world as exemplified in the lifelong work of noted Minnesota potter Warren McKenzie (Clark, 1979).



Figure 6.
Stoneware Bottles
Shoji Hamada



Figure 7.
Stoneware Plate
Warren McKenzie

Accompanying this attitudinal shift toward ceramic pottery was a transition of formal art training out of production or factory studios and into college and university studio art departments (Singerman, 1999). This led to a watershed development in ceramics during the 1950s and 1960s which has been termed a clay revolution; a time marked by an expansive move from function to pure expression as part of the Modern abstract expressionism (Clark, 1979; Koplos, 2010; MacNaughton, 1994). The center of the revolution in clay has largely been

attributed to the work of Peter Voulkos at Otis Institute , the then Los Angeles County Art Institute (Dietz, 2012; MacNaughton, 1994). The transformation of clay from craft to art object rested on scale and purpose. Voulkos and his peers started to treat clay exclusively as a vehicle for artistic expression (i.e. expression of thoughts, ideas, or feelings) with no regard to utilitarian purpose. This allowed those working in clay to move outside of the crafts paradigm and enter into artistic discourse which could take on a variety of forms including parody and irony or embody the then strong currents of abstract expressionism. Clay artists were now liberated free to make visual statements with autonomous visual objects, free from strictly functional purposes. Voulkos' legacy is perhaps best represented in the humorous and ironic work of Robert Arneson who joined the faculty of University of California, Davis.



Figure 8.
Red River, Stoneware 1959
Peter Voulkos

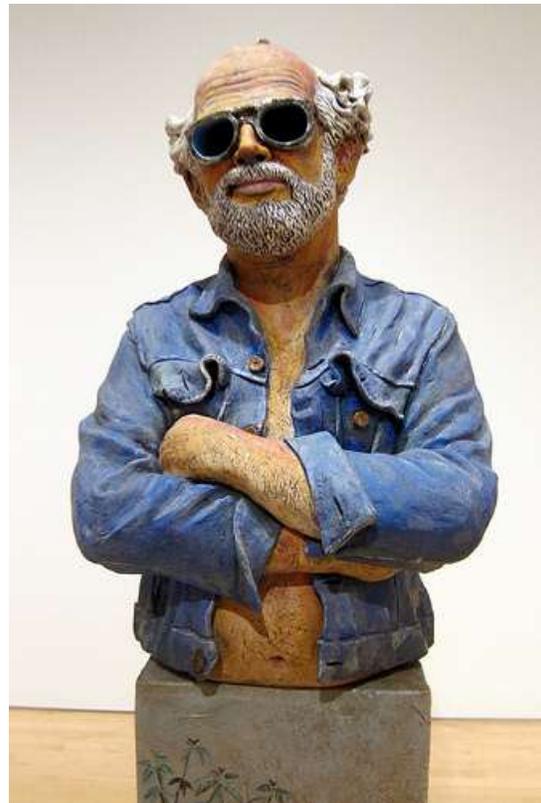


Figure 9.
California Artist, 1982
Robert Arneson

While Arneson began ridiculing art, ceramics, and society in general in a highly confrontational southern California manner, referred to as Funk Art, (Schwartz, 1983). Others clay artists such as James Melchert began conceptual investigations into the vessel and ceramic materials which expanded to installation and performance art (Schwartz, 2008).



Figure 10. & Figure 11.
Leg Pot, 1962 (2 views)
James Melchert



Figure 12.
Changes: a performance in drying slip, 1972 James Melchert

The story of what happened next depends on who is speaking and what story one is trying to tell. By some accounts, this transition of clay as an art medium endowed with representation of ideas further relegated the role of potter to that of a utilitarian craftsman and the production of the vessel as the performance of craft. Yet individuals such as Ruth Duckworth and Betty Woodman, who were recognized as artists, explored and developed a vocabulary based on vessel forms that drew on art and craft practices and traditions. Ruth Duckworth explored formal relations in relationship to vessels while Betty Woodman articulated relationships of the ceramic vessel to the environment and to ideas of vessels. Invariably these visual expressions, or meditations, were based on formal relationships.



Figure 13.
Ruth Duckworth



Figure 14. Floral Vase and Shadow
Betty Woodman

While most of the arguments separating art from craft have been based on whether the object served a practical or aesthetic function, the more compelling issue at hand has been the continued expansion and diversity of ideas and practices contained within the shifting paradigm of art.

Issues of contemporary art

Contemporary art practice in the twenty first century follows and runs concurrently with a postmodern movement in art. Postmodern art essentially rejects theories of Modern art, such as the idea that quality was transcendent and universal; and the belief that there was some special human faculty (the disinterested gaze) which allowed people to appreciate art (Sandler, 1996). Postmodern art's rejection of what had come to be art, echoes a similar anti-art establishment movement decades earlier typically symbolized by Marcel Duchamp's found object, a urinal, which he entitled *The Fountain* and subsequently submitted for exhibit under the name R. Mutt.



Figure 15. Marcel Duchamp's *The Fountain*

The Fountain challenged the idea of what defined art. Duchamp used a found, everyday object to make art. His use of a ceramic toilet raised questions about notions of high and low or hierarchy within the art world. By using a commercially made ceramic household furnishing

available at a plumbing shop, he also challenged the notion of originality and the hand-making process as defining features of art. Finally, Duchamp effectively made a statement to the effect, “It is art because I say so.” Placing a ready-made object into an art gallery shifted attention away from the object itself, raising questions for the viewer about the conditions or context within which art was experienced and defined.

While Duchamp served to question the status quo early in the 20th century, the postmodern art movement in the late 20th century was given momentum by art critics, as well as artists, who adopted a framework of critical theory, based on cultural awareness and power relations. “The primary goal of critical theorists was decentering; that is, getting rid of anything that implied a center or hierarchy. They disputed the idea of a mainstream in modernist art and in Western culture generally, and the primacy of Western culture in world culture.” (Sandler, 1996, p. 337) In terms of visual art, this meant that things formerly considered outside of the boundary of art were allowed in. For example, this thinking helped usher in an era of installation and performance art; and the entrance of unconventional materials such as photography and traditional craft materials into the fine art world. Art quite dramatically was being redefined once again. The media art of John Baldessari exemplified both this conceptual and aesthetic postmodern sensibility. “Baldessari was not interested in commenting on mass culture. Inspired by the theories of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure about the arbitrary nature of signs, he treated text and images – different codes or languages, as it were as open ended signifiers.” (Sandler, 1996, p. 322)



Figure 16 Title: Ashputtle Mixed Media
John Baldessari 1982

In the ceramics world, artists such as Ron Nagle and Ken Price were recognized as reaching similar conceptual levels of achievement in their art work by taking traditional ceramic forms out of a familiar context imbuing them with multiple frames of reference.



Figure 17.
Untitled
Ken Price 1972



Figure 18.
"Fortgang"
Ron Nagle 2002

The work of ceramic artists Sin-ying Ho continues the trajectory of expanding the language of ceramic forms and introduces contemporary popular, global culture.



Figure 19. and Figure 20. *Made in the Postmodern Era No. 2* with Detail (Ho, 2010)



Figure 21. and Figure 22. *Made in the Postmodern Era No.4* with Detail (Ho, 2010)

Now in the early 21st Century, the contemporary art may be viewed as a relational practice. “The role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever scale chosen by the artist... In Relational Art, the audience is envisaged as a community. Rather than the artwork being an encounter between viewer and an object, relational art produces intersubjective encounters. Through these encounters, meaning is elaborated collectively, rather than in the space of individual consumption” (Bourriaud, 2002) (p. 13, 17-18). This conception of art, which places value in terms of human interaction, is most easily found in installation art and is now a common place feature of many MFA Fine Art Programs (see Appendix).

Clare Twomey, an internationally recognized artist and self-described craftsperson-researcher, explores this domain of relational aesthetics in her installation work such as “Consciousness/Conscience”



Figure 19 ‘Consciousness/Conscience’
Tate, Liverpool; Crafts Council, London; and Icheon, Korea
2001-2004

Consciousness/Conscience is a ceramic installation that comprises several thousand hollow unfired Bone China tiles laid out on the floor of the gallery space. The work is installed so that visitors to the exhibition need to cross the work to encounter other parts of the exhibition. By walking across the work they effectively destroy the floor to gain access to other works. The floor tiles record their path within the space. Consciousness/Conscience is conceptually linked with ideas of human interaction, social convention and appropriateness (Twomey, 2006).

Conceptual Dimensions of Craft

Most concepts of craft are fundamentally centered on function and materiality. If an object has some type of function it is relegated to the category of craft or an industrially designed product. Traditionally, studio craft forms have been thought of as objects that are predominantly handmade, possess some domestic or ornamental functional, demonstrate the skill of the maker, and are made of certain materials such as fiber, wood, metal, glass or ceramics (Adamson, 2012; MAD, 2012; Shiner, 2007).

If craft is not defined solely by its material, it is quite often characterized by the process of its making. This leads to a stereotype of craft that is reduced solely to mechanical or technical skill in execution. Though at times technical skills are highly desirable, attributing virtuoso technique alone to craft is a misconception of authentic craft practice. The process of creating an object necessarily involves trial and error, experimentation and intuitive approximation. For example, as Don Wallance, a prominent American designer, explains, “Before a design concept finds its ultimate expression in the concrete form of an object...models must be made...and production procedures worked out. These are not merely routine steps in the production of an end object itself; they are a creative aspect of the development of form.” (Wallance, 1954, in Adamson, ed. 2010, p.563) Writer, craftsman, and educator David Pye explains that craftsmanship, expressed as the workmanship of risk, “ means simply workmanship using any kind of technique or apparatus, in which the quality of the result is not predetermined, but depends on the judgment, dexterity and care which the maker exercised as he works” (Pye, 2010). However, the exercise of judgment is thought to be central to the art making process. As scholar and researcher Eliot Eisner wisely points out, it is the task of the painter to make aesthetic judgments in the absence of rules (Eisner, 1972).

While we might claim that the processes of art and craft share similarities in their creative dimensions, we might still be faced with a persistent conception of the artist as an idea maker and craftsperson as an object maker. This may change with a growing body of literature that addresses emerging craft theory. Discussions of contemporary craft include examinations of ideas such as “craftism” a form of community based political activism achieved through craft making; and the “performative” dimensions of craft experience which are starting to reshape the boundaries and attributes of the craft paradigm (Adamson, 2010; Greer, 2011; Robertson, 2011). Some theoretical discussions of craft lead to the notion that “craft” can exist without materiality as its basis (Mazanti, 2011; Owen, 2011). Theoretical re-framing of craft is part of the academic postmodern condition. However, craft theory, from a maker’s point of view, seems a great distance from the pleasure and enjoyment of making things. As Peter Dormer, a leading proponent of craft expressed cautiously: there can be no overarching theory of craft, and what craftsmen and craftswomen actually do and why cannot be put sufficiently in words (Dormer, 1997).

Given that caveat, it seems that crafts have always operated in the sphere of social practice. Ceramic cups or bowls, wooden furniture, woven rugs, handmade clothing, as well as jewelry have always serving the concerns, needs, and purposes of individuals and communities. In this case, definitions of craft centered on materials or handmade become less important than the object’s social use. It may be that the relationships and experiences formed due to the craft object or the manufacturing of objects are perhaps more critically important than the material. Perhaps contemporary art, moving in the direction of social practice, re-joins craft at the hip, in the service of awareness, appreciation, and sustainability of people and this planet which we call home. Craft objects in their material richness as well as new spaces for craft are densely loaded with information. They are there waiting to be explored, enjoyed, and contemplated.

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APPENDIX

MFA Fine Art Program Descriptions, from the WEB, indicative of a postmodern condition marked by hybridity, globalism, interdisciplinary study, social practice and sustainability

California College of Art <http://www.cca.edu/academics/graduate/fine-arts>

Discover an Interdisciplinary Community of Artists

CCA's Graduate Program in Fine Arts challenges you to take your work to a higher level through rigorous practice and a robust exchange of ideas with an engaged and diverse artistic community. As your work evolves, you will gain a deeper understanding of the dynamic relationships among art, culture, and society.

Find Your Place in Contemporary Art Practice

Immerse yourself in a single medium or *work across multiple disciplines*, including ceramics, glass, jewelry, metal arts, media arts, painting, drawing, photography, printmaking, sculpture, and textiles. *Choose to focus on studio practice or social practice, where you can explore diverse strategies that cross into public spheres.*

Overview: The Field of Social Practices

Social practices incorporates art strategies as diverse as urban interventions, utopian proposals, guerrilla architecture, "new genre" public art, social sculpture, project-based community practice, interactive media, service dispersals, and street performance.

The field focuses on topics such as aesthetics, ethics, collaboration, persona, media strategies, and social activism, issues that are central to artworks and projects that cross into public and social spheres.

These varied forms of public strategy are linked critically through theories of relational art, social formation, pluralism, and democracy. Artists working within these modalities either choose to co-create their work with a specific audience or propose critical interventions within existing social systems that inspire debate or catalyze social exchange.

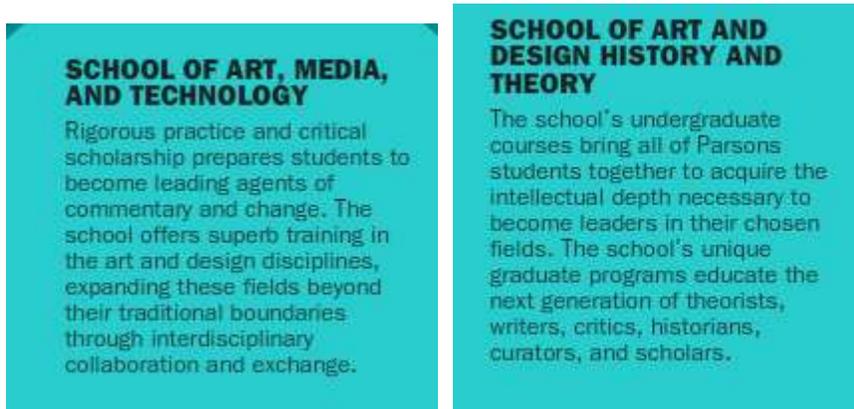
Rhode Island School of Design – Ceramics MFA Program

<http://www.risd.edu/Academics/Ceramics/Graduate/Overview/>

At RISD the MFA program in Ceramics offers a contemporary context for rigorous investigation and dialogue in support of individual artistic development. Graduate students engage in independent research and experimentation with new processes and ideas in consultation with faculty advisors and peers.

Our graduate candidates are professionally committed, materially articulate, intellectually curious and open. Grounded in global and cultural awareness, they pursue areas of practice and research in pottery, sculpture, installation, design, architectural ceramics, decoration, and other diverse ceramic processes and ideas. Their recent field research has taken them to New York City, Boston, Denmark, Germany, Japan and the UK.

Parsons The New School for Design <http://www.newschool.edu/parsons/about/>



Parsons Descriptive Language - MFA in Fine Arts <http://www.newschool.edu/parsons/mfa-fine-arts/>

Parsons believes that artists perform an essential role in our society. The MFA in Fine Arts program creates a challenging and diverse learning environment for students to develop studio-based research and critical scholarship. The program embraces interdisciplinary approaches to making and analyzing visual work, and promotes a global understanding of the arts.

Materials and Methods of Fine Arts

The MFA in Fine Arts offers an exciting immersion into the world of art, familiarizing students with the means, the context, and the interpretation of art through intensive instruction in the many techniques available to contemporary creators. Students acquire a comprehensive understanding of both the material elements that compose artworks and the ideas that make them meaningful. Students develop their own individual voice and critical faculties through ongoing dialogue with a diverse faculty of arts professionals. They are provided with individualized attention and a variety of perspectives on art's place in the global culture.

From Concept to Creation

The MFA in Fine Arts is a two-year, 60-credit program committed to expanding the formal, intellectual, and conceptual work of advanced students. The program encourages students to create, present, and interpret their work with the intellectual rigor and refined skill required to become a professional artist. Students participate in intensive studio critiques with faculty and peers. They also interact with an array of visiting artists. These visitors represent the contemporary range of art practices and cultural orientations that define cutting edge art.
