

Brief notes on recent projects

by Katie Schwab

My practice interweaves personal, social, and craft-based histories, often drawing from traditions of living, making and working collectively. Spanning exhibition making, design commissions, printed resources and workshops, my work explores references to modern design, handcrafts and radical pedagogies.

I often work on long-term embedded projects, using applied anthropological research methods to develop collaborative artworks, including textiles, furniture, video and ceramics. This talk for Making Futures expanded on a recent body of work which explores historical and contemporary models of collective craft and design activity that have taken place across workshops, classrooms and homes, with particular reference to the works, writings and teaching methods of modernist women artists and designers.

I discussed four recent projects: *Together in a Room* (Collective, Edinburgh, 2016), *Making the Bed, Laying the Table* (Glasgow Sculpture Studios, 2016), *Jerwood Solo Presentations* (Jerwood Space, London, 2016) and *A Portable Mural* (Serpentine Galleries, London, 2017) and will give a short overview of each below.

Together in a Room, Collective, Edinburgh, 2016

The exhibition *Together in a Room* built on research undertaken during a six-month period working as an Associate Producer at Collective in Edinburgh. The project reflected on shared spaces of learning, making and living, and drew on an interest in the work of Bauhaus émigré designers, post-war educational interiors and the Swedish arts and crafts movement. The exhibition incorporated a series of functional stools, a video, a painted interior and a large framed embroidered work. The pieces drew on collaborations with a former teacher, a college friend, my flatmate and my grandmother.

Ten stools made with Simon was a collection of seats made with my flatmate, Simon Worthington. The design for the stools drew on aspects of Arne Jacobsen's Dot Stool, Alvar Aalto's 60 Stool and Marimekko's 'Kivet' pattern. Accompanying the stools was a large sampler, a work on hessian featuring an improvised



Together in a Room, Collective, Edinburgh, 2016 (photo: Tom Nolan) Dedicated to my great teachers (Becky Lewin, St Catherine's College, Oxford; Madeleine Ladell, Phoenix Pottery, London; Mia Schwab, London) [still] HD video and hand-painted 16mm film transferred to HD, 2016

composition of stitches, patterns and colours from stitch sample books. The stitched piece used my Grandmother's wool to create patterns influenced by the work of early to mid-twentieth century women artists and designers including Enid Marx, Anni Albers and Sonia Delaunay.



Dedicated to my Great Teachers, an accompanying video work, drew its title from the epigraph of Anni Albers' 1965 book *On Weaving*. The work collaged hand-painted 16mm film with footage of the Arne Jacobsen designed St Catherine's College, Oxford; text from my Grandmother's memoirs relating to Jewish migration, textiles education and war work; and an interview with Madeleine Ladell from Phoenix Pottery, an independent ceramics studio in London, established following cuts to adult education services. Moving between classroom, studio, factory, student halls and social housing, the video presented an abstracted reflection on social, educational and cultural aspirations and compromises, while concurrently thinking through spheres of familial and cultural influence.

***Making the Bed, Laying the Table*, fellowship exhibition, Glasgow Sculpture Studios, 2016**

Making the Bed, Laying the Table was produced as part of the Graduate Fellowship at Glasgow Sculpture Studios, and included a number of works produced collaboratively with my flatmates Florence Dwyer and Simon Worthington. Created while living in temporary accommodation, we worked to collectively design and produce functional items for our future shared home. This work, produced in the communal workshop facilities at Glasgow Sculpture Studios, paralleled and made public some of the labour and decision-making involved in working, and similarly living, together. These pieces, including beds, shelves, bowls and a ladder, are now being used in a shared household in Glasgow.

***Jerwood Solo Presentations*, Jerwood Space, London, 2016**

Jerwood Solo Presentations featured a collection of works located in the atrium between the Jerwood entrance, cafe and rehearsal spaces. This installation reflected on ideas around social space and communal production, with *Stripes*, a series of functional tables and stools mirroring the designs in the cafe space.



Making the Bed, Laying the Table, Florence Dwyer, Katie Schwab, Simon Worthington Mural, household paint Making the Bed, Laying the Table, Glasgow Sculpture Studios, Glasgow, 2016 (photo: Max Slaven) Lines, wood-block printed cotton dustsheets; Stripes, steamed beech, steel, wood dye Jerwood Solo Presentations, Jerwood Space, London, 2016 (photo © Hydar Dewachi)

Stripes and *Lines*, a large wood-block printed curtain, paid homage to the textile designs of Phyllis Barron and Dorothy Larcher from the interwar period. *Lines* was printed by applying foot pressure to wood-block on fabric, a method employed by Footprints, a predominantly women-led textiles workshop that was established in London in 1925ⁱ. These works were accompanied by *Covers* (2016), a video made with Deep Throat Choir, an all-women singing group who are based in London. The video showed fragments of the choir's rehearsal process by documenting their voices, feet and hands as they practised Billie Holliday's 'Easy Living'.

A Portable Mural, Serpentine Galleries, London, 2017

A Portable Mural Architecture Family Pack was designed to accompany Francis Kéré's 2017 Serpentine Pavilion and was created following a series of workshops with 3rd-year students at Gateway Academy in North Westminsterⁱⁱ.

Kéré is an architect originally from Burkina Faso, and I was interested in the links between his Pavilion and traditions of weaving, indigo fabric dyeing and community wall painting in West Africa. The printed resource features a cyanotype print of a woven tapestry with prompts for looking and moving around the Pavilion. The

reverse is made of a print of a strip of indigo dyed dustsheet and contains a space for families to create patterns with pop-out paper shapes.

The title is based on a 1965 essay 'Tapestry', in which the artist and weaver, Anni Albers, described a woven picture as a 'portable mural'. I was interested in this relationship to the social and political history of murals, in which images, texts or patterns are painted on walls to draw people's attention to both decoration and important social issues. The piece also draws on a history of early architectural blueprints, in which cyanotypes were used to create plans for buildings.

The pack was designed by Cameron Leadbetter and accompanied a series of indigo picnic blankets for the Pavilion made in collaboration with textile designer Sarah Johnson.

* *A Portable Mural*, Architecture Family Pack, Serpentine Galleries, London, 2017 (photo: Manuela Barczewski)

Within my practice I am interested in exploring how different hands and voices can come together to respond to issues pertinent to our daily lives around questions of housing, labour, gender, learning and public and private space.



I am currently undertaking the 2017-19 Design Residency at Plymouth College of Art and I hope that these interests will emerge through work being undertaken throughout the year, specifically through research into Plymouth's post-war architecture, modernist textile practices in the South West, and explorations of critical forms of art, design and craft learning in museums, galleries, colleges and schools.

ⁱ Powers, Alan (1997), *Modern Block Printed Textiles*, London: Walker Books.

ⁱⁱ Serpentine Galleries (2017) *2017 Architecture Family Pack: A Portable Mural* [online] available at <https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/learn/play/2017-architecture-family-pack-portable-mural> [accessed 20/11/18].