

Making Playgrounds: limit as expansion in a crafty field

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Abstract

I propose a practice-led presentation, based on the findings, and subsequent work flowing from, a research project, *Writing_Making: Object as body, language and material* (RCA, 2016). During this project, 'new' methods for bringing writing closer to making were developed; methods that explored the potential of making as a means of generating writing and of writing to generate, or to contaminate, making. Influenced by Object Oriented Ontology, craft making was considered as an intimate engagement with, or a form of contact with, another object; as an altered state that might afford privileged access to the 'inside' of an object, or a 'strange stranger', to follow Tim Morton. Central questions that emerged from the research were: • Can making function as a model, or a spur, for settling deeper into inter-object relations? • What voices might emerge from such relations and how might the various objects [maker, material, image, language] that cohere around the activity of making be presented? • How might maker, and audience, become an object among objects and access the subjectivity of the strange stranger? Several material/textual, or material/conceptual making processes were developed - what I am calling writing_making methods that, taken together, constitute the only answer I can offer to the above questions. Some of my methods are repeatable, but I would expect other researcher / practitioners to produce very different results. If these methods can be established as successful, through exhibition, thesis and conference paper, then I would hope that others might explore similar territory, using my methods as a reference point. Perhaps counterintuitively, artistic research seems to be an ideal tool with which to stretch the boundaries of craft practice. The research process revealed, for me, the generative value of both textual and visual documentation of process: as artwork and as feedback that generates the next engagement. I will discuss the relationship between practice and research, writing and making and explore how craft and art processes might be considered as tools for building resourcefulness and resilience, with reference to Ian Bogost's anti-anthropocentric work on play: Play is the opposite of irony: rather than distancing ourselves from things, in play we draw them close and meld with them. We give ourselves over to them, even, subordinating our own agency to a larger system. Ian Bogost, *Play Anything: the pleasure of limits, the uses of boredom and the secret of games* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), p. 92

The following paper is a hybrid - a presentation (and performance during the conference) of some practice-based research outputs and a framing of these as a means of exploring starting points for a discussion, or argument, about what an expanded craft field might be. I write from the perspective of someone trained in ceramics, whose practice is centred on making, but who generally self-identifies as an artist.

One should not think slightly of the paradoxical, for the paradox is the source of the thinker's passion, and the thinker without a paradox is like a lover without a feeling: a paltry mediocrity [...] The supreme paradox of all thought is the attempt to discover something that thought cannot think.ⁱ

Doubtless Kierkegaard had other things in mind, but amongst those things that thought cannot think is making, or process – the bodily experience of a deep engagement with other objects in the world. Every time I start making, I find myself back in a place that I can't normally access; a state of being that isn't part of everyday experience. We can reflect on this engagement and write about it, but conceptualisation, of course, is never the same thing as the activity itself.

And why would it need to be the same thing? We could argue that language gets in the way of experience. During my PhD research project, I tried to set up a practice-based symposium in which a potter would teach a philosopher to throw a cup:

The potter will make a coffee cup and attempt to find language for the embodied knowledge that is being deployed. The philosopher and audience are encouraged to ask questions. The potter then teaches the philosopher to make the same cup, again trying to express familiar, but tacit, knowledge through language. During the lesson, the philosopher attempts to give voice to the unfamiliar interaction between his body and the material.ⁱⁱ

The idea for the symposium grew out of my engagement with a philosophical 'movement' called Object Oriented Ontology [OOO], central to which is Graham Harman's work on Heidegger's phenomenology, specifically the 'Tool Analysis' in Being and Time.ⁱⁱⁱ Some ideas that became key drivers for my reflection on making are:

- OOO is a flat ontology – entities such as animals, bridges, hammers, the colour purple, are all objects and all are equally strange. Art objects (or humans, for that matter) do not have any special ontological status.
- Heidegger says that entities, or objects withdraw from human perception – their being can never be fully accessed. OOO extends this to say that *all* objects withdraw from each other.
- Medium-sized objects (tables, hairdryers, trees, lecture theatres) are worthy of philosophical investigation. Tim Morton's term for the withdrawn object, which exists in a 'mesh' of other objects, is 'strange stranger'.^{iv} We are all strange strangers. A lawyers' office is as mysterious and strange as the Parthenon.^v
- Objects can only approach each other obliquely – no object will ever have complete access to another object (which includes scientific investigation).

- Art gives us useful methods for approaching other objects – art practice is a form of oblique investigation.

I came to see skilled making as a particularly intimate engagement between objects - between maker, tools, materials and space. I wrote a letter inviting Harman to take the role of the philosopher in the symposium. This is an extract:

Inspired by OOO, I've been working with the proposition that Ceramics might be a particularly useful discipline within which to explore relations between objects. Reflecting on Tim Morton's proposal of rhetoric as a means of contacting the 'strange stranger', it occurred to me that making might be equally effective. All forms of craft making constitute an intimate engagement between body and material, but clay seems singular in its openness to interaction with other objects - hands, cloth mats, air, sponges, water, wooden rolling pins, steel knives, feathers, temperature, glass, etc...^{vi}

Harman expressed a willingness to take part, but when I asked my ex-tutor, Walter Keeler, to take the role of the potter, he demurred, explaining that he had reached a stage in life where he wanted to focus his energy on making. Reflecting on this, I concluded that there is a paradox at the heart of craft as a *discipline*: there is something antithetical to making in writing. Making is a form of intelligence in itself and is not lent fluency by concept. At the end of a talk by Edmund de Waal, in response to a question from me, de Waal answered – rather defensively – that ceramics was ‘anti-intellectual’.^{vii} I disagreed at the time, but came to see that this was right. In a sense, ceramics has to be anti-intellectual. So, rather than being critical of, or frustrated with ceramics as a discipline, we must, I think, accept that this tension, between making and questioning, is irresolvable.

Our strand at the 2017 Making Futures conference is ‘Craft in an Expanded Field’, but what is an ‘Expanded Field’? What is a Field, for that matter? This is a question for elsewhere^{viii}, but it is safe to say that a significant acreage of the field must be occupied by education, which is in the business of disciplinarity and its variants multi-, inter-, cross- [but not post-, please]. So, how does a discipline expand? Not, I would argue in the case of ceramics, through it being considered as art, or through ceramics-trained artists doing well in the art world, but through a deep engagement with the discipline and achievement within it.

Speaking in 1979, when many shapers of the ceramics discipline were preoccupied by its lowly status in relation to fine art, Clement Greenberg, with an outsider's perspective, was able to ask,

Are ceramists to bother about whether they're put down as potters or hailed as sculptors? Should they – and we – care about nomenclature? Opinion changes; achievement stays. Achievement also erases the difference between the utilitarian, the vessels and fine-art sculpture. Once again, results experienced, not discussed or debated, are all that count when it comes to art as art.

And let's suppose that ceramic art, done by artists who were clay handlers before anything else, got accepted as sculpture proper – that and nothing less. Would this redound to the credit of ceramics? I altogether doubt it. I don't need precedent in order to prophesy here that the ceramics accepted as sculpture would be altogether lost to the art of clay as far as opinion and nomenclature were concerned; it would simply be assimilated to sculpture as such, sculpture as always.^{ix}

Boundaries have blurred a little more (and clay seems to be the medium du jour for artists), but I wonder how much we have really changed. I start from the premise that there are three disciplines, or disciplinary umbrellas, in what is currently known as art and design education: art (or fine art), craft and design. If craft is to be taught in a university then it must have some sort of disciplinary status. This involves a questioning of what craft is – what it has been in the past, and what it could be in the future. Craftspeople, as with Walter

Keeler, are generally not interested in this questioning. I think we can go further and say that some are threatened by it, and by the drift of ceramics, as taught within universities, towards art practice.

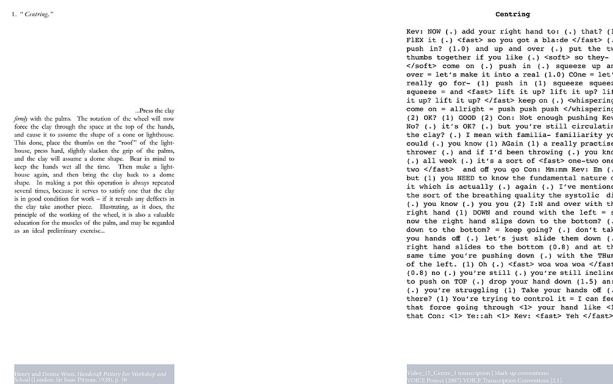
On the other hand, some prominent practitioners, curators and academics with roots in craft or applied art, seem to elide the epistemological and social differences between craft and fine art practice. Perhaps this is the best way to effect change – just ignore the differences. I'm not being snide, despite the implied criticism – maybe it really is the most effective approach – though mine, informed by artistic research, is based more on an interrogation of what might be particular to craft and an experimental approach to the presentation of findings. Despite the recent renewal of interest in the field, my feeling is that craft is still thought of as something from the past; something that is unchanging, whether it is considered as an activity that must be protected, or, conversely, as one that is old-fashioned and a bit embarrassing. As with lots of other things, we think we know what it is, but, of course, we have barely scratched the surface.

My broad aim is to generate dialogue with thinkers and practitioners in different disciplines – philosophy, sculpture, anthropology, dance, cognitive science, poetry... To find the language necessary to 'report back from making' and to start conversations, both within and beyond ceramics and craft, with others who are interested in embodiment and situatedness.

Perhaps counterintuitively, artistic research seems to be an ideal tool with which to stretch the boundaries of craft practice. The process of research revealed, for me, the generative value of both textual and visual documentation: as artwork and as feedback that generates the next engagement.

Centring

Image 2 | Centring



The text piece pictured above was a by-product of a collaborative project between myself and curator, Amanda Game, in 2012-13.^x We set up a playground with simple rules: Game would select an existing object – any object – and write a vivid description of it. I would then make a copy of the object, using only this descriptive text – a reverse ekphrasis, if you like. When I received a poem with what seemed to be a small, ash-glazed, thrown bowl at its centre, I decided to approach the task obliquely. As a non-thrower, I asked three potters to

talk me through their process of centring on the wheel and throwing a simple bowl; and then to teach me how to do the same. All would be recorded on video. I was interested in exploring Michael Polanyi's conception of tacit knowledge, which is full of subtlety, but can be summed up by the well-known phrase, 'we know more than we can tell'.^{xi} But I knew I didn't have the resources or the inclination to study it scientifically – this seemed like the kind of thing that might open up to an experimental, playful method, grounded in artistic research.

The right-hand text is a very short transcript from the video made with Kevin de Choisy, who was particularly good at translating embodied knowledge into language. This is presented as a sort-of concrete poem, using VOICE transcription conventions.^{xii} This work prompted an interest in the language used in 'how-to' pottery books:

Press the clay *firmly* with the palms. The rotation of the wheel will now force the clay through the space at the top of the hands, and cause it to assume the shape of a cone or lighthouse. This done, place the thumbs on the "roof" of the lighthouse, press hard, slightly slacken the grip of the palms, and the clay will assume a dome shape. Bear in mind to keep the hands wet all the time. Then make a lighthouse again, and then bring the clay back to a dome shape. In making a pot this operation is always repeated several times, because it serves to satisfy one that the clay is in good condition for work – if it reveals any defects in the clay take another piece. Illustrating, as it does, the principle of the working of the wheel, it is also a valuable education for the muscles of the palm, and may be regarded as an ideal preliminary exercise.^{xiii}

While perhaps an easy target, this is a hilariously ineffectual piece of instruction. It reminds me of a dream in which you can do something difficult, or impossible, with great ease – like flying. While the tone is brisk and ever so English, the event described is more like an otherworldly dance of three agents – potter, clay and wheel – each with equal agency. "Really, my dear, the clay will train itself, if you brook no nonsense." Which, of course, it will, if you are a seasoned craftsperson, but will not, if you are a beginner, dancing in the dark.

In contrast, here is the section of video that the transcript was taken from:

Image 3 | Centring_2 ^{xiv}



And a moving image piece developed from the raw, documentary footage:

Image 4 | Centring_3 ^{xv}



I was putting my lack of skill at throwing to use. Despite my criticism of the 'how-to' text above as instruction, it hints at another way of thinking about making. Perhaps the three agents do have equal weighting and we only fail to notice this because we are so goal-oriented, so intent on mastery and critical of its lack. Perhaps a lack of skill can make us *more* aware of the interactions between our bodies, space and materials. Andy Clark, a cognitive scientist and philosopher working on embodiment and situatedness, 'postulates that the mind, far from being coextensive with the brain, routinely spills out into the environment, enlisting all manner of extra-somatic objects and artefacts in the conduct of its operations. The artefactual world then becomes a kind of 'wideware' or 'distributed mind'.^{xvi}

One example Clark uses to explore this idea is the swimming ability of the Bluefin tuna. Its speed and manoeuvrability have long puzzled biologists:

Physically speaking, so it seemed, the fish should be too weak (by about a factor of seven) to achieve these feats. However, an explanation for this prodigious ability can be found in the use of embodied, environmentally embedded action by the tuna. Fluid dynamicists have suggested that the fish uses bodily action to manipulate and exploit the local environment (the water) so as to swim faster, accelerate more quickly, and so on. It appears that the tuna find and exploit naturally occurring currents so as to gain speed and use tail flaps to create additional vortices and pressure gradients, which are then used for rapid acceleration and turning. The physical system whose functioning explains the prodigious swimming capacities of the Bluefin tuna is thus the fish-as-embedded-in, and as actively exploiting, its local environment.^{xvii}

A cup is a

Image 5 | *Many a Slip*



Two cups cut, carved and sledged porcelain. (11 x 11.5 x 10 and 12 x 12 x 10.5 cm)

The cups pictured above were made as part of a writing_making project for the group exhibition 'Many a Slip', curated by Alison Britton for Marsden Woo gallery, London, 2015. Two text-images were shown (below), with the cups.

Image 6 | Many a Slip_2



A Cup is a House (with acknowledgement to Mary Ann Hoberman)

The process lives in a house made of three objects (or, 4144 characters in flight from a maker)

Two framed prints (77 x 57 x 3.5 cm each)

The two texts were written during the making process. One was inspired by unglazed cups, sitting on the workbench and finding, by chance, a Mary Ann Hoberman poem for children. The other was written as a studio journal, a method developed during the PhD project.

Image 7 | Many a Slip_3



Two cups (work in progress)

I select the tools that fit the material and the form. Marks and qualities proceed from the making. There is a vague image in my mind's eye. As the marks make form, a deal is made – between that vague, inner image and the reality in front of me. The image fades as the vagueness becomes concrete, but some 'ideal' residue remains, standing over the hand and making it nervous.

A difference that appears egregious in the making body, yet, when asked to manifest itself outside the made object, resists words, cloaks itself in opacity.

Or, a different difference would have it that a decision about the emergent qualities is taken at some point – 'here is the feel I want it to have' – and thereafter this decision is resolutely pursued, with the anxiety of failure, the fuck-up, hovering. Or is this the same difference, just expressed in a different form? Why did I think it was a different difference? Partly, I think because I'm working from a set of studio notes and also thinking independently of those notes. So, I go back to 'Two Ways of Making' and identify an unexpressed subtlety. The 'pre-existing sense' is not fixed; it is in dialogue with the emergent qualities of the object. The vague, pre-existing image becomes part of a conversation between body, tools and material. Could that conversation be characterised as style?

Image 8 | *Many a Slip_4*



Two cups (work in progress)

Is it my job to write as clearly as I can, so that the text is perfectly comprehensible? Or is that like saying that each cup should be a perfect realisation of a mental construct? If I write clearly, you might think better of the text, but have no deeper understanding of the engagement with material being described. Like an object that hides its struggle for life behind a façade of facility. Or perhaps it makes no difference – a text that seems to communicate something that is impossible to communicate, as opposed to a text that openly fails to communicate something that is impossible to communicate.

If the urge to make well can be resisted, might all marks, all qualities, flow only from the technique employed? The end of the gouging is not a fine interior, but a serviceable interior, of the right thickness, that does not conceal the means of its construction. The sledged lip, while done with great care, is about the tool, the hand and the clay; not about a well-formed lip, a beautiful lip. An old idea, of course, but not so easy to apply in a craft context. Not so easy to usher into / out of praxis.

Image 9 | Many a Slip_5



Two cups (work in progress)

It is easy to write and make badly, but very difficult to resist the urge, the imperative, to write and make well. To resist that urge, as a maker, is to resist facility, to resist craft. But I'm trying to make a cup that someone will want to drink out of (when not contemplating the shade). And I'm trying to make a text that will express something worth knowing about craft. So, what I'm hoping is that text and cup will not be badly made, as such, but made without the boundary of the normative, the burden of style. As I write it, I know I did not achieve it. I cannot hide from the memory of the compulsion to judge one mark better than another; the compulsion to make decisions based on taste rather than... than what? Functionality? Unselfconscious process? Non-subjective making? Object-object engagement? It's not Yanagi's Unknown Craftsman, or the Pompidou Centre, or Stokes's Stones of Rimini; it is not aesthetic morality, because, while inelegance and poor functionality are not courted, they are tolerated. The object is secondary to the process. The process lives in a house made of three objects – a cup, a text, a body.

I don't have a word for it yet, but the making produced a tacit, fugitive understanding of it; and the writing at least helped consciousness to find the tracks of that understanding.

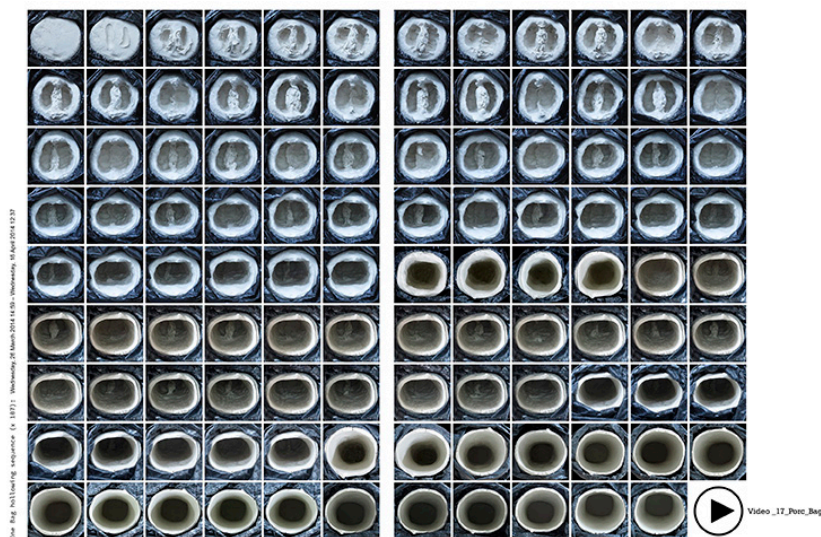
So, returning to the notion of ‘no concern for what the result should look like’. In practice, this is extremely difficult – the more time you invest in the object, the more it seems to stand for your making ability, for you. In reality, there is a to and fro between the two positions, but when I make now, I tell myself that I can’t fuck it up. While there is still care and intense attention, it makes making more enjoyable and open-ended.

Two ways of making:

1. Not having a fixed end in mind, but being guided at all points in the process by an ‘inbuilt’, pre-existing sense of what looks good, what works.
2. Not having a fixed end in mind and, while still taking care, only following the ‘logic’ of each technique of the process (whether cutting, gouging, or sledging), with no concern for what the result should look like.^{xviii}

One Bag [2014]

Image 9 | One Bag



For the PhD project final show, my starting point was a bag of porcelain – this was my playground and the game played produced a range of outputs, some predictable, some entirely unpredictable. One of the latter was ‘Kidney-Bag: a sort of love story, in one act’.

Image 10 | One Bag_2

Kidney_Bag
A sort of love story, in one act.
Characters:
Kidney O'Toole
Porcella Bag
Kidney: I will dig you a hole.
Bag: Sure I'm whole already.
Kidney: I will craft you a volume.
Bag: Old shite and empty promises.
Kidney: I will open you up. I will excavate your soul. I will introduce you to the light.
Bag: If you must.
Kidney: It is not up to me.
Bag: I am not up to you.
Kidney: Then let us begin.
Bag: I will resist.
Kidney: But Mak will prevail.
Bag: Ah, we'll see.
Kidney: I will make you holy.
Bag: You blinks and your bloody looks. Will you just leave me be?
Kidney: I will entrap you whole.
Bag: I am all atreable.
Kidney: My teeth, your teeth.
Bag: I was not made for this.
Kidney: But I was.

Bag: Tell me what you will.
Kidney: In we go.
Bag: Hang on, who is Mak?
Kidney: The finger boy.
Bag: Ah, he has ploughed my field.
Kidney: Forget him.
Bag: I cannot.
Kidney: I will efface him.
Bag: He lives inside me.
Kidney: You will think only of me.
Bag: If I must.
Kidney: My molars are sharp.
Bag: Then drive carefully on me our neck.
Kidney: I care for all of you.
Bag: Have we met before?
Kidney: Not like this, my love.
Bag: You are Eweand.
Kidney: It is too late for that.
Bag: Well, my body is yours.
Kidney: But your mind is the thing.
Bag: I mind your thing.
Kidney: But together, we can shape him.
Bag: Yes, we are strong.

The characters are: Kidney O'Toole (a serrated kidney) and Porcella Bag (a bag of porcelain)

Both characters speak with strong Irish brogues. O'Toole comes over as knowing, pompous, changeable, a little louche; Bag as earthy, constant, accepting.

Kidney: I will dig you a hole.

Bag: Sure, I'm whole already.

Kidney: I will craft you a volume.

Bag: Old shite and empty promises.

Kidney: I will open you up. I will excavate your soul. I will introduce you to the light.

Bag: If you must.

Kidney: It is not up to me.

Bag: I am not up to you.

Kidney: Then, let us begin.

Bag: I will resist.

Kidney: But Mak will prevail.

Bag: Ah, we'll see.

Kidney: I will make you holy.

Bag: You blokes and your bloody holey - will you just leave me be?

Kidney: I will scrape you whole.

Bag: I am all atremble.

Kidney: My teeth, your flesh.

Bag: I was not made for this.

Kidney: But I was.

Bag: Then do what you will.

Kidney: In we go.

Bag: Hang on. Who is Mak?

Kidney: The finger boy.

Bag: Ah, He has ploughed my field.

Kidney: Forget him.

Bag: I cannot.

Kidney: I will efface him.

Bag: He lives inside me.

Kidney: You will think only of me.

Bag: If I must.

Kidney: My molars are sharp.

Bag: Then drive carefully on me corners.

Kidney: I care for all of you.

Bag: Have we met before?

Kidney: Not like this, my love.

Bag: You are forward.

Kidney: It is too late for that.

Bag: Well, my *body* is yours.

Kidney: But your *mind* is the thing.

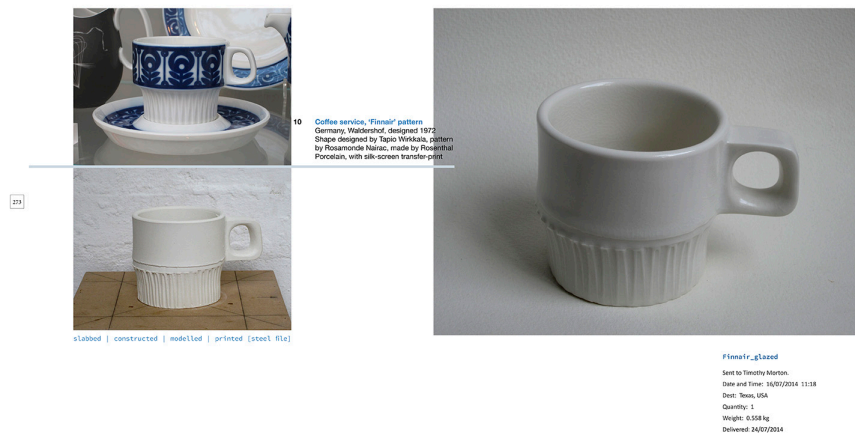
Bag: I mind your thing.

Kidney: But *together*, we can shape him.

Bag: Yes, we are strong...

The full text is available on the RCA research repository.^{xix}

Image 11 | One Bag_3



The 'Finnair' cup above is one of nine cups made from the porcelain bag hollowings. All were copies from cups in the V&A ceramics collections, and all made 'wrong', or somehow awkwardly. I wanted to foreground the direct interaction between body and material, but also imposed a rule that they would all be functional. Each was gifted to someone who had been important to my research project -this one went to Tim Morton.

Cup Rules

1. Each cup starts as a copy of one of my selections from the V&A collection.
2. All cups are made from a single bag of porcelain (Valentine's Special Porcelain - the body stocked by the department).^{xx}
3. Only 'structural', or carved decoration, following the originals. Nothing applied and no colour.
4. All cups to be glazed with a transparent glaze, made from standard materials stocked by the department.
5. All cups must be functional.
6. No 'dry runs', or testing - of making techniques, or glazing.
7. All cups will be gifted to specified individuals. Which cup for which recipient will be decided during the making process.

This list was presented as part of the final exhibition, One Bag, along with a text on exchange:

Exchange

For a while now, I've been puzzling over how the practicalities of making a living might intersect with the possibilities of gift exchange. This prompted the decision to think of the exhibition as an experiment in exchange, with all the cups being given away.

Each cup is offered as a gift to someone who has influenced my thinking over the course of the project. I see this as an act of generosity - a return for the intellectual generosity, or creativity that inspires dialogue - but am also cognisant of Marcel Mauss's reading of reciprocity - gift giving as a form of control, with the expectation of some form of return. I make no bones of my desire to elicit the attention of figures who might be interested in making generally, and the work that I am doing in particular.

As a means of drawing attention to the value of making and of introducing the possibility of financial return, the exhibition will instigate a further experiment in exchange. After negotiating a cup form and making hours to be expended, I will produce cups to commission for the same hourly rate as the commissioner is paid in their job of work, whatever it might be.^{xxi}

Funnily enough, no one took me up on this offer.

Image 12 | One Bag_4



This cup, made with no tools, just fingers, was given to Sally O'Reilly.

I've mentioned playgrounds several times throughout the text – a term I've borrowed from Ian Bogost's recent book, *Play Anything*. Bogost expands and reframes an idea that is endemic to art, design or craft practice – that of a site, a set of materials, a process, a project, a brief as a set of limits.

A recent project grew from a request from the Devon Guild of Craftsmen to submit work for a group exhibition, *Pour Me*, on the theme of the jug.^{xxii} The exhibited works (three objects and six prints) were by-products of a 'game of Jug', instigated by Martin Heidegger's essay, 'The Thing', and the subsequent purchase of a jug made at Prinknash Abbey, home and workplace of concrete poet, Dom Sylvester Houédard. Working out the limits of

the game was seen as a form of speculation on the reality of a jug. The primary playground was constructed from:

1. Three texts: 'The Thing' [Martin Heidegger] / 'The Handle' [Georg Simmel] / 'me as poet rather than critic' [Dom Sylvester Houédard]
2. Two books of images (with captions): Sculpture Grecque [Jean Charbonneaux] / The Louvre: Sculpture, Ceramics, Objets D'Art [Maximilien Gauthier]
3. Prinknash Abbey jug (1 litre)

A further output from this game was a series of images, created through conventional collage and a range of digital processes, presented as a thirty-image loop on a large screen at Bath Spa University.^{xxiii}

Image 13 | A Game of Jug

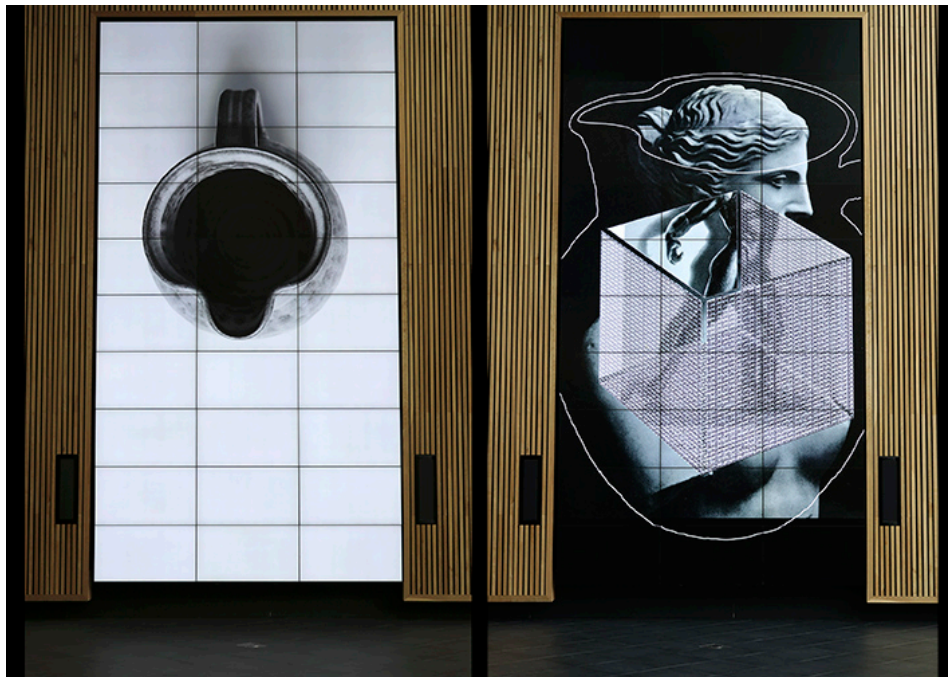
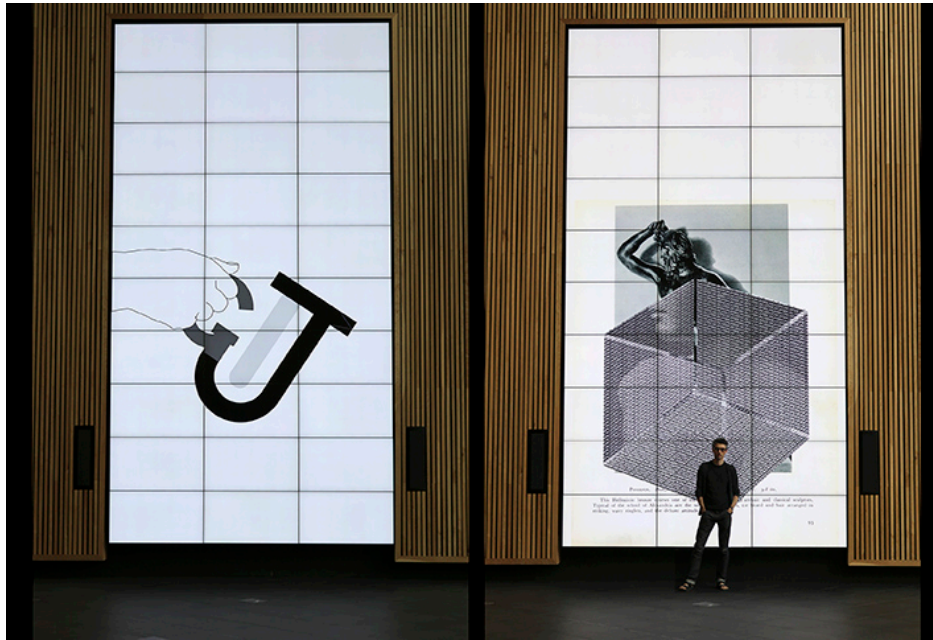


Image 14 | A Game of Jug_2



Bogost is clear that fun is not the same as pleasure – it is more than likely to be hard work. Fun is associated with the ability to find novelty in familiar situations. The way to do this is to create a set of limits, otherwise known as a playground. Fun arises from playing the game that is generated by these limits. The true creative act is the making, or the finding, of the playground.

Play invites us to draw an overdue conclusion: that the potential meaning and value of things – anything: relationships, the natural world, packaged goods – is in them rather than in us. Play is not a kind of self-expression, nor a pursuit of freedom. It is a kind of creation, a kind of craftsmanship, even. By adopting, inventing, constructing, and reconfiguring the material and conceptual limits around us, we can fashion novelty from anything at all. Although they refer to poesis – the making that grounds poetry – instead of play, the philosophers Bert Dreyfus and Sean Kelly come to a similar conclusion about finding meaning in a secular age: ‘The task of the craftsman is not to generate the meaning, but rather to cultivate in himself the skill for discerning the meanings that are already there.’^{xxiv}

I’ve always thought of artists as professional noticers, as well as makers, in the broadest sense.

So, to conclude. How might we see material knowledge, and the skills that go hand-in-hand with it, as tools in a speculative tool-box? Tools that aid imagination, that create imagination. I see all forms of craft making, to a greater or lesser extent, as acts of political resistance. But, if we don’t want to be neatly packaged, by the policy-makers and the money-makers, as individual and competitive units of economic productivity within the ‘cultural industries’, then we need to actively define and expand craft ourselves.

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