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Craft Readers

Proposal

A chance meeting at Making Futures (MF) 2015 led to us creating Craft Readers, a network for postgrad and faculty researchers at University of the Arts London interested in critically discussing craft texts and themes. For us, 'texts' includes exhibitions, experiences, images, inspiring people and objects, as well as documents - anything relevant to starting the discussion, focussed on social/technological change and 'new ways of being'. We gather on a semi-regular basis to discuss suggested key 'texts' or themes arising from previous discussions. Looking at common themes, topics and sticking points, Craft Readers attempt to understand the nexus points in craft research and has become a space for making ideas, making conversation and making connections between disparate practices. Through it we have been broadening understanding of the craft field and research within it, within our university and our individual colleges, along with our own practices.

As MF2017 provides an ideal platform for garnering ideas and opinions around key questions in the field, we would like to propose a Craft Readers session, inviting delegates to participate.

Format

As this is a highly flexible format we are proposing two modes of 'presentation':

- As a presentation slot

After a brief introduction to Craft Readers, our aims and the theme, the rest of the session will be devoted to discussion. We will publicise the theme and suggested 'texts' ahead of the conference. The discussion will be recorded (potentially as an audio file, along with notes and diagrams).

- As an unconventional format, throughout the conference

As a drop in/out conversation, we would place an introductory poster to Craft Readers, our aims, and the theme in a space (even in the grounds, preferably where many will pass), along with facilities (eg, copies of key 'texts', post-it notes) for participation outside of scheduled pop-in discussion time(s) (eg, presentation slots, lunch breaks). We will record this through the notes, diagrams and audio files.

Theme

Narratives, as our theme, engages with the expanding and ever-changing academic field of craft research, and the conference themes. Specifically we would discuss:

- Developing narratives which work for small and large production scales; for developed and developing countries; for process based and product based investigations

- Truths in craft narratives and craft histories; in written and object based research

- The role of narrative in justifying making

We hope this will show overlaps and gaps in approaches, identify key thematic texts, and suggest alternative research questions to be explored in future Craft Readers iterations.

Outcomes

We will summarise the discussion for the conference journal using our notes and diagrams, and publish the minutes on the Craft Readers website. We are currently developing our website as resource and so hope to use the conference discussion to begin mapping the approaches of delegates, based on disciplines/processes, methods and focus.

Please notice we are submitting papers around our own individual research and consider them our primary. This is an additional group proposal, as agreed with the conference organisers.