

Peter Oakley
Royal College of Art

Protecting Productive Crafting: identifying and supporting crafting in industry in the 21st Century

This paper will examine the phenomenon of crafting in industry, primarily through some of the findings of the AHRC-funded project: Extending the Potential for the Digitally Printed Ceramic Surface. The paper will present observations from the project, including project participants' perspectives towards 'intelligent making' as it features in their day-to-day work. This material will then be compared with other fieldwork conducted by the author and the work of other researchers, in order to determine where crafting typically fits into manufacturing relating to the creative industries, particularly in the case of the production of luxury and other high-value goods. Having located crafting in industry and identified the unique contribution it makes to a range of manufacturing situations, the author then asks if it is important that such activities are acknowledged in any sense by practitioners themselves or their employers and managers as a distinctive type of practice. The paper concludes by considering if acknowledgement in itself will be sufficient to support crafting in industry in the 21st century, and if not, what further steps may need to be taken in order to ensure its survival.