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## ***Sustaining Craft Practice by Teaching and Learning through Live Demonstration***

The crafts are characterised by the object's physical presence and materiality. The process of making has been a part of humankind, our culture and history since the beginning of time. As humans we have an arguably instinctive need to connect with materials and the processes of creating.

In our 21st century technology-driven society we contend that physicality and materiality tend to be often inappropriately and problematically marginalised in favour of representation and the virtual. We further assert that the investment of time needed in order to gain skills with materials is in stark contrast to our 'fast pace' modern society. In the face of world recession, critical values in Westernised society are beginning to move towards the longer lasting and potentially more meaningful, away from a market-driven consumptive base, and towards more sustainable modes of being.

This paper reflects how the physicality and materiality of craft practice is sustained in a dynamic pedagogic framework by learning and teaching through demonstration. It primarily explores the value of live performance in respect of virtual representation, and claims that the richness of non-verbal communication helps form the particular languages used in demonstrating – and thereby sustaining – craft skills.

The paper draws on a wider research project, Teaching and Learning through Practice, funded by the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Through Design, a partnership between the University of Brighton, Victoria & Albert Museum, Royal Institute of British Architects and Royal College of Art. This research grew out of our practical experience as makers and as teachers and demonstrators on the MDes 3D Materials Practice course at the University of Brighton, which values individual creativity realised through craft processes, skills and material qualities.

The research focuses on how students in key craft disciplines learn physical technical skills and how these are taught through demonstration. Reading a demonstration, identifying what is critical to enable emulation and applying such information, is recognised as a complex process for learners. The paper outlines the intricate range of communication methods employed in delivery, focusing on the importance of experiential learning and non-verbal language, gesture and its link to the haptic process of making, gathering information by touch, the inter-relationship between hand-making and the individual body's physique, and how temporality and rhythm in making impacts learning.

The importance of live performance in demonstration is recognised in discussion of its flexibility to meet diverse learner needs, to be continually evolved, updated and improved, and how the learner is engaged through theatricality, danger, risk and unpredictability. Through this, we argue for the pedagogic potency and transferability of competent interaction and knowledge exchange between expert and learner in a contemporary educational environment.

Although this paper reflects case study research on demonstrations in Ceramics and Metals, other non-design practice-based subjects – Culinary Arts and Pharmaceutical & Chemical Sciences – were included for innovative comparison as we anticipate that this enquiry has significance for education in practice-based subjects beyond craft.

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<http://artsresearch.brighton.ac.uk/research/academic/boyes>  
<http://artsresearch.brighton.ac.uk/research/academic/cousens>

Teaching and Learning Through Practice – Boyes, Cousens and Stuart 2008  
<http://cetld.brighton.ac.uk/projects/completed-projects/through-practice>