

Sustainability of Crafts as a Discipline?

This research explores the problem of sustainability of the Crafts as a discipline. More specifically, it investigates how the Crafts can respond constructively to the pressures of contemporary technical developments in order to regenerate itself and at the same time preserve its integrity.

The research discusses first the presumptions that underlay the question and argument, and contextualises them within a contemporary discourse, drawing on literature from Adamson (2007)¹, Clifford (1993)², Greenhalgh (2002)³, Margetts (1992)⁴, Roberts (2008) and Sennett (2007)⁵. The discussion raises questions about the nature of craft, and how academic research in the crafts can be used to facilitate developments and regeneration of the crafts.

From this discussion, two aspects emerge that determine the further development of the research: firstly, the problematic of rapid technical development for a discipline, which has remained reliant on manual working, material intelligence and sensitivity. This includes economic and social issues, and raises questions how the crafts can adopt and integrate these new developments. Secondly, there is the question how does the technical development relate to the development of the crafts on aesthetic and conceptual levels.

In order to approach these issues, the inquiry takes a comparative technical and philosophical-aesthetic approach. Following the discussion of the problem, the research proceeds through a threefold analysis of 1) the emergence of technical developments and their potential social and economic impact; 2) the emergence of aesthetic and conceptual developments and how they advance the crafts; and 3) where technical and conceptual advances are combined, how this can lead to a substantial progress of the discipline.

The aim and outcome of the study identifies how new developments or 'new avenues' in the crafts emerge. As part of this, the study explains how Crafts can adopt and use contemporary technical to enhance its own viability, and how the understanding of the interrelationship of technical and conceptual development can be used to facilitate this development.

¹ Adamson, G. (2007). *Thinking through Craft*. Berg.

² Clifford, H. (ed.) 1993. *20th Century Silver*. Crafts Council.

³ Greenhalgh, P. (2002). *The persistence of Craft*. London: A&C Black.

⁴ Margetts, M. (1992). *Things gather world*. In Michael Rowe, Köln: Museum für Angewandte Kunst.

⁵ Sennett, R. (2008). *The Craftsman*. Allen Lane.