



Crafts and Ethics – Konsthantverk och etik

A collaboration between Academy of Design and Crafts (HDK) at the University of Gothenburg, Konsthantverkscentrum (KHVC) and the Röhsska Museum in Gothenburg, **24-25 November**

Background:

The HDK, KHVC and the Röhsska Museum have previously carried out two international conferences in the field of Crafts; 2013 Mapping Crafts theories and 2015 About time. The conferences have had international lecturers and turned to practitioners and other activists in the field of Crafts, both in Sweden and internationally. This year we will conduct an international seminar on the subject: Crafts and Ethics.

Description:

What are the ethical responsibilities of craft today?

This event will explore the complex debates about labour conditions, material sourcing and perceptions of value that are central to the future identity of crafts. The proximity of craft practices to production arguably makes the craft disciplines better positioned to safeguard their ethical standards. But what standards should we aspire to the crafts of the future upholding? How can the crafts justify the investment of maker's time weighed against scale of audience or financial remuneration? In a world overfilled with goods, how do we defend bringing more into the world?

Keynote speakers are **Christien Meindertsma**, based in the Netherlands, whose recent Fibre Market project exposes new potential for textile recycling alongside the frequency with which our clothing inaccurately claims its fibre content and Australian **Rod Bamford**, recently appointed Head of Ceramics and Glass at the Royal College of Art, whose Digital Bamboo Research Collaboration investigated how twitter trading and the internet of things could apply to craft practices. Panel presentations: Märta Mattsson, Birgitta Nordström, Nicolas Cheng, Karin Frankenstein & Tomas Auran, Hilda Hellström and Katja Pettersson. **Jessica Hemmings**, an internationally renowned researcher, writer, lecturer and recently appointed Professor of Crafts at HDK, will chair the event.

Program

Friday November 24th 6:00-8:00 PM Röhsska auditorium entrance Chalmersgatan

17:00-18:30 Registration

18:30-19:00 Introduction **Jessica Hemmings**

19:00-20:00 Keynote speaker **Christien Meindertsma**

20:00-22:00 Mingle and simple food

Saturday November 25th

10:00 AM-12:30 PM Aulan Valand, 12:30-14:15 HDK room 527 + 305, 14:15-17:00 Röhsska auditorium entrance Chalmersgatan

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10:00-11:00 Keynote speaker **Rod Bamford**

11:00-12:30 Lectures 3 speakers x 20 minutes; **Katja Pettersson, Nicolas Cheng, Karin Auran Frankenstein** and **Tomas Auran**

12:30-14:15 Lunch with group discussions. Each group has a few questions to discuss around the theme of the conference. Each group returns a question to the final panel discussion. (Both English and Swedish-speaking groups)

14:15-15:45 Lectures 3 speakers x 20 minutes; **Märta Mattsson, Birgitta Nordström, Hilda Hellström**

Nordström, Hilda Hellström

15:45-16:00 Coffee

16:00-16:45 panel discussion moderated by **Jessica Hemmings**

16:45-17:00 event concludes

Speakers;

Christien Meindertsma (Friday evening keynote)

Knowing and Not Knowing Where Things Come From

Does it change your behaviour if you know where things come from, how they were made and who made them? These are the questions that I asked myself when I was graduating from the Design Academy in Eindhoven in 2003. I did not imagine then that these are still the questions that interest me most. My talk will discuss making one sheep sweaters, a book about a single pig and trying to make something out of the complete harvest (10.000 kg) of flax from a farmer in the Dutch Flevopolder. I will talk about my attempts to try avoid craft and embrace industrial production because for me personally producing locally, environmentally friendly for a fair price is the most important factor, and about wondering where is the border between industrial production and craft?

Rod Bamford (Saturday morning keynote)

Making Ethics

What are the ethical implications of craft if, as Glenn Adamson says in *The Invention of Craft*, craft is 'an indispensable means of working'? Does this mean that craft ethics exist in all kinds of work? If so, then I would argue that those who are experts in making, thinking about and working with craft have a significant role to play in helping us make an ethics of working, or living, beyond the current 'craft' paradigm. My talk uses this argument as a premise to uncover aspects of the essence of craft practice that might contribute ethical perspectives of value in the 21st century. My ideas will be discussed loosely under 3 key headings: craft and the ethics of authorship, interaction, and interference. I will try to develop the idea of craft operating in 'ecologies of production and exchange' where it performs different roles at different points in time and space. I will argue that in this context, some common ethical positions taken by craft and the guidance they might offer is currently insufficient, and how some perspectives are misdirected in achieving their aims because of aspirations to a symbolic order of stasis ill equipped to engage with critical contemporary global issues. I'll conclude with some ideas of how craft might re-engage with its core characteristics of virtuosity, agility and care, and rethink their application towards 'making ethics' as well as things.

Katja Pettersson (20 min panel presentation)

The Fifty Fifty Projects

What are the ethics of making yet another product, even if it is produced and bought in a sustainable way? Are we really producing products or are we producing self-authorisation as designers and producers? Is it possible for a company to have an ethical standpoint in all parts of the process? What choices would we have done if I were the producer?

Critiquing my own initiative, The Fifty Fifty Projects, I now ask how can design and craft contribute to a better world instead of pitying designers for getting a low salary. Looking at Maslow's pyramid of need, I see that the field where The Fifty Fifty Projects could have made a change was in the upper part covering the need of the social, esteem and self-authorisation. The physiological and safety parts were not covered. With you now knowing of my dilemma, I will talk about the structure of how we were thinking around Fifty Fifty Projects. Finding an alternative to the royalty system (implemented around 1950), the system then was based on collaboration with few designers and many products produced. Today the system is reversed: many designers and producing companies and few objects produced. To survive as a designer approximately 25 products need to be in production for an ok salary. I wanted to know how the manufacturers were thinking and how to make an alternative. I question why producers pay double for logistics than for the actual

design and if we need to produce and transport all over the world? Is it possible to educate the end consumer how to consume, by consuming?

Nicolas Cheng (20 min panel presentation)

Sticky Matter

The notion of conflict materiality may be found in surroundings we interact with on a daily basis, but carry along histories and narratives that are very complex and seldom transparent. How can the craft or jewellery medium – their processes and ways of thinking – be used to problematise materials and the way they are sourced, produced, consumed and eventually discarded? How can we as makers raise awareness of, shed light on or propose possible, more sustainable scenarios for important issues that pertain to material resources, their appropriation and distribution? How does this affect producers as well as consumers in the global arena?

Karin Auran Frankenstein and Tomas Auran (20 min panel presentation)

Transforming/upgrading time and material

We will briefly discuss two ongoing projects and their inherent relations to ethics. First, our common work, *The MarbleWool* where material itself is a mediator of values between the crafter and the viewer. This project is based on finding different ways of upgrading/transforming discarded wool. The urge to find ways to use the material is one main driving force. We will discuss the issue of time and freedom or lack of freedom to choose what to do with it and how art and craft can function as a tool to liberate us from the capitalist logic of productivity. These issues lead us into the second project that we are involved in, the work of the Malmö based collective group Cartier, using craft as a binding glue in public gatherings connected to political and social issues.

Märta Mattsson (20 min panel presentation)

Bloody Beautiful: a personal journey through the uncanny use of taxidermy in art

Is it ok to use a deceased body as ornamentation? What is the acceptable use of materials that were once alive? How can I, as a vegetarian and animal-lover, use dead creatures in my pieces? What are my intentions and what am I trying to say with my pieces? I will address different psychological and emotional responses to both my work as well as other artists' work concerning taxidermy. I will also speak a little bit about hierarchies between animals and humans and our relationship to different species as well as human irrational behaviours and ideas concerning what is considered offensive, attractive or repulsive.

Birgitta Nordström (20 min panel presentation)

In Infancy 2017

Certain questions, and things that happen to us, leave a deep imprint in our lives. And this is what happened to me when I was asked to weave small wrapping cloths for children who die during pregnancy or delivery. These wrapping cloths had an important task to perform in a difficult situation where words maybe fail those involved. Could the weave talk and act as words – by touching it and looking at it? In an attempt to examine this question, a booklet was produced and the wrapping cloths were also shown in a number of exhibitions. Sharing them with others led to me having contact with parents who had experienced the loss of a child, as well as the staff in hospitals, and I was so glad to receive their support and share in their experience. Preparations for a clinical study to be launched also took place, and this study is now underway at different pregnancy and childbirth clinics. The work and research that was once carried out alone has now come to be a process that I share with students, colleagues and friends in a Weaving Research Group at the HDK – Academy of Design and Crafts, University of Gothenburg. *To embrace, to hold and to wrap* are the words that lead us – as we weave on the same loom, and encourage each other on by saying: let's weave – and let us weave the loveliest we can.

Hilda Hellström (20 min panel presentation)

The Essence of an Object

My 2012 graduation project *The Materiality of a Natural Disaster* was set inside the Fukushima exclusion-zone. I made a short documentary about the rice farmer Naoto Matsumura, who had decided to remain inside the evacuated area. From the radioactive soil of his wasted agricultural land, we created food-serving trays, objects that would materialise the events in Fukushima, like iconised souvenirs. The starting point for the project was to explore the idea that objects are imbued with meaning that goes beyond its physicality. I was exploring ways of creating artefacts relating to narratives, sites or people. Even though my work doesn't talk about production and its ethics I do think that a key to this topic is to talk about ways of relating; both to other beings and objects, as opposed to creating an environment of inanity. I will touch upon subjects such as the fetishized object, Donald Winnicott's *Transitional object*, Volker Pawlowski's workshop that manufactures 'real' pieces of the Berlin wall, Cornelia Parker's *'Exhaled Blanket'* and Teresa Margolles' *'What Else Could We Speak About?'*.