



Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Scholars Compass

Theses and Dissertations

Graduate School

2009

Altruism, Activism, and the Moral Imperative in Craft

Gabriel Craig
Virginia Commonwealth University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Fine Arts Commons](#)

© The Author

Downloaded from

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/1713>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.

© Gabriel Craig 2009

All Rights Reserved

Altruism, Activism, and the Moral Imperative in Craft

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University

by

Gabriel Craig

Bachelor of Fine Arts (emphasis in Metals/ Jewelry), Western Michigan University, 2006

Director: Susie Ganch

Assistant Professor, Department of Craft/ Material Studies

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
May 2009

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge several people who have contributed to my success and development as an artist, writer, and as a person of good character in general. First, I would like to thank my father, without whose support the journey would have been much more difficult, Amy Weiks whose unwavering love and support has provided the foundation that allows me to take on so many projects, Susie Ganch, whose mentorship, honesty, and trust have helped me to grow like a weed over the past two years, Natalya Pinchuk whose high standards have helped me to challenge myself more than I thought possible, Sonya Clark who baptized me into the waters of craft and taught me to swim, and Dr. Charles Brownell who encouraged my curiosity and helped me to become a better writer, thinker, and researcher.

Also, I would like to thank my brother, Sean Craig, who nobly endured my direction as we collaborated on *The Moral Imperative in the Craft Marketplace*, and my colleagues in the Craft/ Material Studies Department whose friendship and criticism helped me find my way.

Table of Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements	ii
List of Figures	v
Abstract	vi
Part 1 – Understanding the Moral Imperative: Past, Present and Future	1
Chapter 1 – The Moral Imperative in Craft: A Continuum of Concern.....	2
Introduction	2
Early Imperatives	3
The Arts and Crafts Movement – Social Dissent Imperatives	
in a Modern World	7
The Arts and Crafts Movement in America	12
The Decline of the Arts and Crafts Movement	
and the Moral Imperative	15
Chapter 2 – Craft in the 21 st Century Marketplace	18
Introduction	18
Declining Markets.....	18
Slow Food, CSAs, and the Green Movement	23
Craft and the Contemporary Moral Imperative.....	28
Chapter 3 – Considering Craftivism: Craft as an Interactive Practice	33
Introduction	33
Charting Altruism and Activism in a Project Based Practice	35

Self-Reliance Projects	36
Educational Projects.....	38
Community Engagement Projects.....	39
Philanthropic Projects	41
Part 2 – Application of the Moral Imperative	43
Chapter 4 – Technical and Material Concerns	44
Chapter 5 – Personal History	46
Narrative of Development in Graduate School.....	46
Curriculum Vitae.....	50
Bibliography	55
Appendix - Documentation of <i>Philanthropy Failed: The Altruist Series</i>	58

List of Figures

- Figure 1: The Venus of Willendorf, Stone, c. 22,000 – 24,000 B.C.E.
- Figure 2: Roman Ring in the Hellenistic Style depicting Asclepios the Greek God of Medicine, Gold. c.100-200 C.E.
- Figure 3: Detail of Saint John Window, South Nave, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres France, Stained Glass, 13th Century.
- Figure 4: Pelican Ciborium, Italian, Gilt Copper, c. 1540.
- Figure 5: The Tor Abbey Jewel, Enamel, Gold, c. 1540.
- Figure 6: A.W.N Pugin, Cover Page *The True Principals of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, 1841.
- Figure 7: A.W.N. Pugin, Bread Plate, *Waste Not Want Not*, Earthenware, Encaustic Inlay, c. 1850.
- Figure 8: Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)*, Wrapped Hard Candies, 1991.
- Figure 9: Participants Sorting Jewelry for *Radical Jewelry Makeover*, 2007.
- Figure 10: Futurefarmers, *The Reverse Ark*, Pasadena City College Art Gallery, 2008.
- Figure 11: Michael Swaine, *Free Mending Library*, 2002 (ongoing).
- Figure 12: Keith Mendak, *Project Hope*, 2008.
- Figure 13: Stephanie Rahmstorf, *CO₂ Pins: Jewelry for Our Climate*, Sterling Silver, Pearls, 2006.
- Figure 14: *Craft Piece° 2*, Table, Glass Platter, 14 & 18 Karat Gold, Various Faceted Gem Stones, Projected Video, 2007.
- Figure 15: *161 Studies From Contemporary Studio Jewelry*, Research Drawings, 2007.
- Figure 16: *The Narcissist Suite*, Rings, Books, Postcards, Video, 2008.
- Figure 17: *The Pro Bono Jeweler*, Performance, 2008.

Abstract

Altruism, Activism, and the Moral Imperative in Craft

By Gabriel Craig, MFA

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2009.

Major Director: Susie Ganch
Assistant Professor, Craft/ Material Studies Department

I consider myself a metalsmith although my interest in materials and ideas extend beyond the boundaries of traditional practice. I approach my work thematically, meaning that I treat my discipline as a framework for a broad investigation rather than as a skill set or process. The outcomes of this approach are therefore varied and include jewelry, installation, performance, video, interactive community based projects, print and web based writing, and historical research.

It is through humor or direct viewer interaction that I promote accessibility in my work. My ideas are layered and communicated in a way that allows viewers to engage on multiple levels, from superficial aesthetic appreciation of my jewelry to complex theoretical contemplation of my multi-media installations. I frequently use text, photographs, and video for their transparency and accessibility as communicative devices. In general my process favors ideation over formal aesthetics, sometimes neglecting

objecthood in the pursuit of audience engagement. In my writing I employ a wry and biting style, using humor and metaphor generously. My interest in historical craft production frequently seeps into my writing. My studio practice, writing and research have a complementary relationship.

My thesis work has two main components, the physical exhibition, *Philanthropy Failed: The Altruist Series* and the written thesis, *Altruism, Activism, and the Moral Imperative in Craft*. These two components are different manifestations of the same investigation into ethical production and market imperatives embedded in craft objects and interactive craft-based projects rooted in the desire for social change.

Philanthropy Failed: The Altruist Series embeds the logos of prominent non-profit organizations into jewelry creating an object that, through commerce, can raise money and awareness for a charitable cause. The rejection of the project by the organizations that I sought to support highlights the cultural impotence of the individual to engage in meaningful social change activities. The exhibition documents the jewelry artifacts and their rejection by non-profit organizations, as well as three related videos; two documenting educational jewelry making performances (*The Pro Bono Jeweler Series*), and one chronicling the current state of ethical production within the established craft marketplace (*The Moral Imperative in the Craft Marketplace*).

Altruism, Activism, and the Moral Imperative in Craft begins by placing the moral imperative in craft production in a historical context, and then proceeds to locate moral consumerism within the current craft marketplace. It goes on to explore activist and

interactive projects rooted in craft. Additionally, it includes information about creation of the work for the physical exhibition and a brief history of my artistic development.

Part 1

Understanding the Moral Imperative:

Past, Present and Future

Chapter 1

The Moral Imperative in Craft: A Continuum of Concern

*“Generosity, humanity, kindness, compassion, mutual friendship and esteem, all the social and benevolent affections, when expressed in the countenance or behaviour, even towards those who are not peculiarly connected with ourselves, please the indifferent spectator upon almost every occasion.”*¹

- Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1759

Introduction

Altruism, Activism, and The Moral Imperative in Craft is a compilation of my research during the course of my graduate studies and the application of that research to my own studio practice. I consider my studio practice to be an inclusive endeavor. Whether I am making objects, performing, or writing, there is always a vein of idealism driving the project. And while idealism is separate from pragmatism, there is a robust historical and contemporary canon of idealistic figures and practices in craft. In the first part of this section I will examine figures, movements, and institutions that ground craft in a continuum of ethical and moral practices dictated by both idealism and societal norms. In the later part of this section I will show how the changing nature of popular culture has the

¹ Smith, Moral Sentiments, 1759, p. 38-39.

potential to bring craft to increased prominence and market share. I also suggest that craft must embrace institutional reform in order to have a renaissance in the 21st century.

Before delving into the subject of the moral imperative, it is necessary to define this term in the context of this thesis. A moral imperative is an idea or attribute embedded in an object, the goal of which is to improve its value through an appeal to a viewer or user's sense of justness and rightness; or an object which is codified by the moral impetus for its creation. Sometimes this imperative may have a direct correlation with monetary value, but this is not a necessity. My experience with the moral imperative has led me to create several basic categories of distinction. These categories are: ethical production (which can be subdivided between ethical labor sourcing and ethical material sourcing), spiritual or faith based imperatives, and social stewardship (which can also be broken down further into philanthropic and anti-consumerist imperatives).

Early Imperatives

While the moral imperative has a global history in crafted and non-crafted objects, the focus of my research has been in the Western craft tradition (this is due mostly to my own research motivations, which are indeed to understand the craft climate in which I operate, and in a sense to understand who I am; my craft genealogy if you will.) Before the industrial revolution in the West, all objects were crafted. Therefore all examples given before this time relate to craft in terms of our sense of function, rather than production. Also it should be mentioned that the moral imperative in the Western craft tradition has a long history and my descriptions in this section are not meant to be a definitive study of the

subject, but rather a series of examples that chart the moral imperative throughout Western history.

The first such objects were made at the beginning of recorded history and were most likely religious statuary. The Venus of Willendorf is the earliest such Western example. Found in Willendorf, Austria, the so-called Venus of Willendorf (fig.1) is dated from 24,000 BCE – 22,000 BCE.² The figure is not utilitarian and its attributes suggest that it has talismanic properties that offer an incentive for

fig. 1



The Venus of Willendorf, Stone, c. 22,000 – 24,000 B.C.E.

possession. The prevailing scholarship on the Venus contends that the object is a fertility talisman, thus the imperative for possession is a cultural one, where childbirth and fecundity are valued.

If we skip forward several thousand years we can see similar objects in Egyptian,

fig. 2



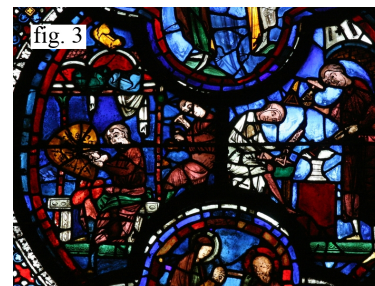
Roman Ring in the Hellenistic Style depicting Asclepius the Greek God of Medicine, Gold. c.100-200 C.E.

Greek and Roman cultures, but this time we look to jewelry instead. The prophylactic rings of these cultures invest psychological power in an object by using symbols of deities that were believed to protect the wearer. “Snakes were the symbol of a number of deities associated with healing, including the Egyptian goddess

² Witcombe, Venus of Willendorf. 2003.

Isis and the Greek god of medicine Asclepios (fig. 2). Worn as an amulet, the snake protected its wearer.”³ This imperative adds value to the object that indeed supersedes any monetary value that the materials may inherently possess. Again, the assumption is made that protection was valued in these cultures, which is fair to say given that the historical record of the period frequently cites wars among city-states – such as Athens – and the prominence of Roman history is defined by its imperial military campaigns. Therefore possessing an object with protective powers grounded the wearer in a basic cultural value, and further, allowed the wearer to commune with important culturally specific faith based icons.

Moving forward again to the rise of Christianity in Medieval Europe we find the moral imperative expanding to appear in media that were developed in this period (liturgical vessels, illuminated manuscripts, stained glass, etc.). The stained glass of Chartres Cathedral provides a vivid example of the co-branding of craft production and moral behavior. In addition to



Detail of Saint John Window, South Nave, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres France, Stained Glass, 13th Century.

the windows being produced by skilled artisans, the windows of Chartres depict their sponsors. The Saint John window (fig. 3) on the south nave aisle was sponsored by an armorer's (or metalsmith's) guild. Generally the stained glass of the period features moralizing narratives of biblical stories as an educational tool for the often-illiterate

³ <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/objectid/O122227>, April 14, 2009.

churchgoers. The material beauty of the stained glass is then only part of the value of the work, as the real value lies in their power to offer spiritual nourishment to the viewers. The stained glass is simply a repository for the cultural values imparted through the biblical stories.

Another prominent example just several hundred years later can be found in the liturgical objects and reliquaries used in the catholic tradition

of Renaissance Europe. The potent power of ritual objects like the chalice (which holds the blood of Christ), the paten, and the ciborium (which holds the body of Christ) contain a solemn reminder of the sacrifice of Christ. Figure 4 shows an Italian Ciborium from the mid- 16th century surmounted by a pelican. The pelican was associated with self-sacrifice due to the (false) belief that it pecked its own chest to draw blood to feed its young when no food was available. The object comes to embody – by symbolism and use – the moral teachings of the religion.

One last example on the cusp of the industrial revolution lies in memento mori jewelry (fig.5). Most popular during the 17th and 18th century in western Europe (though this example is earlier), memento mori often used obvious, but sometimes coded symbols of death to remind the wearer of what was to come; their own final judgment. Etymologically memento was used in late Middle English (c. 1470) to mean a prayer of commemoration, while mori is certainly related, if not directly taken from the Latin word

fig. 4



Pelican Ciborium, Italian, Gilt Copper, c. 1540.



fig. 5

The Tor Abbey Jewel, Enamel, Gold,
c. 1540.

moribundus, which means at the point of death.

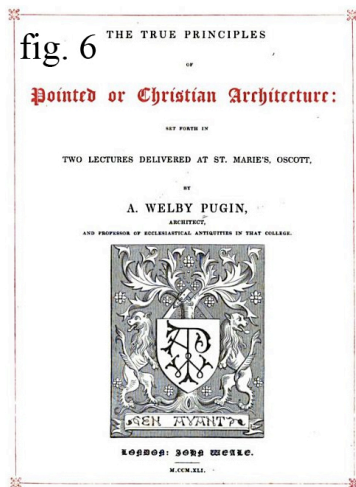
Perhaps there can be no more crass or straightforward bid for moral behavior than the memento mori, which enjoyed extreme popularity judging by the volume of artifacts that have survived into the present day.

The Arts and Crafts Movement – Social Dissent Imperatives in a Modern World

As we move towards the mid-18th century and the industrial revolution, the complexity of the moral imperative becomes more varied. Thinkers associated with the Scottish Enlightenment, including Francis Hutcheson and Adam Smith, wrote treatises on morality independent of religion, clearing the way for social imperatives in craft in the 19th century (Hutcheson also drew analogies between beauty and virtue which has implications for the Aesthetic Movement as well).⁴ Though new secular imperatives emerge, cultural, religious and spiritual imperatives still persist. For all intents and purposes the Arts and Crafts Movement began the tradition of introducing modern social imperatives to craft objects. But before we jump headlong into this discussion, it is useful to understand the rich culture of moralizing the craft object in the evolving movement.

⁴ McLean, Adam Smith, 2007. p. 48.

The early 19th century was dominated by the neo-classical style, which was in essence a revival of classical Greek and Roman architecture, painting, sculpture and



A.W.N Pugin, Cover Page *The True Principals of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, 1841.

decorative arts. In the early 1840s Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, a self-styled reformer, emerged as a prominent figure in English architecture and decorative arts. In 1841 Pugin published *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (fig. 6) which argued for a new gothic revival style – based on medieval design – which was more suited for a moral and Christian audience, than the current neo-classical and Greek revival taste of the period (which Pugin deemed to be pagan). In

1844 Pugin had an opportunity to prominently display his principals when he helped architect Sir Charles Barry design and implement a British and Christian design program for the Houses of Parliament, on the river Thames in London. Pugin designed all of the furnishings in the gothic revival style down to the furniture, rugs and wallpaper.

In 1851 The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations (also known as the Great Exhibition) took place in London, and Pugin figured prominently

fig. 7



A.W.N. Pugin, Bread Plate, *Waste Not Want Not*, Earthenware, Encaustic Inlay, c. 1850.

with his Gothic Court (Figure 7 depicts a Pugin designed plate from the exhibition).⁵ Britain's imperialism had led to a thirst for the exotic and Pugin's Gothic Court satiated that desire, as well as the desire for a moral Christian style that emanated from the 3rd Great Awakening which roughly coincided with the exhibition.

The success of the Great Exhibition of 1851 led to the founding of the South Kensington Museum in 1852. Sir Henry Cole the chief organizer of the Great Exhibition became the head of the museum and was also appointed the head of education for the newly formed Department of Science and Art. Cole helped to create a flourishing art education system in Britain, and by 1873 he had grown the system from 36 art schools to 91. It was precisely because of the rich climate of moral and socially active art and design inspired by the gothic revival, and the phenomenal art education system that developed concurrently, that allowed the Arts and Crafts Movement to succeed in Britain.

Beginning with Pugin and the gothic revival, moral values embedded in religion, such as charity and social welfare, began to play a more prominent role in the decoration and utilitarian wares being churned out by the large workshops and factories of Western Europe, especially in Britain. While Pugin's thirst for the Medieval coincided with morally potent Christian values, his view of machine production differed from his Arts and Crafts successors. Pugin – like Ruskin – championed truth to materials, but the means of production and the plight of the worker did not figure into his ideology.⁶ Later figures such as William Morris, C.R. Ashbee, Walter Crane, and W.R. Lethaby would change that. It

⁵ Atterbury et al, Master of Gothic, 1995, p. 352.

⁶ Wainwright, Master of Gothic, Atterbury et al, 1995, p. 163.

was these later reformers' conflation of object production and social reform that eventually came to prominence as the Arts and Crafts Movement.

On the tail of A.W.N. Pugin, John Ruskin emerged as a prominent voice in art criticism, publishing *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* in 1849, which contains the first appeal for ethical object production (as opposed to the moral Puginian object). In the fifth lamp, The Lamp of Life, Ruskin asks, "...it [is] possible for men to turn themselves into machines and to reduce their labour to the machine level, but so long as men work as men putting their heart into what they do [...] it will be plainly seen..."⁷

Obviously, all appeals for ethical production in the 19th and early 20th century are in reference to ethical labor sourcing. This would later be expanded in Ruskin's 1853 *The Nature of Gothic*. In the first chapter on *Savageness* Ruskin outlines the importance of imperfection and the autonomy of the worker in order for the worker to be free, contrasting them with the monotonous perfection of machine production in modern Britain. In 1871, Ruskin founded the Guild of St. George as a reaction to the poor working conditions of industrial factories. The guild was a utopian community in Sheffield and was one of the first social experiments in anti-industrial, romantic production. Despite the requirement of workers to pay a tithe – or ten percent – of their income to the guild it ultimately failed. The model of the Guild of St. George, an egalitarian community of craftsmen that employed ethical labor practices, was repeated many times in Britain, America, and even in Germany.

⁷ Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849, p. 309.

But truly the most credit in establishing the modern ethical imperative in craft production must be given to William Morris, who fused Pugin's moralizing reform, Ruskin's meandering anecdotes on labor and imperfection, and solid Marxist rhetoric. From 1849 on Karl Marx resided in London, and upon his death in 1883, Morris seems to have taken up in earnest working towards a broader program of labor reform advocacy, "through the eyes of an artist."^{8,9} Morris' experiences in witnessing class inequality both at home through his dealings in Morris and Co., and in his visits to Iceland, led to his outspoken promotion of socialism in lectures from 1878 until his death in 1896.

Morris was a vocal advocate of ethical labor production. In factories of the period, the division of labor placed the designer above the laborer resulting in an undesirable hierarchy in which the laborer was underpaid and forced to work in substandard conditions. Morris instead advocated the craftsman ideal – in which the maker and designer were incorporated into a single entity, both master and servant – thus restoring dignity to the worker. In a letter to Andreas Scheu, dated September 5, 1883, Morris confessed, "Both my historical studies and my practical conflict with the philistinism of modern society have forced on me the conviction that art cannot have a real life and growth under the present system of commercialism and profit mongering."¹⁰ In Morris' view, by combining art and labor, the worker would cease to be a tool of industry, but instead be able to live a healthy, satisfying and productive life.

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Marx, March 18, 2009.

⁹ Morris, *Morris by Himself*, Naylor, 1988, p. 17.

¹⁰ Morris, *Morris by Himself*, Naylor, 1988, p. 17.

Morris, a prodigious designer, maker and businessman had several successful business ventures in which he employed ethical labor production. Morris was also an outspoken socialist and activist having direct correspondence with Friedrich Engels, and founding Britain's Socialist League in 1884. He lectured widely about the importance of dignity in work, and about the accessibility of craft. In fact, he personally trained Morris and Co. workers in the techniques required to produce his wares. For most of his life, Morris believed that by making goods that were equitably produced and were also beautiful that he could relieve the plight of the depressed 19th century worker.

The exceptional parallel that exists between Morris' era of ethical production and the current era should be noted here. Despite being born into the upper middle class in Britain, as an artist and craftsman Morris identified himself with the laborer. Later in life as an active socialist lecturer, Morris lamented that the inherent cost of hand production forced him to sell his company's wares almost exclusively to the Bourgeois (upper classes). In this idealistic scheme a dichotomy existed between the moral and ethical imperatives used in the production of work on one hand and the market system, which governed their distribution on the other. It begs the question of reconciliation between the ideological impetus for craft production – in an age of mechanization – and its appropriate application for social change. This, however, is a subject that will be more fully discussed later. For Morris, he was never able to resolve the gulf between his lofty socialist beliefs and the class separation, which existed in Britain (and abroad) during his time. The value of Morris' contributions then lay in his prolific material production, in terms of both

volume and quality, and his determination to use romantic ideals to develop humanistic production modes.

The Arts and Crafts Movement in America

While hand-production as a reaction to the industrial manufacturing and the craftsman ideal remained consistent in the migration of the Arts and Crafts Movement to America, many social and political reform movements came to bear on the course it would take. The widespread acceptance of humanistic and romantic philosophies of self-sufficiency through handwork, and the autonomy it awarded to women, came to fulfill some of the Morrisian goals of the Arts and Crafts Movement in America.

There are many well-documented examples of social stewardship that were derived from craft production in this era. Craft was a primary tool in carrying out social action and charitable programs. Perhaps the best-known example of the period is Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr's Hull House in Chicago. Established in 1889, the Hull House was founded on radical philanthropic principals that included living in the community to be served, believing in the dignity of all people (and according the proper respect to them), and working against poverty and lack of opportunity for depressed people. The Hull House supported many political, educational, and social activities. Sometimes these themes mingled as in the many craft/skill based educational programs designed to give people the opportunity to better their lives and community through artistic and economic freedom.¹¹

¹¹ <http://www.hullhouse.org/aboutus/history.html>, April 2, 2009.

For her life's work Jane Addams received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931. At no time in history, before or since, has a craft proponent received such a prestigious honor.

The Hull House model was by no means unique, in pastoral America similar programs were established where there was a firm connection between craft practices and social welfare. The model of not only teaching craft skills to depressed demographics, but also providing a mechanism for dissemination and sales, was used by Helen R. Albee to establish the Abnekee Rug Industry in rural New Hampshire at the turn of the 20th century.¹² Similarly, Lucy Morgan founded the Penland Weavers Guild in Penland, North Carolina to preserve local traditions and to serve as a source of income for economically depressed women in the area.¹³ Since its 1929 founding, the Penland School of Crafts has become an internationally recognized craft school, still in operation at the same location. Maria Longworth Nichols Storer's Rookwood Pottery in Cincinnati, Ohio was a pioneer in American ceramics producing the most acclaimed pottery while at the same time employing a socially conscious system.¹⁴ While Rookwood was a legitimate business venture, it was heavily subsidized by Longworth Nichols Storer's own personal wealth. This leniency on the bottom line allowed the pottery to produce innovative work and to emphasize the employment of women, thus putting into practice many objectives of the late 19th and early 20th century women's movement. Eventually, Longworth Nichols Storer gave the pottery to longtime manager William Watts Taylor in order to pursue the advancement of suffrage and the women's movement. I will leave it until a later section to

¹² Boris, Art and Labor, 1986, p. 128.

¹³ Craft in America, 2007.

¹⁴ Rookwood won international awards for their ceramics at the Exposition Universelle of 1889 in Paris, The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, and the Exposition Universelle of 1900 in Paris.

fully discuss the rationale for the intimate relationship between social reform and hand production, but suffice it to say that the relationship was very real in America, beyond Morris, beyond Great Britain, and was an integral part of many social movements in the first quarter of the 20th century.

The Decline of the Arts and Crafts Movement and the Moral Imperative

Despite these examples, it was not the romantic and humanist philosophies that ultimately won in the long run. As with the slow decline of socialism and anarchism in the United States following WWI, the Arts and Crafts Movement also declined, bringing an effective end to the systemic conflation of hand production with a moral imperative (of ethical labor practices, self-sufficiency, personal and artistic freedom, humanists philosophies, etc.). Some projects rooted in social betterment and self-sufficiency persisted into the late 1930s with New Deal projects such as the Timberline Lodge in Mt. Hood, Oregon (1936-38) – a project of the Works Progress Administration aimed at providing work for artists and Craftsman during the depression.¹⁵

Projects like these became increasingly scarce however moving into the 1940s with the separation of the decorative art disciplines (what we would now call craft: metal, fiber, wood, ceramics, book arts, glass, etc.) from fine art disciplines (painting and sculpture). The rise of Modernist philosophies helped to displace handmade goods production as the accepted means to societal improvement. As the Bauhaus proved in the 1930's, good design coupled with efficient industrial manufacturing could produce more egalitarian –

¹⁵ Craft in America, 2007.

and affordable – objects that would improve the quality of life for the middle-class, a segment of the population exploding in the United States in the post WWII economic boom. In his seminal essay of 1939, *Avant-Garde and Kitsch*, Clement Greenberg argues that certain forms of artistic production become less and less justifiable by any other means than wanton tradition, and the regurgitation of these themes results in stagnation. He cites “virtuosity in the small details of forms,” as one of the practices leading to the decay of culture and the erosion of originality. Thus commenced the vilification of fine handwork for the ensuing decades and the true death of the moral imperative as articulated in the Arts and Crafts Movement.

The Modernist espousal of technology was coupled with a radical shift in aesthetic preferences, rejecting past design pedagogy – which was associated with ornament – and instead favoring geometric simplicity that was so suited to mass production. It follows that after WWII, the burgeoning manufacturing economy, that drove American Capitalism to ever-greater heights, eroded the aesthetic of the hand (as used by social proponents from John Ruskin to Gustav Stickley) in the decades to come. While many independent studio craftsman of the post WWII era were heir to progressive ideas in art making pioneered in the Arts and Crafts Movement, they treated their limited production practice as a small business embracing the emerging modern contemporary style rather than the romantic and utopian style(s) the Arts and Crafts movement had come to represent. Though many mid-century craftspeople were associated with the counter culture of the time, jewelry historian Toni Greenbaum suggests that, “Studio jewelry [and craft] was made for the liberal,

intellectual fringe of the American middle class.”¹⁶ Ornament in the Studio Craft Movement of the late 1940s and 50s was exceedingly rare, as were the codified symbols of decorum and the imperatives (both social and religious) that they carried. It is the decline of the moral imperative and separation of the socially charged context from the craft object itself that has led to the current crisis in the craft marketplace in terms of both cultural relevance and audience accessibility.

¹⁶ Greenbaum, Messengers of Modernism, 1996, p. 20.

Chapter 2

Craft in the 21st Century Marketplace

Introduction

In the previous section I have demonstrated that there is a historical context for the moral and socially conscious production of craft objects. This section will explore the contemporary craft marketplace in terms of moral and ethical marketing imperatives and how they operate today. Craft practices that embody these imperatives provide a bridge between the historic cultural meaning of craft – within a continuum of socially charged meaning – and the dominant market driven studio model of production. In examining craft's currently withering institutional infrastructure, this section will also address how socially conscious practices are indeed more relevant to the future of craft production, and to society at large, though their outcomes do not necessarily provide an economically sustainable model for today's practitioners.

Declining Craft Markets

In examining the practice of the craftsperson at present, the first frame that is applicable to nearly all makers is the studio. Since the studio crafts movement of the late 1940s and 50s, almost all craft production in America now takes place in a studio (whether formal or informal). As academic training increasingly reinforced the studio model beginning in the post world war II era, the studio has become the standard mode of

operation.¹⁷ In order for the fruits of production to move out into the world they must interface with a system of dissemination that is separate from the impetus for the work. In other words, the production and distribution of handmade goods is not integrated in a meaningful way at present. There are certainly notable exceptions, which I will mention in a moment, but by and large studio production precludes direct interaction with the public, leaving the gallery, the museum, and the craft fair to act as the mechanism for dissemination.^{18,19}

This is problematic on many levels. Isolation in the studio, endorsed by the academic model of artistic production, reifies the myth of the maker as a lonely tortured genius. The maker, with little social acumen, sends the results of his or her labor to a specialist (a curator or gallerist) in order for it to gain an audience. Consequently, craft production has become synonymous with autonomous and specific object production.²⁰ It is this outdated mid-20th century framework of individual vision, originality, and object specificity that still governs much of the market-driven craft produced today.

In his best-selling book, *Buying In* (2008), cultural critic Rob Walker argues that successful consumer products today appeal to two basic psychological impulses: the desire to feel like an individual and the desire to feel connected as part of a community. It is the insistence of the individualistic impulse and the absence of the community impulse

¹⁷ Sander, *The GI Bill*, 2007.

¹⁸ This idea, while applied here to craft production, was originally proposed by Daniel Buren in reference to the artist's studio. Buren, *Function of the Studio*, Trans. Repensek, 1979.

¹⁹ Some craft fairs offer a direct interaction between maker and consumer; other craft fairs are gallery driven, removing the artist. Therefore it is fair to characterize some craft fairs as participants in the preclusion of direct interaction.

²⁰ Specific Objects refers to Donald Judd's landmark essay of the same name in which he defines the term loosely as formalist objects that are meant only to be discussed in terms of their material attributes and are devoid of external influences. Judd, *Specific Objects*, 1966.

embedded in the object that has led craft to become outmoded in a culture that is rapidly shifting towards products that embody both of these modes.²¹ Through the course of interviews I conducted for the video, *The Moral Imperative in the Craft Market Place*, it became clear that what most craft consumers over the age of forty valued about the handmade was its individuality. When considering the current paradigm of autonomous object production and the consumer desire for originality, the dominant semiotic pedagogy – used frequently in craft criticism – explains this lack of predetermined meaning by proposing that the end-user or consumer creates meaning in the unique object through use. We are left to conclude then that both the consumers and producers of craft objects subscribe to a semiotic marketing model of consumption as identity. Walker thoroughly examines this reasoning, but ultimately rejects it in favor of a more nuanced model in which the consumer creates *brand* identity, rather than brand consumption giving identity to the consumer.

Given Walker's criteria of dual product identity (individual *and* community), it comes as no surprise that over the past decade sales at craft shows have steadily declined, causing concern to craft show exhibitors and major craft show organizers – such as the American Craft Council, The Rosen Group, and DMG World Media. Since the craft boom of the late 1960s and 70s, the baby boom generation has provided the necessary patronage for craftspeople to subsist. While this system worked well for several decades it is now beginning to fail. The fatal flaw of the current craft economy is that the successful 1960s craft market model does not appeal to younger demographics. As the baby boomers age,

²¹ Walker, *Buying In*, 2008.

they are not being replaced by younger patrons. Compounded by the absence of effective group marketing tactics, craft is slowly losing market share as it becomes more invisible to the mainstream.²² Visibility, which is vital to successful marketing, is perhaps the most obvious problem with current craft dissemination scheme. Consumers are in no position to desire craft if they have no idea what it is and where to find it.²³

This steady decline in patronage has recently come to the fore and is the subject of much discussion regarding the future of craft in the United States. The American Craft Council's 2006 national conference *Shaping the Future of Craft* focused on that very topic, and their upcoming 2009 conference *Creating a New Craft Culture* sounds like it will be more of the same. In fact, the American Craft Council (the largest craft organization in the US) seeks to ride the wave of change and has taken steps to begin organizational reform. In the past two years they have hired a new executive director (2008), and are now on their second editorial and design team in three years, for the production of their primary publication, *American Craft Magazine*. In 2008 the magazine implemented a redesign and restructuring of content. Still, these steps alone have not caused a national craft renaissance or even a renaissance within the organization.

Craft's schizophrenic identity and the lingering thrust for originality – in craft objects – make the prospect of a renaissance seem fleeting. The failure of craftspeople, enthusiasts, collectors, and organizations to understand, let alone agree, on what craft is (or could be) has resulted in a fragmented and compartmentalized field. Economic goals can

²² While this observation is my own, a similar conclusion was reached and presented by Garth Clark in his 2008 lecture at the Museum of Contemporary Craft entitled *How Envy Killed the Crafts Movement: An Autopsy in Two Parts*. Clark, *How Envy Killed the Crafts*, 2008.

²³ Walker, *Buying In*, 2008, p. 58.

be used to divide craft into: academics (whose work often operates independent of market forces), ultrahigh-end makers of house wares and architectural details, production craftspeople (who make what will sell), and hobbyists (who typically don't sell). Also, the mid-20th century material divisions of metal, fiber, wood, clay, and glass within craft only begin to hint at how the craft subculture further subdivides itself. There are as many divisions within craft as there are craftspeople.

In his 2007 book, *Thinking Through Craft*, craft theorist Glenn Adamson, dispenses with these traditional divisions and instead offers what amounts to a 169-page definition of contemporary craft. Adamson recognizes the schizophrenic identity of craft and offers five sections or frames with which one can approach the subject. Those are: craft as supplemental, pastoral, amateur, skilled, and material.²⁴ In practice, each of these frames may be accepted or rejected by the various factions within the craft world. For instance, from the curatorial philosophy of the New York based Museum of Arts and Design (MAD), it is clear that they reject contemporary craft as supplemental, but embrace material subdivisions, while promoting innovation within those divisions. A good example was their three-part exhibition cycle exploring contemporary fibers, which included *Radical Lace and Subversive Knitting*, *Pricked: Extreme Embroidery*, and *Slash: Paper Under the Knife*. It is also interesting to recognize that although some elements of

²⁴ For the convenience of the reader a short explanation of Adamson's categories: **Supplemental** – as opposed to autonomous. Additional. Craft is what you do to make the work not the work itself. **Pastoral** – In line with romantic ideologies (back to the land, picturesque, etc.) **Amateur** – not a serious vocation or profession, women's work, also a characteristic which gives craft its underdog status, and causes its inferiority complex. **Skilled** – Technical Prowess. A means evaluate quality if work. 20th century polemic. (Adamson is all over the map on this one) **Material** – Sensual. The association and use of materials (traditional or otherwise) as the impetus for object making, as opposed to an optical, aesthetic, and conceptual impetus.

Adamson's definition may be construed as negative (especially amateurism) they are wholly embraced in some craft subcultures – of course I am thinking of Indie Craft in this instance.²⁵

Whatever divisions exist in contemporary craft, it has always presented itself as a community oriented enterprise peddling highly individual works. It seems then that coming back to, and emphasizing community in the work itself is a way to propel craft into a successful 21st century paradigm.

Slow Food, CSAs, and the Green Movement

It is in finding a new salient 21st century craft paradigm that we finally arrive at the meat of the argument for a contemporary craft practice based on altruism, activism and morality. Before proceeding, I would like to examine the efficacy of these ideas as they are used in social and reform movements outside of craft. Once they are shown to be effective marketing and reform tools for 21st century paradigms, the way is clear for their use in the resurgence of craft production.

Since European imperialism (c. 1500), we have seen the rise and subsequent domination of the (multi-) national corporation, but only in the last fifteen years have these conglomerate corporations reached levels of power and influence usually reserved for sovereign governments. Through the corporate economic prosperity of the late 1990s, American manufacturing jobs were outsourced to countries where labor was less expensive. This was often coupled with the exploitation of indigenous populations in the

²⁵ See page 29 for a more complete description of Indie Craft.

countries of manufacture. Through increased reliance on technology in daily life and the dominance of the big-box retail outlet the average American was separated from the means of production of the goods that they consumed.

From these humble origins arose a dissenting group, whose interest was, at first, in combating the negative repercussions of the increasingly powerful and increasingly unethical corporation, whose accountability was first and foremost to their shareholders. The obvious reactions came first from environmentalists in the 1960s, and later from labor unions, small businesses, independent farmers, health conscious consumers, and yes, craftspeople. The Slow Food Movement (begun officially near Turin, Italy in 1986) rose to popularity in America amidst growing sentiments of anti-corporatism and anti-globalization in the late 1990s, opening its first American office in New York in 2000.²⁶ Slow Food's stated goals are, "to counteract fast food and fast life, the disappearance of local food traditions and people's dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from, how it tastes and how our food choices affect the rest of the world."²⁷ Around the same time Slow Food was taking off (1990), increasingly marginalized independent farmers began to partner with collective groups of consumers in a scheme, commonly called community supported agriculture (CSA), in order to fulfill the growing demand for environmentally and socially conscious provincial food products.²⁸ In the CSA model, people own shares in a farm or in a specific animal, and they receive a portion of the production. The manifestation of over 1,700 CSA farms in the United States indicates that

²⁶ Petrini, *Slow Food*, 2003.

²⁷ <http://www.slowfood.com>, April 28, 2009.

²⁸ <http://newfarm.rodaleinstitute.org/features/0104/csa-history/part1.shtml>, April 28, 2009.

consumers now want foods that are free of chemicals, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, and in addition are locally produced.

Together Slow Food and CSAs began the contemporary public push for transparent supply chaining. The reader may be familiar with nutrition labels, which were a result of this push for transparency. The influence of these movements can also be seen in the steady increase in organic food production and marketing over the past decade. In 1998 organic milk was a novelty in the dairy case, and today, it takes up equal space, while at organic or health food markets it is often the only option (if you don't count alternatives like soymilk). Slow Food and CSAs were only the beginning of a new paradigm in consumerism that sought to return to traditional, small yield production.

Built partially on the success and ethos of the Slow Food Movement, the simultaneously emerging Green Movement exploded only more recently due to increasing media attention on environmental issues such as global warming. In 2007 Al Gore won the Nobel Peace Prize for his persistent work in educating the public about the impending global environmental crisis. Sustainability has become a multi-billion dollar business spawning products with innumerable imperative tags such as eco-smart, eco-friendly, fair-trade, heirloom, non-conflict, organic, natural, all natural, free range, and green. Certainly marketing departments sat up and took notice of this appeal to ethical consumerism. Corporate responsibility campaigns are now vital to the corporate image, often spending more money on advertising and brand image than on actual activities. In *The World is Flat* (2005), Thomas L. Friedman details McDonald's collaboration with Conservation International to restructure their global supply chain in order to protect biodiversity and

reduce their industrial and agricultural footprint. One of many efforts, McDonalds uses this partnership to market itself as an attentive, caring, responsible, and wholesome company. On their website, mcdonalds.com, corporate responsibility figures prominently, especially in the area of environmental responsibility.²⁹

The consideration of green has even shown up in complex social schemes such as re-urbanization and gentrification. As urban sprawl reaches an apex, young professionals are leading the charge back into desolate post-industrial cities in order to create urban sustainability that will meet the needs of future generations. Increasingly people are realizing that urban sprawl is not a sustainable growth or city planning strategy, and that this type of expansion has severe environmental consequences. By choosing to live in and also reform struggling urban centers people are choosing both provincialism and environmental sustainability. Figures such as architect and designer, William McDonough (author of the Cradle to Cradle design model), have successfully bridged the fields of conservation and urban planning, resulting in hybrid design/ ecology practices, which are lauded internationally as the next step in moving humanity towards a sustainable existence.

As the issue of environmental sustainability becomes increasingly prominent, cultural critics prognosticate through every media outlet that this is the issue that will define the rising generation (generation Y).³⁰ If socially conscious moral imperatives

²⁹ <http://www.crmedonalds.com/publish/csr/home.html>, April 19, 2009.

³⁰ A prominent critic is best selling author Thomas L. Friedman, especially his 2008 book, *Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution – and How it Can Renew America*, but generally there are hundreds of newspaper, magazine, and broadcast stories each week about green culture and the rising generation. The best way I have found to track these stories is through Rich Site Summary (RSS) tools which

didn't take root with people looking to eat healthier, or even with people trying to save America's cities from decay, it certainly has taken root with America's young and increasingly educated workforce looking to do their part to avoid Armageddon. In 2007, Martiz, Inc. conducted a survey that found 47% of generation Y respondents would pay more for green brands.³¹ Just one year later, in 2008, Barack Obama successfully ran for President on a platform of economic recovery rooted in green innovation.

It is my contention that all of these trends point towards a resurgence in social and global stewardship. Consumerism now relies heavily on moral imperatives that offer the perceived choice of buying goods that help shift humanity towards a more sustainable future. Consumers are trained to believe that making the world a better place can start at the cash register. "Environmentally friendly" has become the commercial mantra, and why not? It seems like a win-win situation.

Whether the claims made by green and organic products are true is another matter entirely. Just as with health food marketing, low fat does not necessarily mean good for you. Craft objects and craftspeople fulfill many of the criteria that define the green and slow movements, including transparent supply chaining, limited production, small manufacturing footprints, etc. One of the main things that craft is lacking is an effective and collaborative marketing campaign to highlight handmade products in terms of these imperatives. Many makers can tell the consumer where their materials come from because

creates a live feed of changing web content on blogs dedicated to this purpose. Among them are: <http://gristmill.grist.org/>, <http://www.thedailygreen.com/>, <http://www.treehugger.com/>, and <http://www.worldchanging.com/>.

³¹ <http://www.environmentalleader.com/2007/09/14/47-of-gen-y-would-pay-more-for-green-brands/>, April 23, 2009.

they collect or produce raw material themselves. Since craftspeople are intimately involved with their work, it frequently results in ethical material and labor sourcing.

Craft and the Contemporary Moral Imperative

Over the past few decades Studio Craft products have become increasingly marginal in the spectrum of cultural production. I have already established that large craft shows are less salient than ever, with the current economic recession compounding matters (thank you multi-national conglomerate lending houses). With such difficult economic times makers can no longer afford to have their work perceived as luxury goods. The good news is that for the most part, craft is not a luxury good as long as it isn't marketed as such. Instead it can be marketed as an alternative to over-consumption using the moral imperatives described earlier.

While I believe the contention that industry is more efficient at producing goods – in terms of resources used – than studio production, studio production does not participate in the planned obsolescence paradigm. For example, one handmade chair could last generations, while an industrially produced chair may need to be replaced dozens of times in just a single generation. When producing one chair, clearly the edge must go to industrial production, but when we also consider lifespan, hand production clearly becomes a greener option. Additionally, mass production must rely on the consumer's need to buy many chairs in order to remain profitable, while the craftspeople – through their emphasis on quality – implicitly accepts that their products will not need to be replaced.

In considering craft's appeal as an ethical or more sustainable alternative product, Indie Craft is a good place to start. Briefly, Indie Craft is a movement of individuals – sometimes with formal craft training, sometimes without – that has invested in the handmade as a reaction to the separation of people from the means of production. Frequently, consumerism and globalized industrial manufacturing are cited as catalysts for the movement, which exploded in popularity around the turn of the 21st century. It is marked by energetic and inclusive (often online) communities, and participants that regard themselves as part of a counter-culture movement. Indie Craft represents a major exception to the aforementioned deterioration of craft institutions, but has historically not been included in those institutions, instead creating new infrastructure as the movement has grown.³² One thing that it does extremely well is to market its goods as an alternative to mass production, mass consumption, and mass destruction. The Indie Craft circuit is green, slow-moving, and anti-corporate, which has made it appealing to many of the ethical consumers of generation Y, something that traditional studio craft production has yet to do successfully on a large scale. Indie Craft's popularity proves that the moral imperative that inspires people to shop green and eat organic is the same moral imperative that inspires them to buy handmade.

Another 2007 consumer survey performed this time by Cone, LLC., found that 47% of all Americans have purchased environmentally-friendly products, 21% have donated to an environmental organization, and 18% have advocated for environmental

³² Examples of indie craft infrastructure include Etsy (an online handmade market and community), the Bazaar Bizarre (Boston), and the Renegade Craft Fair (Chicago).

issues.³³ Here we can clearly see a relationship between awareness, activism, and consumer spending habits. If hand production is conflated with sustainable and green practices, as in the chair example above, then it follows that craft has the potential to appeal to at least 47% of the American consumer base. It is this potential that is being capitalized on by Indie Craft.

A lucid example of the difference in trajectory between traditional craft markets and Indie Craft can be seen when comparing the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) series *Craft in America* – a sleepy romantic depiction of decadent craft artists– to Faith Levine’s recent offering *Handmade Nation* – an in-your-face energized depiction of average people unplugging from the corporate machine to achieve success and self-sufficiency through handwork. What the comparison boils down to is relevance; to society, to audiences, and to the role of craft in today’s society.

Another strategy that utilizes an appeal to moral behavior and societal stewardship is cause marketing. Born in the 1980s cause marketing, or cause-related marketing, refers to a cooperative effort between a for-profit business and a non-profit organization for mutual benefit.³⁴ This scheme has been used by companies big and small, from the pioneering cause marketing program by American Express to restore the Statue of Liberty in 1983, to Manhattan Mini Storage’s campaign to donate to local charities in 2008.³⁵ The impetus for these types of relationships is making the consumers feel good about their purchase. It seems apropos that while large manufacturing companies increasingly

³³ <http://www.csrwire.com/News/8183.html>, April 3, 2009.

³⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cause_marketing, April 2, 2009.

³⁵ <http://www.prwatch.org/node/4965>, April 2, 2009.

advertise ethical labor sourcing and corporate responsibility, that in return craftspeople should utilize cause marketing – a domain pioneered by big business. Certainly craft does not have the potential to generate the same kind of revenue for non-profit organizations that large companies do, but its historic connection with socially responsible production, and its penchant for transparent supply chaining and ethical labor sourcing position it to dovetail with this more recently developed moral imperative.

There are plenty of non-profits to make contributions to, both within and outside of the crafts community that make logical sense. For instance the Craft Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) helps to support craftspeople that are the victims of fire, flood, or other natural disasters. It would also be logical for a craftspeople to support a cause related to their own work, as in an environmentally conscious woodworker donating a portion of profits to fighting deforestation or developing sustainable forests.

Since the emergence of the slow food movement we have seen many examples of increasing interest in moral consumerism and products that use an embedded moral imperative. If craft does not begin to market itself to the growing hunger in the market place for morally superior products, the door may close on craft's opportunity to regain market share that has been lost in recent years. This is the opportunity to generate another Craft movement, though it still needs a catchy title. There are plenty of industries capitalizing on the demand for moral production; craft should be one of them. Perhaps most interestingly, Indie Craft and Do-It-Yourself culture is exploding in popularity in the United States amid contemporary concerns for ethical consumerism, a paradigm that craft has historically existed within.

While *Altruism, Activism, and The Moral Imperative* is not *the* new model for craft production, it is *a* new model for craft production. It is also a model that is in line with the concerns of national and world cultures facing unprecedented challenges in bringing humanity to a sustainable equilibrium. In terms of studio craft practices, there will always be a place for the specific object and the functional one-of-a-kind or the limited production object. However, ethical production – including embedded imperatives – and specific object production are not mutually exclusive. The question now is what to do, but how to do it.

Chapter 3

Considering Craftivism: Craft as an Interactive Practice

Introduction

Given the historical evidence of the first section, craft certainly has the power to inspire social cohesion through production and use, but in a climate of post-modern studio production, craft can also use post-modern conceptual strategies to create meaning instead of commodity. In application these strategies do not always resemble traditional handwork. Instead they transcend object making to become activities that harness craft's historic connection to community, hand skills, and social consciousness; all things that I believe to be at the heart of our changing culture. In this new type of practice – that centers on altruistic contributions to culture – the division of fine art and craft ceases to be of importance, as the importance is instead shifted towards an active/ activist practice of engagement.

In the past craftivism has been defined by the use of craft as a type of dissent to corporate capitalism; suggesting that the act of creating functional goods instead of purchasing them is, in itself, an act of political dissent.³⁶ While passive resistance to corporate capitalism through craft is part of the ethical appeal of craft to many, it is not a new type of activity. Rather, it is simply the resurgence of the 19th century argument for craft in response to industrial production (or as Marx put it, “Late Capitalism”). This is an argument being proselytized primarily by young makers associated with Indie Craft

³⁶ Greer, Handmade Nation, 2008.

circles. With this resurgent attitude finding a new buzzword label, I am still left feeling that the combined practice of craft and activism (craftivism) has the potential to describe a much more robust and diverse set of practices. This being the case, I suggest a supplemental definition for craftivism: using craft skills and ethos to directly engage in creating culturally enriching experiences. This type of practice is rapidly gaining momentum, a trend that this section will discuss through case studies. Within the wider art world this type of practice has already become part of the lexicon of accepted outcomes. Beginning with interactive works such as Felix Gonzalez-Torres' 1991 installation, *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)* (fig. 8), in which the viewer is invited to take a piece of the work (wrapped hard candy) with them, interactive work has increasingly become an accepted art making strategy. This was further evidenced in 2008 when the Whitney Museum of American Art chose



Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)*, Wrapped Hard Candies, 1991.

Neighborhood Public Radio for inclusion in its iconic Biennial. *Neighborhood Public Radio* is an independent, artist-run radio project committed to providing an alternative media platform for artists, activists, musicians, and community members. In essence it is a community project produced by artists. The inclusion of an underground community-centric radio station in America's most prestigious art exhibition was a signal that an activist/ interactive studio practice has entered the mainstream.

Charting Altruism and Activism in a Project Based Practice

In this new activist and interactive genre it is quite difficult to evaluate the work because a) standard organizational assessment methods do not apply because the activity is art, and b) standard artistic assessment methods do not apply because the work is often not visual. With this in mind I would like to introduce the concept of the beautiful system. I define it as: an art activity where the variables (actions, content, materials, location, products, history, etc.) work in concert to reinforce each other, thus creating a deeper meaning or experience in the work. While this idea is still in its infancy, it should be kept in mind when evaluating the success of the projects that follow.

Also, there are distinctions that can be made based on the intended impact of the activity. Though these distinctions are arbitrary and often do not capture the unique system that each project employs, I use them in order to help draw attention to the breadth and meaning of interactive projects. These distinctions are: contributions to an individual's or a community's self-reliance, activities intended to educate participants, activities with philanthropic goals, and activities intended to benefit local, regional, national, and international community development. I have selected one or two examples of each practice, in each of the four categories of self-reliance, education, philanthropy, and community engagement to serve as case studies for the practice of altruistic projects in a studio craft practice. These categories are not mutually exclusive, and it is often the case that artists or makers engaging in them combine these goals. In general activities with

these non-market driven goals seek to create cultural experiences, which I believe to be the underlying goal of art production in general.

Self-Reliance Projects

In 1997 Annette Rose-Shapiro of Urban Glass in Brooklyn, New York, founded the Bead Project.³⁷ The Bead Project is a program designed for economically disadvantaged women interested in learning a new creative skill they can use to supplement their income. By teaching women, mostly single mothers, glass bead making and silver jewelry making techniques they are able to work from home. In addition to these skills, the program also offers business classes through a partnership with Brooklyn based non-profit CAMBA. After the successful completion of The Bead Project curriculum, students receive their own



Participants Sorting Jewelry for *Radical Jewelry Makeover*, 2007.

torch and tool kit for use at home. The Bead Project has helped nearly 200 women toward greater financial stability.³⁸ This project is an excellent example of how craft skills can be used as a tool for empowerment and self-reliance. While The Bead Project is more of a social action project than an art

project, craft provides the foundation for its feasibility and execution. It also highlights the historic connection between craft practices and social welfare as outlined in Chapter 1.

Another project that facilitates self-reliance is Radical Jewelry Makeover (RJM) (fig. 9). RJM takes a much different approach than The Bead Project and instead of using

³⁷ <http://www.urbanglass.org/thebeadproject/glassmagazine.pdf>, March 16, 2009.

³⁸ <http://www.thebeadproject.org/>, March 16, 2009.

craft skills to promote self-reliance, it takes participants existing skills and attempts to help them cultivate a more sustainable working process and a rationale for the change. The interactive project is sponsored by Ethical Metalsmiths, an organization formed for the purpose of stimulating demand for responsibly sourced materials as an investment in the future [of metalsmithing and of the earth].³⁹ The project is essentially a workshop in which participants recycle components from unwanted, donated jewelry to become new and hopefully more exciting work. The work is then sold with proceeds going to support Ethical Metalsmiths programming. The project involves education sessions about metal mining, demonstrations, and tips and resources on how to reform participants' studio practice in order to make it more environmentally friendly. The combination of practical and theoretical knowledge allows participants to become aware of the environmental concerns of their vocation, and to be equipped to address them. The ultimate goal of the project is to catalyze change in the practices of a dirty field. Throughout the workshops the main imperative is the sourcing and recycling of existing materials, rather than the procurement of newly produced raw materials. RJM offers jewelers a way to avoid sourcing their demand to industries that are not consistent with eco-minded 21st century values by providing a practical model to become less dependent on material whose production is socially and ecologically devastating. In RJM self-reliance then becomes synonymous with sustainability.

³⁹ <http://ethicalmetalsmiths.org/index.html>, March 13, 2009.

Educational Projects

The tagline of the website for Futurefarmers reads, “Cultivating Consciousness since 1995.” Futurefarmers is an arts and design collaborative engaged in socially conscious projects intended to benefit communities and society. Most of their projects begin with craft skills, but balloon in meaning to transcend the practice of object making. For example their 2008 project *The Reverse Ark* (fig. 10):

“was a temporary space of production and learning. An inventory of limited resources inhabited the gallery. These recycled materials were used



Futurefarmers, *The Reverse Ark*, Pasadena City College Art Gallery, 2008.

during a four-day residency to build *The Reverse Ark*. The gallery became a living laboratory for learning, inquiry and improvisation including mini-workshops, lectures, video screenings and frameworks for reflection. Invited guests included an environmental scientist, Los Angeles Mayors Office, Department of Water, a priest, and a computer scientist.”⁴⁰

The diversity of the presentations and activities that took place within the ark speak to the ability of Futurefarmers to transpose their agenda onto that of the art museum they utilized. This type of project co-opts the museum into including dynamic educational programming into their offerings. Therefore it helps to reinvent both the function of art and of the museum by combining education with art practice. *The Reverse Ark* was merely a

⁴⁰ <http://futurefarmers.com/reverseark/>, March 26, 2009.

framework for engaging participants on issues related to climate change and the history of water use. While the use of discarded materials to create the work was rooted in an object making practice, the activities and meaning of the work itself had a clear educational motivation. The physical works appear of very little aesthetic value, and to the visitor at the Pasadena City College gallery, the work would not be easily decipherable in terms of organization, content, or even visual stimulation. What I am forced to conclude then, was that the ark was a series of activities and information sessions – which proceed from the metaphorical and biblical concept of building an ark to save humanity – that utilized craft skills in part, but ultimately was designed to give participants problem solving experience with water consumption issues in a place where it is a serious threat to regional security and stability.

Community Engagement Projects

Michael Swaine, one of the long time participants in the Futurefarmers collaborative, also has many side projects which are relevant to the discussion of a



Michael Swaine, *Free Mending Library*, 2002 (ongoing).

craftivist practice. Swaine, who is a Senior Lecturer in Ceramics at the California College of Arts, started his *Free Mending Library* (fig. 11) in 2002. For this project Swaine stations himself in the depressed Tenderloin District of San Francisco, and offers to repair clothing free of charge in exchange for those seeking repair to engage

with him in conversation. While the repair of clothing is usually not associated with art or

with a studio practice, by positioning himself in relation to a community and by seeking interaction, Swaine activates the seemingly uninteresting task of mending to become an engine for social engagement, while at the same time providing a positive service to the community.

Another example of this type of practice can be found in the work of fellow Virginia Commonwealth University Craft/ Material Studies graduate student (2009) Keith Mendak. In his 2008 work, Project Hope (fig. 12), Mendak created a mobile altar replete with votive candles and glass silhouettes of then presidential candidate Barack Obama. On Election Day Mendak took the altar to a bustling downtown corridor, where he was likely to find people with felony criminal records.



fig. 12
Keith Mendak, *Project Hope*, 2008.

Currently, Virginia is only one of two states in which persons convicted of a felony do not have their voting rights restored once their incarceration is over. Mendak proceed to invite passers-by to light a candle for hope. The candles featured the face of Barack Obama transposed over the original graphic of either Jesus Christ or a saint. This symbolic gesture of inclusion is a good example of how using craft skills to create an object, system, or activity aimed at political commentary can be more powerful than object making alone, primarily because of the meaning created through interpersonal interaction.

Philanthropic Projects

The Empty Bowls Project was started in 1990 by a Michigan high school art teacher to raise funds in support of a food drive.⁴¹ Since then the project has expanded dramatically. On the most basic level it offers patrons a craft object in exchange for making a monetary contribution to hunger relief. The project works like this: craftspeople make ceramic bowls, then advertise and invite the public to a soup dinner. Guests at the dinner select a bowl and pay the suggested donation (usually \$10.00) and get to keep the bowl. The money then goes to a hunger relief organization. The obvious thematic connection between the bowl as a vessel to contain food is exploited in this simple project. The image conjured by the title of the project is a reminder of the goal of the project. Simple and effective, this project is not proprietary and has been replicated thousands of times.

In 2006 jeweler Stefanie Rahmstorf and her physicist husband Stefan Rahmstorf, (a member of the German Advisory Council on Global Change and of the Academia Europaea) began making jewelry to fight climate change. Similar to the Empty Bowls Project, CO₂ Pins: Jewelry for Our Climate (fig. 13) is a philanthropic project whose proceeds participate in philanthropy, but in an indirect and ecologically driven way. Europe employs a cap and trade system on CO₂ emissions, so companies have to buy the right to emit the gas. Each emission credit is equal to one ton of



fig. 13
Stephanie Rahmstorf, *CO₂ Pins: Jewelry for Our Climate*, Sterling Silver, Pearls, 2006.

⁴¹ <http://www.rivercitycommunityservices.org/eb2006/history.htm>, March 13, 2009.

CO₂. Within this system environmentalists (such as the Compensators, who the Rahmstorfs work with) have discovered that they can purchase emission credits, which prevent actual emissions from occurring.⁴² The CO₂ Pins work on this premise. The Rahmstorfs make CO₂ themed jewelry and sell it for around € 110. Once a piece is sold, the Rahmstorfs use the money to purchase a one ton emission credit. The jewelry is then stamped with the serial number of the emission credit, as a record or badge of the meaning and function of the object.

In a global climate of increasingly altruistic consumerism, industrial production, corporate responsibility, and ecological innovation, the practice of craftivism seems to be a logical outgrowth of studio craft practice. In the future we can certainly look forward to the expansion of interactive projects as the lines of craft, marketing, consumerism, art, education, and philanthropy are increasingly blurred.

⁴² <http://www.thecompensators.org/2008/>, March 16, 2009.

Part 2

Application of the Moral Imperative

Chapter 4

Technical and Material Concerns

In the creation of the exhibition *Philanthropy Failed: The Altruist Series* three main elements make up the installation. Those elements are actual jewelry objects, contextual display materials, and a series of three videos. The jewelry was created using 3D computer modeling and rapid prototyping, lost wax casting, fabrication, stone setting, chasing, and polymer clay techniques. All of the metal used in the jewelry was recycled from scrap or sourced from Hoover and Strong, in Richmond, Virginia – a refiner that guarantees their precious metal is 100% recycled. The stones were sourced from Columbia Gem House, a Washington based company who is a leader in ethical gem production and captained by Eric Braunwart the author of the fair trade gem protocols. In using these materials I hoped to exemplify the ethical and altruistic behavior that was the impetus behind the project. There are two main contextual components in the exhibition that work in concert; an audio recording of myself, reading the rejection letters from the non-profit organizations I attempted to partner with, and a 14 by 3 foot field of vinyl text of the same. Of the three videos in the exhibition the first two, *The Pro Bono Jeweler* and *The Pro Bono Jeweler 2* were shot as documentation of performances I did in the fall of 2008. In the spring of 2009 I edited them for the exhibition. The third video, *The Moral Imperative in the Craft Marketplace*, was a documentary made explicitly to explore the current state of ethical, social, philanthropic, and moral imperatives embedded in craft objects that participated in the craft fair/ exhibition system. For the documentary I secured permission to film at the

American Craft Council Show in Baltimore, Maryland. With the help of my brother, Sean Craig, a film student at the University of Michigan, we interviewed over 30 people over the course of three days, including craftspeople, exhibition attendees/ craft consumers, and organizational representatives from the American Craft Council.

Chapter 5

Personal History

Narrative of Development in Graduate School

At the outset of my graduate studies I began the task of familiarizing myself with the current canon of craft theory, its application to current trends in the field (with particular attention to jewelry making), and developing a personal understanding of the place of crafts within contemporary society. My first attempts, in the fall 2007, to create work that addressed the role of craft in society were in essence critiques of the semantic language used in describing craft. In *Craft*

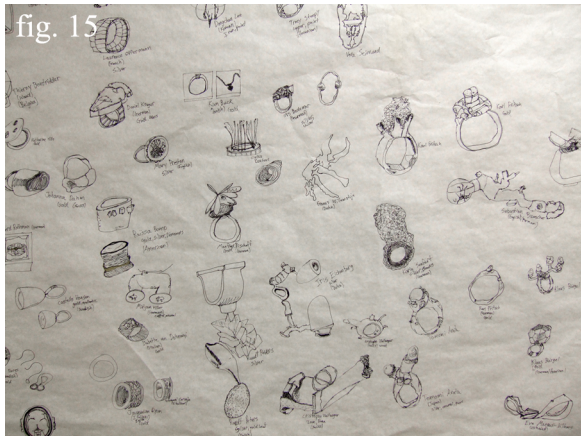


fig. 14

Craft Piece° 2, Table, Glass Platter, 14 & 18 Karat Gold, Various Faceted Gem Stones, Projected Video, 2007.

Piece °2 (fig. 14) I continued a previously established thematic approach to jewelry making. Also in 2007 I began a series of performances to engage the public in the act of making. *The Collegiate Jeweler*, while not my first attempt at performance art, was the beginning of my evolution towards a practice of actively engaging a viewing audience through craft.

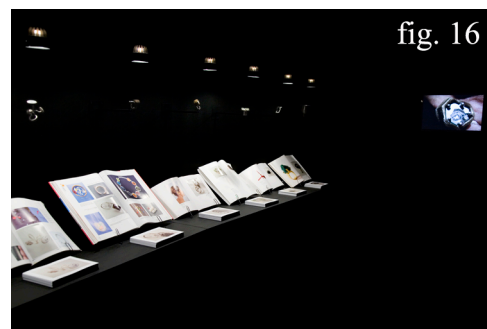
In early 2008 I began intensive research into the popularity of two major trends in contemporary studio jewelry (fig. 15). Those trends were historical appropriation, mostly of Rococo and Baroque ornament, and process based material exploration as exemplified



161 Studies From Contemporary Studio Jewelry, Research Drawings, 2007.

by European jewelers in Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and Eastern European countries. As a result of this research I felt increasingly comfortable with the visual vocabulary and landscape of contemporary studio jewelry. Of particular concern to me was the excess and indulgence that the field exuded,

generally speaking. The 18th century Rococo and Baroque periods were some of the most lavish and indulgent in all of western history. The same indulgence could be seen in the quixotic European style, which was abstract in imagery but derived from quasi-organic forms. The absence of direct references to contemporary culture and a flagrant disregard to participate in it, for me posited the most celebrated contemporary work as an esoteric exercise in creative self-indulgence. The body of work I undertook as resultant of this research, *The Narcissist Suite* (fig. 16), which I showed for my candidacy review, was a reaction to the lack of vitality and urgency in the work of most contemporary studio



The Narcissist Suite, Rings, Books, Postcards, Video, 2008.

jewelers. The work appropriated the form language of contemporary studio jewelry into a series of rings which all had an image of the work itself embedded in the ring. The rings then overtly referenced themselves, just as contemporary studio jewelry referenced itself.

The installation of the work also included books and postcards with images of the jewelry, and a video documenting a theater performance about the narcissism inherent in studio jewelry. *Narcissist: 8 Confessions of an Academic Jeweler*, featured 8 actors, including myself, who all claimed to be Gabriel Craig the preeminent studio jeweler. Rather than making an overt criticism of the work of others I used myself as the subject of the flagellation, in the hope that using myself as a vehicle to explore this issue would result in humor rather than offense.

The Narcissist Suite highlighted several issues that would come to be the focus of my work in my second year. First, I had a growing thirst for institutional reform advocacy, and second I wanted to find a pragmatic model for cultural relevance in my work. *The Narcissist Suite*, though funny and critical, did little to join in a wider dialogue. *The Collegiate Jeweler* offered one avenue for direct engagement, and so I continued to pursue it in *The Pro Bono Jeweler* (fig.17) and *The Pro Bono Jeweler 2*. These performances left the college campus and entered into a dialogue with a slightly larger community. Also, there was an element of being a studio jewelry advocate by educating the public through the performances.

Ultimately, it was important for me to engage in an idealistic and philanthropic project in order to see my studio practice as more than simply self-indulgence. By creating a system that used jewelry in the service of a larger goal I had finally arrived at a practice



fig. 17
The Pro Bono Jeweler, Performance, 2008.

and a body of work that was satisfying and worthy of prolonged exploration. The results of this exploration, *The Altruist Series*, make up my thesis exhibition.



Gabriel Craig *metalsmith* 269 599 6164 | gabriel.craig@gmail.com

Curriculum Vitae

Education

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2009 | Master of Fine Arts in Jewelry/ Metalworking, Virginia Commonwealth University, School of the Arts, Craft/ Material Studies Department, Richmond, VA |
| | College Level Teaching Certificate, Virginia Commonwealth University, Graduate School, Preparing Future Faculty Program, Richmond, VA |
| 2006 | Post Baccalaureate Certificate, Pont-Aven School of Contemporary Art, Pont-Aven, Brittany, France |
| | Summa Cum Laude, Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art with an Emphasis in Metals/ Jewelry, Western Michigan University, School of Art, Kalamazoo, MI |
| 2004 | Kalamazoo Institute of Art, School of Art, Kalamazoo, MI |

Teaching Experience

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2009 | Adjunct Instructor, Beginning Jewelry, Jewelry/ Metalworking Area, Craft/ Material Studies Department, School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA |
| | Teaching Assistant to Christina Miller and Susie Ganch, <i>Radical Jewelry Makeover: Penland</i> , Penland School of Crafts, Penland, NC |
| 2008 | Adjunct Instructor, Art Foundation Projects, Art Foundations Department, School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA |
| | Adjunct Instructor, Beginning Jewelry, Jewelry/ Metalworking Area, Craft/ Material Studies Department, School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA |
| | Instructor, School of the Arts Summer Art Intensive, Jewelry Course, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA |
| | Teaching Assistant, Intermediate Jewelry and Metalsmithing, Jewelry/ Metalworking Area, Craft/ Material Studies Department, School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA |

2007	Teaching Assistant, Beginning Metalsmithing, Jewelry/ Metalworking Area, Craft/ Material Studies Department, School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
2006, 2007	Instructor of Metal Jewelry, Med-O-Lark Arts Camp of New England, Washington, ME
2005, 2006	Guest Artist, Parchment High School, Parchment, MI
2005	Workshop Assistant, <i>Michigan Youth Arts Festival</i> , Metals Workshop, Kalamazoo, MI

Professional Experience

2009- 2010	Artist in Residence, Houston Center For Contemporary Craft, Houston, TX
2009	Presenter, Virginia Commonwealth University's 17 th Annual Symposium on Architectural History and the Decorative Arts, The Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA
	Guest Lecturer, Architectural History Graduate Seminar on the Arts and Crafts Movement, Department of Art History, School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
2008- 2009	Coordinator of Green Resources Database, The Society of North American Goldsmiths, Eugene, OR
2007- 2009	Studio Monitor, Jewelry/ Metalworking Area, Craft/ Material Studies Department, School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
2007- 2008	President, Contemporary Craft Society, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
2004- 2007	Bench Jeweler and Assistant Manager, Plata Y Oro Jewelers, Kalamazoo, MI
2006	Studio Monitor and Technician, Pont-Aven School of Contemporary Art, Pont-Aven, Brittany, France
2004- 2006	Studio Monitor and Technician, Western Michigan University Metals Studio, Kalamazoo, MI
2006	Art Handler, Office of Exhibitions, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI
2005- 2006	Studio Assistant to Caroline Gore, <i>Richmond Center for the Visual Arts Donor Project</i> , Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI
2005	Studio Assistant to Fisher Stolz, <i>Stackhouse</i> , Sculpture Tour, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI

Exhibitions

2010	<i>Adornment and Excess: Jewelry in the 21st Century</i> , Curator: Lena Vigna, Miami University Art Museum, Miami, OH (curated)
2009	<i>Stuff: Jewelry for the People</i> , Juror: Ellen Reiben, Sub Octo Gallery, Philadelphia, PA (juried)
	<i>Metal Evolution: SNAG Annual Juried Student Exhibition</i> , Jurors: Susan Myers and Bruce Metcalf, Loews Philadelphia Hotel, Philadelphia, PA (juried)

- Decorative Resurgence*, Jurors: Jill Baker Gower and Jessica Calderwood, Rowan University Art Gallery, Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ (juried)
- Failed Philanthropy: The Altruist Series*, Master's Thesis Exhibition, Anderson Gallery, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA (solo)
- American Craft Council Baltimore Show*, Virginia Commonwealth University School to Market Booth, Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, MD (group)
- Work in Progress*, Meyer Gallery, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA (group)
- 2008 *Handmade Holiday Show*, Jurors: Richmond Craft Mafia, Richmond Visual Arts Center, Richmond, VA (juried)
- Sleight of Hand: A National Juried Contemporary Craft Show*, Jurors: Kathy Emerson, Steven Glass, and Natalya Pinchuk, Gallery 5, Richmond, VA (juried)
- The Pro Bono Jeweler 2*, Quirk Gallery, Richmond, VA (performance)
- Laughingstock: Humor in Art and Craft*, Juror: Bridgitte Martin, Luke & Eloy Gallery, Pittsburgh, PA (juried)
- The Pro Bono Jeweler*, Quirk Gallery, Richmond, VA (performance)
- The Ring Show: Putting the Band Back Together*, Jurors: Jamie Bennett, Jim Cotter, and Ashley Callahan, Georgia Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA (juried)
- The Candidates*, Richmond Central Bank Building Project Space, Richmond, VA (group)
- Narcissist: 8 Confessions of an Academic Jeweler*, Nedwick Theater, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA (performance)
- VCU/ASU Exchange Show*, Curator: Ann Walsh, Step Gallery, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ (curated)
- The Ring Show: Putting the Band Back Together*, Jurors: Jamie Bennett, Jim Cotter, and Ashley Callahan, Fahm Gallery, Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah, GA (juried)
- Cresting: Society of North American Goldsmiths Juried Student Digital Image Show*, 2008 National Conference, Savannah, GA (juried)
- Composting Good and Evil: Redesign for Sanctimonious Sinners*, Online Virtual exhibition and Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah, GA (group)
- VCU at Pratt*, Steuben Galleries, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY (group)
- Necklust and the Chocolatiere*, Florida Craftsman Gallery, St. Petersburg, FL (curated)
- 2007 *The Collegiate Jeweler*, Campus of Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA (performance series)
- The Ugly Object: Conversations in Making*, Dominion Place, Richmond, VA (group)
- Salon des Refuses V*, Curator: John Crutchfield, Artemis Gallery, Richmond, VA (group)
- A Domestic Separation*, Fine Arts Building Gallery, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA (collaborative group)

- Gabriel Craig and Amy Weiks*, Plata Y Oro, Kalamazoo, MI (two person show)
- West Michigan Area Show*, Juror: Louis Marinaro, Kalamazoo Institute of Art, Kalamazoo, MI (juried)
- 2006 *Dix-Nuef*, Centre International D'Art Contemporain, Pont-Aven, Brittany, France (group)
- Le Christ de Jaune*, Town Square, Pont-Aven, Brittany, France (performance with Colby Claycombe)
- Shaped in Metal*, Curator: Art Martin, Muskegon Museum of Art, Muskegon, MI (curated)
- 40th Memorial International Enamelling Art Exhibition*, Ueno Royal Museum, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Japan (juried)
- Golden Opportunity*, Online Virtual Exhibition and Marx-Saunders Gallery, Chicago (group)
- Process Unveiled*, BFA Metals/ Jewelry Thesis Exhibition, Rotunda Gallery, East Hall, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI (solo)
- School of Art Student Exhibition*, Juror: Robert Ebendorf, Dalton Multi-Media Gallery, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI (juried)
- Emerging Artists*, Curator: Terry Niehart, The Smartshop Gallery, Kalamazoo, MI (curated)
- 20th Annual West Michigan Regional Competition*, Juror: Mary Cusack, Lowell Area Arts Council, Lowell, MI (juried)
- Fine Arts and Photography Exhibition*, Juror: Maria Tomasula, The Carnegie Center for the Arts, Three Rivers, MI (juried)
- 2005 *Vessels and Adornment*, Plata Y Oro, Kalamazoo, MI (solo)
- Metals/ Jewelry Area Show*, Juror: Cat Crottchet, South Gallery, East Hall, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI (juried)
- Mel Bochner's Room Block as Interpreted by Gabriel Craig and Jennifer Gaskin*, Rotunda/ South Galleries, East Hall, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI (two person show)
- Small But Effective*, Juror: Eana Agopian, South Gallery, East Hall, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI (juried)
- Jewelry + Object*, Juror: James Hopfensperger, Ann Arbor Art Center, Ann Arbor, MI (juried)
- Michigan Glass Month*, Janice Charach Epstein Gallery, West Bloomfield, MI (curated)
- School of Art Student Exhibition*, Juror: John Hitchcock, Dalton Multi-Media Gallery, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI (juried)
- Western Michigan University BFA Student Exhibition*, Curator: Richard Wozniak Saniwax Gallery, Kalamazoo, MI (curated)
- 2004 *Oh, What a Wonderful Tea Party*, South Gallery, East Hall, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI (group)
- 2003 *Womb with a View*, Space Gallery, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI (group)

Writing

- 2010 *The Studio on the Street*, American Craft Magazine, April/May
2008 *Seeing Green: Towards Sustainable Jewelry Practices*, Metalsmith, Volume 29, Number 2
Founding Editor-in-Chief, *The National Student Craft Zine* (1st issue due out Fall 2009)
Founding and Contributing Editor, Conceptualmetalsmithing.com

Bibliography

- 2009 *Decorative Resurgence*, exhibition catalog, Rowan University Art Gallery, Glassboro, NJ
2008 *500 Enameled Objects*, Ashville: NC, Lark Books, Curator: Sarah Perkins
Art Provides Laughs in New Show by Kurt Shaw, Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, Pittsburgh, PA
The Ring Show: Putting the Band Back Together, exhibition catalogue, Georgia Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA
Reduce Environmental Impact with Green Bench Practices by Christine Dhein, Jewelers Circular Keystone (JCK)
2007 *Reflections From Haystack* by Kit Cornell, League of New Hampshire Craftsmen Newsletter
What is that Ugly Thing? by Penelope Carrington, Richmond Times-Dispatch, Richmond, VA
Exhibition in Print: Collect, Connect, Protect, Display: Framing the Art of Jewelry, Metalsmith, Volume 27, Number 4, Curator: Ellen Lupton
Artists Aim for Intriguing with Their Metal Creations by Jef Rietsma, Kalamazoo Gazette, Kalamazoo, MI
500 Earrings, New Directions in Contemporary Jewelry, Ashville: NC, Lark Books, Curator: Alan Revere
2006 *Le Christ de Jaune Fait Une Apparition, Ouest France*, ed: Pays de Quimperle
The 40th Memorial International Enamelling Art Exhibition in Japan, exhibition catalogue, Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo, Japan
2005 *Exhibition to Highlight Anti-Minimalism* by Emily Monacelli, Western Herald, Kalamazoo, MI

Awards

- 2009 Semi-finalist, *Feed* National Juried Biennial, 1708 Gallery, Richmond, VA
Graduate Travel Grant, Graduate School and School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
2008 Thesis/ Dissertation Fellowship, Graduate School, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
Craft Research Fund Graduate Research Grant, The Center for Craft, Creativity & Design, Hendersonville, NC
Recipient of Multiple Travel Grants, Graduate School and School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
2007 Graduate Assistantship, Craft/ Material Studies Department, School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
2006 Pont-Aven School of Contemporary Art Post Baccalaureate Fellowship Recipient, Pont-Aven, Brittany, France
Outstanding Student Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture Nominee, International Sculpture Center, Hamilton, NJ
Director's Service Award, School of Art, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI
2005, 2006 School of Art Enrichment Grant Recipient, School of Art, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI
2004- 2006 National Dean's List
2005 Inductee, Golden Key and Phi Kappa Phi Honors Societies
Art Star Award Recipient for Metals/ Jewelry, School of Art, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI
2002- 2006 College of Fine Art Deans List, Spring and Fall Semesters, College of Fine Arts, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI

Bibliography

- Atterbury, Paul., ed. A.W.N Pugin: Master of Gothic Revival. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995.
- Bradley, Will and Charles Esche., ed. Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader. London: Tate Publishing, 2007.
- Boris, Eileen. Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris and the Craftsman Ideal in America. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.
- Brenson, Michael. Acts of Engagement: Writings on Art, Criticism, and Institutions, 1993-2002. Lanham Maryland: Rowan and Littlefield, 2004.
- Buren, Daniel. "The Function of the Studio." Trans. Thomas Repensek. October. Vol. 10 (Autumn 1979): 51-58.
- Clark, Garth. "How Envy Killed the Crafts Movement: An Autopsy in Two Parts." Craft Perspectives Lecture Series. Museum of Contemporary Crafts. Portland, Oregon, October, 2008.
- Craft in America. Prod. Carol Sauvion. Dir. Hilary Birmingham. Writ. Kyra Thompson. DVD, PBS Home Video, 2007.
- Gardner, Helen. Gardner's Art Through the Ages. Ed. Horst de la Croix and Richard G. Tansey. 6th ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975.
- Greeley, Mary. "Introduction." The Craftsperson Speaks: Artists in Varied Media Discuss Their Crafts. ed. Joan Jeffri. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992.
- Greer, Betsy. "Activism is not a Four-Letter Word." Handmade Nation: the Rise of DIY, Art, Craft, and Design. ed. Faythe Levine and Courtney Heimerl. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008. 87-91.
- Friedman, Thomas L. Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution - and How it Can Renew America. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2008.
- . The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century. New York: Picador, 2005.
- Greenbaum, Toni. Messengers of Modernism. ed. Martin Eidelberg. Paris and New York: Flammarion, 1996.

- Greenberg, Clement. "Avant-Garde and Kitsch." Partisan Review. 1939: 34-49.
- Hyde, Lewis. The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World. 1979. New York: Vintage Books, 2007.
- Judd, Donald. "Specific Objects." Arts Yearbook 8. ed. William Seitz. New York: The Art Digest, 1965.
- Levine, Faythe and Cortney Heimerl. Handmade Nation: The Rise of DIY, Art, Craft, and Design. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008.
- McLean, Iain. Adam Smith, Radical and Egalitarian: An Interpretation for the 21st Century. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- McFadden, Steven. "The History of Community Supported Agriculture." <http://newfarm.rodaleinstitute.org/features/0104/csa-history/part1.shtml>, retrieved April 28, 2009.
- Naylor, Gillian. William Morris by Himself: Designs and Writings. London: Little, Brown, and Co., 1988.
- Petrini, Carlo. Slow Food : The Case for Taste. Trans. William McCuaig. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.
- Phillips, Clare. Jewels & Jewellery. London: V&A Publishing, 2008.
- Ruskin, John. The Nature of Gothic. A Chapter of The Stones of Venice. ed. William Morris, [1892]: reprint, New York and London: Garland, 1977.
- . The Seven Lamps of Architecture. [1849]: reprint, Edinburgh: Ballantyne, Hanson & Co., 1880.
- Sander, Beverly. "The G.I. Bill and the American Studio Craft Movement." American Craft. Vol. 67, No. 4 (2007): 54-62.
- Sennett, Richard. The Craftsman. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Smith, Adam. The Theory of Moral Sentiments. [1759]: reprint, ed. D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.
- Todd, Pamela. The Arts and Crafts Companion. Bath, UK: Palazzo, 2008.

Walker, Rob. Buying In: The Secret Dialogue Between What We Buy and Who We Are. New York: Random House, 2008.

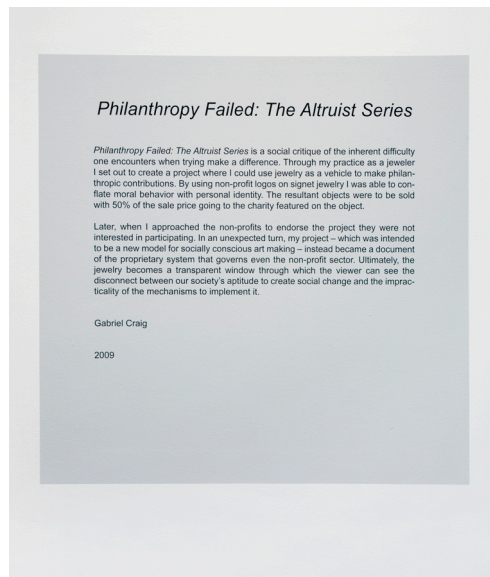
Witcombe, Christopher L.C.E. "Women in Prehistory: The Venus of Wilendorf." <http://witcombe.sbc.edu/wilendorf/wilendorfdiscovery.html>, April 2, 2009.

Appendix

Documentation of *Philanthropy Failed: The Altruist Series*



Installation View, photo: Abigail Volkman



Artist Statement, photo: Abigail Volkman



Installation View, photo: Abigail Volkman



Ring and Mount Detail, photo: Abigail Volkman



Video Loop Detail, photo: Abigail Volkman



Text of Rejection Letters, photo: Abigail Volkman



Altruist no. 3
 proposed donation for Heifer International
 recycled silver, recycled 18 karat gold, artisanally mined citrine
 2008



Altruist no. 3
 proposed donation for Heifer International
 recycled silver, recycled 18 karat gold, artisanally mined citrine
 2008



Altruist no. 5
proposed donation for Feed the Children
recycled silver, recycled 18 karat gold, silk, thread, fair trade rubies
2008



Altruist no. 5
proposed donation for Feed the Children
recycled silver, recycled 18 karat gold, silk, thread, fair trade rubies
2008



Altruist no. 2

proposed donation for the World Wildlife Fund
recycled silver, recycled 14 karat gold, recycled 18 karat gold, artisanally mined emerald
2008



Altruist no. 2

proposed donation for the World Wildlife Fund
recycled silver, recycled 14 karat gold, recycled 18 karat gold, artisanally mined emerald
2008



Altruist no. 9
 proposed donation for the Alzheimer's Association
 recycled silver, polymer clay
 2009



Altruist no. 9
 proposed donation for the Alzheimer's Association
 recycled silver, polymer clay
 2009



Altruist no. 10

proposed donation for the Society of North American Goldsmiths
recycled silver, copper, bronze, paint
2009



Altruist no. 10

proposed donation for the Society of North American Goldsmiths
recycled silver, copper, bronze, paint
2009



Altruist no. 8
 proposed donation for Habitat for Humanity
 recycled silver, polymer clay, fair trade citrine
 2009



Altruist no. 8
 proposed donation for Habitat for Humanity
 recycled silver, polymer clay, fair trade citrine
 2009



Altruist no. 6
 proposed donation for the American Cancer Society
 recycled silver
 2009



Altruist no. 6
 proposed donation for the American Cancer Society
 recycled silver
 2009



Altruist no. 11
proposed donation for the YMCA
recycled silver
2009



Altruist no. 11
proposed donation for the YMCA
recycled silver
2009



Altruist no. 7
 proposed donation for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society
 recycled silver, 24 karat gold plate
 2009



Altruist no. 7
 proposed donation for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society
 recycled silver, 24 karat gold plate
 2009