

# p a i r i n g s

Exploring Collaborative Creative Practice

Edited by Alke Gröppel-Wegener

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PAIRINGS – A CONVERSATION

Exhibition organised by Stephanie Boydell

Project management by Alice Kettle, Alex McErlain,

Alke Gröppel-Wegener and Stephanie Boydell

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# p a i r i n g s

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Exploring Collaborative Creative Practice

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MONOLOGUES

PARTICIPANTS

DIALOGUES

LOUISE BIRGITTA ADKINS  
KIRSTEEN AUBREY  
DUNCAN AYSCOUGH  
HEATHER BELCHER  
SHARON BLAKEY  
VICTORIA BROWN  
CLINTON CAHILL  
DAVID CROW  
CLAIRE CURNEEN  
VANESSA CUTLER  
STEPHEN DIXON  
KATE EGAN  
HELEN FELCEY  
DAVID GATES  
DAVID GRIMSHAW  
JESSAMY KELLY  
ALICE KETTLE  
ANDREW LIVINGSTONE  
ALEX MCERLAIN  
JANE MCFADYEN  
JANE MCKEATING  
MELANIE MILLER  
SALLY MORFILL  
CJ O'NEILL  
INGE PANNEELS  
ISMINI SAMANIDOU  
SYLVIE VANDENHOUCKE  
JENNY WALKER  
CATE WATKINSON  
JANE WEBB  
ALISON WELSH  
LIZ WHEELDON-WYATT

## THE PAIRINGS PROJECT



The position of university courses in creative disciplines is located somewhere between three poles: the amateur, enjoying the making for its own sake, the apprenticeship that explores materials and techniques intensively over a number of years (mostly more than the three of an undergraduate degree), and the theorist with a critical distance to the process of making. Consequently the people teaching on these courses have developed their own approach to both making and thinking about making, often tied into how they understand their own practice – as craftsmen, designers, artists theorists or a selection of these starting points.

The Pairings Project based at Manchester Metropolitan University was set up to challenge these (mostly self-imposed) boundaries, to diffuse the categorization of art, design and craft and foster inter-disciplinary collaboration. Here collaborative creative practice was explored through the pairing up of two or three practitioners from different disciplines and institutions with the aim of producing work for a joint exhibition featuring possible outcomes and a documentation of the journey of collaboration. This research started with two interdisciplinary collaborations at Manchester Metropolitan University, one of which would be explored further as part of the project and can be seen on pages 39-115. Textiles and ceramics came together through shared materials, techniques and processes; and the reflective dialogue that took place in both the conversations and the produced work opened up an extraordinary avenue in the respective makers' work.

“Are you interested in exploring another dimension?”

Whilst responding to each others' marks and forms, a dialogue built up and installation work emerged, which changed the work of all participants, each one informed by and connected with the others' medium. As this process was so rewarding to the colleagues collaborating, they decided to branch out and organize a larger scale project to explore the potential of collaborative creative practice.

The call to arms for interested parties was 'Are you interested in exploring another dimension?', an invitation to staff within the Design School to participate in making, collaborating and exhibiting.

It was set up to not only make new work, but also to engage in conversation and establish links with other makers and institutions.

After the initial aim had been to form six pairs, in the end there would be eighteen. The individual practitioners were invited to make a brief presentation on their practice and following from that they paired up. People were encouraged to meet up to get the collaboration started and to keep track of their journey through a blog. There was no specific brief or other limitation; the only fixed point was the booking of the Special Collection exhibition space at Manchester Metropolitan University from September to November 2010, eighteen months after the project was instigated.

This catalogue, produced in conjunction with the exhibition, attempts to give an insight into the conversations that took place during these different journeys - and the changes that occurred as practitioners left the relative comfort zones of their individual practice behind and began exploring new territory. It is divided into two main sections: the **Monologues** (pages 7-39) give a flavour of the different individual practices of the participants, encompassing the art, design and craft spectrum; and the **Dialogues** (pages 42-??) delve into the work that has been produced as partners got to know each other, started to experiment with new processes and materials and made collaborative work.

Due to the nature of the book format, these are only snapshots of the work that took place, but we hope that they give an insight into the richness and joy of these extraordinary collaborations.

**Alice Kettle, Alex McErlain, Alke Gröppel-Wegener & Stephanie Boydell**

*October 2010*

## MONOLOGUES

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The participants of the Pairings Project came from a variety of backgrounds in the craft/design/art spectrum. The materials they engaged with in their practice included clay, glass, textiles, metal, wood, paper as well as new technologies, such as digital and film media. But they didn't just vary in the materials they used in their practice, but also in their approaches. While some were traditionally material-based as central to their work, others were of a much more conceptual nature and involved materials as a means of expressing their ideas.

Most were teaching at least part-time at a number of educational institutions in the UK.

This section is dedicated to the participants' individual work. It is of course very hard to do all of these varied practices justice on the limited scale of one page, but we have tried to give a glimpse into their work by asking them to provide a biography, personal statement and image that represents their practice, which are contained in this section.

## LOUISE BIRGITTA ADKINS



Louise Birgitta Adkins, a Senior Lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University, combines textile interests with performance, video and installation work. She has a MA in Performance and Live Art from Central St Martins College of Art and Design. She has worked collaboratively under the name Lisalouise (1998 – 2006) with Lisa Le Grove as well as individually and has exhibited throughout Britain and Europe.

In 2006 she received research support funding from the University of the Creative Arts to investigate the relationship between live performance digital and new media. In 2010 she received research project support funding from MIRIAD at Manchester Metropolitan University to research and develop a curated programme of com-missioned performance art events called 'Between' in association with the International3 and the Cornerhouse.

“*My practice has grown out of a series of performance, film and installation works produced corroboratively under the name ‘Lisalouise’ as well as individually as Louise Adkins. I see collaboration as an intrinsic part of my practice and have worked with artists and professionals from a variety of backgrounds including audio arts, classical music, digital media, amateur radio, dance and theatre. From 1998 to 2006 I collaborated with the Glasgow based artist Lisa Le Grove under the name ‘Lisalouise’. This ongoing collaborative practice was predominately performance based and directly explored collective personal histories as well as referencing the diverse yet shared cultural landscapes of England and Scotland. ‘Lisalouise’ has exhibited throughout the UK, Europe and America.*

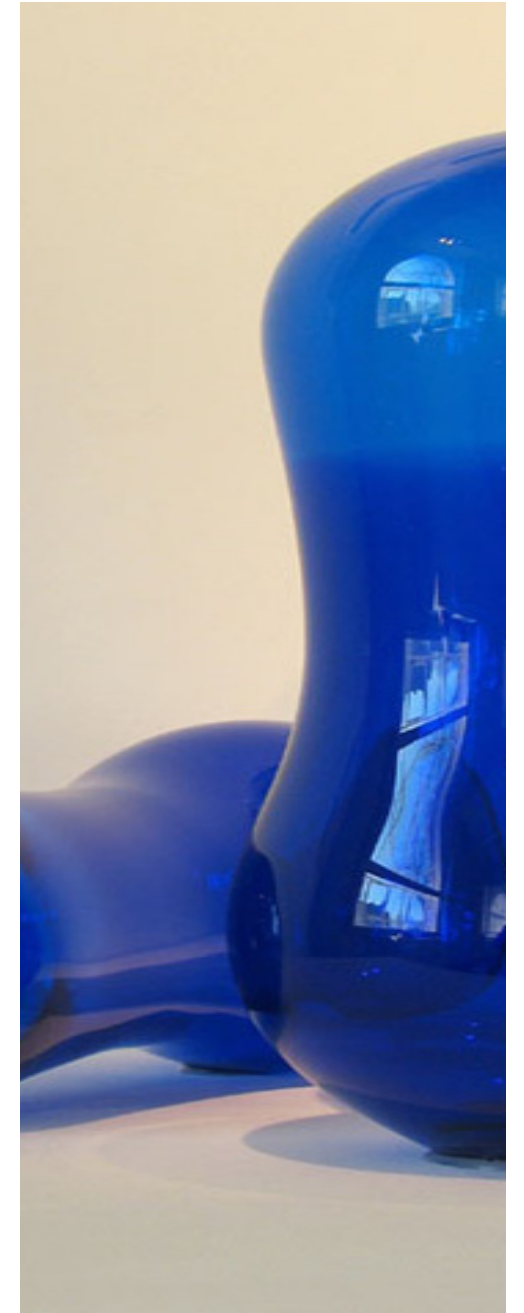
*Since 2006 I have focused on my individual practice looking at the relationship between performance digital and new media. This ongoing research explores how digital technologies can foster additional and alternative narrative within performance-based practice. This investigation has resulted in a series of performance/moving image installation works. My most recent work has included the appropriation and re-enactment of seminal moments within popular culture in particular choreographed danced perform-ances for stage and screen.*”

## KIRSTEEN AUBREY

Kirsteen Aubrey is a Lecturer in glass at Manchester Metropolitan University. In 2002 she was Programme Leader of the BA(Hons) Glass, Architectural Glass and Ceramics Course at the University of Sunderland, undertaking a number of roles, two Community Fellowships and helping to set up a number of ESF modules to encourage reach out into the community. In 2000 she was invited to Lednicke Rovne Glass Symposium as the only UK resident glass maker. In 1998 she won an award to research the use of glass in public spaces working with the Royal College of Art, Nazeing Glassworks and the Liverpool Design Initiative.

“*My work is often inspired by the landscape, exploring mountains and pathways and their relationship with the surrounding environment. The pathways represent journeys through life, exploring how pathways and people interact, and the impact they can have upon us.*

*I predominantly work in hot glass as I enjoy the fluidity of the material; this technique enables me to breathe life into the molten glass and to shape the form by hand. I also work in other glass techniques and materials.*”





## DUNCAN AYSCOUGH



Duncan Ayscough is a Senior Lecturer in Ceramics at Cardiff School of Art & Design. Since 1996 he has produced his distinctive wheel thrown and turned forms from his studio in rural West Wales. He is a fellow of the Crafts Council of Great Britain and has exhibited his work both nationally and internationally, his work is also represented in numerous significant public and private collections.

“Through my work I strive to create artifacts which are rooted in the history and tradition of the ceramic vessel and yet present the viewer with objects which are simultaneously familiar and mysterious, strong and fragile, passive and dynamic. By embedding such oppositional values I aspire to make works of an experiential nature. The metaphor of the ceramic vessel in relation to the human body exerts a constant point of reflection in my practice. The clay pot represents the perfect vehicle to communicate simultaneously the strength and fragility of the human condition. All my works are produced on the potters’ wheel using fine clay bodies which enable me to create very fluid and defined forms. It is the visual tension of the forms that I aspire to encapsulate and enhance with my use of surface application and kiln firing techniques. I have explored and developed processes using terra sigillata slips, fine particled clay slips originally used by Greek and Roman potters.

It is the ancient pots of Egypt, Greece and Rome as well as those of prehistory which continue to captivate me. These ancient pots represent a powerful continuum tracing some ten thousand years of human activity, objects of utility, ornament and ritual with the maker’s intention forgotten or altered through the interceding millennia. I see my contribution to this continuum as creating pots which act as conduits linking us to our predecessors as well, embedding contemporary cultural values to be interpreted or misinterpreted by those who follow. ”

## HEATHER BELCHER

Heather Belcher studied textiles at Goldsmiths College, London and has exhibited her work regularly throughout the UK and internationally since 1983. She is a member of the ‘62 Group’ of Textile Artists. In 2003 she was awarded a Research and Development Grant by the Arts Council England, which she used to visit Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia. Her work is represented in the public collections of Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery, the Crafts Council, Shipley Art Gallery and Bankfield Textiles Museum, Halifax.

“My work explores hand-made felting processes incorporating techniques that include hand knitting, stitching, printing and also images drawn directly into the body of the cloth with loose wool fibres. There are references to the traditions and materiality of felt, and also issues of concealment, the duality of absence and presence. The garments depicted in the work make a connection with the fact that felt has an ancient history, probably one of the first fabrics to be used to clothe the body. Its texture is reminiscent of leather or parchment and could perhaps be regarded as a metaphor for both skin and paper.

My recent work marks a return in interest to the traditions of ‘Still Life’ painting. As with clothing, familiar household objects and treasured possessions hold a narrative and can remind us of the proximity of the human figure, and yet they can also make us aware of a threat of loss or dislocation. ”







Sharon Blakey is a practicing maker and Senior Lecturer in Three Dimensional Design at Manchester Metropolitan University. She exhibits in the UK and abroad. Alongside her teaching and practice Sharon is committed to raising the profile of craft education and has delivered workshops for primary school children at Foundation, KS1 and KS2 level. She has also run short courses for secondary school pupils and CPD workshops for teachers. Her current research project, 'Mary, Mary Quite Contrary', is in collaboration with Manchester Art Gallery and metalworker Hazel Jones, investigating the Mary Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times.

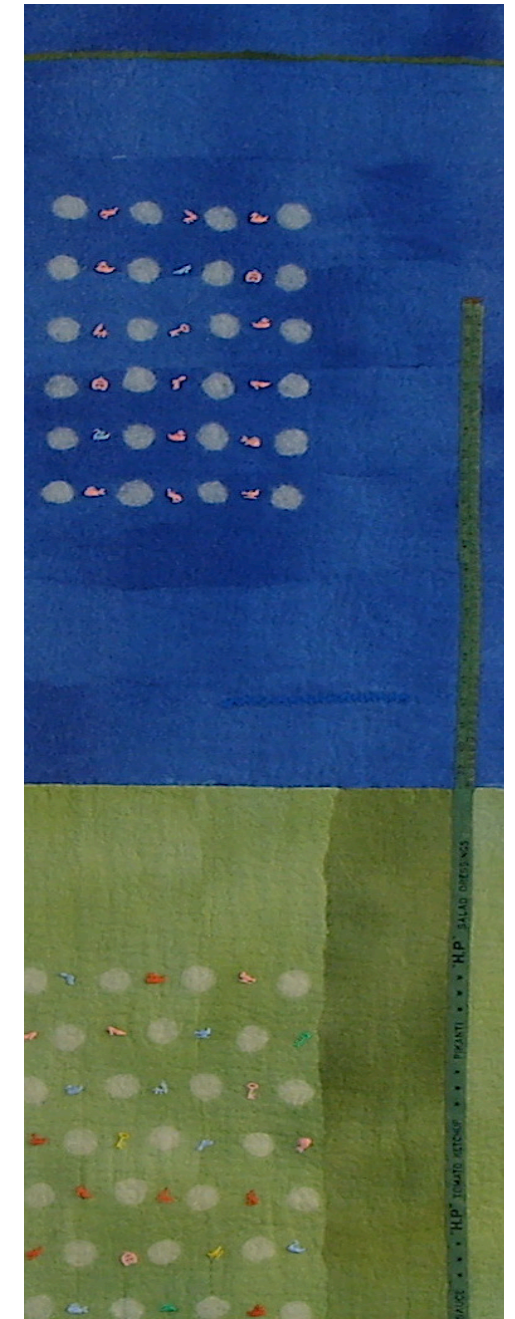
“My work commemorates the ordinary, the unsung and the obsolete, revealing the significant in the unnoticed and the value in the overlooked. I am interested in discarded objects, the things that people throw away once they are no longer considered useful. These mundane objects are imbued with latent messages and hidden narratives of the people, times and places they bear witness to. Forms reference the traditional vehicles for commemorative wares with dishes, cups and spoons featuring prominently. Surfaces are layered with stained slips that are eroded to give a timeworn appearance. These are overlaid with washes of oxide, underglaze, glaze and enamel in an effort to develop patinas that evoke a sense of history.”

Victoria Brown is Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at the University of Chichester where she leads the textile area of the BA in Fine Art. She completed her MA in Tapestry at the Royal College of Art in 1987 and has continued to exhibit throughout the UK. She publishes widely on craft subjects and is a member of The Contemporary Applied Arts Gallery. Sometimes working as a hat maker, Victoria has made new mortar boards for the Royal College of Art and an Armada Hat commissioned by the Worshipful Company of Feltmakers, which has been presented to H.M. The Queen.

“I have been making felt for 28 years, using this simple, ancient fabric to explore colour, pattern and form. The process of making and the nomadic history of felt are important in my work. To be able to dye the wool, layer and blend colour in the felt, has always been at the root of my practice. I make large wall pieces, which are about colour, pattern and embellishment and smaller forms using felt, glass and pewter, looking at processes and spaces ‘between’.

The felt forms are created by making thick felt around glass vessels (pieces from my collection of late 20th Century glass); the wool and the felt is the antithesis to the glass but alludes to protection, the felt re-describes the glass form. The glass is cut out of the felt, which then becomes the mould and molten pewter is poured into the felt mould. There is a sense of the ludicrous in pouring molten metal into textiles. The pewter takes the exact form of the felt, picking up the texture and the surface of the felt fabric in the metal – it also retains scorched fibres in the metal, becoming a hybrid and the felt mould scorched by the heat is a record of the process.

Conceptually my work is looking at ‘the spaces between’, either that which exists in language or physically in materials and process and the ordering of process and making.”





Clinton Cahill has taught Art and Design since 1982. His first degree is in Fine Art and his MA is in the History of Art and Design. In addition to his pedagogical practice he has a commercial background and continued personal research interest in illustration. A Senior Lecturer in the School of Design at Manchester Metropolitan University, Clinton is a tutor on BA (Hons) Graphic Design and subject route tutor for MA Design and Art Direction.

*“I have been reading, mapping and making illustrative work about James Joyce’s ‘Finnegans Wake’ intermittently for many years. ‘Stick & Stone’ is one outcome from this on-going project. The double concertina format is derived from the fissioning of one of the principal consciousness of the book, H.C. Earwicker into his problematic twin sons, Shem and Shaun. The four long images that comprise the content of the two volumes are relief prints taken from perspex plates with the aid of a garden roller.”*

Professor David Crow, who joined MMU in 2004 as Head of the School of Design, was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Art and Design and Pro-Vice-Chancellor in April 2010. His industrial experience was gained in London where he worked on the design and production of various projects including books, brochures, packaging and promotion material. As a senior designer for Island Records, he was responsible for art direction and production and managed promotional and advertising campaigns for a variety of artists. On setting up his own studio as a freelance designer, his client list included Sony UK and USA, Virgin Records, Island Records and the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Professor Crow’s research specialty is experimental typography, using font authoring software to generate systems of symbols. As a practising artist he has produced and exhibited works in different media using animation, CD-ROMs and interactive and non-linear work and has exhibited in the USA, Korea and Israel as well as Europe.





## CLAIRE CURNEEN



One of the UK's foremost ceramicists whose work is distinct for its figuration, Claire Curneen is a Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Ceramic Studies, UWIC, Cardiff, where she also was awarded her MA. She exhibits her work on an international stage and it can be found in many collections around the world, including the Crafts Council, London, National Museums and Galleries of Wales, Cardiff, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Benaki Museum, Athens, the Icheon World Ceramic Centre, Korea, and the National Museum of Scotland.

*“I work with the figure in ceramics and draw from religious and mythical subjects to explore the idea of what it is to be human. The porcelain and terra-cotta figures command a quiet yet charged presence and they often refer to images of Christian Iconography, quoting narratives of sacrifice and devotion. Figures encompass elements of human experiences: love, loss, suffering and compassion.”*

*Although the work often provokes an awkward silence, they always embody hope. The translucent, delicate and ethereal nature of porcelain lends itself to the understanding of the work. The textural finish is central to their making with dripping dribbles of glaze and gold accentuating the rich quality of the porcelain.”*

## VANESSA CUTLER

Vanessa Cutler completed her PhD in 2006 at the University of Sunderland. Specialising in the creative application of abrasive water jet cutting of glass, her work has been exhibited in Britain, the USA, Singapore and the Czech Republic. She regularly publishes articles and her work is in the permanent collections of the University of Sunderland, the Swansea Institute of Higher Education and the University of Wolverhampton.

Currently she lectures at the Welsh School of Architectural Glass at Swansea Metropolitan University. Next year sees her work being exhibited in Denmark, USA and UK.

*“The work looks to exploit the parameters of abrasive water jet cutting by using it to manipulate glass to create forms that explore fragility and form whilst drawing inspiration from areas of architecture and geometry.”*





## STEPHEN DIXON



Stephen Dixon was the inaugural artist in residence in the ceramic studio at the Victoria and Albert Museum from September 2009 to March 2010. He is a Professorial Research Fellow at Manchester Metropolitan University, a maker-trustee on the Board of the Crafts Council, and has recently exhibited in the British Ceramic Biennial in Stoke-on-Trent. His work is represented in many international collections, which include the Victoria and Albert Museum and the MAD Museum, New York.

“*Since I set up my studio in 1986, I have been working with political narrative, and exploring this tradition in ceramics. Driven by frustration and disappointment at the world and its workings, I share the satirist’s desire to question and expose the corruption, hypocrisy and absurdity of political leaders and their governments.*”

*My inspiration comes from a wide range of visual, literary and narrative sources: the satirical cartoon (from James Gillray to Steve Bell); art with a political ‘edge’ (Francisco de Goya, Max Beckman, George Grosz); Pop Art (Eduardo Paolozzi, Robert Rauschenberg) and popular culture; classical and biblical literature; and current events, as ‘received’ from BBC Radio 4.*

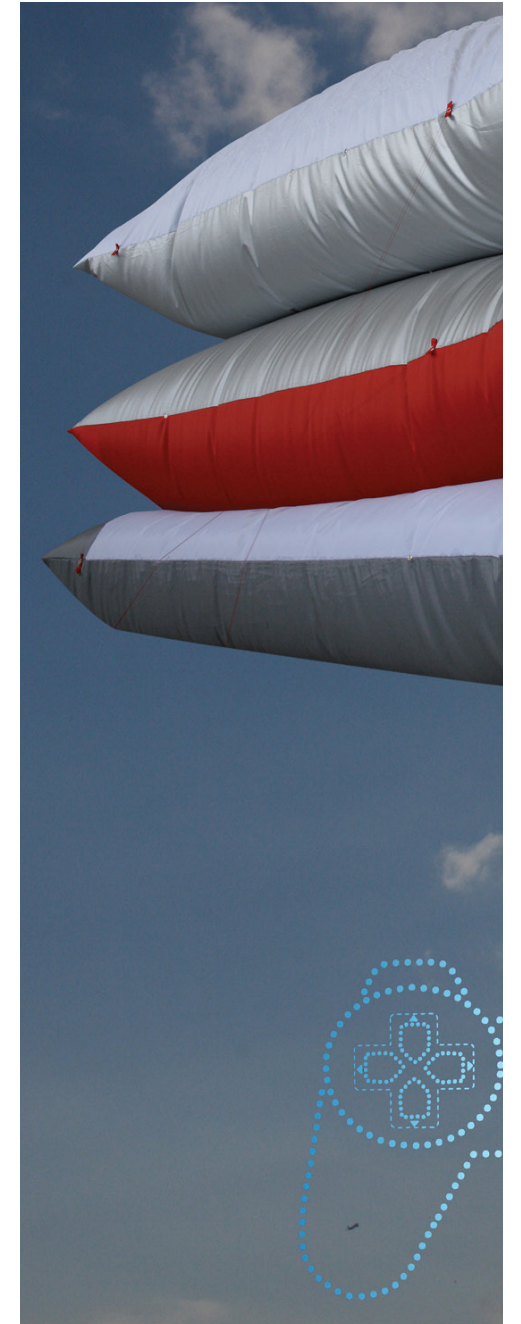
*My work connects with the historical tradition of allegory; I have a fascination with the allegorical sculptures, paintings and prints of the late Renaissance, with their rich complexity of images and symbols, poetry and mystery. They have their own visual language, full of obscure historical, political and cultural references; a visual crossword puzzle waiting to be scrutinised and decoded. My work is deliberately subversive and provocative. The pieces reflect upon the political issues and uncertainties of our times, often by presenting an ‘alternative’ reading and representation of current events. The viewer is invited to respond to this alternative viewpoint, and in doing so to question their own understanding of (and complicity in) political ‘truths’, and their own governments’ policies and actions.”*

## KATE EGAN

Kate Egan is the Programme Leader for Creative Practice, the new part-time degree at Manchester Metropolitan University. She also delivers the programme of Life Drawing Classes and Textiles workshops for the Whitworth Art Gallery Art & Social Club. Commissions include work produced for the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, and for Beachcroft LLP at Spinningfields, Manchester in 2010. She is currently working on ongoing research to develop digital interfaces in public spaces entitled ‘Virtual gardens’.

“*My work combines new and old technologies work, making reference to mass consumerism and observations of the universe (the macrocosm) in relation to the domestic (the microcosm). A variety of materials are used in the work, for example air, soap, concrete, fabric, stitch and film.*”

*In 2002 I set up the art label ‘FLOAT’ as a platform for interdisciplinary and collaborative projects in order to create new and unexpected mixes to complement the Public Art I produce for interior and exterior spaces.”*





## HELEN FELCEY

Helen Felcey studied 3D Design at the Manchester School of Art before completing an MA in Ceramics at Cardiff School of Art in 2001. The 'Jingdezhen Experimental Factory', a two-month residency in 'China's Porcelain Capital' in 2006, had a significant influence on Helen's ceramics. She has exhibited the results and the ongoing impact of this period in various shows, for example 'Place Settings' with Alice Kettle in 2007 and her show with Carina Piscato at Blas & Knada (Stockholm) in 2009.

Helen coordinates the MA Design programme within Manchester School of Art's Design LAB. She is also Chair of the National Association for Ceramics in Higher Education.

“Recent collaborative exhibitions and projects, such as 'Place Settings' and now 'Pairings', are defining new directions in my personal practice and research. The Jingdezhen China residency in 2006 marked the beginning of this period of reflection and subsequent change.

*In December 2009, I took the decision to break from my studio practice, as I then knew it. I am now considering every space and place I inhabit to be my studio – the city streets, my home, the local café, the college workshops and so on. After working in a relatively solitary practice for ten years, I'm pleased to have increased conversation with other artists and designers, materials and environments.*

*These events are driving new research into our conceptions of the security of place and the freedom of space, in relation to art and design practice. Spaces to facilitate our passing through, fluidity, mobility, and even the benefits of a 'non-place' studio are forefront in my mind.*”

## DAVID GATES

A winner of the Jerwood Award for Contemporary Making 2010, David Gates's practice draws together a multi-stranded approach to design and making. His MPhil/PhD research at Kings College London focuses on the situated language of craft practice and builds on his interests in language, communication, epistemology, making as an intellectual act and knowledge and understanding. He is a Senior Lecturer at London Metropolitan University who exhibits his work regularly, for example in 'Taking Time', 'Craft and the Slow Revolution', 'Intelligent Trouble' at Contemporary Applied Arts and 'Starting Points' at the Siobhan Davies Dance Studios.

“My furniture embraces functional expediency as well as exploring our relationship with the stuff around us. Carefully made cabinet-work and tables sit alongside rapidly made intuited pieces, seemingly at a distance yet connected. It at once both celebrates and interrogates making techniques, neither fetishising nor negating either hand or machine.

*Using furniture as a starting point 'In Our Houses' is an ongoing body of work that presents us with ambiguities and questions, asking for engagement and offering possibilities. In side-stepping the use-function inherent in established furniture typologies people, objects and spaces all co-mediate to negotiate multiple meanings that can shift and play in our memories and expectations. A repertoire of expected and sometimes less expected materials and techniques are assembled; family groups, individuals, parts and voids, neither table, chair nor ironing board.*”







David Grimshaw is the Programme Leader for BA (Hons) Three Dimensional Design at Manchester Metropolitan University. He is involved in a wide range of regional economic regeneration projects through the Design Initiative and a member of the panel on the 'Make Me' project that aims to put designers and makers in touch with new technologies.

He recently completed a successful thirty month Knowledge Transfer Partnership project, helping international furniture manufacturing company Halo to rationalise and modernise their design development systems. As a design consultant to industry his designs have been manufactured by companies such as Viaduct, Allermuir, Nomique, Davison Highley, and his 'dip table' was purchased by the Manchester Art Gallery for their permanent collection.

“My interest has always been with the manufactured object, working with commercial companies to design objects for industrial production and the retail market.

*The factory is a wonderful place, a playground of processes; it offers opportunities to work with new and exciting materials and technologies, and to design products that will become part of our everyday lives. The resultant objects live in our world, often unnoticed, but they shape and reflect our industrial technology and contemporary society.*

*As society and technology progress, so do the materials and process opportunities, and as these develop from the experimental to the essential, they shape the objects of tomorrow.*”

Jessamy Kelly has been awarded a BA in 'Glass and Ceramics' and a Masters in 'Glass Design', which involved an Industrial placement at Edinburgh Crystal as a student glass designer, where she worked as an in-house glass designer until 2006. Jessamy has run her own art glass business 'Jessamy Kelly Glass' since graduating in 2001 and went on to set up Juo Ltd with designer Joanne Mitchell in 2006. She recently completed her practice based PhD in Glass and Ceramics at the University of Sunderland.

Her work has been exhibited widely throughout the UK as well as internationally in France, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and in the United States.

“My research examines the combination of glass and ceramics in a hot state within my studio practice and offers a potential new route of practice for artists working in glass and ceramics.

*Renowned for being difficult to combine, glass and ceramics are usually regarded as incompatible due to differences in structure; through my research I have managed to combine them in a hot state to create a unique series of artworks. This approach is based on the hand-crafted sensitivity of craft practice, harnessing light by cutting away the materials to reveal their inherent transparent and translucent qualities; an aesthetic which works subtly with the simplicity of my cast forms. The way light passes through my work to reveal an inner luminosity intrigues and inspires me.*”





## ALICE KETTLE



Research Fellow at Manchester Metropolitan University, Alice Kettle exhibits her work widely. Her solo show 'Allegory' is presently touring the UK. In 2009 she was selected for the European Applied Arts Prize with the World Crafts Council and the Florence Biennale. She completed a huge commission 'Looking Forwards to the Past' in the Winchester Discovery Centre in 2007. The publication *Machine Stitch Perspectives*, which she has co-authored with Jane McKeating, comes out in 2010.

“My stitched works, largely figurative, exploit the sewing machine for intuitive and creative ends. The scale belies the component parts: individual tiny stitches, which combine to form swathes of colour, on which are fluid, stitched line drawings.”

*Themes in my work explore the human condition, narrative and mythology. The line of thread connects emotions, to make associations between the touching and tactile quality of textile and the expression of feelings.”*

## ANDREW LIVINGSTONE

Andrew Livingstone is Senior Lecturer and Subject Leader in ceramics at the University of Sunderland, The National Glass Centre. He received his PhD on “The authenticity of clay and its redefinition within contemporary practice: ceramic familiarity and the contribution to expansion” from the University of Ulster in 2007. Andrew exhibits his work around the world and it is held in many collections including The Garth Clark Mark Del Vecchio Collection at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. He frequently contributes to international conferences and has published the books *Thematic(s)* and *Authenticity. Familiarity. Redefinition.* - as well as contributed to *Contemporary Ceramics* by Emmanuel Cooper.

“My work examines ceramic in its widest sense engaging with material, process and the social contexts in which ceramics operate. The familiarity of ceramic material and object take centre stage within this practice, where both the handmade and readymade are employed within both installation and conceptual applications. My work operates within the expanded field of ceramics and often employs digital media, animation, photography and non-ceramic interventions.”

*The letters 'Made in England', executed in bone china, emanate a funereal presence, a direct reference to the once world centre of ceramics, the UK. The words display a connection to back stamps found beneath ceramic objects, however, more poignantly, they jolt our awareness and acknowledgement of the relocation of manufacture. This work purposefully exposes the demise of industry and explores industrial process through a former worker at Coalport in Stoke-on-Trent. The photographs depict Denise an employee for over 25 years until recently, working at her kitchen table, in isolation, a metaphor perhaps to a dying skill and industry.”*







Alex McErlain is a Senior Lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University, where he specialises in ceramics. His principle research interests are in exploring issues and ideas within the work of contemporary craft makers through film and exhibition. He recently ran a research network for the artistic and scientific communities in ceramics and glass with Professor Robert Freer from the University of Manchester. In 2007 he curated 'Spotlight on Slipware' at York Art Gallery and 'Firing Thoughts', which explored the relationship between drawing and ceramics, at the Special Collections Gallery at Manchester Metropolitan University. He authored *The Art of Throwing* with Crowood Press in 2002.

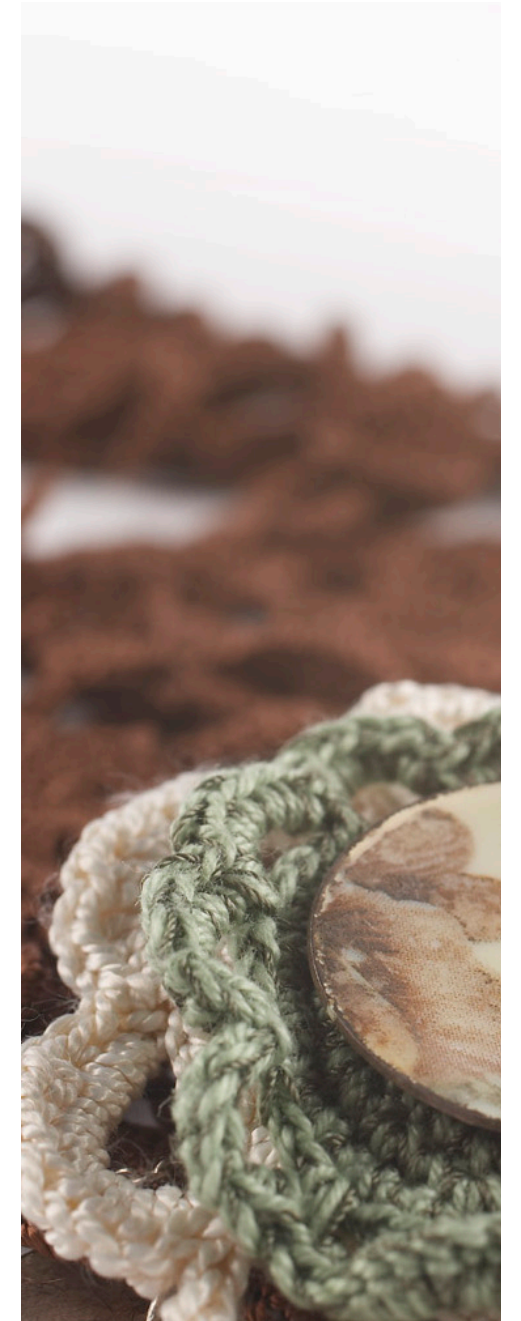
“Primarily I have been concerned all my life with making wheel thrown pottery, often tableware and frequently jug forms. I specialise in saltglazed stoneware but am also very interested in high fired reduction stoneware. My background in studio pottery places me firmly in what is described as the 'Leach Tradition' and whilst I acknowledge Bernard Leach's influence I am perhaps more interested in the kind of pottery that emerges naturally from potters supplying a need in everyday life, work that is purposeful and almost incidentally beautiful. My work with Alice Kettle has led me into trying English slipware which I have not done before and I had been fascinated to experience the whole process from digging clay in Devon through to firing with traditional earthenware lead glazes.”

Jane McFadyen is the Widening Participation Champion for the Faculty of Art and Design at MMU. She also is engaged with a variety of outreach initiatives and her own practice, as well as being committed to raising the profile of Art, Design and Craft education in schools. A graduate from the Three Dimensional Design Programme she practiced as a contemporary Jeweller until joining the Polytechnic as an Associate Lecturer in 1989 and becoming full time Principal Lecturer in 1994.

Having experience as a self-employed maker she has a keen interest in developing opportunities for graduate self-employment and entrepreneurial approaches to practice.

“The language of the objects I make comes from the materials and processes employed fuelled by observation of objects both natural and man-made. I draw ideas, occasionally on paper, but mostly through sketch models, small samples of ideas worked directly in the materials I wish to explore. I usually make small-scale pieces that come together in larger items. More often than not they are wearable, the relationship with their future owner being key to my desire to create.

Crucial to all the pieces are that they are predominantly made by hand with simple tools, it is the skill of the hand and eye and the commitment of time, coupled with dedication to quality control that drive their production. This I believe imbues the object with its worth.”







Jane McKeating is Acting Head of Design in the School of Art at Manchester Metropolitan University. She received the second prize in the Art of the Stitch International touring exhibition and is exhibited in a two person show at Drumcroon Arts centre in 2010 as well as representing the UK at the International Triennial of Tapestry in Lodz, Poland.

She is the co-author with Alice Kettle of *Machine Stitch Perspectives* published by A&C Black to be launched in August 2010.

“*Making things for me involves telling stories. The ideas evolve from drawings in visual diaries, which develop through print and stitch onto cloth, recently as rag books where the tactile quality of cloth and thread is important. The process of making stitches in the cloth moves the images on to something new, and links with an obsession with repetition as part of an underlying narrative.*

*The book presented here is the 2nd part of a story about renewal. This little chair was retrieved in a dilapidated state from my cellar and in book 1, ‘Of no Particular Value’ became the muse for a reflection, looking back on a scrapbook of images to review its value. This volume tracks recent progress, entitled ‘Transition’ it illustrates that repair and renewal is not a quick process.*

*It surprised me that the end of this volume was not completed long ago. A 3rd part will emerge to complete the story when it’s ready to.*”

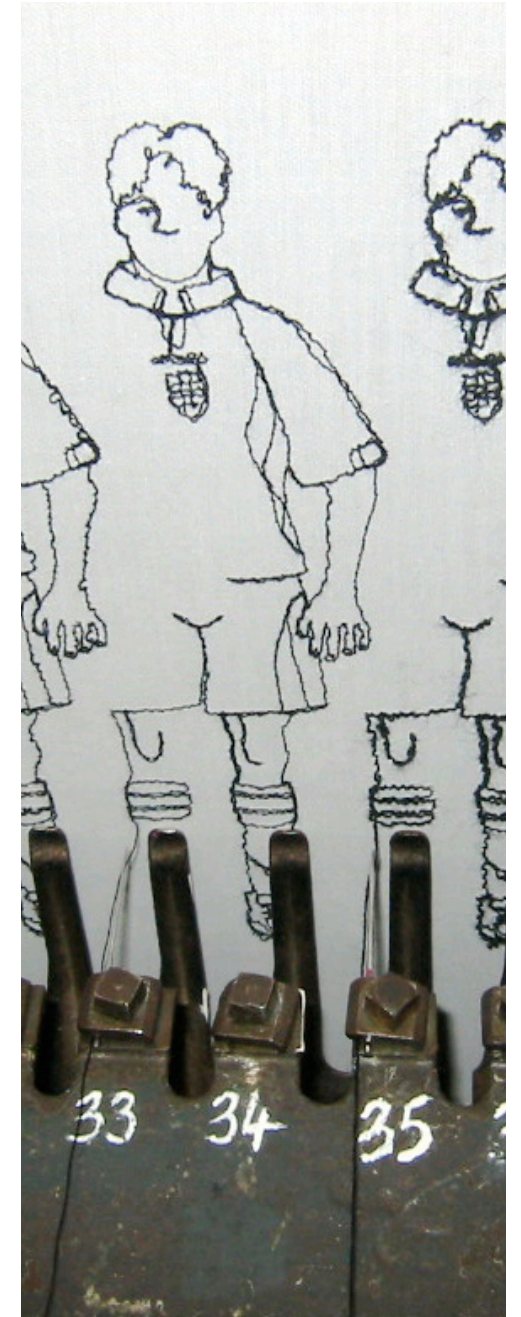
Currently the Route Leader for the MA Textiles at Manchester Metropolitan University, Melanie Miller was awarded her PhD in 1997 for research on ‘Design and technological change in the embroidery industry with particular reference to computerisation’.

She exhibited at, as well as co-curated with June Hill, ‘Mechanical Drawing the schiffli project’ touring exhibition originated by MMU. Melanie also curated ‘Machine Maid’ exhibition of machine stitched textiles at the West Park Museum in Macclesfield in 1999.

“*My usual practice questions conventional stereotypes, ranging from accepted norms of beauty and taste, to gender conditioning. The usual format for the work is fabric lengths that could be used to create clothes or household textiles, but invariably remain as fabric lengths...*

*The function of the fabrics is deliberately ambiguous: they can be seen as ‘merely’ decorative, but have underlying seriousness.*

*Techniques used to make the work vary, but usually include the use of industrial embroidery technology, whether relatively archaic, such as the pantograph schiffli machine, or up-to-date, such as the computerised multi-head embroidery machine.*”



## SALLY MORFILL



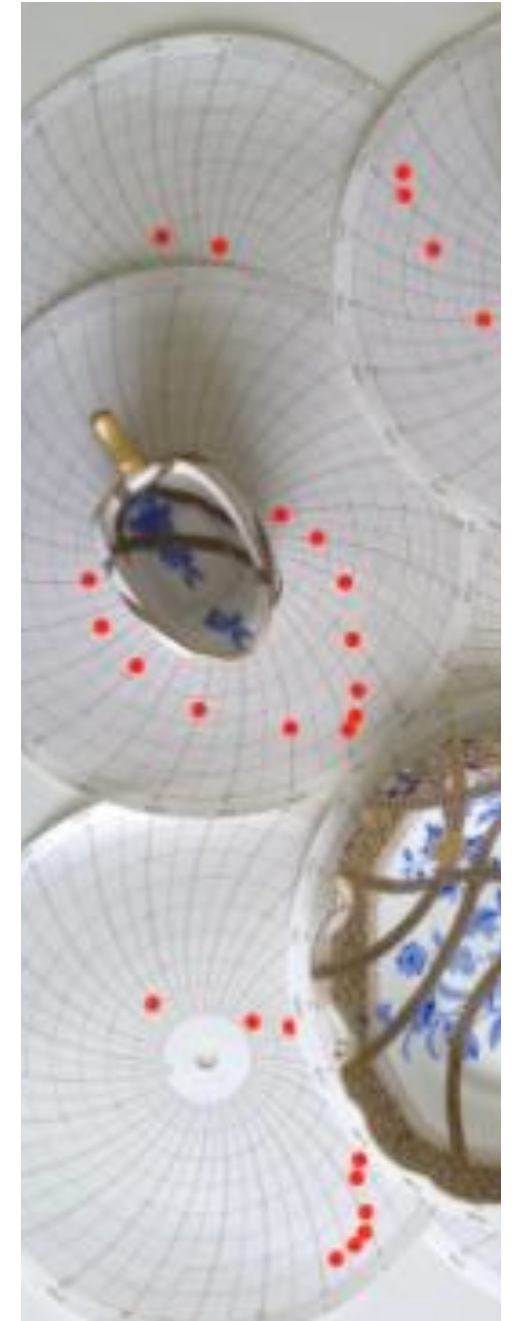
Programme Leader in Textiles at Manchester Metropolitan University, Sally Morfill holds an MA(RCA) in Fine Art (Tapestry). Sally is a member of Five Years, an artist-run gallery in London, sharing responsibility for programming exhibitions; she continues to exhibit her own work both in the UK and internationally. At 'Voice and Nothing More', a week-long festival at Slade Research Centre (UCL) exploring the voice as medium and subject matter, Sally collaborated with vocalists who performed her work, interpreting it as an object-score.

“My recent practice has focussed on the idea of process: both through an engagement with materials and their transformative properties and through attempts to reveal within the work something of the act of making, for example through the use of instructional drawings, plans or the presentation of data pertinent to the idea. Often these elements shift from their 'preparatory' status to become the work itself. This strategy delays the work's conclusion, identifying an incompleteness, the fragment or a state of 'limbo'. Drawing in many forms is central, as is an increasing interest in collaboration and the potential for the viewer to participate in and influence the work and its reading. This is an interdisciplinary approach that engages with both digital and traditional processes.”

## CJ O'NEILL

CJ O'Neill is a Senior Lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University. Recipient of a Next Move Award and a Business Development Initiative Award, she was an invited director on the board of the Manchester Craft and Design Centre from 2007-9 and Artist in residence at Guldagergaard, Denmark, in 2008. Having held a number of research grants on her practical work, she regularly publishes through exhibition catalogues and contributions to books, as well as in magazines such as *Crafts*, *Homes & Gardens*, *FT Times* and *Design Week*. Her work has been exhibited world-wide.

“Inspired by memories, I create a visual language of silhouettes. Re-interpreting everyday ceramics, adding a new layer of pattern over the old, I hope to embed a new story, to provoke conversation and inspire new ways of seeing objects. I use industrial production processes, but align myself more closely to the individual craftsman and am interested in the balance between the handmade and the industrially produced.”





## INGE PANNEELS



Inge Panneels is a Lecturer at the Architectural Glass Department of the University of Sunderland. She has run the IDAGOS glass studio since 1998, working on public art commissions as well as private and corporate projects, producing gallery pieces and creating installations for exhibitions. She was a Specialist Advisor to the Craft Department for the Scottish Arts Council and her work is represented in the collections of the Ebeltoft Glass Museum in Denmark, at the Flemish Government of Belgium and of Dexia Bank, Brussels.

“*I have been designing and making bespoke architectural or sculptural glass pieces since 1998. Both work in tandem and could not exist without the other. Inspiration for my work is driven by location and circumstance, the given context of space and light, and life’s rich tapestry, but a recurrent theme is universal complementary opposition.*”

*Sculptural works are often made in series; exploring a central theme through a body of work that may last a few years. Current work is looking at notions of Truth; looking at two sides of the same stories; opposition and compromise; while new developments are ideas of mapping, inspired by the current Liverpool Map project for the new Liverpool Museum due to complete in 2011.*

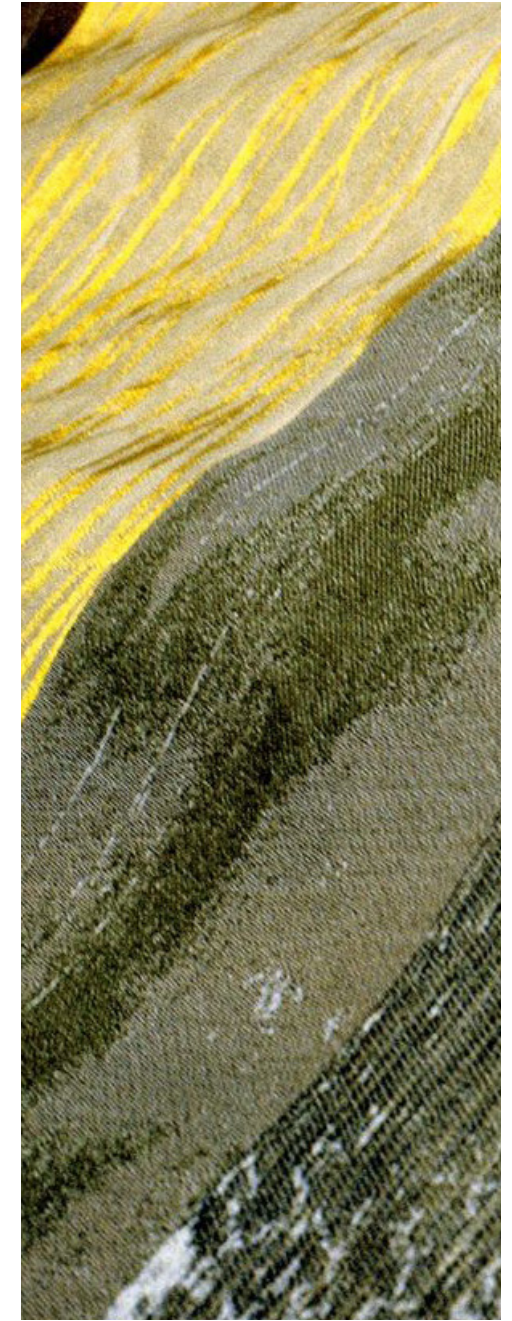
*My inspirations are life, the universe and everything in between; with a particular penchant for Scandinavian design sensibilities, the Zen of Japanese gardens, liberally minded people of opposing viewpoints, a book that takes you across the world faster than a jumbo jet, music for the soul and the smell of freshly made bread.*”

## ISMINI SAMANIDOU

Ismeni Samanidou is a Visiting Lecturer at the University College Falmouth, Cornwall. She took part in the Next Move Residency between 2004 and 2006. She has been invited to travel to Bangladesh for two months and work within University and Industry environments on a cultural exchange program on a British Council residency in 2009-2010. Ismini was nominated for an Arts Foundation Textile Art Fellowship in 2009-2010 to pursue a project on architectural textiles. In 2009 she was selected to exhibit at the Jerwood Contemporary Makers Exhibition at the Jerwood Space and the Dovecot Studios, where she was commissioned to produce a site specific large scale installation.

“*I use weave to describe the world around me. The information I collect attempts to capture the impermanence and beauty of the everyday: evidence of decay seen in architectural surfaces, peeling paint on walls, weathered landscape, natural surfaces, macro images of plants, even weaving itself. By closely examining and analyzing this information I then reconstruct it in woven form. I am fascinated by the construction methods of woven fabrics, and by the way textiles can exist within a space.*”

*Narrative is a strong element in the work and often the weaving relates to a particular place or story.*”







Sylvie Vandenhoudke holds a MA and MPhil from the Royal College of Art (London) and is currently Visual Arts Research Co-ordinator at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp, Belgium.

She has exhibited extensively in Europe, Japan, Canada and USA and was granted an AHRC Research Grant (2006) and a HEFCE Research Fellowship (2007) for her ground-breaking research in pâte de verre.

Her work can be found in many private and public collections worldwide including Museum of Arts and Design (New York), Toledo Museum of Art (Ohio), Chrysler Museum of Art (Virginia), Musée du Verre de Sars-Poteries (France) and Design Museum Ghent (Belgium).

“My work explores questions of perception, it examines the boundaries of the visible and the invisible, the real and the imagined. The material is manipulated into a transmutable medium, turning perception and interaction between viewer and the environment into an acute visual awareness.

My work has gradually evolved from small objects to in-situ installation. It is usually described as poetic and is reminiscent of the gesture of drawing.

The visual language in my work emerged from an intense research in glass and the exploration of new directions in pâte de verre making, technically as well as visually. These investigations are imbedded in this ancient technique but are dealing with contemporary practice, methods and materials in order to push the boundaries of the known and the possible.”

Currently a Lecturer in 3D Design at Manchester Metropolitan University, Jenny Walker was on the Crafts Council Next Move Scheme from April 04 - April 06 and invited to be Artist in residence at MMU. Her practice combines metals with ceramic fragments and she has recently exhibited in ‘Junk shop Revolution’ at the Bluecoat Display Centre in Liverpool, ‘Art School’ at the Holden Gallery, Manchester School of Art, The Great Northern Contemporary Craft Fair in Manchester and at Velvet da Vinci in San Francisco.

“My practice has usually focused on issues of ‘re-use’, the potential of broken things and the capacity of ordinary objects, isolated from their original context, to impart a narrative about their history. I am passionate about local history and how much we can understand about the world from our own ‘back yard’.

In reconsidering what may often be disregarded, the work responds to and incorporates items such as Victorian ceramic shards, smokers’ pipes and junk shop finds. These broken objects discovered in Manchester are employed for the link they provide to the workers of ‘Cottonopolis’ through the remnants of everyday items they once used. I seek to elevate the status of such lowly finds through the medium of jewellery, often contem-plating the absent parts through reconstruction whilst exploring the relationship between disparate materials and objects.

Personal histories and the lives of ordinary people and ordinary objects continue to be a source of fascination for me and I hope to be able to engage others with the exciting possibilities of looking to the past to better understand the present.”





Cate Watkinson has been working as a glass artist and designer since 1988. In that time she has built up an extensive body of work, including public art and exhibition pieces that have been shown internationally. Cate designs and makes architectural glass to commission for a wide variety of applications, ranging from decorative glass panels for public and private buildings to glass public seating in city centres as well as glass and stainless steel public art sculptural pieces. She is interested in architectural glass in all its forms, with particular reference to working in sustainable ways using recycled materials.

Cate is a Senior Lecturer in Architectural Glass in the Faculty of Arts, Design and Media at the University of Sunderland.

“*Having initially trained in the long-established techniques of stained glass making, I have developed the skills and knowledge gained from working in the traditional methods over the years to bring a fresh slant and new techniques and ideas to my contemporary work. Most of my time is now taken up with designing and making glass work for the public realm, designing not only the glass element of a piece but the whole structure.*

*Landforms, the elements and the ever-changing complexities of nature serve as the dominant influence behind the work. The designs explore the natural environment capturing the dramatic and gentle forms moulded and impressed on the landscape by nature itself. The shapes that result from the blasting, baking and erosion of the earth hold a never ending attraction and can be seen, repeated in different ways in organic forms.*

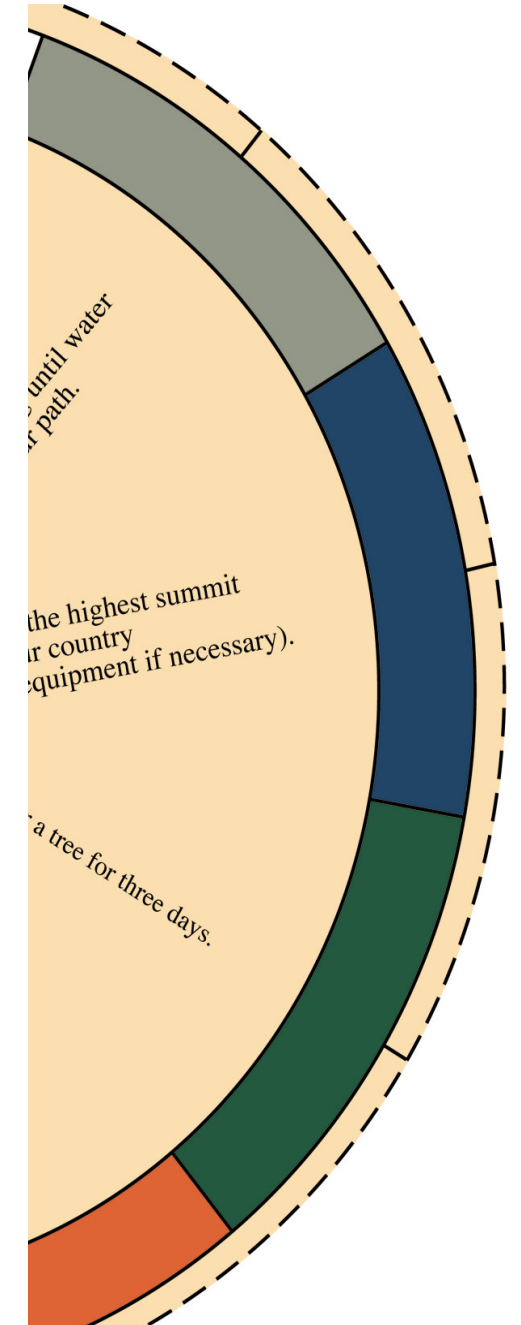
*The sculpture made for the LookOut Metro Project was designed to be distinctive, uplifting and as a visual marker. It is not a ‘logo’ or sign but a timeless symbol for the building. Ideas for the work are drawn from the concept of window shopping, looking longingly at precious objects seen through glass. I wanted to capture the allure and nostalgia surrounding old fashioned sweetie jars and the excitement felt when looking at the jewel like contents inside a shiny glass vessel.*”

Jane Webb is Senior Lecturer in History of Design at Manchester Metropolitan University. She was awarded her PhD for research on ‘The 1835-6 Select Committees on Arts and Manufactures – Benthamism, Anatomy and Design’. Jane specialises in the relationships between theory and practice and writes with artists about their practice.

Her research work ranges from work on the graphic practice of John Flaxman, soon to be published through the Visual Rhetoric series edited by Prof. Leslie Atzmon, to an examination of the use of narrative in the work of Stephen Dixon for *Interpreting Ceramics*. In 2007 she organized the conference ‘Migratory Practices: exchanges between art, craft, design and anthropology’ with Dr. Amanda Ravetz at Manchester Metropolitan University – the papers from this conference were published last year.

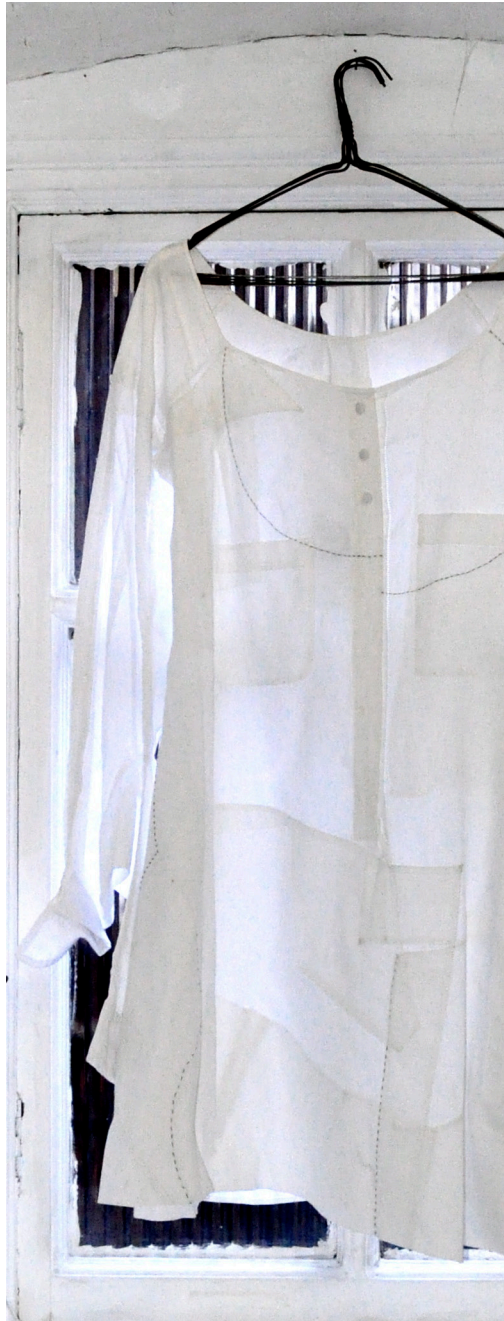
“*Since studying for my PhD in a School of Art and Design, I have been continually inspired by working with artists and makers. This inspiration has not only come by way of observing practice, but also by my own making and drawing. I am slowly beginning to understand the great potential practice has for new approaches to historical research.*

*Though writing is central in my own practice, I do not see it as divorced from the material world. Working with David and Alice in Pairings has been the beginning of a growing freedom I feel to explore not only different forms of writing, but entirely new media.*”





## ALISON WELSH



Alison Welsh is Senior Lecturer on the BA (Hons) Fashion programme at Manchester Metropolitan University, with a background in commercial menswear design. Since 2004 she has been developing research projects and has exhibited work in Japan and China as well as the UK. Alison is a trustee of Graduate Fashion Week, a charity that was launched in 1991 as a forum for the best of BA Graduate fashion design in the UK. Her current practice focuses on garments made from vintage and recycled textiles, incorporating hand and machine embroidery, dyeing and printing.

“*‘Flock’ is one of my most recent pieces of work, and resulted from research undertaken in Ahmedabad, India. The piece combines elements of contemporary British and traditional Indian design, and explores how it is possible to reference and celebrate the shared histories of these two cultures. I am interested in the cut and construction methodology of Indian menswear, and its application to contemporary womenswear.*

*‘Flock’ is constructed from recycled charity shop garments, the shape and cut of the garment referencing vintage Indian Kurtas.*”

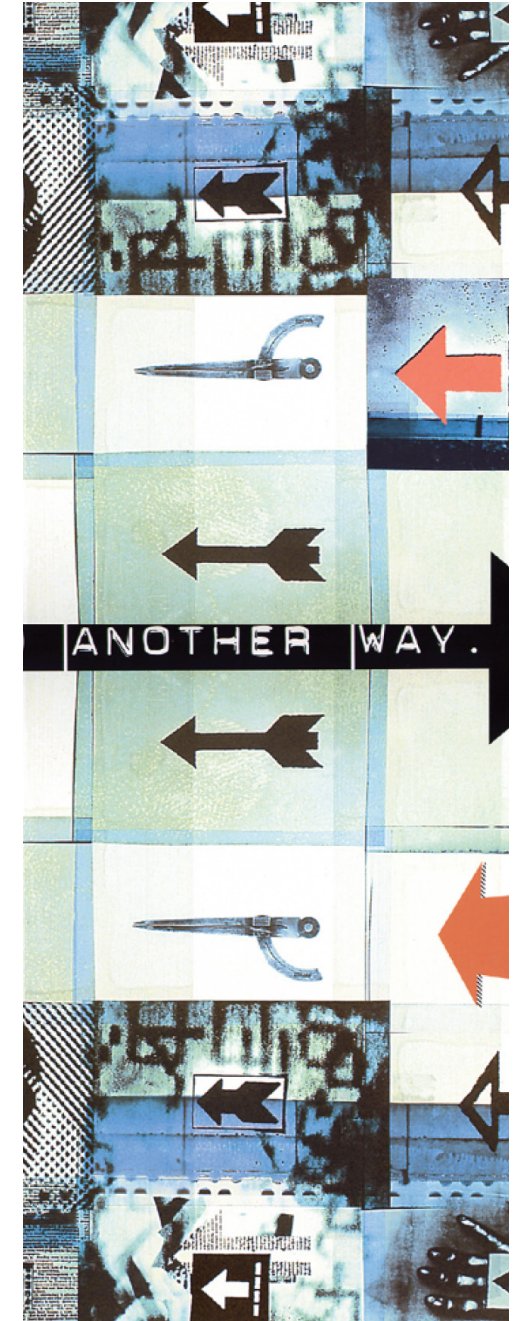
## LIZ WHEELDON-WYATT

Liz Wheeldon-Wyatt is a Senior Lecturer on the Graphic Design programme in the School of Design at Manchester Metropolitan University. After graduating from there herself, Liz has spent over twenty years practising as a Graphic Designer, ten years spent in London and ten in the USA. With her extensive background working in industry, Liz has been involved in a number of research projects, more recently ‘Stepping Out’ funded by The Design Skills Alliance which explores the connectiveness of the Design industry and education.

She has also formed a partnership with ceramist Helen Felcey and has started to explore the personalities of ‘2d’ pattern/textile images and type, digitally rendered onto ‘3d’ forms.

“*Having spent many years finding the design solutions for someone else’s problem, I am keen in my design research to find a way of exploring that which has no defined path or fixed abode. The openness of experimentation with no boundaries, I hope will lead to a new freedom of expression and unpredictable outcomes.*

*The open road!*”



## DIALOGUES

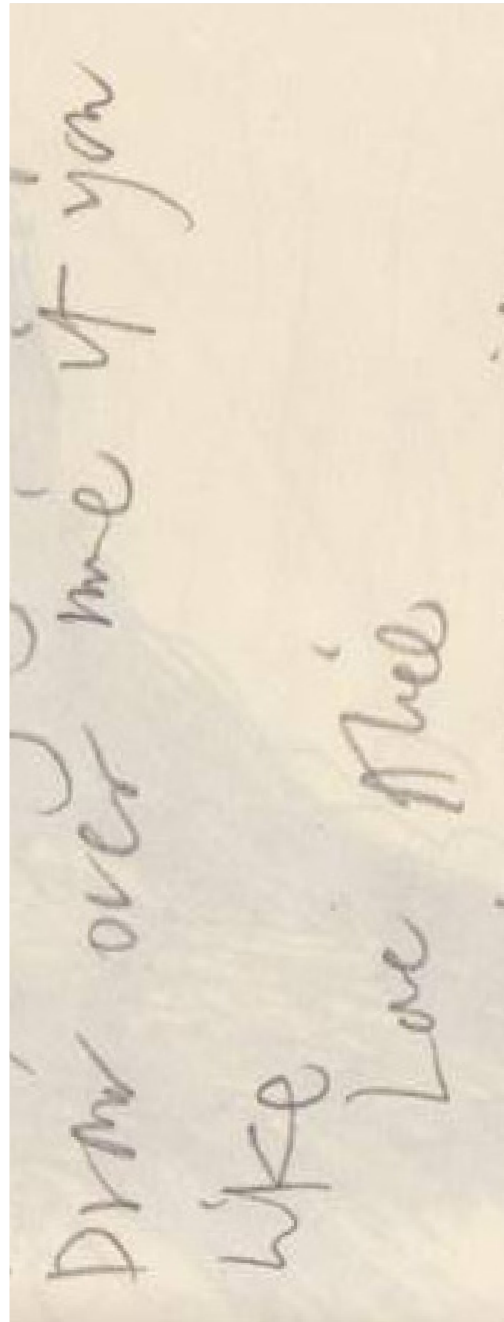
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As most of the partners were based in different locations and had different time commitments, getting together to actually do some work was sometimes very difficult. In extreme cases the collaboration did not only span different counties, but countries.

What a number of the pairings experienced was that while the gestation period apart was certainly important, this could result in very fruitful days once they did manage to get together, a day in which they did the work of years.

Working habits that had become ingrained through practicing for many years were seen through different eyes and subsequently questioned. And while discussions of ideas and work were taking shape in many of the groups, questions were asked about the nature of acquired knowledge, the perceptions of practice and the cross-fertilization of both media and ideas, and in extension the ‘ownership’ of the work.

In order to give an insight into the conversations that were going on, again we asked participants to provide their own documentation: a statement written at the beginning of the process referring to their hopes and expectations, a statement about the processes they experimented with and images showing these processes. In some cases the photographs were not staged professionally and this was because they were taken to document practice and share it with the remote partner(s) rather than the wider public, however, these images, as well as the variety of styles in which text was produced, show the diversity of processes that was going on in the various conversations.



It started with a shared sketchbook. When potter Alex McErlain was filming textile artist Alice Kettle at work as part of the documentation of a research project, he became interested in her stitching. While they were both exploring Winchester as part of his stay there, they also encountered ceramics, floors, tiles, jugs, and Alex was able to share his enthusiasm for his area of expertise. After these encounters with each other's practice, one day a sketchbook with drawings of hands appeared on Alex's desk. On the first page Alice had written an invitation to respond to her drawings and thus begin a collaboration, to "start a process of exchanging and responding." She ended with the words "Draw over me if you like."

The sketchbook was passed between them, but the collaboration stayed in drawn form until Alex started another film that brought him to explore Devonshire Harvest Jugs, and when they appeared in his drawings a new spark started flying. These pitchers were removed from both their practices, neither Alex nor Alice had made one before, and they decided to take the plunge and attempt one. This was a time of firsts, for Alex working in unfamiliar earthenware, using lead glaze and firing in a wood kiln in Devon utilising traditional techniques, for Alice working in ceramic materials for the first time ever, particularly graffito - drawing lines through soft white slip to produce an image. But their collaboration would not just be the jug itself, they also fashioned a cloth for the pitcher to stand on which responded to elements of the jug with line and colour, introducing Alex to stitching and the sewing machine for the first time. What they produced was not only a piece full of narrative, but also something that showed a different approach to either of the makers' practice.

The next piece became a designed piece, deliberate and planned. Alex and Alice produced a pair of jugs complete with stitched cloth to stand on. This was based on the idea of 'the clay talking' and showed both images and text. They had reached a stage where the material started talking to each of them and they started wondering about the language that informed this phenomenon. Was it based in material or in process? Or maybe it was in between (or removed) from both of them?

Spurred on by the desire to answer these questions for themselves, they developed more ambitions, and for an exhibition at Manchester Metropolitan University's Special Collection, Alice and Alex decided to respond to Bernard Leach's 'The Pilgrim Dish'. This brought Alex into stitching, drawing with the sewing machine. The exploration of stitching was furthered by Alice producing a large stitched cloth and asking Alex to stitch into it. He was hesitant; could he really alter her work? Wouldn't he ruin it? So he decided to produce his own stitching on small fabric swatches that could be attached to the larger piece. Starting from the question whether he could draw on a sewing machine continuously, because he found it difficult to stop and start in a neat way, he started to understand how it must be for Alice to make a big piece. While he had observed her working, he was struck by experiencing the process for himself (and from the perspective of a beginner) and to realise how much time and effort went into her work. Engaging with the hidden processes in her work, Alex also started thinking about the hidden processes incorporated in his practice, preparing the clay, for example, or the time it takes to fire it.

When Alice and Alex were invited to show the work of their collaboration at the 'Knitting and Stitching' show (where they also included the work of Helen Felcey, another ceramicist who had started collaborating with Alice), this aim gave them a push to try unfamiliar techniques in producing new work. Using Alex's drawings as a starting point they used a technology new to Alice, stitching emblems for blazers, and Alice ended up creating large scale repeat patterns, which she found much more versatile than she had previously thought.

When talking about the big dish that is called 'Awakenings', Alex McErlain says that "some-how it was born." For a potter, maybe the birth of a pot when coming out of the kiln wouldn't be such an extraordinary metaphor, but that wasn't the point when the piece came to life. On the contrary, at this point the bowl that would become 'Awakenings' almost was destroyed. When the dish came out of the kiln, Alex thought it had too much white space on it and his usual procedure for dealing with a piece that came out

of the kiln flawed was to smash it and start again. However, Alice was horrified by the idea to simply destroy artefacts that didn't turn out right, her practice was to rework them until they were right, giving them another chance to develop. The exposure to a different approach to 'mistakes' made Alex rethink his initial instinct and it was at this point that 'Awakenings' started to be born.

Instead of smashing it when it came out of the kiln flawed, Alex took inspiration of embroidery techniques and decided to use transfer colour in stages (another technique he hadn't used in his own work before), building up the white space initially seen as flawed with a distinct stitched flavour. And, again, he and Alice made a cloth for the dish to stand on. It was only now, after working together for months, that they both had gained the confidence in responding to each others' work. They describe it as an "integrated piece with decorative working from both of us to the point where the mark making activity is both joint and inseparable. Its title comes from the feeling we both experienced of an awakening to new impulses and a questioning of long held values and beliefs."

After this awakening, Alice and Alex have not just continued their own journey of collaboration, producing more pots, some of them enriched with the blistery texture that comes from firing at too high a temperature (previously Alex would have seen a flaw and reached for the hammer), planning installations and two large jars that capture their emotional response to the 2010 Haiti earthquake; they also established the Pairings Project, bringing together practitioners from different disciplines and institutions to explore collaborative creative practice more systematically.

*Alke Gröppel-Wegener*



This collaboration has from the outset been a tale of the unexpected. To begin with (having spent my entire life totally immersed in ceramics), I never expected to be working with a textile artist; then to discover that in working collaboratively I would begin to question some of my own long held practices and beliefs was wholly unexpected. For me the collaboration has breathed new life into my creative impulse. I am excited at the possibilities that venturing into new territory has brought forth. I was determined from the outset to explore something new within the ceramic field and chose for us to work in earthenware, a medium that couldn't have been further removed from high temperature saltglaze with which I am most familiar.

It took ages before I was confident enough to venture onto a sewing machine; was this apprehension at making myself look foolish or was it the unfamiliarity of what at first appeared to be a two dimensional surface? As always drawing was the great facilitator between us and now when I draw I sometimes don't know if I am drawing for clay or cloth.

The works we have made seem to belong to themselves rather than to either of us, I am sometimes wary of planning too much (although this is a natural instinct for me) and relish the improvisational nature of working with the unexpected. What I do expect however, is to continue this journey of collaboration into the future.

*Alex McErlain*



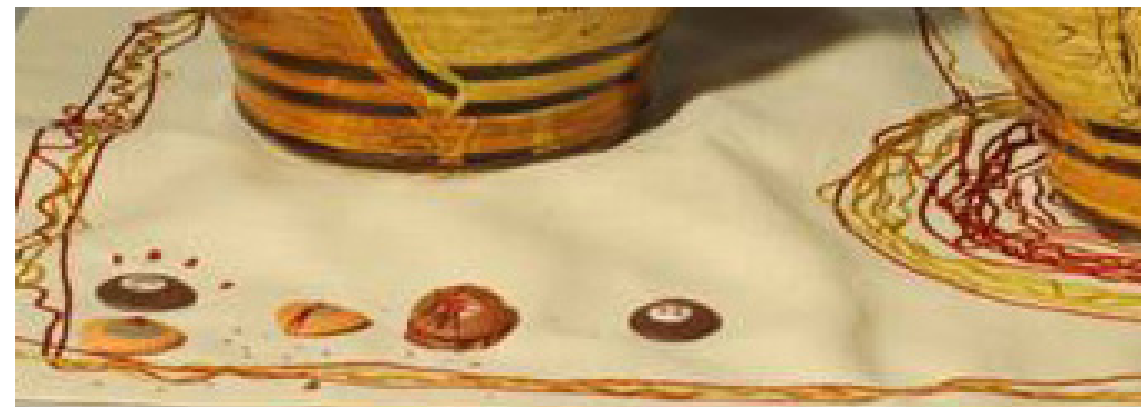
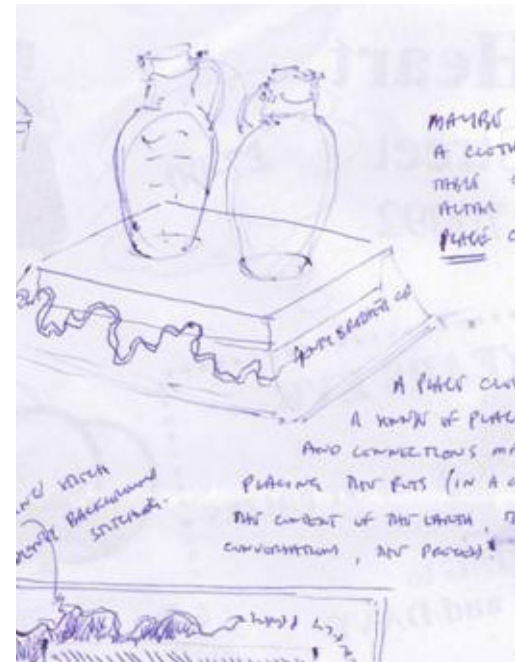
Our collaboration has taken place over a period of a couple of years, the evidence of which has already been exhibited and even collected. The impetus of this exchange has been the catalyst or Pairings since the discoveries and dialogue seemed so empowering to us both.

We have tested out each other's media, slipware vessels are drawn into and fabric works stitched and shared. The conversation is played out through shared interventions, through the materials and groups of works.

For us both it has impacted back into our practice since often the results have been surprising, the boundary between the impetus of one artist and one media diffused into the response to the other. They are works which reveal something of clay and thread and of each of us beyond our established and safe place and also have a shared ownership.

*Alice Kettle*







VICTORIA BROWN, JANE MCFADYEN &  
KIRSTEEN AUBREY

The process of Pairings has been an exciting, challenging and most of all affirming process.

The imperative to clearly communicate one's own practice, reasoning, beliefs and skills has meant that nothing can be taken for granted. Throughout initial meetings, further discussions and shared experiences many thoughts, ideas and questions have been turned around, explored and challenged.

Communication with a partner who is working at a distance has involved some text in the form of emails, however, the most significant sessions have been when taking time out to meet, discuss, explore and communicate directly....we have learnt much about our own ideas and values as well as learning new skills and sharing delight in doing so. We have also found much more than just common ground in practice, we have unearthed a web of shared experiences, relationships and friendships.

*Victoria Brown and Jane McFadyen*

The latest Pairing has been very reaffirming, and it combines the skills of glass, crochet and felt. Although my involvement with this Pairing has been recent it has had a positive impact in how we communicate and develop ideas.

*Kirsteen Aubrey*



“ *Creating shapes that envelop each other in glass, felt, pewter and thread.* ”

What have we begun? It seemed at first that the Pairings Project was and would be a simple collaboration, meeting up, sharing ideas and making something in response... it sounded so simple and straightforward. However, like any other partnership, it proved to be more complex, subtle, fraught and less containable than envisaged.

Initial meetings threw so many ideas and thoughts into the ether that the first six months of the year were spent attempting to make sense of who we are, what we do and think and how this “pairing would /could influence what we did next...” Was it simply an exchange of ideas, or skills, or a sharing of experiences, thinking and making and the development of new approaches?

Eventually, as happens in the development of any projects, themes around containment, colour, texture, contrast and construction began to rise to the surface and the initial joint workshop session for Vicki and Jane – making glass “beads”- was arranged as a catalyst to develop shared “pieces”.

Then we became three.

As the glass elements became central to the work we were keen to join with Kirsteen. Glass became the shared “new ground” for us both, acting as a starting point both in form and structure with the added element of the joy in a new material experience. Kirsteen became the generator of form and interrogator of the process, giving form to our ideas and questioning our thinking.



Discussion on form, structure, colour and connections set us on the path currently being explored. Each object an expression of each member of the group's creative process using elements from the others' practice; and so directly giving form to the influence.

Ambition has grown, the first tentative explorations now pushing us towards greater aspiration.

Should we create a collaborative hanging, bringing together in one piece the elements of each existing practice in a one-off day of sharing? Should we construct a symbolic “charm bracelet” representing the individual collective experiences and resulting forms?

The journey has really only just begun. Like all partnerships when considering new ideas collaborators act as reference points, sounding boards in our own heads or in direct conversation.

The fraught part... there is never enough time to feed the desire to create pieces... (Is there ever enough time in any lifetime for making?) And logistics of collaboration, there is no substitute we have found for being in the same room, holding and exploring the same objects, sharing the search for words to describe thoughts and concepts.

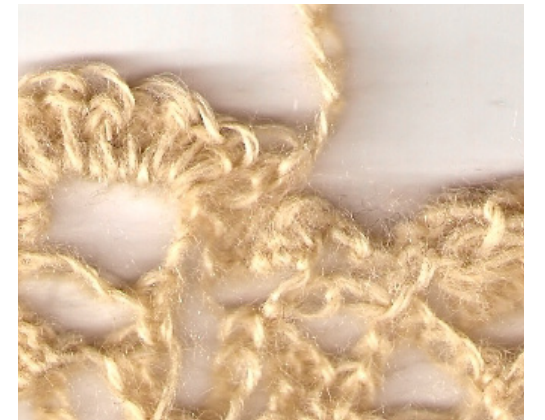
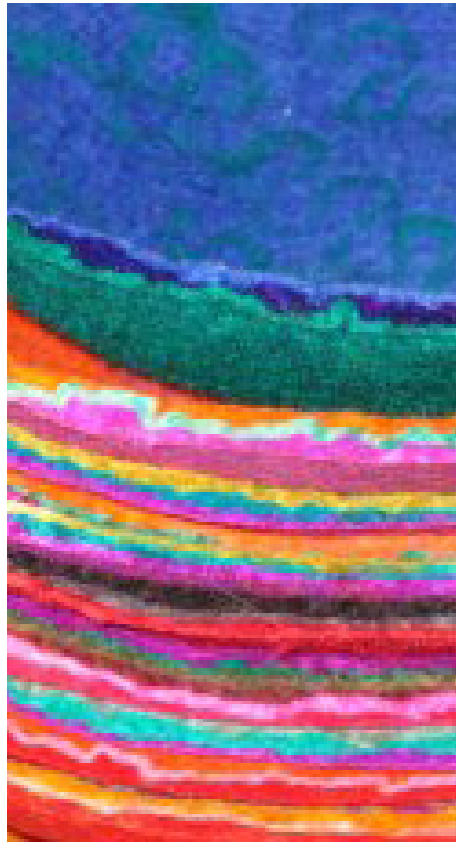
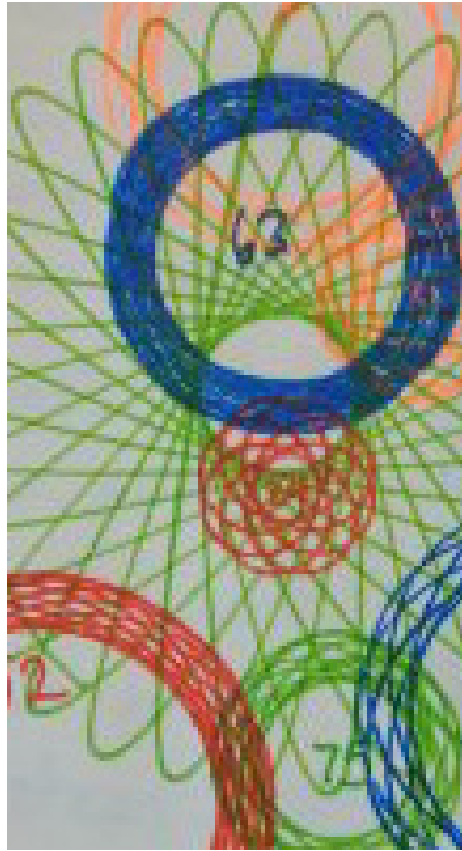
As the exhibition comes to its opening stage, showing the product of the process a year since its start, we are only just becoming clear on where we are going in our three-sided pair. Pairings simply makes sense, as a maker it supports creative questioning and focus, as an academic it confirms what is of value in practice and offers clear direction in the development of pedagogy.

Pairings has been a challenge, it has been exhilarating and stressful in equal parts but will not conclude here and now, its influence will last for all of us as will, we hope, our collaboration on new ideas and new works.

... watch this space ...

*Kirsteen Aubrey, Victoria Brown & Jane McFadyen*







Text is a prominent feature in art practice and is a fundamental component of communication. The term re-pairings has emerged from correspondence via email where it is common practice to begin an email with the term re:, our interpretation and development is as follows.

Both our common materials clay and textile eventually succumb to repair - quite often as a consequence of being torn or broken, whether by accident, intention, or due to age. In response to this we decided to exchange objects that needed repairing. So Andrew gained a textile and Jane some ceramics, both with some accompanying explanations or clues.

We are now in the process of repairing them, with the proviso that we are both approaching the exchanges with the obvious alienation to the material we have been given in terms of appropriate repair. As part of the artwork films will be made of the process to play alongside the repaired objects.



Key words in order to hope to repair,

repair, a journey through re invention  
re design  
re evaluation  
re investment  
and re negotiation.

If it's too far destroyed it's not possible to make it the same, it never can be, repair can only really happen when you give up the thought of the original, when you accept imperfection and enjoy the changed version. You remember the original, but know it is past. Can the re invention be as good?  
Perhaps it can be better. Accepting change. New materials, processes, ingredients, experiences, information, ideas and relationships go to form the repair. It's a slow process.....

'Re-pairings'  
repair, rethink, realign, re evaluate, regroup, redefine, remember, reinvent, reinvest, re engage, regain, remake, restart, report, resolve, re negotiate, reposition, retry, re thread, reproduce, re plan, re open, response, respond, recognise, regrade, repro, religate, relive, restoration, reformation, replacement, rehabilitation, remarry.....

*Andrew Livingstone & Jane McKeating*







So many shared concerns, so many ideas to work on, so much shared enthusiasm, so little time! Our 'Pairings' experience has been like a whirlwind romance: a passionate affair of fleeting encounters and intense assignations in Falmouth, Manchester and London. Of snatched conversations via email, phone and text across countries and continents as Imini worked on projects in Bangladesh and Greece. It's a wonder we managed to do anything at all. And yet we did.

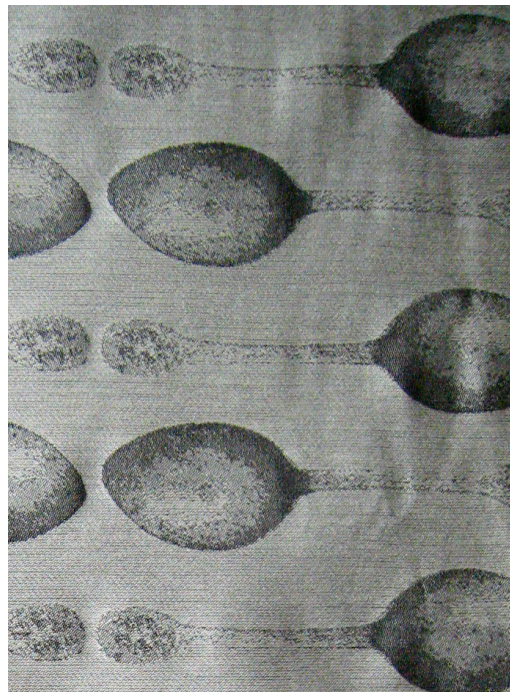
That this happened is down to a deeply rooted, mutual aesthetic in the impermanence and beauty of the everyday and evidence of the transitory: surfaces that bear witness to an activity, object, person, time, place. That, alongside a common underlying narrative or hidden story within our discreet practices, has been the glue that has held us together along what has at times been a tumultuous journey.

When Imini talked about the woven surface Sharon was surprised by how closely connected it was to her experience of working with clay and she noted how much you learn about your own materials and processes from seeing it through others' eyes.

Much of our time was spent exploring a combined palette of cloth and clay, colour and texture through developing ideas in response to a hidden collection of spoons shut in a drawer for more than 50 years, part of The Mary Greg Collection of Bygone Times at the Manchester Art Gallery (see [www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk](http://www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk) for more details). No prized or polished silver here, but the tarnished, worn and broken. We wanted to somehow put these spoons back on the table, ascribing a new value to the overlooked and obsolete. In so doing we also wanted to explore the relationship between the hand and the machine, Imini being much more au fait with the digital world of craft than Sharon and yet keen to revisit a slower pace to the making process than is current in her practice.

Photographs were taken of ceramic surfaces and forms produced by traditional hand methods and brought together with reworked images of spoons from the collection via weave digital software to produce fabric simulations. Over time, and without deliberate intention, these were then translated back into clay and photographed, thus providing a continuous and seamless transition between cloth and clay, hand and machine. Even now in some of our sample making we can't establish what came first - the cloth or the clay, the actual or the simulation.

Of course at the time of writing nothing is fully resolved, but that hasn't been the driving factor. The journey has been the most important thing. There are still many things we want to try, a sketchbook full of promise and a pot of brushes on the desk in Sharon's workshop that Imini thinks would make another wonderful starting point! So hopefully it will



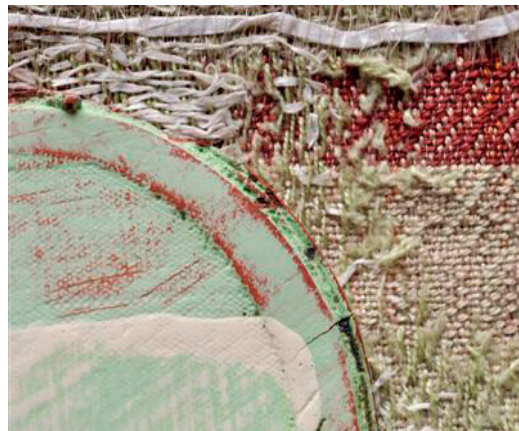
be only the beginning of a long and continued collaboration.

We were drawn together by a shared preoccupation with surfaces and stories and we quickly realised there was a lot of common ground. The dialogue became about colour, tone, hue, texture, line, composition and our pairing has explored this conversation between cloth and clay, the memory and trace of one firmly embedded in the other. Ideas worked on separately came together almost seamlessly and this led the way for our collaboration. Our aim is to create works that sit together harmoniously but which are also capable of existing independently.

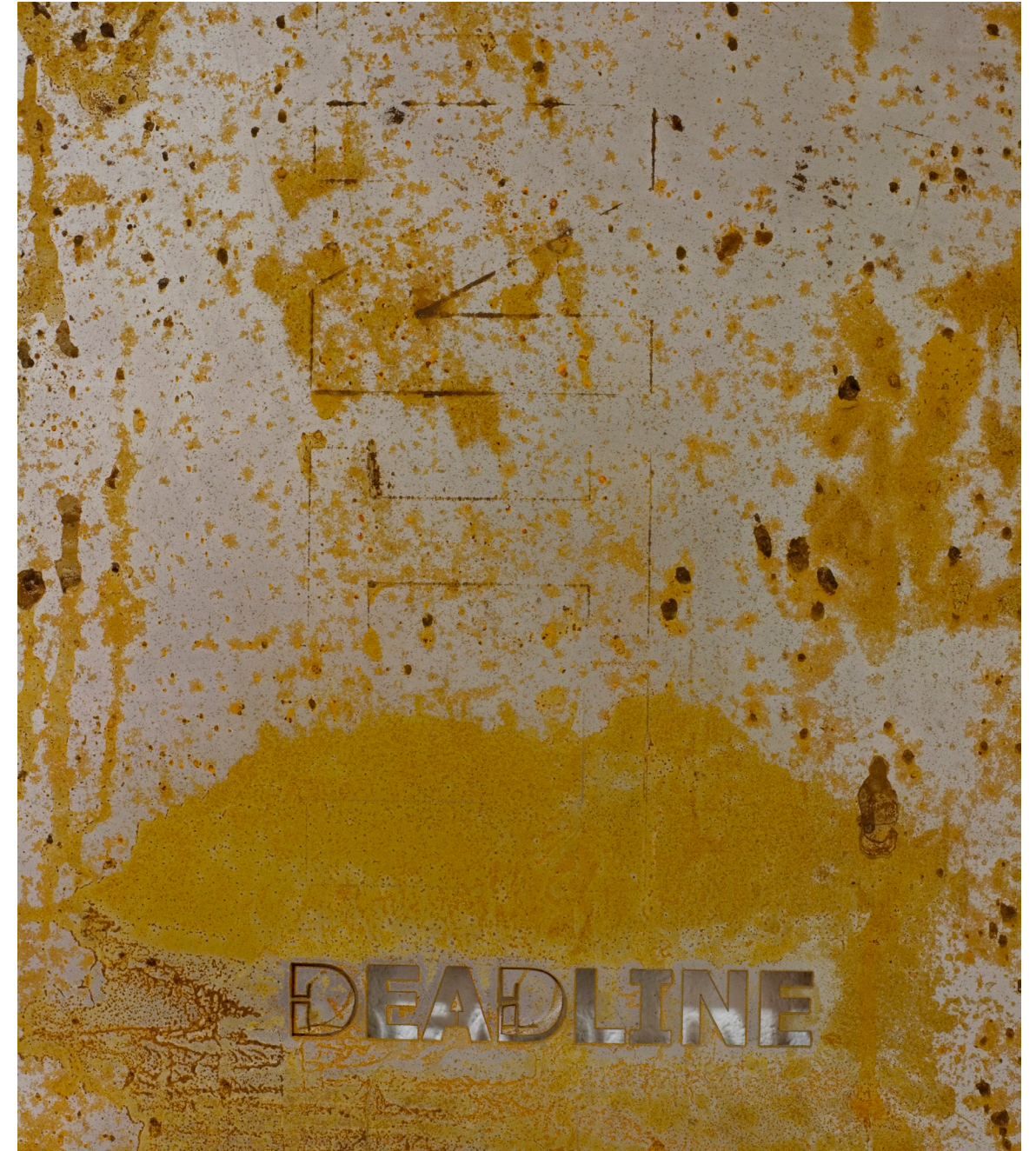
A bit like us really!

*Imini Samanidou & Sharon Blakey*











# DEADLINE

Pairings: Deadline dea dlinede

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This Pairings originated in early 2009, when Steve participated in a case study for Jessamy's PhD research into the combination of glass and ceramics within artistic practice. Initially, Steve wanted to see if bone china flowers could be incorporated within glass, a question directly related to Jessamy's research. A series of tests were carried out on readymade bone china flowers, which were fused with three different types of frit and fired to different temperatures. Tests were then carried out using hot glass, the readymade bone china flowers were encapsulated within glass in a variety of ways: encapsulated between hot cast layers of glass, picked up inside a hollow gather of blown glass and picked up inside a solid gather of blown glass. However, as the bone china flowers were not made of compatible clay, visible cracks and stress could be seen in these tests. To overcome these compatibility issues, Steve's bone china body was altered by adding quartz to the mix; this was then encapsulated within two layers of hot glass which created a compatible test. After the initial tests had been completed, the potential creative possibilities of a collaborative project became apparent and led to a series of experimental artworks.

Steve's recent residency at the V&A inspired the theme of the project, which is related to collections, the way the most curious and obscure objects are collected, and the quirky ways they are stored or contained within museum collections (old 'gentleman's' shirt boxes and cigar cases, for instance). Steve and Jessamy had initially planned to embed cast bone china 'museum' objects into glass blocks, which would take the outer shape of this kind of box-form. Later, the idea of a 'Collection of Curiosities' came about, based on the Cabinets of Curiosities developed by Renaissance Europe's rulers and aristocrats to display their encyclopaedic collections of exotic, extraordinary and fantastical objects.



“Combining glass and ceramics within a collection of curiosities.”

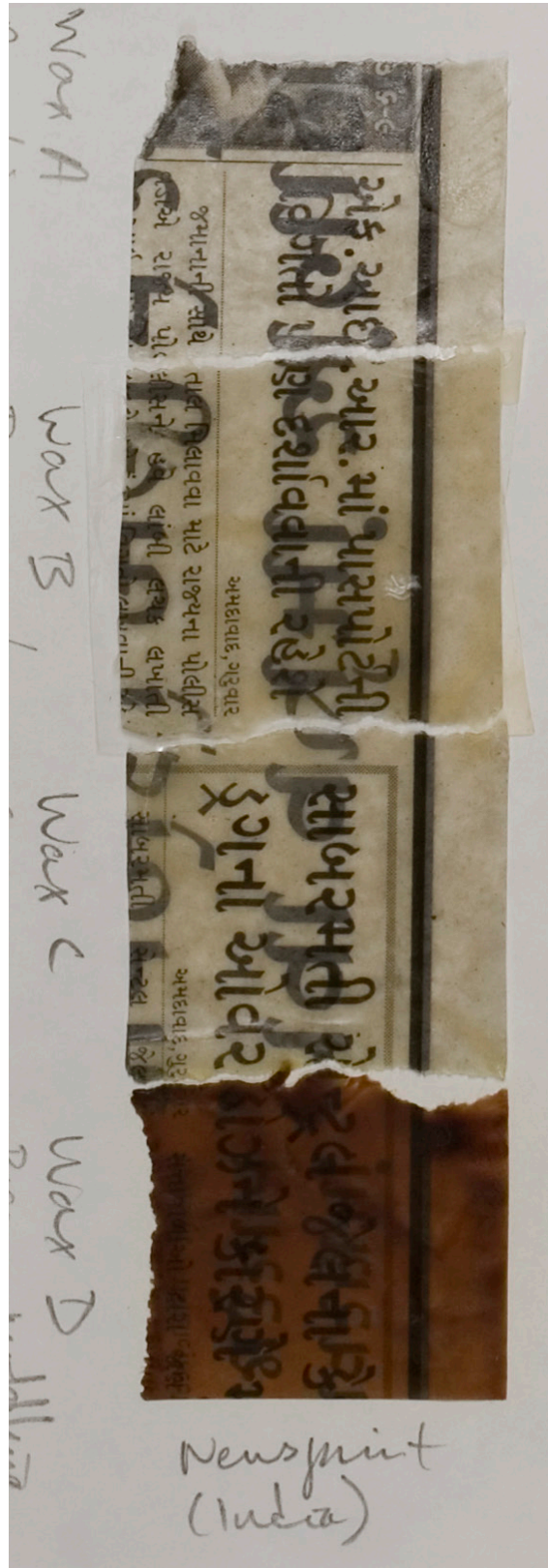


The early stages of the collaboration were carried out on-line and through the exchange of images, objects and materials by post, each new 'delivery' prompting an excited, and sometimes bemused, response. Crucial to the project was a visit by Steve to Jessamy's studio at the National Glass Centre in Sunderland, which resulted in a frenzy of exploratory making; particularly the dipping and casting of 'found' objects in wax and bone china slip. These objects, carefully collected rather than simply 'found', included deeply personal items (such as Jessamy's own knitted baby clothes) as well as the bizarre (a desiccated bat) and the banal (a collection of small 'tourist' pots).

Steve and Jessamy have created a showcase of new 'treasures', exploring personal narratives, with each object embodying its own unique and sometimes extraordinary story. Some of these objects were made from ceramic forms embedded in glass; others experimented with a variety of material combinations, using cast glass, ceramic, plaster, wax and rubber. These pieces reference the nature of collecting and the eccentricity of the collector. The initial experimental pieces, related drawings and sketchbooks are displayed alongside the recent collaborative pieces to show the development and thinking behind the project.

*Stephen Dixon & Jessamy Kelly*



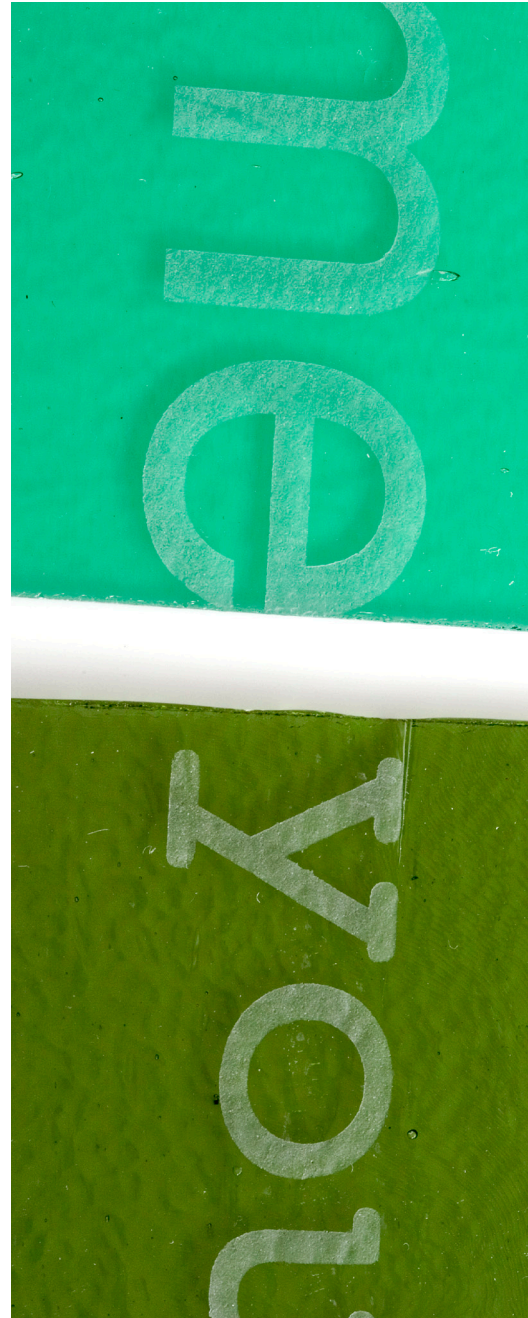




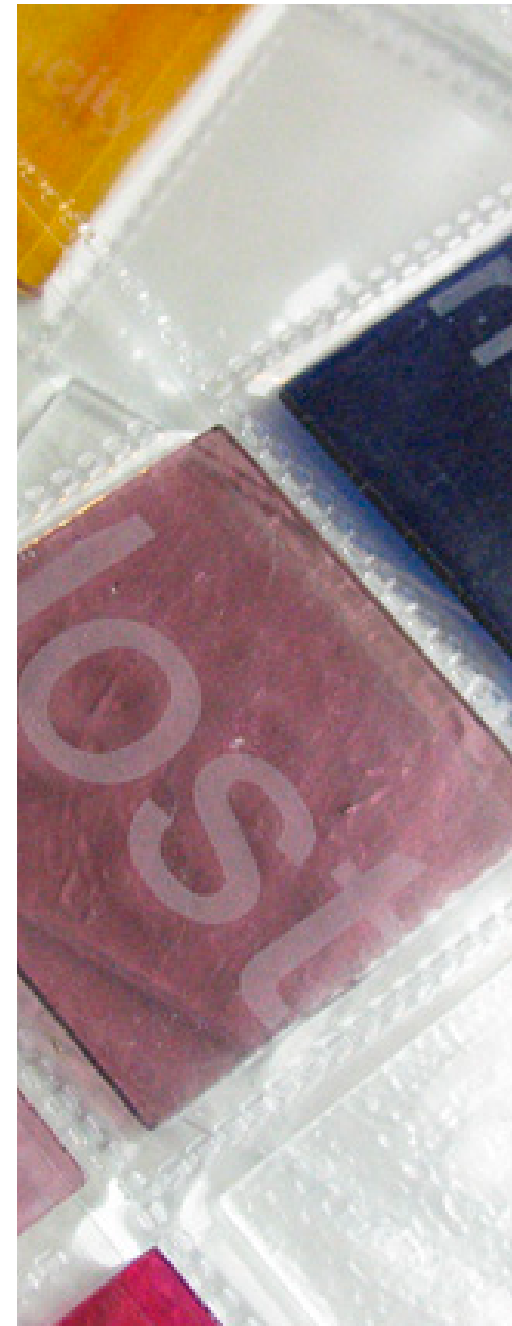
At our initial meeting in Liverpool we identified the key words 'ABSENCE' and 'PRESENCE' as a starting point for the collaborative project. Making links to our own individual practices we discussed the relationship between the selected words and further research possibilities. We felt that by working in this manner we would be able to incorporate our different working skills and knowledge of glass, light and light projection (Inge) and film, performance/narrative and projection (Louise). Via the Internet we continued this dialogue developing a body of text created through free word association. Eventually we decided on a list of word 'pairings' that explore themes of complimentary opposition. A structure was now in place!

We decided to work with redundant slide Projectors of which there are many at both the art schools where we work. By using the projectors and in particular glass slides as a format we could work small and large-scale simultaneously. Working on the small-scale glass slides allowed us to be free of project management and technical details more associated with complex large-scale work. In addition to this the old projectors added both a sculptural and auditory element to the piece.

The first experiments making coloured glass slides with stencilled lettering took place in Inge's studio. Projectors were collected from MMU and were set up in Louise's studio with the main image projected in the centre and secondary projectors positioned on either side.



“ *Exploring complimentary opposition in coloured glass slides for redundant projectors* ”



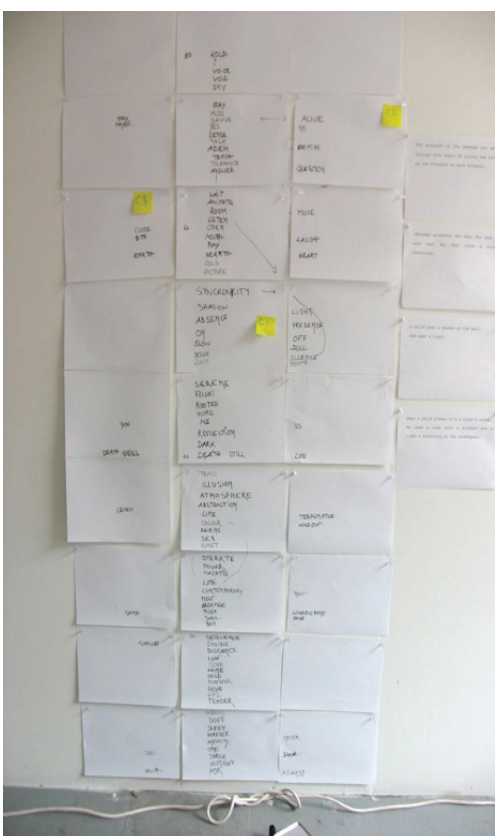
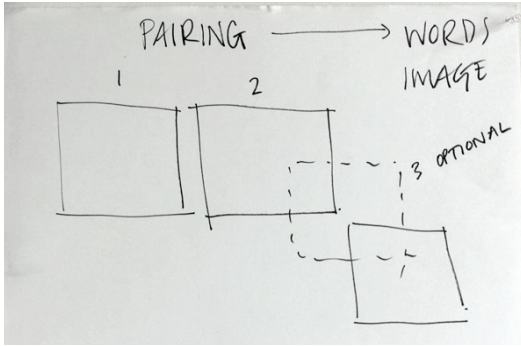
Technical difficulties arose in getting the handmade glass slides to work with the found projectors, however, eventually we identified the ideal size and thickness! At Louise's studio we developed a 'mapping' of the complimentary and oppositional words on the studio wall. Each word was paired up to build a narrative. Using the already prepared glass tests, the words were matched to moods, expressed through colour choices and glass textures. We discussed the impact of type-face, size, and the application of the lettering to the glass. Lastly we paired the words to some imagery from found and selected slides to try and underpin or challenge the meaning of the projected words.

For the majority of the Pairings Project we have both been on maternity leave. As working mothers with two new children, we would both have preferred to have started this project earlier and allowed ourselves more time to develop the collaborative relationship. However, in a way, the restrictions on our time have to a more free and experimental approach to the work. By working at a distance with limited time we have arrived at a place where dialogue, process and narrative are more important than outcome and materials.

We envisage that this piece will evolve over the course of the year and plan to add to and re-organised the projectors content as the tour develops.

*Louise Birgitta Adkins & Inge Pannells*







Ours is an accidental pairing. The enthusiasm for some tiny cotton threads discovered through another research project and a shared love of history drew us together and we were talking ideas before we knew it!

The threads became our starting point and common interests in exploring value in the overlooked our theme. Our collaboration has enabled Sharon to scratch an itch and explore working with clay on a small scale and in a wearable context. In these initial stages Jenny feels she has been a facilitator, helping to interpret ideas in another material and explore possible combinations with ceramic elements. Greatly inspired by the unravelling story of Samuel Crompton and the threads from his Spinning Mule, Jenny has also begun to explore a long held desire to make commemorative jewellery. Despite all too brief opportunities to come together to work on our ideas we feel we have made some exciting developments and are thrilled at the prospect of continuing our work with disparate materials, disregarded objects and historical tales.

The story of Samuel Crompton and the re-discovered threads hidden within the folds of a long forgotten letter in Manchester Art Gallery's archives has been an intriguing one that triggered a conversation across a staff room and inspired our pairing. Jenny became fascinated by this unsung hero. He arguably invented a machine (the Spinning Mule) that was the catalyst for the industrial revolution, yet hardly anyone had heard of him or knew the potential significance of the threads – but Mary Greg did. Sharon discovered the threads, possibly some of the first products of Crompton's Mule in a letter whilst researching into the history of Mary's life and work. Jenny resolved to find out more about Crompton's story, how he struggled for recognition and payment in his lifetime and decided she would like to make work that in some way made reference to these historical narratives.

Having a long-standing interest in both commemorative traditions within ceramics and jewel-



lery Sharon and Jenny began to explore the possibilities of pieces that may allude to both the historical and recent stories surrounding those disregarded threads.

We began with discussions based around Sharon's ideas. At this point we weren't a Pairing, simply two friends looking to support each other in their work. A shared love of history and seeing value in the overlooked became our driver and the threads our starting point. In these initial stages Jenny helped to interpret

ideas in another material and facilitated possible combinations with metal and ceramic elements.

We played with string and different types of threads, combining them with rolled and folded metal imprinted with thread like memories. Sharon's ceramic components – tubes, tags and knots, held subtly worked textures and colour palettes in reference to the Crompton threads. We started to gain an understanding of how these disparate materials might share a dialogue. Our practices may utilise distinctly different media, but bringing the unexpected together is another long held passion for us both. Moving forward we looked at old thread carriers, shop clearance, haberdashery and junkshop finds and began to make new references to carriers of thread. Sharon began to explore new colour palettes and Jenny began to investigate the notion of locket and small triptychs – holders of concealed information that may be revealed to tell a hidden and perhaps colourful story.

Jenny is particularly excited that this has been her first real opportunity to explore her desire to engage a wider audience with an aspect of history that they may not be aware of and she relishes the prospect of developing this strand to her practice. We have both been surprised by how much it has been possible to achieve in the small fragments of time we've had together. We made huge strides in small intensive periods and that is encouraging for our collaboration in the future, however we are all too acutely aware of the time it takes to make, refine, resolve and finish.

The opportunity to work together and gain new insight into process and practice has been revealing. We fell into a very natural and fruitful pattern of collaboration that we hope will be long lasting.

*Sharon Blakey & Jenny Walker*







*Two artists' practices: One collaborative outcome*

Any form of collaboration requires an open mind, a willingness to listen and sometimes, as in this case, a desire to step out of one's comfort zone.

The success of our collaboration relied on the interdependency of several factors: establishing common ground, developing an understanding of each other's practice and a correspondence interpreted through making, as well as personal trust.

On first meeting and seeing some of each other's work we recognised similar lines of inquiry somehow translated in a comparable approach to making. For example, we had each previously made work where the slow accumulation of small scale constituent parts produced installations that were ultimately 'monumental' in both effort and scale.

Or the importance of risk-taking; commencing a work with a particular strategy without being able to define or wholly anticipate the presence of the work until its completion.

After a meeting in London in December 2009, we recognized the importance of deciding on a concrete starting point as well as dealing with the difficulty of timing. We agreed to risk showing the results of the not yet started collaboration at Five Years, a London-based artist-run gallery where Sally is a member, using her scheduled slot in April 2010.

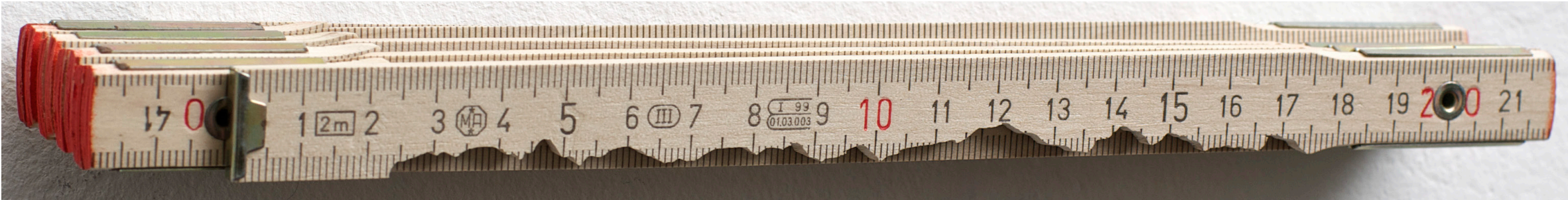
By agreeing to the April deadline the beginning of a useful structure was imposed on the working process and we began to communicate to develop a strategy. Firstly via email and subsequently by phone, we established common ground in terms of interests, working practices and proposed content as well as addressing practical logistics relating to the project.

A mutual recognition of the importance of drawing within our practices and influenced by the idea of the myriorama, particularly 'The Endless Landscape' with its many narrative variations, the journeying line of the wayfarer became central to the project.

Literary, musical and visual quotations punctuated the correspondance along with a range of anecdotal and coincidences. As the dialogue progressed it became clear that the space of the gallery itself was going to be core to the outcome.

On a practical level, the work needed to be portable: in Sylvie's case the elements she brought to the space needed to literally fit into her suitcase, whereas Sally's existed mainly in digital format so that any required manufacturing processes could be carried out at facilities near to the gallery.

Throughout the process we retained confidence in the idea of the collaboration and trust in our respective collaborator. A quotation that we



“By day my limbs, by night my mind – installation exploring narrative variations of a journey.”

found at an early stage of the collaboration proposed an apt metaphor for our undertaking:

*In the past, women would sometimes work in pairs to decorate large pots. Sitting opposite one another, with the pot between them, neither could see what the other was painting. However, by singing as they worked they were supposedly able to harmonize their performance to such an extent that on completion the two halves of the design, on each side of the pot, would be perfectly matched and joined up. This degree of co-ordination... must have involved 'some kind of musical code'. (Tim Ingold, Lines A Brief History, Routledge, 2007: 36; This quotation is referencing the Shipibo-Conibo communities of the Peruvian Amazon)*

We were similarly describing processes to one another but ultimately working 'blind'.

Working remotely, drawing ensued in a variety of forms and the elements that we brought to the gallery comprised a range of material experiments: collections of drawn lines and physical interpretations.

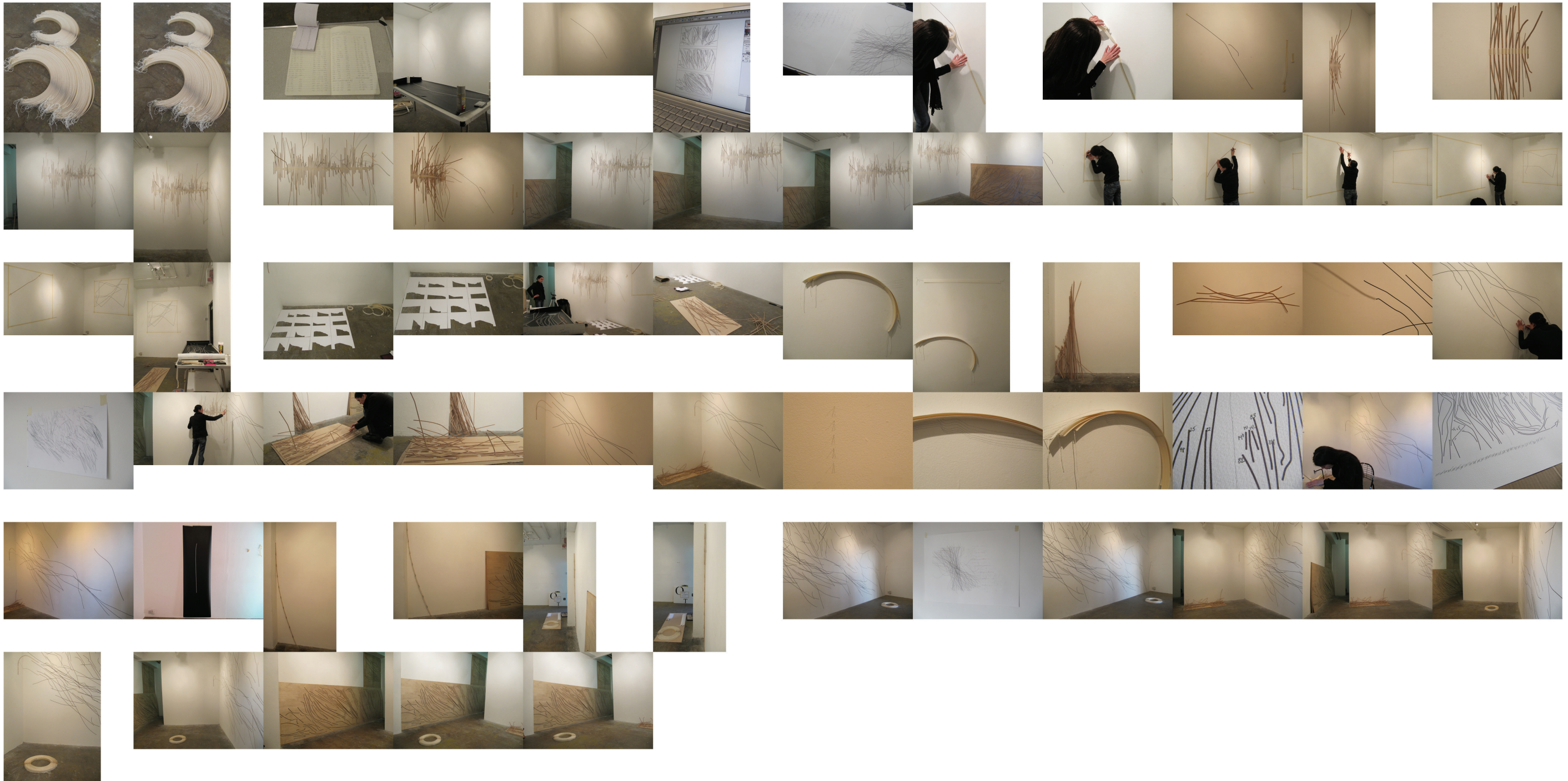
During a short but intensive period working in the gallery space we proposed using the kit components to create hybrid objects or as rulers for making wall drawings. Different arrangements and juxtapositions were tested and through this process a shift in our thinking occurred. We became aware that the exhibition, reflecting the 'Endless Landscape' could exist in many configurations; *by day my limbs, by night my*

*mind* (the exhibition title comes from Shakespeare's sonnet XXVII) provided the first moment of exposure and one proposed configuration of the elements we had produced. By endeavouring to communicate the idea of the 'kit', initially only a strategy for producing elements to work with, this had become an ongoing dialogue that continues to avoid closure.

*Sally Morfill & Sylvie Vandenhoecke*









As a designer for industrial production and a craft maker of non-functional ceramics, how do we work together to make sense of the made object?

We both felt there is often an issue with the impersonal nature of production, and the lack of sensitivity machine manufactured objects can have through their development using computers, and this was in contrast to the more organic nature of the hand-crafted object. However, because of the nature of hand-made production these objects, whilst sensitive and beautiful, are often expensive and exclusive.

We wanted to see if we could introduce some of the sensitive qualities of the handmade, into the high volume production of the machine made.

We decided to investigate the opportunities afforded by new technologies, and using a handmade bowl as our starting point, we utilised a 3D laser scanner to reproduce this object as a CAD model. By doing so, we hoped to retain the sensitivity of the handmade, but we could now reproduce this single bowl at higher levels of production.

The bowl could now be rapid prototyped in a range of materials, enabling us to see how the physical qualities and functionality changed with the material. We could also change its size, potentially developing this single, small hand-made bowl into a family of related bowls. Ultimately, we had the possibility of generating production tooling to facilitate the large volume manufacture of the bowl, opening up the potential for this one small bowl to become a mass volume, low cost product, available to a wider market.

However, this isn't the same bowl we started with, it no longer has that personal relationship and connection that the handmade object has with the maker. Even the initial act of scanning the bowl changes its characteristics, and every interpretation is further removed from the original with every change of material and scale.

So what we will make of our results as we develop the project, that's what we will find out, but together we're taking this bowl on a journey, and it will come out changed, and so will we.

*We would like to thank Ian Kennedy, Senior Lecturer, Department of Engineering and Technology, for all his help in 3D scanning, preparing CAD models, and rapid prototyping of the bowls. In working with a couple of "creatives" he proved himself to be a patient and open minded ally, and we couldn't have done it without him.*



## “ Trying to make sense of the made object through exploring modern technologies. ”

We initially chose a very finely cast, bone china cup. The cup was white and unglazed, and the rim was elliptical in shape – naturally formed during the firing process. It was also very fine, no more than 1mm thick, and was the kind of piece that as the maker you look at and think, “I cannot recreate this piece again because it was only partly determined, or ‘created’ by me, so much was chance that it can’t be repeated.”

So this was the bowl we chose, however it became clear that it was not a very ‘scannable’ item. This was actually quite pleasing to discover, it’s a relief to know that the effort and care put into a handmade piece can’t just be copied and printed off in seconds.

Conversations with Ian Kennedy revealed the scanning issues with the piece. The laser scans the object much as a laser scans a bar code, however the rim was too finely detailed for the resolution of the laser scanner. The curvature – in particular the very slightly sloping sides which gave way to the oval rim – was also problematic. Finally, the laser had difficulty focussing on the translucent white surface.

With all this learned, we returned with a new item. Although born of the same making process this next cup was a heavier porcelain cast – 3mm thick right to the rim. The rim was circular, and the heavier cast meant that little, if any, material movement had occurred during the firing process. The piece was also opaque as it was dipped in an iron solution before firing, producing a yellow ochre finish.

The rim on this bowl was also more of a feature. It was quite thick and uneven where the slip had been poured from the mould and left to drip. These drips are a natural part of the slip-cast process, but are usually removed before firing. However in this piece they had been left to accentuate the rim. This new cup was looked upon far more favourably by the scanning machine.

The scan produced a number of visuals, and Helen was particularly interested in the fractured mesh. It was as if the cup has been reconstructed in an unbelievably fine thread. Already it had become something different – something that could not be produced by hand.

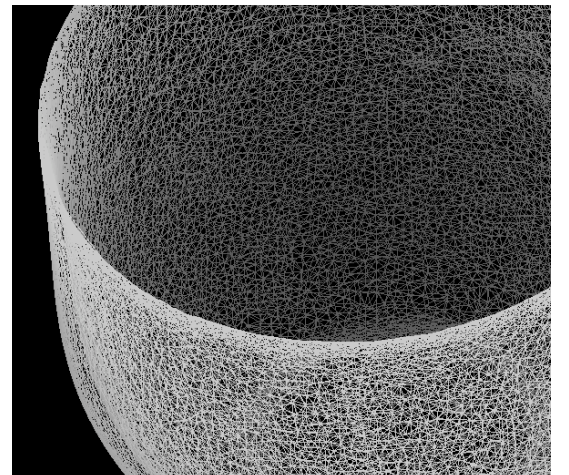
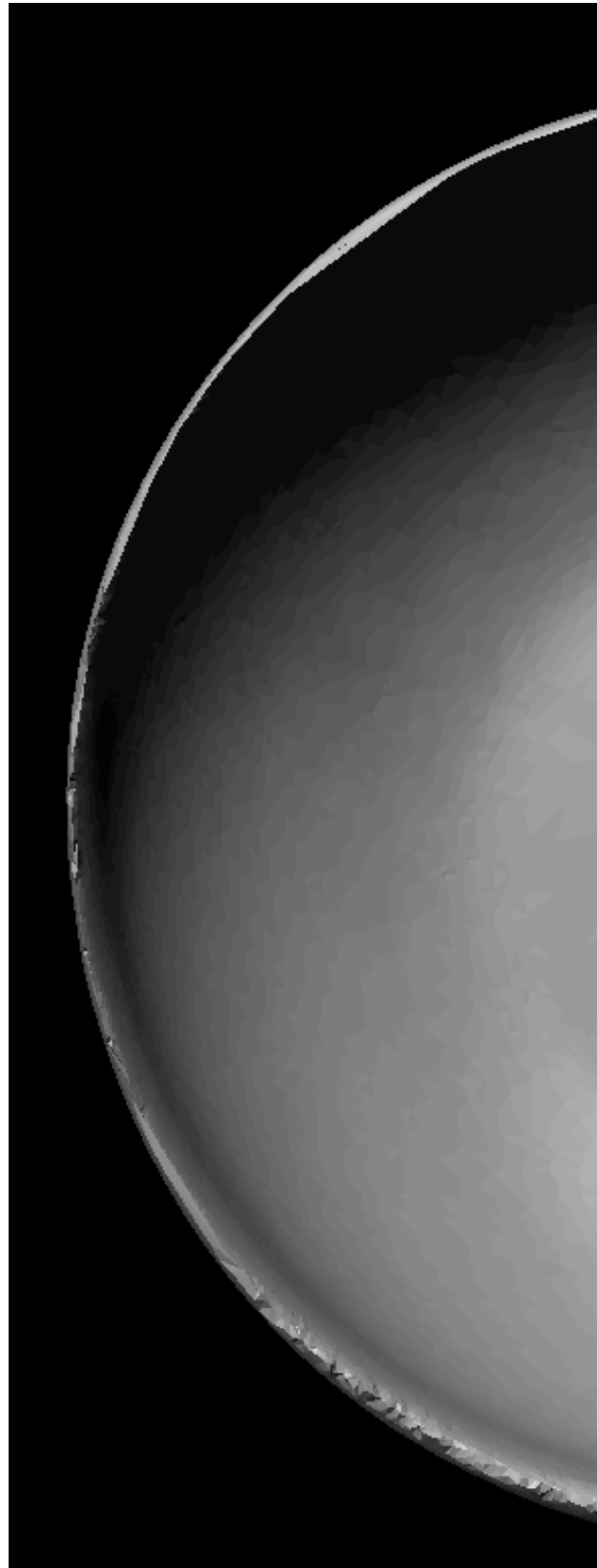
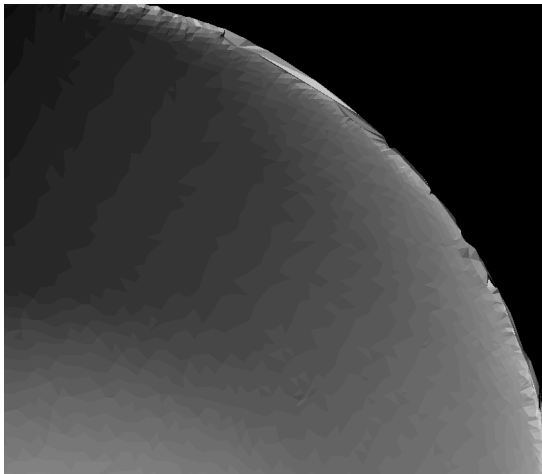
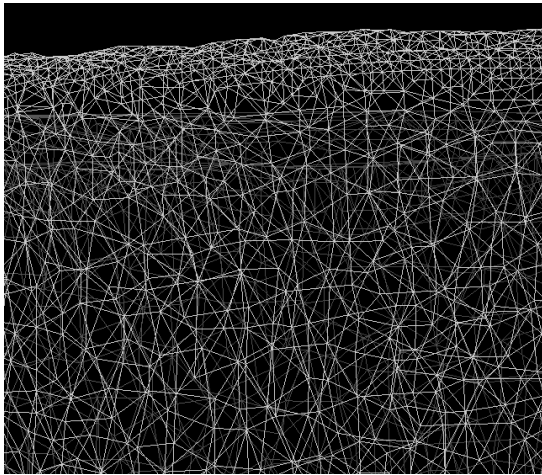
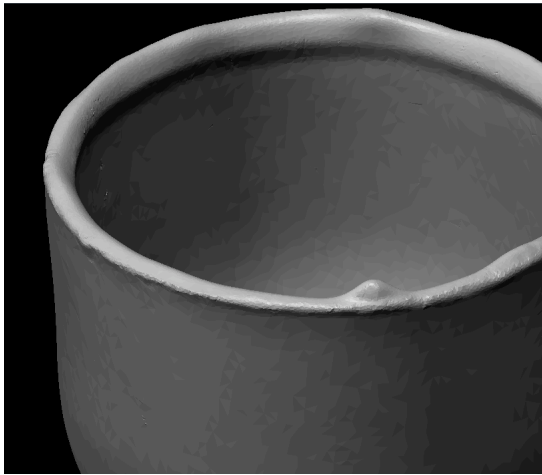
The next step was to re-make the bowl from the digital data. This data was now e-mailable allowing the bowl to be sent and made anywhere in the world. We chose a company in Eindhoven, and selected three contrasting materials; detailed white plastic; red nylon; nylon with aluminium dust. The nylon was particularly interesting with a delicately detailed surface, and a vivid colour range.

It took just 10 working days for the three objects to arrive, and this experience of “making” was far removed from the original process of producing the cup by hand. But what we discovered was that this process still requires just as much crafting and sensitivity – but in different ways and at different stages. It was a process that needed sensitive decision making, and as with all creative making you bring what you wish to the process, to the material, to the machine. As a hand-maker, you never fully determine the object – the act of making and the unpredictability of the process is always part of the final outcome. And so it was with this project. The objects we created, with all their imperfections and subtle asymmetries, are not objects that would have been conceived on a computer screen, but nor are they something that could have been hand-crafted.

By bringing together two contrasting designers/makers, we have effectively ‘doubled’ our processes. Our collaboration has enabled us to meld our processes, and to begin to discover a new and interesting language for the made object.

*Helen Felcy & David Grimshaw*







## KIRSTEEN AUBREY & DAVID CROW

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The Pairing with David Crow brought together two different approaches as we came from a 3D and 2D background respectively. Although we have previously produced glasswork and experimented with blowing and pouring molten glass, the latest work has evolved from a series of short stories. The latter was a new venture that required a different approach and produced an outcome I could not have foreseen.

From the images accompanying the stories, there is potential to abstract these and print them onto blown glass forms or to investigate the potential of sub laser etching in glass to create a more dreamlike quality to the images.

*Kirsteen Aubrey*

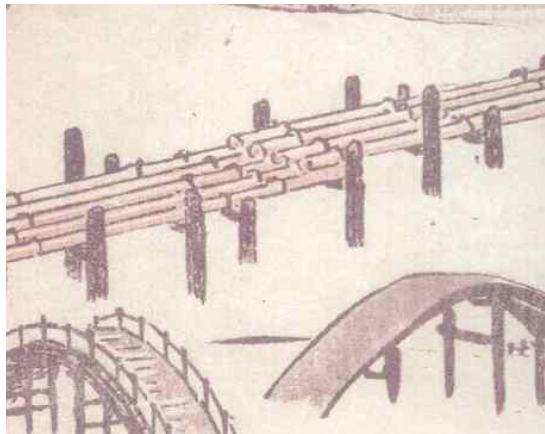


*“The Journey – a book project of writing and illustrating short stories in collaboration.”*

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## Ladder

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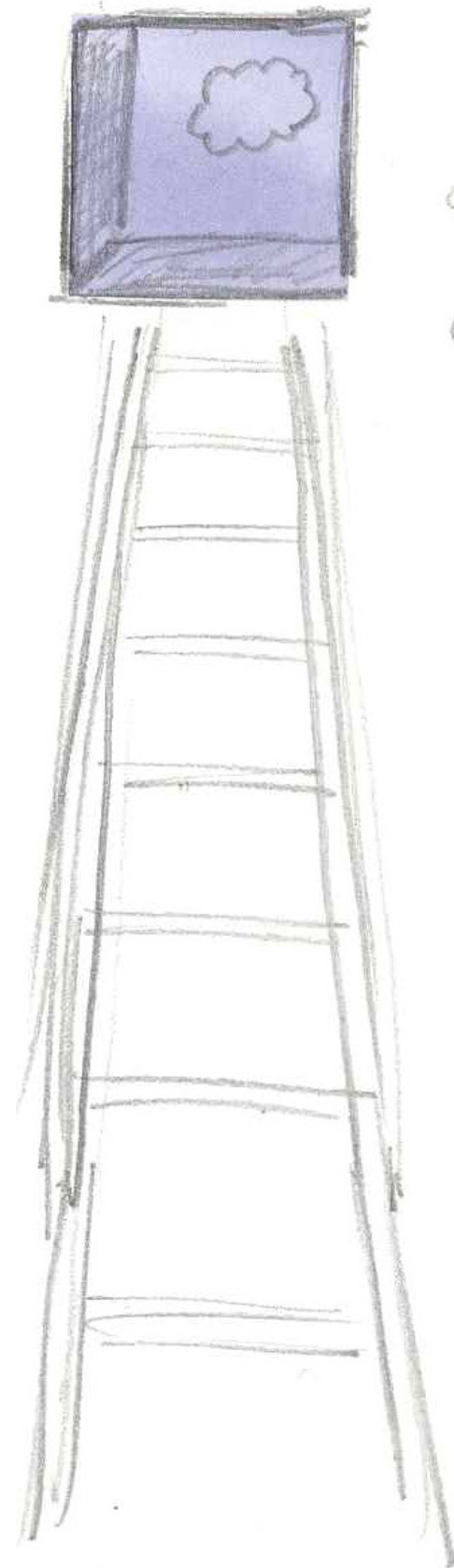
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DAVID GATES,  
ALICE KETTLE & JANE WEBB

It is with nervousness but excitement that the process of collaboration began. I had read of *The Third Hand: Collaboration in Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism* by Charles Green. He describes the third hand as the phantom other author in the space between. There are three of us; Jane, David and I, each conscious of our own distinct and defining materials and process. Our phantom is materializing.

We started with packages in the post, discussion, and snatched moments of making David likes corners, structure, Jane searched to make words intangible and I looked for line. We concentrated on space, circling and opening it, insides and exteriors and penetration through. It feels like the beginning of an ongoing journey which both reaffirms individual positions and expands into uncharted territory. Most of all I have found compatriots and fellow travellers.

*Alice Kettle*

To be able to give and take back, listen and share. Trying to understand someone else, trying to find a way in and to drop in on the beat, in that space of trust and of knowing-ness crossing, something almost intangible might happen. A sometime humbling yet ennobling sensation that someone trusts you with something that is special to them; their voice, their view. Being nudged into unfamiliar territory the specialness is in the process, the experience and the journey. In all the exchange, the talk, the doing, new things are forged.

*David Gates*



“Exploring the insides and outsides of space through  
wood, textiles, embroidery and poetry.”

*A triangle of practices*

A triangle of practices seems to carry so much potential especially using the looseness of conversation as the starting point.

I've just sent off your paper parcels, so you should be getting them soon. Hope you find them stimulating.

Anyway was just about to send you both a message to let you know your parcels are wending their way.... one northbound and the other in a south-westerly direction - I hope you enjoy them. I like the feel of that paper folder Jane, fits the hand quite nicely.

I went to the PO yesterday, and yes parcel is here!! Wonderful smell of beautiful cedar and I love the shavings! nice textile touch with the string tied!

I too was scared and inspired by your parcel... also stared at it... made some marmalade while the different elements looked at me from the kitchen table! Don't feel scared by them they might just need a drawer to be kept in? or a box.

My thought was that we do not have to become each other and the parcel was simply for you to add wood or text to. you can throw most of it



away, if there is something that you like add to it.

The images of the house and figures come from an alchemical text from Michael Maier, not the one I told you about but a slightly later one, I think around 1625. I chose the house because it was a lovely image but also because it is in a section about things lying underneath.

I have to start where I am and I think my response is to use stitch in response to you. David is essentially into 3 dimension on hard material, and Jane is the metaphor and implicit reference, the word and the insight. The conjunction of the 3 together will reflect on the nature of the other.

Turned into a 3d thing after being aliced and janed, David likes corners, structure, Jane is making words intangible and Alice is looking for line.

I like the circular movement this it is forming, yes please David send Jane the veneer

I've also been thinking about text - I've been thinking of the monumentality of text

Well the cave is pretty interesting for me too because I work a lot with the idea of Platonism and explore the concept that the Platonic cave lies within the world itself

Trying things/tri-ings is a great name to play with. I don't know what I am going to make yet but I like being in that place for the moment.

yes it is there, I can see it. I would like my golden thread to go beyond the surface.

the new surface speaks with a voice of its own and yet with familiar undertones.

you will be asked to place a wooden line in 3d space

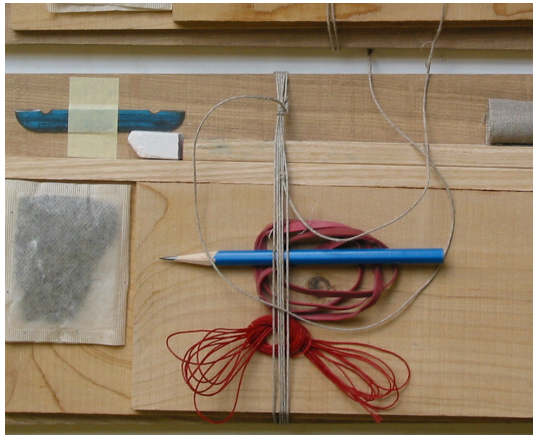
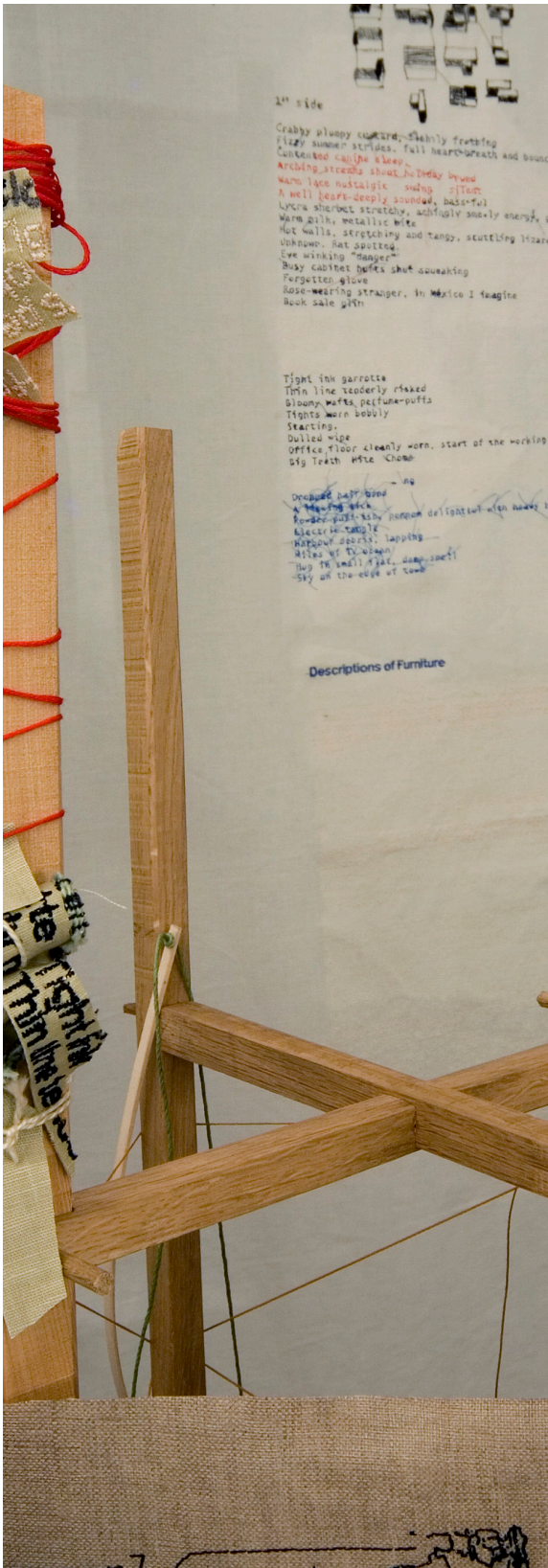
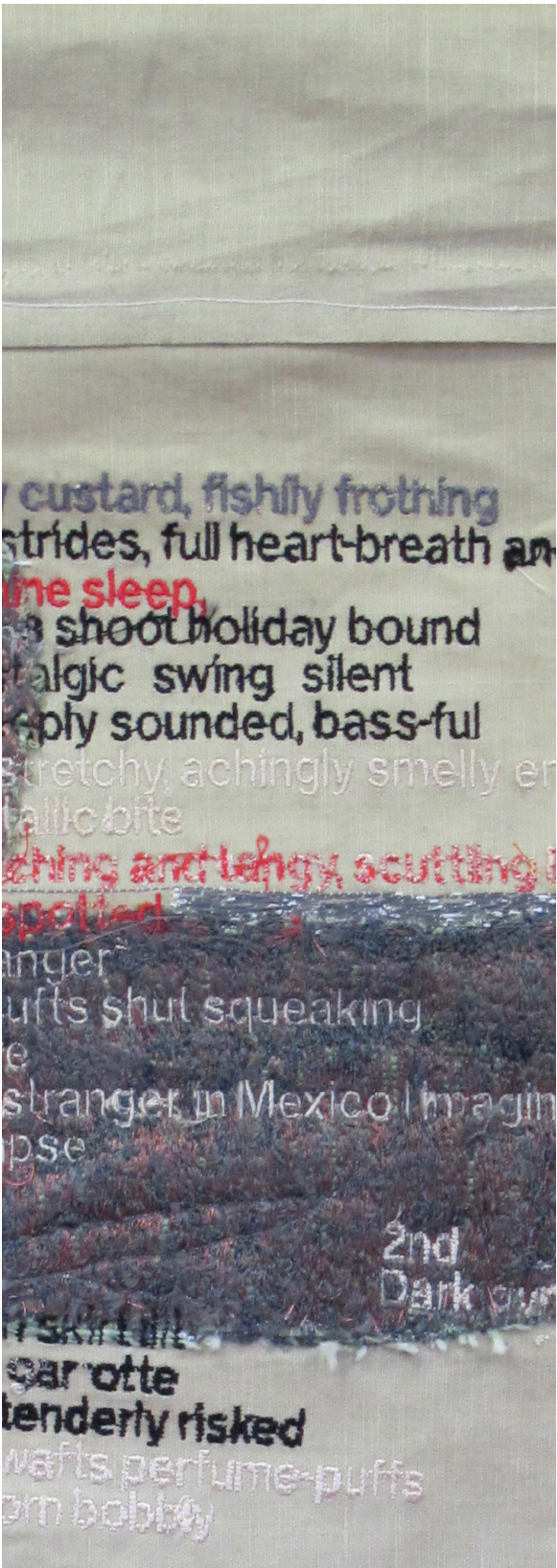
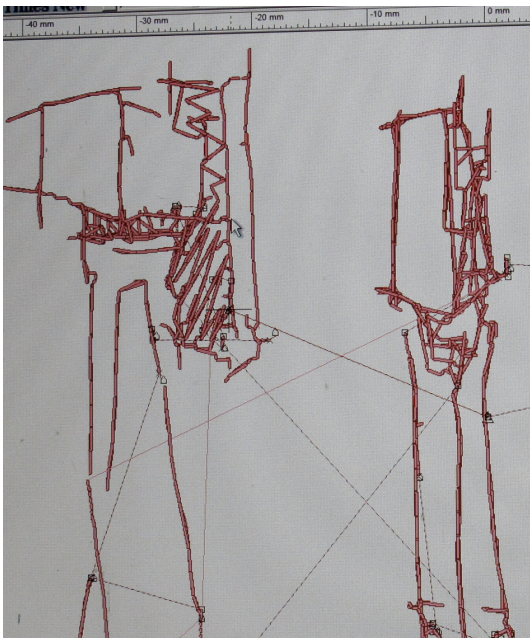
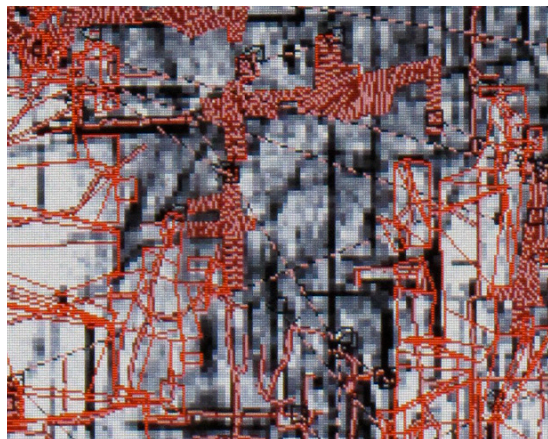
Space, circling and opening it, insides and exteriors and penetration through

I just wanted to say that the cave is an interesting one for me too! As for text well... what am I writing about - this is my problem....?

an ongoing journey which both reaffirms individual positions and expands into uncharted territory. Most of all I have found compatriots and fellow travellers. very circular/never ending

*David Gates, Alice Kettle & Jane Webb*







A shared passion for material, process and words lies at the heart of our discourse and the work we have produced together. It has been a fantastic opportunity for me to step outside my own, focused, practice and to share my discipline whilst obtaining valuable and inspiring insights into a new material. In the attempt to master aspects of your own discipline you can easily lose the valuable creative component of experimentation and play, in both the material and conceptual sense. I believe 'play' (enjoying the freedom to play with both materials and ideas) has been at the core of my creative relationship with Heather.

Heather and I both share a joy of language. Particularly the etymology of words used in our material disciplines; words such as, felt, fibre, filter, fettle, porosity, slip, terracotta and porcelain (many common to both disciplines). Examining these words – their history and meaning has inspired and stimulated our creative development together. My favourite discovery has been about celadon, which is the name given to a particular pale greyish green glaze developed within the Korean ceramic tradition.

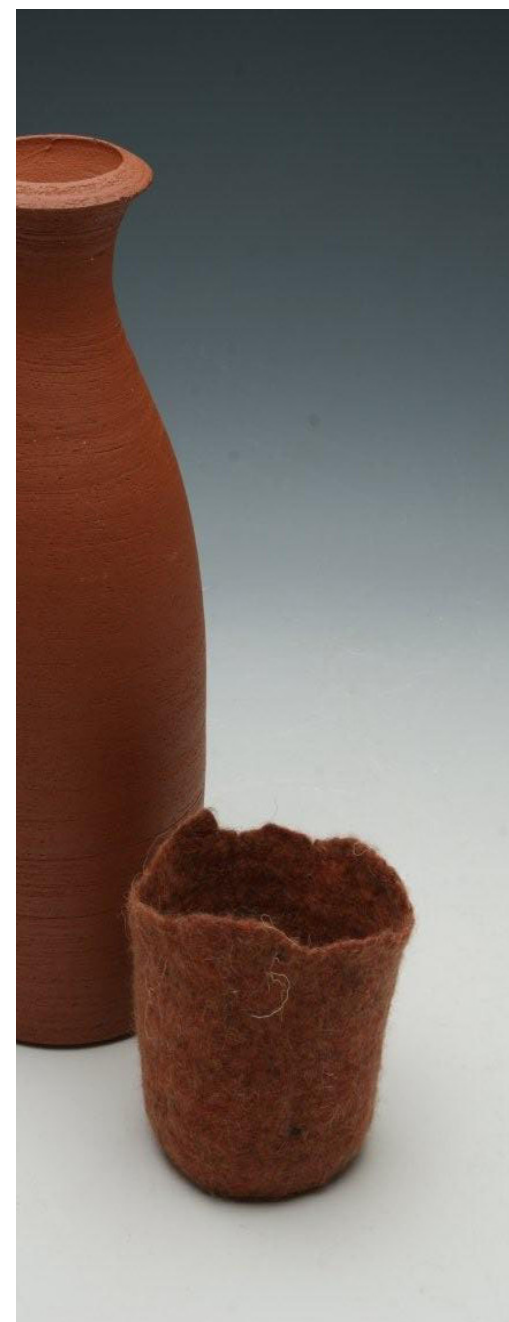
We discovered that the glaze acquired its name in western culture from a character named Keladon in Ovid's Metamorphosis, a sentimental lover who disguised himself by dressing in bright green clothes. The duality of sentiment embodied in the word celadon, and the way in which it bridges materiality and the human narrative contains values which both. Heather and I reflect in our own individual work, producing objects which act as metaphors for the human figure. In the Pairings Project we have enjoyed researching and playing with this, and many other, familiar words in our different practices to provide us with valuable starting points for the works we have developed together.

*Duncan Ayscough*

From our very first conversations, Duncan and I discovered a common enthusiasm for the ancient histories and processes associated with our respective materials. The process of collaborating has challenged me to re-examine and reflect upon core issues within my own practice, exploring ideas from the perspective of another medium. I have discovered new veins of interest in terms of filter and porosity, qualities common to both felt and clay.

I am continuing to explore ideas about the body, skin, boundaries and edges, interiors and exteriors, but the work is now taking the form of a different kind of vessel; that of the humble beaker, an object held in the hand. This, for now has become our mutual ground.

*Heather Belcher*



Several long telephone conversations took place before we actually met in November 2009. We exchanged fragments of pots, samples of felt. This very process of actually building the dialogue between us became interesting in itself. The talking on the phone, the exchange of interests and ideas, and the meeting of the work before we actually met each other was useful as a lead in, a chance to make an intuitive, personal response to the work before being overly influenced by the maker's own presentation of it. We began with an idea of fragments and ancient artefacts, objects found in archaeological excavations and made connections with felt as an ancient form of clothing and protection. We spoke of spirals, a common image and marker of process in both felt and clay.

Conversations shifted to that of the vessel and still life imagery; metaphors for the body. This seemed to be a core concern for both of us. The form that this would take began to be the challenge. We began to focus on the simple beaker as a meeting point somewhere in the hinterland between Heather's easily recognisable garments and cups and Duncan's more abstract forms of vessel.

Pre-existing common colour palettes helped us to make ambiguous links between the physicality of our very different materials. We discovered a common love of the colour celadon and other earth related colours such as terracotta and the translucency of porcelain. This led to a playful exploration of the properties of clay and wool; soft/hard, warm/cold, protective/brittle, light absorbent/light reflective.

An interesting dialogue emerged in the runner with black pots. Almost as if there were a role reversal happening, Heather's felt runner began to take on the translucency of the marks and colours normally found in the clay of Duncan's pots, and his black pots in this collaborative piece began to reflect the light absorbent, dense colour of Heather's felt pieces.

Another important interest that began to develop was that of the idea of filter and porosity and its connection with the body, a breathing, leaking vessel. Felt is traditionally used as filter in machinery, and clay until fired, is porous. We soaked felt in clay slip and fired it, we pored slip through the felt allowing it to wick and filter and clog. This work is on-going, opening up new veins of exploration about the body, skin, boundaries and edges, interiors and exteriors.....

*Duncan Ayscough & Heather Belcher*







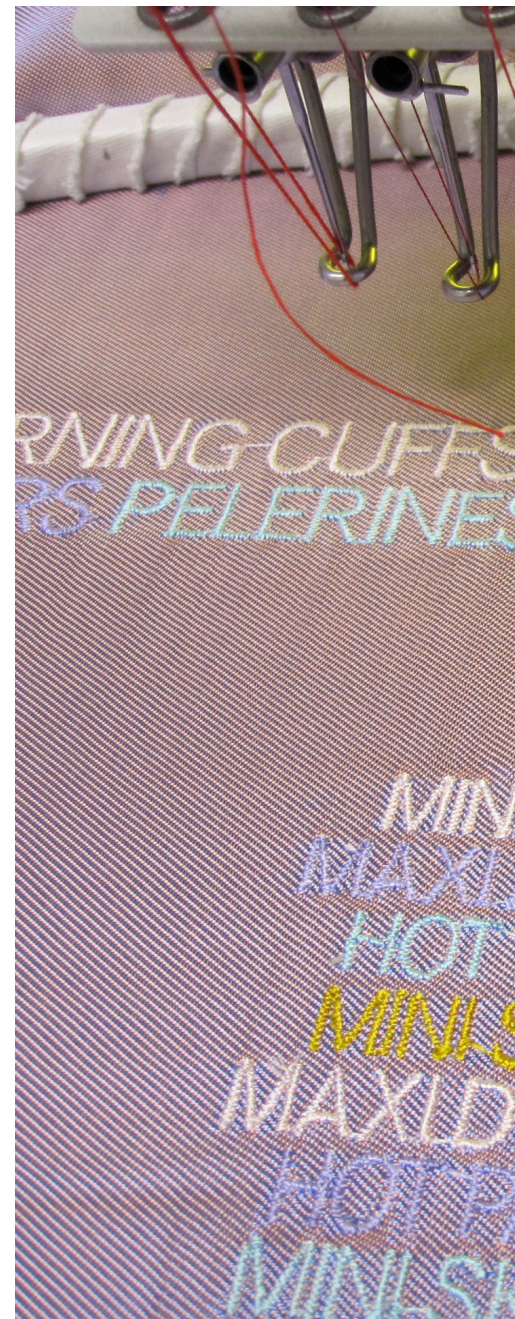
Collaborating with someone to create work has been a totally new and inspiring experience for both of us, we have not, as yet created as much work as we would have liked, we both have had problems finding enough time to get into the appropriate workshops. Time has been a recurring theme throughout this process, from our initial meetings and some expressions of regret that we don't allow ourselves enough time to make; to our conversations about slowing down, the 'Slow Movement' and our visit to Birmingham and the 'Taking Time' exhibition. However, for both of us the collaboration has been about far more than the physical making experience and the material outcome.

The consolidated periods of time we have spent discussing our various ideas, passions and concerns have been both fascinating and invaluable. The discussions made Melanie question key things about her practice: what is her practice? What is her making process? What can our joint practice be about? For Jenny the insight into someone else's process has led her to question many aspects of her own way of working. In particular, the 'Backwards Mind Map' (Michael Daniels, 1992: *Watchwork Technique*) exercise was a new and exciting way of initiating ideas and understanding underlying themes. She has also learnt a great deal from Melanie's ability to document, reflect and map thought processes through her sketchbook. Tours of each other's subject area workshops were very revealing. Melanie had no previous comprehension of the painstaking physical labour involved in Jenny's metalwork. Watching Jenny drill holes through metal using a 0.3mm drill bit to thread fine blades through was a revelation.

We found we had a shared love of textile heritage: our grandmothers were both skilled needlewomen and items they had created had particular resonance. Identity developed as a key theme. Both of us became interested in badges and medals as vehicles. There were notions of small, but powerful statements on the body, commemoration, 'decoration' and



“Exploring identity, the history of costumes, and textiles passed down through generations.”



objects associated with ritual to consider alongside the exciting possibilities of embroidered emblems and words combined with metal ornaments. We discussed cultural issues, family history, inherited items, costume and making sense of your own identity.

We were both inspired by the fantastic collections 'behind the scenes' at Platt Hall Gallery of English Costume, and wanted to include a reference to that in the work and perhaps some rather more subtle references to our concerns over globalisation and the importance we place on making.

We are particularly excited about our collaborative ideas and the possibilities for what we could make together. Jenny is fascinated by Melanie's way of drawing and interpretation through multi-head embroidery and the possibilities of jewellery comprising of metal and stitch – hopefully some of them will exist by the time this catalogue is published – at the time of writing nothing is totally resolved.

However, the most important aspect of our Pairing has been the journey; our interesting conversations, our shared interests, our insight into each other's practices and disciplines and the exciting ideas we've had through our collaboration – some have yet to come to fruition, but making is always about an ongoing process of learning and discovery and as such is never finished...

*Melanie Miller & Jenny Walker*





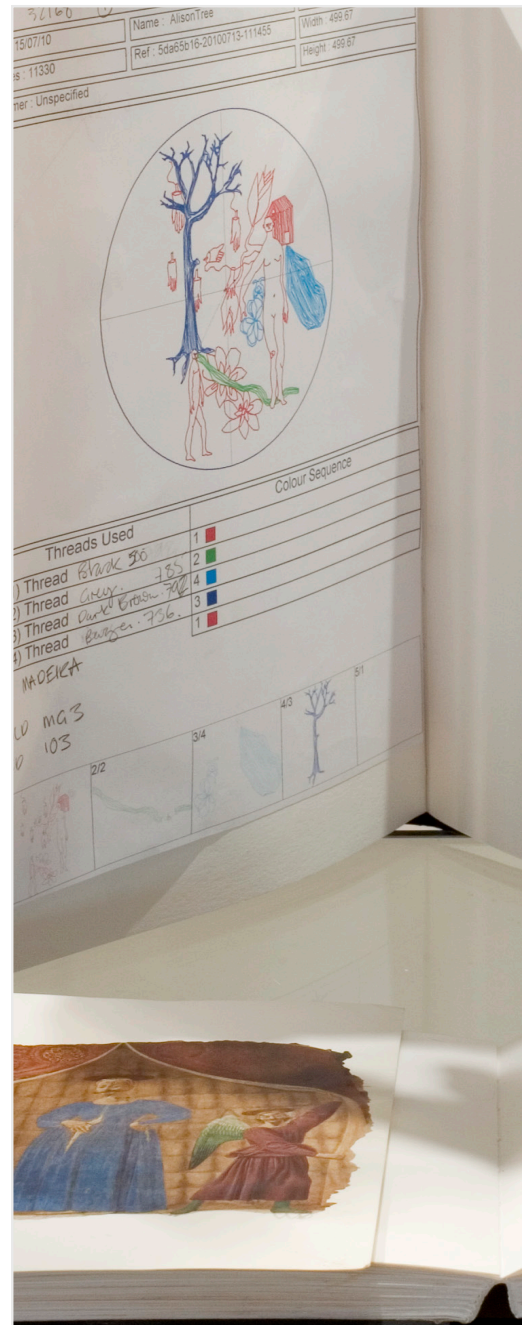


A simple conversation with a like minded stranger can produce some unexpected ideas. I met with Alison over lunch and we looked over each other's drawing and inspirations and realised we shared much common ground. Alison's drawings of garments for the body struck a chord with me; my drawings were of bodies without garments, stripped bare. Maybe Alison explores the exterior body and I explore the interior body, you could say this was a meeting of 'body and soul'.

We both shared an interest in Piero Della Francesca's painting Madonna del Parto and its symbolic references. I was also interested in Alison's collection of wooden dolls hands as they made me think of the many ceramic fragments in my studio, failed ceramic figures which had been broken. These references led to a series of drawings which in a way were random, but what I found interesting was that the collaborative approach allowed for a kind of freedom, away from my usual practice.

I recently visited the Philadelphia Museum and saw a beautiful exhibition of Kantha embroidered quilts. The detailed pictorial narratives have such power and I found it interesting that most cultures have a need to tell stories through their available crafts. So I embarked on a road of stitching. The results are more like sketches or designs but are imbued with a sense of the surreal, where images of figures and objects float around and clash with decorative motives. Although the pieces of embroidery are at the beginning stage, they have the potential to become very precious objects. The embroidered cloths travelled back and forth from Cardiff to Manchester and we left our mark on it.

*Claire Curneen*



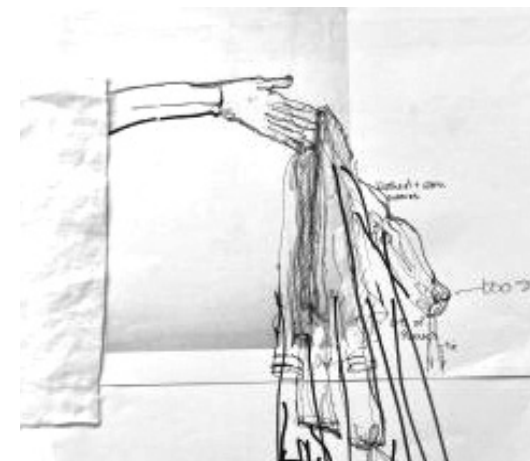
I have developed an interest in decorative stitch techniques over the past four years, utilising a computerised Brother multi-needle machine and more recently working with hand stitch techniques. The reference points for my imagery have frequently been the drawings of early Italian Renaissance artists.

Our initial meeting in Cardiff at Claire's studio provided a strong starting point for the project. We compared work, shared references and discovered a mutual interest in Renaissance iconography. Common themes were colour (or the lack of it - primarily the use of white), religious imagery, and an interest in fabrics which possess shroud like qualities. We also shared a fascination with the figure, and with hands in particular. The symbolic imagery of the Madonna del Parto (Piero della Francesca, 1455) was identified as a starting point. We then went on to work in sketchbooks, swapping drawings and drawing on top of one another's work. Developing a blog was useful to record ideas, share thoughts on possible research themes and generally keep in touch with each other's progress. We are currently working towards a collaborative textile piece referencing the Madonna del Parto, using traditional Kantha stitching techniques.

*Alison Welsh*









We were unaware of each other's work prior to Pairings. Through irregular conversations, emails and visits we developed the mutual trust needed to enthuse about stuff and explore ideas together. Now we share understanding about creative speculation, play, process and material. The openness of Pairings allows us to meander, leave behind the security and constraint of 'the brief' and appreciate the value of indirection.

Beyond the parameters of our respective disciplines we are learning something about each other's language, approaching and producing work in ways unusual to us both. Parallel to our spoken exchange is a conversation with images and materials. Ideas arise from words to be interpreted as a piece of glass or a sketch, a sample of glass is photographed or drawn, emailed, turned back into a phrase, re-interpreted as new piece of glass and so on. Qualities and possibilities are noticed in each other's experiments, at each turn, and responses made.

Liberating naïve questions can be asked of practice areas – is it possible to...?, What happens if...? Could this mean...? Pairings indicates an inter-zone, without expectation of expertise or prior knowledge of the partner domains, permission not to know what can't be done. So far the rewards have been a different place to stand to view our own practice, recognizing shared values, encouragement in imagining different creative parameters and the joy of unpredicted responses from an unfamiliar discipline.

Our collaboration continues to be enjoyable, fascinating and fruitful. The exhibited piece feels very much 'ours' and would not have been produced by us individually. It embodies our collaboration as ongoing dialogue rather than a final statement.



“ *Illuminating Space and Time – an on-going dialogue in ink and glass.* ”

The notes below were gathered from our first meeting in the North East when Clinton visited both Sunderland University Glass department and Cate's studio in the centre of Newcastle. We had time to explore the qualities glass has to offer and discuss the themes and ideas that interested both of us. From this first meeting a series of potential avenues to explore came into being.

Glass: Two way/one way  
Transparency  
Reflection  
Opacity  
Distortion

Precision: cutting  
Residue: outcomes of process, experiment, accident  
Danger, fragility, strength, endurance  
Revealing, beguiling

Manchester < II > Newcastle: Two places viewed simultaneously through one pane  
Represents 'Pairings'?

Collaboration  
Looking and seeing  
About looking in all its forms  
Seeing what is through the glass and seeing yourself seeing  
Line and form as absence: potentiality, minimal intervention  
'Seen and not seen' glass and the holes in glass  
What's inside the glass – the view interrupted – glass as mediating medium  
Refraction, magnification  
Residual forms  
Kiln Film – the moment of transition, changes of state  
Projection  
Words: 'Glass has memory'  
Rememormee (Finnegans Wake)  
Reflection – glassmemory, memoryglass  
Time – mineral qualities /properties  
Deep time/moment

Landscape, layers and lines  
Marks  
Surprise at the beauty of the edge – not just the 'functioning' planar surface

Allowing the glass to draw itself by itself: illustration, illumination, illustraré etc.  
Mineral Signatures  
Glyphs of captive air  
Crystalline memory – exposé  
Accidental inscriptions  
Scars on the maker's body

Tower and Shaft, splinter and slice – shards  
Columns  
Tall formats  
Stacks  
Accent  
Core samples  
Looking through almost nothing at nothing

Stratification  
Accumulation

Glassbook – what might this look like? A book on glasses terms, experimental format  
Where/when do the qualities of 'book' overlap with those of 'glass'?

Slices, leaves, falling through text

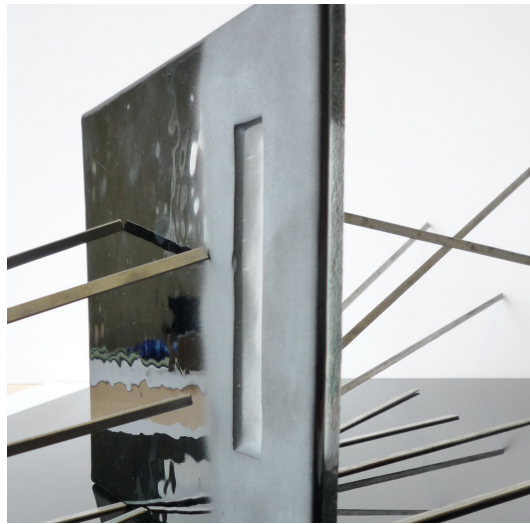
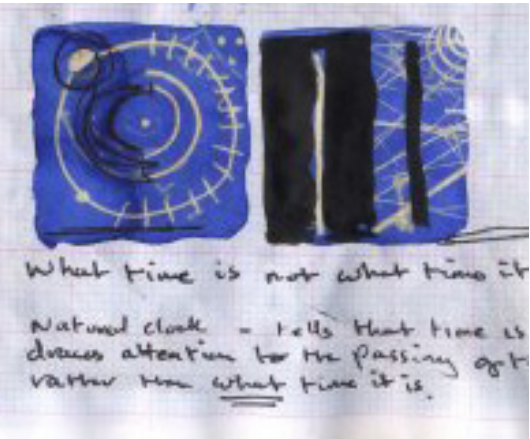
Through a relaxed and irregular series of conversations, email exchanges and visits we are forming a shared understanding, a mutual outlook, about creative speculation, play, process and material.

Co-locating our conversations has been invaluable in giving some momentum to the discourse, contrasting our working environments and the everyday contexts of our practices.

Parallel to the verbal discourse was a conversation with images and materials. An idea would arise in discussion to be interpreted as a piece of glass or a sketch, a sample of glass would be photographed or drawn, emailed, turned back into a phrase then re-interpreted anew piece of glass and so on. We would each see new qualities and possibilities in the others experiments a teach turn and make a response.

*Clinton Cahill & Cate Watkinson*







### Picnic

**Alice:** My mother was given a Royal Worcester Gold Lustre ware teapot when she married. She never used it and I saw it at the bottom of the cupboard as a child and thought it was Aladdin's lamp. When I got married I used the teapot many times each day. The lustre has faded a little. I was given a few other pieces which started off a collection. Eventually I can give a random set to each of my children. And keep one special one for myself.

**CJ:** Alice asked me if I would respond somehow to her beautiful golden coffee pot. We discussed the possibilities of using my patterns in combination with Aynsley traditional florals, and the pieces I had made for the BCB commission were there as a reference.

**Alice:** CJ had laid out her paper firing discs with her distinct ceramic cups and saucers placed on them. The pattern of them seemed stitch like; I was so intrigued by the diagrammatic framework of the lines, and the vibrant spots of orange which donated the cycle of firing.

**CJ:** It's been quite off the cuff, and so easy to work together, snatched conversations in corridors in Manchester and London, but it's worked!

**Alice:** The response I can make with my current experimentation in digital stitch seems fitting, it links so closely with CJ's ceramic transfer process. CJ's interest in recycling and giving new identity to ceramic has led me back to my personal collection of stitched tablecloths which now in her manner I am stitching over and reclaiming into the present.

And so we began to make picnic sets, it has been joyful and spontaneous.

**CJ:** I do feel that I've got more to contribute and just not enough time!! Watch this space...

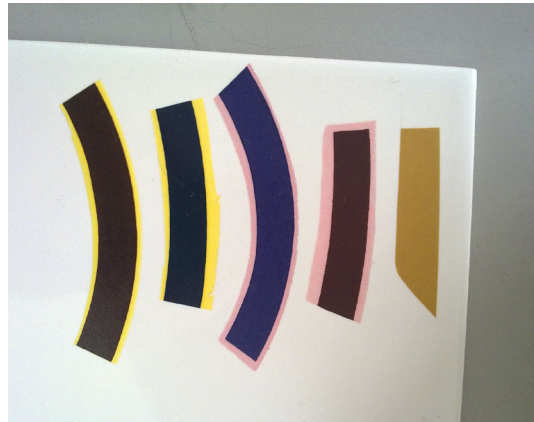
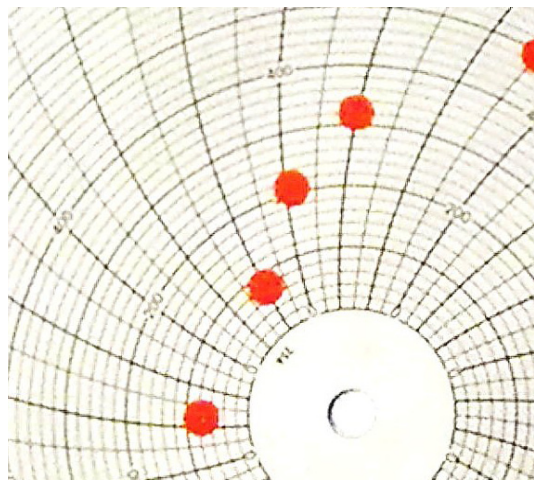


*“Exploring the nostalgia of High Tea through making picnic sets in ceramics and cloth.”*

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We began by talking about our respective approaches, ideas and ambitions, the objects and graphics we had both produced. Liz wished to pursue ideas away from ‘the client’, where she was not required to follow someone else’s brief. Helen wished to pursue ideas away from ‘Helen Felcey’, where she could respond to someone else’s creativity. So in a sense, we each wished to walk in the direction of the other. We chose to work in visual form using photography - the photographic studio seemed an appropriate physical place where object and images meet. We did three shoots, each time arriving at the studio with a collection of ideas, about an hour, and a series of props. From here it was a very fluid process, of open experimentation and conversation.

The first shoot concentrated on the projection of pattern and text onto a translucent, white pot. For this we used a diverse range of images from old letteraset to architectural backdrops and Busby Berkeley prints. The conditions – in terms of light and form, were dramatic. The results were rich with cinematic qualities, the camera often re-interpreting the (white) projected light into rich magenta’s, greens and blues. For our next shoot, we moved to the daylight studio, where by controlling the light we almost removed it from the experiment, allowing us to explore the objects and text more graphically. Here we introduced other objects into the equation, such as coloured tapes, strips of text and perspex. For the third, we returned to projection, bringing back the strong voice of light and shadow, concentrating on specific black text projections on a series of bone china forms.

Each shoot has produced a wealth of imagery and further possibilities. There seems to be two clear strands – one is dynamic, spotlit with strong ‘stage presence’; the other is subtle, translucent and understated. By choosing to use a camera and the photographic studio, we are essentially processing and filtering object, pattern and text through light, working towards a combined visual language.



**Liz:** My collaboration with Helen has been an adventure in its own right, taking me completely out of my comfort zone to a place where there was no brief, no client and no required outcome. Very refreshing!

Our dialogue frequently revolved around the notion of..... “I didn’t know that was going to happen”. There was an openness to experiment with ideas at all levels of our engagement, to explore unknown possibilities and to enjoy our different disciplines creating inspirational possibilities.

I do not think I have ever quite worked in this way before. It was entirely unstructured (very scary to me) and entirely stimulating!

Our collaboration in this exhibition represents a small number of encounters in a photographic studio and embodies the beginning of what we both hope will be many long fruitful future discoveries.

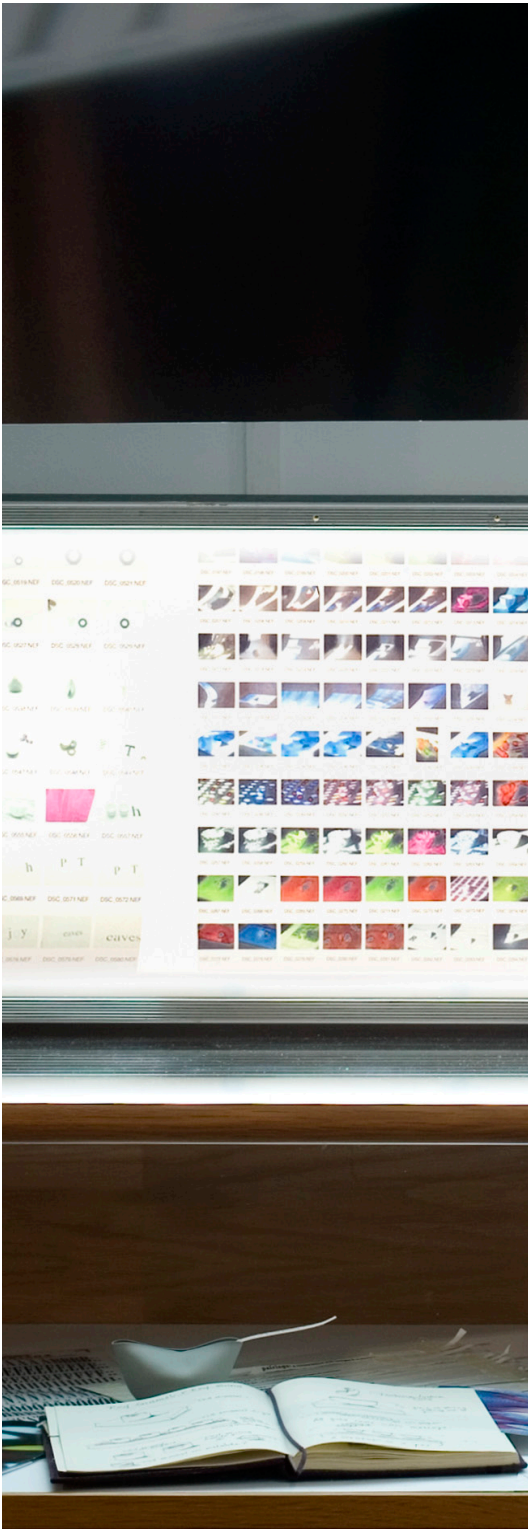
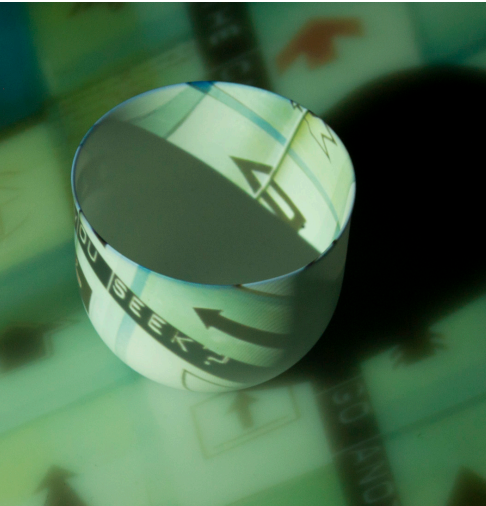
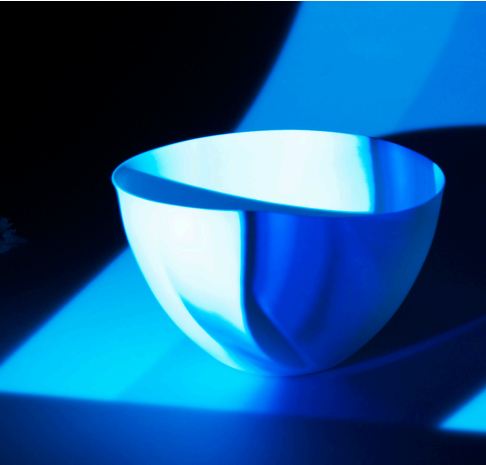
**Helen:** ‘Encounters in a photographic studio’ – I like this description. I think of the ‘chance encounters’, of the objects, images and thoughts, which evolved during our studio meetings.

Yes, they are set up to a degree – in terms of the selection of objects, images and equipment – but, there is room (perhaps far too much) for the un-expected encounter between each determined element – such as the edge of a pot and the projected line, which finds every facet of a surface. And then there is the ongoing conversation within the studio, which fills all the spaces between – with thoughts and words - describing, directing and altering what we see on the studio table. It’s a very interactive scene, lively and discursive. I’m no longer in a silent movie.

By working with Liz, I immediately stepped into a new landscape of visual practice, carrying a few familiar belongings for navigation. The collaboration is acting as a bridge to new areas research, which I would not have found alone. It’s about encounters and conversation, on a very visual and physical level.

**Liz and Helen:** Our collaboration in this exhibition represents a small number of encounters in a photographic studio and embodies the beginning of what we both hope will be many long fruitful future discoveries.







THE PAIRINGS BOOK TEAM

## STEPHANIE BOYDELL

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## ALKE GROPPPEL-WEGENER

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## ALESSANDRA MOSTYN

After graduating this year with a First Class honours degree in Design and Art Direction at the Manchester School of Art, Alessandra is now working at a well-established design company in Manchester. As well as the Pairings Project, she is involved in several independent design projects, contributing to several art and design publications.

Although her key interest lies with design, Alessandra has worked as part time curator for the last year in Manchester, with an 8-month series of student exhibitions in at The Holden Café Gallery and Panic, a major graphic design show held at the pop-up art store Noise Lab, in Manchester's city centre. In October she was asked back to the Holden Gallery as a graduate, to curate her own work Re[collection], a reflective research project on the history of the Art School with fellow curator Zara Harrison.

Her latest venture, The Mill Press is collaboration between herself and her sister; a writing, photographic and design journal, which has recently made its debut at The Piccadilly Artist Book Fair.



## CREDITS

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