



Futuring Craft – an international conference

Thursday 16, Friday 17 & Saturday 18 September 2021
School of Design and the Built Environment, Curtin University
Fremantle Arts Centre

Call for Submissions

Submissions of theoretical papers, practice-led case studies, as well as innovative presentations for inclusion in the ‘Futuring Craft’ conference program scheduled for 16-18 September 2021 are now open.

A diverse range of topics will be considered to reflect the diversity of approaches to craft making and consumption.

Proposals from the broader creative field including cultural practitioners and producers, academic theorists, craftspeople, artists, designer-makers, curators, campaigners and activists are encouraged. Submission formats can include media documentation of objects and makers, and be presented physically or via digitally.

- What is the future of craft practice in the Indian Ocean Region?
- How does the evolution of the ‘handmade’ underpin micro and macro economies?
- What is the role of crafts, and makers play in socio-political, cultural and environmental healing?
- How can communities challenge the craft paradigm?
- Technology and the digital age, a game changer?

These are just some of the important questions that presenters and groups will vigorously debate at the conference. The ‘Futuring Craft’ conference accompanies the IOTA21 ‘Curiosity and Rituals of the Everyday’ exhibitions.

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Overview / Scope

As human beings, we rely on non-human things; the objects that are central to the sustenance of our physical and mental life. Consequently, and significantly, crafts and craft-making are value-driven within the existing economic paradigm, applied across the region, reflecting communities' transformation towards modernity, sustainable development, and beyond.

Craft can be acknowledged as an object of empowerment: not only through a monetary lens but as an artefact that interacts physically, mentally and metaphysically through the qualities inherent in its design and making, and through sensory influences of experience, emotion, and aesthetic pleasure.

Across five overlapping key themes or topics, the conference will map contemporary crafts and define the scope of craft making in the Indian Ocean region. The dynamic exchange of knowledge and ideas will critically analyse and challenge notions that crafts are embedded in the past and address the concept of, '*Craft ... as elemental to a future economy and culture.*' (Fry, 2011, p.139)

The 'Futuring Craft' and IOTA21 'Curiosity and Rituals of the Everyday' program discussions aim to inspire people to create a relevant, viable and better future through creative craft.

Topic Outlines

1. Geography and social context

'The craftsman is engaged in his material, and by inference, in the surrounding culture.'
(Metcalf, 1987).

What is the impact of interactional elements and relationship to place on the maker and the created object? Explore how the craft-making process, as a physical and emotional intent, is influenced by a web of factors – taking into account the geopolitical location within a socio-cultural framework, as reflected in the context of the object and its aesthetic value, including functional properties. This topic opposes the postcolonial contexts which align craft-making with aid and economic development and, subsequently, neglect its local context and its essence as '*an object of belief*' (Fry, 2011, p.140).

Sub-topics include but are not limited to:

- Craft making in the Indian Ocean region, in the context of post-coloniality
- The politics of ethnicity and religion in the Indian Ocean countries
- Local yet global contextualisation of craft making
- Craft and regional conflicts

2. Education as art, design, and community of practice:

'The term 'craft' seems to be one of the most debated terms in the art and design world in the 20th and 21st centuries, which is nearly always defined by what it is not rather than by what it is.'
(Niedderer, 2014, p.626).

What is the strength of futuring craft education? Common practice sees continued debates concerning the position of craft as supplemental to art and/or to design, with education providing an incubation field for these debates to take place. Dominating assertions emphasise a lack of intellectual requirements for craft making which influences the inferior status of the crafts, when compared to the arts. Similarly, the lack of use of technology, mass-production, and the economic value of crafts are major factors strengthening the position of design over craft (Niedderer, 2014).

Sub-topics include but are not limited to:

- The social engagement and utopian aspirations and characteristics of the crafts
- Self-reliance and creativity
- Making process a social narrative
- How do terminologies define, redefine or change education practices?

3. Materiality, consumption, lifestyle, and sustainability

Craft making plays a significant role, as an empowering agent, in social sustainability, based on effective practices concerning ‘social equality, social innovation, and socially embedded practices including social entrepreneurialism’.

(Brown, not dated).

How can we broaden engagement with craft as an object outside its aesthetic, functional and emotional considerations, to encompass its broader environmental and physical scopes?

The physicality of the nature of craft making offers an efficient response to environmental sustainability, concerning (1) the utilisation of local material resources, (2) the demonstration of creative practices to re-use and sustain local sources of material, (3) the effective utilisation of human power in the production of resources and available production techniques, and (4) ethical trade and consumption.

Sub-topics include but are not limited to:

- How do artists, working in a variety of media, make sense of people’s significant mix of ethnicity, religion, identity, etc., past and present?
- What do global warming and the effects of rising water in the Indian Ocean have on the craft sector?
- Questioning the authenticity of craft in the context of prevailing notions of primitive fakeness.

4. Digital media and production

How can communities and the craft sector better utilise technology (social media and digital production) to enhance the future transformation of the crafts, in terms of contexts, practices, and the making of crafts while retaining authenticity?

The growth of the craft sector will rely on craft makers gradually adopting digital technologies in their practices to enhance the production and promotion of their products, to fulfil expanded consumer demands and to enhance their own financial benefits. This topic offers a platform to argue and question the role of digital media and its alignment with craft in terms of contexts, aesthetics, production practices, ethics, authenticity and sustainability.

Sub-topics include but are not limited to:

- The authenticity of ethics and tourist arts
- Technology-integrated craft
- Interactional experience and the crafts
- What is authenticity in the current global market?

5. During and post COVID-19

How can we leverage the relevant factors and knowledge of current social practices to help maintain and develop the craft sector in the post COVID-19 era?

COVID-19 triggered a global revitalisation for craft practices, enforced by the regulations imposed by the pandemic and in response to personal demands; mentally, physically, and financially. The current situation attests to the studies that confirm the significance of practices that support human mental and physical health. We are witnessing an era of boom demand for the development of practices and for more learning of craft-making, as it occurs inside local communities. Digital media supports the essential need for fulfilling these demands, relating to skills development in the production and material availability of crafts, and enhance communication between the newly established social innovation groups.

Submission Formats

Futuring Craft will present virtual and in-person presentations. The conference will be held at the School of Design and the Built Environment, Curtin University - Perth, and at Fremantle Arts Centre, both in Western Australia. In-person presentations and virtual presentations will be accommodated in these formats:

Pre-recorded video	Participants can make pre-recorded films or videos of their presentations and make submissions through IOTA Vimeo or YouTube channel. These presentations will be timetabled and broadcast during the conference, then published after the conference.
Screenings	Short films are welcomed from craft-oriented associations across the Indian Ocean representing social group narratives or otherwise produced by film-makers.
In-person & online presentations	Written papers aligned with the conference tracks will be e-published as conference proceedings with ISBN, and be available via IOTA website.

Key Dates

Full Paper (5000 Words) submission process:	
Abstract (500 Words max) submission due	1 March 2021
Notification of abstract acceptance	5 April 2021
Submission of the paper first draft for blind peer-review process	7 June 2021
Review process feedback	By 5 July 2021
Submission of the revised version of the full paper following the conference template	9 August 2021
Notification of acceptance of the full paper	23 August 2021
Online presentation uploading (<i>details will be supplied later</i>)	6 September 2021

The Pre-Recording & Screenings submission	
Abstract (500 words max) submission due	1 March 2021
Notification of abstract acceptance	5 April 2021

Upload of screenings (links will be supplied later) for reviewing process	7 June 2021
Review process feedback	By 5 July 2021
Submission of the revised version following the conference guideline	9 August 2021
Notification of acceptance	23 August 2021

Fees

Submission of abstract for review	free of charge
Accepted abstract, invited to submit the full contribution (a full paper, or workshop description, etc.) for review process	free of charge
Submission of final work & registration to present (all formats)*	AU\$300 **
Conference Delegate Registration/Booking	To Be Advised

* At least one of the authors, must register and present the work in the conference; either virtually or face-to-face attendance.

** The registration fees cover:

- Admission to the conference sessions, workshops, keynote presentations.
- Between-sessions coffee breaks, and the lunch
- IT and digital support
- Closing session and celebration

The registration fees do not include:

- Travel expenses
- Accommodation

Enquiries

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References

Fry, Tony (2011) Design as Politics. Berg, Oxford. NY

Niedderer, Kristina & Townsend, Katherine (2014) Designing Craft Research: Joining Emotion and Knowledge, The Design Journal, 17:4, 624-647, DOI:10.2752/175630614X14056185480221

Metcalf, Bruce (1987) Replacing the Myth of Modernism. <https://www.brucemetcalf.com/replacing-the-myth-of-modernism> Retrieved 1 August 2020.