



A touring exhibition from Craftspace
curated with Helen Carnac

Judith van den Boom & Gunter Wehmeyer
Gary Breeze — Neil Brownsword — Sonya Clark
Rebecca Earley — Ken Eastman & Dawn Youll
David Gates — Matthew Harris — Amy Houghton
Esther Knobel — Sue Lawty — Heidrun Schimmel
Paul Scott & Ann Linnemann — Elizabeth Turrell
Shane Waltener & Cheryl McChesney Jones

Taking Time: Craft and the Slow Revolution

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Taking Time: Craft and the Slow Revolution considers how contemporary craft making practices embrace similar values and philosophies to those supported by the Slow Movement. Both think through where things are made and by whom and engage in ideas of provenance — being immersed in a rich narrative of human experience. Asking us to slow down, perhaps not literally but certainly philosophically, and to reflect on other and perhaps more thoughtful ways of doing things.

Time has an important emphasis in the exhibition — the works invite the viewer to question notions of time — ‘what does time feel like?’ or ‘how do I understand my own time or my place within time?’ We also hope that within the exhibition space the viewer can forget the seconds, minutes and hours of everyday life, not needing to ask ‘how long did it take to make?’ but being encouraged to find a temporary place for time to think through and be absorbed by the work.

This Craftspace exhibition, which has been curated with the maker Helen Carnac, brings together nineteen international artists, makers and designers whose making practice and work connects with these ideas. In different and sometimes overlapping ways they examine the world through making and in places quietly ask questions about global and local conditions that we find ourselves in today. The exhibition aims to show that contemporary craft practice and its methodologies can generate a modern and timely response to current social debates.

- How can contemporary craft making enable social interaction and embrace collaborative practice?
- How do we think about the relationships that form an important part of making processes including those between people; people and places; materials and ideas; and the space and time that allows for things to change or be made?
- How do we understand the impact of time in making and understand time constructs that are used within the making process? These may be fast or slow.
- How can performance, which involves the public in the making of the work, challenge ideas of authorship and explore ideas of ownership?
- How can we better understand a making process if we reverse this process or ‘unmake’, literally ‘unpicking the stitches’ to reveal ideas of process, materiality and what an object may look like when it is complete?
- What do site, locality and place mean within the making process and can our personal histories transcend or go beyond our geographies?
- How can an object encourage you to slow down and to take a second look and ask why it looks or functions as it does?
- How do makers communicate ideas of making and how are these spoken about?

Foreword

Craftspace's exhibition programme is usually themed to reflect our strong belief in the rich potential for ideas, practice and processes related to contemporary craft, to be culturally relevant and socially engaging. One of our previous exhibitions over the past five years was *SELF* in partnership with Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham. *SELF* sought to explore questions and boundaries of personal identity, individual difference and notions of 'otherness' through the familiar and inter-related media of jewellery, clothing and photography. From considerations of self we now move to considerations of time and place. It is our intention that *Taking Time: Craft and the Slow Revolution* creates a space for reflection and recognition of the ways in which artists and makers situate craft in the world beyond the object. Through relationships and collaboration they engage with current social and political issues. As we negotiate these pivotal times which are testing our values and questioning rates of consumption, the artist's and maker's voice and activism makes an important contribution to thinking through the future.

The research and development of the exhibition has been a curatorial collaboration and dialogue between maker Helen Carnac and Craftspace's previous Exhibitions Organiser Andy Horn. It is the first time that Craftspace has worked with a maker in this way and it brings with it new dimensions of richness. Helen's tacit knowledge of making, its associated critical thinking, practice and dialogues and her broad network has shaped the research process as well as the content and intention of the exhibition.

The explorations of the theme of slowness in the development phase through the blog, the *Analogue* project with artist Russell Martin, the action research community based project with the National Trust *Whose Story?* team in the West Midlands and Birmingham City University's, School of Jewellery project are documented here in this catalogue. In addition Craftspace has commissioned Amy Houghton to create an online web based artwork to test for ourselves how craft can be presented on digital platforms. *Tweave* uses Twitter to create a digital textile which will slowly evolve and change over the eighteen months of the exhibition tour.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with Helen Carnac. I would like to thank her for her generosity, thoughtful expertise, the insights she has brought to our work and the huge amount of time she has invested in the process of research, curation and production. Thanks are due to Andy Horn who left Craftspace in October 2008 for his vision, capacity for generating partnerships and skilful fundraising. Also to Emma Daker who replaced Andy and has worked tirelessly to manage the production phase. Thanks to the staff and Board of Craftspace for their contribution to bringing this exhibition to fruition. Thanks to Arts Council England West Midlands for funding the production and tour. Finally thanks to the artists and makers whose creativity we celebrate.

Deirdre Figueiredo
Director of Craftspace

Judith van den Boom & Gunter Wehmeyer



City Fabric XL_XS

Our lives take a certain time, they develop in relation to what is around us. Our lives get context through our families, neighbours, friends and local communities. The relations in our communities create an environment for us to grow into. It is the local place from where we started our own developing journey.

Our local context was shaped by being rooted in the Netherlands and Germany. A context with large freedom in personal development. Shaping our ideas and having time to develop a view on how everything works. Not only by working in a creative field but also through time being part of different communities. Now we work together as team BoomWehmeyer, bringing together a puzzle of different cultures, design work fields, views, connections and communities. Within our design work for us it is not about where design disciplines are situated or separated but how disciplines are fabricated and connected to each other. Being able to lay out new puzzles in a changing world, slowing down to make changes in our perceptions.

Seeing this puzzle or fabric around us is something that takes time, not only in design but also in looking at our locality. The local surroundings that we root from change rapidly. In some cities whole neighbourhoods move in weeks or roads are replaced overnight. These changes create a much deeper connection with our local environment, how we value the space around us, how we experience community or use objects. It also makes changes in how people experience the world locality. For one, local means the backyard and for the other, local means every place they travelled through.

In the last years, we had the chance to work and live in China, one of the fastest

changing places. This affected and rewired our connection to what personal or local means. Seeing new connections and values appear in the environment such as government planning new suburbs, local people building or repairing their own streets, material resources that decrease or change — all elements that show a deeper view on the values and fabric of our local space. To look anew at our localities or environment we sometimes have to step away and view the larger connections of how everything is fabricated to each other. In our work through design we work a lot with local material projects, social projects and different cultures. This gives us a moment to show these changes we all live in and are surrounded by. Our projects in China are connected to this. We connect not only to our space through our physical products, our clothes, or transport but also by looking at the city around us as a fabric, built together, through different times, materials, techniques and creators.

Sometimes we have to step out of our local zone to see the differences between cultures, customs and the time we need to connect, speak or work with local life. The fabric of our locality needs our personal maintenance and participation, zooming into the cityscape, seeing craft through infrastructure, materials and people, contributing different personal experiences and perspectives, expanding the puzzle around us.

The book *City Fabric XL_XS* contains a view on the fast changing Chinese environment of Shanghai where we work on *Re:Wire*, our project that connects our perceptions differently. The photos are taken by Judith van den Boom, Gunter Wehmeyer and project intern Marianne Meijer who spent the summer researching the project.



From top
Street fabric; Production fabric; Storage fabric

Facing page
Personal fabric



Core words about our practice

Conversations, Crossing, Layers, Interrelation,
Curious, Engine, People, Landscapes, Activating,
Bridging, Slowing, Empower, Material, Scale, Changing,
Development, Social, Detailed, Relationships, Tactile,
Movement, Stimulating, Awareness, Engaging,
Craft, Shaping, Technology, Brainstorms, Research,
Observing, Streaming, Inbetween, Passionate,
Developing, Activism, Engage