



CALL FOR PAPERS 2017

Canadian Craft Biennial Conference Can Craft? Craft Can!

**September 15 and 16, 2017
Burlington and Toronto**

The Art Gallery of Burlington in collaboration with Craft Ontario is organizing the first Canadian Craft Biennial Conference to be held September 15 and 16, 2017 in Burlington and Toronto, Ontario.

There are eleven sessions covering a variety of themes and approaches. To submit a proposal to a session, please send an abstract (250 words) with your contact information, a short biography (100 words) to the convener of the session you would like to join by 30 November 2016.

Regular sessions will include four (4) presentations of twenty (20) minutes each followed by a question period. Number of Pecha Kucha presentations in session five is at the discretion of the conveners. All sessions are 1 hour 45 minutes in length.

1. Indigenous Craft Today: Tradition, Innovation, Action

Convener: Elizabeth Kalbfleisch, Independent Scholar
Email: ekalbfleisch@gmail.com

This panel explores craft as a relevant, vigorous, and meaningful designation for Indigenous visual expression today. This discussion is especially pertinent in light of the use of the term "craft" as a designation of lesser-status for Indigenous made objects, a designation which, historically, resulted in the exclusion of Indigenous visual expression from the art world. Moreover, histories of tourist art, the collecting priorities of ethnographic museums, and the complexities of cultural usage associated with particular objects all inform narratives of Indigenous craft and its relationship to the art world. This panel focuses on contemporary Indigenous craft in light of these histories as well as innovative curatorial and theoretical approaches. Exhibitions like the Changing Hands: Art Without Reservation series have showcased to wide acclaim the breadth of contemporary

Canadian Craft Biennial
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1106 Queen St. West
Toronto, ON M6J 1H9
equin@craftontario.com
416-925-4222 x223



1333 Lakeshore Rd,
Burlington, ON L7S 1A9
denis@agb.life
905-632-7796 x303



Indigenous craft. Individual artists such as Ursula Johnson [Mi'kmaq] and Meghann O'Brien [Haida and Kwakwaka'wakw] champion the political force of Indigenous craft and its potential for nuanced embodiment, respectively, while highlighting refined technique. Others, such as Bev Koski [Anishnaabe] creatively address the history of tourist craft head-on. With an eye to history as well as cultural tradition, presenters are invited to discuss the relationship of Indigenous visual expression to craft today. Presentations by artists, scholars, and curators are equally welcome.

2. Craft and Wilderness: Combatting Territorial Amnesia

Convener: Amanda Shore

Email: amandaraeshore@gmail.com

A wide range of craft-based activities rely on wilderness—not only on the resources and realities of the natural world, but on the constructed idea of undisturbed nature. The notion of untouched wilderness is a lingering illusion from the Frontier era, one which has been central to the nation-building agenda of Canadian governments for centuries.

This session focuses on craft-based practices that, rather than contributing to the national myth of Canadian wilderness, facilitate meaningful connections to land and territory. Topics may range from the appropriation of Indigenous cultural practices at summer camps, to the impact of teaching craft in outdoor classrooms, to craft-based practices that reinforce land sovereignty and pursue decolonization.

By encouraging sustainable, slow methods of production, craft reminds us of the importance of responsible extraction. Craft can cultivate local identities and battle territorial amnesia. In what ways is craft central to place-making on Turtle Island?

3. Somewhere Between Folklore, Modernity and Utopia: Expo'67 and the development of Fine Crafts and Métiers d'art in Canada

Convener: Bruno Andrus

Email: brunoandrus@hotmail.com

The 1967 International and Universal Exposition held in Montréal had an important impact on the development of the cultural fields of fine crafts and métiers d'art in Canada. Alongside the site of Expo'67, architecturally oriented large scale métiers d'art productions were integrated into the new modern Montréal cityscape, particularly its underground Métro system inaugurated in 1966, which temporarily linked the city to its futuristic minded counterpart. On



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site, notably in the Canada and Québec pavilions, craft productions were selected, organized and displayed as modern art objects; these associations between the fields of crafts and the visual arts participated in a shift of function and status for craft objects from the utilitarian towards the symbolic, from the artisanal towards the artistic. At the same time, other Canadian craft productions were exhibited and made available to Expo's public in more folkloric settings, reinforcing the relation between crafts and commodities -notably at the Artisanat du Québec boutique located in a section of the site named Le Village which, according to the Official Expo Guide "represents a cheerful traditional village of French Canada". Beyond questions related to the mediation of cultural identity and nationhood played by Expo'67 against the backdrop of the Quiet Revolution and the celebrations of the Centennial of the Canadian Confederation, the event also contributed to the introduction and dissemination of the utopian ethos and activities of the American counterculture in Canada. As Canada was presenting itself on the world stage as a progressive, modern country, it became an appealing destination for young anti-conformist Americans. Not only did some of them bring technical knowledge and expertise, but also a holistic philosophy towards the craft lifestyle which tended to idealise pre-modern modes of production; a do-it-yourself attitude towards crafts and métiers d'art which still stands strong some fifty years later.

Note: Bilingual Session; Propositions in French and English are welcome.

4. Decolonizing Craft: contemporary craft, race, and decolonial practice in Canada

Conveners: Anthea Black, OCAD University & Nicole Burisch, Independent critic/curator

Email: anthea.black@gmail.com & nicoleburisch@gmail.com

This panel will bring together a cross disciplinary group of speakers to examine the relationship between craft, race, and decolonial practice in Canada. Many scholars have described the connections between the colonial project and constructions of craft, cultural production, and aesthetic value. For some artists and practitioners, "craft" can reclaim the values of skill, function, and material engagement, while for others craft cannot; the term and category of "craft" itself signals an outdated colonial model. Regardless, a decolonial framework for contemporary craft theory and practice must productively shift the terms. How do artists, curators, and theorists work within/against these histories? How do we resist and critique disciplinary boundaries, while recognizing that craft materials and processes can be culturally specific, expansive, and hybrid? We welcome proposals for papers from artists, craftspeople, historians, critics, and curators.



5. The Openness of Craft: Complexity in Current Practices

Convener: Ruth Chambers, University of Regina

Email: Ruth.Chambers@uregina.ca

This session will look at ways in which contemporary Canadian craft has embraced complex issues such as diversity, hybridity, and immigration. John Ralston Saul describes complexity as a defining characteristic of Canada, (particularly as exemplified by the Métis Nation). He describes how “Indigenous approaches and philosophies; and above all, their concepts of inclusion and belonging, which today we would call immigration and citizenship” (Ralston Saul, 2016) have resulted in a distinctly Canadian acceptance of contradiction and multiple identities.

In current craft media, perhaps more than in any other media, we see expressions of, and openness to, the complexity Ralston Saul describes. Recent exhibitions such as: *Play, Precarity and Survival*, at the Manitoba Craft Council, Winnipeg; *We Are Woven Through with Strangers and Strangeness*, at the Centre A, Vancouver; *Eutopia*, at the Textile Museum, Toronto; and *Curio*, at the Gardiner Museum, Toronto, represent a wave of contemporary Canadian craft in which romantic western ideals of craft tradition are transformed by the inclusion of, for example, immigrant and indigenous knowledge, diversity, and ambiguity.

Artists and curators are invited to present a recent project, in Pecha Kucha format that illustrates contemporary craft’s openness to a range of influences and its potential to address complex subject matter such as immigration, indigeneity, identity, hybridity, labour, unorthodox aesthetics, and various sociopolitical and geopolitical content. Following the presentations, there will be a discussion amongst the presenters and with the audience.

6. Identity, Craft / Métiers d’art and Marketing

Convener: Susan Surette, PhD, NSCAD University and Concordia University

Email: studio.surette@gmail.com

Anthropologist and ceramist Brian Moeran suggests that negotiating marketing environments can be beneficial to a craftspeople’s creativity as they tackle both the constraints and the opportunities afforded through commercial venues (Moeran, 2014). Marketing craft, however, has rarely been the subject of serious discussion by the academic community although it is often crucial to the survival of craftspeople, craft practices and craft objects. This session proposes to examine how crafts people’s identities as successful makers, and in some cases as



“professionals” as well as the craft objects’ “social lives” are negotiated through access to, participation in, or even restriction from a variety of marketing venues, such as craft shows and fairs, stores, galleries, studio showrooms and online spaces (Dickie, 2003). Indeed, as suggested by recent studies that point to the exclusionary nature of the term “professional”, this session will purposely complicate the idea of what constitutes “professional” craft and crafters (Hickey, 1997, Alfoldy, 2005, Huneault and Anderson, 2012). It seeks papers from diverse viewpoints which take into consideration the crucial roles, historically and currently, played by commercial craft spaces. Among concerns that may be addressed in relationship to marketing craft are: the need to be perceived as “professional” or even “non-professional”, as well as issues of economic survival, cultural endurance, craft innovation, skillful making, and network establishment and maintenance.

Note: Bilingual Session; Propositions in French and English are welcome.

7. Round-Table Session Title: Making Sense: Exploring Creative Methodologies

Convener: Julie Hollenbach PhD Candidate, Department of Art (Art History), Queen’s University.

Email: d.hollenbach@queensu.ca

Modernist writing about craft and the arts placed the sophisticated theoretical and scholarly acumen of the maker at the core of formalist discussions of venerable cultural production. Indeed, this tendency persists, as evidenced by writing that highlights conceptual engagement as a key orienting and influencing component central to a maker’s practice. However, less discussed within this same discourse are the creative practices that underpin the methodologies and ontologies of those who are doing the writing and theorizing about craft, art, and culture.

This round table discussion invites scholars, historians, and critics to share the important ways in which their own creative practices and projects inform their approach to researching and writing.

These conversations playfully interrogate how we make sense of our time spent creating community with makers and cultural professionals; time spent sifting through documents in archives and digging through books and folios in libraries; time spent transcribing interviews and cataloging images; and time spent looking at objects in museums, galleries, and at fairs. How do our creative practices help us unpack and digest the information that we are thinking through? How do they



provide us with insight into the choices and approaches of makers and groups of makers we are in community with? How do our creative projects help us embody and share space with the objects and practices we are writing about? In asking these important questions, this session invites academics to discuss their own creative methodologies by merging the format of the research findings summary with that of the artist's talk.

8. Craft and Public Art

Conveners: Kathy Kranias, PhD Student, Humanities Department, York University, and Lera Kotsyuba, Research Assistant Intern, Ontario Heritage Trust

Email: lera.kotsyuba@gmail.com & kkranias@icloud.com

The crafts have a long history of social engagement, linked to their integration and animation of architecture and civic space, as sites of public art. Contemporary craft continues the tradition of public art, in the forms of architectural craft and site specific installations: art forms that are inherently interdisciplinary, and often collaborative in nature. Sometimes symbiotic with architecture, or as an intervention that challenges the site, the crafts animate and transform public spaces. Ideologically driven or not, how do the visual and material qualities of metal, fibre, ceramic, glass, and wood, create affective environments in our real world? What impact have new technologies made on the way the crafts may interact with their surroundings, both human and inanimate? Looking to traditional and new craft materials and processes, this session explores public craft that encompasses the handmade to the industrially produced.

We invite papers that investigate contemporary Canadian craft in the context of public places, whether permanent architectural sites or temporary installations.

9. Making Education: The Changing Nature of Teaching Craft

Convener: Dorie Millerson, Assistant Professor, Chair, Material Art & Design, OCAD University

Email: dmillerson@faculty.ocadu.ca

What are the issues concerning teaching and learning craft today? In 2014, the UK's Crafts Council published an Education Manifesto for Craft and Making, which outlined recommendations for raising the profile of craft teaching, enterprise and innovation. What has led to the need for a manifesto to explain the value of teaching making? Over the last decade, there has been increased discussion about the history and value of craft education (Adamson 2007) and the embodied interaction between people, tools and thinking in the craft studio environment



(Johansson 2006; Illum & Johansson 2012). In a time of precarious enrolment and employment in postsecondary craft programs and a lack of prominence for craft and design education in schools, determining the nature and possibility for craft education seems paramount.

This session seeks papers that examine and question teaching practice, the learning process, and the role of craft education within a present-day socio-cultural context. Papers may address but are not limited to: teaching, learning and research in the material studio environment; curricular development and innovation; teaching professional practice; inter/post-disciplinary teaching; and the role of craft education in light of societal shifts. Perspectives on teaching and learning craft in diverse learning environments such as apprenticeships, schools, colleges and universities are encouraged.

10. Craft's Collaborations

Convener: Mireille Perron, Alberta College of Art + Design

Email: mireille.perron@acad.ca

This session investigates the collaborative power of craft as a generative principle at the core of social, political, and cultural life. It posits craft as a field of knowledge poised between modes of expertise, labour, workmanship, exchange, mobility, proprioception, education, and industry which contributes to the renewal of collaborative relationships.

Collaboration through craft includes craft artists working with other makers, with practitioners in other fields, cross-culturally, cross-materially, both inside and outside the arts, with local or global communities. Recent critical appraisal in the role of craft in generating collaborative spaces has been noted in several transdisciplinary publications such as the anthologies *Collaboration Through Craft*, A. Ravetz et al, or *Ways of Making and Knowing: The Material Culture of Empirical Knowledge*, P. Smith et al. Following, but not restricting possible investigations to these leads, we offer craft knowledge as a way to better understand our participation in a material world, a way that shapes new connections among groups, creates alternative identities, and renews claims of legitimacy and public good. All historical, methodological and material approaches are welcome.



11. The digital ties that bind: Practice-lead research in craft

Convener: Stephen Bottomley, Senior lecturer, Edinburgh College of Art/ University of Edinburgh
Email: s.bottomley@ed.ac.uk

The theme of this session will be to connect with other practitioners and researchers utilizing emerging digital technologies to enhance their creative practice and to ask the following questions:

- What is the role and responsibility of designers, artists and makers in the development and dissemination of emerging technologies today?
- Does technological innovation 'help', 'hinder' or 'challenge' the established Craft practices and traditional ways of making?
- Have values of craftsmanship altered when operating in the territory between craft culture and digital making?

The panel discussion will present examples that aims to support and explore the changing identity of creative practices within an increasingly technologized environment