



LONG SHADOWS

TRADITION, INFLUENCE, AND PERSISTENCE IN MODERN CRAFT

GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

Friday, November 10, 2017

LONG SHADOWS:

Tradition, Influence, and Persistence in Modern Craft

9 am **Registration and Coffee | Library Court**

10 am **Introduction and Opening Remarks | Lecture Hall**

10:30 am **Panel A | Lecture Hall**

CHAIR: Glenn Adamson, Yale Center for British Art

Kayleigh C. Perkov, University of California, Irvine
Recurring Aesthetics, Emergent Traditions: Wendell Castle's Continued Relevance to Corporate Culture

Holly Gore, University of California, Santa Barbara
ART/WORK: Intersections of Sculpture and Skilled Trade

Daisy Charles, School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Chance and Tradition in the Architectural Ceramics of Assemblage

noon-1 pm **Lunch Break**

1:15 pm **Panel B | Lecture Hall**

CHAIR: Sequoia Miller, Yale University

Sarah Mills, City University of New York
The Eternal Renewal of Handweaving: From Colonial to Contemporary Practices

Mathilde Frances Lind, Indiana University, Bloomington
Modern American Handspinning: Technology and Tradition

2:30 pm **Breakout Sessions**

Grace Kim, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Crafting Nanotechnology for Art Conservation

LOCATION: Yale Center for British Art, Conservation Studio

Ugochukwu Charles Onyewuchi, Columbia University
Tradition as a Binding Agent: Perspectives From a Workshop on Traditional Nigerian Art Practices

LOCATION: Yale Center for British Art, First-Floor Docent Room

PROGRAM OF EVENTS

Friday, November 10, 2017

Sequoia Miller, Yale University

American Perspectives: Studio Craft in the Yale University Art Gallery

LOCATION: Yale University Art Gallery

Martina Droth and Glenn Adamson, Yale Center for British Art

Curator-led tour of *"Things of Beauty Growing": British Studio Pottery*

LOCATION: Yale Center for British Art, Second-Floor Galleries

3:45 pm **Panel C | Lecture Hall**

CHAIR: David Frazer Lewis, Yale Center for British Art

Sowparnika Balaswaminathan, University of California, San Diego

The Real Thing: Craft, Caste, and Commerce in Late Capitalist India

Ann Marguerite Tartsinis, Stanford University

The Magic in the Dye Pot: Mable Morrow, Alice Kagawa Parrott, and the Sites of Exchange in Modern Weaving

5 pm **Break**

5:30 pm **Keynote Lecture | Lecture Hall**

INTRODUCTION: Martina Droth, Yale Center for British Art

Jenni Sorkin, University of California, Santa Barbara

Prime Objects: Digital Clay and its Modernist Origins

6:30 pm **Reception | Library Court**

cover:

Jennifer Lee, hand-built pots in the studio (1993, 1991, 2008), Collection of the artist, London
Photograph by Jon Stokes, © Jennifer Lee

Glenn Adamson

Senior Research Scholar, Yale Center for British Art

Glenn is a curator, writer, and historian based in Brooklyn who works across the fields of design, craft, and contemporary art. Currently the editor-at-large of *The Magazine Antiques*, he has previously been director of the Museum of Arts and Design, New York; head of research at the V&A; and curator at the Chipstone Foundation in Milwaukee. His publications include *Art in the Making* (2016, co-authored with Julia Bryan Wilson); *Invention of Craft* (2013); *Postmodernism: Style and Subversion* (2011); *The Craft Reader* (2010); and *Thinking Through Craft* (2007). Glenn served as the guest curator for *Beazley Designs of the Year 10* at the Design Museum, London, which opened in October 2017; and he was co-curator of *"Things of Beauty Growing": British Studio Pottery*.

Sowparnika Balaswaminathan

PhD Candidate in Anthropology at University of California, San Diego

Sowparnika studies ethnographic and art museums, South Asian artisans, discourse, and ethics. She has taught anthropology, world history, and writing, and is currently an editorial assistant for *Latin American Antiquity*.

Daisy Charles

Master's Candidate in Modern & Contemporary Art History, Theory, and Criticism at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Daisy is from the United Kingdom, and her academic focus is on Canadian art of the 1960s and 1970s, in particular the intersections between American and Canadian art history during this period. She started making ceramics in 2013, and an interest in the history and theory of the medium emerged from this practice.

Martina Droth

Deputy Director of Research and Curator of Sculpture, Yale Center for British Art

Martina is co-editor of the born-digital journal *British Art Studies* and chair of the Association of Research Institutes in Art History. Her writing and curatorial work focus on nineteenth and twentieth century sculpture, particularly in relation to materials, studio practice, and display. Prior to joining Yale, she was at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds.

Holly Gore

PhD Candidate in the History of Art & Architecture at the University of California, Santa Barbara

Holly studies modern and contemporary art with a focus on craft. Her dissertation examines the relationships between modernist woodworking and skilled trade. From 2016 to 2017, Holly was the graduate curatorial fellow at the AD&A Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara, where she curated *Body Matters: Contemporary Art from the Collection*. Holly is currently a Windgate curatorial intern at the Asheville Museum of Art. Her publications include a review of the exhibition *Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College 1933-1957* (*caa.reviews*, December 2016) and the essay "Expanding the Field: Wendy Maruyama and Studio Furniture" in *A Long Engagement: Wendy Maruyama and Her Students* (San Diego State University, 2015).

Grace Kim

PhD Candidate in History, Anthropology, Science, Technology, and Society at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Grace studies how technoscientific expertise contributes to concepts of authenticity as scientists today develop new technologies for art and cultural heritage restoration. Drawing from STS as well as the anthropology of art and heritage, she investigates what happens to art and heritage materials as scientists use digital projection technology, biotechnology, and nanotechnology to collaborate with conservators and to treat deterioration. Her field sites are international and include the United States and Italy. She received her AB in History and Science at Harvard and an MPhil in History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge.

David Frazer Lewis

Postdoctoral Research Associate, Yale Center for British Art

David received his doctorate from the University of Oxford in 2014. His thesis examined the work of Giles Gilbert Scott (1880-1960), designer of the red telephone kiosk, Battersea Power Station, Liverpool Anglican Cathedral, and the House of Commons Chamber. His current research looks forwards and backwards across the "long" history of modernity, focusing on British architecture from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, particularly the ways that architects thought about psychology and religion. David was the supervising curator for the Center's student guide exhibition in 2017, *Art in Focus: The British Castle—A Symbol in Stone*. He is also the editor of *True Principles*, the peer-reviewed journal of the Pugin Society.

Mathilde Frances Lind

PhD Student in Folklore and Ethnomusicology at Indiana University, Bloomington

Formerly a member of the vibrant textile community of the Pacific Northwest, Mathilde has been an active spinner and fiber arts instructor for seven years. Her research focuses on the role of traditional crafts, particularly textiles, in the formation and maintenance of identity. In 2016, Mathilde was the recipient of the Warren E. Roberts Prize from the Folk Arts Section of the American Folklore Society as well as the Elli Kõngäs-Maranda Student Prize for her research on textile crafts. In the summer of 2017, Mathilde was honored with a Title VIII Portable Fellowship for Estonian language study at the University of Tartu in preparation for long-term ethnographic research on traditional weaving and embroidery in Estonia beginning in the summer of 2018.

Sequoia Miller

PhD Candidate in the History of Art at Yale University

Sequoia is a historian, curator, and studio potter. He is currently a doctoral candidate in the History of Art at Yale University, where he is researching the connections between ceramics and conceptual art practices on the East and West Coasts in the 1960s and 1970s. He recently curated *The Ceramic Presence in Modern Art* at the Yale University Art Gallery and authored the accompanying catalogue. Prior to returning to graduate school, Sequoia was a professional studio potter for nearly fifteen years in the Pacific Northwest.

Sarah Mills

PhD Candidate in Art History at the Graduate Center, City University of New York

Sarah studies modern and contemporary art and design. Her dissertation examines how modern science and technology redefined weaving practices in the United States and shifted the status of weavers in the mid-twentieth century. She is a Graduate Teaching Fellow in the Art Department at City College, CUNY, and teaches courses in contemporary art and design history at Hunter College, CUNY. She also leads the Certificate Program in Modern and Contemporary Art at Christie's Education in New York.

Ugochukwu Charles Onyewuchi

PhD Candidate in Art and Art Education at the Teachers College, Columbia University

An artist and art educator born and raised in Imo State, Nigeria, Ugochukwu is also the founder of the Vaera Foundation for Social Advancement, which seeks to impact societal change in Nigeria through a three-prong approach: arts, health, and economics education.

Kayleigh C. Perkov

PhD Candidate in Visual Studies at the University of California, Irvine

Kayleigh specializes in American art as viewed through the lens of craft and the decorative arts. Her dissertation, "Giving Form to Feedback: Craft and Technological Systems circa 1968-1974," historicizes current movements in personal fabrication by examining objects that synthesize handmaking and emergent technology. This work is supported by the Center for Craft, Creativity & Design; the Smithsonian American Art Museum; and the Newkirk Center for Science and Society. Additionally, Kayleigh has an interest in the digital humanities and was the 2015 graduate intern at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA), where she assisted with digital projects. In 2016-17, she was a graduate intern of Digital Art History/Web and New Media Development at the Getty Research Institute.

Keynote Speaker: Jenni Sorkin

Associate Professor of the History of Art & Architecture, University of California, Santa Barbara

Jenni writes on the intersection between gender, material culture, and contemporary art. She has received postdoctoral fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) and the Getty Research Institute. She has written numerous in-depth catalogue essays on feminist art and material culture topics, and has also published widely as an art critic. She is a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Modern Craft* and an editorial advisor to *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture*. Sorkin's book *Live Form: Women, Ceramics and Community*, about gender and postwar ceramics practice at Black Mountain College and other utopian communities, was published by the University of Chicago Press in 2016.

Ann Marguerite Tartsinis

PhD Candidate in the Department of Art and Art History at Stanford University

Ann's current research examines the use of ethnographic collections by twentieth-century American artists, designers, and photographers. Prior to attending Stanford, she was an associate curator at the Bard Graduate Center: Decorative Arts, Design History, Material Culture. Ann's publications include *An American Style: Global Sources for New York Textile and Fashion Design* (exhibition catalogue, 2013), and she contributed to *Knoll Textiles: 1945-2010*, Yale University Press, 2011.

ABSTRACTS

Sowparnika Balaswaminathan

The Real Thing: Craft, Caste, and Commerce in Late Capitalist India

India's traditional crafts are a significant component of the nationalistic narrative disseminated by the government through cultural organizations representing the country's precolonial historical and sociocultural values. At the same time, these crafts are the fastest growing sector in the export industry (Craft Council of India 2011:1). In this paper, I investigate a community of hereditary sculptors living in Tamilnadu, South India, who produce such a craft-object, the Swamimalai bronze. Although historically used as processional icons, the contemporary demand for bronzes comes from both religious and secular markets, with the latter dominated by the art market and architectural industry. Swamimalai bronzes are marketed as "traditional" handicrafts that have remained unchanged since the medieval times, which poses an ethical dilemma to their makers: How does a craftsman, whose positioning is defined by "hand" work and whose products are supposed to be individually crafted unique pieces, conduct an economically viable business in the capitalistic market? While sharing a similarity to Michael Herzfeld's (2003) argument that the global hierarchy of values defines artisans as traditional and backward, a significant minority of the Swamimalai sculptors differ in that they belong to the pan-Indian artisan caste, Vishwakarma, which allows them to claim a higher social position. This sanctions an objectification of their own labor as a commodity indexing tradition and adds value to their bronzes, thereby straddling the line between producing traditional craft while also performing as a profitable enterprise. The values associated historically in Asian cultures with religious and cultural labor allows artisans in these regions to gain social capital while performing as businessmen.

Daisy Charles

Chance and Tradition in the Architectural Ceramics of Assemble

The use of craft to encourage and support community engagement is one of the ways in which the idealistic figure of the solitary studio craftsman appears to have been physically and conceptually displaced, although in some cases recognition is still largely centered around a singular artistic genius instead of being deflected back on to the community. By working in a state of relative anonymity and without hierarchy, the British architecture and design collective Assemble have so far avoided this predicament, instead using their success to help affect positive change in collaboration and consultation with local groups in urban areas in the UK.

In 2015, Assemble was awarded the Turner Prize for their involvement in revitalizing a row of derelict Victorian houses in Liverpool, in conjunction with the Granby Four Streets project. Part of this project was the production of unique

handmade ceramics to decorate the houses, and Assemble used the Turner prize money to establish the Granby Workshop. Since then, the workshop has been involved in a number of international projects, and ceramics made on-site with local community members have come to feature prominently in many of Assemble's designs for new commissions. In my paper, I will examine how Assemble both engages and disregards local traditions and building histories by recycling existing structures and found materials to create spaces that acknowledge their own past and the unforeseen conditions that brought them to the present moment. I will suggest that despite the contemporary look and feel of Assemble's buildings, products, and method of collective practice, the group is thoroughly indebted to traditional materials, technologies, and social conditions.

Holly Gore

ART/WORK: Intersections of Sculpture and Skilled Trade

During the 1960s, the California artist J. B. Blunk began creating modernist chainsaw carvings from massive hunks of salvaged old growth redwood. These biomorphic sculptures, many of which are also benches, are among his most original and acclaimed works. In a letter of 1966, Blunk's friend and mentor, sculptor Isamu Noguchi, urged him away from functional craft, advising him to "eschew sittability" and make his things "useless but as art."¹ Though Blunk's admiration for Noguchi is evident in his sympathetic approach to three-dimensional form, he seems to have left this piece of advice drop. This paper uses the difference in stance Blunk and Noguchi took toward function in art as a starting point for an investigation of how postwar sculpture intersected with skilled trade.

Both Blunk and Noguchi had long and fruitful engagements with making functional sculpture in wood, Noguchi having created dance props for Martha Graham and other New York City-based choreographers from the 1930s through the 60s. Their practices, therefore, took up the work of carpentry. There are several binaries that could be used to explain why Noguchi distanced himself from the craft aspect of his works while Blunk wore the identification with relative ease: older artist, younger artist; East Coast versus West Coast; and high modernism versus 1960s art that occupies real time and space. But these constructs overgeneralize. An examination of these artists' functional woodworks through the lens of skilled trade reveals that hands-on labor, as an idea, is fraught with a myriad of prejudices, ideals, and aspirations that are specific to time and place. How modernist sculptors navigated these was crucial to their career trajectories and the reception of their works.

¹ Isamu Noguchi to J. B. Blunk, August 29, 1966, drawer 9/1, folder 10, Isamu Noguchi Papers, The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, Long Island City, NY.

Grace Kim*Crafting Nanotechnology for Art Conservation*

Scientists today are establishing new techniques for the conservation of artworks and cultural heritage. The perspective from material science, they believe, offers more accurate ways of diagnosing conservation problems and identifying solutions. Drawing on my ethnographic fieldwork in a laboratory of physical chemists in Florence, Italy, I analyze how technoscientific expertise—specifically, expertise on nanotechnologies such as microemulsions and gels—is being brought to bear on efforts to restore deteriorated artifacts such as Federico Fellini’s ink drawings on paper and Pablo Picasso’s paintings. I argue that these scientists are reshaping the lens through which conservation strategies make sense in order to ensure the material and social persistence of objects of art and tradition. At the same time, they are also working to secure a traditional narrative of their practice—a practice, according to them, that has bound physical chemistry to the salvation of artworks since the 1966 Flood of Florence. This presentation therefore considers how “tradition” operates variously as material practice within cutting-edge research. The contemporary crafting of laboratory knowledge and expertise is increasingly important in decisions about which aspects of craft objects are worth passing into living memory.

Mathilde Frances Lind*Modern American Handspinning: Technology and Tradition*

Spinning fibers by hand to produce thread has often been associated with images of rural industry and domestic femininity. Various groups over time have consciously invoked tradition in relation to handspinning for social, religious, and political purposes, attaching the living practice to idealized versions of past morality, self-sufficiency, and traditional ways of dwelling.

In the contemporary United States, handspinning is at the center of a thriving craft community that has largely divorced it from its earlier symbolic and traditional significance. Many contemporary fiber artists identify as “technical spinners,” spinners who use technology to achieve precisely the yarn they want, often tracking their progress and sharing techniques with other technical spinners online. These craftspeople generally utilize mass-produced spinning wheels and fibers that are processed in bulk using industrial machinery. Meanwhile, a smaller spinning subculture coalesces around traditional techniques and antique textile tools, and their discourse emphasizes self-sufficiency and historical preservation through use. These spinners gather both in person and on the internet to compare and research antique spinning wheels, often using archival and genealogical resources to track the history of their equipment and its makers. While this group intersects with technical spinning communities, their gatherings, internet groups, institutions, and publications are often specific to their historical interests, and they engage in craft discourses that are distinct from those prevalent in the larger group.

This paper explores the relevance of varying degrees of traditionalization in contemporary handspinning in the United States to folklore revival attempts, asking how spinning achieved and maintains its current popularity and overall longevity, and how this picture is different for technical or more historically focused handspinning communities.

Sarah Mills

The Eternal Renewal of Handweaving: From Colonial to Contemporary Practices

At stake in the closing of the American Textile History Museum last year was history itself. The event seemed indicative of the irrelevance of weaving's past, or rather, the inability of a historical narrative to account for the changes taking place in weavers' work today. Challenging that historical framework, which favors an aesthetic hierarchy, this paper considers an alternative approach to understanding the history of weaving. It maps out shifts in the socialization of technology, locating them in relationship to changes in woven forms since the early twentieth century.

Since the use of Thread Controller looms by weavers working today, a new type of weaving has emerged. Utilizing these looms, weavers such as Christy Matson, Bhakti Ziek, and Robin Kang playfully improvise with threads in the building of a final form that demonstrates mastery in drawing with texture. A historical narrative that sees the evolution of modern weaving as the exploitation of materiality and structure—to the point of total abstraction and the dissolution of form itself—only makes partial sense in light of these contemporary practices, which stress structural cohesiveness and a pictorial quality. While Christy Matson, for example, views her projects as an extension of midcentury interests in texture and structure, as represented in textiles by Anni Albers and Dorothy Liebes, so much of her work approximates weaving traditions from a period prior to a modern turn. In fact, Matson arguably draws as much on modern trends as she does on premodern or colonial traditions. This paper examines how contemporary weavers, who explore the capabilities of cutting edge loom technology, are ultimately synthesizing modern and premodern practices, which enables them to recover and renew traditions that have continued to define the craft skills of handweaving.

Ugochukwu Charles Onyewuchi

Tradition as a Binding Agent: Perspectives From a Workshop on Traditional Nigerian Art Practices

Art education in Nigeria prior to the colonial era took place via an apprenticeship system. In this system, the apprentice learned predominantly by participating in cultural activities and producing crafts under the tutelage of a skilled craftsman. This traditional form of education reflected that of the African society, which is one that is communal, not individualistic in nature. Thus, the objective was not to instill a sense of individualism in the apprentice, rather to produce an artist who would see to it the continuity of a community's system of art, culture, and ultimately, way of life. The mentor-apprentice system of art education eroded with the introduction of formal education and standardized examination by the British. The emphasis on standardized examinations under this system of art education has led students to learn content not relevant to their daily lives, further divorcing Nigerian art from its foundations. In response to these challenges, scholars (Palmer, 2014; Obiokor, 2014) have urged the inclusion of the apprenticeship and workshop model in the Nigerian formal art education curriculum. Citing Vygotskian theory, which propagates that the acquisition of knowledge and skills are rooted in the sociocultural world, these scholars argue that the communal nature of traditional education will lend to a more culturally relevant art education for the Nigerian child.

This presentation will take an in-depth look at a workshop on traditional Nigerian art practices, conducted at Afara Secondary School Mbaitoli, located in rural south-east Nigeria. Implementing the apprenticeship model, we invited craftsmen into the school over a period of weeks to teach students how to produce local crafts using natural materials. This apprenticeship culminated in a workshop where students demonstrated skills learned through performance, which included participation in cultural activities. The following questions will serve as the thematic lens for discussion: *Given the disconnect between art education and local context in Nigeria, how might traditional modes of education inform an approach to art education that is culturally relevant? How are artistic knowledge and skills transmitted and developed in traditional art education?* Furthermore, this presentation will highlight principles of traditional (nonformal) education that can serve as a basis for art education in contemporary society.

Kayleigh C. Perkov

Recurring Aesthetics, Emergent Traditions: Wendell Castle's Continued Relevance to Corporate Culture

As craft scholarship engages recent shifts in technology, it must consider what aspects of studio craft's legacy carry over into current digital production. I examine this question through an engagement with the woodworker Wendell Castle, who produced both handmade stack-laminated pieces in the 1960s, as well as more recent objects made with computer-numerical-control tools. How should we as craft historians think about the fact that the curved, biomorphic pieces made during these two phases of Castle's career have a striking formal similarity, yet are made through different processes? Several authors suggest that Castle's consistency provides visual proof that a skilled craftsman can retain their product's quality regardless of the tools used. As an alternative, I argue that the similarities in design represent a shared cultural relevance. Through a study of Castle's archival papers alongside those of his representative, Lee Nordness, I examine the cultural utility of Castle's work during the mid-1960s, and how this narrative moves into contemporary discussions of digital production. The key to my argument is that Castle's work engages and re-engages the rhetoric of Information-Age corporate culture. Castle's pieces from the mid-1960s were embraced by corporations in the name of public relations, coinciding with a period wherein corporations no longer saw design simply as a tool to encourage public consumption but as essential to the maintenance of corporate identity, and to give material structure to their logic and systems. In a similar tenor, economists such as Jeremy Rifkin have lauded "additive" manufacturing techniques currently employed by Castle, noting their economy of materials as a preferred method for agile and cost-effective production. In this way, the technology of Castle's works has caught up to the rhetoric underlying his earlier pieces, offering a case study on how the rhetoric and aesthetics of late-1960's craft prefigured and shaped current digital production.

Jenni Sorkin

Prime Objects: Digital Clay and Its Modernist Origins

This keynote lecture considers the gendered history of American ceramist Adelaide Alsop Robineau's (1865–1929) famed, labor intensive *Scarab Vase* (1910) as an unlikely precursor—one hundred years later—to digitally printed clay, utilized today by ceramists working in the 2010s.

Ann Marguerite Tartsinis

The Magic in the Dye Pot: Mable Morrow, Alice Kagawa Parrott, and the Sites of Exchange in Modern Weaving

In August 1966, Mable Morrow, former director of the Arts and Crafts Department of the US Indian Schools, and Josephine Myers-Wapp, Comanche educator for the Institute for American Indian Arts, conducted a natural dye workshop in Santa Fe, New Mexico, for local weavers based on traditional Native American and Spanish-colonial methods. The Japanese American weaver Alice Kagawa Parrott, Morrow's student, was likely in attendance. Only a few years earlier, Parrott had appealed to Morrow to teach her indigenous methods for carding, spinning, and dyeing wool yarns. Parrott's use of vegetal dyes was the single unifying thread through her diverse production of tapestries, commercial yardages, and garments, and one of the few details consistently noted in the sparse scholarship on her work.

While a focused effort to recover the biography and work of Parrott is certainly overdue, this paper proposes instead to investigate the use and reception of natural dyeing techniques in modern weaving, considering the intercultural and, at times circular, transmission of native knowledge among Santa Fe's indigenous communities, government officials like Morrow, and local artists and craftsman as far afield as Hawaii. Dissecting an entangled network of exchange, from the preservation of Native American craft techniques in the early twentieth-century Indian arts and crafts movement to the adoption of these methods by textile and fiber artists in the 1960s and 1970s, this project aims to formulate a more nuanced and contextualized understanding of Parrott's methods. And by examining both Morrow's pedagogy and the production of Parrott's work, this paper will assess the role of vegetal dye techniques played in permeating the perceived boundary between indigenous and modern craft production during this period.

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