THIS IS ME

Research Methods and Communications
M7X02233

By
Emma Jane Vaughan
1703817

Word Count
3209

Tutor
Cath Hammerton



Table of Contents

List of Illustrations	3
This is me	4
Bibliography	16

List of Illustrations

Figure 1:	My Stitched Wire	5
Figure 2:	My Brooches on display in St Fagan's	6
Figure 3:	Optical by Stuart Haygarth	8
Figure 4:	Tide by Stuart Haygarth	8
Figure 5:	Old Wind-Up Clock by Todd McLellan	9
Figure 6:	iPad by Todd McLellan	10
Figure 7:	Indian Threads by Julia Griffiths Jones	11
Figure 8:	Bauhaus Ballet	14
Figure 9:	White Body Fan by Rebecca Horn	15

THIS IS ME: Designer Maker

Reflecting on my journey so far, I can defiantly say I am a Maker. The Oxford dictionary describes a Maker as “a person or thing that makes or produces something” (O.E.D, 2020), but for me it is much more than that. It is a way of bringing the ideas within my head and allowing my hands to feel, connect and play with the material, while creating a new object. James Otter a maker backs this up by saying, “Through the act of making, we reawaken our hands and mind to connect with the beauty of the natural world around us” (Otter, 2020, p.7), it is an enlightening and freeing experience. Making is my passion that also brings me enjoyment, contentment and calmness, it is my escapism. It has always been a part of me, its instinctive, often it triggers nostalgia, as a child I have memories of making wooden toys with my grandfather in his shed and creating clothes with my grandmother. I believe I can make something from nothing. I have always thought that this process was normal and that everyone can make. However, I have learnt over the past couple of years that it is not the case, and that I am not fully crediting myself for what I can achieve. Although, it has taken me a long time to realise this, I can now see that I am following my own path and dreams to become a successful designer/maker that I want to be.

I have gained invaluable knowledge over the years and my portfolio shows the vast range of processes and materials that I can use and work with, figure 1 and 2 show two examples. You can see that “History, vision and feeling are incorporated into each and every piece, and that clearly distinguishes these products from mass-produced goods” (Dupon, 2011, p.6). Traditional techniques play a large role within my practice, each piece I create is unique one of a kind that cannot be replicated on mass. In my creative process, I carefully select the materials to use, for example how they feel, look, manipulate, do they sit on the body or are they for a sculpture? Also, I can use existing materials with the challenge of creating

something beautiful (upcycling), that a person would want to wear or to show within their home. As sennet comments, “Thinking and feeling are contained within the process of making” (Sennett, 2008, pp.7-10), it is this ability to work with different materials that I am able to switch and work out how best to use them. If I am honest, I prefer reinventing waste, “don’t just reinvent the recipe, rethink the menu” (Braungart and McDonough, 2009, p.179), this is a much more challenging process and is always in the back of my mind at the start of a project. With the world churning out waste at record levels and using up all the natural resources, I am aware or the finite verse infinite nature of materials. However even though I can create, with a precious metal or a crisp packet, it is the love and attention to detail I put into that work I believe really sings and thus creates a desirable, unique item that any consumer would adore.

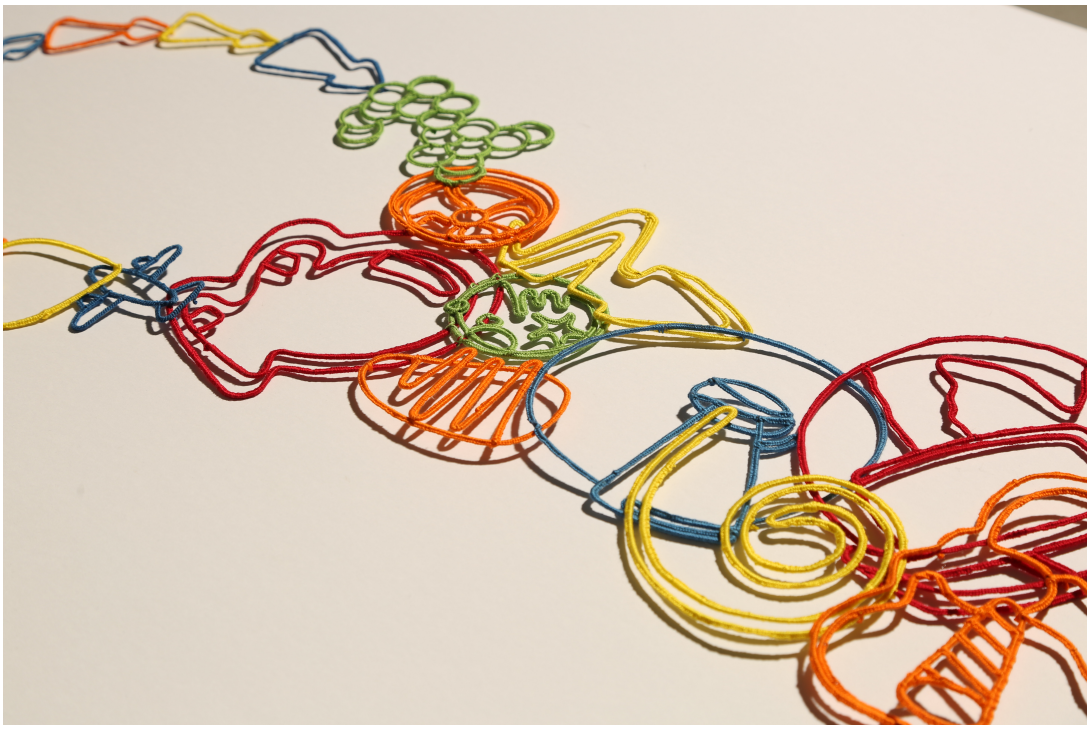


Fig 1: My Stitched Wire



Fig 2: My Brooches on Display in St Fagan's

I have never really credited my skill set, expertise, knowledge, time spent learning and developing processes before. Even thought have continually developed my practice over the years and have spent the last five years back in education furthering my experiences. As Malcolm Gladwell suggest in order to become an expertise in your field you must practice "20 hours of work a week for 10 years – the "10,000 Hour rule" (Gladwell, 2009), it takes a long time, it does not happen overnight. I am dedicated to perfecting skill or technique and cannot move on until I understand it fully, this can be a slow and frustrating process, making mistakes as well as learning from mistakes but for me it is the only way. Further Juhani Pallasmaa comments "a skill requires endless practice based on obsessive dedication and commitment" (Pallasmaa, 2009, p.79), it is an obsession for me, but I strive for perfection. It is this perfection in my ability that I can carry out skills almost automatically, I am almost unconsciously creating. I can attain this knowledge because of tacit knowing, "we can know more than we can tell" (Polanyi, 2009, p.4). Everything I know is inside of me, it is not just one technique or process there are many and I am able to adapt them to new ideas and materials, thus furthering my practice, it is a continuing story. I am not happy with anything that does not comply with what I have envisioned. I want my work to be associated with

high end, kudos and luxury. According to the Crafts Council “Crafted objects have many experimental characteristics: they are unique, high quality, authentic and have a bespoke fit, known origin and tactility” (Council, 2012, p.21) these are all aspects I am committed to achieving within my practice.

When creating my work, I use many tools, for me “the tool is an extension and specialisation of hand that alters the hands natural powers and capacities” (Pallasmaa, 2009, p.47), they allow me to be more refined in my making process. When I am working with wire my grip and direction of the pliers is constantly changing, adjusting to what I am seeing and feeling. I am always in control of my tools and they do exactly what I require. When a skill becomes embedded within me through practice and perseverance “the actions of the eye, hand and mind fuse together into a unified singular response” (Pallasmaa, 2009, p.83) making my process look effortless to the onlooker. Both my hands work together simultaneously even though I am dominant with my right hand, my left hand constantly supporting and moving my material to the desired position. But even though I am saying this I am able to swap my dominance over to my left if needed, this gives me that extra angle or reach when I am creating.

I take my inspiration from the mundane objects that surround my everyday life, it can be anything. According to Paula Zuccotti “Touching objects is one of the most important ways to discover the world, no matter how young or old we are or where we are from” (Zuccotti, 2015, p.5). It is the touching of objects I think that I get my passion of making from, it is my inquisitiveness on the object, how is it made? How does it work? What is it made from? the list goes on. What objects we surround ourselves will differ from one person to the next. I am a hoarder myself, from collecting old family heirlooms to collecting sea glass and plastic washed up on the beach, but it is all this stuff that I see my work coming from. Stuart Haygarth work really resonates with me, the way he categorizes his objects and makes the most beautiful installations out of waste, see figures 3 and 4. He is “Elevating the commonplace or discarded object”, adding value and giving the pieces new meaning. It is the mundane objects that inform my work, every piece I choose to work with holds a memory, a connection, a narrative from the past. For example, in the past I created a series

of work based on a telephone, it was not just any telephone it was a retro one just like my mother had in her hairdresser when I was growing up in the 80s, a childhood memory.



Fig 3: Optical by Stuart Haygarth



Fig 4: Tide by Stuart Haygarth

So, having these initial objects as starting points for my work, I will draw and research around them at the beginning. If it is a complex object made from numerous components, then I do like to take them apart to see their inner workings. During the deconstruction I will record and take photos of the whole process. An artist who works in a similar way is Todd McLellan, he takes photos of objects which have been deconstructed so the components all laid out meticulously. His photos are just spectacular, you are able to see the inner working of many objects. You can almost compare how things are made from an old beautiful, elegant clock to the modern-day iPad, see figures 5 and 6. Its these parts I find interesting, the difference in something that is hand made with a labour of love or something that has been mass produced. Imperfections of the hand juxtaposed to the mundane perfection mass produced.



Fig5: Old Wind-Up Clock by Todd McLellan



Fig 6: iPad by Todd McLellan

So, when I have all the parts laid out in front of me, I always draw the shapes and silhouettes that stand out to me and then I begin to play with the parts, almost reconstructing them into new forms through drawing and model making. I work very traditionally; it is a way of me using my hands to create many new ideas. I will combine materials, by gluing, riveting and stitching together, create paper maquettes of new ideas. I like to play with ideas and feel the different materials, this is how I develop, as John Ruskin quotes “When love and skill work together, expect a masterpiece” (Brainy Quote, 2021), this is so true when I am fully emersed in a project I can just keep going and the outcomes are fantastic. Everything I do and create is an extension of me.

My favourite materials to work with are hard substrates such as metals both precious and nonprecious, wood, acrylic and ceramics. One material in particular, wire allows me to bring my drawings and ideas to life, it is such a pliable material that I can bend and work it into any shape, I am creating a sculpture in the air. For me one of the most amazing aspects of

working with wire is the shadows it cast, it is another extension of your work, which changes throughout the day as different light casts upon it. Unlike most sculptures which are solid forms made from bronze or stone, you can create a large wire piece and it wouldn't dominate the room you can see through it, you are almost creating a series of windows to view through, for me it always looks different. Wire can be a cold harsh material, for me adding stitch onto it is a way of me adding softness, it is almost a form of protection around my delicate structure. But mostly I do it to add colour, this is something that is very important to me. I can decide instantly if I like something based on the colour, colour has to be bright and bring me joy for this reason I stick to using primary and secondary colours. This is a personal choice, but I have to love what I make. Enamelling is also a favourite process I love to do; I have worked with both mild steel and copper. It is such an exciting process, I remember when Julia Griffiths Jones showed me her work, the colours were intense, the texture of the marks was something I wasn't expecting, you can feel the drawing which is engraved into it, figure 7 shows some of her work. It was the first time I had experienced putting a design or pattern onto metal, the only limitation I have is the size of the kiln that the pieces get fired in.



Fig 7: Indian Threads by Julia Griffiths Jones

Recently, I have gained confidence in using technology. Being a maker, I like the imperfection of the hand, it adds a uniqueness to the piece been made. Even though I work in a lo-fi way, while carrying out a lot of my work, I can equally work hi-fi creating illustrator files which then enables me to use equipment such as the laser cutting and waterjet cutting machines as well as the plotter cutter. Before university I would always hand cut my material, which can add a lot of time and cost to your work, it would also become boring/uninspiring to create replicas. Both William Morris and John Ruskin suggested that "it was wicked to make man do tedious, repetitive work" (Frayling, 2011, p.102), this is something I believe in to, for me the machine as the tool is an extension to my hand. Still today I get very excited seeing my work been cut out on these machines as I don't really start playing with the material until they cut. Everything prior has been done in my sketchbook and on the computer. I can see how "the computer creates a distance between the maker and the object…whereas creating…by hand puts the designer in skin contact with the object" (Pallasmaa,2009, p.97), it does distance me from the material to a certain point. Even though I use the machines to cut components as well as cutting multiples, I will always revert back to using traditional methods in order to produce my finished outcome as it is the way I love to work.

I am always planning the next step or idea in my head, I cannot explain it, I just work out things in my head methodically almost in a meditative state. This is a "conscious process that cognitive psychologists call analytic thought" (Kounios and Beeman, 2015, p.10). I break down what I need to do in order to accomplish my outcome. It might be a new material I am working with or a process I am not familiar, but I will pull on all my existing knowledge, to work out the best plan moving forward. This process of problem solving carries on until I have a clear vision of how something I believe will work. When I am making, this is something which carries on through the whole design process for me, there are always developments and new ideas along the way that I challenge myself with. Do not get me wrong I can get stuck on something and just cannot work it out. When this happens, I simply step away from what I am doing to allow space and time to gather my thoughts. Sometime this is enough to work out a solution, it just pops into my head when I am doing something else. A term used for this is known as "waking incubation". For this reason, I always keep a

notepad close by, so I can document the idea before I forget. When I have a lot on my mind, I even keep the notepad at the side of my bed as I can wake up through the night with a solution (Kounios and Beeman, 2015, pp.92-97).

Things can change in my design process depending how I feel or what mood I am in. Music plays an important role when I am making, it goes back to that methodical way I work. I play a lot of songs on repeat and can recall the music I was listening to when creating all my projects. For example, I listened to Rag and Bone Man while I created a full-size Cardboard Man representing being homeless and living on the street and the Blues Brothers influenced my collection of brooches, I created for St Fagan's the list is endless. Interestingly for my final end of year project which was in lockdown I couldn't listen to anything; it was a time of silence and emptiness. This hasn't happened to me before, but it was a time struggled with stress and anxiety and normally I am a very calm person. Things have changed now for the better and for my last body of work the Thought Experiment, I listened to Disney song.

All the factors I have mentioned are all within my own unique way of creating a piece, it differs from one maker to the next. But what we create has what Walter Benjamin would describe as an "Aura" within them. The term "Aura is described as "a quality integral to an artwork that cannot be communicated through mechanical reproduction techniques" (Tate,2020). When we make something, it becomes an extension of ourselves, it is a part us and our surrounding. When I produce something, I know everything there is about it, I can tell a story about it. It is this authenticity that I believe consumers are interested in and makes them desire my work.

Overall, my work is all about me and when I am creating it has to make me happy. I always ask myself would I wear that or would I have it in my home. I know this is very personal way to work but I do have a high expectation for myself and I have to stay true to myself. When I am designing or thinking of an idea, I do have the ability to work out what needs to be done in order to make the piece I desire. As I have commented throughout my essay, I have an abundance of different skills/processes which I am able to use, which allows me to adapt to new materials and ideas. I then have the ability to take all of the above and bring idea to life through my hands. I truly believe my work is all connected from the head, to the heart and

hands, which enables me to create truly unique desirable pieces. I want my work to become Heirlooms of the future, to be passed on from generation to generation.

Going forward I want to experiment with the term wearable art, I want to construct sculptures that are worn on the body. In the past I have created large scale sculptures as well as small pieces to adorn the body. But I feel a much more exciting prospect is to combine the two. I touched upon this idea in my last body of work the Thought Experiment, having been influenced by the Bauhaus Ballet, see figure 8. The costumes were exquisite, and I love how the dancers had to perform in them working with the limitation the costume would allow.



Fig 8: Bauhaus Ballet



Fig 9: White Body Fan by Rebecca Horn

Rebecca Horn is an artist that creates sculptural forms that are worn on the body, figure 9 shows her White Body Fan. Her work explores the “human need for interaction and control while also pointing to the futility of ambitions to overcome natural limitation” (Tate, 2020), it is this exploration I want to investigate. The dream would be to create a piece and have dancers perform in it, see how they interpret the piece. Not only then do I have my vision of what can be achieved in it, but I also get the perspective of the performers in it. Wearable art and limitations are the words I am going to investigate within my Creative Venture. I know I have the ability to create what I want, so the challenge for me is getting my ideas to sit on the body and have someone perform in them.

Bibliography

Books

Braungart, M. and McDonough, W. (2009) *Cradle to Cradle*. London: Vintage.

Council, C. (2012) *Added Value?.* London: Craft Council.

Dupon, O. (2011) *The New Artisans*. London: Thames & Hudson.

Frayling, C. (2011) *On Craftsmanship: Towards a New Bauhaus*. London: Oberon Books.

Kounios, J. and Beeman, M. (2015) *The Eureka Factor.* London: Penguin Books.

Otter, J. (2020) *Do Make: The Power of Your two Hands*. London: The Do Book Co.

Sennett, R. (2008) *The Craftsman*. London: Penguin Books.

Zuccotti, P. (2015) *Everything We Touch*. London: Penguin Books.

Websites

Art Basel. (2019). *How Rebecca Horn expanded the boundaries of the human body*. Available at:
https://www.artbasel.com/news/rebecca-horn-museum-tinguely-koerperfantasien-art-basel
(Accessed: 6th January 2021)

BrainyQuote. (2021). *John Ruskin Quotes*.
Available at: https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/john_ruskin_119951
(Accessed:14th December 2020)

OED, Learner Dictionaries. (2020). *Maker*. Available at:
https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/maker?q=maker
(Accessed: 1st December 2020)

Tate. (2020). *Aura*. Available at:
https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/aura
(Accessed: 18th December 2020)

List of Illustrations

Figure1
Vaughan, E. (2020) *My Stitched Wire* [Wire, Embroidery Thread]

Figure 2
Vaughan, E. (2020) *My Brooches on display in St Fagan's* [Mild Steel, Enamel, Aluminium]

Figure 3
Haygarth, S. (2020) *Optical*. Available at:
http://www.stuarthaygarth.com/works#/optical2007
(Accessed: 1st January 2021)

Figure 4
Haygarth, S. (2020) *Tide*. Available at:
http://www.stuarthaygarth.com/works#/tide-200-2018
(Accessed: 1st January 2021)

Figure 5
McLellan, T. (2020) *Old Wind-up Clock*. Available at:
https://20x200.com/products/todd-mclellan-old-wind-up-clock
(Accessed: 4th January 2021)

Figure 6
McLellan, T. (2019) *Deconstructed Devices reveal the beauty of everyday design*. Available at:
https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/design-things-come-apart-todd-mclellan/index.html
(Accessed: 4th January 2021)

Figure 7
Jones, G, J. (2020) *Indian Threads: textile inspirations*. Available at:
http://www.juliagriffithsjones.co.uk/portfolio-items/indian-threads-textile-inspirations/
(Accessed: 6th January 2021)

Figure 8
Brown, K. (2019) *The Bauhaus Did Ballet? See the Surreal Costumes from the German Design School's Little-Known Performance*. Available at:
https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/triadic-ballet-bauhaus-1444630
(Accessed: 6th January 2021)

Figure 9
Tate. (2020). *Rebecca Horn, White Body Fan, 1972*. Available at:
https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/horn-white-body-fan-t07844
(Accessed: 1st January 2021)