

Question 2: *Define skill in the context of your practice and the work of two artists/ makers/ designers from the lecture series.*

Course name: Design Craft

Module name: Research in context

Module code: ADAD5003

Lecturer: Julia Lockhart

Student name: Ionelia Alina Papaman

Student number: 1815979

This essay will analyze the skill in the context of practice, material, and inspiration of craft designers. The text will be supported by a trust worth list of references and relevant research.

Beginning the basic definition of skill as is presented in Oxford Dictionary, “skill is the ability to do something well.” A skill can be also called an “art when it represents a body of knowledge or brunch of learning as the art of medicine” (Merriam- Webster, 2021). When the learned skill it is put into practice becomes the basis of profession, trade, or craft.

When the term “skill” it is attributed to craft designers, it is more complex than the basic definition. If in other brunches of design, can usually count to three different mediums in design craft it is endless possibilities of mediums to explore. To become skilled in Design Craft, it is beyond the degree a student aim. It is a lifetime process of experimenting with ideas, materials, medium, techniques and documenting the work constantly and checking the feedback of the process and finished items. It is huge competition in the design industry, technology is advancing so rapidly today, and the access of resources has become increasingly restrictive. Another challenge of design craft practitioners is the popularity of mass production.

Every project must start with investigation and research of relevant sources by selecting critically. Through design thinking the relevant practice, in the cultural context of industries using creativity, knowledge and innovation.

The pros of the large variety of media a craft designer can use is that the endless possibilities of creation, shapes, structure, texture, area of art movements and techniques to be explored in practice.

The cons of the large variety of media a craft designer can use is that it can easily get lost in ideas, and so many possibilities of creating process. The time wasted by bad choice of medium, materials or techniques.

In historical times the term “craft” was attributed to people using a certain set of skills in processing a specific medium to become a useful finished item. The first form of craft dated before the Neolithic period. Historians discovered this carbon date to 18.000 BC, pieces of ceramic vessels into a cave in China in 2018. The artefacts prove the theory of pottery being the oldest craft. The so called “the first thing created by humans”.

Bouke de Vries is a pottery artist born in Utrecht, Netherlands. As a young artist in London, he has his own studio for ceramic restoration and repair. Many times, his customers bring in ceramic art too much damage to be restored. Sometimes the price of restoration was bigger than the price of initial ceramic items and customers just left the broken pieces into the studio. This devaluation of art soon become a demotivation factor for de Vries. Eventually he starts to rethink his career and change path from the little studio.

“His devaluation of art began to bother him, ultimately causing him to change career” (Haden-Guest, Antony, 16 July 2009).

He starts to work for museums, collectors, dealers, and even big names like Grayson Perry, John Galliano, Stephen Jones, and Zandra Rhodes. De Vries starts to focus on restoring and conserving damaged items. Despite the fact ceramists in general are looking for the perfection and functionality of their creation, in manner of the techniques glaze and details as perfect cut edges, delicate finish touch and digital ceramic printing for a perfect product. Bouke de Vries art reflects exactly the opposite, the beauty of imperfection, the power of many broken instead of the power of many perfect. "We all carry around a medal compendium of things that inspire us. I'm inspired by the broken and discarded ceramic objects I find. They suggest situations, connections and compositions, which I then translate into sculptures." (The Telegraph,2010)

He is familiar with handling ceramics of all periods, from Han dynasty figurines to Meissen, continental bisque, and Delftware, and hence unafraid of tackling an ambitious installation of this important collection, which will line the walls of the carved wooden staircase in the eighteenth century Pallant House, a Grade I listed Queen Anne townhouse dating to 1712. De Vries installation will thus simultaneously mark the 2012 Olympics and the 300-year anniversary of the building of Pallant House, with a playful nod to the celebration.

From a little studio designated to restoration and repairs of damaged ceramics, to fashion industry and later to still life sculptures. Bouke de Vries follows a successful path as a mixed media artist and ceramist. "He was regularly offered pieces given up by their owners that, despite the traces of their use, had not lost their original charm" (Mandos, Ron, 2010).

The collaboration with jewelry designer Annoushka Ducas from 2011, Introduce De Vries artwork in jewelry industry. The "Vanitas/Contemporary Reflection" exhibition was a successful collaboration and put in show innovation in ceramic and mixed media sector of art.



Fig 1 "Reshaped- Ceramics Through Time" Bouke de Vries

In figure one it is presented De Vries sculpture "Reshaped- Ceramics Through Time" can be seen a trace of the original item, which is a teapot, by deconstructed the original item and reshaped into a new shape. The artist takes away the functionality of the original product but keeps the charm and soul of the teapot. Decorating the broken pieces of a teapot with butterfly's, pearls, garnets, and dragonflies, for a touch of organic appurtenance of ceramic processed mud, the connection between a day-by-day product as teapot and nature by the material used. His creation from reclaimed broken ceramics, organizing the chaos of exploded pieces De Vries manipulates the leftovers characteristics and charm of these pieces. "In his 'exploded' work, he takes advantage of the leftover's characteristics and charm of these pieces. Instead of attempting to erase the trace of use and damage, he elaborates on it, so that this works gains new leas of life. They become still-life permitted with a 'Vanitas' character: a popular theme with many contemporaries of the 17th century ceramists who made these objects"(Mandos Ron, 2010).

Deconstructed ceramics have become more popular with young designers, as it is an innovation, another kind of ceramic. Deconstruction is relevant in my practice because it enhances the viewer with another perception of a boring object. The

object becomes a multitude of pieces, reshaped but remains the same essence of a usual object.

Frank Stella is another artist who brings innovation in installation design. I resonate with his artwork because in my practice choice of colors, structure and shapes brings unity to my craft. Frank Stella artwork it is a perfect example of transforming 2D structures into 3D structures without using digital design.

Frank Stella is an American painter, sculptor, and print maker. His artwork is influenced by abstract expressionism movement and inspired by Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline. His abstract paintings were known to be a work which emphasizes pictures as objects rather than the picture as a representation of something.

In the late '60s Stella began to introduce relief to his paintings. Give his artwork a new dimension, make the painting exist in the 3D world. Stella's canvases start to become more structural, collages by adding wood and metal pieces. From simple samples of abstract collage structure, his artwork develops into huge collage sculptures fixed on aluminum supports. This print mark of brushstrokes is his design which reminded the viewer about the original paintings of Stella, from the beginning of his career after graduation from Princeton University.

"By the turn of 2010s, Stella started using the computer as a painterly tool to produce stand-alone stars shaped sculptures." (Jason Farago, 2021). By the 90's Stella started to create more architectural artwork, the most prolific architectural project of his portfolio being the decorative scheme of Toronto Prince of Wales Theatre. To create the decorative architectural elements of his work Stella employed people from other sectors of the design industry as assistants, industrial metal cutters and digital technologists. He has a complex team to help him to put his ideas into practice and deliver to the world the best version of his creation.



Frank Stella

Fig 2, Gobba,Zobba e Collotorto-

In figure 2 is represented the “Gobba, Zoppa e Collotorte” a relief painting of Frank Stella, which can be found at Museum of Modern Art- New York, since 1985. It is a mixed media work art. The materials used in the process of creating this relief painting which is part of a bigger collection are the following: oil, Urethane enamel, fluorescent alkyd, acrylic and printing ink on etched magnesium and aluminum. As Frank Stella career starts with black and white abstract paintings, Gobba, Zoppa e Collotorto it is one of his first relief colorful paintings. This is the moment in his career when Stella moves from 2D to 3D paintings. As stella describes his own work, all his paintings exist as a ‘continuum’ of the same piece of artwork. The complexity of the process of creation and the professional materials used for Gobba, Zoppa e Collotorte display an excellent choice of colors and great fusion between the colors and the non-color background. The choice of shape introduces the viewer strait to the modern ‘80.

The pop art culture is taking over America art and design sector, the influences can be seen in Stella's choice of colors and shapes used for *Gobba*, *Zoppa e Collotorte*. The shape itself is minimalist with a trait of abstract collage composition which makes me think about Ettore Sottsass and The Memphis Group Milano and the Radical Design movement. The connection between the simple shapes developing into something bigger, the simple shapes now belong to a bigger picture. Yet Frank Stella uses the 'power of many' with creativity, engineering thinking and innovation, by using different shapes of dissimilar materials changing the vibe and structure of a painting. The playful way of displaying the colors on some areas of the shapes induces the subtle touch of childish play on top of a perfect shape.

Stella's interest in engineering and architecture pushes the limits of painting beyond the realm of fine art, reinventing and reinvigorating the painting for the future generation of artists. His curiosity of giving volume to a 2D structure and transcending dimensions, of three feet cones, tubes and columns was a change in the modern history of arts. But after all this improvement and innovation of his painting in *Gobba*, *Zoppa e Collotorte* still can be found this print mark of brushstrokes representative of Stella's work since the beginning of his career when his paintings were black and white.

The architectural aesthetics of *Gobba*, *Zoppa e Collotorte* it is usually attributed to sculpture. Later in his career Stella became famous for his architectural structures, made of self-standing solid metal. According to Jason Farago "The resulting stars are often monochrome, black or beige or naturally metallic, and their points can take the form of solid planes, spindly lines or wire-mesh circuits" (2021).

As can be seen in this essay, two different artists creating innovative pieces of art using their creativity and visionary intuition. In the beginning of the essay the cons of the large variety of media a craft designer can use are shown, which is thus getting lost in ideas. Both Frank Stella and Bouk de Vries are the perfect example

of designers makers who succeed in organizing chaos and transcending from an original standard design to absolution in their area of practice. Their work is relevant in my practice as a craft designer as an inspiration source of techniques and knowledge. Exploring media and methods documented by De Vries and Stella give a plus in my materials practice. Changin my perspective and allowing myself to get out of my comfort zone in the process of creation put me in the situation of pushing my creativity at a higher level. Allowed feelings and cultural appurtenance to fusion with my practice.

List of figures:

Figure 1: “Reshaped- Ceramics Through Time” Bouke de Vries

Figure 2: Gobba, Zobba e Collotorto- Frank Stella

List of references:

Farago J, [2021], *In Frank Stella’s Constellation of Stars, e Perpetual Evolution*, New York Times

Haden- Guest, Anthony, [2009], *A smashing new talent*, The Daily Beast, retrieved Aug 2021

Mandos, Ron, [2010], *Deconstructions*, Artnews.org, retrieved Aug 2011

Merriam- Webster Dictionary, [2021]

Pallant House Gallery, [2010], *Interview with Bouke de Vries*, The Telegraph, retrieved 2011

Bibliography:

Christie’s, [2019], *Continuum: Select Works from Frank Stella’s Personal Collection*, www.christies.com, accessed on 01.12.2021

ILOBOYOU, [2009], *Sneak Peak: Bouke de Vries Broken Art pieces*, www.iloboyou.com , accessed on 15.10.2021

Martin S, [2012], Historic Narratives, www.adriansassoon.com , accessed on 02.10.2021

Ron Mandos, [2021], Art Rotterdam part #1 at the Gallery, ronmandos.nl, accessed on 10.10.2021

Young, [2016], Frank Stella Retrospective, www.squarecylinder.com , accessed on 3.11.2021

Young Museum, [2016], Frank Stella, www.artsy.net, accessed on 02.10.2021