

Detailed below is a list of points that I publicly presented at the close of the *Shaping the Future of Craft* conference in Houston, Texas. This list essentially summarizes either what I heard other people say, implicitly or explicitly, or thoughts that came to my mind, while I was in the audience wiggling in my seat in reaction to the behaviorist organizational structure of the conference:

1. The basis of our art and craft studio educational system is built upon the ideals of John Dewey and the Bauhaus and has been reinforced by the 1950's GI Generation and Baby Boom experiences of learning. We now have a new generation of learners with a very different relationship to technology and with very different needs as learners, therefore, we need to rethink, revise and restructure the pedagogy of studio art practice, particularly within higher education.

2. The notion of critique has largely been absent within the craft field during the past fifty years as the craft fields form themselves into communities of practice. As these communities are structures which people rely upon for support, it is difficult to offer any form of critique without being ostracized or looked down upon.

(On a personal note, I experienced this marginalization after I publicly presented these ideas at the Houston conference, as many people intentionally avoided me afterwards, perhaps thinking I was too dangerous or a liability. Fortunately, I am grown up enough to laugh it off as an occupational hazard.)

In any case, I believe that *American Craft* magazine could serve an important role in critiquing the culture of craft in the United States, assuming that it is interested in this leadership role. It will also be necessary to restructure the magazine so that it is truly representative of the entire American Craft community, rather than just a small segment of object oriented and market driven work.

3. We should constantly question the emphasis upon capitalism as a primary form of validation within craft, as the market is fickle, its expectations directly limits the diversity of outcomes relative to human creativity.

All forms of validation, including the market, the media and museums tend to embrace the traditional. They are all rather slow to accept and reward creative innovation, as they tend to support the known and the status quo. Therefore, due to this self perpetuating cycle, the field of craft constantly finds itself regurgitating its past.

Further, we should continue to question the commodification of the handmade art object, the institution of collection and the how the flow of money influences taste. In my view, collectors are allowed to wield too much power within our field. They serve on many of the major boards of craft institutions. While their financial support and expertise is very much needed and appreciated, collectors are often outsiders and quite simply, they should not be allowed to dominate conversations concerning taste and judgments surrounding the selection, collection and exhibition of art work; this is the job of the museum curator. In any other field, collector involvement at the curatorial level would be labeled as a conflict of interest.

4. We should examine our allegiances to the studio craft movement and our notion of the super-object and the aesthetic purity represented when we display these objects on pedestals in a museum/gallery context. This methodology has strong allegiances to modernist traditions which continue to alienate the field of craft from the art world. For this reason, the larger art world is not going to validate objects of craft that are displayed in this manner, therefore, we should stop expecting anyone else to “get it”. Perhaps, they get it more than we often are willing to admit.
5. We should think about how the post-colonial discourse has been largely avoided by the mainstream American Craft movement. For this reason, works by glass artists such as William Morris, which blatantly appropriates images from works of indigenous cultures, are still held in high regard. Further, white males artistic icons, such as Peter Voulkos and

Dale Chilhuly, are often mythologized. We need a public critical discourse to objectively evaluate their legacy and the myths that the culture of craft continues to perpetuate around these figures.

6. Within the context of the expansion of cultural pluralism, we need to analyze the notion of interdisciplinary practice and not just in terms of trying to show everyone else how we do things. The disciplinary boundaries between art, craft and design are quickly losing relevance but their academic strongholds show no signs of weakening. However, this will likely change as the Baby Boomers continue to retire from their positions of institutional leadership over the next nine to eleven years and the Gen-Xers take over.
7. It is important to recognize the cultural significance of the DIY Craft movement and its parallel relationship to the American Craft movement. These are both legitimate forms of creative expression in our culture, neither of which are going to disappear any time soon.

It is time to reconcile the shared terminology and for both fields to recognize and celebrate each other's existence, without all of the hierarchies and taxonomic systems of classification. It is important to recognize that the DIY Craft movement does not seek validation by traditional methods and its form of social activism is a little unsettling to traditional craft artists.

Realistically, it is going to take some time for these two groups to come to terms with one another. Further, the DIY craft community will eventually need to develop a methodology for evaluating quality as the traditional methods of validation and reward are not applicable.

8. Lastly, we should know that we feel uncomfortable about what we see because our very identity as object makers is being questioned. Perhaps, we feel angry because we are trying to hold on to a romantic notion of the past that is quickly slipping away.