

# Craft Economies: Inequalities, Opportunities, Interventions

**STEAMhouse, Birmingham**  
**4 December 2019, 9am-5pm**

**Welcome** to the first Craft Economies conference, which includes speakers from the UK and around the world discussing various aspects of craft, from practice, to careers, to questions of diversity and inclusivity. This conference is part of a funded research project led by Dr Karen Patel of Birmingham City University in collaboration with Crafts Council UK and led by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. More information about the project is at the back of this booklet.

Please see the full programme below. The conference is being held in the Lab space of STEAMhouse (to the left of the reception desk).

**If you have booked a one-to-one session with the Crafts Council these are being held in the Games Room, which is on the far left-hand side of the reception area.**

## Programme

- 9am-9.30 Registration, tea and coffee
- 9.30-9.45 Welcome - Rajinder Dudrah, Karen Patel (Birmingham City University)
- 9.50-10.35 **Keynote with Q&A: Craft past, present and future** - Deirdre Figueiredo (Craftspace) chaired by Karen Patel
- 10.35-10.45 Comfort break
- 10.45-12pm **Panel 1 - Craft and the Community (chaired by Annette Naudin)**  
Craft - the new entrepreneurship? - Julia Bennett (Crafts Council UK)  
Maker-centricity and 'edge-places of creativity': making as a method for self-organizing and achieving craft impact in local communities and economies - Fiona Hackney (University of Wolverhampton) and Deidre Figureido  
Models of engagement between makers and markets: a study of craft intermediaries in Cape Town - Roberta Comunian and Lauren England (King's College London)
- 12-12.45 Lunch
- 12.45-2 **Panel 2 - Global Craft (chaired by Karen Patel)**  
Folk Art in India: The example of Patachitra in West Bengal - Charlotte Waelde (Coventry University)  
The charity of craft: Empathic Activism - Rose Sinclair (Goldsmiths College)  
When crafts people become the storyteller-the interrelationship between tourism and the craft industry - Ya-Chiao Tu (King's College London)
- 2-3.15 **Panel 3 - Craft and Sustainability (chaired by Craig Hamilton)**  
Crafting professionals: graduates' entrepreneurial strategies for balancing passion and sustainability - Lauren England (King's College London)  
Plant motifs in craft practices: future interdisciplinary possibilities - Geetanjali Sachdev (Srishti School of Art, Design & Technology, Bangalore, India)  
The importance of good looks? Craft publishing and attracting new audiences for academic research - Craig Hamilton, Sarah Raine, Iain Taylor (BCU)
- 3.15-3.30 Tea and coffee break
- 3.30-4.45 **Panel discussion - diversity in craft and the creative industries** - Karen Patel, Lorna Hamilton-Brown and Jeanette Sloan (BIPOC in Fiber), Majeda Clarke. Chaired by Rajinder Dudrah.
- 4.45-5pm Closing Remarks - Karen Patel
- 5pm-6pm Drinks Reception at Digbeth Works (1 min walk from STEAMhouse)





does not take into account aesthetic and indigenous uses of plants.

In India however, plants are extensively used within craft practices through aesthetic engagements often originating in myth and ritual. This paper draws upon such botanical expressions and proposes a trajectory for studying botanical art that intersects with Indian craft practices. It argues that while plant representations in crafts vastly differ from conventional botanical illustrations, these representations, and practices producing them, should be pedagogically considered due to opportunities this offers for interdisciplinary educational interventions, and for developing new specializations for the craft economy.

## **The Importance of Good Looks?: Craft publishing and attracting new audiences for academic research**

Craig Hamilton, Sarah Raine and Iain Taylor, Birmingham City University

Emerging from a four-year project within BCMCR at Birmingham City University (UK) on experimental approaches to writing about popular music, *Riffs: Experimental writing on popular music* is conceived as a research method through which we can think about what it means to communicate research about popular music. In this paper, we will critically reflect on the design, publication and dissemination activities associated with *Riffs* - which at present are rooted in small-scale, craft practices - in order to ask what can be achieved if we move beyond traditional academic forms, conventions and contributors, particularly in regards to audience. We then consider issues of sustainability, exploring if and how *Riffs* - as both a publication and a method - can exist within and/or without of the academic systems that have supported its development, and whether such systems could ever fully account for the labour of the academics and creatives involved with *Riffs*.

## **About the presenters**

**Karen Patel** is a Research Fellow in the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research (BCMCR) at Birmingham City University. She leads the Craft Expertise project, which is an AHRC Funded UKRI/RCUK Innovation Fellowship in collaboration with Crafts Council UK. Her research interests centre on the politics of expertise in cultural work, inequalities in craft and cultural work, and creative workers' use of social media. She is author of *The Politics of Expertise in Cultural Labour: Arts, Work and Inequalities* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2020) and co-editor with Annette Naudin of *Craft Entrepreneurship* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2021).

**Rajinder Dudrah** is a Professor of Cultural Studies and Creative Industries at Birmingham City University. Rajinder's academic interests are in the areas of film, media, cultural studies, and creative industries including: Bollywood cinema, Black British representation, popular music, diasporic and transnational media, television studies, and in cultural theory and qualitative research methods as applied to popular culture and creative industries research.

**Julia Bennett** is the Crafts Council's Head of Research and Policy. She develops policy and advocacy strategy, writes about craft and manages research projects, strengthening evidence to improve the conditions for craft. Julia has worked independently with small arts organisations, as well as for the Local Government Association, the Learning and Skills Improvement Service and the Minority Rights Group.

**Fiona Hackney**, Professor Fashion Manchester Metropolitan University is currently researching sustainable fashion, interwar print media, crafting, co-creation and social design. Recent publications include *The Power of Quiet: Re-Making Amateur and Professional Textiles Agencies* (2017) and the co-edited collection: *Edinburgh Companion to British Women's Print Culture between the Wars* (2018) for Edinburgh University Press. She has led several Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded research projects with Deirdre Figueiredo, including *Maker-Centric*.

**Deirdre Figueiredo MBE** is Director Craftspace Birmingham, a leading craft development organisation and creative producer. Craftspace commissions exceptional, world-class contemporary craft and champions makers to take an active role in civil society. It connects creative practice with diverse communities of interest and place through a range of activities and partnerships. These include touring exhibitions, cross-artform productions and participatory projects. [www.craftspace.co.uk](http://www.craftspace.co.uk).

**Roberta Comunian** is Reader in Creative Economy at the Department for Culture, Media and Creative Industries at King's College London. Her research interests include the creative industries and cultural policy at the urban level; creative graduates and creative higher education and networks and work in the creative economy. Dr Comunian is currently working on a research network grant "UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTING CREATIVE ECONOMIES IN AFRICA: EDUCATION, NETWORKS AND POLICY" supported by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC). From 2019, Dr Roberta Comunian is involved in the new H2020 consortium DISCE (Developing Inclusive & Sustainable Creative Economies).

**Lauren England** is a Lecturer in Culture, Media & Creative Industries at King's College London. Her PhD, conducted in partnership with Crafts Council UK, investigates higher education and sustainable business development in the UK's contemporary craft sector. Lauren has published research on the resilience and evolution of craft knowledge and skills in post-industrial regions, and reports on craft entrepreneurship and higher education policy via the Crafts Council. She is currently working on projects exploring creative industries development in Africa.

**Charlotte Waelde's** research interests centre on the role of intellectual property law and in particular copyright within the cultural (heritage) sector and the digital environment. She has written widely at the intersections of intellectual property law, digitisation and culture and has sole and co-authored a number of articles with cross-disciplinary intersections which have been published in a range of national and international journals. Charlotte is currently the PI of the BA Sustainable Development funded project, Celebrating local stewardship in a global market: community heritage, intellectual property protection and sustainable development where the team are working in India with the NGO, Banglanatak.com, and of a British Council funded project in Kyrgyzstan working with young cultural entrepreneurs seeking to use their intangible heritage skills for economic empowerment.

**Rose Sinclair** is a Design Lecturer (Textiles) in the Design Department at Goldsmiths, University of London, where she teaches Textiles and Design related practice at Postgraduate level. Her doctoral research focuses on Black British women and their crafting practices, and textiles as used for migration, identity and settlement, she is also interested in their use of textiles networks as participatory craft practice. Rose has authored several textile books, her most recent being *Textiles and Fashion, Materials, Design and Technology* (2015). She is a member of the editorial board for *Textile: Journal of Cloth and Culture*.

**Ya-Chiao Tu** is a PhD candidate in Culture, Media and Creative Industries at King's College London. Her thesis investigates the interrelationships between tourism and pottery industry through economic, cultural and social aspects in Stoke-on-Trent, UK and Yingge, Taiwan. Her research interest includes tourism and creative industry, creative tourism, craft tourism, destination making and placemaking. She also is a Managing Director of a holiday accommodation management company in London.

**Geetanjali Sachdev** is an art and design pedagogue based in Bangalore, India. She has been involved in framing teaching and learning frameworks at the undergraduate and postgraduate level at the Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Bangalore, where she is currently the Academic Dean for Post Graduate Programs. She is doing her PhD in Art & Design from Manipal University, Karnataka, through which she is exploring pedagogical approaches for the study of plants through art and design.

**Craig Hamilton** is a Research Fellow at Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research (BCMCR) at Birmingham City University. His research explores contemporary popular music reception practices and the role of digital, data and Internet technologies on the business and cultural environments of music consumption. This research is built around the development of The Harkive Project ([www.harkive.org](http://www.harkive.org)), an online, crowd-sourced method of generating data from music consumers about their everyday relationships with music and technology. Craig is also the co-Managing Editor of *Riffs: Experimental Writing on Popular Music* ([www.riffsjournal.org](http://www.riffsjournal.org)).

**Sarah Raine** is a Research Fellow at Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research (BCMCR) at Birmingham City University. Sarah is currently an AHRC Creative Economy Engagement Fellow working in partnership with Cheltenham Jazz Festival on their Keychange (PRS Foundation) pledge and to explore the barriers experienced by women musicians active on the UK jazz scene. She is also co-Managing Editor of *Riffs: Experimental writing on popular music*, a book series editor for Equinox Publishing (*Icons of Pop Music and Music Industry Studies*) and the Review Editor for *Popular Music History*.

**Iain Taylor** is a lecturer in Music Industries in the Birmingham School of Media, Birmingham City University, and an editor and designer of *Riffs* – a journal for experimental writing on popular music. His research is concerned with the changing material meanings of popular-cultural artefacts in the face of digitalisation. He currently leads on the Materialities research theme in the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research.

**Lorna Hamilton-Brown** is a black British knitwear designer and artist. She has a Master's degree in Knitted Textiles from the Royal College of Art, London, and is a qualified University lecturer. Lorna learned to knit and crochet from her Jamaican mother and started out designing and selling items at school. Her knitwear has appeared on BBC TV and been sold in Harrods of Knightsbridge, London. As an artist, Lorna creates artworks that challenges racial stereotypes. She's currently building on research from her Master's dissertation, which debunked the myth that "Black People Don't Knit," as well as revealing the bias shown in the way knitting histories have been presented.

**Jeanette Sloan** is a knitter and textile designer and co-founder of BIPOC in Fiber. She has worked as a freelance textile designer and tutor teaching both machine and hand knitting. She has written four books on hand knitting. Jeanette has worked with some of the best hand knitting brands in the UK and her designs have featured in several UK knitting magazines including *Knitting Magazine*, where she is a regular contributor responsible for the 'Ask Jeanette' letters page, Yarn Reviews and A-Z of Techniques.

**Majeda Clarke** is an award winning artist, recently receiving the 2018 British Muslim Award for Creativity and 1st prize in the New Designers 2018 One Year In Award. Published in Wall St. Journal, World of Interiors, Living Etc, The Sunday Times, The Evening Standard, Selvedge magazine and Crafts magazine. She has exhibited widely in galleries such as Aram, Mint, CAA, New Ashgate, Fortnum and Mason and The National Centre for Craft and Design. Her work has been selected as a Liberty's 'Future Collectible'; 100% Design curated by Barbara Chandler and The Crafts Council Hothouse Talent Programme. She is a Crafts Council Talent Ambassador and a Clothworker's Foundation Awardee.

**Karen and Rajinder would like to thank everyone involved with this conference - the presenters, staff at STEAMHouse and at BCU, caterers at Digbeth Works and colleagues in the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research.**

## About the project

Craft Expertise, or 'Supporting diversity and expertise development in the contemporary craft economy' is an AHRC funded UKRI/RCUK Innovation Fellowship led by Dr Karen Patel of Birmingham City University, in collaboration with Crafts Council UK.

This is a 2-year project which began in March 2019, and involves interviews, ethnography, podcasts, workshops, academic publications and a conference. For more information visit [craftexpertise.com](http://craftexpertise.com).



## Listen to the Maker Stories Podcast

In the Maker Stories podcast we talk to inspirational crafts women from black and ethnic minority backgrounds who are based in the UK. The first two episodes are now live at [maker-stories-podcast.simplecast.com](http://maker-stories-podcast.simplecast.com). You can also subscribe via iTunes and Spotify.



## About STEAMhouse

STEAMhouse is a new centre for innovation and creation based in central Birmingham. Uniting talented people from different backgrounds in the arts, science, technology, engineering and maths – the STEAM sectors – to bring amazing new ideas to life.

For more information visit [www.steamhouse.org.uk](http://www.steamhouse.org.uk).



Thank you for attending. This conference was supported by:

