



High art, low art: folk culture in the Irish Revival

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DHS EVENT

**'FOLK'
CULTURES IN
EVERYDAY
OBJECTS**

Fridays 18th November -
2nd December 2022

Session 1: 15:30 - 17:00 (GMT)
Session 2: 19:00 - 20:00 (GMT)

Online

ABOUT THE EVENT

Convened by Wiktorija Kijowska (DHS Ambassador) and Claire O'Mahony (Associate Professor in History of Art and Design; Course Director for the MSt in the History of Design, University of Oxford Department for Continuing Education)

'Folk' is a contested term, invoking resonances of tradition, rurality, informality. Its forms and connotations have often infused everyday objects with contested significance. References to particular forms and imaginings of folk culture vary from homage and emulation to unexpected juxtapositions, translations, misquotations and appropriations. Who had agency in the design and manufacture of these objects as well as those who circulated and mediated them to multiple audiences who consumed them inflects these objects with complex and contested power dynamics and impacts.

The seminar series **'Folk' Cultures in Everyday Objects** aims to explore how folk cultures inhabit the design and production of everyday objects critically assessing how and why these intersections operate.

A large number of excellent proposals came in from around the world reflecting provocatively on the theme. As such, the format of the event will be a **three-week seminar series** that meets **weekly on Fridays from 15.30-17.00 hrs (GMT) and 19.00-20.00 hrs (GMT)**. The series will **begin on 18 November and conclude on 2 December 2022**.

The seminars are free and held online (on Zoom) so we warmly invite everyone to attend.

Please register for free via [Eventbrite](#).

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TEMPORALITIES

Friday 18th November 2022

Session 1: 15:30 - 17:00 hrs (GMT)

Session 2: 19:00 - 20:00 hrs (GMT)

Session 1:

15:30 - 17:00 hrs (GMT)

‘Folk’ Cultures and Contemporary Practice

Yissel Hernández Romero

Design Ethics Towards Indigenous Craftmanship

Folk design has one of its manifestations in craft design. In Mexico, 166 types of crafts are registered, most of them coming from indigenous communities. With the proliferation of social networks, the work of artisans has been exposed to millions of eyes around the world. Faced with the legal deficiency that protects the intellectual property of traditional designs, artisans have gone from appreciating and valuing their work to appropriation (plagiarism) of multinational companies, commodifying, trivializing and assuming these designs as their own.

As designers, what is the role we play in this process? What are the limits of inspiration and homage to indigenous designs when incorporating them into contemporary products? How to prevent designs with a strong symbolic charge from being trivialized without the slightest respect? Beyond the legal and international framework, what is the ethics that must prevail from design?

One aspect that seems relevant to me is the obligation of designers to know, understand and spread what the designs represent for the community (worldview), that they know, practice and learn traditional processes and techniques. The rapprochement with the community will allow to assess 1) the relevance of proposals, using indigenous designs, in everyday objects, 2) the level of similarity, 3) the respect for the original meanings and, above all, 4) the authorization and 5) determination of the benefit to be obtained by the same indigenous community.

This form of respect for the work and designs of indigenous peoples should be a practice incorporated into the training of every designer. Not only to strengthen his project development in the aesthetic and technical assessment, but also in the ethical and human.



YISSEL HERNÁNDEZ ROMERO, was born in 1981. She has a PhD in Design and Urban Studies (2019) from UAM, a Master's degree in Industrial Design from the UNAM (2012) and a degree in Industrial Design from UAEM (2007). Member of the National System of Researchers. Professor at the UAEM, from 2008 to the present. She obtained the Honorable Mention at the 10th National Design Biennial and the National Design Award in research category. Belongs to the Academic Network of Design and Emotions. Has given lectures and participated as a speaker in national and international colloquiums on topics related to design, ergonomics, emotions and memory.

Andreu Balius and Ishan Khosla

Displaying Indian Folk Cultures through Type Design

Typecraft Initiative is a project where type design and letter drawing are intended to provide visibility to the popular expression that is manifested through crafts in India. With the support of non-governmental organizations, type design workshops are organized to involve artisans communities in the process of creating letters, involving their skills and expertise. In these workshops, type design works as a catalyst for an experimental union between design and craftsmanship.

Folk traditions and craft legacy are the source of inspiration for a type design process that concludes with the production of a digital typeface to be licensed for commercial use. Also, memory is interpreted as a practical resource within the design process, since artisans can provide their unique knowledge when it is applied to letter design. Myths and symbols from tribal cultures emerge within the patterns and shapes of letters in a myriad of different forms.

While folk culture is translated into typography, design methodologies are introduced into the craft practices. Also, community building is a vital aspect of the Typecraft project since is not only about the creation of typefaces, moreover it is about sharing expertise in design with a craft community and sharing a spirit of collaboration. Recent project "Barmer Katab" is a typeface designed together with crafts women in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan, to create a foliage rich typeface that belies the barren desert and instead highlights the vibrancy of the people.

This contribution paper explains the process of collaborative design work done with craftwomen in India and how memory and tradition emerges through the shape of letters. It focuses on the methodology of work when designing typefaces with local craft artist: from the first rough experiences to the last stages of letter drawing before digitization process.

www.typecraftinitiative.org



ANDREU BALIUS is a type designer based in Barcelona (Spain). He designs retail and custom typefaces and has been awarded with several Excellence in Type Design for his type design work. He holds a PhD in Design from the University of Southampton (UK) and teaches typography and type design at EINA, University School of Design and Art, in Barcelona.

www.andreubalius.com

ISHAN KHOSLA is a Delhi-based visual artist, designer and researcher with an MFA in Design from the School of Visual Arts, New York. He runs his own studio Ishan Khosla Design. His work has been exhibited and published in several magazines and specialized design books. He has been given several design awards.

www.ishankhosla.com

Aija Freimane

Are 'folk' or traditional culture objects meaningful to Generation Z?

Objectified culture, based on craft and local materials, has changed not only due to a hundred years of consumerism and fast production, but also according to values and behaviour of every generation. This paper examines what does traditional and craft-based culture objects mean to generation Z in Latvia.

In 2014 design audit of a craft and traditional culture industry in Latvia was performed. One of the aims was to identify iconic traditional products and examine its significance in everyday life. Ten iconic traditional culture products were nominated by experts of the Traditional and Applied Arts Council of the Latvian National Cultural Centre. A survey was developed and conducted asking respondents to rank nominated products by frequency of use: I use exactly this product every day; I use this product, but with a different performance and appearance; I have used it, but I don't use it anymore; have never used it; I didn't recognize this product; I own the product, but I don't use it. 262 responses were analysed, and the results indicated that some products, such as wooden spoons, knitted mittens and socks, and wicker baskets has not changed their meaning neither, crafting, nor purpose of usage. Whereas traditional objects such as hand-crafted instruments, brick ovens for bread backing or tools for wool processing has lost its meaning or is not even recognised. A summer Solstice flower crown was included in the survey as it was nominated by experts supplementary.

For this paper the same traditional - 'folk' culture products, including a summer Solstice flower crown, are examined to define its meaning to Generation Z. 100 children as respondents were chosen in the age of 5-17 and the results are compared to the first design audit.



AIJA FREIMANE as a full-time academic faculty member of TU Dublin School of Art and Design since 2021. From 2008 till 2021 Aija Freimane was an Associate Professor of Design Faculty, Art Academy of Latvia.

Aija advocates design as a method of creating happy and satisfied societies. Her postdoctoral study in 2021 was awarded prestigious A' Design Award in the category Meta, Service and Strategic Design Section.

Joyce Cheng

Hello Kitty as Industrialized Folk Art

To counteract the aesthetic mediocrity of industrially manufactured goods and of official taste, modern design and craft theorists in the late 19th- and 20th-centuries frequently upheld handcrafted objects by peasants and indigenous peoples as model for good – meaning beautiful and righteous – making. If William Morris considered modern products inferior to "the handiwork of an ignorant, superstitious Berkshire peasant of the fourteenth century" or that "of a wandering Kurdish shepherd, or of a skin-and-bone oppressed Indian ryot" (Morris 261-262), the artist Paul Gauguin likewise saw precious French porcelains as paling by comparison to the ceramic pottery of "the American Indians." (Gauguin 32). In the interwar period, the critic and philosopher Yanagi Soetsu applied the primitivist logic of western craft criticism even more radically by rejecting industrially manufactured goods but also individually authored fine arts, claiming to find aesthetic and moral excellence instead in the anonymous everyday objects – *mingei* (folkcrafts) – made by the humble classes in his native Japan and its colonized territories.

The fascination with folkcrafts has been undeniably impactful for modern design (Yanagi's son, the industrial designer Yanagi Sori, effectively adapted the principles of *mingei* for mass-produced objects), yet modern craft and design writings' tendency to consider folk art as the realm of necessity and utility, reflected in values such as material and technical honesty and the functionality of objects, also leave out the possibility for folk objects to serve as the vehicle for meaning-making. The symbolic dimension of folk objects as inherited by modern design culture is consequently left either unrecognized or dismissed as kitsch. To overcome this shortcoming, my presentation will take the Japanese cultural icon Hello Kitty as an example of *industrialized folk art*, which being non-utilitarian and adaptable to all materials and techniques, seeks rather to aestheticize everyday life as decoration and allegory.

Sources cited:

Gauguin, Paul. "Notes on Art at the Universal Exhibition (1889)." In *The Writings of a Savage*, edited by Daniel Guérin, 30-35: Viking, 1974.

Morris, William. "Some Hints on Pattern-Designing (1881)." In *News from Nowhere and Other Writings*, edited by Clive Wilmer, 1993.



JOYCE S. CHENG is associate professor of art history at the University of Oregon where she teaches courses in modernist visual arts, poetics, aesthetic theories, and the cultural and intellectual history of the interwar period. She has published book chapters and articles on topics such as Symbolism, Dada, surrealism and primitivism, and has recently completed a book on the intersection between surrealism and ethnography entitled *The Persistence of Masks: Surrealism and the Ethnography of the Subject*. She is currently at work on a new project on the anthropological aesthetic of the Japanese cultural icon Hello Kitty.

Jixiang Yang

From Peasant Images to the Political Philosophy: 'Chinese Dream' Posters, 2012

On November 29, 2012, Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, first proposed the concept of the 'Chinese Dream' when he visited the 'Road to Rejuvenation' exhibition at the National Museum of China. Subsequently, the concept of the Chinese Dream, through continuous enrichment and improvement, has become his important political philosophy, which has had a profound impact on the development of contemporary China. Beginning in December 2012, in order to spread the political philosophy 'Chinese Dream', China Network Television (CNTV), a subsidiary of China Central Television (the most influential television station in China), together with the Central Civilization Office and other artists, designed 58 posters to publicize the political philosophy 'Chinese Dream'. The posters have been widely disseminated in Chinese urban and rural areas through various media such as television, Internet, and printing, and have promoted the Chinese people's understanding, acceptance and support of the 'Chinese Dream'. The 'peasant images' are the important feature in the 58 'Chinese Dream' posters. This article adopts the research methods of semiotics, historical analysis, content analysis and so on. First of all, the article studies the main reasons for highlighting the 'peasant image' in the 'Chinese Dream' posters. Besides, the article analyzes the specific political connotation of the 'Chinese Dream' that the poster express through the 'peasant images'. At last, the article explores the new features of the 'peasant images' in the 'Chinese Dream' posters by comparing the 'peasant images' created in the previous political posters since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.



JIXIANG YANG has a PhD from Academy of Arts & Design, Tsinghua University. Lecturer in Hunan Normal University. My research interests include the history of graphic design in contemporary China and the history of contemporary graphic design exchanges between China and foreign countries.

Session 2:

19:00 - 20:00 hrs (GMT)

Continuing and Contested Traditions

Mhasileno Peseyie and Gaur Rashmi

The traditional ornament as everyday objects of the Nagas from Northeast India

For tribal societies from the Northeast India, traditional ornaments are objects made up for the physicality of the everyday. These ornaments is created to understand their historical and socio-cultural meaning attached with it. Drawing from Judy Attfield's (2000) concept of "material culture of everyday life", this paper explores how traditional ornaments mention in folktales amongst the tribal Naga community attempts to understand the meaning of objectification of the ornaments, creating point of intersection between ornaments with their artefactual identity and cultural context desire to wear high- ornamental design which signify the hierarchical status in the community. Using textual analysis of five Naga folktales we understand that through activity of oral narratives, traditional ornaments established a form of the Naga culture of design. Hence, folktale shows that ornamental objects impact their human-object relation in their lives.



MHASILENO PESEYIE is currently pursuing her doctoral degree on Naga folk studies from IIT, Roorkee, India. Her area of research comprise Naga folklore studies and Indigenous studies.

RASHMI GAUR is a professor in English, she teaches courses in communication, gender studies and media studies at IIT, Roorkee, India. She has published four books and more than eighty research paper in national and international journal. Her area of research includes postcolonial literature, diaspora studies, eco-criticism, comic studies, gender studies, and digital humanities.

Katie Irani

Tawiz, talismans and tiny texts: miniaturized holy books as folklorised agents in design history

This paper explores the idea of the talismanic through the role of miniaturised sacred texts in the lives of Muslim soldiers during the First World War. Talismans, amulets and charms are typically framed as aspects of ‘folk’ culture; they fall outside of markers of colonial modernity, which privileges the idea of a rational Protestant Christianity, and when worn they complicate the discreteness of spaces carved out by scholarship rooted in colonial apparatuses of knowledge as ‘dress’ and ‘religious’ objects. Talismanic objects thus tend to be understood within mid-twentieth century definitions of ‘folk’ that emphasise rurality, Orientalised mysticism and a denial of coeval time. This paper departs from analytical frameworks that situate objects and practices in terms of a modernity/traditional binary, and asks instead what might be learned about the lived experiences of Muslim soldiers if talismanic objects are understood as intra-active agents in bodily practices. Drawing specifically on examples of miniaturised Qur’ans produced variously in India and Scotland and sent to Indian Army soldiers in hospitals, prisoner of war camps and active combat, this paper locates such objects in the histories of talismanic objects in Islam, and suggests that these tiny texts were responsive, generative, and themselves had agentive potential.



KATIE IRANI is a third-year, LAHP-funded PhD candidate in design history at the Royal College of Art and V&A Museum, London, and a Visiting Lecturer on the RCA/V&A Museum Masters in History of Design. Her research explores the histories of the Indian Army in the First and Second World Wars; it interrogates the nature and function of material culture as a research category within design history and considers the enunciations of bodiliness and selfhood by Indian Army soldiers across shifting, plural registers of materiality.

Rising Lai

Crafting Desire

Social values are materialised through craft, and comprise our material culture. Through objects, we carry and inherit social values, habits and traditions that are mediated by the object. The Red Sleep Bed (紅眠床) is a traditional Taiwanese bed which portrays the ideal marriage, one between two people based upon social values and ideologies ingrained in normative gender roles, heterosexuality, and patriarchal relations. The bed is embellished with stories carved into the wooden panels that convey these ideologies and traditions.

By unpacking the "mind" lying behind the making of the Red Sleep Bed, the patriarchy in Taiwanese tradition was verified from the aspect of material culture. Understanding that ideology is rooted in the artefact, materialised from folk sayings, customs and rituals, the Red Sleep Bed allows patriarchal relations to persist over time.

In response, I proposed several 'queering' methods that aim to determine how can we queer the artefacts via their making and designing, diversifies the possibilities and interpret the material.



RISING LAI (1996, TW) is a designer, maker, and researcher who focuses on uncovering the stories contained within objects. Graduated with a background in industrial design and later obtained an M.A. degree from the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague (NL), Rising's practice builds upon and speculates on the relationship between people, objects, and material culture. They research about cultural heritage especially and thereby develop new narratives through their designs.

Daniela Salgado Cofré

Selective Tradition and Selective Innovation in Chilean Popular Crafts

This proposal focuses on historical discourses and rationales concerning ‘folk’ and ‘traditional’ artesanías –or crafts–in Chile, starting from a period marked by the beginning of the 1935 Popular Art exhibition, when interest in artisanal production appeared in the academic milieu, until the first decade of the twenty-first century, when the policies for design and crafts began to develop and be discussed in the country. This is a significant period to the relationship between design and crafts as it represents a moment of conformity and foundation of institutional and political visions of the folkloric, the popular and the traditional crafts values associated with national identity, visions that are being gradually fragmented and redefined. This fragmentation, as we shall see, is directly linked to social and economic aspects, given the commercial boom of craft products in global circuits, the promotion of artesanías in Chilean and international markets and the inclusion of the concept of modernity into the artisanal objects and products, performed through dominant narratives in the field of design that encouraged the incorporation of professional design into the world of crafts.

Thus, in this proposal, artesanías are considered as places of awkward engagements continuously impacted by regional and global cultural, political and economic forces that serves to disentangle the notion of traditional crafts and innovative design interventions. Despite conflictive encounters, these forces have not overthrown ‘popular’ craft products and its widespread consumption in the local market. Therefore, I seek to explore, on the one hand, how these apparently opposed ideas of conservative tradition and design innovation are two sides of the same coin in which institutional and establishment selectivity operates. On the other hand, we locate the transformation of artisanal production through frictions. In these frictions, the narratives of tradition, modernisation, globalisation, localisation, and authenticity are heterogeneously appropriated, justified, rejected, and materialised by the artisans through their different practices, discourses and creations.



DANIELA SALGADO COFRÉ is an Industrial Designer and associate professor at the Faculty of Architecture and Design of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, where she has conducted several situated research and pedagogical experiences of design in the studios, at the Travesías and the Ciudad Abierta. She is a Doctoral Researcher (ANID-Chile) at the "AmericaS" laboratory and the "SASHA Laboratory of Architecture and Human Sciences" at the Faculty of Architecture of the Université libre de Bruxelles.

G E O G R A P H I E S

Friday 25th November 2022

Session 1: 15:30 - 17:00 hrs (GMT)

Session 2: 19:00 - 20:00 hrs (GMT)

Session 1:

15:30 - 17:00 hrs (GMT)

Borderlands and Transnational Exchanges

Piotr Korduba

Dishes from Silesia. Constructed folklore of the German-Polish borderland

Faience dishes from Bolesławiec (Bunzlau) and porcelain tableware from Opole (Oppeln) are popular in Poland and Germany and have been produced in their current form in Silesia since the second half of the 20th century. Although different in terms of materials, forms, and decorations, they are both considered regional products, a successful combination of folk motifs and present-day design. In reality, they reflect the very complex relationship between folk cultures and everyday objects during the long 20th century and today in the German-Polish borderlands. They will serve to reveal the mechanisms behind the relationship between constructed folklore and design, which in this case does not so much draw inspiration from art and folk culture as actually completely reinvents it. The faience and porcelain from the title were part of a grand project to introduce folk art into Polish national culture after 1945. The special importance of production in Bolesławiec and Opole stems from their role in the cultural Polonization process of the German territories annexed to Poland after World War II. Using local ceramic traditions to create contemporary vessels, the forms and ornamentation of which were transplanted from folk traditions of other regions or developed locally ("stamp" decoration), a local "folk" tradition was constructed. Based on these examples, we will try to deconstruct the following key phenomena in the relationship between folk cultures and design: 1. the institutionalized systems of adapting folk technologies, forms and decorative motifs for use in design (Cepelia: Folk and Artistic Industry Headquarters, Institute for Industrial Design); 2. the authentication of regionalisms created at the turn of the 20th century by their subsequent and contemporary use in design; 3. the transmission of folk cultures throughout near-border regions together with the mechanisms of cultural adaptation and appropriation based on the example of the Polish-German borderland.



PIOTR KORDUBA Prof. Ph.D., art historian, director of Art History Institute at the Adam-Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. Specialist in the field of the living architecture, culture of housing and interior design, urban issues and also german-polish art and cultural relationships. He has published six books and many articles. His last book was dedicated to the folk-oriented aesthetics in polish design and interior decorations in 20th century in view of their ideological context (*Folklore for Sale...*, Warsaw 2013). Now he is conducting the research project: *Furniture-making in Poznań 1945-89. Education, design, production.*

Lina Koo

Images and Narratives in ‘Joseon Folk Dolls’ during the Japanese Colonial Period, 1910–1945

In Korea, dolls in the images of Korean people became widely produced as souvenirs and cultural artefacts and were sold to foreigners who visited the country in the late nineteenth century. These doll representations were emphasised with traditional clothing, cultural accoutrements and/or indigenous activities. In the twentieth century, during the Japanese colonisation period (1910–1945), more varied types of dolls illustrating selective images of Korean people began to be developed and labelled as ‘Joseon folk dolls’ with the influences of the Japanese folk doll production. As the product name indicated, such dolls were meant to describe the ‘folk’ culture of Korea to the viewers. Along with the colonial administration’s systemic development of tourism in Korea, Joseon folk dolls were consistently sold at souvenir stores or near tourist attractions with a high number of foreigners. Having been brought by tourists and visitors, these objects were displayed in houses, played by children or donated to museums. Given the object biographies, many extant dolls are now housed in museum collections across Europe and North America. In this paper, I will look at selective examples of Joseon folk dolls that I examined at museum collections in the United States and Germany in 2021/2022 to discuss the typologies that repeatedly appeared in the doll objects. In addition, I will discuss relevant writings on Joseon folk dolls from the colonial period that reveal the contemporaneous understanding of Joseon folk dolls and the views on the culture of Korea at the time. By interrogating doll imageries and related narratives, this paper aims to ascertain how the concepts of ‘folk’ played an integral role in designing and labelling Joseon folk dolls and affected the perception of Korea and its people in the first half of the twentieth century.



LINA KOO is a PhD candidate in History of Art and Design at the University of Brighton.

Her PhD dissertation is a comparative study of ethnic dolls from nineteenth- and twentieth-century East Asia. Previously, she worked as Curatorial Assistant for Korean Art at the Asian Art.

Museum of San Francisco. Koo completed an MA in History of Art and Archaeology of East Asia at SOAS University of London and a BS in Art History at the Fashion Institute of Technology, State University of New York.

Carlos Bártolo

Folklore for the Good of the Nation

A Bem da Nação [For the Good of the Nation] was the motto closing all official missives during Estado Novo [New State], the right-wing dictatorship that ruled Portugal from 1926 to 1974. The expression embodies the national sacrifice that should be required for the reconstruction of the nation, an outcome also shared by the, until then, spurned popular arts.

The appreciation of local folklore went against the cosmopolitan Euro-centric attitude that prevailed the Portuguese culture and taste until the end of the 19th century.

It would be initially developed by the first ethnographic studies carried out in the transition of the century and by the attention that the first Portuguese generation of modern artists nurtured for these primitive artefacts, understood as an escape from the lethargy of academism.

A slow dissemination would permeate to a broader public, mainly through the 1920's, but it would be the regime's concerted efforts from the 1930's onward that would consolidate this 'taste'. The appropriation of popular arts was essential to the development of an official cultural identity that, through the praise of rurality, would serve as a cornerstone for the moral resurgence of the nation.

Fundamental to this development were the tools of analysis and synthesis brought by a new generation of modernist artist-designers that created a 'modern' style, which, oxymoronically, would continue to be based on national traditions, a palingenetic concept crucial to the nationalist ideals that underpinned the regime.

This presentation will focus on the discourses of António Ferro - director of the National Propaganda Bureau - at the openings of the 1936 Popular Arts Exhibition and of the Museum of Popular Arts in 1948, where the role of the folklore for the expected development of the arts and design is fully discerned.



CARLOS BÁRTOLO (Lisboa, 1968) is a graphic design graduate (1990) with a master's degree in Equipment Design (1998) and a PhD in Design (2021), teaching at Lusíada University (Lisbon, Portugal) since 1995. Since his MA he centres his studies in the Portuguese Design History field, researching the Design object as an ideological communication support, especially in extreme political spheres. His PhD research reflect on how the Portuguese dictatorship (1926-1974) tried to evoke its social and moral values through the design of ideal home interiors by appropriating national archetypes.

Joseph McBrinn

High art, low art: folk culture in the Irish Revival

Although largely overlooked today the visual and material culture that accompanied the Irish Literary Revival of the early twentieth century was deeply dependent upon the re-invention of folk art as, in the words of W.B. Yeats, a system that ‘refuses what is passing and trivial’ as ‘it has gathered into itself the simplest and most unforgettable thoughts of the generations, it is the soil where all great art is rooted’ (1902; p.139). The high art aspirations of the Revival, in establishing a literary canon in the grand European tradition, was accompanied by a visualisation of a unique vernacular (low) culture that was by then passing into history. Yeats’ fascination with ‘faerie and folklore’ was no better visualised than in the work of his contemporary Beatrice Elvery (1883-1970). More than any other artist of the period Elvery created a uniquely visual world of an imagined ancient Ireland in her designs in bronze, silver, clay, glass and wood, her work for the Yeats’ sisters at the Cuala press and in her illustrations by books by Revivalist writers such as Patrick Pearse, K.F. Purdon and Violet Russell. Although Elvery ceased working by the First World War and resumed painting only in the 1930s her work had been central in helping establish a visual culture of new Irish nation. Take for example, a small print that Elvery made for Cuala in 1910, entitled *Virgin Ironing*, which was subsequently made into a small domestic stained glass panel at An Túr Gloine (Tower of Glass), and when shown at the Irish Free State’s Aonach Tailteann in 1932 was widely praised in presenting an image of contemporary Ireland in terms of humour as much as modernity.



DR. JOSEPH MCBRINN was educated and has worked in Ireland, Scotland and France. He holds an MA (Hons) in art history from the University of Glasgow and a PhD in art history from the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. He has taught at the art schools in Dublin and Belfast since 2000. He is an Irish art historian, and he also writes about a broad range of art, craft and design. Recently he has published on the intersecting histories of gender, sexuality and disability in modern art, craft and design in several journals (*Textile: Cloth and Culture*; *The Journal of Design History*; *The Journal of Modern Craft*). He has also written extensively on the craft workshops associated with the First and Second World Wars as well as the crafts produced during the Northern Irish Troubles (1969-1998). His most recent publication is the monograph *Queering the Subversive Stitch: Men and the Culture of Needlework* (Bloomsbury, 2021).

Session 2:

19:00 – 20:00 hrs (GMT)

Central and Eastern European Folk Cultures

Tetyana Solovey

Soap Cleansing Power: The role of soap branding in the process of establishment of the Russian Empire's colonial narrative in Ukraine

This paper examines a particular feature of Ukrainian material culture that had a significant impact on local folk culture in the nineteenth century, as well as its interpretation in design and fashion in the twenty-first century. The phenomenon of "Brocard embroidery" demonstrates how imperial policies were carried out in the Russian empire at the level of commercial mass production and consumption.

The Russian empire's narrative in connection to East Slavic ethnic groups, which may be described as "internal colonialism" (von Hagen, 2014, p. 178), was implemented under the premise of seeing them as branches of all-Russian nations since the seventeenth century. Russification - the Russian enculturation - was the key strategy for achieving this goal, therefore Ukraine's original language and culture were subjected to a host of restrictions at the end of the nineteenth century.

Brocard, one of the largest Moscow perfume producers, reflected cultural homogenization trends in its marketing strategy. After releasing cheap glycerin "People's soap" in 1864, which was affordable to the lower classes, the company grew to popularity. Each bar of soap came with a printed postcard with simplified floral motifs embroidery based on popular ornaments, which gradually took the place of genuine Ukrainian ones (there were more than 250 stitches, which were performed by more than 20 techniques; authentic embroidery was significantly different in all the parts of Ukraine, even in neighbouring villages). The benefits of civilisation were provided alongside cultural homogenisation. Brocard patterns were effectively inherited by the USSR and became a dominating ornament for folk ensembles - it was a way for bureaucrats to appear to support national identities. Many Ukrainians now see this decoration as original and extensively utilised in current fashion and design, although ethnographers frequently refer to more authentic patterns as "traditional," reflecting the background of a perpetual struggle to preserve authenticity.



TETYANA SOLOVEY is an experienced mid-career professional, working on the nexus of fashion & jewelry expertise, journalism, curatorship and activism. Tetyana's background is as a journalist and editor: she spent 2 years at the position of editor-in-Chief at BURU. Ukraine and 7 years worked as Fashion features & Jewelry and Sustainability Editor at Vogue UA. As a recipient of the Chevening scholarship, she is currently a member of the MA program "Brands, Communication & Culture" at Goldsmiths (University of London).

Ieva Pigozne

Intersection of Folk Forms and Modern Objects: Example of Latvian Bridal Crowns

In 2009 Latvian-Australian artist Brigita Stroda created modern versions of Latvian traditional bridal crowns from the 18th and 19th century. They were courageous designs that provoked the public interest. During the last 10 years making of modern crowns has become more and more popular. The idea peaked its popularity when a group of post folk singers Tautumeitas created the image of the modern folk girls in 2016. Since then, many master classes of making such crowns have been organized all over Latvia and many craftspeople make them for sale. Women of all ages and marital statuses may wear such crowns for festive purposes.

The traditional forms of bridal crowns are hardly to be recognized and the more this new tradition evolves, the more creative approaches have taken over. Today, calling the new creations "crowns" often is the only connection between the new forms and the initial tradition of the 18th and 19th centuries. At the same time this connection secures popularity, public interest, and appreciation. It can be argued that willingness to create interpretations of crowns, purchase them and wear them is present only because the original folk tradition of bridal crowns was so popular both in the 18th and 19th century and during the 1930s when folk costumes became very fashionable for choir singers and individual wearers on festive occasions. Modern crowns, however, also fulfil the desire of many Latvian women to be creative. Uniting traditional background with individual creativity has turned out to be the key to success of the modern Latvian crowns.



IEVA PIGOZONE is a dress historian, working at the Institute of Latvian History, University of Latvia. She researches traditional Latvian peasants' dress of the 18th and 19th century, as well as usage of folk dress in the politics and social life of the 20th and 21st century. She is the author of two monographs on Latvian dress history and more than 20 scientific articles. She gives public lectures on dress and culture history in Latvia and the Baltic region. Ieva Pigozne is currently working on her third monograph on the development of peasants' dress in Eastern Latvia in the 19th century.

Marie Gasper-Hulvat

Bows and Arrows, Boats, and Pipes: Folk material culture in early Soviet children's books

Several picture books published in Moscow and Leningrad between 1926 and 1929 visually delineated ethnographic types of "folk children" ("deti narodov"), illustrating paradigmatic examples of children from nations within and beyond the Soviet Union. While most of the illustrations take pains to carefully depict children's environment, they pay equal attention to the material objects of children's play. Certain genres of objects, such as weapons and modes of transport, represent cross-cultural visual connections between the playful activities of children from several diverse "primitive" or "traditional" cultures.

Bows and arrows appear in multiple images, a representation of weaponry, which in these books are demonstrated as functional rather than toys, also including boomerangs and machetes. Boats appear several times in these books. They function as a subset within a larger theme of playful modes of transportation, including ostrich-drawn two-wheel carts, sleds and skis, and modern Soviet airplanes. Pipes, on the other hand, are the only musical instruments that appear in these books, interestingly appearing in two different books on pages illustrating Ukraine and Belarus, two contiguous Soviet colonized nations.

This presentation will contextualize these representations of folk material culture within the broader context of shifting Soviet nationalities policies, which were directly impacted by the research of Soviet ethnographers, mapmakers, and ethnographic museum curators. The illustrators of several of these books worked at either the Ethnographic Department of the State Russian Museum in Leningrad or the Darwin Museum in Moscow. Thus, these artists had direct access to the objects of material culture that had been archived within these collections. These picture books provide insight into how the early Soviet era defined the diversity of 'folk' and 'traditional' cultures through everyday objects within and beyond the confines of museum collections.



MARIE GASPER-HULVAT is Associate Professor of Art History at Kent State University at Stark in Canton, Ohio, USA. Her research interests include early Stalinist art, visual culture, and exhibition practices as well as the pedagogy of Art History. She has published two chapters on early Soviet children's illustration with Bloomsbury in *Childhood by Design* and *Constructing Race on the Borders of Europe*. Her chapter on Pavel Kuznetsov's subtle rejection of Soviet racial categorization in his late 1920s paintings of Crimean and Caucasian laborers is forthcoming in the edited volume, *Russian Orientalism* (Manchester University Press).

Rebecca Bell

Approaches to ‘Folk’ Objects in Czech New Wave Film: Karel Vachek’s 1963 *Moravská Hellas* (Moravian Hellas)

In Socialist Czechoslovakia, the notion of ‘folk’ was often applied as a means of tempering and improving modernity to make it acceptable to state commissioning structures. Indeed, makers were encouraged to seek a ‘happy medium between folk and the modern’ (Vydra, 1948, cited by Hubatová-Vacková, 2015: 31). Frameworks of rhetoric used in official discourse neglected to address questions of the agency of rural makers, from whom practices were drawn via ethnographic methods. I propose that if we look to oral history and film, we can better understand the ways in which this was received and felt by so-called ‘folk’ makers.

In this paper, I will use Karel Vachek’s 1963 Czech New Wave film *Moravská Hellas* (Moravian Hellas) as a focus point to explore juxtapositions of local traditional and modern everyday objects. The film provides insight into tensions between mass-production, ethnographic practice, and the agency of makers. The film took as its subject the advocacy of folk traditions by Communist authorities in Socialist Czechoslovakia and through a part-real, part-fictionalised documentary of a folk festival, was a satirical critique of centralised power. The role of the individual maker as victim or perpetrator of state ideology was thrown into question. The film was point of ideological controversy, criticising political leadership and its idealisation of rural life. *Moravská Hellas* also reveals a great deal around frameworks of Czechoslovak Socialist modernity in relation to the characteristics of craft (tradition, authenticity, individualisation, hand-made), as well as humour, alienation, and the absurd. The film was banned after its first screening, showing how sensitive these areas were to political identity in 1960s Czechoslovakia. Resulting questions of appropriation, idealisation and a personal exhaustion on the part of the makers is relevant to how we might consider uses of ‘folk’ ideals in the production of everyday objects today.



DR REBECCA BELL holds a PhD in Czech craft under Socialism from the Victoria and Albert Museum and Royal College of Art (RCA). Bell is Lecturer in Visual Culture at the University of the West of England (Bristol). For over a decade, she worked in contemporary art commissioning in the public realm, with Andy Goldsworthy, DACS, and Art on the Underground. She has taught at a range of institutions, including Middlesex University, UMPRUM Prague, The School of Life, and the RCA. Her research focuses on making practices under politically controlled conditions, craft methodologies, pastoral materialities and pedagogies of hope.

PLACE AND FOLK CULTURES

Friday 2nd December 2022

Session 1: 15:30 - 17:00 hrs (GMT)

Session 2: 19:00 - 20:00 hrs (GMT)

Session 1:

15:30 – 17:00 hrs (GMT)

Mediation and Display

Hervé Doucet

Traditions and Modernities of the Decorative Arts in Alsace at the Beginning of the 20th Century. The Example of Théo Berst

In 1904, Theo Berst (1881-1962) was commissioned to restore an old building in Strasbourg to house the Musée alsacien, a museum dedicated to the folk arts of the region. In 1906, Berst took part in the International Exhibition of Decorative Arts in Dresden by recreating an Alsatian stubbe (traditional room in the Alsatian house). For the first time, this event combined popular art and artistic modernity; local cultures were considered a source of rejuvenation for creators. Architect, decorative artist and designer of decorative art objects, Berst joined the Deutscher Werkbund in 1908.

In 1914, he wrote a text entitled *Ars Statt Mars*, which emphasised the importance of cultural heritage in the emergence of modernity: "Architecture has never been self-sufficient, it has always been the expression of an era and a way of life, an applied art, a means adapted to a function. That is why it is nonsense to try to create absolutely new forms when in most cases the conditions and assumptions are the same as in ancient times".

Commenting on the Pavilion of Art in Alsace that he had designed for the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Arts in Paris in 1925, he wrote: "It seems certain that an architect from another province would have realized it in a different way, because his spirit would have developed on a different soil than that of Alsace. This is what we call regionalism, and nothing else".

With this theoretical framework in mind, the presentation will analyse some of Berst's art objects in order to understand how he creates works that are intended to be modern, based on traditional popular models.



HERVÉ DOUCET has been a lecturer in the history of contemporary art at the University of Strasbourg since 2008. Curator of the exhibition *Otto Wagner, Maître de l'Art nouveau viennois* (Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Paris, 2019-2020), he is a specialist in the history of architecture and decorative arts. His research on Strasbourg's architecture during the annexation period (1871-1918) led him to curate the exhibition *La Neustadt de Strasbourg, un laboratoire urbain* (Strasbourg, 2017) (catalogue published by Lieux-dits éditions) and to organise the international colloquium *L'Art nouveau aux confins d'empires : Strasbourg et Riga* (Strasbourg 2018).

Michelle Jackson-Beckett

Simple Household Goods? The Commodification of Folk Idealism and Domestic Culture in Interwar Vienna

This case study engages with important questions surrounding the commodification of "folk" ideals and aesthetics in Vienna after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as well as the shifting cultural identities embedded in everyday household objects and furniture. In this paper, I argue that the notion of "folk" domestic culture (Wohnkultur) and "simple" living were propagandistic categories used by the interwar Viennese furniture trade and related magazines, culture organizations, and retailers in constructing new identities and re-fashioning older definitions of modernity in the newly formed First Austrian Republic. Specifically, these actors hoped to sell the idea of Viennese charm and simplicity to an international audience in order to shore up cultural and economic stability. The centerpiece of this effort was a series of exhibitions titled Simple Household Goods (Einfacher Hausrat) that took place at the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry (today the MAK, Museum of Applied Arts Vienna) between 1916 and 1921. Designers like Hugo Gorge, Rudolf Lorenz, Fritz Kruh and others sought comfort in a historicist mélange of styles, reinterpreting Neoclassical, Baroque, Rococo, British Arts and Crafts, and Biedermeier styles, as well as "folk" forms in home furnishings. However, critics of the Simple Household Goods exhibitions illustrated how the question of "simple" or "folk" furnishings was anything but simple. Socialist critics, incensed by the exhibitions' high prices, argued that the exhibition series only paid lip service to supporting the dire need for affordable home furnishings, while in reality the exhibitions served a growing international demand for Viennese export furniture. Further, this case study analyzes connections to the discourse on domestic culture and Bodenständigkeit, or the belief that something can be uniquely rooted to the soil upon which it is grounded—a prevalent and problematic concept in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century discussions of racial purity, nationalism, and colonization in the German-speaking world.



MICHELLE JACKSON-BECKETT is a historian of modern European and US cultural history, with a specialization in design, material culture, and the built environment. She holds an MPhil and PhD in Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture from Bard Graduate Center, and a Master's in the History of Design and Decorative Arts from the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum. She currently serves as senior lecturer in the Design History & Theory department at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. Her current research and publications focus on exhibitions of interior design in interwar Vienna and concepts of flexibility and adaptation in domestic spaces.

Alice Twemlow

Bad Taste, Working Class and Popular: 1950s Urban Folk Culture in 'Black Eyes and Lemonade'

In post-war Britain many cultural commentators perceived rural craft practices to be under threat from the insidious creep of American, industrial, urban, mass production. The author, curator and muralist Barbara Jones (1912–1978), although not unsympathetic to this cause, was unlike her peers in that she also took seriously the kinds of commercial and mass-produced objects found in the city.

The 'Blackeyes and Lemonade' exhibition she curated for the Whitechapel Gallery in London in 1951 featured a fleet of ships in bottles, an anthropomorphic lemon, as big as a child, extolling the virtues of Idris lemon squash, a regiment of pub beer pulls, advertising posters fresh from the hoardings, paper bags, an array Bassetts' Liquorice Allsorts isolated under a spotlight like jewels, and a tiled fireplace in the shape of an Airedale dog.

The exhibits—"things people make for themselves, or that are manufactured in their taste", as Jones termed them, did not derive from the village greens and leafy lanes of a rural yesteryear imaginary, but rather from specific semi-industrial bakeries, newsagents, pubs, and living rooms of East London.

By successfully defending her selection, collection, interpretation, and display of such a spectacle of everyday objects for an exhibition, and giving definition to a branch of aesthetic impulse that had hitherto remained unclassified, Jones re-directed what she called the 'museum eye', forcing it to re-examine the ways in which matters of national memory, heritage and identity had been monopolized by one particular patriarchal notion of good taste. She wanted to re-open discussions about art, design, commodities, and craft to include what working class people, and especially working class women, liked and bought, what they made and used and saved.

Today, as design is being reinvigorated, or at least challenged, through new engagements with indigenous traditional practices, slow design, witchcraft, and AI, for example, it's worth recalling this case from mid-20th century Britain. Here folk, as practice, as object, as culture, and as demographic, was used as a tactic and ethos to unsettle the congealed confluence of class, gender, and taste discrimination in the museum context and, as a welcome byproduct, leaves us with a generative legacy to build on.



ALICE TWEMLOW is Professor in the Wim Crouwel Chair in the History, Theory and Sociology of Graphic Design and Visual Culture at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and a Research Professor at the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague (KABK).

Twemlow is a former head of the Master Department in Design Curating & Writing at Design Academy Eindhoven and the MFA in Design Criticism and MA in Design Research, Writing & Criticism at the School of Visual Arts in New York, which she co-founded in 2008.

She has an MA and a Ph.D in History of Design from the program run jointly by the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Royal College of Art in London, and her book, *Sifting the Trash: A History of Design Criticism*, was published by MIT Press in 2017.

Elina Nahlinder

Poor Design? 'Poverty' as the Bedrock of Swedish Modern Design

Focusing on the kitchen furniture set that the designer Gunnar Asplund (1885-1940) displayed at the Home Exhibition in Stockholm in 1917, this paper explores the threefold significance of poverty to the development of Swedish modern design.

Not only does this furniture set testify to what the influential nineteenth-century author C. J. L. Almqvist (1793-1866) meant by the term 'Swedish poverty' when he first discussed it in the essay 'The Significance of Swedish Poverty' (written in 1838), but it also demonstrates the two additional meanings that the term acquired in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a consequence of the effects of industrialisation.

While Almqvist had considered 'Swedish poverty' a characteristic national trait and a moral virtue that cut across socio-economic classes, social and cultural reformers around the turn of the twentieth century reinterpreted the term to also denote, on the one hand, the aesthetic qualities of designed goods (such as simplicity and function) and, on the other, a production strategy that aimed to make beautiful objects more usable and widely accessible.

This paper proposes that these three meanings of 'Swedish Poverty' – as a unifying force, an aesthetic value, and a strategy for production and mass-consumption – were underpinned by an idealisation of the old Swedish folk culture, including the view of the peasant lifestyle as an ideal state of being in both the moral and aesthetic sense. Asplund's furniture set makes this particularly evident as it draws on all three conceptions of 'Swedish poverty'. It can therefore be seen to demonstrate that Swedish modern design was as much a child of tradition as it was of modernity, as well as to show how Swedish folk culture was renegotiated in modern design practices so as to increase its life span and preserve its relevancy.



ELINA NAHLINDER I am a third-year PhD candidate in History of Art at the University of Warwick, funded by the Midlands4Cities Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) doctoral training partnership. I gained my Bachelor's and Master's degrees in History of Art at the University of Glasgow in 2018 and 2019, respectively. My doctoral thesis looks at the conceptualisation and practical arrangement of the Swedish home during the period 1890-1917 with the aim of grasping how the socialisation and democratisation of art was perceived to have factored into the wider goal of socio-cultural change in turn-of-the-century Sweden.

Simon Spier

'Homely Pottery?': Rereading the Willett Collection of British Ceramics

The brewer and collector Henry Willett (1823-1905) is best known for amassing a collection of ceramic objects which, through their design and decoration, illustrate a national history in 'homely pottery'. In the many Staffordshire figures, earthenware busts and plaques, illustrated plates, jugs, mugs and teapots he bought, Willett recognised that alongside narratives of sovereignty, politics and warfare, stories of local and folk status were as important in describing the character of a nation. As such, the collection, which numbers well over 1000 pieces, includes references to low-born pugilists, highwaymen, abducted maidservants and the eponymous drinker Toby Fillpot whose ashes were made into 'Toby's Jug'. As such, the collection depicts the folk life of the British in a medium that can also be considered a form of folk art. In the first instance this presentation will outline some of Willett's collection and the stories and objects he felt captured the spirit of British social history.

However, as the discipline of history evolves, so Willett's collection and his reading of British folk history needs to be scrutinised and refreshed. When writing up the catalogue of his collection before giving it to the people of Brighton, Willett also thematised it, dividing it up into social classifications such as 'Military Heroes', 'Philanthropy', and 'Domestic Incidents'. By his own admission these categories were somewhat arbitrary, and suitable for his reading of the collection, seemingly inviting future custodians and interpreters of the collection to redraw and redefine the groups. This presentation will also suggest some new readings of this collection through the lens of recent historical debates around imperialism, gendered histories and class structures.



SIMON SPIER I am currently Assistant Curator of Ceramics and Glass in the Decorative Art and Sculpture Department at the Victoria & Albert Museum, working on a loan display of the Willett Collection planned for 2023. I received my PhD in 2021 from the University of Leeds, writing a study of collecting, art dealing and museum formation in the second half of the 19th century.

Session 2:

19:00 – 20:00 hrs (GMT)

Constructing Folk Craft

Emily Madrigal

Wild Clay

This paper presents a study of the contemporary pottery processes of Bandana Pottery and an understanding of folk art as a practice rooted in regional materials. Bandana Pottery is in western North Carolina, near Penland School of Craft. The Appalachian Mountain region, the Southern Highlands, not only has a long history of folk art production but still exists as a center of folk art creation today. While my overall research is interested in the history of these communities, for this conference, I will focus on one specific group and type of maker, as a representative lens through which contemporary folk art can be viewed. Bandana Pottery consists of the duo Michael Hunt and Naomi Dalglish and their studio, where they prepare the clay, build the pots, fire these in a wood kiln, and sell the works at an on-site gallery. The defining aspect of their craft, which also happens to be the quality that most connects it to the traditions of the southern highlands and folk art, is their use of the local and ‘wild’ clay of the region. Prior to the international production and distribution of a variety of clay bodies--each with their own firing properties, consistencies, grits, colors and responses to glaze--potters had to adapt to the clays available to them, rather than the other way around. The aesthetic of this work was essentially a byproduct of the local clay’s physical characteristics. Thus, the pottery produced was a direct reflection of the region, of the environment in which it was made. Michael and Naomi extend this tradition to the present by using the material generated by the earth on which they work. This paper centers material and process in its understanding of folk art.



EMILY MADRIGAL is a PhD student in the history of art at the University of Virginia. She researches how artmaking and material-driven fabrication in the present can re-cast histories of artworks. She was a studio art major as an undergraduate at Princeton University, worked as a studio assistant for a sculptor, and studied at Penland School of Craft, all of which inform her understanding of technical practices. She received her MA from the Williams College Graduate Program in the History of Art at the Clark Art Institute in Massachusetts, where the subject of her qualifying paper was: "Reverse Pygmalions: Plaster in Édouard Dantan’s Atelier Paintings."

Artun Ozguner

Folk / Modern: fitting the nation into the past

In 1936 Ankara's brand new, radically constructivist Exhibition House (Sergi Evi by architect Şevki Balmumcu) housed an exhibition titled the Turkish Arts and Crafts. The exhibition presented various artefacts from lecterns, helmets, ceramics to textiles. Its state-sanctioned rhetoric was to infuse an indigenous essence of craft tradition into the modernity of new nation-state. The work of past craftsmanship was relegated to industrial precision waiting to be rediscovered by the industrialist endeavors of the young nation state and its new political community. The sheer modernist lines of the exhibition space and the avid historical tone of the exhibition presented thus no clash, they were suggestive of this new symbiosis.

Yet, a decade later in 1947, the Exhibition House saw a huge transformation, following the consolidated conservatism of the Second World War era. Through a project overseen by the German architect Paul Bonatz, its constructivist lines were dismantled, only to be replaced by a stripped-down classicist National Architecture style Opera House. This time, it was the new nation's artistic genius, Bedri Rahmi Eyuboğlu who was invited to paint a mural, renown by his work on the amalgamation of the pre-modern folk elements with a style akin to modern primitivism.

Still standing today, Ankara's Opera House and Bedri Rahmi's fresco within are witnesses to the fluctuating role assigned to folk motifs in the state rhetoric of defining the national in the early stages of official cultural politics in Turkey from 1930s to 1960s. The proposal thus investigates the prevalence of folk motifs in the official cultural politics of nation building in Turkey through the lens provided by Ankara's Opera House in this period.



ARTUN OZGUNER has completed his PhD at the V&A/RCA History of Design programme in 2020. Since then he has been working as a Senior Lecturer at the University for the Creative Arts, Contextual and Theoretical Studies, School of Communications. As a design historian his main research interests include practices of commemoration, nationalisation of material culture and design resources, graphic design history, visual and print culture, and the negotiation of national consciousness between official and public design practices, materialities and rhetoric. Since 2019, Artun has been a Trustee of the Design History Society, helping to expand the field.

Craig Martin

Foxfire Magazine: Disseminating Rural Folk Knowledge, Traditions, and Skills

Located in Mountain City in the Appalachian region of rural north Georgia, the Foxfire Museum & Heritage Center is home to several traditional wooden buildings housing exhibitions, material artefacts and workshop-based activities related to the region's folk traditions. Since 1974 the Museum & Heritage Center has sought to document rural skills such as log cabin building, blacksmithing, or flintknapping, and crucially to teach new generations these valuable traditions. Decisively, the origins of Foxfire's heritage remit emanate out of the Foxfire magazine which started in 1966 and is still published to this day. Researched, edited, and produced by high school students from the local area the magazine covers the folk cultures of the region, including oral testimonies of 'old timer ways', storytelling, poetry, and rural crafts. Crucially for this presentation, a significant function of the magazine (and related edited books) has been to disseminate information on these rural traditions by way of textual description alongside detailed visual communication through drawings, diagrams, and photographs. The presentation will explore how the localised folk traditions, material cultures, and practices from rural north Georgia have been disseminated on a national and international level through Foxfire magazine, thus broadening the scope of how rural folk knowledge, traditions, and skills are shared at a cross-cultural level. More specifically I will examine the visual language of instruction, arguing that the magazine forms part of a rich visual anthropology of the local area. In doing so I make the case that Foxfire magazine serves as both a conduit of folk knowledge, and crucially as a folk object in its own right. That is, in the way other folk objects communicate the region's histories and traditions through their material characteristics, so Foxfire magazine disseminates information and instructions for new generations to recognise the wisdom of rural folk knowledge and skills.



CRAIG MARTIN is Reader in Design Studies in the School of Design, Edinburgh College of Art, The University of Edinburgh. As an interdisciplinary scholar engaged with cultural geography and design studies his research addresses the social, cultural, and spatial complexity of design. This includes informal, localised design and making practices in a range of geographical settings, from refugee communities in Burkina Faso, to rural innovation in the Scottish Highlands. His work has been published in numerous journals, and his books include *Shipping Container* (Bloomsbury, 2016) and *Deviant Design: The Ad Hoc, the Illicit, the Controversial* (Bloomsbury, 2022).

Claire Le Thomas

When folk art creates everyday objects: DIY, creative hobbies and ordinary practices of creation at the turning of the 20th century

With the growing of consumption and mass culture, a new form of craft arose in the urban world: amateur occupations or ordinary creative practices. These leisure activities which are done inside home, or at immediate proximity, consist in making usual or decorative objects such as cardboard flower pot holder, lampshade ornamented with drawings or glued pictures, weaving umbrella stand, richly decorated jewel or candy boxes with silk, embossed or gold paper... To support these practices a large variety of ready-made products to ornate with paint, engraving, papers, were sold in shops. To use present-day expression, they belong to DIY and creative hobbies and can be analysed as their direct ancestor.

This paper will then study the characteristics of these creative practices in order to think their affiliation to folk art and the way they affect everyday objects production's. If folk art, in the broadest sense, refers to the art of the people, as distinguished from the elite or professional product or high art, then ordinary creative practices need to be included in this artistic category. Moreover, they transform older regional and rural practices to adapt them to an urban environment and the newly consumption society. Finally, they have an impact on the design of everyday objects as they involve creating useful objects and are tied with mass production products.



CLAIRE LE THOMAS works with an interdisciplinary approach (art history, anthropological history, art anthropology, cultural history and visual studies) on DIY artistic practices and interaction between high and low, art and mass culture in the avant-garde history. She taught at Paris Ouest and Strasbourg University, wrote for the website *l'histoire par l'image* (resource for secondary school teachers) and directed a research program for the Musée éclaté de la presqu'île de Caen (June 28th - October 27th 2013). She is the author of numerous publications on cubism, collage historiography, ordinary creatives practices and DIY. Her latest research focus on decorative/house painters.