

INTERSECTION

Approaching Collaborative Practice

Speaker's biographies and abstracts

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Marie O'Mahony Chair

Biography

Marie O'Mahony is an independent consultant specialising in advanced textiles, technology and smart materials and systems. She works for a range of companies and institutions advising on projects, preparing reports and organising workshops, symposiums and exhibitions. Exhibitions curated include *Hitec-Lotec a Crafts for Now* touring exhibition exploring how craftspeople and designers can work with industry, *The Fabric of Fashion*, a British Council touring exhibition and *The Soft Machine – Design in the Cyborg Age* at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.

Extensive lectures and workshops given internationally, include Stanford University (USA), Kobe Design University (Japan) and the Victoria and Albert Museum (London). Four books have been published by Thames and Hudson: *TechnoTextiles* (co-author), 1998; *Cyborg, the Man-Machine*, 2002; *SportsTech* (co-author), 2002 and *TechnoTextiles 2*, 2005.

Clare Cumberlidge Chair, Panel Discussion

Biography

Clare Cumberlidge is director of creative consultancy General Public Agency (GPA), co-founded on May Day 2003 with Lucy Musgrave. GPA has an interdisciplinary team and works across sectors bringing innovative solutions to issues within the public realm. Before co-founding GPA Clare was one of the UK's leading independent curators specializing in developing new spaces for artistic practice and supporting socially engaged practice. Over the past 15 years she has developed pioneering approaches to collaborative and cross disciplinary work. Her clients included The British Council, The Science Museum, The Poetry Society, The Architecture Foundation, Arts Council England, Institute of International Visual Arts, NESTA, Wellcome Trust and North Kensington Amenity Trust. Artists she has commissioned include Gillian Wearing, Tim Head, Nils Norman, Jordan Baseman, Cornelia Parker, Yinka Shonibare, Tacita Dean, Brian Catling, Peter Fend, Bridget Smith, Kathrin Böhm, and Adam Chodzko. She serves as an advisory member of the RSA Arts Panel and lectures widely nationally and internationally.

Charles Leadbeater
Keynote speaker

Biography

Charles Leadbeater is an independent writer and adviser to the UK government, large and small businesses and voluntary organisations, an associate of the RED Unit at the Design Council, a senior research associate of the think tank Demos and a visiting fellow at the Said Business School at Oxford University. He is the author of numerous books among them *Living on Thin Air*, *The Independents: The Rise of Cultural Entrepreneurs* and *The Pro-Am Revolution*. His next book: *All Mixed Up: The rise of mass creativity*, will be published in 2006.

Abstract

Title: All Mixed Up: can creativity become a mass activity?

We are used to the idea that creativity comes from special people working in special places: the artist in their studio, the writer in their garret, the bohemian wandering the creative quarter. If we need more creativity the answer is straightforward: more special people, working in more special places. And if we want to amplify the impact of creativity then we have to create wider pipelines to carry this creativity out to people, the consumers and uses.

Increasingly this elite model of creativity is misleading, at best only a part of the picture. With the spread of cheaper technologies, education and values of personal autonomy, people increasingly want to become players not just spectators. They want to be able to have their say, add their voice or contribution. This trend towards mass collaborative forms of creativity, often through social and electronic networks, is evident in media, music, photography, game, design and politics. Many of the same trends are affecting once ivory tower professionals in education, health and universities who find themselves working in a far richer, diverse landscape, in which ideas and knowledge are coming from many more sources.

Charles Leadbeater will explore the interactions between these different accounts of creativity - what it is, where it comes from, who does it and consider how they might compete, conflict and complement one another.

Speakers

Emily Campbell

Biography

Emily Campbell is the British Council's first Head of Design & Architecture in its Arts Group. Appointed in 1996, she has led the development of a diverse programme of exhibitions and collaborative projects overseas and specialist visits to the UK.

The objective of this programme is to increase the understanding of design in the world at large and to promote the strengths of British design to educational, business and cultural audiences, through the British Council's network in 110 countries.

Emily was Commissioner of the British Pavilion at the 2004 Venice Biennale of Architecture curated by Peter Cook and of the first major international design exhibitions to tour India and China.

She has a BA in English Literature from Cambridge, a diploma in clothing technology from the London College of Fashion and an MFA in Graphic Design from Yale University School of Art. Before joining the British Council she had been a pattern-maker at Jean Muir, a project manager at Pentagram in London and a senior graphic designer with Michael Bierut at Pentagram in New York, where she worked on high-profile visual identities and campaigns for Brooklyn Academy of Music and Princeton University.

She is on the 2005 RIBA Awards Group and the Jury for Designer of the Year 2006.

Abstract

Title :You're only ever as good as your last client

Recent discourse concerning the designer as author proposes a kind of autonomy for which designers should strive, in the manner of fine artists or novelists. The proposition rightly challenges the conventional - and pernicious - perception of the designer-client relationship as one between a supplier and a buyer. However, it fails to recognise that successful outcome of any design process depends just as much on the "creativity" of a client or commissioner as on the designer or architect. The provenance of creativity has been brought to the fore by another recent controversy; that surrounding the Design Museum's Designer of the Year. In the best scenario, the designer and client/commissioner are locked, as collaborators, in a creative interdependency.

Annie Cattrell

Biography

Annie Cattrell originally trained as a fine artist at the Glasgow School of Art. She holds an MA Fine Art from the University of Ulster and an MA in Glass from the Royal College of Art.

Amongst many other awards, commissions and residencies she has received, Annie held the ACE Helen Chadwick Fellowship in 2000 and in 2002 was appointed Leverhulme Artist in Residence at the Royal Institution London.

She is currently the Arts & Humanities Research Council Art, Science and Technology Research Fellow at De Montfort University, Leicester.

Annie Cattrell has had a number of solo exhibitions in galleries across the UK including the Anne Faggionato Gallery, London, Berwick Gymnasium Gallery, Berwick upon Tweed and Collective Gallery, Edinburgh. Solo shows abroad have been mounted by the Werner Klein Gallery Cologne, and the British School in Rome.

She has also been represented in numerous national and international group exhibitions. Recently these exhibitions include *The Body Art & Science* at the National Museum of Stockholm (2005), *Sea* at the Royal Scottish Academy Edinburgh (2005), *Head On (with the brain in mind)* at the Science Museum London (2002) and *Not What It Seems* at the National Glass Centre Sutherland (2001).

Her work is to be found in private and public collections including Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museum, the City Art Centre, Edinburgh, Glasgow Museums & Art Galleries, Glasgow, Imperial College, London, Macmanus Art Gallery & Museum, Dundee and Peter Moore's Foundation, Liverpool.

Annie has held visiting lectureships at numerous colleges in the UK, including Chelsea & Central St Martins, Duncan of Jordanstone, Edinburgh, Grays and Wimbledon Schools of Art, Ruskin School of Fine Art & Drawing, Goldsmiths College and Coventry, De Montfort, Nottingham, Staffordshire and Sunderland Universities.

She is currently teaching on the MA Sculpture Programme at Wimbledon School of Art and at the Royal College of Art, as well as acting as an External Examiner for Staffordshire University.

Abstract

Over many years I have sought specific advice and expertise formally and informally from specialists, in order to expand my understanding of new techniques, situations, concepts and scientific research. This has helped to at times broaden, enrich and challenge existing ideas and technical approaches which I have been developing in the studio.

Currently I am Arts & Humanities Research Council Art, Science and Technology Research Fellow, based at De Montfort University in the Sculpture Department and in the Faculty of Computing Sciences and Engineering at the Innovation Centre. I am also working with research scientists and clinicians at the Walsgrave Hospital in Coventry and at Oxford University.

The basis of this fellowship is to explore the use of Rapid Prototyping (an engineering process

that makes three dimensional models from CAD computer data) as a means of making three dimensional artworks (sculpture), using Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI and Functional MRI) scans of the interior and exterior of the living body.

With the invention of these new technologies we are able to visualise the interior of living bodies. This reflexivity has also made it possible for the body observed to see itself as well. This therefore makes it feasible for an artist to produce sculptures which have previously been impossible to envisage.

The emphasis of my presentation will be to show how this fellowship and previous related projects have had an impact on my practice as a fine artist.

Nipa Doshi

Biography

Nipa Doshi was born into a Gujarati family in Bombay. In 1989, Nipa was offered a place at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad, where she specialised in Furniture. Nipa graduated from NID in 1994. 'Design' unless it was 'fashion' or 'interior decoration' was still unheard of as a serious career path to follow in India. Her parents, however were very supportive and encouraged her to follow her instincts. It was at NID in Ahmedabad that Nipa developed a deep appreciation for skilled craftsmanship, especially textiles and it was at the market within the walls of the old city where she began to explore the link between craft, design and cultural identity.

On a visit to London in 1994, Nipa met Jasper Morrison who inspired her to apply for the Masters Degree course in Furniture Design at the Royal College of Art. In 1995, Nipa was awarded a full scholarship to study at the Royal College of Art and she met Jonathan Levien, her future partner.

In 1997, Jonathan and Nipa graduated from the RCA. Nipa returned to India to work with crafts people. In 1998, she came back to London and worked for SCP and David Chipperfield. Meanwhile Jonathan Levien worked for Ross Lovegrove. In 2000, Nipa and Jonathan married and decided to leave their jobs and have a go at doing their own thing. The partnership of Doshi Levien began with series of commissions from Tom Dixon, creative director of 'Habitat'.

An extract from a Blueprint magazine feature on Doshi Levien in 2003:-
'I love the visual landscape of street culture in India. The busy markets, the innovative and spontaneous use of colour, the irreverent and eclectic mixing of materials! I love everyday objects which have a strong cultural and emotional significance like the lota, the ubiquitous water vessel found in every Indian home. I am inspired by wall paintings owned by no one, created by anonymous street artists. The mythical and magical world of Indian film; The fantasy in stark contrast to the reality. I love my cheap colourful plastic bangles as much as my beautifully crafted jewellery. I am inspired when an East London Bangladeshi girl dresses in her traditional salwar kameez and wears trainers, speaking a mix of Bengali and cockney. That to me is rich and that pushes me on. It challenges my perception of what is ethnic, what is traditional and what is pure?! I am inspired when the opposites get together." Nipa Doshi 2003.

Recent projects

Doshi Levien's work is strongly informed by their own distinct, but complementary cultural backgrounds and they aim to create objects which represent this cultural hybridisation. Fusion is most explicit in the range of non-stick cookware they designed for French manufacturer Tefal. Having observed that Tefal was selling European cookware in India, a country with a strong food culture of its own, they proposed a range of more culturally specific products. Tefal commissioned Doshi Levien to design a series of cooking vessels for Indian, Moroccan, Mexican, Spanish and Chinese food in which the designers were able to bring together the forms and patterns belonging to each culture with Tefal's 'international' non-stick surface characteristics. The project was something of a commercial blueprint for Doshi Levien's ambitions as designers.

In 2004 they were commissioned to create a series of large-scale window installations to communicate the history and work of the Wellcome Trust, a biomedical research charity in London. The windows express the Trust's mission and depict Henry Wellcome's life in an idiosyncratic language of hand-crafted objects and industrial prototypes.

Doshi Levien were commissioned by the British Council to develop a body of work for "My World", an installation for Experimenta 2005 in Lisbon. Doshi Levien's installation is inspired by the shops

and workshops of ancient but still functioning markets in India. Customers remove their shoes, sit on a mattress and spend time talking to the craftsman about what they need. The objects resulting from this transaction are made with great care and are extremely personal both to the maker and the consumer. The atmosphere of the shops yields a strong impression of having entered a world; the craftsman's world; infused with unique smell, touch and creative possibility. Doshi Levien created a liminal space between two worlds, Indian and European, imaginary and real. All the prototypes for this installation have a deep dependence on traditional crafts as well as industrial processes. Craft relies strongly on intimate knowledge of materials, and this knowledge is easily lost in manufactured products where production is separated from design. Doshi Levien intend with all their work to reintroduce this link and to increase the role of serendipity and experimentation in mass production. They also hope to 'promote respect for craft in parts of the world where the hand is the machine.

Events, Exhibitions and Awards

- Experimenta 2005, Design Biennale Lisbon.

Doshi Levien were invited by the British Council to create a body of work for "My World." This work explores the boundaries between design, craft and industrial manufacture. Their installation was realized with the generous support of the Arts Council of England and B&B Italia.

- Truly British 2005.

Doshi Levien was featured alongside 5 designers to represent the best of British design at Harrods. This ran in conjunction with the London Design Festival.

- Blueprint magazine (architecture, design, culture) 2005
Voted "Blueprint Sessions product designer of the year 2005."

- Government of India Design Summit 2004, Delhi
Nipa Doshi gave a presentation on "Cultural Capital as a resource for innovation in design."

- British Council, "Global Local" 2004
Touring exhibition and seminar. Doshi Levien gave a talk on "cultural identity in industrial design". Doshi Levien featured alongside a selection of designers whose work applies an international sensibility, developed through research and global travel, to the local context in which they work. This exhibition is currently being hosted by the Victoria and Albert Museum.

- FX Design Award 2003
Tefal Mosaic wins "best furnishing or accessory for residential interiors".

Abstract

Nipa Doshi will be discussing collaborative practice in relation to her experience of hybrid cultures and her interest in challenging the boundaries that exist between craft and industrial production. These themes find expression in her professional practice with Jonathan Levien and can be seen in a number of recent Doshi Levien Partnership projects which will form the basis for her presentation. Recent projects which Nipa will be discussing include *How Are You?* a recent installation for the Wellcome Trust, London and *My World Craft and Autonomy in Contemporary Design*, a British Council Exhibition for the 2005 Lisbon Design Biennale.

Rebecca Earley

Biography

Rebecca Earley is a London based textile designer, and Senior Research Fellow at the University of the Arts London. She currently produces hand and digitally printed textiles for her own label, undertakes public art projects and commissions, and is an educator, facilitator and curator.

Earley graduated from Central St Martin's in 1994 and set up her label 'B.Earley' the following year with help from the Crafts Council and the Prince's Youth Business Trust. Using a unique 'Heat Photogram' printing process that she developed whilst studying, she produced womenswear and accessories for stores like Liberty, Harvey Nichols, and Barneys. In recognition of the development of this printing process, the Victoria and Albert Museum bought six pieces of Earley's work in 1996 for their Fashion and Textiles collections.

When Earley became a visiting lecturer at Chelsea College of Art and Design, also in 1996, she got involved with the 'Textiles Environment Design' (TED) staff project whose remit is to 'explore the role that the designer can play in producing textiles that are more eco friendly'. Earley subsequently developed an 'exhaust printing' technique which produces hand printed textiles with no water pollution and minimal chemical usage. The resulting collection of PET recycled scarves won an award at the first Peugeot Design Awards in 1999.

Earley became a Senior Research Fellow at Chelsea in 2002 and has continued to investigate new techniques and theoretical approaches to textile design. From 1999 – 2001 she worked with scientists and other designers and educators at the Eden Project in Cornwall, developing garden designs and educational programmes and workshops. She often works in collaboration with eco consultant Dr Kate Fletcher.

Her most recent work, Top 100, explores the benefits of using recycled synthetics. The second hand polyester blouses are recut and styled, then overprinted using different design themes, intending to increase consumer attachment through a series of unique narratives. They are made to be washed less often and never ironed, and finally at the end of their second life they are 100% recyclable. The blouse collections have been exhibited in France, China and London, and were seen on the catwalk in Paris in November 2004. Another ongoing project is the TED Materials Resource that draws together samples, products, imagery and information about eco textiles and fashion. This resource based at Chelsea, is a toolbox to help designers create more environmentally positive textiles, and is due to open in Autumn 2005.

Future projects currently include the curation of Well Fashioned, an exhibition dedicated to eco fashion, at the Crafts Council Gallery in March 2006, and setting up a Designer in Residence scheme at an art school in Long Island, New York.

Working as part of the wider University research culture, Earley's current post involves working with diverse groups of students and researchers, generating project concepts, funding applications, and strategies for dissemination. In June this year she was awarded a large grant from the AHRC to fund a three-year collaborative practice-based research project called Worn Again: Rethinking Recycled Textiles.

Rebecca Earley has exhibited widely, featured in numerous publications and undertaken many commissions and residencies. Her work can be found in the following collections:

- The Victoria & Albert Museum (Dress and Textiles collections), London.
- The Crafts Council, London
- Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.

- Constance Howard Research Centre, Goldsmiths College, London

Abstract

Title: Making (it) Work Together: Creative Collaborations Between Makers, Thinkers and Researchers

During my career as a textile designer I have had the chance to collaborate with many other practitioners – designers and makers, writers and thinkers, scientists and academics – and I intend to show examples of the results of such collaborations whilst addressing key questions about the benefits and difficulties of working in this way.

Makers – Early on in my career I collaborated with fashion and accessory designers – Jason Halsey, Nicky Lawler, Giovanna Palmiero, Marcus Constable, and Paul Thomas – and would like to talk about how the design process differs when working this way, the difficulties that arose and what I learnt from the process. I will talk in most depth about my collaboration with the sculptor Simon Periton for Sarah Staton's 'Supastore' exhibition, New York 1997.

Thinkers - Whilst working on a public art commission, (Radiotherapy Treatment Gowns 1999), I had the chance to read texts and research papers about the treatment of cancer, and then think about how these medical ideas might translate into practical design ideas. Since then I have continued to work with writers and academics, attempting to turn their words into action and artefacts. I will talk about 'HyperHall' (Copenhagen 1998), my first research project funded by Chelsea, which allowed me to work with Dave Beech (Artist and Critic); about my ongoing partnership with Dr Kate Fletcher (Eco Designer and Consultant), which is both the most successful and difficult collaboration I have ever had. (Here I will explain how issues of ownership and balance of power had to be dealt with). I have become fascinated by the ideas of Professor Ezio Manzini, and would like to show how his very particular definition of the role of the designer in the future has given me fresh insight into such partnerships and projects.

Practice Based Research - I will go on to discuss how the research culture within a University supports and encourages collaborations, with work and examples from the Textiles Environment Design Project (TED) at Chelsea, focusing on the Eden Project work (2000 – 2002). This was a three-year collaborative project with Gary Page (Fashion Designer), Dr Jenny Balfour Paul (Researcher and Writer), the Eden Project, Cornwall (Creative Team), and scientists from Bristol and Reading Universities (Spindigo Project).

I would like to conclude by showing that working collaboratively can I believe be incredibly beneficial for designers, despite the difficulties. This is especially true when it comes to addressing the environmental issues connected with ones work. I will show how through the curation of an eco fashion exhibition for the Crafts Council Gallery ('Well Fashioned', March 2006) I have tried to encourage and facilitate collaboration between the exhibiting designers. Finally, I will talk about the new AHRC funded project which I am leading - 'Worn Again: Rethinking Recycled Textiles' (2005 – 2008) and how practice based research and collaboration between consultants, staff and students has been built into every aspect of the brief.

Deirdre Figueiredo

Biography

Deirdre Figueiredo is Director of Craftspace, a publicly funded arts agency based in the Midlands. Craftspace works to develop and promote contemporary craft and design, through national and international touring exhibitions, life long learning projects, action research partnerships and consultancy. Craftspace is committed to access, quality and innovation. Prior to joining Craftspace, Deirdre was Cultural Development Officer for Leicestershire Museums and Arts Services where she curated a contemporary South Asian Collection, a programme of temporary culturally diverse exhibitions and ran a participatory arts and heritage outreach programme for diverse communities across Leicestershire. In a voluntary capacity she is currently Lead Advisor to the Arts Council's Cultural Diversity Task Group, a member of ACE Decibel Board and a Council Member of ACE West Midlands. She is also a Board Member of two Birmingham arts organisations: Audiences Central and Punch, and an advisor to the Hub Centre for Contemporary Crafts in Sleaford.

Abstract

Title: The pains and gains of collaborative ventures across sectors and cultures

Craftspace is committed to developing and exploring the legitimacy, social and cultural relevance of exhibition themes and concepts through real people's experiences and participation.

Multi layered partnerships and collaborations - between curator, artist/maker, audience participant and organisations - are something of a compulsion for Craftspace, which sets out to explore and interrogate the interface between life experience and the making of work and exhibitions.

It is an investment intensive process, underpinned by the willingness of all parties to learn and founded on tried and tested attributes developed within a critical framework.

This presentation offers a perspective on the motivations which have shaped recent projects and the unexpected outcomes and benefits that arise from new experiences.

It will also highlight issues around equity, ownership, facilitation, value.

Greg Hilty

Biography

Greg Hilty is Director of plusequals, an agency established in Spring 2005 in a joint venture with the University of the Arts, London, with a mission to build cultural and economic value by brokering collaborations between artists, businesses and organisations across creative industries and disciplines (www.plusequals.com).

Greg played a central role in arts funding and strategic planning at London Arts and Arts Council England from 1999 – 2004, following his fifteen-year career as a curator and commissioner of contemporary art, starting at Riverside Studios in Hammersmith.

At the Hayward Gallery he was responsible for a series of major British and international group shows and initiated pioneering exhibitions of contemporary film, fashion and sound art.

He writes regularly about contemporary culture in exhibition publications, magazines and newspapers.

Abstract

Title: Art's (Technology's) self- (world-) alteration

The title of this presentation comes from the final line of the short essay 'Art and Technology' written by John Cage in 1969. The presentation is not about Cage or technology. It will however consider how technological developments over the past two decades are creating a powerful new paradigm in creative production and consumption within which, optimistically, Cage's utopian/pragmatic vision of meaningful democratic communication could be realised.

The presentation will consider how new models of creative production and platforms for cultural presentation are enabling more dynamic and more direct exchanges between 'artist' and 'audience'. In this context the potential for moving across creative disciplines and industries could become the norm rather than the exception. The presentation will be informed by current theory and policy where relevant but will focus on wide-ranging examples of new initiatives.

Rob Kessler

Biography

Rob Kessler is a visual artist and Professor of Ceramic Art & Design at Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design. His work inhabits a territory where Design, Fine Art and Applied Art practices overlap, as do the contextual frameworks in which they operate. Within a very diverse range of outputs, his work examines the natural world and its influence within contemporary society through the interrelationship between the arts and sciences. In 2002 Rob Kessler was awarded a three year NESTA fellowship to work with microscopic plant material in the herbarium at Kew Gardens. With Dr Madeline Harley from Kew, he recently published a major new book, *Pollen, the Hidden Sexuality of Flowers*, (Papadakis Publishers), and is currently working on a sequel about seeds with Dr Wolfgang Stuppy from the Millennium Seed Bank.

Abstract

Title: Cross Fertilisation - A Botanical Collaboration

During the past five years, with the support of NESTA I have been fortunate to work with two exceptional scientists at Kew. During this time we have been able to form a highly productive relationship, the results of which have far exceeded our expectations, invigorated our own practice, informed our disciplines and extended the audience for our work.

In collaborations between artists and scientists, there is a feeling that the benefits appear slanted towards the artist. This might be a reasonable assumption given that artists have always been adept at plundering new territories to feed their creative appetites and to discover new forms and images from which to work. From a scientist's perspective the world of contemporary art can seem confusing or trivial in comparison to the evidence driven rigour of their own discipline.

Given these conditions how can such collaborations work?

These are just a few of essential ingredients:

- Serendipity.
- Compatibility and mutual respect.
- Discipline and acknowledgement of each others standards.
- A passion to share and communicate beyond respective boundaries.
- The ability to go beyond the superficial.
- Unflagging enthusiasm and a sense of fun.
- Stamina.

The presentation will explore some of these issues through the results of my collaborations at Kew.