Re-locating ceramics: art, craft, design? A practice-based, critical exploration of ceramics which re-locates the discipline in the context of consumption, the home and the everyday.

Emma Shaw

School of Media, Arts and Design

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RE-LOCATING CERAMICS: ART, CRAFT, DESIGN?

A practice-based, critical exploration of ceramics which re-locates the discipline in the context of consumption, the home and the everyday.

EMMA SHAW

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Westminster for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

June 2007
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ABSTRACT
RE-LOCATING CERAMICS: ART, CRAFT, DESIGN?

A practice-based, critical exploration of ceramics which re-locates the discipline in the context of consumption, the home and the everyday.

The home is the territory of ceramics and crafts. It is a major site for the consumption, use and display of ceramics. However, ideas about the consumption of ceramics in the home have not been fully explored within its writing or practices. This research proposes a critical and theoretical framework for ceramics which re-locates it in the contemporary context of consumption, in the home and the everyday (Attfield, 2000). This work draws on recent studies of material culture and consumption (Miller, 2001) which focus on the social role of the domestic object and which explore our relationships with things.

This research is practice-based where my art practice is the main research method and methodology, art practice as research. The research began with a literature and contextual review of the field of ceramics and craft writing and practice. Conclusions drawn from this research identified the over-riding research question - what differentiates art, craft and design? and formed the basis of the Practice Manifesto which identified the issues and approaches the practical research would adopt, a starting point and a guide for the studio research.

The completed practical research consists of a new series of work entitled About Ceramics…. This work explores the meaning of ceramics, how ceramics are used, experienced, valued and understood. It rejects traditional concerns and approaches to the subject and instead adopts a critical, conceptual approach. The resulting artworks embrace elements from across the disciplines of art, craft and design. Although predominantly made up of industrially made objects, the work also contains a significant craft or hand-made element. As such, the work inhabits the spaces “in between” established categories and provides an alternative, hybrid model for practice. The work is made using ordinary, everyday, mass-produced objects and materials, privileging a lower class of objects and practices (such as DIY & home/ hobby crafts) previously excluded from the ceramics and craft fold. For example, Basketweave explores ideas about ceramics, DIY and home decoration and is made entirely from wallpaper (brick wall pattern). This work
blurs the boundaries of art, craft and design - at what point does the decoration become the form, or the craft become art?

*Collection of Objects (about ceramics)* explores ideas about collections and display and the status of objects. A collection of objects (which includes an enamel facsimile of an 18th century Sevres porcelain plate, a brick teapot and a wooden mug tree) are displayed on a pine kitchen dresser. The objects presented here are not valuable as craft objects or antiques, or for their aesthetic status, but because they have a relationship to, have been influenced by, or simply would not exist without ceramics. The central work in this series is *What sort of mug do you take me for?* It consists of a forest of over-sized mug trees (made from wood, MDF & pegs), each mug tree displaying a separate mug collection. This work further explores ideas about collections and collecting in the home, linking the processes collecting and display in the home with those of identity construction. Although ideas about taste and class, and about the aesthetic status of objects are central to this work, the objects employed here are not simply acting as symbols of class or as “bad” taste, they are also acting as signifiers of identity. This work demonstrates how the seemingly insignificant objects in our homes (such as a ceramic mug), and the ways we own, use and display those objects, play an important role in the construction and expression of self. This work invites its and your classification, asking *What sort of mug do you take me for?*

In *The Value of Things*, Cummings and Lewandowska (2000) identify that the drive to collect is the same regardless of whether a collection is for the home or the museum. It is the hierarchies of art, craft and design which dictate the value and status of things. These hierarchies however are not in operation in the majority of homes and this makes the home an important site for understanding ceramics and for extending current concepts of art, craft and design.

This research offers new perspectives and provides an alternative model for both writing and practice. It proposes a theoretical and critical framework for ceramics which relocates ideas about the subject in the context of its consumption and use in the home, linking ideas about the use and display of everyday domestic objects with the processes of identity construction.
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<tr>
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<th>ART</th>
<th>CRAFT</th>
<th>DESIGN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hand-made &amp; machine-made</td>
<td>Hand-made</td>
<td>Machine-made</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any material, &quot;anything goes&quot;</td>
<td>Craft materials, medium-specific</td>
<td>Industrial materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellect, art skills &amp; processes</td>
<td>Craft skills &amp; processes, tacit knowledge</td>
<td>Mass production methods, engineering, technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any scale</td>
<td>Small (domestic) scale</td>
<td>Any scale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create</td>
<td>Make</td>
<td>Manufacture</td>
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<tr>
<th>Motivations</th>
<th>Art Theory &amp; Practice</th>
<th>Craft Theory &amp; Practice</th>
<th>Design Theory &amp; Practice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art Aesthetics</td>
<td>Craft Aesthetics, notions of the well-made</td>
<td>Design/ Industrial Aesthetics</td>
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<td>Ideas-driven</td>
<td>Materials &amp; processes driven, tradition</td>
<td>Market-driven</td>
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<tr>
<td>To provoke, to create/say something new, to create new experiences</td>
<td>To create beautiful, useful objects, to offer an alternative to the mass produced, to uphold tradition, to link with history</td>
<td>To provide useful product, to sell a product, to fill a gap in the market</td>
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<th>By the craftsperson's hands</th>
<th>By machine</th>
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<td>Made by one/few</td>
<td>Made by machine/many hands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quick &amp; easy and/or labour intensive</td>
<td>Labour intensive, labour of love, hard work</td>
<td>Efficient, quick &amp; easy to produce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working Alone &amp; Outsourcing</td>
<td>Working Alone</td>
<td>Team-working</td>
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<th>Studio (&amp; Home)</th>
<th>Factory (&amp; Studio)</th>
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<td>Mass-produced</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very limited availability</td>
<td>Limited availability</td>
<td>Readily available</td>
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<tr>
<th>AUDIENCE &amp; CONTEXT:</th>
<th>Art world</th>
<th>Craft world</th>
<th>Design World</th>
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<tr>
<td>Collector, connoisseur</td>
<td>Collector, connoisseur, &quot;anti-consumer&quot;</td>
<td>Consumer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Upper &amp; middle classes</td>
<td>Middle &amp; upper classes</td>
<td>Lower &amp; all classes</td>
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<th>Site of Consumption</th>
<th>Gallery &amp; Museum</th>
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<th>Function</th>
<th>To communicate, to entertain, to provoke, to look good/be beautiful</th>
<th>To be useful, to be beautiful, to be practical (functionality)</th>
<th>To be useful, to be practical (functionality), to look good</th>
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<th>Site of Use</th>
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<table>
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<th>Value</th>
<th>Very expensive</th>
<th>Expensive</th>
<th>Affordable</th>
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<td>Originality, contemporary, avant-garde, transitory, meaning, spectacle</td>
<td>Tradition, repetition, history, tradition, permanent, beauty, physicality</td>
<td>Fashion, novelty, newness, short-lived, service, functionality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Associations | Contrived, insincere, shock, dis-comfort, simulated, cultural, professional, | Honest, emotion, comfort, Authentic, natural, moral, ethical, domestic, amateur, feminine | Corrupt, soul-less, style, Artificial, commercial, industrial |

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Prince William is to marry Kate Middleton. But Woolworths isn't waiting for the news: it is already preparing a commemorative range to mark the occasion.

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Figure 65: Emma Shaw, Without Ceramics
The art of collecting

Interested in starting an art collection? To find out where to look and what to see visit guardian.co.uk/arts/ownart

You can also enter our competition for the chance to win this original photographic work by award winning artist Richard Billingham. There are also 2 four-day passes for Frieze Art Fair up for grabs plus a £500 Own Art voucher and other fabulous prizes.

Figure 66: Michael Landy, Semi-detached (2004) at Tate Britain, London

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Figure 73: *About Ceramics*... Private View, London Gallery West, 9th May 2007
INTRODUCTION

This research came about largely as a result of critical reflection on my own art practice and specifically, my frustrations with the context of ceramics and craft. Working in the field felt restrictive and I could not find appropriate theoretical or critical models for the work I wished to undertake.

Ceramics as a discipline is renowned for its lack of critical engagement and its writing often focuses on historical perspectives and on production rather than consumption. Its criticism is limited, tending towards descriptive discussions with a focus on skill, technique and materials. Indeed, practitioners are well catered for in terms of practical support, but not in terms of intellectual support and criticism. Perhaps historically those in the field have not needed a critical framework in which to locate themselves or their work. This research argues that there is now a new generation of practitioners who have a different agenda and who require a different type of support and this generational perspective is often missing from the canon. This research aims to fill this gap and to provide an alternative critical and theoretical framework for the field.

The field of ceramics is diverse and includes a number of competing and often conflicting practices. However, issues of diversity have not been adequately dealt with or acknowledged within the field, where all categories of ceramic practice are often talked about, written about and displayed in the same context. It is unsurprising therefore that there continues to be a level of anxiety within ceramics surrounding classification issues. Diversity should make for an exciting and vibrant environment and should be embraced, but in the context of ceramics, which has no established critical framework to manage this diversity, this has resulted in an identity crisis within the field and a general feeling of confusion amongst its practitioners. Ceramic practice appears restricted when compared to contemporary art, design and even other craft-based art practices such as textile art. This research aims to extend current boundaries of practice and to identify alternative creative and critical strategies.

Within the broader context of the visual arts, the field of ceramics is understood and classified as craft, an applied art, as “other” to fine art and of little value within
fine art’s hierarchies. Although primarily located in the context of craft, the field of ceramics spans the fields of art, craft and design. In my own art practice, I have always had an interest in the limits of those practices and my practice actively explores the boundaries which separate and define the fields. My background is in ceramic design and although I now operate as an artist, I continue to have a relationship with ceramics, as well as with craft and design. This research therefore does not propose to simply adopt a fine art model, but rather it seeks to embrace elements from all three disciplines and asks what can the fields of art and design offer ceramics and craft?

This research is practice-based and employs art practice as the main research method and methodology. By adopting this approach, this research is in a unique position to make an intervention in the fields of writing and practice. I felt that it was important that practitioners become involved in the writing and ownership of their practice in order to help shape its theoretical and critical agendas. This research aims to investigate present positions in order to identify possible future pathways for ceramics. It aims to expose ceramics’ ways of thinking in order to introduce new concepts & perspectives on the subject and to offer alternative creative strategies.

The research begins with a contextual review. Firstly, I will review the literature in the field of ceramics and craft. I will go on to examine the area of contemporary ceramic practice, identifying the different areas and genres of practice and the methods and approaches employed. In the next chapter 1.3, I will provide an overview of contemporary art and design discourse, to include a discussion about the limitations of ceramics when compared with contemporary art and design.

As the field of ceramics is primarily understood in the context of craft, the next section of the thesis will examine this context. I will explore the meaning of craft, identifying how craft is defined and classified, consumed and valued. This research seeks to identify craft’s ways of thinking and its codes and conventions of practice.
The results and conclusions of this phase of the research form the basis for the Practice Manifesto which is presented in Chapter 3.1. This chapter identifies the methods, issues and approaches the practical research adopted. I will then focus on the area of practice-based research in art and design. Artistic methods and methodologies are identified and critically discussed. This section will conclude with a summary of my chosen research methods and methodologies.

In the final section of the thesis, I will present the results of the practical research, a series of new works entitled About Ceramics... This will be followed by a critical discussion and analysis of the work and the issues it raises, to include an examination of the context of the home and the everyday. Ideas about the value and status of objects and about the social role of the domestic object will be critically discussed. Finally, I will present my conclusions, proposing an alternative theoretical and critical framework for ceramics and a hybrid model for practice.
SECTION 1. CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

This review aims to provide a critical overview of the key issues facing the discipline of ceramics. It will identify the major concerns and debates within the field of contemporary ceramics and ceramic art practice from the point of view of writing as well as practice. As such, this will be a contextual rather than a traditional literature review.

The paucity of literature within the field of craft theory and criticism is widely acknowledged and the discipline is lacking what would usually be described as the "key texts" of a field. The literature is dominated by practical, technical and historical accounts of the discipline and, although this material will be considered within the remit of the review, it will not be critically discussed here. This review will be selective, focusing on literature relating to the field of ceramic/craft theory and criticism.

The research will examine published material from 1970-2004, focusing on a British context, although key international (English language) texts and practice will also be discussed. The research will identify the strategies and methodological assumptions employed within ceramics and craft writing and criticism, identifying any gaps in the literature.

The review will then focus on the context of ceramics and contemporary ceramic practice. This will include a brief history of the fields of contemporary ceramics and ceramic art, exploring their origins and evolution to date.

The thesis will employ the following acronyms/abbreviations:

CC  Contemporary ceramics
CA  Ceramic art
FA  Fine art

The review will identify the different areas of practice and the terms, definitions and creative strategies employed. As there are a number of competing discourses operating within the field of ceramics, when reviewing the relevant literature, the
review will focus on the field of Ceramic Art practice; although relevant material relating to the broader contexts of ceramics and craft will also be discussed and major developments documented. This research will attempt to resolve the problems associated with the diverse and often contradictory discourses operating in ceramics - by exposing them. It will not therefore present an exhaustive genealogical account, but will instead attempt to offer a critical review of the crucial issues facing the discipline.

Finally, the review will examine the contemporary context: key developments and trends, as well as current positions within contemporary art, craft and design practices will be identified and critically discussed. I will explore how contemporary art and design discourses have engaged with craft and ceramic ideas, materials and processes. To conclude, the review will compare current positions in ceramics with those in other contemporary art, design and craft practices.
1.1 CERAMIC & CRAFT THEORY AND CRITICISM

Gap in the literature

The lack of a critical and theoretical framework within ceramics and the crafts in general is widely acknowledged and there are few texts dedicated to the subject of craft theory. This has meant that a few writers and theorists have dominated the discourse. Bernard Leach has had a pre-eminent impact on the construction of a particular canon through *A Potter’s Book* of 1940, one of the earliest attempts to create a handbook. Leach’s book undoubtedly had, and continues to have, a massive impact on ceramic practice, and although Leach attempts to combine ceramic theory with practice, I would suggest that it has limited relevance to practitioners today in terms of theory. Rawson’s *Ceramics* first published in 1971 also unites ceramics theory and practice and can be considered as the next serious attempt to produce “a ceramics handbook” to replace Leach’s original (De Waal, 2003). The gap of thirty years between the publication of these two titles - and the fact that they both remain in print - is indicative of the paucity of writing in the field. Moreover, the field of ceramics and craft are renowned for their lack of engagement with theory itself. Metcalf notes craft’s reluctance to embrace theoretical concerns:

“Where modern art is defined by theory, post-war craft has avoided it.” (Metcalf, 1993, p.40)

Pamela Johnson (1998, p.17) concurs, describing the 1980s as a “theory free zone”. The majority of critical and theoretical writing in the field has occurred since the 1990s and although the field continues to gain momentum, where an increase in the quantity and quality of craft writing has been noted (Hill, 1997); available material is nonetheless limited.

James Evans (1998) also notes the absence of theoretical texts in crafts and identifies only 8 titles in the previous 11 years. Peter Dormer represents a quarter of this output, reflecting his important and significant contribution to the field. Dormer has published numerous books and papers on the crafts: his writings were catalytic in the recognition of particular new forms of craft practice in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s. He suggested that the lack of a theoretical and critical structure for crafts writing and practice was due to the fact that when compared to other art
forms, CC was still a young art (Dormer, 1994a) and as such, had not yet fully developed as a discipline.

Dormer employs ideas about tacit-knowledge as a framework for talking and writing about crafts. He is conservative in approach and is suspicious of difference and of new types of practice. For example he talks about the "sculptural ambitions" (Dormer, 1994b, p.194) of ceramics and laments the rise to dominance of CA practice to the neglect of studio pottery. Dormer’s position is protective both of the discipline and of the idea of skill itself, he relentlessly championed craft skills and traditions locating craft as a "practical philosophy" (Dormer, 1997, p.219). He argues that craft and theory do not mix; that craft is "non-conceptual" and therefore can not be put into words. Craft thus becomes defined as anti-theory. His last publication before his death was The Culture of Craft in 1997. Dedicated to the "exploration of the philosophy of craft", it is presented as a collection of essays, divided into 3 sections: The Status of Craft, The Challenge of Technology and Writing about the Crafts. Dormer employs an interdisciplinary approach, employing writers and approaches from the fields of anthropology, economics, literary studies, history, sociology and philosophy.

Although Dormer himself remains defensive and protective of craft skills and traditions, The Culture of Craft is an important text which addresses the crucial issues facing contemporary crafts practice. Most crucially it indicates that there is a "culture of craft" to be taken seriously.

Paul Greenhalgh takes on many of the arguments that Dormer rehearses and conceptualises them differently. In his The Persistence of Craft: The Applied Arts Today (2002) he provides a more recent example of contemporary craft theory and criticism. Noting that there is a protective rather than critical stance within craft writing he states that:

"... in the past craft too often has been described in restrictive and defensive rather than inclusive and expansive terms." (Greenhalgh, 2002, p.1)

To counter this, he does not employ a particular theoretical or methodological position or standpoint, but instead employs a more generalist, overview perspective. Greenhalgh states the main aim of this book is to explore:
"... key issues, ideas and developments that have been current on the international scene over the last 15 years or so." (Greenhalgh, 2002, p.2)

Greenhalgh describes this time as a "turbulent period" for the crafts and identifies 13 major issues that have dominated crafts for the last 30 years as follows:

1. Classification
2. Economy
3. Amateurism
4. Technology
5. Morality
6. Ethnicity
7. Place
8. Domesticity
9. Museology
10. Gender
11. History
12. Modernity
13. Quality

Undoubtedly these are areas for concern and debate within ceramics and craft practice, but it is not clear if Greenhalgh is proposing that these 13 areas constitute an appropriate critical framework for practice today. Although useful, many of the areas identified by Greenhalgh over-lap and inter-relate. For example Greenhalgh cites Domesticity as an area of concern but neglects to connect it with ideas about feminism, gender politics or women's work. Greenhalgh also argues that the consumption and display of "ornamental objects" create "places" - that ceramic/craft objects give a sense of place - but he does not further explore these ideas in the context of taste, consumption and material culture. More importantly, Greenhalgh has not included writing, theory and criticism in his list of concerns. Although many of the issues raised by Greenhalgh will be examined by this study, I do not propose to adopt these discrete areas as a framework for the research.

Taking their lead from Dormer, recent approaches have been to locate arguments in the context of craft skill and ideas about tacit knowledge. For example, James Evans takes this position in his paper Significant Work: Towards a Framework for
the Understanding of Craft (1998), where notions of work and ideas about bodily intelligence are compared with FA practices. Much of the literature employs this approach in an attempt to legitimise craft via the championing of skill and tacit knowledge. I would argue they do so to the neglect of our understanding about how crafts are consumed and understood. Although this work contributes to our understanding about craft production, there are few examples of writing and research that explores the consumption of craft.

Garth Clark (2003) also notes that ceramic theory, criticism and research are under-represented and under developed. He identifies the irony that, although ceramics has the longest art history of any discipline at 10,000 years (compared to painting at 600 years), ceramic history is not taught comprehensively. Despite craft’s rich and ancient history, and despite the fact that the crafts are culturally positioned to represent tradition, there is nonetheless an absence of an established craft canon as Sue Rowley notes:

“A student of the crafts is unlikely to find an explicit, cumulative, authoritative – albeit contested – consensus about which craftworks and crafts practitioners are canonical, in the sense of having contributed significantly to the history of their practice and having influenced the work of those who followed them.” (Rowley, 1997, p.xviii)

Ceramic Criticism

Ceramics criticism itself tends to be descriptive or technical, with the majority of writing being a “celebratory description rather than analysis” (Johnson, 2001, p.32). This basic duality (description or analysis) is at the heart of the issue of the identity of ceramic criticism. Though some writers like Richard Zakin defend the descriptive bias in writing stating:

“I feel that description is good and can tell us a lot.” (Zakin, 1999, p.276)

Other commentators lament this situation. Clark (2003) identifies craft criticism as personal, poetic, vaguely defined and open to widest possible meanings. Ronald Kuchta also identifies the gap in criticism:

“The need for art critics to address ceramics and to think about this contemporary art form critically and analytically not just descriptively, historically and technically…” (Kuchta, 2002, p.84)

Bruce Metcalf (1993, p.41) notes the visual bias in craft literature and cites two surveys of 20th century jewellery which in total included only 51 pages of text but
260 photographs. Although an image bias is to be expected within the visual arts, crafts literature is lacking in writing, criticism and theory, especially when compared to literature within the fine arts.

Clark (2003) trenchantly categorises three major attitudes within ceramics writing. He calls the first the “Artsy-Craftsy” School indicated by a romantic approach with high sentiment and much discussion of glazes. The second he refers to as “Half-baked Esotericism”. Here there is vague, unsubstantiated language derived from FA. It is characterised by amateur art-historians ignoring the genres of ceramics and its traditions. The third tendency is that of “The Buddy System”, where texts are written by friends and where nepotism and self-congratulatory references abound. He identifies in this tendency that:

“It remains a fallacy that one must know the man or woman before one can write about their objects.” (Clark, 2003, p.369)

This is a trend also noted by Tony Hepburn:

“The tradition of bon-amis between clay workers was not conducive to incisive criticism.” (Hepburn, 1980, p.42)

Gary Kornblau compares ceramics and FA criticism:

“Ceramics criticism usually contents itself with the formal analysis of a work. Little discussion is made of the role contemporary ceramics play in the culture at large - to its current status as luxury items, or its original functional purposes. Art criticism, on the other hand, is obsessed with social context, to the extent that art reviews often make little mention of the actual artworks involved, and instead carries on about the context in which the art object has been placed.” (Kornblau, 1995, p.18)

Kornblau also identifies insecurities within ceramics, where critics aim to attribute a higher status (FA) status to ceramics:

“Oftentimes, ceramics critics strive to better the position of their craft (e.g. Woodman having been described as having "moved beyond craft")...It's as if the ceramic critic treats pots as having an identity crisis: They are of value because of their engagement with a ceramics tradition, but that engagement is overlooked in an attempt to pretend they are something else entirely - namely, paintings or sculptures that just happen to be made out of clay.” (Kornblau, 1995, p.18)

The lack of rigorous criticism within the field is often acknowledged within the literature but seldom acted upon. Metcalf also notes how the field often fails to employ critical ideas successfully, where craft “borrows ideas uncritically” from art. Metcalf goes on:
“The paucity of thinking and writing on craft has led to a vacuum in debate and standards.” (Metcalf, 1993, p.41)

The absence of established standards of quality and a distinct language for ceramics and craft (as FA has) has been identified (Clark, Metcalf et al). However, Clark warns not to employ FA or decorative art models but calls for the crafts to create a new model. Clark (2003) suggests an art critic of today should have:

1. Knowledge of ceramic history (as ceramic artists employ some reference to tradition of materials)
2. Knowledge of contemporary art history (even in a broad sense – as artists function within FA mainstream/fringes)
3. A capacity to make abstract connections out of broadly based knowledge, objectivity, intuition, integrity.

The Art vs. Craft Debate

Classification issues and the arts/craft debate have dominated craft writing and practice for the last three decades. In Clement Greenberg’s keynote speech to the Transactions of the Ceramics Symposium of 1979, he highlighted concerns about the classification and status of CA as FA. Disappointingly, little has changed during the 25 years since Greenberg’s address and anxieties over the status of ceramic art continue.

Howard Risatti (2001) identifies Slivka’s 1961 article The New Ceramic Presence as seminal - an early attempt to rectify craft’s low status and to cast craft “in a new light”. Slivka (1961) urged craft to embrace the already existing critical and theoretical discourses of the art world. Risatti refers to Slivka’s approach as the “no separation” argument - that there is no difference between art and craft. He argues that the majority of crafts practices pursued this goal, claiming that there are no distinctions or separations between the fields. Throughout the 1980s, the literature followed this trend, declaring the arts versus craft debate over. Metcalf also identifies the trend within the crafts to:

“... declare that the conflict between art and craft is dead, that the struggle has been won, that craft is art.” (Metcalf, 1993, p.40)

This approach continues to be employed today and I would argue that it has contributed to the confusion and anxieties within the discipline. CA has still not
emerged as a vital force within the visual arts, and has failed to become what Clark describes as a “convincing sculptural genre” (Greenberg, 1980, p.2) which competes on equal terms with contemporary fine art practices. However, Risatti makes the important distinction that claims for the “no separation” argument:

“... were made mostly by people in the craft field.” (Risatti, 2001, p.63)

By the 1990s, the art vs. craft debate was no longer considered relevant, where the mere mention of it seems an obvious annoyance to the majority in the field. Greenhalgh (2002) notes that the 1990s were characterised by “interdisciplinarity” and a “desire to set an intellectual agenda” and argues there has been a shift away from classification anxieties:

“An interesting aspect of the classification debate during the course of the 1990’s has been a shift in emphasis from the ideology of negative complaint (why am I not treated like an artist?) to an integrationalist spirit (what does it matter as long as I create and communicate?” (Greenhalgh, 2002, p.3)

This attitude may be true amongst some students and practitioners, however I would argue that, although the situation has improved, the majority of CA practice is not embraced by the FA world. The fact that the literature still feels the need to assert this position i.e. to keep stating that the art vs. craft debate is not important, is evidence that issues of classification and status continue to cause concern within the field. Risatti argues that the important issue in craft is not classification but status, he urges craft not to adopt a fine art agenda and instead calls for the development of an argument based on:

“... the unique and inherent values of craft itself... a way of revealing the theoretical and critical ground upon which metaphorical values of craft can be constructed and understood without succumbing to the aura of Fine Art.” (Risatti, 2001, p.68)

Risatti notes how, in the context of the rejection of Greenbergian formalism and the emergence of the “New Relativism”, the “no separation” argument i.e. that art and craft are the same is:

“... unsatisfactory for both Craft and Fine Art. For, without explanation, the argument implies that, on the one hand, either it is unnecessary to understand formally and conceptually exactly what is referred to when speaking of Craft and Fine Art. Or, on the other hand, that formally and conceptually Craft and Fine Art are exactly the same enterprises.” (Risatti, 2001, p.65)

Risatti argues that an understanding of the formal and conceptual basis of things is essential to their recognition. In order to understand what craft and art are we
must examine craft as a practice internally and externally in relation to art. When this is done, Risatti argues, critical and theoretical differences will emerge:

"... differences based on essential and fundamental aspects inherent to Craft as an activity and as a unique class of objects." (Risatti, 2001, p.68)

This research intends to explore these differences.

Knowledge & Power
The majority of the material reviewed has been identified from within ceramics and craft texts, conference papers, reports, exhibition catalogues and selected journal articles. Much of this literature (particularly the conference papers, reports and research studies) has been commissioned, funded, and/or published by the Crafts Council.

The Crafts Council appears to have a monopoly on crafts writing. Pamela Johnson (2001) notes that since the 1970s, most writing on the crafts has taken place in Crafts magazine and in Crafts Council exhibition catalogues. Harrod (1999) notes criticisms and charges of elitism against Crafts magazine (under Martina Margetts) for excluding traditional crafts. The Crafts Council has also been accused of being a "cultural gatekeeper" (Harrod, 1999, p.423) who had the power to decide who should be (officially) recognised as a maker and should not.

The majority of surveys of the crafts have been commissioned by and/or published by the Crafts Council. These studies tend to be located within socio-economic or educational contexts, notably Bruce and Filmer (1983) and the follow up surveys Knott (1994) and Crafts Council (2004). These surveys are nonetheless important and often provide the only available data about the lives and activities of craftspeople in England and Wales. Andrew Jackson also identifies the power imbalance in evidence within crafts writing, noting:

"... an indifference to structures of power inherent in subject matter". (Jackson, 1997, p.287)

Jackson provides the only example within the surveyed literature which questions the power structures operating within the crafts. He notes the dominance within the literature of a particular canon which has been identified as legitimate:

"There does seem to be a remarkably limited set of theoretical standpoints being bought to bear on craft activity and in particular there is a paucity of work
on how power structures work within crafts. The system within which the crafts circulate is subject to the same complex social strategies as exist in any other area of material culture. Systems of hierarchy and value are created and sustained in order to distinguish and rank crafts-people, crafts objects and the groups of people who consume those artefacts.” (Jackson, 1997, p.287)

As Jackson identifies, areas of practice have been and continue to be excluded from the canon by the dominant powers in operation within the discipline.

As the majority of writing is funded and controlled by the Crafts Council (including Crafts) or by Ceramic Review, our understanding of CC practice is very much created and controlled by these privileged and dominant areas. This study therefore proposes to expose these dominant power structures in order to make way for change and contestation.

**Methodological Assumptions & Approaches**

As I have identified, most craft writing employs a limited set of methods and is often rooted in a technical or historical context, or in arguments in favour of tacit knowledge. Methodologically, craft writing has a tendency to ignore recent developments within contemporary art and culture (theory and practice) and tends to use references to them selectively to bolster intellectual credibility. For example, ideas about consumption and the de-materialisation of the object, although common currency within art discourses, have yet to infiltrate the crafts canon. Studies of consumption and of material culture, although crucial to our understanding of ceramics within a social context, have been largely ignored by the field.

There are surprisingly few feminist accounts of craft practice specifically, although many important texts relating to crafts practices can be found within the fields of art and design practice and history (e.g. A View from the Interior by Attfield and Kirkham, 1989). The first major feminist account of crafts practice is Women and Craft (Elinor, Richardson et al., 1987) which unveils the previously hidden histories of craft practice and craft makers, identifying craft as women’s work, undervalued and often overlooked. More recently, Vincentelli’s (2000a) Women and Ceramics provides a survey of women’s ceramics, exploring issues of gender within a ceramics context. Vincentelli identifies specific female ceramic traditions, focussing on the contribution women have made to the development of ceramic
traditions across different cultures; exploring the impact of domesticity as well as women’s role in the display and consumption of ceramics.

Although there have been nods towards an acceptance of cultural and critical theory, the majority of craftspeople do not see the theorisation of crafts as a good thing. For example, Johnson is suspicious of contemporary sociological and anthropological approaches to craft practice and research:

“Current critical writing about the crafts seeks not to make us connoisseurs of the object, but rather anthropologists of ourselves.” (Johnson, 1998, p.139)

Brown (1997, p.5) also takes this view, describing cultural studies as “predatory”. However, Brown also notes that the crafts have encouraged their misrepresentation as “ethnographic curiosities”. Lesley Jackson states that the crafts:

“… have been invaded by cultural theorists and their dreaded jargon” (Jackson, 1997, p.284).

Johnson calls for the legitimising of craft skills and materials within the broader context of the visual arts:

“Encouraging critical debate within the field is now of less importance. I would argue that ”craft criticism” now means inserting the language of materials and making into established interdisciplinary debates.” (Johnson, 2001, p.35)

Despite the validity of this approach, I would argue that by effectively discouraging critical debate within the field, Johnson is reinforcing the view that the crafts are incapable of, and do not want to be subject to, serious critique. (This anti-critical, anti-theory position which characterises the crafts will be further explored in Section 2: The Meaning of Craft).

Focus on Consumption – Losing Autonomy

Andrew Jackson (1998) notes that most craft writing (and I would suggest most practice) is focused on production rather than on consumption and attempts to redress this imbalance in his paper Furniture Makers and the World of Goods: The role of material culture studies in the theorisation of designer-maker practice. Unusually for crafts writing, Jackson focuses on the relationship between objects and people rather than the characteristics of objects themselves.

Sociologist June Freeman provides one of the few texts which explore crafts from a socio-cultural perspective. In her paper The Discovery of the Commonplace or
Establishment of an Elect, Freeman (1989) argues that crafts must engage in debates about the social role of culture and also identifies the lack of any theorised approach to the analysis of material culture. Although located in an Australian context, Craft and Contemporary Theory (Rowley, 1997) is a much welcome contribution to the field and provides a range of methodological perspectives on crafts writing. John Barrett-Lennard (1997) looks at the role of crafts in the museum, where he identifies the museum audience as a passive audience. Narrative traditions in crafts are explored by Sue Rowley (1997) who links performance and storytelling with craft production and consumption. Annette Blonski (1997) looks at the representation of crafts and craft makers in the cinema whilst Wood Conroy and Trevorrow (1997) explore notions of Aboriginality and “bad aboriginal art” within aboriginal craft practice. Rowley notes the positive impact of studies of domestic life on craft theory as well as the recent developments of post-colonial perspectives on craft writing.

Clark (2001) identifies the lack of research on the ceramics marketplace and advocates this area as a topic for further research and also for inclusion in the ceramics curriculum. An example of research in this area includes Gloria Hickey’s study Craft within a Consuming Society (1997) which examines the consumers and the craft marketplace in Canada. Drawing on the work of Daniel Miller (1987), Hickey explores ideas about consumption, looking at how we “creatively use objects as tools for self-expression” (1997, p.84) in the context of the consumption of crafts as giftware.

Craft’s main area of contention seems to surround ideas about the autonomy of the object. Jackson (1997) notes that cultural theory refuses to treat the object as an autonomous entity - whereas the crafts want their objects to speak for themselves. He identifies that craft products have become:

“... realigned as signifiers of lifestyle, or cultural capital, rather than as items of utility. They signify status through aesthetic distinction, and as such become more highly prized than the former utilitarian products of craft industry.”

(Jackson, 1997, p.288)

The idea that crafts act as signifiers of lifestyle and cultural capital within our consumer society is in contradistinction with traditional craft values. It appears that to accept this premise, would be tantamount to the crafts signing their own death
warrant. Despite the aforementioned exceptions, crafts writing appears to have chosen a strategy which simply ignores contemporary theories.

Theoretical & Critical Debate

Risatti (2001) identifies how the well-established critical discourses surrounding fine art create an intellectual framework which allowed for arts transformation to become an intellectual and conceptual activity. By contrast, the crafts are:

“... woefully lacking in similar theoretical support.” (Risatti, 2001, p.63)

The relationship between the literature of an art form and its influence on the art practice it serves has been well documented (Becker, 1984). Practice needs a critical literature in order to stimulate and sustain that practice. In his Introduction to Writing about the Crafts, Dormer (1997) identifies writing as an important part of an art form’s acceptance in the artworld, an example being the acceptance of video art within fine art. He notes that it is the development of an appropriate art theory and the nurturing of specialist writers which enables this acceptance. Clark also notes the important relationship between writing, criticism and practice:

“I believe that there is a relationship between the level of art that is shown, and the level of academic support it is given. The better the academics, the better the art.” (Clark, 2003, p.368)

Brown also identifies the growing importance of theory within craft education and the pressures to include it within university curriculum:

“To theorise a practical endeavour in a university, whether it be nursing or knitting, is to raise its status and gain professional autonomy for its practitioners. A field of practice seeking ratification within the university curriculum must either theorise itself, mutate into some other theoretical discipline, or be excluded.” (Brown, 1997, p.3)

Rowley notes how a lack of writing can result in alienating practitioners:

“In contrast to the perception that the crafts are wedded to tradition, emerging crafts practitioners are likely to feel estranged from histories of their practice.” (Rowley, 1997, p.xx)

Rowley identifies the lack of scholarly activity within crafts but argues against the creation of a craft canon. She notes that the formation of a canon in any discipline is reliant on relationships to power within the institutions which regulate notions of taste and value. As such, the canon functions as an instrument of exclusion.
The lack of a critical framework within the crafts has resulted in a generation of art-craft practitioners who are critically ill-equipped to function within the context of FA, and who would be unable to withstand the rigours of FA criticism as Clark notes:

"Our inability to deliver this kind of academic rigour combined with an almost pre-natal hostility to art theory, leaves ceramics inarticulate and unconvincing when we try to enter ceramics into the debate of defining the visual art mainstream." (Clark, 1998, p.11)

Contrary to the dominant anti-theory positioning of much of crafts' literature, in a recent Crafts Council survey “critical debate” was highlighted as an area in particular need of development (Crafts Council, 2004). Crafts practitioners are now dissatisfied with the lack in this area. Perhaps historically practitioners have not needed nor asked for this type of intellectual support. I would argue that there is a new generation of practitioners who need a different kind of critical support and this generational perspective is often missing from the canon.

**Practice & Practice-Based Research**

If the crafts are being misrepresented, then it is important that practitioners become involved in the writing and theorising on their subject. Alison Britton, who was among the pioneers of new CC movement, provides one of a few examples of practitioners who are also involved in writing about their discipline. Her Maker’s Eye essay (Britton, 1981) is considered an important piece of ceramics writing, thought to encapsulate her generation’s concerns. However, Harrod (1997) highlights the lack of practitioners’ involvement in writing as an area for concern, noting that most of the papers written for the Obscure Objects of Desire conference for example, were written by non-practitioners.

Freeman also warns that practice alone is not enough:

"Cultural artefacts and their makers are by themselves powerless to affect their acceptance as art and artists but need a social backup system to establish public credence." (Freeman, 1989, p.64)

Freeman argues that without a social back-up system (i.e. literature and the media), the status of a practice will not change. Dormer also notes the importance of the written text and argues that only the written text, because of its higher status, can have any (cultural) effect - whereas the crafts, which may provide freedom to earn a living and a way of life, have no effect. He notes the most
important writing for craftsmen and artists is the catalogue essay, which he argues:

“… exists as a form of propaganda.” (Dormer, 1997, p. 15)
However, Dormer goes on to argue that as craft writing only affects those within the crafts world, it achieves nothing outside that world, and that:

“… no amount of writing can reverse a cultural trend.” (Dormer, 1997. p.15)
Rosemary Hill concurs, noting that although the crafts have no shortage of “perfectly sound writing” - the issue is that it has no effect upon wider debates within visual arts.

In conclusion, I have identified a lack of theoretical and critical approaches to writing about ceramics and the crafts. I have identified that encouraging debate and establishing critical frameworks within the field is of urgent importance, where the discipline must engage with contemporary debates and embrace wider cultural and social contexts. I have also identified a gap in the literature in relation to knowledge about the audience and marketplace for ceramics, particularly in relation to its consumption.

The gaps identified within the literature, I would argue are also evident within the practice. In the following chapter, therefore I will examine the context of contemporary ceramic practice.
1.2 CERAMICS CONTEXT

I will begin this chapter with a brief identification of the key definitions and terms used. I will identify the areas of practice which constitute the field of contemporary ceramics before charting the history of the field and its evolution to date. The specific area of ceramic sculpture or ceramic art practice will then be explored in greater depth. I will identify the art forms and genres currently in operation within CA practice. The research will examine how CA practice has been categorised, criticised and documented; particularly in relation to the creative strategies employed. Finally, current positions, including the problems of diversity within ceramics will be identified and critically discussed.

CC and CA Practice - Definitions & Terms

The terms contemporary ceramics and ceramic art are problematic as they encompass a diversity of practices which, apart from the material clay, have little in common. Contemporary ceramics is a generic term referring to a range of practices which includes art-based, craft-based and design-based ceramics as the table below identifies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ART</th>
<th>CRAFT</th>
<th>DESIGN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ceramic Art</td>
<td>Studio Pottery</td>
<td>Ceramic Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramic sculpture: Traditional pottery</td>
<td>Domestic Pottery/ Ware Functional- ware</td>
<td>Industrial Ceramics (Tableware, decorative sculpture, gift ware)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vessel-based, Non-functional Abstract, Modernist Figurative Post-modernist Installation Performance</td>
<td>Art Pottery</td>
<td>Architectural Ceramics Tiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-functional</td>
<td>Non-functional pottery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the lack of an established critical framework or taxonomy, categorising and discussing CC and CA practice becomes a difficult task. There is a tendency within the literature to take a generalist approach to documenting practice, often
categorising work either by its methods of production or according to its visual 
aesthetics and references. For example, in *The New Ceramics*, Dormer (1994b) 
identifies only two approaches: that of the thrown and the constructed. These 
categories relate to how the work was made, rather than in relation to any content 
or meaning. In *Contemporary Porcelain*, Lane (1995) divides the work into 
sculptural objects and vessel forms. Lane’s category “Vessel Forms” includes both 
functional and non-functional work. Surely the non-functional, vessel-based work 
would be better served under the sculpture category. One could also argue that, 
as a lot of functional work never actually gets used (for its intended function) but 
instead is used for purely decorative/ aesthetic purposes, that all vessel forms are 
therefore sculpture.

**CA and Ceramic Sculpture**
The term CA is generally used in relation to the field of ceramic sculpture (art-
based, non-functional), however it is also used in reference to ceramic practice as 
a whole i.e. the ceramic arts (which encompasses all practices including craft-
based, functional work). This study is not concerned with functional or craft-based 
pottery and ceramics. This research will instead focus on the field of ceramic 
sculpture and ceramic art practice (although non-functional, vessel-based work is 
also included in the art/ sculpture category).

In the foreword of Philip Rawson’s *Ceramics*, Wayne Higby categorises ceramic 
art as follows:

“... ceramic art may include a broad range of utilitarian and symbolic forms as 
long as these forms have their roots in pottery materials, methods, and a 
compositional order evolved from the act of containing space.” (Rawson, 1984, 
pp.xiii-xiv)

Rawson argues that to be CA the work must include ceramic methods, materials 
and symbolic forms or be about the containment of space. According to Rawson, if 
the work does not include these elements - it is not ceramic art.

I will attempt to identify additional areas and forms within CA practice which are 
not vessel-based (although may contain vessels). This distinction is often absent 
within the literature. Identified genres within CA and sculpture are usually 
inconsistent and descriptive rather than referring to content, context or artistic
intention. Identified genres and categories are therefore often unhelpful. For example, in a Crafts Council survey of 1994 (Knott, 1994), the categories of ceramic sculpture are identified and listed as: Birds, Animals, Figures, Buildings, Hand-modelled and Cast. This hardly represents the diversity of ceramic sculpture. The main areas of CA practice as identified within the literature can be listed as follows:

- Figurative
- Abstract/ Modernist
- Traditional
- Vessel-based
- Post-modernist
- Installation

Many of the above categories however could be argued to be styles rather than art forms but the literature often classifies practice in this way. A more detailed discussion of the specific approaches and themes in CA practice follows later in the chapter.

**Origins of CC and CA: Emergence of the ‘new ceramics’**

The field of CC properly emerged in Britain in the 1970s, although the seeds of the movement were sown during the 1950s and 60s, influenced by trends within the fine arts at that time and particularly the work of Picasso. The term CC was used to describe a new breed of ceramics which rejected traditional ideas about skill, technique, function and utility. Discarding the potter’s wheel for hand-built techniques, this new area of practice “new ceramics” (Dormer, 1994b) gave birth to the areas of non-functional ceramics and ceramic art/ sculpture. The majority of this work focused on the vessel form and introduced asymmetry to a previously wheel-bound aesthetic. Studio pottery evolved into an art form, but as Dormer notes, to the neglect of the studio potter. This trend for experimentation can also be seen across other crafts practices during this period for example in jewellery and in textile art (Greenhalgh, 2002).
The infrastructure of the field began to be established at this time when specialist ceramics galleries and journals began to emerge. For example, Andrew Brighton notes the significance of the creation of Crafts magazine in 1973, providing the context around which:

"... the critical and scholarly culture of craft as art would grow." (Brighton, 1985)

This new breed of art-based, as opposed to a craft-based ceramic practice, endeavoured to forge a path towards FA legitimacy. Dormer notes this shift from thrown pottery to hand-building and sculpture:

"Since the mid 1980's the craft of ceramics has continued to change into a form of "fine art" ..... The functional potter is overshadowed by the steady emergence of the ceramic sculptor." (Dormer, 1994b, p.194)

During the 1980s practice moved further away from function, rejecting traditional methods and techniques for the introduction of post-modern aesthetics and ideas. The period witnessed a boom in the marketplace for CC and new CC galleries were established as private patronage boomed, reflecting the political and economic climate of the time.

There were severe criticisms of the "new ceramics" which centred on issues of utility and status:

"Such works are not only quite useless and singularly unattractive to look at; they are also uninteresting. They are born out of the Late Modernist dogmas that novelty, rejection of tradition and uninhibited "questioning of the medium" are the essential, indeed the sole criteria of value." (Fuller, 1985, p.240)

CA became and continues to be the dominant practice within CC, much to the lament of traditional potters. For example, Mark Hewitt, a traditional potter in the USA, is critical of this type of ceramic work:

"I have a real problem with non-functional vessels. They seem to be a metaphor for cultures that don't work. Imagine going to get into a beautiful car and trying to open the door but you can't because it's designed only to "make a point" about openings. It may be interesting or witty for a minute, but then it seems pointless. Being purely decorative is a limited and vain function." (NCECA, 1995, p.17)

Many traditional potters felt betrayed by the Crafts Council's policy to include this art-based practice within their fold. For example, Fuller (1985) criticises the Crafts Council for supporting "such faddish novelties" which he describes as the:

"... pseudo cult of the Fine Artist Craft Person Ceramicist." (Fuller, 1985, p.244)
Fuller (1985, p.241) refers to Carol McNicoll’s work as “expensive, pretentious claptrap”. He goes on:

“The “Krazy Kat” generation, however, proceeded to produce "ceramic sculptures", and other works, whose sole raison d'etre seemed to be the violation of tradition and taboo.” (Fuller, 1985, p.259)

These tensions were heightened by the language used to endorse these new kinds of ceramic practice, and the claims made for them. It was felt that they were trying to gain acceptance as art (rather than craft), even though as Hepburn noted, ceramic sculpture was first received as “an eccentric spin-off from pottery” (Hepburn, 1980, p.41).

Two key exhibitions illustrated the fault-lines in ceramics at this time. The exhibition *Fast Forward* at the ICA in 1985 and *The Raw and the Cooked* at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford in 1993. In the accompanying catalogue to *Fast Forward*, Harrod talks about ceramics’ shared vocabulary with sculpture and highlights the importance of the symbolic over the functional. The landmark exhibition *The Raw and the Cooked* was ambitiously described by its curator Martina Margetts as “The coming of age of ceramic art in Britain” (Margetts, 1993, p.15). Margetts describes ceramic art as “thriving” in the climate of cultural relativism.

Dormer (1994b, p.8) distinguishes these types of pots from sculpture, noting that they are more akin to painting. This alignment with painting side stepped the conflict of parity with sculpture. Although boundaries within FA were dissolving at this time, CA practice failed to gain acceptance within a FA arena. I would argue that the majority of the work in this exhibition could not be compared favourably with contemporary sculpture of the time. That is not a value judgment; simply they are different endeavours with very different agendas. Indeed such commentators as Dormer argued that this was the moment to make distinctions clearer:

“I believe that ceramics is about pots and that ceramic sculpture should usually be considered alongside other sculpture… Sculpture is concerned with a much wider metaphorical and conceptual range than is normally expected of or possible in pottery.” (Dormer, 1994b, p.12)

Many in the field still felt that prejudices against craft hampered recognition of any part of ceramic practice, not withstanding its merits.
The efforts of studio craftspeople to get themselves accepted as artists are often wasted. Acceptance now depends on denying or subverting craft, or insisting that craft is the least important aspect of the work. Even then, a work in what is perceived to be a craft medium, such as clay or glass or textiles, is seldom accepted as art.” (Dormer, 1994a, p.27)

Dormer argues that art world hierarchies continue to marginalise craft and prevent them from becoming FA, and warns that CA will never gain acceptance as a FA due to prejudices against craft materials. Dormer identifies the impact of art’s prejudice on ceramics:

“There is a prejudice against clay as a sculptural medium. It has acquired too many down-market, non-intellectual associations.” (Dormer, 1994b, p.196)

He identifies the high value attributed to being an artist (rather than a craftsperson). As an artist, you are considered for important exhibitions and are worthy of media and critical coverage. However, to aim for FA acceptance and to seek FA status is looked down upon within ceramics.

“For European and North American makers of pots and other craft objects the "is it art?" question is a practical one of status that has to do with money: anything with the status of art is potentially more valuable than a thing without status. Moreover, people want the status of being an artist as a value in its own right.” (Dormer, 1997, p.6)

Dormer is pessimistic in his outlook for craft’s acceptance in the art world. As taste for art is driven by the critical and scholarly culture of art and the international art market, he argues that no amount of talking or writing by crafts writers and practitioners will affect their status. Only cultural politics and the art world economy which controls it can do that. Zakin concurs:

“The ceramic artist can never get the same coverage as an artist in the “fine arts.” (Zakin, 1999, p.275)

Metcalf also supports this view, calling for practitioners to relinquish their:

“... art-envy and stop aspiring to the alleged nobility of fine art.” (Metcalf, 1993, p.45)

Metcalf is fearful that the crafts will lose its identity and warns:

“Assimilation into art is deadly to craft and should be avoided.” (Metcalf, 1993, p.40)

Risatti also warns those craft practitioners making sculpture not to pretend that this work is craft: it is sculpture. To call this work craft, Risatti argues, is to:

“... undermine Craft’s identity to such an extent that Craft simply disappears: it forces craft to give up its identity for that of sculpture.”(Risatti, 2001. p.68)
These comments present the intellectual anxiety implicit in the analysis of how ceramics are valued. The achievement of more highly conceptual and theorised writing about ceramics (and the crafts) must not be at the expense of a loss of identity.

**Vessel-based (non-functional) Work**

Issues of identity are often explicitly aired in the debates within CA practice. The rhetoric around perceived function or abstracted function is an example in vessel-based ceramics. Talking about her own preoccupation with the vessel, Alison Britton notes:

“It is hard to explain my own inability to stop making vessels. It could be somehow inherent in the training of a potter, something one is lumbered with as part of the equipment. Or it could be that the inclusion of function is a crutch for one lacking the courage to make a piece of work that is entirely aesthetic; I may be clinging to the residue of use as a justification. Or I may have an irresistible (and fairly abstract) preoccupation with something very deep-rooted. Vessels are basic, archetypal, timeless.” (Britton, 1981, p.16)

This type of practice draws on the traditions and history of ceramics and specifically it explores ideas about function.

In a touring exhibition of vessel-based work in 1991, Houston (1991) identifies the “Abstract Vessel”. Houston defends this type of work for its familiarity to pottery, arguing that as such, it should not threaten the traditional ceramic audience. Houston identifies the impact of modernism and celebrates the historicism of this work. He does not engage with the “is it art?” debate but instead simply proposes a new genre of vessel-based ceramics. This genre is connected to the continued presence of modernism within ceramics and many artists continue to explore ideas about abstraction and abstract expressionism. Sculptural concerns about form, volume and the containment of space (for example the work of Gordon Baldwin) continue to feature strongly as Zakin identifies:

“Form and volume are the core issues in the ceramists' work. This gives the work a generous spirit, a lively and complex character. Because form and volume are such important parts of ceramics, those trained in clay feel that successful work in the medium demands sensitivity to these attributes.” (Zakin, 1999, p.271)

I would argue however, that there are obvious distinctions between vessel-based work (which is non-functional and which explores ideas about function) and other
art-based ceramic art/ sculpture (which may include vessels). However, these distinctions are often effaced.

**History, Tradition, Museology & Archaeology**

Another key area of CA practice lies with historicism, a dominant strategy of practice.

"Most potters are glad and grateful to be part of this unending tradition and proudly feel themselves to be part of its apparently unchanging nature." (Houston, 1991, p.12)

Zakin also highlights the importance of tradition within ceramic practice but argues that traditions should be united with contemporary concerns:

“The challenge to ceramists is to create work that is at once open to the currents of thought that are important in the contemporary art world and to remain sensitive to the character and traditions of the ceramic medium.” (Zakin, 1999, p.274)

Kuchta even argues that the inclusion of history actually defines the quality of the practice – where work which:

“... searches for meaning from the past either by suggesting a concern for the organic origins of life or by making references to memorable icons or symbols of the world’s art history.” (Kuchta, 2002, p.88)

Such work, Kuchta argues, contributes “most profoundly to the medium” (Kuchta 2002, p.88). According to Kuchta, the inclusion of either historical or organic references within the work - makes it “good” ceramic art. Kuchta also identifies the ceramic artist’s desire to be:

“... in closer touch with the essential forces of nature.” (Kuchta, 2002, p.92)

Ceramic’s fascination with nature is unsurprising given the material and CA practice continues to explore the organic, the archaic and primeval. This trend can be also be seen in the revival for wood/ anagama firing as noted in the US by Kuchta and also by Mansfield (1995) in Australia.

Kuchta links the fundamental nature of clay with origins of life questions and indeed clay seems an appropriate material to raise these concerns. He champions ceramic artists whose art “relates to a reflective, meditative time” rather than to a futuristic one. Surely this is a romanticised view of historicism taken to
the extreme. Kuchta goes on to identify that the “most creative” ceramic artists are those:

“... searching either the past in history or in nature for inspiration and answers to our present condition.” (Kuchta, 2002, p.92)

According to Kuchta, success in ceramics can only be achieved via history or via nature. This lumping together of the historic with the organic is typical of the carelessness of ceramic discourse.

Ideas about tradition and historicism in ceramics can be linked with ideas about the museum and museology. The status of ceramics and our understanding of ceramics have been largely established by institutions such as the museum; where ceramics are used to signify history, ethnicity, tradition and exercises in technique. Ideas about the display of ceramics have often been rooted in the museum rather than in the sphere of the domestic, something that my research will discuss later. However, Greenhalgh (2002) argues that crafts are intrinsically unsuited to museum display as they are intended for private consumption in informal places.

The impact of the museum and ideas about museology, archaeology and the history and display of ceramics are very much in evidence within contemporary CA practice. They are intimately connected to the field of installation, the site of which is often the museum and gallery.

New & Emerging Practices
In the last decade, installation has steadily emerged as a strong force within CA practice in Britain for example as seen in the work of Edmund de Waal and Clare Twomey. In addition, the area of performance has risen in prominence as have conceptual approaches such as in the work of Keith Harrison. Kuchta identifies how ceramic sculpture has grown:

“... in scale and adventurous sophistication.” (Kuchta, 2002, p.84)

However, the mainstream continues to be dominated by the same generation of practitioners, who have been dominant for the last twenty years. Although new types of practice are undoubtedly emerging, this area is currently under-
represented and under-promoted within the canon. The discourse around it is also slight.

In her article *Think About It*, Jo Dahn (2004) attempts to identify conceptual ceramic art as a “discrete genre”, but the examples she provides are conceptually lacking and her critique is limited. She selects artists who take “pleasure in making” (Dahn, 2004, p.36). By focusing on ceramics’ continued preoccupation with making and materials, Dahn draws attention away from the conceptual, thus reducing what is offered up as a “conceptual ceramic art” into a materials-based practice. This is not to discount the use of craft skill and materials within contemporary art practice. They are not mutually exclusive, but I would argue that any truly conceptual art practice must be primarily located within the context of ideas.

The impact of postmodernism has not been as marked in UK as it has been in the US for example, where post-modern ideas have been widely embraced. Although this trend peaked during the 1980s, it is arguably still a dominant area/ style of CA practice. Jorunn Veiteberg (1998) identifies post-modern influences on Norwegian CC practice noting the trend for kitsch in Norwegian ceramics, especially the use of stock transfers on blank ceramics /white-ware. Key themes in contemporary Norwegian ceramic practice also include: the use of pastiche; humour and irony; the sampling of everyday objects; the use of multiples; and the introduction of mixed media. These trends are also evident within CA practice across Europe, for example in the UK with Richard Slee (the use of the everyday/ found object) and Belgian artist Piet Stockmans (the use of multiples) and further afield the Japanese artist Nakamura Kimpei. Polish born artist Marek Cecula (now based in the US) is another example. His work explores industrial processes and the mass-produced object (Figure:1). Additional categories within postmodernism may also include the use of decoration and ornament as a creative strategy for example as seen in the work of Leopold Foulem (US).

As seen within the Brit Art of the 1990s, Kuspit (1998) also identifies the trend for “the spectacular” within CA practice, where shock tactics are employed and where the emphasis is placed on originality. Kuspit however is critical of this approach
arguing that ceramicists only employ this strategy because it is seen as the only way to gain attention and credibility. I would argue that the majority of artists seek attention and credibility. Contemporary ceramic artists seeking to innovate and move outside of dominant practice are often criticised by the discipline of ceramics and accused of copying art and of following art’s trends.

Zakin also identifies the art world’s influence on contemporary makers. Zakin (1999, p.274) argues that those ceramists who “would like to have their work look contemporary” are highly influenced by art world thinking, and are currently more supported than traditional ceramists. However, Zakin notes that these ideas are not “native to ceramics”. Zakin also notes that those interested in the avant-garde put a very high value on “looking current” and are wary of the emphasis placed on clay – acknowledging that a materials-centred approach is not valued by the art world. By equating the avant-garde with looking current Zakin appears to have missed the point. Once the avant-garde starts to look current – it has already become part of the mainstream.

Problematic of Practice
As identified above, the diversity of CC and CA practice and the lack of established categories and genres within the literature make it difficult to discuss and critique that practice, and I would argue this consequently makes it difficult to function as a practitioner within that context. The traditionalists within ceramics argue that practical skills are undervalued, neglected and out of fashion (Dormer, 1997); whilst the “art camp” wants boundaries broadened and perhaps even separation from the craft context. Tensions between being original and upholding skills and traditions continue to dominate CA and CC practice. There remains a crisis of tradition versus innovation.

As I have identified, innovation in ceramics is often limited to innovation in technique or use of materials and Dormer (1997) even argues that invention is simply not in craft’s agenda:

“Within the studio crafts the pattern tends to be that a person will find a form or a limited series of forms, and work year after year mining the same vein of possibilities, by extending the form or the methods of shaping or decorating the form cautiously and incrementally.” (Dormer, 1997, p.149)
Some would argue that a rooted-ness to history prevents ceramics embracing progress. Kuchta asks does tradition have a role in critique. I would say it has a place, but it should not be the dominant form of practice or critique. Metcalf urges that tradition in craft should be seen not as a restraining force or anchor but as a “rudder” (1993, p.44). Clark also identifies how working from an historical context makes it difficult to be original:

“But within ceramics one still finds a somewhat tortured ambivalence between the ambition of being a meaningful contemporary artists functioning on the medium’s edge, and on the other hand, reflecting a love of the medium’s tradition.” (Clark, 2003, p.358)

I propose that the “love” of the medium’s tradition can be reflected in many different and alternative ways, not necessarily confined by traditional forms or techniques. Metcalf also notes the distinctions between art and craft approaches:

“I believe there are important distinctions between craft and art. The clearest evidence I can point to is that when craftspeople and sculptors make sculpture, the results are different. Craft-based sculpture tends to be more decorative, more richly visual, more respectful of materials and process, but also less cognizant of the history of sculpture and art-world issues. I can only conclude that craft comprises of a different class of objects and springs from a different set of values and a separate historical consciousness. These differences are essential to craft, and they are in peril of being lost.” (Metcalf, 1993, p.40)

I would argue that traditional craft practices are separate from art practices and therefore should be viewed as separate genres. If craft traditions are indeed in danger of being lost, then those traditions need to find ways to make themselves more active and relevant. Greenhalgh urges that innovation must be embraced, warning that there can be no future for practices that are:

“… kept artificially live out of a sense of duty of false tradition.” (Greenhalgh, 1997b, p.105)

**Limited Form & Content**

Rob Kesseler identifies the lack of critical engagement within CA and its isolation from fine art agendas:

“The lack of serious critical discourse and awareness of contemporary Fine Art issues has led to a certain predictability and shallowness in much ceramic sculpture.” (Kesseler, 1993, p. 47)

Although new forms are now emerging, Koplos also identifies the limitations of practice and argues that the majority of ceramic artwork is about decoration and/or function, consisting of:
“... homeless objects that want to take up residence in the house of art but aren’t admitted, and so continue to take shelter under the roof held up by the two pillars of ceramic tradition, the functional and the decorative.” (Koplos, 1993, p.13)

Metcalf (1993, p.44) describes the majority of art-craft work as conceptually “empty” objects and notes how the non-functional object has become the “standard of achievement” especially in ceramics. Greenhalgh also notes the dominance of the vessel and its links with history:

“The clay vessels that survive imbue contemporary clay vessels with the concept of age. Innovation in ceramic practice is invariably achieved against the backdrop of unimaginable antiquity.” (Greenhalgh, 2002, p.10)

Merback concurs:

“The institutional strategy of asserting the primacy of the vessel over its vanguard antagonists succeeded by sheathing itself in theoretical naturalism and by making appeals to what might be called natural ceramics law. In the ceramics imagination, all radical antitraditionalisms are conjured away in order to assert the undeniable specificity of the vessel tradition to all work in clay.” (Merback, 1992, p.34)

In the following paragraphs therefore, I will examine the impact of diversity within ceramics and its associated problems.

Diversity & Classification – Art, Craft, Design?

As with ceramic practice (i.e. the objects), the terms used to describe practitioners are equally numerous, reflecting the diversity of approaches and attitudes currently in operation within the field as the table below shows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Craft</th>
<th>Art</th>
<th>Design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Craft Potter</td>
<td>Ceramic Artist</td>
<td>Ceramic Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio Potter</td>
<td>Ceramist</td>
<td>Designer-craftsman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potter</td>
<td>Ceramicist</td>
<td>Designer-maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist-potter</td>
<td>Ceramic sculptor</td>
<td>Product designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist-craftsperson</td>
<td>Clay artist</td>
<td>Industrial designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisan</td>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsperson</td>
<td>Sculptor</td>
<td>Batch Producer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftist</td>
<td>Maker</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CC practice exists across the three contexts of craft, art and design (as well as architecture) and therefore contains a number of competing and often contradictory discourses operating within the same field. Within each category of practice, there are further sub-categories and genres, many of which overlap. Within this diverse field, classification becomes important in order to separate and differentiate the different areas of practice – to make sense of it all.

Speaking about the American context, Garth Clark (2003) notes the impact of diversity on education where Clark argues that the sheer range of ceramic practice makes it impossible to teach. He criticises ceramics teaching as being inadequate and unaware of the marketplace for ceramics and where ceramics departments:

"... take on students who want to make stoneware pots, ritual vessels, figurative art installations, conceptual art, murals and almost anything else that can be made in clay. Obviously no department (and particularly not those in the under-staffed, under-educated and under-funded ceramics area) is equipped to teach students in all of these rather separate disciplines." (Clark, 2003, p.313)

Kate McIntyre (1998) also notes the gaps in education and that in her experience, craft students lack knowledge and understanding of the structures in which they operate.

Issues of diversity within CC practice have not been adequately dealt by the literature and although the problems associated with diversity are acknowledged, little has been done to offer an appropriate critical framework. In fact, all categories of ceramics continue to be talked about, written about and often displayed in the same context. For example the short list of artists selected for the Jerwood Prize for Ceramics in 2001 provides an example of the diversity within ceramics, where figurative, vessel-based and sculptural work are all represented. Although this provides evidence of some sense of democracy at work within the discipline, the inclusion of so many different types of practice with different agendas further contributes to the confusion and anxieties felt amongst practitioners.

DIVERSITY + NO CRITICAL FRAMEWORK = CONFUSION + IDENTITY CRISIS
Diversity should make for an exciting and vibrant environment and should be embraced. However, with no established critical structure to manage this diversity, this has led to a general feeling of confusion amongst practitioners who consequently lack the confidence to stride out from the norm. Veiteberg also identifies the multitude of craft practices and notes that, where art means everything and nothing, that craft is now in a similar situation to art.

“... but unlike in the case of fine art, the literature discussing this situation is highly sparse.” (Veiteberg, 2005, p.9)

In the foreword to A Secret History of Clay Christoph Grunenberg suggests that it is ceramic's diversity which may be to blame for its marginalisation and exclusion:

“The fact that clay is playful and democratic, and that it is impossible to categorise the range of work produced, may account for the medium's exclusion from traditional histories of art and accounts of Modernism, as well as from the artists’ own oeuvres. The "high unseriousness" for which critics such as Hilton Kramer attacked those working in clay consigned such works to the status of non-art, or "craft". “ (Tate, 2004, p.9)

Johnson also notes the diverse and contradictory practices and calls for the development of:

“... a pluralistic approach to mediating the full range of activities within the field.” (Johnson, 1998, p.68)

Johnson notes that to accept pluralism, is to accept the need to constantly reassess and articulate. Is ceramics up for the job? The idea of constant change and renewal is in opposition to the ideals of a discipline based in history and tradition and which is dedicated to the preservation of those histories.

Identifying new genres within ceramics

In the first chapter of this contextual review, I identified the importance of critical writing and the establishment of a critical language for ceramics. I would argue this equally includes the creation of new genres within practice. Greenhalgh (2002) notes the dynamic process where old genres collapse and where new ones are created, as seen in fine art sculpture, where new approaches fall into patterns which then form into new genres. Greenhalgh highlights the importance of the creation of new genres:

“Genres form, legitimise and present cultural forms. They gather hinterlands of patrons, dealers and writers around them.” (Greenhalgh, 2002, p.27)
Is there a distinct genre of ceramic art which is not vessel-based, figurative, abstract or modernist sculpture, which is art-based and content-led?

Although attempts have been made to define and separate the different areas contained within the category of CA practice, there remains a great deal of uncertainty as to what the different areas of CA are and how to differentiate between those practices. Pamela Johnson provides a useful framework, calling to practitioners to clarify their relationship to function: "for use, about use, beyond use" (Johnson, 2001, p.32). She identifies the distinctions between these different areas of practice, noting that the "beyond use" practitioners have more in common with Mona Hartoun than with Chelsea crafts. Using Johnson's categories, non-functional, vessel-based work falls into the "about use" (and possibly the "beyond use") category. Although this research will focus on the "beyond use" area of ceramic art practice (as identified by Johnson), I do not propose to employ Johnson's terminologies. By defining ceramic art purely in relation to its use/function, this reduces it to a function-based practice which it is not. I would argue that CA sculpture should be defined within the context of fine art sculpture.

A Restricted Practice?

CONFUSION + IDENTITY CRISIS + NO CRITICAL FRAMEWORK
= A RESTRICTED PRACTICE

Diversity coupled with a continued lack of a critical framework has resulted in a general confusion amongst ceramic practices, an identity crisis which I would argue, has resulted in a "restricted" ceramic art practice. As Veiteberg notes, this increases the need for critical discussion.

"This creates confusion and disquiet and increases the need for discussion and reflection." (Veiteberg, 2005, p.9)

This identity crisis has set up a conflict between those upholding tradition on one hand, and those seeking to advance and to innovate on the other. These tensions have been identified as contributing factors to ceramics' current position. This "restricted" trend within CA is also evident in other areas of ceramic practice for example in studio pottery. Clark notes his disappointment with functional pottery
and compares this practice with developments within the field of design, asking why studio pottery has failed to achieve the same level of success (Clark, 2003). He argues that the traditionalists, what he describes as “Bernard Leach’s orphans” (Clark, 2003, p.376), still dominate the field and consequently there is an absence of contemporary perspectives and approaches. Clark warns that pottery, in its current state, is no longer relevant and calls for its reinvention suggesting a shift away from:

“... a performance-based philosophy to one that is design-based.” (Clark, 2003, p.378)

Clark also notes the lack of creativity in the field, identifying that unlike designers; craftspeople are not constrained by the limits of mass production and therefore have more freedom to innovate. However, Clark notes that despite this:

“... the craftsman’s imagination is more limited than the designer’s.” (Clark, 2003, p.37)

Is craft’s imagination more limited than that of design or art? My research will challenge this position and will ask what the fields of art and design have to offer ceramics and craft.

In order to find out if CA practice is indeed “restricted”, in the next chapter I will investigate the contemporary contexts of art, craft and design. Current positions within ceramics will then be located within contemporary art, craft and design discourses.
1.3 CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

In order to understand more about the current condition of ceramics and to substantiate claims of a “restricted” ceramic art practice, the research will investigate the contemporary contexts of art, craft and design practices. Key developments, debates and issues within the fields of craft, art and design will be identified and critically discussed. To conclude, current positions within ceramics will be located within contemporary art, craft and design discourses.

Changing Concepts, Dissolving Boundaries

Over the last 40 years, the categories of practice that make up the visual arts have greatly diversified and the traditional boundaries within the fine arts (between painting and sculpture for example) have largely dissolved. Dormer notes the changing role of art over the last 70 years and its impact on craft:

“Why should art be this? Why does art need craft? Why make something when you can find a ready-made and present it as art? It is your ability to chose and select, not your ability to make, that marks you as an artist, as a connoisseur. Why have the object at all? And in the face of these questions craft in art collapsed.” (Dormer, 1997, p.3)

Greenhill (1997) also identifies the fragmentation which has occurred within FA practice, particularly in contemporary sculpture which she identifies as an area for concern. Sculpture, which has dominated FA practice since the 1980s, now Greenhill suggests, has:

“… retreated to reassess its values.” (Greenhill, 1997, p.7)

As with all art forms, there are changing areas of dominance. The current dominant practice within contemporary fine arts now being new media, web-based and digital arts. However in contrast to these technology-driven practices, more recently painting has seen a revival of interest as evidenced by the Triumph of Painting exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery, London in 2005. A recent shift to reclaim traditional sculptural (and craft) materials and techniques has also been noted, resulting in the emergence of new hybrid practices which embrace both conceptual and material concerns. Art’s interest in design has also been identified as for example in the exhibition Design ≠ Art: Functional objects from Donald Judd to Rachel Whiteread (Bloemink, 2004) at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York in 2004/5, which linked art and design practices with
minimalism. Despite the changing areas of dominance within contemporary FA practice there still exists an “anything goes” philosophy towards art making, dominated by an ideas-based, conceptual art practice.

Unlike the crafts, diversity does not appear to restrict FA practice. Many different areas and forms of practice co-exist, often supported by specialist literature and galleries. The field of design has also diversified to include new areas such as Designer-Maker practice.

Craft practices such as textile art have also embraced contemporary concerns as Dormer identifies:

“In essence, contemporary art textiles share two dominant strategies with other areas of visual art practice, namely an interest in exploring visual metaphor in order to make comment upon or allude to social or political issues, and an interest in using textile art to comment on the nature of the art itself.” (Dormer, 1997, p.174)

This can be seen for example in the work of Caroline Broadhead whose work embraces fine art discourse as in the performance work The Waiting Game of 1997 (Figure:2). Dormer also notes how, of all crafts, textiles is “most at ease” with new technology and how the production processes of woven cloth are suited to support industrial production (e.g., where a small craft-shop produces one-off pieces and/or samples for industry to mass-produce). He does however identify anxieties over the status of UK textile art when compared with an established textile and fibre art movement in the USA (Dormer, 1997).

Greenberg (1980) states he thought ceramic art was just craft and talks about how ceramists worry about the status of their art, comparing ceramics' to photography’s early concerns. Photography, once thought to be too mechanical to be art, became accepted into the FA canon in the 1960s when traditional boundaries between the disciplines lost hold. Nancy Selvage also notes changes in definitions within FA in relation to photography:

“Photography took over the painters craft in a similar way that industry had taken over part of the potter's craft.” (Selvage, 1980, p.86)

Can CA achieve FA status as photography has done? It could be argued that the acceptance of photography into FA has been due to its phenomenological
element. It could also be argued that its short history of 150 years - in comparison to ceramics' history of millennia, has aided its assimilation. Above all, the fact that photography has grown up with attendant theorising around its practice should be taken notice of. It is also interesting to note how photography has grown and diversified to include areas of Photojournalism, Fashion Photography, and Fine Art Photography.

Sites of Production & Divisions of Labour
The emergence of the conceptual as the dominant force within FA also saw the demise of a studio culture within FA practice (Barlow, 1997). Barlow argues that this was due to number of factors: the economic implications of maintaining a studio-based practice; the emergence of digital arts practice; and the recognised need for contemporary artists to be able to collaborate with the outside world (e.g. to get work made or sited.)

The shift away from the studio as the main site of production has been fuelled by FA's shift away from the romanticism of a studio-based practice, towards a design way of thinking, where industrial production techniques such as the outsourcing of production and the employing of skills are now commonplace as Barlow identifies:

"Without a studio there can be liberation to explore and exploit diverse media through specialist agencies, suppliers and manufacturers." (Barlow, 1997, p.26)

Barlow argues that the studio-based mentality is at odds with the conceptual and that working in the confines of the studio:

"... can seem to force a moral attitude to work - passing on an inheritance of a kind of Protestant work ethic in which is entrenched a strong sense of struggle out of which good must surely come." (Barlow, 1997, p.24)

The development of "portfolio careers" also reflects the changing economic climate. Artists are often employed in a variety of ways for example, in addition to their art practice they may take on teaching work, design work or other unrelated jobs.

Loss of Skill & Decline of Specialisms
It has been argued that the shift in criticism towards "the spectacle" away from materials and physicality has marginalised materials-based artists (Watney, 1997).
Brown also argues that FA has been de-skilled and that installation and performance work dominates because it is “cheap to mount” and requires only “short and informal apprenticeships” (Brown, 1997, p.5). Brown also criticises digital work which he argues is de-skilling and which “systematises and thus industrialises the personal act of making art” (1997, p.5). However, I would argue that the above represents a “skill-shifting” rather than a de-skilling of art practice.

Clark (1998) warns the notion of a single medium artist is under threat and that art education is turning its back on materials specialisms. He notes its impact on ceramics:

“If this trend continues, and it seems to be building momentum, then ceramists could well be an endangered species unless a contemporary format can be evolved for those who work in clay.” (Clark, 1998, p.14)

It has also been suggested that the university is an inappropriate place to acquire practical skills. Brown identifies that some universities employ a strategy of “neglect and elimination” and notes that within the context of a university, ceramics is particularly vulnerable:

“Ceramics must either mutate into something else, like "clay" as a subset of sculpture, or face extinction in universities.” (Brown, 1997, p.4)

In ceramics education, both here and internationally, a number of specialist ceramics courses have already been closed or have been merged within larger departments. For example in Edinburgh, the Ceramics Department has now merged within FA, as has the ceramics course in Victoria, Australia. Ceramics courses are having trouble attracting students, although there is evidence of a trend for a return of mature students who return to study craft as a second career or lifestyle change.

This begs the question - is specialist ceramics (and medium specific) education sustainable? Should CA be under FA and away from ceramics and craft?

Greenhalgh (2002) argues that the loss of craft skill equals the loss of craft and urges that we should not dilute or abandon specialisms. The loss of specialisations developed over generations, will mean the decline of the genre. Yet this position contradicts Greenhalgh’s call for “interdisciplinarity” which he argues should be the next phase of craft’s intellectual growth, where contact with other fields will be key to craft’s future development.
Impact of Technology

Dormer notes that a common assumption is that technology will replace craft and that, from the designer's point of view:

“... the craftsperson has become expendable.” (Dormer, 1997, p.12)

Dormer (1997) argues that craft and art have been driven out of architecture by new building technology. However, he also identifies a positive shift by designers who have taken up craft approaches. Technology enables scale and economic advantages and as a result CAD machines now dominate factories. French (1997) also identifies the impact of CADCAM technology on the ceramics industry in Britain, noting that since computer aided design and manufacture was introduced in the 1980s, modellers have now become redundant. Although modellers skilled in plaster are in decline, some kinds of modelling still cannot be achieved by CADCAM and this new technology continues to be too expensive for some factories to employ. French is critical of industry’s use of new technology and argues that its full creative potential is not fully explored, and that it is being used to create:

“... undemanding shapes that are easy to decorate.” (French, 1997, p.167)

He compares old design methods of tableware with CADCAM: using the old methods it takes 2 years for a product to reach the market compared to 12 weeks using CADCAM. Unlike the old methods, CADCAM is fast, it produces consistent results, and therefore it is favoured by the ceramics industry. Industry states that the public wants the consistency of the machine aesthetic and its:

“... dependable, almost hygienic neatness.” (Dormer, 1997, p.11)

Recent developments in both technology and also in the accessibility of this technology have seen the use of CADCAM and industrial production techniques move outside of the factory. For example, the Austrian based design group Algodes, who describe themselves as “a fusion of designers, mathematicians and programmers”, have developed a revolutionary software which enables the consumer to design their own individual forms in a real-time 3D design environment via their website (Fluidforms). The resulting objects are then produced as a one-off using rapid prototyping techniques and can be further personalised by the addition of laser engraving. Kuchta however, notes the absence of new technologies and processes within ceramic practice:
Ift... ceramics is a somewhat confining medium, where few processes or technologies are revolutionarily new for the artist as they are in the electronic or computer media. (Kuchta, 1992, p.31)

Dormer identifies a trend in textile practice to embrace new materials, unlike in ceramics where he argues there is no place for:

“... new, high performance ceramic materials used in engineering.” (Dormer, 1997, p.170)

However, there are examples of contemporary ceramic artists who have employed high-tech ceramics materials and techniques for example Katie Bunnell who uses 3D digital production techniques (Jackson, 2007) and also Marek Cecula who uses a ceramic material developed by NASA.

Contemporary Design Practice

“Product design, narrowly defined as a practice of shaping material objects, has its roots in fine art and only gradually adopted a limited body of technical knowledge. Early product designers within the European system of industrial production were artists who simply provided drawings for manufacturers.” (Margolin, 2002, p.30)

Victor Margolin notes how design has become separated from invention, where design is no longer about designing new products but instead is concerned with “re-designing”.

“... inventing is separate from most forms of design.” (Margolin, 2002, p.33)

Style and design are synonymous. Brian O'Doherty also identifies the high importance of style in art:

“Style in art, whatever its miraculous, self-defining nature, is the equivalent of etiquette in society.” (O'Doherty, 1999, p.74)

I would argue that craft aesthetics are also a type of style, although one couldn’t describe them as stylish.

Margolin notes a new ethical agenda for designers in the new millennium. A new generation of designers have rejected the sleek, industrial aesthetics for a more home-spun feel, with a renewed sense of responsibility towards the user and a focus on user experience and interaction. This area of practice is also characterised by its engagement with the everyday as Jamer Hunt identifies:

“Design, unlike art, must locate itself in the ordinary.” (Hunt, 2003, p.57)
This trend is evident in the exhibition *Strangely Familiar: Design and Everyday Life* (Blauvelt, 2003), an exhibition of more than 40 international projects from the fields of architecture, product, fashion and graphic design. It represents a new generation of design which is often multifunctional and which is focused on user interaction, personalisation and customisation. Design in this area can be characterised by its “incompleteness”. This area of practice is often referred to as “critical design”.

**Critical Design**

Hunt (2003) notes a trend towards social concerns within contemporary design practice, a new critical design practice he calls “Design Noir”. This practice is described as being the darker side of design, a place where the objects act more like “proposals”. This area of practice is concerned with its impact on social life and seeks to engage directly with our social, political and emotional needs as Margolin identifies:

“A metanarrative of spirituality can empower designers and technologists to better understand design as a form of social action that contributes to social well-being. It can link design to a process of social improvement that becomes the material counterpart to spiritual development.” (Margolin, 2002, p.120)

Margolin suggests a new spiritual role for design, where design acts as a social service - “a social philosophy” of design.

“Design, understood in a deeper sense, is a human service.” (Margolin, 2002, p.119)

Attfield (2000) notes the current trend to employ ecologically and socially responsible approaches to design practice. She identifies the recent shifts in contemporary design as evidenced by the exhibition *Stealing Beauty* (Catterall, 1999):

“… what distinguishes them from those that preceded them in the “anti-design” tradition, is the value placed on the elusive qualities of materials with a previous life acquired through time and use. The reuse of things with a particular biography is not in the parsimonious spirit or shabby heroism of wartime make-do-and mend, but an attempt to capture a form of authenticity that “the look” alone cannot provide.” (Attfield, 2000, p.60)

Attfield also makes the distinction between art and design’s engagement with the everyday, noting that design is interested in ugliness or “un-design”:

“Whereas art enchants the ordinary object and makes it special, design disenchants it.” (Attfield, 2000, p.4)
Contemporary critical design practice can be characterised by: its use of the ready-made or found object, for example British designer Michael Marriott's *Bring Me Sunshine* light, made from a plastic bucket (Figure: 3) and also *Chest of Drawers* by Dutch design group *Droog* (Figure: 4); by its focus on user interaction and participation for example as in “Do” Break vase (Figure: 34), where the breaking of the vase will not damage the vase but instead it gives a mark to remember the occasion, revealing a crackle pattern on the vase surface; and by its engagement with environmental concerns, for example by its use of recycling such as in *Transglass* (1997) which uses recycled wine and beer bottles, part of the “*Design with a Conscience*” project by Tord Boontje and Emma Woffenden (Figure: 5).

**Ceramic Design**

Within the field of ceramics, design has been particularly successful in achieving new approaches, notably the work of Droog and the independent work of artist/designer Hella Jongerious (Figure: 6). Ceramic design was well placed to benefit from a boom in the market place during the 1990s and many new retail outlets for designer-maker ceramic practice emerged during this time such as *Vessel*, London. The period saw a trend for white (often porcelain), minimalist aesthetics in ceramics, fuelled by fashion and interiors of the time, such as the work of the German ceramic designer Bodo Sperlein, the so-called “*white wave*” of the 1990s (Veiteberg, 2005, p. 66).

David Redhead identifies design’s close relationship with fashion and its influence on design, noting a shift in design practice towards what he describes as the “*brandification*” of design (Taylor and Redhead, 2001, p. 40). Sperlein demonstrates this trend – he created his own “design and make” brand and label of ceramics, marketed exclusively for up market retailers such as Browns, providing further evidence of the distinctive entrepreneurial spirit of the designer-makers.

**Designer-Maker Practice**

The emergence of the field of the “*designer-maker*” during the 1980s redefined and extended the boundaries of design and craft practices. Louise Taylor identifies
that the term "designer-maker" (or sometimes maker designer) emerged in the mid-1980s as a way to:

"... differentiate a new group from the previously acceptable (though uncomfortably gender specific) "artist craftsman"." (Taylor and Redhead, 2001, p.7)

This represented a major shift in design philosophy, where designers embraced both the designing and the making, bridging the gap between design and craft, and fine art. Greenhalgh notes that designers are now enjoying fine art status as "high" designers and who have "effectively entered in the art economy" (Greenhalgh, 2002, p.6).

The landmark exhibition Industry of One at the Crafts Council in 2001, charts the impact of this "design-and-make" culture in Britain as Taylor notes:

"In the UK we have a new culture of design with strong media interest, a buying public, a proliferation of retail outlets, and, not least, self-belief in entrepreneurship on the part of designers, sustained by high-profile examples such as James Dyson." (Taylor and Redhead, 2001, p.6)

The Crafts Council welcomed and embraced this type of practice. The selected makers were distinguished as craft because:

"... they had a close involvement in the production process, employing and demonstrating their understanding of materials and process." (Taylor and Redhead, 2001, p.7)

I would argue that any "good" designer should have these qualities. Despite being recognised under the craft canon, Taylor notes the dual nature of designer-maker practice:

"... not sufficiently hand-made to be craft in one arena, but not sufficiently "commercial" to be design." (Taylor and Redhead, 2001, p.9)

Jackson (1998, p.97) examines ideas about lifestyles in relation to mass production and argues that we should think of designer-makers as "cultural intermediaries" that "curate culture" for clients, where the romantic notion of the artisan offers a "more authentic" version of culture.

Many of the works included in the Industry of One exhibition were made in small batches and therefore could be described as crafted objects. Attfield notes how designer-makers adopt for a modern rather than a traditional aesthetic (adopted by
craft). However, Redhead identifies that many designer-makers ultimately seek mass-production opportunities:

“The grail for many remains the chance to design mass-produced furniture for manufacture not in their tens or even hundreds but in their thousands and millions.” (Taylor and Redhead, 2001, p.10)

Redhead notes, as makers grow in confidence, there has been a shift away from small batch art pieces to more mass production, for example the British design studio Inflate, founded in 1997, whose turnover reached £1.2 million in 2001. Industrial production enables those with aspirations to make products that are more readily available and cheaper. Ironically, designer-maker practice has more in common with Arts & Crafts ideals than much contemporary crafts practice, where studio-based crafts products are necessarily more expensive and therefore exclusive.

The Craft Council’s shift to embrace this new practice is part in recognition of the change in career paths for craftspeople and designer-makers (and artists), where portfolio working is now more commonplace. For example, by acting as a consultant to industry as an alternative to teaching and as a supplement to income. But also this shift is a response to changes to the role of the Design Council, which since being downsized and reconstituted in 1994, does not support the work of these designers and now functions simply as:

“... a PR and lobbying organisation.” (Taylor and Redhead, 2001, p.47)

Redhead (2001) identifies the recent trend for collaborative work, where artists are invited to work with industry, for example projects organised by the European Ceramic Work Centre (EKWC) in collaboration with ceramic industry. (He also warns that British industry needs to do more to compete within international manufacturing.) Greenhalgh (2002) also identifies a shift in attitudes within industry, especially in Holland, Germany and the Nordic countries where designer craftspeople are being employed to produce small batches. This multi-disciplinary approach can be seen in the emergence of small co-operative businesses in Britain and Europe. For example Jam (UK), and Droog (Holland) whose practices span the areas of communication design, architecture, design and craft media (Greenhalgh, 2002).
Women & Craft

Despite ceramics’ close relationship with the home and the domestic (the home is the major site for the consumption, use and display of ceramic objects), ideas about domesticity are not dominant within CA practice, nor is there an established area of feminist ceramic art practice. In a practice dominated by women, why is this not evident? (In Knott’s 1994 survey of the crafts women represented 57.3% of ceramics practitioners and men 42.7%). Despite developments in art and design history, writing and practice, where is the evidence of feminism in ceramics?

This provides further evidence of a restricted CA practice. Greenhalgh states that feminists have politicised their practice but the only evidence he provides is a reference to Judy Chicago’s *The Dinner Party* (1979). Have there really been no examples of feminist ceramic practice since 1979? Harrod (1999, p.423) also notes how feminist writing has been marginalised, finding only one feminist article (by Pennina Barnett) to appear in *Crafts* magazine during the 1980s. Further research is urgently needed in this area.

There is currently however a new wave of interest in feminist art as evidenced by *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution* exhibition (4 March - 16 July 2007) at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles which focuses on art produced during the 60s and 70s, and also the *Global Feminisms* exhibition (23 March - 1 July 2007) at the newly opened Elizabeth A. Sackler Centre for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum. *The Dinner Party* is the centrepiece of the permanent collection at the Sackler Centre but the exhibition focuses on recent works completed after 1990.

The areas of craft and home-crafts have been successfully employed in art practice, for example by women and feminist artists in the 1970s and 1980s, and more recently a renewed interest in craft materials and practices has been identified in both contemporary art and design practice. Notable examples of female artists who have successfully engaged with craft and with ceramics particularly include: Jo Spence’s *Love on a Plate*, 1989 (Figure:8); American artist

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Cindy Sherman in her Madame de Pompadour soupiere of 1991 (Figure:9); and also Orlan’s Self-hybridation of 1998 (Figure:7) in which she has morphed her face into a pre-Columbian pot.

Contemporary textile practices have embraced contemporary fine art concerns and approaches, establishing itself as a distinct area of art practice, for example with the areas of fibre-art, textile art and also body-art. Forms of textile art often incorporate elements of performance such in Caroline Broadhead’s work which spans the boundaries of art, craft and design and which has been described as providing “the aesthetic turn in conceptual art” (Veiteberg, 2005, p.81).

Craft practices and materials continue to be of interest to contemporary artists as evidenced by Lauren Porter’s Twelve Miles of Yarn, 2006, a life-size, knitted Ferrari (Figure:10). A critical discussion of contemporary art’s use of craft materials and approaches appears later in the chapter.

**Changing Roles and Contexts for Art & Artists**

J.J. Charlesworth (2004) identifies the tensions between the two main areas of contemporary art practice; the area of practice which serves the marketplace and the area which is mainly publicly funded and “socially engaged”. Kornblau (1995) also notes the emergence of a “therapeutic culture” in America and identifies the pressures on art funding for art to have a social function (e.g. to heal, to entertain and to have a practical use in everyday culture). He argues that as a result, art now strives to have a utilitarian function as craft has.

“It is now mandated that art serve a political bureaucracy and attain social utility to have value, while ceramics must attain formal elegance to have value.” (Kornblau, 1995, p.19)

This context has resulted in a new social function of and for art, as evidenced by the emergence of “socially engaged” art practices. This area of practice is difficult to define as more and more artists are now involved with different forms of social engagement through their practice. Although a variety of different strategies are being employed, this area of practice is largely publicly funded via institutions such as the art museum or gallery and can be characterised by its inclusion of elements of public participation and interaction.
Brighton (2002) questions the type of art being supported by public funding and argues that public and commercial arts sectors have different agendas and different notions of good and bad culture. He argues that institutions supported by public funding often base their cultural policies on social engineering and on "social utility" (p.256) rather than on art world values. This trend has also been identified by Hal Foster (1996) who is critical of some site-specific or institution-specific work which he argues is used for public service, economic development, social outreach and/or art tourism. What he calls the "Disney version" of the site-specific (Foster, 1996, p.197).

Despite recent shifts towards a socially responsible art practice, Charlesworth argues that contemporary art practice is inconclusively split:

"... unwilling to fully endorse an aesthetics of pleasure, yet increasingly uncertain about art's effective role in a politics of responsibility." (Charlesworth, 2004, p.8)

Brighton (2002) also identifies how recent attempts to make art more accessible have often been misguided. For example, despite increased visitor numbers to Tate Britain, the majority of these visitors were from the same social profile/class, that is ABC1 in social profile (i.e. middle-class, skilled, professionals). Although this area of practice undoubtedly emerged in response to changes in public funding, one cannot underestimate the artists' role in the re-defining of their practices and of their role within society. Despite the above criticisms, I would argue that this area of practice has succeeded not only in widening art's audiences but also in extending definitions of art and the role of the artist.

Following on from feminist and conceptual art practices of the last three decades, this new breed of artists seek to make an intervention both in the artworld and within socio-political spheres. This practice often includes the direct involvement and participation of audiences and communities. For example projects such as Anthony Gormley's Waste Man (Figure:11) in Margate, Kent. This work was constructed by Gormley and a team of professional riggers and local volunteers. The work is made entirely of the detritus of modern consumer society (including wood, tables, chairs, keyboards, paintings, front doors and toilet seats). The culmination of the project was the burning of Waste Man in situ on 30th September, 2006.
Lucy Orta is another prominent artist working in this field. Originally trained as a fashion designer, her work is a fusion of fashion, architecture and a type of social activism. She often works with marginalized groups (for example with refugees) such as in Refuge Wear (Figure:12), a range of bodysuits which transform into tent shelters. Another example is Meal (Figure:13) in which inhabitants from different immigrant and indigenous citizen groups in Utrecht were invited to an open-air meal. The 30 groups each created a local dish to share and taste different cultural delicacies throughout the evening, accompanied by story telling.

**Artist & the Museum - Artist as Curator & Ethnographer**

The changing roles of art and the artist have also resulted in the emergence of the artists as curator. Curator and theorist James Putnam (2001, p.7) identifies an “emerging museological tendency” in contemporary art practice, where the museum now acts as a major site for artists’ interventions. Previously regarded as traditional, rigid structures which were out of touch with the real world, museums are now adopting an enlightened approach, becoming more like a “laboratory for experimentation” (Putnam, 2001, p.33). Michael Biggs (2003) also notes how the act of un-packing the way artefacts operate can generate new contextual material.

Museums are enjoying a renewed interest from contemporary artists seeking new and alternative contexts for their work. This shift represents part of the wider movement for museum reform as identified above. Foster (1996) identifies a similar shift in the US noting that as support for the arts declined, funding was redirected to regional institutions which fuelled the rise of the “artist as ethnographer” (Foster, 1996, p.172). Foster proposes the 1990s as the decade of the “itinerant curator” (the 1970s as the decade of the theorist, the 1980s as the decade of the dealer). This type of practice evolved from the early 1990s when it was often special or one-off projects initiated by artists or by a progressive curator, to now become part of official museum’s programme, with special departments now set up to co-ordinate these activities such as artist residences. Putnam (2001, p.191) also identifies how some museums are responding to criticisms and attempting to “re-unite art with the everyday”, for example by developing off-site projects in attempt to engage a wider public audience.
Museum curators now recognise what artists have to offer and consequently there is a trend for museums to invite artists in to arrange the material from their collections. The artists' vision and their individual processes of selection can offer fresh insights and break down the formal structures of classification and ordering, to deconstruct “the impersonal nature” of the museum display.

“In this situation, the process of selection, arrangement, presentation and labelling becomes essentially an artist’s personal construction and concept using the museums’ collection as working material. The increasing phenomenon of the artist-curator often crosses the boundaries between exhibition design and installation and is regarded by some artists as a natural extension of their everyday practice.” (Putnam, 2001, p.132)

Putnam identifies this type of activity as “creative curating” but it also has parallels with conceptual and installation art. I would suggest that all artists who exhibit their work are at some level necessarily involved with the display of their work and with exhibition layout/design.

Foster (1996, p.191) identifies how artists “play with museology” in order to expose and reframe the institutional codings of art and artefacts (i.e. the ways objects are turned into historical evidence and invested with cultural values). However, Foster warns of the dangers of employing what he calls a “quasi-anthropological” approach, where few principles of participant-observer are observed:

“… the quasi-anthropological role set up for the artist can promote a presuming as much as a questioning of ethnographic authority, an evasion as often as an extension of institutional critique.” (Foster, 1996, p.197)

In this type of work Foster argues, it is the sponsoring institution that “collects the cultural capital”. Foster now poses a new paradigm – the artist as ethnographer. He notes a significant shift from a subject defined in terms of its economic relation, to one defined in terms of cultural identity, what Foster refers to as the “ethnographic turn” in contemporary art and criticism.

“In our current state of artistic-theoretical ambivalences and cultural-political impasses, anthropology is the compromise discourse of choice.” (Foster, 1996, p.183)

It has been argued that where the field of anthropology developed a type of “artist envy”, where the artist is held up as the paragon of reflexivity, these positions have now reversed whereby:

“… a new ethnographer envy consumes many artists and critics. If anthropologists wanted to exploit the textual model of cultural interpretation,
these artists and critics aspire to fieldwork in which theory and practice seem to be reconciled.” (Foster, 1996, p.181)

This ethnographic approach to art practice often employs what Foster refers to as “sociological mapping” and demonstrates an awareness of sociological assumptions.

Despite criticisms, collaborations between artists and museums offer opportunities to rethink the role of museum, the role of art and of the artefact. Museum interventions provide exciting opportunities for artists to respond to the museum, its context, its collection, its spaces and as an institution outside of the white cube, but also to gain exposure to new audiences. Projects in this area include Sophie Calle’s Absent, 1994, at Boymans-van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam (Figure: 14). In this work, visitors were given a personal stereo which directed them to 21 objects placed in collection. Instead of the usual museum commentary, Calle talks about her relationships and personal events, how banal objects have personal and social histories, creating “a museum of lives lived, not just things” (Godfrey, 1998, p.404).

The museum was also the site for Clare Twomey’s site-specific installation Trophy (Figure: 15) which formed part of the Clay Rocks event at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London on 26 September 2006. Visitors to the event were invited to take home a trophy, one of the 5,000 cast clay birds which were placed amongst the sculptures and vitrines of the Cast Courts. This artist/museum dialogue is mutually beneficial.

Current Positions - Critiques of Postmodernism

There are strong critiques of postmodernism, in which the crafts figure as redemptive possibilities. For example, Kuspit (2000) is critical of conceptual, non-materials based approaches, arguing that this type of work offers no hope - just irony that accepts the conditions of our consumer society. He argues that FA practice has now “lost aesthetic credibility” and calls for a return to the traditional conception of the artists as “an expert in a particular medium” (Kuspit, 2000, p.158).
Charlesworth argues that radical discourses in art have now become institutionalised and therefore do not exert the power and influence they once did:

"... the return to beauty, and the question of aesthetic experience more generally, far from being a systematic or fiercely argued return to tradition (1), in reality reflects a deep uncertainty about the ability of artistic practice to operate as an effective politico-cultural intervention." (Charlesworth, 2004, p.9)

Ideas about beauty are culturally determined, a constantly changing concept based on individual tastes. Although this research does not intend to provide a critique of beauty, ideas about beauty are relevant to ceramics and craft and therefore demand attention. Artists are seeking alternative strategies from outside of the mainstream of contemporary FA practice. Their saviour is craft. It has been identified that contemporary artists are now finding refuge in the idea of beauty and completeness:

"The root cause of today's problem with beauty was the paradigm shift from an essentialist idea of the work to the formulation of the art-work as text, open to endless deconstructions, and the conviction held by artists and critics alike that no final judgements can be made." (Wilsher, 2004, p.8)

Mark Wilsher argues that textuality is no longer satisfactory as it creates an "uncomfortable tangle of deconstructions, explanations and analyses", so the majority of artists are happy to go along with the current trend back to beauty. Veiteberg (2005) identifies the classical indicators of beauty as; balance, order, symmetry and good proportions, noting that craft writing often employs assessments based on these values of beauty. However, she also notes that perceptions of beauty are highly problematic, as are ideas about ugliness which are connected with being formless and grotesque (p.47).

Charlesworth (2004) also identifies a partial return to ideas about beauty in art as does Abigail Diamond who also suggests a return to aesthetics and to "a consideration of the physicality of the artwork and to form" (Diamond, 2004, p.7). In these contexts, it is possible to think of re-crafting art:

"It is a new emphasis on what is irreducible in art, which turns out to be craft or the fact that art is made in a certain way." (Kuspit, 2000, p.159)

Groom also identifies the crafts as the last bastion to be exploited within FA practice:
“Having turned the world into a work of art and assimilated almost everything in it, the one last taboo of the artworld is that of craft, where a pot evokes deeper fear and unease than almost any other object.” (Groom, 2004, p.14)

The recent backlash within contemporary FA practice which calls for a return to traditional materials-based FA practices, re-positions the artists as producer - back into the studio, as Kuspit notes:

“The new craftsmanship is a last-ditch attempt to defend the idea of art as work and a way to wholeness, and a rejection of the Post-modern notion of the art object as one that bespeaks alienation, with its fragmenting effect - an object that hides its unwholesomeness behind its commodity value.” (Kuspit, 2000, p.167)

The renewed interest in the use of traditional craft materials and techniques within contemporary fine art practice has forced craft practices to reassess their own position within the visual arts. Clark (1998) notes how the trend for more artists choosing ceramics among other media means that ceramists now face competition from a group that has better access to marketing systems and the media.

A good example of the institutional support for this kind of practice is that of the EKWC, the European Ceramic Work Centre, based in the Netherlands. It deliberately solicits artists, architects and designers who have had no experience of using clay to work in their studios, as seen in the exhibition Slip: Artists in the Netherlands and Britain working with ceramic (Koos, 2002) at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts and the Frans Hals Museum, Harleem, The Netherlands which showcased artists like Anish Kapoor and Antony Gormley’s forays into ceramics.

I now want to examine four examples of exhibitions in the UK where these issues have been made manifest: Craft (1997), New Labour (2001), the Turner Prize (2003) and A Secret History of Clay (2004).

Craft, Richard Salmon (1997)
The exhibition Craft at the Richard Salmon Gallery in 1997 illustrated the trend to show that craft materials, techniques and methods of production can be employed as legitimate FA strategies. The exhibition also marked a shift in ideas about the classification of craft. Joan Key (1997) notes that the exhibition was designed to:
Simon Watney (1997) notes the distinctions between art and craft but argues that, in the current climate of borrowing from different disciplines, disputes between the classifications of art vs. craft are now irrelevant. The work in this exhibition achieves what the crafts have not yet been able to, a fusing of craft materials and techniques with FA concerns.

Ceramics feature in the exhibition in the work of Cecile Johnson-Soliz (Figure: 16) and Hadrian Pigott (Figure: 17). Johnson-Soliz is interested in multiples, collections and display. In 28 Pitchers (1992-1996) twenty eight un-glazed terracotta jugs are displayed on wooden shelves, in a type of ceramic still life. She presents us with a collection of domestic objects which challenge the hierarchies of art and notions of the art object. In contrast Johnson-Soliz’s craft-based approach, Pigott employs industrial processes and aesthetics. For example, Re surface (1998) resembles a piece of industrially produced sanitary ware. At first glance, you see a bathroom sink. The form signifies sink; it is round (sink-shaped) and made from high gloss, white vitreous china, complete with plug and plug hole. Yet the function of the sink has been subverted. The sink space has been filled in and there is no bowl to contain water. Pigott denies the sink its function and the container becomes contained.

Other artists in the exhibition have worked with sewing, knitting, crotchet, glass beads and woodwork, all traditionally craft processes. Materials and the manipulation of materials are central to these artists, as are ideas about use and function. Key notes that:

"The re-positioning of craft as art has, nevertheless, aesthetic concerns." (Key, 1997, p.24)

The result of displaying a commodity as art, is the privileging of aesthetic judgement over its useful origins. Whereas craft is traditionally positioned with the consumer, here it engages with the user or viewer, where the viewer becomes or imagines being the user. Ideas about domesticity, exchange values, consumer culture and the dematerialisation of the object were all in evidence, proving to crafts, that craft and art can indeed mix.
New Labour, Saatchi Gallery (2001)

This shift in FA practice towards craft materials and processes was also visible in the exhibition New Labour at the Saatchi Gallery in 2001 where selected artists shared a common approach, where:

“... the physical making of work is the most important part of their practices.” (Ellis, 2001)

The work represents a range of “craft inspired activities” and approaches. The focus is not on any particular aesthetic or idea of beauty (as a return to craft techniques and materials may suggest) but is more about the importance of gaining pleasure from art making.

Clay and craft are often linked to ideas about play and fun, reflecting crafts perceived amateur status and perhaps childhood memories of craft at school. (CA practice does not feature this playful element.) Ellis however, affirms fun as a legitimate art making strategy:

“Having fun is one of the best reasons to make art.” (Ellis, 2001)

Selected artists have employed either traditional craft materials or techniques, or where the production of the work is particularly labour intensive. The domestic context also features strongly. For example, Michael Raedecker sews on to canvas; while Andreas Schlaegel uses multiples of everyday products to create “dysfunctionally functional” furniture such as in Chair (Figure: 18) made from sponge/ scourers. DJ Simpson employs DIY materials and approaches in The Noise of Carpet, which was made using a router to carve into plywood (Figure: 19).

Three artists in the exhibition use clay in three very different ways. Grayson Perry makes vases which:

“... possess Bret Easton Ellis sophistication, immortalised in baked mud.” (Ellis, 2001)

Perry uses traditional forms and processes of pottery whilst Liane Lang and Rebecca Warren exploit clay’s plastic qualities. In Masturbation (Figure: 20) Lang uses plasticine, a material usually associated with childhood and child’s play, to create a 60 minute clay animation video of female masturbation, playschool meets playboy.
Warren (Figure: 21) also explores ideas about female sexuality and the representation of women, working within the context of figurative sculpture. Her work focuses on the female figure, often making reference to classical forms of sculpture. She makes painted, unfired clay sculptures which Ellis describes as: 

“... a feminist brand of macho-ism with an unlikely combination of classical Rodin vs. racy Jeff Koons.” (Ellis, 2001)

Warren is not concerned with ceramics as a class of objects, in the way that Perry is for example. Warren is interested in clay the material and her sculptures are very much about process. The surfaces are heavily worked, covered with marks and rough lumps of clay. Her making style is loose and clumsy, her forms grotesque. Unlike Perry’s highly finished, glossy ceramics, Warren’s sculptures are unfired and have a deliberately unfinished quality. Their roughness however also provides them a sense of vitality and empowerment. Crammed onto plinths (which have been painted in pastel shades) these lumpy, heavy-looking objects offer an alternative femininity and represent an anti-aesthetic to the dominant styles and themes of contemporary sculpture.

The exhibition New Labour represents a diverse range of practices which draw heavily from fields of craft and design. This seemed proof enough of the disintegration of boundaries and the shift away from the conceptual towards a more materials based practice. De Waal reinforces this view noting that:

“Clay is experiential.” (De Waal, 2004, p.39)

De Waal notes that this is what is attractive to artists today.

**Grayson Perry, Turner Prize (2003)**

Grayson Perry winning the Turner Prize in 2003 has to be the most significant event for ceramics in decades. Critics declared it as “the coming of age of craft” and it signified a shift in FA practice away from the conceptual to a return to craft skills, values and techniques. Groom suggests that Perry’s work provided:

“... a welcome antidote to the machismo and conceptualism of the YBA generation.” (Groom, 2004, p.14)

Perry goes out his way to deny the craft of his work, however, I would argue that it is difficult to ignore the importance of how the work was made. Perry has acquired considerable skill using clay and the ceramic techniques of surface decoration. His
pots are highly decorative, the surfaces heavily textured with layers of decoration using drawing, sprigging, transfer prints, glazes, enamels and lustres. His work is labour-intensive. He hand builds his pots using archetypal ceramic forms which then act as a canvas for his painting, although Perry does more than to just paint on pots.

Narrative is central to his work, with each pot telling a story. His subject matter is contemporary, satirical, autobiographical and sexually explicit, dealing with challenging themes such as child abuse as in *We’ve Found the Body of Your Child* (2000). Equally important is the fact that the work is hand-made, it is craft. By hand-crafting the pots, Perry connects with ideas about domesticity, femininity and women’s work. Pottery is a highly gendered practice and this fact has not been overlooked by Perry, who has a transvestite alter-ego named Claire. Perry employs strategies from feminist art (the craft practices of pottery and embroidery) to explore ideas about gender politics and sexuality. However, it is impossible to ignore the fact that these pots were made by a man and as such they offer a man’s point of view. If a woman had made this work it would generate a different reading and arguably it would have a different (lower) status.

Perry uses ceramics because of its perceived low status in the art world. He has widely commented that the art world had more of a problem with the fact he was a potter than the fact he was a transvestite. Pots are not usually seen as a vehicle for serious artistic expression and this is precisely why Perry employs them. For example, in “*Boring Cool People*” (Figure: 22) Perry attacks consumerism and lampoons the art world and fashionable “arty” types. A large blue vase is decorated with drawings of bland, rather sad looking “cool” people in various poses. This work relies heavily on ceramics (and the status of ceramics) for its meaning. A painting of the same subject would not have the same result. This work is only successful because it is made of ceramics and ceramics are not cool. Perry continued to exploit this theme in “*Discretely Branded*” (1999) and “*We Are What We Buy*” (2000).

Perry refers to his use of ceramics as a “*stealth tactic*” (Jeffries, 2003), where the pots function to lure in the unsuspecting viewer. They are accessible objects.
providing an easy “way in” to the work. Pottery is not meant to be shocking. It is the juxtaposition of the safe and cosy craft element with the dark and violent subject matter which makes his work successful. (Perry has had considerable success. His work features in all four of the exhibitions under discussion here.) Perry’s aim however, is not to validate ceramics as a legitimate art form (although this may be a side-effect), but rather he aims to mobilise its “naff-ness”. On awarding the Turner prize the judges commented that they admired “his uncompromising engagement with personal and social concerns” (Tate, 2003). Perry did not win the Turner prize because of his abilities with clay. Without the content, his work would be just pottery.

A Secret History of Clay, Tate Liverpool (2004)
The exhibition *A Secret History of Clay: From Gaugin to Gormley* at Tate Liverpool is the first exhibition to present fine artists’ work in clay in the UK. The exhibition is a long overdue survey of works in clay, from the 20th century to the present. Laid out chronologically it included an impressive collection of works, many of which have been previously ignored from the histories of art. The exhibition presents a diversity of artists and approaches to clay, and as such, much like discipline of ceramics, it makes it difficult to pin down and categorise the work.

The majority of the artists included are well known and from a FA background. (This is unsurprising given the context of the Tate.) The exclusion of many artists from the ceramics world was perhaps a deliberate decision by the curator in response to the demands of the Tate’s audiences. However, it is disappointing that important works from the CA world which, although may be lesser known to the general public, were nonetheless worthy of inclusion. The majority of the artists included were also male, with only a handful of female artists being represented.

The exhibition did include some works from the ceramics canon, albeit with a bias towards works form the USA, including Peter Voulkos and Jim Melchert. However, the accompanying texts made no effort to introduce the debates and concerns of the world in which these artists inhabited - ceramics. I would argue this would have enriched the experience of the exhibition, challenging and widening our perceptions of clay. The period from 1980 - present was particularly under-
represented and key movements within CC at this time were excluded. For example, the work of Alison Britton, representing a shift in ideas about function, would have provided an interesting departure for debate.

The exhibition and accompanying catalogue seem to have deliberately played down issues surrounding crafts’ contemporary status, taking the position that clay is simply another artist’s material. I would whole-heartedly agree that this strategy is an appropriate one, reinforcing Greenberg’s sentiments that if it is good enough, it will be considered art. However, by creating a separate room at the end of the exhibition in which to place the works of contemporary ceramic artists - this effectively negated this position and undermined any potential benefits to be gained. (Although other works by Fine Artists were included in this room, it predominantly represented artists from the ceramics world.) Small in scale and set up to invoke a specifically styled domestic interior complete with reproduction furniture, this room reinforced the status of this work as other to, and separate from the rest of the works on show. This, no doubt, will fuel anxieties about the status of craft further.

These four exhibitions demonstrate a return to craft materials and processes in contemporary art practice. They signify a shift towards a materials-based, medium-specific approach to art making, providing evidence that clay is still a relevant medium for artists today. Grayson Perry winning the Turner Prize in 2003 established a ceramics presence in the art world, changing the ways ceramics are perceived and opening up debates and opportunities. These exhibitions demonstrate how art values craft, but how is this art work valued by the craft world?

How Craft Values Art
Despite clay’s long relationship with fine artists, the ceramics community often regards these artists as “outsiders”:

“Some traditional potters are critical or even jealous of the intrusion of great artists into the field of ceramics, even if they all pursue the same ideal with the same dedication.” (Preaud and Gauthier, 1982, p.100)
The ceramics world, de Waal (2004) notes, takes a “highly moralised” view of this work, often choosing to focus their critique on the contribution made by the assisting craftsperson, without whom they would not be able to make, fire, glaze etc. Recent successes in clay in the art world have come from fine artists rather than ceramic artists. As the ceramics community views these artists and their work as outsiders, their positive impact on ceramics world is minimal. Despite the widening of craft’s boundaries to embrace for example design-based practices, developments within contemporary design have also failed to impact heavily on ceramics discourses. The ceramics world views the majority of this new design-based work in much the same way it views the work by fine artists using clay - as other. For example, the Dutch designer/ artist Hella Jongerious, who works on the borders of design and craft (and often in ceramics) has created some of the most exciting new work in ceramics but until recently has been largely ignored by the ceramics world/ press which has been slow to respond.

Metcalf (1993) argues that installation and performance based craft should not be classed as craft. For example, he criticises Jim Melchert’s performance Changes, describing the work as “process raided to subject matter”. He argues that this type of craft work should be classified as performance or sculpture but not as craft:

“... craft (as a class of objects) is not pouring slip over people.” (Metcalf, 1993, p.70)

I would argue that craft processes are often the (only) content/ subject matter of craft practice. The majority of ceramic art practice is materials and process driven rather than content-led.

Recent attempts by the Craft’s Council to be seen to be more like the art world, such as with the exhibition Approaching Content at the Crafts Council in 2003, I consider to provide further evidence of craft’s limited perspective. The exhibition, whose intention was to unite applied and fine artists, only served to reaffirm ideas about craft-based art practice as being a purely materials-based activity.

The very term “Approaching Content” immediately implies a failure to embrace content i.e. nearly art, getting there but not quite there. By championing the making of the work, at the expense of addressing any conceptual concerns, any
possible content is thus demoted. The works selected for the exhibition reinforced this view. Selected artists represented an equal number from art and craft backgrounds. I would argue that the exhibition was a missed opportunity for craft-based art practices to make a strong case for their legitimacy as a fine art. Instead, the exhibition highlighted the inability of craft-based art practices to engage with contemporary concerns and debates. The writing accompanying the exhibition lacked any critical rigour and was often patronising in its tone, perhaps deliberately targeted for a crafts audience. The result is a half-hearted attempt that fails to please either the art or craft camps and to wholeheartedly embrace art’s concerns.

I would argue it served to reveal the underlying conflicts surrounding the boundaries, status and functions of art and craft practices and the prejudices within the craft world against art ways of thinking within craft practices. These differences between insider and outsider perceptions of ceramics will be further investigated later in the research.

If you say it’s art - it’s art
Dormer identifies the distinctions between art and craft:

“The critical distinction between an applied art and a fine art has to do with the aim and purpose of the activity.” (Dormer, 1994b, p.47)

During the last 30 years the ceramics world has been dominated by classification issues centred on the art versus craft debate. However, as previously identified in the literature review, the “no separation” argument (that there is no difference between art and craft), although now debunked, continues to dominate ceramics discourse and practice which continues to adopt the “if you say it’s art, it’s art” approach.

Despite its ambitions to be considered FA, much CA fails to be accepted as such. To have the intention to make art is clearly not enough. Artists complain that their work is not accepted as art because of art world prejudices (against craft) and anxieties over classification and status of ceramic art continue.

Prejudices & Hierarchies? Post-Perry & the New Relativism
Historically, the hierarchies imposed by the FA world undoubtedly economically and culturally marginalised the crafts. However in this chapter I have identified
how the emergence of new art and design practices has forced a shift in ideas about the classification and functions of art, craft and design. I have established how traditional boundaries between art, craft and design practices are dissolving. I have identified how art, craft and design practices have embraced new methods of working; borrowing ideas, attitudes and concepts from each other's fields. (For example, design has embraced art's conceptual approaches to explore the nature and concepts of design.) Conceptual approaches within CA however are just beginning to emerge (Dahn, 2004).

I have identified a shift in the Crafts Council’s position to embrace designer-maker practice within the crafts canon, thereby broadening the concepts of craft and design. I have also identified a return to craft materials and processes within contemporary art and design practices. Contemporary art and design practices have extended their boundaries and shifted their focus towards cultural, social and political concerns, for example by engaging with ideas about sustainability within design and environmental issues via use of recycling etc. Crucially, where craftspeople have failed, designers have successfully achieved fine art status with the emergence of “high” designers, making one-off and limited edition pieces. In the context of this new relativism, where “anything goes” in art, and where Grayson Perry can win the Turner prize – I have established that there is no substance to claims of prejudice against craft materials today. Why, in the absence of prejudices against craft materials, has CA failed where fine art and design have succeeded? Why has CA practice failed to be embraced by the fine art world and achieve art status?

The art world does not expect craft to challenge. In conversation with James Putnam sculptor Anthony Gormley notes that where art questions the world:

“... craft is there to make life easier, more liveable.” (Gormley and Putnam, 2004, p.84)

Veiteberg (2005) notes that since Perry, the field has been in transition and also in conflict with itself and its own identity. She notes that craft is now in a similar situation to art – where craft means everything and nothing, but she argues that hierarchies still exist within the arts despite significant changes such as Perry winning the Turner Prize in 2003.
"We thus have a situation which, on one hand, allows for a new perspective on craft in accordance with post-modern thinking, and which, on the other hand, contains a historical hierarchy that keeps craft fixed into a subordinate position to the fine arts. It is in this paradoxical situation that contemporary craft makers work." (Veiteberg, 2005, p.15)

She notes how the field of craft has expanded and although many makers feel at home in a fine art arena, the majority of craft occupies what she terms the "intervening space" between art and design, proposing the term "undecidable art", as a term that can unite craft, denoting something positive, probing and open (Veiteberg, 2005, p.87). The term implies the artist is still negotiating whether they make art or not, undecided as to the work's function. This is not the case in my work. Although my work explores the boundaries of art, craft and design practice, I am engaged in the processes of making art.

Veiteberg warns that:

"If practitioners do not uphold the idea of a "separate room", their discipline risks disappearing from view." (Veiteberg, 2005, p.87)

It is ironic that craft's position has shifted away from trying to emulate art to now find itself in a position where it must maintain a difference from art, in order to justify itself.

I have identified how diversity and the lack of a critical framework have contributed to a crisis in both identity and confidence within CA practice. I have identified that when compared to other contemporary art and design (and indeed other craft) practices such as textiles, CA employs a limited set of methods and approaches and lacks alternative perspectives. Consequently CA appears "restricted" when compared to those practices. These differences have been noted by Koplos:

"... these objects speak a different language than contemporary art, and when they are labelled art and judged accordingly, they seem second-rate." (Koplos, 1993, p.13)

Greenberg also identifies how "the notion of craft" has confined practice:

"Ceramic Artists complain about lacking serious critical attention. I say make art good enough and it won’t be denied such attention in the long run. And don’t let yourselves be closed off by the notion of craft lines – by the notion of "craft" – which may be the hardest thing of all to do, harder even than making superior art." (Greenberg, 2003, p.138)
To make “good enough” art, one must make quality art. Art and quality in art is classified and defined by the art world, according to art’s rules. Artistic intention is not enough, in order to be accepted as FA you must play by FA rules and adopt its critical agenda.

“If craft wants entry into the temple of art, it had better change its clothes - and be very polite.” (Metcalf, 1993, p.40)

Greenberg also articulates this gap within CA practice:

“There is a distinction between ceramists who make sculpture and sculptors who resort to clay (as they would do wax or another medium). It’s there in the way craft lines are drawn, there in the minds of ceramists and in the minds of sculptors too.” (Greenberg, 2003, p.137)

In order to find out how “craft lines are drawn”, in the following section, I will explore the context, meaning and value of craft.
SECTION 2: THE MEANING OF CRAFT

Within the visual arts, CC and CA are located within the context of craft and much of the literature (and practice) is located and informed by this context. CC and CA are considered to be craft, an applied or decorative art. Some critics have suggested that ceramics is confined by the very notion of craft. In order to understand more about ceramics and about how “craft lines are drawn”, the following section of the research will investigate the context of craft, how craft is classified, valued and understood.

Firstly, I will explore the classification of craft; its origins, definitions and concepts. I will identify the determining features and characteristics of craft. In the following chapter, I will investigate the value of craft. I will identify craft’s associations and connotations, how craft is valued by consumers and the marketplace. I will conclude by establishing present positions and by identifying how “craft lines are drawn”.
2.1 CLASSIFICATION OF CRAFT

Historical Divisions - How craft was separated from art & design

It is widely acknowledged that most “high” art started out as some kind of craft (Becker, 1984, p.298). Kuspit (2000) also identifies that the split between the “high” and “low” arts which occurred in the 18th century when the notion of “fine art” first arose. Prior to this time, craft and art were inseparable, a practical rather than theoretical activity. In a study exploring status of crafts in Middle Ages, T.A. Heslop (1997) identifies an even earlier shift during the 12th century, away from artists to what he describes as “craftists” (p.54).

Arthur Danto (2000) notes that the concept of craft emerged in the late 19th century as an anti-industrial ideology, a product of the industrial revolution. This new concept of craft represented an aesthetic of the handmade and was seen as a way to a more primitive and fulfilling life. Kuspit (2000) also notes that as art lost its practical purpose and became associated with taste, notions of well-made art collapsed to be replaced by the aesthetic experience generated by the art, however it was made (Kuspit 2000). Greenhalgh (1997a) identifies how developments in design impacted on the crafts; specifically the Bauhaus movement of the 1920s who combined the decorative arts with the politics of work. This resulted in craft becoming “divorced from design” (Dormer, 1997, p.11).

Consequently, craft became isolated from both the art and design worlds and became defined solely by its relationship to industry and mass production. Dormer identifies that crafts became further marginalised after the second world war when technology and design were united and craft became “the crafts”, other to art and design, and perceived to be of a lower status (Dormer, 1997).

Although craft precedes and predates both art and design, Anna-Marja Ihatsu (1997) notes that craft can now be defined in its relationship to the worlds of art and design – the two ways of thinking which define craft today. She notes that craft is situated between art and industry, acting as a mediator in both directions - with industrial design and fine art at each extreme (Appendix A). Veiteberg concurs noting that to understand crafts’ identity it must be viewed in relation to art and design.
It is important to recognise however that concepts of craft differ across Europe and internationally. For example, in Finland craft contains a strong design element and there is no concept of craft-based art or “art-craft” – it is just art (Ihatsu, 1997, p.303). The crafts have a history of change and as a result have a complex and unstable identity.

Contemporary designers are embracing the relationship between craft and design as Hella Jongerius acknowledges:

“... design is recent, craft is its roots; craft is our tradition.” (Walrecht, 2002, p.5)

Cerebral vs. Physical
One of the defining dualities in discussion of the crafts is that between the cerebral and the physical. This is connected to the creation of the high and low arts and in the separation of making from meaning, where having ideas was split from the making of objects. By separating creativity from the making of things, this led to art without craft. Dormer identifies how this “art without craft” approach to art history has not been employed in the literature. Smith (1997) is also critical of art history and argues that the canon of modern art was constructed around anti-craft values, describing the next phase after modernity as “craft-indifferent” (p.26).

In Collingwood’s (1938) Principles of Art, he states that art and craft are fundamentally different – that craft is physical, art is cerebral. Greenhalgh (1997a) notes that the philosophy of craft was developed by the Arts and Craft pioneers, premised on the idea that cognitive and manual activities are one the same, whereas FA separated them. Art was seen as a way of seeing rather than doing, centred on the artist. Craft on the other hand, stands for the making of things. This kind of definition rests on a belief in tacit knowledge.

Dormer (1997) defends craft as “knowledge which is hard to describe”, and as “a practical philosophy” which cannot be put into words (p.226). Despite his attacks against art theory and the theorising of craft practice, he then goes on to identify and employ Wittgenstein’s theories of knowledge. Dormer notes that the “thinking
is in the making”, and refers to Wittgenstein who identified the difference between knowledge which is written and that which can only be shown.

“What can only be shown cannot be written about, and to those that think there can be a theory and a critical language of craft that is a warning worth heeding.” (Dormer, 1997, p.230)

Metcalf (1997) notes that craft values the tacit and intuitive, unlike art which values the cerebral, and he explores ideas about motor activity and control. He locates his arguments in the context of “bodily-kinetic intelligence” (as identified by Howard Gardner in Frames of Mind, 1985), where different types of intelligence are “value-neutral”. Metcalf argues therefore that it is difficult to compare linguistic versus bodily intelligence as they such different entities. However, he does acknowledge that different hierarchies of intelligence exist within different cultures but he argues that these are culturally constructed and not scientific fact.

It has been suggested that crafts are “holding back” the progress of fine art departments within universities, where FA sees the:

“... demanding technical traditions of the crafts as trapping students into inappropriately unreflective activity, of taking up far too much time and space. (Brown, 1997, p.4)

Metcalf talks about the “institutional theory of art” and notes that outside the craft world bodily intelligence is incomprehensible and is therefore useless:

“The craftworld accepts the meanings of felt experience and the body, whereas the artworld remains dedicated to meanings embedded in texts and discourses.” (Metcalf, 1997, p.80)

Julian Stair also highlights the human experience:

“I chose to make objects for use to expand my conceptual possibilities, instead of limiting them. Crafts operates through a multi-layering of aesthetic and conceptual levels. The most potent thing about craft objects is the way we engage with them as human beings, through touch as well as visually.” (Johnson, 1999, p.50)

This can be linked to the ways that craft practitioners conceptualise their lives in terms of their value systems - what could be described as the social meaning of craft.
The Social Meaning of Craft

Changing Concepts of Craft - Post-Industrialisation

I have identified that prior to industrialisation, everything was craft (Danto, 2000). The modern concept of craft emerged during the late 19th century as an anti-industrial ideology, an aesthetic of the handmade and a way to a more primitive, fulfilling life. In *The Lost Continent of Craft*, Andrew King (1997) notes the important shift in the concept of craft from pre-industrialisation when craft was viewed as a producer; to post-industrialisation when craft became a political statement and lifestyle choice. The crafts became dissociated with labour and were repositioned as:

"... a new kind of practice, in which sensual gratification, intellectual exercise, moral virtue and even, in certain cases, the odour of sanctity were combined." (King, 1997, p.179)

King identifies how the Arts and Crafts movement created not a crafts revival but a new type of practice, distinguished by its anti-stance, "a reaction to industry" (1997, p.180). King notes that the modern concept of craft was created as "a weapon of social criticism" (1997, p.179). Hobbis (1997, p.40) states that being a craftsperson is: "a social fact". Indeed, King (1997) argues that craft practice represents a political stance via the creative control of production, whilst Hobbis (1997) argues that craft offers a better way of life. This craft ideal is the legacy of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement which is at the core of how we value craft today. Clark concurs:

"The crafts link daily use to a complexity of moral and political arguments that include Socialism, the Protestant work ethic and other issues." (Clark, 2003, p.193)

In her article *Contemporary Concerns: what is the place of craft in a full world?* Harrod (2001) also identifies how craft embodies the antithesis of "soul-less mass production" although she identifies this as a "peculiarly British" reason for craft practice. This social definition of craft is still prevalent today and there is evidence of an emerging number of mature students who return to study crafts in order to pursue a more "fulfilling way of life". Ideas about endurance, longevity and of preserving history all contribute to craft’s moral and spiritual code. Kuspit (1998) argues that the crafts denote intimacy, authenticity and touch, and as such are well-positioned to act as an antidote for modern living. Kuchta also holds this view noting that clay is seen as:
Greenhalgh (2002) also argues that craft is used as a therapy against mass consumption and as a means of individual expression. In short, craft now seems to represents nostalgia: nostalgia seen through a prism of tacit knowledge, lifestyle and the valorisation of touch above the cerebral.

**Craft as a Lifestyle Choice & Notions of Work**

“It is clear that, for those who have chosen to work as craftsmen and women, this has involved not simply learning a new set of work tasks and establishing a new set of social relationships, but also coming to terms with a new set of values about themselves, their work, and the social world in which they live.” (Ranson, 1989, p.89)

In the context of growing dissatisfaction with our consumerist society, the crafts are enjoying a renewed interest both in terms of production and consumption as Kuspit notes:

“Craft means repersonalisation of work in a world of depersonalised work.” (Kuspit, 2000, p.166)

He goes on:

“Genuine craft always represents unalienated labour - the labor of love - which is why it has gained new appeal in our technological society of ever more ingeniously alienated work.” (Kuspit, 2000, p.166)

Dormer (1997) talks about “honest work” and about how craftspeople search for excellence in their work, how they strive to get it “right” (p.224). However, it is important to note that the process of getting it right necessarily involves making aesthetic and functional choices which are tied to rules and codes of practice and procedures. Dormer (1997) also notes the importance of the act of “craft labour”, where craft relies on tacit knowledge. The value of craft is dependant on the time taken to learn craft skills as wells as the time spent/ taken to make the work.

Veiteberg (2005) also notes the labour intensive hand-made aspect of craft work and quotes Caroline Broadhead who acknowledges that, in the context of technological advances, making things is a “supremely anachronistic occupation” (p.80).
Divisions of Labour & Site of Production

“The choice to devote one’s life to a craft is a conscious rejection of the way our culture has devalued physical labour.” (Metcalf, 1993, p.46)

Christopher Bailey identifies the three main sites of craft production as: the factory, the studio and the home (Bailey, 1989, p.1). The craft practice discussed here refers predominantly to the “studio” craft category, although the home and to a lesser degree the factory are also sites of contemporary craft production. Taylor identifies the studio as the main site of craft production and makes a key distinction between the classification of the designer / craftsperson:

“... while employing studio assistants is common practice within working potteries or studio glass works, for example, those who wish to delegate some or all of the making to another specialist or manufacturer beyond the studio step symbolically outside the recognised boundaries of craft.” (Taylor and Redhead, 2001, p.7)

In a recent Crafts Council study, crafts makers were identified to have a work satisfaction rate of 94% and a desire to achieve “both business success and lifestyle satisfaction” was noted. Ceramics represented 21% of the craft makers who responded to the study. The survey states that:

“... crafts continue to be more than a job for many – rather a lifestyle!” (Crafts Council, 2004, p.4)

Ceramic artist Carol McNicoll states that one of the reasons she chose ceramics was because she thought it would be possible to make a living doing it (McNicoll, 1997). Judy Attfield (2000) notes however that much of today’s craft practice can be deemed leisure as it is often carried out in the home and is often subsidised by another source of income. She notes that crafts offer:

“... a precarious way to make a living.” (Attfield, 2000, p.69)

In his essay Craft and Art, Culture and Biology, Bruce Metcalf argues that the motivation to pursue a craft is largely intrinsic, based on desire to do something “for its own sake regardless of external reward” (Metcalf, 1997, p.78). He argues that bodily intelligence is the biological and cognitive foundation to all craft practice – this is why individuals choose a single medium and why they become so dedicated to it and develop a “powerful loyalty” to craft (Metcalf, 1997, p.76). He argues that because craft is difficult to learn and takes a long time:

“In craft, a powerful motivation is essential.” (Metcalf, 1997, p.78)
Metcalf proposes that art and craft are radically different:

"... contemporary art and craft are rooted, at least in part, in different biological and social contexts." (Metcalf, 1997, p.67)

He links ideas about human nature as the "human basis" for craft practice, the choice and mastery of a single medium. He argues that craft and art therefore cannot be compared and that to do so is unproductive. Art and craft are different practices, with different roles and functions. However, Metcalf fails to engage with the massive area of art-based craft practice. Does craft-based art function in the same way as other types of art?

In conversation with Julian Stair, Pamela Johnson identifies that crafts practitioners do have the opportunity to ask compelling questions, but Stair replies:

"What's the point of only asking questions? Art must attempt to supply answers. I am making art that provides an aesthetic experience that engages all our senses." (Johnson, 1999, p.51)

Kuchta (1992) puts forward possible psychological explanation for types of artists where artists who are inclined to follow traditional forms are inevitably of an introverted character; whereas those artists whose work reaches for "novelty of expression" are invariably extroverted personality types (p.34). According to Kuchta's categorisation of personality type by art form, all traditional craftspeople are introverts. Although I do not subscribe to such generalisations and stereotypes of craftpeople and artists, I suspect that craft subjects do attract a certain type of person (i.e. different from design or art) and further research is needed in this area.

**Contemporary Craft Practice**

There are competing taxonomic definitions of craft, as Pamela Johnson notes:

"The notion of craft as a pure category can no longer be sustained. It is not possible to point to something singular and unchanged which we may call craft." (Johnson, 1998, p.67)

In *The Culture of Craft*, Dormer identifies three areas of the crafts: *Art-craft*, *Design-craft*, and *Studio craft*. Rose Slivka (1980) also identifies three areas of craft practice. The first is *Art craft*, the pursuit of ideas and from, interaction with painting and sculpture. The second is *Functional craft*: this consists of limited series, where the quality of design, technique and material are pre eminent. The
third is *Survival craft*. Here hand skills as seen as an alternative to industrialisation: this is a new movement affecting lifestyle, work ethics and social responsibility which she regards as being “*beyond aesthetics*” (Slivka, 1980). Gloria Hickey (1997) identifies “*rural craft*, “*souvenir craft*” and “*tourist art*” as distinct areas of craft practice. The characteristics of souvenir craft Hickey identifies as being: accessible, simple, often romantic or grotesque and featuring visual clichés.

In her paper *Report from a Borderland*, Jorunn Veiteberg (1998) calls for an extension of the concept of craft and notes that the term craft cannot be defined once and for all, as it is in constant flux (p.75). She identifies recent trends in Norwegian craft practice, where artists are now nomadic in nature, working between the borders of art, craft and design. Although she classifies this type of work as visual art, she notes the importance of the value attributed to the work i.e. whether we call it craft or art.

**Determining Features, Characteristics & Attributes**

There are several normative attributes to craft practice: the handmade, skill, materiality and function. The unifying feature of all crafts practices is that they are made by hand. In the Foreword to the exhibition catalogue *The Raw and the Cooked*, David Elliott notes:

> “The idea of craft, of which the field of ceramics is usually deemed to be a part, is based on a number of myths. The most pervasive and historicist of these is that the making of objects by hand is, in some sense, a moral activity; much more so than the making of art. (I) The focus of crafts rests on the nexus of creation itself.” (Margetts, 1993, p.7)

Attfield (2000) notes that the craft category is often used to separate the hand made from the industrially produced. She also identifies the romanticisation of craft production, where the concept of craft has evolved to mean a rejection of the machine (in the stereotypical Luddite/ Morris sense), rustic and to imply literally hand-made as in precious “handi-craft”. However, as Attfield identifies:

> “Ever since powered hand tools and machinery have been available craftworkers have been using them.” (Attfield, 2000, p.65)
Johnson (1997) sees the crafts as “fundamentally tactile” and calls for the re-evaluation of the sensual across all disciplines (p.292). Craft, she argues implies intimacy and invites a tactile response. Kuchta argues that clay is:

“…eminentely suitable for manifesting sensuous forms.” (Kuchta, 2002, p.92)

In conversation with Pamela Johnson, when asked about the “conceptual possibilities” of the handmade objects versus machine made objects, potter Julian Stair replies:

“That’s like comparing an Athena print with a painting. The craft cup has a literal and metaphorical thumb-print.” (Johnson, 1999, p.50)

Craft can be distinguished from design by it’s following of design through to the process of production and by notions of fine “workmanship”. This links to ideas about demonstrable skill which is the second feature of craft practice. Dormer argues that craft is about connoisseurship:

“Each craft involves connoisseurship, and connoisseurship is part of tacit knowledge – that is, it is learned through experience.” (Dormer, 1997, p.225)

When asked by Johnson if he is just advocating a connoisseurship of the handmade object and Stair replies:

“I am asking people to make value-judgements.” (Johnson, 1999, p.50)

In Artworlds, Howard Becker (1984) defines craft knowledge:

“Defining craft as the knowledge and skill which produces useful objects and activities implies an aesthetic, standards on which judgements of particular items of work can be based, and an organisational form in which the evaluative standards find their origin and logical justification.” (Becker, 1984, p.274)

In ceramics, the emergence of CA as the dominant field has led to fears of the loss of established craft values and concerns about a loss of skill and decline in standards.

“Individualism and the sheer variety of output has affected notions of quality and connoisseurship.” (Dormer, 1994b, p.195)

Although Dormer acknowledges charges of elitism against ideas about connoisseurship and aesthetics, he argues that this is not about taste and defends the connoisseur as someone who is interested in the “quality, integrity and rightness of a craft approach”. Metcalf (1993) identifies how in Japan and Korea the “mastery of technique” is regarded as evidence of “spiritual maturity” (p.46).

The third area is that of materiality:
"The artist craftsperson is wedded to his or her material; it is the material that is their muse. There is a fundamental difference between art driven by ideas and art which derives from a material and its history. When a sculptor uses clay he or she might only use it once or twice. ...When a ceramist uses clay it is with a feeling for its past as well as for its future." (Poncelet, 2001)

In FA, diversity and classification are not such an issue, where the notion of a medium specific artist has lost ground. Craft practices however are classified by their use of craft materials, unlike in FA where there are no limits to materials used. Although clay (and potentially any craft material) can and has been employed as a legitimate art material, CC and CA are nonetheless situated within the context of craft. Ceramist Andrea Gill notes how at present ceramics is “very much defined by process” where the use of materials is central to the meaning of the work (Zakin, 1999, p.276). This view is reflected in the ceramics literature which is dominated by detailed descriptions of work.

Functionality is the final area of definition, a ubiquitous reference within craft practice. Anna-Marja Ihatsu (1997) describes function as providing “a goal for production” for craft and design. Alison Britton notes the area of vessel-based work and its relationship to function:

“I would say that this group is concerned with the outer limits of function; where function, or an idea of a possible function, is crucial, but is just one ingredient in the final presence of an object, and is not its only motivation.” (Britton, 1981, p.16)

Alex Buck also notes that:

“The question of functional use is now no longer always part of the criteria for defining crafts, as they have transcended traditional definition.” (Buck, 1997, p.144)

Veiteberg notes how function is often perceived as a problem by those outside craft:

“Outside craft’s own circle, craft’s “problem” is as a rule always perceived as being its utility function.” (Veiteberg, 2005, p.27)

She notes a shift away from utility in craft practice in Norway, what has been described as the “liberation project” (Veiteberg, 2005, p.28).

Metcalf explores the meaning and use of craft, its function and social meaning. He argues that craft can offer “a medium for personal meaning” (of its user) where craft can perform a “service”.
“Instead of celebrating the artists’ ego, the work can discover the unanswered needs of the user.” (Metcalf, 1993, p.45)

In this way, Metcalf argues that craft may even become “socially responsible”. The site for this work is not the gallery or museum but the body and the home, what he considers to be “humble” places.

If the meaning of craft is created in its use, why does craft practice fail to engage with ideas about use other than to ensure an object’s functionality? Metcalf urges makers look at function in the context of meaning created by the user, in the home, to unite content with function:

“Unfortunately, most contemporary craft practitioners do not consciously address meaning. Discourse about function is directed toward physical use, exactly as Modernism dictates. ...The possibilities of craft serving psychological uses go uninvestigated. This is sad - a betrayal and a loss.” (Metcalf, 1993, p.45)

Quantity - Patron or Punter?
Becker (1984) locates craft in the context of an employer/ employee relationship. He argues that the notion of service subordinates the craftsman to an employer and it is this distinction which separates craftspeople from fine artists. He goes on to argue that craftsmen, by becoming artist-craftsmen, are freed up from the constraints of the employer/employee relationship. Although this distinction may not be relevant within the context of today’s fine art market; for the majority of craftspeople the notion of service to an employer is still very much in evidence (Crafts Council, 2004).

Greenhalgh (2002) also makes the important connection between classification and economy. He suggests that artefacts are sold either for exclusivity (which denotes fine art) or quantity (which denotes craft and design). By categorising objects by the number produced he fails to reflect the fact that many crafts have and continue to be made for their exclusivity. There is a large proportion of craft objects currently being sold in craft shops and galleries that are expensive, exclusive objects (when compared with the mass-produced ). Such objects are often displayed as art objects or stored away and in the case of the rare, antique or collectable items that are rarely used.
Design can be classified as separate from craft by its sheer quantity. Although the emergence of designer-maker practice and small batch production blurs this distinction. Andrew Jackson (1998) for example notes that in the case of furniture, which often has a mass produced finish and relies on machinery in its production, is still considered craft because it has limited availability. If according to Jackson, craft has limited availability, then art has less availability and design therefore is more available than craft.

“...it is becoming more and more difficult to employ fixed, internal criteria for what makes craft, craft.” (Veiteberg, 2005, p.41)

The changing concepts of craft as identified above have informed our understanding of the term. These concepts have brought with them negative stereotypes and associations which continue to inform our understanding of craft and ceramics today. These negative associations of craft continue – it is considered down-market, cheap when compared to FA, not serious art or amateur. Craft's associations are a definite drawback for contemporary ceramics. Although there are signs that this position is now dissolving, we must offer new, positive examples of ceramics.

“Even in the current atmosphere of freewheeling pluralism, craft will not be taken seriously until it can demonstrate genuine significance and relevance.” (Metcalf, 1993, p.41)

I have examined craft in terms of classification by the art world, but what are the implications of the craft classification? How is craft valued and by whom? There is a tendency within the literature to focus on production rather than on consumption. In the next chapter, I will examine the existing literature which focuses on the crafts marketplace and on the consumption of ceramics and craft, in order to identify how craft is valued.
2.2 THE VALUE OF CRAFT

The research will now explore the implications of craft context, the value of craft. I will examine how craft is valued and understood, craft’s cultural and economic status and its associations and connotations. I will then examine the crafts marketplace and craft consumers.

Marginalisation – Cultural & Economic Status

“For craft is not an issue of debate in the art world as a whole: craft simply does not figure in the art magazines or the serious art reviews in newspapers as a subject to discuss.” (Dormer, 1997, p.174)

Craft’s cultural status is low and it is not valued as highly as fine art. Groom (2004, p.14). notes that clay’s exclusion from art history is surprising given that clay was once “a metaphor for art itself”. De Waal (2004) also notes that work in clay by fine artists has been devalued and excluded from critical history due to anxieties about craft.

“Straddled between an art and design economy, craft often gets the worst of both worlds. It occupies a space where objects, though individually hand made, sell at mass production prices.” (Greenhalgh, 2002, p.6)

Greenhalgh (2002) argues that FA hierarchies are essentially about money, a financial pecking order established by the art world in which crafts are not valued as highly as FA and are cheap when compared to FA.

Taste & Aesthetic Status – Why art is art, and craft is something else

“A 1930 eight litre Bentley is as beautiful as a Lucie Rie bottle. A Lucie Rie bottle is at least as beautiful as a Kenneth Noland painting. All these artefacts are more beautiful than a Francis Bacon painting. I believe Francis Bacon to be a great artist.” (Brighton, 1985)

As Andrew Brighton notes in his essay Why craft is not high art, craft may be more beautiful than art, but art is more important. He notes that this however is a statement of taste. He argues that we experience “disgust and revolution” when we look at Bacon. Is this then a prerequisite of art? Must craft therefore make us comfortable? Koplos (1993) notes that Betty Woodman’s work for example gives pleasure, unlike fine art which is supposed to be difficult. Woodman discusses responses to her work:
“Curators tell me that the fact that my work can make people feel good removes it from being serious art. My goal is not to make everybody feel happy. That’s not such a bad goal, but it’s not my goal.” (NCECA, 1995, p.11)

Surely contemporary FA is equally capable of giving pleasure and making people feel good? Woodman’s comments also raise questions about taste and the functions and audiences of art which are explored later in the thesis.

Ideas about beauty are linked to ideas about pleasure. Veiteberg identifies beauty as a function of craft, where beauty is the bit that works.

“Beauty is about craft’s affective side.” (Veiteberg, 2005, p.60)

Contemporary crafts practitioners are questioning notions of beauty in craft and engaging with ideas about craft aesthetics and about “ugly” craft. Veiteberg identifies the influence of Leach and Japanese culture on ideas about beauty in craft which became associated with aesthetic and ethical concerns. She notes that to have ones work branded as beautiful is to be branded superficial or vacuous; beauty seems “suspicious”, purely aesthetic - so not real art. However, a return to beauty and craft in contemporary art practice has now been identified.

Craft Associations & Connotations:
Domesticity & Femininity

In a review of Grayson Perry’s work, Jonathan Jones notes his contempt for the clay medium:

“... clay is a medium stultified for most of us by its association with pretty vases and teapots.”(Jones, 2004)

Ideas about femininity influence all aspects of craft. Ideas about craft are informed by notions of femininity, ideas about women’s work, domesticity, the home-made and the amateur. Home is both a site of the production and of consumption of ceramics and craft. Feminist critiques of craft and design have identified how women and women’s work and women’s art and the crafts have been devalued, as identified by Attfield and Kirkham (1989); Elinor, Richardson et al. (1987) and Pollock (1988). This gendering of craft and its associations with domesticity, femininity and amateurism affect notions of quality and value. This is connected to something that Rawson notes, that across history and traditions ceramics is about containing food and drink:
"This intimate connection with a potent aspect of daily life and experience is what gives ceramics its particular aesthetic interest." (Rawson, 1984, p.3)

He identifies links with the domestic, where ceramics:

"… fill the gap between art and life." (Rawson, 1984, p.6)

Dormer also notes that crafts provide:

"… a thickening of the visual texture of the home." (Dormer, 1985, p.5)

Amateurism
Crafts are associated with the home made and the home-spun, and with femininity and domesticity, and consequently craft has come to denote amateurism (Dormer, 1994a). Greenhalgh also identifies amateurism as key area of concern for craft.

"Crafts has been imaged as a pleasurable way of filling time, or alternatively as a subsistence practice that is done alongside other things." (Greenhalgh, 2002, p.6)

In reality, makers often make little money and have to take on additional employment, as do many fine artists. Jackson notes a shift towards the amateur, where crafts are practiced as a popular activity and notes the Crafts Council’s response to this trend, which was to disassociate themselves with amateur practice (Jackson, 1997). He refers to the Crafts Advisory Committee 1974-7 report, which highlights concerns over the number of community art projects promoting crafts – thereby bringing notions of high craft into play.

Attfield notes how concepts and writing about craft are either confined to the privileged sector of art school and studio crafts, or associated with morally cleansing activities such as the Woodcraft Folk and the Women’s Institute. Attfield (2000) notes how craft practitioners were until the mid 1980s imaged as “a band of eccentric amateurs” (p.66). Greenhalgh also identifies the current popularity of amateur crafts.

"This considerable percentage of the British population are more interested in making their own craft objects than in looking at those of others." (Greenhalgh, 2002, p.7)

This renewed interest in the practice of hobby-crafts in Britain is evidenced by recent publications such as Making Stuff: An Alternative Craft Book (2006) by Ziggy Hanaor and Victoria Woodcock (Eds) and also the Guardian’s Craft Guide (Spencer, 2007). This area of craft practice however is excluded from the ceramics
and craft canon. The area of hobby-craft will be further explored later in the research.

Fine artists have embraced “low” art forms, objects, materials and practices - so why shouldn’t craft? The amateur associations of craft can be viewed (and employed) in a more positivist light, for example to denote the common man. As Hickey notes:

“Awareness of craft is often based on exposure to it as a leisure activity.” (Hickey, 1997, p.87)

Although she refers to the Canadian context, I suspect same is true in the UK as evidenced by the number of hobby craft magazines and new craft super stores such as Hobbycrafts and also Paint your own ceramics shops (Appendix A). Hickey identifies that the Canadian general public largely has contact with craft through “bazaars operated by community centres and churches” (Hickey, 1997, p.87). She notes that the owners of the established Canadian craft fair “One of a Kind” was so named in response to the fact that their audience “had a big problem with the word craft”, where craft was perceived it as being “something pioneers did to survive”. Hickey notes that instead of trying to “re-engineer the image of craft” they instead choose to “promote shopping rather than craft” (Hickey, 1997, p.89). This strategy seemed to have worked as Hickey cites the Toronto Christmas Fair attracting some 100,000 shoppers. This strategy has recently been employed by the Crafts Council as evidenced by Origin which was launched in October 2006 at Somerset House, London and promoted as the “London Craft Fair”. This event replaces the Chelsea Crafts Fair which had been running for 26 years. Although the event claims to be a “celebration of the unique and the handmade”, it reinforces crafts’ links with design (rather than with art) and with designer-makers, promoting craft as a commodity. Craft is repositioned as a thing to be consumed.

Anti-theory, Anti-intellectual

“All too often the crafts are ignored because they are perceived as sentimental, anti-intellectual.” (Johnson, 1998, p.19)

It is widely acknowledged in the literature that craftspeople are anti-intellectual. Craft’s position as anti-industrial and anti-machine, and pro the hand made, the tactile, the physical and the experiential, has resulted in craft being positioned as
anti-theory. This is evident at craft related conferences and events and in the literature. In a report in Crafts magazine of the Craft in the 21st Century conference in Edinburgh, 2003 the review stated that “academic imperialism” was visible at the conference and that this ran counter to creative synergy the organisers supposedly advocated. As a result, some makers felt alienated by the language used. This conference also provided further evidence of the unwillingness of some crafts practitioners to shift their focus away from production issues to more critical concerns. For example, Canadian artist Neil Forrest gave a paper at the conference showing examples of his practice. During the Q&A session which followed, one delegate predictably asked Forrest if he had made the work himself. Although a valid question to ask of an artist, it is not the only question. Craft must shift its focus away from issues of production and about how an object is made and instead begin to focus on why we make objects and on what the object says about us.

In conversation with Stair (the first Fellow in Craft and Criticism at the University of Northumbria and the first practitioner to hold such a post), Johnson argues that makers are reluctant to lead debate. Stair disagrees, arguing there are many examples of practitioners in the field, who are “eloquent, incisive and brilliant” writers from Leach and Britton, to De Waal. Johnson however identifies that these writers have mainly addressed their own community. Stair acknowledges the difficulties involved:

“If makers take the stubborn position, refusing to engage, they must accept the consequences. There is an element of whining which is inexcusable.” (Johnson, 1999, p.49)

Morality, Humanity, Emotion & Experience

“While the artworld concentrates on the philosophical, craft allows a more diffuse range of human capacity, cognition and emotion. Craft has a human face.” (Metcalf, 1997, p.81)

Crafts can be viewed as a lifestyle choice which rejects consumer society, linking craft to ideas about morality. This can be traced to the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement, whose mantle was later taken up by Leach who joined these ideals with a Zen philosophy of making. The perceived need for crafts to engage with the moral condition of society and that to practice a craft will improve your
quality of life stem from the these ideals which continue to have an influence on

craft today. For example as evidenced by the current trend for taking up a second
career in craft. In the UK, craft is predominantly a white, middle-class pursuit
rather than a form of subsistence. Crafts discourse often fails to engage with
working class craft practices such as bricklaying. (Issues regarding class and
ceramics and craft will be discussed further in Section 4.)

“Craft objects reinforce personal identity.” (Metcalf, 1993, p.45)
De Waal notes the experiential qualities of clay. Barrett-Lennard identifies its
narrative and interactive potential, where craft objects often come with a story and
a history and offer:

“… a potential for reintroducing the experiential element and for adding a social
and personal dimension to the aesthetic.” (Barrett-Lennard, 1997, p.51)

Craft signifies human, the man-made, and the hand-made.

“... Craft offers a meaningful example of our shared heritage as human beings.”
(Risatti, 2001, p.69)
Veiteberg identifies the craft approach as an ethical manifesto:

“This attitude, which can be condensed in the three words honesty, simplicity
and usefulness, was not just an aesthetic ideal but also an ethical manifesto.”
(Veiteberg, 2005, p.18)

Louise Taylor (then Director of the Crafts Council) in the Foreword to the exhibition
catalogue Home Made Holland, goes further linking craft with the spiritual.

“... craft is valued for its soul. (...) the imprint of the production processes is
retained as the signifier of human touch.” (Walrecht, 2002, p.5)

**Green Politics**

Grayson Perry notes:

“I hated pottery – it was something hippies did.” (Tate, 2004, p.69)
Craftspeople continue to be associated with anti-industrialisation, environmental
issues and green politics. They have links with the peace movement which can be
traced back to the formation of the World Crafts Council in 1964, which was
created “in order to unite craftspeople for peace” (Peterson, 2000). Veiteberg also
identifies how during the 1960/70s craft became seen as a counterculture,
associated with the rural, natural and authentic, in opposition to industry and
pollution, representing an alternative, hippy lifestyle:
"Seeing oneself as part of a counterculture is a form of self-perception with roots dating back to the Arts and Crafts movement, and for many practitioners it is still part of the craft identity." (Veiteberg, 2005, p.22)

Clark (2003) traces crafts politics and ideas about morality to the legacy of Leach and his “utopian socialism” and “sackcloth mentality”. Located in a rural rather than an urban context, crafts came to represent freedom from consumer society.

Gareth Williams argues that unlike the fine arts “the crafts can uniquely contribute to the “green debate” (2002, p.61). He continues:

“The crafts are defined by the intrinsic value of the handmade object above the mass-produced commodity and the integrity of the maker and his or her relationship to the material and technique. Politicised by an engagement with environmental issues, the crafts have striven to become more relevant to the needs of modern society. The crafts themselves are exempt from charges of pollution or over-consumption...” (Williams, 2002, p.61)

The use of natural craft materials, recycling and ideas about sustainability are characteristic of environmentally aware craft practice. Crafts continue to be associated with green issues and green politics. However, although contemporary craft practices have successfully employed green methods and materials, for example the use of re-cycled and sustainable materials, it is not the dominant agenda in craft. In ceramics, although a natural material, the making and firing process involve the use of a number of toxic chemicals, not to mention the considerable amount of energy required for firing which emits polluting gases into the atmosphere. The un-environmentally friendly aspects of ceramic practice are rarely alluded to within the literature.

Summary Craft Associations
The above reinforce prejudices about crafts. These do not necessarily dictate CA’s acceptance as an art form although some prejudices may still exist. These associations do restrict ways of thinking and ways of working within the subject itself and hence demand attention.

The Crafts Marketplace
Metcalf (1993, p.40) notes the impact of mass production on craft, noting that today’s craft market is dominated by gifts and home furnishings which compete in the market on an “equal footing” with craft.
Consumers of craft

Hill notes that media and press coverage of craft is limited to interiors, women’s sections, shopping, reflecting the largely held view that the crafts are:

“... decorative, domestic, rural, nostalgic, brown, culturally marginal, something to do at evening classes.” (Hill, 1997, p.194)

Hill agrees that, for the majority of crafts, this mass perception of craft is correct. She notes however that it is common for craftspeople and critics to “bemoan” this state of affairs. Hill notes that a lot of this work is better served featured in publications such as *House and Garden* where they can gain exposure to an audience who can afford to buy it. She also notes that not all craft wants critique or aims to be art.

Craft can be purchased in the following ways: from the studio, from craft galleries, from craft shops and outlets (including museum shops & craft fairs). Dormer (1997) identifies that craftspeople either sell to collectors or make giftware. Metcalf also identifies crafts used as gifts often to mark important milestones e.g. births, rather than as necessities (1993, p.45). Dormer calls for the separation of craft made as giftware from studio craft.

“The admirers of “high art” are not interested in craft and the consumers of decorative objects and other trophies for the home do not see that high craft is really worth paying for. So what is a maker to do if he or she is to gain status or earn a living?” (Dormer, 1997, p.19)

Gloria Hickey (1997) argues that it is only insiders (professionals, collectors and connoisseurs) who understand the concept of craft in this way. This is the dilemma facing craftspeople today. They must retain their autonomy as producers of hand-made objects, knowing that their objects can be copied and emulated by a machine, mass produced, more quickly and cheaper, and then have to compete with those objects in the same marketplace.

Hickey argues that because crafts are not advertised, packaged or promoted, they do not stand out in the marketplace, resulting in what she describes as a:

“... startling gap between insiders and outsiders of the craft world.” (Hickey, 1997, p.86)

Hickey argues that the values commonly associated with craft i.e. that it is “unique, sophisticated, precious, expressive, enduring”, often do not match consumers’
expectations or their “shopping experience” (Hickey, 1997, p.90). She concludes that the chances of an “informed shared perception” of craft is slim.

Hickey identifies that most craft purchases in Canada are made by collectors. I would suggest the same in the UK. However, Brighton (2002) suggests that art galleries, unlike craft or interiors galleries, sell not to the general public but to collectors. There are of course collectors of craft in the UK and this market is in the process of being developed and expanded (as evidenced by events such as Collect at the Victoria and Albert Museum London).

Why Consume Craft? Specialness & Added Value

“... all crafts represent a counter-culture, and thus the production or purchase of a craft object is a form of dissent.” (Rees, 1997, p.130)

Williams (2002) cites tradition, long lasting materials and “the added value in a handmade object” as reasons for craft choice above that of the mass produced. This idea of “added value” is important to our understanding of craft and implies a morality and spirituality. Hickey notes that crafts are seen as pre-industrial by consumers, rooted to place and tradition. She notes that the hand-crafted is valued as a gift because it is:

“... “special” or rare because it is handmade and perhaps customised; sophisticated because the making of the object required skill; it is precious due to materials or time invested in labour; it is expressive - in terms of subject-matter, function, traditional or historical reference; and it is enduring.” (Hickey, 1997, p.85)

Simon Watney (1997) identifies how questions of value in craft are determined by the amount of time spent creating the work, asking if the work took no time to make would it make it less valuable? Craft writing tells us that good craft takes a long time to learn and to achieve. Adrian Saxe links ideas about value with the time spent viewing ceramic/ craft work. Saxe talks about “the long look” which is required of his work, noting that this is often denied in what he describes as “the quick view of the gallery” (NCECA, 1995, p.5). Harrod also notes that we look to handmade objects for:

“... simplicities rather than for conceit or metaphor.” (Harrod, 1985)
Authenticity & Ethnicity - Craft in the Museum

Hickey examines the role of the museum in the marketing and sales of craft in Canada. The context of the museum adds intellectual weight and legitimates and authenticates the importance of an artefact. It also exposes the object to large numbers of the general public. In context of the museum, craft, including handmade reproductions of original artefacts, appears “more authentic” (Hickey, 1997, p.90). Terry Smith (1997) also identifies this trend, what he describes as the “museumising” (p.26) of the past for tourists, where craft plays an active role in keeping this industry going.

I will locate ideas about ethnicity and authenticity in the context of the consumption of craft - from the perspective of outsiders, as this is where I would argue, these ideas gain their currency.

In the craft marketplace, ethnicity equals authenticity and both are highly favoured. Hickey argues that crafts provide “suitable markers of cultural identity” and thus are valued as having “a marketable ethnicity” (1997, p.91). She notes that in an urban market, ideas about traditional and or ethnic craftspeople are fuelled by a “romantic nationalism”, rooted in ideas about the noble savage. Traditional and rural crafts are regarded as “engagingly naive, unspoilt, genuine” (p.92) i.e. truly authentic and as such have achieved commercial popularity. This romanticisation of place and its links with authenticity can be traced back to the days of the empire and colonial Britain. In today’s context, concepts of authenticity have expanded to focus on the individual and individualism.

In his essay Altogether Elsewhere: The figuring of ethnicity, de Waal (2002) explores ideas about “the craftsmen as ethnographer”, using the examples of Leach and Cardew who both worked with traditional craftspeople in Africa and Japan. This trend for potters in 1950s and 60s to travel was an attempt to legitimate and authenticate their own practices:

“Authentic ethnic craft validates the critical abilities of those who have spotted it.” (De Waal, 2002, p.188)
Seen at the time as a celebration and in the context of ethnographic study, de Waal identifies how ideas about the home, national identity, domestic vernacular inform our understanding of craft.

Sense of place & Souvenirs

De Waal (2001) identifies the link with the rural but describes himself as “a metropolitan potter”. He identifies the connection between potters and the landscape and countryside, for example by their use of local materials, which he argues provides “the sense of identity of English craft-culture”. De Waal poses that craft acts as a signifier of being “settled”. Crafts are directly linked with ideas about place, tradition and identity (personal, regional & national).

“The craftsperson, the materials, the activity of making and consequently the object are regarded as characteristic of place.” (Hickey, 1997, p.91)

Hickey (1997) identifies that craft shops not only generate revenue for museums but they also function to reflect the “museum’s mandate” by “accentuating the regional character” of a particular museums collection. In the context of “souvenir craft” (p.93). Hickey identifies location as the most important aspect of the work (for the buyer), above any technique. The characteristics of place are the cultural markers of authenticity and identity, highly prized by the craft / souvenir consumer. She notes the significance for example of purchasing craft directly from the craftsperson’s’ studio. By buying direct from the craftsperson, Hickey (1997, p.95) argues that that the purchaser becomes a “patron” and that the studio craftsperson “the endangered species being supported”. Studio purchases therefore are “unquestionably authentic” and make “the ideal souvenir” (Hickey,1997, p.95).

“Like safari photographs, the studio acquisition is a politically correct trophy.” (Hickey, 1997, p.97)

According to Hickey, a craft purchase is akin to a charitable donation. She assumes that the consumer supports the politics & lifestyle of the craftsperson and that the crafts person has any politics or ethical code. Craft, of course, can and is consumed as a style choice rather than as a political statement.

Craft and Consumer Society

Tensions between the personal/ moral and the commercial/ profit continue to dominate crafts practice. Greenhalgh (2002) identifies that the success of crafts in
the marketplace is determined by: the crafts market, craft audiences and consumers, and how the crafts market themselves. Hickey notes however crafts are often practiced as a vocation “not a lucrative profession” and as a result craftspeople often have difficulties marketing and pricing their work. She also points out that throughout history the crafts have existed “in a marketplace”. and suggests that the idea of a “pure” craft, one free from market influences has never existed (Hickey, 1997, p.93). Yet this image of craft as a pure and free pursuit continues to permeate craft discourse.

Nevertheless, conflicts between ideas about the “craft ideal” and its implied morality and financial success remain. The same criticisms were levelled at the Arts & Crafts movement and its successors who adopted these craft ideals. Hickey argues that crafts are well-placed in the marketplace to benefit from consumer desire for the “personal in a consumer culture” and that as such craft: “… inhibits an ironic position: that of a commodity that rebels against the marketplace.” (Hickey, 1997, p.97)

I would not describe craft as rebelling against the marketplace, but rather that it is engaged in some sort of “sit-in”, refusing to admit that it is a commodity, engaged in a silent demonstration against industrial production and consumer society.

**Autonomy & Failed Ideals**

Metcalf notes the legacy of William Morris and argues that today crafts are forced to acknowledge consumer society and the capitalist marketplace in which they compete. He argues that middleclass taste is regarded merely as a “marketing parameter”:

“Service and acceptance, not agitation and criticism, are central to the ethos of craft.” (Metcalf, 1993, p.44)

The failures of the Arts & Craft movement seem to being replayed within contemporary craft practice where conflicts between upholding “craft ideals” and existing within the marketplace continue to cause tensions. For example, potter Julian Stair claims to be making work for and about everyday use, but as Johnson highlights, at £140.00 per cup and saucer this makes craft an exclusive rather than everyday experience. He differentiates himself from the small businesses at
Chelsea Crafts Fair which he argues are concerned with fashion and style. Although he accepts that the public may not make this distinction, he states

“\textit{I cannot take on the baggage of Joe Public.}” (Johnson, 1999, p.51)

His inward-lookingness and lack of engagement with any audience outside that of the crafts collector is indicative of crafts attitude to its audiences and consumers.

Talking about the processes of design, Attfield notes that in reality, artists, designers and craftspeople operate under the same commercial pressures. She notes that contemporary crafts practice provides its practitioners with:

“\textit{... the opportunity for an individual to work autonomously, to be creative on their own terms and produce uncommissioned work for sale through art galleries and craft fairs in a similar way to that in which fine artists operate. In practice, of course, designer-makers just like fine artists do work for client patrons and are often dictated to by the galleries and commissioning agencies who take them on and charge a percentage of commission when they sell their work.”} (Attfield, 2000, p 65)

\textbf{Erosion of Craft Aesthetics}

Jackson identifies, how craft symbols, if too widely distributed, lose their meaning and currency:

“\textit{A wobbly pot is not badly made, but stands for a particular aesthetic position. Failure to understand this basic premise is to risk exposure as a philistine. This knowledge is made material through acts of consumption and display. In this way, subtle skills of aesthetic distinction that cant be easily learnt provide an effective means of social closure; a way of excluding members of other social groups, who may wish to adopt the symbolic language. If these symbols of social status become distributed too widely, then the sense of difference which gave them their meaning in the first place starts to become eroded. This is one way of explaining the privileging of innovation as a determinant of aesthetic value. It is a way of maintaining a sense of difference.”} (Jackson, 1997, p.289)

He notes the impact of developments within industry since the 1950s, where craft aesthetics have been adopted by industrial production - hi-jacking crafts signifying aesthetics and linking them to lower social status groups. He identifies how crafts cultural capital has decreased and how the craft aesthetic has been weakened and diluted by mass culture. Crafts are now signifiers of a lifestyle rather than utility, the uniqueness of craft has a limited market. Smith concurs:

“\textit{At most, it seems, craftwork might survive as simulacra in museum shops.”} (Smith, 1997, p.23)
Consuming Craft - The Value of Authenticity

Attfield (2000) notes that contemporary craft is perceived of as having aesthetic value but no functional purpose. Craft objects are now associated with regional history and as representative of the vernacular, now valued because they are sparse and therefore precious. Veiteberg (2005) notes that the status of craft is not about aesthetics but more about attitudes towards making things and attitudes to work. From the crafts perspective, the focus is on making things, on production, techniques and processes, the hand-made. The value and meaning of craft therefore can be said to lie in the fact that the object is handmade.

I have examined how craft is valued within the marketplace, identifying how and why crafts are consumed. I have shown how craft continues to be linked with the Arts and Crafts movement and craft ideals and that these negative stereotypes of craft continue. I have identified how contemporary craft practice fails to engage with the realities of consumer culture and recognise its position within the marketplace.

These concepts, stereotypes and associations of craft continue to inform our understanding of craft and ceramics. However, it is precisely because craft has remained outside of dominant discourses in art that it has any value (to art) today. Its value lies in the fact that as a field it as yet relatively uncontaminated by consumerism and by post-modern ideas and values: where materiality is most important; where skill and tradition are celebrated and preserved; and where the practice of craft is linked with morality and an ethical code. All of the above associations and connotations make craft more authentic, and as Kuspit argues in Craft as Art, Art as Craft, for arts’ purposes, craft becomes other to art or “anti-art”:

“... art is craft or it is nothing... a defensive fall-back position, even a cynical idea of art.” (Kuspit, 2000, p.162)

Kuspit continues:

“The craft definition of art makes it once again the privilege of the few; namely, craftspeople.” (Kuspit, 2000, p.163)

This statement suggests that craftspeople are going to take over the art world, however Kuspit is referring to recent trends in art practice which indicate that
artists are returning to a more materials and process-based way of working. Although a new generation of crafts practice is emerging, my research suggests that craftspeople are currently not in a position to exploit this opportunity. Kuspit takes a romanticised view of the craftsperson, infusing craft with moral virtue. Kuspit sees craft as:

“... an antidote to the Post-modern society that unwittingly generated it, posits the craftsperson who is more whole - has more integrity - and works for a different purpose than the post-modern artist, who has become a specialist in creativity, perverting its meaning as his or her ironical appropriation?” (Kuspit, 2000, p.167)

Kuspit does not provide any further evidence of crafts alleged superior integrity over art. He simply expresses a stereotypical view of the craftsperson as authentic. Kuspit argues that crafts “work for a different purpose”, but why, because they have a utilitarian function? He suggests crafts main purpose is its morality, its authenticity, its wholeness and purity. He argues that contemporary fine art has a narrow emotional range – dominated by anger and irony, where there is little art that is “positive, tender or beautiful”. Crafts on the other hand, are full of beauty and pleasure, and symbolise comfort and simplicity. So, Craft = comfort & pleasure, art= discomfort & displeasure.

“The new craftsmanship is a last-ditch attempt to defend the idea of art as work and a way to wholeness, and a rejection of the Post-modern notion that the art object as one that bespeaks alienation, with its fragmenting effect - an object that hides its unwholesomeness behind its commodity value.” (Kuspit, 2000, p.167-8)

According to Kuspit, craft can revitalise our sense of “wholeness” and improve our emotional health. It is not clear whose wholeness he refers to here - the makers or the audience/consumer, or both? The revitalisation and sense of wholeness provided by craft remains the privileged domain of those who have access to craft. The research will ask where is class in debates about craft (and the morality of craft). Crafts are expensive and are not readily available. The majority of crafts are produced and consumed by the middle-classes. My research therefore will explore ideas about ceramics and class.

I have identified the changing concepts and definitions of craft and the codes and conventions of practice. However for craft-based art practices such as ceramic art, these codes of practice can become limitations as conflicts between embracing
arts values whilst still respecting crafts’ are played out. The limitations, rules and conventions which govern craft practice I would argue, have contributed to the crisis in identity and confidence within the ceramic arts. In summary, the context of craft weighs heavy on our understanding and experience of ceramics, we now need to un-learn in order to make any advancement. At the turn of the last century, craft was once a potent force, but now it:

“... needs to be de- and then re- classified. It needs to become internally dynamic once more, rather than allowing itself to be externally constrained.” (Greenhalgh, 1997a, p.47)

This is what this research hopes to achieve. To re-define ceramics and craft, to find new directions. In order to achieve this object, in the following section, I will critically discuss the findings of the research undertaken to date.
SECTION 3: METHODOLOGY & METHODS

In order to identify possible ceramic futures i.e. future pathways and creative and critical strategies for ceramics, I will now disseminate and reflect on the research findings to date. The research undertaken so far has illuminated many new issues and directions which have influenced the direction of the research and the research design. In this section of the thesis, I will present the processes of the re-shaping of this research project, in relation to its overall design and in the selection of its methods and methodologies.

In the following chapter 3.1, I will discuss the research findings to date in order to identify specific methods, issues and approaches the practical research will adopt. The conclusions of this research will be presented as my Practice Manifesto.

In Chapter 3.2, I will examine the specific area of practice-based research in art and design, identifying the “artistic” methods and methodologies I will employ. I will conclude this section with a summary of my chosen research design, methods and methodologies.
3.1 PRACTICE MANIFESTO

Motivations
I operate as an artist and define my work as art. I am not seeking acceptance from one discipline or another. However, by virtue of my training, my career and my practice, I also inhabit the ceramic and craft space, as well as design. My background is in ceramics, I am connected with ceramics and I am interested in ceramics. Even though I identify myself as an artist, I am still part of that field and consequently I feel a sense of ownership and responsibility to that field and to the future of the discipline. I operate on the boundaries of art, craft and design; I am interested in spaces in between disciplines, the places where they overlap. I am not seeking acceptance or validation but instead I am seeking to extend the current concepts of ceramics and of art, craft and design.

Although I now operate as an artist, my background is in ceramics and design. I studied at Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design, University of the Arts, London, graduating with a BA (Hons) Ceramic Design in 1995. However, my practice has always been interested in the boundaries between art, craft and design practice. As the diverse field of ceramics spans the disciplines of art craft and design, an interest in the limits of those practices, I would argue, is almost inevitable. For example, although on a design course, by the end of my degree, I was making art (sculpture and installation) which explored ideas about design as well as about ceramics and craft. I was “designing” artwork, giving art a (design) function, giving design something (else) to say. My work at this stage although predominantly ceramics was already combining ceramics with a range of materials including everyday domestic objects, wood, metal, lighting etc. (Figures:23-25)

After graduation, I continued to make and exhibit my work and in 1996-7 I was awarded the Po-Shing Woo Research Fellowship in Ceramics back at Central Saint Martins. During this year, I developed a series of work that explored ceramics in an architectural context. This work continued to challenge the limits of ceramics and of design, and I produced a body of work, which was made as art but which also had design implications/ applications. Or, to put it another way.
design which also functioned as art (made of a craft materials - ceramics).
(Figures:26-30)

As my practice developed, I became increasingly frustrated with the context of ceramics. I could not relate to its ideas or its practices. I had reached a point in my practice where it was becoming harder to justify the use of the material. What I wanted to say and make no longer required or demanded the use of clay, its processes and aesthetics. What I wanted to achieve with my work was no longer confined to, or dependant on the use of the medium and the processes of clay. There seemed no place to locate or to "deal with" my work in the context of ceramic practice or its theory and writing. As I have identified, ceramic art practice, when compared with other contemporary art and design practices, appears restricted. It is lacking any strong sense of what could be described as a critical practice; obsessed with materials and processes, rooted in history and tradition and steeped in modernism etc. My practice therefore did not fit in with dominant models. This, coupled with ceramics and crafts' lack of critical and theoretical writing, meant that the context of ceramics did not provide the conceptual spaces in which to locate my work. I found myself at a critical and conceptual dead-end. It is this situation which I intend to change with my research. I aim to open up new critical and conceptual spaces for ceramics and craft, and to find new directions. These are my motivations for embarking on this research project.

Ceramic's classic response to this stalemate is to suggest that you move to a fine art context. Many traditional craftspeople would prefer it if the art-based part of ceramic practice would simply go away, as this type of work is seen to undermine and de-value traditional craft practices. For example, Metcalf is critical of artist-craftspeople who he describes as "status-hungry":

"To accept autonomy as a necessary precondition for craft, the craftsman must agree with a system that denies aesthetic value to the very things that make craft distinct. If he transforms the craft object into autonomous art, he denies the way craft relates to real life. He is then left with "art-guilt" - about making merely a pot, a knife, a coat, or an engagement ring." (Metcalf, 1993, p.43)
This statement reveals crafts prejudices against art. Art is imaged here as the oppressor that denies craft any aesthetic value. I would argue that there are many ways craft can relate to real life. In my experience, it was not “art-guilt” which inspired me to make art, but craft’s inability to accommodate different ideas and approaches. Ironically, as I have identified, ceramic art has been the dominant model in contemporary ceramics practice since the late 1970s/early 1980s and the discourse of ceramics privileges this type of work over traditional, functional craft practice. This position however is now shifting, fuelled by new generation of makers such as de Waal who embraces traditional with contemporary concerns. The craft world’s privileging of art-based craft over more traditional crafts is a matter for further research, the important issue here is how ceramics deals with the diversity of its practices.

The lack of established critical and theoretical frameworks within ceramics means there is nowhere to deal with the diverse and often contradictory practices currently in operation within the field. I am committed to the idea that the field of ceramics and craft should be able to support and nurture a “critical” art element, and this involves creating new critical and theoretical frameworks in which to locate this work. In the current context, either the area of ceramic art can remain as a sub-genre within ceramics and craft, or alternatively, it could start producing vital art works that resonate and have value across the fields of art, craft and design. This research aims to do the latter.

**Practice Manifesto**

This research is practice-based where my art practice is my main research method and methodology. The Practice Manifesto will be employed as a framework in which to structure the ideas and direction of the creative work/research. The results of the first phase of the research, the literature and contextual review of the field of ceramics and craft identified the issues and concerns the practical research will address. These findings will now be articulated as my Practice Manifesto, which formed the starting point for the practical work.
The manifesto provides a useful tool by which to articulate an artist’s aims, methods and concerns. Since the earliest example of the *Futurist Manifesto* of 1909, artists have continued to employ the manifesto, with more recent examples including Gilbert & George’s manifesto of 1986 and also *The Stuckist Manifesto*, 1999. Although the use of the manifesto within the visual arts is usually associated with avant-garde artists and art movements, there is also a long history of its use within ceramic practice. For example, the Italian Futurist ceramics manifesto of 1939 and the CoBrA group formed in 1948 by Danish, Belgian and Dutch artists, sculptors and writers. CoBrA organised international “ceramic encounters” at the Italian workshops of Albisola, where artists experimented with ceramics in order to escape the confines of modernism and high art. In post-war Japan, the Sodeisha group was formed by four potters in the 1950s. The Sodeisha had two main aims; to stop submitting work to salons - to produce independent exhibitions with no reference to existing genre divisions, and to stop using canonical forms (De Waal 2003).

More recently, I have identified two new manifestos for ceramics and craft. The *Pottery Liberation Front* (PLF) was formed by ceramic artist Garth Johnson based in New York. Its Manifesto states:

“The PLF will continue to push at the boundaries of the ceramic universe, in a struggle to free it from its shackles.” (Johnson)

And also the Crafters manifesto *Why we enjoy making things*, created by Ulla-Maria Mutanen, a PhD student, University of Helsinki, Finland, which calls for craft makers to unite (Mutanen). Although this aspect of ceramics history and practice tends not to be celebrated within the field, the above examples demonstrate ceramics’ potential to be a radical force within the visual arts. This research employs the manifesto as both a guide for the development of my own art practice and as a way of articulating my methods, aims and concerns to my audience. In addition, this manifesto functions as a new model for other practitioners.

Re-drawing “craft lines”

“There is a distinction between ceramists who make sculpture and sculptors who resort to clay(). It’s there in the way craft lines are drawn, there in the minds of ceramists and in the minds of sculptors too.” (Greenberg, 2003, p.37)
As Greenberg identifies, there is a difference between art and craft ways of thinking. This research aims to change these positions, to open up ceramics and crafts thinking - to re-draw “craft lines”.

In order to achieve this, firstly the research will present a summary of the rules or codes and conventions of craft practice, its characteristics, stereotypes and associations as identified by the research undertaken to date. The following Manifesto is the synthesis of the research findings. It outlines the methods, issues and approaches the research will adopt. It will instigate and guide the practical research.

What Can Art & Design Offer Craft?
I have identified how contemporary artists and designers have borrowed and gained from craft and I would argue this has displaced craft from its own ground. It is therefore important to stake a claim for ceramics and craft and to carve out new territory and new directions. My research therefore asks, what can art and design offer ceramics and craft?

There is a long history of fine artists using ceramics. Harrod (2002) identifies ceramics as “a special case” in the context of the applied arts, as it has a long history of fine artists using clay and its processes. Despite its long relationship with fine art, this is not reflected in its writings or practices. More recently, a renewal of interest in ceramics and craft materials and processes has been identified within contemporary art and design practice. However, contemporary artists who employ ceramic materials and processes often do so by appropriating it, rather than by attempting to make what is considered “good” ceramics by the ceramics world. Fine artists who have been successful using clay (in the art world) are often regarded as “outsiders” or as “visitors to clay” (De Waal, 2004, p.51) by the ceramics community, outsiders who “invade” (Becker, 1984) that world, exploiting qualities of material not usually favoured by those within ceramics. These artists employ art methods, and deal with art issues, using craft materials and techniques. They do not necessarily address issues that are considered important within the craft world. Therefore, their impact on this world is minimal. I propose therefore, not only to bring art ideas and approaches to
ceramics, but also to bring ceramics’ and craft’s issues and debates to the worlds
of art and design. By doing so, I aim to make an intervention not only in the
ceramics world, but also in the worlds of art and design.

Despite the renewed interest and use of ceramics and craft within contemporary
art practice, within ceramics, materiality is often the focus of its art-based
practices, often to the expense of any content (although the crafts world would
argue that the materials/ materiality is the content of this type of work). My
practice however will seek alternative strategies and will be content rather than
materials and process-led. I propose to bring critical approaches from
contemporary art and design practice to ceramics and craft. I propose therefore to
make art about ceramics and craft.

I will employ a combination of “artistic” methods and methodologies. (This area will
be further examined in the following chapter.) The art methods I will employ are:

- Making art works, maquettes and models using a range of materials and
  methods.
- Sketchbooks, notebooks
- Photography
- Concept mapping, diagrams
- Databases & archives (images and text), tables

The practical research will employ methods and materials as currently in operation
within contemporary art and design practice. The practice therefore is not confined
to any particular material or method; it is free to employ any combination of
materials and methods. This research however does not attempt to provide a
definitive account of current art, craft and design practice and their methods, but
rather to identify the key components of those practices in order to propose an
alternative, possible framework in which to locate ideas about ceramics. This
research does not seek to “pin down” art, craft and design practice, but rather to
open up a dialogue between the discourses.
In order to understand more about ceramics and craft ways of thinking and doing, the research began to compare craft’s features, characteristics and conditions (i.e. the elements that constitute craft) with those of art and design practices. The table in Figure: 31 outlines the key elements which constitute a work of art, craft or design, from its production - methods, approaches, materials, and motivations, to its consumption - context, audience, value, and associations. As traditional boundaries between disciplines have now largely dissolved, many of the items included in this table could be identified as stereotypes or generalisations. However, this table nonetheless provides a useful tool by which to identify the similarities and the differences between the three fields. This process of comparison and analysis enabled the identification of the over-riding research question, what differentiates art, craft and design? in relation to their methods and materials, issues and approaches, contexts and audiences. This process also raises important questions about the roles and functions of these practices, which this research will explore.

My research began to explore the limits of practice by asking at what point does craft cease to be craft. For example, 25% Craft + 25% Design + 50% Art = ? If a work is less than 50% craft, does it retain its “craft-ness”? My practice explored these ideas, mixing elements from art, craft and design, experimenting with the edges of practice. At what point does their classification as art, craft or design become impossible?

I sought examples of other artists who had broken the rules and who had employed innovative approaches to ceramics. One such artist is British ceramic artist Paul Astbury who has successfully pushed the boundaries of ceramic practice. Astbury made the bold decision not to fire clay, using clay in its wet state for a series of time-based work where the state of clay is constantly changing (Figure: 32). Few artists in ceramics employ the ready-made and those that do, such as Richard Slee (Figure: 33) who uses found objects and Clare Twomey who casts found objects, often do so in conjunction with their own manipulation of the material. Although these artists have expanded boundaries of practice, they are all primarily engaged with the use of the material of clay.
Although deliberately provocative, Figure: 34 illustrates the different ways of thinking in operation within art, craft and design practice. It is this thinking which this research seeks to expose, to offer new perspectives on the subject of ceramics.

Conceptual Art – Conceptual Craft?

"All art (after Duchamps) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually." (Kosuth, 1969, p.856)

Kosuth identifies that crafts practice and criticism is largely based on morphological grounds, and therefore adds no new knowledge to the "nature" of craft. Although craft may be saying new things, craft’s language has remained the same. This research intends to extend crafts vocabulary, to introduce new ways of thinking, making and talking about ceramics and craft.

In order to engage the subject of ceramics on a new level and to identify new perspectives, rather than adopting a materials-based approach, this research will employ a conceptual and critical approach to the subject of ceramics, applying the way art thinks about itself to ceramics and craft. According to craft’s rules, if you do not use clay, then it is not ceramics. I propose therefore to explore ideas about ceramics (as a field), rather than clay the material. My practice will challenge the concept of ceramics and craft. If craft is “limited”, my research will ask – can anything be craft and what about a conceptual craft?

The area of conceptual art is a diverse and evolving practice and consequently definitions of conceptual art are difficult to pin down. This research does not however seek to provide an exhaustive analysis of conceptual art practice, but instead it seeks to identify conceptual art as a critical approach to practice.

“Conceptual art is not about forms or materials, but about ideas and meanings. It cannot be defined in terms of any medium or style, but rather by the way it questions what art is.” (Godfrey, 1998, p.4)

Conceptual art can be characterised by: it’s privileging of idea over object; by its rejection of/ dematerialisation of the art object; by its rejection of the commercial aspects of art production; by its use of events, performances & documentation; by
its engagement with critical agendas; and by its investigations into the roles, functions and meanings of art. Taken as a whole, conceptual art can be defined by the attitudes and intentions of its practitioners (rather than as a specific style or period), as Godfrey identifies:

"Conceptual art is not a historical style, but an ingrained habit of interrogation." (Godfrey, 1998, p.424)

It is this approach I propose to employ to the subject of ceramics. To privilege the idea over the object and to investigate the meaning, roles and functions of ceramics - to employ a conceptual approach to ceramics and craft.

Godfrey identifies how photography has embraced conceptual art practice:

"If conceptual art in its linguistic mode investigates how we think and make others think, then a Conceptual art of photography has to be about how photographs are used to make meanings." (Godfrey, 1998, p.301)

This research proposes to do the same with ceramics, to create a conceptual art of ceramics – to explore how ceramics are used to make meanings. The idea of a conceptual or critical ceramic or craft practice however is not common currency within the field.

"Conceptual crafts exist primarily in words, with the objects acting as symbols or pegs. The goals of such practitioners can be fought out in discussion and in philosophical debate." (Dormer, 1997, p.228)

Dormer argues that the goals of any conceptual craft practice can only be theoretical, whereas the goals of the potter are practical, “fought out” in the work itself. Metcalf also argues that craft cannot be dematerialised:

"While art has dissolved most of its identities, craft must retain several limitations. Craft cannot be dematerialised: it must first and foremost remain a physical object." (Metcalf, 1997, p.70)

However, as I have identified, the art or craft object can no longer be viewed as an autonomous object, irrespective of the maker’s intentions. The fact that craft is a physical object does not dissolve it from taking part in the making of additional meanings, i.e. beyond the visual and the sensual.

Buck proposes that conceptual craft can exist:

"Conceptual craft can also exist where, no matter what medium, the result seems to defy classification and to fulfil needs other than the functional one expected of it." (Buck, 1997, p.143)

The lack of crafts' engagement with the conceptual can be explained by the disciplines unfltering commitment to its materials and techniques, and to its role
as the preserver of tradition. This, together with its insistence on the autonomy of the craft object has served to keep experimental, content-led or conceptual approaches to the subject at bay. lhatsu (1997) identifies the “diplomatic” nature of craft, with its tendency to restrict itself to the basics and to avoid extremes. I intend to engage these extremes, to explore the edges of craft practice.

Talking about the work Carol McNicoll and Irene Nordli, Veiteberg notes:

“*Their objects therefore occupy a dual position: they follow current trends in conceptual art, and, at the same time, embody alternative values linked to aesthetic and craftsmanship properties that have traditionally belonged to the crafts sphere. The question is whether this excludes them from conceptual art. Can craft and conceptual art be combined, or are they irreconcilable opposites?”* (Veiteberg, 2005, p.73)

Although an emerging area, there is at present no distinguishable conceptual or critical area of ceramic practice in Britain. I intend to fill this gap; I propose to employ a conceptual and critical approach to the subject of ceramics. This research will apply the way art thinks about itself, to ceramics.

**Craft Materials, Skills & Processes**

The involvement of the handmade is both a definition and a limitation of craft practice. The handmade i.e. made by hand, would seem an obvious distinction but as I have identified, there are acceptable and changeable limits of “handmade-ness”. For example, the impact of new technology and machinery, and the emergence of designer-maker practice have all influenced the limits of handmadeness. Taylor identifies designer-makers as craftspeople because “*they had a close involvement in the production process*” (Taylor and Redhead, 2001, p.7). She does not however specify how much of a “*close involvement*” is required in order to achieve craft status. If craft must be made by hand, how many hands – just the one pair? Taylor’s classification of craft can be interpreted to mean man-made (rather than hand-made) i.e. made with the help of others and/ or machinery. Designer-maker practice can employ some out-sourcing of its production, yet this type of work is still embraced under Crafts Council’s banner.

In the context of technological advances in design and manufacture, craft aesthetics can easily be replicated. Virtually anything can be conceived of and
constructed using 3D computer modelling and rapid proto-typing techniques. A mass-produced object which emulates craft (by employing craft aesthetics) would still be a machine-made object, but what is left of the concept of craft-ness? All that remains for craft is the fact that it is made by hand rather than machine.

I will explore the limits of hand-made-ness as well as notions of the well-made. This also links with ideas about craft skill and notions of work. Craft is defined by ideas about “hard” or “honest” work, where craft is seen as a labour of love and where craftspeople strive to get it “right” (Dormer, 1997, p.224). Craft writing tells us that “good” craft takes a long time to learn and to achieve. The time spent making the work and / the time taken to learn craft skills are valued highly in craft. Craft should demonstrate craft skill and tacit knowledge, a deep understanding of craft processes and techniques learnt over time, through experience. However, as I have identified, ideas about craft skill also involve ideas about craft aesthetics, the rules about how crafts should look and about how well something is made. Ideas about what constitutes good ceramics and craft are however changeable concepts established by the ceramics and craft worlds. This is where I hope to make an intervention, to extend current definitions and to introduce new perspectives on the subject in relation to ideas about quality and value and the aesthetic status of objects.

Craft is intrinsically connected to ideas about beauty, but as Veiteberg notes craft must make room for the hideous, for shock, revolt and despair. Craft materials denote craft. The crafts are a materials- based and often medium-specific practice. For the craftsperson, the material “is their muse” (Poncelet, 2001). Ceramic and craft practice is obsessed with the material, skill and process, and the manipulation of the material. However as the PLF notes, despite its alleged focus on the sensual aspects of craft production, much ceramics practice fails to achieve this object. Ceramics continues to posit itself as an antidote to modern society, centring on the sensual, touch and the craft experience, what the PLF refers to as the “cult of touch”. My practice will not employ a materials- based, medium-specific approach. This research will not limit itself to one material and will instead employ a range of materials (including objects) as in operation within contemporary art practice, from “marble to chocolate” (Sandino, 2004, p.286). I will
reject ideas about making and the hand-made and about the materiality of the craft object. This will enable me to focus on the ways we use, consume and experience objects, rather than being focused on their methods of production.

**Consuming Ceramics**

Despite the fact that for many crafts practitioners, the meaning of craft is created in its use, there is a tendency within the crafts to focus on production rather than consumption, in terms of both its writing and practices. Within design history, although there are many studies on consumption, there is little research on product use (Margolin, 2002). This research will therefore engage with ideas about the reception and consumption of ceramics and craft.

"We are swimming in a sea of stuff we have made. We need to continually remind ourselves why it looks like it does and why we do it. And we must be careful not to drown in it." (Greenhalgh, 2002, p.207)

Greenhalgh articulates the current crisis facing crafts, calling for practitioners to engage with ideas about the consumption in the last line of *The Persistence of Craft*. The legacy of the Arts &Crafts movement and later Leach, continues to influence how we value craft today. In the context of Britain, craft is still understood in terms of the craft ideal, steeped in modernism. Across the Atlantic in the USA however, the *Funk* ceramics of the 1950s and 60s enabled ceramics to embrace post-modernism and there is a distinct post-modernist aesthetic within current practice where the use of mass produced objects features more strongly. Within Europe, and particularly Scandinavia, concepts of art, craft and design are not as rigidly enforced and boundaries between the disciplines are blurred, creating an environment where a distinct critical ceramic and craft practice has emerged.

In Britain, craft is still positioned as anti consumerism where craft represents a way to a more fulfilling way of life, both for the producer and the consumer of craft. I have identified the dubious politics of craft, which claims to be making everyday objects, for everyday use by everyday people, yet the majority of craft is far from affordable. I have identified tensions between upholding craft’s ideals (i.e. where craft positions itself against consumerism and consumer society) whilst at the same time existing in that marketplace. Despite crafts close associations with the vernacular and the everyday, the craft experience remains an exclusive, middle-
class experience. In respect of its availability, design can be argued to be more
democratic than craft (or art). In craft’s version of reality, the craft object acts
independently of its context, audience, and marketplace

In a discipline that takes such moral high ground in relation its role as the
preserver of tradition and which is positioned as anti-consumerism, one would expect it to have a stronger social and political agenda and presence. Crafts continue to be associated with green issues and green politics. However, although contemporary craft practices have successfully employed green methods and materials, for example the use of re-cycled and sustainable materials, this is not the dominant model in craft. I am not suggesting that all crafts practitioners adopt a green agenda. I am simply stating that in the context of an ever-expanding consumer society and its negative impact on the environment, it is important to recognise that we are producers of things. Harrod concurs.

"Why make art or craft in such a full world? Is it a responsible thing to do? Is there an aesthetic need, given that existing objects are so rich in semiotic meanings that they cry out to be recycled and re-contextualised?" (Harrod, 2001, p.8)

This research will engage with ideas about the morality of craft. I would argue that it is design and mass-production that provides real opportunities for democratic intervention. I propose therefore to engage with the mass-produced and the everyday. Craft’s rules state that mass-produced objects cannot be craft; I propose to challenge this position. I propose to engage with consumption of ceramics in the home, in order to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the ways ceramics are part of everyday life.

Ceramics & the Home
Ceramics and crafts are inextricably linked with history, tradition, and the museum. Historicism is a key feature of ceramic practice and I have identified a strong sense of responsibility within crafts to preserve traditions. The crafts represents longevity and permanence, craft is seen “to promote lasting value” (Williams, 2002, p.61) where craft symbolises the origins of life. This links craft to ideas about archaeology and museology, and the display and consumption of craft in the museum. Craft objects are often experienced in the context of the museum, where they are often displayed in an historical, anthropological or ethnographic context.
The majority of crafts purchases are made in museum shops. The context of the museum has positioned craft to represent authenticity, ethnicity and regionality – where crafts signify place, national and regional identities. If the meaning of craft is gained through use, then the meaning of craft is not present in the craft gallery or the museum shop - but in the home. The craft experience, the site of use, is the home. Although the museum is an important site for ceramics and craft, this research asks what about the home?

“In industrialized societies, most of what matters to people is happening behind the closed doors of the private sphere. The home itself has become the site of their relationships and their loneliness: the site of their broadest encounters with the world through television and the internet, but also the place where they reflect upon and face up to themselves away from others.” (Miller, 2001, p.1)

My research explores ceramics in the context of the home. The home is the territory of ceramics and craft. It is a major site for the consumption, use and display of ceramics though ideas about the consumption of ceramics in the home are often overlooked within its practices and literature. Ceramics are implicitly linked with ideas about the home, domesticity, femininity, women’s work, the home-made, DIY and decoration. The home is an intrinsically gendered space and this provides opportunities for engaging with ideas about domesticity, femininity and gender politics. The crafts are implicitly linked to daily life functioning as vessels and containers for food, where ceramics can be been said to:

“... fill the gap between art and life.” (Rawson, 1984, p.6.)

Daniel Miller (2001) identifies the home is single most important site for material culture studies and I would argue that it should also be the single most important site for ceramics. It is a major site for the consumption, use and display of ceramics, though this is not fully reflected in its writing or practices which tend to focus on production. The home is a vehicle for communication and display and its contents make potent statements about who we are.

Tim Putnam identifies the home as a site of consumption, noting that concepts of home cannot be separated from the people who inhabit that space, where the home equals the household (Newton and Putnam, 1990). In House as a Mirror of Self, Clare Cooper Marcus (1995) identifies how we create an environment to suit us, where we are mirrored in it and which reflects back to us our sense of self. and where the personalisation of space can be seen as “human place-making”. In her

In their study of families living in Chicago, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton conclude that material objects in the home facilitate a “self-cultivation” and furthermore that

“... the emotional integration of the home is concretely embodied in household objects.” (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p.165)

Miller (2001) also notes the link between home and emotional wellbeing. For example, in his study of a north London council estate *Appropriating the state on the council estate*, one of the clearest patterns to emerge from the study was the link between people who seemed lonely, isolated or depressed and the lack of decorative development in their homes and where:

“... the objects around us can embody an agency that makes them oppressive and alienating.” (Miller, 2001, p.120)

Such darker aspects of the home are often overlooked.

The home is a unique site in that it is not exclusively private or public. Miller identifies the problematic relationship between private and public, where the home acts as both, for example where interior decoration is intended for private enjoyment or use and also for public display, for others to see. He notes however the need to study the private in order to gain insights into the public sphere:

“If the home is where the heart is, then it is also where it is broken, torn and made whole in the flux of relationships, social and material.” (Miller, 2001, p.15)

The home provides a vehicle for the representation of self, for self and/or for others and this involves the collection and preservation of stuff and alterations to the decorative order. In the context of the home the meaning of objects and artefacts have different meanings through different stages of life and are constantly being re-defined.

Although concepts of the home are closely linked with notions of the familiar, this research will not employ concepts of familiarity to locate ceramics. It instead
locates ceramics in the context of the ordinary and the everyday as identified by Judy Attfield (2000) in *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life*.

**The Everyday**

Attfield makes the distinction between the everyday and popular culture, where popular culture can be characterised as the passive consumption of mass-produced poor quality goods, whilst the everyday encompasses the array of ordinary objects which occupy our lives and homes. *Wild Things* is not a critique of cultural populism but instead it identifies the everyday as a distinct area of objects and practices for study.

Attfield identifies the shortfalls of design history and its problem of seeing design as a “*visual medium*” i.e. the same as fine art. She notes how the field of design history made a definite move away from its parent discipline art history, which allowed design to be re-categorised as part of visual culture. However, she argues that design’s re-categorisation as part of visual culture fails to consider:

“... its materiality and the most distinctive qualities which make design different from art in its relationship to the everyday, the ordinary and the banal.” (Attfield, 2000, p.3)

Attfield notes how the diversity of products and contexts of the field of design have seen design unsuccessfully straddle the worlds of aesthetics and engineering. As a result, she argues, design has ended up with two cultures and two definitions of design, an art versus science or stylist versus engineer divide. This situation is similar to ceramics which can be argued to be even more problematic and it spans three worlds and consequently three definitions and identities of art, craft and design.

Attfield identifies the distinction between objects categorised as design or craft and ordinary, everyday things:

“... the more, banal, cluttered collectivity of goods in general.” (Attfield, 2000, p.71)

She argues that the common-place is not self-conscious like design and defines design as “*things with attitude*” - where the designer’s intentions are made apparent through the visual statement of the work. Attfield distinguishes between design as things with attitude and things “*in the lower case*” – ordinary, everyday
things. Although this distinction can be interpreted as high versus low design, the emphasis here relates to the life of an object after the point of sale or the material culture of everyday life, which:

“... acknowledges the physical object in all its materiality and encompasses the work of design, making, distributing, consuming, using, discarding, recycling and so on. But above all it focuses on how things have gone through all those stages as part of the mediation process between people and the physical world at different stages in their biographies.” (Attfield, 2000, p.3)

Blauvelt also identifies design's relationship with everyday life:

“For designers the everyday represents the site of actual use - the messy reality where designs are negotiated.” (Blauvelt, 2003, p.25)

The everyday refers to objects which have moved beyond point of sale/consumption and which have embarked on a journey of consumption - the social life of objects. I apply the same approach to ceramics. This research is not solely concerned with the visual aesthetics of objects but it is instead interested in what these objects signify, adopting a social/cultural approach to thinking about objects and things. Attfield's study of the material culture of the everyday offers a new framework for design and design history. This research intends to apply Attfield's approach to ceramics and craft, to relocate ceramics in the context of the everyday.

In order to understand more about how we experience and use ceramics, and about what ceramics means, this research will focus on the consumption of ceramics, in the home. I propose to explore the social role of the domestic object, in relation to the creation and expression of self-identity, to explore the relationships between people and their objects - what our things say about us. This research will explore how ceramics relates to everyday life, focusing on mass-produced, everyday ceramics rather than the rare or the unique. My research will ask - how are ceramics used, experienced, valued and understood?

I have identified that craft can be defined by its quantity. Craft has limited availability, in relation to design which is most available and where art is the least available. Craft is usually made in the studio and according to craft's rules, any work made in the factory (mass-produced products) cannot be regarded as craft. By engaging with the “lower class” of mass-produced, everyday objects, I hope to
present an alternative view of ceramics and craft which focuses on a class of objects previously denied access to the ceramics fold. Instead of the usual positioning of craft as middle-class, my research will locate ceramics and craft in the context of the mass produced and the ordinary, offering a lower/working class perspective of ceramics.

This engages the research with ideas about class and taste. Pierre Bourdieu (1984) has identified how social class defines taste, where objects act as symbols of class and status. However, although ideas about class are central to this work, this research is also concerned with the social role of the domestic object. This theme will be discussed in Chapter 4.2 of the thesis.

Un-making Ceramics - Ready-mades

The use of the ready-made (and the mass-produced object) continues to be a dominant feature within contemporary art practice. However, some critics argue that, unlike Duchamps, whose use of the ready-made was revolutionary, in today's context the use of the ready-made simply privileges consumerism:

"The argument usually made in support of the post-Duchampian ready-made is that it fineses consumerism. In fact, it only confirms that consumerism is the presiding ethos of our culture. The post-Duchampian ready-made asserts not only that art is a more princely commodity than other commodities, but that it cannot be anything but a commodity, can have no meaning other than its exchange value. It is this explicit consumerism of the post-Duchampian object that reduces it to ordinarness, to the prelapsarian state of banality - to the state before Duchamp got an intellectual hold of it." (Kuspit, 2000, p.202)

I would argue that the use of the ready-made is still relevant today, as evidenced by its continued presence within contemporary art practice. The concept of the ready-made has evolved considerably since Duchamps' Fountain. It is no longer solely reliant on techniques of re-presentation and re-contextualisation, often involving additional elements and interventions. This research does not intend to provide an account of the ready-made in contemporary art practice, but merely to identify the use of the ready-made or found object as an established art method/methodology within contemporary art (and design) practice, where existing and/or found objects and materials are employed as the processes and materials of art making. The use of ready-made can be identified as part of the general/common methods of art and sculpture production.
The use of the ready-made and particularly the everyday object is a regular feature of contemporary art practice, for example in the work of British artist Richard Wentworth. Wentworth is interested in the tiny gestures in the world around us, such as in his ongoing photographic series *Making Do and Getting By* series which he started in the 1970s. His work explores the potency of the everyday and the improvised nature of material culture. He uses a range of materials and objects in his sculptures, often including ceramic objects as for example in *Baton* (Figure 35). Talking about his work, Wentworth notes he is:

> “Living in a ready-made landscape and putting it to work.” (Wentworth, 1998, p.66)

The everyday object is also a feature of Haim Steinbach’s work which highlights the links between art and consumer culture and shopping. Steinbach presents familiar objects in seemingly unassuming ways such as on a shelf (Figure 36). His choice of objects and their arrangements and display enable the objects to take on new status and new meanings, where cultural and personal referents can emerge. Artist Richard Artschwager is another example. Talking about his work, de Waal notes that his practice is concerned with “the re-presentation of ordinary things, as sculpture” (De Waal, 2003, p.166).

Attfield (2000) also notes the current interest in the everyday within contemporary art for example the exhibition *Material Culture: The object in British Art of the 1980s and 90s* (Hilty and Archer, 1997) at the Hayward Gallery, London. The link between the ready-made and shopping is demonstrated in the exhibition *Shopping* at the Schrin Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (28 September to 1 December 2002) which included the work of more than 70 artists and which documents over 100 years of this area of practice. The acts of acquisition, discovery and appropriation of objects have and continue to be an important part of artistic practice.

As I have identified, the area of critical design practice has embraced the ready-made and the everyday. In ceramics, though the ready-made does feature, it is not common currency or practice. London based ceramic artist Richard Slee was at the forefront of the trend in Britain. More recent examples include Barnaby Barford (Figure 37) and Swedish ceramic artist Kjell Rylander (Figure 38), who cuts, modifies and assembles found ceramic objects. Veiteberg identifies a new type of
craft practice in Norway which is characterised by its use of ready-made or found object.

"Bringing mass-produced and anonymously designed products into craft and then transforming them into unique art objects, augurs a completely new type of craft. These objects incorporate the old oppositions of industry, design and art in a new order within one and the same object." (Veiteberg, 2005, p.37)

I do the same. My practice will not focus on the production of a “new” product or object (although that is inevitable). My focus will be to offer new understandings about existing objects through their manipulation, un-making and re-making, and through their re-contextualisation and the making of new connections and new groupings - what things mean to us. Kuspit (2000) argues that the act of craft symbolizes emotion. If that is so, then the mass produced symbolises non-emotion. My practice will seek to inject emotion into the mass produced.

"Contemporary designers seem to be more interested in finding authenticity outside themselves in the materiality of “thingness” that resides in the real world." (Atfield, 2000, p.60)

The practical research will engage with the practice issues outlined above whilst at the same time attempting to grapple with the overriding research question – what differentiates art, craft and design? In order to re-draw “craft lines”, the practice will employ a critical and conceptual approach to the subject of ceramics, adopting methods and approaches from contemporary art and design (rather than craft) practice. This research proposes to re-locate ceramics outside of its traditional concerns to engage with the consumption of ceramics, in the home and the everyday.

I have outlined my Practice Manifesto, the issues and approaches the practical research will adopt. In order to identify the specific methods and methodologies and theoretical directions the research will employ, in the following chapter, the research will examine the area of practice-based research in art and design, and specifically artistic methods and methodologies.
3.2 PRACTICE - BASED RESEARCH IN ART AND DESIGN

I will begin this chapter reflecting on the progress of the research to date, highlighting key developments within the research and the necessary adjustments made to the research design. I will go on to examine the specific area of practice-based research in art and design. The research will engage with contemporary debates surrounding the subject, including ideas about the role of art and the artefact in the creation of new knowledge. The research will examine the methods and methodologies currently employed within the field, in order to identify possible pathways.

The research will critically reflect on the research findings to date in order to make final decisions regarding the overall design of this project. I will then focus on “artistic” methods and methodologies (Gray and Malins, 1993; Gray and Pirie, 1995). Issues relating to the complex relationship between the theoretical and practical research and the role of artist as writer/researcher will be critically discussed.

Finally, I will present the final research design, together with my chosen methods and methodologies.

Re-focus on practice
My research project has evolved considerably since my registration in March 2004. My original project, Identifying Ceramic Futures: A Discursive Analysis of Contemporary Ceramic Practice, intended to examine the culture of ceramics via a survey of the entire ceramics community. The breadth of my original proposal sought to encompass all of ceramics’ ills and was conceived of in response to a discipline in crisis. I felt a responsibility to address the whole of ceramics’ condition. The identified need for a cultural perspective on the research problem led me to explore discourse theory/analysis and ethnography as possible critical methodologies. By doing so, I hoped to reveal the hidden power structures and prejudices within the ceramics world.

Although this was undoubtedly a valid research project (the areas identified are in desperate need of research), it soon became apparent that the scope and scale of
the project were unrealistic, especially within the context of a practice-based PhD. I became increasingly concerned about how my practice fitted in with the overall project and I felt that the practice element was in danger of becoming lost.

In order to carry out my original proposal, I would have to acquire specialist skills, knowledge and support which would take time and resources. Did I need to employ sociological research methods to achieve my research goals? If I interviewed the key players in the ceramics world I would indeed be able to establish present positions/ provide a description of a discipline in crisis - but would this achieve any real change? My intention is to make an intervention in the ceramics world. On reflection, I would now argue that it would be more appropriate for a sociologist (rather than an artist) to pursue my original project.

My specialist skills are my artistic skills/ art practice and the research design should not only reflect this, but it should also provide opportunities to utilise, exploit and extend these skills. I therefore decided to shift the focus of my project back to the practice where the practice element forms the core of my research. By making the practical element the primary research method, I believe this research is uniquely placed to assimilate and disseminate information and generate new perspectives.

In order to identify specific and appropriate methods and methodologies, I began to re-examine the area of practice-based research in art and design and to explore “artistic” methods and methodologies.

Finding New Methods & Methodologies

“Artists and designers are not good at exteriorising what they do. The creative process remains a mystery; artistic "methodology" remains unarticulated." (Gray and Malins, 1993, p.12)

Practice-based research in art and design is still a relatively new area of research, first emerging in the 1970s/ early 1980s (Gray, 1996) and consequently research methods and methodologies specific to those practices have yet to be fully established. Researchers in this area have therefore tended to “borrow” methodologies from other disciplines, most notably from the social sciences with a trend towards sociological methods such as in the use of surveys, interviews,
questionnaires and case studies. Gray and Pirie (1995) argue that the dominant models in Science and the Social Sciences have "manipulated" art research, where researchers have employed "quasi-scientific" methods in order to give their research an "air of respectability".

"The holistic complexity of many the areas of "artistic" research practice in Art & Design, sometimes regarded as "chaotic", cannot and does not conform to conventional measurable systems. Research of this nature is extremely difficult to carry out and evaluate if it tries to precisely emulate research models developed by scientific disciplines." (Gray and Pirie, 1995, p.5)

Patricia Bickers also identifies the inappropriateness of applying existing models of academic research to art practice and warns of the dangers of PhD art practice being too theory-driven:

"...to force artists to conform with criteria and forms of assessment that were developed entirely for theoretical disciplines is a travesty, not only of those existing disciplines but, more importantly, of art." (Bickers, 2000, p.56)

She also identifies the pressures placed on universities to be research-based and particularly, the impact of RAE ratings which have resulted in what Bickers (2000, p.55) describes as the "academisation of art practice". She argues that it is visual art's persistent "desire for social and academic acceptance" that has fuelled art's shift away from the studio, towards academia and research. Bickers argues that art institutions have willingly embraced academia, even colluded with it:

"Why, if we ourselves value art, don't we have more conviction about it? Why don't we make a better case for ourselves within academic institutions?" (Bickers, 2000, p.56)

Despite the new prominence of research within art and design education, Darren Newbury notes that the question of "what counts" as research has yet to be defined and where:

"There is no clear consensus about how this should be achieved." (Newbury, 1996, p.215)

As an emerging field, research in art and design lacks established methods and methodologies. It is not surprising therefore, that researchers in this area experience difficulties identifying appropriate methodologies as was my own experience. During the first year of my research; my practice became displaced, subsumed by my anxieties surrounding appropriate theory and about "legitimate" research methodologies. Although I had chosen practice-based research from the outset, I had not fully embraced the concept of artistic methods, of art practice as
research. The idea of rejecting the initially proposed survey to instead focus on my practice instead, felt uncomfortable at first and I was unable to wholly commit to the idea of rejecting the proposed survey work in favour of practice alone. I kept seeking additional, add-on methods and methodologies, in the hope that by using established methods (such as a social survey) it would have a legitimising affect on my research project.

Seeking advice about my own methods and methodologies, I met with sociologist Professor Paddy Scannell at the University of Westminster, who also expressed concerns over the over-theorisation of art practice and practice-based research, which he described as the "fetishisation" of art practice. It is therefore crucial that artists begin to find their own methods and methodologies and re-define existing frameworks of research:

"What is required is an attitude shift - our research is not scientific, nor does it wish to be. It is "artistic". It is research by Artists and Designers, into, through, and for the development of Art and Design research as a discipline." (Gray and Pirie, 1995, p.18)

I therefore decided to re-examine artistic methods and methodologies currently being employed by artist researchers, in order to identify and justify my own research strategy and approach.

"Artistic" Methods & Methodologies

Gray and Malins (1993) argue that there is a perceived problem in the acceptability of art and design as legitimate research. They identify an established tradition of reflective practice and of "practical research" within art and design practice. Referring to Cornock's important work on artists' process and methodologies, Gray and Malins (1993) identify the following cyclical pattern of artistic activities:

Generative: Generation, Selection, Synthesis

Analytical & Reflective: Articulation, Presentation, Critical Discussion

This pattern of "practice and reflection on practice" can be identified as the general procedure for artists and designers. The research undertaken by artists and
designers is not the opposite to other types of research, it is simply different and needs to be defined and articulated differently.

"Art & Design research requires a distinctive approach and the use of procedures/methodologies which are appropriate and sympathetic to the nature of the discipline, but no less rigorous, respectable and accountable than those of the Sciences and Social Sciences." (Gray and Malins, 1993, p.3)

Bickers (2000) highlights criticisms against practice-based research, particularly the idea that this type of research is not repeatable and therefore is not useful. She links the idea of the usefulness of research with ideas about the usefulness and purposes of art. Art has now extended and redefined its boundaries, having many (new) functions and uses, and it exists in many contexts. Should one of the aims of practice-based research therefore, be to demonstrate the usefulness of art practice? How the usefulness of this art is determined (and who by) is a matter for further research and for discussion elsewhere. This research is not seeking to evaluate art, or to test its effects. It is interested in how the processes of making art can generate new knowledge and perspectives.

Artistic Research Models

Despite its relatively short history, new, alternative artistic models and methodologies specific to art and design practice and research are being developed and articulated. In relation to research structure and design, the three main models for practice based research in art and design have been identified as follows (Research Training Initiative):

1. Research completed prior to execution – for example where research defines a design brief
2. Practice completed prior to research – where the original contribution is the understanding offered of the processes of art or design production.
3. Research completed in the process of execution – practice as research process – combines elements of above but where for example the experimentation with new materials or processes leads to new understandings, new ways of working and innovative artistic products. This model is less predictable and often the results cannot be predicted.

Possible routes can also be articulated as follows:
1. Practice and contextualisation, re-positioning
2. Practice and theorising that practice
3. Practice as method/active agent

It is the third model *Practice as method* which I propose to employ.

Using Allison’s (1992) Research Index of Art & Design, Gray and Pirie (1995) identify the following predominant procedures currently adopted in the field:

- Descriptive and historical
- Experimental
- Practical and philosophical
- Comparative “methodology”
- Naturalistic “methodology”

The last three are identified as emerging models, specific to artistic practice. They also identify the key characteristics of emerging procedural approaches as follows (Gray and Pirie, 1995, p.10):

**Practice-led**, involving the practitioner researcher, who reflects-in-action and reflects-on-action

**Interdisciplinary**, demonstrating a willingness to examine other fields and make sensible connections and adaptations

**Holistic and contextual** (non-linear and inclusive), using varied visual and multi-media methods of information gathering, selection, analysis, synthesis, presentation

Current shifts within design practice are also reflected in its research, for example a shift away from a focus on production towards a focus on the end product and user involvement has been noted (Gray and Pirie, 1995). Despite the above developments, there is (understandably) no universal approach to research in this field. It is not surprising therefore that most researchers in the field display eclecticism, often adopting a multi-method approach. Barfield and Quinn (2004) also identify the benefits of interdisciplinary models which place research
knowledge outside the domain of its parent disciplines, making it transferable across range of fields. Artists and designer researchers must therefore develop new and specific procedures in response to their individual practice and research projects. This is the approach I will employ. I will employ artistic methods and methodologies, a multi-method approach developed for and by my research and art practice. This DIY, trail-blazing approach to methodology, as characterised within research in art and design, involves an element of risk taking and is often unpredictable, but equally it offers exciting opportunities for the production of new knowledge. By employing my art practice as my main research method, I hope to offer a new model for practice but also to provide new theoretical and critical directions, generated by that practice.

New Art & New Knowledge

"The nexus of the problem of the transition from artefact to knowledge is the issue of the validation of construction as anything other than a new way of making art, architecture or design." (Barfield and Quinn, 2004, p.2)

One of the key questions for artist researchers concerns the role of the art object in the production of new knowledge. In the context of research, art objects can be presented as data, as evidence of the research/ art process or as the research results. This can pose problems for the artist researcher.

According to Niedderer (2004, p.6) artefacts can be used as:

- Data/ Evidence of the characteristics of the object itself
- Data/Evidence in terms of social and cultural phenomenon
- Evidence of the making process; both in technical as well as conceptual terms.

How one conceives of the artefact in the context of research, will be dependant on the overall research aims and design. Gray and Pirie (1995) identify some of the problems associated with using art practice as research data, for example, the fact that art practice creates data which evolves through time and which is therefore unstable - making it unsuitable for certain types of analysis. This reinforces the need for artists not only to develop their own strategies but more importantly, to have the confidence that their practice will generate new theoretical approaches.
It is widely acknowledged within the contemporary art world that the art object is not seen as the embodiment of knowledge, as Michael Biggs identifies:

“The fact that objects can be included in an infinite number of different taxonomies shows that their rationale for inclusion or exclusion is not embodied in the objects themselves.” (Biggs, 2003, p.5)

Diamond (2004) notes that current art theory sees art as an “activity” where the art object is a “becoming-object”. Art objects cannot be viewed/understood in isolation of their context. Art is understood in relation to art discourse, it gains its identity through its participation in that discourse. Some critics, such as Bickers, argue that the PhD is not necessarily an appropriate route which allows artists to pursue any “meaningful practice”. This juxtaposition of art world values versus academic values can create tensions for the artist researcher, who must negotiate a path between both camps. Artist researchers must be mindful of the integrity of their own practice outside of research and the academy. It is crucial that artists do not interpret art as research as the making of art for the academy. (The written thesis however is made solely for the academic world.) Art produced as/for/in research is as valid (and arguably more so) than art produced outside of research. Art created within the context of PhD research should be no different to “regular” art, it should not be a diluted version of art or be of a lesser quality. On the contrary, I would argue that the processes of making art as research can enrich and enliven an artist’s practice.

**Re-Shaping the Research Design**

Having re-focused my research whereby the practice is the main research method & methodology, I then began to explore strategies relating to the exhibition, evaluation and testing of artworks. I began to explore creative and curatorial strategies for example; to create work that tests assumptions and prejudices about ceramics and craft, and to explore the role of context for example to site the work in order to elicit specific responses. This raises questions about how context influences the meaning, value and experience of an artwork/object and about the differences between art, craft & design spaces and public versus private space. Can an object survive the three contexts of art, craft and design? This phase of the research set out to test both the physical and conceptual tolerances to the overriding research question – what differentiates art, craft, and design?
The practicalities involved in securing multiple exhibition venues (especially within the time constraints of the research) made this approach unworkable. In addition, this research is not focused on the role of context in the reception of art and therefore exhibition/curatorial strategies involving siting the work in multiple contexts were rejected.

My focus was then directed towards the interrogation of the practice, and the critical and theoretical direction of the written component. I began to explore ideas about the evaluation and "testing" of the practical research, for example by: observing and recording responses to the work (in situ), by the use of questionnaires (audiences invited to complete a simple questionnaire at the exhibition venue), by inviting critical responses to the work and by the use of focus groups. However, after delivering a paper at the Centre for Research and Education in Art and Media's (CREAM) research symposium at the University of Westminster in 2006, the response from fellow artist researchers was - why am I doing this? The idea of testing or evaluating my practice had never sat well with me or my research project. How would the results from such testing help my thesis? Would the answers contribute to my research/argument? The results of the proposed testing would be fascinating but they were not essential to the research outcomes. I therefore decided to reject the idea of testing the artworks. I do not need to test my work to see if "it worked". Nor am I interested in making work in response to audience responses and opinions (about my work). I am not seeking approval for my work. I am not seeking an answer but posing possible strategies as a result of/on reflection on art making.

I had been discounting the important work I had already completed. In my proposed model - practice as research, it is the practice which generates new theoretical perspectives. This approach is, by nature, generative and mysterious, where critical insights are yet to be revealed. Adopting this approach can therefore cause anxieties over the future theoretical direction of the research. In my own experience, for quite some time I simply could not see the value of my own research/my art practice, I could not envisage how my art practice would generate new theoretical and critical material. These anxieties prompted me to seek alternative add-on strategies and methodologies which, on reflection, were clearly
not required. At this stage of the research it was impossible for me to envisage how the practice would provide the theory, let alone what shape this might take. Although the practical work was underway at this time, it was far from completed and therefore the theoretical direction of the next phase of the research could not be articulated. This was to be expected using this emergent model. As Gray and Malins (1993) have noted, fine art practice is by nature “anti-method”, but this approach can nonetheless be identified as a methodology.

Research procedure (methods & methodologies) should be chosen in response to the characteristics, nature and structure of the practice and the research question/problem. I therefore propose to employ an emergent artistic model, specific to my art practice and my research project. Using this model, the theoretical direction of the final phase of the research will be contained within and generated by the practical research, and the processes of reflection in and on that practice.

**Art Practice as Research & the Reflective Practitioner**

Despite the criticisms against the “academisation” of art practice and the questioning of artists’ motives for undertaking practice-based research, similarities between the reflective and critical nature of contemporary art practice and of research have been noted.

> "The issue of reflection, and reassessment, which is required of sculpture to allow it continually to reinvent its relationship with the world and to culture, can be aligned with the necessary reflective and deliberate processes of practice-based research degrees." (Greenhill, 1997, p.8)

Research in the area of art & design is characterised by its reflexivity and by an emerging, naturalistic, multi-method approach. I propose therefore to employ my art practice as my main research method and methodology. Where:

> “… the practice of doing art or design provides the method of enquiry.” (Research Training Initiative, p.13)

I will employ “artistic” methods and methodologies, a hybrid approach, tailored to my individual research project and specific to my art practice. This will involve a pluralist methodology where the practice and theory are reciprocal:

> “The main methodology is responsive, driven by the requirements of practice and the creative dynamic of the artwork. It is essentially qualitative and naturalistic.” (Gray, 1996, p.15)
This emergent model will be formed by the interactions between theoretical and practical discoveries, where the written text is instrumental to the conception of the art project, and where the art making is instrumental to the written component. In this model, new knowledge is not embodied in the art object but clustered around it, as a transferable set of outcomes. In this model, the act of realising the art work alters the written form.

“In summary, we can say that artefacts/creative practice may be understood as a phenomenon or substance that provides a basis for theory generation and that in turn is illuminated by this theory.” (Niedderer, 2004, p.3)

My practice is the active agent of this research, where the practice is strategic. Research through and in practice. These processes of action and “reflection-in-action” (Schon, 1991) are common methods of artistic practice and production, making it wholly appropriate model for this research. In the context of ceramics particularly, it is important that practitioners now claim ownership and take responsibility for the critical evaluation of both their own and their peers practice. I would argue that practice-based researchers in the field of art and design have a responsibility to establish new ground, to make a contribution to the establishment of new methodologies for art and design research. My research aims to provide a critical and theoretical framework in which to re-locate ceramics as well as to offer new research pathways for future practice based researchers in the field.

**Documentation, Presentation & Exhibition**

By adopting artistic methods and a reflection in and on action approach, this immediately opens up a dialogue between the theoretical and the practical research. In order to both record and to evidence the relationship between the theory and the practice, the development of the studio work and the processes of interaction between the practice and the theoretical component will be documented throughout and will include the following:

- Documentation of creative/studio practice
- Models & maquettes
- Sketch books, notebooks, research diary
- Photography
- Presentation & exhibition of creative work
The above processes and documentation of those processes provide the documentary evidence of the research process and its development. As Gray and Pirie (1995) identify, there can be good research without having a "good end product", where mistakes or any dead ends are a valuable part of the research. For example, in my own research, I initially proposed a social survey of the ceramics community, which was later rejected in favour of artistic methods. I then went on to propose strategies which explored the role of context in the understanding and classifying of art, craft and design. However, this approach was later rejected as the research became focused on the meaning and social role of objects.

In addition, for artists undertaking practice-based PhD research, it is usually expected that they exhibit their artwork at some time during the research period. This however can pose problems for the artist researcher in relation to the practical requirements of securing suitable exhibition space during the time frame of the PhD, as outlined above. Barfield and Quinn argue that exhibitions of practice-based art practice often have no commonly agreed objectives or criteria, describing them as:

"... well exhibited rather than important research." (Barfield and Quinn, 2004, p.3)

It has also been noted that the quality of research can be measured by:

"... the esteem of the venue, and not by any demonstrable contribution to knowledge in the discipline." (Barfield and Quinn, 2004, p.3)

The exhibition context undoubtedly influences the meaning and interpretation of art works as well as the value attributed to them. Context plays a key role in the art experience, where art is understood in terms of its space (the site of its exhibition). In Inside the White Cube Brian O'Doherty identifies how:

"... we see not the art but the space first." (O'Doherty, 1999, p.14)

And where:

"... context becomes content." (O'Doherty, 1999, p.15)
It is widely acknowledged that artists’ intentions are not the sole determining factor in the creation of new meaning.

“We recognise that it is no longer helpful to pretend that artists originate the products they make, or more importantly, that they have control over the values and meanings attributed to their practice: interpretation has superseded intention.” (Cummings and Lewandowska, 2000, p.15)

In response to this context, new art and exhibition strategies within contemporary art practice have evolved which directly engage with ideas about the role of context. This trend to manipulate methods of display within contemporary art practice continued to the point where:

“… non-display can be seen as a particular intervention.” (Biggs, 2003, p.6)

Museum display has had a particularly strong influence on contemporary art practice, where museology has been identified as a feature of contemporary art practice (Putnam, 2001). However, the physical context of the work is just one aspect of the creation of meaning and experience in art. O’Doherty (1999) highlights the important role of art theory and criticism in the creation of meaning and value. Although arts’ reception should define its content, O’Doherty identifies how the literature often adds content to a work retroactively:

“We now know that the maker has limited control over the content of his or her art. It is its reception that ultimately determines its content, and that content, as we see from revisionist scholarship, is frighteningly retro-active. The retro-active provision of content to art is now a cottage industry.” (O’Doherty, 1999, p.111)

This further highlights the need for artists to write about their own practices. In the context of my own project, I was forced to reject strategies that relied on the exhibition of artworks and/or audience involvement as these were simply not practicable. Although I planned to exhibit the practical work, the research was no longer dependant on exhibition outcomes regarding any survey or data collection methods such as obtaining audience responses.

**Artist as Researcher - Writing About Doing**

Artists have embraced the role of the writer and critic and there are many examples of key artists who are involved in the critical and theoretical writings of their field. In the craft world however, although practitioners are becoming more involved, serious writing and criticism is limited. Major shifts in art criticism in the 1990s, together with changes to the funding of art education and the impact of the
RAE ratings exercise, saw the emergence of a new role for artists, that of the artist researcher.

"The death of the critic has enabled a new role to emerge - the birth of the practitioner-researcher in the visual arts." (Gray, 1996, p.8)

This blurring of the boundaries between the theorist and the practitioner, and between the critic and the artist/designer has created an environment where artists are able to develop a genuinely critical and reflexive practice and research culture (Newbury, 1996). This research aims to make a contribution to this area. The role of the artist researcher offers rich possibilities for artists not only to enrich their critical and creative skills, but also to contribute to the writing and theories of their field.

However, finding new and meaningful ways to articulate the processes of art making and the relationship and interactions between the art practice and the theoretical component, can be difficult. James Elkins examines the writing of art history and identifies the problematic relationship between theory and practice, problems concerning “saying what we are doing”.

“Saying what we are doing” is not only difficult: it is painful.” (Elkins, 2000, p.144)

Talking about the practice of writing about art, Elkins identifies the notion of “practising a discipline in part by talking about it”. This can be aligned with the role of the artist/researcher, who acts as both observer and the observed, as well as with the artist-writer and artists in general who are necessarily involved in writing about their work through artists statements and exhibition catalogues. When considering writing style, it is crucial to recognise the different types and functions of writing. For example, Diamond (2004) highlights the differences between writing for research and writing for the contemporary art world, which acts as a validation for art. Elkins (2000) identifies the differences between art history and art criticism and the old divisions between art history writing (as descriptive) versus art criticism (as judgemental). He is critical of art history writing and argues that the field is repressed and identifies what he describes as the “sameness” of theory, where the theory is something, which is applied to practice:

“… theory is a place – a point of view- that can be occupied, and that a practice or discipline is a place that can be observed.” (Elkins, 2000, p.3)
In the context of the practice-based research in art and design, the practice is often something which is written about, where theory is adopted and applied to the practice. In my chosen model, practice as research, the practice can also be a place, that can be occupied and where the practice can provide a different point of view and where the practice is in a position to interrogate the theory and contribute to a new theory. In the context of my own research which employs a conceptual approach to the subject of ceramics, my practice will adopt a specific point of view - a critical approach. This will allow the practice to occupy new conceptual spaces where the practice can then work through the research problem. By activating the theory and/ with the practice, the practice is now in a position to generate new theoretical insights and directions.

Elkins (2000) identifies three main forms of critique within art history writing as:

Speaking to – addressing the discipline directly with a voice that originates outside
Speaking for – “philosophy speaks, and the discipline is spoken to” (p.5), there is a sense that the discipline cannot represent/speak for itself
Speaking in – alternative to speaking to/ for, where the text can be part of the practice

The act of “speaking in” can be directly allied with the act of practice-based research, where the artist is required to write both to and for the work, this places the artist researcher in a unique position to speak in practice and theory. Despite the apparent duality of the role of artist / researcher, I have established that art practice and research practice have much in common. The reflexive and critical nature of art practice can be aligned with the academic rigour required of research. Practice and theory should not be in opposition, they are in fact natural allies.

“It is the perception of art and design as inherently mysterious activities, which are in some way inaccessible, and about which little can be said, that has provided a conceptual basis for the division between theory and practice, and hence between practical work and communicable research.” (Newbury, 1996, p.217)

This research will attempt to speak in practice and theory. The act of writing about art practice tends to close things down rather than to open them up. I propose therefore to use the theory with the practice, where the theory and practice inter-
act, where the practice generates, interrogates and influences the theory and vice-versa. I propose an emergent model, formed by the interplay between the areas of theoretical discovery and creative practice. In this model, both theory and practice are activated.

**What Theory? Re-locating ceramics**

When thinking about ceramics in relation to practice-based research in art and design and in relation to the question what theory? some difficulties immediately emerge. Firstly, the context of practice-based research in the field is still relatively new and consequently it lacks established methodologies. This coupled with the context of ceramics and craft, which is lacking an established critical and theoretical framework, can make finding appropriate methodologies difficult. One of the aims of this research therefore is to offer new critical and theoretical directions for ceramics and craft, as well as for practice-based researchers in the field. I will achieve this by adopting artistic methods and methodologies where my art practice is the main research method. The practice will act as an active agent, driving the research forward. As Wentworth identifies:

“In part, artists criticize their previous work by making more work.” (Wentworth, 1998, p.10)

When undertaking practice-based research and where the research takes the form of visual (rather than written) media, the interpretation of the research is necessarily subjective and open to interpretation. There are a number of possible approaches to the interpretation of visual media for example from art history, psychoanalysis, visual sociology and art therapy. This research is concerned with the artist’s perspective, where the processes of art making, and the processes of reflection in and on that practice, provide the tools for the analysis. In this model, the practice and the processes of interaction between the practice and the written component generate new critical and theoretical perspectives. Using this model, the theoretical direction of the next phase of the research is yet to be determined.

I will now articulate those processes. In the following section, I will present the practical research together with the theoretical and critical analysis of the artwork and the issues it raises.
The practical research set out to re-draw craft’s “lines” and to challenge the existing codes and conventions of ceramic practice as articulated in the Practice Manifesto. In the following section, I will present the results of the practical research, the completed art practice. This consists of a new series of art works entitled About Ceramics… which is made up of the following 4 sculptures:

1. Basketweave
2. Collection of Objects (about ceramics)
3. What sort of mug do you take me for?
4. Untitled (Mug Tree Souvenir Mugs)

Firstly, I will present the art works, charting their development in relation to the methods, materials and approaches employed, and the issues the work engages. This will be followed by a critical and theoretical analysis of this research focusing on the context of consumption, in the home and the everyday. The research will explore ideas about the value and status of objects and about the social role of the domestic object. The areas of DIY, home improvements and hobby-crafts will be examined and ideas about ceramic display and about collecting and collections, in the home rather than the museum, will be critically discussed.

Finally I will present my conclusions and recommendations proposing a critical and theoretical framework for ceramics which re-locates it in the context of consumption, the home and the everyday and which highlights the important role of the domestic object in the construction of personal identity.
4.1 PRACTICAL RESEARCH About Ceramics...

As laid out in the Practice Manifesto, the practical research made a deliberate move away from a focus on production and material and processes, to focus instead on the meaning of ceramics - how ceramics are used, experienced, valued and understood. This research explores the contemporary rather than historical or traditional context and seeks to identify how ceramics and ceramic objects have had an influence on contemporary culture and everyday life. This research asks *what have ceramics ever done for us?*

It centres on the context of the home and the everyday, the territory of ceramics and craft. It is a major site for the consumption, use and display of ceramics and ceramic objects, though ideas about the consumption of ceramics in the home have not yet been fully explored within its writing or practices. At the same time, the practical research also grappled with the overriding research question - *what differentiates art, craft and design?*

The practical research explored ideas about the hand-made and about authorship which are central to our understanding of craft. For example, would a ready-made, composed of craft objects (made by someone else) achieve the same results as if I crafted the objects myself? How would these objects and the experience of those objects differ? I explored ideas about aesthetic and value judgements, for example ideas about "bad" craft (poorly made craft, not employing craft aesthetics) and "good" craft (well-made craft). The practical research explored the limits of ceramic-ness and the boundaries of ceramic and craft practice, which led to the question - *do I need to use clay to raise ideas about ceramics?*

The practical work focused on the context of the home and particularly the areas of home-making and DIY which are often overlooked by the field. In this context, ceramics function either as decoration and ornament (the display of ceramic objects) or as tiles (wall or floor coverings) and the research was directed to the area of wall coverings, tiles and wallpaper.
1. *Basketweave*

The first piece of work completed in this series is *Basketweave* (Figures: 39-40), a work which denies the expectations of the making and the materiality of clay. It rejects ideas about the hand-made and instead adopts a ready-made approach, employing mass-produced materials. It is made entirely of wallpaper, mass-produced, readily available and bought off the shelf. This work rejects clay the material and a materials-based approach to instead focus on the subject and meaning of ceramics.

This work is not confined to a plinth as is often the norm in ceramic practice. It is deliberately large in scale, spilling out into the gallery space. Although made from a mass-produced material, the work also contains a craft element in the form of the weaving of the paper to create its form, a reference to the craft practice of basket-weaving. In addition, *Basketweave* also makes reference to the craft of bricklaying, referring to a type of brick bond of the same name.

The brick is a universal symbol for both the home and ceramics. The red brick has particularly British associations as many homes in Britain are constructed using this material. By using the image of a brick as opposed the brick itself, the work also engages with ideas about the image versus the object and about the materiality of clay.

*Basketweave* is not about ceramics and clay in the physical sense but is instead about ideas about clay and ceramics, what ceramics means in a wider context, in the context of the home and the everyday. This work explores ideas about; decoration versus construction, 2D versus 3D, masculine versus feminine, amateur versus professional and art versus craft. At what point does the decoration become the form, or the craft become art? This work also raises questions about the classification of ceramics and ceramic art.

Ceramics in the home are often employed as decoration and ornament, from kitchen tiles to strategically placed objects such as a vase on a shelf. The use of ceramics in the home therefore can be likened to the use of wallpaper, both acting as a wall covering and often having a purely decorative role i.e. nice to look at but
with no content. In this work, the wallpaper, the decoration becomes the form and the structure. Metcalf (1993) urges that decoration should not be viewed as a "veneer of style", but argues it has a more important social function, where "decoration is a social code" (p.47). The term wallpaper also refers to the stuff around us (as in the magazine Wallpaper*) the background and the invisible.

Basketweave explores the inter-related practices of DIY and home decoration. In Britain, there has been an explosion in the practice of DIY and home improvements, fuelled by the Thatcherite politics of the 1980s and the right to buy which created a boom in home ownership (Clarke, 2001). Clarke notes that this trend continued throughout the 1990s and is still evident today, further fuelled by the rising housing market and the contemporary obsession to add value to one's property. The continued growth in the home improvement sector and the increased availability of materials and expertise has also resulted in the diminishing use of professional painters and decorators (Clarke, 2001). Attfield (2000, p.46) also identifies this trend, what she refers to as the "deskilling" of craft and design. Clarke also notes that the boom in home ownership has also signified a shift in the British working class away from an identification with work towards a home-centeredness.

The continuing obsession with home ownership and improvements in Britain is evidenced by the numerous television programmes dedicated to home decoration and improvements (such as the BBC’s Changing Rooms) which promote DIY as accessible, playful and as a celebratory leisure pursuit. However as she identifies this trend is implicitly tied to home ownership and there is a strong cultural assumption about middle-class home ownership and home decoration. She notes that in the four years of its transmission Changing Rooms never featured a single council estate owned property (Clarke, 2001). Miller (1990) also notes the tendency to romanticise the working class or to deride them as a mass. However, in his study of a North London council estate he identifies how “doing-up" the kitchen is not limited to owner-occupiers or seen just as a way of adding value, and found that tenants are as likely to make significant changes to the kitchen as those in the private sector.
Miller however identifies the “work on the home” both as consumption and as labour, a social activity. “Consumption activities” such as home decoration have previously been ignored by social theorists, part of the general denigration of women’s work, which is often regarded as trivial. Miller identifies these activities as a form of consumption worthy of consideration, the goal of such activities is “the production of unalienable culture” what Miller terms as “socially productive labour” (Miller, 1990, p.54).

This can be aligned with the practice (and consumption) of craft which also has been identified as representing un-alienated labour. However, despite craft’s claims for social inclusion and its sense of a higher morality, as I have identified the majority of crafts are far from affordable.

Miller (1990, p.53) identities that householders enter into creative strategies: “to appropriate that which they have not themselves created”, the council house. Previously considered trivial activities, he identifies the processes of home-making as being derived from “profound concerns” (p.53). He also notes that unlike the high arts, the aesthetic of the home is exclusively female centred, where females direct males to do the DIY and where women use aesthetic rather than physically expressive media in the home. Attfield (2000) also identifies DIY as a predominantly male practice where DIY can be seen as the “male counterpart” to home or hobby crafts. However, more recent studies have shown that gender divisions are now shifting and that more women are now also involved in the physical acts of DIY, for example Madigan and Munro’s study of 1996 which identified that women tend to have main responsibility for decorative choices in the home (Madigan and Munro, 1996).

The practices of DIY and home improvements can be directly linked with the practices of home and hobby crafts, all of which take place in the home. Jo Turney identifies hobby craft as the:

“… ordinary practices and ordinary objects distanced from the world of “art”.”
(Turney, 2004, p.269)

The area of hobby crafts however is often overlooked, particularly within ceramic and craft practice and writing. Attfield (2000) also notes that craft produced in the
home is a neglected area, an invisible part of domestic production which is attributed with a low status. In her essay *Making Something from Nothing: Towards a definition of women’s hobby-art* Lucy Lippard (1995) identifies that the context of home allows a freedom to create anything (without being art), useless objects which are free from commerce or the art world. In her study of amateur needlecraft, Jo Turney (2004) notes the addictive nature of needlecrafts, often characterised by over-production which suggests their non-function, but where they are created to adorn or decorate rather than fulfil a specific function. She argues that home-craft can be clearly distinguished from craft or design as the majority is made from kits and patterns, and as such they lack a cerebral “creativity” or “original design”. Consequently they represent:

“The “in-authentic”, the un-original and the copy.” (Turney, 2004, p.269)

This definition of hobby-craft is the antithesis of studio crafts which are characterised as authentic, unique, pure and honest.

Attfield (2000) notes the distinction between crafts practiced in the studio and those practiced in the home or in the workshop or building site. For example unlike studio craft, hobby craft is often not made for profit but to give away or to be sold informally at charity type events, church bazaars or semi-amateur craft fairs. Lippard (1995, p.136) suggests the next step up from hobby craft is to become a “cottage industry”, sold at gift shops and craft fairs (not in galleries). She also identifies that it is lower class women who stay in the home; middle class go outside of the home to seek culture. Turney also identifies needlecraft practice as being associated with the middle-classes (the mundane and mediocre) and also as being a particularly British pursuit. Ideas about needlecraft and craft in general are closely linked with notions of femininity. For example Turney (2004) notes that needlecraft is imaged either as a constructive or philanthropic leisure activity, or as thrifty housewifery, where needlecraft is historically and culturally tied to a make-do and mend philosophy. I would argue the make-do and mend philosophy and approach to craft practice can also be associated with the working class.

Despite the fact that crafts have their roots in working class crafts, they are now associated with the middle-classes and the craft trades and practices such as bricklaying are often overlooked by the field. Attfield identifies how definitions of
craft were transformed from being a working-class skilled occupation to become a feminised middle-class leisure activity.

“One need only look just beyond the text to understand the need of museums like the Victoria and Albert Museum, whose collections are largely constituted of craft objects, to augment its symbolic value through the creation of a literature of history and criticism that valorises the decorative arts alongside fine art rather than tracing it back to its working-class trade roots, in spite of the fact that the provenance of the major bulk of its holdings actually derives from it.” (Attfield, 2000, p.64)

Working class trades or craft practices are not recognised by the craft field. Attfield also notes the Crafts Council’s “self-conscious” attempts to associate with fine art for example the exhibition the Raw and the Cooked, rather than for example with craft trades or with hobby crafts. Within the craft hierarchy, working class trades and home crafts are marginalised within the field. This work makes visible the previously invisible practices of DIY and decoration, unveiling the hidden side of ceramics which exists in the home and the everyday. It weaves together the two gendered practices of basket weaving with bricklaying, to create a new hybrid in which concepts of art, craft and design become merged.
2. Collection of Objects (about ceramics)

My research continued to explore ideas about ceramics in the contemporary context of the everyday, what ceramics means in everyday life, asking what have ceramics ever done for us? It also, crucially raises the question what wouldn't exist without ceramics? This research continued to focus on the mass-produced and the ordinary rather than on the rare or unique.

I began amassing a collection of objects and materials that were about ceramics, that had a relationship with ceramics or which were inspired or influenced by ceramics. These objects became my raw materials. The objects were collected largely from car boot sales and charity shops and I continued to collect objects for this series throughout the research period (Figures: 54, 65 and Appendix B).

For quite some time however I was unsure as to what function these objects would serve or how they could employed within my art practice. Once the objects were brought together in the studio however, it became apparent that I had a “collection” (Figures: 41-42).

The collection of objects includes:

1. Plastic replica of Wedgwood Blue Jasperware Vase
2. Exact facsimile of a side plate from the Sevres State Dinner Service in the collection of his grace the Duke of Bedford at Woburn Abbey presented to Gertrude, Duchess of Bedford by Louis XVth of France in 1763.
3. Wooden Mug Tree
4. Souvenir mug of “Ollie the Owl” from the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery Stoke-on-Trent
5. Toilet Pedestal Rug
6. Wooden Plate (Drying) Rack
7. Plate holder (wire hook)
8. Plate holder (plastic)
9. Plate hanger (disc)
10. Tile on a Roll
11. Fragrant terracotta tile
12. Knitted Tea cosy
13. Tea towel
14. “Paint your own plate” kit
15. Postcard from Sydney
16. Postcard of Duchamps’ Fountain
17. Brick Teapot
18. Pottery kitchen dresser
19. Gaudi’s La Sagrada Familia souvenir tea light holder

This collection of objects are about ceramics or objects, objects which wouldn’t exist without ceramics or which serve ceramics such as the mug tree, plate rack and plate holder. The objects have been selected to signify some of the approaches and characteristics of ceramic practice and its history; for example, the enamel replica of the Sevres porcelain plate and the plastic copy of a Wedgwood Jasperware vase (Figure: 43). These objects are replicas or copies of the original. This links with ideas about the copy and Baudrillard’s concept of the “simulacrum”, where there is no longer a distinction between reality and its representation, only the simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1994). “Tile-on-a-roll” is another example of this area.

Ceramics has a long history of simulating other materials and objects, for example Wedgwood’s development of Jasperware in order to replicate the Portland Vase which was made from Roman glass. This aspect of ceramics’ history may also be partly responsible for embedding the notion that ceramics is something which reproduces rather than originates and which follows trends rather than to create them. Clay is renowned for its ability to take any form and is a natural skeuomorphic material.

The brick teapot is a celebration rather than a replication of the original. It functions not as a copy but rather as a novelty or souvenir, an homage to the brick (Figure: 46). The pottery dresser, although it could be argued to be a scale model, functions as an ornament, a miniature version of a dresser which has the additional function of being a letter holder. Whilst objects such as the plate holder
and plate rack make reference to the absent object, being presented as empty objects with an unfulfilled function.

Ceramics has strong associations with the commemorative and the souvenir, both of which are still in production today. Souvenirs (or tourist art) are represented in the collection by the souvenir mug from the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent (Figure:45) and also by the postcard from Sydney, *Opera Dishhouse* (2003) by M. Berton (Figure:47). Mass-produced ceramic souvenirs are still popular in the British tourist market, largely the province of sea-side and tourist resorts and attractions where they are purchased as holiday mementos or as gifts. The popularity of the holiday souvenir and particularly the ceramic miniature has its roots in Victorian Britain when improved transport together with the introduction of bank holidays resulted in a greater mobility of the population and day trips and holidays to the seaside became a commonplace feature of British life.

Scale is significant to the souvenir which is often produced as a miniature version, collapsed in scale in order to fit into homes and also the pocket, making them portable, take away objects. The act of miniaturisation, in ceramic can be said to represent the domestification of the object. There is a long history of miniatures being produced in ceramics and particularly of interest here are the crested or heraldic china objects most notably associated with Goss factory in Stoke-on-Trent, which were both miniature and souvenir.

Crested wares were inspired by the new tourism and miniature models of landmarks and resorts were produced in porcelain and decorated with a coat of arms of the resort where the object was to be sold. These objects represented regionality, a sense of place and a map of nationalism. They were produced from the 1880s to the 1930s and their popularity or the “craze for crest ware” (Andrews, 1980) peaked around 1910. Despite the popularity of these wares, they are often overlooked by the ceramics field. These wares developed to include an array of diverse subjects such as the weapons and machines of the first world war as in (Figure:48), a model of an armoured car. This theme has been taken up by contemporary artists/designers Constantine and Laurene Leon Boym in their
Buildings of Disaster Series which consists of scale models, cast in bonded nickel such as the World Trade Centre buildings (Figure:49). This links to the area of commemoratives (illustrated in Figure:44) which be discussed later in the chapter.

These objects have been selected because of their relationship to ceramics. Rather than being viewed as bad taste or as kitsch, the objects and materials employed here represent ceramics, albeit a lower class, everyday version of ceramics. (Ideas about taste and kitsch will be discussed in the following chapter.) This work employs a class of objects and practices which have been overlooked within the ceramic and craft canon. They provide an alternative vision of ceramics, acting as framing devices in which previously salient aspects of ceramic practice, its history and influence can be unveiled. They also provide an alternative aesthetic, an aesthetic which nonetheless represents ceramics.

In Collection of Objects (about ceramics), the objects are displayed on a kitchen dresser. This choice of display method was influenced by the theoretical research which shifted its attention to the area of ceramic collections and display and particularly domestic furniture. I have chosen a mass-produced kitchen dresser, made of pine and laminated chipboard and which conforms to the standard or typical kitchen dresser design. This dresser is not antique or rare. It came flat-packed for self-assembly and I constructed the dresser myself, by hand.

This work sought to privilege the ordinary and the everyday, and its relationship with ceramics, and therefore an antique dresser would not have been appropriate and would not have worked. Not only does the dresser fully comply with my about ceramics remit, it is also fit for purpose in that it is a piece of furniture designed primarily as a vehicle for display and usually the display of ceramics. The kitchen dresser therefore provides the ideal vehicle on which to display my collection of objects about ceramics.

Ceramics has strong associations with museum collections and display. The museum is a major site for the consumption of ceramic objects, the site where ceramic objects are presented and displayed, usually within an historical, technical or ethnographic context. The majority of research in the area of collecting and
collections is located in the context of the museum where the majority of collections are held and displayed.

The use of museum methods of display such as the display case or vitrine is a familiar mode of presentation within contemporary art practice (and also in ceramic practice), and museology has been identified as a key feature of practice (Putnam, 2001). As I did not seek to directly reference the museum I rejected the use of the vitrine as a display vehicle for the collection. This research is located in the home and therefore I will employ methods of display used in the home such as the kitchen dresser. By employing everyday (rather than unique objects) and by focusing on display in the home (rather than in the museum), this research is able to connect with ideas about museum and retail culture, whilst being firmly rooted in the domestic.

Used primarily for the display of ceramics, dressers were originally made from local materials by local craftsmen, usually in oak or pine. Antique dressers are highly prized and sought after but equally contemporary (including mass produced) versions of the dresser are still being produced today and are readily available. They can be found within most ranges of contemporary, domestic furniture from the hand-crafted to the mass-produced. Contemporary versions largely follow the well established, traditional kitchen dresser design i.e. display shelves at the top and a base unit consisting of drawers and cupboards. The main function of the kitchen dresser is as a vehicle for display.

The kitchen dresser is an instantly recognisable piece of domestic furniture which continues to be a regular feature in British homes. In British culture, the dresser signifies the country kitchen, home sweet home, the rural idyll and domestic bliss. In her case study *The Welsh Dresser*, Moira Vincentelli (2000b) links the dresser with notions of Welsh-ness and particularly Welsh feminine identity. (Although the dresser is also commonly known as a Welsh dresser, it not exclusive to Wales.)

In this work, the objects have been placed on the dresser according to their size, colour and shape and to achieve an overall balance of composition, following the general stylistic consensus of dresser arrangement and display as featured within
contemporary furniture shop displays and in catalogue photographs. Although many dressers are arguably beautiful examples of furniture, it is the sum of the dresser and its contents, and the relationship and interplay between the dresser, contents and owner which creates its overall effect and which is of interest here.

This work, offers an alternative representation of ceramics, which refers to; a different class of objects, to ceramics as display and also to the role of objects on display in the home. Although ideas about class and taste and about the hierarchies of objects are central to this work, this work does not employ these objects simply as symbols of bad taste. This work combines the conceptual with the aesthetic. The objects were selected because of their relationship with ceramics and as such they offer an alternative view (an artist’s view) of the field.
3. What sort of mug do you take me for?

What sort of mug do you take me for? is the central work in the About Ceramics... series and represents the culmination of this research. What sort of mug do you take me for? consists of a forest of over-sized mug trees, each mug tree displaying a separate mug collection. The mug trees are made from wood, MDF and wooden pegs. Each mug tree measures H180cm – 220cm and is capable of holding 22-32 mugs. (Figures: 50-55 and Appendix C).

The mug is perhaps the ultimate ceramic icon. It is one of the most successful ceramic objects. Everybody owns a mug or a mug collection of some kind. There are mugs for every personality, age, style, budget, mood, hobby or event. In almost every kitchen in the home and the workplace, you will find an array of mugs which represent an array of different tastes, personalities and lifestyles. The humble mug however is largely ignored within the cultural landscape, an invisible object which makes up part of everyday material culture. The function of the mug goes way beyond its utility as a drinking vessel, your choice of mug says a lot about you. For example in the office workplace, individual’s mugs often reveal a more personal side of the self which ordinarily one may choose to keep private. Mugs are important signifiers of personal taste and they also provide a vehicle for individual, creative expression. Mugs make important statements about who we are.

For this work I have taken an archetypal mug tree design and scaled it up. I have constructed the mug trees using everyday DIY materials of “2 by 2” timber and MDF, employing a DIY or home-craft/ hobby-craft approach and aesthetic. The practices of DIY and hobby crafts are often associated with amateurism and implies poorly made, using cheap materials and a mix and match or make-do and mend philosophy. I originally experimented with doweling for the mug hooks and although this method functioned successfully, they were difficult both to cut and to attach to the trunk particularly at the angle required. In addition to being a relatively expensive material, I also felt they were lacking (visual impact and in finish) and sought alternatives. I eventually found the perfect solution to the doweling problem, a made to measure, mass-produced, readily available domestic object – an old-fashioned style wooden clothes peg. Truly fit for purpose, the pegs
were not only the perfect size and functioned perfectly as a peg, they also represented domesticity and a DIY, make-do-and-mend philosophy. In addition, the design of the peg with a slit down the centre, had the added benefit of enabling the peg to expand to fit (into the hole), making a snug and secure joint.

The mug tree is a piece of domestic furniture designed solely for the storage and display of mugs. Mug trees are significant because they would not exist without ceramics. Mug trees serve ceramics, they are all about ceramics yet these intriguing objects are largely ignored and disregarded. I hope to elevate the mug tree to achieve sculptural status. In contrast to the miniaturisation which often occurs in ceramics, this work deals with enlargement. By scaling-up the mug tree, it automatically demands attention, possessing the space. This is reinforced by the use of the multiple, 23 mug trees and also the mugs. As in Basketweave, I have made a deliberate attempt to get away from the plinth, to engage with the dimensions of sculpture and installation. The work fills the gallery space and although the elements are fixed (mug trees and mugs); it was installed site-specifically in the gallery space.

The mugs included in this work have been collected over the last five years, largely from charity shops and car boot sales, or as found, unwanted objects and donations. Currently the collection totals over 500 mugs, but it is still growing. The mug collections included in the work represent a diversity of tastes and lifestyles and currently include:

1. Advertising (Chocolate)
2. Advertising (Gen/ Corporate)
3. Animals (kids/cartoon)
4. Boys/ Dad’s
5. Brown/Craft
6. Countryside/ Rural
7. Craft/ Pottery
8. Fan/ Club
9. Floral (General)
10. Floral (Posh)
Collecting is a powerful tactic for making sense of the material world, of establishing trails of similarity through fields of otherwise undifferentiated material. To collect is to divert an object from any prescribed path or circulation, to place it to one side. It is possible that the obsessive accumulation of serial things can defer the alienation experienced as a result of intensified material consumption. As a peculiar form of accumulation, collecting appears to intensify the relationship between artefacts and collectors, facilitating a mutual exchange of identity." (Cummings and Lewandowska, 2000, p.29)

Collecting has its roots in 16th century European nobility (Cummings and Lewandowska, 2000) where private collections were displayed in small rooms or in cupboards, such as Wunderkammer or Cabinets of Curiosities (Mauries, 2002). In these collections, the objects were displayed purely as status symbols and signs of power of the owner. As the trend to collect developed, collections became more themed and individualised, and inventories and guides were written about the collections. This model of the display and cataloguing of collections formed the basis of the museum.

This research however focuses on collections in the home rather than the museum but as Cummings and Lewandowska (2000) identify in The Value of Things, there is no difference between personal collecting and collecting for a museum. The motivation and the drive to collect is the same - "to order is to know" (p.31). Collections become morally, emotionally, culturally charged systems. This can
also be aligned with the artist’s use of multiples, where the sum of the whole is greater than the individual object. By presenting objects within a collection, the objects take on additional weight and meanings. The context of the collection has a legitimising effect, whereby the insignificant can become significant.

Using Susan Pearce’s (1998) model, museum collections can be identified as a systematic collection i.e. as an attempt to create an ideology, where curated exhibitions of collections create a social narrative. I would argue a collection displayed in the home achieves the same, creating and displaying the narrative of our lives. Unlike the museum collection, collections in the home, although they may be systematic, may also contain an element of chance. For example, items received as gifts which may not have been sought out by the collector and which may not fit in with the collector’s remit, are nonetheless absolved into an existing collection. In the exhibition catalogue Thinking Aloud artist Richard Wentworth also makes this distinction:

“I have always made the distinction between collect and acquire – one seeming more self-conscious. We acquire mannerisms and vocabulary and relationships, I think, more than we collect them.” (Wentworth, 1998, p.63)

To acquire implies an amount of unpredictability (versus systematic collecting). Talking about Wentworth’s work, Nick Groom refers to the processes of “sorting and sifting” and identifies the uncertainty of the flea market which he describes as “a sort of gigantic skip, the last chance for commodity culture” (Wentworth, 1998, p. 66). He describes Wentworth’s work as providing “escape routes for objects”. This is what I hope to achieve, to give new life, new meaning and new values to previously disregarded and discarded objects.

The mug collections in What sort of mug do you take me for? followed this trend. Part systematic, part opportunistic, the categories evolved in response to the items collected/ items available to collect. As more mugs were collected, new categories emerged.

I have always had an interest in mugs and I still have mugs from my childhood which were either given to me as gifts or which I bought myself as a holiday souvenir. My father also had a collection of mugs (largely royal commemoratives)
which were displayed prominently on a high plate shelf in the hallway of our family home. They are probably the only items in the house which were passed down the family and although battered and bruised, they could be argued to constitute the family heirlooms. To my horror, my Dad “got rid” of half of this collection the last time they moved house but the remaining items, with a few additions of my own, forms the Royal Commemorative category in *What sort of mug do you take me for?*

Some mug categories were deliberately sought out for example, a focus on ceramics and craft. Mugs were selected because they represent or relate to ceramics and craft such as in the categories Craft/Pottery, Brown/Craft and Countryside/Rural which refer to craft stereotypes of the rural and country idyll. The characteristics of the craft categories are in colour (brown - all variations and shades) and the use of glazes and casting techniques which emulate craft aesthetics, such as the use of oxide resist glaze decoration, which dominates the Countryside/Rural collection. In addition, the categories of Willow Pattern and Blue & White make direct reference to ceramic history and practice. The willow pattern is synonymous with ceramics and particularly with British ceramics industry. Ceramic wares decorated with versions of the Willow pattern are still in production today as seen in the mug category Willow Pattern (Figure: 59). This aspect of British ceramics continues to be explored within contemporary ceramic practice such as in the work of ceramic artists Andrew Livingstone (Figure:60) and Robert Dawson (Figure:57). This also links with current trends in contemporary design and interiors such as the work of Scottish design group Timorous Beasties, for example their “London Toile” wallpaper design (Figure:58) which fuses a traditional toile pattern with images of contemporary London.

In addition to its links with ceramics industry, the willow pattern also symbolises notions of Englishness. Ideas about domestic objects and national identity are the focus of Drazin’s study (Miller, 2001) which identifies that the material wood embodies ideas about caring and makes up part of Romanian-ness. In the same way, I would argue that ceramics (and particularly stereotypes of British ceramics included here) communicate a sense of Englishness, where the ceramic mug or tea cup are part of British identity as seen in the work of Martin Parr (Figure:56)
This links to souvenirs and commemoratives. Souvenirs provide a permanent reminder of a place, a holiday or an event. Their main function is to provide a sense of place and they often depict key locations, buildings, objects or styles which symbolise place, region or nationality. These wares have been produced by the ceramics industry since the eighteenth century and are still in demand today. This area of ceramics is represented in *What sort of mug do you take me for?* by the mug categories of Souvenir (UK), Souvenir (London) and Souvenir (International).

Whereas the souvenir is usually associated with humour and with happy memories and classified as a novelty or kitsch item, the commemorative usually deals with less light-hearted subject matter and is more austere or official in tone. Their function is to commemorate a specific person, place or event and they often include detailed information of the event or person being commemorated such as names, dates and times. Wedgwood for example produced a limited edition plate to commemorate the 1969 moon landing (Figure:44). Royal commemoratives are particularly sought after and continue to be produced and collected today. Woolworths for example have already designed a commemorative mug in anticipation of Prince Williams' expected engagement (Figure:61). This category is represented in *What sort of mug do you take me for?* by the Royal Commemorative mug collection.

Anything can become collectable and in the case of ceramics, there are no bounds to the type of ceramic objects deemed worthy of collecting. From crested china, and figurines, to pot lids and sanitary wares, the ceramics collector has a voracious appetite. In *The Cultural Biography of Things*, Igor Kopytoff (1986) identifies the yearning for singularization in complex societies which takes the form of a "collective hunger". He notes the paradox of the two different value systems of the marketplace and the closed sphere of personally singularized things (which makes them worthy of being collected). This paradox is played upon by companies offering "future collectibles", appealing to greed:

"...buy this plate now while it is still a commodity, because later it will become a singular "collectible" whose very singularity will make it a higher-priced commodity." (Kopytoff, 1986, p.81)
This trend is particularly evident in the ceramics industry, where advertisements for collectable or souvenir limited edition ceramic items are a common feature in Sunday supplements such as those produced by the Franklyn Mint (Appendix C). The passage of time however is crucial to this process, where objects once considered worthless may later take on new values. In addition, I would argue that the term “collectable” usually refers to the more affordable range of goods which does not quite make the classification of antique.

“The longing that haunts exchange grows from our inability to satiate our desires: we are unable to invest in one thing for any length of time before the object inevitably slides from favour. This process turns every belonging into a souvenir, a reminder of a momentary coherence; it builds collections out of products that have been bought, are no longer wanted and which need to be stored, producing an exhibition in every home.” (Cummings and Lewandowska, 2000, p. 78)

The collecting of ceramics and particularly ceramic teapots is popular in Britain. For example, teapot collectors Keith and Sue Blaze who were featured in the Guardian Magazine, August 26, 2006 (Figure: 62). They started collecting teapots after Sue’s grandmother gave her a teapot in 1983. Over the ensuing years, the collection took over their home and they eventually moved house in order to re-house the collection, buying an island in Kent which they renamed as Teapot Island. As well as being their home, Teapot Island also houses a museum for their collection of 5000 teapots, which is open to the public.

As well as addressing issues of personal identity, this work also raises important questions about the identities of art, craft and design. This work blurs the boundaries of art, craft and design, a hybrid model which embraces elements from all three disciplines. For example, although predominantly made of mass-produced ceramic mugs, the work also contains a significant hand-made or craft element - the mug trees. The trees were made by hand, with use of hand and power-tools. In addition, some of the mug trees were made at my home and therefore they could also be argued to be home-made as well as hand-made. This work invites its (and your) classification asking – what sort of mug do you take me for?
4. *Untitled (Mug Tree Souvenir Mugs)*

This work consists of 30 bone china mugs, decorated with 30 mug tree images (decals), hanging from brass hooks secured to a 2m length of laminated kitchen worktop (Figures: 63-64).

This work supports *What sort of mug do you take me for?* Over the research period I also collected mug trees both the objects themselves and images of mug trees, downloaded from various retail/commercial and private internet sites (Figure: 65). Where *What sort of mug do you take me for?* focuses on the decoration and content of the mug, this work demonstrates the variety of mug form and mug tree. This work employs 30 different mugs, decorated with 30 different mug tree images, highlighting the diversity in designs. It also explores the image/object relationship - by using the image of the mug tree rather than the object, the work privileges the idea over object. The mug tree becomes the decoration for ceramics rather than a vehicle for the display of ceramics. By using the mug tree image to decorate the mug - I thereby cerama-cise the mug tree, gaining ownership of the object on behalf of ceramics whilst providing a permanent reminder or souvenir.

In this work, the mugs are displayed on a kitchen worktop, referencing the display of ceramics in the home, specifically the kitchen. The kitchen has been identified as a key determinant in general housing satisfaction and is central to the routines of everyday life (Miller, 1990). The worktop is the natural habitat of the mug tree and the mug, yet the context of the kitchen is often overlooked by the field, particularly the fitted kitchen. I have employed a mass-produced worktop, readily available from high street DIY stores. The worktop is made from chipboard covered with simulated grey granite laminate and represents a working class kitchen aesthetic rather than the traditional country kitchen (i.e. middle class, notions of home sweet home and the rural idyll) which is usually associated with ceramics and craft.

This research does not employ the worktop simply to represent bad taste but to represent an everyday, domestic aesthetic. By locating the work directly in the kitchen, it engages with ideas about the use and display of ceramics in the home.
It also explores ideas about the aesthetic status of objects and materials, re-evaluating which objects are worthy of attention or of becoming a souvenir. This work explores the influence and significance of ceramics in the context of the home and the everyday. It is a celebration of the worktop, the mug and the mug tree.

In her study of the 1950s cocktail cabinet, Attfield (1990) focuses on an item of furniture previously regarded with horror by the design world and which was considered “useless”. However, she does not present the cocktail cabinet as an item of kitsch or as bad taste, nor does she propose that design history adopts “poor taste” but instead she proposes:

“... a different type of appreciation in which social cultural differences are recognized as valid and do not need to be judged as good or bad.” (Attfield, 1990, p.84)

She rejects ideas based purely on aesthetics judgments (i.e. the evaluation of the visual qualities of an object within a hierarchical structure) and identifies

“... the need to use certain criteria other than aesthetic in order to discuss a different repertoire of questions and debates relevant to the practice of design and the study of its history.” (Attfield, 1990, p.84)

I hope to achieve the same for ceramics and craft. To propose an alternative critical and theoretical framework for the discipline, and to offer new creative strategies for practice. Attfield’s approach views the object as already being integrated in the home. By considering it as part of material culture, she takes the object beyond the point of sale to its being consumed, re-contextualising it in the home where new social and symbolic meanings are acquired. My research adopts a similar approach, re-locating ideas about ceramics in the context of the consumption, use and display of ceramics in the home.

This body of work About Ceramics... work provides a new model for practice which employs a conceptual and critical approach to the subject of ceramics. It also offers an alternative aesthetic which privileges a range of objects of objects and materials which, though they have a relationship with ceramics, have been overlooked by the field. It re-locates ceramics in the context of consumption, the home and the everyday, linking ceramics with ideas about the social role of the domestic object. The results of this practice demonstrate that rather than be
labelled as bad taste or be seen as mute objects, this class of objects and practices (which includes wallpaper, mugs and souvenirs) can instead be viewed in the context of our relationships with objects in the home and the everyday.
4.2 CRITICAL DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

The critical and theoretical analysis will examine the issues raised by the practical work, drawing on recent studies of material culture and consumption which focus on the social role of the domestic object. Ideas about house-holder and object relations, and about the social life of the domestic object will be critically discussed. The research will examine the home as a site for art, craft and design exploring the area of home and hobby-crafts. Finally, the research will investigate the role of the home and the domestic object in the processes of identity construction.

The Value & Status of Things
Through the series of work About Ceramics… I discovered the sensitive nature of taste, whereby taste goes beyond class and into the realms of identity. In the first phase of the research, I sought to challenge the hierarchies of art and taste and this approach is reflected in Basketweave and in Collection of Objects (about ceramics). For these works, I sought out objects, methods and materials from outside of ceramics and craft discourse, focusing on the mass-produced, the ordinary and the overlooked. The objects and materials employed in these works were selected to represent ceramics, however they could also be classified as examples of bad taste or as kitsch.

Kitsch is defined in relation to art as “other” and as such it is deemed inauthentic and regarded as a derivative art form. Kitsch can be characterised by its use of repetition, the familiar and the comforting. Kitsch objects are mass-produced, often dependant on clichés and closely associated with sentimentality, over-decoration, amateur art and home-craft. Categories of kitsch include novelty items, ornaments, hobby-crafts, knick-knacks, souvenirs and tourist art, all of which have strong associations with ceramics and craft and which are included in this work.

Within contemporary art practice kitsch is employed as an art strategy, where it represents a refusal to play art’s games and where the kitsch object acts as symbol for mass consumption. The trend for kitsch can also be seen in ceramic...
practice for example in the work of ceramic artists Richard Slee and Carol McNicoll.

Kitsch can not be defined as a single style but rather it refers to a class of objects which symbolise bad taste. Kitsch therefore may be defined as the aesthetics of mass or popular culture. The work of Bourdieu is relevant here. He established that taste, previously thought of as idiosyncratic individual choice, was in fact a predictable phenomenon, defined by economic and social class, and where consumption can be seen as the battleground where social class distinctions are fought out (Bourdieu, 1984). If taste is defined by class, bad taste and kitsch may be associated with the working class.

The objects and materials employed in these works undoubtedly represent this lower class category. However, these objects are not being presented as examples of bad taste or kitsch but rather to offer an alternative aesthetic which focuses on a class of objects which have been previously ignored by the ceramics and crafts canon. The practical work played with notions of taste and kitsch in order to challenge the hierarchies of art and to explore ideas about the aesthetic status of objects. As the research progressed, it became less about the status of objects and more about the value and meaning of objects in everyday life.

**Beyond Taste - The Everyday**

Judy Attfield's (2000) work was central to this shift. By locating the research in the context of everyday, it was able to move away from discussions based on class and taste, to focus instead on the context of consumption and use. Rather than be viewed within the hierarchies of taste and art, the objects, materials and processes employed in the work can instead be located in the context of the home sphere and in the routines of daily life. In the final phase of the research, the domestic object was removed from the hierarchies of art and repositioned to the home sphere, locating ideas about objects in a broader context of familial and social relations. This work expanded on the concepts previously identified to explore ideas about the levels of agency acquired through the use and display of objects in the home and to examine the role objects play in the construction of identity.
This shift reflects developments within the scholarship of cultural studies, anthropology and sociology. Recent studies of consumption have expanded on Bourdieu’s concepts of taste bound by class, to explore the concepts of lifestyle and the role of consumption in the construction of identity. Attfield (2000) usefully distinguishes between the concepts of choice and lifestyle, where lifestyle signifies an imposition whereas choice implies a degree of conscious decision making, linking to ideas about conspicuous consumption. However, although ideas about conspicuous consumption and concepts of lifestyle are important in locating debates, this research is concerned with the values and meaning of objects and how these are gained through ownership and use.

Ian Woodward (2001) discusses two theoretical paradigms for the interpretation of consumer objects: one based in semiotics which focuses on the ability of objects to signify something in social discourse, the other based in cultural anthropology, which focuses on relationships with objects and how they are embedded in social relations. Woodward refers to Daniel Miller’s (1987) seminal work in the field in which he argues that studies of material culture should include both socio-semiotic and socio-cultural approaches and it is this dual approach this research has adopted. This research employs objects and materials to act both as symbols of taste, whilst also engaging with ideas about the social role of objects.

The Social Lives of Things
The research will now focus on recent studies of material culture and domestic consumption which explore our relationships with objects and the ways objects are used and consumed in the home. Miller (1987; 1990) identifies the work consumers do to create meaning from goods, the cultural labour involved before, in and after the purchase of commodities whereby objects become embedded within cultural relations. This approach forms the basis of cultural anthropology. The idea of cultural labour provides a useful way of re-framing ideas about ceramics and craft.

Andrew Blauvelt (2003, p.16) also notes that objects can no longer be understood solely in terms of their exchange value or utility but that they now function as signs in the “experience economy” (as identified by economists Gilmore and Pine,
This idea of experience is something that Tim Putnam identifies, where consumers today are now more self-conscious and aware, active participants, in what he refers to as “critical consumerism”, where consumers exercise deliberate control over their judgment and choice which establishes a sense of satisfaction and enables “personal possession” (Newton and Putnam, 1990, p.16). This became the central theme of the practical research as can be seen in What sort of mug do you take me for?

The objects included in my work have little economic value and are considered low or inferior art according to art world hierarchies. However these ordinary, everyday objects nonetheless play an important role in identity and social relations, absorbing “the other kind of worth, one that is non-monetary and goes beyond exchange worth” (Kopytoff, 1986, p.83).

Consumers can now be viewed as active, not passive, where individuals mould their identities through consumption and where taste can be viewed, not as expression of class, but as an expression of self. Ian Woodward’s (2001) study of householders in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia employs the term “taste narrative” to describe the meaning and consequence of the thing consumed. Whilst Alison Clarke (2002) argues that aesthetic judgements are formed by social relations rather than by an encounter between an individual and artwork, where aesthetics can be viewed as a “social rather than an individual process” (p.147). She identifies the processes by which tastes are formed as “taste in action” where objects can take on agencies of their own (Clarke, 2002, p.131). She argues, as I do in What sort of mug do you take me for?, that homes are not just markers of identity or a reflection of class, that homes and possessions are active agents in the construction of taste and social relations.

“In daily life the assertion of an aesthetic judgement is not simply that of the autonomous agent but most commonly part of a social context in which the expression of aesthetics is intended to be part of relationships. These may be relationships with others who are present, others held in mind, or those more complex internalized constructions of other subjects which psychoanalysts have called “internal objects” to whom we relate our judgements.” (Clarke, 2002, p.145)

Household objects provide the site by which culturally derived attitudes, values and meanings can enter the home. The man-made things one uses in the home
become a part of the self, where things form the framework of our experience. Things are a way to define who we are, to ourselves and to others; they rely on human relationships for their meaning. Meaning therefore is not contained in the thing itself but within social relationships.

**Shifting Identities**

Jean-Sebastien Marcoux's (2001) study *The Refurbishment of Memory* examines the process of moving house and the relationships between memory, material culture and mobility. Marcoux (2001) notes that some objects are valued because of their origin, whilst for some, the origin is not known. Some are valued because they have always been there, whilst others have been “dragged” with them and are valued for having “survived”. Notions of survival can be linked with ceramics particularly. For example, in *The Meaning of Things: Domestic symbols of the self*, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) the category of Plates (which included a variety of eating and drinking utensils, dishes, china, cups and mugs) came tenth in their study of the most cherished objects in the home. The objects were not special for utilitarian reasons but were mentioned either as heirlooms or because of their ethnic background; the emphasis being on their memories and association.

> “Given the number of fragile objects, the majority of them are soon bound to be broken. To preserve a breakable object from its destiny one must pay at least some attention to it, care for it, buffet it from the long arm of chance. Thus a china cup preserved over a generation is a victory of human purpose over chaos, an accomplishment to be quietly cherished, something to be “kind of proud” of.” (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p.83)

As fragile objects, ceramics are often cherished for having survived intact or for surviving at all. Marcoux's (2001) study emphasises the house as a dynamic process rather than a static backdrop, where the process of moving home involves the confrontation between people and their possessions and the opportunity to reconfigure personal biographies and narratives. For example, objects are reminders of the past and as such can be discarded or retained. Marcoux notes that in the context of displacement and of moving home, objects represent stability in relation to people. This is evidenced by the results of the study which focuses on tenants rather than home-owners. He concludes:

> “… tenants can probably be said to inhabit their belongings as much as their place.” (Marcoux, 2001, p.71)
Marcoux also identifies that possessions acquire value through the sorting out process, where:

"The production of rarity, hence of value, is indeed the corollary of the sorting out of things." (Marcoux, 2001, p.84)

This can be aligned to my artistic practice and methods, where my use of the found object and the acts of acquiring, "sorting and sifting" and the display of objects as art, mirrors the processes of collecting and display within the home.

Komter (2001) identifies how different and often conflicting meanings and values can be attributed to the same object for example in family disputes over inheritances where one member values an object for its memories, another for sentimental reasons and another for its market value.

"Things may have conflicting social lives." (Komter, 2001, p.59)

This can be seen for example in the Royal Comemoratives collection in What sort of mug do you take me for? which though battered and bruised, is highly valued by me but not my father who recently discarded half the collection. In addition, this mug collection includes a mug (found in a charity shop) which commemorates a wedding, perhaps given as a wedding gift it is decorated with a picture of the bride and groom. This object triggers a dialogue about why such an important object may have been discarded. Although objects have multiple lives, previously highly prized objects can become unwanted.

This is similar to what Kopytoff (1986, p.64) identifies as “a moral economy”; how things can be seen as commodities by one and something else by another. Things have moveable values and meanings. As Komter notes:

"Things are markers as well as marks of relationship." (Komter, 2001, p.74)

Cooper Marcus (1995) also identifies the different meanings of home through the different stages of life, where objects come in and out of our lives. Such discarded items are often made available at car boot sales and charity shops and are employed as my raw materials. This also links to ideas about junk, rubbish and clutter.
Junk, Clutter & the Ecology of Possessions

The term clutter is usually employed as a negative value judgement, it is seen as a problem and signifies disorder and untidiness. Clutter refers to the method of display as much as to the class of objects. Citing Jonathan Culler’s 1998 essay Rubbish Theory, Linda Sandino (2004) identifies junk as the category of things one hasn’t thrown away yet because they may someday be useful. Whilst Alan Metcalfe and Saulo B. Cwerner, in their paper Storage and Clutter: Discourses and Practices of Order in the Domestic World, note:

“... clutter is matter that no longer matters that much.” (Metcalfe and Cwerner, 2003, p.237)

Jane Graves however makes the important distinction in terms of an object’s monetary value, noting that we are judged by our property - you are what you own. Where property has a monetary value, clutter does not:

“Clutter is the reverse of property. (Clutter is the property of the poor.” (Graves, 1998, p.66)

Importantly, clutter is used to define a number of objects in relation to each other and in relation to their environment. This relates to what Attfield (2000, p.149) refers to as the “ecology of personal possessions”. This refers to the system where DIY and home improvements can be seen as an additional layer to be applied to an existing style or structure, and which allows for the arrangement and placement of objects (such as objects placed on a bedside dressing table). In this scheme, each element contributes to the overall expression of the household’s identity, where the arrangement of objects and the clutter in the home signifies a network of relationships.

“... clutter materialises a complex universe of social relations, past, present and future.” (Metcalfe and Cwerner, 2003, p.237)

It is in this context that concepts of kitsch are now being redefined. For example, Jacqueline A. Gibbons (1997) notes that class is of lesser and lesser import, to the point where kitsch can now be seen as part of the “visual discourse of the everyday” (p.66). As Gibbons notes, what is classed as kitsch for some, can become “the warming and personal shaping of an environment for others” (1997, p.64). Sam Binkley (2000) also provides a positive reading of kitsch which aims to identify it as a distinct aesthetic style on its own terms, defining kitsch is a “unique aesthetic sensibility” (Binkley, 2000, p.134).
Kitsch has gone from being a symbol of bad taste to becoming a personal metaphor for cultural values or family ties (Binkley, 2000). This reflects the shift that occurred in my own research. This research identified that although the objects on display in the home represent taste and class, they can also be understood in the context of their relationships to the home as a whole, encompassing the architecture, the interior decoration, the furniture and the objects and people who inhabit it.

**Identities on Display**

Southerton's (1998) study of domestic consumption concludes that despite attempts at personalisation, people are not individualized to the extent proposed by theories of individualization. Garvey's (2001) study of Norwegian homes concurs, identifying that despite claims to individuality, the home decoration of respondents' homes often have marked similarities. Levels of economic and cultural resources undoubtedly have a significant effect on the frameworks of taste i.e. those with access to the same economic resources have similar tastes. However, Southerton's study also identifies that the acts of display and ordering in the home, such as the small changes made to the kitchen display (for example the use of vegetables, herbs and pans put on display and strategically placed ornaments) were perceived of as providing "a sense of individuation" (Southerton, 1998, p.4).

Mugs function in this way, acting as markers of individuality. Against the backdrop of the standardised, mass-produced fitted kitchen, mugs represent the individual. They reflect our tastes, interests and hobbies and possess distinctive qualities which have been selected to reflect our personalities and character traits. Mugs reflect our sense of humour (such as in the Novelty mug category), they reflect our interests (such as a football team or club) and our favourite things (such as films or foods). Mugs remind us (and others) of where we have been (for example the Souvenir mug categories) and they are often given as gifts and as such are embedded with strong emotional attachments. On a daily basis, mugs are used in response to our needs and moods, for example we may select a specific mug in order to cheer ourselves up or to rekindle a memory. These various aspects of
self are represented in *What sort of mug do you take me for?* which contains over 500 individual mugs, currently themed within 23 categories.

The kitchen provides considerable opportunities for the expression of personal style and it is often invested with emotional meanings associated with and created by family relationships. Although the arranging of objects may seem like small differences (compared to the fitted kitchen as a whole), they play a significant part in the processes of personalisation. Key to this process is the personalization of space, where moveable objects become symbols and expressions of the self.

This work focuses on display in the home rather than the gallery. Although it exists in the gallery, it is also firmly rooted in everyday life and experience. Richard Wentworth also makes the distinction between exhibition and display where display “is an essential aspect of urban life” (Wentworth, 1998, p.6), for example where parked cars can be seen as a form of display. *About Ceramics…* is also concerned with everyday methods and vehicles of display such as the kitchen dresser in *Collection of Objects (about ceramics)*, the mug tree in *What sort of mug do you take me for?* and the kitchen worktop in *Untitled (Mug tree souvenir mugs)*.

In the case of the kitchen dresser for example, despite an established tradition of dresser display, Vincentelli notes that individuals often make considerable modifications and personal adjustments to the established order of dresser display.

> "The dresser display as a dynamic piece of house decoration, offers an opportunity to display excess wealth i.e. Non-functional goods. It is a place around which family memories and histories can accrue and is also a vehicle for creative expression." (Vincentelli, 2000b)

These practices, the collecting and display of objects on the dresser are identified as a site for female creative activity. These acts, the processes of minor alterations such as the re-ordering of furniture in the home, Garvey (2001) identifies as significant to the constructions of self. She identifies that rearranging is commonly an emotional response to an emotional condition and that such acts are often spontaneous, cathartic, immediate, establishing a feeling of newness.
Garvey draws a critical distinction between decoration or refurbishment and the reordering furniture, focusing on the more banal domestic routines which she argues are fundamental to understanding relationships between domesticity and self-identity. Such practices however are not only overlooked in studies of home decoration and consumption, but they are invisible within contemporary ceramic and craft practice. In the series of work About Ceramics... I explore ideas about display in the home and expressions of self; creating a space which validates the practices of the display and re-ordering of objects. By foregrounding this neglected type of highly gendered practice, I attempt to legitimise these important creative acts.

**The Home as a Site for Art, Craft & Design**

In About Ceramics... I make art about the home and the domestic, whilst also exploring ideas about the home as a site for individual creative expression. In Contemporary Art and the Home, Colin Painter makes the distinction between home as a site for art and as a subject for art, and proposes that the home should be viewed as:

“... a crucial potential space for the work of contemporary artists – a space through which their work might participate more widely in life.” (Painter, 2002, p.2)

However, Painter (2002) argues that artists often employ the home as a “temporary gallery space”. Although the home is (part of) the subject of my art, the home is not employed as a “temporary gallery space” but rather it is a celebration of the home and the processes of home-making.

The home continues to provide the inspiration and subject matter for contemporary artists as seen for example in Michael Landy’s Semi-detached (Figure:66) and in the exhibition House Work: Domestic spaces as sites for artists at the Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham (Dean, 2002). Other examples include the work of Sarah Lucas (Figure:67) and Richard Billingham.

Despite the interest in the home and the home sphere as the subject for art, Painter identifies that few homes in Britain contain contemporary works of art.
"... on the one hand, the home is for many people their most formative and intense engagement with visual images throughout life and, on the other, few homes contain work by contemporary artists." (Painter, 2002, p.1)

Projects such as Own Art and At home with Art set out to address this balance, aiming to make art more accessible and available to new audiences. For example, the Art’s Council’s Own Art project provided interest free loans to members of the public to encourage the appreciation and collection of contemporary art. The project was promoted using Billingham’s work Untitled (1995), one of a series of photographs taken in the artist’s home (Figure:68), reinforcing art’s links with the home and the everyday. In the At Home With Art project, leading contemporary sculptors were commissioned to create work specifically for the home, for mass production, to go on sale in the Homebase stores. Another example is the Close Encounters of the Art Kind project and exhibition in which contemporary works of art were displayed in homes.

Harrod (2002) makes reference to this project in her essay House-trained Objects where she argues that although many artists have engaged with the domestic object, this type of art is not suited to an actual home. Referring to the photographic record of the project which shows the objects on display in the homes of the participants (Figure:69), she argues that, although the display of these works in the homes brought pleasure to both the householders and the artists:

"... most of the sculptures were rendered invisible by the home environment and are only properly exhibited at the V&A Museum where they are displayed apart from the everyday objects that clutter most homes." (Harrod, 2002, p.70)

Crucially, Harrod implies that these objects do not operate as art because they are in the home and are surrounded by clutter. She goes on to argue that ceramics speak the language of the home, decoration and ornament, and therefore they fit in easier. Harrod uses the work of Richard Slee as an example of this:

"Slee, by working from ornament to create ornament, is able to enter the home with ease." (Harrod, 2002, p.71)

Harrod concludes that Slee’s work does not fit into the art world but that it does fit into the home and describes Slee’s work as a “house-trained object”. However, I do not see how the example of Slee’s work does not fit into the art world., as it is usually exhibited in a gallery (a white cube context) and sold at high craft/ art prices. Although its destination may be a home, I suspect that the homes of Slee’s
buyers are not characterised by disorganised clutter and are more likely to resemble a gallery space. Harrod argues that if an art object is not displayed as art in the home (i.e. displayed in a gallery/ white cube environment), then according to Harrod, it cannot function properly as art.

“Currently, a few ceramicists, like their cousins in the fine-art world, are commenting on the world of things and on consumption itself. But the fact that ceramics have always been part of the domestic environment as part of a culture of display and collecting largely orchestrated by women raises an important question. Does an object’s status as an artwork depend upon context?” (Harrod, 2002, p. 70)

Although she asks the question, she does not provide a satisfactory response. According to Harrod, art displayed in a home, surrounded by clutter can not operate as art, whereas Slee’s work because it is house-trained can. If art must be “properly exhibited” in order to function as art, then art can only be experienced in the context of the gallery. This suggests that for owners and collectors of contemporary art, in order for their art to operate as art, it must be displayed in a home that resembles a white cube space. Contemporary artists have successfully embraced many new sites and contexts for their work outside of the gallery. This trend is evidenced by the area of socially-engaged practice and by the number of collaborative and site or community-specific projects. By using Slee as an example, the classification of an object as “house-trained” suggests an object must be either: made of craft materials, refer to ceramic and craft practice and/ or history, or refer to the home. Are art objects in the gallery therefore gallery-trained?

My exhibition plays with the notion of a house-trained versus a gallery-trained object. Unlike Harrod, my work does not differentiate between ceramic art and the realm of ceramic objects which may be regarded as clutter. My practice embraces the totality of ceramics and therefore it challenges perceptions of the ceramic and craft object.

If contemporary art is not considered suitable for home display, then perhaps the area of popular painting and tourist art is suited to the home. Andrew Brighton’s (2002) study Avant-Garde and Kitsch Revisited explores this area. He identifies that, despite the fact that such images are the major source of art in the home, the genre of popular painting is generally regarded as un-reflexive and without
criticality. He identifies serious arts’ “hostility to the habitual and familiar” (Brighton, 2002, p.256). Brighton notes that in popular holiday locations in England, such as the Lake District and Cornwall, the buying of paintings to commemorate a holiday has sustained an economy of small art and craft galleries and local artists.

“There are however, practitioners of and markets for art that offers itself as pleasing, honest, sincere, normal and natural, which does speak for a desired social cohesion. It is what Greenberg called kitsch.” (Brighton, 2002, p.256)

There are of course different markets for and genres of art, as there are different markets and genres of craft. Art’s relationship with the area of popular painting can be aligned with craft’s relationship with home and hobby-crafts. Despite their growing popularity, hobby-crafts are not considered as serious craft and are marginalised by the craft field.

Hobby-craft = Art in the Home

The area of home improvements and hobby-crafts became increasingly significant to my research.

“... most of us, for whatever reason, do not purchase works of contemporary art for our homes (although we may buy reproductions, craft and applied art).” (Harrod, 2002, p.56)

Although you are more likely to own craft than a work of contemporary art, the majority of crafts are not affordable for a large proportion of the population, especially the type of craft promoted by the Crafts Council. When compared to the cost of mass-produced objects (such as ceramics), hand-crafted objects are expensive and therefore they have limited availability. However, as Greenhalgh (2002) identifies, the majority of the British population are more likely to practice their own craft than to buy it and this is evidenced by the numerous “paint your own” ceramics shops which are a now a common feature in the high street. The current interest in craft within the art and design worlds is mirrored in the wider social context where crafting is growing in popularity, fuelled by environmental concerns and the need to reduce waste and recycle. This new wave of crafters however are:

“More DIY punk than Stepford homemaker, the modern craftster is a sociable creature, gathering in pubs, clubs and online to chat and swap ideas.” (Spencer, 2007, p.4)

This trend is evidenced by publications such as ReadyMade: How to make (almost) everything (2006) by Shoshana Berger and Grace Hawthorne, published...
by Thames & Hudson. Today’s context of endless consumer choices, together with the weakening of the traditional foundations of family, has created a situation of identity-anxiety. It is this aspect of contemporary life for which craft purports to be an antidote for.

Despite the renewed interest, hobby-crafts and amateur making are often classified as low, non-creative, repetitive, non-challenging pastimes, requiring little or no skill and which have little value within hierarchy of the arts. These practices are often overlooked.

In her study of amateur needle-craft makers, Jo Turney identifies the act of making as indicative of a “merging between self and home” (Turney, 2004, p.278). She also identifies the significance of the display of home-craft in the home, where completed objects are presented as “special objects”, often framed and on prominent display.

“... the living room is presented as a "gallery", a "public" space in which creativity is displayed, consumed not only by the family, but also by visitors to the home, and magazine readers.” (Turney, 2004, p.274)

Turney argues that the special-ness embodied in the display of home crafted objects is the physical manifestation of the special-ness of the maker.

“Where the maker of the object is also its consumer, the display of the object becomes highly significant in demonstrating the identity of the maker and the ideology of the household.” (Turney, 2004, p.275)

The making and display of home-crafted objects are identified as examples of “symbolic creativity”, as associated with sociologist Paul Willis (1990). This can be aligned with Vincentelli’s (2000b) study which identifies the practice of collecting and display on the Welsh dresser as a female creative activity.

Turney (2004) identifies a strong desire not only to display but also to catalogue the work and this form of recording is actively encouraged by needlecraft magazines. Home-crafted objects are often displayed in thematic groups as collections and this type of display and categorisation is considered the norm. Turney argues that these practices challenge the status of ordinary objects as “mute”, invisible, domestic things and argues that the sentimental can be
subversive, and furthermore that these practices challenge existing notions of art, craft and design.

“...art can be interpreted in terms of use, function and response, and can therefore include images, objects and media that would not normally be associated with the term.” (Turney, 2004, p.270)

The processes of hobby-crafts and home-making, and the use, display and ordering of objects in the home can be likened to the processes of making and experiencing art. Although hobby crafts may not achieve art world status as art, these objects can and do function as art for their owners. The authority of the art work can therefore be said to lie in several places simultaneously; in the work itself, in its physical context, with the viewer, the owner/maker. I would go on to identify all types of homemaking such as DIY and home decoration, including the order and arrangement of the home and its contents as forms of “symbolic creativity”. These practices are creative expressions of self. In the home, craft is practiced, displayed and functions as art.

This research explores ideas about the aesthetic status attributed to objects, why some objects are classified as art, craft and design. However, these hierarchies are not in operation in the majority of homes, and this makes the home an important site for understanding ceramics and for extending current concepts of art, craft and design. My work focuses on everyday objects which are not necessarily “house-trained” (although they may be functional) but rather they are “householder-trained”, where their meaning is gained through their use and display, and defined by social relationships.

The area of home-crafts have been successfully employed in art practice and more recently, a renewed interest in DIY and in craft materials and practices has been identified in both contemporary art and design practice. However, the practices and aesthetics of DIY and hobby-crafts are not valued or recognised within the ceramics and craft fields. This research directly engages with these practices. It is represented in Collection of Objects (about ceramics) with the inclusion of the “tile-on-a-roll”, knitted tea-cosy and the “Paint your own plate kit”. Basketweave directly engages with DIY and home decoration through the use of
wallpaper. Although they have strong links with ceramics and craft, the areas of DIY and hobby-craft have yet to be embraced by the field.

One recent example of a craft-based artist who has also engaged with these areas is Swedish-based Lagombra (Anders Jakobsen). In Lamp. (Figure: 70) a tray and lamp bought from IKEA are re-constructed according to Jakobsen’s own design. This work highlights the active role of the consumer and the desire to personalise the mass-produced, as well as challenging existing notions of craft and craftsmanship. As Jorunn Veiteberg notes:

“The result is an object that defies most categories such as design or craft, mass production or unique, good or bad, valuable or valueless, but which mediates between these extremes and opposites. It points towards the need to make something personal from our surroundings, towards a new and creative consumer role in which one does not just slavishly follow IKEA’s instructions but becomes a kind of producer oneself. To lean on everything that has already been made is a new tendency in contemporary craft that contributes to expanding the field. It entails a new understanding of the bond with the material.” (Veiteberg, 2005, p.37)

I achieve the same with About Ceramics… For example, What sort of mug do you take me for, although predominantly made of industrially, mass-produced ceramic mugs, also contains a strong craft, hand-made or home-made element – the mug trees.

Hybrid Model

Rather than confining themselves to established notions of craft, a new generation of craft-based artists and designers are looking to consumption and the mass produced object both for inspiration and as a raw material. As Marek Cecula states on his website:

“Mass production is an inspiration for originality.” (Cecula)

In today’s context, the mass-produced has more resonance for ceramics and craft practitioners, enabling a dialogue with consumption and use. The resulting practices blur the boundaries of craft practice. Veiteberg raises the question what constitutes the “applied” in applied art, and proposes the formula:

Applied Art MINUS Applied = Art (Veiteberg, 2005, p.27)

The “applied” part of applied art could be argued to relate to function and use, ornament and decoration, or to its (craft’s) approach i.e. hand-made, materials-
based. The “applied” may also refer to the application of (other’s) ideas, to borrow rather than to originate. Describing the switch from making functional furniture to making sculpture with reference to furniture, American artist Richard Artschwager identifies “non-use” as a goal for practice:

“I'm making objects for non-use; by use I mean cups to drink out of, a spoon to stir with. By killing off the use part, non-use parts are allowed living space.” (De Waal, 2003, p.165)

In ceramics, use is often the focus for practice where the making of non-functional vessels is a mainstay of ceramic art discourse. However, the use of the readymade in ceramics and craft is still a relatively new feature of contemporary practice. Rather than exploring concepts of use, my work directly engages with the actual use and user in the home, as distinct from function or intended function, the use which takes place in everyday life - real use rather than intended or imagined. The “applied” part of applied art therefore can be identified as craft’s relationship to the domestic, where “applied” = everyday life.

Although there are some exceptions such as the work of Kjell Rylander, when ceramic artists do employ the ready-made, they often do so in conjunction with some manipulation of the material clay, for example by casting the object in clay. About Ceramics... takes the bold step to remove the raw material of clay completely, transposing the ceramic object as my material.

Making Yourself at Home

The whole process of this research has involved me making myself at home in the art world, as well as in the worlds of craft, design and academia. This has involved both the domestification of the white cube and the personalisation of the academe. It has involved the transposition of objects outside of craft’s usual social sphere into other kinds of discourse.

“But one can argue that the home contains the most special objects: those that were selected by the person to attend to regularly or to have close at hand, that create permanence in the intimate life of a person, and therefore that are most involved in making up his or her identity.....Thus, household objects constitute an ecology of signs that reflects as well as shapes the pattern of the owner’s self.” (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p.17)
My research raises questions about what constitutes the special object. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) identify that household objects act as symbols of self, where they play a private and public role acting as signifiers of status, taste, family relations and self-identity. This research poses that the insignificant can become special. By locating objects in the context of their consumption in the home, where the home is seen as a whole, as “the ecology of possessions”, this research re-frames objects within the processes of identity construction.

The mug is a key signifier of personal taste and identity. We form strong relationships with mugs. In my workplace for example, I receive regular emails requesting information about the location of specific mugs i.e. who’s taken my mug? Mugs provide the vehicle by which aspects of our personal lives enter the workplace. They act as symbols of self and of relationships. For example, My cup runneth over (Figure:71) features a mug given as a birthday gift to a father from his children. The mug is decorated with a picture of the children, taken whilst on holiday. The father, David Trent describes the holiday as the most difficult holiday he ever had, noting “This cup reminds me of all this”. Despite this, the mug is highly prized and has enormous value to David.

“Sometimes my colleagues use my cup. When I catch them with it I say, “Oh, I see, using my cup. Could you just check the side of that cup? Are those your children?” And they laugh and say to me: “Oh David, you don’t mind do you?” I smile and laugh nervously and say, “Of course not, don’t be silly, it’s just a cup”.” (Trent, 2006)

David is emotionally attached to his mug, declaring “I love my cup”. The mug functions not only as a holiday souvenir but it also acts as a symbol for family relationships. It provides a constant reminder for David but also it displays to others the image of a happy family life and shows that he is well-loved by his children.

This demonstrates how personal photographs displayed on mugs can take on powerful meanings and provide potent experiences. In her study of amateur needlecrafts, Turney notes a similar trend to “sew” favourite family photos or holiday snaps. She notes that these objects are valued not only because they take a long time to complete but equally that the recipient is expected to be extremely
grateful for the object. She argues that the object conveys a “double sentimentality”, containing both the original photograph and the love of the maker (Turney, 2004, p.275). This also relates to the image/object relationship as seen in Basketweave, Collection of Objects (about ceramics) and Untitled (Mug tree souvenir mugs).

This personal identification with mugs was in evidence in responses to the exhibition of What sort of mug do you take me for? (Appendix D). Visitors to the exhibition actively sought out mugs with which they could identify, triggering memories of people, places and relationships. Comments from the exhibition reflected this:

“You have parts of my life growing here. Everywhere I look I am sent back to some time or situation sparked by a mug! I can see my Dad, my childhood, being at different friend’s houses, work situations and private moments.”

“My tea and coffee drinking will never be the same again.”

On the opening night of the exhibition, the mugs not included in the work were available for visitors to use (Figures: 72-73). Visitors were invited to choose a mug for their drink and this provided some interesting responses. Some visitors were afraid to select a mug, wary that they would be judged by their choice of mug. Others freely entered into the experience, seeing it as a playful opportunity to pick a mug which may not have been their usual preference, to experiment with a different mug identity. Each mug contains multiple past, present and future narratives.

In addition, What sort of mug do you take me for? has been designed to provide future opportunities for audience participation and interaction. For example, the audience will be invited to bring mugs for inclusion in the exhibition (empty mugs trees will be included in the exhibition to facilitate this). The work also facilitates a web-based project where the audience are invited to send in mug-shots of themselves and their favourite mug. The resulting images will form an interactive database - match the “mug shot” with the mug. This aspect of my practice not only provides opportunities for me to connect with the audience, but crucially it enables the audience to connect directly with the work, a collaboration which has the potential to enhance and enrich the work.
My taxonomic structure is infinite and expandable. In the case of *What sort of mug do you take me for?* the work allows for its expansion, for example where new mug collections and categories can emerge.

The results of this research highlight the importance of the home and the everyday, where the objects and practices of DIY, home-making, collecting and display are crucial to the processes of identity formation. The work employs a class of objects and materials which have been marginalised within the ceramics and craft fields which may also be regarded as kitsch, junk or clutter. However, this work also engages with the object of class as much as the class of objects.

Apart from acting as symbols of taste or class, it is the ways people relate to their objects, how they use and display their objects that are of importance here. The everyday provides a context and a class of objects, materials and practices which relates to the home sphere but which also overcomes categorisation as art, craft or design. The context of the everyday provides a direct link with the domestic, whilst also engaging with consumption and use. In addition, the everyday connects objects with their users and provides a framework where relationships between people and objects can be explored.

Mugs, simultaneously quotidian and highly personally privileged, are often overlooked and disregarded within ceramic and craft discourse. As a ceramic object, they are significant both to the discipline as a whole and to individual expressions of self. They provide a link between the discipline of ceramics and everyday material culture. By highlighting the significance of the mug, I hope to open up ceramic debates to include studies of domestic consumption and the material culture of everyday life, and to highlight the significant role ceramics play in social relations and in the construction of identity.
CONCLUSIONS

The final chapter of the thesis restates the research problem and provides a summary of the research, its results and implications.

Ceramics is a diverse field which spans the disciplines of art, craft and design. However, the discipline lacks an established critical and theoretical framework in which to manage this diversity and this has resulted in confusion and a crisis of confidence and identity amongst its practitioners. Consequently, ceramic art practice appears restricted and arrested in its development when compared to contemporary art and design practices (and indeed other crafts such as textiles).

Contemporary artists and designers however have successfully embraced craft methods and materials and I would argue that this has displaced craft from its own ground. The field of craft however is missing out on the renewed interest in craft and the current re-crafting of art and design. It is therefore important to stake a claim for ceramics and craft and to carve out new territory. This research therefore set out to identify new critical and creative strategies for the field and to provide an alternative model for practice and writing.

The research began with a contextual review. This included a literature and practice review of the field of ceramics and craft. In order to substantiate claims that ceramic practice is restricted, the research went on to examine the contemporary context of art and design discourse. This review acknowledged that traditional boundaries between the fields are dissolving and identified that new approaches, functions and sites for art and design are constantly emerging, where the roles of the artist and designer are being redefined.

As the field of ceramics is largely understood within the context of craft, the research went on to focus on that context, identifying the meaning of craft and how craft is classified and valued. This research established ceramic's and craft's rules, its ways of thinking and the codes and conventions of its practices. The results of this research formed the starting point for the practical research, the Practice Manifesto.
Despite its diversity, the research identified that the field of ceramics continues to have a problematic relationship with the fields of art, craft and design, and classification issues (for example about its status in visual culture) continue to cause anxieties within the field. The research identified the need for the discipline to embrace new ideas and approaches and therefore it asked what can the discourses of art and design offer ceramics?

This approach opened up a dialogue between art, craft and design discourses. The research explored the differences between fields and practices, asking what differentiates art, craft, design? in relation to their; methods and materials, audiences and consumers, and their approaches and values. This research identified the limitations of ceramics and craft practices and revealed differences between the fields in their ways of thinking, as Greenberg (2003, p.138) states, “in the way craft lines are drawn”. The results of this research formed the starting point and guide for the practical research.

Ceramics is a discipline renowned for its lack of intellectual engagement and established critical and theoretical frameworks. This, coupled with the context of practice-based research in art and design, which is still a relatively new field of research which consequently lacks established approaches, made finding appropriate theories and methodologies a difficult task. The research investigated various methodologies but these were rejected in favour of artistic methods, where art practice is the main research method and methodology. Using this approach, the theoretical and creative direction of the research is contained and defined by the practical research, by its interaction with the written component and by the processes of reflection in and on action. These processes generated new perspectives and directions and over the research period a deep relationship between the theory and the practice was forged. This resulted in an integrated, critical practice. Although unpredictable, which at times was disconcerting, this approach nonetheless provided unique opportunities and results.

The practical research embarked upon the research journey as laid out in the Practice Manifesto, employing artistic methods. The results of this research consisted of a series of new series of art works entitled About Ceramics…
The resulting art practice provides a new set of criteria for both the creation and evaluation of ceramics. The work rejects established codes and conventions of ceramic practice and instead adopts a critical, conceptual approach to the subject. It employs unconventional materials, objects and approaches, those not usually associated with ceramic and craft practice such as use of the ready-made. The everyday, ordinary objects employed in this work represent a range or class of objects which may be regarded as junk or clutter. Whilst these objects and materials represent a particular taste, class or aesthetic, they ultimately represent an alternative view of ceramics and make visible a previously invisible class of objects, materials and practices. In this research, the vestigial and the peripheral become central, the theoretical becomes practical and the practical becomes theorised.

The final phase of the research shifted its focus away from discussions about taste and class to focus on the context of the everyday. This enabled the research to step outside of the hierarchies of art to engage with ideas about consumption and use and the social role of the domestic object. In the context of the home and the everyday, objects can be re-classified in relation to their owners. The home provides an important site in which to understand ceramics and in which to extend current concepts of art, craft and design. The everyday can provide a new type of authenticity for ceramics and craft, one not based in history or tradition, or in materials and technique, but instead based in the "messy reality" (Blauvelt, 2003, p.25) of its meaning and use. By focusing on consumption rather than production, and by locating ceramics in the context of the everyday rather than the traditional ceramic and craft context of the rare or unique, this research provides an alternative view of the discipline as well as a new model for practice.

My practice demonstrates the importance of the ways we use things and personalise space; how we arrange, discard and add new values to objects. These practices have begun to be explored within the fields of consumption, material culture, anthropology and sociology as well as design history. For example, the Household Choices project (Newton and Putnam, 1990) focused on the reception of products. The project sought to debunk the notion that products
were in some way determined by the intentions of the manufacturer and aimed to identify an area of study of product design which recognizes the:

“... absence of control over the significance of an object as it discovers, so to speak, its metaphorical power within specific social structures.” (Newton and Putnam, 1990, p.5)

My work achieves the same goal. It re-locates ceramics in the everyday and the home, the site where things are used and displayed, and where relationships and identities are formed and played out. Although art and design history have embraced these new debates and directions, the fields of ceramics and craft have yet to fully explore this rich area.

This work is a celebration of the everyday object. It is also a celebration of the relationships we have with the objects in our homes. This work highlights the ways seemingly insignificant, ordinary objects such as the ceramic mug, play an important part in the construction and expression of self.

This research is not concerned with the de-familiarisation of the ready-made, as can be seen in art’s use of the ready-made which valorises the everyday object, but instead it re-familiarises the everyday. About Ceramics… is both centripetal and centrifugal. It is centripetal in that it is about an expanded field of ceramic objects and the discourses which surround those objects. It is centrifugal in that it is about the areas which surround the discourse which have been identified as additional areas of potential engagement.

About Ceramics… offers a model of a hybrid practice. It also provides a critical and theoretical framework for the discipline which re-locates ceramics in the context of the home, the everyday, domestic consumption and studies of material culture. It moves beyond ideas about taste, class and the hierarchies which define art forms, to discover a new pathway, in which the home and the domestic object and specifically the ceramic object, can be seen as catalytic in the processes of identity construction.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
Diagram showing the relationship between art, craft and design (Ihatsu, 1997, p.303).
“Paint your own ceramics” shops & cafes
the guardian guide to

Craft

theguardian | February 2007
Appendix B:

Collection of Objects (about ceramics)
Collection of Objects (about ceramics):

1. Plastic replica of Wedgwood Blue Jasperware Vase
2. Exact facsimile of a side plate from the Sevres State Dinner Service in the collection of his grace the Duke of Bedford at Woburn Abbey presented to Gertrude, Duchess of Bedford by Louis XVth of France in 1763.
3. Wooden mug tree
4. Souvenir mug of “Ollie the Owl” from the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent.
5. Toilet pedestal rug
6. Wooden plate (Drying) rack
7. Plate holder (wire hook)
8. Plate holder (plastic)
9. Plate hanger (disc)
10. “Tile on a Roll” kitchen wallpaper
11. Fragrant terracotta tile
12. Knitted tea cosy
13. Tea towel
14. “Paint your own plate” kit
15. Postcard from Sydney
16. Postcard of Duchamps’ Fountain
18. Pottery kitchen dresser
19. Gaudi’s La Sagrada Familia souvenir tea light holder

List displayed alongside Collection of Objects (about ceramics) in the exhibition.
Appendix C:
No flash suits.
No hard sell.
Just sound financial advice.

How do you talk to someone about life assurance or a pension without being pressurised into taking out life assurance or a pension?


Mugs featured in advertisements

Mug Mania
If it’s always been your dream to own the coffee mug Chris Tarrant uses when hosting his radio show, now’s your chance. The TV presenter – along with other celebrities such as Graham Norton and Dot from – are auctioning off their favourite mugs for Macmillan Cancer Support. It all starts on the 29 September so log onto ebay.co.uk and get bidding.

Mugs featured in advertisements
From: Sonya

Sent: 19 March 2007 09:43
Subject: missing cup

Morning all,

My tigger mug has gone walkies from the cupboard. Whoever has it, I hope you are enjoying your tea or coffee but I would appreciate it if I could have it back

Thanks

Sonya

From: Pauline
Sent: 19 March 2007 12:16
Subject: Are you missing a mug?

A nice pink mug with a cupcake on the front has been left in the admin area, if it is yours please come and collect it.

From: Keith
Sent: 19 March 2007 12:20
Subject: RE: Are you missing a mug?

I wondered where I left my pink mug

Keith
A fabulous porcelain collector plate... edged in precious 22-carat gold

FREDDIE MERCURY.
An electrifying singer, flamboyant performer, and a music legend.
He's gone... but never forgotten!

Now, to honour music's greatest showman, this historic photograph taken by Mick Rock is presented on a fine porcelain collector plate. Sure to be treasured by fans everywhere, this plate is available exclusively from Danbury Mint.

A superb photographic portrait
Here is Freddie as we all remember him... those dark eyes... his bold style... and his dramatic presence as the frontman for Queen. All the unique traits that catapulted him to super-stardom are captured in this magnificent photographic portrait.

MICK ROCK
Mick Rock - known as 'the man who shot the seventies', his famous photographic studies of music legends such as David Bowie, Lou Reed and Debbie Harry have earned him a reputation as rock's premier photographer.

Fine porcelain and precious 22-carat gold
For the first time ever, this classic photograph by Mick Rock has been meticulously re-created on a fine porcelain collector plate. The plate is edged with a band of precious 22-carat gold - a luxurious finishing touch!

As befits an issue of this quality and importance, it will be accompanied by a serially-numbered Certificate of Authenticity.

Remarkable value; satisfaction guaranteed
Bohemian Rhapsody can be yours for just £24.95 (plus £1.95 postage and handling). There is no risk. If you are not satisfied with your plate, simply return it within 30 days and owe nothing.

Send no money, order now
Orders are expected to be high and will be handled in strict order of receipt, so apply today. Send no money now. Call our order line now on 0870 112 3711, or return your order form today to:

Danbury Mint
Cox Lane, Chessington, Surrey KT9 1SE

BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

Please reserve (qty) Bohemian Rhapsody plate(s) for me, as described in this offer.

Price includes UK VAT @ 17.5%. No overseas orders.
A division of SFL. Inc. We are unable to accept Federal or State cards. If you do not wish to receive mailings from other carefully selected companies, please advise us.

Send no money now
Appendix D:

PRESS RELEASE
Emma Shaw  About Ceramics...

About Ceramics... is the first solo exhibition of London-based artist Emma Shaw. About Ceramics... is a new series of work which explores the meaning of ceramics - how ceramics are valued, experienced and understood. Shaw rejects traditional concerns and approaches to the subject and instead adopts a critical approach, relocating ceramics in the context of its consumption, in the home and the everyday. Shaw uses ordinary, everyday, mass-produced objects and materials in her work, privileging a lower class of objects previously excluded from the ceramics and craft fold.

Basketweave explores ideas about DIY and home decoration. Made from wallpaper (brick wall pattern), the paper is partly hung on the walls, partly woven together, taking on form before spilling out onto the gallery floor. This work blurs the boundaries of art, craft and design - at what point does the decoration become the form, or the craft become art?

Collection of objects (about ceramics) explores ideas about collections and display. A collection of objects (which includes an enamel facsimile of an 18th century Sevres porcelain plate, a brick teapot and a wooden mug tree) are displayed on a pine kitchen dresser. Shaw presents us with a collection of objects that are not valuable as craft objects or antiques, or for their aesthetic status, but because they have a relationship to, have been influenced by, or simply would not exist without ceramics.

The centre piece of the exhibition What sort of mug do you take me for? consists of a forest of over-sized mug trees (made from wood, MDF & pegs), each mug tree displaying a separate mug collection. Shaw uses everyday objects here, not simply as symbols of class or as bad taste, but as markers of identity. This work celebrates how seemingly insignificant everyday objects (such as a ceramic mug) play an important role in the creation and expression of self. This work invites its and your classification, asking What sort of mug do you take me for?

Private View Wednesday 9th May 5.30pm- 8.00pm
Thursday 10th May to Sunday 20th May 2007
Open Daily 9am to 5pm
For more info contact: emma@whatsortofmug.com
London Gallery West
University of Westminster
Watford Road, Harrow
Middlesex HA1 3TP
Tel: +44 (0)20 7911 5000 ext 4771  www.wmin.ac.uk/mad
Northwick Park (Metropolitan Line)
Emma Shaw

About Ceramics…

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Northwick Park (Metropolitan Line)
Car parking available

What sort of mug do you take me for?
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