

CRAFT THINK TANK REPORT



*Glass piece by: Vivian Parades, The House That Vodka Built, 2014,
on display at the The Craft & Folk Museum.*



Craft Think Tank Report

Maegen Black, CCF/FCMA Director

From October 19th to the 21st, 2017, the Canadian Crafts Federation / Fédération canadienne des métiers d'art (CCF/FCMA) participated in the exclusive Craft Think Tank, hosted by the American Museum of Ceramic Art in Pomona, California. For three days, thirty nine delegates (each in attendance by invitation of the organizers) exchanged information and ideas about the state of craft in America. Throughout these discussions, the CCF/FCMA shared the Canadian perspective, informing leaders in the US Craft sector about our craft experience, the unique structure and focus of the CCF/FCMA, the similar issues and challenges we face, and the means we have used to address them.

During the official proceedings, Maegen Black (Director of the CCF/FCMA) made a brief Petcha Kutcha style presentation about the organization and our current focus. As the general theme of the Craft Think Tank was Craft Education, she

incorporated images and basic information about many of the most prominent craft schools in Canada, including ACAD, OCAD, NSCAD, Emily Carr, Espace Verre, the NB College of Craft & Design, and the Nunavut Arctic College; to give a sense of the breadth of educational opportunities in Canada. Basic information from the CCF/FCMA's recent survey of craft educational institutions was shared, and the CCF/FCMA's 2016 conference on craft education was discussed. Notice of next years conference on "Placemaking" was shared, and the invitation for all to join us in October 2018 in Nova Scotia, was extended to the full delegation in attendance. A brief highlight on the changing landscape of craft programs specific to Indigenous artists in Canada was also made (e.g. the new funding streams at the Canada Council, new programs and high profile exhibitions at ACAD, NBCCD and OCAD). In closing, Citizensofcraft.ca was also shared, bringing the program and its resources to a captive, interested audience.



The main thrust of the presentation was to give a taste of what the Canadian craft sector is, how we work together, and the importance of collaboration. Our goal, to direct American eyes to the activity and programs of their northern neighbours, was certainly accomplished. Many expressed an interest in attending our future conferences, and applying to present. Delegates who had seen the program and materials of Citizensofcraft.ca online expressed how much they enjoyed and appreciated the content and the movement. Many specifically noted they had seen the Citizens of Craft booth at SOFA Chicago in the partner pavilion, where they were first exposed. Maegen Black encouraged delegates to make use of the marketing tools, to share the website and video, and to utilize the hashtags, as the messaging is relevant to all, both north and south of the border. She also shared the news of the Citizens of Craft podcast to come, which was received with much interest.

Craft Think Tank delegates consisted of representatives from across 17 states, as well as two Canadians, Maegen Black, and Charles Lewton-Brain (former President of the CCF/FCMA, long

time instructor at the Alberta College of Art + Design, and highly respected jewellery and metal artist). Charles shared his view of the Canadian presence at the Craft Think Tank, as follows:



The Craft Think Tank was a wonderful experience. Maegen Black did an accomplished job of her presentation, introduced the CCF/FCMA clearly and strongly to the assembled US Craft leaders, representatives and heads of craft organizations and museums. She put Canada on a number of influential people's maps. In this moment of political change and unease in the United States she made connections for Canada and the future by being there in conversation and presenting. I heard several people say that they wished they had such a strong, representational organization in the US.



Charles Lewton-Brain

As identified by Charles, the most valuable component of participation in the Craft Think Tank were the connections made. The opportunity to network with

Conference co-ordinators, Beth Ann Gerstein (left) and Brigitte Martin (right) open the events



representatives of the American craft sector, from educational institutions, galleries, museums, residency programs, and quite importantly: arts service organizations, were unparalleled.

Of particular interest were the contacts made with the Executive Director of the Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG), Gwynne Rukenbrod Smith, and two key members of the American Craft Council team, Editor in Chief/Interim CEO, Monica Moses, and Director of Education, Michael Radyk. SNAG is currently producing an 8 week online entrepreneurial professional development course that they are interested in licensing (which may be of value to the members of Provincial and Territorial Craft Councils), while discussions with the American Craft Council representatives included shared issues with membership development and program planning that are relatable in many ways to CCF/FCMA members activities and challenges. There is interest in continuing these discussions informally, and formally, perhaps at future CCF/FCMA conferences, where there would be great benefit in connecting Craft Council EDs to the team at the American Craft Council. Additionally,

Maegen Black has been invited to make recommendations for Canadian artists and craft centres/locations that may be of interest to the American Craft Council Magazine audience, for consideration of future coverage.

Further contacts were made with a wide variety of leaders in presenting organizations, including Janet McCall: Executive Director of the Society for Contemporary Craft in Pittsburgh, and Jennifer Zwilling: Artistic Director, Clay Studio in Philadelphia. Both institutions have a mandate to present American and international contemporary craft. The institution in Pittsburgh has done an excellent job increasing their focus on social justice through craft, expanding their audiences through cross-pollination and effective social programming. Both institutions are a great example of pushing the boundaries of craft practice and highlighting the humanity of craft, as well as its ability to connect, question, and heal. These institutions and many others in attendance at the Craft Think Tank were great examples to view innovative and exciting craft programming.

Throughout the presentations, new and



*Adrian Esparza, Vuela Vuela, 2017, Serape, nails, thread.
From the Craft and Folk Art Museum in Los Angeles exhibition:
The Us-Mexico Border: Place, Imagination and Possibility*

interesting approaches and ideas were discussed. Questions about the presence and importance of craft in education and in larger society were raised, and blind spots in the community were identified. In this ongoing conversation of the place of craft and its role in social structures, more questions were raised than answered, but it is the conversation itself that allows for new ideas, approaches and collaborations to form.

The CCF/FCMA would do well to continue developing the connections made at this event, and to increase Canadian participation in the future, when the opportunity arises. The opportunity to consider

more Canadians for invitation at future events has been confirmed with one of the co-founders and key Craft Think Tank organizers, Brigitte Martin.

In the meantime, the following resources are shared in order to extend the reach of the CCF/FCMA's participation in this year's event. We hope you will find the following links and descriptions useful, in order to share a wider knowledge of resources and opportunities of interest to the Canadian craft community.



Ceramic artist Gerardo Monterrubio speaks with conference delegates about his exhibition at the Craft in America Center in Los Angeles

RESOURCES OF INTEREST

PUBLICATIONS

A Jeweler's Guide to Apprenticeships: How to Create Effective Programs - Nanz Aalund

http://www.mjsa.org/career_resources/apprenticeship_guide

This newly published book provides detailed insights into setting up a training program. While the details are specific to jewellery, the ideas put forward about structure apply to apprenticeships in any discipline.

STEM vs STEAM infographic - University of Florida, 2015

<https://elearninginfographics.com/steam-not-just-stem-education-infographic/>

5 Minutes - School of Art & Design, Oregon University of Art

A publication which includes transcripts of a series of short, five minute conversations between a grad student and a visitor from the craft sector (a visiting artist, instructor, etc.) These cut right to the point and encourage students to engage directly with visiting artists.

The Hand - Frank Wilson

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/191866/the-hand-by-frank-wilson/>

An older publication, but still relevant, about how the hand trains the brain.

RESIDENCY PROGRAMS

Peters Valley School of Art, New Jersey

<https://www.petersvalley.org/html/artist-residencies.cfm>

Including three programs, for Artist Fellows, Summer Studio Assistants and AIR programs

Oregon College of Art & Craft

<https://ocac.edu/community-programs/artists-residence>

Residency spaces are open to professional artists and K - 12 artist educators.

Tennessee Tech, Appalachian Centre for Craft

<https://www.tntech.edu/craftcenter/resident-artist-program/>

Residencies available in clay, fibre, glass metal and wood

American Museum for Ceramic Art, California

<http://www.amoca.org/about-ceramics-studio/>

With three programs, for Artist in residency, internships, and visiting artist programs.

Houston Centre for Contemporary Craft

<https://www.crafthouston.org/artists/residents/apply-to-program/>

Including an Artist in Residency program, calls for gallery proposals, an extensive and high-profile 3 year curatorial fellowship.

WEBSITES

American Craft Council Digital Archives

<http://digital.craftcouncil.org/digital/>

Includes the ACC archives, SNAG digital slide collection, and the Furniture Society Oral History Collection.

Craft Schools

<http://www.craftschools.us/>

A joint project of 5 US craft schools providing workshops and training programs.

Stem to Steam

<http://stemtosteam.org/> (including many resources on art education's positive impact)

Global Day of Clay

<https://www.92y.org/globaldayofclay>

November 8th, 2017 is the global day of clay, encouraging connection with clay in every format across the globe. Institutions will host free events, or offer free admission (at AMOCA), and celebrate the day on social media.

Facebook Group: "Glass Secessionism"

Founder Tim Tate describes the group as "an accessible venue for the showing, discussion and definition of secessionist works... Its objective is to advance glass as applied to sculptural expression; to draw together those glass artists practicing or otherwise interested in the arts..."

Thingiverse

<https://www.thingiverse.com>

An online clearing house for 3d print designs, including educational resources for teaching with 3d print, at a variety of grade levels and interests.

Craft in America - Resources

<http://www.craftinamerica.org/guides/>

Not only do they provide the PBS series of Craft in America, but also online resources for exhibitions and webisodes - as well as educational guides for teachers to match curriculum with the series.

PODCAST SERIES

The Craft School Experience Make/Time Podcast Series

<http://www.craftschools.us/podcast.html>

19 Episodes of interviews with craft artists from across the USA, each discussing their experiences in training and afterward, exploring interesting tales of craft artists across many disciplines.

Blacksmith Her Radio

<http://www.blacksmithher.com/>

A series of interviews with blacksmiths around the world, lead by metal artist Victoria Patti.

Oral History of the Furniture Society

<http://digital.craftcouncil.org/digital/collection/p15785coll4>

A part of the American Craft Council Archives, includes extensive interviews with makers.

INTERESTING IDEAS SHARED

- Coursework that gets craft students out of the studio and into presenting institutions. For example, the Otis College of Art and Design project that directs students to 24 galleries in the surrounding area. Each stop has a series of questions they answer through an online forum, all accessed through the students smartphones. Styled as a 'treasure hunt', about a third of the questions are re-usable from permanent installations and collections, while approximately two thirds are based on temporary exhibitions, exposing students to a wide variety of contemporary work through modern practices that suit the Millennial lifestyle.
- The idea to shift from "inter-disciplinary" studies to "trans-disciplinary" or "meta-disciplinary" studies. The issue with "inter" being that students may only learn the very basics of what they need to accomplish a single goal or technique. By increasing the hands-on components of inter-disciplinary studies, the aim is to increase a broader concern with materiality, going deeper than light cross-disciplinary exchange.
- A major issue in teaching is the lack of a solid compendium or "primer", no real textbook to give a broad span for students to grasp the history of craft and craft theory. This exists in piecemeal, but no standard book is truly recognized. Students today have a blind spot, as they are aware that a time existed before planned obsolescence, but they grow up surrounded by it. Craft can capture that awareness, and a better publication to touch on this history, and to draw students in to a deeper study of craft is needed.
- At the Oregon College of Art & Craft, the school conducts 'outsider' programs, working with at risk youth, Aboriginal artists, and even NIKE designers. For many participants, this is the first time they've been able to do hands-on studio work, even the professional designers. At this level, it's not about mastery, it's about learning basic skills to better inform future directions. The crossover of participation with their regular students has created a great diverse community environment at the school.
- North Bennet Street School in Boston mixes traditional craft with blue collar trades programming, including jewellery, violin making, locksmith, carpentry and piano tech. They lose their accreditation if their students are not employed after graduation, so they school goes to great lengths to ensure employ-ability. They work with "off-track youth" to get them back in the classroom on a daily basis, not so much so they will become artists, but so that they see the value of a different kind of education. Their programs are skills based, not conceptual, but there is a great mix of students who come from art school, or go on to art school, with great success.
- At Oregon College of Art & Craft, their four core themes are: Making (understanding the material), Thinking (historic/political aspects of craft), Mentorship (they have a 7 to 1 student to faculty ratio) and Outreach (to ensure community connection and exchange).
- At the Peters Valley Craft Centre, it was noted that their workshop participants are a mix of emerging artists and and second career artists... "The artists are coming to be business people, and business people are coming to be artists."
- Due to the current political climate in the US, student bodies are reporting higher anxiety. In the past, when asked why students attended art college programs, they answered "I cant imagine doing anything else", now? "I need skills to survive." The drive to be an entrepreneur is higher.
- There was a lot of discussion about the advocacy movement to shift STEM to STEAM (Science, technology, engineering and math ... with the addition of Art & Design)
- Karen Hampton is currently an assistant professor and the "Critical Race Issues Resident Artist" at Michigan State University. She is using textiles to teach a curriculum with purpose. For example, through their research into the water crisis in Flint, Michigan. The students are learning to use textiles in craft activism, to address the issues that matter to them, in their own communities.
- Metal artist Jack DaSilva presented on the importance of craft in and outside of arts training, and the importance of using your hands to cognitively develop. This is more than muscle memory, but rather the hand training the brain - long thought to be the other way around. He specifically referenced the book: The Hand, by Frank Wilson. "It's not just about sustaining the crafts themselves, but how the crafts can extend beyond the studio to impact the world." He was a passionate advocate for the right to craft education and hands on learning for ALL, not because everyone will become an artist, but because the arts fuel creative learning and development that impacts science, medicine, project management - all future employment, which can have a positive impact on society and even the world.

- The Craft & Folk Museum in Los Angeles has been around for over 45 years, but is still relatively unknown. They aimed to raise awareness and visibility by doing large scale design work on the facade of their building, which has drawn a lot of attention. They started by collaborating with Yarn Bombing Los Angeles (<http://www.yarnbombinglosangeles.com/>), which led to the front of their building being covered for three months. Following that, they acquired a grant to work with a designer to paint the building, which has been very well received. They are aiming to change the facade approximately every five years to continue to draw new interest. They also adjusted their programming as they saw attendance sliding - so the Museum redesigned their programming to suit a more diverse audience, as LA's population is very split, with the majority of the population over 40 as Caucasian and under 40 as a much broader mixture.
- The Museum of Craft & Design in San Francisco had to relocate in 2010 due to damage to their original location. While seeking out a new space, they hosted multiple pop-up galleries in a shipping container in different areas of the city, to test the market and promote the institution, until their new space was opened in 2013. In 2015, they opened a 'parklet', a tiny green space with benches outside their new location, drawing attention and bringing a new public use to their building space.
- The Houston Centre for Contemporary Craft, a non-collecting institution, opened 16 years ago, with the purpose of providing studio space for craft artists. What they do that no one else does: "Make the idea of process and making a part of the exhibitions themselves". Galleries are opened with the space empty, and then over time, the artists in residence build and make their work on site. It is a way to draw repeat visitors, and host a closing party rather than just an opening. They also trained their security staff to act as quasi-docents, so that when people want to touch the artwork, security can explain why not, and provide the visitor with sample materials that they can touch, breaking down the barriers of curiosity in the space without damaging the artwork. The Centre also installed a beehive on their roof in the sculpture garden, to connect with the nature and science community in their area.
- During an open discussion on the challenge of art museums and galleries being expected to 'replace' art education in the schools: This is problematic, and not the right fix for the problem of sliding art education in schools. Rather than create programming to try and stem the loss of education in the classroom, institutions are reaching out to local schools to meet with principals, teachers, and school boards, to ask how they can be relevant, rather than replicate, to approach it as a partnership.
- When asked what arts service organizations can do for craft galleries and museums, it was suggested that the payment of and coordination of shipping is most helpful. By taking some of the logistics off the plate of the institution, even if money cannot be provided, this helps to make touring exhibitions possible.
- In response to an aging demographic in their visitors (despite the median age of their surrounding community being about 30 years old) the Sam and Alfreda Maloof Foundation started a teen docent program and a teen advisory committee. These teens are trained to be docents, getting school credit for the program. They also contribute to the exhibition roster each year, providing suggestions for themes and curating a show of student work. The teen docents lead groups of other teens through the Centre, making the space more relatable and appealing to young people. They believe that Millennials want to do meaningful work, work that is public.



Conference delegates at the Sam and Alfreda Maloof Foundation for Arts and Crafts ranch in Pomona, California

CRAFT THINK TANK ATTENDEES

Nanz Aalund

Designer, Educator, Goldsmith, Bellingham, WA

Jennifer Apgar

Education Director, Peters Valley Craft Center, Peters Valley, NJ

Tracy Bays-Boothe

Associate Director, Museum of Craft and Design, San Francisco, CA

Tim Berg

Associate Professor of Art, Pitzer College, Claremont, CA

Maegen Black

Director, Canadian Crafts Federation, New Brunswick, Canada

Sadie Bliss

Executive Director Maine Craft Association, Gardiner, ME

Tim Christensen

Ceramic Artist, ME

Angelina Ciulik

Production Manager at Michael Schmidt Studio, Los Angeles, CA

Michael Jean Cooper

Retired, Instructor, California College of Art, San Francisco, CA

Jack DaSilva

Metals Artist, Oakland, CA

Marilyn DaSilva

Professor & Program Chair of the Jewelry/Metal Arts Dept at California College of the Arts, Oakland, CA

JoAnn Edwards

Executive Director, Museum of Craft and Design, San Francisco, CA

Karen Hampton

Critical Craft Forum, Los Angeles, CA

Charlotte Jones

Education and Programs Manager, Museum of Craft and Design, San Francisco, CA

Julia Galloway

Professor, School of Art, College of Visual and Performing Arts, University of Montana, MT

Beth Ann Gerstein

Executive Director, American Museum of Ceramic Art, Pomona, CA

Brian Gillis

Associate Professor of Art, University of Oregon, OR

Miguel Gomez-Ibanez

President, North Bennet Street School, Boston, MA

Jiseon Lee Isbara

Dean of Academic Affairs and Professor, Oregon College of Art and Craft, Portland, OR

Suzanne Isken

Executive Director, Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles, CA

Jo Lauria

Independent Curator; Faculty, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, CA

Charles Lewton-Brain

Master Goldsmith, Alberta, Canada

Brigitte Martin

Founder Crafthaus; President, Society of North American Goldsmiths, Chicago, IL

Janet McCall

Executive Director, Society for Contemporary Craft, Pittsburgh, PA

Beth McLaughlin

Chief Curator of Exhibitions and Collections, Fuller Craft Museum, Brockton, MA

Monica Moses

Editor in Chief, American Craft Magazine, American Craft Council, Minneapolis MN

Kristin Muller

Executive Director, Peters Valley Craft Center, Peters Valley, NJ

Bart Niswonger

Furniture Maker and Vice President, Furniture Society, MA

Paula Owen

President and CEO, Southwest School of Art and Craft, San Antonio, TX

Perry Price

Executive Director, Houston Center for Craft, Houston, TX

Michael Radyk

Director of Education, American Craft Council, Minneapolis, MN

Jim Rawitsch

Executive Director, Maloof Foundation, Alta Loma, CA

Gwynne Rukenbrod Smith

Executive Director, Society of North American Goldsmiths, Asheville, NC

Michael Schmidt

Michael Schmidt Studio, Los Angeles, CA

Joan Takayama-Ogawa

Professor, Otis College of Art and Design, Pasadena, CA

Kimberly Winkle

Associate Professor of Art, Appalachian Center for Craft, TN

Jennifer Zwilling

Artistic Director, Clay Studio, Philadelphia, PA

Stephen Yusko

Blacksmith, Lakewood, OH

Emily Zaiden

Craft in America Center Director & Curator, Los Angeles, CA