

HOW IS CRAFT A TOOL FOR HUMBLING AND EMPOWERING HUMANITY?

*An investigation into learning, and empathy building,
through material relationships.*

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CRAFT! (TEXTILES)MASTER 2

SPRING 2021

WORD COUNT 9,409

Abstract:

Our value of people and craft are linked. With the rise of fast production industry, and the lack of transparency when it comes to a role of consumption, we have become detached from making processes. This detachment is detrimental to our understanding and empathy for other people but also to ourselves. It perpetuates disposable ways of living and keeps us reliant on disposable consumption.

Craft is an undervalued tool which can be utilised in historical learning as well as anthropological study today. In doing so, we are able to understand more about humanity by inspecting craft through the 'three facet' lens. We are then able to develop empathy for other people and other cultures, through the non-tangible space created during the process of crafting. For those who do craft, this recognition is empowering and enables cultural ownership. It also empowers us as individuals, when we are able to produce something ourselves and physically see the learning process.

This means we can recognise who has made our objects, and appreciate the time, skill and commitment which goes into the undertaking. This encourages us to appreciate objects, to consider our ways of living and move away from disposable consumption.

Through a comparison of the relationship to craft that is held in Peru, with that of the relationship we hold in the UK, and broadened by my experience living and teaching in Sweden, I conclude that industrialisation and colonialism has a role to play, but ultimately, the power and potential of craft, is physically in our own hands.

I propose using the 'three facets'; Utility, Aesthetics and Connectivity, as a way to break down the information documented through craft, to analyse, at a deep level, what can be gained from craft appreciation.

Key words:

Empathy, culture, colonialism, community, disposability, value, tradition, tools

1.

Index/Contents

2.

Introduction

4.

Chapter 1. The basis of my theory -The three facets

7.

Chapter 2. Utility

19.

Chapter 3. Aesthetics

37.

Chapter 4. Connectivity

53.

Conclusion

56.

Bibliography

60.

Image reference list

Appendix

1.

How is craft a tool for humbling and empowering humanity?

Introduction

In this essay, I will be discussing the importance of using craft to learn about humanity. And how this 'tool' could be used to encourage empathy building through crafting processes, as a way to develop inclusivity and humanitarian understanding. Furthermore, by changing our attitudes towards objects, this 'tool' can inspire a move away from disposable culture. These concepts centre around material relationships.

I work predominantly with hand skill techniques such as knitting, crochet, natural dyes, back-strap weaving and black smithing. I am developing my practise with a multidisciplinary approach. With a focus more on accessible/nomadic techniques rather than one skill; albeit, predominantly textiles techniques. For example, developing back strap weaving skills in preference to the large floor loom. Investigating the thought around the nomadic nature of these crafts, highlighting the tools, and indeed the hands/body as a tool.

I have come to understand that the act of crafting itself is where we can find the space and physical ability to develop ourselves. This is why the choice of tool is important, activating our physical ability to engage and focus on the skills. I focus on crafts which require minimal equipment, enabling a nomadic existence with the tools, meaning continual development of the intelligence of our hands, and interaction with our physical being. The repetitive motions working as a meditative form of physical thinking.

My focus is on the actual crafting processes and the use of existing old materials, unravelled and remade. What relationships do we already have with these materials? How can the process of crafting change our relationship to material? What do we also learn about other people through participating in craft practise?

My investigations are human rooted, through interviews, historical research and physical forms of thinking in my studio practise, I discuss how our relationships

to materials and objects can change how we perceive other people. The practise gives time for reflection, and the culture around craft, speaks of humanity.

What can it tell us about ourselves? And why is this important? I believe these questions can be the catalyst for change.

I have compared historical sources from museums and papers with primary and academic journal research from contemporary sources. I propose the concept of the 'three facets' as a theory to analyse the breadth of knowledge we can gain from craft inspection and participation. Through my studio work, I investigate these notions. Primary research comes from my research in Peru February - March 2020, and from interviews conducted throughout 2019-2021.

Chapter 1

The basis of my theory

Suggestively, a Vessel, whatever form, be it ceramic, textiles or other, can be considered the epitome of Craft. It is a human object born of necessity and imbued with idiosyncratic visual values. It is crafted. What can we learn by examining this object and how is our value and relationship to craft connected to our value of people?

Craft itself can be a vessel for information. About our species, culture, and history. Upon investigation, we can learn to connect with others, and use our engagement, to carve a better, globally united humanitarian future. In this essay, I bring forth the notion that our value of craft, is proportionate to our value of humanity. By developing understanding through craft engagement, we can both empower and humble humanity. (Venkatesan 2009 pp 78) With these two juxtaposing words, they reflect the complex ability of craft and the issues at hand. Empowerment by reactivating our natural sense of curiosity, problem solving and connectivity with our own hands, and indeed an embodied expression, a translated voice (Katter 1995 pp13). Humbling by reminding ourselves of the diverse abilities of humanity and insisting us to respect and understand the material and process, as well as the people behind these skills; connecting us (Feldman 2016 pp53-54).

This is rendered through the craft process itself, not in the final “static” object produced (Katter 1995, pp13) and definitively, my work is derived in process.

The relationships we build with materials and furthermore with the people behind those materials are a key to understanding how we can change our present day attitudes towards disposability. (Adamson 2018) I illustrate this with the use of existing materials. Unravelling and restructuring with knitting, crochet and weaving. (*Image 1*)

The use of these hand skills; primarily, knitting, crochet, natural dyes and metal working, develops concepts of empathy building through my own experience of these processes. These items will always be one off items because there are so many variables with the second hand materials and natural dyes I use. The work is intended to inspire others to think and consider crafting their own pieces. Reflecting on the materials they most likely already own, such as old polyester jumpers. Using equipment and skills, they will be able to gain access to. A comment on, what I will later discuss, accessible/nomadic skills.

People and communication are central to my work. I see discussions and interviews as part of my practise. I am co-creator of the podcast CRAFTSIGHT. Which enables me to hear diverse perspectives of craft and how it exists today.

While undergoing research in Peru, I experienced the true strength of community in craft. The human connection I experienced, has shown me why teaching and engagement is an important part of my work, a reflection which will shape me in the future. I plan to work further with the contacts I made in Peru.



Image 1: Left: Crocheted bags from unravelled yarn. Right: Madder dyed yarn and woollen fabric.
Hannah-Molly Brown 2019

The three Facets

“Art...has the power to transform or shift the way in which its viewers and producers engage the world”

(Feldman 2016 pg53)

I propose that there are three facets to craft: ‘Utility’, ‘Aesthetics’ and ‘Connectivity’. Which will be discussed in three separate chapters.

Why three facets? It is hard to break down the immense amount of information we can extract from crafted objects, but these three terms sum up a lot of the information I have found to be valuable when considering more than the object itself. A crafted item describes a utility, whether that is purely functional or symbolic. An aesthetic, which is often dictated by culture, and a connectivity: to the person who uses the object and to a culture and a history. There is also a space formed during the crafting process which enables connectivity in many forms: These are the three facets.

I have been working with bags, as a form of textile vessel, and other objects, labelled as utilitarian, which embody these three standards in equal portion. What can we learn from examining a bag? Perhaps even as much as knowledge of the people who made it, used it and an understanding of culture and problem solving. Bags developed as a tool by humans, enable us to be mobile. Could it be that the ‘bag’ holds within its very fibres information about our humanity which gives us the key to reflective attitudes? The bag, it could be argued, is an extension of human need and expression, a tool. I have come to use this as a symbol, to define the three facets.

If we break down objects into these three facets to realise what knowledge we can gain from them, we will see that they are inseparable from our humanity, and a multi dimensional tool with which we can use to analyse ourselves through craft. By extension, we can relearn our relationship to materials and to people.

You will see as you read through these chapters that the three facets themselves are very difficult to separate. however, this aids the ability for craft itself to be dynamic and applied to this format of human study. It is not about categorisation, rather a form of reading and reflection.

Chapter 2.

Utility

A utilitarian object, can be described as an item which has been created for an intended purpose of use. The object is derived from a human need, there is a purpose for its existence. Be this practical, spiritual or inspirational. This speaks loudly of human problem solving, culture and technological development, and crafted items have often taken the form of a usable object. (Costin 1998 pp3) Attached to these utilitarian objects is information about everyday use and everyday customs (Gnecchi- Ruscone 2017 pp151) This is utility beyond the original intended purpose. The physical object itself can also act as a time capsule, trapping human traces. Giving us information about the past, including migration, political situations and technological access (Feldman 2016 pg54). Furthermore, the use of symbolism can be analysed as communication, and enables us to connect with history and human traditions.

There is so much information we are able to extract from one item, about our humanity (Gnecchi-Ruscone 2017 pp152). To think of the people who used and touched these items, highlights the importance in my own work to use ‘old’ materials. To feel a connection to the person who held or used that item previously. I build on the item’s own history through reusing old materials.

Our value and understanding of physical objects has huge cultural influences (Katter 1995 pp 10). Take for example the human imposed material value of gold. When the Spanish colonised Peru, they melted down gold coloured¹ objects for the monetary value, not considering the craftsmanship or spiritual relationship which the Inca had with the material. The loss to the Inca, in terms of spirituality and human connection, far outweighed the colonial monetary gain (Museo Larco 2020) (*Image 2*).

These different values are human impositions. Bringing to the fore, thoughts of value being human construct and cause for conflict. This tells us much about the the colonisers’ value of the indigenous peoples. Does this suggest that colonialism had a key role in the devaluing of craft? Katter (1995 pp 10) suggests reflecting on the craft outcome, after the collision of cultures.

¹ The Inca used alloys, mostly made of copper, to produce gold coloured artifacts. Gold was the symbol of the sun and linked to their sun god Inti. Therefore it was the colour itself which was a spiritual, symbolic value to the Inca. (Museo Larco 2020) (*Image 2*)

Discussing how craft objects “reflect the blending and borrowing” which occurs. And indeed, industrialisation has changed craft manufacture (Altman and West 1992 pg 28), this I will come to in chapter 5, Connectivity.

This prompts my investigations with using second hand materials further. What value do we place on material once we have been through the crafting process with them?

The relationships we hold to materials and production are paramount. It extends beyond the physical. For example the textile work made by the indigenous communities in Peru. When a weaver dies, the textiles will be gathered and burned so that they will be with her in spirit. (Alvarez 2017 pg 95) This is utility, yet symbolic, as the spirit still has use of the materials. It again demonstrates how our relationships with materials are human imposed. Because these items have a dynamic utility that transcends monetary exchange. When the non-monetary relationship we can have with materials is so diverse and idiosyncratic, the conversation of value becomes a very human issue.

In these communities, before the materials spiritual journey, materials once worn, are taken apart and remade to make many other items. Yarns taking new life; from fringes to small textiles for children. (Alvarez 2017 pg95). Utility isn't taken for granted, there is a strong need for using and reusing. The fibres lives are long and not wasted, existing in many forms of textiles. Being part of the making process brings understanding of how time consuming these processes are. Value for this time and skill ensures nothing goes to waste. This is comparative with the female knitters from the fishing communities in the UK in the 19th century. Knitting a Gansey (*Image 3*) “...was a labour of love, demanding skill, patience... Garments were made to last and often lasted more than twenty years”. (Wright 1979 pg 26) These items were well worn and well valued. “They were masterpieces and they were all different.” (Wright 1979 Pg4)

However as Wright continues, a few generations on from this, and we no longer have this same relationship as, comparably, they still do in the indigenous communities in the Andes. (Wright 1979 Pg 5) We can again consider industrialisation as having a role in this detachment.

Overtime, these crafted objects then work for us as stores of information waiting to be deciphered. Telling us about culture and change. Therefore, having an extended utilitarian value, bringing us stories of human culture which cannot be underestimated for anthropological value. (Gnecchi-Ruscone, 2017, pp152).

Indeed, these “artefacts are the material evidence” (Museo Larco, 2020). There is bio-molecular information which has been found, in the form of fat traces, on Neolithic ceramics. Information about agriculture and food culture can be obtained from these craft remains, which provides a scientific platform for craft usage in utility, acting also, as a time capsule as an extended utilitarian purpose. (Craig et al.2011, pp 1)

I also reference ‘Quipus’. A form of administrative record keeping from the ancient Inca civilisation where written records do not exist, constructed by a series of knotted strings. (Conklin 1997 pp 119.) (*Image 4*) Despite not being fully understood today, this form of communication teaches us of humanity even without the direct translation. It tells us of documentation, administration, and aspects of communication, civilisation and culture. The essence of culture being part of our humanity. This is yet again utilitarian extension of the item’s intended purpose. We can value the human ingenuity as well as visual structure, even without the translation.

Craft can even give us information about social class and political agendas today, for example the way we are socially indoctrinated to ‘choose’ how to dress as a way to control class distinctions (D’Angelo 2020). We can also extract knowledge of trade and human movement from craft (Szpak et al. 2015 pp449), even in the 21st century, as Glenn Adamson referred to in a lecture when discussing the work of Stephanie Syjuco, craft has a strong link to political utilisation. (Adamson 2018).

Conclusively, as well as learning about cultural history, we are able to learn still today from material relationships in different cultures around the world. It is important that we listen, as more and more ‘different’ ways of living are deemed as less advanced (Chang. A 2020). we then risk losing other insights. When we face the huge environmental difficulties of today, we can learn much from other ways of living.

This extension of the original utilitarian purpose of a crafted object, can tell us about current and past human life. This means the aspect of ‘utilitarian’ is indeed very broad, but an important aspect of craft.

THE REAL VALUE OF GOLD

In ancient Peru, the real value of gold lay in its status as a symbol of royal identity and supernatural power.

Much has been said about the great quantity of gold which the Spanish conquistadores took from Peru during the conquest. However, we have already seen that the majority of the metal objects produced were made from alloys which in many cases contained minimal amounts of gold. We have also seen how high technology enabled ancient Peruvians to create large objects from very thin sheets, using very small amounts of metal. These large objects contained very little precious metal. Andean smiths sought technological solutions which would lend the objects they produced the appearance of gold, although they were mostly made from copper.

Given the characteristics of pre-Columbian metalwork, the question we find ourselves asking is: What did the conquistadores plunder? Or better yet: What was it that was lost to the societies they conquered? We now know that the amount of gold and silver obtained by the conquistadores through the melting down of ceremonial objects, or from the clothing of the elite, was minimal. It was through mining operations that most of the great quantity of precious metals, mostly silver, which was subsequently made into coins, originated.

Nevertheless, the enormous sense of loss generated by such plundering far outweighs the small quantity of precious metals actually obtained from the melting down of ceremonial objects. Clearly, these conquered societies lost much more than their conquerors gained. What was that loss? The elimination of religious emblems and prestige items represented a huge loss in terms of power and identity for the people of the Andes.

What is the value of these objects today? These beautiful artifacts are the material evidence of the way in which the societies of ancient Peru understood the world around them, and they form an essential part of our collective cultural legacy.

Image 2

Information about the value of gold to the Inca in comparison with the Spanish during the conquest.

(The permanent exhibition, Museo Larco (2020) Lima, Peru 2020)

Image 3

Ganseys. Styles varied from town to town and techniques and thickness slightly varied also. Patterns spoke of pride and identity, designed on images relating fishing and idiosyncratic to specific areas. Initials were knitted into the patterning on the Ganseys, and they lasted for years. This one belonged to Norfolk fisherman Jimmy Paris West and it was knitted for him by his mother Augusta West.

This image comes from the Cromer museum, Norfolk:

<https://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/cromer-museum>



Image 4

Quipus.

The Incan method for administration. Still not fully understood to this day.

(*Chronological textiles sequence, Permanent exhibition, Museo Amano, (2020), Lima, Peru, 20th February 2020*)

Demonstrating this in my work

Craft continues to reflect society, even today. In the beginning of the Covid 19 pandemic (2020-21), I was without a loom, so I began experimenting with how I can create a loom at home, unfortunately without much success. Here the old adage is true. 'Necessity is the mother of invention'. As I used primitive weaving methods as inspiration. (*Image 5*) Experimentation and failure are part of the learning process. I have since moved on to existing, time tested methods of tablet weaving and back-strap weaving. Forming also, connectivity to a continued history, tradition and people of craft.

Back in the studio after Konstfacks studio closure, I was able to finally continue with reconstruction/resurrection of an old jumper from knitted to woven (to be discussed in chapter 4 Connectivity). I used a large floor loom. While I was weaving, I thought of the back strap looms used in Peru and reflected on my own needs during this time. I came to understand this necessity. The ability to be able to transport your tools is much more practical as it takes up less space and requires less bulky equipment. It means you are also not tied to one place. Through the process of crafting I was able to reflect and develop empathy and understanding.

I continued with knitting, embroidery and crochet: accessible skills. These skills rely on little equipment and much technical knowledge. Perhaps these skills are best described as 'nomadic', or 'ambulant' for their dynamism rather than 'accessible'. 'Nomadic' skills are transportable, not tied to industrial machines. They require the interaction of the human body.

Knitting is not a well documented skill. (Norbury 1951 pg221) Although, and fortunately, it is accessible today through internet resources, there is still the danger of losing information which is not recorded. Many traditional ways of working are taught through word of mouth and integral to growing up and living in communities (Wright 1979 pg 55), again reflecting a time and place.

This becomes clear with other techniques such as back-strap weaving. Despite the internet making knowledge of these skills more accessible, there are centuries of culture and knowledge in these skills which require interaction. And the use of these skills require cultural affirmation. The history and current day practise of back-strap weaving require much more than the equipment and what can be found online. The culture of the people is part of the learning and indeed crafting process. Indeed, the weavers in Latin America learn to weave

throughout their childhood as they grow up. It is a lifestyle. (Altman 1992 pg 26)

These skills are integrated. As knitting once was with the fishermen's wives in the UK. The integration into the everyday of these skills, allows for busy hands to effect a meditation process. "(spinning) this is an everyday activity"...."meditation, taking out all the bad spirit". (Alvarez 2014)

There is a spiritual nature to these skills and the culture surrounding them are integral to learning and understanding the techniques and the people.

Using the format of the podcast CRAFTSIGHT, has enabled me to really connect and learn from people who I wouldn't always have the opportunity of speaking to. Abby Franquemont grew up with and works with the indigenous communities in Ollayantaytambo in Peru. I wasn't able to meet her while I was in Peru because of the pandemic outbreak. However, we were able to engage online, in conversation about cultural appropriation and she is able to really engage with indigenous perspectives and promote the learning of culture alongside physical craft skills. I hosted a conversation with her as a guest for our podcast launch event, October 2020. These spokes persons are required to not work 'for' these communities but 'with'. Enabling a true perspective and quality control from the people who own their culture. As these skills are better represented, more respect is awarded to the people who perform these crafts.

The use of certain skills and fabrics/yarns used once again document a time and place. Perhaps we will look back at the covid pandemic (2020-21) and see a documentation of struggle through a rise in 'home' crafting, as we can look back to not too distant history and reflect on the socio-political knowledge we can read from accessible 'nomadic' craft:

"Knitting became a necessary and available occupation for many women, for both financial and social reasons. By 1901...often the women bore the financial burden of the children."

(Wright.M 1979 Pg 13)

The use of these 'nomadic' crafts in the day-to-day work well as documentation, and need to be heeded as such.

Knitting is a primary skill I use to develop my thinking and experimentation. I have been researching the relationship people have to knitting in the context of fishing communities from the UK. Through the action of making my own

Gansey, I have been able to feel a connection to my past, and these women from a certain time and place. Learning about the culture has been an important part of the making process. Discussed further in chapter 5, Connectivity. *(IMAGE 6)*

My crocheted and knitted bags demonstrate utility in its whole form, but also tells a history of second hand/old yarns. The use of these yarns mean limited colour batches, visuals dictated by what is available require us to consider what *is* available. The make up of these items are also meant to inspire others, demonstrating that they themselves have the accessibility to second hand yarns and crochet/knitting equipment. It acts as a vessel for sending a message, in its very fibres of built history, furthermore I have lined the bags with printed fabrics displaying the message: “Craft value is Human value”.

With my pieces, such as the shawl woven from my sisters old cardigan *(Image 8)* (this is discussed in chapter 4) I focus on the relationship building aspect of crafting. This form of connecting means another utility for a crafted item.

As I discuss later in this essay, I have been making tools. I therefore have made a tool roll to carry the tools. The potential emancipation from a certain space, through the use of hand tools, requires ability to carry the tools. Another utility of the ‘bag’. This tool roll demonstrates the nomadic power of ambulant hand crafts. In one roll, travels the possibility for many crafts. Only the hands and the knowledge required need be added.

The outside of the tool roll is printed with hands at work. This is a visual story explaining the dynamism of hand craft *(Image 9)* Here, we see the humanity, the culture that is part of the making process.

When I come to the making processes, I begin with the purpose. The items must be recognisable ‘utility’ items. Their purpose is clear, but they also carry deeper meanings, extended utility, within their linings and within their very fibres, asking people to question what can be learnt from crafted items, and encouraging others to take up these skills.

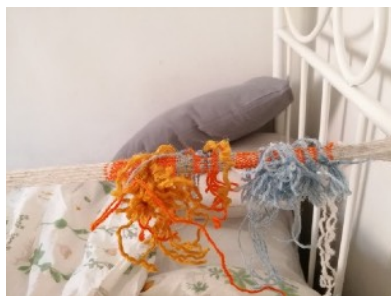


Image 5

Attempts to make a loom from my bed frame. Attempt 1 was successful but time consuming and very basic. Attempt 2, I tried to make shafts, but the thread was too thick. The idea of using pieces of wood to make it detachable from the bed worked. These experiments prompted thinking and reflection in terms of moveable skills.

Image 6

My Gansey knitting. I am following a traditional pattern from Thompson, G (1971) Patterns for Guenseys, Jerseys and Arans: Fishermen's Sweaters from the British Isles. I wanted to follow a traditional pattern to learn as much as I could about history and feel connected to past people. I used a channel Island cast-on, which although not historically used in this pattern, I found myself learning through doing and investigating. I am using new yarn for this project. It is important to note, that because I primarily use old yarn, does not mean new yarns shouldn't be used. It is about assessing relationships and encouraging longevity, and healthy material relationships. If the Gansey I knit lasts a life time including repairs and is indeed a labour of love, it is still ecologically minded and indeed about relationships, as this will be given to my father. It is about promoting non-wasteful ways of using. The left overs can be used to make something else, as the Fishermen's wives did.





Image 7

One of the three crochet bags made from second hand yarns, collectively called 'The Fishermen's wives'. I knitted a fish tail onto the bag, following the tail part of the herring knitting pattern by Anita Bruce, Alluding to the history of the fishing communities, and connecting with other makers. I lined the inside of this bag with the fabric I screen printed with the statement: 'Craft value is human value'.

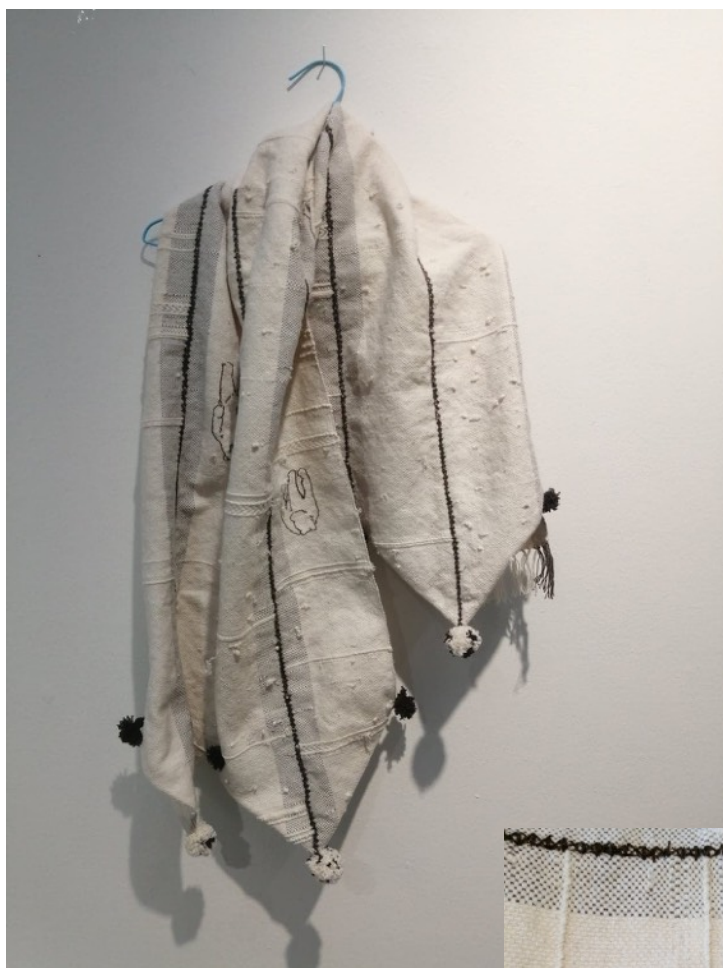


Image 8

This was made by unravelling my sisters old cardigan and then woven on a large floor loom. I also used hand weaving techniques such as Soumak. The embroidery is made using yarn unravelled from my mothers old jumper. From these two unwanted old items of clothing made from cheap synthetic fabrics, I have made a value family heirloom. Though the process of crafting, connectivity to people is formed.

Right: Close-up of the 'soumak' technique on the shawl.

Image 9

‘The Tool’. The tool being ‘craft’ itself. This tool roll enables nomadic craft, which emancipates the crafter from a static context. I aim to fill the tool roll with my own hand made tools.



Chapter 3.

Aesthetics

Are aesthetics entirely idiosyncratic and subjective? Craft work can be identified by its aesthetics, due to what equipment and dyes are available and what techniques have been developed. Therefore it can be argued that craft is often dictated by culture and accessibility. And this stands trial over time, enabling us to pinpoint where and when certain historical archeological pieces have been found. (Barber.E.J.W 1991 pg 229) This has led some of my investigations onto ideas involving ‘local dyes’. Using materials and dyes only available in a specific area. (*Image10*)

The use of dyes has been a strong part of craft history, and specifically textiles, as far back as we can find human traces. Iron rich mud being argued as the first method of producing the colour red. (Barber.E.J.W 1991 pg231) The use of colour making through plant and animal extract has been able to enforce identities as well as display colours only available in certain areas, such as shells to make purple, which come from coastal areas (Barber E.J.W 1991 pg 230). In the times of the Inca, the Incas would use textiles as a way to identify people, ensuring conquered peoples would wear their regional dress. (*Image 11*) (Amano, Museo Textil, Precolombino. Lima, Peru 2020) This is now beneficial today for archaeological purposes of understanding migration and identification. (Barber.E.J.W 1991 pg 229)

Historical death shrouds or ‘mantas’ have huge significance in Peru as they are a proud piece of Inca history which has survived (Museo Larco, 2020). One famous piece in particular, was found constructed in a method once thought of as lost. The ‘shroud of Gothenburg’² demonstrating a pre colonial technique visually comparable to knitting, but in fact a looped cross stitch embroidery technique. This is some of the work I witnessed, spending time with the CTTC (Centro de Textiles Tradicionales del Cusco) in Cusco, Peru (*Image 12*). The images on the shrouds (woven, or embroidered) are hugely significant to cultural value.

²The Shroud of Gothenburg. A rare piece of Peruvian history. A textiles which would be wrapped around the body as a funeral shroud (Museo Larco 2020). This piece was smuggled out of Peru over 80 years ago by a Swedish diplomat and has been returned to Lima. (BBC news)

“...The identifiable technical and decorative patterns indicate that nothing was left to chance and that every decision made... had a meaning. The artisans made technical decisions whilst taking into account the religious symbolism of the designs.”

(Permanent Exhibition, Museo Larco, 2020, Lima, 2020) (Image 18)

This demonstrates how aesthetics are partly directed by culture. Giving us information about other cultures and history.

Indeed even today, communication through aesthetics can also be purposeful, and is central for some indigenous work. As Feldman argues:

“In traditional Shipibo and Andean textiles, the unique combinations of designs are embedded with both cultural and individual expressed concepts whose meaning is recognized within the community.”

(Feldman.N.G 2016, pg54)

We can learn about history, but we can also learn about modern day culture, analysing values and material/technique availability in other places. As in the case of the Andean communities today. Work produced on the back-strap looms can only be a certain width, because they are held in tension around the body and a solid object. Once weaving pieces are completed on their back-strap looms, specific embroidery stitches are used to join their work together to create a larger piece. Each seam stitch is idiosyncratic to the community it is made in. *(Alvarez .N .C 2017 pg116)* Moreover, it is unmarried men and women who produce the most exquisite textiles pieces, as they have the time and “are judged and valued by their attention to detail; it indicates their ability to be a good future husband or wife, father or mother.” *(Alvarez .N .C 2017 Pg97)*

We learn here about the lifestyles and culture of these people and their understanding of time and the commitment to craft. This should prompt us to reflect on our own relationships and societal influences. This information is witnessed in the everyday objects and use. Katter gives credit to the ‘everyday household artifacts’ as being able to display a history and culture. *(Katter 1995 pg10)*

Concluding that it is through aesthetics that we can learn historical and cultural information, and certainly, this can be through items of the everyday, emphasising the importance of ‘home’ crafts and items crafted for everyday use. We can develop empathy through this *(Katter 1995 pg10)*. By reflecting on this,

it forces us to question our own relationship to crafts and how we have come to value the time and the people involved in the crafting process.



Image 10

Local dyes

This was an attempt to make colour using seaweed from near my parents house in Devon, and using fern leaves and other leaves we found near my sisters house in Wales.

This was an experiment I did with my sister and mother as I wanted to build on relationships through the process of crafting.

Unfortunately I didn't get the process completely correct and the colours are quite weak in this sample. I have been trying to avoid using chemical mordants, and iron, unfortunately can dull the colour. But it is an idea I am continuing to experiment with, and will try again when I am with my family.

TEXTILES COMO TRIBUTO Y SÍMBOLO DE IDENTIDAD

TEXTILES AS TRIBUTE AND IDENTITY

Existieron establecimientos especializados de mujeres escogidas para elaborar textiles de diversas calidades.

Los tejidos fueron una importante herramienta para el estado inca, ya que se ofrecieron a los gobernantes de pueblos que el imperio deseaba anexionar. También se entregaron a los pueblos vencidos en batalla que ingresaban a un sistema de tributos y redistribución.

El Inca vencedor usaba, momentáneamente la ropa tradicional del pueblo conquistado, mientras que a los pueblos absorbidos se les permitía mantener su vestimenta de tradición regional. Esto facilitó la identificación de su origen.

Las crónicas hacen referencia, también, a que los trajes eran ofrecidos a los dioses, siendo quemados en grandes cantidades. Aun la ropa del Inca gobernante era quemada, pues este nunca usaba el mismo traje dos veces.

Specialist centers existed where chosen women produced textiles of varying quality.

Textiles served an important function within the Inca state. They could be presented as gifts to the rulers of the peoples the empire wished to annex. They were also given to those peoples defeated in battle who were subsequently incorporated into the Inca system of taxation and redistribution.

For a short time, the conquering Inca would wear the traditional clothing of the defeated people, while those absorbed into the empire were permitted to retain their customary regional dress. This made it possible to identify their place of origin.

According to the chronicles, fine items of clothing were also offered to the gods in ceremonies during which they were burned in enormous quantities. The clothing of the Inca sovereign was also burned, for he never wore the same item twice.

貢納品あるいはアイデンティティのシンボルとしての織物
征服された民族はインカへの貢納や再分配システム
に統合されていきました。インカ王は勝利者として

Image 11

Information photographed from the permanent exhibition from the Amano museum.

(Chronological textiles sequence, the permanent exhibition, Amano, Museo Textil Precolombino (2020) Lima, Peru 2020)



Image 12

The CTTC. (Centro de Textiles Tradicionales del Cusco)

They work with empowering the crafters of traditional techniques from the indigenous communities around the Cusco region, by facilitating international and community wide sales. They have a museum in Cusco and also have small establishments inside many other museums in Cusco. There are always some weavers from different communities doing demonstrations in each of these places.

Image 13

At their location in Chinchero, Cusco, they had an exhibition on the Paracas embroidery technique. The famous 'Shroud of Gothenburg' which was taken out of Peru 80 years ago, was returned recently to The Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Lima.

This technique is a type of 3 dimensional embroidery, even though it looks knitted. Knitting was introduced by the Spanish.

(Images 14,-18 from exhibition, *Reclaiming ancient Paracas*. Centro de Textiles Tradicionales del Cusco, Chinchero, Peru (3rd May-30th June 2019.) 2020)



Image 14

For the exhibition, women and youths from different communities all took part in examining the research and making a sample. (*Reclaiming ancient Paracs*. Centro de Textiles Tradicionales del Cusco, Chinchero, Peru (3rd May-30th June 2019.) 2020)



Image 15

This is the piece that achieved first place. By the Accha Alta Young Weaver group.

32x29 cm.

Hand-spun sheep yarn. Lourdes Chura, Marleny Condori, Elsa Mendoza, Ronaldo Condori, Delia Layme, Climaco Laime, Yesica Mendoza, Daysi Beatriz, Cura, Presentación Huaman, Sandro Layme, Cinthia Chura, Carmen Rosa Chura, Analý Córdova, Vilma Condori, Yeny Flores, Rosmeri Huaman, Saul Mamani, Nery Condori.

(Centro de Textiles Tradicionales del Cusco, Chinchero, Peru (3rd May-30th June 2019.) 2020)

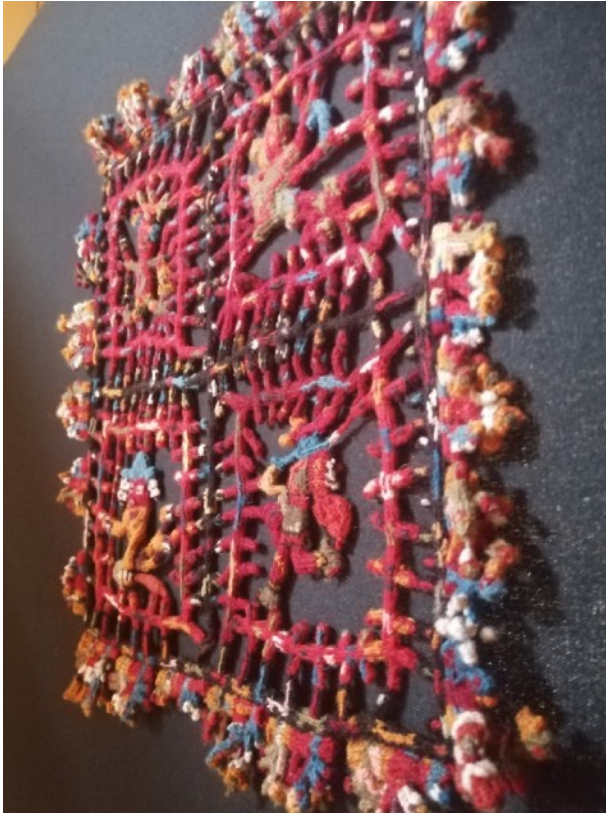


Image 16

Close up of the fine 3d embroidery technique. A rod is used to stitch around to create the tubular effect. Here, a thin metal needle is used as the central support. The result looks very similar to knitting, but is in fact a looped cross stitch embroidery.

(Image from *Reclaiming ancient Paracs*. Centro de Textiles Tradicionales del Cusco, Chinchero, Peru (3rd May-30th June 2019.) 2020)



Image 17

Women lay out the huge 'Manta' (multipurpose carrying shawl) they had created for a world record attempt, not to show off, but to give it some sun light. Textiles pieces are seen and respected as living things. This was explained to me by María José Murillo from the department of education at the CTTC. (*Centro de Textiles Tradicionales del Cusco, Chinchero, Peru 2020*)



Image 18

Paracas Manta.

Paracas is a coastal area and historically was known for the ancient embroidery techniques and 'mantas'. The 'shroud of Gothenburg' is a Paracas textiles piece.

This example here in the Larco museum has strong symbolic imagery of felines, steps and birds. Alluding to the presentations of afterlife and deities, ever present in Inca symbolism.

(Textiles from Ancient Peru, room 5, Permanent Exhibition, Museo Larco, (2020), Lima, Peru, 24th February 2020)



Demonstrating this in my work

Iron has become very important in my work. Since understanding its mordanting value and realising its many strong shades, I have been working with a combination of iron wire and avocado dyes to produce blue grey to dark grey to bright orange and subtle beige tones. (*Image 19*) Trace marks are left by the iron wire, which sits directly onto the fabric, create twisting, fluid organic lines across the fabric which I can manipulate to some extent. Using this element is important for ‘grounding’ my work, as it reminds ‘us’ of our organic being, as iron is an element we need in our bodies.

The desire for producing the colour Red throughout history (Barber 1991 pg 230) and the use of iron in this millennial old challenge, makes me feel a connection to what is central to humanity. The people before me, the use of natural elements. As I will discuss in the next chapter, this human connection to people of the past, is an important aspect of craft, and how we can encourage empathy building.

In my work, I illustrate how aesthetics are dictated also by availability through using old materials with existing colour, or dyes procured by available natural elements. This removes a strong element of control on my behalf, discussing availability and the luxurious choices we have in the global way we live today. The aim here is to draw attention to both the processes and people behind the processes. I have been working with unravelled yarns, and old materials. (*Image 20*) The purpose is to investigate the relationship we have with items and to focus on the process and the history of an item.

I take unwanted items, unravel them and make them into a new item to then return to the owner with a new layer added to their history. (*Image 8*) Impregnating the new items with a new relationship, which is also forged between me and the owner. I am creating an ‘active’ relationship with the ‘consumer’ (Costin 1998, pp3). But it is an act of care. A primary concept in the third facet of ‘connectivity’, which can strongly be linked with healing. (Anderson and Gold 1998, Abstract) Items which have been unravelled and remade into other items still contain the history of its previous life. I am building on to its history, not erasing its past. This could be metaphorically interpreted as anti-colonial recognition. It is strongly intended to be a catalyst for thought.

As a symbol of craft, I have been using vessels and bags as a continual theme running through my work, highlighting the humanity and need in textile craft. Certainly, it can be part of the discourse around colonialism, and ‘collecting’. For this investigation, it is about problem solving throughout history and human need. A human connection to material things. I mean to discuss items such as these tinder pouches. (*Image 21*) The pouch brings respect and care for the tools but allows for easy transportation. The actual carrying item itself is crafted and acts as a vessel for the tools as well as a vessel for information. It does not impose its colonial history on its users, it in fact aids movability. This transportability encourages freedom and emancipation from one place. It enables ambulant forms of crafting.

In the indigenous communities in Peru, it is the ‘manta’ (a multipurpose piece of cloth used to carry things and to keep warm. They weave these, and the patterns are idiosyncratic to certain regions) which enables them to carry items and even children.

Apart from a symbol of the three facets, the bags have a very obvious practical use. And this relates strongly to my investigation into transportability of skills, to be able to carry necessary tools.

I have crocheted a series of bags, using second hand, unwanted yarns. (*Image 22*) These yarns are unwanted because they are in small quantities and not enough to make much in one colour. The change in colour which happens throughout the bags, tell this. It connects to the history of remaking and reusing, in times when waste was less acceptable and resources were scarce.

“With large families and limited resources, many knitters devised their own methods of economy... With oddments of yarn squeezed from their consignments, they knitted stockings for the children, often with striped effects from the use of different dye-lots.”

(Wright 1979 Pg 16-17)

This demonstrates how the aesthetics can be dictated by access, and local culture. I adapt the bags according to what is available. Alluding to their history, the bags are collectively titled ‘The Fishermen's Wives’.

The process of crafting itself sends a message of commitment and reflection. It is important in my work that the processes are understood and recognised. The resulting aesthetic is a product of these thoughts. Hence, as the death shrouds in Peru are dictated by culture and expression, my work also, is dictated by thought

processes, exhibiting social identity and expression. (Costin 1998 pp6) This demonstrates how aesthetic values have mediative thought behind the choices made. As with some indigenous communities in Peru, aesthetic decisions can then be perceived as a way of communicating. (Feldman 2016 pg 54)

These aesthetic values manifest human culture and expression. It is an integral part to what we can learn about humanity (Costin 1998 pp7).



Image 19

iron dyes. Using rust with vinegar and avocados makes variations from oranges to blue greys. I like to use iron wire as it creates a movement of lines on the surface of the fabric. On this piece, squares of cut steel were also used. The fabric was wrapped around these squares with iron wire.

Image 20 These bags and vessels were made from unravelled and unwanted yarns. (*Hannah-Molly Brown 2019*)



Image 21 (below)

Tinder bags. This image comes from the book *Twined knitting: A Swedish Folkcraft Technique*. Dandanell/ B and Danielsson. U.

An example of the utility of bags. A valuable object in itself with utility beyond its intended purpose.

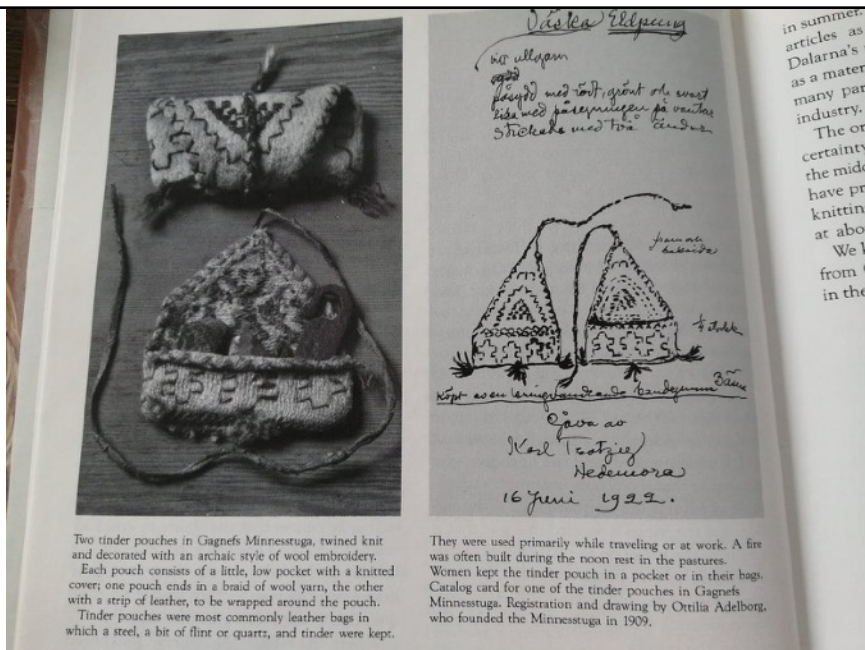


Image 22

These bags were all made using yarn bough second hand. They are off cuts and unfinished balls from other peoples projects. The purpose is to demonstrate reuse and less waste. It alludes to the fishing communities who would be sure to use up all possible scraps of yarn. The metal pieces are made from steel, an alloy containing iron.

(Hannah-Molly Brown 2020)







Chapter 4.

Connectivity

“‘Indigenous’ crafts teach us how to connect with nature. We are so detached in our synthetic system.”

(Chang 2020)

Previously I had referred to this final social facet as ‘Community’. This final facet has been the hardest to put into words. It speaks of the human connectivity through craft. And even though the community aspect is a strong element in this, crafting can also be a way of forging self connection. A meditation and mediator with the self and for the self. This is still human connectivity but tells us of independent human thought, expression and indeed healing. Could it be the tool to help us reconnect to ourselves as organic beings? Understanding our place within nature?

Community is certainly a key aspect. As Nilda Callañaupa Alvarez founder of the CTTC, Peru, explains how deeply craft connects us humans, and even to the earth. (Alvarez 2014) There is a spiritual, non physical element at work.

According to Costin (1998 pp 4) “crafting makes us human”. Therefore, documentation through the form of the previously mentioned ‘nomadic’ techniques, which are often part of the ‘everyday’ are vital in giving us cultural, social and political information from contemporary and historical sources. (Venkatesan 2009 pp 79)

As well as exploring culture through skills such as back-strap weaving, I am investigating knitting, in particular, fishermen’s gansey’s (*Image 3 and 6*) and the community around fishing towns, in my quest to further investigate ‘community’ aspects surrounding this ‘nomadic’ skill and what we can learn from the ‘everyday’. I reflect on the historical relationship to this skill in comparison with today.

In my work, I focus, predominantly on hand techniques (*Image 23*). This is not to say that machines and other equipment should not be used. Indeed, I believe technology is something which should be harnessed by creative thinkers, not to make past techniques obsolete, but to steer modern proposals into the direction of problem solving and accessibility.

However when comparing pre-industrial production methods to ‘western’ modern day production methods, I would argue that we have not moved into a better relationship with materials (Venkatesan, 2009 pp 79). We are losing our human connection through an obsession with disposability. (*Image24*) As Costin (1998, pp3) explains, craft items give us more than household value and speaks of the person who made the item, they are the intangible in human connection. We need to craft. We need the third facet of connectivity. We are a ‘global community’ and need to prepare our next generation for this inclusivity (Katter 1995, pp 9). Therefore these accessible ‘nomadic’ craft skills are important still today. Indeed, it is very important to take note of, not belittle, the ‘every day’ craft objects. The objects and processes which may seem trivial or even mundane and ‘domesticated’. As Lum (2005 pp136) argues, there is truth in the ‘everyday.’ Perhaps this accessibility, nomadic nature and everyday use, is what has made many textiles techniques, such as knitting so poorly documented over time, with certain artefacts most likely seen as common place, and therefore not well recorded.

“Few knitted artefacts have been comprehensively reported leaving a large gap in the recorded history of textiles.”

(Malcolm-Davies 2018 Abstract.)

It is interesting how the value of knitting skills compare with weaving skills. In the most recent podcast episode on CRAFTSIGHT, we talked with artist Rosa Tolnov Clauson, about the accessibility of weaving as this is the area she works in. Bringing the equipment to people, empowering them through learning new skills. (Tolnov Clausen 2021) There is a strong history of weaving in Scandinavian culture.

It is compelling what can be learnt, just by understanding how different areas practise different methods of knitting. Anecdotally, when I first came to teaching students how to knit in Sweden, they would tell me how they used a different, Nordic style of knitting. (as well as the traditional folk knitting style, Tvåstickning which utilises the use of two yarns at one time). This Nordic style appears similar to the British style. Except when holding the yarn for tension, the other hand is used to the one you would use for the British style. This means you work the needles differently to take advantage of the tension. And indeed in the Peruvian highlands, they knit in another way. This technique is called ‘Mirror knitting’ (Alvarez 2017 pg80) Where stitches are transferred back onto the left needle after knitting them onto the right hand needle, instead of swapping needles over in the hands. Therefore, even though the migration of

knitting (It is suggested that knitting originated in the Middle East (Norbury 1951 pg217) Shows us how far these techniques can travel, it also shows us human ingenuity, to develop certain methods, whatever the cause may be for variation. It would seem this 'domestic' skill of the everyday has much to tell us.

It is interesting to compare the multitasking of these types of 'nomadic' skill in historic photos to how it is integrated into the everyday still in places like Peru. (*Image 25*) Is this multitasking of day to day activities regarded as 'cheapening' the skill, despite the trained movement intelligence of the hands? Because it is common place, and performed as part of the daily chores. Yet the value is more than production. Nilda Callañaupa Alvarez explains, it is a meditation (Alvarez 2014), So perhaps the devaluing has more to do with our removal from the skill as a day-to-day form of meditation and connectivity. Suggestively, it could be argued, that it has to do with colonialism, industrialisation and the commodifying of these skills into monetary and production value.

Furthermore, it was traditionally the women who wove in Guatemala (Altman and West 1992, pg 28). Once the Spanish arrived, large floor looms, and Spanish production methods were forced onto them. Meaning the men then wove, for industrial production. The floor loom metaphorically pinning these forced outworkers in place (Altman and West1992, pg30.) Moreover, referencing back to the discussion about the loss afforded to the Incas after their gold was taken, we can again question what was lost as a consequence of this colonial industrialisation.

These daily practised hand skills, give us insight into daily lives. They are physically able to embody the connections we have with people. The use of craft processes creates a space for us to connect with others. Whether that is during the act or in the receiving/giving of the item. Could recognition empower the makers, atone for the past and shorten the gaps of understanding between people and cultures? (Page-Reeves 1998 pp 83)

Primary research in Peru

During an interview with Peruvian anthropologist, Francesco d'Angelo, we came to the conclusion, that to value the craft, is to value the person. (d'Angelo 2020) (*Image26*)

Therefore, our observations of everyday crafting are a vital insight into 'ourselves', throughout history and today. (Gnecchi-Ruscone 2017 pp 151) If we want to move away from disposable, colonialist views of craft and materials, it is important that we empower people to be aware of their skills and value. (Page-Reeves 1998 pp83). Emphasis needs to be made on craft value equating to human value. (*Image 26, 27*)

I spoke with indigenous community members while in Peru who told me about their craft traditions, and how, through their use of symbolism, they are able to "connect to (their) ancestors".

Ylla Chicche.H, 2020, (Hannah-Molly Brown).(*Image 28*) Huber, who was my community member connection from the Chahuaytire community, near Písaq, Cusco, explained to me some of the symbols, such as the 'Andean cross', which represents "the steps to the next life". Symbols developed by the Inca and used throughout the Spanish occupation to keep their culture alive. Symbols, still used today. This is embedded throughout communities in Peru. Each community working with symbolism in different ways. For example the Shipibo people from the Amazon "embrace Kené (the name for the powerful symbols they use) as a powerful and recognizable contemporary symbol of community." (Feldman 2016 pg 56)

Furthermore, this connection is not only through the symbolism, but through the material items themselves. Huber showed me a piece which his grandmother made and he told me how special it is to him because she had made it. This spiritual relationship, is felt in many contexts around the world (Norbury 1951 pp 218). This connection to people through craft is pivotal to the potential changes we can make in modern society. Can we alter our views towards people if we learn about crafts and therefore culture? This highlights the importance of teaching culture alongside crafts.

While incredibly informative in forms of history and politics, we are also learning about human values. 'Connecting to our ancestors'. This tells us more about the human culture which is hard to document. The intangible between people. This 'engagement' and understanding. The ability to still 'witness' people once they have gone, by the traces they leave behind. (Healy 2012 pp94)

Through my comparative qualitative research, including my time in Peru (which has had a profound affect on my understanding) and concluding through this paper, it is clear that the relationship we hold with craft is pivotal for the change of human attitudes towards materials and disposability. (Katter 1995 pp 13) And since returning from Peru, I believe there are strong humanitarian changes needed. Our community and knowledge gain from craft is incredibly rich. (Katter 1995, pp13)

The tools.

I argue, that the tools we use are an important part of history and bodily connection to craft work. Each time we use them, we form a bond. Through the use of our hands, we are connected to our work. Our hands are themselves tools.

What is interesting, when discussing historic textiles, is that a lot of the remains around textiles production tend to be the tools rather than the fabrics the further back we look. As, for fabrics to survive, they need to have been lucky enough to sit in very unusual conditions, such as freezing temperatures (Barber 1991 pg3)

Migration and human movement is recorded through tools. Ergonomic shapes or tools designed for specific purposes tell us of human ingenuity and problem solving as well as how they used their hands and bodies, I reference the knitting sheaths used by the fishermen's wives in the last century. This would hold the working needle and aid speed while working (*Image29*). This simple piece of wood, tucked into the belt of the user, enabled knitting speeds up to 200 stitches per minute. (Wright 1979 pg17-19). When knitting was also a source of income for these fishermen's wives, speed was an important aspect to this skill.

It is possible to see practical inventions from many places around the world which aid the transport and day to day adaptability of crafts. For example the 'stickgälskrok' in Scandinavia. This was simply a hook used to carry yarn while working on the move. (Dandanell and Danielsson 1989 pg 14) (*Image 30*)

The nomadic nature of these tools is what enables them to be engulfed in the day to day (such as knitting/ spinning while walking) and perhaps what actually makes them both accessible and empowering, is not being tied to a place. By the affordability, reproduction capability and size of the tools used, we are able to learn about migration and human needs throughout history as well. (Barber 1991 pg307)

I refer to the fishermen's wives who would knit at recognised places outside for the best light and congregate, combining their daily tasks with meeting other

women and “knitted as they walked or talked, stood at cottage doors or watched events of general interest”. (Wright 1979 pg14-15)

Our body becomes the tool when we work with our hands and these small transportable objects become extensions of our body. Perhaps this is where the repetitive processes becomes like a meditation? (Alvarez 2014), We become a part of the craft process and therefore a part of the crafted item.

Working in metal, to build a structure for my work for the exam, I decided to use a hand saw to cut my lengths of metal to the correct angles. This decision was made initially because the large mechanical saw wasn't formatted to cut higher than 45°. However, yet again because of necessity, the use of hand tools elevated my sense of making and connectivity to the work. Through the physicality and engagement of working with my hands.

Furthermore, these tools can tell us about human relationships. These wooden knitting sheaths were often carved by menfolk for the women who knitted the Ganseys. Gifted to sweethearts, sometimes hearts were carved into the wood, names and messages also. (Wright 1979 pg18) These objects forge relationships and do more than aid the hands. Hand tools are not to be underestimated for anthropological value. If we once again use the three facet lens as our basis for investigation, the tools are part of the craft itself.

These hand techniques and tools are the skill areas I focus on in my work. The appreciation of our body's engagement with craft, the ability to craft and travel without being encumbered or pinned down by big and expensive equipment. It discusses different ways of existence, apart from colonialist industrialisation (Altman 1992,pg30)

Image 23

Hand techniques. Varying from: natural dyes, embroidery, crochet, knitting and black smithing. It is the relationship we create through contact with material and the nomadic nature of these types of craft which interest me. Currently I am learning more about back-strap weaving.



Image 24

‘The value of craft is proportional to the disposable obsession’

This I printed onto ‘ready made’ fabrics. Napkins, hankies, second hand. The thought was to bring attention to these items. They have been made. By whom? Can we learn to value all the items we have by understanding that they have been made?

This was printed onto three napkins. All three were dyed in different combinations of iron and avocado dyes.

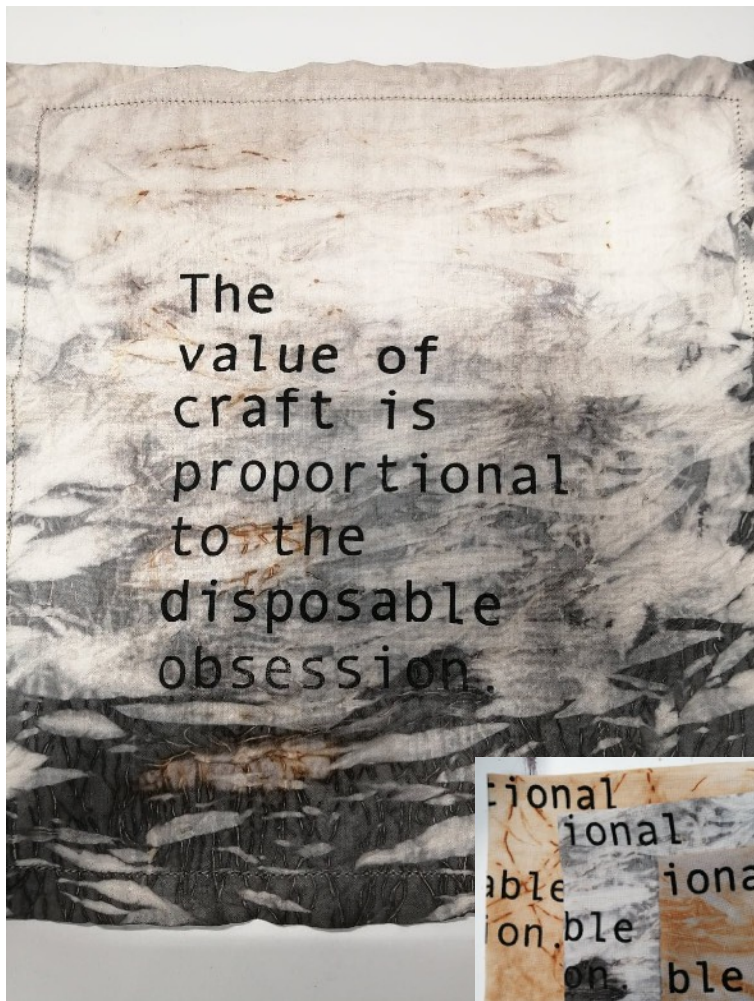




Image 25

Fishermen's wives knitting in the early 20th century, compared to woman spinning on Taquile Island 2019. In Peru, this multitasking of skill is still practised.

(Image top:
agnautacouture.com
Image below:
travlinmad.com)



Image 26

'Craft value is Human value' This conclusion was reached during the discussion with Francesco D'angelo, anthropologist in Lima, Peru.

This I printed onto different 'ready made' fabrics again to draw attention to the everyday objects. Some of these ready made are older pieces, It is interesting how the age of the fabrics can also affect the dyeing process. Older fabrics take natural dyes much more readily as they are worn and the cuticles on the fibres more open.



Image 27

When interviewing Francesco D'Angelo, he showed me some objects to explain the relationship he had with them.

Left, one of the children from the Chahuaytire community made this lama toy for him.

Right, he bought an old plough from a farmer he knew in the community. He explained how happy they both were with the sale. He thought it was cheap and the farmer thought he had got a good price for an unwanted item.

(Brown and D'Angelo, Lima, 24th February 2020)



Image 28

Huber Ylla Chicche from the Chahuaytire community, near Písaq, Cusco. I spoke with him and his girlfriend about the weaving work they do for the CTTC and how important crafts are to the indigenous people in Peru.

Left: Me with Huber and Kristine. Right: Some pieces which Kristine is working on to sell through the CTTC.



Image 29

(Left) Two examples of knitting sheaths or sticks. *Wright 1979 pg17-19.*

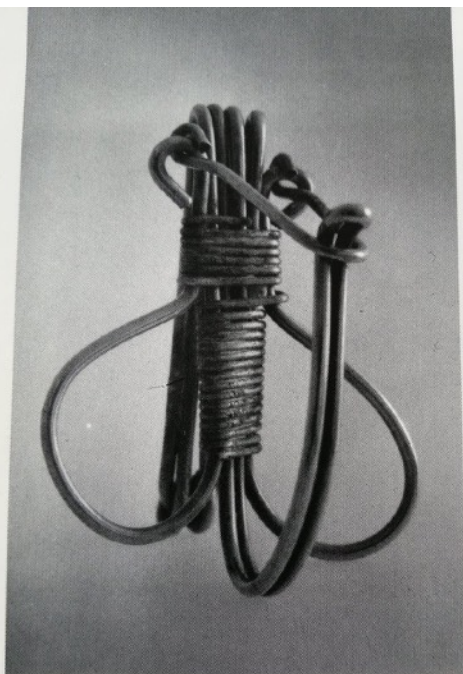


Two examples of knitting sticks from St. Ives, known locally as 'knitting fish'. These had carved slits, to fit over a belt or waistband.

17

Image 30

(Right) 'Stickgälskrok'. A simple hook often made of brass, used to carry yarn whilst on the move. *Dandanell and Danielsson 1989 pg 14*



"When women walked around the farm knitting, they carried the ball of yarn under one arm." or, "the women carried the ball of yarn on a knitting hook (stickgälskrok, or krotjem), most commonly made of brass wire, with a hook on one side to fasten to the waistband and another in front to secure a ball of yarn."

Demonstrating this in my work

I suggest empathy building through the process of crafting, as a method to encourage building relationships and enhancing connectivity. As Katter (1995, pp9) argues, by not committing ourselves to investigation, and sticking to stereotypes, we perpetuate segregation.

Through craft, we are able to engage in a process of empathy building, as we learn about people and culture. I claim that empathy building is key to inspiring people to focus on longevity of items and move away from disposability.

At the beginning of 2019, I decided I would make my own tools and I wanted to make everything from 'scratch' as much as I could or use recycled materials as much as I could, bringing another history with them. (*Image 31*) Reflecting on materials and developing my empathy building with production further.

Considering my connectivity through my use of tools. One could question how many people it takes to make an art or craft piece, when one reflects on the materials and tools used, how many people were involved in the process from element, to object.

I was motivated by the desire to really understand my objects and form strong bonds with my tools as well as my materials. I quickly developed a strong appreciation for people who work with metal, when I started to learn these techniques, as my work progressed through the learning of new skills. Most of my work follows what one could call 'slow processes', as I focus on relationship building with what I am engaging with. It is in the processes that we learn and have the space to reflect.

I am sure that the tools I complete, will be kept forever. This demonstrates how important our material relationships are if we aim to become a less disposable society. The unravelling and remaking with materials is another way to inspire with this message.

As I have been using steel in my metal work, I decided to use mostly iron dyes for my fabrics. Highlighting the strong human history we have with iron (Weinberg 1989 pp262).

As communication is important in my work, I explore the use of statements. Often, with my iron dyed fabrics I screen print on to the pieces: 'The value of

craft is proportional to the disposable obsession'. (*Image 24*, 26) and 'Craft value is human value'.

Inspired by my time in Peru, I embroidered a 'manta' as a nod towards the strong spiritual, community built craft relationships, tying indigenous community life together in Peru. Purposefully not copying Peruvian designs or culturally appropriating their work, The name of 'manta' is a symbolic connection for me to my time in Peru. The fabric is made from old unwanted, second hand fabric, I embroidered the statement 'Craft value is human value', on to it and covered the fabric with embroidered hands as a symbol of the important tool of our hands. (*Image 32*) This became an embroidered piece because of covid restrictions, meaning Konstfacks studios were closed. I had previously been screen printing my statements and had wanted to continue with this. Demonstrating again how situational craft pieces are, and how we can use them to study a certain place and time. This has prompted me to continue working with this concept of 'nomadic' skills. Therefore, as well as printed statements, I experimented with embroidered and knitted statements too. (*Image 23*)

The aspect of connecting to our past, has become a strong drive for my work, using old materials, pondering on the past life of these items, and whose hands they touched.

Most recently, I constructed a piece to demonstrate relationships with and through craft, with the resurrection of my sisters old cardigan (*Image 8*). I unravelled the cardigan and wove it into a shawl. I wove the piece on a large floor loom. I have woven it as one long piece, folded for width, and attached the seams using my own family symbolism in my embroidery stitches, much as the communities in the Andes do (Alvarez 2017 pg116). I have integrated tapestry weaving techniques such as Soumak. This takes a long time as the weft is wrapped around each of the warp threads. The purpose is, in slowing down the process even more, it demonstrates more visually time commitment in crafting.

Weaving and embroidery with old and second hand yarns will give a second life and new relationship to the materials, still holding the previous history in their fibres. All members of the family will feel a connection through this piece. Symbolism acts as a visual connection to our humanity. As demonstrated by the many communities in Peru. (Feldman 2016 pg 56) I reference again my conversation with Huber from the Chahauytire community, as mentioned in the first part of this chapter.

This woven piece will become a family heirloom. I am using symbolism to include my family in the process. (*Image 8*) As well as the body of fabric made from my sisters unravelled sweater, the yarn for the embroidery is made from my mothers unravelled jumper. The symbolism is images of bears (family reference). And I hope she will use this piece to wrap her baby for his christening in 2021. Alluding to ritual, ceremony and again, material and human relationships through material production and use. (Feldman 2016 pp 51) The work becomes personal, although it speaks broadly of human wide relationships to materials. Being able to demonstrate how material relationships can change, is how to encourage others to question their material relationships. Demonstrating and discussing can be part of a ‘gentle form of protest’ as artist Sarah Corbett strives for in her ‘Craftivism’ work. Craft “can bring about effective long-term change” (craftivist-collective.com) Protest and aggravation need not be aggressive and forceful. Indeed, these conversations need to be had on a mutual and respectful level.

It is the intangible, the human relationship which is the important part of the work. It is not money that brings value to these pieces. It is the connectivity and relationship. This human relationship cannot be separated from the production of materials.

“crafting almost always involves a relationship between a producer and consumer (active or passive).”

(Costin 1998, pp3.)

Therefore, I insist that, this sense of community, humanity and spiritual nature is embedded in human culture, and central to craft. We build relationships on and through crafted objects. This is the third facet of craft. By looking at crafts through the three facet lens, we can question and humble then learn and empower.

Image 31

I have made my own knitting sheath (left) and knife (right) (both unfinished here). Alluding to a connective history and exploring past relationships and different ways of thinking about materials/crafts. I put myself in the position of learning new skills and engaging with different materials as a way to learn more about material connection.



Image 32

'Manta'. The name forms a connection to my understanding of my experiences in Peru. I was hugely inspired by the connections formed through crafting I witnessed.

I embroidered this piece because I didn't have access to the printing workshop during the closure of the studios at the beginning of the pandemic 2020. Being forced to think of other ways of working, forced me to reflect on ways of working. Our needs, our movability, our access.



Conclusion

In conclusion, to encourage empathetic thinking in others, as well as myself, through my craft practise I am working with ways of communication. My work is mostly about asking questions. I want my work to encourage people to reflect and question, and I aim to demonstrate this and hold conversation. I insist that craft be studied through the lens of the three facets to open up a wider acceptance of crafts dynamism when it comes to understanding about people.

I will continue to work with the artists and anthropologists I met in Peru and hope we can take advantage of the digital systems available, to encourage wide spread craft and culture exploration.

Teaching has been a big part of my own ability to reflect empathetically and to be able to engage with others. Learning new skills such as back-strap weaving and metal work has been part of my own empathetic development as I try to relocate myself within another area of research. I focus on ideas of anti-colonialism and human value through craft. This is key to changing disposable attitudes. I consider further how to engage with people. To encourage more thinking around craft as a holistic tool for investigation about humankind.

I will continue to explore the use of the bag as a symbol for the three facets.

The use of language is important for the messages I am trying to convey. Therefore, the podcast CRAFTSIGHT will be a continual important part of my openly shared investigative research, creating a platform for discussion on contemporary craft. Discussing what craft is becoming in a modern context. How it is evolving.

Finding an adequate way to present my work in the exam exhibition has been quite a challenge. As I investigate intangible aspects which require interaction, discussion and contemplation. My work in the studio is part of my investigative technique and not a final result.

To encourage contemplation and reflection, I will focus on space. I will bring my work away from the walls, as 3d objects, they require people to move around the objects. Text is an important part of my communication and will therefore be used. I am constructing a steel frame on which to hang my artifacts. Inspired by a tent-like shape. Alluding again to the three facets witnessed in such crafted objects which are overlooked.

It is important, when making the structures which will display my work, that I engage on the same level that I have for the work I am showing. Therefore, the use of iron is as important as the shape of the structure, and the use of hand tools will be part of the connectivity through the work.

My studio work will be represented by a tool roll with tools. The aim here is to highlight the nomadic power of hand techniques. This emancipation from one stationary area of crafting, offers empowerment. The tools need credit for what relationships we can build through their use. These objects tell us much when viewed through the three facet lens. They are extensions of the body after all. The back of the tool roll is printed with a series of illustrations of the hand. Working with yarn through hand craft techniques from a ball of yarn and back to a ball of yarn. (*Image 9*) The purpose is to discuss the process in between the beginning, as a ball of yarn, to post construction; returning to a ball of yarn. The ability of reuse and to appreciate the processes that go into construction. Communication through illustration offers a visual language aiding in the understanding of the three facets by demonstrating use.

The tool roll has been dyed with iron dyes. Representing our human relationship to iron. Inside, there are pockets for many hand tools, including the first knife I have made and a knitting sheath. This tool enabled many knitters from the fishing communities, in the 1800's in the UK, to be mobile and multitask their days. Here I connect our humanity to our history and point out the ingenuity born of human need. As Huber from the Chahuaytire community (as discussed in the previous chapter) told me he was connected to his ancestors through craft, we here can feel a connection. A connection which perhaps needs rekindling. As our lack of understanding, appreciation and values in the UK distance us from a connection still experienced by the indigenous communities in Peru. Furthermore, these tools need to be held and used to feel a connection. It needs to be understood which is why communication through the illustrations are so vital.

The three facets; Utility, Aesthetics and Connectivity, are key to dissecting the humanity in craft. Being able to extract this information, teaches us about ourselves and gives us the ability to build empathy and decide how to live more ethically.

One can use the metaphor of a crafted item being as a person. The crafted item can be valued as much as the maker. The maker becomes part of the object.

Whether on a factory line, or home studio setting, there is human involvement. Our ability to empathise with the making, enables us to understand the true value of the object and by extension, the person.

It means we aren't just looking at 'traditional crafts' purely as nostalgic. 'Traditional' and 'nomadic' skills are still part, and should be more a part, of everyday life in many places, and very much a comment on time, place and even social status. (Venkatesan 2009 pp78) This is a world wide investigation of people. Where we find a gap between product and person, craft needs to be reintegrated into our lives.

Craft needs to be considered for its human value. By exploring and understanding the relationships we form with materials and objects, we can learn from history. We can increase our own empathy with makers, and by extension, people today. By utilising all three facets of craft, we break into other fields of research and are able to embrace and utilise the multidimensionality of craft as a human tool.

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Image reference list:

1	Hannah-Molly Brown. (2019) Left: Crocheted bags from unravelled yarn. Right: Madder dyed yarn and woollen fabric.	<i>Materials: Crochet wool mix. Dyes, Madder and wool. Dimensions: Crochet pots ranging between 15 cm by 15cm. Artist: Hannah-Molly Brown 2019</i>
2	<i>The permanent exhibition</i> , Museo Larco (2020) Lima, Peru 24th February 2020	<i>Materials: Applied to the wall in the Permanent exhibition. Image credit: Hannah-Molly Brown 2020</i>
3	Ganseys from Norfolk museum © Norfolk Museums Service http://norfolkmuseumscollections.org/collections/objects/object-1236354087.html	<i>Materials: 5 ply worsted Wool. Dimensions: Adult male. Artist: Mrs Augusta West Image credit: © Norfolk Museums Service</i>
4	<i>Chronological textiles sequence, Permanent exhibition</i> , Museo Amano, (2020), Lima, Peru 20th February 2020	<i>Materials: Spun and twisted cotton and camelid fibre. Image credit: Hannah-Molly Brown 2020</i>
5	Hannah-Molly Brown. (2020) Bed frame loom experiment. Stockholm	<i>Materials: Mixed fibres. Artist: Hannah-Molly Brown</i>
6	Hannah-Molly Brown. My Gansey. (2020-present) Stockholm	<i>Materials: Traditional Frangipani wool, Artist: Hannah-Molly Brown</i>
7	Hannah-Molly Brown. (2020) 1/3 'The Fishermen's wives'.	<i>Materials: Mixed second hand yarn. 'Craft value is human value' screen print lining. Dimensions 54x8.5cm. Artist: Hannah-Molly Brown 2020</i>
8	Hannah-Molly Brown (2020-2021) 'Reincarnation'	<i>Materials: Cotton, Polyester mixed, second hand fibres from unravelled jumpers. Dimensions: 180x100cm, Artist: Hannah-Molly Brown</i>
9	Hannah-Molly Brown (2021) 'The Tool' Tool roll.	<i>Materials: Cotton second hand bed sheet. Iron dyes with avocado. Screen printed imagery. Dimensions: 140x80cm Artist: Hannah-Molly Brown</i>
10	Hannah-Molly Brown (2019) 'Local dyes'. My mother and sister.	<i>Materials: Silk and bamboo fibre. Seaweed, ferns, bracken and wild local leaves. Iron pieces. Artists: Hannah-Molly Brown and family.</i>

11 *Chronological textiles sequence, Permanent exhibition*, Amano, Museo Textil Precolombino (2020), Lima, Peru, 20th February 2020

Image credit: Hannah-molly Brown

12- *Centro de Textiles Tradicionales del*
17 *Cusco, Chinchero, Peru (3rd May-30th June 2019.) 2020*

Artists: Indigenous community members from Chinchero.

Image credit: Hannah-Molly Brown. Images 14 and 16 are photos of photos within the exhibition at the CTTC Chinchero site, Cusco.

Image 15: Artists: The Accha Alta Young Weaver group.

Dimensions: 32x29cm

Materials: Hand-spun sheep yarn.

Artists: Lourdes Chura, Marleny Condori, Elsa Mendoza, Ronaldo Condori, Delia Layme, Climaco Laime, Yesica Mendoza, Daysi Beatriz, Cura, Presentación Huaman, Sandro layme, Cinthia Chura, Carmen Rosa Chura, Analy Córdova, Vilma Condori, Yeny Flores, Rosmeri Huaman, Saul Mamani, Nery Condori.

(Centro de Textiles Tradicionales del Cusco, Chinchero, Peru (3rd May-30th June 2019.) 2020)

18 *Textiles from Ancient Peru, room 5, Permanent Exhibition*, Museo Larco, (2020), Lima, Peru, 24th February 2020

Materials: Camelid fibre

Historical Paracas mantle.

Image credit: Hannah-Molly Brown

19 *Hannah-molly Brown (2019) Experiments with iron dyes.*
Stockholm

Materials: Iron and avocado dyes on silk, bamboo fibre mix.

Dimensions: 100x40cm

Artist: Hannah-Molly Brown

20 *Hannah-Molly Brown (2019) Various crochet bags and pots made from unravelled yarns.*

Materials: Crochet second hand and unravelled yarns. Hand forged steel pins.

Artist: Hannah-Molly Brown

21 *Dandanell. B and Danielsson. U (1989) Twined knitting: A Swedish Folkcraft Technique.* Dalarnas Museum and LTs Publishing Company

Materials: photo of woollen knitted tinder bags.

Image credit: Dandanell. B and Danielsson. U (1989) Twined knitting: A Swedish Folkcraft Technique.

22 *Hannah-Molly Brown (2020). 'The Fishermens wives.' Crochet bags.*
Stockholm

Materials: Mixed second hand and old yarns.

Dimensions:

Artist: Hannah-Molly Brown

23 *Hannah-Molly Brown (2019-2021) Variety of hand worked pieces.*
Stockholm

Materials: Steel, wool, velvet, iron dyes.

Artist: Hannah-Molly Brown

24	Hannah-Molly Brown (2019) <i>'The value of craft is proportional to the disposable obsession'</i> . Stockholm	<i>Materials: screen printed linen. Iron dyes and avocado. Three pieces Dimensions: roughly 48x48cm Artist Hannah-Molly Brown</i>
25	Top: Peruvian spinner from Taquili Island, Puno, Peru. Below: early 1900s Fishermen's wives knitting while walking.	<i>Image credit: Image top: agnautacouture.com Image below: travlinmad.com</i>
26	Hannah-Molly Brown (2020) <i>'Craft value is Human value'</i> statement. Stockholm.	<i>Materials: Ready made textile (old hankie) Dyed with iron dyes, screen printed: 'Craft value is Human value'. One of thirteen wall hangings. Dimensions: 22x22cm Artist: Hannah-Molly Brown</i>
27	Brown and D'angelo. (2020) Francesco's personal objects. 24th February Lima, Peru.	<i>Materials: wood, camelid fibre. Artists: Chayhuatire community members Image credit: Hannah-Molly Brown</i>
28	Ylla Chicche.H (2020) (Hannah-Molly Brown). 29th February, Chayhuatire community, Písaq, Cusco, Peru.	<i>Woven items Materials: Camelid fibres and natural dyes. Artist: Kristine and Huber Ylla Chicche Image credit: Hannah-Molly Brown</i>
29	Wright. M (1979) <i>Cornish Guernseys and Knit-frocks</i> . Polperro Heritage press.	<i>Materials: wood. Photo credit: Wright. M (1979) Cornish Guernseys and Knit-frocks.</i>
30	Dandanell. B and Danielsson. U (1989) <i>Twined knitting: A Swedish Folkcraft Technique</i> . Dalarnas Museum and LTs Publishing Company	<i>Materials: photo of brass wire 'stickgälskrok' Image credit: Dandanell. B and Danielsson. U (1989) Twined knitting: A Swedish Folkcraft Technique.</i>
31	Hannah-Molly Brown. (2020) Knife and knitting sheath. Stockholm	<i>Materials: Knife: Cherry wood off-cut, copper, steel (from an old file) Knitting sheath: Off-cut birch wood. Dimensions: Knife:22cmx35mm Knitting sheath:23.5cmx30mm</i>
32	Hannah-Molly Brown. (2020) <i>'Manta'</i> Stockholm	<i>Materials: Second hand fabric and yarns. Dimensions: 200x150cm I</i>