



Shelanu women's craft collective, Wandering Methods project Dublin, Action weaver Travis Meinolf, Curious About Craft tour

About Craftspace

Craftspace is an award-winning organisation, pioneering approaches to engaging a diverse public with exceptional contemporary craft

- We champion and support makers to take an active and creative role in civil society.
- Our work positions craft beyond conventional boundaries, including its enhancement using emerging digital technologies.
- We aim to connect creative practice with diverse communities through collaborative research. Together we explore the power of craft to promote social innovation and social justice.
- We extend the reach of our successful initiatives through national and international partnerships.
- Through our thinking, actions and advocacy, we provide national leadership to the sector.

Values

People

- We are committed to developing people's skills, knowledge and creativity at all levels whether they are staff, participants, makers, project partners or clients.
- We aim to devise projects and services in collaboration with partner organisations and clients which have lasting and positive impacts upon both individual participants, whole organisations and their wider communities.

Artistic Programme

- We are committed to artistic excellence across all our programming.
- We believe that quality and innovation is characterised by working collaboratively and inclusively in creative partnerships, by placing access at the centre of our operation and also by challenging boundaries and preconceptions around crafts practice and its presentation.

Audiences and participants

- We value process and participation as a meaningful and engaging way to facilitate learning about and experiencing crafts.
- We believe that the exploration and showing of crafts in a wide range of social and culturally diverse contexts makes it more relevant to all our lives.

Core Activities

Craftspace

- Supports artists/makers to make and showcase contemporary crafts, work collaboratively and develop their practice.
- Enables communities to access contemporary crafts for personal and creative development
- Works with venues to engage and excite diverse audiences by exploring innovation in contemporary craft
- Works with artists in educational settings to encourage creative potential and personal development through contemporary crafts
- Develops creative relationships with business through contemporary crafts

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Company

Craftspace was set up in 1986 as a one person organisation and celebrates 30 years of operation. It is a company limited by guarantee and an Educational Charity. It has a voluntary board of Directors and five full time equivalent staff.

Staffing includes: 3 full time (including Director and one job-share) in programming, learning and engagement, 1 part time in marketing and 2 part time in operations. Staff roles include Director, Exhibitions and Projects Development Manager and Learning and Engagement Manager (job-share) forming the programming team. Operations & Development Manager, Administrative Assistant and Marketing Assistant forming the operations team. In the last two years we have been involved with the Creative Employment Programme Birmingham cluster employing a creative apprentice and a curatorial intern and the Jerwood Creative Bursary scheme employing an early career creative producer post. Craftspace frequently works with a range of freelancers including a clerical worker, accountant, PR consultant and project managers. In addition to artists and makers we often employ creative people to undertake evaluation and documentation.

Craftspace is revenue funded by Arts Council England West Midlands as a National Portfolio Organisation until April 2018 and we have re-applied to be in the portfolio until 2022. We fundraise for all our programme and projects from trusts, charitable organisations, businesses and other sectors. We are beginning to target donations and income from

individuals and the private sector. Earned income derives from consultancy services. Annual turnover ranges from 250K to 350K.

Whilst we have a responsibility to deliver crafts development activity within the West Midlands region, our programme, work and influence extends nationally and internationally reflecting a leadership role on behalf of the crafts sector. We seek to initiate and contribute to thought leadership and critical debates in crafts practice, visual arts and audience engagement/development.

Craftspace has worked with a corporate business partner, VSM (UK) Ltd for 6 years resulting in winning awards for our work together. In 2012 Craftspace and VSM won two awards; a national Arts & Business Prudential Volunteering and People Development Award <http://artsandbusiness.bitc.org.uk/case-studies/vsm-husqvarna-viking-sewing-machines-craftspace> and we were the overall winner of the Arts & Business category of Business in the Community's Awards for Excellence. <http://www.bitc.org.uk/our-resources/case-studies/vsm-husqvarna-viking-sewing-machines-craftspace-winner-2012>

Our education work has won two national Artworks awards and was shortlisted for a Birmingham City Council learning award in the past. Our project Shelanu was highly commended for the national Craft Skills Award.

Our diverse and wide ranging partnerships include the Irish Government (Office of Public Works), Bealtaine Festival Ireland, Falmouth University, the Arts & Humanities Research Council, Staffordshire County Council, Birmingham and Solihull NHS Foundation Trust, St. Basils, Somerset Art Works, the National Trust, the School of Jewellery in Birmingham, Hereford College of Art, Migrant Voice, Irwin Mitchell Solicitors, Colmore Business District, Arts Alive (Shropshire and Herefordshire) and Birmingham Contemporary Music Group.

Our Purpose

Craftspace works to develop crafts practice, its curation and presentation and creative learning through craft. We aim to stimulate artistic excellence, critical thinking and understanding of contemporary crafts in the widest social and cultural contexts. We achieve this through a programme of touring exhibitions and cross artform productions, research partnerships, learning and participatory action research projects.

We aim to challenge perceptions of craft by consciously creating enquiring contexts and collaborations in which makers can gain new perspectives on their practice and participants experience the breadth of crafts practice. Expanding ownership of crafts and its ideas and processes depends on bespoke partnerships in community and commercial settings, often with organisations that have previously had little experience of contemporary craft. Explorations of how craft is situated within the world beyond the immediate object develops an appreciation of the wider role of makers in society and the rich potential for ideas and processes to be relevant and socially engaging. We aim to build cultural, human and social capital through our work.

We are committed to quality, access and innovation. The board and team operate by strong core values of which diversity (including disability) is a key feature.

Artistic Programme Development

Craftspace is based in Birmingham and does not have its own venue. We work in partnership with a range of galleries, museums, community venues and organisations to develop and deliver our programme.

For Craftspace, our artistic development is inextricably linked to audience development and participatory work. The cornerstone of our approach is the way in which we involve people in the processes of research, development and creation of our product. These projects take place over the course of a year leading up to the production of exhibitions and are highly focused, high quality projects with small groups. Our aim is for both areas of our work to be developed within critical and reflective contexts which can be disseminated nationally & internationally.

Over the next three years our artistic ambitions will involve exploration, production and presentation of craft in an expanded field. This means investigating crafts practice, history, dialogues about and different contexts for making through a variety media and mediums from radio podcasts and theatre performance to film and digital platforms. We are also particularly interested in the themes of social justice, social innovation and ways in which craft can progress civil society.

Craftspace has previously incubated *the shape of things*, a 4 year national exhibition and professional development programme exploring diversity through artists' commissions in five venues. www.theshapeofthings.org.uk

A summary of programming focus and development work over the next three years is:

- Craft in an expanded field (cross artform collaboration – Craftspace Curates)
- Outsider craft UK and international (Radical Craft exhibition)
- Craft from the Midlands (Made in the Middle exhibition)
- Bespoke craft developed in response to residencies (Making Moves residencies + exhib)
- Championing alternative business models for craft in particular through social enterprise, exploring collectivity and collective making as an alternative to sole trading (Shelanu)
- Craft as a skill for life and its potential to facilitate creative and cross curricular learning
- Social action through craft (Craftivism) and DIY, eco, guerrilla, crafting in relation to youth/popular culture, targeting 16-25 aged young adults (particularly vulnerable young people and those not in employment and training)
- Exploring the potential of digital and viral platforms for craft production and user-generated content
- Artists as creative producers,(particularly emerging and mid-career), who can integrate their own creative concerns and investigation with a socially engaged model of collaboration and co-production
- Community skills exchange
- International partnerships (through Creative Europe and other schemes)

The core attributes of all of our artistic programming (exhibitions, learning and audience development) are:

- Challenging preconceptions, perceptions and boundaries of the crafts through choice of themes and content, selection of artists/makers and taking risks in presentation

- Commissioning high quality new work and developing a critical context for its presentation
- Providing opportunities for makers to develop their practice and skills at different stages of their career
- Exploring ways in which making gives expression to diversity (including disability)
- Enabling audiences/people to access creative processes for enjoyment, for learning and as a tool for personal and skills development
- Expanding the skills and knowledge of local/regional curators and venues in relation to contemporary crafts and audience development
- Expanding the skills and knowledge of non-arts partners in relation to the artform and good practice in working with artists and participants
- Further developing the nature and depth of touring partnerships
- International commissioning and partnerships/collaboration

Artistic programme 2015 to 2018 comprises:

- **In:Site 2017 in partnership with Birmingham Cathedral and Colmore Business District** - An annual outdoor festival where emerging applied arts graduates are selected to create commissioned temporary, bespoke artworks.
- **Craftspace Curates** – a series of craft happenings devised to showcase craft in an expanded field with different partners (to include performance, installation, digital).
- **Radical Craft** a ground breaking touring exhibition making a significant contribution to profiling unseen makers, facilitating their voices to be heard, stimulating debate and raising awareness of challenges. The exhibition features creativity by self-taught makers across the UK and internationally who make work in a private domain outside the mainstream.
- **Made in the Middle** - a cyclical exhibition featuring contemporary craft from across the Midlands. This selling exhibition, the eighth in the series, features 30+ makers whose diverse practice reflects the wealth of craft across the Midlands.
- **Shelanu** – a Birmingham-based craft social enterprise. Shelanu is a collective of migrant and refugee women who produce high-quality craft objects inspired by Birmingham and informed by diverse cultural perspectives. The women are currently working with Craftspace and makers to develop their craft social enterprise. Shelanu exhibit locally and nationally, lead workshops and devise product ranges to sell.
- **Children and Youth People Engagement Programme**
 - **Making for Change** – a youth Craftvisim (craft+activism) social action project using creative actions to make positive change. Aimed at 16-25 year olds, particularly those not in education, employment or training.
 - **Families (early years)** – in development, working with young families to improve communication skills through making.
- **Making Moves** (in development) – A craft development initiative with a residency programme and touring exhibition taking place across the West Midlands with planned expansion into the East Midlands and possibly pilot in the South West.
- **Research projects** with University partners funded by the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council). Currently with Wolverhampton University.
- **Creative Producers** - Annual initiative enabling emerging artists to take up the role of being creative producers. These could be curated events and 'happenings'. It takes into account the performative and live potential of craft. It seeks to encourage experimentation and innovation placing craft into places where audiences can experience it through participation and/or social engagement.

- **Consultancy** - Our consultancy work ranges from scoping and evaluating a Happy Museums focused early years project, public art commissioning for the NHS to curating an exhibition in a National Trust property for Somerset Artworks and a three year participatory project for The Office of Public Works Ireland in partnership with Bealtaine Festival.

In addition to our website you can view films and see photos of current and past projects on our You Tube channel Craftspacevideo and Flickr.

http://www.youtube.com/user/craftspacevideo?ob=0&feature=results_main

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/craftspace>

We are also on Twitter @tweetcraftspace, Instagram Craftspace_ facebook.com/craftspace

The board and staff of Craftspace are working as imaginatively as possible to adapt our business model to generate income/investment develop and position Craftspace in what is a very different world emerging in the next two or three years. We face opportunities and challenges:

- Less investment in arts and culture from public funds leading to an increasing need to diversify income including through philanthropic giving
- New digital technologies creating new delivery channels and engagement models
- Changing political priorities and agendas around localism, education and inclusion – all of which impinge closely on Craftspace’s work
- Wider geographical opportunities, opportunities for new partnerships and business model to secure longer term income streams

In 2016 Craftspace and the Devon Guild of Craftsmen successfully bid for an Arts Council England Catalyst Evolve grant for building fundraising capacity and a match funding scheme. Every £1 raised from private donations is matched by £1 up to a target of £50K. The programme runs until 2019 and all staff are involved in the action plan.



Matthew Harris from Field Notes project, Good Luck Gum Nut Folk Joanna Simpson from Radical Craft, Amber Wakely from In:Site festival