



# 3



## THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

The author proposes to place the current discourse of craft into a theoretical framework that outlines the extent to which interior design aids in the enabling of an environment that pushes the boundaries of current practice in terms of the role of craft and design. The candidate proposes to use past theories that have questioned what it is that craft and design represent in a contemporary South African society, while maintaining the standpoint that it is imperative to ameliorate the present and focus on the future.

The broad definition of craft as outlined by the Department of Arts and Culture (2006) as the client body is essential in establishing delimitations for the development of design ideas, although the candidate considers it vital to deliver critique on the definition and expand on it, as potential is the underlying theme of the study.



## 3.1 PROPOSED THEORIES 3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Cultural Production as put forth by Pierre Bourdieu, outlining the idea of an object/ product within its immediate context of maker (the individual) and the larger context of the cultural domain in which this individual finds him-/ herself.

-Interior design as a form of cultural production and how the design of interior space can be conducive to the individual inhabiting the space.

- The architectural theory of “phenomenology” that illustrates the action of inhabiting a space in terms of sensory experiences-focusing specifically on the nature of materials and their properties.

-Heidegger’s reference to “techne”: its position within and relevance to the field of craft, art and production.

-Materiality as perception-generator in terms of space and product.

- Fred Scott’s theory on alteration (2008) with reference to redundant buildings in particular, and how the approach to alteration determines the impact on the existing built fabric.

-Adaptive reuse: strategies in approaching the adaptive reuse of a redundant building, the relevance thereof and the effect the strategies will have on the physical- and social environment.

1. Can craft products be recognised as design products and received as elements of status or with high value?

2. How can interior design contribute to the “elevating” of craft’s current status?

3. Can craft innovation be a means of eliminating global perceptions of the status of craft products?

4. Can innovation in the crafts push the boundaries of interior design?

Design Indaba is an expo that encourages “fraternity within the creative industries”, but enjoys a level of autonomy too, as different entities (from architectural through to product) are on show. It showcases Cape Town as design capital of South Africa. Craft as a part of ‘art’, should share in its independence: “art is a social universe... where a particular form of capital is accumulated” (Bourdieu, 1993: 399). This statement suggests its autonomy or “exclusiveness”. Craft, too, when viewed objectively, can become such a social entity because of the weight that it has accumulated in its origins and development.

The candidate would therefore deliver critique on the D.A.C.’s definition of craft, because “utilitarian or decorative items” suggest a subjective view of the field. This objective position-taking suggests that a certain amount of weight or power can be attributed to craft, as with design (Lipstadt, 2003: 395).



## 3.3 CULTURAL PRODUCTION

### 3.3.1 CRAFT AS A 'FIELD'

Bourdieu argues that the artistic fields (art and literature) have illustrated, to an extent, that culture can become a commodity. This challenges art because of its elitist connotations. The author wants to demonstrate that craft is not seen as art, but a part of it, so that a balance can be found between its elitist nature and that of a commodity. Therefore, the field of craft suggests one that is not a “social product, construction or representation of an established group” (profession), but rather a flexible entity that lingers somewhere between autonomy and dependence.

In this study, the interpretation of a particular theory, and not the ontological associations thereof, is focused on.

The author believes that craft’s current identity can only be ameliorated once it finds its place within other disciplines, professions and fields. The following discussion shows how misnomers have altered- or strengthened perceptions of a person that has acquired certain educational entities.

The word ‘profession’ as indicated by Helene Lipstadt (2003), suggests a contradiction towards the word ‘field’, as described in terms of Bourdieu’s principles. Bourdieu affirms that ‘profession’ is a term that is fostered by a professional group itself and that craft (as an entity of art) should be termed a ‘field’ of the arts. Interior design in the same way is not a profession, as it has not yet been identified as such in South Africa: one that enjoys a certain degree of independence. He further suggests that when design is compared to the artistic fields (art and literature), the former requires a client to realize a work, but the latter realizes their own: this shows that architecture is not fully autonomous, but the artistic fields are placed within a realm of autonomy. But, when competitions are considered, the convergence of the two is present: architectural (design) competitions illustrate a level of autonomy too, because the architects (as designers) compete. A hierarchy is formed.

### 3.3.2 CRAFT AS ‘MAKING’

The Oxford Dictionary (2011) defines autonomy as: freedom from external control or influence; independence.

“A rethinking of maker and means inevitably involves a rethinking of what architecture ought to be” (Gore, 2004: 39).



Fig. 3.1: Elements influencing cultural production (Author, 2011).

The raw material in itself has various qualities that need evaluation: behaviour, history, technical requirements, body of research, a cultural memory and a haptic (tactile) relationship.

According to Gore (2004), craft is identified as “any human transformation of raw material into another object”. This implies the field of cultural production: an individual (human), a context (transformation of raw material) and a product (object). The hand plays a vital role in the production of craft:

The idea of operation and workmanship is a result of this hand-machine correlation. If a machine is involved, a degree of certainty is inevitable, whereas if a product is produced by hand alone, a level of risk is involved (Gore, 2004: 40). Both strategies are qualitative in that there are different “tastes” that come into play: some prefer a machined joint and some a whittled joint for various social- or cultural reasons.

The question asked is whether there is value in the latter, and why, if there is a degree of autonomy that can be obtained with the former?

A direct distinction is noted: that of the predetermined and that of the crafted. Material experimentation, critical analysis and the tectonic strategy that is implemented in the craft process, shows that the process is not dependent on extreme precision. This reinserts its role within cultural production as it is exposed to the unknown and takes place in relation to a cultural context.

The author intends to outline that craft needs to be viewed critically, in order to understand the extent to which it is relevant and conducive to the human being’s place within the world.



### 3.3.3 CRAFT INNOVATION

In order for the potential of craft to be visible, boundaries of the field need to be pushed. Probably the best example of this potential is visible in the building industry, where material innovation has started to question the fields of art and architecture and their similarities (Klassen, 2006: 258). Similar to craft's affinity with a field of cultural production (one not isolated and one in flux), can architecture be placed within such a context: it reflects cultural change and technological innovation. Here, craft can be used as a means to enhance our perception of designed space, when it exposes itself to new material innovations and production technologies.

The author believes craft, as an integral part of art, can allow for a more autonomous spatial experience or product experience. This illustrates craft's potential to create intangible environments. The technique of fabric weaving is exemplary of craft's role in interior design. The author believes this innovation to be a marriage between technology, art, design and ornament. Furthermore, the ornamentation element is conducive to the space the fabric finds itself in because of the artistic expression this "imprint" leaves on the space. Craft is hence seen as a means of artistic expression to generate place.

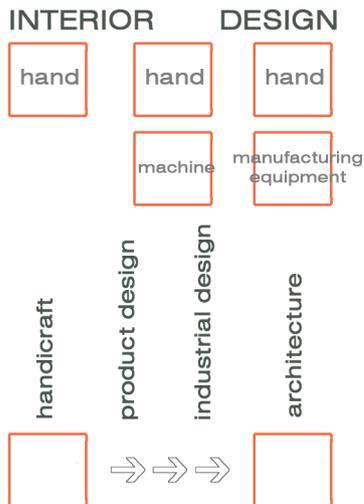


Fig. 3.2: Hand involvement in craft (Author, 2011).

The Arts and Craft movement in the early 20th century is an example of such expression. The role of craft as an entity between autonomy and dependence is reiterated by the notion that an element like ornamentation is necessary to create a certain historical realm or imprint on the product or space.



Fig. 3.3: Craft's role as an entity that strives for a degree of autonomy (Author, 2011).



### 3.4 PHENOMENOLOGY

Furthermore, craft's role in architecture is emphasised with the placement of the human body within, and the extent to which the human body is part of, designed space. Klassen (2006: 259) places craft (textiles for example) within an alternative spectrum: the textile gives way to structure, space, and then ultimately an experience. This experience leaves an imprint on the inhabitant of that space, which becomes an extension of the body. Phenomenology in architecture also sets out to interpret the human experience in terms of the sensory properties of the space. Traditional surface treatment with a contemporary "touch" revives craft's role within built space, as the sensory properties of traditional materials are manipulated to form a different cultural experience.

The author wishes to analyse craft's role within different disciplines to explore its potential in terms of application and effect. Innovation of traditional craft will be explored, to the extent that it becomes design, but is not submissive to design.

Innovation in weaving has shown the merger of art and craft, where imprints are created that "show the creative act" (Treadaway, 2009: 236). South African world-renowned artist, William Kentridge, is one of the forerunners of merging art and craft with his latest print range, where art-making and craft are combined in a single object with embedded cultural meaning. Here, the studio in which production takes place becomes a laboratory for experimentation. This gives rise to a phenomenological way of perceiving craft: the slowness of making, where the artist and craftsman are working together, provides for reflection and association with the materials, and finally, the outcome of the product. It gives way to a process that binds past and present (how we interpret what we've seen in

the past, in a contemporary way) (Treadaway, 2009: 236). This forms a platform for haptic input, where all the senses are stimulated. It provides a platform to illustrate the "technites" at work.

Heidegger's theory pertaining to the idea of *techne* suggests that we must contrast the hand-made with the factory-made (Leach, 1997: 94). He relates this to phenomenological experience of space in the sense that space should reflect this craftsmanship. The author believes that the complexity visible in the hand-made should be emphasised in the space, in order for the rational (thinking) to be visible in comparison to the realistic (empirical) (Leach, 1997: 95).

*To dwell authentically, is to dwell poetically... since poetry is the manifestation of truth restored to its artistic dimension*

Heidegger

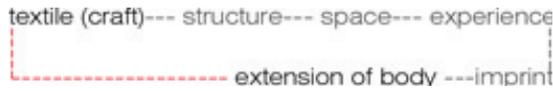


Fig. 3.4: Existential nature of craft- craft in relation to space (Author, 2011).

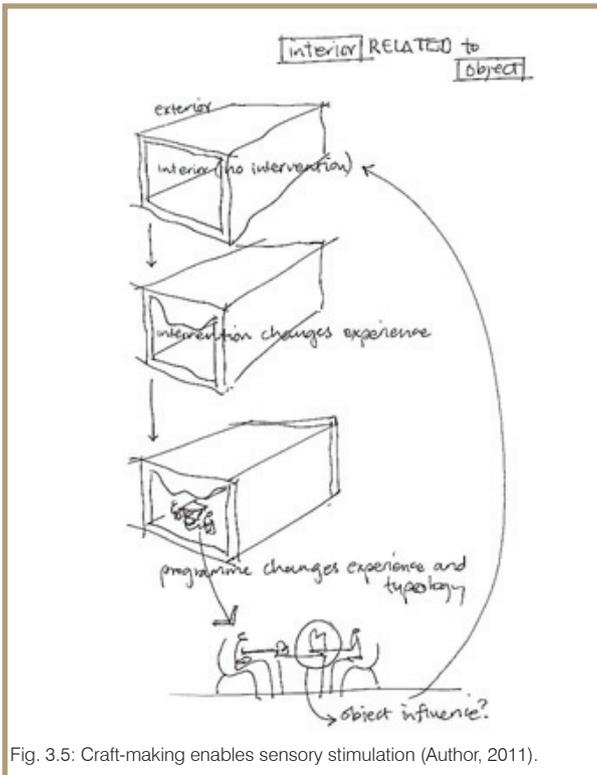


Fig. 3.5: Craft-making enables sensory stimulation (Author, 2011).

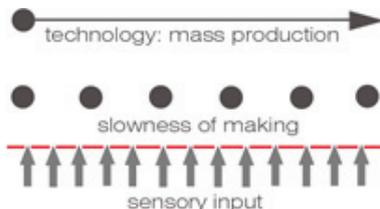


Fig. 3.6: Interpretation of an object's influence on space (Author, 2011).

Ancient Greeks referred to craftsman and artist as “technites”, but Heidegger reiterates that the term is not an appropriate term for them, as it rather signifies a “mode of knowing” (Leach, 1997: 97). He further suggests that architecture should represent the truth, a representation of “making the world visible”. This strengthens his argument of “techne” as a mind-set rather than an action, as it refers to the way in which something is produced or carried out in a rational manner (Leach, 1997: 95). Not only does this highlight the act of cultural production, but emphasises the “handmade” as being an integral part of the production process.

Furthermore, this phenomenological approach to the crafts relates to the idea of the human body being central to an experience, whether it be a spatial one or a sensory one. Ergonomics are an integral part of contemporary design strategies, relating them back to the phenomenological idea of a holistic understanding of the world.

The human’s individual placement within this world, relates this argument back to that issue of cultural production as outlined by Bourdieu.

Phenomenology allows one to place the human in his totality within a spatial context. Here, his engagement with the particular context reveals in some manner a specific truth, by using the senses as catalysts.

As the craftsman tries to establish the utopian question of “what ought to be”, so does phenomenology, leading towards a subjective experience of space. The craftsman deals with the immediate world around him, not an abstract representation of the world. Leach (1997) tries to argue by referring to Heidegger and Bachelard, that space is not abstract, but a representation of lived



experience. It is also argued that an architectural space cannot be fully understood unless viewed as a process, because if the eyes are the only stimulated sense, there is a certain subjectivity involved and this inhibits the other senses from experiencing the space in its totality.

Like the craftsman tries to make sense of the world around him and transforms this (natural) world into one of culture, phenomenological theory strengthens the craftsman's position within the world as it sets out to argue that all of the space should be revealed: these revelations can enrich the understanding of the world. Henri Lefebvre strengthens the notion of "body in space" by suggesting that all of the senses be part of the experience. The author also believes that the body should not just be considered, but that there should be a concern for the body.

Tactility (haptic sense) and sight help one understand the value of perception of the object or product during the production process (Treadaway, 2009: 238). Tactility in particular allows the maker to be physically involved in the process, whereas vision provides that information concerning the shape or where the materiality originated. The author believes that vision together with physical action is mediation between how an object is perceived and what results from the perception, for example the formation of an opinion. The materiality of the product comes into play once again, because this mediation between product and hand shows that the crafter might be limited by technology.

The author is of the opinion that the ideas illustrated by phenomenology enter the realm of interior design in that the "unwrapping" or revelation of certain elements of the space can give way to new realities. If one unwraps (an object or product or

space), a certain biographical content is revealed, not necessarily still usable in terms of its original purpose, but one that enters a new life. This "unwrapping" alters that object's or product's or space's materiality (Hurcombe, 2007: 536). A deteriorated built structure, as an example, is able to reveal its layers over time. As crafts can have certain meanings "woven" into them, the author believes, so can designed space. Elements can be rearranged or manipulated to take on a new meaning that results in a refreshed significance.

African "curios" or "souvenirs" that are adopted by tourists not familiar with the materiality of the object, will be perceived in the way that materiality is perceived, and then a symbolism will be attributed to that object via the perception. This seems very subjective.

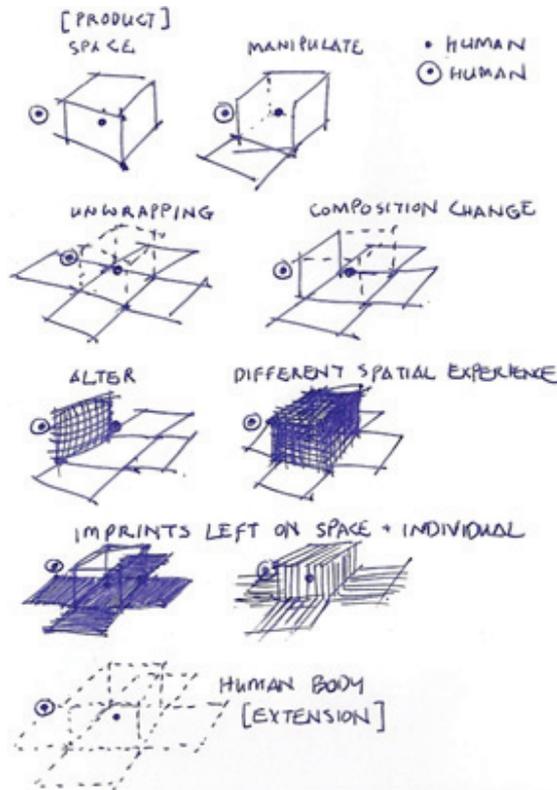


Fig. 3.7: “Unwrapping” of space and spatial elements (Author, 2011).

When certain objects enter a society, for example metalworks, as products, they are received in a different manner compared to products that are appreciated because of their status, for example, fur. The former has an archaeological element attached to it while the latter, a consumer-orientated element. This might be the reason why particular objects are not received in “high society” but others are.

Linda Hurcombe (2007) suggests that perception is a means to validate a purpose that will benefit us as modern human beings. Therefore, in order to be fully objective, one is required to think relationally (Bourdieu) and hence understand the cultural product (object, product or space) as the material evidence of the past.

These sentiments are enhanced when Groak (1993) explains the notions of poets and designers. The narrative created by the revelation of elements in built space (structure for example), is compared to poetry in the way these elements are articulated and dealt with. The author believes that the alteration of an (existing) space, lends itself to this idea of unwrapping as well. Fred Scott’s theory on alteration supposes that an alteration process is considered a craft (Scott, 2008).

### 3.5

### FRED

### SCOTT

Scott (2008) suggests that alteration to a building is an art. He refers particularly to conservation, restoration and preservation of built fabric, emphasising that an intervention that alters the interior of a building can be echoed on a larger scale (Scott, 2008: 44). The author sees this as an intangible scale: the intervention has a cultural impact on those in contact with- or those inhabiting the space. He also believes there should be a certain sensitivity towards alteration, in order for alteration not to become more than the host building, in other words, not to become heretical. The author believes an urban setting with an existing energy will be affected by alteration, even if “simply” on an interior scale.

### 3.5.1 THE CASE OF THE REDUNDANT BUILDING

Abandoned buildings and occupied buildings require a different approach in terms of intervention. Abandoned buildings are required to be understood in terms of analysis, in order for an intervention to transcribe the existing into something contemporary, while exposing the past. This “translation” from past to present is believed to provide a platform of opportunities from the host building, to alter, in order to convey a new meaning. These opportunities are not necessarily there to be used in order to improve on the old, but rather, to interpret it (Scott, 2008: 118). Just as Scott supposes, the author believes that interpreting “unimportant” buildings is more important than trying to improve on them, because an improvement signifies a mono-view to solving a problem, as various cultural entities need to be considered.

John Ruskin and William Morris, both pioneers of the “Arts and Craft Movement” in architecture in the 19th century, believed that a prop or a crutch as intervention, are both appropriate means of protecting a building from decay or in danger of collapse. This “support” is referred to only as something physical and visible, literally holding up that which is about to fall.

The proposed building, although not in any danger of “falling apart” structurally, is in need of a prop, albeit intangible, to prevent its deterioration in other areas: for example, the facades are in danger of decay. This illustrates surface deterioration, something that the author considers a concern in terms of the building’s integrity. Furthermore, the proposed prop can be seen as an autonomous part with respect to that part (interior) which it supports. Finally, it can be representative of something that should have been there,

considered to be exemplary of this bridge between decay and intervention via a prop: meticulous skill is required to “fix” the object in order for sensitivity to be maintained, while making a worthy impact.

The proposed building is inevitably part of the urban context it finds itself in. This context forms part of the reason for the building being in decay. Similarly, the author believes that a prop (intervention) should, in some instances, form part of the building, and be visible as a part of it, not apart from it.

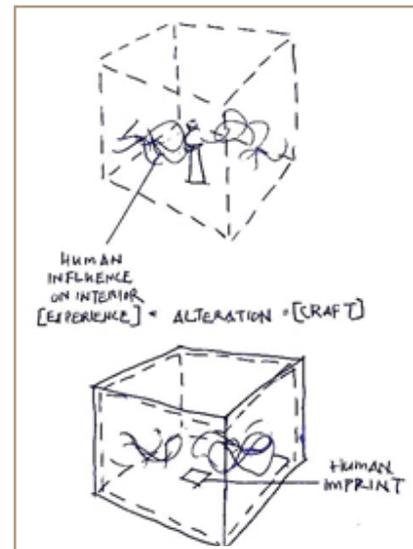


Figure 3.8: Craft interpreted in terms of phenomenology (Author, 2011).