

*Making matters: The hand of the artist
in contemporary South African sculpture*

by

ZELDA STROUD

11372860

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ABSTRACT

This research stems from the view that although the twenty-first century has witnessed a return to the skilfully crafted art object, many of these artworks are not made by the artists, but produced instead by fabricators and assistants according to the specifications of the artists. Some of these artists lack the relevant skills to produce any material portion of their artworks and, in addition, may have no interest in developing those particular skills, instead relying solely on the craftsmanship of others. I contend, in this study, that many valuable benefits, inherent in an artist's personal engagement with the material, are lost to the artist and the artwork, as well as to the viewer of the artwork, when the artwork is outsourced and produced by others.

My research, via questionnaires and an interpretative analysis of critical theory, argues that the act of personally making one's own work provides a number of psychological rewards to the artist, in addition to other advantages such as the development of a laboriously achieved signature style, enhanced creativity and the opportunity to exploit serendipity. Supplementary to this, four South African sculptors, who conceive of and make their own work, have provided their individual insights into the experience and value of personal art-making. My individual experience, as a sculptor of both personal and commissioned works, forms a significant aspect of the study due to my familiarity with the 'hands-on' experience of making, the need to outsource larger work, and in addition, deadlines which require the type of digital assistance which, arguably, creates a further loss of connection between the artist and the artwork. An examination of the perceived value of skills in general, and skilled art-making in particular, contributes to my research's call for a return to the employment of both the artist's head and hand in the creation of art in general, and sculpture in particular.

This research contributes to an existing body of knowledge that argues for a return to skill and a renewed appreciation of the value inherent in material contact with the artwork, in order to reduce the current tendency towards a disconnect between the artist and their work.

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

Zelda Stroud

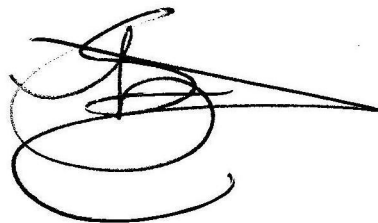
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Declaration

1. I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the University's policy in this regard.
2. I declare that this dissertation is my own original work. Where other people's work has been used (either from a printed source, internet or any other source), this has been properly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with the requirements as stated in the University's plagiarism prevention policy.
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Signature



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and aims of study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the notion that the personal production or fabrication of a work of art has specific value to both the artist and the viewer. Matthew Crawford's *The Case for Working with Your Hands* (2009), an indictment of the devaluation of craftsmanship, formed the impetus for this investigation into the value of crafting one's own art. While Crawford's book is a combination of philosophical and academic argument as well as autobiography, it provides a background to, and critique of, post-industrial capitalism and the current nature of human work, arguing for a re-connection to the materiality of making.

The idea of the artist as the master of a particular skill or style, surrounded by apprentices who learn by emulating and participating in the production, predates the Renaissance. Skill was seen as essential for artistic creation.

In the 1994 publication, *The Art of the Maker*, Peter Dormer lamented the neglect of skill in the art of the latter part of the 20th century (later summarised in Lees-Maffei & Sandino, 2004:5):

The modern orthodoxy is that conception and execution are separate activities and the execution – mere making – can take care of itself. Skills are regarded as constraints upon self-expression and they are not recognised as being the content as well as the means of expression.

This has subsequently changed. Much contemporary sculpture, both in South Africa and abroad, currently display a high level of skill and craftsmanship and the viewer assumes that this work is produced by the artist. There is a tacit understanding that in the same manner that painters usually purchase their materials and have their works professionally framed, sculptors may have a foundry where they cast their bronze from the original clay or wax form or have assistants to do some of the cleaning or mould-making. This understanding usually presupposes that the creative work, whether conceptual or practical, is done by the artist. However, this is no longer so, and many artists rely on fabricators and studio assistants to physically produce their work while they focus on the ideas.

This research argues that there is value in the artist making their own work, and that personal making can be beneficial to both the artist and the viewer. While artistic creation entails the freedom to generate artworks in any manner that the artist deems appropriate, there is, in this research study, the appeal for honesty about the making process, as this knowledge affects the viewer's experience. While skill may be more important to some viewers than to others, this study suggests that it is nevertheless important for the viewer to know whether that the skill is that of the artist or that of the fabricator, as this could possibly influence the viewer's appreciation of the work. It could also affect the economic value of the work. It will be argued that 'making' involves actual physical contact with the materials, and accordingly, conception and design that does not include material contact, results in a different experience and different work.

1.1.1 Background to fabrication

Philosophical arguments around 'deskilling' in art and the role of the 'hand of the artist' have been prevalent since Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917), one of the first 'readymade' artworks. The term deskilling was originally used to express "a complex dialectical process by which virtuoso artistic technique was displaced or suppressed in order to draw attention to art's conceptual underpinnings" (Rodenbeck 2008:1). However, what changed radically in the 1960s, with the advent of Conceptual Art, is the attitude towards skill in object-making as a prerequisite for art making. Initially, this change took the form of deskilling, as the emphasis changed from object to concept. In 1981, the conceptual artist Ian Burns referred to the idea of deskilled art as a genre that devalues not only traditional skills but disciplined training itself; and that what was intended as a democratising process has led to a "dumbing down", and the loss of the body of accumulated knowledge that accompanies manual dexterity (Rodenbeck 2008:2).

Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been an increasing move in Europe towards well-crafted sculptural work in which skill and innovative concept are both apparent. According to Alistair Sooke, writing in 2009 (2), "[t]he brutality and cynical pessimism that characterised much of the output of the Young British Artists in the late

Eighties and Nineties is beginning to recede. The desire for work that displays craft and skill is reasserting itself”. Alice Pfeiffer (2011) echoes this observation in her claim that artisanal techniques, once looked down upon, are now making a resurgence and can be found in art galleries and art fairs, particularly in Europe. This applies not only to art but is reflected in the current trend, both internationally and in South Africa, towards the appreciation of ‘artisanal’ products. Bruce Stirling (2011), the futurist writer, suggests that the online, personal craft market, Etsy, provides an outlet for handicraft that “stands out more sharply now, against the gaudy background of modern high-tech production”.

While the appreciation of craftsmanship¹, in general, is gaining favour (Hayes 2010), it is less known to the public and the art community that much of the artwork, in the sphere of sculpture, in particular, is produced by professional fabricators and skilled craftsmen, and there is often no involvement from the artist other than a sketch of the final product required (Petry 2012; Saunders, 1993). Julie Hanus (2011:1) observes that “... in recent years, the fine art world has returned to a ‘highly crafted aesthetic’ and in many cases, is relying on craft artists and/or artisans to realize it”. There is a desire to produce work that requires skill, but it appears increasingly as though there is little or no interest in acquiring that skill. Michael Petry, author of *The Art of Not Making*, states in an interview that “... artists ... feel they have ... the freedom not to have (specialised) skills, but to work in a directorial way ...” (Hanus 2011:2). It is the artists’ skill in conceptualising as well as managing and delegating, that is on display; not their skill in ‘making’. Raphael Rubenstein’s *Art in America* article (2007): ‘Art schools: a group crit’, airs the debate in art schools about new skill sets such as marketing and managing that need to be developed to prepare young artists for the contemporary art world.

In spite of the current prevalence of artists who work in a more directorial manner, galleries and art dealers are largely reluctant to prominently credit the fabricators and to reveal that the artist conceived and managed the work but was not involved in its production (Saunders 1993:15; Sesser 2011:2). Many galleries only make the information available to those who specifically ask (Sesser 2011:2). It appears that many artists themselves also want “to protect the layman’s ideal of the lone heroic

¹ Although some of the terms in this research may be gender-biased, for the sake of expedience, the most commonly used terms have been used.

sculptor struggling with the material” (Saunders 1993:5), and are less than honest about the use of assistants. Assistants/fabricators are often obliged to remain anonymous regarding their production of the artist’s work (Steinhauer 2014:[sp]; Anonymous 2013; Saunders 1993).

In 2012, a debate was sparked in the media in Britain after it was reported that David Hockney had commented on his own paintings being “made by the artist himself, personally” (Duggan 2012:1). This was seen as a veiled criticism of Damien Hirst’s factory-like process. The effect of this debate has been to inform the public, who have generally assumed that the work is the unadulterated, direct expression of the artist’s feelings via the manipulation of the materials, of the change in much artistic process.

According to Petry (2012:introduction[sp]), Roland Barthes’ declaration of “the death of the author” in 1969 has been seen by some artists “as a liberation from the tasks of production”, especially if notions of authorship are protected regardless of who makes the actual work. Many artists now work from offices in the manner of architects and film directors and ‘manage’ the fabrication of their work, freely admitting:

... there’s nothing I can do particularly well. But one thing I can do is use the Yellow Pages – I can find people to act as my hands, and as the better part of my mind.

Vito Acconci (Saunders 1993:26)

I have an active mind, but I haven’t always been so good at making things, so I’d get something made, or printed, by somebody else. It was a response to the skills or lack of skills that I have.

Micah Lexier (Petry 2012:[sp])

Although there are many artists who have embraced the freedom to ‘not’ make their own work, there are many others for whom the personal production of their art remains imperative. The reasons for this are numerous, varied, and sometimes difficult for artists to articulate as anything other than a personal need to be hands-on in the actual forming of their work.

An assistant who worked for Jasper Johns talked of the artist’s ‘integrity’ in doing all the work himself; and that the purpose of the assistant was to do everything other than the work (Saunders 1993:7-8). This notion of integrity in art-making and exhibiting

comprises part of the core issue of this research. It could be argued that the return to the skilfully crafted art object reflects a corresponding return to contemporary art as commodity and financial investment, despite the attempts by many artists to subvert this ‘commodification’ of art through art forms such as performance and ‘new media’. The skilfully ‘manufactured’ sculptures of artists such as Jeff Koons (Figure 1), has led artists such as Paul Vanstone (Glaister 2012:3), a sculptor and former stone-carver for other artists, to reflect: “One thing that has changed with fabrication is that a lot of the artworks are like executive toys. They’re just so controlled. In my own work I look for more of a dialogue.”



Figure 1: Jeff Koons, *Hulk (Organ)*, 2004–14, polychromed bronze and mixed media, 252.7 × 127.6 × 80.3 cm. (Bent 2014:[sp]).

Soaring prices and the market demand for contemporary art is spurring artists to make much more extensive use of assistants, but the art world is not in total agreement on the

practice, with many collectors putting a premium on works “executed by the artist’s own hand” and some galleries turning down work where the artist has made use of a fabricator (Sesser 2011:2).

This debate regarding the value of making, and the perception that managing and facilitation is a form of making and creating by remote control, has current relevance in a society that is increasingly becoming separated from the material world. Handwork is meaningful to those who practice it as well as for “those who need an antidote to the alienation of modern society” (Metcalf 2000:8). According to Crawford (2009:37) “wherever the separation of thinking from doing has been achieved, it has been responsible for the degradation of work”.

In an article reflecting on the current renaissance of craft activity amongst artists, architects and designers, Janet Abrams (2011:1) speculates that the cause may be the result of our digital lives where “the manipulation of physical things seems to have receded, replaced by good simulations or visualisations, which may satisfy the eye and the mind but leave us feeling strangely amputated” with a hankering for knowledge through physical contact, because the “haptic has given way to the optic”.

The perceived loss of physical skills and their devaluation is lamented by both the public and governments throughout the world (Lerman 2013:5, Hayes 2010) and this research is an investigation into an aspect of this phenomenon affecting both the global art world and contemporary South African sculpture.

1.2 Central arguments

This research argues that, for the artist, there are valuable physical and psychological benefits inherent in the personal production of artworks that cannot be experienced if the work is delegated to assistants or outsourced. In addition, the viewer, who participates in the creation of the meaning of the artwork, experiences the work differently when aware of the artist’s involvement in the creative process. The stated premise is therefore that personal artistic control over material manipulation is valuable to both the production and appreciation of the work.

There is compelling evidence to suggest that ‘believers in making’ may have support for their arguments from a variety of spheres including science (David Galenson), psychology (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi), the social sciences (Vlad Glaveanu), and even politics (John Hayes).

Additionally, this research argues that, unlike in film and architecture, there has been an unspoken understanding in the art world that unless the work is a ‘readymade’ or an openly proclaimed collaborative project, the creative hand of the artist is present in the work. While the practice of using fabricators has become acceptable to many galleries and artists, it is the researcher’s contention that to protect the economic value of the work and the reputation of the artist, there is an attempt by many galleries, as well as artists, to conceal the lack of physical involvement by the artist in the artwork (Hanus 2011:2).

The critic, Edward Cone (1979:63), in his article on how to distinguish between art and ‘non-art’, states that “in his everyday life as a person, an Artist, like everyone else, is a *doer*; the results are *acts*. As an Artist, he is a *maker*; he produces *works*” (Cone 1979:63, emphasis in original). “To the artist, art is a verb” (Bayles & Orland 1993:90).

This research investigates the motivations of artists who want to be ‘makers’ and produce ‘works’, through the examination of international trends as well as selected examples of South African sculpture.

1.3 Methodology

This research takes the form of an exhibition of creative work (largely sculptural – some of it hand-crafted and some produced by other means such as casting, waterjet-cutting and CNCing), a catalogue and a framing document (or mini-dissertation).

The investigation into the value of making in contemporary South African sculpture is contextualised within psychoanalytical approaches to creativity and discourse around the role and identity of the artist. Arguments are situated within the context of the influence of the professional art market and to a limited extent within the Art/Craft debate. The discourse concerning ‘postart’, which according to the historian and art

critic, Donald Kuspit (2004:167), undervalues both humanness and the “humanising potential of art”, also forms part of the framework for this research.

This study follows a qualitative research approach. The qualitative component takes the form of a review of relevant literature and the application of theories to selected visual examples. Four South African sculptors, Walter Oltmann, Paul Edmunds, Wim Botha and Guy du Toit, have been selected in support of these arguments within the South African context. Research conducted via questionnaires completed by these artists, is used to legitimise these arguments. In addition, unstructured interviews with fabricators, artists and exhibition viewers augment the discussion. My experiences as a sculptor of both private work and commissions provide a personal perspective to some of the arguments.

Much of the most valuable source material for this dissertation takes the form of academic journal articles on creativity, cognitive theory and economics, as well as articles in art, craft, literature and pedagogic journals. Other sources include numerous articles in newspapers and magazines highlighting the debate regarding the extensive, non-credited use of assistants, blogs on the same subject over the past year or two, as well as Wayne Saunders’ interviews with various American artists in earlier article “Making Art, Making Artists” (1993).

1.4 Literature review

John Roberts’ *Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art after the Readymade* (2007) explores the relationship between productive labour and artistic labour and the possibilities of authorship, skill and the absence of skill in contemporary art. He also investigates the fetishist status of the unique, “unreproducible artwork” and the “sensuous immediacy of [its] labour” as the site where “the capitalist value-form is contested” (2007:31). Effectively, Roberts argues that the nomination and transformation of found objects represented a procedural and intellectual response by artists to the “increasing socialization of labour” (Roberts 2007:23), and that deskilling led to a change in the ‘use-value’ of art. Roberts (2007:28) also investigates the idea of

the artist as productive or unproductive labourer in light of both enrichments provided to the gallery as well as in the context of the artist's essential nature as art maker.

The Art of Not Making: The New Artist/Artisan Relationship (2012) by Michael Petry presents and reviews the work of a number of artists in the light of them being, according to Petry, largely the creators of the ideas while craftsmen are the manufacturers of the objects. Interviews with artists and fabricators constitute an interesting addendum to the first part of the book which deals briefly with the history and philosophy behind not making one's own work. The motivations and rationales of artists, who desire the physical product or art object as the physical manifestation of their idea, without much (or any) physical contact with it, form a large part of Petry's book. Statements by artists such as Maurizio Cattelan (Petry 2007:148) who emphasizes, "I absolutely never touch my works", present a valuable contrast to the central premise of this research.

Even though Sol LeWitt attempted to challenge the perception of drawing as directly from the artist by means of his 'drawings by instruction', the idea of drawings as representative of the unmediated hand of the artist, persists. Peter Steinhart's *The Undressed Art: Why We Draw* (2004), explores drawing as a form of self-knowledge and pleasurable immersion in materiality and meditation. Many of the benefits of drawing described by Steinhart and others in his book are echoed by sculptors who make their own labour intensive works. Many of these ideas are also emphasized in Tanya Kovats' *The Drawing Book. A Survey of Drawing: the Primary Means of Expression* (2006), and her argument that "drawing negotiates between the rational and the irrational minds, the intellectual and the instinctive, the head and the hand" (2006:201) applies equally to the physical process of making sculpture.

Donald Kuspit argues in *The End of Art* (2004:introduction[sp]), his controversial criticism of the 'postart' aesthetic, that cleverness has been elevated over creativity and art is at the service of the mind. He calls for a move away from the cynicism and creative superficiality of 'postart' which, according to him, has downplayed humanism and the unconscious. Kuspit describes himself as having unpopular values in a "psychoaesthetically indifferent and materialistic society" (Cole 2004:1). Many of these

issues still form an essential part of the ongoing debate regarding the value of art, and by extension art-making, in contemporary society.

David Bayles' and Ted Orland's *Art & Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking* (1993) and Peter Dormer's *Art of the Maker* (1994) have both proved invaluable in their observations on and investigations into motivation, process and reward in the actual making of art and Richard Sennett's *The Craftsman* (2008) has explored the psychic and social benefits of quality-driven work as a prototype for living a happy life.

The above-mentioned literature and research, as well numerous other articles from journals, is utilised in support of the exploration of arguments surrounding the social, physical and psychological benefits of skilled making, internationally and locally: in general life, in art, and in sculpture in particular.

CHAPTER TWO: SKILLS AND FABRICATION

This chapter provides background to the perceived value attached to skill, craft and craftsmanship in both general labour as well as in the art world. Opinions regarding ‘the hand’ as stimulation for the intellect are examined, and the conjectured return to the skillfully made art object and the use of fabricators is discussed.

In 2003, the artist Grayson Perry in his acceptance speech for the Turner Prize, noted that the art world found it easier to accept that he had a transvestite alter-ego personality rather than that he was a potter. From a high-profile position as the winner of an avant-garde art prize, Perry drew attention to the continued “institutional, perceptual and cultural distinctions between art and craft” (Lees-Maffei & Sandino 2004:2). For many in the artworld “iconoclastic aesthetic experimentation” has replaced craft skills (Lees-Maffei & Sandino 2004:5) and it has become unremarkable that there is an absence of palpable skills in contemporary art (Roberts 2010:77).

2.1 The value of skill and craftsmanship

The consideration of craft practice and craft consumption as an antidote to highly industrialised living had been recommended as early as the 1880’s with the British Arts and Crafts movement (Sennett 2008:178). The tangible elements of craft were thought to provide a remedy for “vague feelings of unreality, diminished autonomy and a fragmented sense of self” (Crawford 2009:29). Objects made by hand were thought to be spiritually uplifting (Lees-Maffei & Sandino 2004:3) and skilled making was effectively seen as a form of social therapy. By 1917, at about the time of the development of Henry Ford’s assembly line, funding was provided in the United States of America for an education system that severed the cognitive from the physical. Scholars were to be streamed into general education or vocational education, or in other words, white collar or blue collar (Crawford 2009:30-31). This was a form of institutionalised separation, splitting those deemed to be intellectual from those deemed more practical, not considering the possibility that one could, or should, be both. This trend was exacerbated by the large scale adoption of Taylorism² and Fordism³ which for

² Frederick Winslow Taylor’s *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911).

economic reasons advocated the ‘scientific management’ of craftsmanship and craft knowledge in industry, reducing skills to rules, laws and formulae which allowed for tasks to be broken up into smaller sections and allocated to workers as individual parts of a work process (Crawford 2009:39). Industry was made more profitable by optimising and simplifying tasks in a manner that allowed for unskilled workers to perform them. These unskilled workers could be paid less and were easily replaced. The makers/fabricators were separated from the conception of the work and creative decision-making. Objects were conceived by designers and then manufactured by ‘unthinking’ fabricators. Skilled workers found it difficult to remain economically competitive and many skills disappeared (Crawford 2009:39), to the point where, post-World War II, the skills and craftsmanship of earlier times were treated with contempt (Hayes 2010:[sp]). For Crawford, and others such as political economist Harry Braverman and labour activist Mike Cooley, “wherever the separation of thinking from doing has been achieved, it has been responsible for the degradation of work” (Crawford 2009:37). By contrast, one of the benefits of greater knowledge is that it provides freedom of choice (Dormer 1994:60) and therefore, by extension, the thorough knowledge of an entire process from conception to final execution could provide more options and opportunities and allow for greater autonomy.

White collar (knowledge) workers have, for the past century, at least, enjoyed greater social and financial prestige than blue collar (physical) workers (Sennett 2008:43), but in the current ‘wired’ world, where services can be provided via the internet, some writers argue that it is the physical workers whose jobs are becoming most secure, especially those jobs where physical and diagnostic skills are required simultaneously (Crawford 2009:162; Ruismäki & Juvonen 2006:110).

Crawford claims that the disappearance of tools from the average high school education anticipates a general ignorance of the workings of the materials and equipment we regularly use (2009:1). This ignorance has made us more passive, dependent and less manually competent. We now buy or replace what we would previously have made or repaired and this lack of manual competence implies a less spirited response to the world (Crawford, 2009:2). Others regret the shift away from “craft-centred materials

³ Henry Ford introduced the use of the assembly line for the production of vehicles in 1913.

based teaching” as craft came to be seen as having little value as an educational tool in the post-industrial information age. They hold that this view of craftsmanship as something outdated and expensive has its roots in an erroneous belief in the “wired nirvana of a virtual world” (Press & Cusworth 1997:12).

Many countries have, until recently, seen modern education as synonymous with pure technology and in consequence are currently beginning to experience a shortage of skilled industrial workers (Juvonen & Ruismäki 2006:110,114-115). The profile of ‘skill’ as a whole has been raised due to these shortages. A number of countries are starting to acknowledge the pending detrimental loss of a whole generation of manual workers, due for retirement, who have not passed on their tacit knowledge (Niedderer & Townsend 2011:4).

South Africa is experiencing its own shortage of skilled artisans and there is currently a government-sponsored drive to educate a new generation of artisans⁴, and we are not unique in this regard. An oral statement to the British parliament, by the MP John Hayes, in 2010, indicated a commitment by the British government to practically skill 75 000 new apprentices in order to spur economic growth and social upliftment (Hayes 2010:[sp]).⁵ To Hayes, the “power of the degree brand” which has elevated academic learning over practical learning has created “an aura of intellectual and social exclusivity” that is detrimental to both self-esteem and the economy. Practical skills have, ironically, proved to be more marketable than intellectual skills, and due to the current shortage the value of a practical skill lies in its scarcity (Hayes 2010:[sp]).

Sophisticated industrial skills add value to products and services and contribute to a more profitable, socially stable economy which is able to draw foreign business and create jobs while making the lives of individuals richer (Hayes 2010:[sp]). Hayes refers specifically to Ruskin’s Arts and Crafts movement, which “recognised the unbreakable link between satisfaction in work and quality of life” and which hankered, at the time, for “a period where ... skills were recognised, valued and freed to produce great art”. Hayes argues that modern society has underestimated the benefits to individuals of

⁴ A number of government-sponsored billboards throughout South Africa in January 2016 display the slogan “The decade of the artisan”.

⁵ Hayes advocates “a new Arts and Crafts movement for Britain in the 21st century”, “The age of the craftsman” (Hayes 2010:[sp]).

acquiring new practical skills, whether for work or leisure, and that the “dignity of labour” should be rejuvenated. He believes that the acquisition of practical skills through apprenticeships allows for the transmission of skill from one generation to the next, effectively providing “proof ... that learning by doing is just as demanding and praiseworthy as learning from a book”. He makes a case for the renewal of reverence for skill, craft and dexterity that will serve both the individual and national interest in Britain (Hayes 2010:[sp]).

Craft education (as distinct from an artisanal education) initially became outmoded in the 1970s as it was seen to be too expensive, too individualistic, too low-tech and effectively too unintellectual (Press & Cusworth 1997:14, Crawford 2009:1-2). When rationalising expenditure in education, craft disciplines were often the first to face cuts as they are resource-intensive and require workshops, materials, equipment and more staff hours. Skilling is a costly exercise, in spite of some art students, in particular, often “inconveniently” desiring to work with their hands (Schaechter 2014:[sp]). Craft education requires that one go deeply into something rather than receiving an assortment of ‘general’ skills and this costs money. Craftsmanship and a craft education entail some specialisation – “learning to do one thing really well ... through the accumulation of experience” (Crawford 2009:19-20) and until recently this was not highly valued in a society which places emphasis on variety rather than specialisation. According to Niedderer and Townsend (2011:4) “‘fast living’ and ‘flexible working’ discourages dedication to, and pride in, succeeding in a particular skilled activity”.

Craftsmanship requires technical and diagnostic judgement, an understanding of the material and its nature that can only be fully acquired through the ‘pragmatic engagement’ of visual, aural, tactile as well as language skills⁶ (Crawford 2009:25,21; Sennett 2008:277). “Making is thinking” (Schaechter 2014:[sp]). To become skilled at this form of thinking requires an investment of time, argues Janet Abrams (2011) referring to Daniel Levitan’s estimate that an investment of 10 000 hours of focussed practice is required to become an expert at anything. “Craft knowledge, ... acquired conciously and laboriously, achieves the status of a skill once it is taken for granted” by

⁶ Sennett refers to the technical instructions for the use of specific materials such as resins, rubbers and solvents.

the practitioner and then becomes simply a means to an end (Dormer 1994:20). Dormer differentiates between simple fabrication techniques and articulated craft knowledge, arguing that the former is a superficial application of simple techniques while the latter, tacit knowledge, is complex, internalised and hard-won, even for the talented (1994:39).

We are living in a society that has become increasingly deskilled. For a growing number of workers in the West, the possession and development of skills is not customary in their work lives and increasing numbers of workers are said to have been deskilled by globalisation in particular (Federico 2006). Young people, on average, have become less interested in physically working with their hands and prefer to work with computers and modern media (Ruismäki & Juvonen 2006:110). According to Federico (2006), we, as humans, have become less focussed on the acquisition of time-honed skills than on immediate gratification, in spite of the latter providing only temporary satisfaction.

Referring to Cooley and Braverman, who deplored the loss of skills and craftsmanship as early as the 1970s, Mike Press and Alison Cusworth (1997:14), writing in *The Design Journal*, contend that the educational and cultural significance of skill and craftsmanship has been underestimated. They are supported in this by Dormer (1994:8-9) who believes that handicraft in art is undervalued and neglected to the point where a tradition of making and thinking-through-making may be lost, and with it some valuable aspects of Western cultural knowledge. Essentially, Press and Cusworth argue, the craftsperson has an intimate knowledge of the character of tools and materials – an understanding of processes that enable problems to be overcome. Craft knowledge is achieved and transferred through the use of all the senses (Press & Cusworth 1997:15), and because this knowledge is often one of sight and touch, it is sometimes difficult for the craftsperson to articulate. Craftsmanship is knowledge that is learned through experience and is best conveyed through demonstration and for this reason language, while useful to the craftsperson, is inadequate as a means of communicating craft knowledge and skill (Dormer 1994:7).

This inability to formalise the information textually is often mistaken for “a lack of knowledge and an inability to rationalise actions”. Craft knowledge is seen as non-intellectual and ‘dumb’ in spite of evidence that creative work relies on tacit knowledge gained through experience and risk-taking (Press and Cusworth 1997:15). “Experts

learn to perceive things that are invisible to novices”, they make good judgements based on “repeated confrontations with real things ... in a manner that may be incapable of explicit articulation” (Crawford 2009:168-169).

There is a “charm of competence” – a belief in knowledge from book learning – that relies on the assumption that one can understand something without being fully involved. This is a form of superficial knowledge that is different from the tacit knowledge/craft knowledge and intuitive judgement that comes from recognising patterns. The ability to recognise patterns as well as structures and potential is gained from previous physical and intellectual immersion in a task (Crawford 2009:166, Dormer 1994:22-23), an understanding that relies on intuition rather than intellect. Dormer states: “You cannot understand it or know it until you can do it. Reading about it is not the same as understanding it” (Dormer 1994:42; Hayes 2010:[sp]). Tacit knowledge requires an investment of time and physical effort. It resides in individual people, as it cannot be preserved and transferred, except through demonstration and application. It is disciplined knowledge that has been internalised by the craftsman (Dormer 1994:13-19). While a designer may superficially understand a particular technique or material he/she would be unlikely to fully anticipate either the potential or the pitfalls. In spite of being held in higher regard than the craftsman, the designer would usually specify a goal (via a drawing) and then be guided by the craftsman regarding the process. As Dormer states, “we are in the hands of the practitioners and the doers” (1994:14).

What is particularly valuable about skill and craftsmanship is its ownership by the craftsperson. Tacit knowledge, once internalised, “cannot be taken away and becomes a massive addition to the individual’s life” (Dormer 1994:103) There is ‘a definite professional advantage to learning a craft’ that provides one with an eternally valuable, tangible skill (Pfeiffer 2011:3). Knowing ‘how’ is more valuable and enriching than knowing ‘of’, and knowing ‘how’ requires positive participation in a world of experience rather than the passive absorption of information (Dormer 1994:103).

Craft knowledge has been perceived by some as a threat to creative expression, and it has been argued that the physically skilled artist, beguiled by the need to demonstrate their skill, will neglect the concept or idea (Dormer 1994:8). Dormer has identified a

number of prejudices regarding craft knowledge/skill, namely that craft knowledge is “merely mechanical”; that it can be learned as and when required; that it is rule-based and rule-bound and this conflicts with creativity; that it is about forming habits and these also conflict with creativity; and last, that it is separate from aesthetic judgement and conceptual ideas (Dormer 1994:8).

He emphasises that practical knowledge is in no way like book learning which, he argues, is available on demand. Expertise requires years of application and it finally expresses itself in spontaneity. The spontaneity and fluency in the work of an expert is something we all respect, but it is based on disciplined practice. We admire the spontaneous freedom that comes from knowledge and confidence (Dormer 1994:65).

2.2 Skill and virtuosity

For Dennis Dutton, in *The Art Instinct*, our appreciation for skill and talent is an adaptation stemming from sexual selection based upon natural selection. In a period when survival was reliant on wit and wisdom as well as strength, beautiful artefacts required special creative and intellectual efforts to create, demonstrating patience, care and superior thinking (2009: 157,163,175). We remain like our ancestors in our admiration for high skill and virtuosity (Dutton 2009:243; Hayes 2010:[sp]). The making of an exceptional object or the execution of an exceptional performance requires, and is a demonstration of, specialised skills and our admiration of these skills is not just intellectual, but can be an emotionally moving experience (Dutton 2009:53). There is a sense of awe at a display of special skill and painstaking exertion. The complexity of virtuosity and highly skilled making suggests an element of risk, whether of time or materials, that evokes admiration for the audacity of the maker (Dormer 1994:92). Judith Schaechter, in a lecture titled “Kill Skill”, presented at Maryland Institute College of Art in February 2014, argues that it “is preposterous not to value skill [as] it has undeniable practical value”. The skill of athletes is admired, rewarded and even worshipped, and yet, skill in artists is derided (Schaechter 2014:[sp]). The popularity of television programmes such as *Strictly Come Dancing* and *Masterchef*, as well as televised sport, also demonstrate the public interest in watching the demonstration of practical skill.

Traditionally, skill, style, and accomplishment were all values that were admired in art, and the extensions of these into creations that are “among the most opulent, extravagant, glittering and spendthrift celebrations of the human mind”, suggests that art making and its appreciation is an important instinctual need (Dutton, 2009:136). Viewers show great admiration for work that is labour intensive (Schaechter 2014:[sp]). “The arts squander brain power, physical effort, time and precious resources” (Dutton 2009:136) and perhaps, in this extravagance, lies some of its value. In referring to handmade objects Dutton emphasises that “the sense of an object’s cost, and, therefore, its beauty, is increased also by an awareness of a slow, painstaking means of production”. He bemoans the lack of admiration of skill and craftsmanship that he believes is the result of contemporary art-theoretical thinking (2009:158). Dormer argues that the skill has been neglected because of an emphasis on the individuality of expression (1994:40-41). He further claims that art has been appropriated by intellectuals who have initially downgraded the skill element, and thereafter separated creativity from skill by arguing that skill stifles creativity and artistic freedom (Dormer 1994:65). There is little recognition within the art world that skill can be “the content as well as the means of expression” in an artwork (Dormer 1994:7).

According to the anti-*avant-garde* writer and art critic, Peter Fuller, we have gained many advantages through the social, technological and political advances of our society, but there are also things we have lost, and these become apparent when we are confronted with consummate labour-intensive craftsmanship (in Lees-Maffei & Sandino 2004:4). There is a connection between skill and beauty that lifts the human spirit (Dormer 1994:97). For Dutton (2009:1):

Artworks are the most complex and diverse of human achievements, creations of free human will and conscious execution. Art-making requires rational choice, intuitive talent, and the highest levels of learned, not innate, skills.”

Skill builds upon talent and learning a skill is only the beginning of becoming fluent. The long journey to becoming skilled is an emotional, intellectual and physical process and not simply a mechanical activity (Dormer 1994:40).

To the ancient Greeks ‘ars’ and ‘techne’ meant the same thing – they were versions of skill associated with craftsmanship (Ingold 2001:17). It was only during the

Renaissance that the artist was separated from the artisan or skilled craftsman, and art and technical skill have only been antithetical for the past century (Ingold 2001:17). Craft was debased to a mechanical execution of a predetermined design, and art was elevated to “the creative exercise of the imagination” (Ingold 2001:17,18). According to Barolsky (1995:5), it was around C.E.1500 that the term ‘artist’s *hand*’ came into popular use when referring to authenticity, originality and artistic style.

Ingold indicates that there are a number of issues that are crucial to the appreciation of technical skills. Amongst these, first, that ‘practice’ implies the use of tools and the body; second, that there is a “synergy of human being, tool and raw material”, and third, that skilled practice “entails qualities of care, judgement and dexterity” as well as feeling and observation by the practitioner while he/she works (Ingold 2001:21). Sensory corrections are a necessary response to constant monitoring while working. A skilled practitioner’s engagement with their material is ‘attentive’ rather than merely ‘mechanical’ and this allows for change from the original design or plan (Ingold 2001:21,22). Skilled practice is not merely the creation of complex objects, but the development of complex processes (Ingold 2001:220). When applied to art-making, it becomes clear that skilled practice requires the immersion of the artist in the entire process of making, both physically and intellectually, necessitating constant monitoring and evaluation.

This idea regarding the need for flexibility during skilled making is not new. The distinction between art and craft put forward by the philosopher R. G. Collingwood in the 1930s relies on the argument that the craftsman knows in advance what the end product will look like. Art, on the other hand, while also requiring skill and technique, allows for a “partial or complete change of direction or goal” an openness to the unexpected (Dutton 2009:227-228). Bayles and Orland contend that the imagination is in control when one begins making an art object but eventually technique and craft take over and uncertainty about the final outcome is, essentially, what keeps the imagination engaged (1993:15). Uncertainty is the crucial, unavoidable and ubiquitous companion to making art (Bayles & Orland 1993:21). Dutton, in his interpretation of Kant’s arguments regarding art and beauty, argues that a work of art is “an object of

contemplation ... that makes up its own problems and supplies its own solutions ... it cannot be cranked out according to a routine or plan” (2009:229).

If the skilled artist uses head and hand in synchronicity, this raises questions about the nature of the art produced by fabricators. The fabricator is likely to be producing work according to a sketch or plan and is unlikely to have the freedom to deviate from the plan. The artist who is not a maker and would like his/her specific idea realised by a fabricator, invariably provides a drawing of the completed work – effectively a design to be manufactured in much the same way as any other commercial product. By contrast, Richard Sennett, in *The Craftsman*, writes that the “good craftsman understands the importance of a sketch”, a rough idea for a working procedure that prevents “premature closure” (2008:262) unlike a resolved drawing or design. Sennett also lists some other attributes of a ‘good’ craftsman, including placing a “positive value on contingency and constraint”; avoiding the perfectionism that can lead to the mere showing-off of skill; and also knowing when to stop working even if the work is seemingly incomplete when compared to the original intention (Sennett 2008:262-263). These are all ideas which seem closer to thoughtful, intuitive art-making than to mechanical craftsmanship.

David Pye, in his book *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*⁷, refers to the “workmanship of risk” and the “workmanship of certainty”, the latter of which accounts for work when the result is exactly predetermined (Pye 1995:20). For Pye the workmanship of certainty is driven by speed of production and he differentiates between industry and art by saying that: “(n)early everything in the museum has been made by the workmanship of risk, most things in the store by the workmanship of certainty” (Pye 1995:20). By this yardstick, art that is designed by the artist and made by fabricators is produced by the workmanship of certainty and is, essentially, a commodity like any other.

Craftsmanship, based on painstaking application of knowledge has been denigrated in favour of a portfolio of superficial skills, eroding the belief that it is acceptable to do one thing really well (Sennett 2008:265). “(S)kill is a trained practice” that is seen to be

⁷ Originally published in 1968, the book is currently in its second edition and sixth reprint (2010).

in contrast to “the sudden inspiration” (Sennett 2008:37). The notion of inspiration lies in the conviction that if one has raw talent, training is not necessary. However, research shows that skill and practice provide more *eureka* moments and also supports the idea that the very rhythm of problem-solving and problem-finding that builds and expands skills, also provides the opportunities for the *eureka* moments of inspiration (Sennett 2008:38).

Intelligent making, according to Press and Cusworth (1997:16), requires a combination of physical skills, intellectual skills, as well as creative autonomy, innovation and contextual awareness. For them, the “dumbing of craft” has resulted from a “culturally constructed hierarchy” with regard to mind and body, where linguistic and mathematical intelligence is valued above intelligence that relies in any way on the body.

The opposition between thinking and doing originated with Plato and resulted in the proposition of a mind/body dualism. Descartes’ more recent support for the dualism of mind and body has resulted its general acceptance within Western philosophy, and thus in the promotion of the separation of intellectual from manual labour (Ingold 2001:18). Reason (or the mind) is respected and we experience a form of “body dysmorphia, (where) we’re afraid of anything below our head(s)” (Schaechter 2014:[sp]). For Donald Kuspit there is a marked preference within the art world for ‘intellectual expression’ over ‘animal expression’ (Cole 2004:1)⁸, as though the body consists of a baser material. There is a distrust for the body and by extension for any act of making that relies on the body, with the result that Western thought ultimately fails to value the labour of the hand (Press & Cusworth 1997:26; Sennett 2008: 295).

And yet, Crawford quotes the ancient philosopher, Anaxagoras, as saying: “It is by having hands that man is the most intelligent of all animals”, reasoning that the use of tools is a fundamental part of our human interaction with the world. There is a deeper knowledge that comes from handling tools and materials that cannot be gained in any other way (2009:68-69). It is the opposable thumb and resultant precision of movement that has made humans capable of sustained labour (Roberts 2007:90). Humans are able to use tools in a ‘socially’ conscious way to transform their environments, and they are

⁸ These terms were originally coined by Marcel Duchamp (Cole 2004:3).

also able to use tools to manufacture other tools. The manipulative capacity of the hand has been linked to human linguistic and cognitive development as well as the development of abstract thought (Roberts 2007:90).

Thus, imagination and self-consciousness were intrinsically linked to the precision and manipulative capacity of the hand. Creativity and concept were fundamentally connected to the use of tools. In many societies those who are able to use their hands skillfully are seen as “clever and able to survive in different situations”, with the ability to creatively solve problems (Ruismäki & Juvonen). Interestingly, Ruskin, amongst others, believed that we are born with an inherent ability to become skilled, and current biology upholds this idea (Sennett 2008:275). Advances in neurology enable us to map the location and scope of an innate talent for craftsmanship in the brain, indicating effectively that the brain, and not only the hand, is responsible for skill and craftsmanship (Sennett 2008:275-276; Metcalf 2000:3-4). In addition, research by Alexander Schlegel, Prescott Alexander and Sergey V Fogelson *et al* (2015) has shown that the skill that results from art practice actually re-wires the brain (also Metcalf 2009:3).

2.3 Deskillling

Capitalism, through the separation of mind and body, is said to have stripped the artisan of status as well as his/her autonomy (Roberts 2007:17), and also to have stripped the artist of his/her traditional, broad-spectrum skills. Under advanced capitalism, issues regarding the copying or replication of art have led to debates within modernism, the avant-garde and postmodernism, about the nature of artistic skill. The separation between mind and body in the making of art could be said to have reached its nadir in the readymade. The readymade led to the twentieth century “displacement of the link between handcraft and skill” (Roberts 2007:2). Within the avant-garde artworld, craftsmanship became dissociated from art with the result that the notion of authorship

was questioned. Authorship, according to Roberts (2007:2), has come to include the “non-artistic hands of others”, technological skills and executive artistic skills.⁹

This displacement of the link between handcraft and skill has led to deskilling. According to Roberts, deskilling is the result of the expressive accord between the hand and eye being disregarded because art had become infinitely reproducible. Artistic skills were increasingly demonstrated through conceptual acuity and the artist’s labour became “immaterial production”. The artist was no longer seen as “self-confirming ‘creator’” and instead became an organiser and manipulator of existing signs and objects (Roberts 2007:9). Thus, the artist was, in principle physically deskilled by the readymade, with its attendant focus on concept over form, and the emphasis was placed instead on intellectual skills. For Ingold (2001:29), the divisions between ‘design’ and ‘implementation’, are so deeply ingrained in contemporary Western society that they seem immovable. We currently imagine that the practical application of any task simply “entails the mechanical application of a set of operational principles” with little integration between the mind and the hand (Ingold 2001:29).

Although the practice was begun at least twenty years earlier, the term ‘deskilling’ was first used in Britain during the Second World War to describe the increased use of unskilled labour in factories (Rodenbeck 2007:86). It was characterised by increased mechanisation, the decline in craftsmanship and the separation of physical and intellectual work. Deskilling has had the effect of disenfranchising workers who are dispensable, thereby alienating individuals from the products of their labour (Rodenbeck 2007:86). To the extent that some, like Schaechter, argue that “deskilling is a class issue” (2014:[sp]).

The term ‘deskilling’ has migrated from economics and industry to the arts and “somehow mutated from something that was a cost-saving technological development into a mandate that art be about the spirit and the intellect and not about showing how clever one is with one’s hands” (Schaechter 2014:[sp]). Schaechter maintains that “we should resist deskilling in general, not just the arts, because it makes us dumber and

⁹ This last, a euphemism for management skills, is perhaps one of the more valuable skills required by contemporary artists who choose to have their art made by others.

lazier” and that any culture that seriously considers deskilling should consider the cognitive impact (2014:[sp]). She claims that there are three major costs to deskilling (Schaechter 2014:[sp]):

We personally lose the knowledge of how to make things and we lose knowledge on a grander scale if we outsource it as a society. (T)his leads to a descending cascade of consequences ending in a loss of freedom-of-choice.

We forget that we ever could do things and deprive ourselves of an entire domain of creativity. Freedom-of-choice is about opportunities we develop for ourselves.

When we deskill we empower those who can make things.

Many artists have become knowledge workers, separated from their manual skills, and their complex labour reduced to simple labour (Roberts 2007:42). Within Marxist theory, this deskilling, or stripping down of labour from complex to simple is necessary for “the extraction of surplus-value” within the capitalist system. The productive worker’s combination of knowledge and accumulated skill is a barrier to profit which thrives on the division of labour (Roberts 2007:42). “Work that engages the human capacities as fully as possible ... goes against the central imperative of capitalism, which assiduously parts thinking from doing” (Crawford:2009:52).

For some, resistance to profit lies in the sharing of knowledge about making. Within the ‘maker’ community there are, according to futurist Bruce Stirling, ‘maker maestros’ who sacrifice “money for meaning, for mattering” (2011:16)¹⁰ and are willing to freely share their knowledge regarding forms of making. The Internet and Etsy abound with free instructions for makers of all kinds. “Makerism” thrives on “niches of non-commercial enthusiasts” (Stirling 2011:15) who have embraced the opportunity to gain skill and knowledge through the physical manipulation of materials in spite of (or perhaps because of) the ever-present digital world (Abrams 2011).

For Roberts (2007:52-53), Duchamp’s readymades were partly an attempt to question the place of art under industrial capitalism by emphasising the conceptual underpinnings of art. The readymades, such as *Fountain* (1917) (Figure 2), are regarded as Duchamp’s

¹⁰ These mavens who are intent on subverting capitalism through sharing their skills exist not only within the traditional craft community, but also within the digital world. Linux, the open-source operating system is an example (Stirling 2011:16).

seminal works, but his later return to personally crafted works in *The Large Glass* (1915-1923) and *E'tant données* (1946-1966) demonstrated that artistic labour should be seen as a combination of “technology, technique, and artistic subjectivity” (Roberts 2007:55). Roberts claims that Duchamp’s early contempt for ‘the hand of the artist’ was exchanged in his work *The Green Box* (1934) for a realisation that “the hand, touch (and) sensuous manipulation” are as necessary for the work as the immaterial and intellectual.

The readymade raised issues regarding authorship as well as the non-artistic division of labour, pointing to the role played by non-artists in the production of a work of art (2007:56-57). In the case of a bronze sculpture, this would include the foundry workers and others who have traditionally remained anonymous. In the case of painting, this would include the peripheral support such as canvas stretchers and framers. In the case of the readymade, the labour of the non-artist fabricator is placed centre stage.



Figure 2: Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917. Urinal. (Pictify. Sa)

Theoretically, conceptual art, largely stripped of the traditional art object, was less vulnerable to the profitable division of labour which requires a marketable resource.

Some artists have resisted attempts at commodification through genres such as performance art and community-based collaborative installations. The resurgence of interest in the ‘beautiful art object’ (Sooke 2009) has allowed for the return of the highly marketable product, as in the work of artists such as Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst. The contemporary artist has consistently been seen as the epitome of individual autonomy and as a nonalienated producer (Rodenbeck 2007:86), but, with the increasing use of fabricators, perhaps the alienation from the artist from his/her labour has already taken place. The artistic act has become a mode of surrogacy (Roberts 2010:84). The extensive use of assistants and fabricators amongst many contemporary artists has resulted in the division of labour into the ‘artist as conceiver’ and the ‘artisan as executor’, theoretically placing contemporary art within the realm of ‘simple labour’, open to capitalist exploitation. Capitalism has produced the “general diminishment of all-round human creative powers in the interests of narrowly-defined categories of productive labour and free creativity” (Roberts 2010:86). Art, which Marx saw as immune to the law of value and therefore free from exploitation as labour, has been subsumed by capitalism.

For Judith Rodenbeck, in a 2007 article entitled *Hands off: Deskilling adapted for the 21st century*, where the term deskilling once referred to the questioning of “authorship and the commodity status of art, the term has morphed into academic shorthand for perfunctory or outsourced execution” (2007:84). Deskilling as a strategy was used by conceptual artists in the 1960s to divest themselves of the need to produce unique objects as part of the gallery and patronage systems.

Deskilling has not only changed the production of art by the artist but has also changed the appreciation of art by the viewer. For Dutton (2009:59) conceptual works such as Duchamp’s *Fountain* are socially exclusive in that their appreciation requires some knowledge of art history or theory. Art is therefore removed from the realm of appreciation by the masses as there is no physical or representational skill to be admired and so appreciation is restricted to the initiated. It may therefore be argued that there is something undemocratic and elitist in work that emphasises the concept over the well-crafted object, and deskilling has also become a class issue for the viewer.

2.4 Novelty and creativity

“Art is valued, and praised, for its novelty, creativity, originality, and capacity to surprise its audience” (Dutton 2009:54). Individuality or genius in art is currently located in creativity and novelty (Dutton 2009:54), to the extent that any artistic work that implies rules, routines or labour, has been construed by some as suppressing creativity. Traditional skills and craft processes are regarded by many as value-laden and outmoded (MacDonald 2009:3). As a result, “many contemporary artists move from discipline to discipline ... without acquiring much of the knowledge that once distinguished such disciplines” (Dormer 1994:31). Craftsmanship, by contrast, calls for objective standards and specialisation, not for salesmanship and novelty (Crawford 2009:18-19). Dutton (2009:240) regrets “the decline of great art in cynical, ironic ages such as our own” and Donald Kuspit, verbal on the decline of art, comments: “Looking new means looking good, and being taken seriously, at least as long as the art continues to seem new”, arguing that there is a constant hunger for freshness and a “ceaseless production of art novelties that barely satisfies the jaded taste for the new” (2011:239). “Entertainment value and commercial panache are valued more highly than artistic ability or aesthetic worth” (Cole 2004:2). For Kuspit, Guy Debord and others, we are living in a society awed by spectacle and novelty. “There is almost a degree of neurosis about being (and being seen to be) unique” (Dormer 1994:7).

Lee Martin and Nick Wilson, in an article for the *International Journal of Talent Development and Creativity*, argue that while creativity has often been perceived as novelty that has value (2014:35) definitions around creativity need to be revised so that ‘discovery’ is at the core. For Dustin Staiger, a business coach focusing on creativity (2006), much of what is perceived as creativity is merely ‘cleverness’, characterised by its ability to distract, entertain and inform. He argues for recognition of the difference between cleverness and creativity, proposing that by contrast with the ‘attention-seeking’ nucleus of cleverness, ‘creativity is purpose-centred’ and concerned with forming and sustaining. This argument is supported by other motivators within the American art community, such as Milenko Matanovic, who reasons that creativity has become confused with innovation and is currently seen as that which is “original, new, hip, clever and daring” (Silton 2013:[sp]). To Matanovic the “deeper mission of the artist is to discern connections, heal people and illuminate the invisible” and that art

needs to become more creative and less clever (Silton 2013:[sp]). For Kuspit we are living in a ‘postart’ era, characterised by a failure of true creativity. “Postart is art that is at the service of the mind and the product of joyless, ‘clever, clever’ theorising” including “a tendency to mock posterity” (Cole 2004:2).

A successful artist understands the “tacit prejudices and orthodoxies of the day” and an artist desiring the recognition and respect of their peers would be “unwilling to differ from the dominant ideology of their chosen profession”. As a result, the orthodoxy of modernism, which argues that technique is merely the execution of an idea and not the catalyst for an idea, remains entrenched (Dormer 1995:27, 26). Within the artistic community “there is no nostalgia for lost skills, artisanal creative all-roundedness” and other apparently outdated humanist beliefs (Roberts 2010:86,88).

The sensationalism in much contemporary art, and the move towards performance, installation and video art is, according to Dormer (1994:25) a predictable response to a society that is increasingly consumerist and media-oriented. Traditional art forms such as sculpture and painting are seen by some as “too static, too slow or too mute to appeal to artists living in a world where a commonplace television commercial can convey a complete mini-drama in forty-five (sic) seconds” (Dormer 1994:25). Current video technology allows for relatively unskilled artists to express their ideas and opinions directly and effectively, allowing young artists to establish a personal style quickly in response to a “fast changing art world”, ceaselessly searching for novelty (Dormer 1994:26). Thus, the status of tacit knowledge declined sharply in the art world after conceptualism as it is was deemed to have little intrinsic value for the artist who would derive greater benefit from linguistic, philosophical and purely visual skills (Dormer 1994:25-28). While Dormer supports new media, performance and other contemporary genres, he feels concern over the the art world prejudice against the practically skilled artist, who links intention and expression through his/her own handicraft.

Others, such as the outspoken art critic Brian Sewell (2012:[sp]), are less sympathetic:

It is all very well to argue that art must be disassociated from the skills of art, but to disassociate so far that the skills become disreputable, their exercise clear proof that the practitioner is *not* an artist, results in visual mayhem. (emphasis added).

Robert Storr (Rubinstein 2007:41), the art critic and academic, maintains that artists “find their mediums as need and experience dictate”, learning to use new tools when motivated to do so. He disagrees that “technology has eclipsed the handmade” or that “people opt for cameras because they can’t draw”, suggesting instead that we are currently dealing with two distinct visual cultures: one driven by drawing and the other by digital skills. Many artists are comfortable with both means of making and manipulating images (Rubinstein 2007:41), and this may be the case, but by implication they, themselves, are doing the manipulation and not outsourcing the work to a third party or fabricator.

Scanning and rapid prototyping (CNCing and 3d printing) are being used more and more by sculptors who feel the need to speed up production and pursue different options without risking the original work. These options are used by artists such as well-known French sculptor, Xavier Veilhan¹¹, who (amongst his other works) scans celebrity figures and produces various versions of a sculpture in different scales and colours by means of rapid prototyping (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Xavier Veilhan, *Lee “Scratch” Perry*, 2015. Aluminium-charged resin, height 76cm. (Swanson 2015:[sp]).

¹¹ Veilhan’s work is represented in the Pompidou.

According to one of Veilhan's assistants, the artist is not a skilled portrait sculptor (ref Arques 17/01/2015), and his conceptual process is seldom much more than the application of a different colour or computerised process. There is a schizophrenic quality to Veilhan's work, a seeming inability to work through and exhaust a particular direction, arguably a sculptural lack of focus where nothing seems to hold the artist's attention for long enough to explore fully before moving on. Picasso, arguably one of the greatest artists of the 20th century, constantly changed his style and technique, apparently as the result of feeling that he had fully explored a particular direction (Nead 1995). Picasso, however, was also highly skilled and exceptionally prolific, exploiting the notion of artistic genius and believing in the investment of time and energy in the development of skill. This is very different from selecting a particular overlay/application from a selection in a computer programme. As Crawford has argued, "choosing is not creating, however much 'creativity' is invoked in such marketing" (2009: 68).

2.5 Renewed esteem for skilled art

Janet Abrams, in a 2011 article with the title "Craft: A Return to the Hand", considers "the renaissance of craft currently occurring among artists, architects," and others. For Abrams, this "speaks to a universal longing for the tactile and the real" (2011:[sp]). Where in the past craft was generally regarded as the "forbidden other" (something to be avoided as an artist), craft and craftsmanship were, by 2011, being rehabilitated in a number of high-profile exhibitions throughout Europe and the United States of America (USA). The snobbery against craftsmanship was fading as the art world showed a renewed interest in the beautifully crafted art object (Pfeiffer 2011:3). Some galleries have become increasingly interested in manual techniques, especially those used in a novel manner, and countries such as France have been making efforts to preserve and promote their traditional craft and its application in a 'modern' way (Pfeiffer 2011:2-3). According to Sooke (2009:3), this shift in taste has come about because artists "react against the generations of artists that precede them" creating art-historical trends that are essentially cyclical. However, this renewed esteem for the beautifully crafted artwork has not necessarily translated into renewed esteem for the skilled artist.

Michael Petry, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in London, in an interview with Julie Hanus about his book *The Art of Not Making*, highlights the return to a “highly crafted aesthetic” amongst fine artists (Hanus 2011:[sp]), many of whom rely on craft artists or artisans to produce their work. Classic craft mediums such as glass are being used in a fine art context. Petry feels that in his own work, where he makes use of blown glass which has been produced by others, he has an understanding of the material on an intellectual level but has no desire to develop the skill to blow glass as he understands how difficult it is. Petry contends that he makes his own art “in the general sense”, in that it is produced in his studio under his supervision (Hanus 2011:[sp]). He claims that many artists, while interested in expressing their ideas by means of well-crafted objects, feel that they have the freedom to “garner and gather those skills” in the form of skilled fabricators to produce the objects. In response to this trend, Schaechter comments that it is an issue of labour and management: “Why bother with a skill when it’s ok to get assistants to do that part for you Presumably this frees up the artist to do the juicy part, the conceiving part, and who doesn’t want to conceive all day long” (2014:[sp]).

For Petry “the imagination of the artists is expanding in a new way – with new materials, new methods of presentation” (Hanus 2011:[sp]). As Petry makes clear in the title of his book, these artists are *not* ‘makers’. They realise their works through the skilled labour of others, basing their selection of materials and techniques on, what is arguably, a superficial knowledge of the inherent possibilities or problems. Some of these artists have a concept or idea that needs to be made visible and they may have no physical contact with the work at all until it is placed on exhibition. Sooke (2009:2), in his article on the resurgence of interest in beautiful art, includes Anish Kapoor amongst his examples of artists who focus on flawless execution and notes that some of Kapoor’s work at his retrospective in London in 2009 took the ‘artist’ “10 years to finesse, such was the state of perfection he was hoping to achieve”. A fabricator who has worked for Anish Kapoor has spoken of the frustration of working for artists who

don't understand the technical constraints of the materials used to produce their designs and also make no site visits to examine the work in progress.¹²

Within the art world there currently appears to be a general redistribution of skills, as in industry (Dormer 1994:28). While the designers (artists or knowledge workers) conceive of the idea, craft knowledge is being partitioned amongst specialised fabricators and subcontractors as well as the hardware and software of computers and machines. Craft knowledge has essentially become fragmented and atomised (Dormer 1994:28-29) in much the same manner as within the Taylorist model found in industry. For Dormer the notion of artists making use of a variety of fragmented skills of fabricators is effectively a form of production line with the artist as designer who has an attendant loss of control over the creation once it is relinquished to production (Dormer 1994:30). Art has become yet another industry where it is acceptable to design and delegate for assembly-line production by those who have practical skills but no conceptual input (Dormer 1994:30-31).

Petry maintains that because the dialogue within the art world operates on a conceptual level, artists who craft their own work are in competition with non-makers, installation artists and with young graduates actively marketing their conceptual skills. There is an implied threat that artists who make their own work are facing obsolescence partly due to the move to art as large-scale spectacle, and partly because of the move to what has been called the “new academicism of much current museum and saleroom art” (Hanus 2011:[sp]). Maker-artists may find themselves either being sidelined or, in fact, being employed by prolific ‘directorial’ artists who have more currently relevant marketing skills.

A number of articles and discussions in various forums have raised concerns regarding the fabrication of art by others. An online magazine, based in the USA, called *Fabrication*, described its mission as follows (Fabrication 2011:[sp]):¹³

- to create and promote discourse surrounding the problems art faces in the so-called post-skill or post-studio era.

¹² This information was derived from casual conversation in Paris in January 2015 with a fabricator who prefers to remain anonymous.

¹³ *Fabrication* online magazine was, however, short-lived and is no longer published.

- to honor (sic) artists who make their own work, fostering a DIY ethic in contemporary artmaking.
- to critique the widespread outsourcing of artistic labor (sic) to professional fabricators.
- to question the privileging of concepts over craft and sensory content in the critical assessment of artistic skill.
- to explore the impact of materials and fabrication on past, present, and future artistic practice.

Many artists, including those whose own work relies on traditional techniques, argue that the use of fabricators and assistants creates an unfair advantage for artists such as Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst: “Most of us can’t afford – nor approve of – having an entire factory of workers” (Bianca Argimon in Pfeiffer 2011:1).

With over 120 assistants, an artist such as Koons is accused of “art-directing his brand of products as opposed to creating works of art”. (Dahl 2010:[sp]). For some the factory-like process of Koons, with the attendant perfection of the works, “leaves a bitter aftertaste” as the work appears machine-made and, lacking the artists’ personal touch, is devoid of emotion (Dahl 2010:[sp]). Koon’s assistants are micromanaged and he arguably uses them as tools in much the same manner as paintbrushes or computers. He is fully in control of his vision, but many argue that his works are “overinflated commodities for the culturally elite” (Dahl 2010:[sp]), art reduced to luxury merchandise.

Hirst has also been criticised for employing “a full studio of artists-for-hire to work the brushes”. The assistants “are expected to bring their knowledge to the studio, not learn it in the studio”, so comparisons with Renaissance studios where the assistants learnt from the master are spurious (B.K. 2012:[sp]).

Zahner, a large-scale engineering firm in the USA, which originally engineered and fabricated elements for architects such as Frank Gehry, has seen the potential in the art market and opened a division known as ‘Hands of the Artist’. According to Zahner’s website everything from the budget to the installation can be left to them and their years of engineering experience (from the late 1800s), ensuring “that your project succeeds, and that you do too”. Zahner currently specialises in ‘ideas’, as well as metals and the advancement of artist’s careers (Zahner [sa]) leading to questions about the exact role of the artist in the work.

CHAPTER THREE: DEBATING SKILLS WITHIN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

This chapter serves to contextualise the debate regarding general skills, as well as artistic skills, within the South African context, in order to illustrate the idea that even though there are elements of ‘South Africanisms’ within the art, South Africa still belongs to the ‘global village’.¹⁴

The dearth of suitably skilled workers and the challenges within South Africa’s education system are said to have negatively affected South Africa’s economic prospects. It may be argued that the separation of ‘head’ and ‘hand’ within the realm of the South African artisan has contributed to these problems. The loss of workers who are simultaneously skilled in both the conception and execution of projects is a source of concern in both the USA and Britain, as previously discussed, as well as in South Africa

The nature of globalisation and its effect on South Africa and its culture is considered in the light of the apparent hegemony of the cultures of the USA and Europe. The effect of a South African culture of resistance and its possible response to global influence is considered, as is the opportunity within the local art/heritage environment to create more practically skilled sculptors, and a larger art viewing public, with the assistance of The National Heritage Project (NHP).

Finally, the work of four selected South African artists, who prefer to make their own work and minimise the use of fabricators and assistants, is examined in order to contextualise their experience of art making within the arguments presented.

3.1 Skills in South Africa

Jeffy Mukora, in a chapter on artisans in the Human Sciences Research Council publication *Skills Shortages in South Africa: Case Studies of Key Professions* published in 2009, argues that employers continue to report that there is a shortage of skilled artisans in South Africa. In spite of artisans having completed their studies at public and private Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, they do not have the necessary

¹⁴ A phrase coined by Marshall McLuhan in 1964.

skills for the workplace as they have a theoretical understanding of the work but limited practical experience or skills. “Workshop training and workshop experience are crucial to vocational preparation” as these teach “situation-specific competence” (Mukora 2009:238). A change in the training programme from a seven year apprenticeship to a two year learnership programme has ensured that workers are able to use one or two machines, but do not “attain the all-round knowledge and skill offered by the old apprenticeship system” (Mukora 2009:242).

This shortage in South Africa of artisans with all-round useful skills has come about partly as an attempt to train workers for “a more modern economy” (Mukora 2009:243):

There did not appear to be an appreciation of the value of the artisan, whose role had become intrinsically linked with the old apartheid system. Instead there appeared to be an unrealistic assumption that traditional artisan (sic) skills would not be required in the new economy, which would require ‘smart skills’.

This has resulted in an oversupply of workers with the theoretical skills and a shortage of those with the requisite practical skills, leading to both unemployment and slower economic growth. (Mukora 2009:243-244).

South Africa is not unique in this regard. Numerous governments around the world lament the loss of skilled workers, notably the British Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning. In his address to the Royal Society of Arts in 2010, “*The craft so long to lerne*”: *Skills and their place in modern Britain*, John Hayes argues for the continued promotion of the teaching and learning of practical skills in Britain, as well as an attempt to elevate the status of craftsmen.

Stephanie Allais, in a 2011 conference paper, considers the notion of ‘skill’ in the South African context and the construction of a policy for South African skills development through an examination of two research studies into the policies of wealthy capitalist countries regarding skilled work. According to her research, the German model differentiates between training for an occupation and training for employment. Training for an occupation requires vocational training “designed to develop the ability to act autonomously and competently within an occupational field”. “Students are expected to develop a high level of autonomy, an understanding of the entire work process and of the wider industry, and an integration of manual and intellectual tasks” (Allais 2011:6).

This requires training that is different from that needed to make a candidate merely employable. By contrast, the Anglo-Saxon model allows for shorter periods of training to create a “market of qualifications” where workers are employed for their skill for the job at hand and “intellectual functions (planning, coordinating, evaluating, controlling) are sharply separated from execution” (Allais 2011:7). This leads to a casual and fragmented task-oriented situation where the focus is on outsourcing and subcontracting with little opportunity for wider competency. This fragmenting removes any aspect of personal ability, or skill, from an operation (Allais 2011:9) as the worker is not in control of the whole, but merely executing a component thereof.

Within the South African context, as a country, rich in resources, there is a need for manufacturing entrepreneurship, which arguably requires the autonomy and competency noted in the German model. Small businesses are likely to benefit more when there is greater control and therefore less of a separation between intellectual and executive functions in the business. This need for skill is not restricted to the manufacturing sector, but needs to be embraced within the cultural economy as an additional contribution to South Africa’s economic stability.

3.2 South African art and artists

3.2.1 *Globalisation – the influence of Europe and the USA*

In contrast with popular culture, with its more mainstream focus, ‘high culture’ is seen as playing the role of the cultural *avant garde*. According to Buchholz (2005), fine arts, in particular, shows a high degree of globalisation, often with less nation-specific characteristics than popular culture. With the centres of art production and the networks of artists, critics, curators and dealers located in New York, London, Paris and Berlin, the cultural influence of those hubs on the rest of the art world cannot be overlooked (Buchholz 2005).

South Africa does not exist in a vacuum. It is part of the global village and its art, in spite of possessing local flavour, is inevitably influenced by the trends prevalent in Europe and the USA.

3.2.2 Globalisation – South African art

Khwezi Gule, in a discussion in Sophie Perryer's *10 Years 100 Artists: Art in a Democratic South Africa* argues that a "cornucopia of consumer products" as well as the internet have theoretically provided all the benefits of globalisation, but simultaneously, globalisation has also encouraged cultural uniformity rather than diversity (2004:6). Perryer writes that coincidental with South Africa's emergence from apartheid in 1994, the international art world began to provide increased visibility to non-Western artists in the form of exhibitions themed around global inclusivity (2004:6). This benefitted a number of South African artists who were able to become part of what Gule calls "the global (read European/American) art elite" (Perryer 2004:6). He argues that despite European culture co-opting a variety of non-Western "aesthetic and curatorial codes", the overriding discourse has remained European because of geography and economics (Perryer 2004:7). Colin Richards, in the same discussion, posits that the reality of apartheid resistance has given South African artists a sceptical attitude towards globalisation (Perryer 2004:7). In support of this argument, Gule calls for a "more robust engagement with the impact of globalisation" and suggests that South African artists need to negotiate their own responses to global trends or risk being swept away by forces beyond our control (Perryer 2004:9). Bearing in mind these cautions, the global trend towards fabrication and assistants arguably needs to be considered within South Africa in the light of local circumstances, and not followed blindly because it is easier or faster.

Focusing on social responsibility and cultural resistance within South Africa, Frank Ledimo questions the lack of growth in a local black art-audience, saying that South African artists and curators have not "worked out a way to make the ordinary man in the street consume our art" (Perryer 2004:8). Following on from this discussion, what can perhaps be learned from our exposure to the global art world, is the need to develop our cultural economy and encourage the growth of an art-viewing public in South Africa.

The National Heritage Project (NHP), a private initiative begun in 2012, has the aim, with funding from The National Lottery, The Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Arts and Culture, to create a series of almost four hundred life-size realistic bronze sculptures. These sculptures are being commissioned to honour unsung

South African heroes who contributed to its democracy. Currently more than 50 figures have been sculpted by various South African artists and these have been cast in bronze in various South African foundries.¹⁵ While criticism may be levelled at these works because of their realism and adherence to a Western formula of heritage portraiture, the sculpture project forms part of a heritage and entertainment park to be created as a recreational and tourist venue at Fountains Valley in Pretoria. Amongst the aims of this project is to create national pride and to make this sculpture park inclusive and available to the average South African who has not, until this point, formed part of the art viewing public.

What has become clear on this project, however, is the need for skilled sculptors who are able to realistically portray these ‘struggle heroes’. A mentorship program (effectively a short apprenticeship) has been established to provide guidance to black sculptors, as the artists thus far have been predominantly white. This is presumably because many of the artists are older and have received formal sculpture training which, in the past, often entailed the acquisition of skill in portraiture and representational art. In addition, the mentorship program has been extended to include a student project in the sculpture department at Tshwane University of Technology designed to develop the portraiture and other technical skills that would be advantageous to both the NHP as well to as the students.

The NHP’s inclusion of what is likely to be perceived by the public as both art and heritage, within a recreational environment, may go some way towards enabling the novice South African art viewer to perceive sculpture as ‘skilled labour’ and a valuable asset to our cultural economy.

3.3 South African sculptors who are makers.

Four South African sculptors have been selected for discussion, largely because of their work process. The labour and level of personal involvement in the making process is clearly communicated in the obsessive nature of the work of Walter Oltmann and Paul

¹⁵ The author of this paper is currently involved in this project, having sculpted five of the fifty-six figures on display by the end of 2015.

Edmunds. Wim Botha was selected due to the figurative skills and virtuosity displayed in his works, with the assumption that this was less likely to be outsourced. Guy du Toit was selected as a result of discussions about his work process and his apparent need to be ‘hands on’ and in control of every aspect, from conception all the way through to bronze-casting and finishing.

3.3.1. *Walter Oltmann*

Walter Oltmann describes his artwork as “sculptural practice using the language of craft” (Oltmann 2012). His working method references local craft traditions in KwaZulu Natal where he grew up, but his work is also about the time and labour involved in physically crafting his work.

Oltmann’s work for his 2013 exhibition, *Penumbra*, was executed mainly in wire which is manipulated in a manner that emphasises the process of making. The hand-made process and the laborious nature of his work is a theme that has been carried over from much of Oltmann’s previous work. The meticulous process apparent in works such as *Child* (2013) (Figure 4), emphasises craft, labour and time and “slows down the experience of looking” (Penumbra 2013:1) as the viewers’ eyes follow the tracery of the wire.

There is a decided interest from the public in the actual process of making. As Oltmann (Penumbra 2013:1) says:

I’m often asked: ‘How long did it take you to make that?’ and I often introduce imagery that will resonate with this recognition of condensed temporality in the time spent on making.

The theme of time plays a role in Oltmann’s choice of subject matter; in this case, archaeological images such as skull and skeletons. The use of wire as a form of lacework (Figure 5) also references the time and labour of craftsmen/women and the gradual forming of an image or pattern over an extended period of time.

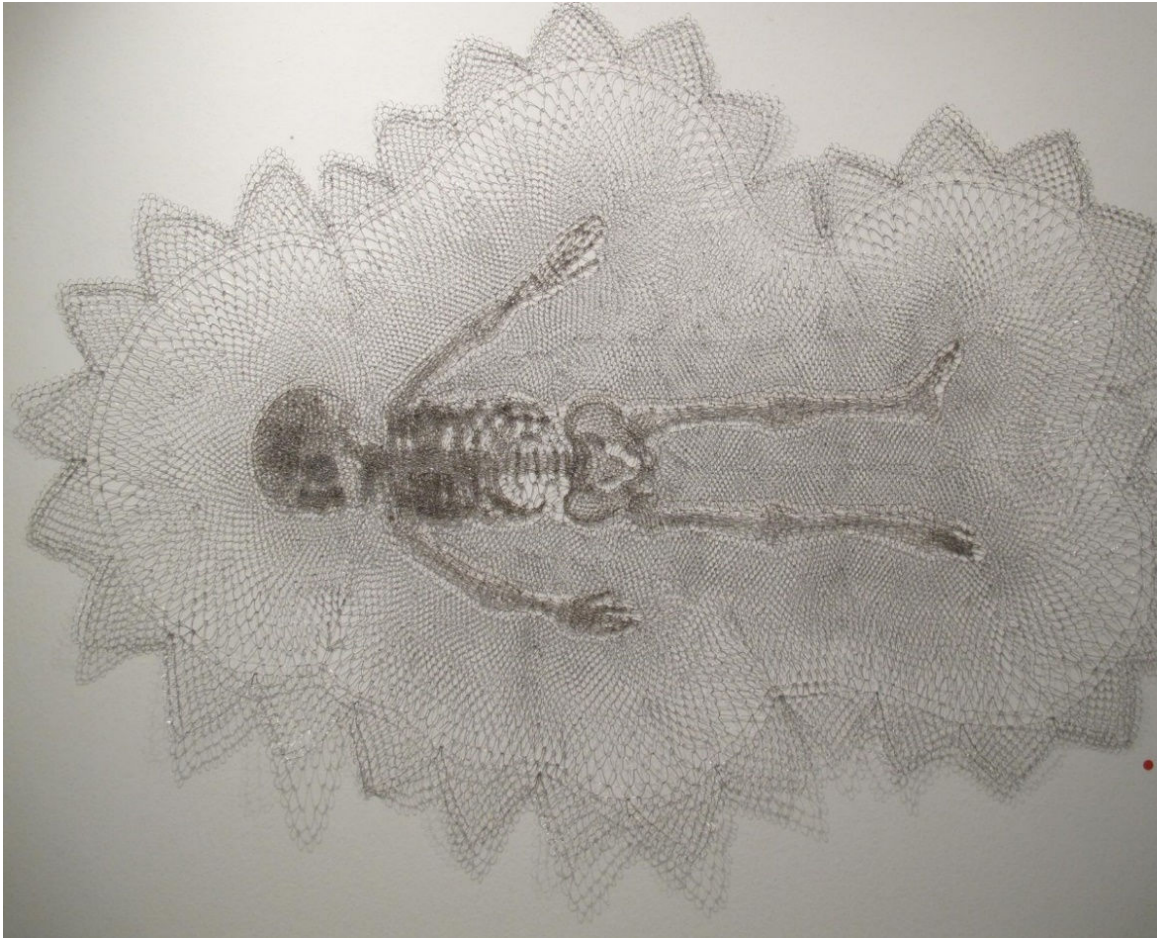


Figure 4. Walter Oltmann, *Child*, 2013, aluminium wire, 148 x 215cm. (Leiman 2013:[sp]).

There is a rhythm to Oltmann’s work that supports Sennett’s argument that for the skilled craftsman who has developed sophisticated hand skills, routine work can build an immensely satisfying pulse that extends the mind to the hand and eye (2008:175).

For Oltmann (2012) “craft is about the process of making and the joy of material exploration”, “the joy of making” (Krantz 2006:49). He feels that craft “is not a mindless activity of the hands” as has been asserted by many, instead craft is “infused with conceptual thinking – hand and head always work in tandem, they are not separate” (Oltmann 2012). Oltmann’s ideas often evolve while he is grappling with the material, so the making process actually provides an opportunity to discover new ideas

and find creative solutions to problems (2012, Appendix 1). As Oltmann states (Krantz 2006:48): “[t]hings happen on the way, as opposed to an idea being realised or mechanically produced”. The craft effort itself is allowed to direct the process and the final work.



Figure 5. Walter Oltmann, *Child* (detail), 2013, aluminium wire. (Leiman 2013:[sp]).

He refers specifically to the therapeutic value of art-making, the personal satisfaction derived from making art and also his interest in Csikszentmihalyi’s theories regarding ‘flow’, and the relationship between happiness and absorbed work (Appendix 1).

Oltmann's work appears to exude serenity, even when some works may have spiky elements. It appears as though the impression of slow, therapeutic wirework that the viewer observes in each artwork, has imbued that work with those same slow, rhythmic cadences. The work appears to reflect the artist's ideas, his experience of the process, as well as his measured, thoughtful personality. The work is an expression of Oltmann's understated, but obsessive, interaction with his signature material. He also acknowledges that he is fortunate in being represented by the Goodman Gallery who are sensitive to his time-consuming process (Appendix 1).

3.3.2 Paul Edmunds

In an interview with Clair Krantz in *Sculpture Magazine*, Paul Edmunds states that his work is "characterized (sic) by repetitive gestures and cumulative processes" (2006:48). Edmunds makes use of cheap industrial materials such as Styrofoam cups, nylon cable ties and plastic mesh to create abstract sculptural objects such as *Sieve* (Figure 6). These works are labour intensive and each takes an average of three months to complete (Krantz, 2006:50).

According to Edmunds (Krantz 2006:50), while he initially started by working with images he finally abandoned the notion of narrative in his work and "ended up with things that were the result of processes". His avowed focus is neither on theoretical discourse nor on content, but on the making process itself. For Edmunds, much of the enjoyment of making comes from problem-solving: "I enjoy the process of making work, but the most exciting part is finding ways to get around problems" (Krantz 2006:51). He suggests that many of the decisions about the structure of the works he makes are inevitable, partly because of the materials he has collected and partly because of what may be a subconscious desire to fill up the empty space with repetitive patterns and forms – a form of *horror vacui* which is an expression of his personality while in the process of making.

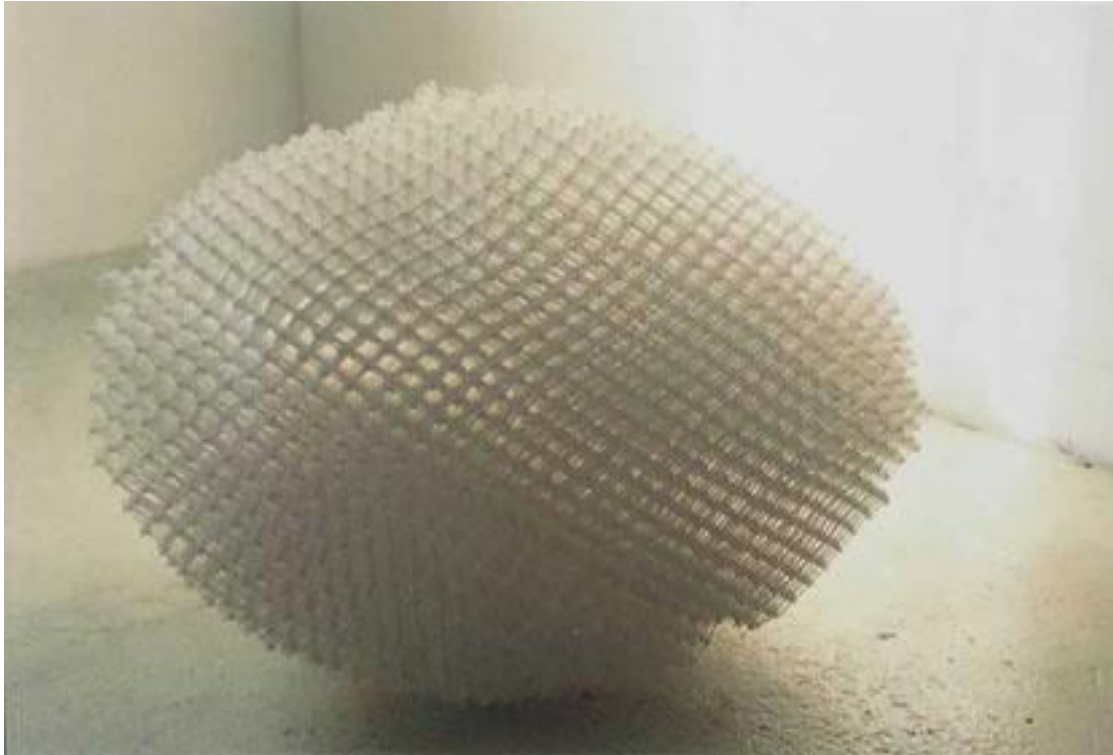


Figure 6. Paul Edmunds, *Sieve*, 2003. Polypropylene garden mesh, cable ties, 1200 x 1000 x 1000mm (Paul Edmunds [sa]).

Tracy Murinik, writing for ArtThrob, commented on the skill, physicality and the demonstration of “overwhelming discipline” apparent in Edmund’s work (2001). The process of making the work is highlighted by the typically “labour-intensive, crafted” appearance of the pieces. *Reef* (Figure 7) is an installation of precariously balanced, used polystyrene cups which still display residual traces of the drinks they once contained. These cups are covered with a total of approximately 75 000 arrows precisely hand-cut with a knife by Edmunds over an extended period of time (Figure 8) (Murinik 2001). Edmund’s work “celebrates (the) tangible reality” of physical objects (O’Toole 2004) and often displays what both Michael Stevenson and Tracy Murinik have referred to as a “painstaking” process which often appears to be obsessive and/or meditative as physical actions are countlessly repeated and constantly evaluated and re-evaluated. Edmunds’ work is an example of what Sennett (2008:177) refers to as ritual that results

from repetition, where the anticipation of the next action seems to create alertness for the artist, rather than boredom.

Essentially the “technical exercises and challenges” (Durban 2012) involved in making in different mediums, and thus the obligation to develop or master new techniques, has allowed Edmunds to constantly reinvent himself. In spite of the changes in materials and techniques, there is still a recognisable style to Edmund’s work, what the viewer recognises as a common thread. As Edmunds says: “(f)orms, interests and processes recur without any conscious intention on my part” (Durban 2012).



Figure 7: Paul Edmunds, Reef, 2001, Installation view (Murinik:2001).

Figure 8: Reef (detail) 2001. Polystyrene cups. (Durban:2012).

Edmunds emphasises that he has “learned to trust the process” of making his pieces and that he is a “little old-fashioned, in that (he) believe(s) in hard work” (Durban 2012). He also recognises what he has referred to as a form of “intellectual capital” which he has gained from learning a new technique while immersed in problem-solving with an untried material – a form of what he regards as an apprenticeship with himself, served while gaining experience over decades involved in the physical process of making. He

emphasises specifically (Durban 2012) that he only “gets to grips” with a particular technique while already part of the way through the process of making a particular work and that the accumulated knowledge (or skill) gained through the process provides opportunities to conceive works using a repertoire of skills added to over many years.

Because of his laborious process, Edmunds has a relatively small, intensive output of work. A solo exhibition will sometimes include only a few pieces. A show of such a small body of work could, according to {H} in *Art South Africa* (2007) be risky for the artist, curator and gallery, but may actually be “a powerful way to pitch art in a culture of overstimulation”. This small output emphasises time as an element in Edmunds’ work (H, 2007), communicating a sense of the weight of time through drawing attention to Edmunds’ personal, physical commitment to making and being absorbed in what is seen to be a laborious¹⁶ process.

Whether consciously intended or not, Edmunds draws our attention to the labour of art-making and the development of skill during that process. There is no split between head and hand – the work is the result of Edmunds’ immersion in the entire process with no division between conception and execution.

3.3.3 *Wim Botha*

Chad Rossouw, in a 2014 *ArtThrob* review, suggests that Wim Botha’s work illustrates the battle between subjectivity and objectivity, between romanticism and empiricism. For Rossouw, Botha’s work is both technically accomplished and authentic, while also being conceptually significant.

Botha works in a variety of materials ranging from bronze and marble, through wood and polystyrene, to resin and maize meal. His skill at working with these materials is significant, not least because much of the work relies on subtractive techniques which are more challenging and unforgiving than additive techniques. Subtractive work calls for constant focus and evaluation throughout the process as the removal of the material is permanent. Botha’s work explores themes of classicism, romanticism, humanism,

¹⁶ The negative connotations associated with the term “laborious” in this context are of interest.

iconoclasm and Afrikaanerdom. His earlier work was a more obvious display of his technical virtuosity as in *Mieliepap Pieta* (Figure 9), *Commune: Suspension of disbelief* (Figure 10) and *Generic Self Portrait as a Heretic* (Figure 11) and has become increasingly fragmented and discordant, as in his *Prism* series.

{H}, in *Art South Africa* (2009), comments that Botha's work eludes fixed interpretation and he uses his technical virtuosity as well as "the physicality of ... slashes and radiating lines and marks" to create work that is both enigmatic and subversive.



Figure 9: Wim Botha, *Mieliepap Pieta* (installation view, Cathedral of St John the Divine, New York). 2004. Maize meal, epoxy resin, life-size. Spier Collection, Cape Town. (Perryer, 2005:47).

While Botha (Appendix 3) makes use of assistants for the preparation of materials as well as bulk work and logistics, both the conceptual work as well as the final physical execution is his own, as it relies on ideas and gestures that would be difficult to outsource. “It is very much still a process in which forming and mark-making is quite central and determinant of the final appearance, and it is difficult to outsource the very thing that gives the work its character” (Botha 2012).



Figure 10: Wim Botha, *commune: suspension of disbelief*, 2001. Carved Bibles and Bible text, surveillance equipment, Scale 1.3:1, installation dimensions variable. Johannesburg Art Gallery Collection, Johannesburg. (Perryer, 2005:19).

For Botha (Appendix 3), gestural and forming skills improve during the process of making one’s own work and a unique, personal language is developed that would “be impossible to arrive at or simulate by another method”. The autonomy of the artwork is enhanced as the work is able to “play a part in its own creation” through “unexpected and fortuitous accidents” which happen in spite of the artist’s original intention. He argues that this is the primary reason for making one’s own work: “when others produce

for you it is a product of the mind, a vision projected in advance” without the work having a life of its own (Botha 2015).

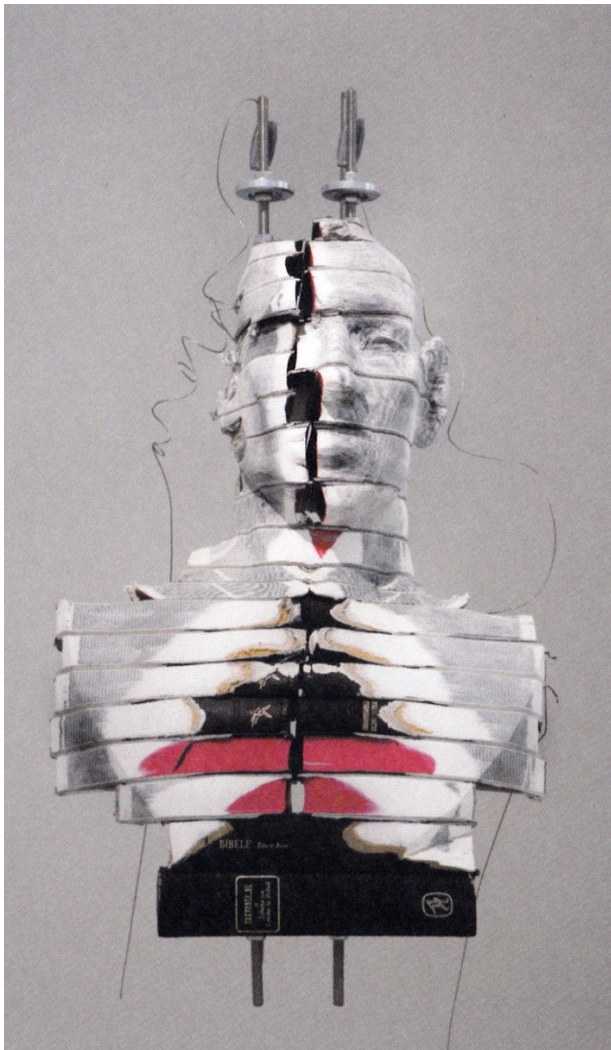


Figure 11: Wim Botha, *Self-portrait as a Heretic*, 2008. Bibles in indigenous languages, stainless steel, 53 x 37 x 23cm (Perryer, 2012:27).

While Botha believes that the value of an artwork does not depend on the artist’s hand, his own engagement with an artwork by another artist is more momentous when he knows that the work is a product of the artist rather than a fabricator. “(I)t carries significant conceptual weight when an artist believes in an idea enough to invest great amounts of physical labour or time” (Appendix 3). He qualifies this statement by adding that it is certainly possible for an artist to be highly engaged in producing a work without physical contact with it by directing the production process and thereby still allowing for the autonomy of the work and the opportunity for change.

3.3.4 Guy du Toit

Guy du Toit's work is characterised by both irreverent humour and process. As a sculptor whose studio includes a foundry dedicated to casting his own work in the traditional medium of bronze, du Toit's work occasionally touches on the age-old debate about art versus craft¹⁷ (Swanepoel, 2005:17). According to Pieter Swanepoel (2005:15), "Du Toit's work reveals that it is in *doing*, in the *practice* of the art, that we find the craft and that it is through the craft that we come to understand the art". For Du Toit (Appendix 4) one of the benefits derived from the physical practice of making is the "control of the process". "I make all the marks, all of the sculpture is mine" (Appendix 4), also indicates a sense of ownership of the process of making each work. Du Toit makes use of assistants for the foundry process but the use of assistants is restricted to purely practical functions such as casting, cleaning and assistance with mould-making, so that Du Toit is able to have a more fulfilling, directly personal relationship with each work through the making process (Appendix 4).

The artist, according to Du Toit (Appendix 4), has access to a number of tools, whether a hand file or a computer, and an assistant can be seen as yet another tool, depending on "the artist and the control he has of the tools". The notion of control extends to Du Toit's contention that with the "threat of 3-D printing, the human mark will become sought after. The forensic identity will make it human and special" (Appendix 4).



Figure 12. Guy du Toit, *Current Matters* (detail), 2004, Bronze, life-size. (Guy du Toit - Prince Albert Gallery website).

¹⁷ Du Toit is one of the sculptors on the National Heritage Project. He has, in collaboration with Egon Tania, sculpted and cast four life-size figures by the end of 2015.

The need to evaluate the process while immersed in it also forms part of Du Toit's art. He has occasionally, within his work, shown his interest in combining /juxtaposing the planned as well as the accidental results of the making process. This can be observed in *Current Matters* (2004) (Figures 12 and 13) a series of ten full-size bronze thumbs that began as the result of the accidental creation of a full thumb impression while making a mould for a different sculpture.



Figure 13. Guy du Toit, *Current Matters*, 2004. Bronze. (Guy du Toit - Map South Africa website).

Du Toit's interest in the thumb as a wry metaphor for identity, 'artistic genius' and craftsmanship reveals his belief that his "personal style (is) to a high degree reliant on craft" (Swanepoel 2005:19). Du Toit's emphasis on the creative process and the consideration of both art and craft as forming part of the same process is seen by Swanepoel as a means of drawing attention to the connection between concept and practice, in conjunction with "its potential to trigger theoretical debates". These debates in Du Toit's work are about the nature of artistic skill, craft versus art, artistic authorship and the role of serendipity.

Du Toit refers to the cast of his thumb as a 'found object' (Swanepoel 2005:20), but of a kind very different from the 'found objects' of Marcel Duchamp. The thumb that was 'found' by Du Toit during the physical process of making his own mould is also the very thumb that conveys dexterity and skill to the artist. Thus Du Toit demonstrates his

interest in the debates surrounding art, craft, skill and concept, and his questioning of the notion of the artist as the thinker and designer and the craftsman as the ‘doer and maker’ of the ideas of others. The separation of art and craft would, in this case, reduce the opportunity for the serendipity apparent in Du Toit’s work – Du Toit would not be making his own moulds (or own work) and therefore not be presented with the ‘happy accident’ of new ideas and new work that resulted from personal involvement in the making process. Du Toit actually refers to his work as being driven by labour more than by thought (Swanepoel 2005:27).

3.3.5 Common ground

These four sculptors were selected for this study chiefly because a variety of different sources suggested that they prefer to make their own work. While there are enormous differences between their artworks with regard to style and concept, there is much common ground between the artists themselves and their ideas about making, as their specific responses to the questionnaires show (Appendices 1-4).

Each of these artists is passionate about the actual process of making their work – not to the exclusion of the production of a finely crafted product – but, with the clear acknowledgement that both physical and intellectual absorption in the material is a pleasurable activity. Oltmann and Edmunds both regard the opportunity to labour for extended periods of time over their artwork, as a privilege granted by understanding galleries/curators.

All these artists specifically acknowledge and value the reciprocal relationship between themselves and the work, contending that this would not be possible if made by an assistant or fabricator. Even the struggle with a process or material is seen as a valuable exercise as it leads, according to Botha, to greater skill and visual acuity. For Oltmann, there is no room for an assistant in his working process, and only minimal use is made of logistical support for the occasional base/stand. Edmunds and Botha both occasionally make use of assistants/assistance for material preparation but prefer to do the actual work themselves because of the dialogue between themselves and the work. For all the artists there appears to be sense of the artwork having a life of its own that

calls for respect and collaboration. Opportunities need to be seized and future directions recognised when they arise during the working process. Du Toit pertinently states that control over every aspect of the work is important to him, and assistants are used for bronze-casting, studio management and “sweeping”. The ‘ownership’ of the work comes from direct engagement with the materiality of making.

While Edmunds and Botha are ambivalent about the need to formally credit assistants, both stating that the artist will know when assistance should be acknowledged, Oltmann and Du Toit believe that where the labour of an assistant is ‘foregrounded’ there needs to be some acknowledgement of that assistance.

All these artists recognise that public awareness of their personal engagement contributes to the value, the interpretation and the appreciation of their work. To my mind, a viewer who understands the artist’s laborious and dedicated process reads the work with the foreknowledge of the artist’s personal commitment to the realisation of their idea. It is inevitable that the recognition of that commitment contributes to the meaning of the work.

CHAPTER FOUR: WHY MAKING MATTERS

While it is difficult to draw a precise line between the physical and psychological with regard to the art-making process, this chapter details the physical benefits of art-making – one of the primary reasons why making one’s own work matters – particularly in sculpture. The distinction between that which manifests physically, and that which manifests emotionally and psychologically, is tenuous at best. Creativity theories (which rely on quantifiable outcomes) are examined in this chapter, despite the fact that these theories can be related to mental and emotional activities.

Theories that support the idea that creativity itself is enhanced by active engagement with the material, notably Nicole Gnezda’s (2011:47) theory of creativity as “a cognitive-emotional-manipulative experience”, Robert Solso’s investigation into the unique brain activity of practising artists (Peter Steinhart 2004:55) and case studies by Cathy Treadaway (2009:236) which show “the importance of making by hand, hand rendering and manipulative skill in the creative process” are examined. The action theory of creativity as put forward by Vlad Glaveanu, Todd Lubart, Nathalie Bonnardel, *et al* (2013) is also investigated.

The argument arises: if an artist’s work benefits or improves as a result of enhanced creativity then, by extension, the practices and habits that enhance creativity itself should increase the quality/efficacy of the work. Research into this argument is critically interrogated. Also of interest are supporters of the theory of intrinsic motivation, such as Teresa Amabile (2001:335), who suggests that creativity relies on discipline and passion, and not only on wit and intelligence.

The theory that the work has a life of its own and that the artist needs to work with the material in a manner that allows for reflection, change and constant re-evaluation, is not new. It forms part of the traditional romantic image of the sculptor. Paul Edmunds and Wim Botha regard their work as process oriented, and regard the reciprocity that comes from working directly with the material as essential to their work (Edmunds 2012/10/15; Botha 2012/10/16). Dormer (1994:56) refers to this as the “interdependency of content and process”. This posits the possibility that there is a form of collaboration between the artist and the work itself and “the unconsidered gesture, the

repeated phrasing, the automatic selection, the characteristic reaction to subject matter and materials – these are the very things we refer to as style ... an inevitability ... the natural consequence of habit” (Bayles & Orland: 1993). Effectively this means that the artist’s personality, habitual behaviour, impulsive and instinctive choices, as well as daily/hourly mood are all contributors to the artist’s style. A style that is based not only on the choice of subject matter and appearance, but on the material manner with which that subject is treated.

Many artists also refer to the ‘happy accident’ as an important part of their work, where, as in the case of Guy du Toit, an accidental thumb impression while mould-making has led to a whole series of works in which the relationship between art and craft is considered (Swanepoel 2005:17). “[A]ccident, cause and effect, reciprocity ..., possibility, and necessity”, form a part of the core of “pure concepts” that Emmanuelle Kant regards as fundamental to objective knowledge (Crowther 2010:100-11). According to Harry Jamieson (2008:77) perceptual skill is the “ability to detect and be aware of unfolding relationships, which might be by design or purely coincidental, a matter of serendipity”.

David Galenson’s (2009:8) research into the differences between ‘experimental’ innovators and ‘conceptual’ innovators is examined, especially his discussion of experimental innovation as an essential form of creativity in which “important new discoveries are the cumulative product of gradual and extended experimentation”.

The confidence that results from the familiarity with the material often leads to an increase in skill as a result of the artist’s desire to extend him/herself and thus the cycle is repeated.

Peter Steinhart (2004) in his book, *Drawing: The Undressed Art*, argues that we are living in a society that “increasingly denies and represses the senses”, and that according to Herbert Marcuse aesthetics originally meant ‘of the senses’ rather than ‘of reason’ (2004:198,197). The sensory experience of working with a material is in itself a form of knowledge – an understanding of the material and what can and cannot be done with it as explored by Wittgenstein as knowledge through experience (Dormer 1994:42).

Press and Cusworth (1997:16), who specifically examine craft education, argue that research shows that intelligent making comprises “formal knowledge, tacit knowledge, physical and mental skill, contextual awareness, innovation and personal creative autonomy” as well as “the exercise of judgement [and] skills in construction and presentation”. Creativity is seen as the means of providing creative solutions to problems through doing, making, as well as organising (Press & Cusworth 1997:21). The sculptor, Walter Oltmann (2012/10/17), feels very strongly that “[h]and-made fabrication, process and transformation of material underlies what [he does]” and that “ideas evolve through the labour and interaction with material”. The laborious practice of his sculptural work allows time for reflection and the consideration of future directions.

Creativity is a consequence of proficiency that comes from focussed repetition (Crawford 2009:5). As with practicing musical scales, creativity appears to come from dedicated tractability. The musician’s – and by implication the artist’s – power of expression stems from prior discipline, and from an ongoing submission to practice, where the instrument (or material) has its own stubborn ways that are understood and manipulated (Crawford 2009:64-65). This process of mastery requires time, focus and dedication, all of which are, arguably, in short supply within a society that demands instant gratification and the democratisation of talent. “Identifying creativity with freedom harmonises quite well with the culture of the new capitalism, in which the imperative of flexibility precludes dwelling on any task long enough to develop real competence” Crawford (2009:52).

4.1 Creativity – research into brain activity

Action theories of creativity are different from theories of creativity that deal purely with mental processes in that they deal with creative ‘work’ and, by extension, a creative product. Some theories support the idea that creativity itself is enhanced by active engagement with the material.

Amongst these theories is Nicole Gnezda’s (2011:47) theory of creativity as an experience that is composed of thought, emotion and the manipulation of material.

Creativity is cognitive because it involves mental processes that are active in the innovation and development of ideas. It is emotional because, according to Gnezda, and others, feelings are an integral part of the creative process. Creativity is manipulative in that it happens through ‘reciprocal action’ with a medium (2011:47).

Brain mapping studies support the idea that associations between disparate ideas, and the contemplation of multiple pieces of information, form part of creative thinking. As a result, artists are often seen as intuitive because of their ability to make connections and perceive underlying structures (Gnezda 2011:48).

Robert Solso’s 2001 investigation into the brain activities of a novice versus a skilled artist made use of fMRI scanning of the process of drawing a portrait. While the novice seemed to look at the features to copy them; the experienced artist, using a different part of the brain, seemed to “see beyond” the features. The skilled artist’s brain was shown to be active in the area of the brain associated with the “complex manipulation of visual forms, as well as with planning the fine motor responses of the hand” (2001:33).

Solso’s research supports the notion of the “efficiency of experts”, as less mental energy was spent on the processing of the purely visual. Instead, the energy was split between visual observation, intellectual processing, the planning of fine motor coordination and the actual motor functions (2001:34).

Subsequent research by Caren M. Walker, Ellen Winner, Lois Hetland, *et al* (2011:23), shows that the visualisation employed in problem-solving by artists, especially those who study skeletal and muscular anatomy, empowers them with a superior visual-spatial capacity that allows them to excel in mental rotation and visual memory. This, in turn, is shown to “confer an advantage for geometric reasoning”, establishing a cognitive link between the visual arts as physically practiced and certain branches of mathematics (Walker *et al* 2011:24).

Results compiled in 2014 after research conducted by Schlegel *et al* into the brain activity of students studying figure drawing over a period of time, shows that artistic training is a multifaceted process involving the development of both creative-cognitive and technical skills. The results show that, contrary to popular belief, artists do not

perceive the world differently, instead, they have the ability to translate perception into creative action (2015:448).

The part of the brain that showed increased activity and change (the prefrontal cortex), “plays an important role in creative behaviour and especially the creative work of an artist” and this suggests that the making of art assists in the production of more efficient processing pathways with resultant improvements in creative thinking (*et al* 2015:449). The research emphasises that art-making “must be developed through study and practice” (Schlegel *et al* 2015:450). In essence, the actual process of ‘making’ leads to improvements in creative ‘thinking’.

This argument is supported by Treadaway’s (2009:231) research into the manner in which digital technology influences creative practice. Her research raises a number of interesting observations about tactility, materiality and the general art-making process. According to Treadaway, there is research evidence that creative cognition is crucially reliant on materiality and physical experience, and she argues that artists have always been inspired, both practically and creatively, by bodily interaction with materials as well as with the physical properties of tools. Her case studies show “the importance of making by hand, hand rendering and manipulative skill in the creative process” (2009:236).

Treadaway (2009:231) contends that “creative processes are heavily reliant on our memories of physical experience” and that ‘new ideas’ are reliant on ‘stored information’ for their creation. It is the memories of previous physical experiences that are fundamental to the creative action of visual artists. Effectively, the parameters of ideation that are crucial for “critical decision-making processes” are defined by previous physical experience (Treadaway 2009:232). Stored physical experience is processed and filtered in the brain to provide sensory data that the artist is able to tap into (Treadaway 2009:233). Our sensory experiences create a ‘mental library’ of information that we can call on when necessary.

When confronted with choices, artists select their creative direction from a multitude of options, and “the selective criteria are frequently rooted in intuitive visceral processes that are often difficult to explain analytically (Treadaway 2009:235). Deciding whether

an artistic effect/result is a mistake or a happy accident is a subjective judgement “embedded in tacit knowledge and connoisseurship” (Treadaway 2009:235). An emotional valuation of the current status of the work is made on criteria that are often difficult for artists to explain or express verbally. The continual, fairly rapid, judgements that are made in the process of making are important to continued progress in the work. During Treadaway’s research, trial-and-error manipulation and layering with associated or randomly selected elements were observed by all parties to be integral to each practitioner’s practice” (2009:235). These case studies showed the importance of serendipity, intuition and improvisation in the creative process (2009:235), conditions that are difficult to create when someone else is making the work. Choices need to be made rapidly and continually, as obstacles arise, and the results cannot be the same if the work is made by a fabricator or assistant. This argument is supported by Botha (Appendix 3).

The part of the study related to the use of digital tools in creative thinking suggested that all tools, whether physical or digital, provided creative freedom, but that digital tools, in particular, enabled a playful, risk-free, manipulation of visual elements (Treadaway 2009:235). While this can be seen as an advantage – as mistakes can be ‘undone’ – it is those mistakes that cannot be ‘undone’ that often lead to creative discovery. Digital creation is seen as less spontaneous and heavily reliant on a menu of commands, whereas there is an element of unpredictability and a sense of emotional investment in the physical, bodily interaction with a material (Treadaway 2009:235). The subjects in Treadaway’s research “stressed the importance of manipulative and tactile making skills in the development of visual ideas”, and felt that the stimulus of physically grasping tools and the friction of a tool on a surface provides sensory feedback in the process of developing new ideas (2009:236). Sennett (2008:43) also argues that simulation and digital tools are meagre alternatives to tactile involvement.

Research shows that there is a major connection between the hand and the brain in the development of creative thought, with imaginative thinking impacted by the “connections between *vision*, *touch* and *cognition*” (emphasis in original). In the use of digital tools, the perceived disconnect between the hand and eye often leads to frustration due to the lack of haptic sensory feedback (Treadaway 2009:236).

The contention arises that those artists who have previously developed haptic skills, from working physically with materials, are “more likely to feel constrained by the lack of stimuli inherent in digital crafting” (Treadaway 2009:236). In other words, artists skilled in only new technologies do not experience the same frustrations at the lack of contact and direct response that are experienced by those whose haptic skills are more developed. This implies the formation of a tendency towards a greater disconnect between the body and the mind. Less contact with the material effectively leads to less need for contact, without an understanding of the attendant loss of sensory pleasure and heightened creativity that accompanies the process of making by hand.

It could, therefore, be argued that artists who outsource their work, and who have little or no physical contact with the material (and who, in addition, as a result of conceptual art training, have little or no physical skill) are unaware of the disconnect between themselves and the work. The accessibility of the digital sculptural technologies of scanning, CNCing and 3D printing, as well as the rise in services such as ‘fablabs’, forms part of a global move towards digitising (and, in theory, simplifying) the process of 3-dimensional making, but without manipulative physical contact with the material. This is a loss the artists may not experience if they have never worked with the actual material. These are all forms of making by remote control, where there is the input of information and the output of a product – instant gratification without the attendant frustration of dealing with the unpredictability of physical materials.

The rapid generation of visual ideas is a major attribute of digital visual art practice. Ideas can be quickly altered to create various options for further exploration, but Treadaway’s study indicates that the subsequent decision-making process can be debilitating for the artist, as the speed of the process, while in some ways advantageous, allows little time for reflection (2009:236). By contrast, the handmade process with its attendant slowness provides the necessary time for “idea association and imaginative thought to develop and for critical aesthetic decisions to be considered” (Treadaway 2009:236). Thus, the use of physical tools and the bodily manipulation of materials have been found to bolster both creative and reflective thinking.

Russell Rogers, in his article for *Innovative higher education*, discusses the numerous theories on reflective thought that have arisen since Daniel Schön’s seminal work on the

subject, *The reflective practitioner*, was first published in 1983. Schön's theories on 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action', Mezirow's theories on 'thoughtful action with reflection' and 'retroactive reflection', Loughrin's arguments for 'anticipatory', 'contemporaneous' and 'retrospective' reflection and Siebert and Daudelin's 'active' and 'proactive' reflection, are investigated in Rogers' article *Reflection in higher education: a concept analysis* (2001). These theories all relate to 'mindfulness' while actively engaged in an activity.

The common thread amongst all these theorists is that reflection is a "cognitive and affective process or activity" which requires the active engagement of an individual. Reflection is usually triggered by an unusual or perplexing situation or experience and is used to seek solutions to a problem and take action based on a particular plan (Rogers 2001:39).

For the purposes of this study, though, the most interesting aspects are the 'results' of reflection (also known as mindfulness), namely an "increased capacity for change; increased control of context; greater freedom of action; and increased flexibility, productivity and innovation" (Rogers 2001:48). Thus, reflection in its various forms is seen as crucial for learning, for the transformation of ideas and for greater flexibility and creativity (Rogers 2001:48).

However, continuous reflection, with all its attendant benefits to artists who, after all, are lifelong learners, relies on the personal experience of the individual. 'It is the result of a primary experience and cannot be experienced second-hand'.

According to Rogers (2001:52), "Western epistemological and educational traditions have tended to reject the value of primary experience in favour of more modified, packaged and organised abstractions of secondhand experience" resulting in what he regards as "the erosion of our mental resources".

Primary experience with a material is crucial for the understanding and appreciation of that material and its properties. Crucially, the flexibility/creativity that results from the primary experience with a material will, therefore, be gained by the fabricator/assistant

and become part of their repertoire; and not that of the outsourcing artist, who has been removed from the making process.

For John Dewey, who in 1934 published *Art as Experience*, action and creativity were related to the interactivity ‘between’ person and environment. New models of “creativity as action”, based on Dewey’s concept, focus on creative action starting with an impetus (impulsion) and being directed via experience towards “fulfilment” (Glaveanu *et al* 2013:2).

According to this model, action can only be seen as experience when confronted by obstacles or constraints. This model of creative process based on “doing” and “undergoing” can be seen as a form of reciprocity between the artist and the work, where there is an integration of behaviour, thought, emotion and will in response to obstacles and challenges (Glaveanu *et al* 2013:3).

Glaveanu’s research reveals that during the process of creative action, artists often experience the impetus to make as a “physical necessity” and a form of “internal pressure” resulting from an idea/vision/conception or ‘light bulb’ moment. This leads to making in the form of sketches, text, doodles, maquettes *et cetera* (Glaveanu *et al* 2013:4-5).

The fabrication or material “undergoing” of the work is characterised by tactile interaction with the “material, sensorial, sensible” presence of the work as well as the “confrontation with it”. The person (artist in this case), faced with these obstacles or constraints gains an awareness of self, the aim and the path of action, and experiences an emotional response to these challenges. The creative action thus becomes a continuous cycle of “doing” (actions directed at the environment/artwork) and “undergoing” (taking-in the reaction of the environment/artwork) (Glaveanu *et al* 2013:5).

Some of the artists, in the Glaveanu *et al* study, defined their creative experience as “a series of ‘crises’, a constant self-doubt and an occasional desire to start afresh. Glaveanu *et al* (2013:5) discovered that their study subjects thought that: “the artworks resist the

intentions of the artist”, the artworks “change the original plan” and the artworks are often “stronger than the creator”.

This resistance, reaction, and dialogue, that exists between the artist and the work, form part of the reciprocal relationship between the artist and the work. To this extent the work is embedded (even saturated) with the shifting personality and experience of the artist’s day-to-day lived reality. This response via action/inaction/reaction can be said to cause the artist’s style.

This is very different from the concrete, virtually unchanged ‘dictatorship’ of the fabricator executing an artist’s specified design, and the resulting work is likely to be quite different. The work will not be imbued with the actual personality of the artist, but rather with the constructed personality of the artist as he/she perceives him/herself. There is a financial investment but not an investment of energy and time in which the true personality of the artist is apparent with all its obsessions, failings and human frailty. It is perhaps this human frailty, determination and obsession in the face of material obstacles that, once embodied in the artist-made work, provides that intangible element that may differentiate a slick, well-crafted work from a work which truly resonates with the viewer.

4.2 Creativity – motivation

Teresa Amabile, creativity and motivation theorist, bases her work on empirical research as well as the work of other theorists such as Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, and proposes numerous factors that can be used to motivate individuals in the workplace. These include responsibility, autonomy, and satisfaction due to accomplishment, skill acquisition, competence and task significance, amongst others (1993:187). Amabile (1993:187) as well as others such as Marie Forgeard and Anne Mecklenburg, argue that our motivation towards work can be categorised into two distinct types: those who are ‘intrinsically motivated’ and those who are ‘extrinsically motivated’.

Individuals who are ‘intrinsically motivated’ are ‘process focussed’, that is “they seek enjoyment, interest, satisfaction, ... self expression, ... (and) personal challenge” in their work (1993:188). They are concerned with gaining knowledge, skills and experience (Forgeard & Mecklenburg 2013:256). Intrinsic motivations are bound up with the person’s feelings about the work and their engagement with the actual task (process) as a means of self-expression or a “positive, skill exercising experience” (Amabile 1993:189).

Individuals who are ‘extrinsically motivated’ are ‘product focussed’, that is “they engage in the work in order to obtain some goal that is apart from the work itself” (Amabile 1993:188). They are concerned with performance goals and objectives independent of the process and any learning involved (Forgeard & Mecklenburg 2013:256). Extrinsic motivation is the result of driving forces outside the work itself, such as rewards, evaluations, deadlines, praise, specifications or instructions. If the focus is on the ‘product’ then the task is extrinsically motivated (Amabile 1993:188-189).

Amabile’s research found that professional artists who tended to spend a lot of time in their studios scored high on intrinsic motivation (1993:190). Since then, further studies have indicated that the “main motivator of creative behaviour is the intrinsic interest (sic) and enjoyment of the behaviour itself” (Forgeard & Mecklenburg 2013:255).

Artists are often both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated, for example, a process-oriented artist might need to complete a work for an exhibition deadline, but studies have highlighted that intrinsic motivation enhances creativity and that extrinsic motivation, far from being benign, can actually harm creativity as it decreases the mental flexibility and intricacy that is strongest under intrinsic motivation (Amabile 1993:192). There is also less of the “play attitude” that for Sennett (2008: 288) distinguishes art from the artistic labour motivated by external forces.

What is encouraged by extrinsic motivation is technical quality. But greater technical quality does not mean greater creativity (Edwards & Johansen 2011:36). Commissioned work where there are constraints such as deadlines, expectations and financial reward, in other words: extrinsic motivation, is shown to have a negative effect on creativity.

Incidental learning is minimised and easier routes to success are chosen in order to meet deadlines and avoid problems and failure. Thus, extrinsic motivation makes people results-fixated, “risk averse, less cooperative and less creative” (Edwards & Johansen 2011:36,68).

Perhaps this extrinsically motivated desire for the ‘quick fix’ explains Angus Taylor’s recent series of figures that are approximately scale 1:5. Taylor has taken 3d scans of six live women and has 3d printed them on the small scale, altering them and adding a few details before casting them in bronze (Figure 14).¹⁸



Figure 14: Angus Taylor. *Being Resolved: Portrait of Diane Victor* 2014. Bronze, 41 x 34 x 34cm. (Angus Taylor 2014:29).

This is certainly much easier and faster than making these works from scratch, especially the six portraits required. Working in this way is comparable to the difference between photography and painting. Taylor is very skilled at portraiture, so one has to wonder at his motivation, which may range from experimentation, through the desire for larger output and more exposure, to boredom with the chore of doing the basics, or any number of other motivations. The process used was not made clear at the exhibition opening at the Everard Read Gallery in October 2014, where these works were

¹⁸ This information was gained in conversation with Angus Taylor at the FNB Joburg Art Fair in August 2014. The 3d printed scans, and the process used, were on public display at the Cool Capital Open Foundry Day (13 September 2014).

displayed, so the assumption for the viewer was that these unbelievably accurate portraits were sculpted by Taylor and are a reflection of his skill and not his access to technology.

Returning to motivations, Forgeard and Mecklenburg (2013:258) have devised a framework of motivations based on ‘growth, gain, guidance and giving’.

‘Growth’, in which the creative act is motivated by ‘flow’¹⁹ and the “sense of meaning derived from the creative activity”, is seen as intrinsic and self-oriented. Whereas ‘Gain’, is where the creative act is motivated by financial rewards and recognition and is extrinsic and self-oriented. According to Forgeard and Mecklenburg (2013:258), creative acts that are ‘giving’ and generous and provide ‘guidance’, and create value, in spite of being extrinsically motivated, may also “translate into increased creative behaviour”.

Interestingly, these researchers raise the issue of what has been termed ‘malevolent creativity’, in the form of ideas designed to destroy rather than create value. To the point that “(r)esearchers have started to wonder whether acts that involve the generation and implementation of novel, effective, but nefarious ideas should be considered creative” (Forgeard & Mecklenburg 2013:258). This raises an interesting debate around the perceived destruction of authorship and skill in contemporary art in the light of both the readymade and the notion of art as concept, as it could conceivably be argued that Duchamp’s readymades are a form of ‘malevolent creativity’.

4.3 Creativity – innovation

While the terms, creativity and innovation, are often used interchangeably, however, it is useful to make a distinction here. As discussed in Chapter 2, creativity can be seen as the act of coming up with an idea that is purpose-centred, and is concerned with forming and sustaining. Innovation, can be seen as the implementation of that idea. Creativity can therefore be perceived to be a catalyst to innovation, and consequently benefits from physical contact with the material.

¹⁹ Flow is discussed in Chapter 5.

4.3.1 Experimental and conceptual innovators

David Galenson, a much-published economics and creativity theorist, has postulated, in *Old masters and young geniuses* (2009), that innovative artists can be divided into two groups. First, ‘experimental innovators’, who work by trial and error and whose innovations develop slowly over a long period of refinement and experimentation, and second, ‘conceptual innovators’, who make sudden breakthroughs and radical innovations at an early age (2009:1).

Artists, filmmakers and writers such as Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Turner, Rodin, Rothko, Pollock, Hitchcock, Eastwood, Dickens and Twain are referred to as ‘experimental innovators’, as the innovation is regarded as the result of increased mastery of techniques and often at its height later in the artist’s life.

‘Conceptual innovators’ such as Raphael, Rubens, Picasso, Duchamp, Warhol, Hirst, Welles, Spielberg, Lawrence and Fitzgerald produce revolutionary work characterised by “bold, brash leaps into the unknown” (Galenson 2009:8) that appear when the artist is young and unconstrained by rules, as confirmed by Orson Welles’ comments after directing *Citizen Kane* at the age of twenty-six “ignorance ... there’s no confidence to equal it” (Galenson 2009:6).

It seems to be no coincidence that the list of artists put forward by Galenson, shows few, if any, successful contemporary artists who are experimental innovators. In an art milieu where concept takes precedence over process, this is unsurprising. Experimental innovators are generally motivated by aesthetic concerns and proceed to make discoveries while they work. They are usually more concerned with learning than with producing finished works, and often produce their best work late in their lives (Galenson 2009:2).

By contrast, conceptual innovators – the *avant-garde* of the artworld – want to communicate ideas or emotions achieved through pre-planned and thence executed works; to the extent that, for many, the execution by the artist is often unimportant and can be outsourced to assistants. For the majority of conceptual innovators the most radical ideas appear early in the artist’s career when the violation of artistic convention often results from unconstrained habits and thinking (Galenson 2009:3).

Galenson warns that we erroneously tend to assume that youth and creativity go together and that radical innovations generally result from dramatic leaps. However, far-reaching innovations can also be the cumulative sum of many small steps and it is important for our society and economy to have both, as their contributions are very different (2009:9). Younger conceptual innovators may have flashes of insight, but older experimental innovators have wisdom and skill, all of which are valuable qualities to encourage and maintain (Galenson 2009:9).

In *Late bloomers in the arts and sciences*, Galenson (2010:10) speculates that conceptual innovators are likely to be long past their creative prime by the end of their careers and often repeat themselves or produce overcomplicated works, whereas for experimental innovators creative work is produced for a sustained period of time. Ironically, the Turner Prize, which focuses on innovative conceptual work, and is restricted to artists under the age of 50, is named after an artist whose most definitive and innovative work was produced after he reached that age, (Galenson 2010:9).

4.4 Creativity – process

4.4.1 Reciprocity and serendipity - collaboration between the artist and the work

For Bayles and Orland (1993:113), the premise, when confronted with difficulties, is simple: “follow the leads that arise from contact with the work itself and your technical, emotional and intellectual pathway becomes clear”. The artist needs to be guided by the work and to seize opportunities as they present themselves.

In an article on Francis Bacon and the practice of painting, Michael Jarvis (2009:181) questions what causes a “handmade practice” such as painting to still be relevant, given the “multiplicity of media” available to the contemporary artist? Many of the comments made by Francis Bacon in an interview regarding his painting practice could apply equally to the practice of sculpture:

“You know in my case all painting ... is accident. So I foresee it in my mind, I foresee it, and yet I hardly ever carry it out as I foresee it. It transforms itself by actual paint ... and it does many things which are very much better than I could make it do” (Jarvis 2009:183).

Jarvis (2009:183) argues that the artistry in a work depends on what is included, left out and destroyed. The “tacit mastery comes from an instinctual perception of how to utilize and somehow ‘cash in’ upon something found (or) ... accidentally revealed during the process”.

When discussing why some pieces are more successful than others, Bacon suggests that the difference is to be found in the medium, in this case paint, that either communicates directly or communicates by means of illustration and that the latter is often uninspiring and commonplace. By implication, the results of direct communication by the material have more resonance, and there is an “instinctive knowledge” that comes from familiarity with a material that allows for sensory responses from both the artist and the viewer (Jarvis 2009:186).

Bacon’s comments support the notion that the practice of painting is a continuous discourse where sensitivity to both the material and to accidental rewards can be exploited (Jarvis 2009:192) and that “the material can potentially assume an independent life of its own, an almost unruly character” (Jarvis 2009:181).

4.5 Creativity – knowledge, mastery, power

4.5.1 Creativity as a form of knowledge

In their article about the benefits of making by hand, Antti Juvonen and Heikki Ruismaki (2006:111) write: the “(l)earning of skills includes procedural knowledge” where the doing by hand gives “intellectual stimulation as the planning processes connect with the practical object”. Problem-solving is an important factor in making things by hand, and both imagination and intelligence are important components in problem-solving.

At the end of the 1990s the Nordic handcrafts council wrote in their *Manifesto of handicraft* that there is a balance between the “freedom of design and the demands of the material ... the process and the product cannot be separated ...” (Juvonen and Ruismaki 2006:112).

The practice of visual art-making is engaged in “conceptualization [sic], thus, it can be seen to have a foot in both camps: the perceptual and conceptual” (Jamieson: 2008:75). Art as practice requires procedural and tacit knowledge which is absorbed during the learning process and then employed in future making (Jamieson: 2008:75).

According to Michael Polanyi, in *The tacit dimension* (2009), we know more than we are aware of and can articulate with words. Tacit knowledge is knowledge lodged in our subconscious, in our application of skills and use of tools (2009:16). It can, therefore, be seen in the underlying awareness to be found in the art-making process. A part of tacit knowledge is to be found in what Polanyi terms “indwelling” (2009:24) where we internalise particulars to which we are not attending and of which we are superficially unaware. Indwelling is also part of the knowledge of tools, where the tool is transformed “into a sentient extension of our body” (Polanyi 2009:16). We begin to dwell within the tool and it becomes a natural extension into the world. The development of skill and expertise results from tacit knowledge, practical know-how that is the result of practice. Something can only be learned by “practicing its application: its true knowledge lies in our ability to use it” (Polanyi 2009:17). This knowledge gained from experience can arguably allow the artist who is skilled to attend to the meaning of the work while the physical body of the work grows through the application of the artist’s tacit knowledge.

In a similar vein, Sennett calls the conversion of information and practices into tacit knowledge ‘embedding’. “Embedding is a process essential to all skills” (Sennett 2008:50). When acquiring a skill, we develop a collection of procedures that become routine and eventually allow, at the higher levels of skill, for an interplay between “tacit knowledge and self-conscious awareness” where the tacit knowledge provides the foundation and the awareness allows for self-critique and correction. It is the self-consciousness that drives the practitioner to do better, to lift the standard of the work produced (Sennett 2008:50). With this in mind, it may be advanced that the embedded skills developed by those artists who use fabricators would arguably be the skills of designers and managers, not those of makers.

For most artists, however, it is the actual experience of making that is regarded as the most important aspect, not the product itself. The art-making process benefits from a

resistance to the pre-planning of both subject and process, where instead, the artwork is ‘allowed to emerge’ during the creative process (Gnezda 2011:51).

Jamieson (2008:76) writes in *Forming art: making and responding* that there are cognitive “decision-making” aspects to the practice of art-making that are a direct response to perceptual and sensory cues. “(P)erception itself, the sensory aspect of knowing and being aware involves more than mere seeing. It involves judgements and recognition of differences and similarities”; aspects of which the maker may not consciously be aware. Perception draws on past experiential knowledge and memories when appraising the artwork, “a conjoining of past and present experience”. Besides the visual judgements that need to be made, the artist also needs to make decisions regarding the tools and materials required to execute a particular task. This intellectual aspect of making is seldom touched on in the debate surrounding the practice of art-making.

Jamieson (2008:76) sees “‘form-making’ ... as a ‘relationship seeking’ and ‘relationship creating’ activity, the practical outcome being the finished ‘form’”. Art-making is seen to be an active process of creating or arranging parts in furtherance of a total form created by a forging of relationships between juxtaposing parts. Jamieson refers to this as “the active aspect of art creation, which has cognitive dimensions besides the manipulation of tools and materials, the physicality of ‘form-making’”. He is referring here to the mental processes where the work is constantly being considered and reconsidered as it progresses.

This continual cognitive engagement by the artist has its “counterpart in the demands made upon the viewers of artwork(s)” (Jamieson 2008:77). While the artist has an active role to play, the role of the viewer, which may on the surface appear to be passive, also calls for dynamic perceptual engagement in the form of connections or associations that are needed to complete the comprehension of the work. According to Jamieson (2008:77) the final creative act takes place in the mind of the viewer.

Jamieson (2008:77-78) regards art-making as a form of perceptual skill – the detection and awareness of unfolding relationships which may manifest by design or by coincidence. There exists the need to search for, or indeed, create, relationships which

can be perceptual – in the form of line/colour, or conceptual – in the form of signs or symbols. The skill lies in the artist’s ability to construct or present a series of aesthetic or symbolic relationships that encourages the viewer to read the work for form and significance, to create something that resonates to the point where the viewer is compelled to use their understanding of the “nuances of form” or their ability to “decode the cues or clues provided by symbols”. In either instance, some skill is required to both encode and decode the work, with intellectual satisfaction as a possible result – what Jamieson calls “the resolution of complexity” (2008:82). This “enlightenment of the senses” which results from the viewer’s ability to create intellectual order from visual clues, and the relationships of elements to one another, leads Jamieson to conclude that “at its core the practice of art is a manifestation of intelligence” (2008:84). The art-making process is described as “the search for, or creation of, relationships in which order can arise from disorder” in a manner that encourages creative comprehension in the viewer (2008:83).

Jamieson (2008:78) also asks us to consider the notion of “mastership” which implies “competence or skill acquired through practice”. A skill base founded on a high degree of competence often carries negative connotations in art circles and yet Jamieson insists that skill can be shown to be an integral part of the process of artistic creation (2008:78). Skill and visual sensitivity are seen to be vital components of the art-making process, with tacit learning and a consequent understanding of both material and process as a result.

In research done since 2005 at Stanford University’s Hasso Plattner Institute of Design into the creative problem-solving process, results showed that a parallel approach to design led to better results (Dow 2011:57). Participants, encouraged to work on more than one solution simultaneously found that the fast, comparative “parallel process” led to better, more diverse designs as well as other benefits for individual designers who felt better able to deal with critique, as they were not wholly invested in a single, polished idea. Design in parallel also discourages physical investment in an idea until problems have been eliminated.

Iteration, or the trying out of new ideas, helps designers to integrate feedback into their designs while exploring possibilities. Dow (2011:59) refers to the notion of “design as

discovery” as particularly important in problem-solving, where effective design practice is “a process of trying out alternatives and tolerating shifts in direction”. Parallel design as a strategy helps the designer deal with unpredictability by avoiding commitment and allowing the process to go in a number of different directions by “keeping multiple possibilities in play as long as possible”.

The sculptural production of maquettes could be regarded as the equivalent of designs before they are put into production (to be scaled up by either the artist, assistant or fabricator) but sculptors have not traditionally been seen as designers of slick, finished products for corporate consumers. This begs the question: how hands-on does the sculptor need to be to still be a sculptor and not a designer? And furthermore, are these distinctions still relevant?

4.5.2 Skill and mastery

Bayles and Orland, in their influential book, *Art and Fear*, insist that art-making involves skills that can be learned (1993:3) and that perseverance and hard work are indistinguishable from talent in the long run. They argue that making art is about overcoming obstacles and there is often “uncomfortably accurate feedback about the gap that exists between what you intended to do and what you did” (1993:5). To viewers other than the artist, what generally matters is the product. To the artist, “what matters is the process: the experience of shaping that artwork” (Bayles & Orland 1993:5). According to Bayles and Orland (1993:6) most artists spend their time producing work that is mediocre, but the function of the majority of that work is to teach the artist to make the small fraction of work that is exceptional. Even the failed pieces are essential to the process. “(Y)ou learn to make your work *by making your work*” (emphasis in the original) (Bayles & Orland 1993:6).

In the process of making art, “Vision, Uncertainty and Knowledge of Materials are inevitabilities that all artists must acknowledge and learn from” (Bayles & Orland 1993:15), with the artist beginning the work with their imagination or vision and allowing craft and technique to take over as the work grows. This is very different from the design process.

Materials are felt to be amongst the few things over which the artist can exercise some control and the manner in which the materials respond and resist suggest new ideas to the artist. “Art is about carrying things out, and materials are what *can* be carried out” (emphasis in original) (Bayles & Orland 1993:18). The artist needs to respond authentically to the subject matter as well as to the materials. “Uncertainty is the essential, inevitable and all-pervasive companion” to making art, and “tolerance for uncertainty is the key to succeeding” (Bayles & Orland 1993:21). The artist needs to have a broad idea of what they are looking for, some sense of how to find it, and a determination to embrace mistakes and surprises along the way (1993:21).

One of the fears dealt with in *Art and Fear* is the artist’s fear of failure as a result of doubt in his/her own artistic abilities. This is exacerbated by the artist’s knowledge that much of what is successful in their work is the result of serendipity (Bayles & Orland 1993:21). When work is not going well, ‘happy accidents’ aren’t happening. The argument posited by Bayles and Orland (1993:26) is that the artist needs to work through this period of blockage and that ‘good work’ is invariably made by making ‘a lot of work’ and gradually weeding out the bad elements as part of the process. “Artists get better by sharpening their skills or by acquiring new ones; they get better by learning to work and learning *from* their work” (emphasis in the original (Bayles & Orland 1993:28)).

The artwork is invariably as flawed as the artist and, crucially, the inspiration for the next artwork often lies in the imperfections of the current piece (Bayles & Orland 1993:31). These imperfections are often aspects that need to be reconsidered or explored further, an “interaction between the ideal and the real” that sends the artist back to produce new work (Bayles & Orland 1993:31). The artist’s expectation of producing a more successful piece of work is often the impetus for more attentive production, where the work guides the artist. The work tells the artist about his/her strengths, weaknesses, habits and gestures (Bayles & Orland 1993:36). These lessons are learned in the process of making, as a result of communication between the artist and the work. The artwork is a reaction to everything the artist puts in or withholds (Bayles & Orland 1993:47).

The behaviour of the artist and his/her working habits are recognisable in the work. “A piece of art is the surface expression of a life lived within productive patterns” (Bayles & Orland 1993:61). The artistic gestures and habits of the artist acquire a life of their own, inseparable from the maker. These habitual gestures and processes allow, for the artist, “confidence and concentration. They allow not knowing. They allow the automatic and unarticulated to remain so” (Bayles and Orland 1993:62). Thus it is difficult to understand how outsourcing the work or the extensive use of assistants can lead to the same results.

According to Judith Schaechter, in her 2014 MICA lecture ‘Kill Skill’, the point of skill is to enable us to attempt to manipulate things to our will. “Materials don’t behave, they don’t conform to instructions.” Schaechter believes that as we progress from being novice art-makers to masters, “we go from simple play to learning, to learning how to fix our mistakes, and to knowing when fixing them is desirable or not”. The progression through these stages is a means of achieving full actualisation as an artist. To stop at the first stage, play, where one is unskilled and purely involved with the concept, “because that is what the art world favours, is to stunt one’s growth” (Schaechter 2014).

Schaechter argues that there is something missing in artworks where the labour is the work of someone else. “A piece cannot be informed by its own creation if the artist is awaiting the goods in some separate room making design decisions as a matter of management” and there is a distinct difference between work that is made by the artist and work that is made by someone else (Schaechter 2014). Referring to the difference between two world-renowned glass artists – Dale Chihuly, whose glassworks are routinely faked by other glass artists, and Lino Tagliapietra, whose work is seldom faked – Schaechter suggests that the problem lies in the process of making followed by each artist. Chihuly’s work is designed by him and manufactured by others, leading to techniques and styles that lose little in the copying. By contrast, Tagliapietra’s work is not the result of the artist having ideas and these being executed by himself or others, instead he has the ideas ‘while he is making the work’. “He’s allowing the process to be a major factor in his inspiration and he’s inventing and innovating as he goes He creates a dialectic between process and concept that has forward momentum” (Schaechter 2014).

Schaechter believes that contemporary art practice demands that artists focus on concept rather than making and that technical skills are lost in the process. In addition, the presumption is that in the era of deskilling there is no cost to this loss of technical fluency. While the focus on skill alone can lead to a form of perfectionism that is undesirable, Schaechter insists that it is important to push ones' medium to its limits; to either originate within it or shift its paradigms. Part of the conservation of a medium lies in keeping it relevant, but for the most part, this presupposes that one is working directly with the medium. The consensus seems to be that skill comes naturally as one spends more and more time struggling with the material (Schaechter 2014).

Handwork is one of the wellsprings of creativity and in separating handwork from creativity, we cut ourselves off from this avenue of inspiration. Our hands are not merely an obedient labour force employed by our minds, but may, in fact, be the very impetus for creativity. (Schaechter 2014).

4.5.3 Making as a form of power

Daniel Charny, the curator of the *Power of Making* exhibition at London's V&A Museum in 2011, believes that what and how we make defines who we are (2011:[sp]).

According to Charny (2011:[sp]), making is one of the most powerful ways to solve problems and the knowledge of how to make is "one of humanity's most precious resources". The power of making lies in its ability to fulfil a human need to think, invent and innovate.

Making is a form of learning, and at "every stage in the learning process, a maker's relationship to materials and tools changes dramatically" (Charny 2011:[sp]). Frustrations transform themselves into pleasure and unconsciously makers start to think via their materials and skills. Through the use of and care for their tools, makers may start to modify and invent new tools and techniques. Thus, the learning and mastering of a skill can open up further possibilities and challenges (Charny 2011:[sp]).

Being 'in the zone' can be experienced by anyone invested in the process of making, and at this point, what may be an intuitive or meditative experience, often leads to

unplanned rewards (Charny 2011:[sp]). “This sensation of effortless flow is a reward in its own right, but is also a situation of intense learning”. It is the immersion in making while building on existing skills and discovering new ones, that often leads to unexpected innovations (Charny 2011:[sp]).

Making involves parameters imposed by not only the materials, tools and scale but also by the physical body and relative skill of the maker. Making tests the maker psychologically in that the temptation to stop when things go wrong is often experienced by unskilled makers, whereas experts in a particular technique will find a way through the problem, constantly unfolding new possibilities within the process (Charny 2011:[sp]).

According to artists/makers interviewed by Charny (2011:[sp]), being the sole maker means having control over every single aspect and knowing every part intimately. These artists also challenge the misconception that working with one’s hands is a form of poverty, as the rewards of making are not solely in the form of financial recompense. Creative making is an active way of thinking, not the execution of a preconceived form or idea that exists in the mind or on paper. It is in the making with no particular goal in mind that innovation is most likely to occur (Charny 2011:[sp]).

With this in mind, sculpture fabrication arguably becomes a form of industrial/object design, the manufacture of a product for an existing or potential client. The artist becomes a director, designer or manager, whose skills lie (with the assistance or insistence of a gallery) in the creation of a brand that can be marketed to consumers: the brand of the creative genius or *enfant terrible* whose name is used as a cultural passport in the right circles; a cultural star and potential ‘money spinner’.

Skilled making is a form of power. Makers experience an “individual sense of freedom and control in the world” (Charny 2011:9).

4.6 Creativity – authenticity

4.6.1 *Drawing and sculpture*

In her book, *Vitamin D: new perspectives in drawing*, Emma Dexter, for many years the chief curator at the Tate Gallery, states that the medium of drawing has long been acknowledged and prized as the foundation for all aesthetic techniques and practices. Drawing is associated with “intimacy, informality, authenticity (or at least with authentic inauthenticity), immediacy, subjectivity, history, memory [and] narrative” (2005:[sp]). She claims that there has been a resurgence in drawing since the 1990s and argues that the reason for this is that drawing offers artists the freedom to explore issues such as narrative, subjectivity and authenticity; issues that had been “repressed under the influence of post-structuralist scepticism” (Dexter 2005:[sp]). She adds that both sculpture and drawing have both been used in the past as the tools or end products of experiments with process and action (Dexter 2005:[sp]).

Juliet McDonald (2009:4) in her PhD thesis at Leeds university, explores drawing as an embodiment of knowledge, reflecting upon the desire shown by many artists to “get involved with material messiness”, to “get their hands dirty, or if not their hands then any part of the body that can immediately make a mark.”

For many artists the directly made mark has retained its importance as evidence of the embodied presence of the artist – proof, one could say, of the artist’s involvement in the work (MacDonald 2009:4). This argument is supported by Dexter, who feels that the “act of drawing betokens honesty and transparency”, a form of art-making where the mistakes are readily apparent to the viewer. Drawing is a medium that requires “imagination, creativity and skill” and in its recently embodied form has returned to expressing the artist’s emotions and experiences (2005:[sp]).

New technologies such as the use of computer drawing tools, while convenient, lack the “accidental elements and the history of erasures that are retained in hand-made drawings” (MacDonald 2009:4). In the same way, sculptural fabrication, where there is an interface, be it human or mechanical, assistant or 3D technology, between the sculptor and the sculpture, lacks the accidental elements, the search for a solution, the questing nature of the handmade.

It is perhaps no coincidence that drawings are becoming amongst the most prized pieces of work to art collectors. There has been an increased move towards drawing in global art auctions. While the turnover in the past decade has increased 12 times for painting and 10 times for sculpture, the turnover for drawing has multiplied by 37 during the same period (Ehrmann 2014:[sp]). According to Donna de Salvo, the chief curator at Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, it is the dedication of artists themselves to collecting works on paper that has encouraged the elevation of the status of these works in the eyes of the public. It is felt that drawing provides the most direct connection between the idea and the physical object (Halperin 2014:[sp]).

If drawing is gaining popularity largely because of an increased awareness of the value of its direct connection to the idea or concept, its authenticity, and this is driven by the appreciation of artists themselves, why is there a move towards fabrication in sculpture? Is it perhaps driven by the pressures of the art market and the need for ‘quantity’ and ‘exposure’ rather by artistic preference? In the light of this, it is refreshing that an artist such as Paul Edmunds regularly exhibits only a few works at a time, drawing attention to the laborious processes and emphasising the solitary crafting of each piece.

4.6.2. Performance and Contagion

Artworks are seen to have greater value if they are original or authentic – this according to research results published by Newman and Bloom in 2012. Based on their findings, each artwork’s particular history is considered in the light of ‘performance’ (the time and skill taken to produce the work), and ‘contagion’ (the contact between the work and the artist) (Newman & Bloom 2012:568).

The artwork is seen as the endpoint of a “creative performance” and is, as a result of proximity to the artist, seen as imbued with the ‘essence’ of the artist (George E. Newman, Daniel M. Bartels & Rosanna K. Smith 2014:655, 658). The artwork is seen to be “a manifestation of the soul” and an extension of the artist’s individual identity, and, crucially, needs to be in physical contact with the artist to have value (Newman *et al* 2014:657-658). Perfect duplicates are seen to devalue the work because “the original possesses an essence that cannot be duplicated”, and, according to Newman *et al*, this

forms “part of a cross-cultural tendency to believe that a person’s essence can rub off and contaminate objects” with which they have had physical contact (2014:658, 651). For Newman and Bloom (2012:568) the process of creation (performance) and proximity to the artist (contagion) are regarded as the major contributors to the artwork’s value.

The uniqueness, or *avant-garde* quality of the creative performance (for example, Duchamp’s *Fountain* (Figure 2)), and beliefs about physical contact by the original artist, are believed to play an important role in the supposed value of the work (Newman & Bloom 2012:568). Thus, the authentic artwork is seen to be imbued with the spirit of the artist.

4.6.3. Proxy art

Returning to Galenson’s (2006:7) theories on ‘experimental’ and ‘conceptual’ innovators, but now in the context of authenticity, it could be said that much conceptual art allows for the separation of invention and execution. Traditional masters such as Raphael and Rubens were ‘conceptual innovators’ who made meticulous plans for their paintings which allowed the actual work to be carried out by others, in spite of their own superior technical skills. Da Vinci, Michelangelo and Rembrandt were ‘experimental innovators’, who preferred not to plan their works entirely, because “they did not believe in separating invention and execution” (Galenson 2006:7). Their inability to anticipate or predict the final appearance of their works meant that assistants seldom assisted in their actual art-making process. Instead, assistants did preparation work for the artist, copied the artists’ works and occasionally completed works which were attributed to their masters.

While 20th century artists such as Duchamp shook the art world with the concept of the ‘readymade’, some Dadaists were theorising about making art by means of telephonic instruction. It was Yves Klein who in 1960 first suggested that the artist should conceive works of art specifically without any physical contact (Galenson 2006:12). The notion of the artist as ‘factory owner’ was suggested by Andy Warhol in the 1970s as the result of the commercial process of art production he employed in his studio (The

Factory) (Galenson 2006:14). One of the side-effects of this process was that the very machine-like process of art-making lent itself to the very real likelihood of forgery. Artists such as Sol LeWitt surmounted this obstacle by issuing a certificate of authenticity and original diagrams for each of his *Wall Drawings*, even though the drawings on the walls of the various spaces were drawn entirely by others based on his instructions. LeWitt supported the idea of art as ideally “free from the skill of the artist as craftsman” (Galenson 2006:15).

All of this raises questions around the nature of authenticity, as LeWitt insists that the work is his (the artist’s) as long as the draftsman does not deviate in any way from the plan/instruction; any deviation means that the work is now the creation of the draftsman and not the artist. There is, however, often no supervision or inspection of the final product to ascertain authenticity, so there is an element of trust involved. The work can also be sold or moved by being redrawn in another location as long as it only exists in one place at a time.

Is the work located in the design or in the drawing? For an architect or a designer, their work lies in the actual design, and the execution thereof is often also something based on trust and beyond their control. Should proxy art, or art by remote control (including some sculpture), then be seen as allied to design and innovation rather than to exploration and creativity?

CHAPTER FIVE: CONNECTION TO OWN WORK

My own work is linked to the theory in this research by my focus on the actual physical process of making, as well as my interest in constantly broadening my skill set. There is a constant attempt to learn new techniques, investigate alternative materials and apply fresh methods, all with greater or lesser success. Amongst these are the use of scanners and CNC equipment, largely in my commission work, allowing for first-hand experience with regard to the use of technology where necessary. As a counterpoint to the commissioned work, in my private work there is an attempt to allow for more freedom and reciprocity while working, so that the work itself contributes to its own creation.

Much has been written about the positive psychological benefits of art-making such as ‘flow’ and ‘theories of personal expressiveness’ and these will be dealt with in this chapter in relation to my own experiences while making art.

While much of my private work is related conceptually to notions of self-preservation and social commentary, the common thread running through all my work is the focus on skilled making and the attempt to do all the creative work without assistance or outsourcing.

At the outset I would like to state my position, and frame of reference, for purposes of clarification. As with most artists, my work is motivated by a desire to express my ideas and interests. I am driven by a constant search for information and statistics about societal pressures and also driven by a desire to constantly learn new skills. I am happiest when working with my hands and using tools to personally make things, often using techniques that are new to me by just leaping in with some planning but little or no experience with the particular technique or material. As a result, some works are more successful than others, and occasionally the works for which I have the greatest affinity may not be successful to the viewer. My greater connection to these works may, I suspect, be because I have a personal investment in the issues and have invested much of my time and energy in making the work and in developing the new skill.

I believe in both the art-making process and the art object as it is displayed in a gallery, not to the exclusion of any other artworks, but a final art product is what I, personally,

am driven to make. And finally, I believe in beauty, skilled making and the power of art to effect social transformation. A consideration of all these beliefs will go some way towards an understanding of the motivation behind this research.

My argument, once again, is that there are numerous benefits to be derived from the personal production of artworks that are seriously curtailed by the use of professional fabricators and skilled studio assistants and I hope to illustrate some of these through reference to my own work and experiences.

The psychological benefits of art making examined by Dormer (1994) as well as Bayles and Orland (1993) and Bruce Metcalf (2000, 2009), such as self-knowledge, enhanced self-esteem, “nourishment within the work itself” (Bayles & Orland 1993:2), “the connection we share with all makers of art” (Bayles & Orland 1993:115), and the experience of individual agency (Crawford 2009:7) all contribute to my work as a constant attempt at skilled making. Other motivating factors are the need for personal physical control over the work and the more intimate experiences of catharsis and emotional therapy that are experienced during the fabrication process and during the subsequent display of the work.

5.1 My process of making

René Huyghe, the noted art historian, is quoted by Juliet MacDonald (2009:1) as saying: “Everything shaped by the artist’s hand becomes by the same token one of the faces of his soul”. As a direct register of the artist’s unique gesture, the mark made by the artist is linked to his/her inner character. Direct marks are authentic evidence of the artist’s presence and self-expression and can only result from what Richard Serra called “the act of doing” (MacDonald 2009:1-2). Wherever possible, I prefer to be personally involved in the process of making my work. The casting of the silver and bronze in some of my work has been outsourced as I do not have the requisite equipment to do my own casting. Some hidden fittings in *Breast Plate* (Figure 15) were cut with an industrial water-jet, as were the panels for the cement house in the work *How can we help you?* (Figure 16).



Figure 15: Zelda Stroud, *Breast Plate*, 2012. Cement, silicone breast implant (incinerated), copper, silver, oxide and PU foam, 20 x 40 x 34 cm. (YCSA 2012:48).



Figure 16: Zelda Stroud, Xavier Schorr, Lianne Cox, detail of *How can we help you?* (in situ before burning), 2014. Concrete, leaflets, leaves, newspaper, wood. Dimensions variable. Photograph by Lianne Cox.

As a personal experience of using assistance, *How can we help you?* (Figures 16 &17) has been one of the most emotionally difficult pieces to make as I relied heavily on both the model-making skills of my husband, Xavier Schorr, and the cinematographic skills

of filmmaker Lianne Cox. Although I conceived and designed the work, made the moulds, cast the cement panels as well as the supporting post and also collected and laser-cut the leaf-shaped documents over the period of a year, Schorr digitally drafted and assembled the house and Cox filmed the work as it was set alight. I found the loss of control over every aspect of the work very frustrating and attempted to micro-manage every feature through detailed briefs, constant supervision and final editing. Heightened levels of anxiety due to a loss of control demonstrated that I find it easier and more natural to make rather than to manage.



Figure 17: Zelda Stroud, Xavier Schorr, Lianne Cox, detail of *How can we help you?* on display in gallery. 2014. Concrete, newspaper, wood, film (length?) Dimensions variable. Photograph by the author.

Managing an art-making process entails relinquishing some control – stating the preferred outcome and allowing the fabricator to find his/her own solution. However, unless the project is micro-managed, it is difficult to recognise the constant small changes, that intuition or experience would encourage, when one is making the work oneself.

Personal making requires commitment, self-discipline and self-control (Dormer 1994:40-41; Sennett 2008:42-43; Metcalf 2000:5-6), especially in sculpture where one is often obliged to use technical processes, such as mould-making and casting, and a

momentary regrettable impulse or lack of focus could result in the destruction of months of work. Sculpture work forces one to subject one's impulses to the rigors of process and the demands of technical methods. Metcalf argues that craftsmanship requires a "strong bodily-kinesthetic intelligence tuned to fine motor skills and good spacial intelligence" and that we display an innate disposition towards working in a particular manner with a particular medium (2000:4) Furthermore, there is "a powerful emotional charge that come[s] with finding one's work", and finding one's medium can feel like finding oneself and one's home (Metcalf 2000:4).

Judgement is learnt through doing, so the discipline of completing work that is not going according to plan, which reminds one of one's own incompetence, can be very difficult to deal with (Dorner 1994:46). It can be especially hard for sculptors when so much can go wrong due to the sculptural process, and this may partly explain the temptation to use a fabricator who understands the vagaries of a particular material and will ensure success. The work does not, however, always benefit from the ministrations of a skilled fabricator.

My own work illustrates this point to an extent. In *The Making(s) of a Smile* (Figure 18), where I embroidered my used dental floss into a cross-stitch self-portrait, I was using a technique that I had not used since primary school and seriously underestimated the time required to complete the work for an exhibition deadline. A seamstress fabricator would not have made the same error and the work would have been completed timeously, but in this case the error was fortuitous, as the work is actually more interesting in its partially complete state.



Figure 18: Zelda Stroud,
The Making(s) of a Smile. 2014. Artist's
used dental floss, linen,
40 x 40cm. Photograph by the author.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, artists have always valued drawings and sketches as works that foreground and expose the conceptual processes of other artists. Maquettes in plaster, terracotta and plasticine fulfil much the same function within the sculptural process. As someone who, in addition to my own more conceptually-driven work, sculpts commissions of naturalistic life-size bronze figures for clients, I use the maquette-making process in much the same manner as a sketch – for solving problems, changing poses and occasionally producing different versions to elicit feedback from the client as in this maquette of Sophie Williams (Figure 19).



Figure 19: Zelda Stroud, *Maquette of Sophie Williams*, 2014. Plasticine. 43 x 15 x 23 cm. NHPC, Johannesburg. Photograph by Lianne Cox.

While the approval from the client of a particular design (interpretation of the brief) leads to the execution of that particular design, this in no way disallows for changes to take place during the translation from quarter life-size maquette to life-size figure. Whether maquettes are sculptural sketches or highly detailed miniatures, the process of

translation from small to large is different when the artist is doing the actual work and not relying on technology or fabricators and, later in the process, on studio assistants.

The freedom to allow the material to make some of the decisions, and the opportunity for the artist to go with his/her instincts and change the work during the process, is not possible if the scaling up and final sculpting is done by someone else, unless the artist is involved in the minute-by-minute directing of that process. Even then, the emotional investment is not the same, as artists have been quoted by Wade Saunders in *Art in America* (1993:11), as being more ruthless in destroying and changing the labour of assistants, possibly as a result of being less emotionally invested in the work. This is in no way a value-judgement on the quality of the resultant work. Not all work made by the artist is necessarily ‘good’, and not all work made by assistants/fabricators is less so. As Wim Botha (2015) states:

Personally I feel that the interesting aspects in artworks are when I see the traces of a language that is unique or being born with ease or with struggle through chance or intense engagement. Normally I would expect this to come from the artist but I have no doubt that it can come from an unusually dedicated fabricator.

Artists can often become very precious about parts of their work that might not be working but have taken long time to produce. Perhaps this is where the personality of the artist once again becomes apparent during the making process. Is the artist willing to destroy their own labour in the service of the success of the particular art work, or would they only destroy the work of assistants? How unsentimental or ruthless is the artist in the pursuit of a particular result or effect when their own investment of energy is at risk, and is this very choice-making process another manifestation of the style of the artist?

Scanning and rapid prototyping are also used by many sculptors to avoid what they regard as the ‘boring’, labour-intensive parts, so that they can work on the surfaces and finishes. As argued elsewhere in this paper, it is in the struggle and delayed gratification that achievement is experienced and character is built. For many artists, such as Guy du Toit, Walter Oltman and Paul Edmunds, their involvement with every part of the process is crucial and there is value in the periods of monotony and laborious effort. Working slowly and skilfully allows for periods of reflection, judgement and the

percolation of new ideas which are anathema to the push for quick results (Sennett 2008:295-296).

In my experience, my greatest emotional and technical growth has come, not from making the maquettes which are of a scale I would work at instinctively and fairly easily, but in my struggles with the larger life-size works where I occasionally feel that I am out of my depth and decidedly out of my comfort zone. The understanding and appreciation of one's own strengths and failings, good and bad habits and personality traits are all there in the translation of the work from maquette to final product.

Reliance on a skilled assistant to “do the boring bits” changes the work as the artist is usually less concerned with the assistant's boredom as they are being paid to work at whatever task they are given. Those sections that in the maquette were manageable because of their relatively small scale, in the larger work become a major challenge, and the artist has to persevere in spite of their boredom, fear or resistance. The artist can neglect the areas that are not enjoyable or require more skill than he/she has, or may specifically work on those areas and learn the skills. As in figure-drawing, where one cannot avoid drawing the hands forever, so in figurative sculpture there cannot be missing sections unless that forms part of the intent.

In my own commission work I tend to focus on the faces and bodies, as well as the decorative details, and I gloss over the fabric and drapery where possible, using a looser modelling technique in those areas. These preferences contribute to a particular style of work even though these are commissioned pieces and not pieces I would necessarily make if I had the economic freedom to choose. The work therefore becomes recognisably mine due to the detail and mark-making. This would be difficult with an assistant. As Bayles and Orland (1993:103) put it: “style is not a virtue, it is an inevitability – the inescapable result of doing anything more than a few times”.

It is also easier and quicker to use shortcuts such as scanning and CNCing or rapid-prototyping, and although the craftsman in me rebels against this, and I mourn the loss of the self-knowledge and self-confidence gained from the hand-crafted experience as well as its benefit when applied to other more personal works, deadlines need to be met and bills need to be paid. I am currently required by time pressures, and encouraged

by client sponsorship of the process, to use CNCing in my own large commissions. I occasionally feel morally compromised even though it is my own maquettes that are being scanned and scaled up from a quarter-life-size. To explain the process: a maquette of Helen Joseph that I have produced on a scale of 1:4 (Figure 20) is scanned and digitally enlarged to scale 1:1 (life-size). A selected layer of anything between 3mm and 20mm is then digitally removed from the surface before the armature is digitally designed and the figure is cut (CNCd) from polyurethane foam (PU foam). Once the work has been CNCd from PU foam it is assembled around a welded steel armature based on the digital design (Figure 21) and I, as the artist, physically add on (sculpt) the digitally removed layer in plasticine or clay.



Figure 20: Zelda Stroud, *Maquette of Helen Joseph*, 2014. Plasticine. 44 x 16 x 16cm. NHPC, Johannesburg. Photograph by Lianne Cox.



Figure 21 Life-size figure of Helen Joseph CNCd by Sculpture Casting Services, Strand. 2015. Polyurethane foam. Photograph by the author.



Figure 22: Zelda Stroud, Detail of life-size figure of Helen Joseph sculpted in plasticine over the PU foam figure. 2015. Photograph by the author.

It is at this point that the portrait is sculpted, the surface details added, and superficial changes made (Figure 22), but in many respects the greatest risk has now been removed, as it is the stance and structure that ultimately make the work convincing, not the surface detail or even the portraiture. I also feel that the opportunity to learn and

become more skilled at the most difficult part - the armature - is lost by the mechanised process. At both this stage and in the later bronze-casting process, problems are often solved by the foundry and I occasionally feel as though I have lost control of the work and it has become a product of the client and the foundry, even though I am at the foundry to direct the final finishing and patina of the bronze sculpture (Figure 23). While I am certainly not ungrateful for the commissions I have been granted, I sometimes feel that personal skills-development should be one of the advantages of doing commercial/commission work. If one is compromising the design as well as the therapeutic learning/making process to meet with the client's specifications and deadline, then the only benefit that remains is the money and the publicity.



Figure 23: *Zelda Stroud, Helen Joseph* before installation, 2016, Bronze, 178 x 77 x 75 cm. Women's Living Heritage monument, Pretoria, Photograph by Lianne Cox.

Luis Boza (2006:4-7) argues that CNC technologies separate the hand from the direct act of making. The hand is relegated to simply assisting with the assembly, so that intuition and spontaneity is stripped away.

When looked at honestly, once work has been technically facilitated by technology and one becomes used to that service, it is often very difficult to return to working the old-fashioned, laborious way, as one loses confidence in one's ability to always be successful at the unknown, difficult, structural elements. One becomes risk-averse, tempted by the speedy, short-term rewards of happy clients and financial recompense when compared to the more 'fuzzy' long-term rewards of personal growth, skills development and regular experiences of 'flow'.

5.2 Skills development and self-improvement

As both a sculptor and goldsmith, the preciousness of some of the materials I use, and the often fine skills required to make my work, requires a focus on technique and craftsmanship that is occasionally seen as unfashionable within the art community, especially in the light of the current move towards outsourcing and a greater reliance on technological shortcuts. Are practical, physical skills really necessary when outsourcing has become more widespread and technology can make the art-making process so much easier and faster? As Metcalf asks: "Why bother to make anything by hand today?" (2000:1).

As the daughter of a stonemason and a member of a family of seamstresses, weavers and ceramicists, I have been surrounded by makers and craftsmanship since birth. It is difficult for me to conceive of a world where there is little direct contact with materials during the creative process. In fact, Metcalf quotes Harvard professor, Howard Gardner, on types, and mixes, of intelligence that are genetically determined, including bodily-kinesthetic intelligence which requires manual dexterity (2000:3-4). That genetically defined, maker environment was extended when I married an architectural model-maker and spend twenty years working on architectural models while we constantly searched for solutions to create miniature worlds that were as convincing as possible. New skills were continually being sought that could be used on the models and these included digital design skills for use with a laser cutter and CNC machine, new

casting skills, as well as a combination of sculpting techniques that required out-of-the-box thinking while still being meticulous about accuracy of scale. Many new skills were learnt as part of the process of keeping clients satisfied.

As a student at Wits in the 1980s, much of my work had been done in bronze and when I, in my role as an architectural modelmaker, regretted no longer working in metal, I found a suitable alternative and completed a three year jewellery manufacturing programme from 2008 to 2010. This now forms a vital part of my repertoire of 3-dimensional skills. For me, learning new skills forms an integral part of the making process and the struggle with new materials and techniques forms part of the excitement of each project. As an example, I am currently teaching myself to felt with the help of a Russian felting guide downloaded off the internet so that I can felt a suit from wool and the hair of friends and family. The job of the artist is said to be one of pushing craft to its limits without being trapped by it – using craft as “the vehicle for expressing [one’s] vision” (Bayles & Orland 1993:99).

Physical interaction with the medium is extremely important in my work and a large part of my motivation is the attempt to push the limits of the material as I become more skilled. One of the greatest benefits of art making is that it provides an opportunity for lifelong learning as well as continuous work, and this was highlighted in a chance meeting with the sculptor, Fanie Volschenk, at a foundry in late 2015, where he informed me that he had made both the armature and the clay sculpture of a larger-than-life buffalo, entirely on his own, at the age of ninety.

5.3 Reciprocity - collaboration between the artist and the work

Both the concept and the creative production are important to me for all the reasons investigated in this paper, and I am particularly drawn to the idea expressed by the architect, Luis Barragan that “[a]rt is made by the alone for the alone” (Baker 1980:[sp]). By my interpretation, this does not mean that the artist is totally isolated from the world, merely that while in the studio, it is just the artist and the work communicating with one another to achieve the desired result - a personal experience that has the potential to resonate with the viewer as individual. “[W]hy does the myth of the individual artist - the loner following his/her own heart – arise so predictably with

each new generation?” ask Bayles and Orland (1993:76), speculating that it is the result of the authenticity of the relationship between the artist and the material, or the artist and the subject matter, ringing true.

The reciprocal relationship between myself and the art work effectively reflects Gnezda’s view (2011:48) that during the creative process, idea development happens in the mind as well as through interaction with a medium while an idea is being implemented (also Barnaby Nelson & David Rawlings 2007:221). The artist has a vague idea of the intended art object and relies on intuition, perception and exploration to realise the final piece. The various components of my artwork *Cosmetic Self-Portrait (1-10)* (Figure 24) were painted on wood with cosmetics such as foundation, eyeshadow and nail varnish in the sequence in which I would usually apply cosmetics to my face and hands. This necessitated constant re-evaluation of the material properties as it was put to use in a manner different from that intended by the cosmetic manufacturers, effectively testing my conceptual and physical skills throughout the process of making as the work constantly fought back.



Figure 24: Zelda Stroud, *Cosmetic Self-Portrait (1-10)*, 2012.
Cosmetics and nail varnish on wood, 38 x 95 cm. Photograph by the author.

This is just one example of Glaveanu *et al*'s (2013:5) theories of “doing” and “undergoing” in practice. There is constant resistance from the material and this requires a constant dialogue between the artist and the material. As mentioned by some of the subjects in Glaveanu’s research, the artworks “change the original plan” and they are often “stronger than the creator” (2013:5).

“Making art precipitates self-doubt” (Bayles & Orland 1993:13). We are revealed to ourselves during the process of making physical things (Sennet 2008:8). Surprise, disaster and constant problem-solving are amongst the joys of making one’s own work, as the work is not predictable as long as one is pushing the limits. There is a thrilling element of risk to making one’s own work, as well as a need for impulsive decision-making. There is also the consequent regret when one has made the wrong decision and the work has either ‘died’ or one has wasted good resources and time on something that has not succeeded. This was made clear after I had produced a series of 3-dimensional collages using irreplaceable materials such as tickets, pamphlets and exhibition catalogues that I had collected while at the *Cité Internationale des Arts* in Paris for two months. These collages were unsuccessful and the materials could not be used for any other purpose, but the very preciousness of those materials meant that some value needed to be extracted from them. It has taken almost a year, and much thought, debate and determination to find some use for those pieces, but this very dilemma has been part of the challenge and the fear/excitement.

This resistance, reaction, and dialogue is an essential part of the reciprocal relationship between the artist and the work. The work is imbued with the artist’s personality and his/her commitment to solving problems or avoiding them. As an example, in a work from 2013, called *Material Heaven* (Figure 25), a cloud was created from lint collected from my tumble-dryer over an extended period and only when I started laying the sections onto the wire framework did I realise that gluing did not create the desired effect and another solution needed to be found. Eventually I created a 15cm long needle in order to stitch the lint onto the framework and the use of gold thread created a valuable link between the cloud and its gold-leaf covered support. Harry Jamiesen (2008:77) contends that perceptual skill enables the artist to be aware of unfolding relationships during the making process, and these relationships may present as a result of purpose or coincidence.



Figure 25: Zelda Stroud, *Material Heaven*, 2013. Artist's tumble-dryer lint, beeswax, anti-static spray, gold leaf, embroidery thread, cement, 47 x 34 x 24 cm. Photograph by the author.

Serendipity, once recognised and embraced, is often a valuable asset to making art. In my sculpture, *Breast Plate* (2012) (Figure 15), the text in the cement base did not cast as planned. Since there was no time to recast before the exhibition, I removed even more text and therefore deliberately obscured the statistical information regarding breast implants. This last-minute solution fortuitously prevented the work from being overly didactic. My desire to belabour the viewer with data is seldom in the best interests of the work and, as in this case, providence needs to be recognised when it arises. In fact, Bayles and Orland (1993:11) suggest that the artist should leave an unresolved issue in each artwork to explore in the next, rather than resolve and overwork the piece.

Thus, the process of making allows for intuitive experimentation which leads to greater creativity as well as skill. In fact, it is very unlikely that a sculptor's work ever turns out exactly as envisaged if he/she is doing the actual making.

Our actions while making art show our tacit knowledge and for many sculptors, such as Peter Schutz (under whom I studied from 1982 to 1986), honesty and integrity formed the basis of all making. As sculpture students we were taught “truth to materials” and the morality of sculptural practice. Even a plaster-of-paris mould could be an object of precision and beauty, and, for Peter Schutz, anything worth making was worth making well. As a student I understood that this provided one with both self-respect as the result of a job well done, but also provided opportunity for skills development as well as serendipity (as Guy du Toit’s thumb-cast shows). The knowledge consequently gained through the process of making also allows for a greater appreciation of the objects made by others, as experiences teaches one about the difficulties. No amount of YouTube videos or even personal observation can really make one aware of the difficulties, risks and thrills of, for example, casting one’s own work in bronze. The process of making one’s own wax sculpture and then making the mould and pouring the bronze, is a magical experience that still excites an artist like Guy du Toit after thirty-five years of casting his own work (2015). The pleasure and excitement gained from personal engagement in making is different from the more removed pleasure of watching someone else turning one’s ideas into reality.

For Dormer (1994:81), skill lies in the dialogue between the artist and the work. For him, fabrication denies the artistic encounter with the material and reduces the work to “ideal art” (1994:80-81), perfected and detached from personal experience. The artist who makes is engaged: physically, emotionally and intellectually (Sennett 2008:20). Tolstoy argued more than a century ago that we determine both a work’s status as art, and its quality, by how the work expresses the uniqueness, transparency and honesty of the artist’s feelings – as the viewer needs to be “infected” by the feelings of the artist (Guest 2002:1). Tolstoy also condemned modern art as amusing but spiritually bereft (Dutton 2009:239). While some of these ideas may be a century old, and seem traditional, this does not necessarily negate their value. They are echoed by more contemporary writers. Within a society that is increasingly depersonalised and disembodied, the handmade object represents the person who made it, and it represents that person’s presence, touch, care and sincerity (Metcalf 2000)

5.4 The psychology of making

Cognitive theory suggests that creativity centres around not only the development of the idea, but also around subjective responses to problems encountered in the implementation of the idea (Gnezda 2011:48). The challenges posed by the implementation of the idea and the attendant frustrations, self-doubt and disillusionment are spurs to greater creativity and may be regarded as beneficial to the general physical and psychological development of the artist and their relationships with others (Sennett 2008:289; Ruismäki & Juvonen 2006:112). Simply put, making art could make one a better person.

The process of making art usually runs from dormancy through inspiration to planning, execution and, eventually, completion. The peak of the emotional experience is said to be at the time of inspiration and therefore, the final work, which has been executed by “an imperfect person with imperfect abilities”, seldom lives up to what was promised in the original idea (Gnezda 2011:50).

When applied to my own work, what I experience in my mind is exciting because my ideas have no practical limits. There are few constraints and therefore few failures. Consequently, the fear I experience at contemplating the bare sculpture stand is arguably the result of self-doubt: I doubt my ability to create what I see in my mind and I do not want to be exposed to my own shortcomings. It requires a great deal of courage to confront one’s own inability and that is why, on the occasions when ‘flow’ happens, it is such an incredible experience. When the execution of one of my works is progressing smoothly, time disappears, the world disappears, and all the fears, longings and frustrations, that often plague me while am working, evaporate. I am one with the work and at home in the world. There is no emotional ‘high’, instead there is a form of peace and contentment that becomes almost “trance-like” (Gnezda 2011:49).

In “The Concept of Flow” (2002) Jeanne Nakamura and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describe flow as an occurrence of intense, focussed concentration on the present moment, when action and awareness are merged into an experience that is intrinsically rewarding, and where often “the end goal is just an excuse for the process” (2002:90). Flow leads the individual to lose their awareness of their surroundings as well as their usual role as “a social actor” - time appears to pass more quickly and the individual is

fully absorbed and operating at full capacity, disregarding hunger, fatigue and discomfort (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi 2002:89-90).

This effortless absorption of the practised artist is based upon the earlier mastery of a complex set of skills, (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi 2002:91). It should, therefore, follow, that the more skilled one is, the more likely one is to be able to express one's ideas in a satisfactory manner and problem-solve without anxiety, frustration and self-doubt. The greater the balance between the task and the ability, the greater the opportunity for flow.

Skills without challenge result in boredom, and challenges without the necessary ability result in anxiety (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi 2002:91). Flow requires clear, reachable goals, immediate feedback, and just enough challenge to absorb the practitioner without frustration (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi 2002:92). It may, therefore, be argued that those who conceive the idea and outsource the execution are experiencing the short-term emotional excitement of having new ideas without the longer-lasting satisfaction that results from the flow experience while making. Perhaps there is less commitment to become physically skilled and thus sooth the self-doubt and anxiety that is the result of a lack of skill.

Flow is characterised by complete, happy absorption and a lack of self-consciousness. Skills and interest are a precondition for flow, which also demands subjective, active involvement motivated by intrinsic rewards (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi 2002:89-94,) rather than deadlines and social or financial recompense. The physical, psychological and spiritual experience of making art is its own reward (Nelson & Rawlings 2007: 217-255).

Alan Waterman (2005) contends that philosophers have distinguished between the 'lower' pleasures of hedonism and the 'higher' pleasures of eudemonia. The hedonic view of happiness is one of pleasure, gratification and pain-avoidance. By contrast, the eudaimonic view of happiness is linked to self-actualisation and excellence through exceptional effort: "the full development of personal potentials" acquired by means of intrinsic motivation (Waterman 2005:167-168). According to Waterman (2005:169), "feelings of personal expressiveness" suggest the beneficial nature of personal, physical

involvement in an activity where skills, interest and subjective experience result in positive psychological benefits. Eudaimonic happiness results from personal potential being developed through the adoption and mastery of difficult tasks which require intrinsic motivation, thereby furthering a sense of competence and purposeful living (Waterman 2005:170-172). Eudaimonic happiness is said to lead to self-acceptance and a general sense of well-being where one needs little external affirmation.

Ruismäki and Juvonen (2006:111) and Crawford (2009:15) also refer to the psychological benefits of physical agency as an understanding and acceptance of one's own self-worth. "Manifesting oneself concretely in the world through manual competence ... relieves [one] of the felt need to offer chattering interpretations of [oneself] to vindicate [one's] worth" (emphasis in original) (Crawford 2009:15) The possibility that 'making makes one happy' is echoed by Dormer (1994: 102-103) who notes that the struggle with a physical material "provides intellectual and practical pleasure, interest and possibly insight", suggesting that even the profusion of amateur artists is evidence of this phenomenon (also Ruismäki & Juvonen 2006:111). Our perception of the world is deepened when we are actively engaged via a physical, exploratory medium that allows for self-fulfilment through our own handiwork. Some even refer to the special, 'nourishing' moments when the work appears to be making itself under the guidance of the artist, when a gulf is being crossed and thoughts become reality under one's fingers (Bayles & Orland 1993:51; Ruismäki & Juvonen 2006:112; Metcalf 2000: 6-9).

Hand-skills lift us above the drudgery of everyday life, and skills are fundamental to flow experience, thereby assisting in the formation of the path to a happy life (Ruismäki & Juvonen 2006:115; Metcalf 2000:6).

Tania Kovats in *The Drawing Book* (2006:9) asserts: "The mental state when making drawings is most commonly one of total absorption, a withdrawing and removal of attention from anything other than the drawing. Drawing is fundamentally a pleasurable activity (Kovats 2006:40) and this is no different for other artists, including sculptors. Sennett (2008:254), and others (Ruismäki & Juvonen 2006:111), in fact, argue that the steady rhythm required for the repetitive, time-consuming aspects of making also provides not only focus and pleasure, but relaxation and relief from stress.

For controversial artist Marilyn Minter, who previously had an assistant to do some of her more controlled work, the focus has changed. Before “I did the underpainting and my assistant would paint the dot screen, working from a live projector – very cool and removed, but not satisfying”, now “I make it up as I go along...that’s when it really starts to get interesting” (Burton, 2010:41). Minter feels that she is now luxuriating in painting, sometimes using her fingertips to physically manipulate the enamel paint; emphasising the pleasure experienced by having physical contact with the material (Burton 2010:41).

The all-pervasiveness of digital devices is also spurring the desire to manipulate tactile materials as our contact with the surrounding world has largely been reduced to visual and auditory stimulus (Abrams 2011:1). We have a longing to make contact with our hands and thereby experience the materials, the satisfaction, as well as the time that is required to physically make things. (Abrams 2011:2).

For some artists, such as Louise Bourgeois, drawing and sculpture can be a form of emotional repair (Kovats 2006:38). Art making also fulfils a therapeutic function as attested to by the prevalence of art therapists. Both making and viewing art may produce a beneficial psychological catharsis where emotions are purged and the spirit is uplifted (Dutton 2009:87). For some critics, such as Donald Kuspit (Cole 2004:3), the best art has a cathartic effect and reflects the values and attitudes of artists “for which they are responsible whether they know it or not”.

Flow and eudaemonic happiness essentially arise when the consciousness and the activity are in balance: when we feel that what we are doing is in harmony with who we are and we have a sense of goodness and belonging in the world. Waterman infers that it is no coincidence that the terms ‘virtue’ and ‘virtuosity’ have the same root (2005:166). Flow and Eudaimonia, when combined with the hedonic pleasure of sensual contact with the material, encompass some of the most rewarding aspects of art-making.

5.5 Humanism

For the artist, creativity opens up the world to the individual. Creative, skilled making creates a connection to the inner brilliance of human beings by linking us to our cultural history through an appreciation of the skilled labour of the past (Ruismäki & Juvonen 2006:114; Schaechter 2014; Dutton 2009:243).

We are connected to a community of skilled makers and skilled ancestors who have added value to the world, and therefore, in spite of working alone in my studio, I feel emotionally connected to all the makers that have gone before. I can relate to their struggles with recalcitrant materials and ineffective tools because I have experienced these. I can empathise when I see an unsuccessful piece of work where the effort is obvious but the fluency is missing. I can relate when work is fresh but clumsy due to the application of unfamiliar techniques.

Art connects us to our humanity and we are “responsible for transmitting these important values, skills and routines to the next generations” (Ruismäki & Juvonen 2006:114). The world was built by the skills of good craftsmen and the skills of artists have made it a better place to live ((Ruismäki & Juvonen 2006:115). Craftsmanship implies beauty and “the exultation of the human spirit” and art that is beautiful has the ability to provide solace in times of crisis (Sooke 2009:1-4).

Harry Jamieson in “Forming art: making and responding” (2008) believes that viewing an artwork is an active mental process that requires comprehension of the connections/associations that the artist has created. The final act of creation takes place in the mind of the viewer who may be more or less perceptually skilled based on prior learning and exposure to contemporary art. The artist’s skill lies in constructing the form with its attendant symbols/relationships, and “the viewer displays skill in his or her ability to be aware of the nuances of form, and also in the ability to decode the cues or clues provided by symbols” (Jamieson 2008:78). Thus, skill can take the form of visual acuity and need not imply only technical facility (Edmunds 2014). Jamieson states that despite the term ‘skill’ having negative connotations within art circles, it is an integral part of the process of artistic creation, on the part of both the artist and the viewer (Jamieson 2008:78).

There is an element of pleasure at finding oneself able, as a viewer, to decode symbols or elements in an artwork. Having the ability to interpret difficult work may be as rewarding as making it. “The resolution of complexity can be a source of satisfaction” (Jamieson 2008:82). There is glimpse into the mind of the artist and a form of communion between the artist and the viewer that relies on heightened awareness, sensitivity and learned skill. The work is the connection between the artist and the viewer, and they are both involved in its creation. And, as with any other form of collaboration/communication, an intermediary (fabricator) may compromise both the meaning and the sincerity of the message.

Gnezda (2011:51) speaks of creativity as “a specialized type of higher level thinking, an emotional journey, a work process, and a high-quality human experience”. This applies to the creativity of both the maker and the viewer. In the personal making and interpretation of the artwork, the artist and the viewer experience “an enlightenment provided by the senses”, the creation of order from disorder (Jamieson 2008:83). We are connected in our shared awareness of the practice of art as a form of intelligence made manifest (Jamieson 2008:84), a link to our shared humanity.

Schaechter (2014) argues that it takes a toll on the human spirit to not execute one’s own ideas: “(w)hat does it say about human creativity if it avoids the material and the technical”. She states that skill is a form of love, because, to passionately make something that is difficult to make while maintaining “reverence towards process” is a form of sacrifice, a devotion to a cause larger than ourselves. We create because “we love it so much that we can’t live without it” and so, “to do it the easy way would be to miss the point entirely” (Schaechter 2014). There is pleasure in the effort, whether it be in the effort taken to make a work or the effort taken to understand/appreciate a work (Dutton 2009:102). Metcalf notes that contemporary art intellectuals “sneer” at the notion of passion in art-making: “Such disdain is consistent with the role of the modern artist as sceptical” and removed from the passionate emotions linked to subjective experience (2000:6). Careful, dedicated handwork becomes the site of resistance in a contemporary society where a life of devotion to craftsmanship is not particularly valued. As Metcalf (2000:8) says:

Handwork proposes that the typically American values of bigger, faster, and newer aren't good for everyone: slower and smaller are fine for some of us. Working with the hands is thus a symbolic protest... This resistance is not nostalgic...It's about quality of life”

Artists can be driven to make by inspiration, provocation or desperation, but art-making inevitably leads to the artist declaring him/herself as the distinction between the artist and the work blurs and becomes the expression of their view of the world (Bayles & Orland 1993:108-109).

As stated by Bayles and Orland (1993:115):

Only in those moments when we are truly working on our own work do we recover the fundamental connection we share with all makers of art.

5.6 The expression of self – self-preservation and social commentary

“One of our deepest, darkest fears is of being disconnected”, and of our bodies and our surroundings falling apart (Schaechter 2014). Art is a form of confession in which we unveil the truth about ourselves (Ian Fillis 2010:11).

Both these statements provide some insight into my working methods and materials.

There is, in my work, both vanity and anxiety. This vanity is concerned with both physical beauty and skill. My work is about both the traditional and contemporary notions of female beauty and its preservation. It is also about the skill required to attempt to personally recreate female beauty in the form of sculptural work. The anxiety expresses itself in the overthinking and overworking of artworks as well as in my inability to let go of ideas, materials and parts of my own body.

Building architectural models with my husband for a period of 20 years, obliged the collection of miscellaneous small objects that could be used to simulate fountains, lights *etcetera*. This was extended into collecting parts of my own body, such as hair, when approximately 15 years ago I made a series of eight wax figures for a museum and was obliged to find short tapered hairs for eyebrows that needed to be implanted. I grew my leg hairs for six months and then waxed, strained, shampooed and dyed them to use for all the eyebrows. The feeling of presence experienced from having not only my skill,

but a physical part of me in those wax figures has turned into something of an obsession to collect and use the sordid detritus of my daily life to make artworks. (Everything from used earbuds to toenail clippings are collected and stored). I collect constantly, often with little idea as to the final use of the material – sometimes I have a definite plan, sometimes a vague idea, but most often I just collect almost everything that I might, possibly, find a use for in the near future.

My husband and sons have been obliged to cope with signs on the bath stating “do not empty” so that exfoliated bath scum could cool and settle on the surface to be collected (harvested) for the sculpture *Body Butter* (Figure 26)



Figure 26: Zelda Stroud,
Body Butter, 2012.
Bath scum, beeswax, hair,
wood, Perspex, 17 x 20 x 20 cm.
(*Sasol New Signatures* 2012:16).



Figure 27: Zelda Stroud,
Asset Maintenance I (detail), 2011.
Sterling silver, copper, wax, hair,
Perspex, 28 x 18 x 9 cm.
Photograph by the author.

Some of my artworks combine personal items reminiscent of saintly relics (such as hair, nail clippings and medication) (Figure 27), with wax as well as precious and semi-precious metals to create contemporary talismans/reliquary items. These reflect the social and financial implications of the pressure to conform to successful middleclass stereotypes. Many of my artworks are concerned with the preservation of youth and the female body and explore the practices of physical augmentation, grooming and shopping. In short, all the ‘necessary’ superficiality of an aspirant upper-middleclass existence.

The focus on self-improvement and the development of greater technical skill all play a pivotal role in my need to make my work myself. This is ironically mirrored by the conceptual theme of the work which deals with the desire for physical perfection and the constant striving to be more than the sum of one’s parts. The emphasis on the preservation and improvement of the body by collecting and using remnants of my own body (hair, nail clippings and skin scrapings) as well as the use of prostheses and chemicals designed for physical enhancement, express concerns with the reliquary aspect (preserving the personal), fear of losing the self and an anxious desire for personal worthiness.

My work is about the hand of the artist and the psyche of the artist in the process of making, and to some extent, about the preserved body of the artist in the actual art object.

The investigation into why making matters to some artists is an attempt to understand my own need to ‘self-produce’ and preserve myself both intellectually, emotionally and physically in the work, while emphasizing that the value of both the artwork and the individual lies in more than just what is visually manifest – that honesty, creative process and lived experience are required.

5.7 Reflection

To some extent all art-making is about compromise, and it is the province of each individual artist to decide where that compromise should be made. The compromise may be economic, emotional, physical, ethical or political, and may apply to each individual work or to the scope of the artist’s productive output over their working lifetime. As cultural products we all reflect the spirit of our times. What legacy do we leave behind for future generations about the nature of skill and art-making during the early 21st century.

South Africans have always taken pride in their innovation, craftsmanship and make-do-and-mend attitude. As two artists who were approached in 2000 to make eight life-size wax figures for a museum in South Africa (mentioned earlier), a friend and I saw this as an opportunity to earn a living from our sculpture skills. Using the most basic equipment and much hard work and ingenuity we managed to produce eight figures in eighteen months. We had one unskilled assistant in the studio and we subcontracted the manufacture of the prosthetic eyes and teeth, as well as the planting of the hair to others. All the sculpting, mould-making, wax-casting and resin-casting, finishing of wax heads and resin bodies, insertion of eyes and teeth, painting, sourcing of clothing and props was done by the two of us. On a visit to Madam Tussauds’ workshop in London during this period to learn from their process, we were surprised to discover that every stage of the work was done by a specialist who did not encroach of the work of any other

specialist. The sculptor sculpted and the mould-maker made moulds *etcetera*. Madam Tussauds also takes up to six months per figure from start to finish.

While this is in no way art-making, it is allied in terms of the technical processes, and serves to illustrate how a can-do mentality, of which we have so much in our country, may be applied to not only art. The skills I learnt from that process of making gave me the confidence to submit proposals for the life-size bronze commissions that currently provide an income. From that process of making I am learning new skills and greater confidence that I am currently applying to my personal work.

The flow experience that manifests when the challenge presented meshes with the required level of skill, provides an opportunity for happiness that is difficult to articulate. I, as an artist, have experienced a sense of belonging in the world without all the extraneous noise and need for external affirmation. Affirmation is provided largely by the process of making and seldom by the final product or its reception. Feelings of loss of control over my body and my environment are soothed in the studio when I wrestle only with the material. While it has a life of its own, the work is still all mine, and it is amenable to manipulation and suggestion.

Making one's own art is both selfish and selfless. It provides emotional and spiritual contentment, as well as self-respect, obviating the need to obtain those from external sources. As Guy du Toit (2015) stated: "art making in my case is a selfish choice – it was part of my marriage vows – sculpture is the first love".

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

While making implies the forming, shaping and altering of a material, art-making has recently come to refer to the expression of an idea without the necessity for material contact or manipulation. This, by extension, obviates the need for the synchronicity between head and hand which has been the greatest contributor to our survival as humans.

The deskilling and separation of head and hand that has informed both industry and art in the 20th century has continued into the 21st century. Intellectual workers are still respected more than those who work with their hands, in spite of research that demonstrates that creativity is enhanced by practical skills and direct involvement with materials. In some fields such as surgery and mechanical engineering, the need for a combination of intellectual and physical skills is understood and valued. In art, however, those who insist that it is beneficial to make one's own artworks are seen as mavericks or nostalgics, out of step with the times.

Deskilling in art served a dual purpose: to emphasise the role of artist as intellectual and to remove art from the realm of commodity. However, with deskilling came a lack of respect/reverence for the effort required to develop skills and, eventually, for the need for artists to have any physical/practical skills (Rodenbeck 2008:1-2).

The cyclical nature of many taste preferences has led to the current return to the beautifully crafted art object but due to pressure from galleries and the general need for a large output of work if the artist is to remain in the public eye (Saunders 1993), assistants and fabricators have become ubiquitous within the art community. Yet, as the public furore over the Hockney/Hirst feud demonstrates, many viewers are outraged by artists not making their own work, whilst other viewers are indifferent.

The research has shown that personal art making not only enhances creativity, but also that it leads to greater self-knowledge, empathy and happiness. Personal making links us to our better selves and to other makers through an understanding of, and respect for, the struggles of other makers to express themselves while also growing in skill.

There is a greater likelihood of passionate sincerity being communicated to the viewer when the artist is the maker. The work may be less than perfect, but it will honestly reflect the artist's flawed personality and humanity and therefore communicate on a more visceral level with the viewer. Fabricated work, as mentioned earlier in this research, invariably resembles the industrial product it is.

When artists make use of studio assistants to produce their work, one of the dangers is a loss of control over the work to the point where there is uncertainty as to the authorship of even the ideas and techniques in the work (Saunders 1993; Anonymous 2013). There is a tendency to miss serendipitous opportunities as they arise and the work may change in style as the artist's changeable personality is no longer affecting every stage of the work.

The artist may achieve greater recognition and public acclaim due to a larger output of work, but the recognition is reliant on the ideas of the artist and the skills of others and the work is no longer entirely the product of the artist. This in no way denigrates work that is made by fabricators and assistants, as there is much to be said for collaborative, large-scale work that could not be produced by individuals. The experience for the artist is, however, not the same.

For the viewer, work that displays craftsmanship expresses the artist's struggle with the material in a manner that allows for a different experience from work that is concerned largely with concept (Oltmann 2012/10/17). The viewer has "an instinctive concern with the character of the artist, including admiration of skill" (Dutton 2009:6).

BK, the anonymous art critic for *The Economist* (2012:2), suggests that resistance to the use of assistants and fabricators is the result of a lingering Protestant work ethic that equates success with hard work, and therefore, the artist's studio filled with assistants forces us "to consider the artwork as a commodity, rather than a more pure (sic) product of one person's need to create".

If craftsmanship is not important to the viewer/buyer, why is it not made clear to the viewer that the work is the idea of a particular artist but was made by someone/something else?

Art viewers, as discussed in earlier chapters, attach a greater value to work that is made personally by the artist, and tend to view work that is made by others differently.²⁰ The value of art as an investment, that is reliant on artistic genius/uniqueness, has, as mentioned, contributed to less than honest behaviour by many galleries who realise that many of their clients still esteem the hand of the artist.

Since knowledge about the artist and his/her motives and process often affects the reception and appreciation of the work, perhaps clarity about those issues would be as valuable to the viewer. It could be argued that if there is space on the gallery wall or in the catalogue to inform the viewer of the artist's intention and inspiration, there is also enough space to honestly inform the viewer about the artist's process and acknowledge those who actually made the work.

Michael Petry, (Hanus 2011:2), emphasises that his book, *The Art of Not Making* seeks to make the public aware of the work of artisans, fabricators and collaborators as an attempt to “find honesty in labelling”, especially because of the reluctance of galleries to provide that information. Petry feels that those who work on a project need to have recognition and that with a few exceptions, most artists are happy to acknowledge their fabricators or assistants, accepting that their work is not the product of the ‘lone genius’.

Wayne Saunders (1993), as a sculptor who interviewed numerous other artists about the subject for *Art in America* in 1993, disagrees, saying that few artists are willing to talk about the collaborative nature of studio practice, suggesting instead that they do all the work themselves so that the authenticity and marketability of their work are not affected. He admits that assistance is more readily acknowledged by sculptors because of foundry use or the physical constraints of large-scale work. In his experience (Saunders 1993:2), art dealers, in particular, show a marked reluctance to prominently acknowledge assistants, as collectors would question which part of the work had been done by the artist.

²⁰ A casual conversation in 2015 with someone who admired the work of Kehinde Wiley, seen on an exhibition, led to the revelation about the artist using a studio in China to do most of the painting. The perception of the work was immediately altered and the appreciation of the work instead turned to disappointment.

Rungwe Kingdom (Glaister 2012:5), who runs a large foundry in the UK, and has done casting for a number of artists, feels that as long as art is made with integrity and honesty, all is well. For him it is a form of fraud to pretend that an assisted work is the result of the artist's own skill. Petry's avowed intention to give credit to assistants and fabricators seems fair, as it would provide greater recognition, and more work, to fabricators and assistants. This stand by an important curator²¹ is an important step towards transparency about process and contributes to more informed viewers who appreciate/understand the roles of all involved in the conception and production of a work of art.

As seen in the work of Jeff Koons, who is completely honest about his use of fabricators and assistants, this does not necessarily devalue the work's popularity or economic value and instead clarifies his role as designer and project manager, rather than maker. The work is still admired for its finish and skill of execution (Figure 1), as well as for the uncompromising attention to detail, but Koons' role is no longer that of the traditional artist. In fact, his honesty about his persona as 'the artist as businessperson' forms part of his work.

The same could be said about the work of Joana Vasconcelos who is also completely honest about her role as marketing agent, chief designer and project manager and receives no obvious censure. Perhaps this is due to the nature of her work, which appears to draw attention to the collaborative, crafted nature of traditionally female techniques such as crochet (Fernandes & Afonso 2014) and does not perpetuate the idea of artistic genius.

Attempts to turn contemporary artworks into drawcards for cultural tourism have encouraged the notion of art as spectacle, which has democratised art (as with the National Heritage Project), but also put greater pressure on artists regarding deadlines and the need for technological or fabrication assistance. This extrinsic motivation through financial reward and deadlines has, as discussed, been seen to be detrimental to creativity, which benefits instead from intrinsic motivation and the desire for personal expression. Cleverness and novelty require external acknowledgement, whereas creativity and laborious growth in skill is seen to be pleasurable in itself.

²¹ Petry is director of MOCA London, and co-founder of the Museum of Installation, London.

As noted before, outsourcing, whether to a fabricator or skilled assistant, results in the separation of the artist from the material, with the resultant loss of the tacit knowledge and stylistic honesty that is gained through direct contact. There is a loss of intuitive interaction and a resultant loss of in-depth self-knowledge that comes from direct, personal struggle with the material and one's response to it.

While it is important to acknowledge the need for new skills in a new, technologically connected, faster world, there are valuable aspects of the more traditional, personal notions of making that need to be preserved and respected. Skilled work is important to those who practice it, as well as for those who feel estranged by the modern environment (Metcalf 2000:8). Making by hand is a form of cultural resistance to currently accepted norms regarding the nature of art, and it allows us, as both artists and viewers, to remain in touch with our passions, our senses, our humanity and thereby with each other. Critics such as Kuspit and Fuller have written about their concerns regarding the soullessness and materialism of much contemporary art and have been denigrated, as old-fashioned, for their efforts.

While it is vital in art, as in industry, to embrace change and opportunity, the situation that has developed within industry should perhaps be seen in a cautionary light within the art community. The separation of the head and hand and the deskilling of a whole generation of artisans has been detrimental to economic growth and self-determination. It has also been shown to be detrimental to innovation, as creativity is spurred by problem-solving during practical struggle with the material and is not something which happens only in the mind. Creative problem-solving is in itself a valuable skill, a unique form of knowledge that relies on intuition gained through practice, where there are no shortcuts.

The learning that comes from struggle with a material is practical, intellectual and also psychological. The physical maker gains self-knowledge and a personal style of making that is often identifiable to the viewer. Work that is made by the artist has the indelible stamp of the artist's personality as we can see in the meticulously cut arrows of Paul Edmunds and the meditatively woven wire of Walter Oltmann. Artists who make their own work are exposed to themselves and to the world around them. The work can only happen if they 'show up'- physically, mentally and emotionally. The truth of their

obsessive, crazy, lazy personalities are there in the work for all to see, as are their gifts which are often hard-won.

Unlike the work of Xavier Veilhan where the style of the work varies constantly as there is little investment of personal time and effort in coming to grips with each material, for the sculptors who physically make, the investment of large amounts of time and effort on something that is unlikely to be lucrative, requires that, at the very least, it should be enjoyable or emotionally rewarding. This physical and emotional investment is visible to the viewer. The work is only as finished and slick as the artist's skill and patience allows. Boredom and shortcuts are visible, as are obsession and frustration. For what it is worth, the viewer is in the artist's head.

Serendipity is a gift to the sculptor who makes. The happy accidents that arise during the making process often lead to new works, new themes and even new techniques as seen in the work of Guy du Toit. These opportunities are not likely to present themselves, fully formed, to artists who outsource their work. The maker grows in skill and is exposed to opportunity. As seen in my own work, the maker grows in confidence and courage, becoming self-reliant and even emotionally self-sustaining.

The kind of virtuosity that is demonstrated by an artist like Wim Botha, who appears to remove material in his portraits with ease and confidence, belies the difficulty of working both conceptually and practically in an unforgiving, subtractive medium such as stacked paper. There is a gestural immediacy and spontaneity in Botha's work that is the result of consummate skill and confidence. It is clear that Botha understands his own ability, his materials and his tools. When carving a portrait such as Botha's, what is left, in terms of the red edge of the book, is as important as that which is removed and decisions are made constantly to further both the idea as well as the aesthetic appearance of the work.

The South African sculptors that have been discussed in this research may use different materials and techniques, but their work is honestly expressive of their personalities and preferences. Whether the work demonstrates formalist obsession, as in Edmunds', irreverant humour as in Du Toit's, or intellectual introspection and respect for

traditional crafts, as in Oltmann's, the temperament of the artist is clearly and sincerely visible.

It has been shown that problem-solving while working with the material leads to new ideas, an increase in skill, greater self-respect and self-control. It leads to happiness as a result of the sense of personal agency and also to the respect of the community of makers who understand and respect skilled work.

Absorbed, focussed art-making leads to flow and eudaimonic happiness, a sense of being at home in the world and in one's own skin, that obviates the need for external affirmation. Personal art making becomes its own reward.

The kinds of skills that would be valuable to artists who would prefer to ideate and manage (Bauer et al 2011; Fernandez & Afonso 2014) may call for further exploration. Debates regarding the need for different skills for artists (such as project management), are under consideration at art schools (Rubenstein 2007), on film (IQ2 Asia: 2010), as well as in the commentary pages of online newspapers (Aidin 2003; Glaister 2012) and blogs (Beck 2008; Duggan 2012). The arguments are often heated and range from those who subscribe to the belief that the art lies in the concept, through those who believe that the hand of the artist needs to be present in the work and finally to those who believe that art itself has been hi-jacked by commerce.

There are, in the final instance, at least three entities in the creative process: the artist, the artwork and the viewer. Cognitive research supports the notion of absorbed-making being a source of happiness to the artist. Creativity theory supports the argument that physical engagement with the material contributes to both improved creativity (so that the current or future work will benefit from the creative stimulus) and skills-development. Galleries acknowledge – and art-sales statistics support – increased value because of the 'hand' of the artist (or the notion of 'contagion').

If the artist, the artwork and the viewer are shown to benefit from the artist making his/her own work, what motivates the current trend within so much of the art-world to disregard, and even devalue, personal making as unnecessary and outdated?

It may also be valuable to do research into the experiences of those who are and have been artist's assistants in order to gauge whether those involvements were valuable or detrimental to the careers and the personal artwork of the assistants. A number of articles (Saunders 1993; Anonymous 2013) suggest that while there may be benefits in terms of insight into the artworld, contact with galleries and the development of skill, there are also negative aspects such as a loss of personal identity and opportunity for self-expression. And, in addition, much bitterness for some, regarding the lack of acknowledgement.

The role of technology in sculpture may also be worth investigating. If there is said to be a hankering after haptic rather than purely optical stimulus, the effect of digital making, where there is a computer interface between the sculptor and the material, may demand further study. How does the lack of physical contact with the material, the prescribed menu of choices and the opportunity to see the digital product without risk to the physical product affect the work, the artist and the viewer? Do flow and eudaimonic happiness still arise during digital making?

As artists, we are surrounded by choices and the consequences of those choices. It may therefore be important for art students and artists to understand both the benefits and the drawbacks of personal making so that they can make informed choices about their art making process and their place within the art world.

Art-making can and does take numerous forms and each artist chooses their own combination of message, material and process. What seems to be required is honesty and integrity: recognition to both those who labour intellectually and those who also labour physically. There also needs to be an attempt within the artworld to acknowledge, preserve, and value the work of those artists who physically make as possessing some unique benefits to both the artist and the work itself, as well to the viewer and humanity in general.

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APPENDIX 1

WALTER OLTMANN– Completed questionnaire returned by email.

Oltmann, W. (Walter.Oltmann@wits.ac.za) 2015/01/07. Re: Urgent: MA(FA) research - sculptors, skill, fabricators – Letter of Consent. E-mail to Z Stroud (fsstudio@mweb.co.za)

SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS.

My dissertation is effectively an inquiry into the reasons why particular South African sculptors prefer to produce their own work and what benefits they feel they derive from the process. If you prefer to produce your own work and you have philosophical rather than just practical reasons for doing so, I would be grateful if you would answer the following questions for use in my dissertation:

1. Do you do all your own work (i.e. the creative idea as well as the physical process of fabrication) or do you outsource some of it?

I generally do all my own work unless there is a component that I am unable to make myself or if a commissioned project requires of me to employ helpers. I have done one such commissioned project for the Durban Convention Centre where the brief stipulated that I needed to employ helpers in producing a beaded wall sculpture (1997). I have also employed helpers in installing some of the larger commissioned works that I have made. But I prefer to produce the hand-work fabrication of my sculptures entirely on my own. I am drawn to handwork - it has become fully integrated into my thinking and informs all the sculptural work I do. I have always felt very comfortable working with my hands and have gravitated towards using fibre-based materials and textile-based modes of making.

2. What percentage of your work is produced by you?

100% of the work (most of the time).

3. If you don't produce all the work, for which aspects do you make use of assistance?

Only where I need specialized technical help with something that I am unable to do myself, e.g. when I need some aluminium welding done for a base or a support structure or when I need help in installing a large sculptural work etc.

4. What physical benefit, if any, is derived from making your own work?

The physical benefit would be the full experience and physical involvement of the making of the work, i.e. the process of hand-crafting the work and the interaction with materials that this involves. Discovery along the way often determines how I proceed in realising an artwork, i.e. it is about exploring through interaction with materials and processes.

5. What psychological benefit, if any, is derived from making your own work?

Psychological benefits would be the therapeutic value of the work itself and the satisfaction in creating an artwork (Bruce Metcalf refers to an “emotional investment configured as a goal.” In his essay “The Hand: at the Heart of Craft” (2000: 5 - 6) Metcalf mentions the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi who writes about the nature of satisfying action pertaining to handwork and describes a type of pleasurable action that he refers to as ‘flow’. Metcalf writes: “Activities that induce flow have clear goals, they are challenging but not impossible to complete, they provide immediate feedback, and they are characterized by a deep state of concentration that is set apart from everyday experience. Csikszentmihalyi says, “The combination of all these elements causes a deep sense of enjoyment that is so rewarding people feel that expending a great deal of energy is worthwhile simply to be able to feel it.” In other words, the secret of contentment is absorbed work.” Csikszentmihalyi starts his analysis by saying that most ‘flow’ states require actions bounded by rules, and that demand skill. The activity can’t be so simple as to become boring, nor so complex as to result in failure, frustration, or anxiety. The skill – earned only through practice and training – ensures that the individual has the tools needed to rise to the challenge. Of course, the threshold of boredom will rise as a person becomes more skilled, so flow requires complexity that increases correspondingly. Csikszentmihalyi is adamant that reaching the flow demands skill. He says: “Although the flow experience appears to be effortless, it is far

from being so. It often requires strenuous physical exertion, or highly disciplined mental activity. It does not happen without the application of skilled performance.” [...] The clear goals, rules, and immediate feedback that Czikszenmihalyi cited are the psychological foundations of craft.”) you can download this essay from:

http://www.brucemetcalf.com/pages/essays/the_hand_print.html

6. Are there any other benefits to doing the work yourself?

Doing the work myself gives me the freedom to decide when to work or not and to pick up from where I left off, i.e. it enables continuity (I guess this relates to the notion of ‘flow’). It allows me to work at my own pace and to make my own decisions along the way.

7. Do you believe that sculptors need to be physically skilled?

Generally I would say yes, but it depends on what kind of sculpture is being made. Craft-based sculpture that involves handwork and manipulation of materials like metal (casting, forging, welding etc), wood, stone, ceramics, glass etc will require a level of skill in order for a sculptor to become proficient in handling his/her chosen material and in allowing him/her to interrogate the potential of such materials, but an unskilled artist may find his/her own way of doing things too. It is certainly valuable to receive skills-training but not always essential for artmaking. The qualities we associate with handmade objects do generally require skill to make but there are also kinds of sculpture that one wouldn’t consider craft-based in this ‘fine workmanship’ sense and that may not require exceptional hand-making skills. Computers have also introduced new ways into form-finding that expand the field of sculpture even further – there is such huge diversity nowadays. A kind of do-it-yourself vernacular has informed much recent sculptural work (the idea of the ‘bricoleur’ who makes do with what is at hand relates to this form of making). There are many ways in which the handmade manifests.

8. What skills do you believe contemporary South African sculptors need?

This would depend on the kind of work being done, but a basic training in various skills will provide a good basis to work from. In our Fine Arts courses

at Wits we start out by teaching the skills of modelling and casting in clay and plaster of Paris as one of the main traditional sculptural processes, but students also have the option of working with other materials and processes, thereby broadening their knowledge and practice in sculptural skills and even aligning these with other disciplines (e.g. digital art forms). In an ideal world one would want to provide as much variety and diversity as possible in training students, but this is not possible due to time and financial restraints.

9. Should fabricators, or those who provide substantial assistance, be credited in the gallery as being collaborators/fabricators to the artist's design in the same way as for architects and film directors?

It would be best to do so, yes, especially where the collaborators are fully engaged in the making process and drawn into decision-making along the way. A good example of this would be the collaborative beadwork projects carried out by Liza Lou and her helpers who are always fully acknowledged as producers of the final work.

10. At what point do you believe that sculptors need to credit their assistants?

I think it is only fair to acknowledge helpers wherever the production and execution of the work is mentioned or foregrounded.

11. Do you believe that the viewer needs to know what aspect of the work is produced by the artist?

I don't think the viewer necessarily needs to know unless it is significant to how the artwork is to be read, i.e. whether or not it is important to how the viewer is to receive or 'read' the artwork. A viewer can still enjoy looking at a sculpture whilst not knowing who was involved in the making of it, but in some instances the knowing of who was engaged in the making can add an element to the reception of the work in informing its context.

12. If you make most or all of your work, is your productive output reduced compared to others who outsource or have assistance?

Most certainly, making the work myself means that progress is slow and that the making of the artwork demands lots of time. I cannot produce as much as if I

were to employ helpers, but this is something that I feel more comfortable with and that I thus choose to do. I also often align this aspect of slowness with the subject matter that I choose to focus on.

13. If so, do you feel disadvantaged by this?

No, I don't necessarily feel disadvantaged – I could always decide not to work on my own if I felt this to be the case. It is just something that feels right for myself to carry out the work on my own and to be responsible for the entire process. It is not that I mind other people being involved (I have nothing against collaboration), but I prefer to execute the work myself – for the love of the process of making. I guess it is a bit like deciding to work on a large scale or on a tiny scale. The one is not necessarily better than the other – they are just two different ways of working. Both can deliver equally powerful artworks.

14. Are you tempted to get assistance in order to increase your output to meet with gallery or art world expectations?

This has not happened, so I don't feel tempted to do so. The Goodman Gallery knows that I work slowly and they are sensitive to this in allowing me the time to produce work for a new exhibition. I do constantly work under time constraint towards the next exhibition or commission, i.e. deadlines are always looming, but I also know what I can take on and how to pace myself accordingly. Rushing work always ends up in disaster.

15. Do you believe that you or your work would be compromised by making substantial use of assistance?

No, I don't think so. I would approach the work differently, but it wouldn't necessarily compromise me or the artwork in any way. It is really a matter of choice and working accordingly.

16. Do you believe that the public perception of art has been affected by the change in artists' skills? If so, how has it been affected?

Not quite sure if I understand what you are referring to as 'the change in artists' skills' here, but I think you may be referring to contemporary visual arts where the focus on concept often eclipses considerations of construction and making,

i.e. craft skills are often outsourced to technical assistants rather than the artist involving him/herself in the making. Jeff Koons is a good example of an artist who remains detached from the actualisation of his sculptures. It does affect the public perception of art of this kind as making is seen to be secondary. But this is part of what Koons is about, i.e. his pose of ironic distance is significant to the reading and reception of his work (much like Marcel Duchamp's and Andy Warhol's work was too). There are other artists who choose not to approach artmaking in this way and who therefore value the work involved differently. It really has to do with the kind of artwork being made and what it conveys - two sides of the same coin, I suppose.

17. Do you believe that sculptors who are both physically and conceptually skilled are more respected than those who are not?

Artists who are trained in craft skills have been able to develop the 'language' of materials through performatively acquiring tacit knowledge via experimentation and reflection and are therefore very able to articulate their medium in complex ways. However, sometimes a certain un-skilled 'rawness' can also convey forcefully in an artwork (e.g. George Baseltz's crude wooden carvings are a far cry from Brancusi's refined sculptures but they have a potent presence).

Technical proficiency is not necessarily always the primary aim in artmaking but being skilled is certainly an advantage in allowing the artist to make appropriate choices. What you refer to as 'conceptual skill' is always important as an artist has to make intelligent choices in producing convincing artworks. I don't know whether your question has a clear-cut answer though. A skilled sculptor and an unskilled sculptor could both create powerful work and be equally respected for the work they have done in their respective ways.

18. Do you feel that the change in the skill base for sculptors is a positive or negative phenomenon?

I'm not quite sure what the specific 'change in the skill base' is that you are referring to here, but I would say that how an artist seeks to convey something and through what means depends on the kind of work he/she wishes to produce. Someone who has not been trained in skills may even be able to produce

stronger work than a highly trained artist – it is not so clear-cut. So-called ‘outsider artists’ (self-taught artists) who have not enjoyed art training but who create things from an inner compulsion often make the most extraordinary artworks. I’m not saying that skills are unimportant, but powerful art can still be created without such skills or despite not having been trained. Craft-based sculptural work does require skills training in order to know what can be achieved and in developing fine workmanship, but an artist may also choose to work against the highly skilled way of doing things. Knowing the skills would enable him/her to be better equipped in making these choices, so it is definitely a positive thing to have had training in skills and to refine these - but it doesn’t mean that it is an absolute ‘must’ in order to create. There are certainly artists who have pushed their skills to an extraordinary level where technical mastery is almost unbelievable - it is really a matter of what the artist wants from the work he/she makes. The Australian wood carver Ricky Swallow is an example of this kind of virtuoso crafting – a contemporary sculptor who pushes the traditional craft of woodcarving into new terrain.

APPENDIX 2

PAUL EDMUNDS – Completed questionnaire returned by email.

Edmunds, P. (paul@pauledmunds.co.za) 2013/01/27. *Re: Urgent: MA(FA) research - sculptors, skill, fabricators – Letter of Consent.* E-mail to Z Stroud (fsstudio@mweb.co.za)

SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS.

My dissertation is effectively an inquiry into the reasons why particular South African sculptors prefer to produce their own work and what benefits they feel they derive from the process. If you prefer to produce your own work and you have philosophical rather than just practical reasons for doing so, I would be grateful if you would answer the following questions for use in my dissertation:

1. Do you do all your own work (i.e. the creative idea as well as the physical process of fabrication) or do you outsource some of it?

I do everything I can. If I don't have the expertise or machinery, I will get assistance, but I generally avoid things where that is the case.

2. What percentage of your work is produced by you?

95%? It's difficult to estimate.

3. If you don't produce all the work, for which aspects do you make use of assistance?

Occasionally, there is some task which doesn't really require my sensibility and I am short of time, in which case I may ask a younger artist to help me. Also, I often produce models and maquettes using digital technology (laser-cutting etc.) as it is quick, cheap, and makes it easy to effect small changes.

4. What physical benefit, if any, is derived from making your own work?

I'm not sure if aches and pains are benefits! I guess I could say that I like being physically active, and labouring away at my work is one way of doing this.

5. What psychological benefit, if any, is derived from making your own work?

While I wouldn't claim that I don't make my work with some sort of end in mind, for me, a large degree of the reward is in actually making things. I love working with my hands, I love expanding and improving my skills, and I love being able to focus on a single task. I find that last thing easier when it involves some physical participation. I also consider it a great privilege to be able to use my time so

‘extravagantly’, dedicating weeks and months to doing something as well as I can. This is a rare privilege.

6. Are there any other benefits to doing the work yourself?

I get to exercise my sensibility and judgment over all aspects of my work, and I get to enjoy the benefits of being surprised by the outcomes of my creative endeavour. It is often exciting to me to see something slowly emerging as I work away at it, often without full knowledge of how it will turn out.

7. Do you believe that sculptors need to be physically skilled?

That’s tricky to answer, as I would immediately assume that a sculptor is someone who exercises certain technical skills and facilities. And, I wouldn’t really use the term ‘physical’, preferring something like ‘technical’.

And, I consider myself more an ‘artist’ than a ‘sculptor’. Need artists be technically skilled? I think you would find that they very often are, even if this is not immediately apparent in their work. Chuck Close recently wrote a short piece riling against the current proliferation of ‘de-skilled’ artmaking. I think I’m with him there.

8. What skills do you believe contemporary South African sculptors need?

That’s difficult to answer, as from your question above, I don’t think there is a clear definition of what a sculptor is these days. My own experience of a rigorous, pretty conservative formal art education, is that skill acquisition is important to me. I found also that learning some technical skills makes the acquisition of others easier too. Having been all vague there, I will say that I believe drawing – in the sense of understanding tone, form, line etc. – seems to me essential if one is to produce work which operates on those terms.

9. Should fabricators, or those who provide substantial assistance, be credited in the gallery as being collaborators/fabricators to the artist’s design in the same way as for architects and film directors?

I don’t think there’s one answer to that question. I think it is probably clear where the line between assistant and collaborator falls. I don’t think any of the assistants and fabricators I have used have ever collaborated with me. On the other side of the equation, I spent many years assisting other artists and I never felt that my contribution wasn’t appropriately acknowledged.

10. At what point do you believe that sculptors need to credit their assistants?

I think that this will be clear to both parties in a given situation.

11. Do you believe that the viewer needs to know what aspect of the work is produced by the artist?

I think the viewer in South Africa – where the use of assistants is less common than in the US, for example – would like to know such a thing. But, I think that is simply because it is uncommon, and probably arouses suspicion. I think a viewer here would probably rather that the artist did everything. That has probably shifting anyway.

12. If you make most or all of your work, is your productive output reduced compared to others who outsource or have assistance?

I would look at it another way and say that it means that my work bears my characteristic signature everywhere. Perhaps I could produce more works if I made more use of assistants, but those would be a different sort of work, and I'm not sure that's the sort of work I would like to be producing right now. As I said, there is much reward for me in spending my time actually making things.

13. If so, do you feel disadvantaged by this?

No, but the amount of time I put into a work does make its pricing difficult. Also, I seldom have the kind of time I would like to produce large-scale commissions.

14. Are you tempted to get assistance in order to increase your output to meet with gallery or art world expectations?

I certainly would employ assistants if it was appropriate to the project that I was undertaking, but I think that my gallery and the art world value that my work is mostly painstakingly made by me in my studio.

15. Do you believe that you or your work would be compromised by making substantial use of assistance?

No, not if I made use of assistants in the right way. At the moment, however, I largely produce things in which my own particular sensibility is evident all over. Part of that sensibility is the mark of my hand and eye, and part of it is the persistence and focus to complete fairly large, time-consuming tasks. It's difficult to expect that of someone else.

It's not inconceivable that I may decide to do something that requires a different sort of sensibility in the future.

16. Do you believe that the public perception of art has been affected by the change in artists' skills? If so, how has it been affected?

I think the broader public certainly finds it easier to understand the value a work of art in which its producer's skills and hand are evident. There is, understandably, suspicion around work that looks like 'my kid could have done that'. But, these two sorts of artmaking, and the many shades of grey between them, have co-existed for the better part of a century, and I don't foresee any dramatic shifts happening there any time soon.

17. Do you believe that sculptors who are both physically and conceptually skilled are more respected than those who are not?

As I said, often those skills co-exist in an artist, although they might not both be evident in all of the work all of the time. I think it would be safer to say that artists who are most 'respected' probably are both technically and conceptually skilled.

18. Do you feel that the change in the skill base for sculptors is a positive or negative phenomenon?

It's hard to answer that, as the process of getting older seems to generally bring about the idea that things are getting worse, education is not what it used to be and kids just don't have the kinds of skills they really should have! Having said that, I am always surprised by what I see at each year's student shows. So, I would probably suggest that while certain kinds of skills are currently foregrounded over others, most successful artists probably possess a wide range of skills, not all of which are concurrently evident in all the work they produce.

APPENDIX 3

WIM BOTHA – Completed questionnaire returned by email.

Botha, W. (vimbotta@icloud.com) 2015/05/11. Schedule of questions.
E-mail to Z Stroud (fsstudio@mweb.co.za).

SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS.

My dissertation is effectively an inquiry into the reasons why particular South African sculptors prefer to produce their own work and what benefits they feel they derive from the process. If you prefer to produce your own work and you have philosophical rather than just practical reasons for doing so, I would be grateful if you would answer the following questions for use in my dissertation:

1. Do you do all your own work (i.e. the creative idea as well as the physical process of fabrication) or do you outsource some of it?

It is not possible is it to say that I do all my own work. Or anyone for that matter.

There are always exchanges, influences from your surroundings to take into account before asserting full authorship. Having said that, in most cases I would say that I am responsible for the creative input, and majority of production as well. This does not mean that I work entirely alone, but it means to say that the part of the work that makes it recognizable as my own is done by me.

2. What percentage of your work is produced by you?

About 90-100% of the conceptual work, 30-50% of material preparation and 98% of actual final appearance.

3. If you don't produce all the work, for which aspects do you make use of assistance?

Preparation of materials, bulk work before shaping, logistics, physical assistance

4. What physical benefit, if any, is derived from making your own work?

The process of creating your work develop your physical hand skills in a real sense. Actual faculty for creating for making effective form through gesture improve. You get better at expressing your intentions into physical form. In this way you develop language that is indistinguishable from yourself, and becomes a completely unique form of expression that will be impossible to arrive at or simulate by another method.

5. What psychological benefit, if any, is derived from making your own work?

This depends on personality, for myself I derive significant personal gratification from successfully creating my intended objects, even more so from the unexpected and fortuitous accidents that happen spontaneously despite my intentions. To my mind this is the real reason to create the work by yourself: when others produce things for you it is a product of the mind, a vision projected in advance, and without the real ability for the object to become autonomous and play a part in its own creation. Fabricators follow instructions and cannot improvise on your behalf unless they become collaborators.

6. Are there any other benefits to doing the work yourself?

If you allow it to be such a process, there can be significant mental focus and growth in the process of making objects.

7. Do you believe that sculptors need to be physically skilled?

If by sculptor you mean artists that fabricate the works themselves, then yes, it helps to develop skills. If their ideas are of a nature that can be expressed on their behalf it is less of a requirement, other than for being able to understand the production processes enough to give meaningful direction.

8. What skills do you believe contemporary South African sculptors need?

Whatever is required for them to be able to fully express their vision.

9. Should fabricators, or those who provide substantial assistance, be credited in the gallery as being collaborators/fabricators to the artist's design in the same way as for architects and film directors?

Artists like Jeff Koons, Damian Hirst, Marc Quinn, Olafur Eliasson and especially many other unknown sculptors can in some ways be seen as creative directors, rather than the traditional idea of what an artist should be. This is fine, as long as everyone is happy. Crediting depends on the level of autonomous engagement by the fabricators. At some point it becomes a collaboration between individuals. Before then, calling it "Studio of Jeff Koons" is probably more accurate.

10. At what point do you believe that sculptors need to credit their assistants?

There will be a point at which it will not feel like a difficult question to answer.

11. Do you believe that the viewer needs to know what aspect of the work is produced by the artist?

The value in the artwork does not inherently depend on the autonomous artist hand. It can be a great work without the need for the individual traditional artistic creator. For me, my engagement with an artwork is significantly more personal and engaged and interested when I know the work to be made by the artist, rather than a fabricator. This is true both of fast, abstract works, where the hand of the artist is unique and paramount and also of highly labour intensive works; it carries significant conceptual weight when an artist believes in an idea enough to invest great amounts of physical labour or time. This may be diminished when fabricators produce it - often personal investment by the artist is reduced greatly and becomes mostly a matter of available budget.

This is the norm, but can by no means be seen as the unequivocal truth. It can be possible for a highly engaged artist to be intensely involved in every part of the production process without ever touching the work, operating with complete artistic autonomy and without having to credit another creator. There are many instances where this may actually be more feasible, for instance when creating despite experiencing physical disability.

12. If you make most or all of your work, is your productive output reduced compared to others who outsource or have assistance?

Yes. But since the aim is not to produce volume of products, this is not a problem.

13. If so, do you feel disadvantaged by this?

No

14. Are you tempted to get assistance in order to increase your output to meet with gallery or art world expectations?

My temperament and type of work does not lend itself greatly to outsourcing, thereby reducing the temptation.

15. Do you believe that you or your work would be compromised by making substantial use of assistance?

Without a doubt. It could also benefit, but in different ways. It will probably unfold in both directions.

16. Do you believe that the public perception of art has been affected by the change in artists' skills? If so, how has it been affected?

Perhaps there is a reduction in engagement and a greater desire/demand for the outsize and the spectacular.

17. Do you believe that sculptors who are both physically and conceptually skilled are more respected than those who are not?

Yes, I think so. Not that it matters. It is a personal endeavor that should not be dependent on outside approval.

18. Do you feel that the change in the skill base for sculptors is a positive or negative phenomenon?

I think that fabricators often invest more effort than the artist/director, but will not easily be able to invest to the same level as an artist who is one with his/her process, engaged in a personal level for a private outcome.

Personally I feel that the interesting aspects in artworks are when I can see the traces of a language that is unique or being born with ease or with struggle through chance or intense engagement. Normally I would expect this to come from the artist but I have no doubt that it can come from an unusually dedicated fabricator, hijacking and possibly saving what may otherwise have been a disengaged artwork.

APPENDIX 4

GUY DU TOIT – Completed questionnaire returned by email.

Du Toit, G. (guy.sculpture@gmail.com) 2015/02/09. Re: MA(FA) research - sculptors, skill, fabricators. E-mail to Z Stroud (fsstudio@mweb.co.za).

SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS.

My dissertation is effectively an inquiry into the reasons why particular South African sculptors prefer to produce their own work and what benefits they feel they derive from the process. If you prefer to produce your own work and you have philosophical rather than just practical reasons for doing so, I would be grateful if you would answer the following questions for use in my dissertation:

1. Do you do all your own work (i.e. the creative idea as well as the physical process of fabrication) or do you outsource some of it?

I have until recently done all my production. Obviously the physical act of pouring bronze requires 4 hands so I have made use of an assistant (Sakkie Seoke and Sarel) who's role has been studio maintenance and manual labour – sweeping the studio and manual labour.

2. What percentage of your work is produced by you?

All is under my supervision.

3. If you don't produce all the work, for which aspects do you make use of assistance?

Sweeping – some tasks are repeatable – casting waxes, generating refractory moulds (dipping), the physical pouring of bronze, demoulding, sandblasting

4. What physical benefit, if any, is derived from making your own work?

Stay active and fit, art making in my case is a selfish choice – it was part of my marriage vows – sculpture is the first love.

5. What psychological benefit, if any, is derived from making your own work?

In control of the process, time lines ect. I make all the marks, all the sculpture is mine,

6. Are there any other benefits to doing the work yourself?

Therapy I enjoy the whole process. The making is as important as the consuming. I'm still a child when I see molten metal.

7. Do you believe that sculptors need to be physically skilled?

I question this all the time –lots of my work is appropriated – I don't necessarily sculpt it – it is part of a process. Short answer NO so few are yet they do great stuff.

8. What skills do you believe contemporary South African sculptors need?

A work ethic

9. Should fabricators, or those who provide substantial assistance, be credited in the gallery as being collaborators/fabricators to the artist's design in the same way as for architects and film directors?

Yes but don't tell them – everything is collaboration. Artist = supplier, gallery, buyer, viewer, and even the fucken curator. .

10. At what point do you believe that sculptors need to credit their assistants?

All the time they have input and egos and some even work hard. They are like family and should be stroked often (metaphorically speaking) I am not totally convinced that artists should always be given the credit that they get. Wives have to be thanked at any and every opportunity.

11. Do you believe that the viewer needs to know what aspect of the work is produced by the artist?

Yes I think any enquiring viewer will, when building up a relationship with an artwork/artist quickly realize the input and process that the artist goes through. The process might not involve the hand of the artist at all – and this would be the artists practice. It cannot hurt the outcome – the artwork rests in the viewer's mind/head.

12. If you make most or all of your work, is your productive output reduced compared to others who outsource or have assistance?

No I make just enough. China has offered to help but output is not the desired outcome. Art is not full of right and wrong and it is definitely not a competitive race.

13. If so, do you feel disadvantaged by this?

Sometimes when I don't sleep, but then I roll over.

14. Are you tempted to get assistance in order to increase your output to meet with gallery or art world expectations?

No fuck them. I am the only GdT versus many galleries – the question now arises who is the desired one. Supply vs Demand.

15. Do you believe that you or your work would be compromised by making substantial use of assistance?

Could be -I find the relationship between the work more fulfilling than that with assistance. Short answer yes, everyone is opinionated and will exorcize this in the production of the work – nothing wrong with this - but this then becomes collaborative - nothing wrong with this – the artist has to be the editorial editor and decide what she/he will tolerate.

16. Do you believe that the public perception of art has been affected by the change in artists' skills? If so, how has it been affected?

The buyer is investing in the artist, whether he/she makes use of the computer or other tools which is what assistance are, depends on the artist and the control he has of the tools. Handfile = printer just other controls.

17. Do you believe that sculptors who are both physically and conceptually skilled are more respected than those who are not?

Yes I think in this fast evolving world and the threat of 3D printing, the personal human mark will become sought after. The forensic identity will make it human and special.

18. Do you feel that the change in the skill base for sculptors is a positive or negative phenomenon?

Sculptors verse makers is narrowing in this time of 3d printers and the like but the thumb print will still be sought (what makes it humane and unique). The signing of a cheque might be changing but that bit of dirt that a sculptor leaves will remain special and sought after..

Specific Objects

Donald Judd

Half or more of the best new work in the last few years has been neither painting nor sculpture. Usually it has been related, closely or distantly, to one or the other. The work is diverse, and much in it that is not in painting and sculpture is also diverse. But there are some things that occur nearly in common.

The new three-dimensional work doesn't constitute a movement, school or style. The common aspects are too general and too little common to define a movement. The differences are greater than the similarities. The similarities are selected from the work;

they aren't a movement's first principles or delimiting rules. Three-dimensionality is not as near being simply a container as painting and sculpture have seemed to be, but it tends to that. But now painting and sculpture are less neutral, less containers, more defined, not undeniable and unavoidable. They are particular forms circumscribed after all, producing fairly definite qualities. Much of the motivation in the new work is to get clear of these forms. The use of three dimensions is an obvious alternative. It opens to anything.

Many of the reasons for this use are negative, points against painting and sculpture, and since both are common sources, the negative reasons are those nearest commonage.

"The motive to change is always some uneasiness: nothing setting us upon the change of state, or upon any new action, but some uneasiness." The positive reasons are more particular. Another reason for listing the insufficiencies of painting and sculpture first is that both are familiar and their elements and qualities more easily located.

The objections to painting and sculpture are going to sound more intolerant than they are.

There are qualifications. The disinterest in painting and sculpture is a disinterest in doing it again, not in it as it is being done by those who developed the last advanced versions.

New work always involves objections to the old, but these objections are really relevant only to the new. They are part of it. If the earlier work is first-rate it is complete. New inconsistencies and limitations aren't retroactive; they concern only work that is being developed. Obviously, three-dimensional work will not cleanly succeed painting and sculpture. It's not like a movement; anyway, movements no longer work; also, linear history has unraveled somewhat. The new work exceeds painting in plain power, but power isn't the only consideration, though the difference between it and expression can't be too great either. There are other ways than power and form in which one kind of art can be more or less than another. Finally, a flat and rectangular surface is too handy to give up. Some things can be done only on a flat surface. Lichtenstein's representation of a representation is a good instance. But this work which is neither painting nor sculpture challenges both. It will have to be taken into account by new artists. It will probably change painting and sculpture.

The main thing wrong with painting is that it is a rectangular plane placed flat against the wall. A rectangle is a shape itself; it is obviously the whole shape; it determines and limits the arrangement of whatever is on or inside of it. In work before 1946 the edges of the rectangle are a boundary, the end of the picture. The composition must react to the edges and the rectangle must be unified, but the shape of the rectangle is not stressed; the parts are more important, and the relationships of color and form occur among them.

In the paintings of Pollock, Rothko, Still and Newman, and more recently of Reinhardt and Noland, the rectangle is emphasized. The elements inside the rectangle are broad and simple and correspond closely to the rectangle. The shapes and surface are only those which can occur plausibly within and on a rectangular plane. The parts are few and so subordinate to the unity as not to be parts in an ordinary sense. A painting is nearly an entity, one thing, and not the indefinable sum of a group of entities and references. The one thing overpowers the earlier painting. It also establishes the rectangle as a definite form; it is no longer a fairly neutral limit. A form can be used only in so many ways. The rectangular plane is given a life span. The simplicity required to emphasize the rectangle limits the arrangements possible within it. The sense of singleness also has a duration, but it is only beginning and has a better future outside of painting. Its occurrence in painting now looks like a beginning, in which new forms are often made from earlier schemes and materials.

The plane is also emphasized and nearly single. It is clearly a plane one or two inches in front of another plane, the wall, and parallel to it. The relationship of the two planes is specific; it is a form. Everything on or slightly in the plane of the painting must be arranged laterally.

Almost all paintings are spatial in one way or another. Yves Klein's blue paintings are the only ones that are unspatial, and there is little that is nearly unspatial, mainly Stella's work. It's possible that not much can be done with both an upright rectangular plane and an absence of space. Anything on a surface has space behind it. Two colors on the same surface almost always lie on different depths. An even color, especially in oil paint, covering all or much of a painting is almost always both flat and infinitely spatial. The space is shallow in all of the work in which the rectangular plane is stressed. Rothko's space is shallow and the soft rectangles are parallel to the plane, but the space is almost

traditionally illusionistic. In Reinhardt's paintings, just back from the plane of the canvas, there is a flat plane and this seems in turn indefinitely deep. Pollock's paint is obviously on the canvas, and the space is mainly that made by any marks on a surface, so that it is not very descriptive and illusionistic. Noland's concentric bands are not as specifically paint-on-a-surface as Pollock's paint, but the bands flatten the literal space more. As flat and unillusionistic as Noland's paintings are, the bands do advance and recede. Even a single circle will warp the surface to it, will have a little space behind it. Except for a complete and unvaried field of color or marks, anything spaced in a rectangle and on a plane suggests something in and on something else, something in its surround, which suggests an object or figure in its space, in which these are clearer instances of a similar world - that's the main purpose of painting. The recent paintings aren't completely single. There are a few dominant areas, Rothko's rectangles or Noland's circles, and there is the area around them. There is a gap between the main forms, the most expressive parts, and the rest of the canvas, the plane and the rectangle. The central forms still occur in a wider and indefinite context, although the singleness of the paintings abridges the general and solipsistic quality of earlier work. Fields are also usually not limited, and they give the appearance of sections cut from something indefinitely larger. Oil paint and canvas aren't as strong as commercial paints and as the colors and surfaces of materials, especially if the materials are used in three dimensions. Oil and canvas are familiar and, like the rectangular plane, have a certain quality and have limits.

The quality is especially identified with art.

The new work obviously resembles sculpture more than it does painting, but it is nearer to painting. Most sculpture is like the painting which preceded Pollock, Rothko, Still and Newman. The newest thing about it is its broad scale. Its materials are somewhat more emphasized than before. The imagery involves a couple of salient resemblances to other visible things and a number of more oblique references, everything generalized to compatibility. The parts and the space are allusive, descriptive and somewhat naturalistic. Higgins' sculpture is an example, and, dissimilarly, Di Suvero's. Higgins' sculpture mainly suggests machines and truncated bodies. Its combination of plaster and metal is more specific. Di Suvero uses beams as if they were brush strokes, imitating movement, as Kline did. The material never has its own movement. A beam thrusts, a

piece of iron follows a gesture; together they form a naturalistic and anthropomorphic image. The space corresponds.

Most sculpture is made part by part, by addition, composed. The main parts remain fairly discrete. They and the small parts are a collection of variations, slight through great.

There are hierarchies of clarity and strength and of proximity to one or two main ideas. Wood and metal are the usual materials, either alone or together, and if together it is without much of a contrast. There is seldom any color. The middling contrast and the natural monochrome are general and help to unify the parts.

There is little of any of this in the new three-dimensional work. So far the most obvious difference within this diverse work is between that which is something of an object, a single thing, and that which is open and extended, more or less environmental. There isn't as great a difference in their nature as in their appearance, though. Oldenburg and others have done both. There are precedents for some of the characteristics of the new work. The parts are usually subordinate and not separate as in Arp's sculpture and often in Brancusi's. Duchamp's ready-mades and other Dada objects are also seen at once and not part by part. Cornell's boxes have too many parts to seem at first to be structured.

Part-by-part structure can't be too simple or too complicated. It has to seem orderly. The degree of Arp's abstraction, the moderate extent of his reference to the human body, neither imitative nor very oblique, is unlike the imagery of most of the new three dimensional work. Duchamp's bottle-drying rack is close to some of it. The work of Johns and Rauschenberg and assemblage and low-relief generally, Ortman's reliefs for example, are preliminaries. Johns's few cast objects and a few of Rauschenberg's works, such as the goat with the tire, are beginnings.

Some European paintings are related to objects, Klein's for instance, and Castellani's, which have unvaried fields of low-relief elements. Arman and a few others work in three dimensions. Dick Smith did some large pieces in London with canvas stretched over cockeyed parallelepiped frames and with the surfaces painted as if the pieces were paintings. Philip King, also in London, seems to be making objects. Some of the work on the West Coast seems to be along this line, that of Larry Bell, Kenneth Price, Tony Delap,

Sven Lukin, Bruce Conner, Kienholz of course, and others. Some of the work in New York having some or most of the characteristics is that by George Brecht, Ronald Bladen, John Willenbecher, Ralph Ortiz, Anne Truitt, Paul Harris, Barry McDowell, John Chamberlain, Robert Tanner, Aaron Kuriloff, Robert Morris, Nathan Raisen, Tony Smith, Richard Navin, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Watts, Yoshimura, John Anderson, Harry Saviak, Yayoi Kusama, Frank Stella, Salvatore Scarpitta, Neil Williams, George Segal, Michael Snow, Richard Artschwager, Arakawa, Lucas Samaras, Lee Bontecou, Dan Flavin and Robert Whitman. H. C. Westermann works in Connecticut. Some of these artists do both three-dimensional work and paintings. A small amount of the work of others, Warhol and Rosenquist for instance, is three-dimensional.

The composition and imagery of Chamberlain's work is primarily the same as that of earlier painting, but these are secondary to an appearance of disorder and are at first concealed by the material. The crumpled tin tends to stay that way. It is neutral at first, not artistic, and later seems objective. When the structure and imagery become apparent, there seems to be too much tin and space, more chance and casualness than order. The aspects of neutrality, redundancy and form and imagery could not be coextensive without three dimensions and without the particular material. The color is also both natural and sensitive and, unlike oil colors, has a wide range. Most color that is integral, other than in painting, has been used in three-dimensional work. Color is never unimportant, as it usually is in sculpture.

Stella's shaped paintings involve several important characteristics of three-dimensional work. The periphery of a piece and the lines inside correspond. The stripes are nowhere near being discrete parts. The surface is farther from the wall than usual, though it remains parallel to it. Since the surface is exceptionally unified and involves little or no space, the parallel plane is unusually distinct. The order is not rationalistic and underlying but is simply order, like that of continuity, one thing after another. A painting isn't an image. The shapes, the unity, projection, order and color are specific, aggressive and powerful.

Painting and sculpture have become set forms. A fair amount of their meaning isn't credible. The use of three dimensions isn't the use of a given form. There hasn't been enough time and work to see limits. So far, considered most widely, three dimensions are mostly a space to move into. The characteristics of three dimensions are those of

only a small amount of work, little compared to painting and sculpture. A few of the more general aspects may persist, such as the work's being like an object or being specific, but other characteristics are bound to develop. Since its range is so wide, three-dimensional work will probably divide into a number of forms. At any rate, it will be larger than painting and much larger than sculpture, which, compared to painting, is fairly particular, much nearer to what is usually called a form, having a certain kind of form. Because the nature of three dimensions isn't set, given beforehand, something credible can be made, almost anything. Of course something can be done within a given form, such as painting, but with some narrowness and less strength and variation. Since sculpture isn't so general a form, it can probably be only what it is now-which means that if it changes a great deal it will be something else; so it is finished.

Three dimensions are real space. That gets rid of the problem of illusionism and of literal space, space in and around marks and colors - which is riddance of one of the salient and most objectionable relics of European art. The several limits of painting are no longer present. A work can be as powerful as it can be thought to be. Actual space is intrinsically more powerful and specific than paint on a flat surface. Obviously, anything in three dimensions can be any shape, regular or irregular, and can have any relation to the wall, floor, ceiling, room, rooms or exterior or none at all. Any material can be used, as is or painted.

A work needs only to be interesting. Most works finally have one quality. In earlier art the complexity was displayed and built the quality. In recent painting the complexity was in the format and the few main shapes, which had been made according to various interests and problems. A painting by Newman is finally no simpler than one by Cezanne. In the three-dimensional work the whole thing is made according to complex purposes, and these are not scattered but asserted by one form. It isn't necessary for a work to have a lot of things to look at, to compare, to analyze one by one, to contemplate. The thing as a whole, its quality as a whole, is what is interesting. The main things are alone and are more intense, clear and powerful. They are not diluted by an inherited format, variations of a form, mild contrasts and connecting parts and areas. European art had to represent a space and its contents as well as have sufficient unity and aesthetic interest. Abstract painting before 1946 and most subsequent painting kept the representational subordination of the whole to its parts. Sculpture still does. In the

new work the shape, image, color and surface are single and not partial and scattered. There aren't any neutral or moderate areas or parts, any connections or transitional areas. The difference between the new work and earlier painting and present sculpture is like that between one of Brunelleschi's windows in the Badia di Fiesole and the facade of the Palazzo Rucellai, which is only an undeveloped rectangle as a whole and is mainly a collection of highly ordered parts.

The use of three dimensions makes it possible to use all sorts of materials and colors. Most of the work involves new materials, either recent inventions or things not used before in art. Little was done until lately with the wide range of industrial products. Almost nothing has been done with industrial techniques and, because of the cost, probably won't be for some time. Art could be mass-produced, and possibilities otherwise unavailable, such as stamping, could be used. Dan Flavin, who uses fluorescent lights, has appropriated the results of industrial production. Materials vary greatly and are simply materials—formica, aluminum, cold-rolled steel, plexiglas, red and common brass, and so forth. They are specific. If they are used directly, they are more specific. Also, they are usually aggressive. There is an objectivity to the obdurate identity of a material. Also, of course, the qualities of materials—hard mass, soft mass, thickness of 1/32, 1/16, 1/8 inch, pliability, slickness, translucency, dullness—have unobjective uses. The vinyl of Oldenburg's soft objects looks the same as ever, slick, flaccid and a little disagreeable, and is objective, but it is pliable and can be sewn and stuffed with air and kapok and hung or set down, sagging or collapsing. Most of the new materials are not as accessible as oil on canvas and are hard to relate to one another. They aren't obviously art. The form of a work and its materials are closely related. In earlier work the structure and the imagery were executed in some neutral and homogeneous material. Since not many things are lumps, there are problems in combining the different surfaces and colors and in relating the parts so as not to weaken the three-dimensional work usually doesn't involve ordinary anthropomorphic imagery. If there is a reference it is single and explicit. In any case the chief interests are obvious. Each of Bontecou's reliefs is an image. The image, all of the parts and the whole shape are coextensive. The parts are either part of the hole or part of the mound which forms the hole. The hole and the mound are only two things, which, after all, are the same

thing. The parts and divisions are either radial or concentric in regard to the hole, leading in and out and enclosing. The radial and concentric parts meet more or less at right angles and in detail are structure in the old sense, but collectively are subordinate to the single form.

Most of the new work has no structure in the usual sense, especially the work of Oldenburg and Stella. Chamberlain's work does involve composition. The nature of Bontecou's single image is not so different from that of images which occurred in a small way in semiabstract painting. The image is primarily a single emotive one, which alone wouldn't resemble the old imagery so much, but to which internal and external references, such as violence and war, have been added. The additions are somewhat pictorial, but the image is essentially new and surprising; an image has never before been the whole work, been so large, been so explicit and aggressive. The abatised orifice is like a strange and dangerous object. The quality is intense and narrow and obsessive. The boat and the furniture that Kusama covered with white protuberances have a related intensity and obsessiveness and are also strange objects. Kusama is interested in obsessive repetition, which is a single interest. Yves Klein's blue paintings are also narrow and intense.

The trees, figures, food or furniture in a painting have a shape or contain shapes that are emotive. Oldenburg has taken this anthropomorphism to an extreme and made the emotive form, with him basic and biopsychological, the same as the shape of an object, and by blatancy subverted the idea of the natural presence of human qualities in all things. And further, Oldenburg avoids trees and people. All of Oldenburg's grossly anthropomorphized objects are manmade - which right away is an empirical matter. Someone or many made these things and incorporated their preferences. As practical as an ice-cream cone is, a lot of people made a choice, and more agreed, as to its appearance and existence. This interest shows more in the recent appliances and fixtures from the home and especially in the bedroom suite, where the choice is flagrant. Oldenburg exaggerates the accepted or chosen form and turns it into one of his own. Nothing made is completely objective, purely practical or merely present. Oldenburg gets along very well without anything that would ordinarily be called structure. The ball and cone of the large ice-cream cone are enough. The whole thing is a profound form,

such as sometimes occurs in primitive art. Three fat layers with a small one on top are enough.

So is a flaccid, flamingo switch draped from two points. Simple form and one or two colors are considered less by old standards. If changes in art are compared backwards, there always seems to be a reduction, since only old attributes are counted and these are always fewer. But obviously new things are more, such as Oldenburg's techniques and materials. Oldenburg needs three dimensions in order to simulate and enlarge a real object and to equate it and an emotive form. If a hamburger were painted it would retain something of the traditional anthropomorphism. George Brecht and Robert Morris use real objects and depend on the viewer's knowledge of these objects.

Source: Thomas Kellein, *Donald Judd: Early Work, 1955-1968*, New York: D.A.P., 2002.

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