



Oral History Society
Annual Conference 2010
in association with the
Victoria & Albert Museum



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Oral History in Art, Craft and Design

Friday 2 July & Saturday 3 July 2010

10.00–17.30

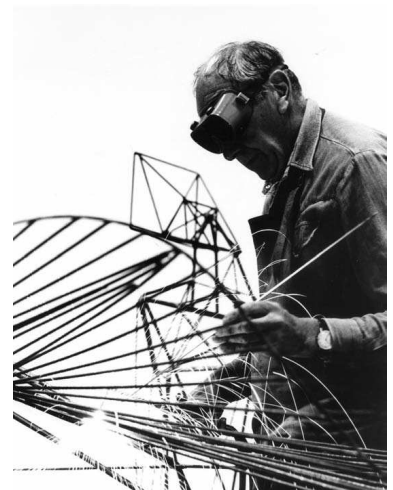
Sackler Centre

Victoria & Albert Museum

London SW7 2RL

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Lynn Chadwick at work in his studio

Photo used by kind permission of the Chadwick family
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project

Abstracts

Keynote Speakers

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Oral History in Art, Craft and Design

2 – 3 July 2010, V&A Museum

Michael McMillan

Oral Histories in an Ethnographic Context

As a practitioner using theatre, performance, installation and publication I have always been interesting in oral histories in my work, because I suppose I am fascinated by what went before as a clue to the present and a framing of the future. Moreover, given my migrant background, which is British born of Caribbean heritage, I grew up with learning three languages: the creole spoken by my parents as a fusion of an English lexicon and an African grammar; the Jamaican English spoken on the streets of Hackney and around London and the London English spoken at school. My father was also a storyteller and would entertain us as children with tales of his adventures as deep river diver in the Guyanese rain forest looking for diamonds, Jumbie (spirits) stories on the island of St. Vincent, where his was born and grew up and his experiences of arriving in England as an immigrant.

My approach as an interviewer with the subject/s recounting their oral testimonies is that I try to transcend the conventional objective position and share my own experience as a means of generating trust with the interviewee. This may break with oral history conventional practice, but I believe that the observer does affect the object of study that is being observed. Moreover, the interview/interviewee is a private relationship and I am being trusted with personal information and therefore ethnically I should be as open and honest about my own aims, objectives and motives.

As to the specific projects where an oral history methodology as described above these include: *The Black Boy Pub & Other Stories; the black experience in High Wycombe* (Wycombe District Council, 1997), *The West Indian Front Room: Memories and Impressions of Black British Homes* (Geffrye Museum (2005-06), *The Beauty Shop* (198 Contemporary Arts & Learning 2008), *A Living Room Surrounded by Salt* (Instituto Buena Bista, Curacao 2008) and *The Front Room: Migrant Aesthetics in the Home* (Black Dog Publishing 2009).

Michael McMillan is a writer, playwright, curator/installation artist and scholar of Vincentian parentage. Recent plays produced include: *Blood for Britain* (BBC Radio 4 Drama 2001), *Babel Junction* (Maya Productions 2006) www.mayaproductions.co.uk & *Master Juba* (Theatre Is & GLYPT 2006) www.theatreis.org. *The Good Person of Trenchtown* (an adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's *The Good Person of Szechwan*) will be produced by Midland Actors Theatre (MAT) in autumn 2010.

His critically acclaimed installation/exhibition *The 'West Indian' Front Room* (Geffrye Museum 2005-06) inspired the BBC4 documentary *Tales from the front room* (Dir./Prod. Zimena Percival 2007). The Front Room interactive website is www.thefrontroom.org

He has a new book *The Front Room: Migrant Aesthetics in the Home* (Black Dog in September 2009) available on Amazon.com
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/gallery/2009/sep/16/front-room-book-communities>.

His recent exhibition *The Beauty Shop* (198 Contemporary Arts & Learning, 2008) www.198.org.uk. He was lead designer/co-curator on *The Southall Story* (South Bank Centre 7 April- 11 May 2010) <http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/find/hayward-gallery-and-visual-arts/tickets/southall-story-1000024>

He is Visiting Professor of Creative Writing at the LCC (University of the Arts, London) and completing a Phd at Middlesex University.

David Toop

The Body Event: an exercise in auditory exegesis.

The Body Event was a sound installation created originally for artist John Latham's Lisson Gallery exhibition of 2005, *God Is Great and Belief Systems As Such*. In 2004, after a long association with Latham that dated back to 1969, I wanted to record a conversation with him. This took place at Flat-Time House in Peckham (the house where Latham lived and worked in the last years of his life). My reasons for making the recording were complex and not entirely clear to me at the time, but there was an awareness of Latham's age and frailty and a personal realisation that hearing a recorded voice can stimulate richer memories of those who are absent. I also wanted to document an engagement with Latham's ideas about time and event-structure. Difficult as they were, his theories have exerted a profound effect on my thinking and practice. After Latham's death in 2006, Elisa Kay, resident curator at Flat-Time House, invited me to create a new version of my sound installation for the space in which the original conversation had taken place. In a sense the work became a ghost, a distributed version of the body event called John Latham, returned to the original place of its sounding as palimpsest and memory, but also an opportunity for me to examine in public my own engagement with John Latham, to learn what I had learned. My presentation will consider the expanded story of this work as a strategy of oral history.

David Toop is a composer, author and sound curator, Visiting Professor at University of the Arts London and a Senior Research Fellow at London College of Communication. He has published five books including *Ocean of Sound*, *Haunted Weather* and in July 2010, *Sinister Resonance: the Mediumship of the Listener*. Exhibitions he has curated include Sonic Boom for the Hayward Gallery, Playing John Cage for Arnolfini Bristol and Blow Up for Flat-Time House. His first album, *New and Rediscovered Musical Instruments*, was released on Brian Eno's Obscure label in 1975; since 1995 he has released eight solo albums, including *Black Chamber* and *Sound Body*. As a

critic and columnist he has written for many publications, including *The Wire*, *The Times*, *The Face*, *Leonardo Music Journal* and *The Soundtrack*. His sound works have been shown in Beijing, Tokyo and in the National Gallery, London. In 2009 he wrote and composed an opera entitled *Star-shaped Biscuit*.

Plenary

Reflections on the Oral History Component of the One and Other Project

For 100 days and nights in summer 2009, Antony Gormley's One and Other live art event saw 2,400 people occupy the fourth plinth in London's Trafalgar Square for 60 minutes each. The One and Other Oral History collection, which has been funded by the Wellcome Trust, was a challenging and ambitious project to record interviews with the 2,400 "plinthers". The interview material will provide a long-term resource that focuses on the individual and their choices of self-representation and identity as well as their aspirations, fears and hopes. The archive will be an unusual and rich source of material for a wide variety of future researchers and public programmers to draw on for academic multidisciplinary investigations, as well as for other creative projects such as exhibitions, films, books and websites. The collection will be available to the public via the Wellcome Library from mid-October 2010, in conjunction with the launch of a book about the project.

This plenary panel will examine the One and Other project and the ways in which the oral history aspect enlightens artistic practice and process using contributions from the perspectives of art history, oral history, art practice and from "plinthers." One of the topics in the discussion will be how the One and Other Oral History collection can help explore the relationship between the individual and the collective experience of this artistic event.

Chair:

Jon Wood works at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds, where he directs the research programme and curates exhibitions. He has written widely on twentieth century and contemporary sculpture and co-edited the 'Modern Sculpture Reader' (2007).

Discussants:

Verusca Calabria is a freelance Oral Historian. She directed the collection of the 2400 plinth audio stories that form the One and Other Oral History collection at the Wellcome Library. For more info visit: www.veruscacalabria.co.uk.

Klaus Kruse is a German director, performer and poet based in the UK, who was a "plinker" in the One and Other project. Klaus is part of *Living Structures*, an immersive performance collective: www.livingstructures.co.uk.

Elizabeth Norman is a retired Senior Lecture in Art History at Sheffield Hallam University. She spent her hour on the plinth swinging Indian Clubs.

Abstracts

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Camille Benda

Sounds of Change: The Role of Oral Dress History in London's East End Jewish Population, 1920-1950

My name is Camille Benda and I am an independent costume historian based in London. I am currently doing research around oral history and the elderly, specifically remembrances of clothing, dress and textiles during the 20th century. This research involves interviewing individuals 80 years of age and above about their memories of dress, clothing and corresponding social context. I am exploring how oral history provides rich sources of information about dress history and the craftspeople that practiced the trade.

This paper will analyse a series of interviews with residents at Nightingale House, the largest Jewish nursing home in London. I found a fascinating commonality in their memories: a high proportion of Nightingale residents worked in London's East End garment trade as craftspeople, or had parents who lived during the height of the tailoring trade in London's East End, dating back to the 1880's. The interviewees were textile designers, fashion designers, tailors or shop owners. Even interviewees who did not work directly in the garment trade offered gems of knowledge about consumption and procurement of clothing, especially during the period of rationing and coupons in London during WWII, and the social, cultural and religious influences that shaped their choices in purchasing, making or selling clothing. This paper will explore how individual remembrances offer a wealth of knowledge into this part of Jewish and immigrant history, specifically a part of dress history that has strongly influenced the UK's tailoring trade. It is even more fascinating to hear oral histories of an area that is no longer primarily Jewish, which has been radically transformed into a predominantly Asian area - the history now lies within the elderly members of the Jewish community, rather than in a physical location.

Liz Bruchet

Making it Fit? Podcasting History, Art History and Oral History

The Association of Art Historians' Oral History Project seeks to document the recollections of art historians involved in the establishment of the Association in the early-mid 1970s and to consider their experiences in relation to a period of expansion and development within the discipline.

The project was originally conceived as a podcast series in which excerpts of audio recordings conducted with prominent art historians would be edited into succinct programmes for broadcast on the Internet. It became apparent however, that the complete, non-edited

interviews would be a valuable resource for future researchers and arrangements have now been made to deposit the recordings in the Archive of Art and Design.

The expanded project now proposes two key outcomes: a contemporary podcast or 'broadcast' element and an 'archival' oral history component. Such a cursory description speaks to an underlying tension shaping the project: the need to précis, order and provide clarity, and the need to create space and time in which to present, reflect and elaborate on multiple accounts.

Using the AAH Oral History Project as a case study, this paper will explore notions of authenticity and access associated with both approaches and consider the extent to which oral history methodologies—such as life story content, minimal editing and the inclusion of a wide range of interview subjects—might work alongside a more 'produced' approach to the collection and publication of content typical of broadcast programming.

Natalya Buckle

Feedsack Fashion in Rural Appalachia, A Social History of Women's Experiences in Ashe County, North Carolina, 1929-1956

The southern Appalachian Mountains stretch across the eastern United States from West Virginia to Georgia. Historically the region has suffered from isolation and poverty, though it is also revered for its unique emphasis on crafts, folk music and oral history. Personal narratives identify pieces of a collective or community memory about women's experiences with textiles and apparel in the rural mountain South. More specifically, they provide a lens to examine the national trend of feedsack fashion, which emerged during the global economic depression of the 1930s. Resourceful rural women adopted the use of the cloth bags that flour and other commodities were sold in to create dresses, diapers, pillowcases, towels and other soft household supplies. As this practice grew in popularity (and out of necessity), the companies packaging the goods "caught on" and began marketing their products to women based on the colorful printed pattern on the sacks, extending their use late into the 1950s. The story of feedsack fashion reflects shifting cultural values echoed in the changes in women's daily apparel as mass produced dresses became more prevalent, and small-scale agriculture and home sewing declined.

Oral histories facilitate a better understanding of the creative reuse of textiles to create personal identities, a contemporary fashion trend with its roots in necessity. These testimonies highlight beliefs about class, race and gender and suggest how these values are communicated, avoided or blurred through dress. My presentation draws heavily from personal interviews conducted in Ashe County, North Carolina about women's experiences with purchasing, sewing and wearing feedsack dresses. Using small digital clips and quotes in addition to material culture evidence, one can trace the evolution of the ready-to-wear apparel industry in the mountain South and the growth of a rural American consumer society.

Emily Butterworth – See Clare Qualman

Sarah Campbell – See Robert Wilkinson

Keireine Canavan

The Language of AlSadu Weaving

AlSadu is an ancient Bedouin tribal weaving artform, which in its broadest linguistic identity is rhythmically linked to poetry, memory, the weaving practice, the extension of the hand, and the graceful moving pace of a camel.

AlSadu weaving conveys the Bedouin's rich heritage and instinctive awareness of natural beauty, with patterns and designs messaging the nomadic lifestyle, the desert environment, and the emphasis of symmetry and balance due to the making process.

Nothing is written down or recorded. Due to widespread illiteracy of Bedouin nomadic tribespeople, all motifs, patterns and associated symbolism are memorised and passed from generation to generation, by word of mouth and example.

This paper will discuss the findings of a six-month field study in Kuwait, in collaboration with Kuwaiti museums, Bedouin master-weavers, academics, poets and social anthropologist. The oral history of a dwindling number of master-weavers are video-recorded and documented to preserve the declining memory, practice and awareness, and to prevent further loss.

The focus is on the interpretation of the woven *shajarah* or central tent divide, establishing the wealth of meaning and communication from the codes or pictographic language. Quoted from recorded interviews, the paper will discuss whether contemporary weavers are disinterested in the names assigned to the overall design composition, but interested in the names and meaning of single motifs or components of motifs, or if names and definitions are personal testimony only to the weaver who created them, or whether the language of AlSadu has been lost in modern-day Kuwait, appreciated only for its traditional aesthetic values.

John Clarke

Oral History Work Amongst Tibetan Craftsmen 1986-1990

This paper will examine fieldwork carried out during five years in India, Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim involving the interviewing of Tibetan metalworkers. The information gathered focussed on the work of traditional metalworkers before the Tibetan uprising of 1959 when the Chinese authorities dismantled existing governmental and social structures. The areas concentrated on were questions of perceived regional style amongst metalwork, patronage and the organisation of workers.

The emphasis throughout lay in eliciting the memories of older craftsmen who remembered traditional patterns of working and systems of patronage that in some cases may have reached back several centuries. In addition to Tibetans in exile older Bhutanese, Ladakhi gold, silver and blacksmiths were interviewed as were Nepalese metalworkers who formerly worked in Tibet.

The paper will highlight issues surrounding interviews conducted in the field including those arising from the use of an interpreter and from utilising photographs of museum objects in discussions. Less tangible but nevertheless key aspects of such work centred on personal relationships with individuals and on the authorial assessment made of the evidence gathered.

Cathy Courtney

Changing Addresses: Artists Lives at the British Library

Over the past twenty years the 'Artists' Lives' programme at the British Library's National Life Stories has amassed one of the largest oral history collections in the world, some 300 in-depth conversations with visual artists speaking about their life and work. There have been further projects documenting the crafts, photography, architects and theatre design, and 'Artists' Lives' has itself broadened to include a small number of recordings with museum directors, dealers and others whose careers have been closely involved with those of visual artists.

This paper will explore how the use of life story oral history methodology in a generalist institution such as the British Library, in contrast to an institution primarily focused on making art or considering art history, has given rise to an account of twentieth century art practice rooted in a wider context than has been traditionally referenced in text-based art analysis, and the extent to which this, in turn, can shift the boundaries within which art practice is perceived. The paper will illustrate the way in which the 'Artists' Lives' recordings relate to one another and will comment on the collection's potential use in the future and in the present, in particular with reference to a recently created CD publication about drawing, raising questions of selection, manipulation and interpretation of personal testimonies for an external audience.

Ann Cvetkovich

Oral History and Craft as Queer and Feminist Art Practice

Out of an interest in oral history as method for creating archives of public feelings, I have been exploring how interviews with artists can be an important way to document their creative practices, including the shape of their careers, the affective networks and communities in which they circulate, and the material conditions within which they produce and exhibit their work. I have been interviewing mid-career lesbian artists with the aim of creating a collection that reveals how they re-shape what it means to be an artist and to engage in creative practice.

My conference paper will describe some of the theoretical and conceptual thinking behind this project, as well as examples from specific interviews. I will focus in particular on artists such as Allyson Mitchell (www.allysonmitchell.com) and Sheila Pepe, who are reclaiming craft as both a

feminist practice and an art practice and using it to create new communities and new forms of museum installation. I argue that oral history interviews can play a vital role in articulating the importance of craft as art form and the relations between fine art and community-based practices.

Niamh Dillon and Michael Wilford

Architects' Lives

Architects' are increasingly becoming public figures, and their work a subject of scrutiny and public debate.

However, the environment in which they work; its restraints and opportunities, the changing political landscape which determines which buildings will be prioritized and therefore funded, is often less discussed.

Often, the architect is viewed as singular authorial voice, and the complex process by which a building originates, and the close relationships between architect and client, planners and members of their own team, is not fully acknowledged.

These complex narratives are explored through detailed recordings that comprise the Architects' Lives recordings at National Life Stories at the British Library. In this presentation I plan to focus on two elements:

Preservation of creative practices:

To look at the practice of designing by hand and how this has been eroded by the ubiquity of CAD and other software. The link between the pen and the idea is made by several architects of the pen and ink generation, who stress the freedom present in designs done free hand on paper and how the process of originating a design is changing fundamentally. Using extracts from two architects I will explore the important link between a physical connection to the creative process.

Narratives of creativity

As architects' work in a collaborative environment and their work is the subject of discussion before the building is even in the construction stage, I want to explore the idea of the architect as an authorial voice; and how this vision is retained when working in a team and when challenged by the either by the client, planners and other industry professionals.

Silvie Fisch

'Hook Into The Past' – Mat Making in the North East of England

Mat making was an intrinsic part of family life in economically disadvantaged homes in the North East until the 1960s.

“Then the great moment arrived when it was all finished. It was usually just before Christmas when it was actually laid on the floor. Your house looked really posh ready for Santa Clause coming; not that we actually got very much, maybe an apple, an orange and some knitted gloves or mitts. That was it, but we had a brand new clippie mat to sit on to open our presents and that was pure luxury. This same rug would be put on the bed if it was very cold in the winter.”

Artists had become aware of the importance the craft played in people’s everyday lives while working with at the Northern Centre For Cancer Care, making wallhangings and mats using ‘hooky and proggy’ techniques. Memories were frequently shared, and mat making seemed to symbolise all that was good within the close communities of the North East.

The ‘Hook Into The Past’ project has its focus on preserving the memories of the tradition as well as its social histories. Although fundamentally an Oral History project, it connects with the current revival of interest in the craft helps to improve skills and to widen its appeal.

The creative practitioners play a vital role, not just by practising their profession, but also as mediators. They have access and gain the trust of a socially invisible and isolated community, and their work serves as an effective memory prompt.

And we can happily harvest the fruits of their labour!

Regina Fitzpatrick

From Forest to Field – The Role of Oral History in the Recording of the Traditional Craft of Hurley Making in Ireland

Ireland without the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) is unimaginable and the GAA without hurling is unthinkable. Hurling is a fundamental part of the sporting and cultural heritage of Ireland. A hurley is a stick crafted from ash wood and used in the Gaelic game of hurling. The hurley conjures images of mythological feats and revolutionary struggle in Irish history but essentially, it embodies a tradition that is uniquely Irish. Hurley making is a traditional, indigenous craft to Ireland, a craft which is rapidly changing. The journey of the hurley from the forest to the field has been completely transformed in recent years. The traditional handcraft, while still in practice, has mostly been replaced by a mechanised process.

This presentation will look at the contribution of oral history to the recording of the traditional art of hurley making. Through the GAA Oral History Project, generations of craftsmen are being interviewed in order to get an insight into traditional practices and to trace changes in processes. In the wider cultural context, these interviews also trace changes in society, sport, economy and ecology in Ireland through the lens of the hurley maker and provide fascinating accounts, often given by third or fourth generation tradition bearers. The connection between the practitioner and their wider cultural context will be explored along with the oral

transmission of the craft; the changing position of the craftsman in the community and issues surrounding interviewing crafts people who are part of a movement.

The presentation will include: footage of the game of hurling in order to contextualise the hurley for the audience; audio clips from interviews carried out; and historical photographs and documents from the GAA Oral History Archive.

Eleanor Flegg

The Death of Small Things

This paper discusses endings, and the way that they are remembered. People have an affinity with beginnings. They are associated with energy and hope, and historical source materials tend to congregate around them. Beginnings attract the mechanisms of promotion – the press release, the photographer, and the local newspaper. They generate records that have a fighting chance of survival.

Endings, in contrast, are silent and sad, and people do not linger there in any way that creates a lasting record. Endings carry associations of failure and shame. Where written accounts exist, they are usually brief, reflecting the tendency to move on from the place where things went awry.

Small enterprises end quietly. Craft activities, always low in the hierarchies of importance, tend to slip away unnoticed, leaving scarcely more than a ripple in the historical record. But, irrespective of their perceived importance, endings impact people's lives. Enterprises that end in ways that are divisive or traumatic leave scars within the community. These scars become areas of silence, around which people manoeuvre, at first with care and then habitually. Memories of painful endings become internalised, isolated, embittered, and entrenched. Oral history recordings release these memories: the festering and the resolved. They expose scar tissue and irreconcilable truths. A single event, remembered by different protagonists, can be barely recognisable as such. One person's decisive action can be another's heartbreak. With this in mind, this paper attempts to trace the anatomy of heartbreak surrounding the closure of the Cork Craftsmen's Guild in 1984.

The material is drawn from a PhD project at the University of Ulster which examines the studio crafts movement in Ireland in the late twentieth century. The project is based on 50 interviews with makers and administrators and is structured around those organisations – large and small – that supported the crafts.

Bettina Furnee – See Ian Horton

David Gates

History in the Making: The use of Talk in Inter-Disciplinary Contemporary Craft Collaborative Practice.

The author is a practicing furniture maker based in London and is a research student at Kings College London.

This paper seeks to reveal the role of talk in sites of contemporary crafts practice and that talk can be shown to be a significant part of the creative process.

Oral History typically concerns itself with the narratives of individuals. We can also claim that the overriding working condition in contemporary craft practices is of individuals making work in greater or lesser degrees of isolation. This notion of the individual and of solo pursuits ties in well with the standard reading that craft knowledge is tacit; silent and unsayable. However this ready acceptance can be restrictive when thinking about the processes of creative practice and interaction between practitioners. Significant numbers of practitioners engage in periods of collaboration, working with one or more possibly inter-disciplinary makers creating work of a less pre-determined nature than their usual outputs. Many more find the idea of peer review and conversation helpful as part of their development. These situations all involve talk.

This research draws upon approaches from Oral History and Sociolinguistics using as data an occasion of in-studio collaborative activity. Breaking with the view of Oral History as the recall or testimonial by the individual of the past we might attend to the co-constitutive nature of talking and making in *the now*. Considering the talk *in* practice rather than the discourse *around* practice, its situatedness in place and action might reveal connected dialogic strands of interaction between making and language revealing the temporal and social interconnectedness of both locating the doing of making more centrally in the recordings of histories.

Huriye Gürdalli

Oral History of the “Buildings of Power” in Northern Cyprus Through the Eyes of Their Architects

The capital city of Cyprus, Nicosia, has held the seat of government and administrative authority for the island throughout the history. The Lusignan reign in the 12th century (1192-1489). This was followed by Venetian (1489-1571), Ottoman (1571-1878), British (1878-1960) rules and the independent state of Cyprus (1960-1963). Today it is widely known as the last divided capital city in Europe as it serves as the capital of Turkish Cypriots on the north and Greek Cypriots on the south of the island. The city itself with its palaces, monuments and the governmental centers illustrates how the territorial belonging and architecture of power were defined and reflected in the buildings. The organisation of power of individuals, communities and nations can be traced through the organisation of space as well as the architectural forms of the administrative buildings.

This paper is based on the interviews, which have been conducted with the architects of the official buildings that have served the administrative structures of Turkish community in the North Cyprus. It elaborates the ideas and experiences of the architects on the ideational background, symbolic significance and the relationship between the art forms and the political power with regard to these buildings.

In this respect the paper reflects on the views of the architects on the constructional aim of the building, the architectural styles that affected the design of the building; the extent of the political authority's involvement in the planning and designing of the building. Drawing on the oral testimonies of the architects, the paper highlights the connection between the political power and the architectural processes allowing for the contextualizing the divisiveness which dominated the architectural forms in the island throughout the history.

Keywords: architecture, space, political power, official buildings, oral history

Fiona Hackney

Memory, Meaning and the Making of an 'Art Community' in St. Ives, Cornwall

This paper explores Memory Bay, a Heritage Lottery funded oral history project that has been recording community memories and experiences of the art colony in St Ives. The aim of the project, which is managed by the St Ives Arts and Heritage Partnership including St Ives Trust Archive Study Centre, Tate St Ives, the Leach Pottery, the Porthmeor Studios and University College Falmouth, is to create a new audio-visual resource providing rich material for schools, community groups, researchers and heritage organisations about the art community in the town. A central aim of the project is to reconsider what 'art community' means and how this is imagined (re-imagined) and materialised through memory. By recording the testimony of those who lived and worked with creative practitioners: the family who provided the clay for the Leach pottery, for instance, and the pottery's secretary as well as the potters themselves, Memory Bay moves beyond representing artists in isolation, locating them instead within the wider cultural contexts, narratives and networks of the everyday. Emerging themes include: incoming artists and the local economy, the significance of place and identity, local, national and international relationships, and the new freedoms that the artists brought as well as tensions that developed with local people.

The presentation will include selected extracts from oral history interviews and a film that was commissioned to accompany Memory Bay. The presentation will conclude with an outline of the project's second phase: dissemination of the archive inside and outside the town through new media technology.

Alexandra Handal

Gathering Scattered Pieces, Reassembling a Disappearing World: The Role of Oral History in the Making of *Dream Homes Property Consultants*

In this presentation, I will be discussing my web-based artwork *Dream Homes property consultants*. It is a real and imagined estate agency in cyberspace that specialises in 'Arab-style' homes. These are houses situated in neighbourhoods of West Jerusalem that were ethnically cleansed of its Palestinian Arab population by Zionist forces in 1948. To gain insight beyond the 'competing historical narratives' and the 'big events', I have turned towards those whose voices have been silenced. It has led me to enter into conversation with twenty-four Palestinian refugees and exiles whose memories of their expropriated homes and of the neighbourhoods they were driven away from served as a departure point to piece together a vanishing world. It is on the basis of small stories, intimate recollections, and fragmented memories - overlooked by historians - that I have built the *Dream Homes* website. It resulted in an artwork that includes mental maps, archival images, found photos, recent photographic documentation, short videos, animations, sound and text. In my presentation, I would like to address the role of oral history in the making of *Dream Homes*, beginning with the collection of material on to the process of its translation into another narrative form, that includes visual, oral and textual elements.

Ian Horton and Bettina Furnee

Oral History, Site-Specificity and the Indexical

This paper examines the use of oral history in text-based site-specific public art practice. It highlights the features these two activities share and examines potential tensions when such artworks use oral history records as a key component in the final outcome. These issues are examined with direct reference to two projects, "Witness" and "Prisoner of War", by the artist Bettina Furnee.

Oral histories, in aiming to record and archive people's accounts of past events, must make reference to time and place. They are a record in the present time and place of events that move fluidly across both time and place through the act of recounting. It is argued that these features are also evident in site-specific art practices which similarly reference the history of place while being firmly located in the present moment of creation and/or reception.

Whilst oral history and site-specific public art share the features outlined above, the artworks examined in this paper highlight issues within the use of oral history in such practice. Oral histories can most directly be presented in an art context aurally. If they are to take physical or material form then the issue of editing becomes central to the practice unless a printed transcript is presented in full. This problem is explored in relation to Rosalind Krauss' notion of the indexical, used in analysing postmodern artistic practices, and linked to the idea that the textual fragment can substitute for the archive itself.

Liza Kirwin

"Speaking of Craft: Oral History at the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art"

In 1958, the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art began an oral history program that quickly became a cornerstone of its mission to collect, preserve and make available primary sources documenting the history of the visual arts in America. This talk focuses on a major, ongoing initiative—The Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for American Craft and Decorative Arts—to record and transcribe oral history interviews documenting the history of the studio craft movement in America. To date the project has produced more than 190 interviews with prominent artists working in clay, glass, metal, fiber and wood. Many of the transcripts are available online through the Archives' website at www.aaa.si.edu. This talk will explore the revelations and limitations of these interviews as primary evidence from the point of view of the project manager.

Torston Lange

Critical Voices and Architectural Debate in the GDR in the 1970s and 1980s

In the GDR a significant role was ascribed to urban design, architecture, and art – and their interplay – in providing the spatial and material framework in which socialist society should develop. But did this importance in turn lead to heightened public attention and debate about these disciplines? In a 1993 essay, the East German architectural critic Bruno Flierl held that there was no broad public discussion about architecture and urban design. Instead, the media only circulated official views and statements that were sanctioned by the leaders of the state controlled construction system.

In recent years, the notion of total control over opinion and strict totalitarian rule has become the subject of growing interest in historical research, particularly in the field of social history. Such research aimed to challenge the totalitarianism paradigm by drawing attention to diverse forms and degrees of controversy, critical engagement, and regime criticism across different levels of society.

However, architectural histories of the GDR – with few exceptions – have been slow in addressing (or repressed?) the issues of criticism and public debate among urban designers, architects, artists, and theorists. Were there really no open discussions about architecture in the GDR? Or, if they existed, where could they be found, what were their characteristics, and how critical were they?

The objective of my presentation is to offer an alternative account of criticism and debate through a study of periodicals from the fields of architecture, art and design from the 1970s and 1980s. I will draw on the magazines themselves as well as on oral history interviews with their editors and contributors. With the help of both, I will discuss contingencies for and limits to critical engagement in different publications that were situated either within, on the margins of, or outside the discipline of architecture and its professional institutions.

Hannah Liley

The M11 Link Road Artists' Archive Campaign

The “No M11 Link Road” campaign in East London was one of the most controversial road protests in England of the past twenty years. It was the direct forerunner to the reforming of Reclaim The Streets and the Anti Globalisation direct action protests, which coined the phrase “Tactical Frivolity”, with performance interventions, observation towers, treetop walkways and the creation of independent “free” states, central to their campaign. The No M11 campaign became the catalyst for a number of artists’ counter cultures; the film collective Undercurrents, an alternative news company which filmed events at the height of the protest. The campaign was also the focus for the early editions of schNEWS. Though researchers have addressed the synergy between activists and community, the presence of artists on the site has been largely ignored.

The research project Road is an archive of text, images and interviews that document the living history of the No M11 Link Road campaign in East London, and the people that lived in and visited the area. The project investigated this largely forgotten history by examining and documenting the wider context of the artists’ community and the legacy of its creative strategies. It considers how residence on the M11 site affected artists’ production, but importantly how far artistic production became a central part of the campaign.

The production of an oral archive brings the voices of 20 artists that lived in the area during the protest to the forefront of the research and allows us a unique opportunity to hear the artists’ experiences first hand. It presents another way of documenting and assessing art history, using oral history recordings as a tool to develop non-fictional writing and art-based projects.

Fiona P. McDonald

An Unexpected History Lesson: Oral Histories and the Fiber Arts in New Zealand

The history of women in Aotearoa/New Zealand is captured through their stories and their craft—both are immortalized through the small groups who meet to knit and spin wool together. This project traces the lives of five women who meet bi-weekly at the Albany Spinners and Weavers Guild in Auckland, NZ. They are five of many women in the Auckland isthmus whose skills and talents are slowly being forgotten. I met these women by chance while I was studying at the University of Auckland in the department of Māori Studies as an international graduate student. A chance meeting at local wool shop started a project on fiber arts that has afforded me the opportunity to practice primary fieldwork within my own community and understand the importance of self-reflexive methodologies when collecting oral histories.

This paper will focus on the historical aspect of the *[Record] [Create]: Oral History in Art, Craft and Design* by elaborating on how I approached the recording of oral histories while learning the dynamic nature of fiber arts and the bond between women and the histories that they

share. The identities of these women are captured through each knit and purl, each story, and each cup of tea. However, while these five women are an integral part of the history of Auckland it is important to note that they are first or second generation of English, Scottish, and Dutch immigrants (some of whom were war brides). This guild, however, is just a small representation of the larger collective of fiber arts guilds that meets tri-annually, at what they call a “spin-in,” to share their work and the collegial environment of women with a shared passion. This presentation will show through examples the interconnectedness between the histories of wool, economics, sustainability, diversity, and genealogy in New Zealand facilitated through oral histories.

Wasma Mansour

Voices from Home: Single Saudi Women’s Perspective

My research explores the construction and reflection of the identities of single women living alone in Saudi Arabia. The medium I use to investigate these identities is their own private spaces and possessions, as captured in my own photographic work. The role of oral history in my research is to guide my interpretation of these private spaces and biographical objects. According to Janet Hoskins (1998), it is impossible to collect histories of objects in isolation from the histories of their owners. Objects become catalysts which evoke memories, as they are embedded within the informants’ lives and experiences. My subjects’ narratives are indeed crucial in contextualizing the photographic component of this research.

Given these women’s single existence, I focused on their domestic spaces, and their narratives on them. This presentation will therefore display examples of my photographs of these domestic spaces, complemented by these women’s autobiographical stories, which I gathered through fieldwork interviews. My presentation will demonstrate how I have used oral history to decode my photographs of these spaces, thus unravelling these women’s identities. My analysis of these identities will illuminate elements such as the complex gendering of their domestic space, their methods of articulation, and their sense of agency.

Deirdre Murphy

Oral Testimony and the History of Court Fashion

Oral histories are an invaluable research tool in aiming toward a more complete understanding of the history of court fashion. Interviews with people who have made and worn court dress give an insight into the design and production of these specialist clothes as well as the workings of the ceremonies at which they wore them. As curator at Historic Royal Palaces, I have been recording interviews with people who have made and worn court dress since 2003.

Formal presentation of men and women to British monarchs ceased in 1939 and with these spectacular ceremonies went the special clothes people wore at them. Since the 18th century, court dress had been an absolute requirement for anyone who attended court functions. Men wore elaborate military-style uniforms and women wore dresses with long trains and ostrich

feather headdresses. An enormous industry built up around the production of these garments. Savile Row tailors Henry Poole started making these costly uniforms in the mid 19th century and court dressmakers supplied women with couture gowns.

This paper will examine the importance of oral histories in understanding court dress and the workings of formal court presentation ceremonies. Audio and video interview clips will explore details of the tailoring and dressmaking industries that grew around these customs. Interviews with Savile Row tailors, ex-debutantes and a man who attended a levée ceremony at St James's Palace in 1938 will illustrate the importance of personal testimony in recording the near-lost practices of making and wearing court dress.

Arlene Oak

Memories in translation: Recollection and Imagery in Architectural Practice

Oral history interviews in which creative practitioners self-consciously talk about their past in response to an interviewer's questions have been referred to as a form of 'Big Story' (Freeman 2006). In contrast, those everyday interactions, such as business meetings, in which for instance, practitioners talk about their past to account for present or ongoing design decisions, have been referred to as 'small stories' (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008)).

This paper looks at aspects of the interrelationship between big and small stories through studying an architect's recollections of a specific experience in his past: his visit to Louis Khan's Kimbell Art Museum in 1993. In particular this paper considers how the architect's big and small stories are told in relation to photographic images of the Kimbell Museum. Through exploring how the architect draws on his memories of the Art Museum as he relates both small stories (in transcripts of meetings with clients during the early stages of the design of a crematorium) and big stories (in a transcript of an oral history interview about the crematorium project) we can see how his narratives act as diverse forms of agency. That is, the architect's 'small'-story recollections, when presented in relation to images, serve as rhetorical devices that position him as a relevant, authoritative professional and convince his clients of the veracity of his design decisions. Further, his 'big' stories, when combined with photographs of the Kimbell, enable him to reflect upon his own career, actively locate his proposed building within a personal history of practice, and situate his work within the wider canon of architecture's past.

Gabriele Oropallo and Sofia Serenelli

"How embarrassing is it to write": Self-Images, Narratives and Hidden Conflicts in AG Fronzoni's Work.

Designers write to present and pitch their work, to describe their principles and methods; they even write design criticism. Against this landscape, AG Fronzoni represents a strikingly different case. Considered one of the founding fathers of the minimalist aesthetic in design, his career spanned along almost six decades and touched all design disciplines. Although initially a journalist, he later actively rejected writing as a way to convey his ideas. The spoken word was

consciously selected as the only way to encode the meanings and to explain his work. Also, in the few interviews he gave, his concepts are remarkably consistent; along the decades, even the wording is similar, as though he had standard answers. Moreover, also during the interviews with collaborators and pupils, testimonies are consistent and standardized. Instead of clarifying, these oral stories seem to have been collectively reworked, eventually creating a totemic aura around his figure. Yet, these fixed images appear to have developed progressively, perhaps unconsciously, and are in tension with some recurring features of his design work.

This paper will use oral history as a crucial tool to understand Fronzoni's militant aim to make design into a "language without words" that communicates its messages bypassing critical interpretation and, within it, the role and the contextual meaning of the spoken word. Secondly, it will examine the artist's construction of his codified self-image and the ways in which this image crystallised in a stereotypical set of memories. In addition, the paper will confront Fronzoni's "wordless" programme with its practical evolution during six decades of design work. It will be argued that these standardised narratives of the designer can reveal an unspoken and maybe unconscious radical change in the meaning of Fronzoni's work. During the decades, "repetition" may have become the only way to cope with the challenges of a changing modernity. In other words, it might have become a comfortable form of "silence" over the infeasibility of the original programme, beyond the "embarrassment" of the written word.

Matthew Partington

Oral History and Research Ethics in the Creative Arts and Higher Education

My paper will look at the ethical issues which arise out of *human participant research* in the visual arts, with particular reference to oral history interviewing. All higher education research which deals with human participants now has to undergo varying degrees of ethical oversight, ranging from Funding Council approval to a Faculty committee. Growing out of ethical concerns over medical research, formal ethical approval has now reached all areas of higher education but the visual arts have been amongst the last to actively engage in ethical oversight of staff and student research.

Given both the widespread use of recorded interviews in visual arts research and the potential to engage with extremely sensitive issues, this paper will look at ways in which examples from the Higher Education arena can demonstrate how careful attention to ethical issues can serve to strengthen the position of oral history as a research methodology. Drawing on my experience as a crafts historian (using video as an oral history tool) and as Chair of my Faculty's Research Ethics Committee my paper will also address the following practical issues:

- Informed consent (including the right to the withdrawal of consent),
- Security and safety
- Copyright
- Anonymity

The paper will include audio and video clips from a number of research projects in order to illustrate some of the ethical issues which arise from using oral history as a methodology in the visual arts.

Belinda Perfitt

Women Textile Workers in the West Riding of Yorkshire

As Frisch suggests oral history can be “a powerful tool for discovering, explaining and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory – how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experiences and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them” (Frisch 1998 p3)

I am a part time postgraduate student, researching for a Masters degree at the University of Bradford. The subject of my research is an oral history of West Yorkshire women textile workers in the mid 20th Century.

One of the purposes of my research is to document and preserve the experiences of women who worked in an industry which has all but disappeared. I have taped interviews with a number of women who worked as menders, warpers and weavers in the woollen textile industry.

Using this oral evidence, my talk will describe practices which the women did not consider to be creative at the time . I will also discuss that by participating in my research and accessing their “historical memory” has helped the women to reconnect with the past and reflect on their achievements and contribution to the textile industry and to find a retrospective creative identity.

Frisch M, *The Oral History Reader 1998* Routledge London

Clare Qualman and Emily Butterworth

Spinning Stories

This paper will focus on the role of other people’s stories as research, inspiration, and material to work with, reflecting on the possibilities and the difficulties of a participatory process. We will explore these issues through a case study of *Spinning Stories*, a recently completed multi-faceted art project that used oral histories to inform and develop a range of outcomes.

The project was developed in collaboration between Clare Qualmann, an artist, and Dr. Emily Butterworth, a sixteenth-century specialist working on notions of gossip and babble in the French Renaissance, with an interest in how and where these activities were practised. Our partnership proposed the identification of contemporary parallels relating to locations and practices of conversation, language and storytelling.

Working with The Women's Library as an institutional partner influenced the emergence of the launderette as our site of focus. Their building occupies the site of one of the first public washhouses, and our research soon revealed the contemporary launderette to be disappearing from the surrounding area. Our research methods involved formal interviews, collecting memories of laundry, laundrywork and associated stories, and informal 'under cover' overhearings and conversations, as well as contributions in written form via a blog (<http://www.spinningstories.wordpress.com>).

These stories and histories were combined with historical research to create a walk, (conceived of as the art work) which we performed as a guided tour in autumn 2009, and will repeat in July 2010. A guide to the walk was published and is available free of charge from The Women's Library. We also produced a workshop for the Big Draw in October 2009 and a live art event 'The Nightwash Laundry Chorus', a performance of the instructions in a Hackney launderette.

Anne Ritchie

The Museum as a Work of Art: Interviewing Museum Architects, Engineers, and Builders

As different from each other as the Tate Modern and the Tate Britain, the architecture of the East and West Buildings of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. reflect their modern and classical collections of art. The challenge for the East Building, opened in 1976, was to complement the original building without either copying it or clashing with it. Additional problems were posed by the unusual trapezoidal space available for the new building. The National Gallery has sponsored an oral history project that includes interviews with the architect, I. M. Pei, the engineers who calculated how to turn Pei's vision into reality, the builders and stonemasons who constructed it, and the curators who have mounted exhibits in it.

As the chief interviewer, I will discuss the objectives and methods of the project, the individuals interviewed, and the array of information gleaned from conception to construction of a building that is now considered a work of art in its own right. The story of a building varies considerably between those who plan it and those who build it, as the different perspectives of participants reveal. The paper will also discuss the ways that the National Gallery continues to draw on the collection for renovation, remodelling and maintenance of such a heavily trafficked building, where artwork is constantly being installed and removed, and where visitors crowd its galleries daily.

Heike Roms

Performing An Oral History of Performance Art in Wales

Over a period of more than forty years artists have been creating performance, action or time-based art in Wales, yet their work remains largely confined to half-remembered anecdotes, rumours and hearsay. *An Oral History of Performance Art in Wales* was a two-year series (2006–

8) of events, organised by Heike Roms, which took such oral engagements as a starting point for the creation of a conversational history of the artform in Wales. It featured interviews with key artists who have shaped this history since the mid-1960s (including I. Davies, R. Miller, S. Cameron, A. Howell, T. Emlyn Jones, JC Jones, M. Pearson, G. Moore, A. Stitt, and others). Using (video) extracts from the interviews, this paper will discuss the implications of staging these conversations as public events in front of a live audience that included former audience members and collaborators of the work. By doing so, the project intended to call attention to the inherent performative nature of the interview situation and further emphasize that these artists' stories are not providing us with the only, authoritative version of events, even where their own work is concerned. Extensive documentary material was screened as part of each conversation, and artists were asked to explore the disparities between their memories and the documentation of their work. It is the contingent nature of both documentation and memory in relation to the ephemeral art of performance that the project aimed to bring into conversation with one another.

An Oral History of Performance Art in Wales is part of “*It was forty years ago today– Locating the early history of performance art in Wales 1965–1979*”, which is supported by a large research grant from the AHRC Arts and Humanities Research Council (www.performance-wales.org)

Catherine Rossi

“I Can Tell You Things You Won’t Have Heard Anywhere”: Uncovering the Relationship Between Design and Craft in Post-War Italy

This paper considers the value of oral history in bringing to light craft’s role in post-war Italian design. Craft was vital to the phenomenon of post-war Italian design and an area of intense creativity in its own right, and yet it has been largely overlooked in Italian design historiography. This paper focuses on the relationship between design and craft in the Milanese furniture industry to not only offer an alternative view of Italy’s design history but to contribute to our knowledge and understanding of craft practices and practitioners in post-war Italy.

Given the paucity of critical writing about Italian craft, and the incomplete nature of much relevant archival material, oral history is a crucial technique. Interviews with architects, artisans, producers and critics have been invaluable not only for understanding the specificity and marginalization of craft practice in post-war Italy but, through their setting in spaces of design production and consumption, endow a physicality not found in textual sources. This paper uses a series of case studies that examine the nexus of visual and verbal dialogues that take place between architects and artisans – and interviewer and interviewee. Photos and gifts act as *aide-memoires* for the interviewee and offer clues into the close relationship between architects and artisans; the engagement with them reminds of the visual and tactile components of history telling. This corresponds to the importance of combined visual and verbal dialogues between architects, artisans and entrepreneurs in the design and production process itself. The scribbles and stains on sketches and design drawings

show up their nature as discursive objects at the centre of the architect and artisans relationship and ultimately shows up the collaborative nature of design practice and the intimate and complex relationship between design and craft in post-war Italy.

Sofia Serenelli – See Gabriele Oropallo

Shehnaz Suterwalla

From Punk to the Hijab: Women's Voices on Dress as a Symbol of Resistance, 1970s to the Present Day

Narratives of the self enable us to gain insights into individual subjectivity and the (trans)formation of identity. My presentation reflects on my ethnographic work based on oral interviews with British women from sub-, counter- and alternative culture since the 1970s. I explore how women use dress as a process of performative resistance to ideals of femininity and conventional historical discourse about womanhood. In particular I draw on case study analysis based on first-person testimony with women from different groups: punks in the late 1970s; women who lived at Greenham Common Peace Camp in the 1980s; and British Muslim women who choose to veil since 2001. I explore how dress practice as lived experience in the everyday reflects subjective agency and the creation of individual identities formed through personal constructions of freedom. With a focus on women's stories in their own words, I move beyond textual and visual histories, as well as theoretical interpretations based on semiotic readings, to concentrate instead on the embodied experience within its own politics of location, and I unpick some of the creative and critical strategies employed by women who use dress to critique and subvert dominant forms of culture, history and knowledge. In this way my work challenges conventional readings of women's representation and complicates, with 'herstory', linear history making. Instead I concentrate on the unobvious links between my case studies to reflect women's history as interconnected, cyclical and retrospective. In this paper I also reflect on some of the problems and limitations of oral history as feminist praxis, and the difficulties involved in the use of oral history as a means of exploring the construction of historical memory. This presentation is therefore a critical evaluation of oral history as a feminist research method, offering a reflexive analysis of its advantages and disadvantages in the recording of women's subjectivities and personal stories.

Stephanie Taylor

Constructing Creative Biographies: A Narrative-Discursive Analysis

This paper adopts an alternative approach to the analysis of the personal accounts in audio-recorded interviews which have conventionally been an important focus for oral historians. My research employs a narrative-discursive approach based in social and discursive psychology to investigate the shared understandings which are cultural or discursive resources for talk, and also the 'local resources' (Taylor 2010; Taylor 2007; Taylor and Littleton 2006) in play in narrower contexts, such as those given by family and education. These local resources enable and constrain a speaker's construction of a personal biography, for example, in terms of viability

and success. The paper presents data from two interview projects with creative workers. It shows how 'art college' experience is a rich source of local resources which participants draw on in their talk in order to construct coherent sequences of transition and transformation. The paper discusses participants' accounts as selective interpretations of their situations as they attempt to establish themselves in creative careers. Notable features of these interpretations are the available options and the 'logic of success' which participants present, and also the ways in which they categorise themselves as differently motivated to people following other occupations and careers, for example, as driven by love of the work rather than an interest in conventional career success or financial reward.

Viki Thomas

Keeping It In The Family

A legacy can be seen as leaving something for future generations. This paper explores some of the issues around preserving, recording but also promoting and using the legacy of an artist or designer.

Participant research with four separate families has shown that oral history may be key to preserving and understanding their legacy for future generations. John and Mark Wickham have inherited the work of their grandmother, Mabel Lucie Attwell. Zuzanna Lipinska is preserving the work of her parents, the poster designer and caricaturist Eryk Lipinski and Anna Goslawska (Ha-Ga) the illustrator. Marie Craft is deciding how to represent Kinuko Craft's illustration collection in Europe and the designer John Wood is preparing an exhibition of his life's work as he nears retirement.

In all these cases, oral history records and preserves memories that may seem partial, it can be used to capture what is important to the next generation and it can be seen to put the record straight. New technology such as video, scanning and the Internet are used as a way of preserving an authentic record. Their history is voiced by the creators themselves, by those who shared their lives and now manage their legacy.

The research builds on network, consumption theories and studies of relevance of the family tree. It is not clear at this point whether all the case studies will be included in the final presentation. Additional experience is being suggested as the research continues. The presentation would be audio-visual capturing the distinct family voice and adding it to the Oral History in Art, Craft and Design.

Rhian Tritton

Visualising Voices: Collecting and Animating Memories of SS Great Britain's Salvage

This project's use of animation to visualise oral history testimonies is highly innovative in the context of museum interpretation.

The aims of The Incredible Journey, SS Great Britain Trust's oral history project were: to collect the memories of the salvage team; to reinforce the sense of the ship as a Bristol icon by presenting her as firmly rooted in the city's cultural DNA; and to gather material to interpret the story of the salvage as part of the site's permanent interpretation.

A hierarchy of methods of collecting memories was used. Trained volunteers recorded and transcribed interviews with the salvage team, while Memory Collection Boxes and postcards were distributed round the city for use by the wider public. Memories and photographs could also be uploaded to a website.

The animated film made by UWE was a mechanism for creating a coherent narrative from these fragmented mosaics of memory. It also democratised the contributions, giving equal weight to short snapshot memories and to the longer, more discursive voices of the salvage team.

The film was also a way to reconcile the geographical breadth of the project, depicting Bristol as "home", and thereby creating the emotionally resonant concept of the ship's salvage as a homecoming.

Using a visual format made it possible to make the ostensibly technical story of the salvage operation accessible to a wider audience by overlaying it with emotionally engaging personal reminiscence.

The project has succeeded in not only producing interpretive outcomes which have made the primary sources accessible to a wide audience, but has also created significant marketing opportunities for SS Great Britain Trust. As an unexpected benefit, it has also prompted the Trust to develop a strategic commitment to using new, particularly web-based, methods of interpretation.

Deborah True

Located Narrative

To create a visual narrative, I have collected oral testimonies from those who were involved in the lace industry. Through a series of encounters the Mill at Perry Street, in Somerset has become the specific geographical location for my situated practice. This research strives for a greater depth and rigor of engagement in order to offer a model for artists who wish to work with communities.

The audio-visual presentation will address the different practices of analysis employed to analyse the data collected in the form of oral history interviews; highlighting the features required for effective in-depth investigation; making transparent how these have been developed to create visual narratives using a method called 'Framework' that was developed during the 1980s at the National Centre for Social Research, for analysing qualitative data.

My aim has been to generate an intensive examination of a single case, in order to engage in theoretical analysis to identify concepts that are particular to the location of my situated practice. I argue that because the findings of my research are specific to the location, it will be possible to obtain a richer representation of the location. This research design has allowed me to engage with location in a generative way, in terms of content and community, allowing multiple invisible narratives about the location to be brought back into view.

I propose that through interviews with respondents, using their memories, the research will find a visual form. The visual artefacts will be used to test and further develop the 'located narrative process', thus establishing the use of oral history to inform art practice.

Jo Turney

Crafty Chats: Domestic Discourse and Making Marginality Matter

One of the many discourses emerging from the crafts in recent years prioritises and questions the ways in which both practice and objects have been marginalised within an arts hierarchy. This is commonly described as the Art/Craft debate and has the dual purpose of elevating craft activities and objects whilst establishing a critical language suitable for their discussion. There is no doubt that this has been a worthy exercise, and the discussion of craft has moved from its critical and academic margins into museums, galleries and contemporary critical theory.

Whilst the driving force of crafts criticism has promoted and extolled the work of professional makers, the distance between professional or fine crafts and domestic or amateur crafts has widened exponentially, creating a new marginality unrelated to numbers of participants, availability of products or enthusiasm for making. As the amplification of the gulf between professional and amateur has become more apparent, a popular crafts revival has ignited a new passion for making.

Domestic crafts practice has historically existed as a paradox, bridging the gap between work and leisure, necessity and frivolity, whilst simultaneously appearing as distinct from culturally constructed paradigms such as fashion, consumerism and good taste. Yet these practices and objects endure, are so prolific within our material culture that they appear mute.

Using testimony from amateur knitters and stitchers, this paper examines the ways in which oral history can express marginal voices and practices, valorising and emphasising the contribution of contemporary domestic craft to the language of craft and to wider socio-cultural concerns and discourses such as sense of self, place, home, well-being and memory.

Moira Vincentelli

Women and Ceramics in Wales

Following an AHRC funded project *For Lover or Money: Motivation for Women and Ceramics in Wales* the paper will present some of the issues raised in the audio recorded interviews and focus groups. The study included a number of interviews with women made in the early 1990s and there were some return interviews offering the possibility of comparison over a fifteen year period. Participants represented a broad cross section of ceramic practitioners from well known names in contemporary ceramics, people running ceramic businesses directed at the tourist and gift industry and others who largely made for their own pleasure. Some work on their own and others with partners. Some of the participants were of Welsh origins, including one who was the first female in a long dynasty of male potters going back for generations. Women talk about moving to rural Wales as a lifestyle choice or arriving as students and staying on. Cardiff in particular offers a supportive community for ceramic artists. New and more generous funding opportunities where ceramic artists can bid for the same amount of money as fine artists has also been very important to a number of makers. The paper will examine how women represent their personal relationship with Welsh identity, with ceramics as a creative practice and/or as a business against the backdrop of a period which has seen a huge rise in interest in the field but is currently experiencing rapid refocusing.

Jennifer Way

Women Art Technology: An Oral History Interview Project

This paper reviews the origins, scholarly foundation, and methodology of Women Art Technology, an ongoing project that creates oral history interviews to redress a lack of information about women using technology in the contemporary art world. The project developed from a realization that despite the rapid integration of electronic and other forms of technologies in visual arts practices, no institutions, programs or research projects are systematically inquiring about or documenting women's use of technology to create, distribute, archive, access, use or know about art. The scholarly foundation of the project draws from feminist scholarship documenting a pattern of omission in art histories of first-person points of view from women participating in the historical and contemporary visual arts; gender-technology scholarship from gender studies, women's studies, and engineering and science; and autoethnography. It uses the scholarship to inquire how, why and to what ends artists, designers, art educators, critics, historians, collectors and museum personnel who self-affiliate as female use technology, in what ways they define technology, how they obtain access to and prepare to use it, what types of uses they make of technology and what effects they perceive their uses to have. Along with producing historical documents that redress an absence of information about women engaging with technology in the art world, the interviews intend to serve as a resource for writing histories alternative to current studies in technology and art. Finally, the project treats the participatory aspect of oral history research as an opportunity for pedagogic reflexivity on the part of the interviewer. Autoethnographically, university students who conduct some of the interviews ask themselves the questions they posed to their subjects;

then, they compare and contrast their responses with the interviewees'. This compels students to reflect on their involvement in relationships of subjectivity and technology, and practice and narration.

Michael Wilford – See Niamh Dillon

Robert Wilkinson and Sarah Campbell

ReCollection at Kettle's Yard

Kettle's Yard is an iconic house and gallery owned and managed by the University of Cambridge. It was the home of Jim and Helen Ede for almost 20 years from 1957-1973. Jim, who had been a curator at the Tate Gallery from 1920-1936, described himself as a 'friend of artists' and his collection includes works by Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, Winifred Nicholson and Henry Moore. There are also works by European artists as well as paintings by Cornish artists Alfred Wallis and Bryan Pearce.

Jim believed art and life were intertwined and Kettle's Yard is the manifestation of that belief. Modernist sculptures and paintings are displayed within the domestic environment, among found natural objects and everyday furniture and the collection is still arranged as Jim wished us to see it. His approach to display inspired a number of now prominent gallery directors and art historians whilst they were undergraduates at Cambridge.

A two-year oral history project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Cambridgeshire County Council, was set up to explore Jim's legacy for artists and art historians and preserve the memories of those closest to Kettle's Yard for future generations. It also sought to find out more about Helen as well as the development of Kettle's Yard as a house and temporary exhibitions gallery through the people who have worked there. Artist-led workshops with a local children's centre and a primary school provide a contemporary perspective.

As well as an archive of over 40 interviews, there are more than 80 sound extracts from the recordings, a dedicated website and two downloadable soundtracks around the house that explore selected works of art and environments in more depth. This presentation will explore the importance of cross generational oral history archives to assist interpretation of fine art collections and historic environments and the potential to engage new audiences.

David Wood

Sawdust in my Cassettes: Studio Furniture's Voices in New Zealand

Betty Norbury's *Bespoke: source book of furniture designer makers* (2007), documented British studio furniture makers. New Zealand has nothing comparable, despite the presence of hundreds of practitioners. When the Crafts Council of New Zealand existed (1977 – 1992), artists' professional résumés, publication reviews and slides were accessible in its office;

concurrently a national furniture group identified quality makers. However, by the mid 1990s the national infrastructure for craft and, particularly, furniture ceased to exist.

My PhD in Design Studies initially required finding the furniture makers. A road trip revealed that the majority are in their 50s and 60s; each man (there are few women) willingly recounted his education, practice, experience and commitment. The resulting oral history is a record of a handicraft discipline that appears, in New Zealand, to be evolving in ways that de-value practical knowledge of materials and processes.

My illustrated presentation, with practitioners' quotations, will discuss the merits of oral history in:

- taping interviews with craftsmen in their studios, chronicling creative inspiration and practice;
- timely documentation of traditional cabinetmaking skills;
- elicitation of rich detail, via open-ended interviewing;
- design history research for New Zealand and global cultural records;
- acquiring new perspectives on my own craft career.

The choice of an oral history methodology enables my recording of the breadth and depth of New Zealand studio furniture's creative personalities and processes.

Claire Wilcox

A History of Concealment

'People tended to think when you got really enormous you should stay at home and not make an exhibition of yourself.'

This paper examines recalled experiences of maternity in post-war Britain through close analysis of an interview between a daughter and mother conducted and transcribed in the late 1990s. It will investigate the way that clothing and textiles associated with motherhood act as a carrier and a trigger for intense and powerful memories. The conflict between the visible, public manifestations of pregnancy and the hidden reality of childbirth (and frequent trauma of loss) will be analysed within the context of dress as a tool for concealment of the body, and the role of textiles in 'covering up', played out within the environment of the suburban home. This paper will also touch upon the challenges of working with sensitive subject matter, and examine the fine distinction between curatorial empathy and intrusiveness.

Stephanie Zollinger

Stories from the Jack Lenor Larsen Studio: Process, Product, and Innovation.

Jack Lenor Larsen has been one of the most influential voices of this century in the textile and interior design industries. Jack Lenor Larsen Inc. was founded in 1953 and quickly became one of the world's leading textile producers, specializing in high-end fabrics for use in the interior

environment. Larsen is most famous for his loomed fabrics, textured random-weave upholstery fabrics, grainy batiks, mohairs, tufted leather rugs, velours, printed velvets, airy cotton, and Thai silks. Known as an innovator of fabric design, Larsen's company established the standards for superlative textiles for the last half of the twentieth century. Larsen's textiles have been recognized by numerous textile and design industry awards, and have been celebrated with major museum exhibitions from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Palais du Louvre in Paris.

Oral history was used to explore and document the success of Jack Lenor Larsen Inc. In-depth interviews with 14 former Larsen designers, staff, colleagues, and Jack Lenor Larsen, examined how the company worked and how the company succeeded. Interviews also enabled documentation of Larsen's design as a multi-faceted activity, encompassing not only the creative process, but also methods of production, marketing decisions and retail merchandising strategies. While design involves creativity, Jack Lenor Larsen, Inc. was successful as a business, requiring scrupulous surveillance of costs, maintenance of trusting relationships with manufacturers on several continents and persuasive publicity. Excerpts from interviews will be used in the presentation to support findings.

Digital Posters

[Record] [Create]

Oral History in Art, Craft and Design

2 – 3 July 2010, V&A Museum

Donna Bevan

Barnet's in Basingstoke – gender, technology and performance in provincial hair salon

My work explores women's hair as a fundamental part of their identity and how gendered identity is socially produced and performed through power relations within the public space of the provincial hair salon – My practice based research has developed through the use of oral testimony, photography and soundscapes.

Abigail Downer

The Voice of a Place, Weston Shore, Southampton

Living on International Way provides a unique insight of environment, seasons, events, weather patterns, shipping and wildlife. The tacit knowledge of residents informed and reinforced the site artwork of Abigail Downer.

Residents documented their experiences of the shore and the views from their windows through the seasons of 2006.

Barbara Droth

The Making of Lenya: (Re)Creating an Artist's Life

The actress Tracy and her stage character Lenya intertwine and explore notions of public/private, documentary/fiction, self/other. Through visual and oral methods documenting Tracy and Lenya's life stories the project problematises the (re)presentation of the artist's matrix of identities. Here the viewer can structure his/her own biographical narrative of Lenya.

Elizabeth Kealy-Morris

Remembering a Destroyed Place: Oral History as Visual Practice

This presentation is based on a collaborative oral history project carried out with former residents of a central-Manchester UK working-class district destroyed by the post-war municipal and national practice of 'slum clearance'. I will present the visual outcomes informed by this oral history project which include participants' mapped memories of their former neighbourhoods and a visual and audio documentation of a participant's walk through her neighbourhood as it stands today.

Shonagh Marshall

Hearing Fashionable Words: The Use of Oral History in the Fashion Exhibition

Hearing Fashionable Words: The Use of Oral History in the Fashion Exhibition presents a model for a dress exhibition that can be applied to any oral history testimony. In this instance the interview Alistair O'Neill conducted with Marit Allen (British Library, 2003) is used as a case study. The model uses three sections, each displaying Marit Allen's words differently.

Caroline Rackham

Sari Stories

'Sari Stories' was a Community Arts and Oral History project by The Media Workshop and the WEA in Southampton's Clovelly Road Centre. The project involved women talking about their Saris and Chemises and the life stories which were woven into the garments as much as the threads. The women scanned their garments and shared their stories to create a series of exhibition panels highlighting their life experiences and their relationships with their clothes.

Jennie Savage

The Arcades Project; A 3 D Documentary

As developers move in to rebuild the city the project charts its daily changes in relation to a broader history of shopping and the trajectory of consumer culture.

Voices include the developers and architects, shop keepers, local people, writers, historians and academics who reflect on the building site in relation to the cities existing Victorian shopping arcades.

Rose Sinclair

What mother did not tell me about textiles? Dorcas, Prayer and cushions

Using Oral history narratives, visual and museum based archival research documentation this digital presentation seeks to look at the place and understanding of using memory prompts, in developing digital creative responses, where the practitioner places them self as a mediator and interpreter of memory in the design practice.