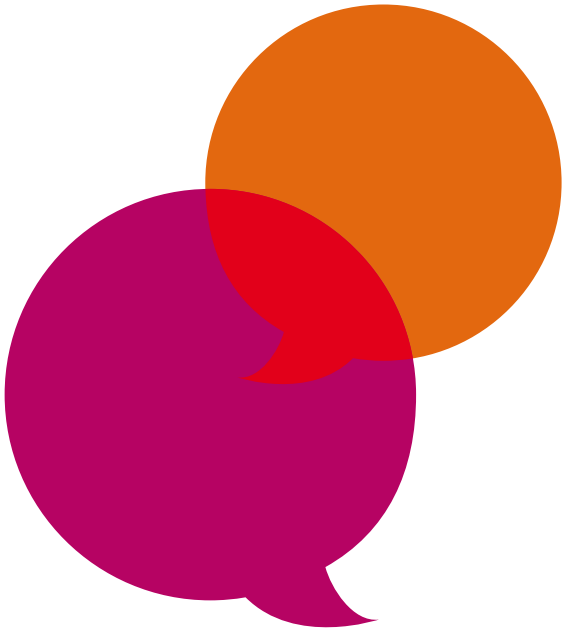
Canolfan Grefft Rhuthun
Y Ganolfan i'r Celfyddydau Cymhwysol
Ruthin Craft Centre
The Centre for the Applied Arts

materials

resource pack



what is craft?

what is craft?

Who does it?
Why do they do it?
Why does it matter?

Looking at the nature of craft and its relation to everyday living – based on four broad seasons over 2 years we aim to consider:

materials decoration

process function

and explore the question... *What is Craft?*

Ruthin Craft Centre is delighted to launch our new and exciting programme called *What is Craft?* As part of this project we will be undertaking a 2 year audience development, outreach and resource legacy programme which includes a new designated on-site resource space at Ruthin Craft Centre. We want to return to the basic questions about the nature of craft and its relation to everyday living. *What is Craft? Who does it? Why do they do it? Why does it matter?*

We hope you will be inspired by this programme and more importantly get involved!

what is craft?

materials

resource pack

Historically, the materials of choice for artists and craftspeople were obtained from their natural environment. In the twentieth century, new resources were explored in a quest to discover what art could be and what it could be made from. As the parameters of art and crafts continue to expand, so too does the seemingly limitless range of materials available for making objects. In recent times, greater emphasis has been placed on the use of renewable sources and recycling materials when possible.

This pack investigates the origins of some of these materials and the different purposes for which they have been used. The pack is designed to support teachers and gallery educators in the planning, delivering and following up visits to Ruthin Craft Centre with a collection of activities, ideas and resources related to the broad theme of materials. The workshops and practical tasks are suitable for all ages and can be adapted to your group's specific needs.

This resource pack is also aimed at our general audience and visitor (both to the centre and our website) who may like to find out more about Craft and the materials used in its making – to *'get inspired: get involved'*.

Julie Robson

written by Julie Robson for the
what is craft? materials season

Contents

get inspired,
get involved!

Beginnings

Every civilisation has a history of making, of carving, weaving, stitching, manipulating or modelling material. Even the earliest known communities would use the basic resources around them to create objects. Often these would take the forms of vessels, tools and utensils for everyday use, but sometimes, they would make ornaments for rituals or bodily adornment. Some early examples of manipulating materials include:

- Cave dwelling communities would carve figures, pictures and motifs into the surrounding rocks or grind pigments to make marks
- Other communities would use clay to form figures, tiles and vessels moulded in their hands and baked by the sun or in a fire.
- More developed civilisations began to capture human likeness in portrait busts and statues. They became more adept at carving and modelling different materials (for example stone, marble, clay, etc.)
- Fibre and reeds could be woven to make baskets, textiles, paper, matting and was also used in construction
- Sculpture often adorned architecture and masons were employed to carve embellishments on buildings that could be figurative, symbolic or merely decorative (for example gargoyles, caryatids, acanthus leaves, etc.)
- Glass was originally discovered as a hard stone, obsidian which could be sharpened to make tools and when molten, fashioned into a range of objects.
- Metals could be hammered, heated and combined with other materials to make strong tools, implements, weapons, vessels, jewellery and statues

The choice of materials initially depended on availability but later was increasingly selected for durability, monetary worth or cost-effectiveness. Advancement in science and technology continues to expand the range of materials available in the twenty-first century, though in recent times greater emphasis has been placed on the use of renewable sources and recycling materials when possible.

In the following sections, some of the materials used in contemporary arts and crafts will be discussed in greater depth with focus on some of the works that have been displayed at Ruthin Craft Centre.

Ronald Pennell, *Gardens, Myths, Magic* exhibition, 2014

Glass

Glass plays an important role in modern life. In its molten form, glass may be poured into moulds, pressed or blown into a variety of shapes and forms. It is all around us – food jars, drinking vessels, light bulbs, windows, computer screens, spectacles, fibre optics…the list is endless! Glass is 100% recyclable and can be reprocessed without losing strength or quality. We take this material for granted, but how is it produced? Who were the first people to make glass? How have artists used it?

History

A form of glass, obsidian, is formed naturally within the mouth of volcanoes, when intense heat melts sand with other minerals such as ash or limestone, and this forms a hard, glassy stone when cooled. Early civilisations discovered that its sharp edge was an ideal material for spear heads and adzes. Earliest examples of glass products include beads unearthed by archaeologists in Mesopotamia which can be traced to 3500 BCE. These may have been initially made by accident, as a byproduct of metalworking with fire in a sandy location.

The Egyptians and people of Mesopotamia not only used glass for utilitarian objects, but also decorative purposes such as jewellery and beautiful vases for their temples. As they developed processes for working with the material, glassmakers began to experiment with different shapes, forms and textures for their wares, attaching handles and feet, carving or grinding the surface and adding colour with a mixture of minerals and oxides.

Glassmaking also took place in ancient China and Southern Asia from c1730 BCE, but the Romans were responsible for expanding the range and versatility of this material for everyday use. Examples have been recovered across the Roman Empire including domestic, industrial, architectural and funerary objects. The Romans also discovered how to roll out sheets of glass for the windows of their buildings.

Throughout mediaeval Europe, the material was incorporated in architectural decoration in the form of stained glass windows and mosaics. An importance advances in glassmaking processes in the 17th century led to improvements in both the appearance and quality. George Ravenscroft in 1674 was the first to produce clear lead crystal glass on a large scale, making Britain the worldwide centre of the glass industry.

Tasks

Discover the history of glass. Visit your local museum and discover find out about uses of glass throughout history (eg domestic, industrial, scientific, jewellery etc)

Make a list of objects made from glass in your home and everyday experience eg television screen, spectacles, vases, jars, bottles etc.

Design a stained glass window. You could transfer your drawing to glass using glass paints or make a collage with coloured paper or cellophane

Discuss the use of glass in architecture a) structurally (eg windows in skyscrapers, greenhouses, conservatories, skylights, ventilation etc) b) decoratively (eg stained glass, shop windows, mirrors, mosaics etc)

Decorate a drinking glass or mirror tile using glass paints

Discuss how artists have used glass as
a) subject – eg Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Portrait* 1435; *Jeff Wall, Picture for Women* 1979
b) material – eg Dan Flavin, *'Monument' for V.Tatlin* 1966–9; Kiki Smith, *Constellation* 1996

Collect pictures or take photographs of windows – in houses, shops, offices, churches etc. Compare the shapes, sizes, frames, type of glass etc. Make a painting based on windows.

Further information

Jane Dunsterville, *The Glass Painting Book: A Complete Introduction, Including Over 20 Projects and 100 Trace-off Motifs*, David and Charles,1996
David Whitehouse, *Glass: A Short History,* British Museum Press, 2012

www.britglass.org.uk
www.m.wikihow.com
www.urbanglass.org
www.worldofglass.com
www.glassblobbery.com
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/

Work in Focus: Rhian Hâf

Glass, Light and Space 2011

Rhian Hâf completed her MA in Glass at Swansea Metropolitan University in 2011. Using drawing, photography and a range of glass techniques and applications, she creates installations and sculptural works which respond to their site, whether urban, rural, inside or outside a building. A recent commission is Blodau Bywyd (Flowers of Life) at the Emergency Quadrant entrance at Glan Clwyd Hospital, Bodelwyddan where six screen-printed perspex panels show larger than life images of medicinal plants, local to the area.

Rhian's interest lies in the properties of glass and its ability to capture, transmit, reflect and refract light. She states that her work 'explores and portrays a constant thread of themes: light and shadow, white and black, the visible and the invisible, absence and presence…illusion, perception and scale are also important factors within my work, demanding the viewer to look again, question what is being seen and to comprehend what is being portrayed'.

Glass Light and Space is a series of four glass forms exploring light and shadows captured around and within them. The material has been cold worked (ie changed by grinding, carving or engraving when cool) to create different surfaces and to heighten the properties and qualities of glass.

The artist takes the universal symbol of a house as her basis – a simple geometric shape that combines rectangle and triangle, reminiscent of children's representations of houses or the plastic pieces in a Monopoly game.

Houses are containers of histories, memories and dreams. The artist allows her tiny glass blocks to become receptacles for the viewer's imagination. She invites you to contemplate associations and meanings associated with the house. For most people, it is a place of shelter, protection, sanctuary, but it can also be a place of isolation or confinement for others. Some consider a house as property or investment rather than a home or place to live in.

The dimensions of the houses vary between 5 and 2cm. Exploring scale, illusion and perception they were photographed in different settings and environment and a book of images was produced to accompany the project. *Glass, Light and Space*, was exhibited at Ruthin Craft Centre, during her three-month residency in 2014.

'Glass comes alive
in the presence of light'

Rhian Hâf

Tasks

Take photographs of reflections and refractions in glass objects, windows or mirrors. Try altering conditions such as changing light source, using coloured filters, creating shadows, using different backgrounds. Be inventive!

Write a story about people who live in glass houses! Who could inhabit Rhian's houses? What would a village, town or city of glass look like, sound like, feel like? Use your imagination!

Make a detailed study of a glass bottle, jar or container as part of a still life composition. Use different materials eg pencils, charcoal, pastels, watercolours etc. Look carefully at the effects of light and shadow on your objects. You could repeat this exercise with liquid inside the glass container or direct a spotlight on the composition. Note how the light and shadows change.

Use a dictionary or thesaurus to find as many words as you can associated with glass. Use these words to write a short description or poem about Rhian's work.

Further information

Hâf, Rhian, *Glass, Light and Space*, Blurb Books.com, 2010

www.rhianhaf.com
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/

Rhian Hâf, *Glass, Light and Space,* 2011. photo: Rhian Hâf

Mary Lloyd Jones, *Signs of Life* exhibition, 2013

Fibre

The word ‘textile’ is used to describe a flexible material comprising of a network of natural or artificial fibres or yarn. The word ‘textile’ comes originally from the Latin ‘texere’ which means ‘to weave.’

Textiles are made by:
- Spinning – fibres are spun into yarns
- Weaving or knitting – yarns are combined to create fabrics
- Finishing – the appearance or texture of the fabrics are improved through various processes (such as bleaching to remove impurities, raising the surface for softness, pre-shrinking etc)

Fibres used to make textiles:
- Natural – from plants, animals or minerals eg cotton, linen (from flax), wool, silk
- Synthetic – man-made from chemical sources eg viscose (from pine trees and petrochemicals), acrylic, nylon, polyester (from oil and coal, tencel (from cellulose derived from wood pulp)

Natural and synthetic fibres may also be blended together to create new fabrics (eg polyester, nylon, latex, acrylic, spandex etc)

History of textiles

Textiles have been important throughout human history as a means of protecting the body from cold, heat and rain in the form of clothing, blankets, rugs, wall-hangings, canopies, tents etc. Textiles have also been used for other purposes such as decoration, rituals and to signify social status. Samples recovered by archaeologists can tell us how people lived and also, what materials were available to them and the technology they used to process them. From ancient time to present day, the evolution of textiles and innovation in production methods has influenced how we dress, decorate and furnish our living environment.

Techno Textiles

Today textiles continue to develop as new and improved manufacturing processes enable natural and synthetic materials to be combined: to reduce weight, increase strength, durability and performance of fabrics, not only for clothing and furnishing, but also for engineering projects such as road building, land reclamation and flood control. Environmental concerns have also contributed to the need to explore sustainability and recyclability of materials.

Tasks

Science and Technology – find out about geotextiles used in:

- the Deltaplan in the Netherlands to prevent the sea from flooding the land (see: www.deltawerken.com and www.iadc-dredging.com).
- Chek Lap Lok, Hong Kong where a man-made island was created as the site for an airport (see: www.fibretex.com/hongkong)
- Buildings – for fire resistance, weatherproofing, insulation, seismic resistance etc (see: www.library.upt.ro/pub.edocs/iures/Carte8.pdf)
- aerospace
- discuss materials used in everyday life and their properties – eg, what are sports shirts made from? What makes an umbrella waterproof? How do towels absorb moisture? etc

Geography – talk about textiles and their uses in other countries eg Japan, Australia, South America etc. Look at clothes, rugs, screens, ceremonial and everyday fabrics.

History – find out about the Industrial Revolution and how it affected the production of textiles.
How has modern technology impacted on fashion and the clothing industry?
How did trade and travel affected textiles in 16th century Europe

Art – discuss textiles in art:
a) artists who have depicted textiles (eg Vermeer's lace, Gainsborough's satins, Alison Watt etc)
b) artists who have designed textiles (eg William Morris, Henri Matisse, Vanessa Bell, Sonia Delaunay etc)
c) artists who have used fabrics in their practice (eg Jasper Johns, Tracey Emin, Yinka Shonibare, Michael Raedecker etc)

Further Resources

Alysn Midgelow-Marsden, *Stitch, Fibres, Metal & Mixed Media (The Textile Artist)*, Search Press Ltd, 2014
Mary Shoeser, *World Textiles: a Concise History*, Thames and Hudson, 2003
Kim Thittichai, *Reclaimed Textiles Techniques for paper, stitch, plastic and mixed media,* Batsford Ltd, 2014

www.textileschool.com
www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/design/textiles/
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/

Work in Focus: Michael Brennand-Wood

The Ties that Bind 1996

Michael Brennand Wood's awareness of the unique properties of materials, such as texture, construction, acoustics and scent, can be traced back to his childhood in the North of England. His grandmother was an industrial weaver at a local mill and she often brought back scraps of fabric for him to play with and he also recalls the sounds and smells associated with weaving as he watched her using the family loom. He learned about traditional materials and techniques and developed an awareness of their role in everyday life, but above all, he was encouraged to experiment with his own creations from an early age. Whilst respecting the history of textiles, he looked to build on techniques of the past and to open new ways of thinking about time-honoured skills such as weaving, knitting, lace-making and embroidery. He sought to move away from the decorative aspect of stitching, for example, to allow it to become more expressive.

He also made connections between fine art and traditional crafts. He referred to embroidery as 'drawing in thread', thought about 'the geometry of the stitch' and the structural grid that forms the basis of embroidery. He didn't just study other textiles, but also found inspiration in the work of artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Sol LeWitt, Alberto Burri and Jean Tinguely.

Compositionally, *The Ties that Bind* makes reference to a board game as a symbol of life's choices, as Michael explained: '*To an extent the circular shapes may be read as counters, the lines as pathways, options to consider. Sometimes emotionally you go up ladders, mostly you slide down snakes.*' It uses scraps of fabric taken from the garments of two people and as the title (taken from a Bruce Springsteen song) suggests that lives can become entwined when you enter a relationship with someone.

This work also refers to the tradition of American quilts where squares of patchwork and embroidery were skilfully sewn together by different members and successive generations of families using their old textiles. Over the years, a quilt rich in history would evolve, telling the story of the family both visually (through images and symbols embroidered on the squares), and emotionally through association (the history held by the textiles that had been worn and used by family members).

The sensory experience of materials is an important aspect of Michael's work and he believes that it is through touch, scent and sound – not just vision – that meaning is conveyed. The memory of feeling, smelling and even hearing the rustle or movement of certain materials interests the artist along with the historical resonance of textiles associated with specific events in life. Technically, the edging of individual shapes with silk fabric in *The Ties that Bind* also relates to the work's title. Michael states, 'The act of wrapping is a powerful emotive gesture, rich in symbolic importance, swaddled at birth, mummified at death.'

Tasks

'The act of wrapping is a powerful emotive gesture, rich in symbolic importance, swaddled at birth, mummified at death'

Michael Brennand-Wood

Research artists who have worked with fabrics: such as Robert Rauschenberg, Alberto Burri, Antoni Tapies, Christo, Lucio Fontana, Jasper Johns or Tracey Emin. Discuss how they have incorporated different materials into their art; the processes used; how the textiles contribute to the meaning of the work; your personal responses to it. Can you see any links between their work and that of Michael Brennan-Wood?

Discuss the importance of textiles in everyday life. Make a list of the different materials that you experience daily. Which ones make you feel warm/cool/are waterproof/stretchy etc. Why do you need different materials for different uses, activities or occasions? Describe your favourite/least favourite clothes – why do you enjoy/dislike wearing these items?

Collect examples of different textiles and discuss their textures. What associations do you have with different fabrics when you touch, smell, crumple or stroke certain materials? What do they remind you of? Write down words that come to mind as you handle them. Do textiles have scents and can they make sounds?

Research the American quilting tradition. Make a patchwork square that represents you or your family made from old garments or household fabrics. You could draw or paint the square and stick fabrics to it if you do not wish to sew it.

Make a group quilt – a collaborative piece where each student contributes a square made from fabrics with personal associations. The design could include names, initials, favourite flowers, animals etc.

Music – many of Michael's works take their titles from songs. Listen to music as you work! Give your own works musical titles taken from your favourite tunes.

Further Information

Forever Changes, (catalogue) Ruthin Craft Centre 2012
Cole, Drusilla, *Textiles Now*, Laurence King, 2008
Harris, Jennifer, *Michael Brennand-Wood, Material Evidence: Improvisations on a Historical Theme*, Whitworth Art Gallery, 1996

http://vimeo.com/11024369
http://brennand-wood.com/
http://www.themaking.org.uk/content/makers/2011/02/michael_brennand_wood.html
http://www.clothandculturenow.com/Michael_Brennand-Wood.html
http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/textiles-in-the-v-and-a-archives/
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/

Michael Brennand-Wood, *The Ties that Bind,* 1996. photo: Chris Gomersall

Metal

Metalwork

Metalworking has involved since early civilisations discovered that metal ore could be processed to make tools, vessels, ritual objects, weapons, armour and body adornments. The term *metalwork* can describe a wide field of production, covering industrial, domestic and artistic uses which include shipbuilding, bridge construction, intricate machine parts and delicate jewellery. In the context of this Education Pack, we will be focussing on the use of metal in art and design, particularly jewellery.

Metal has been used throughout art history for casting models made from clay or plaster into a more hard-wearing medium, such as bronze. In the twentieth century, artists began to exploit the expressive potential of the material and incorporating processes that were previously associated with industrial rather than artistic pursuits. New technology such as laser welding, allows contemporary jewellers to create increasingly elaborate work, often combining unexpected materials and textures. Rare metals such as gold and silver have been traditionally highly valued and displayed as signifiers of status or rank in hierarchical societies. Many of today's designers, such as David Poston, have deliberately shunned expensive metals, intending their jewellery to be valued for artistic and aesthetic reasons rather than for its cost or materials and the physical, sensual and psychological experience of wearing and touching becomes paramount.

There are many different types of metal that can be made into art or decorative objects today. Here is a selection of some popular materials:

Gold, chemical symbol *Au* (from Latin *aurum*), is a soft, malleable metal that can be used in its natural form, without smelting or other arduous processes and this has made it a valuable and highly sought-after material throughout history. In the past, a gold standard was commonly used as a monetary policy between nations. Gold is traditionally associated with icons, treasured objects and status symbols such as sceptres, thrones, crucifixes, wedding rings, crowns etc. Due to its value as a precious metal, it is rarely found as a material in contemporary art, but continues to be favoured for expensive jewellery.

Silver, chemical symbol *Ag* (from Latin *argentum* meaning 'white' and 'shining') is more abundant, naturally than gold but can also be worked in its pure form. Also valued as a precious metal, it has numerous applications such as monetary systems, jewellery, mirrors, table utensils (silverware), and due to its conductivity it is used industrially in electrical contacts and conductors. Its compounds and dilute silver-nitrate solutions are used in photographic film, X-rays, solar panels, water purification, dentistry, bandages and medical implements. As with gold, it is rarely found as a medium for contemporary art, but continues to be favoured for jewellery, most commonly in alloys with gold and other metals.

Steel is an alloy of iron and, most commonly, carbon, valued for its hardness, ductility and tensile strength. Although the use of steel can be traced back to antiquity, efficient production methods were not invented until the seventeenth century. Further improvements in the manufacture of steel made it a cheap material to mass-produce which led to its widespread use during the Industrial Revolution. Modern artists, such as Richard Serra, David Smith and Sir Anthony Caro favoured metals such steel for abstract works, as they were free from the figurative associations of traditional materials. Other artists, for example Julio Gonzalez and Alexander Calder, exploited the material's strength and flexibility in wire sculptures. In jewellery, steel has become a fashionable and cheaper alternative to the traditional white metals of silver and platinum since the 19th century.

Bronze has been used for casting sculpture since Classical times. The strength and stability of this material has made it ideal for large monuments and outdoor works. Bronze alloys, usually composed of copper and tin, have the advantage of expanding slightly before they set in the mould and therefore provide a faithful copy of the object that is being cast. Chemicals or oils, called a 'patina' may be added to the surface of bronze after casting to alter colour, appearance and texture. This may also protect the metal the effects of exposure to air which turns untreated bronze, green (this is called 'verdigris'). Many modern sculptors, however, prefer this natural oxidisation to take place as it adds definition and character to the work.

Aluminium, chemical symbol *Al*, (from Latin *alumen*) is the third most abundant element after oxygen and silicon, and is the earth's most abundant metal. It is a silvery-white, soft, ductile material and its low density and resistance to rust makes it a vital material for the aerospace industry, transportation and structural projects. Aluminium is 100% recyclable and its most common use in daily life is for drinks cans and packaging (foil trays, paper etc). In the late nineteenth century, aluminium metal was exceedingly difficult to produce, which made the material more valuable than gold. Since the Victorian period, it has become a common material for public sculptures, due to its resistance to corrosion. Some examples are: Alfred Gilbert's statue known as *Eros* in Piccadilly Circus, London, 1885–93and Jacob Epstein's huge *Majestas* sculpture in Llandaff Cathedral, 1954–5. Aluminium is also commonly used for making jewellery. Sheets of the material and lengths of aluminium wire are available in range of thicknesses and for use in crafts.

Titanium, chemical symbol *Ti* was discovered in Cornwall in 1791 and named after the Titans of Greek mythology. It is highly resistant to corrosion and has the highest strength-to-density ratio of any metallic element. Titanium can be alloyed with other elements to produce strong, lightweight materials for a range of uses, eg: aerospace, dental implants, sporting good and mobile phones. It is an ideal material for jewellery due to its lightness, and is often combined with other materials.

Tasks

Research metals and their uses in everyday life, industry, art and crafts.

Find out about the associations of metals with ancient mythology and folklore.

Discuss jewellery that can be:
a) worn to denote status (eg badge, medallion, chains of office, crown or tiara)
b) a signifier of ethnic, religious or social afilliation (eg badge, cross, star, ring)
c) with a functional purpose (eg cuff-links, hair-grip, hat-pin, watch)

Visit your local museum and discover jewellery from other periods and different parts of the world (eg Viking, Roman, Native American, Oceanic, Egyptian, Aztec, Victorian, Art Nouveau, Punk etc). Find out about their history and the people who wore them. What was the purpose of these objects? What were they made from? Make a collage or an abstract painting based on some of the designs you find.

Find out about modern artists who have chosen metal as their medium. Some examples from art history are: Julio Gonzalez, David Smith, Alexander Calder, Richard Serra, Anthony Caro etc. Contemporary artists working with metal include…

Work in Focus: Wendy Ramshaw

Petrified Lace Collar, 2010

Wendy Ramshaw CBE RDI is internationally renowned for her distinctive jewellery, textile designs, large scale metal screens, gates and architectural ornamentation. Her work straddles the disciplines of design, craft, fine art and public sculpture which is sited all over the world. She takes her inspiration from a range of sources, including Alice in Wonderland, Bluebeard's wife and the paintings of Pablo Picasso.

Petrified Lace was influenced by an example of intricate Spanish lace of the 17th century. Wendy stated: *'I have been tempted by the idea that lace, so soft and delicate, a magical material, might become reinvented in a harder and stiffer state to be worn in a different way.'* The collar has a very contemporary feel, made from red powder coated steel, a material with industrial connotations. The coloured paint disguises the metal and helps retain the softer character of the traditional lace. However, the strong red also draws attention to the geometry of the design and emphasises its linear qualities. It is very much a work of contrasts: old/new; hard/soft; delicate/strong; industrial/hand-crafted etc. As with most of Wendy's designs, *Petrified Lace* functions as art when displayed and jewellery when worn. She is interested in the relationship of the object and its wearer: how it feels next to the skin, how it sits on the body and how it moves with the wearer.

'It retains an ornamental function; it is a reminder of the glorious lace of the past'

Wendy Ramshaw

Wendy Ramshaw
Petrified Lace Collar, 2010
Red powder coated steel, 35cm dia.
Photo Courtesy of the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

Tasks

Write down words that come to mind when you look at Wendy Ramshaw's jewellery. What do the shapes remind you of? Would you expect the pieces to be heavy or light? How would they feel next to your skin? Would they have a sound or scent? Do they remind you of anything – evoke memories or sensations?

Discuss the effect of colour in jewellery. Make tracings or black and white copies of *Petrified Lace* and try using different colours for its coating. Imagine the collar in silver or gold – why do you think Wendy chose to paint this piece?

Create an artwork inspired by jewellery designs. Experiment with scale, colour and materials for example you could try using papier-mâché, collage, foil, wire, and found objects. By spraying the finished work with a metallic paint, you could capture the effect of precious metals.

Make sketches of lace, ferns, leaves or flowers from real life and then think about how you could translate their shapes into 3D objects such as earrings, key fobs, wristlets, necklaces, cufflinks, tie-pins etc. You could try modelling your designs with clay, foil, thread, card etc.

Discuss how you could capture the qualities of the jewellery in a drawing or painting. Which art materials would be most appropriate for depicting lightness, linearity, elegance, refinement, silver, copper, etc?

Further Resources

Julia Mannheim, *Sustainable Jewellery,* A&amp, C Black, 2009
David Poston, *What is Jewellery*, Crafts Council, 1995

http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/h/history-jewellery/
http://www.roomsofdreams.com/
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/

Titanium – David Poston first used this material in the 1960s. The tactile texture of these rings was produced by making individual spot welds with a laser beam.

David Poston, *Rings*, 2007. Forged titanium, coloured stippled texture. photo: Joel Degen

Pamela Rawnsley, *Shadow vessels*, 2004–06. Silver, oxide, gold leaf. max 330mm. photo: Keith Leighton

Catrin Howell, *Hound (Bestiary Series),* 2011

Clay

The word ceramic comes from the Greek word **κέραμος** (*keramos*) used to describe potter's clay, tile or pottery.

Ceramic: made of clay and permanently hardened by heat (adjective)
Ceramics: pots and other articles made from clay hardened by heat (noun) – Oxford Dictionary

Fragments of ceramics, found by archaeologists suggest that humans have been making pots and figurines since before the Neolithic period: figures were discovered in the Czech Republic dating to 29,000BCE and vessels in Jiangxi, China from c.20,000BCE. These early examples were made from clay, sometimes mixed with other materials, and then hardened by fire or baked in the sun. Later pots were decorated, either before or after firing, and glazed to create smooth surfaces that were more durable and resistant to liquid. Ceramics today include not only domestic objects, but also industrial and building products, such as bricks, tiles, sanitary ware, disk brakes, dentistry and advanced engineering.

Different types of ceramics

– Earthenware: pottery made from clay, often mixed with silica, quartz, feldspar etc. It needs to be glazed in order to make it watertight.
– Stoneware: heavy, opaque pottery fired at high temperature. It is non-porous so does not need to be glazed.
– Porcelain: A hard, white ceramic made by firing a pure clay (usually in the form of kaolin) and then glazing it – often called 'china' after its place of origin.
– Bone china: soft-paste porcelain composed of bone ash, feldspar and kaolin.

Clay in Contemporary Art

Clay is one of the easiest materials to model with and most children have played with it at some time, even to simply form 'snakes' by rolling the material between their hands. Sculptors often make their 'maquettes' or models in clay before translating their designs into a more durable material such as stone or bronze. Since the late 20th century, clay has been elevated from its humble crafts associations, to a material favoured by radical artists. Pablo Picasso was partly responsible for this renewed interest in ceramics when he set up a pottery studio in Madoura in the South of France following WW2. Other artists who work with clay include, Antony Gormley, Andy Goldsworthy, Emma Rodgers, Catrin Howell.

Tasks

Discuss different uses for pottery in everyday life. How do shapes and materials reflect their uses? Make a list of as many examples you can find in your home. Make sketches or take photographs.

Collect images of ceramics from magazines, leaflets and websites. Why do you think different countries or regions produce different styles of pottery? Compare and contrast examples of Peruvian pottery, Mexican, Celtic, Greek, Egyptian etc. What can pottery tell you about the period when it was produced? Discuss different objects – what were they used for? How were they decorated?

Find out about different types of glaze and what they are made from (eg iron black, feldspar white, and copper green).

Make a pot from coils of clay and decorate it with your own design. Look at ceramics on display at Ruthin Craft Centre and in books or magazines for inspiration. If you do not have a kiln, use air-dry clay such as 'fimo' or 'das'. Experiment with different tools or pressing objects into the clay to create patterns and textures.

Look at installation photographs of Antony Gormley's 'Field' in its various locations, worldwide. Make your own version by filling a corner or your classroom with clay figurines.

Further Resources

Groom, Simon, *A Secret History of Clay – from Gauguin to Gormley*, Tate Publishing 2004
Leach, Bernard, *A Potter's Book*, Faber and Faber, 2011
Mattison, Steven, *The Complete Potter: The Complete Reference to Tools, Materials and Techniques for all Potters and Ceramicists*, Apple Press, 2003
Cooper, Emmanuel,*Ten Thousand Years of Pottery,* The British Museum Press, 2002
Cooper, Emmanuel, *Contemporary Ceramics*, Thames & Hudson, 2009
Handbook of Pottery, Longman 1970

www.vam.ac.uk/page/c/ceramics/
www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/a/a-to-z-of-ceramics
http://www.antonygormley.com/projects/item-view/id/245
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/

Work in Focus: Claire Curneen

St Sebastian 2008

Born in County Kerry, Ireland, Claire Curneen has lived and worked in Wales since completing her MA at Cardiff in 1992. At the 2001 National Eisteddfod she won the Gold Medal in Craft and Design, in 2005 she received the Arts Council of Wales' Creative Wales Award and in 2012 the Creative Wales Ambassador Award.

Her figurative ceramics explore themes of human experience, such as birth, death, desire, fears, pain and compassion. They frequently make reference to religious iconography from the early Italian Renaissance, in particular representations of Christian martyrs bearing the evidence of their gruesome deaths.

St Sebastian is a favourite subject which Claire has revisited many times throughout her career. This version from 2008, shows the saint from the torso upwards and stands 65cm tall. It is constructed from flattened patches of white porcelain clay which has been fired and then details have been picked out with touches of coloured glaze.

The choice of material plays an important role in conveying both the silent suffering of the martyr and his steadfast resilience. The hard, brittle surface of the porcelain suggests strength and permanence which contrasts with the soft, cracked clay beneath. This is not the smooth bronze or marble of traditional icons, but a scarred and pitted body, covered with the artist's fingerprints. These marks reveal the process and material, and also a human touch. The texture of the hollowed clay figure reminds us of the fragile, vulnerable condition of the human frame. Arrows pierce Sebastian's body with drops of gold lustre in place of blood to suggest the magnitude of his sacrifice.

'I get very passionate about things holding some meaning. It has to be important'

Claire Curneen

Claire Curneen
St. Sebastian,
65cm x 30cm, 2008.
photo: Dewi Tannatt Lloyd

Tasks

Research St Sebastian in art. Compare and contrast examples by Donatello, Botticelli, Mantegna, Pollaiuolo, Bernini, Caravaggio etc. Discuss the different artists' interpretation of the subject

Discuss other representations of St Sebastian by Claire Curneen. Talk about scale, materials, processes, colour, texture etc.

Make your own models in clay and attempt to convey emotion through your treatment of the material – try ripping the clay, scarring it, pitting it, pressing objects into it to make different textures. What other materials could you use?

Create an abstract artwork to convey emotions such as love, hate, anger, pity, fear, happiness etc. Which colours, textures and materials to you associate with these emotions?

Visit an art gallery or museum and make notes and sketches of figurative works noting their materials. How have representations of the human body changed throughout history?

Further Resources

Ruthin Craft Centre (Catalogue) Claire Curneen: *Succour*, 2008
Ruthin Craft Centre (Catalogue) Claire Curneen: *To This I Put My Name*, 2014

www.clairecurneen.com
www.ceramics-aberystwyth.com/curneen-claire.html
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/

Claire Curneen, *To this I put my name* exhibition, 2013

Carving Out Space exhibition, 2013

Wood

Wood is a relatively cheap material, versatile and easy to work with tools. Due to its plentiful supply in most parts of the world, it has been used in the construction of homes, transport, furniture-making, baskets, musical instruments, toys, fuel, footwear, even early forms of false teeth…the list is endless! One of the disadvantages of wood, however, is that it is not as long-lasting as materials such as stone or metal; it can be affected by water, rot, insects and is highly flammable.

As a creative medium, wood was traditionally associated with crafts, folk art and mediaeval carving rather than 'fine art.' In the 20th century, however, sculptors such as Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth led a revived interest in woodcarving with their internationally acclaimed abstract works using natural materials. Hepworth valued wood for its aesthetic beauty and tactile qualities which she exploited in her work. She also selected tropical woods for their evocative or sensual power and linked their exotic scents to memories of particular places. She was also interested in the contrasting surfaces which could be created by applying matt white paint to the interiors of hollowed out forms and polishing the exterior to a high degree.

Other artists, for example David Nash or Georg Baselitz have exploited the expressive potential of wood. They have chosen to preserve its rough natural character, emphasising its grain, knots and blemishes rather than sanding and treating the surface. Wood may also be finished by staining, varnishing or painting the material. Besides giving it a smoother appearance, these processes help to preserve and protect the wood.

Different forms of wood craft include: carpentry, turning, joinery, cabinet-making, inlaying, marquetry, carving, sculpting with a chainsaw, wood-turning, basket-weaving etc. Contemporary artists continue to find new ways of exploiting this versatile material, as demonstrated in the *Carving out Space* and *Is it Wood?* Exhibition at Ruthin Craft Centre.

Tasks

Discuss – wood and its use in everyday life (furniture, shelves, frames, chopping boards, pencils etc.)

Make a list of the different forms wood can take eg shavings, splinters, sawdust, planks, beams, twigs, branches, sticks, canes etc. Make a sculpture that combines some of these forms.

Find out about different types and forms of wood and how you can use them in arts and crafts. For example balsa, willow, cork, ice-lolly sticks, matchsticks etc

Draw a still life group composed entirely from wooden objects. Attempt to capture the character of different woods through their graining, texture and colour.

Explore the acoustic properties of wood! Play recorders, pipes, maracas, xylophones etc. Make your own percussion instruments from scraps of wood.

Discuss wood in mythology, folklore, literature and poetry – eg Celtic sacred trees, *Cad Goddeu*, Apollo and Daphne, Sherwood Forest, Babes in the Wood etc.

Research wood in art history (eg Picasso and Braque's depictions of wood-grain in their Cubist still life paintings; Anselm Kiefer's *Parsifal* paintings, Barbara Hepworth sculptures; Georg Baselitz carved figures; David Nash installations and land art works etc.

Find out about wood in Welsh folk history – eg love spoons, stick chairs, dressers etc – make sketches, copy the decorative carving, make your own designs.

Design a 'Green Man'!

Further Resources
Carving Out Space Resource Pack http://ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/learning/resources-2/

http://www.welshfurniture.com/contentpage1.html
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Man
http://www.mythencyclopedia.com/Tr-Wa/Trees-in-Mythology.html
http://www.snappypixels.com/diy-ideas/great-ideas-diy-wine-cork-art-projects/
http://www.dvsonline.co.uk/matchsticks/hints.htm
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/

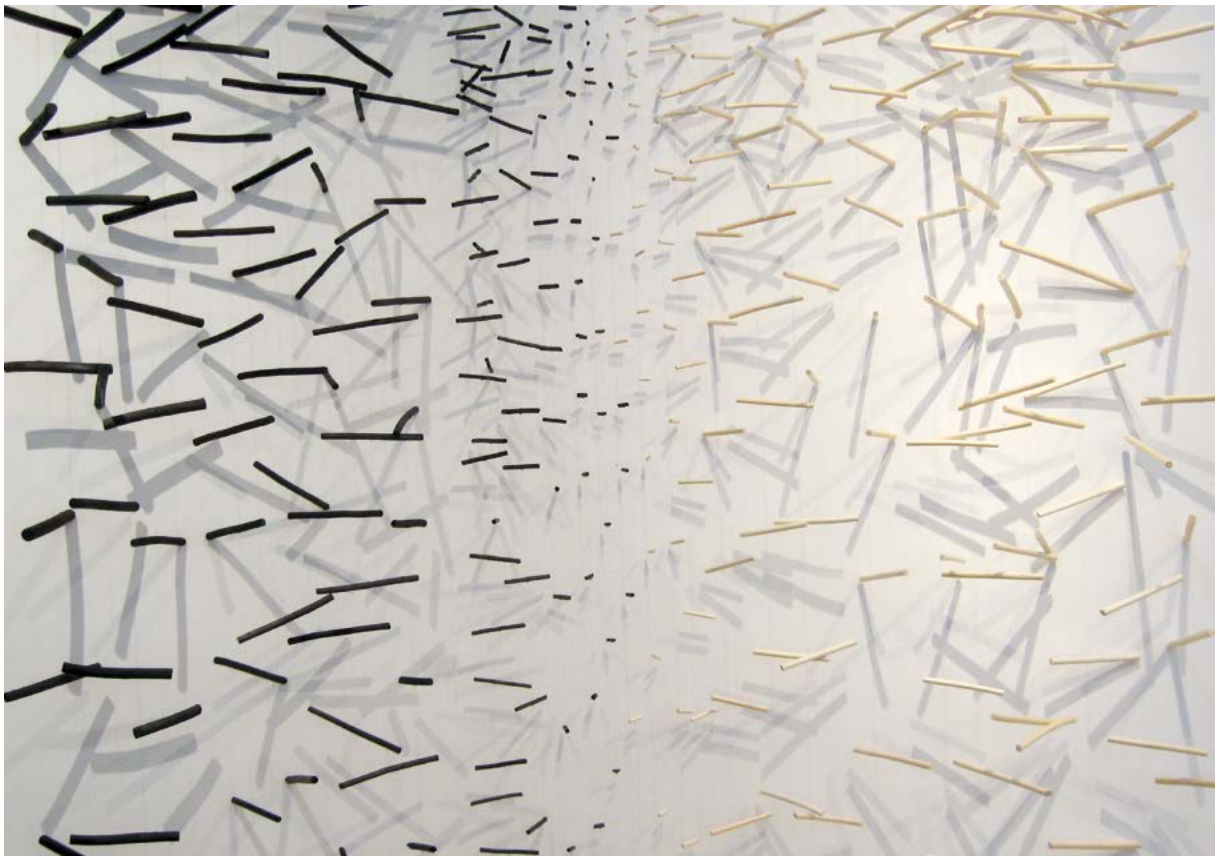
Work in Focus: Dail Behennah

Charcoal and Willow Hanging 2007

Dail Behennah was born in Bristol 1953. She studied Geography and Local History before taking a course in Basketry at the London College of Furniture. She describes herself as an 'artist and maker' and a strong sense of geometry and structure underpins all of her work. She began as a contemporary basket-maker and inspired by this discipline, she has developed increasingly large installation works that respond to their surroundings, emphasising the natural properties of the materials.

In this work she has used willow, the traditional raw material of British basket-makers, in two states, stripped white and charcoal. The natural wood is hard and flexible, which makes it an ideal material for basketry. When charcoaled, by controlled burning over three days, it still bears the form of the original stick but is transformed to a soft, crumbly texture that seems far removed from wood.

Short lengths of the material are suspended on fishing line, with lead weights and crimps to keep them in place. Against the gallery wall, a play of light and shadow is created, a crisscrossing and interweaving of lines, reminiscent of woven material. The sticks lightly touch the wall and are gently blown by passing drafts. 'The strong white willow leaves no trace, but the fragile charcoal marks the gallery wall,' Dail explains, 'My work is about line and depth, light and shadow and I always try to bring to it light and a sense of calm, but not stillness.



Tasks

Research Dail Behennah – find other examples of her work; what materials does she use? How does she make her works?

Write a description or short poem inspired by one of Dail's works. Find different words to describe the contrasts of light and shadow, black and white, line and form, object and space.

Draw with charcoal. What is it? How is it produced? How does it differ from other media eg pencil, pastel, crayon etc. Describe how it feels to work with.

Discuss the materials used in Dail's work. How do they look, feel, smell, sound? What associations do you have with these materials? What uses do willow and charcoal have in everyday life?

Make a mobile! You could use wood or experiment with other materials. Look at Alexander Calder's work for other ideas.

Further Resources

www.dailbehennah.com
http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/i/interview-dail-behennah-contemporary-basket-maker/
https://vimeo.com/36544274
http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Mobile
http://www.accessart.org.uk/category/charcoal/
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/

'The charcoal is soft and velvety in appearance. Is it wood?'

Dail Behennah

Dail Behennah, *Charcoal and Willow Hanging*, 2007. Charcoal, white willow, crimps, fishing line, lead weights. Drilled and threaded. photo: courtesy of the artist

Recycled Materials

Recycling: the process of changing waste products into new materials for re-use.

We think of re-cycling as a relatively new concept, influenced by green issues, changes in the world's climate and the need to conserve the earth's natural resources for future generations. However, our ancestors have been recycling materials for thousands of years. Archaeological studies of midden heaps near ancient villages reveal that many communities converted their waste into compost and that they often recycled broken tools and pots.

Throughout history, metal objects have been melted down to supply the molten material for casting new goods. During resources shortages of WW2, British citizens were urged to donate household goods, such as pans and tools for boosting supplies of metal for munitions as an act of patriotism.

Other historic forms of recycling include:
- *Rag-and-bone men* collecting unwanted household items: bones could be sold to soap-makers who used the grease to make soap or potters who ground them up to add to clay; old clothes were bought by rag-paper makers or textiles industries who recycled them as an inferior fabric known as 'shoddy'
- The term 'dustman' originates with the waste-collector who sold ashes and wood to brick-makers
- From the early 19th century to the 1970s, bottles were recycled with a refundable deposit in Britain.
- Milkmen collected empty bottles for re-use along with their daily deliveries

The advantages of recycling are:
- Reduction in consumption of raw materials and natural resources
- Composting of biodegradable waste (eg food, garden waste) for use as fertiliser rather than landfill
- Reduction of air pollution from incineration of waste and water pollution through landfill

Recycling in Art: David Poston, *Bracelet* 2003

In the modern era, jewellery has become valued for artistic and aesthetic reasons rather than for its cost or materials. Many designers, such as David Poston have deliberately shunned expensive metals such as gold and silver. Since his early career, Poston has chosen to work with many unconventional materials, such as glass, plastic and found objects. He is interested, not only in the aesthetic qualities of these different resources, but also the tactile, psychological and sensual effect of having certain textures next to the skin or worn as an accessory. This bracelet is made from two wooden forms sheathed with recycled painted steel from oat tins. The seams are laser welded with a soft beam that produces smooth edges. Other similar items by Poston include, *The Real Thing* 2004 (a pectoral cross made from coca-cola bottle tops) and *Well, Well, Well* 2008 (an armlet made from a recycled treacle tin).

David Poston, *Bracelet*, 2003. Recycled painted steel 'Oat tin', welded over wood. photo: Joel Degen

Tasks

Make bangles, rings, badges, necklaces etc from recycled materials. You could make papier-mâché beads, use curtain rings, washers, tin-foil, sweet wrappers, ring-pulls etc

Discuss the role of jewellery as a status symbol. What other possessions or commodities have been used as indicators of wealth or power in society?

Make a collage with labels and packaging from food tins and packaging – use pva glue to give your work a glossy finish.

Rodney Peppé,
Cardboard Zoo, 1989
photo: Antique
Collectors' Club

Recycling in Art: Rodney Peppé Cardboard Zoo 1989

Model making has become integral to Rodney Peppé's career as a children's writer and an artist. Not only has he created models as aids for his book illustrations, but he has also found inspiration for stories in the objects he has made. He uses every day materials, such as old shoes, baskets, pegs,.. even toilet rolls! Items that other people might consign to the bin are given a new life as animal characters. These simple cut-out creatures were made from cardboard boxes, string for tails, paint and glue.

Tasks

Make a cardboard cut-out zoo, farm, Noah's Ark, circus, dancers, football team…be inventive!

Collect discarded household items to convert into models. Look out for interesting objects in thrift shops and car-boot sales eg kettles, baskets, boots, hats etc that could be converted into pirate's galleons, houses, flying machines (see Rodney Peppé Education Pack for inspiration)

Make your own Clothes-peg Alligator. Invent creatures with snapping jaws (details and instructions for making models can be found in this free pdf download http://bookos.org/g/Rodney%20Peppe

Further Resources
David Poston and Rodney Peppé Resource Packs downloadable from
http://ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/learning/resources-2/
http://list25.com/25-impressive-works-of-art-made-from-recycled-materials/
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/

Ruthin Craft Centre, 2008

Architectural Materials
at Ruthin Craft Centre

Traditionally, the architecture of a community or settlement reflects the materials available in its locality, such as stone or slate that is quarried nearby, local clay tiles or bricks, wood where there is a forest etc. In the twentieth century, as transportation became easier and cheaper, a wider range of materials was available to designers.

In contemporary architecture there is a renewed interest in making buildings 'site-specific' by using local materials and reflecting the character of the surrounding landscape or cityscape. Ruthin Craft Centre was designed by Sergison Bates and opened in 2008. The project was to blend into its environs and convey the spirit of the Vale of Clwyd:

- Cast concrete walls are pigmented with a clay-red hue to establish a link with the sandstone of the area – seen in buildings such as Ruthin Castle. The name Ruthin comes from *rhudd* (red) and *din* (fort).
- Walls were cast on the ground and then tilted upwards into place. The imprint of surface textures tie the walls both visually and physically to the land around them
- Zinc panels of the angular roofs echo the shapes and colours of the hills behind them
- Wooden furniture designed by local artists, Jim Partridge and Liz Walmsley use natural materials found in Denbighshire. They describe their intention: to make "work with a strong but quiet presence in the landscape".
- Gates designed by jewellery maker and metalworker Brian Podschies, made in stainless steel with a woven appearance which relates to crafts on display, such as textiles and basketry.

In 2009, the building was awarded both the Dewi-Prys Thomas Prize and RIBA award.

Tasks

Visit Ruthin Craft Centre – List as many different materials as you can – man-made and natural. Make sketches of the roofline and hills beyond it. Make rubbings of the textures you find outside the building. Take photographs of contrasting materials. Describe how the different material feel, what associations or memories they evoke.

Walk around Ruthin – or your own town and make notes, sketches and take photographs of architectural and natural materials. Find out about the history of the buildings – when were they built? Who were they designed for? What are they made from?

Find out about local materials eg Ruabon clay and bricks, Penrhyn slate, Welsh wool, glass, gold etc

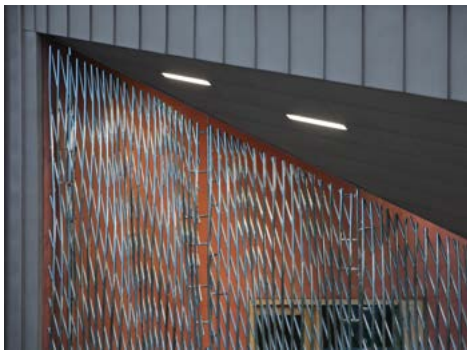
Download a plan of Ruthin Craft Centre from Sergison Bates' website. Use it as a template for an artwork using appropriate local colours and textures. You could make a collage… or a 3D model!

Make a plaster cast of an area of ground – capture an imprint of the grass, grains of soil, sand, pebbles, footprints, tyre-marks, animal tracks etc (there are numerous websites and videos on YouTube that demonstrate how to do this)

Further Resources

www.sergisonbates.co.uk
www.penmorfa.com/bricks/wales2.html
www.historic-uk.com/HistoryMagazine/DestinationsUK/Ruthin/
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/contact/about-the-centre/






Michael Brennand-Wood, *Holding Pattern* (detail), 2007

Acknowledgements

This learning pack was created by Julie Robson.
Julie Robson is an independent art historian and gallery educator, working with museums and galleries in Merseyside and North Wales. She studied Art, Architecture and Literature at the University of Nottingham and has a Masters degree in Contemporary Art, University of Liverpool. Besides Ruthin Craft Centre, she has written interpretative material and teachers' resources for Tate Liverpool, MOSTYN and the Victoria Gallery and Museum. Julie regularly gives public talks at the Walker Art Gallery and Lady Lever and teaches at the School of Lifelong Learning, University of Liverpool. She is also a practicing artist, working in mixed media and ceramics.

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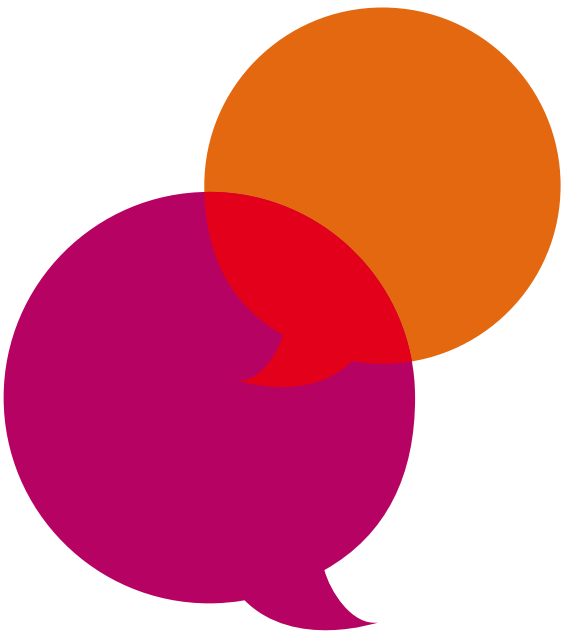

Canolfan Grefft Rhuthun
Y Ganolfan i'r Celfyddydau Cymhwysol

Ruthin Craft Centre
The Centre for the Applied Arts