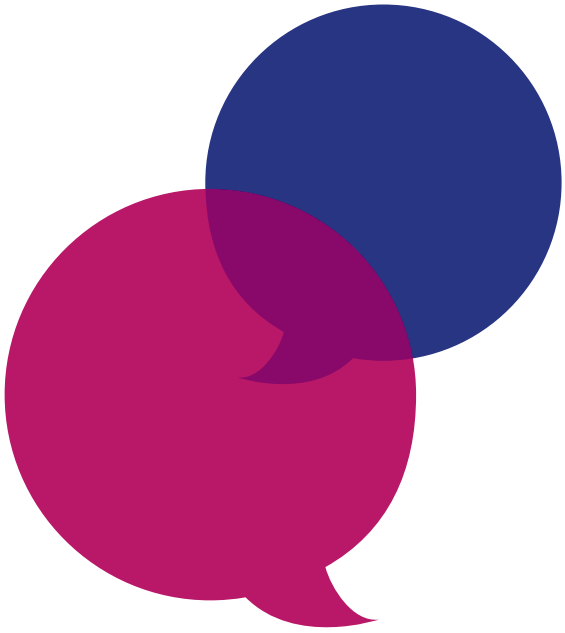
Canolfan Grefft Rhuthun
Y Ganolfan i'r Celfyddydau Cymhwysol
Ruthin Craft Centre
The Centre for the Applied Arts

process

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?

process

resource pack

Process: a series of operations or procedures performed during the manufacture of an object or material. (Chambers Dictionary)

Many different processes are used in creating arts and crafts. Everyone develops their own way of working towards a desired result, usually through learning and mastering tried and tested techniques. The types of materials, cost or availability of equipment often dictate the process or methods employed. Sometimes, new ways of making are discovered through experimentation or even by chance.

Makers establish their individual style through adapting or inventing processes and adding personal touches. Some choose to hide all trace of processes in their finished work, whilst others prefer to retain marks and evidence of how the object has been made, feeling that this contributes to its character and unique quality.

This pack investigates the different processes used in arts and crafts by focussing on a range of selected works. 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 *Process.* The workshops and practical tasks are suitable for all ages and can be adapted to your group's specific needs.

Julie Robson, 2016

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

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get inspired, get involved!

'I use the techniques of the past with the eyes of the future'

– David Frith, potter

David & Margaret Frith – *50 Years of Brookhouse Pottery* exhibition at Ruthin Craft Centre, 2013

Ceramics

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.

There are many different ways of transforming clay into functional everyday vessels, sculpture and decorative objects. The clay can be hardened by leaving to dry in the sun or by firing in a kiln to a high temperature and then finished by glazing and decorating. Some of the processes are explained below:

Carving: Clay is a very soft material which makes it easy to carve. There is a wide range of tools and techniques that can be employed for modelling sculptures and vessels or for applying surface details and decoration. They include knives, wire-ended tools, spatulas, saws, awls, wire-wool and even household utensils. Most makers assemble a collection of tools they can put to use, depending personal preferences and on the task in hand: gouging, scratching, incising, slashing, smoothing, cutting etc. For best results, the clay should be leather hard. The maker will learn from trial and error, which tools are suitable and how much pressure is needed to produce the required effect when carving.

http://ceramicartsdaily.org/free-gifts/ceramic-carving-tool-techniques-bringing-the-ceramic-surface-to-life/

Firing process – when the pot is completely dry it is ready to be bisque fired in a kiln. This initial firing removes all water from the clay so that the piece can be glazed without returning to mud and breaking. After glazing, the vessel is given a second firing which makes it watertight and gives the glaze a glassy finish. There are many methods of firing including:

- Raku – the pot is removed from the kiln while it is red hot and then plunged into cold water or sawdust in order to create a crackle effect on the glaze.
- Stoneware is fired to higher temperatures than earthenware, maturing the clay and glaze at the same time. The glaze interacts with the clay to form an integral glaze/clay layer.
- Earthenware: pottery made from clay, often mixed with silica, quartz, feldspar etc. It needs to be glazed in order to make it watertight.
- Wood firing: Wood fired ceramics are at the very root of civilization, as open firing (on the ground without a kiln) evolved to covering the simple bonfires with fired brick structures. The Japanese anagama kiln is an ancient type of wood fired pottery kiln where a continuous supply of fuel is needed for firing, as wood thrown into the hot kiln is consumed very rapidly.
- Gas firing allows the potter to control the ratio of oxygen to gas. Depriving the kiln of oxygen creates an atmosphere known as reduction where carbon monoxide can be produced. It is the burning of chemically combined oxygen in the clay and glazed minerals that give the ceramics fired by natural flame their unique characteristics.
- Electric kilns were developed in the late C19th, they now include computer controlled electric kilns. Capable of firing to preset temperatures and complex schedules they have enabled the individual artist potter to work alone.

Lowri Davies

Glazing: a liquid solution of finely ground minerals is used to cover pottery. The ware is dipped into glaze or it can be sprayed or painted on. During firing it fuses to the clay to create a non-porous surface. See: http://www.howtomakepottery.com/glazing_and_firing.html

Hand-building: these are the most common methods of making pottery by hand:

– Coiling – has been used to make clay vessels for thousands of years. The technique allows the potter to build and shape walls by rolling long 'snakes' of clay and placing one coil on top of another until the desired height and form is attained. Coiled vessels often take a 'pinch pot' as a base to build from.

– Pinching – making a 'pinch pot' is one of the simplest and oldest techniques. Beginning with a ball of clay, thumbs are pushed into the centre, and then the walls of a pot are created by pinching the sides between fingers and thumbs and continually turning the ball in your hand. The pot is then pushed on a flat surface to create a base.

Slab-building involves rolling out a lump of clay on a flat surface with a rolling pin between two strips of wood of equal thickness, to ensure that the slab is rolled out evenly. When the clay has dried and leather-hard, the slab is cut with a sharp knife into the required shapes to be assembled by pressing dampened edges together.
See: http://www.lakesidepottery.com/HTML%20Text/Methods%20of%20Handbuilding.htm
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-dIdKI-exI

Mould Pressing is the forming of objects by pressing the soft clay firmly into a mould with the fingers. Moulds are usually made from plaster and they are particularly useful for making repeats of forms. They can be easily made by hand or purchased from ceramic suppliers. For information and instructions for making press moulds.
See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=um0GLs-ahkw
http://annakeiller.com/tag/press-moulding

Paper clay (fiberclay in USA) is any clay body to which processed fibres (paper being the most common) have been added. Earthenware, terracotta, stoneware, porcelain and bone china

clay bodies can be made into paper clay. The firing process for paper clay is similar to firing of conventional clay. Replacing some of the clay with fiber, will reduce the thermal mass of clay, in turn reducing further the energy required to fire the work, and the final object will weigh less that conventional clay.

Slip casting: a method of creating ceramics from a plaster mould. The casting slip (liquid clay) is poured into the mould and the clay dries out into its shape as the water is absorbed by the plaster.

Slip trailing is the application of lines of slip to a clay surface using a fine-pointed dispenser (similar to a cake-decorating nozzle). The resulting raised decoration adds physical and visual texture to ceramics. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nk4zNN05c68

Throwing: the term comes from the Old English word 'thrawen' which means 'to turn.' A lump of clay is placed onto the middle of a rotating wheel and the potter pushes the material up into a cone and then down into its centre with thumbs to form a vessel. The finished work is removed from the wheel with a wire cutter. It takes practice to learn how to control clay and wheel speed in order to produce a perfect pot. http://lakesidepottery.com/Pages/Pottery-tips/Throwing-a-pot-Lakeside-Pottery-Tutorial.htm

Tasks

Play with clay! Press objects into a rolled out slab to create textures, imprints and patterns (eg shells, textiles, coins, wallpaper etc). You could cut round the most interesting bits to make decorative coasters.

Watch a potter at work! You could visit a studio or workshop and talk about different processes or watch a video. (http://www.wimp.com/claypottery/)

Find out about different glazes.

Make a pot from coils of clay – if you do not have a kiln, use an air-dry clay such as 'Fimo' or 'Das'.

Further Resources

Connell, Jo, *The Potter's Guide to Ceramic Surfaces,* Apple Press 2002
Turner, Anderson, *Surface Decoration Techniques,* Amer Ceramic Society, 2014 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
Leach, Bernard, *A Potter's Book,* Faber and Faber, 2011

www.vam.ac.uk/page/c/ceramics/
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/

Catrin Howell workshops at Ruthin Craft Centre

Work in Focus: Susan O'Byrne

Lamb, 2012

Susan O'Byrne, *Lamb,* 2012

'The way I make my works is related to the way I made things as a child in papiér mâché.'

Susan O'Byrne developed her unique approach to modelling as a means of problem solving. As an art student in Edinburgh, she loved to combine drawing and collage. When she began to work in ceramics, she devised a way of translating these disciplines into three dimensions: *'I started drawing with wire and collaged pieces of clay.'*

However, metal expands in the kiln as clay shrinks and so 'it became a challenge to get everything to hold together.' Her solution was a very personal making process, starting with a micro-wire armature on to which layers of printed and patterned pieces of porcelain clay are applied to form a skin:

'The natural twists and kinks of the wire frame and the shrinkage of the clay around it during firing are allowed to dictate the posture of the finished animal. The element of chance in these processes is central to my work.'

The sheets of patterned paper clay which are applied to the frame are prepared beforehand by using the following process:

– Making a stencil of the pattern that is to be used.

– Painting through the stencil with thick paper clay slip onto a flat, damp surface.

– Peeling the stencil away, leaving the pattern embossed on the surface.

– Painting a layer of thin, paper clay slip in a different colour over the pattern. (this becomes the background for the design)

– Peeling the whole sheet off and then collaging it in bits onto the wire frame.

Susan also makes animal sculptures on a smaller scale, starting with a papiér mâché maquette and creating a mould in order to cast the works. She explains that the tapestry-like surface of *Lamb* reflects her interest in mediaeval bestiaries: *'I always think of animals as parts of collections and in my collection, as in history, the lamb represents something lighter in contrast to the darker nature of, say, the goat.'*

Tasks

Draw an animal using only lines and then make a copy of this in wire. Fill in the spaces with collaged pieces of patterned paper or fabric.

Make a model animal in paper clay or papiér mâché and decorate it with collage or paint. Try to capture the character or nature of the individual animals. Make a bestiary!

Watch video of Susan O'Byrne at work https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTmskLM0JDw and then write a report with clear instructions. Use this report to compose a story about a sculptor who brings clay animals to life!

Design stencils and cut them out of card. Use them to create sheets of patterned paper.

Further Resources

Elizabeth Moignard and Philip Hughes, *Susan O'Byrne: Five Sisters and a Family Tree,* Ruthin Craft Centre 2015

http://www.susanobyrne.com/en/about.html
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/

Susan O'Byrne, *Red-headed Finch,* 2015
photo: Bruno Gallagher

above: Ptolemy Mann. right: Ptolemy Mann, Circle 1, 2011

Textiles

The word ‘textile’ comes originally from the Latin ‘texere’ which means ‘to weave’ and is used to describe a flexible material comprising of a network of natural or artificial fibres or yarn. Textiles may be used functionally for warmth, protection and insulation and for personal adornment and for home furnishings. Patterns and designs may be produced as part of the process of making the materials (eg weaving or knitting different colours and textures into the fabric or added in the form of appliqué and embroidery).

Some of the processes used in making textiles are given below:

Appliqué: sewing or sticking pieces of fabric onto a larger area of material to produce a picture or pattern.

Crochet: handicraft in which yarn is made up into a textured fabric by means of a hooked needle.

Dyeing: process of adding colour to textile products such as fibres, yarns and fabrics. There are many methods of dyeing using chemicals or natural dyes, by hand or machine (see links below for further information).

Embroidery is the process of decorating fabric or other materials with needle and thread or yarn. Embroidery may also incorporate other materials such as metal strips, pearls, beads, quills, and sequins.

Felting: matting, condensing and pressing fibres together to create a non-woven fabric.

Knitting: yarns are intertwined and looped together, either by hand (with knitting needles) or with a machine to create fabric.

Machine embroidery: the process whereby a sewing or embroidery machine is used to create patterns on textiles. It is often used commercially in product branding, corporate advertising and uniform adornment.

Pleating: creating folds of equal width by doubling cloth back on itself and pressing or securing with stitches.

Printing: the process of applying colour or patterned decoration to a fabric. The colour is bonded to the fibre to resist washing, friction and fading.

Quilting: padding and stitching layers of fabric together to create a decorative pattern.

Shibori: Japanese technique adding pattern and texture fabric through compression, binding and dyeing.

Spinning: part of the textile manufacturing process where strands of fibres are twisted together to form yarn.

Stitch: to mend or join together pieces of material with loops of thread or yarn.

Tapestry: a thick textile fabric consisting of a warp upon which coloured threads are woven by hand or machine to produce a design, often used for wall hangings, cushion covers, furnishings etc.

Weaving: combining or interlacing long threads or yarns to create fabrics.

Tasks

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?

Make a patchwork cushion cover… or you could work together as a group to produce a quilt.

Look at the paintings of Henri Matisse, Gustav Klimt or Fiona Rae. Make a textile collage or appliquéd wall-hanging based on one of their paintings.

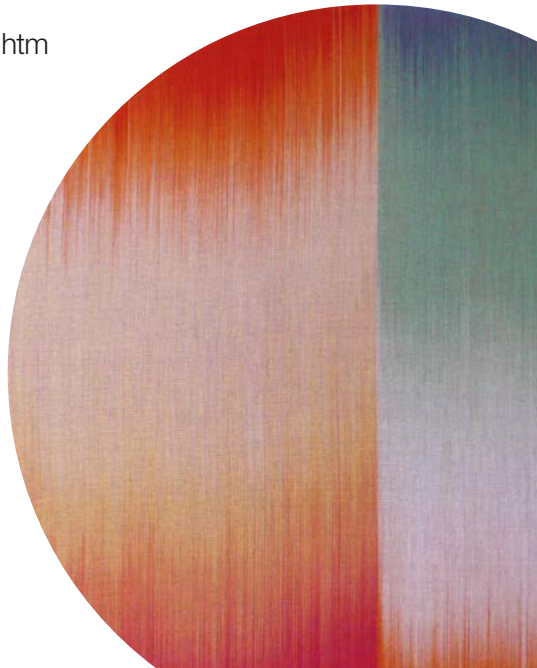
Learn to knit or crochet! Begin with simple shapes and stitch together to make a wall-hanging or cover. You could work together as a class.

Make a cardboard loom and create your own tapestries!
See for example: http://www.biglearning.org/article-cardboard-loom.htm
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDCgldHpSFs

Further Resources

Alysn Midgelow-Marsden, *Stitch, Fibres, Metal & Mixed Media (The Textile Artist),* Search Press Ltd, 2014
Mary Schoeser, *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 http://www.shibori.co.uk/shibori.html
www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/design/textiles/
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/



Jilly Edwards, *Reflections & Investigations* exhibition at Ruthin Craft Centre, 2011

Work in Focus: Jilly Edwards

Field Hedges 2, 2013

'What I've always liked about weaving is that there is nothing there to start with so, rather like sculpture, you have to actually construct something.'

Jilly Edwards has been described as a fine artist working in woven art. The broad washes of colour in her tapestries are reminiscent of abstract paintings and it comes as no surprise to find that Howard Hodgkin is one of her favourite artists.

Like Hodgkin, many of her works respond to landscape and evoke a sense of being in a place or travelling through it. Her combination of colours and textures captures the weather, climate, colours, scents and even sounds that she associates with specific locations that she has visited.

The starting point for Edward's work is her sketchbook which is filled with drawings and notes which are then translated or distilled into designs for tapestries. Her work, she explains, is not about landscape, but her personal responses to it: *'it's about my feelings, thoughts, memories that the sights, words and sounds evoke in me.'*

Field Hedges 2 captures the experience of travelling through the landscape near Edinburgh on a train. The square form of the small tapestry becomes a window, or a snap-shot – a fleeting image or memory of a place passed through. The yellow blotches capture the effects of light on the fields of oilseed rape, whilst horizontal dashes suggest the broken lines of hedges wheeling past the window. Overhead, looms an ominous storm cloud evoked by patchy black and grey. Using cotton warp and weaving lines of wool, cotton and linen weft, Jilly evokes not only the colours of a northern landscape but also the undulating textures.

Her process follows the following steps:

– She begins by setting up her loom with lines of tight cotton warp.

– Then she weaves a line of yarn through the warp and bashes it with a bobbin to create a flat base for the next line.

– This is repeated, building up the lines of different colour, constantly checking her sketches and 'cartoon' which she pins to the loom as a guide.

– Eventually the tapestry emerges after a period of strenuous work which can sometimes take months!

When exhibited alongside other works from this series, *Field Hedges 1 and Fences 1,* it becomes part of a sequence, suggesting the passing of time not only on the journey but also the laborious process of weaving itself.

Tasks

Watch a video of a weaver at work (eg: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gm-vF92eSJE)

Keep your own travel notes from a journey by car, train, plane or even a walk. Jot down words, colours, shapes, scents etc. Use them to recreate your experience in an abstract painting, a poem or a design for a tapestry.

Experiment with weaving! Thread different materials around the warp such as paper, foil, reeds, feathers… be inventive!

Choreograph a dance based on weaving. Take one of Jilly Edwards's designs as a starting point and attempt to recreate the rhythms, colours and mood with movement, scarfs and steps.

Further Resources

Philip Hughes and June Hill, *Jilly Edwards, Reflections and Investigations,* Ruthin Craft Centre, 2011

Jilly Edwards and Matthew Koumis, *Jilly Edwards (Portfolio Collection),* Telos Art Publishing, 2000

http://www.jillyedwards.co.uk/

http://bletheringcrafts.blogspot.co.uk/2011/06/jilly-edwards.html

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

Jilly Edwards, *Field Hedges 2,* 2013

Raising The Bar exhibition at Ruthin Craft Centre, 2008

Metal

The ability to transform metal ore into a useful material had a great impact on early civilisations. Through applying intense heat, hammering and forging, they were able to make tools, building materials, weapons along with domestic items such as bowls, plates and vessels. As processes developed and became more refined, the range of uses also expanded from intricate jewellery or machine parts to girders for building construction.

Personal ornaments such as necklaces, rings, or bracelets were traditionally made from or contained precious metal. In the modern era, jewellery has become valued for artistic and aesthetic reasons rather than for its cost or materials. New technology such as laser welding, allows contemporary jewellers to create increasingly elaborate work, often combining unexpected materials and textures.

Some processes used in metalwork include:

Silversmithing: the raising of transforming silver sheet metal into silverware (such as vessels, candlesticks, plates etc), sculpture or jewellery.

Forging: a metal shaping process using processes such as hammering, pressing or rolling with tools.

Piercing: a process where tools are used to create a hole in a sheet of metal.

Soldering: a process in which metal surfaces are joined by means of melting and putting a solder (usually metal) into the joint.

Casting: involves pouring molten metal into a mould which has usually been made in plaster from the original object. When the metal has solidified, the cast form is removed from the mould and (if required) all signs of the casting process are filed down and polished. Some makers prefer to leave the evidence of the process on the finished work.

Chasing: a technique used to define or refine the forms of a surface design and to raise them into low relief. Various tools are used to work the material from the front by hammering and without removing any metal from the surface.

Welding: joining metal parts by heating the surfaces to the point of melting with a blowpipe, electric arc, or other means, and bringing them together them by pressing, hammering, etc.

Enamelling: the application or fusing of a glassy, usually opaque substance to the surface of metal as a form of decoration or protection.

Tasks

Find out about casting techniques, e.g. 'the lost wax' process.

Make casts of objects (or your hands and feet!) using a sand tray and plaster.

Walk around your local area and find examples of bronze sculptures. Take photographs, make sketches and notes. Find out about their history – why are they there, what do they represent, who made them, how were they created?

Visit a museum or gallery and look for objects made from metal – make a list of the different types of metal and find out how they were made.

Make a mobile from metal wire and shapes from card, foil paper, sweet wrappers – be inventive!

Further Resources

Joanne Hayward, *Mixed Media Jewellery: Methods and Techniques,* A&amp, C Black, 2009
Stan Bray, *Metalworking: Tools and Techniques,* Crowood Press 2003
Philip Hughes, Elizabeth Goring (et al), *Silverstruck,* Ruthin Craft Centre 2011

Julie Blyfield – Australian Metalsmith at her design bench in her studio: Exhibition *'Panorama'* at Ruthin Craft Centre, 2015

Theresa Nguyen, *Con Brio,* 2010. photo: Clarissa Bruce. *Silverstruck* exhibition at Ruthin Craft Centre, 2011

Work in Focus: Theresa Nguyen

Con Brio, 2010

Artist and Silversmith Theresa Nguyen finds inspiration in the world around her and seeks 'to convey a sense of organic form, incorporating sensuous surfaces, creative movement and flow.' In order to achieve this, she has mastered a range of processes and continues to learn new and innovative approaches to working with silver.

Theresa begins by sketching natural forms and uses these drawings to design her silverwork. In its making, *Con Brio* involved three processes:

– First of all, each element of the design was made by folding a sheet of metal in half and using a textured hammer to apply pattern to the surface. Theresa describes the technique as a combination of origami and forging. The silver was then heated to soften it and then the flat folds opened out to reveal a sculptural form. This was then further shaped over wood with nylon hammers and also pressed and manipulated with her fingers.

– Secondly, the silver was forged with intermittent sharp blows while the metal was red hot. To produce a tapering length she hammered a series of blows along the length of a round rod of silver.

– Finally, the organic structure of tendrils, spiralling and trailing leaf forms was constructed in stages by skilfully soldering the metal surfaces together. The surface was cleaned through immersion in an acid solution (pickle bath) and surplus solder removed from the joints by filing.

The result is a sinuous free flowing form, with a sense of energy or vigour, as its musical title suggests. It also conveys the artist's enthusiasm for working in metal: *'Silver is such a robust and enduring material that is malleable enough to allow me to fully express my creative vision. Silver is simply magic!'*

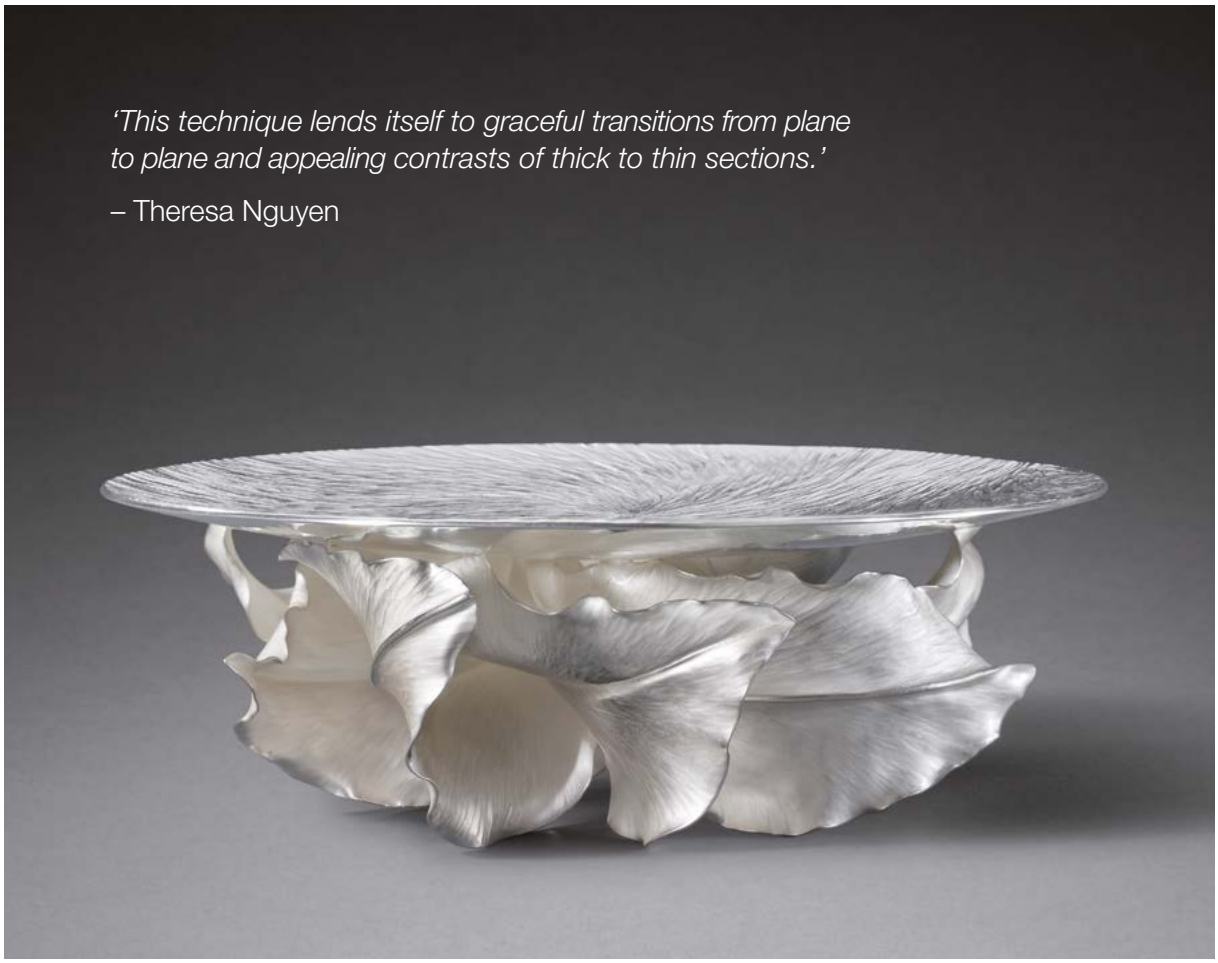
Tasks

Watch a video of Theresa Nguyen at work (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vl617TVLvWw)

Design a range of jewellery based on musical symbols, instruments or inspired by your favourite songs.

Write a list of words and phrases that come to mind when you look at Theresa's work. Use these words to compose a poem with the title 'con brio.'

Further Resources
http://www.theresanguyen.co.uk/
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/



Theresa Nguyen, *Lifeforce,* 2009. photo: Clarissa Bruce. *Silverstruck* exhibition at Ruthin Craft Centre, 2011



Illuminate exhibition at Ruthin Craft Centre, 2014. left–right: Sheldon Cooney, Michael Ruh, Emily Phillips

Glass

Since ancient times, glass has been processed for a wide range of uses, both decorative and functional. Makers have experimented with different minerals and oxides, and developed new ways of working with the material in order to create different shapes, forms and textures. Processes used in glassmaking include:

Slumping: technique in which glass is shaped over moulds at high temperatures in a kiln.

Fusing: a technique used since around 2000 BCE which involves layering sheets of different coloured glass and heating in a kiln to a high temperature in order to melt and bond them together.

Casting: a process tracing back to Ancient Egypt in which objects are cast by pouring molten glass into a mould where it solidifies. Other processes include kiln casting, casting into sand, graphite or metal moulds.

Lamp work: process where a torch or lamp is used to reduce glass to a molten state and it is then formed by blowing and shaping with tools and hand movements (also known as flame-working or torch-working).

Glass blowing: technique that involves inflating molten glass into a bubble with the aid of a blow tube in order to form a vessel.

Engraving: a variety of techniques may be used to cut or abrade images and inscriptions into the surface of glass with tools such as diamond tipped burrs, small abrasive wheels, drills or lathes. Fine emery powder or sand may also be used as an abrasive.

Cold working is a term for a number of techniques that are used to alter or finish glass after it has been cooled or annealed. These processes include polishing, grinding, engraving, etching etc.

Water jet cutting: using a very high-pressure jet of water, or a mixture of water and an abrasive substance.

Pate de verre: literally translated means glass paste, this is a form of kiln casting whereby finely crushed glass is mixed with a binding material, such as a mixture of gum arabic and water and often fused with various hues and enamels.

Tasks

Watch a video demonstration of glassblowing – or visit a glass workshop or museum!

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

Decorate a drinking glass or mirror tile using glass paints.

Discuss the uses of glass in everyday life and list its uses eg windows, windscreens, spectacles, vessels etc. How are these objects made?

Further Resources

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
Raguin, Virginia Chieffo and Higgins, Mary Clerkin, *The History of Stained Glass: The Art of Light Mediaeval to Contemporary,* Thames and Hudson 2008

http://www.nationalglasscentre.com/learn/activitiescoursesandclasses/familyactivities
www.britglass.org.uk www.m.wikihow.com www.urbanglass.org
www.worldofglass.com www.glassblobbery.com

Bob Crooks exhibition at Ruthin Craft Centre, 2016

above: Bob Crooks. photo: Ian Jackson. below: Bob Crooks, *Concision & Grace I,* 2015.

Work in Focus: Bob Crooks

Concision & Grace I, 2015

Bob Crooks continues to develop the traditional processes of glassmaking, working out original and challenging ways of exploiting the natural properties of his material through refraction, reflection, transparency or opacity. Each piece is designed, produced by hand and finished by Bob.

To coincide with the Van Gogh exhibition at the Royal Academy in 2010, Crooks was invited to make limited edition vases based on the artist's work. The *Concision & Grace* series developed from this commission. The title refers to writer Robert Hughes' description of the late works of Van Gogh: being in control and 'longing for concision & grace.' Crooks takes the vibrant swirling colours and forms from these paintings as inspiration for his series, using the *millefiori* technique.

Millefiori, Italian for one thousand flowers, was invented by the ancient Egyptians and was developed in the 1st century BC by the Romans. Venetian glassmakers in the 15th century revived and improved this technique which is made by fusing together a bundle of thin coloured glass rods. They are pulled, cooled, and cut in cross-sections to produce small flower shaped discs. These circular forms are applied to hot blown glass which is reheated and re-blown to produce a complex, highly decorative piece with the imaginative and expressive use of colour that is associated with paintings such as *The Starry Night.*

Tasks

Make an abstract painting based on the lines, colours and shapes in one of Bob Crooks' works. Attempt to capture the effects of light, refraction and reflections in your design.

Compare Crooks' vases with Van Gogh's paintings. Can you make links between his use of colour, form and line with the Post Impressionist's works? How does the reflection and refraction of light alter Crooks' design?

Copy a Van Gogh painting onto a glass surface using special inks.

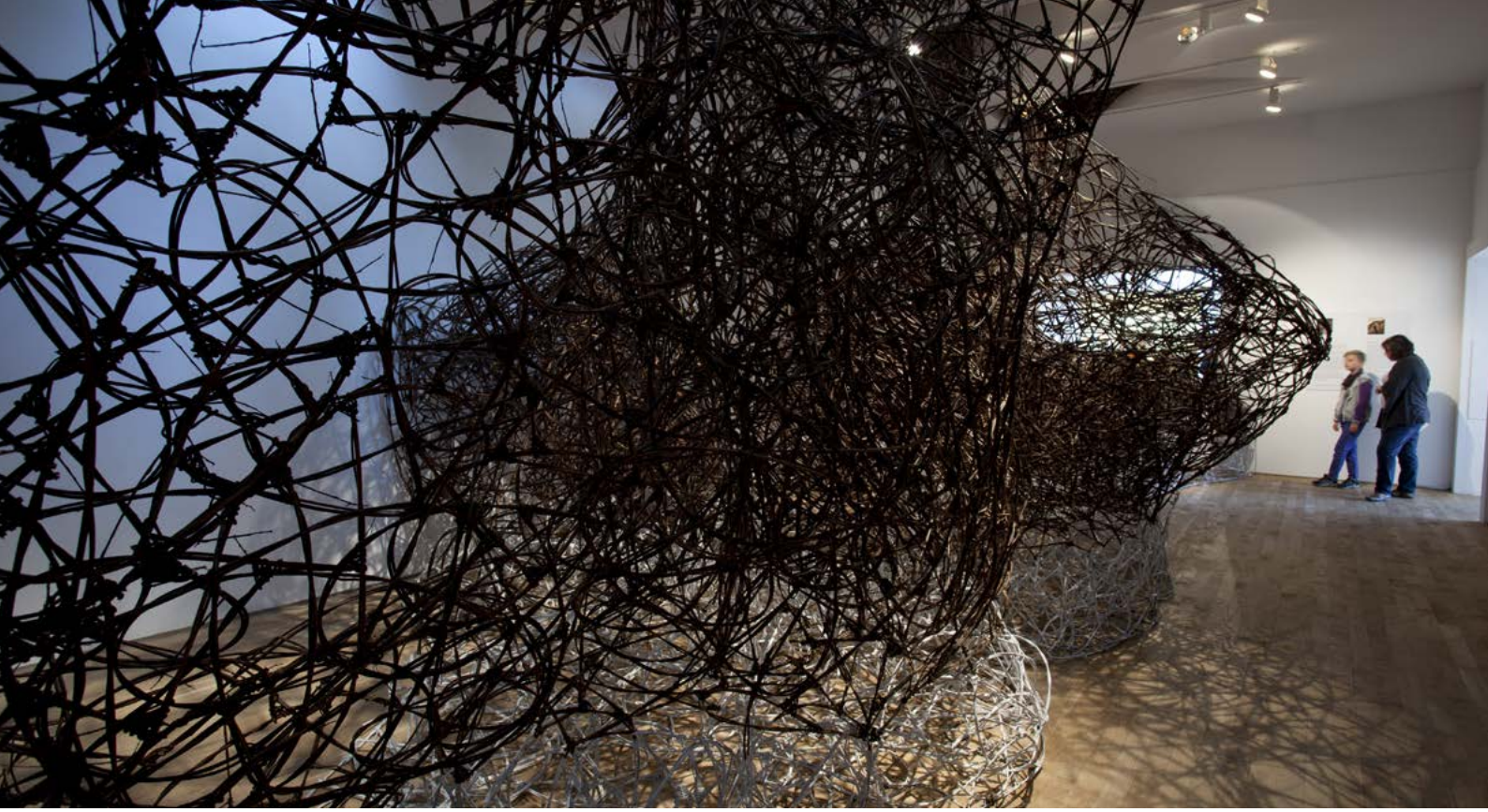
Find out about the properties of glass. What is refraction? Why do mirrors reflect? What is the difference between concave and convex lenses? How can glass be made into shapes?

Further Resources

Bob Crooks, *Colour, Reflection, Refraction,* The Scottish Gallery 2006

http://www.bobcrooks.com/
http://www.scottish-gallery.co.uk/images/artists/TSG_Bob_Crooks_online_catalogue.pdf
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKwbadbkR08
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/arts_and_culture/8474538.stm
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/

Bob Crooks. photo: Ian Jackson



Inundation, Laura Ellen Bacon exhibition at Ruthin Craft Centre, 2014

Wood

Wood is a traditional material for making due to its widespread availability and the variety of forms it can take: from pliable branches to blocks and panels, it can be woven, sawn, planed, carved, pieced together with joints or glue.

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.

Some processes used in woodcraft are discussed below:

Wood-turning This form of woodworking originates in Egypt around 1300 BC with the invention of the lathe which enables the wood to move while a stationary tool cuts and shapes it. Throughout history, the lathe has developed from a hand or pedal powered tool, to motorised and eventually, computerised equipment. Despite the availability of modern technology, there is still a demand for skilfully hand-turned products.

The two distinct forms of wood-turning are spindle and faceplate. In spindle-turning, the wood is fixed between two points and allowed to rotate while a sharp tool cuts into it. In faceplate turning, a metal disc is attached to the lathe's spindle which rotates and cuts into the wood. The former method is used to create objects such as chair legs, lamp-stands, banister spindles etc, and the latter to produce hollowed bowls, platters etc.
Further resources: http://www.technologystudent.com/equip1/woodturn1.html

Laser cutting This method can be used to produce complex shapes or designs, quickly and efficiently. The wood is cut or engraved with a focussed laser beam, leaving a clean cut with a high degree of accuracy and no rough edges. Lasers are particularly suited for precision work such as decorative engraving, model-making, lettering, wood inlays etc.
See for example Hannah Wardle (www.helfagelf.co.uk/en/artists/drws-y-coed)

Willow weaving The stems of the willow tree have been used since the beginnings of civilisation for making baskets, mats, traps, fishing nets, coracles, furniture and even the walls of houses. The soft, pliable branches are less likely to split or break when bent and woven than other woods. Besides having a functional use, willow stems can also be woven into living sculptures, such as domes, tunnels and decorative garden features.

Wood Carving Wood carving is a traditional craft in many countries, including Wales. Some examples of Welsh folk art include:

– Love-spoons – decoratively carved with symbols such as hearts, horseshoes, keys etc. These spoons were not functional utensils but decorative objects to be presented as a gift of romantic intent.

– Stick Chairs – deceptively simple in design, many demonstrate great skill in outline shaping, fretwork, carved backs and turning with a lathe.

– Dressers – originally meant as utilitarian kitchen furniture, dressers became more elaboratelycarved as they were used for displaying crockery and ornaments in wealthier homes.

Tasks

Look at and discuss examples of willow sculptures e.g. Dail Behennah (http://www.dailbehennah.com/) Laura Ellen Bacon (http://www.lauraellenbacon.com/)

Research the history of the Welsh coracle. Visit your local museum to find examples of basketry and weaving.

Make a sculpture from wood: by carving, whittling, assembling, collaging or sticking bits together with wood glue.

Talk about uses for wood in everyday life eg furniture, houses, boats, utensils, clogs etc. Find out how these are made.

Further Resources

Carving Out Space Resource Pack
http://ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/learning /resources-2/
From Nature Resource Pack
http://lawncreative.co.uk/rccassets/RCC_FROM_NATURE_%20ENGLISH.pdf
www.welsh-love-spoons.co.uk/history
http://www.welshantiques.com/antique-stickchairs-article.html
http://www.jonsbushcraft.com/basicbasket.htm
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pa50Ag_bv6w

Richard La Trobe-Bateman, *Age of Experience* exhibition at Ruthin Craft Centre, 2009

Work in Focus: Jim Partridge and Liz Walmsley

Single Block Seat, 2004

'Designing, experimenting, making; the directness of handling of tools, materials and ideas allows us fluidity… this is how we carve out a space.'

Jim Partridge and Liz Walmsley have been collaborating since 1988 on a variety of projects including furniture and functional sculpture such as bowls, tables, bridges, hillside shelters and making works for both indoor and outdoor settings.

Significant commissions include Grizedale Forest, Forestry Commission, Warwick Art Centre and they have work in several collections including the V&A, London and Manchester Art Gallery. They also made furniture for Ruthin Craft Centre for the re-opening in 2008.

The *Single Block Seat* is typical of Partridge and Walmsley's' minimal approach to furniture making. It's sturdy form has been hewn from a block of unseasoned burr oak using chainsaws. The concave form of the seat was carved out with chisels and the surface made smooth and splinter-free with a power sander. The cracks and splits occurred naturally as the timber dried out and are emphasised by the charring of the surface with a blow torch. A particular trademark process of Partridge and Walmsley's work is this scorching and waxing of the wood, drawing attention to the texture of the grain and making their objects highly tactile in quality. Several versions of *Single Block Seat* have been produced and its heavy, robust character makes it suitable for outdoor use in places such as gardens, parks and alongside public paths.

above: Jim Partridge and Liz Walmsley, *Block Seat,* 2004
below: Jim Partridge and Liz Walmsley courtyard table at RCC

Jim Partridge and Liz Walmsley, 2012

Tasks

Design your own piece of wooden furniture such as a chair, table or desk. Make notes on your drawing about the processes you might use make the object and describe the unique features that your design incorporates.

Make a detailed drawing from one of Partridge and Walmsley's pieces focusing on the different textures. How can you distinguish between polished surfaces and rough grain in your drawing? What materials are best for this purpose – pencil, crayon, charcoal…?

Compare and contrast furniture by Partridge and Walmsley with traditional examples such as Welsh stick chairs.

Hunt for all of the furniture within the Craft Centre that has been made by Jim & Liz: How many can you find?

Further Resources
http://www.jplw.co.uk/
http://www.scottish-gallery.co.uk/images/artists/From_Black_to_Gold_Collect_2012.pdf

Mandy Coates, *Willow Pot with Birch Catkins*. photo: Dewi Tannatt Lloyd

Work in Focus: Mandy Coates

Willow Pot with Birch Catkins, 2015

The process of basketmaking for Mandy Coates is deeply rooted in history and tradition. She draws inspiration from her environment, using local materials and employing time-honoured techniques. Though her baskets have a contemporary feel, they have their origins in traditional forms that have evolved over thousands of years to suit their particular function or everyday use. Her work ranges from utilitarian trugs, trays and log baskets to non-functional, sculptural creations. She grows her own willow, which provides her with different colours and textures and to this material, she often adds other natural materials gathered from hedgerows and country walks.

Mandy uses numerous processes in her work. It begins with growing the material itself: in the winter, the willow has to be cut back to a crop of gnarly stumps in preparation for the next year's growth. Throughout the summer, colours change from vivid hues to mellow tones as the willow matures. She sorts the harvested material into bundles to dry, arranged by colour, length and thickness.

Before weaving, the willow has to be re-hydrated by soaking for up to a week. This makes the rods pliable enough for twisting and bending into basket form. Once completed, the woven material dries naturally to resume its light, tensile sturdiness, strong enough for everyday use. *Willow pot with birch catkins* combines form and function with delicate artistry. The protruding catkins contribute a lighter touch: a reminder of the material's organic origins and in its neat, nest-like form, an echo of nature's weavers.

Tasks

Find out about nests – make sketches of different shapes, sizes, materials and technique used by nature's weavers.

Make a basket or mat! If you do not have willow, use raffia or strips of paper.

Collect samples of twigs, cones, leaves, flowers for a nature table – identify the trees and plants. You could use the collection to make a collage.

Research the history of basket making – find out about its many uses from storing apples to making furniture.

Watch a video of Mandy Coates preparing for her exhibition at Ruthin Craft Centre: http://www.artplayer.tv/video/1360/mandy-coates-baskets

Further Resources

Sara Roberts and Philip Hughes, *Mandy Coates, Baskets,* Ruthin Craft Centre 2016

http://mandycoates.co.uk/
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/

Mandy Coates. photo: Dewi Tannatt Lloyd

W is for Wallpaper exhibition at Ruthin Craft Centre, 2015. photo: Stephen Heaton

Paper

Throughout history, paper has had numerous uses in daily life. Besides being used for writing and painting on, the material could be transformed into boxes, furniture and screens by treating it with lacquer, paint and varnish. Other uses include lanterns, dolls, kites, ceremonial masks, jewellery, umbrellas, mats, blinds and even clothing.

During the 20th century, the widespread availability of western machine-made products led to a decline in hand-made paper but in recent years, the importance of traditional crafts has been recognised. Washi paper in Japan, for example, is considered a cultural asset and its production is encouraged and the traditional methods are protected.

Some ways of processing paper include:

Papier mâché: the phrase literally means ‘chewed paper’ in French. It is a composite material made from paper strips or pulp, sometimes mixed with fabric and bound together with adhesive, such as glue or paste. See: http://www.papiermache.co.uk/

Origami: the traditional Japanese art of folding paper into decorative shapes and forms.

Laser cutting: technology using a high-power focused laser beam to cut materials accurately and without rough edges – particularly useful for intricate designs.

Tasks

Make your own paper by following the instructions at: http://stacienaczelnik.hubpages.com/hub/How-to-Make-Paper---An-Illustrated-Step-by-Step-Guide

Discover Origami! You can find out how to make objects on You Tube. For example, try this paper kimono: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgypycnaE1Y

Think about how paper affects your everyday life. Make a list of all the objects you might use which are made from paper. Some examples: books, comics, wallpaper, cartons, packaging, posters, leaflets etc. Discuss the different textures. How has the paper been treated in order to adapt it for its everyday use?

Find examples of different types of paper and make a collage. Choose different textures and colours for different shapes and objects. Be inventive!

Make your own paper environment! Collect sheets of paper and cardboard and transform your classroom into a paper den, a magical palace or a world of make-believe with paper furniture, lamps, plates etc.

Further Resources

James C. Coltrane, *Paper Sculpture: Over 25 Cute and Quirky Paper Mache Projects,* David & Charles 2008

http://lawncreative.co.uk/rccassets/RCC_Julie_Arkell_Education_Pack.pdf
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cX-Rq0Qoid8

Japanese Style : Sustaining Design exhibition at Ruthin Craft Centre, 2012

Sitting & Looking exhibition at Ruthin Craft Centre, 2010. photo: Dewi Tannatt Lloyd

Work in Focus: Nel Linssen

Coloured Bracelets, 2014

'Finding appropriate technical solutions is an important challenge… the interaction between head and hands'

Based in the Netherlands, Nel Linssen finds inspiration for her necklets and bracelets in the rhythms and structures found in nature, such as spirals, cells, waves and circles. She has found paper to be an ideal material with properties that can be exploited for her craft with the help of basic mathematics and origami techniques such as folding, creasing and tucking. Parametric geometry enables lines and flat planes to be converted into arcs and curves whilst also allowing her to create soft sinuous shapes from a hard-edged geometric pattern. Scoring a sheet plastic coated paper into equally sized squares or rectangles, makes it easier to fold and manipulate. See Nel's tutorial: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yndYUcR0eTs

The soft, tactile qualities of the material and the relationship between object and wearer are important to Nel – the sensuous experience of feeling the paper next to the skin; its weight and movement; the visual effect of colours, repeated shapes and spaces between the folds.

Tasks

Make a bracelet using one of these techniques:
http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Paper-Bracelet

Draw parametric curves and transform straight lines into arcs!

Experiment with paper! Take sheets, strips or scraps of paper and cut, fold, rip, paste, scrunch, snip, roll, score, pleat, curl, punch, staple, glue, shred…what else can you do? Does the thickness or texture of the paper affect your ability to manipulate it?

Create a personalised bracelet using paper that has a poem, printed photos, favourite quotes or your name. Try out different fonts, sizes and colours.

Watch a video of Nel Linssen making a bracelet and copy her techniques.
Can you adapt her process to make your own design?

Further Resources

Wendy Ramshaw and David Watkins, *The Paper Jewellery Collection,* Thames and Hudson, 2000
Denise Brown, *Paper Jewellery – 35 beautiful step-by-step jewellery projects made from paper,* CICO Books, 2012

http://www.nellinssen.nl/
http://www.tastecontemporarycraft.com/nel-linssen/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5f_QsBrX04
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk/archive-exhibitions/

Nel Linssen, *Coloured Bracelets,* 2014

what is craft?

materials | decoration

process | function

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!


cyfranogwch! / get involved!
MATERIALS CORNER
CORNEL DEUNYDDIAU


addurnwch yma
decorate here


siapiau, patrymau a lliwiau gyda ffelt syn gludo
Experiment with shapes, patterns and colours with stick-o

'When people look at craft objects often they don't see the skill and judgement with which the technique is used'

Mary la Trobe-Bateman – Julie Arkell 'Home' exhibition catalogue

Julie Arkell – *Away* exhibition, 2014, *in a quiet space of time it happened… the journey began… on the way to a dance…*
photo: Dewi Tannatt Lloyd

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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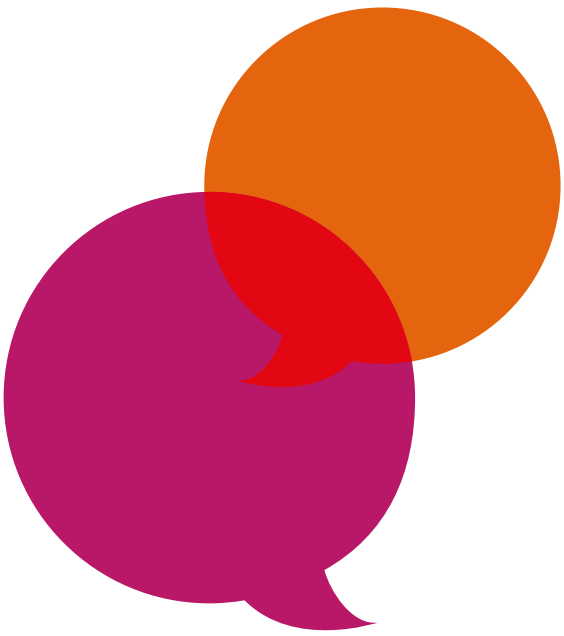

Canolfan Grefft Rhuthun
Y Ganolfan i'r Celfyddydau Cymhwysol

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