

DLA/University of Fine Art, Budapest

**Proposals of the Topics for the DLA Thesis**

**TOPIC 1.**

**Title: A paraphrase of Craft / possibility to introduce the notion of Craft in the contemporary art discourse.**

An ideal society is called Utopia. The quest for perfect unification of art and design reaches its goals in Utopian visions. Yet, the state of Utopia (from the examples imagined and described so far), excludes art as we know it. In the perfect state, the state of Utopia, art is dispersed in - everything.

The reason to pose this topic is my long term inquiry into the interdisciplinary art activities and role-taking, mainly the interference of art and design. My interest in the notion of Craft arose while trying to find a common denominator for the character of the post-disciplinary practices of today's world.

This inquiry started as early as my first contacts with art – from the beginning I was interested in how the art embodies social awareness and what kind of (active) roles it applies in the attempts to speak about the society. Social awareness and commentary became one of the dominant topics in the contemporary art discourse during the late '90s and early 2000s. These primarily included ethically-based critical approaches, and art abandoning the exclusive artist's authorship, soon to reach the trap of criticism of the society, while simultaneously taking part in its constructs. ('community-based art', 'relational art', 'new genre public art' are some of the terms used to describe this kind of art production.)

I wish to propose the notion of Craft in the quest for a different way to undertake social commentary, in order to avoid the 'ethical trap'. In order to achieve this, we must make a paraphrase of Craft. We should approach/understand the notion of Craft not only as a set of techniques shaping the material, but as a way of being within society which also includes immaterial labour/work.

**Related literature:**

Bishop, Claire: *The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents*. online: [danm.ucsc.edu/~lkelley/wiki\\_docs/bishop.pdf](http://danm.ucsc.edu/~lkelley/wiki_docs/bishop.pdf)

Adamson, Glenn: *Thinking through Craft*. Berg, Oxford/New York, 2007

Coles, Alex: *Design and Art*. The MIT Press, London, 2007

## TOPIC 2.

**Title: Re-reading Arts&Crafts. Why are ideas from A&C still relevant today?**  
**The purpose of the anachronism today.**

Why do the ideas of the main protagonists of the Arts&Crafts Movement, dating from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> C., make relevance today? John Ruskin's and William Morris's texts not only revealed their belief in the reciprocity of ethical virtues and aesthetic vision, they also anticipated some of the major shifts that were to happen in the evolution of capitalism and labour during the 20<sup>th</sup> C. Their works projected an ideal vision in which the craftsman and the designer were one, where craftsmanship, art and life were inseparable. Although sounding Utopian, their suggested idealism was in fact anachronistic – it was invigorated with the medievalist longing. “...it was Ruskin's tendency to suggest ways forwards by looking backwards” (Glenn Adamson). But although criticized for being backwards looking or nostalgic, the aesthetic idealism of the A&C Movement was political, searching for social change. Maybe it is the role of anachronism that makes the A&C still interesting today. If we take that “*Contemporary nostalgia is not so much about the past as about vanishing the present*” (Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*), through selective re-examining of the ideas of A&C, we can reconsider our relationship to Modernism, and examine in which aspects the present moment is related to the notions of modernist progress and anti-modern. The ideas of A&C were shaped prior to the modernism, and today we need to 'look back' for a 'fresh' view on our times, still under the influence of modernist ideas and their various mutations.

Revisiting the A&C Movement and the notions of Craft is not a new thing. They were interpreted in various ways since the 19<sup>th</sup> C. (by Constructivism, Bauhaus, Viktor Papanek, Feminism, DIY activism, .etc). It is important to say that not any kind of the revival of Craft can bring satisfying widespread cultural transformation. For example, the notion of Craft was often misused when related to certain interpretations of the meaning of tradition. The Neo-nationalism uses of the rhetoric connected to diverse folk revivals in a chauvinistic way, through the simplified stereotypical expressions of 'homeland' and 'pure nation'. The notion of Craft should also be revealed from the veil of simple, romantic, traditional, rudimentary and non-technological lifestyle. Today Craft is a notion that provides us with a possibility to envision all those overlaps of ideas and –isms, shaped since the time of A&C Movement.

### Related literature:

Ruskin, John: *On the Nature of Gothic (The Stones of Venice)*. In *The Craft Reader*. Berg, Oxford/New York, 2010

Pye, David: *The Nature and art of Workmanship*. Cambridge University Press, 1968

Adamson, Glenn: *The Craft Reader*. Berg, Oxford/New York, 2010

Papanek, Victor: *Design for the real world*. Bantam Books, New York, 1973

Boym, Svetlana: *Budućnost nostalgije (The Future of Nostalgia)*. Geopoetika, Beograd, 2005

### TOPIC 3.

#### Title:

**Making and Thinking / Making and Talking**

**Modern amateurism, open source patents, national representations.**

Craft embodies both Making and Thinking. Accelerating the division between Making and Thinking has marked European society ever since the Industrial Revolution. During Modernism the notion of Craft became a 'problem'. Since then, the issues connected to Craft have, too often, pointed either at some sort of amateurism or, on the other hand, pridefulness related to the (national) self-representation. Craft is often being exploited in order to ascertain traditional values or national identity. And recently, Craft has re-emerged as a way of offering alternative values to those of industrial production and mass consumerism. Actually, Craft is used by everybody, from DIY grass-roots activists, hobbyists, to politicians.

It is hard to write/talk about Craft, because in a large degree it is something beyond words. Craft is not learned and comprehended by body and vision, but with mind as well.

For me Craft is something that is being made in connection to a particular sort of thinking.

However, there are cases when Craft is used as a tool of a different sort of thinking.

In this topic I would like to elaborate how the contemporary (and future) understanding of the notion of Craft is (un)related to modern DIY handicraft amateurism and/or nationalistic representations.

The explanation lies in the appropriation of the process our society has gone through: from acquiring skills to deskilling and 'reskilling'.

#### Related literature:

Morris, William: *Makeshift*. Online: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1894/make.htm>

Margolin, Victor: *The politics of the artificial: Essays on Design and Design Studies*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2002

Metahaven: *"We"*. Ideology of Design, Autonomedia, New York, 2009

Epstein, Michael: *Filozofija tela (Philosophy of the body)*. Geopoetika, Beograd, 2009