



CREATIVE WORKING LIVES

# Craftspeople and Designer Makers in the Contemporary Creative Economy

Susan Luckman · Jane Andrew

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# Creative Working Lives

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*To the makers*

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## Introduction

### **Feature Interview 1.1. Jane Scott, CEO, Craft Victoria (Interviewed June 2015)**

‘Well one of the interesting things, when I started with the organisation [Craft Victoria], at one of my first openings here I just looked around and noticed there are young men here in the 20 to 30 age bracket. And it was like, I’ve worked in the arts my whole life, this is not a demographic that you get in an art gallery, and I started asking around, going “what’s going on?” And the feedback that I was getting from these people was that they’ve grown up on computers, and quite frankly they just want to get their hands dirty. And so there’s this whole new movement of people who resent the fact that they never learnt any skills at school, their parents couldn’t teach them how to do it, it’s like we’ve just been hell bent on removing ourselves from craft practice. And the cooking phenomenon has been one of those things where all of a sudden people are going, “Oh no it’s really [...] fabulous to be able to actually prepare a meal”. And that’s great, but it’s been a bit like that with people [who now] can’t sew a button on a shirt, they’ve got no idea, it’s all been handed over to somebody else, you just don’t do anything [yourself anymore]. There’s all this younger generation going, “Actually I would like to

know how to do stuff". One of the workshops we ran over Christmas [was] on how to make a dress, from cutting out the fabric to hand-stitching the whole garment [...] and there was all of this young group who were desperate to do that workshop because they've never actually picked up needle and cotton. [...] they were desperate to learn how to do that and pick up those skills and the sense of achievement that these guys had that you can actually make your own clothes, who would have thought it! So it's cyclical what people are interested in [...] who would have thought that whittling wood would be back in vogue? There's a whole lot of guys who are doing woodwork again and that's a very interesting edgy area. People just want to actually be a bit more in tune with materials and their environment and taking some pride and not just be in this cash culture, throw away world. And that's a good thing and a big part of that of course is just the attitude towards sustainability which is really prevalent in younger people and they're just taking it through to the objects around them. So I think that's part of the push.'

## CRAFT AND MAKING TODAY: THE RISE OF CRAFT AND DESIGN ACROSS THE GLOBAL NORTH

This book is the culmination of four years of research undertaken across Australia into the experience of running a craft or design craft microenterprise. In many ways it, and the study it is based on, is the logical follow-up to the earlier book *Craft and the Creative Economy* (Luckman 2015a), which sought to capture and understand on a more theoretical level why we were witnessing rising interest across the Global North in craft and the handmade and what is at stake in terms of craft's location within larger debates around what counts in the cultural and creative industries. Within this larger scholarly and practice context, that book also started to ask questions about what kinds of new work patterns and identities were emerging for creative workers—craftspeople in particular—in the face of the perfect storm of increasing casualisation, expectations of self-enterprise, portfolio careers, the rise of social media and internet 'long tail' distribution and desires for 'good work' (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). However, this earlier discussion was based largely on an exploration of the publicly visible

aspects of online self-marketing and performativity and a critical analysis of what was being sold via these sites, namely, lifestyles and idealised identities, as much as products. Drawing upon four years of field research and interviews, this book now puts flesh on those theoretical bones.

While large-scale manufacturing is increasingly moving to cheaper labour markets, making things—physical, material things—is re-gaining popularity. It is also important to acknowledge that this is largely but by no means exclusively a middle-class activity. The same is true of buying unique handmade items. The demand for bespoke, handmade ‘design’ (often used to denote a distinction from ‘twee’ or ‘old-fashioned’) craft is clear in the growing number of designer maker markets across the country and the exponential growth of online marketplaces for the handmade. This book presents findings from a major study of contemporary craftspeople and designer makers in Australia. Across this study, the idea repeatedly arose that people prefer to buy something handmade rather than mass-produced and available from shops around the globe—as an antidote to unsustainable globalisation, as a way to access unique and interesting items or at least in order to support local economies to which they can meaningfully belong (Fig. 1.1). Especially among those with a stronger

**Fig. 1.1** Karen Warren (<https://www.etsy.com/au/shop/tootsiehandmade>) at work. (Photograph: Rosina Possingham Photography)



identification with craft, a recurring motif was that people appreciate things that are not mass-produced and that they can have a more meaningful relationship with. The latter point was clearly supported by their interactions with customers. In an age of fast fashion, craft and well-designed objects are part of a rejection of disposability, of changing everything every six months. So, too, rare or heritage trades are experiencing renewed popularity and profile. They offer a sense of a larger story of making and connection to history, community and family. Similarly, repair collectives and practices are on the rise, alongside increasing emphasis on the second-hand market as a more sustainable form of consumption. Nevertheless, it is again important to acknowledge that the issue of class location is important here; wearing or carrying an item featuring visible repair, for example, may feel less comfortable depending upon your experience of being able to choose, rather than being forced to do so out of necessity.

This research project arose at a time of renewed interest in craft and making. In the context of the Global North, this current renaissance is being referred to as a ‘third wave’ (Luckman 2015a, 18). The first such wave appeared in the late nineteenth century in response to the Industrial Revolution, with the emergence of the British Arts and Crafts Movement. It was something of a counter-aesthetic and economic model, which then gave rise to local manifestations around the English-speaking diaspora and also in the Nordic countries. More recently, we need only look back to the 1960s and 1970s and the heady countercultural hippie days to craft’s last moment of growth and mainstream interest—the second wave. Consequently, paralleling the four years of the project has been the rise of a discussion, especially in the UK but elsewhere as well, on the ongoing value of even referring to ‘craft’ when references to ‘handcrafted’ and the artisanal are at near saturation point, used to sell everything from potato crisps to Christmas (Gibson 2014, 3).

Craft’s third wave has also been accompanied by an explosion in reality television programming’s foregrounding of craft and making practices. Building upon successful (and generally relatively cheap) formats, the different programmes can appeal to a breadth of markets representing everything from—following the broad Ocejó-inspired (2017) definition of ‘craft’—whole-animal butchery to knifemaking, glass blowing, pottery and sewing. A non-exhaustive list of some of the current offerings includes *The Great British Sewing Bee* (UK, BBC 2013–), *The Great Pottery Throw*

*Down* (UK, BBC 2015–2017, Channel 4 2019–), *Blown Away* (USA, Netflix 2019–), *MAKE! Craft Britain* (UK, BBC), *Made in Great Britain* (UK, BBC 2018–), *Bespoke* (Australia, ABC), *Forged in Fire* (USA, History Channel 2015–), *The Butcher* (USA, History Channel 2019–), *The Repair Shop* (UK, BBC 2017–), *Making It* (USA, NBC 2018–), *The Wonderful World of Crafting* (UK, Channel 5 2019–) and *Craft Master* (Ireland, RTE 2011–2013). Today, with many of us more distant than we have ever been from the actual everyday processes of making as a result of the offshoring of manufacturing and growth of white collar or ‘no collar’ digital/office employment, the appeal of watching people produce something from scratch taps into complex deep human drives, as well as contemporary anxieties.

Clearly, even what we know as contemporary craft practice has, in most incarnations, a long (often millennia long) and deep history and will continue well after the current zeitgeist appeal of craft and the handmade wanes. But it is important to acknowledge this larger contemporary context for a number of reasons, not the least of which is because the current popularity leads to market demand and hence, hopefully, greater opportunities for more craftspeople and designer makers to sustain a livelihood through their work, or at least make a decent side or top-up income (Fig. 1.2). Beyond the economic impacts, what is also significant here is the larger cultural context around what might be driving this interest and demand, and what this reveals about contemporary life and values, at least as experienced in Australia and similar industrialised and relatively rich countries. In this way, the findings from this study are relevant beyond just this geographic location. Indeed, while conducting the research, we were fortunate to have the opportunity to speak about it in a number of international contexts. With the exception of a couple of unique points of difference, the experiences of the makers we spoke to, and the wider marketplace of values and aesthetics within which they operate, largely reflect trends across the Global North and it is important to locate the study within this larger setting (the notable exceptions are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander craft and design and the specific economics of distance versus cost of living in Australia, which has impacted the significance of international Etsy-style online marketplaces as a game-changing distribution opportunity).

Recently, a number of books have sought to capture what may be at stake here with the rise of interest in craft, the artisanal and handmaking generally. These titles tend to build upon themes first explored in some of



Fig. 1.2 Kath Inglis (<https://www.kathinglis.com/>) in her studio. (Photograph: Rosina Possingham Photography)

the earlier iconic writing on not only the practice but also the poetics of craft and making. These earlier titles include David Pye's ([1968] 1995) iconic *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* and its articulation of the ongoing implicit value of handmaking skills and deep materials understanding. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's ([1990] 2008) study, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, explores why humans love being in what some may call 'the zone'—that immersive space where the task at hand is both challenging enough to be interesting and rewarding and not so challenging as to be frustrating or unachievable. While not specifically about making, it also informs more recent thinking about immersion in, and as, a rewarding activity. Like those two works, although some of these more recent titles may be written by academics, they are also aimed more widely at an interested and increasingly educated audience who are clearly open to the ideas they present. That there is a broader market for such scholarly work at all is evidence of their timeliness and of a wider acceptance of the reality of, and search for answers to, the malaise with contemporary work and life they variously capture. Clearly then, for many, even beyond the

community of craft and designer makers themselves, part of the answer to at least some of the problems of contemporary life is the idea of getting back to respecting ‘from scratch’ making and doing skills.

But perhaps the book that many first read that captures the essence of these subsequent titles at a practical, embodied level is one that was not written in any kind of scholarly context at all. Quite the contrary. Robert Pirsig’s ([1974] 1982) classic *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* offers an iconic fictionalised auto-ethnographic account of reconnecting with meaning, value and self through a physical journey that is profoundly and positively impacted through the self-sufficiency of being able to (re)build and repair his own means of transportation—his older-style and thus ‘knowable’ motor bike. For Pirsig’s protagonist, the privatised, corporate landscape of large-scale industrial production was the closed-off, de-humanising and de-skilling nemesis of meaning and quality, blocking people increasingly from the satisfaction that comes from do-it-yourself making. As he writes:

That attitude is not hard to come to. You go through a heavy industrial area of a large city and there it all is, the technology. In front of it are high barbed-wire fences, locked gates, signs saying NO TRESPASSING, and beyond, through sooty air, you see ugly strange shapes of metal and brick whose purpose is unknown and whose masters you will never see. What it’s for you don’t know, and why it’s there, there’s no one to tell, and so all you can feel is alienated, estranged, as though you didn’t belong there. Who owns and understands this doesn’t want you around. All this technology has somehow made you a stranger in your own land. Its very shape and appearance and mysteriousness say, ‘Get out.’ You know there’s an explanation for all this somewhere and what it’s doing undoubtedly serves mankind in some indirect way but that isn’t what you see. What you see is the NO TRESPASSING, KEEP OUT signs and not anything serving people but little people, like ants, serving these strange, incomprehensible shapes. And you think, even if I were a part of this, even if I were not a stranger, I would be just another ant serving the shapes. ([1974] 1982, 15)

It is salutary to revisit this writing in the context of current concerns and anxieties around the impact of digital technologies. The production of the desirable technological gadgets most of us across the Global North and beyond take for granted today has been sent offshore to places such as China, where the exploitation of low-skilled labour and the environmental and human impacts of production are not so easily ‘happened upon’ by us.<sup>1</sup>

However, the company headquarters ('campuses') that dominate locations such as Silicon Valley have much the same kind of presence, 'whose purpose is unknown and whose masters you will never see' (Pirsig ([1974] 1982, 15). Certainly, the feelings of alienation and estrangement, of feeling like an 'ant' serving some larger, invisible master, remain powerful discourses reflecting the working lives of many people, even in the post-Fordist era. Today this situation is magnified through the incredibly speedy and profound changes in both our working and wider lives that have been brought by digital technologies over the past few decades. Today we still need cultural analysis and reflection upon the ways in which 'All this technology has somehow made you a stranger in your own land', even despite digital technology's strong early links to the US West Coast hippy dropout culture of the Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link (WELL).<sup>2</sup> In this context it is not surprising that participatory activities such as classes and making retreats are a growing part of the contemporary craft consumer landscape and an important additional income-generating activity for many contemporary craftspeople and designer makers. That the black and white boxes that are our smart phones, computers and other gadgets are by design and warranty restrictions made to be untinkerable, and that the inner workings are off limits and unknowable to us, is salient here. In post-industrial societies, so much of what is now central to our daily lives effectively possesses its own 'NO TRESPASSING, KEEP OUT' warning. Is it any wonder then that so many people—makers and consumers both—are seeking to reconnect with craft and making?

Arguably, the first book of the more contemporary moment to speak to the current zeitgeist was Richard Sennett's (2008) *The Craftsman*. Here, Sennett takes up Pye's concerns with the relationship between quantity and quality, between uniformity and irregularity. He situates the writings of leading British Arts and Crafts Movement thinker John Ruskin in the context of the relatively new challenge for the Victorians of an abundance of material goods, which itself led to a challenge that remains all too pressing today: 'waste' (to be discussed in greater length in Chap. 7). Referring to the wasteful practice of replacing ('upgrading') older items that are still operating as designed, such as cars and computers, Sennett (2008) writes:

One explanation for such waste is that consumers buy the potential power of new objects rather than power they actually use; the new automobile can speed a hundred miles per hour, even if though the driver is usually stuck in

traffic. Another explanation of modern waste is that consumers are more aroused by anticipation than by operation; getting the latest thing is more important than then making durable use of it. Either way, being able so easily to dispose of things desensitises us to the actual objects we hold in hand. (110)

But he is more optimistic about the potential of the handmade, hand-crafted object that certainly offers the maker, but even the purchaser, a particular ‘potential power’. Aspects of what this might be emerge in his later discussion of the writings of American sociologist Thorstein Veblen, some of whose key works, he notes, started being released just after Ruskin’s death. He recounts Veblen’s ‘characteristically ornate prose’: ‘The visible imperfections of hand-wrought goods, being honorific, are accounted for marks of superiority, of serviceability, or both’ (Veblen quoted in Sennett 2008, 117). He paraphrases a further insight of Veblen’s that would ring true for many for the makers we interviewed for this project: ‘The good craftsman is a poor salesman, absorbed in doing something well, unable to explain the value of what he or she is doing’ (Sennett 2008, 117). In this age of social media the ongoing challenges of needing to market not only what one does and produces but also one’s very self are aspects of the contemporary craft and designer maker experience that we will be exploring in greater detail in Chap. 8.

Pirsig’s evocation of being able in some way to control or be master of one’s own destiny through having the tools and skills necessary to meaningfully and impactfully interact with one’s own immediate environment and the objects needed to sustain life in it clearly resonates with the current wider cultural appeal of craft as a verb as well as a noun, even if it is not obviously about what we may see as capital ‘C’ craft. It also connects to another key contemporary text, Richard Ocejo’s *Masters of Craft: Old Jobs in the New Urban Economy* (2017). A wider and similarly male-dominated study of ‘craft’ practices in New York, it explores the contemporary urban landscape of cocktail bartenders, craft distilleries, men’s barbers and whole-animal butchers that are all themselves experiencing significant growth as part of the wider trend towards demand for the artisanal. This includes both its final products and—interestingly and more profoundly—the rekindling of interest in and knowledge about the required skills and processes underpinning such making. Indeed, a particularly valuable line of discussion in his book concerns how, in an environment where skilled manual knowledge around many kinds of craft

practices is becoming scarcer but their products increasingly valued, trades previously identified largely as male working-class employment options are being recast as desirable middle-class career trajectories:

Today's expanded service sector has not just segmented in terms of 'upper' and 'lower' tiers, with high-skilled knowledge-based jobs in one and unskilled manual labor-based jobs in the other. The picture is more complicated. Good versions of typically low-status, manual jobs also exist in small segments, or niches, within service and manufacturing industries. The jobs in this book have been recoded as 'cool,' creative ones, with opportunities for young workers to shape tastes, innovate, and achieve higher status. They seek out these jobs as careers instead of other jobs in the new economy with higher profiles. For them, these jobs are vocations, or callings, providing meaning through materially oriented, craft-based manual labor, in front of knowing peers and an accepting public. (Ocejo 2017, 18)

All these activities occur and derive their value within a growing wider field of what Ocejo refers to as an 'artisan economy' of small-scale manufacturing; the businesses 'in the artisan economy, such as craft brewers, coffee roasters, and knitters, are based on shared understandings of quality, authenticity, and the importance of "localness"' (Ocejo 2017, 20).

The evocative attraction and rewards of 'working with one's hands' are also at the heart of Matthew Crawford's 2009 book *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work*. (The 2011 European edition was released in the UK under the title *The Case for Working with Your Hands, Or, Why Office Work Is Bad for Us and Fixing Things Feels Good*.) With both editions notably but in different ways featuring a motorcycle on the cover, echoing Pirsig's earlier book (Crawford takes pride in being a practising mechanic as well as philosopher) Crawford situates a rekindling of interest in making practices as a form of frugality. This emphasis occurs partly because he was writing in the early days of the Global Financial Crisis, but as he goes on to make clear, there is much more to this rise in interest at this time in history than just making do in hard times:

Frugality may be only a thin economic rationalization for a movement that really answers to a deeper need: We want to feel that our world is intelligible, so we can be responsible for it. *This seems to require that the provenance of our things be brought closer to home*. Many people are trying to recover a field of vision that is basically human in scale, and extricate themselves from dependence on the obscure forces of a global economy. (8, emphasis added)

It is in access to information about making processes that the complicated enabling status of digital technology in all of this starts to reveal itself; the current moment of widespread interest in and access to analogue making processes is profoundly enabled by digital technology. In *Making Is Connecting*, David Gauntlett (2011) valuably connects the upsurge of interest in analogue making to the easier availability of ‘how-to’ instructional materials and information-sharing and problem-solving communities made possible by digital communication. He attributes the shift from a “sit back and be told” culture towards more of a “making and doing” culture’ to the growth of Web 2.0 technologies (8). This is important, for it acknowledges that the digital is far from being material making’s ‘other’. Though handmaking may be valued for the ways in which it embodies non-digital skills and the values of traditional craftsmanship, it is nonetheless now completely enmeshed with the potentialities of the digital at virtually all levels of production and consumption. One of the more notable findings emerging from this study was the degree to which even professional makers upskill, diversify their practice and/or refresh their techniques through online advice and instruction, rather than looking to formal education or face-to-face instruction. This finding offers opportunities but also challenges to traditional providers of such education and support. It also leads to potentially greater democratisation of access to craft and design expertise, with the capacity to be able to commit to formal study provided by a public or private education provider less of an essential prerequisite for entry into many kinds of making. On many levels, this is clearly a good thing. But as those who operate in it know and as we shall see across the pages of this book, the contemporary craft and designer maker market is an increasingly crowded one, rendering making a sustainable income from creative practice more and more challenging.

## CRAFTING SELVES TODAY: THE PROJECT AND DATA INFORMING THIS BOOK

### *The Project*

The ‘Promoting the Making Self in the Creative Micro-economy (Crafting Self)’ research was funded through the Australian Research Council’s Discovery Project funding scheme (project number DP150100485). Focused on the contemporary craft and designer maker micro-economy, the core focus of the project was to explore the changing nature of



**Fig. 1.3** Pip Kruger (<http://www.pipkruger.com/>) and friend folding tea towels for sale. (Photograph: Rosina Possingham Photography)

contemporary creative work. Given the strong presence of women in the craft and design craft sector, the project sought explicitly to offer a feminist analysis of how the growth of entrepreneurial modes of self-employment is experienced by different creative workers, including notably how growing numbers of primary caregivers negotiate what is often home-based paid work alongside their unpaid responsibilities. In this way, we sought to contribute to a growing body of valuable feminist social scientific scholarship into creative work that takes up McRobbie's (2016) call for us to 're-think the sociology of employment to engage more fully with entrepreneurial culture and with the self-employment ethos now a necessity for survival' (4) (Fig. 1.3).

The primary aim of the project was to determine how online distribution is changing the environment for operating a creative microenterprise and, with it, the larger relationship between public and private spheres. A key research question was: what are the 'self-making' skills required to succeed in this competitive environment? Specifically, the research sought to:

- identify the attitudes, knowledge and skills required to develop and run a sustainable creative microenterprise, including the acquisition of making/production skills, business skills and acumen, personal capacities and decision-making around self-marketing;
- analyse the spatial and temporal negotiations necessary to run an online creative microenterprise, including the ways in which divisions of labour are gendered; and
- examine how the contemporary creative economy contributes to growing ethics-based microeconomic consumer and producer relationships that privilege small-scale production, environmentally sustainable making practices and the idea of buying direct from the maker.

Although people who identified as craft practitioners were a core focus of the project, we also chose to include self-identified designer makers in the study in order to build a picture of how some people seek to grow their making business. Certainly, ‘designer maker’ is a term increasingly employed in the contemporary craft and design marketplace, especially among those looking to make a full-time living from their practice. It marks those makers who may undertake original design and prototyping themselves, but who, in order to scale-up their production in ways not always possible for a solo hand maker, outsource some or all subsequent aspects of production to other makers or machine-assisted manufacturing processes. In reality, as we have written in other contexts (e.g. Luckman 2018), while we did find and speak with a number of designer makers as part of the study and some of their stories will be featured here, we definitely encountered more artists, craftspeople and makers who were just as happy not to grow their business or practice ‘too big’ for a number of personal and professional reasons. These included:

- a lack of identification with the idea of entrepreneurialism, its promotional requirements and its assumptions that all economic growth is good;
- the desire to focus on handmaking and the natural limits to business growth this imposes, as part of maintaining what, for them, is a healthy work–life balance where running a creative business does not become overwhelming;

- stage of life-related reasons for starting a creative business, such as taking up or resuming creative work as part of retirement planning or as part of a larger lifestyle ‘downshifting’ into artisanal work;
- a commitment to quality handmaking as an environmentally sympathetic response to a world of ‘too much stuff’ and climate crisis; and
- making as doing ‘what they love’, and what they love is not running a business—many makers are still fundamentally artists at heart (see Luckman (2018)).

As is already evident, in this project it was important to recognise that not all handmade micro-entrepreneurs are at the same stage of their career or have the same origin story. Therefore, the qualitative, mixed-methods approach underpinning the project consisted of three parallel data collection activities: semi-structured interviews with established makers; an interview monitoring arts, design and craft graduates each year for three years, as they sought to establish their making careers; and a historical overview of the support mechanisms available to Australian handmade producers. Across the four years of the project, we undertook one-off interviews with 20 peak body and industry organisations and 81 established makers, and followed the progress of an initial 32 emerging makers as they sought to establish their careers (32 interviews in Year 1, 27 follow-up interviews in Year 2 and 19 follow-up interviews in Year 3—a total of 70 interviews).<sup>3</sup> These makers represent a range of craft practices (see Table 1.1) and a range of ages (see Tables 1.2 and 1.3). The study was explicitly national, and we spoke to makers and peak organisations in every state and territory (Fig. 1.4).

A number of sampling approaches were employed. Underpinning the selection criteria was the need to capture as large a diversity of people and experience as possible, across geography (urban, suburban, regional, rural, remote); practice and business model; age; race and ethnicity; and gender. We make no claims that the sample was completely representative, but in its scale and scope, it does capture an incredible variety of stories and knowledge. Indeed, all up, the 179 professionally transcribed interviews have generated more than 150,000 words, which has been both a boon and, well, certainly not a curse, but definitely a challenge in writing this book as there are so many valuable stories to tell and so much richness of experience to share. Not all of it is positive; the challenges of running a creative business were rarely far from the surface for even the seemingly most successful maker. Balancing work and other aspects of life, especially

**Table 1.1** Area or object of making practice of interviewees (established and emerging makers)

<i>Craft area</i>	<i>No. of makers</i>
Glass	16
Ceramics	15
Unassigned/mixed practice	15
Jewellery	14
Metalsmith	12
Furniture design	11
Textiles	9
Design	5
Woodwork	5
Leatherwares	5
Shoemaker	4
Textiles—jewellery	2
Papermaking	1
Hand-painted accessories	1
Textile upcycled accessories	1
Upcycled accessories	1
Soft toys	1
Fibre artist	1
Graphic design	1
Woodturning (pens)	1
Pyrography	1
Furniture/interior design	1
Gallerist/jewellery/glass	1
Jewellery and object design	1
Textiles	1
Designer	1
Furniture and lighting design	1
Shoemaker and leatherwares	1
Knifemaker	1
Design and illustration	1
Illustration	1
Yarn worker	1
Glass lampworking	1
Dog collars	1
Design and ceramics	1
Tinsmith	1
Machine embroidery	1
Flamework beads	1
Milliner	1
Weaving	1
Textiles—knitting	1

**Table 1.2** Age range of established maker research participants

<i>Age range</i>	<i>No. of makers</i>
25–29	1
30–34	6
35–39	9
40–44	14
45–50	14
50–54	7
55–60	8
60–64	4
65–70	2
Unassigned	16

**Table 1.3** Age range of emerging maker research participants (as of last interview)

20–24	19
25–29	10
30–34	13
35–39	11
40–44	3
45–49	0
50–54	0
55–59	2
60–64	3

giving the time people wanted to children and partners, as well as the frequent financial and other impositions upon family necessary to get a creative business up and running, are real challenges facing most makers. But across these pages, there is also much joy, fulfilment and pride in work well done.

We identified potential emerging maker participants through 2014 graduate exhibition catalogues from art, design and craft higher education programmes around the country. These were sourced either from publicly accessible sections of university websites or directly from the university involved, following disclosure of how they were to be used. Where graduates provided contact details as a part of an exhibition catalogue, these details were included in our database. Where graduates had not provided this information, contact details were obtained through a public internet search using Google. Initially, we mistakenly presumed that most of the



**Fig. 1.4** Bella Head (<http://bellatextiles.com.au/>) at her loom. (Photograph: Rosina Possingham Photography)

recent graduates would be young, but what was immediately striking was how many craft returners there were, that is, people returning to their love of making in mid-life, having had other jobs and/or brought up children. Established makers (generally those with five years or more of making and selling experience) were identified on peak organisation websites or through dialogue with them, via Etsy and other online retail outlets (including sometimes their own websites), as stall holders in design craft markets, or through snowball recommendation by previous interviewees. They were then cold-called. Through the peak body and industry organisations, we approached all the Australian Craft and Design Centre (ACDC) members across Australia, as well as other iconic craft and design organisations such as the JamFactory, Sturt, Australian Tapestry Workshop and Tjanpi Desert Weavers. We also sought to include representative examples of some of the newer retail designer maker and craft market operators, such as Bowerbird and Finders Keepers.

In presenting this interview material we have honoured the approved Human Research Ethics protocols and consents the project was conducted

under. Given the personal nature of much of the discussion, we have erred further on the side of caution and sought to de-identify participants when discussing what we as fellow human beings see as potentially sensitive content, even where permission to identify the speaker was granted as part of the interview process. We hope that this is accepted by our incredibly valued participants in the spirit in which it was done, namely, by continually asking ourselves the question, ‘Would we be comfortable having this quoted and discussed academically in our name?’ One of the key reasons we sought to trace graduates along their path to creative employment was to capture the full breadth of experience. Unfortunately, as we know, this includes moments of failure as well as success. Although rich and unique insights are available from talking to established makers who are well into their journey and still on it, they are not always the full picture, and this approach certainly does not capture the experiences of people who have had to give up their dreams, at least for the time being. But many tensions and personal crises were revealed even among the established maker cohort, hence the decision, in whole sections of this book, to anonymise the speakers.

*Race, Ethnicity and the Contemporary Craft and Designer Maker Sector in Australia*

The project sought to involve as wide a cross-section of the Australian craft and designer maker community as possible. Nevertheless, it largely ended up replicating the racial profile of the scene which, as commented upon elsewhere both in Australia (Luckman 2015a) and in other national contexts (e.g. the USA [Dawkins 2011] and UK [Patel 2019]), is dominated primarily by people from Anglo-European origins. Despite the social and environmental awareness underpinning contemporary craft cultures, the contemporary craft and designer maker economy in particular remains marked by its whiteness. For example, a 2012 report into the UK commercial craft sector found that it was markedly unrepresentative of the contemporary national racial and ethnic population mix, with 93.4 per cent of its respondents identifying as white, while only 3.5 per cent ‘were from black, Asian, mixed and Other backgrounds’ (BOP Consulting 2012, 7). While makers of colour are highly visible in craft microenterprise emerging out of foreign aid, microcredit and other strategies for economic sustainability, within the Global North across all levels of the craft and designer maker continuum, the picture of making is predominately a white

one. This is true, too, not only of the demographics of the makers but also of a majority of the buyers and thus the very aesthetics of the goods.

However, this is not to dismiss or erase the presence of makers of colour in the Australian craft and design craft sector. It is important to acknowledge that in the making stories of those from beyond Anglo-European origins, connections to family and cultural histories of making (e.g. of ceramics in China) remain significant. So, too, and connected to this is the role of family endorsement of the choice to pursue a creative career. However, an element of rebellion against familial cultural expectations was also present, in particular among those recent graduates who had come to Australia to pursue university study and found themselves still living in Australia and away from direct family influence.

### *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Craft and Designer Making*

Alas, although the project explicitly set out to be truly national and to represent a mix of urban, regional and remote experience, none of the makers interviewed were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background. This is not to say we did not approach more makers and organisations about possible involvement, but for a mixture of reasons, as can be seen in Table 1.4, none of the makers we spoke to identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. We did interview Michelle Young, manager at Tjanpi Desert Weavers, an enterprise of the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council, and we drove the beautiful stretch over 100 kilometres west from Alice Springs to Hermannsburg to speak with the Hermannsburg Potters, but that interview could not proceed because of a bereavement in the wider community. In their different ways, both these organisations speak to the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander craft and designer making at present. Makers from both groups are represented in the collections and exhibitions of some of the country's most iconic arts and cultural institutions, while work by other makers from the groups is available for sale in the gift shop of these same establishments. The scaling-up across a range of gallery-centred as well as commercial practice possibilities through these mostly community-run art centres is a classic crafts studio model that can meld fairly seamlessly with the art centre's social enterprise focus. For Tjanpi Desert Weavers, this even extends to being able to provide financial support in return for work for women who, for various reasons, find themselves in town (Alice

**Table 1.4** Established and emerging maker responses to ‘ethnicity (self-described)’

Australian	64
Unassigned	22
Caucasian	9
Anglo-Australian	6
Anglo-Saxon	5
Pakeha	4
Chinese	4
Australian Dutch parents	3
English	3
Chinese Australian	2
Italian	2
New Zealand	2
South African	1
German	1
Asian Indian	1
British	1
Swedish	1
Australian Filipino	1
Mixed part Chinese	1
Jewish Australian	1
Jewish Australian/Indian/Israeli	1
English Irish	1
Polish	1
Australian-born Brazilian Irish	1
White	1
Scottish Australian	1
Australian South African	1
European Australian	1

Springs) and want to get back to country. Some of the works that arrive in the Alice Springs office are not yet ready for retail sale in the urban coastal centres. Additional employment can be provided to women who can work to refine these items to prepare them for sale, saving them from having to find other means to make their way home.

It is in this sector, too, that the decentralised geographies of international online craft and design retail are being realised more fully in Australia via online sales, including on sites such as Etsy. An extension of the art centre model for creative production in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities has enabled artists to make a living while staying on their (frequently remote) country. In our project we have identified more than 50 social enterprise art centres with at least some engagement with

craft and design. For example, in the Central Desert there are Ernabella Arts, Hermannsburg Potters—Aranda Artists of Central Australia, Yarrenyty Arltene Artists and Maruku Arts. The Tiwi Islands of Northern Australia has Manupi Arts, Bima Wear and Tiwi Arts. In Arnhem Land, also in Northern Australia, there are Maningrida Arts & Culture, Elcho Island Arts, Bula'bula Arts and Bábbarra Women's Centre. In the Kimberley Region of North West Australia, there are Waringarri Aboriginal Arts and Nagula Jarndu (Saltwater Woman) Design. In Torres Strait, North-eastern Australia, there are the Gab Titui Cultural Centre and Moa Arts. Working across a spectrum of creative practice and price points, what unites this work is that it is globally unique. Printing unique local designs onto fabric which is sold either as raw fabric or sewn into clothing, accessories or household items is the focus of a number of these organisations and this kind of item has the additional advantage of being relatively light-weight and easy to post. The expenses associated with distance in this context become not only something to be expected but indeed part of the whole experience of purchasing work from these makers, based as they are in their own unique geographies, which are significant to the product. Similarly, whether it be in the maker's stories that they represent, the design elements employed, or the actual materials used in their production, these products tell a distinct story of place and send this out to the world.

### *Chapter Overview*

In many ways, *Craftspeople and Designer Makers in the Contemporary Creative Economy* is the companion book to the final public report on the project, released in early 2019: *Crafting Self: Promoting the Making Self in the Creative Micro-economy* (Luckman et al. 2019). As a result of our own sectoral, institutional and funding requirements, this is written as an academic book, but one we sincerely hope remains usefully accessible to a wider audience. It is able to offer more depth and nuance to the findings introduced in the *Crafting Self* report, having the space, especially, to present a lot more of the words of practitioners themselves. For this reason, a feature of this book is the extended interview excerpts that elaborate the discussion through the voices of participating makers and other key sector stakeholders themselves.

Following this introductory chapter, Chaps. 1 and 2 will explore the motivations and inspirations, as well as stage of life-related opportunities

behind why people seek to pursue a making-based creative career or small business. It considers the importance of early positive exposure to working with one's hands (including at school), as well as the value systems giving rise to increased support for small-scale artisanal economies today. Chapter 3 will provide a brief historical overview of the models of training available to support skills development for the applied arts in Australia, from colonial cottage industries to the educational experiences of the contemporary craftspeople and designer makers who participated in this study. Chapter 4 examines how our research participants viewed, described, structured and funded their making enterprise. Building on this, Chap. 5 explores attitudes towards handmaking versus other forms of production, including outsourcing and the use of digital tools.

Chapter 6 explores the marketplace for craft and designer maker goods sold in Australia; where are people selling and how, and what does this reveal about contemporary socio-economic relationships? Chapter 7 focuses on maker's concerns over the impact of their practice on the environment and thus the strategies they put in place to minimise this. It looks at upcycling and other materials supply chains that aim to minimise waste, as well as how crafted items and skills have a role to play in minimising the amount of consumption people potentially engage in—quality not quantity and the importance of repair. The final chapter acknowledges the game changing role of the internet, and social media in particular, in broadly enabling the growth not just in Australia but elsewhere of the craft and designer maker sector. Specifically, in the Australian context, it acknowledges the role of Instagram as a key communicative and marketing platform and the more ambiguous status of Etsy, as well as the additional labour burden online marketing and networking places on craftspeople and designer makers. It finishes on a final note acknowledging, but also problematising, the ongoing role of locality-based support organisations in the digital age.

*Craftspeople and Designer Makers in the Contemporary Creative Economy* is broad but also deep. This said, there may be some topics we have excluded or touched upon only lightly because we have written on them previously in a number of other scholarly outputs (see, e.g., Luckman 2020a, b, in print, 2013, 2015a, b, 2018; Luckman and Andrew 2018a, b, 2019). But in the chapters to follow, we seek to outline key findings, acknowledge the divergent experiences and the breadth of craft and designer maker creative enterprise nationally and situate them in terms of

the local contexts and international trends and forces that variously inflect the Australian making landscape.

## NOTES

1. In some instances this transfer of production to lower-cost manufacturing sites has enabled companies struggling to keep pace in the local manufacturing environment to emulate the artisanal aesthetic and churn out high-volume production of the utilitarian products we purchase for homeware retail chains. This has increased competition for craft-based microenterprises at a time when the discretionary spending of economies and individuals is limited.
2. The Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link (the WELL), which is still active, was the first online virtual community. It emerged in 1985 in the very early days of the expansion of the internet out of the countercultural community mobilised around the *Whole Earth Catalog* (WEC) off-line magazine and product catalogue, among other projects.
3. See Appendix 1 for a full list of all research participants who consented to being identified as contributing to the project.

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## CHAPTER 2

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# Meaningful Making in the Contemporary Creative Economy

Poorer perhaps financially, but richer emotionally. (Female, ceramics, established maker, November 2016)

And I wanted to make. I think I've always said to myself, I was, if [I could] make enough money from [my] art to live I'll be content. That's just my benchmark. I don't need to be world famous or anything, I just need to make a living doing the things that I love doing. (Clare Poppi, jewellery, established maker, September 2016)

This chapter introduces the people and their stories that inform this book, including the reasons behind their choice to pursue craft or design, despite the frequently precarious incomes to be made. One of the strongest findings to emerge in this study is the centrality of early exposures to making to later comfort with and motivation to give craft and design 'a go'. How the makers connect their current identities to formative earlier familial and educational experiences is explored. These findings are then situated analytically within critical scholarship on the values of crafts-based practice today as they sit alongside the rise of neoliberal individualised work practices, including the normalisation of self-employment and microenterprise, with all the associated personal financial risk-taking this entails.

## WHO ARE AUSTRALIA'S CONTEMPORARY CRAFTSPEOPLE AND DESIGNER MAKERS AND WHY DO THEY MAKE?

From the outset, an important part of the research project was concerned with capturing the key moment when makers sought to make the move into professional practice. There were a number of reasons for this. Certainly, it is recognised that further research into the graduate career outcomes of arts and humanities graduates is important and essential (Cunningham and Bridgstock 2012; Bridgstock and Cunningham, 2016; Brook, 2016a, b), especially as more and more students enrol in creative degrees, and universities market these attractive offerings heavily as a gateway into creative industries employment. A significant part of our concern is to generate knowledge to inform educational approaches better able to support ongoing graduate wellbeing, given that arts labour markets continue to experience growth despite persistently low and often declining levels of sustainable employment.

The multi-year Australian Research Council funding enabled us to attempt to capture graduates' early experience of establishing themselves in creative work through a three-year longitudinal study of a cohort of creative graduates in New South Wales (5), Queensland (2), South Australia (11), Tasmania (3), Victoria (7) and the Australian Capital Territory (5). As stated in Chap. 1, before being asked to participate in the study, the members of this cohort were identified as graduating students from publicly accessible graduate exhibition marketing materials and catalogues. This research activity, which builds upon and adds depth to existing Graduate Destination Survey data, was designed to identify the current education, training and professional development needs of Australian creative producers within the larger context of the need for lifelong learning in a rapidly changing economic and social landscape. By undertaking semi-structured interviews with graduates every year for three years, the project was able to capture some of the complex decision-making underpinning this critical moment in professional development. Many of these findings, as well as their repercussions for education, training and practitioner support, inform Chaps. 3 and 4 of this book.

Within our cohort of research participants, both emerging and established, we found a wide variety of interests, areas of practice, life and work experiences and career development motivations (see Tables 1.1–1.3 in Chap. 1 for a summary of participant age ranges and areas of practice). But across the wide, rich and varied personal stories people shared with us

through the four years of this nationwide study, two specific trends clearly emerged. Firstly, although making a decent income to support themselves and their families or to at least break even on the making itself was a logical incentive to pursue their creative business or self-employment, few if any interviewees indicated that they were motivated by an entrepreneurial desire to ‘get rich’ or ‘make it’. Rather, they provided a number of reasons for pursuing creative practice. Making money was certainly a part of the stimulus, but not the main one. Although (enough) money is obviously important, people’s stated emphasis was much more upon making ‘enough to get by’.

It is important to acknowledge that this was not infrequently expressed within the context of the interviewee being able to contribute to household income while not bearing the burden of being the main breadwinner; this was especially the case for those taking up or returning to craft or designer maker careers after having children. But as we have written elsewhere (Luckman 2018), across a range of life experiences respondents were more likely to refer to not wanting to get ‘too big’ for fear of losing contact with the actual making that they love. Becoming too large a business came with expectations that making would have to give way to management and administration and associated concerns over the responsibilities to others entailed in becoming an employer on a significant scale. Therefore, what strongly came through from our interviews was the persistence of what we refer to as the ‘more than capitalism’ values of arts and creative practice: ‘doing what you love’, a belief in producing art as a worthy activity unto itself, a commitment to ethical production and consumption as part of an ‘intentional economy’ that seeks to use its business practices to address social and environmental problems (Banks 2007; Gibson-Graham 2006) and simple human desires for ‘good work’, with preferably a degree of security (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011).

Secondly, one of the standout findings from the research was how often people connected their current interest in making to positive exposure at an early and impressionable age. An overwhelming number of our research participants strongly associated childhood proximity to the tools and processes of making with inspiring them either to pursue craft or design practice or—at the very least—to make it possible through a lack of fear around ‘giving it a go’. Often this early familiarity with making arose through either the work or recreational practice of family members. Early educational experiences were likewise formative for many, reinforcing the ongoing importance of arts, crafts and design within the K–12 curriculum in

any country that aspires to nurture a workforce that can make things. In this way, the creative personal journeys articulated by our Australian research participants mirror findings elsewhere that childhood experience is an important part of the ways creative workers construct their personal and professional identities and map a continuity of personal narrative across what otherwise is most likely a much more complex life story (McRobbie 2016, 79; Taylor and Littleton 2016). Taylor and Littleton (2016) moreover interpret these retrospective accounts as a form of validation for a claim to be a creative person. For this reason, much of the discussion in this chapter explores how a larger sense of history and identity informs and motivates the contemporary craft and designer maker practice of interviewees.

The next section of the chapter offers a little more demographic background to the research study sample within the larger context of research into the career trajectories of craft practitioners across the Global North. This is followed by a deeper drilling down into how the makers we spoke to connect their current identities to formative earlier familial and educational experiences. Finally, the study is situated analytically within critical scholarship on the values of crafts-based practice today as they sit alongside the rise of neoliberal individualised work practices, including the normalisation of self-employment and microenterprise, with all the associated personal financial risk-taking this entails.

### *Makers: 'Old' and New*

In this study of who are Australia's craftspeople and designer makers and what motivates them, it was striking how many of the recent graduates were not the 20-something straight from school university graduates we naively presumed they would be. Although school leavers (give or take a 'gap' year) undoubtedly still make up the majority of undergraduate enrolments in arts, craft and design degrees, a sizeable minority of students in undergraduate and (notably) honours and graduate diploma degrees were middle-aged or older. Even acknowledging that mature graduates may be more willing to participate in a research study for a number of personal and cultural reasons, their strong presence in our 'I-Up' (first year) cohort was notable for what it says about the very real challenges of building and maintaining a sustainable creative career and how this is gendered (both to the advantage and disadvantage of women as mothers). It also speaks profoundly to the powerful attraction of making and how this desire can persist over decades.

Given this demographic spread, in exploring the complex ways craft and designer maker careers can unfold across people's lifetimes, it is useful to reflect on the profiles of practitioners developed in the report, *Craft in an Age of Change* (BOP Consulting 2012), commissioned by the Crafts Council, Creative Scotland, the Arts Council of Wales and Craft Northern Ireland. Four key pathways into professional craft practice were identified:

- *Craft careerists*: committed to the idea of craft as a career, they move to start their businesses shortly after finishing their first (or second) degrees in craft-related subjects.
- *Artisans*: do not have academic degrees in the subject but nevertheless have made craft their first career.
- *Career changers*: begin their working lives in other careers before taking up craft as a profession, often in mid-life.
- *Returners*: makers who trained in art, craft or design, but who followed another career path before 'returning' to craft later on. (p. 5)

This breakdown is highly valuable in examining Australia's craft and designer maker career paths, and each of these categories of maker is certainly reflected in our study, pointing to the complex make-up of the Australian craft and designer maker community and its countless individual, social, cultural, political and economic driving forces.

In reflecting on the participant stories we heard and acknowledging the particularly strong presence of clearly identifiable returners among the 1-Up cohort of makers, what is notable is how few clearly defined craft careerists or even artisans were present, even among the more established makers. This is not to say they were not present, and indeed, many established makers expressed the generational sense that it had once 'been easier', with more arts grant funding. Nonetheless, even among those respondents who have clearly gone on to have outstanding creative careers, the realities of getting to this point are never as straightforward as professional public promotional biographies may indicate. This is an incredibly important point for emerging and mid-career makers to be aware of as they pull together the various strands of their portfolio careers, all the while seeking to build the proportion of time they can justify dedicating to the creative practice side of things. If the findings from our study are any indication of wider trends, not moving directly into full-time creative employment can be seen as a strategic move towards that goal, rather than the end of one's creative dreams (see Taylor and Luckman (2020b)). Teaching creative practice, especially, has long been a key way in which craftspeople and

designers seek to supplement their creative incomes and stay close to their practice. However, in this age of online marketing and personal branding (including presenting a ‘good’ life story), the ‘downs’ of even successful careers can become lost in the requisite positivity of focusing on the ‘ups’. These kinds of issues will all be explored in much further detail across this book, but in this chapter, for the purposes of exploring who Australia’s craft makers are and what motivates them, we draw upon the rich corpus of interview material the project collected to get a sense of the lived complexities of pursuing a creative career. This includes how issues of stage of life and moving between jobs and careers (often while seeking to build one’s own business) emerge in our study as almost the standard career trajectory for Australia’s craftspeople and designer makers, though undoubtedly appearing more widely as a new normal in the contemporary workplace (see Taylor and Luckman eds. (2018)). This is exemplified by the many people best identified as career changers and returners.

### *Career Changers*

#### **Feature Interview 2.1. Female, Jewellery, Established Maker (Interviewed November 2016)**

‘It was a massive tree change.<sup>1</sup> So my background is science, so I did a double degree in biology and public health and then spent 10 years working in the corporate arena and private industry, in public health and safety and then to government. And then I converted across into more of this designery artsy business side of things. So completely different, completely and utterly different from my day job that I was doing previously. So it was very much, “I’ve got to get out here, this job isn’t what I imagined it to be, I don’t know what I’m going to do with my life, I don’t like this job and this is meant to be a good job in terms of what I did my degree in and on paper it looked fine and great and why wouldn’t you be happy?” So I found the job very stressful so I started doing the beaded jewellery and some of the handmade jewellery. And I found there was a lot of joy coming from the hobby and by doing a hobby that became more exciting for me. I couldn’t wait to get home so I could start making some more jewellery pieces. And it wasn’t until I actually sold my first jewellery pieces, I went to the local market and had a little stall

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[and] thought I wouldn't sell a single thing, but at it I sold quite a lot and I was quite impressed and shocked by it and then that gave me the drive to be, "Oh people actually want it, they're actually interested. Well if they're interested I should make them, make more and I should do another market". [At] that point there was never: "I'm going to quit my job", it was just, well this is fun and this is the thing I can do on the part-time on the weekend. But then it got to a point where I was probably doing a full-time day and then maybe 2, 3, 4 hours at night-time, depending on what was needed to be done. And I could see that it was taking up a lot of my free time and I could see that I was getting almost a steady income from it [...] that's when I started thinking, well if I can get this level of an income, working and a full-time job and doing this part-time, surely if I put more effort into it and started treating it like a real business as opposed to a hobby, I can help it grow a bit more like this. And then when a time comes and I'm making a certain financial income from it, a certain increment I spoke with my husband about it that, at that point that would be the time that I can leave the business, leave the full-time job. So I gave myself a 12-month plan as to when I wanted to leave the full-time job and what financial goals I had to hit in order to, to make that transition.'

Throwing in a 'day job' to pursue one's dream is a clearly established romantic aspiration prevalent in the hearts and minds—if not practice—of countless numbers of people across the Global North. Given the mainstreaming of small-scale interest in craft, often handmaking, as part of this current third wave of renewed interest in craft and making, such narratives have become so normalised as to be featured in everything from bank marketing<sup>2</sup> to feature weekend newspaper articles<sup>3</sup> (banks do not make advertisements supporting such activity if they do not think there is money in it). What emerges in these media depictions and what clearly enables this kind of growth of this sector of the economy is an increasing number of middle-class and generally (but not always) middle-aged people who, having had well-paid jobs and with most likely some equity in their own home, now in mid-life have enough capital behind them to reconsider their income and lifestyle options. Re-evaluations of what

really mattered to them and what might be financially possible were reflected in the study:

I grew up with Mum sewing, making our clothes and just being really crafty. We always made things at home, whether it was out of fabric or leaves [...] I nursed for 17 years but in amongst that I was always kind of making things and really interested in fabric and patterns and colours and I had my own tiny little fashion label when I lived in Brisbane probably—maybe 15 years ago. So, I was just doing casual nursing through an agency and had my own little label and I used to just screen print on really small pieces of the finished garment, I'd find a little section to screen print on, and I remember I used to fly to Melbourne [from Brisbane] and literally just walk the streets looking for stockists. [...] Then I moved to Melbourne about 7 years ago—[I] was working at the blood service as a nurse consultant and was just miserable. It was not the job I thought it was going to be. [So] I just did some research, found RMIT [RMIT University] and the textile design course and quit my job, enrolled full-time into study and learned to live without a lot of things that I didn't really need and couldn't afford anymore. [...] Dad had his own business as a woodworker. He used to make furniture from recycled timber way before it was cool and happening. [...] Mum and Dad both worked in the business. He did a lot of restaurant fittings and made furniture, but a lot of people didn't quite get the whole using recycled timber and now everyone's doing it and Dad's no longer doing it which is such a shame. [...] I learnt a lot] just watching Mum and Dad work really hard and having to save really hard and kind of living a bit frugally, because of running their own business so it's not a new thing. (Simone Deckers, textiles, established maker, March 2017)

Similarly,

I had four children. [W]hen I had two out of school I asked my husband if I could do the shoe course. He said 'If you can bring home the same money as you're bringing home now [in your non-creative job] and study full-time go for it' because we had four kids at private schools. So I—yeah I studied full-time, and worked part-time and brought up four kids. (Rose Anne Russell, shoemaker/leatherwares, established maker, April 2016)

This second extract is interesting in that it presents perhaps not your typical picture of someone keen and ready to change career. For some makers, no longer having to focus upon the responsibilities of supporting children freed them up to be able to make the riskier financial choice to give up paid

employment to pursue creative self-employment. This pattern emerged more strongly among the returners (to be discussed shortly). Rather, what emerges in our study is that choosing a career change can happen at any stage of life. Arguably, it reflects the increased precarity of the job market anyway, especially for younger people. When permanent full-time employment is becoming rarer and harder to get, self-employment is no longer the ‘risky’ option it once seemed. It is not, therefore, just middle-aged ‘empty nesters’ seeking a creative career change. These findings—that younger people are also choosing artisanal work as a less secure but more rewarding career change—reflect studies elsewhere, such as in the USA (Ocejo 2017, 149). For the reasons of increased precarity, job-shifting and insecurity already noted, some younger people are attracted to making this shift. It is hardly surprising, considering the growing employment insecurity, coupled with the growing normalisation of entrepreneurial discourses through society and the emphasis on self-employment and microenterprise as standard employment options within university creative degree programmes.<sup>4</sup> Thus we ended up interviewing many people who did not have an education rich in the arts, yet, despite this, they are now running a creative enterprise. In most instances there was often an event in life that was a catalyst for them to focus on developing their crafting/making enterprise (Fig. 2.1):

[I] worked for seven years as a Speech Pathologist, did two years here in Tassie [Tasmania], two years in the UK, had my daughter over there, so then came back and was only working part time after I had her. And my husband came back, couldn’t get a job, so we were quite poor. And so, my sister-in-law is very crafty and taught me how to make—just make a few things that she was giving away as gifts. And so, I just kind of started making things and realised how much I did like making, and started giving them as gifts, because we didn’t have a lot of money. And then people were like, “You could actually probably sell this”, and I thought, “That sounds fun.” And a market came up so I applied, and sold stuff before the doors even opened. Did another market and got picked up by a stockist, did another market and got picked up by a stockist. And within 9 months I was like, “I’m out of speech pathology, I’m going to pursue this”, which in hindsight, I don’t know that I’d have the guts to do it now, because it was such a big gamble, but I also really didn’t like speech pathology. And that’s where it started from. And I think because I wanted it to be successful I sought every possible way to make it successful, because I was passionate about it, and it happened. (Helen Mansbridge, Pila Pala, homewares and jewellery, established maker, February 2017)



**Fig. 2.1** Helen Mansbridge in the shopfront of her studio. (Photograph: Rosina Possingham Photography)

In the Australian context, the not insubstantial cost of quality childcare and the patchy-at-best approaches (in practice if not policy) towards family-friendly, flexible employment options was also a prompt for many ‘career changers’. Unsurprisingly in this context for quite a number of our

research participants, almost exclusively women, starting a family was the life event that precipitated the stepping back from paid employment outside the home and the shift (rarely immediately, but rather eventually) to starting up a craft or designer maker enterprise:

We moved from Newcastle on the east coast to Perth, and my job was in Sydney, and so, and then when we moved to Perth we didn't have any family, so I was looking for something that could be flexible that I could do around the kids, young children, at that stage. So I was looking for something that was flexible. So I was doing some consulting and I was doing the sewing on the side. So I love that, I've always loved that creative thing, creating something from new, and so that was more of a hobby, and then when I came to Perth I couldn't find any high quality market, so sort of out of frustration I thought I'll just start my own market [...] and I started a market more to sell my own kids brand, not as a business but as it turned out there was lots of other people that wanted to sell their products as well, and there was lots of people who were interested in buying it, and so then it sort of became a business. (Justine Barsley, Perth Upmarket, November 2016)

2005, so that's when I started my ceramics because my little one was one [year old] and I thought 'well we're not having [the] separation anxiety that I had with my first [child] going into a creche' and I thought 'oh, what will I do? I will just go and enrol myself into a pottery course.' I heard there's a really good one here in Ballarat. [...] at that stage it wasn't even about income. It was just an absolute love of creating I think and creating something from nothing that's what it felt like, and it just felt so engaging and responsive and then someone likes it—they want to buy it and it's like 'oh I can make a living from this' and of course it depends how high you want to live as to how successful it is, but I think I am starting to gain that more confidence in my work and what I'm creating and then getting it out there, and obviously the kids are getting older now and I can do this now. It's exciting. (Kim Haughie, artist potter, established maker, July 2017)

It is worth acknowledging that while women as traditional primary care-givers were primarily impacted by the demands of family requiring them to seek out alternative income-generating or, notably in our study, identity-giving (Luckman and Andrew 2018)<sup>5</sup> employment activity, a few couples jointly sought out creative self-employment as a means by which to be more available to family:

- Male 'It's certainly more a lifestyle choice than a financial one.'
- Female 'Yeah well, we both talked about when we were, you know, when they asked you what you want to do at the school, I mean both of us always said "artist". So it's kind of like been a lifelong goal really for both of us, to be practising artists, so that's just, we're doing what we want really.'
- M 'Which wasn't the most, wasn't the kick start, you know I got told to sort of grow up really and find a proper job when I was at school. But I mean that was the mid-'80's, so when I said I want to be an artist they sort of laughed and went, "Yeah but what do you really want to do?" So it wasn't until I was pretty much, hit nearly 40 that I actually managed to start believing that we could do that as a living.'
- F 'Yeah and it is a lifestyle thing, we like to be able to pick our kids up and they definitely like it. So it is a lifestyle choice, we love our lifestyle yeah, we're not loaded but we're very happy.' (Small and Pickering, metal sculptures, established makers, May 2016)

### *Returners*

Another notable finding from the project was the clearly gendered trend among craft returners that developing their creative enterprise was made possible by their children becoming independent adults:

When I was a very young teacher, probably in my early 20s, I trained in Vis Com [Visual Communication] or graphic design back in the day when we didn't use computers and I think my art practice has always been sort of [a] fairly neat, tidy, clean, precise sort of thing. So I never really found a home in painting or sculpture or some of those sorts of things, although I did like print making. And then in my first few years of teaching I just went to, it was an after-hours hobby class type thing that was run by one of, at that stage, Melbourne's sort of leading jewellers. He just set up a studio with half a dozen benches and invited people in. So I spent a couple of years just exploring that and realised that now I had found [something] which suited my creative approach and my skill level; it was sculpture but it was neat and tidy and it was little and it was precise and it was sort of quite engineered. So I did that for a few years and then had children, which I don't regret at all, but I packed up the tool box for a significant number of years and just put myself on a promise that when I could I'd come back to it. So it took me probably close to 30 years to get back to it. The toolbox sat there and the kids used

to look at it and go, “Can we look in your tool box?” Which is pretty funny. And then I was with the Education Department in Victoria and had the opportunity for early retirement and decided now is the time. [...] So then I enrolled at NMIT [Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE, now Melbourne Polytechnic] and thought I’d died and gone to heaven. (Alannah Sheridan, jewellery, emerging maker, March 2016)

So, on the upside, for most of the people in Alannah’s position, being able to return to their practice was often also enabled by their household’s finances being set up in such a way that they could explore creative possibilities while not also having to worry too much about making an income from doing so. This was especially important for those returning to study, though for many this was not without its challenges as they, like many of their fellow students, sought to balance study with part-time work. But perhaps more poignantly, as we see in Alannah Sheridan’s account, the return to craft practice requires, by definition, an earlier experience of having to initially give it up. Others shared Alannah’s experience:

Yes, so there’s a story. So really maybe like a lot of crafters, you know my background is I went to uni, I did a visual arts degree and then journeyed off to do the teaching thing and then had kids. So I was at home and two friends had kids the same age so as an excuse to get together without the kids we had a craft club which sounds a bit daggy but my girlfriends were big sewers and they always had the beautiful retro patterns which I love but I can’t sew, and I was, oh what am I going to do and then, I don’t know I just, the wall paper thing came to me. So it started you know as just doing gift tags, and then I discovered these flying ducks, so I started doing the flying ducks and then I really like Betty Jo designs. I don’t know, do you know Betty Jo with the, she does stuff out of lino, and she was doing beautiful birds. [...] I was an art teacher, high school art teacher. And then for a while I was at the Cairns regional gallery as their educator, yeah. So I’ve always been in the arts industry, but not actually making my own stuff. So it’s really nice now to get back to what I went to uni to do, you know I went to uni to be an artist so yeah, so it’s nice to arrive back at that point. (Sage and Peppa, homewares and jewellery, established maker, November 2015)

Again, it is important to hear these stories. We know that not all current students and recent graduates will be able to move into creative practice in the years immediately following their formal training. But in an employment market that demands of most participants an agility to move between not only jobs but even different sectors and skillsets, that return is possible is an important message.

The recent growth in both the online and face-to-face market for the handmade, which presents a number of opportunities not previously available to makers, clearly contributes to the feasibility of returning to creative practice. Whether or not this market has yet peaked remains unclear, but what is evident is that it is fuelled by more makers than can make a sustainable living from it. How people make their own personal peace with this situation and negotiate their financial place within the market remains one of the most profound challenges facing Australia's craftspeople and designer makers. How this marketplace is impacting the educational approach taken towards craft and design education and how it is impacting contemporary careers will be explored further in Chaps. 3 and 4. But before there is demand for entry into creative undergraduate degrees or a commitment to pursuing creative self-employment, there are moments of self-realisation to be had and a series of choices to be made. In the next section of this chapter, we will be stepping back from journeys delayed or returned to in order to explore what set people on this track in the first place.

## ENABLING ECOSYSTEMS AND FAMILY MAKING HISTORIES

### **Feature Interview 2.2. Female, Ceramicist, Established Maker (Interviewed November 2015)**

'Yes, I'm quite sure that that's what led me down that path, and I think, for some reason when I was younger I often used to not like the comment, "oh are you creative like your parents?". It used to really frustrate me, but at some point I think I just had that light bulb moment in high school where I was having to choose my subjects for my senior year and you know at 15 you really don't know what you're doing. But I suddenly thought, oh I don't need to do maths, I'm going to be an artist, and it was, you know I think that was probably my first realisation that I had that leaning and I went on to start a fine arts degree when I finished, graduated high school, but I left it in the second year. [...] And my parents, who'd been doing art as long as I can remember, I mean it wasn't their first career either, my mother was an occupational therapist, my father was a civil engineer. So he retired when I was about ten or something from that completely and opened an art gallery and picture frame business in town. And my

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mum worked full-time as an occupational therapist then so that was how the rest of my childhood went was with Dad being at home and Mum being at work. And in that time Dad got more and more into ceramics and then they both got right in to that, so by the time I finished school I'd worked for them for years in their studio doing their commercial lines from probably the age of ten really I was doing ceramics. So it was always just a job for me and my brother you know, it's what was there and it was our first job and sometimes we worked in the gallery for them too. [...] And I think that working for them gave me a model of a successful business, [...] So I've had a good broad education and I think really my education arts has come from the experience of being in this active workshop from the age of ten and learning about it from a really young age and ceramics is an incredibly technical field to get into, you know. [...] And I realise since then as I talk to other ceramic artists, most of them do a diploma or a degree or whatever, and then you're on your own. Like you're really, you know you might have a local club but [...] the investment of a kiln is massive and to understand what's going [on] when you pull out a load and something different has gone on, I have this just wealth of knowledge in my mum and dad, I can turn around and go, why has this happened, you know, and even though the clays and the glazes I'm using are quite different to what they do, you know you can usually shed a bit of light and he's got a lot of resources there that he can offer me too, reference books and stuff that we look stuff up. So it's, I think without that it would be incredibly discouraging, there's so much testing and experimenting with ceramics.'

### *Family Making Histories*

I made my first button-up shirt at the age of 11, and I have not stopped sewing since. I've got two sisters. When we turned 21 we all got the choice—do you want a big party, or do you want a sewing machine? So, we all went for the sewing machine. (Robyn 'Boo' McLean, custom textile design, homewares and accessories, established maker, July 2016)

I always got into trouble as a child because if the scissors or the sticky tape was missing, it was me! (Female, jeweller, established maker, February 2016)

The previous discussion, much like the majority of each interview itself, was concerned with where people are at now with their making and, especially in the case of the I-Up participants, where they want to be. Another key finding in this study was the connection between wanting to pursue making as a living and early childhood exposure to it. This was identified as playing a formative role in the desire to do creative things. Markedly, having direct family experience of running a creative business (which by its very nature tends to include participation in the business) was arguably what enabled some of our makers to move more directly into being ready to run their own economically sustainable business (see Feature Interview 2.2). Many of the apparently most successful and stable, and certainly happy, makers we met around the country had this kind of background. What is notable among them is that unlike many graduates, they knew they had to ‘hit the ground running’, seeing their creative practice as a business, and thus figuring out how to balance their more creative or original making alongside ‘bread and butter’ production lines or some other regularly profitable output. Having been brought up around people familiar with twentieth-century studio craft models was thus a clear boon; the ‘alternative’ children of 1970s ‘hippies’ can make for savvy artisanal business people. Such levels of sustainable practice were especially palpable and commented upon by those whose vision of economic ‘success’ operates alongside materially moderated lifestyle expectations, with a focus on quality of life including time for family. Not surprisingly, many of these research participants lived in regional locations, still close to major cities, but without their high housing costs, and with the bucolic lifestyle affordances of rural or peri-urban living. Knowing how to negotiate these trade-offs, and a personal value system structure that supported doing so, was frequently connected to their early family experiences.

**Feature Interview 2.3. Minna Graham, Ceramicist, Established Maker (Interviewed July 2017)**

‘I don’t think I ever had a choice, if I’m really honest with you, I think it was inevitable. I think just growing up the way I grew up [...] my parents, they would just live and breathe for art. My father passed away in 2000, my mum’s very much alive, she’s really eccentric [...] in a most fantastic way, I can’t describe her, she’s just the most wonderful person and everyone that ever meets Jacquie just, just swoons. She’s,

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she's an incredible lady, incredibly humble, has no idea how wonderful she is, really no idea, but she's just really fantastic in everything she does, her every waking minute is about creating something in some way. So she makes all her clothes, she hand spins wool, she knits her own jumpers and dyes it herself. She just makes everything. Her house is painted bright pink on one wall and halfway through she, well more than halfway through she ran out of pink so she started it in blue. So when I was growing up, the house I grew up in was a very, very old dilapidated farmhouse that one of my dad's art students (because he was a teacher as well) said (we were looking for somewhere to live, we'd just moved to the area). And she said, "We have this old farmhouse you can, you can rent it 20 bucks a week". So we lived in this old farmhouse for my whole childhood that we rented for, I think we were there for over 20 years for \$20 a week and they just did what they liked to it really. So Mum had painted on the outside of the house one whole side of the house was a giant fox, multi-coloured fox, another side there was an ant, massive bull ant, there was a, it might have been a possum. So each side of the house had different animals on them. On the inside around the doorways were [...] really bright coloured patterns, criss-crosses, and polka dots and each door was painted with all sorts of crazy patterns. [...] My dad had this amazing floor-to-ceiling bronze sculpture based on the Opera House that he'd built—that was in our lounge room. There was just no spare wall anywhere and just little bits of squashed metal were art pieces and they'd be hung on the wall and it was just nuts so. [...] We just lived out on a, on a sheep station that wasn't ours, we just rented this old farmhouse. So just out in the middle of nowhere, really free and it was great, it was a fantastic childhood. My father was a Head of the Local TAFE [Technical and Further Education] Art Department so he taught everything. He taught sculpture, life drawing, print making, my mum's a print maker predominantly. So she did a lot of, she was really involved in the print-making side of things as well and painting actually, she did painting classes as well, they just did all sorts, [...] I went through a phase when I was a teenager just hating art. [...] I think that probably the most valuable thing that came from all that is resourcefulness. Both my parents are extremely resourceful and we just made do with whatever we had, there was never much money because we're a family of artists. You have to make do with what you've got.'

Clearly, parents, grandparents or significant adults have played a catalytic role in many maker's lives, enabling and inspiring the development of their creative passion. For some, such as in Feature Interviews 2.2 and 2.3, this was in a specifically identifiable arts or craft practice setting. But such exposure takes many forms, such as simply watching or working alongside parents or grandparents in their sheds, home offices, sewing rooms or kitchens:

Yeah well I guess I come from that long line of women who have always crafted. So my grandma would crochet and knit and sew, and my mother as well. It wasn't considered a career path back then but I always as a child [was] learning how to knit and crochet and sew and patchwork, and my mum still does that now. My dad was always, he was one of those tip scavengers who could go out and find...yeah find bits and pieces and just make something out of nothing, and they were both really really good at that and I guess that was a really huge influence as well. (Kim Haughie, artist potter, established maker, July 2017)

My father was an architect but he also pursued Chinese ink painting and I grew up in a house where he had his practice on one floor of the house and in his room he'd have his painting studio and on one side it's all computers and clicky clicky and then on the other side it's the traditional smell of rice paper and ink which is very nice. (Chere De Koh, textiles, emerging maker, December 2015)

I grew up around boats and my first dream was to become a yacht designer. So copying boat plans out onto taped together A4 sheets of Reflex, and just a love of drawing some technical drawings. And Dad always had a half-finished yacht in the backyard, and so working on that. So I think they were the first seeds of wanting to do something in design and making. (Scott van Tuil, furniture maker and product design, emerging maker, February 2016)

My dad was a bit of a hobbyist maker. He made model ships and he used to paint a bit too. So yeah, he's probably the creative one. My grandmother always did her embroideries and Mum used to sew. So there's that, those sorts of connections. [...] I remember Dad sitting at the kitchen table (no workshop in those days) with his balsa wood and he'd just have the plans there and he was sort of, he'd make half of it up and then he'd make these incredible model ships with very, very fine little cannons and all the fencing and Mum would have to sew up the flags. Then she'd complain about Tarzan's grip everywhere on the table or on his pants, because he just did it on the kitchen table. So yeah, I obviously, that would've had a big influence on me I think. (Julie Blyfield, jewellery, established maker, August 2015)

Furthermore, for many of our interviewees, although their parents were not themselves either professional or hobbyist artists or craftspeople, they were creative in other ways, such as in their approach to life, an attitude of resourcefulness or a hands-on hobby. These were people who could and did repair, ‘make do’ or ‘tinker’ in their shed. They had the skills to support an attitude of self-sufficiency. Unsurprisingly then, early making and often designing experiences and exposure were particularly commented upon by those who grew up on farms, situating contemporary Australian craft and design within the larger history of making innovation through often rural tinkering (Wilson 2017). Other research participants gained creative insight and inspiration through their parent’s work or professional pursuits such as building, engineering, architecture or inventing.

I came from essentially a making family; my dad’s a tradesman and I’ve been building things in the shed ever since I was 5. (Male, homewares and jewellery product designer maker, established maker, August 2018)

I was definitely supported by my family in terms of kind of creative and artistic pursuits. My mother’s very arty and crafty, and my dad’s also very practical. He was a carpenter, so that sort of problem-solving practical hands-on work sort of comes from both sides of my parents, and it was always greatly encouraged, so the whole thought of going to art school, as opposed to, say, any other form of study was definitely encouraged. (Meredith Woolnough, embroidery, established maker, June 2016)

Others were also fortunate to grow up in rural or frequently more progressive peri-urban locations, including Claire Beale whose parents sought out the 1970 hippie version of the still highly desirable ‘move to the country’ dream with its strong associations of environmental responsibility and self-sufficiency:

Oh I would say that I was incredibly lucky and grew up in a creative environment, so I knew that I was going to be involved in some form of creative practice from my very early childhood. I grew up in a collective, well not really, my family were part of a group of friends who lived in the Yarra Valley on acres of bush, so we owned 9 acres, our neighbours next door had five acres and so on and so forth. And everyone that was living in that environment were creative practitioners of some sort, they were primary school and high school teachers but they were also ceramicists, fashion designers, artists, jewellers, a whole range, it was the real ‘70s alternative lifestyle creative

environment. Didn't mean that we were a commune by any sense of the word because we still have very established separate family identities and monetary things and all those things. But I grew up in an environment where we were just encouraged to be creative and make, and so having extended family who was a master potter you'd go and play on the wheel, the next day you'd go and play on the tool bench and muck around with scraps of wood and see what you could cut and draft. Probably through an OHS perspective and modern parenting now, the things we did were highly dangerous, but that's how we learnt. So I learnt to sew when I was four, on a sewing machine when I was seven or eight, and I was making my own clothes, I was painting and drawing, so for me it was this is just what you did. It took a lot longer to actually understand how I was going to make that happen, and so when I went to university, and I also felt like I didn't have as much talent as my peers, so when I went to university I said, "I'll do a fine art history degree, that'll be the sensible thing to do", and got a classical education. (Claire Beale, textiles, established maker, October 2015)

The sheer weight of all these evocative vignettes, which represent just a sample of all the stories we heard, makes it clear that for many of the participants in this research study, irrespective of when in their lives they were in a position to dedicate themselves more fully to making as an income-generating activity, the foundation for a later relationship with making was established early in their childhood (Fig. 2.2).

### *Early Material and Tool Knowledges*

This normalised presence of tools and materials and people not afraid to use them is perhaps less significant for the aptitude towards any specific set of skills this instilled and more notable for how it led to a broad-ranging but profound affinity with making something from scratch—and a belief that this is even possible and achievable. Adelaide-based designer and maker, Christian Hall, describes this more existential understanding of how an early hands-on experience of handworking is an empowered, deliberate engagement with understanding and interacting with the world:

I wouldn't call it the start of my career, but I think the start of my thinking as a creative person, I'd kind of mark that very early on. I spent a lot of time on my own as a kid in the bush and was very self-reliant and from a very early stage was given tools mainly by my father to entertain myself and the two that I think that have persisted were tools with language and tools with drawing and imagery. So I'd start that very early on around the age five. [...]



**Fig. 2.2** Jax Isaacson, Jax and Co. (<https://jaxandco.com.au/>) in her workshop. (Photograph: Rosina Possingham Photography)

So for me that's really key and more than thinking about it as an artistic career, it was really the foundations of thinking for me. I remember my father showing me that in order to draw something in a sense which was more realistic you looked at it in a certain way, you looked at it as a series of

shapes rather than as a continuous outline and so for me that was the first time in memory that I formed a strategy for understanding the world and choosing a way of understanding the world. And so obviously as time went on I learned other ways of perceiving the world, but that was the first time perception became a choice. So I think [...] without that kind of start I don't think I would've pursued [this] career. (Christian Hall, object and jewellery designer maker/industrial design, established maker, August 2015)

These making histories are included here not only for the insights they offer into the motivations of these particular craftspeople and designer makers but to emphasise the essential importance of making in all its forms—amateur and professional—to a healthy making ecology.

The social and economic importance for a country of people who can innovate and value-add raw materials seems all the more pressing in light of an influential and widely quoted 2019 report from the Harvard University Kennedy School's Center for International Development. The report identified the Australian economy as 'rich, dumb and getting dumber' and ranked it 93rd in complexity, behind Kazakhstan, Uganda and Senegal (Patrick 2019). In this context we can see why many of craft's leading thinkers and writers have long upheld the value of amateur and hobby practices as essential to maintaining and growing a country's making capacity. British writer, researcher and lecturer in craft theory and history, Stephen Knott, has recently been at the forefront of research into the significance of amateur making. In an article in *Crafts* magazine coinciding with the release of his book *Amateur Craft: History and Theory* (2015b), he cites craft legend David Pye's lauding of amateur making to make the case for its ongoing importance:

However, in the post-industrial world, where the economic rationale for many craft processes and traditional models of apprenticeship have been fundamentally challenged by technological innovation and outsourced production, the continuation of many craft practices actually depends upon amateur making.

As the furniture maker and professor at the Royal College of Art, David Pye observed in his book *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* (1968), only amateurs could afford to devote the amount of time and resources necessary to sustain many crafts. This is because amateur craft can be economically aberrant, it provides a space for forms of practice that need not pay heed to market concerns. (Knott 2015a, 51)

It is not just the capacity of amateur practice to maintain heritage or legacy craft skills for which Knott advocates but also, and particularly, its capacity for innovation and making ‘outside the square’:

I aim to contest this dismissive set of assumptions, and demonstrate how amateur craft has made a vital and important contribution to the material culture of the modern world, and remains the freest, most autonomous form of making, within structures of Western capitalism at least. Under no financial obligation, amateur craft allows an individual to make something for the love of it alone, without the pressure of deadlines or the need to please a patron. (Knott 2015b, xi)

As we have seen, it also empowers future generations of craftspeople and designer makers. Making histories of all kinds across the full spectrum of making practice, including amateur and hobby, offer an essential exposure to and experience of both practices (what to do with tools and materials), but more importantly, they engender the ‘you can do it’ attitude.

### *The Impact of Educational Encouragement and Exposure*

It goes without saying that the nature of our educational experiences, like our early childhood experiences of family, also plays a significant role in shaping our lives. So too, choosing to send a child to school in education environments supportive of creative making and creative enterprise is significantly influenced by family attitudes and valuing creativity, making and the arts. Perhaps not surprisingly, a disproportionate number of our interviewees attended Montessori, Steiner or other non-traditional schools with a strengths-based approach to fostering and supporting an individual’s educational pursuits:

I went to a Rudolf Steiner school and there was a big emphasis there on creativity and drawing and painting and theatre. And I just found that that’s where I excelled really, and that began then, and then so from then it became sort of like a strong suite or a, something that I felt, that I felt comfortable with. (Phillipa Julien, textile artist and designer maker, emerging maker, February 2016)

I was talking to a friend recently about our education, and this hadn’t occurred to me but she suggested that—for my first 7 years—so when I was young I was home schooled and then I went to a [Montessori] school [...]

And I was explaining how the average week at Montessori went, and how it was structured. [...] throughout the week you would have formal lessons on different subjects, but you'd also be given a set of tasks you had to complete by Friday or we wouldn't get to play sport (which was devastating—you'd have to continue doing our tasks). And it hadn't occurred to me, but she did suggest that that self-directed way of learning and way of conducting yourself, getting things done, was maybe an influence. And that does make sense, I hadn't kind of made that connection myself. (Corner Block Studio, timber frames and wall art, emerging maker, November 2015)

Others taught in such schools:

So I got involved with the Steiner community because they were very interested in shoe making because Rudolf Steiner had a thing about shoe making. [He believed] all students should learn how to make shoes and they were interested in the whole process, so they did the farming bit, did the tanning, and then learning how to make, how to craft shoes. [...] This is in the UK, so I did a bit of work in a few different Steiner schools and they of course had beautiful workshops so it was sort of easy for me I'd just pile all my machines into the car and trot around the countryside. (Lunaboots, shoemaker, established maker, February 2017)

Reassuringly for those without the family economic resources or cultural histories that may see them attending such an independent school, many of our interviewees cited the influence across school types of a 'great teacher' inspiring and supporting them in the development and pursuit of their creative making. Highly regarded Australian jeweller Blanche Tilden was the fortunate beneficiary of the kind of 'above and beyond' individual acts of support and generosity from a teacher that really can have lifelong impacts, for both parties:

I was at school, a private school in Bowral. They had a really good art department and my teachers, I say I really like, I really want to know how to make something out of glass and she's like, well, how are you going to do that. It was impossible and her husband, independent of her teaching at the art school, was a ceramicist and so she said I think you can melt glass in a kiln, you can try and do something in his ceramics kiln. And then she said I think there's actually a ceramics kiln here and she dug it up, and cleaned it up and she plugged it in for me and I made this kind of big panel out of glass and it was like a nautilus shell. So it was all the kind of sections of a nautilus shell but I didn't understand about compatibility in glass. So if you melt

different sorts of glass together and they're not compatible it doesn't work. So I made this beautiful thing out of glass and then I went away for the middle of the year holidays and when I came back it was all just like sugar. [...] so it was all laid out and I was ready to put it together with lead, to make it into a big leadlight window and yeah it was all, it all had just turned into sugar. And I was like 'wow, now what do I do that's my HSC [Higher School Certificate] major work?' and so then she went, because of this ceramics connection, she went and she bought me some Bullseye compatible glass. She went and got, I think she went to Sydney and got it for me and she got the information of how to do it and the temperature and the annealing and she figured it out for me. [...] In about 1997 I think, I had an open studio and she was in Melbourne and she saw, and she came to the open studio, [...] She rang me up beforehand and [...] she said 'are you that same [person from Bowral], do you have a piece in the National Gallery?' and I was 'yeah' and she said I'm Mrs Xxxx, your art teacher. [...] And she came to my house and I was crying and she was crying and I say I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you. So part of the reason I wanted to do this is I've had so many people have helped me, so many people, I wouldn't be here without about 40 different stories like that and I always try and help people if I think they're going to run with it, pass it on, because no one really gets there without help. No way. It's very hard. (Blanche Tilden, contemporary jeweller and glass, established maker, October 2015)

Blanche's is an exceptional (and beautiful) story; few art teachers get to see their student's work in the National Gallery and few students get to personally say 'thank you' as adults. Nonetheless, the early attitude of teachers, including those charged with 'careers counselling', can make or break a young person's attitude towards pursuing a creative career:

I was a creative child and that was always a thing that I was rewarded for by my folks. You know, it was a sketch book—I always had things on the go and I was always labelled the creative one. [...]. So it went from there and I remember really clearly a moment when I was 15 standing in high school looking through one of those career guide things that they don't have any more, I'm sure now because it's so much faster and not traditional, and reading a section in there about interior designers and that occasionally they can design furniture and literally like that bolt of lightning thing of going, that's what I want to do, at 15. And then I went in all sorts of circles and finally got there but didn't go in a straight line. (Julie Pieda, interior and furniture designer, established maker, August 2015)

I made a billy cart when I was a kid that sort of thing, [...] like I think everyone has an enjoyment of making in some way or another, whether it's baking some biscuits or drawing a crayon drawing as a kid, or you know, super gluing some pipe cleaners together. Like everyone enjoys playing with something physical, rather than just sitting behind a computer all day. And like that's, especially the case I think with woodwork, lots of people enjoy it and lots of people would be capable of it, it's just whether they've had the life chances in order to be able to go through with it. And I was lucky enough to have people in my family who are interesting in making, and a bit of interest in sort of creativity, as well I suppose, but also having other people through school that were quite encouraging, like two of my woodwork teachers were quite interested in woodwork and they said some really like pertinent things that sort of stuck with me, and one of them still maintains contact now, so I suppose it started—cut a long story short—it started sort of high school, and maybe a little bit before I sort of went, oh yeah I really enjoy this. [...] but then] because my vision had degenerated in 2005 and I never thought I'd be able to do it again, and found out about a safety course about learning how to use tools safely as a vision-impaired or blind person—or legally blind person—and that sort of, just did a bit of a crash course on that, and then I went and had a chat with Linda at the art school, and she was like totally welcoming and she even went and dropped in and checked out their facility as well to see what sort of stuff they had there, just off her own bat, so she's been an ongoing sort of member of the design community in Tasmania that contributes a lot. (Male, furniture and lighting designer maker, established maker, February 2016)

Before moving on from this discussion of early influences, it is important to acknowledge that although people would prefer to recall the positive influence significant adults can play in their development, we also interviewed numerous people whose intended pursuit of a creative career was strongly discouraged. For some, this transpired at high school when needing to choose between undertaking science-based or arts-based subject streams. Unsurprisingly, a number of career changers reported being variously directed away from pursuing arts study. Across all categories, many recalled influential people in their lives stating things like, 'You can't make a decent living as an artist'. While discouraging, such statements are not entirely unfounded and may well come from parents who themselves pursued creative careers and wish to protect their children from the emotional and financial struggles involved. Again, it is interesting to consider this in light of the cohort of career changers and our argument that a creative career not directly pursued is not necessarily a creative career lost.

One of our interviewees reported that it was his parents' warnings not to pursue such a career that made him determined to establish his own strong financial base and business acumen pursuing another career, before later in life returning to making and the development of a creative enterprise inspired by his grandfather.

### THE VALUES AND PERSONAL MEANING OF SMALL-SCALE MAKING TODAY

The examples from this study presented so far, illustrating the significance of early influences on future creative careers, parallel research into how people come to embody the disposition to engage in this kind of work. Clearly, following Bourdieu's famous work into cultural production and consumption, we can understand this process of becoming in terms of entry into a making habitus, that is, early exposure to a 'feel for the game' (Johnson in 'Editor's Introduction' to Bourdieu 1993, 5). Through different early family and school experiences of making—some orientated more as an arts practice, others as an economic activity—the makers in our study approach the field of cultural production that is craft and design with a range of dispositions 'which help to lead them to these positions and to define their way of operating within them and staying in them' (Bourdieu 1993, 64). The lived networks of early exposure to and understandings of making can clearly be seen here as being not only highly influential but as directly enabling access to the field of creative production:

The field, as a field of possible forces, presents itself to each agent as a *space of possibles* which is defined in the relationship between the structure of average chances of access to the different positions (measured by the 'difficulty' of attaining them and, more precisely, by the relationship between the number of positions and the number of competitors) and the dispositions of each agent, the subjective basis of the perception and appreciation of the objective chances. (Bourdieu 1993, 64)

As an important part of this, we can see in many of the extracts above a classic orientation into the art field that requires trade-offs between 'doing what you love' and the recognition and fulfilment that comes from this and potentially higher levels of income that might come from more conventional employment. Choosing the former means being resigned to potentially low levels of income as a result. In those craftspeople and

designer makers who, as we have already seen, had chosen creative self-employment as a lifestyle choice and were happy to make financial sacrifices, we can clearly see an instance of Bourdieu's (1993) assertion that the field of cultural production is the 'economic world reversed', that is, a field whose own logics and value structures defy those of the field of (economic and political) power.

The findings in this Australian study resonate with those of a recent British study that similarly employed rich, semi-structured interviews to understand how individuals come to understand their identity as artists. Taylor and Littleton (2016) found that the 'interpretive repertoires' their interviewees employed:

are culturally established and recognizable arrangements of wording and argument, often linked by commonsense association rather than conventional logic, [...] inflected with values and accrued associations. Like other resources, such repertoires pre-exist any particular occasion of talk and can enable or constrain identity work. (48)

This reinforces the key understanding underpinning Bourdieu's work, namely, that the dispositions (including language and narratives) that we use to make sense of our world and inform our negotiations through it are not formed in a vacuum but are precisely the result of our habitus. Taylor and Littleton's (2016) study had a focus on 'early interests, experiences and influences', and in this context they identify three key recurrent repertoires: "prodigiousness", "creative early environment" and "creative inheritance" (48). All three—early talent that is rewarded, growing up in a creative habitus and making as a direct link to family and history—are also clearly evident in our study. Although for some makers these interviews occurred not too long after leaving a family home or even while they were still supporting their creative practice by living with their parents, for most, these accounts represent memories that continue to resonate for them many years later. Makers are thus able to draw upon these memories and dispositions to:

... construct a narrative of continuity from 'who I was' to 'who I am' which functions as a claim to an identity as a creative. In addition, because the claim establishes a narrative where the choice to pursue a creative career follows on logically either from innate dispositions and talents, or from early experience, it can also function to validate a participant's choice of a creative career. (50–51)

Bourdieu's economic field of power is, of course, still very present here. One of the key take-home messages of the 2016 Australian federal budget (released in the middle of this study) was its emphasis on supporting small business to create jobs growth. This focus upon individualised entrepreneurial risk-taking underpins many governmental policies, not just in Australia, but globally around the industrialised world. Arts, cultural and creative practitioners are all expected to be increasingly business-minded as part of the policy shift signalled by the emergence of an emphasis on creative industries; clearly, the cultural and creative sector is most certainly not immune to wider trends (McRobbie 2016; O'Connor 2016; Ross 2007). But in this way, too, to quote US-based scholar of the cultural and economic persistence of artisanal handmaking Kathryn Dudley (2014), 'Hand builders are focused on actualizing an entrepreneurial self through the performance of a cultural repertoire that is collectively, not corporately, owned' (192), that is, owned largely by the making community, not the government. In this way, as we have written elsewhere (Luckman 2018), arguably most of the craftspeople and designer makers we spoke to in this study speak of their identity and motivations for pursuing their work in ways quite at odds with any identification with entrepreneurialism and growth:

I figure that it's why I love doing it, I actually need to do it, I go a bit loopy if I don't get time up here [in my studio]. I'm not really worth being around according to my family if I don't get time up here. And I figure because of that need to do it, it doesn't matter if I make money, if it can sustain itself, which it does, then I'm happy. So that's my bottom line is, if I can, if it can just tick over and I can afford to get clay and I can afford to buy materials and to fire [them] then I'm happy. (Minna Graham, ceramicist, established maker, July 2017)

When I graduated from furniture school I didn't know how to run a business. So I just shut up and I watched and I saw how hospitality people did it. I saw how hairdressers did it. I saw how small start-ups did it, and I just watched and I tried to get an idea of what would work for us and what wouldn't. And I've spoken to a friend of ours down here who runs a really big successful gourmet food sort of like Vari's [a famous, since closed, Italian deli in Norwood, South Australia] but on steroids, expanding all over Tasmania. They have 250 staff or employees or something. And he was a client initially, now a friend, and we were having a coffee or something the other day and Pete and I were saying about how we're struggling with the

scale of things but we really didn't want to take on employees or get bigger. And he said he totally understood, that if he had it his way—he's got 150 or 200 staff that rely on him, he spends all of his time doing payroll, basically managing things—he said if he had it his way he'd close it all down tomorrow, he'd have a hole in the wall shopfront somewhere, and he'd have a coffee machine and prosciutto and that's all he'd sell. And he'd work from 9:00 in the morning, no he said probably 7:00–7:00 in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon five days a week and just keep it simple. So that's kind of what we're trying to do. We're not trying to take over the world. We don't need to have our—we're not trying to be some kind of international cock rock superstar, kind of—that's not it at all. We just want to be able to enjoy what we do, enjoy making stuff for people that we like in the way that they're going to appreciate it, spending time with the kids, living somewhere beautiful. [...] It's about keeping it small and manageable and enjoyable. Because once the enjoyment goes out of it there's no point. (Laura McCusker, furniture maker, established maker, February 2016)

The desire to pursue self-employment as a means by which to 'be one's own boss'—and thus the work–life arrangements that can go with this—has a long and deep history (Dudley 2014; Gill 2014), and it is an ambition clearly not limited to craftspeople and designer makers. Such sentiments also clearly precede the current government policy and wider social interest in entrepreneurialism. But even in this contemporary context, the values and the meaning of small-scale making today are perhaps not as anomalous and out of step with mainstream ideals as they may appear to be.

In his chapter, 'Your Future Employer—Yourself', in the Committee for Economic Development of Australia's report, *Australia's Future Workforce*, Ken Phillips (2015) cites the following statistic:

Globally, around 97 per cent of businesses are small (with fewer than five employees) and around 60 per cent of businesses are non-employing businesses of one. The people who run the dominant number of businesses are not command-and-control firms. They are more 'consumer-like' than anything else in the way they behave. This must turn on its head the prevailing acceptance by economists of how a market economy operates. To date, there's little evidence that economic policymakers see this, understand it or have even adapted any of their thinking in this direction. (190)

Further, Phillips (2015) states:

Self-employment can be seen as a ‘rising-star’, not just because of increasing numbers of self-employed people. It’s more because self-employed individuals are at the cutting-edge of cultural and attitudinal change in global workforces. The supremacy of the organisation is fading and being replaced with the authority of the individual. (180)

Key to what drives many of the individuals we interviewed for this study is a recognition that, as leading sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2008) has stated:

About half the goods crucial for human happiness have no market price and can’t be purchased in shops. Whatever your cash and credit standing, you won’t find in a shopping mall love and friendship, the pleasures of domesticity, the satisfaction that comes from caring for loved ones or helping a neighbor in distress, the self-esteem to be drawn from work well done, gratifying the ‘workmanship instinct’ common to us all, the appreciation, sympathy and respect of workmates and other people with whom one associates; you won’t find there freedom from the threats of disregard, contempt, snubs and humiliation. Moreover, earning enough money to afford those goods that can only be had through the shops is a heavy tax on the time and energy available to obtain and enjoy non-commercial and non-marketable goods like the ones listed above. It may easily happen, and frequently does, that the losses exceed the gains and the capacity of increased income to generate happiness is overtaken by the unhappiness caused by a shrinking access to the goods which ‘money can’t buy’. (5)

We might quibble over the accuracy of the ‘about half’ figure, but the larger point about the desire to achieve happiness and work–life equilibrium clearly resonates across the making stories featured in this chapter and across this book (Fig. 2.3).

But before moving on, it is important to acknowledge that what we are often talking about here are people’s dreams and aspirations, which are always more difficult to attain and sustain in reality—and across a lifetime. As is always essential in commenting upon this study, it is important also to acknowledge that the capacity to engage in creative self-employment is not equally accessible to all. For many of our participants, their making is made possible by a relatively middle-class economic buffer (be it a work payout, savings, owning a home, other employment or a supportive partner/family), but what is also evident, especially when factoring in the experiences of the emerging makers cohort, is the degree to which



Fig. 2.3 Phillipa Julien, Till Designs (<http://www.tilldesigns.com.au/>), in her studio. (Photograph: Rosina Possingham Photography)

self-employment is an increasingly normalised social and economic expectation in an age of increasingly precarious contract-based, part-time, casual or otherwise insecure employment. In this context, creative self-employment is a new normal, providing an identity beyond ‘temporarily unemployed’ and frequently masking low or negative incomes (Luckman and Andrew 2018). In such an environment, the desire to pursue meaningful work that one loves can be deployed as a strategy of the marketplace (the ‘field of power’) to facilitate individual and collective acceptance of the very kinds of work insecurities and exploitations from which people seek to escape. Alas, this compromise is something the larger economy (field of power) is increasingly finding useful to accommodate:

Additionally, even if the pay is low, then *other* forms of ‘external’ good—such as the prestige and social status of being recognised as an artist—may also provide the motivation to labour for low pay. [...] Yet while this might serve to secure kudos for the artist, it has also proved congenial to the capitalist who is able to more effectively exploit those who self-consciously dis-

dain the need for earnings and who seek to obtain a ‘cultural credit’ through their wilful ‘pecuniary neglect’ (Ross 2000, 15). Andrew Ross (2000) has drawn attention to the impacts of what he has termed the ‘cultural discount’, the principle ‘by which artists and other art workers accept non-monetary rewards—the gratification of producing art—as compensation for their work, thereby discounting the cash price of their labour’ (Ross, 2000, 6). (Banks 2017, 128)

Moreover, in this self-promotional age, McRobbie identifies within the creative sphere the rise of ‘a (feminized) romantic ethic of production, rather than consumption’ (McRobbie 2016, 108), which manifests in an ‘ethos of “passionate work”, which envelops the identity of the cultural entrepreneur and which decorates his or her publicity material as a kind of statement of intent and declaration of suitability for participation in this sector’ (McRobbie 2016, 74). With such self-presentation ‘now a crucial part of the economic infrastructure’, the affective labour of doing what you love is now a required and normalised part of many jobs across the Global North (Hearn 2017, 63). How higher education is increasingly being required not only to train students as experts in their practice areas but also to ensure graduates are ready to face this world prepared but not completely disillusioned is the focus of the next chapter.

## NOTES

1. The phrase ‘tree change’ or ‘sea change’ is used in Australia to refer to a residential shift from the city to the country; this usually comes with expectations of if not a bucolic existence, then at least a more relaxed lifestyle.
2. Perhaps the most overt current (at the time of writing) example of this is the National Australia Bank’s ‘This is the story of progress’ screen advertisement as part of a larger ‘More Than Money’ campaign (National Australia Bank n.d.). The narrative focus of the ad is a voiced conversation between a father and daughter, as she enthusiastically outlines her plans while he expresses concern: ‘Oh, you’re not still on about that are you?’, ‘But your job. I mean you can’t just throw that away’ and finally ‘Look, just promise me you won’t do anything silly.’ She assures him she would ‘Never’ do anything silly, as we see her walking towards the sunrise on her dreamed-of goat farm. The ad closes with the tag line, ‘When you’re ready to make it happen, so are we.’
3. Gabriella Coslovich’s (2018) feature article, ‘The would-be artisans who ditch day jobs to chase a dream’, in *The Age’s Good Weekend Magazine* (also simultaneously published in the same edition of the *Sydney Morning Herald*), explores the rise of interest in craft, handmaking, lost trades and the artisanal. It includes quotations from an interview with one of the authors of

this book, reporting on the emerging findings from this study, and also features interviews with a number of makers of wooden furniture, ceramics, shoes and gin, who, often in conjunction with a partner or friend, have given up day jobs as police officers, journalists, architects and in public relations to pursue artisanal self-employment.

4. For further discussion of the pathways chosen by aspiring creatives as they seek to enter the creative workforce, see Taylor and Luckman (2020a).
5. In Luckman and Andrew (2018) we write about how engaging in creative self-employment or small business addresses a desire among especially educated, professional women previously employed outside the home to maintain an identity beyond ‘mum’ or ‘homemaker’. In this way, crafting self-employment becomes a vehicle for also crafting a professional creative identity. For example, as a way to address these kinds of situations: ‘[My] working week, [...] so I’d probably, I roughly do two hours a night and then I have every second Friday off, so I’d work all that Friday because she’s got to go to child care because you’ve got to pay for it anyway, so that gives me a good opportunity. So every fortnight we could say, I guess, so that would be an eight hour day on that Friday and then two hours every night, plus in the weekends. [...] I thought [working from home while the children are young] would be really easy, I really did, I thought oh she’s asleep, and it’s true, I do stuff and she’s a good sleeper [...] but it’s, yeah it is a hard challenge because just personally it’s, there’s a lot of pressure and then you’ve got that mother guilt thing, and then you’ve got “oh well”, and I felt a bit guilty because [my partner] works so hard and I do have some guilt, [I’m] a dental nurse as a trade so I can, so it’s taken me a long time to kind of come to terms with yes well I really should contribute. And it’s weird now when people say “What do you do?”, “I’m a stay at home mum”, and people would look at you like you’re a foreigner or weirdo, something, I don’t know what, “Oh you don’t go to work?” “No”’ (Female, yarn worker, emerging maker, September 2015).

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## Educating for Enterprise

### **Feature Interview 3.1. Jordan Gower, Ceramicist, Emerging Maker (Interviewed January 2016)**

Jordan: ‘[It was a] TAFE [ ... ] when I went through the degree and I know it’s changed a little now with the merger with Flinders [University] and that sort of thing. When I went through it was a very hands-on, very sort of technical, practical—it was basically a tech college where you learnt some skills and you do some thinking and it wasn’t necessarily the research-focused sort of ethos that we have here. When I came over to uni, certainly the skills that I learnt there were very beneficial, but the main focus of [the] course was on thinking and research and being able to apply or maybe being able to understand your own ways of making through an academic structure, which is fantastic. For me [though], if I hadn’t have done that degree I wouldn’t be where I am now, and I wouldn’t think about the materials and the objects and the practical sort of side of things as clearly as I do if I hadn’t done it. The sort of references and the influences that [ ... ] who were the coordinators gave—I mean they have such a breadth of knowledge that you just wouldn’t be able to

*(continued)*

**(continued)**

find all these things if you sort of tried on your own, and again it's that network between that sort of cohort that really clarified what you were doing, and you had sort of clarify it otherwise you would sort of fall back and you had to write about it but it was incredibly important and I find writing is sort of as fascinating as making; it's sort of the ways you can structure certain things and how sort of ephemeral writing is yet how potent it is at the same time. [ ... ] I can't really say what the sort of undergrad program at uni is like, but from what I can see it's certainly not as hands-on [as the earlier TAFE program] and the sort of technical skills maybe quite aren't there unless people have had prior experience or [are] just amazingly naturally talented or really focused. I think the technical level it's a little lopsided compared to TAFE but of course that is changing [ ... ] but I think it [being] a little bit more balanced in both schools would be better. They're integrated—you can't make things and not think.'

Interviewer: 'Especially when you need to tell the story of them and why you make them in this day and age to communicate?'

Jordan: 'Exactly and you can sort of make things having not gone through a degree and of course you can be successful in a retail and a commercial sense, and of course you can still speak about it, but I don't think it has the layers of meaning compared to say going through a visual arts degree or even just having that historical context and social context and all these different contexts that exist. Whether you like it or not you have to understand what's happening which I find a lot of the same sort of objects are being made and people are really enjoying those objects, but at the same time the makers and perhaps the people that are buying them don't understand that.' (Fig. 3.1)

*(continued)*

(continued)



Fig. 3.1 Jordan Gower (<https://aburiceramics.com/>) in his studio. (Photographs: Rosina Possingham Photography)

The account that opens this chapter points to many of the ongoing debates in Australian craft and design education, in particular lingering tensions between where that education should reside (vocational versus university education) and thus of what the balance should be in terms of practical technical skills versus creative thinking. These continue to be debated in Australia and elsewhere (Banks and Oakley 2016). In order to discuss this project's findings, therefore, it is important to locate contemporary Australian craft and designer maker practice within the larger, shifting picture of arts education and training in Australia and even beyond. Many of the funding challenges facing Australian higher education providers, such as the loss of studio space and tutor funding, are not unique to this national context and are being felt across much of the Global North. This chapter will provide a necessarily brief historical overview of the models of training available to support skills development for the applied arts in Australia, from colonial cottage industries to the educational

experiences of the contemporary craftspeople and designer makers who participated in this study. In doing so, it will highlight significant contemporary Australian federal and state government political and economic policy agendas that have directly and indirectly influenced changes to the nature, form and institutional investment in education supporting the development of contemporary Australian makers. The second half of this chapter reports on the research participants' educational experiences and sense of how well prepared they were upon graduating to establish and sustain a viable creative enterprise. Despite the prospect of low levels of income earned from their creative practice, people continue to be attracted to the possibility of carving a creative career by pursuing their crafts or designer maker interests. Furthermore, although the availability of online information about making techniques, materials and equipment suppliers, micro-entrepreneurial business skills and accessing markets has opened up the field further to self-starter or DIY makers, the majority of the makers we spoke to in this project continue to pursue some form of post-secondary qualifications and/or training to enable their practice.<sup>1</sup>

### CRAFT IN COLONIAL AUSTRALIA

Any account of pathways into creative work in Australia must acknowledge the Euro-centric focus of higher education. Most courses fail to acknowledge that making practice and creative enterprise in Australia stems back tens of thousands of years. For millennia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have been making objects of utility and crafting expressions of spirituality, in the process passing on essential knowledge about techniques and the places where raw materials can be sourced. Having brought these skills and others into contemporary making practices, generally without formal tertiary educational frameworks and institutions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities have expanded the outreach of more than 50 regional social enterprise art centres, so that they now include an extended network of small group and individual makers producing globally unique craft works across a spectrum of creative practice and price points (discussed further in Chap. 6). Mostly, these centres are run by Anglo-European artists/arts managers with an arts education from a technical college or university, which the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders making the creative works are unlikely to experience. With this important and notable exception, the Australian contemporary craft and designer maker economy is dominated

by people from Anglo-European backgrounds. It is in this context that we now consider the influence of the various modes of skills acquisition, education and training (influenced by the social, class, economic and political agendas of the day) that have supported the development of craft-based enterprises in Australia, from its early colonial industry to the contemporary designer maker of the early twenty-first century.

In January 1788 the ‘First Fleet’ arrived in Botany Bay, Sydney, from Britain to begin the process of creating the fledgling European Australian colony. As has been widely researched, this marked the beginning of colonisation, with its ongoing subsequent boat arrivals delivering their cargoes of convicts and settlers to the penal colonies of Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania), New South Wales and Western Australia. Between 1788 and 1868, the majority of the 165,000 British and Irish convicts transported to Australia were poor and illiterate, victims of the harsh social conditions and laws in the rapidly industrialising Georgian England. Apart from unskilled convicts, who worked mostly in labour gangs, each transportation to the colony also included semi-skilled convicts such as miners, craftsmen and tradesmen, who could be put to work to manufacture goods for the growing colonies. Irrespective of their place of origin and tenure of incarceration, all these people brought with them memories of the objects and making practices of their former lives, many of which they adapted and applied in the technically immature worksites of the forming colony. As with similar histories of European colonisation, Australia’s Indigenous peoples were not perceived and respected as skilled knowers of the land and how to work with it. Rather, as British settlers went about the genocidal project of occupying a land deemed by the British authorities to be *terra nullius*—‘empty’ or ‘nobody’s land’—the expertise of the Indigenous peoples was ignored and their presence viewed simply as a hindrance.

The settler economy reproduced many of the class divisions of its original societies, with the associated valorisation, or devaluing, of different workers and their skills. Industrial stations were established to support and supply food and everyday items to the work gangs and the camps transforming the Australian landscape from bushland to farmland, as well as the growing urban community. Convict labour was put to work to produce items such as footwear and clothing made from hides and wool from government farms and tools, and fittings forged with coal from the mines. The convicts working in these enterprises were commonly selected based on their employment and skills prior to being transported. The

production of these goods resembled a ‘factory line’ approach, which increased efficiency. An example of this development of semi-skilled craft labour can be found in historical records of a Tasmanian penal settlement, where incarcerated boys were put to work making shoes, goods from timber and stone building products for use in the wider colony (Tuffin 2013, 6–10).

Then, as is still the case, Australia based its economy predominantly on trading its untransformed resources, such as wool, grain and ore. In the early decades of the colony, they were chiefly sent back to Britain. This export from Australia was balanced by British imports of consumer goods such as clothing, textiles, boots and shoes, food, drink and tobacco (Butlin 2013, 3–8). Such imports tended to be more highly valued than locally produced goods, with a further hierarchy of values linked to place of origin: British and European goods were more highly rated than those from China. Rowan Ward (2002) illustrates the types of goods imported in his report of the excavation of ceramic objects from a property established in the late 1700s, occupying 109–113 George Street, Parramatta, in western Sydney. The dig found:

[a] wide range of decorative styles, in every conceivable shape, and with price ranges to suit all budgets [ ... ] meant that the imported United Kingdom ceramics so effectively dominated the field that locally produced ceramics, such as the early lead-glazed wares and imported ceramics from China, were not able to maintain their competitiveness within the market of mass production and ease of accessibility to goods. [ ... ] During the earlier years of colonial settlement the finer imported wares from both China and the United Kingdom were mainly purchased as tableware and teaware items, with the simple locally made wares ideally suited for uses mainly concerned with utilitarian roles (food preparation and storage, possible dairying, and toiletry). (Ward 2002, 68)

It was not until the great investment boom of the late 1870s, following the Australian gold rushes of the mid-nineteenth century, that local industrial production began to diversify and grow.

This historical record of the impact of imported crafted consumer goods signals a contributing factor to Australia’s limited industrial production of many of the goods that required artisanal skill and labour, and by corollary, limited cultural appreciation for, and economic and industrial investment or training for the production of refined utilitarian objects or objets d’art. Beyond the making legacies that individual migrants brought

with them from their countries of birth, non-Aboriginal making in Australia has a very short history. This historical narrative repeated itself in the late 1980s after the alternative lifestyle and artisanal boom period of the 1960s and 1970s had died down. Craftspeople and designer makers who had once been able to generate a good income from their making practice found it increasingly hard to compete with overseas manufacturers who began copying the decorative styles of the handmade limited production objects. This was particularly challenging for ceramists/potters, furniture makers and jewellers.

### FORMALISING APPLIED ARTS EDUCATION: MECHANICS INSTITUTES IN AUSTRALIA

Since the establishment of the colony, support in Australia for the acquisition of craft and making skills and for education in the applied arts has run in step with the modes of production, training and education in the UK. Perhaps the most tangible example of this was the strong presence across the country of mechanics institutes, which were the key forerunner of public libraries and adult education in Australia. Their origin is attributed to Glaswegian Dr George Birkbeck, who in 1799 advocated the need to educate the ‘working man’. His series of free lectures led to the establishment of the Edinburgh School of Arts (1821) and the London Mechanics’ Institute (1823). The institutes were intended not only to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge but also to provide a ‘civilising’ (and sobering) influence on the working classes. The growth of the mechanics institute movement coincided with the Industrial Revolution. When machinery began to dominate production processes and modes of labour, the artisanal labourer moved from being an artisanal cottage producer to being a ‘mechanic’ working the machines of production.

Mechanics institutes therefore spread from Britain to its colonies and lectures were offered free of charge in the evenings to incentivise and enable workers to attend them. In Australia, the institute building was often one of the first public buildings in a town and served many purposes (e.g. schoolhouses, banks, health centres and polling booths) while communities were being built (Pahran Mechanics’ Institute [n.d.](#)). Sometimes derogatorily called poor man’s universities or workingman’s colleges, the mechanics institutes were essentially the first adult education schools in Australia (Baragwanath 2011). It is likely that this early, overt articulation

of class distinction between universities and ‘other’ institutions of adult education is the origin of the persistent differentiation in respect and value accorded to academically focused education as opposed to trades or vocational education (as exemplified by the technical and further education or TAFE sector in Australia).

The first institutes or schools of arts (or ‘athenaeums’) were established in Sydney in 1833, Newcastle in 1835, Melbourne and Adelaide in 1839, Launceston in 1842 and Brisbane in 1849 (Baragwanath 2011). The focuses of the institutes varied across the individual colonies and were closely related to the demographic, economic, geographic and environmental resources of the communities. Institutional names reflected the industrial and economic focus of the region; for example, ‘Schools of Mines’ and ‘Agricultural Colleges’ generally were found in rural communities, whereas ‘Working Men’s Colleges’, ‘Mechanics Institutes’ and ‘Schools of Mines and Industries’ were usually established within cities and urban areas.

The status attached to particular skills and forms of making in the colonial Australian context had a complicated influence on the development of the institutes. As noted, the intention in establishing these sites of knowledge and skills sharing was not just to disseminate technical know-how among the developing local economies. The social promise of the school of arts movement held enormous appeal in colonial society:

The transfer of the concept [of mechanics institutes] to the Australian colonies created an intriguing scenario, for initially there was no industrialised society here. Rather, there was great demand for skilled labour for building purposes, and a very unequal society of convicts, emancipists and free immigrants. The concept of acquiring skills for the labourers was attractive enough, but the possibility that the movement could help stabilise society was irresistible. (Beddoe 2003, 123)

For a young, emerging nation built on a population of (ex-)convicts, (gold) diggers and those who felt their chances in the colonies could not be any worse than their standing in British or European society, the Victorian, middle-class impetus behind the institute movement, with its reformist, ‘civilising’ character, had a particularly strong currency.

Even though the ambitions for the institute movement to support Australia’s industrial development had both moral and economic grounds, for the most part the institutes struggled to attract enrolments and remain

focused on industrially aligned programmes of education. Australian settlement at this time was minimally industrialised and those who may have been eligible to attend were otherwise occupied during the day—working. They therefore had limited time or incentive to further develop their skills in the evenings. With inadequate enrolments, the mechanics institutes/art schools found they had to diversify their offerings to remain viable.<sup>2</sup> Baragwanath (2000) described the change in orientation during the nineteenth century from the working classes to the middle classes. As the nineteenth century progressed and with low numbers of ‘working men’ enrolled, mechanics institutes became less oriented towards the working classes and more towards the middle classes, delivering courses that could be described as literary and popular amusements (Baragwanath 2000, 15). Nevertheless, despite the largely middle-class enthusiasm that greeted the establishment of the mechanics institutes and their libraries, the decline was inevitable, especially given the high costs and difficulty of raising funds to maintain library stocks; books were yet another manufactured item the colony largely imported from Britain. Without significant government investment, mechanics institutes were under financial duress from the outset. The story of the establishment and decline of the mechanics institute movement is remarkably similar across Australian cities and towns; then as now cultural, civic and educational ideals and investments were at the mercy of shifting regional economic fortunes and political agendas.

### TRAINING TO SUPPORT A NEW NATIONAL ECONOMY

On 1 January 1901, Australia’s colonies federated to form a single new nation. With the heyday of the mechanics institutes now past, schools of art and design emerged from the movement and took a more active role in working to develop local industry. Notably, it is in the contemporary manifestations of these earlier institutes of learning where many of our project research participants acquired the knowledge and skills that they now apply to their making practice and creative enterprise. Space does not allow us to do justice to the full national history of the development of this particular educational sector, nor was this a focus of the project, but because these legacies inform the kinds of education available to many of our participants, we will explore one particular state context.

South Australia, with its strong twentieth-century industrial focus on manufacturing, offers a valuable case study microcosm. South Australia was hit hard in the 1980s as a result of restructuring and the offshoring of

manufacturing production to cheaper labour economies (as also was the nearby state of Victoria). The link between craft, industry and design has less history in Australia than elsewhere (notably the UK: Banks and Oakley 2016). However, for almost 50 years in the capital of South Australia, Adelaide, this link has been at the heart of the internationally regarded JamFactory, established in 1973 by the innovative state government of Premier Don Dunstan. The JamFactory in turn reflects a longer strong commitment in the state to applied arts education. As author, journalist, social historian and art critic, Peter Timms (2002) states, thanks largely to the pioneers Charles Hill and Harry Pelling Gill, ‘South Australia led the other states in the development of arts and crafts education’ and was first to master the promotion of classes in architecture; decorative design; metal, wood and leather work; as well as painting and sculpture (38–39). Adelaide was also home to the largest collection of Morris & Co. items outside the UK, thanks to the keen patronage of the firm by some of the colony then state’s richest families.

Neville Weston (1991), practising artist and art educator, provides deeper insight into the development of art and craft education in Australia. His doctoral thesis provides an interesting account of the origins and development of art school education in Australia through investigation of the relationship of British and Australian education systems and considers the impact of and resistance to innovation and change in visual arts education. He also discusses a case study from South Australia, looking at the establishment and transitions of the Adelaide School of Arts.

The Adelaide School of Arts and the South Australian Society of Arts were founded in 1851 by Charles Hill and it is from these that the current Royal South Australian School of Arts has evolved. Following Charles Hill’s departure from the school and coinciding with the Industrial Revolution in Britain, H.P. Gill became principal of the School of Arts comprising Schools of Painting and Design (1882 and 1915). Gill advocated that the ‘minor arts’ should be considered the equal of painting and sculpture. He proposed that the basis for all art education, from primary to tertiary levels, should be Walter Smith’s South Kensington System of drawing instruction, concerned primarily with artisan education and the production of artist/designers for industry (Weston 1991, 113–114). Both Gill and Hill, like many others across the colonies, were influenced by the British Arts and Crafts Movement. The associated arts and crafts societies, the ‘working guilds’ espoused by *Arts and Crafts* magazine,<sup>3</sup>

were of major importance to Australian craft, and indeed to the arts in general, until the 1939–1945 war (Timms 2002, 38).

With the decline in enrolments in many of the mechanics institutes, boundaries began to blur between training in what today we would call ‘fine arts’, and the materials-based making skills of the applied arts or craft applied in industrial or small-scale manufacturing sites, and training in what we now consider to be contemporary design practice. Peter Timms (2002) describes the latter as more akin to:

trades drawing. Art courses were basic training for mechanical or sanitary engineers, plumbers, metal workers, joiners, carpenters and masons. What may be called High Art occupies but a small space in the work to be done, and such of it as is done is undertaken primarily because of its use in the application to industrial art, and every Branch of Art is applicable to Industrial Art. Even china painting classes, introduced in some states as early as the mid-1890s, were supposed to have an industrial art basis, along the model of the English artwares studios but the rationale behind this was rather more tenuous. (38)

With the colonial population focusing on developing the sites and infrastructure to support the growing colony, the acquisition of objects of fine art relied on their importation rather than local production. Furthermore, as Timms (2002) observed:

there could be little justification for a school of fine arts and little chance such a school would secure private or public funding. Gill’s course of pursuing applied arts that were likely to be useful for the improvement of manufacturers was, therefore, the sensible option. [ ... ] Not until the late 1930s did this bias towards the useful arts give way to greater emphasis on painting, printmaking and sculpture. (39)

This complex history continued to shape crafting and associated practices in Australia throughout the twentieth century. Design historian Michael Bogle (2002) observes that, despite ‘Australia’s failure to industrialise until the early decades of the 20th Century [it] continued to valorise craft skills and kept ceramics, woodworking and textile arts courses in the many technical college curricula after they had withered away elsewhere’ (p. xv). These courses supported the training of apprentices in industries such as textile clothing, footwear and the furniture industry until the reduction or total elimination of tariffs and award restructuring

that led to the loss of many family owned, small-scale manufacturing businesses from the 1980s onwards (Tanner 1999). Ultimately, this impacted on the number of courses delivered by trade schools and opportunities for apprenticeships in craft-based manufacturing.

### THE RISE OF THE UNIVERSITIES

Craft education in Australia had therefore been shaped by multiple influences, including initially imperial ones and then the economic and social projects of the newly independent colony. From the Second World War onwards a series of initiatives by national ('Commonwealth') governments first promoted vocational technical education in Australia and then, in the late 1980s, abruptly abolished it, transferring the focus to the university sector. Constitutionally, the Federation of Australia in 1901 gave the Commonwealth government no direct role in education; this was considered a state responsibility. Consequently, Commonwealth involvement in education in Australia was minimal until the 1940s, when technical education became a vital part of the war effort for the Second World War. The Commonwealth provided financial assistance to the states for the development of technical education through the Commonwealth Office of Education, created in 1945 under the auspices of the Department of Post-War Reconstruction. However, as Goozee (2001) observes, the Commonwealth's interest in technical education virtually died at the end of the war. Don Smart, professor of education at Murdoch University, reminds us that it was not until the 1950s that the Commonwealth displayed a top-down involvement in education through numerous committees of enquiry, starting with the Murray Report and the creation of the Universities Commission (cited in Goozee 2001, 8). Following the establishment by legislation of professional registration boards for occupations that once resided in the institutes, such as Engineers Australia and the Australian Institute of Architects, the criterion for professional registration was determined to be at degree level rather than the traditional technical education diplomas. Consequently, many of these courses moved (usually at the request of the relevant professional body) to the Commonwealth-controlled university sector. Some would argue that status considerations rather than for any significant concern for educational rigour played an important part in these decisions (Goozee 2001, 9).

The college of advanced education (CAE) sector had been founded as a Menzies government (1949–1966) federal response to the

recommendations of the Martin Report for the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education (1964). The CAEs were usually based on earlier technical colleges, teachers' colleges and other post-secondary vocational institutions. Although presented as 'separate but equal', their chief responsibility was to provide vocational courses at sub-degree (i.e. diploma) level. Until 1974, the sector comprised mainly technical, agricultural and specialist paramedical colleges. In that year, the state government-controlled teachers colleges became CAEs, with the result that teaching students now comprised half of all students in the higher education sector (Goozee 2001, 7).

However in a dramatic subsequent change, between 1989 and 1992, the Hawke–Keating government's minister, John Dawkins, implemented sweeping reforms of higher education in which the CAE sector ceased to exist, being subsumed instead into the university system. This coincided with significant restructuring of the Australian economy from the 1970s to the 1990s, including the privatisation of many government instrumentalities, the deregulation of the financial system, the unleashing of competition policy, award restructuring and a reduction or total elimination of tariffs (Tanner 1999, 20, 65, 66). These restructurings had important implications for the links between craft education and industry in Australia, as it ultimately led to the rapid decline of much of Australia's manufacture of consumer goods and the loss of many family owned, small-scale manufacturing businesses such as ceramics factories; textiles, clothing and footwear factories; and furniture factories. These changes to government economic policy resulted in the decline of apprenticeship employment and reduced the need for training in these artisanal manufacturing skills.

Writing in the wake of the Dawkins era, during which time the more independent or technically focused art schools were folded into the university system, Mike Press and Alison Cusworth (1997) offer a nuanced description of the craft of object making, describing the contestation between the academic focus of making courses within the university system as opposed to other sites of adult education, where making and creative enterprise skills are sought:

Craft contains its own thinking, its own knowledge, some of which is reducible to words, but most of which takes place through the physical act of making and is manifest in the crafted object. Craft knowledge is gained and passed on through the use of all the senses. It is possible to write an account of how to blow glass, but this does not constitute the knowledge of glass

blowing. This knowledge is acquired, and developed further, by understanding the material's qualities at different temperatures and sensing how the fluid material is best manipulated: through sight and touch. (Press and Cusworth 1997, 15)

This transition point is where the history of the evolution of the craft and design education in Australia begins to be reflected in the experience of our research participants. The absorption into the university system of visual art, craft and design programmes from technical colleges catalysed a change in pedagogical focus for many design- and craft-based programmes. Many of our established makers commented on how fortunate they were to study during a period in which education was free and their time in the studio was virtually unlimited. In 1989, the Hawke Labor Government began gradually re-introducing fees for university study and since this time fees have steadily increased as has the average level of graduate's HECS (Higher Education Contribution Scheme) debt, meanwhile the income threshold that triggers the repaying of fees to the government has lowered. This change in policy is also noted by many of our emerging makers who similarly bemoaned the fact that as Commonwealth university funding shrank so too did studio time, so much so they felt ill-prepared in certain aspects of their making and enterprise skills to venture into professional creative work on graduating from their studies.

### THE UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

These Australian changes of the 1980s are associated with a shift of focus in arts, craft and design education. Discussing a parallel transition in the British context, Banks and Oakley 2016 suggest that the earlier educational focus had been on the cultivation of an artistic or creative person as a particular 'type'. Similarly, Alan Barcan (1978), in his rather strident critique of the amalgamation of the CAEs into the university system under the Hawke–Keating government, considered that:

[Academisation] throughout the western world schools, colleges and universities have relaxed their previous emphasis on developing minds and character. Acquisition of knowledge, ability to interpret information, acquisition of vocational and other skills, and the production of a given type of character have fallen into disrepute. Instead, the achievement of formal qualifications through enrolment in a higher education institution has become more

important. Certificates, degrees and diplomas are valued in themselves, rather than for the abilities and knowledge which they should symbolise. In any case, this ability and knowledge has become more and more theoretical rather than practical. (41)

Alongside the pedagogical shift from hands-on to more theoretical classroom modes, there was a tightening of university funding mechanisms and a consequent rationalisation in investment in staff levels and student contact hours. This pressure to wind back the availability of studio practice and the follow-on negative impacts on contemporary arts, craft and design graduate's practical skills was a recurrent theme throughout our research. Australian National University School of Art academics Nicol and Rubenis (2015) commented on 'the challenge of maintaining media-based programmes [i.e. materials-based] that require small classes, intensive one-on-one tutorials, extensive infrastructure and time, and specialist teaching and technical staff' and the financial handicap it placed on such intensive media-based training in comparison with 'other creative disciplines, especially those that are digitally based' (2). Their observations were certainly confirmed in our study. For example, as one of our research participants in the study commented:

To tell you the honest truth, [it's] left up to the individual to work out how to make; there's, now especially, I mean [since] I started they cut it [studio time] from 6 hours to 4 hours, now it's down to 3 hours. (Misha Dare, jeweller, emerging maker, April 2016)

Towse (2003), making a similar observation more than a decade previously, concluded that, at the level of tertiary education, the human capital investment is 'less efficient' for arts occupations. The restructuring of the higher education sector in the late 1980s included the absorption into the university system of many of visual art, craft and design programmes from art and craft schools, colleges of advanced education, independent institutions and vocational schools or technical colleges. This amalgamation has highlighted the tensions and value-laden differentiation between university education and education traditionally offered by technical colleges or TAFEs. The former involves what are considered higher cognitive skills, a more theoretical approach and a more straightforward pathway to employment, whereas the latter offers a more hands-on education with a focus on manual and technical skill.

In the disciplines of applied arts or crafts, where learning is structured around doing, this diminution of time in the studio has had a significant impact on the calibre of making skills acquired by emerging graduates. Our participants who studied within both the university system and TAFE were able to provide insights into the different pedagogical approaches and institutional cultures and their personal experiences during their time studying:

The course at RMIT [the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, a joint university–TAFE that grew out of the amalgamation of more arts and trades-based precursor institutions] is very much a skill-based course and it's, in typical sort of TAFE fashion, you work through modules and you learn particular skills and then you had to produce something that shows that you've acquired those skills. And [it's] very basic in terms of things like learning how to make a hinge or how to make a clasp or the sort of [ ... ] skills that need to be there. The RMIT [course] is actually far more [for you if] you're a fine artist and the media you're using is not very often even gold and silver, it's all sorts of things. So that's become a—that's a much more, I suppose, creative and conceptual course. And the NMIT [Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE] was [a] much more structured and skill-based course and I much preferred it. [ ... ] I got a lot of challenge out of RMIT in terms of being taken out of my comfort zone and being able to or being asked to explore materials that I otherwise maybe wouldn't have touched. However, it frustrated me that skill was not what was appreciated. (Alannah Sheridan, jeweller, emerging maker, March 2016)

The influence of this change in training and educational experience and skills acquisition is thus clearly apparent in our study when comparing experiences between the emerging and established makers who participated. The established makers commonly undertook their formal education during a time when there was greater government investment in education and the arts. In addition, during the formative stages of practice development, they were able to access a more generously subsidised range of arts funding programmes than are on offer today.

## TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY CRAFT AND DESIGN EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

Writing in 1991, writer and artist Don Ellis suggested that, once amalgamated, craft and design education had to be 'intellectualised' in some way in order to meet the tradition of university education. Furthermore,

he argued that art school policies were leading to too many programmes, which generated an oversupply of artists facing inadequate employment prospects. Many critics consider that all of these consequences are today visible in Australian university education in art, craft and design. A subsequent development is that universities have been pressured by the government to produce greater efficiencies and employment outcomes for the public monies invested and consequently have been forced to rationalise the extent of their disciplinary offerings and modes of delivery. Studio-based disciplines that require hands-on time to acquire skills, are physically resource intensive and do not have direct employment outcomes have been among the first to face rationalisation and—in many instances—demise. All this is taking place within a larger political, economic, industrial and cultural context in which science, technology, engineering and math [STEM] disciplines are valorised as the saviours of our economic futures, rendering low-tech craft production and education outmoded and redundant (Press and Cusworth 1997, 13).

In 2016, Australia's then federal education minister Simon Birmingham asserted that training in the creative arts is a 'lifestyle' choice and cannot lead to a satisfactory career or any economic outcome (Caust 2016). This dismissive attitude could be seen simply as a manifestation of the minister's and government's generally conservative principles. However, it is also strangely outdated in its implication that to be legitimately employed in work they should be employed by someone other than themselves. This lack of recognition of the validity of relevant self-employment is illustrated in reports such as the Beyond Graduation Survey which found that creative arts graduates are the least likely to be *employed in an occupation* linked to their degree three years after completing their qualification (Graduate Careers Australia 2009). All this has most recently prompted the question: When training people in these practice-based areas, what skills development is needed to enable contemporary craftspeople and designer makers to run a creative enterprise in the digital age? In the next section, we address this issue, drawing on our interviews with makers and with representatives from industry organisations.

## GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS: PROFESSIONAL SKILLS IN PRACTICE-BASED EDUCATION

You have to be good at lots of things, to wear lots of hats really well, to be a bit of an all-rounder. (Kath Inglis, jeweller, emerging maker, October 2015)

During the course of our research project, a growing body of discourse converged from a number of policy, industry and academic perspectives on the need for all students including those enrolled in fine arts programmes to develop not only disciplinary-specific skills and knowledge through their undergraduate degrees but also transferable skills (Fletcher 2016, 117; Haukka 2011). Commentators argue that this preparation is required to place students in good stead to navigate an increasingly ambiguous, flexible and unequal employment landscape (Banks and Oakley 2016; Bridgstock 2005, 2011; Brook 2016a, b; McRobbie 2004, 2016; Oakley and O'Brien 2016; Throsby and Petetskaya 2017; Throsby and Zednik 2010). The skills are additionally important in current contexts where there are more creative graduates than there are sustainable employment options for them to take up and where entrepreneurial discourses are normalised and 'the self-employment ethos [is] now a necessity for survival' (McRobbie 2016, 4).

The promotional literature of most Australian universities is notable for language that appears to address these challenges. Students are offered opportunities for engaging with industry and future employers through Work Integrated Learning (WIL) opportunities to develop or enhance their transferable skills. In addition, many universities offer support for current or recently graduated students to pursue the development of an enterprise through start-up initiatives or hubs. However, as is the case with the authors' own institution (the University of South Australia), the recipients of funding and support from the start-up hubs are mainly from the STEM disciplines. As Bridgstock and Cunningham observe in their paper on creative labour and graduate outcomes:

There is no single mandated curriculum for higher education. There are also few professional accreditation requirements in the creative industries. This means that institutions are free to determine their own graduate capabilities and program learning outcomes. Australian Qualifications Framework stipulates that Bachelors degrees in Australia will 'have advanced knowledge and skills for professional or highly skilled work and/or further learning',

but do not stipulate the actual knowledge and skills required (Australian Qualifications Framework Council 2013). [ ... ] these frameworks have been criticised for insufficiently addressing ‘twenty-first century’ capabilities such as entrepreneurship and career self-management, lifelong learning and metacognition. (2016, 13)

The importance of embedding ‘enterprise education’ in their undergraduate programmes has been recognised by cultural and creative industry researchers, economic anthropologists, educational researchers, policymakers and universities themselves. It is therefore surprising that there appears to have been minimal pedagogical response to embracing and embedding entrepreneurial and enterprise development skills within the arts curriculum throughout the years of the degree.

For this reason, many of our interviewees felt that they were ill-prepared to establish a creative enterprise but were less sure regarding whether the problem was a failure of provision or them having being naive or inattentive students (see also O’Brien and Kerrigan 2020). Here, Emma Young, an emerging glass artist, reflects on her understanding of what establishing a creative practice might entail following graduation:

I definitely think that [my degree] was not business-focused at all. Not in the sort of way that I went through anyway. There was so much focus on just building a concept because how many skills can you learn in, like, two years blowing glass? It takes years and years to learn how to make anything properly. [ ... ] So we’re kind of just pushed just to follow the assessment and just to get through uni really, and then maybe if you do honours or if you do any sort of postgrad then maybe there’s more of a focus on the business side of things. But I think definitely [ ... ] we were more, I don’t know, encouraged to be a visual artist rather than business people, and I knew that I didn’t want to be [just] a visual artist. (Emma Young, glass artist, emerging maker, March 2016)

Others had a more positive experience:

There was a bit of stuff in the final year which was really helpful. [ ... ] And there was a couple of units, like a professional practice unit, which was very helpful just in terms of understanding figures, numbers, what’s required to make a business work, in terms of if you want to stay in business and you want to employ this many people or whatever it is: “This is the hourly rate you have to charge to cover these costs.” Very basic stuff, but stuff that you

really need to know otherwise it's not going to work. So that was quite helpful. (Scott van Tuil, furniture maker and designer, emerging maker, February 2016)

Although most of the emerging makers could recall having had people come in to speak to them during their university study about the business side of creative practice, overwhelmingly, these messages were experienced as 'not sticking' or not valuable, or they simply may not have realised the significance of the information being conveyed at the time:

I just wasn't in tune with what was being said at uni because you don't really understand the context all that well, or actually it wasn't taught very well. It maybe is a little of both. (Scott van Tuil, furniture maker and designer, emerging maker, February 2017)

Some of the reasons for this (as the participants themselves acknowledged) have to do with youthful arrogance or a lack of focus on the world after completing their degree, but more often there was a sense that the information was too esoteric or not relevant enough at the time to be of any value to them.

The kind of business information and knowledge they found useful, no matter where it was sourced from, was about bigger picture and more strategic considerations. Therefore what they did find useful was when successful makers came in and talked about their (macro) business model, that is, how they had gotten where they were through trial and error, by balancing jobs; deciding on brand identities, products and locations; taking on creative or non-creative work; choosing to focus on product lines or gallery work; and/or focusing on grants or adopting a more business growth-oriented model from the get-go. As emerging maker, Cara Pearson, recalled:

They leave that professional practice side of that really late in the degree. [I'm referring here to] professional practice, which I guess is the only subject that you have in the bachelor's degree that gears you towards doing anything outside of what you've learnt or outside of your little bubble of university [ ... ] But you kind of come out of it and it doesn't give you that much of a support for where you're going to go. They try, I think there's the delineation between the students who really do want to go on and become a successful independent artist, and the students that go on to do teaching or go on to do a further degree and are not necessarily interested

in it, because a lot of them don't see the value in learning how to write grants and learning how to do all of that. But a person like me who wants to [ ... ] learn, wants to continue to build upon my skill, that's something I consider that's essential in terms of developing a business, I mean there's next to no support in that sense that I probably tried to do a lot of what I have done on my own. [ ... ] We had a lot of people come in and talk about how they, like it was pretty much, like professional practice is pretty much just about grants writing, and you don't get much else out of that to be honest. We had people come and talk about their success stories but never about running a business, I think that's something that's kind of completely overlooked in that sense. I'm trying to remember what the syllabus was, but it was mostly around grants and writing, like, you know like [ ... ] essays and things like that. [ ... ] I think for me it's something that needs to be addressed earlier in the degree. (Cara Pearson, studio glass, emerging maker March 2016)

The craftspeople and designer makers we spoke with were more concerned with balancing creative and non-creative work to make ends meet, how to strategically develop and communicate about their creative enterprise, finding the right outlets and galleries for their work and negotiating contracts and when, where and how to apply for grants and skills development residencies. Although many would begin this information-gathering journey with a Google search, a key factor in the development and continuation of the creative practice and enterprise of many of the makers we interviewed was building upon this earlier visiting practitioner experience in the classroom by having a mentor, either as part of a formalised program or through personal networks.

Others we interviewed found aspects of the professional practice subjects they had undertaken useful, but could not see how, at least if done at the necessary level of detail, they might fit usefully into an already crowded curriculum:

Well I do know in the undergraduate course that I did we had a class that was called professional practice, which I always felt like it was such a wasted opportunity because the premise of it was to teach you a lot of those things but it was just so lightly skated over. So we had one class that was tax and an accountant came in and talked to us; we had one class that was grant writing. [ ... ] That was the only experience I had with that and so I think it would be great for it to be in undergraduate, but I don't know where the time and the space within a degree [could be found]. (Clare Poppi, jewellery, established maker, September 2016)

Given this perception of lack of space within the studio-based making curriculum, just what skills did contemporary craftspeople and designer makers consider they needed, either looking forward to their future career or looking back over an established career? Arguably, the answer that captures the essence of our findings came from emerging maker Naomi Stanley, when asked what skills she considered necessary run a successful enterprise:

[You need] heaps. You just need to be everything and it's a bloody big ask for one person. Like you can't do it all at once. You need to have—you need to be marketing savvy; you need to identify your market and stuff. (Naomi Stanley, shoe maker, emerging maker, October 2015)

A fellow emerging maker's response reflects what many of our interviewees considered to be the most challenging aspect when first setting out to sell their work, after or even towards the end of their degree:

The pricing, the marketing, the understanding of “how to”, yeah it's really just the pricing/market thing that as a designer you probably need to have. But again, when we are creative we, sometimes, you just want to create; you don't think about ... it's not that the uni doesn't [mention it ... ] but they don't teach you the business side of things. Right? Yeah, they touched very little on it so it's quite hard to manage, yeah. [Admittedly] in uni you probably don't know what you want yet. So when you can't decipher that you can't find a focus, when we've been given so much information it's not [ ... ] ideal I feel. It might confuse you even more. (Textiles, emerging maker, April 2016)

We heard many interviewees say they had faced a steep learning curve when they realised that, if they were going to continue their making journey and set up a viable creative practice, they would need to be self-employed. Interestingly, few were particularly concerned about the minutiae of doing their accounts:

So it's really funny, when I first started, when I first finished uni I really wanted business training. You don't get any of that from uni and I sort of undertook to take, I didn't do any formal TAFE or other courses like that, but I did a lot of one-day workshops in how to do bits and pieces, and from that I pretty much learnt that I don't have an excellent head for business and I should outsource a lot of those things. So yeah. So taxation and things like that it's just whoosh. So I just have an accountant that I pay to do that. (Clare Poppi, jewellery, established maker, September 2016)

Although most of our emerging makers (especially the so-called digital natives) felt relatively comfortable with digital communication tools (see Chap. 8 for further discussion of this), many faced challenges—not only in timing and tone of communication about themselves and their work but also in getting their online stores working and maintaining them. This was more challenging and time-consuming than they had at first thought. Emerging maker, Natalie Lane, was particularly resourceful in addressing the challenge:

- Q: ‘And in terms of moving forward, what kind of skills development, if any, do you think you need or would you like to be able to get?’
- A: ‘One is definitely the online, with the website. So I’m doing a lot of the tasks myself, there’s not a lot that I’ve outsourced—photography, I did get a photographer early, because I thought that was important to the website. I [also] had help with my website. [I asked a friend who is a professional photographer] and the first shoot was an exchange—an exchange of skills and products [ ... ] which was a nice way to start. [So also] things like how to make your website run faster. So there’s that side of things, or customising things, say even something as simple as if when someone makes a purchase if they could choose to also buy a greeting card and have custom text inside. And just actually making that all be able to happen easily on the website is outside of my skills. So I need to include a [web] developer. [ ... ] I think part of it is not [acquiring some skills yourself, but rather] reaching out to people who have those skills, who are professionals. Not to say that there aren’t skills I need, there’s plenty, but I suppose the first thing I was thinking of was being able to access people who have skills. Whereas [at] these early stages you’re just figuring out how to do everything.’ (Corner Block Studio, picture frames, emerging maker, November 2015)

### DRAWING ON PREVIOUSLY ACQUIRED TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Not all makers come to their creative business direct from university; even those that do tend to have part-time employment to support them through their study. As a result, when seeking to refine their self-employment or small business skills, many looked to other retail or business experience rather than formal education. We asked the career changers among our

interviewees (those who began their working lives in other industries before establishing a craft or design-based enterprise) to reflect on the transferable skills they brought from their previous work:

I did the science degree and then after that I did a postgrad in business and that really helped set me up, and I think that's one thing that I can see [makes] a difference in my professional realm is seeing that artists versus designers do have a different set of skills. I would class myself as a designer because I'm too practical sometimes, and those skills were very useful in the business entrepreneurial side of where I took my creativity. (Kate Evans, textiles, established maker, October 2017)

One of our emerging makers had a background running a business as an electrician, which he said made him more aware of the pitfalls to avoid.

I've had an electrical business before [and] a lot of it was just the same skill set in a different field, it's just all about making sure you're not over-spending, keeping account of everything, making sure you know exactly what your hours are and things like that. [...] So when you quote you now quote properly because you're not trying to undercut yourself and end up working for ten dollars an hour just so you can get the job, it sort of defeats the purpose of it. (Furniture, emerging maker, February 2016)

Many of our makers found they drew a lot from their experience of working in retail, whether in the arts/design sector or other non-related retail:

It was actually a good experience to have because it gave me skills in order to sell my own work, which was harder, and then it also gave me a lot of small business skills because I mostly worked for smaller companies. So, I actually learned a lot of skills in those years I was doing retail, particularly when I worked in the United Kingdom. I worked for a small company and they just threw everything at me—lots of different aspects of the business. So, it gave me a really broad idea of actually how to run things. (Corinne Snare, silversmith, established maker, February 2017)

When asked to reflect on the skills other than the making/creative skills that she drew on in her practice, an Adelaide-based ceramic artist identified her experience working in the hospitality sector as enabling her to communicate with clients more effectively:

All that gives you a sense of confidence in terms of answering enquiries or how you approach people that you work with and I think that's always helpful. And also in terms of response times and having a bit of work ethic behind that, [it] certainly helps because if I have someone I haven't [got] back to, I certainly feel it because I'm used to feeling that in other job situations. So [ ... ] I think it makes you quite professional in terms of how you interact with prospective clients or stockists or galleries and I think it also helps you in terms of pushing yourself to make sure that you get yourself out there and understanding a little bit about the work behind the scenes in terms of running a business and, and how you, how you get on with that. (Ulrica Trulsson, ceramic artist, established maker, August 2015)

Established maker Hayden Youlley found his work experience in furniture retail invaluable on many fronts. This included observing customer buying behaviour, identifying market trends and opportunities and the all-important communication skills:

While I was there, the managing director and the designer of all the furniture [ ... ] really taught me a lot about designing for sales. So what I learnt there was really invaluable. So I learnt things like how to approach clients, how to talk to clients, who my target market was, how to position myself in the market. I got a really good understanding of what was available, in the sort of high-end, handmade designer ceramics, because that was part of what we sold. So I got a really good understanding of what was available, where the gaps were in the market, and I started to develop also in my aesthetic. So seeing what was on the shelf, and what people interacted with, really did start leading me into, "Okay yeah, I really like that as well, and it also sells," that's extra incentive to develop that part of my aesthetic a little bit further. So it was a really good training, like really good practical end-game training. [ ... ] I also learnt the [other] side: as a maker, how do you approach someone like [my former managing director] or a shop like Planet to get them to sell your work? [ ... ] I saw people do really well at that, and I saw people do really bad at that. So I got a really good sense, [that] you don't just walk in off the street and be like, "Here's my work," because nobody wants to deal with you. You learn things like that. And a simple email is actually really effective, and the images that you present in that email are also extremely important, because people are going to take a first look and get a really quick impression of you, and that's really important to solidify your product in their minds, because they're making decisions very quickly. [ ... ] So I knew coming out of [my degree and] approaching my

own practice that photography and really good style photography was going to be very important to my success. (Hayden Youlley, design, established maker, August 2016)

‘Getting your work out there’ and visible, which is important not just in the physical marketplace but also in the online marketplace, also unfortunately increases the risk of copyright infringements by others inspired by your work. Such copying was not unique to furniture makers, but it had impacted proportionately more of them within our research cohort. When asked about their level of concern in protecting their intellectual property, many of our interviewees were remarkably pragmatic about beating copycats, preferring to stay ahead of the pack rather than enter into emotionally and financially costly litigation.

### CREATING AND COMMUNICATING PERSONAL NARRATIVES

A particular communicative skill that was relevant for our interviewees was that of presenting themselves through a personal account or life narrative. Throughout history, compelling individualised narratives have helped to sell things, especially when asking people to part with discretionary income on things that are not essential to daily life. Still today, gaining a prospective client’s attention is critical; image is everything, as is cultivating your own brand, even if that ‘brand’ is you. In the Global North, where it seems almost everyone connects to the crowded internet marketplace for business and pleasure, being an all-rounder in this area of enterprise development is particularly pertinent. While many of our interviewees acknowledged that they were shy and really just wanted to focus on making, they found self-promotion almost obligatory and writing a compelling personal narrative for their online sites particularly challenging. As Morgan and Nelligan (2015) observe:

The myths of meritocracy are shattered as creative aspirants come to realize that they are often judged in ways that have nothing to do with their skills, and that in order to succeed they will have to change, for example the way they speak, dress and present themselves. (70)

Despite the increase in avenues for online promotion of their work and online selling platforms, our makers clearly articulated the benefits of face-to-face selling environments. Such environments provide the opportunity

for potential buyers to talk directly to the person who made the work, to acquire a deeper understanding of its production and the person who made it and thus to differentiate the object from others competing for the buyer's attention and dollars. But being able to market and communicate effectively across both online and face-to-face contexts was a challenge for many of our interviewees. When asked if they could put their finger on anything they would have like to have learnt in their course, many (often self-confessed introverts) reflected on the need to develop their communication and sales skills, as well as public speaking generally:

Public-speaking abilities. I'm lucky, the one thing I've had to learn going to a few different trade shows is people want the story behind the piece and if you can't engage the people they're not interested. And some people are very small-mannered people, [they] just want to look at things and don't want to get spoken to. But a lot of people want a story and I thought I was getting into this industry because I could just whittle away and do whatever I want, [ ... ] but it's really not that. [For example,] I've got to do a floor talk tomorrow night. (Furniture, emerging maker, February 2016)

Clearly, the skills to run a successful making enterprise are garnered from both explicit knowledge exchange and skills development through formal education as well as tacit knowledge and skills development through work and life experience, within as well as outside of the creative industries.

### CRAFTING A CAREER PROGRESSION: FILLING THE SKILLS GAPS

The previous sections have indicated some of the skills areas that are important for both emerging and established makers. In this section, we review some of sources of support that our interviewees said that they had found helpful.

#### *New Enterprise Incentive Scheme*

When we asked our interviewees directly about the support they considered necessary to develop a successful making enterprise, what was overwhelmingly evident was the importance of the ability to access business skills when they need them. As we have seen, generally this was not during their undergraduate training and often did not even coincide with formal

training or professional development events run by industry groups and business support organisations. Our participants acknowledged the importance of soft skills to succeed in this space, but they sought them in multiple ways, largely as part of a continuing process of professional development. In addition to the important role mentors played in makers' career development, other key sites of collegial sharing of information and knowledge included the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS), shared studios, co-working spaces and artist-run initiatives. Our interviewees shared insights into their experiences and the impact these initiatives had on the development of their creative enterprise.

With the apparent lack of exposure to information about enterprise development and business management, or an inability to contextualise learning something unless actually applying it in daily life, it is hardly surprising that few of the emerging makers we interviewed had a written a formal business plan, or had anything more than a hand-to-mouth approach to managing the financial side of their business. A standout finding arising from the question 'Have you ever put together a formal business plan?' was the number of makers who, to make up for the lack of business skills development during their time in higher education, acquired the information through the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS). The Commonwealth government-funded NEIS provides registered job seekers (i.e. those eligible to receive unemployment social security payments) with:

- accredited small business training and business mentoring for up to 52 weeks;
- income support for up to 39 weeks (NEIS allowance) and NEIS rental assistance for up to 26 weeks (if eligible); and
- personalised mentoring and support from a NEIS provider in the first year of the new business to help put their business idea into practice. (Australian Government [n.d.](#))

Of our interviewees who had written a business plan, many had done so while undertaking the NEIS and all acknowledged its positive impact on the development of their enterprise:

I did a NEIS course and that was fantastic because they do this thing where they make you figure out what your competitive advantage is, which took me weeks and a lot of tears and going 'no, I'm no different to any furniture

designer, how am I ever going to make a successful business?’ But what I figured out from that was there was lots of wooden cabinet makers and people who did benches and tables and none of that has changed, but there weren’t many people doing upholstery. So that’s where I went, I’m focusing on the upholstery side of things and going from there and I still keep that upholstery focus and it’s interesting when I do collaborate with architects [which I do] all the time now, the fact that I do the upholstery side of it they really appreciate that because they can knock up joinery designs and stuff no problem, but they all feel a bit lost on that upholstery side of that because it is a bit specialist. So it was a good choice 15 years ago. (Julie Pieda, Koush Design, established maker, August 2015)

I did a course run by the Australian Government. It was called the NEIS Scheme. [ ... ] And that was amazing I have to tell you. That actually set me up. That started me to think properly about every step and this is how they showed me that you have to choose one day for your administration and that’s normal. You have to have a day like that to deal with all the issues. So now I don’t have to complain “Oh I hate paperwork and everything,” I just do it in between and I just call it my administration time. But NEIS helped me to plan and to get all the ideas together. (Agnieszka Berger, ceramics, established maker, February 2016)

But, as mentioned, to be eligible for NEIS training, the applicant must be at the time registered for Newstart Allowance (an income support payment while unemployed and looking for work). This rendered most of the people we spoke to ineligible, despite the gains that such a focused and structured program can provide.

### *Shared Spaces*

Although it provides a solid foundation, it takes more than writing a business plan to run a successful creative enterprise. To implement the plan, it is necessary to have skills that go beyond the ability to make the work to be sold. Ironically, those best able to survive in this space are not necessarily the best makers. Whether aiming for the high-end gallery or the Etsy ‘high street’, all makers need networks, and building networks means building relationships. A number of our interviewees were able to enhance their creative enterprise skills through the tacit knowledge exchange that comes with being a member of a shared studio space. For established maker Hayden Youlley, this experience was invaluable:

When I graduated, I was in the position of working part-time in the design industry, sort of more in sales, and I lost that job due to downsizing and was put in the awkward position of do I try and find another job in the industry that I'm going to hate, or do I actually try and live out somewhat my dream job, which would be to make my own ceramics and design my own ceramics? Someone at that stage told me about the New Enterprise Initiative Scheme run by the government and I did some research and found it that it was perfect for someone like myself, who was looking to start a new business, and jumped at that chance. [I] put myself through the course, did really well, got my business plan in order, for my ceramic business, and when I finished that, I was lucky [ ... ] I was able to jump in as a resident at a ceramics studio on main campus at UNSW [University of New South Wales] and just started my business there under the kind of guidance of a few ceramicists who were already working there and [had] already established practices and established businesses. And they really sort of helped me grow and find my feet and really pointed me in the direction of what I needed to do to make it work, and to sell work and how to approach shops and how to approach stockists and get wholesale orders and what to do at a market stall and how that all plays out. So they were really, really helpful. (Hayden Youlley, ceramics, established maker, August 2016)

Similarly, Clare Poppi finds working in a collective studio space does more than provide her with the economic benefits of communal working; more importantly, sharing the space with others offers opportunities to share feedback about each other's work—something more challenging to gain if working solo:

When we started over there it was four of us that had gone through uni together and so since two of those people have left and gone on to do other things and then two new people have come [ ... ] And it's just really lovely, it's just a great community and everyone has different feedback but because we all have other jobs, our other things that we're doing [so] we're not all in here at the same time together so you get that time to yourself to actually work. And then sometimes you'll go "Oh, somebody else is here, this is nice we'll have a chat." (Clare Poppi, jeweller, established maker, September 2016)

Established maker Vicki Mason found her time at Object Studios in Sydney invaluable in establishing her practice:

I think I was at Objects Studios for two years when Brian Parkes was running them and it was a professional development practice for young starter-

outerers and they had Object Studios in Pymont. Oh my goodness that was invaluable, the people that came through those studio doors. They had a manager, there were about six or eight of us in there at a time, they had a visiting artists' residence, it was amazing. But that's where I really, they geared you up with your marketing, postcards were printed, you choose fonts for your business card, you talked, looked at the whole package, curators came through the doors, we were given opportunities to exhibit. That's when I got the mentorship to go to Gray Street [Studio in Adelaide]. That, that was invaluable and I think it's probably sorely missed, I've never seen anything quite like it again really. (Vicki Mason, established maker, jeweller, April 2106)

### *Asking for Advice and Support*

Aside from any particular course or mentoring model that had been formative in the development of their business skills and practice, our interviewees had found it pivotal to be willing to ask for advice and support:

A combination of mentoring process and winging it, and also having friends who have done business stuff and just being willing to ask, I suppose maybe being willing to ask and being able to say you can't do something, can you give me advice—just asking for advice from multiple parties and figuring out somewhere in between is something I do a bit. And I suppose I learnt some generic skills as well through like activism, I was fairly heavily involved in it sort of when I was younger in particular, and it's one of those things that actually does train people up quite a bit, especially in communications. And it's a bit—sometimes having a conversation with someone about a product is a bit easier than having a conversation with someone about a heavy political issue, so it's interesting having like gone from one to the other and just going, okay yeah I feel uncomfortable, but you kind of just have to do it anyway, and you're not really, it's not really the biggest imposition to talk to someone, if someone doesn't want to talk to you they'll just say so. Saying that, everyone finds that stuff difficult I think, mm yeah, and so do I. (Duncan Meerding, furniture, established maker, February 2016)

### *Personal Qualities*

What was clear from our interviewees is that, whether or not they felt their education prepared them for stepping up to the challenges of running a sustainable making enterprise, there were many things they were unlikely to learn in a formal classroom or studio setting. It was important to

practice and develop crafty ways of doing things. Furniture maker and designer Liam Mugavin cited financial adversity and the challenge of making money from a creative enterprise as spurring him on:

- A: ‘You have to be persistent and willing to just live very basically, as you get started, because you won’t make money for a while.’
- Q: ‘Has it been tough? While your friends have got jobs and buying cocktails, and you’re thinking of staying home and have a beer?’
- A: ‘Well not really, because I’m naturally good at doing that. Yeah, I saved up a bit of money in Japan, as well, so I do have money to fall back on. I feel that that challenge actually fuels you to try to succeed and push your business further, because it means that making money isn’t central and it pushes you to succeed. Whereas I feel that if I had a more stable income, I wouldn’t push my practice so hard, if that makes sense.’ (Liam Mugavin, furniture maker and designer, September 2015)

Established maker Anna Anago found that her ‘relentless determination’ enabled her to overcome the inevitable problems faced in establishing and running a creative microenterprise.

And not giving up when you get the first problem that comes about because what I’m finding is, you’re just a problem solver in business, that’s all you become, at the end of the day you’ve got little problems and big problems that pop up. And I’m one of those people that actually quite like getting the problem going, how am I going to fix it and coming up with crafty ways of fixing it. (Anna Anago, One Happy Leaf, established maker, November 2016)

Overall, we found that irrespective of where and how our makers gained the knowledge, skills and support to develop their creative enterprise, there were just as many personal qualities that they felt they needed to draw upon or develop.

## NOTES

1. For further discussion of the pathways chosen by aspiring creatives as they seek to enter the creative workforce, see Taylor and Luckman (2020).
2. See Banks and Oakley (2016) for a discussion of how art schools in Britain also emerged out of the nineteenth-century mechanics institute movement.

In Australia, the emergence of the trades-oriented TAFE sector effectively served to again divide university taught arts/crafts from trade skills, leading to Australia not having quite the same kind of history of accessibility to the working-class art schools as was the case in the UK.

3. *Arts and Crafts* was a magazine briefly published in Australia in the 1890s.

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## CHAPTER 4

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# Establishing a Crafty Making Future: What Does a Career in Craft Look Like Today?

It was not so much a hobby but an enjoyable pastime for me. I mean being a visual art teacher I mean I've obviously got skills in drawing and painting and I love that, but I started doing the craft side of things for more practical reasons like my small children's painted T-shirts and that type of thing. I was under no illusion that I could make a living at it. I made a living as being a teacher so in that regard the silk painting that I do has always been something else on top of my real job. [...] I never saw it as a business and still don't. So it's unusual in that 35 years ago when I decided to try knitting as an art form I saw myself and for the next 15 years through the 80s and into the mid to late 90s I only ever knitted artwork. I only ever knitted work for exhibitions for galleries for installation or for artwork. It's only in recent times and a lot to do with being part of Craft New South Wales that I've actually created a retail range. I never had a retail range until the last 10 years, whereas now because I'm a full-time knitter I knit on average 8 to 10 hours a day and therefore I now mix the three things. I now combine the artwork with the installation art with the retail line but, sort of, it is while I have had an ABN since 2000 as a maker, as you would be aware you have to earn a lot of money before it really clicks in in terms of paying tax on it, I never

saw it as a business and I'm only aware of one textile artist or textile maker who earns a living from textiles—it is a craft form that's almost impossible to earn a living from. You need to have a supplementary income from whatever form it's coming from, if you are working in textiles, if you are a maker in textile. (Jude Skeers, textile artist/Arts and Crafts NSW, established maker, December 2015)

As we have already noted, few if any of our interviewees indicated that they were motivated by an entrepreneurial desire to 'get rich' or 'make it'. With this in mind we were curious to examine how our research participants viewed their making enterprise, given they were all selling what they made. Were they doing this as a hobby, a vocation or a 'self-defining' or redefining career move? Did it evolve from a lifestyle transition? Were they consciously avoiding traditional employment and wage-earning structures, or was it as dispassionate as a moneymaking enterprise? Or was it an unplanned next step as they emerge from higher education? What we found through the project was that regardless of the motivation for starting their making enterprise, none of our research participants were waiting for opportunities to fall into their laps. As one of the emerging makers stated: 'You've just got to trust in yourself, [...] keep your direction and go for it' (Phillipa Julien, textile artist and designer maker, emerging maker, February 2017). But as we have heard from our interviewees in the project, while 'going for it' looks different to different people, there are many common experiences shared between those that work in the creative industries, and the craft sector more specifically, including their persistence and commitment to a making enterprise that most would consider 'economically aberrant' (Knott 2015, 51). Regardless of the level of economic reward, the skills and entrepreneurial acumen to negotiate such an individualised pathway is challenging yet a clearly rewarding (enough) task, given so many persist (Fig.4.1).

This chapter outlines the diversity of ways that project participants have developed and structured their working lives and enterprises. Within these conversations we will gain an understanding of the range of people, personal acumen and skills and public and private investments that are garnered by these creative entrepreneurs to develop and sustain their practices. Most of our research participants could be described by Milanese's notion of 'passion entrepreneurs', pursuing their creative practice as either, or a combination of, lifestyle choice, accidental entrepreneurship and/or hybrid entrepreneurship



**Fig. 4.1** Tiff Manuell (<https://tiffmanuell.com/>) working in her studio, with shopfront through door on right of photo. (Photograph: Rosina Possingham Photography)

(Milanesi 2018, 425). Despite the often relatively low levels of income derived from their creative self-employment, we hear from makers why they pursue this work and often supplement their income with other sources of paid employment. The chapter concludes with a reference listing of some of the key practical advice offered by the research participants.

### DESCRIBING A CREATIVE CAREER

Since the late 1990s, across the Global North we have witnessed the rise of what has been referred to as portfolio work. Portfolio work involves simultaneously working on a variety of projects in different places of employment (or self-employment); in this way, the ‘individual becomes his or her own enterprise, sometimes presiding over two separate companies at the one time’ (McRobbie 2016, 20). Tepper (2002) observes that many who work in the creative industries have multitrack portfolio careers—for example, our research participants’ work portfolios included designer makers who also teach, produce works for exhibition, create limited-run production ranges, undertake public art commissions and design for manufacture.

Hall (1996) described this process as the protean career: ‘a career that is driven by the person, not the organization, and that will be reinvented by the person from time to time, as the person and environment change’ (8). Our conversations with Australian craftspeople and designer makers did indeed confirm that most are needing to pursue a portfolio career to generate workable incomes. They also highlighted the passion that drives many makers to persist balancing these multiple roles. Thus, while few if any of our research participants would ever describe themselves as ‘entrepreneurs’ (see Luckman (2018)), Milanese’s definition of the ‘passion entrepreneur’ nonetheless seems to offer appropriate typologies to describe our research participants’ creative enterprises without judgement on the income they generate through their practice. For what was evident through our research is that self-employment specifically, and by default the need to be enterprising or entrepreneurial within the creative sector, is an increasingly normalised social and economic assumption regardless of whether you are starting out on the creative career path upon exit from a higher education degree or entering as a ‘career changer’ (Fig. 4.2).

In a paper exploring passion entrepreneurship, Milanese (2018, 425) summarised the discourse on atypical pathways of the passion entrepreneur who is motivated by reasons other than solely business opportunity and resource optimisation. She outlines the following passion entrepreneur typologies as identified in the business entrepreneurship literature:

- The lifestyle entrepreneur is motivated by [economically] irrational personal needs, such as self-realisation and enjoying life, and considers the company as a means of supporting a certain lifestyle in which business objectives are secondary to personal goals (Henricks 2002).
- The accidental entrepreneur is the result of specific processes where entrepreneurship often happens when people are on their way to something else (Aldrich & Kenworthy, 1999).
- The hybrid entrepreneur has parallel business-employment careers with a particular focus on passion as the main motive (Thorgren, Nordström & Wincent, 2014) (as cited in Milanese 2018, 425).

Interestingly, many of our interviewees could be considered a hybrid of all three of Milanese’s entrepreneurial typologies listed above, often transitioning from one to the other as personal goals and life circumstances shift, as they inevitably do. For example, textile artist Jude Skeers, whose words open this chapter, never saw her making as a business and still doesn’t. With the ability to earn a wage through teaching, she focused her



**Fig. 4.2** Stephanie Hammill (<http://stephaniehammill.com/>) in her studio. (Photograph: Rosina Possingham Photography)

making on the production of artwork, only more recently developing a retail range upon retiring from teaching and becoming a ‘full-time knitter’. Other interviewees were clearly accidental entrepreneurs, spurred on by family to venture into the online marketplace:

- Q: What led you to wanting to do this and setting up a business?
- A: Well, I've always wanted to have a go at leather craft, but it's quite expensive to get materials so I just [...] bought myself half a cow and had a go, but then I thought if I make and sell I can generate income to buy more supplies. So that's how it happened and my youngest suggested I try selling on Etsy which I did put the time into putting that all up and then a local lady contacted me to say they were establishing an Etsy-based market for Darwin-based people, would I like to participate? And I said yeah I would and so that's where it started. [...]
- Q: So, you're running this as a small business?
- A: Yeah taxwise it's not really emerging as anything to consider as far as income goes at the moment, but I am trying to supplement my husband's wage.
- Q: So, is it mostly paying its own way?
- A: It's breaking even.
- Q: You're not getting any return for your own personal time quite yet?
- A: Probably not. (Leather, established maker, July 2016)

Similarly, Jax Isaacson's interest in making started as an 'accidental' making enterprise which grew from a need to keep her creative brain active while caring for a young family (see Feature Interview). Her experimentation with resins and jewellery making has evolved from a 'hobby' to what is now a successful microenterprise.

#### **Feature Interview—Jax Isaacson**

Q: So, when did the resin jewellery start?

A: So, this is the easy one, so this time last year I had an [...] 8-month-old and a [toddler] and they both slept for the first time. [...] So they were sleeping and I had time during the day where they were sleeping both during the day and I started getting immensely bored; I'm not an awesome born to be mother anyway. So it's not like that, that fulfils me completely but I started getting really bored and really quite miserable about that. I work on the block and once again that's a physical thing and I do really enjoy that, but creatively I was lacking immensely and it was affecting my wellbeing. So I decided I had to start, had doing creative stuff again. So what I did is I started trying to

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workshops and stuff like that, because I thought I'll just dabble in small amounts and I really enjoyed my print making when I, that I did when I was at Uni and there's no workshops really around in the Riverland and I found it really difficult to find a creative outlet. I joined my local art gallery, thinking volunteering for them might help but that was not very much stimulation really. [But] it's just a small gallery and I would be the youngest there by about 40 years. So it wasn't exactly the environment I thought would be. [...] So anyway, I thought I'll start print making and I got all this stuff together to do a bit of print making and realised that you can't do print making in 1½ hours while your kids are sleeping it's a bit more, it's too messy for that [...] Anyway, I always wanted to try resin, thought I'd just give it a go, I just started playing around with resin and during that process I set some resin in wood and then I thought I'd carve it, and then I thought, well I'll make myself a pendant out of it and I did and then somebody wanted to buy that pendant from me and that's how I started. [...] And then I made another one and then somebody else wanted to buy that one from me and all of a sudden, I'm making jewellery. [...] it was purely just because I needed something to do and it's fit in, and the best thing about it was it fit into my time; I could do it whenever I wanted and of course at the start it was really slow. So, I could just make a piece once a week and on my day that I, I could and, [...] then [...] in September last year I had a little stall at the local field days in Barmera and I sold heaps of pieces and got heaps of really great feedback and then that's when I was like, maybe I should be taking this a bit more seriously. So, I started a website then and started looking at actually selling my stuff instead of just doing it for shits and giggles.

Q: So, pursuing your, what you're interested in, you're able to do that because of the income coming in from the pistachio business and your partner is that, is that how it works?

A: So, so I've been in the luxurious position where I haven't had to work which has been amazing, especially with the little kids.

Q: You are working but you're not in paid employment.

A: Well I am working and, and I've always worked on the block but I haven't had to go out and get an external job [...] So, whether I can stay in this position is, I'm unsure, we won't know for a few

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**(continued)**

months, see how our harvest goes and all of that. So, we've got an income coming in through the pistachios and being able to out-source my kids a couple a days a week, that gives me the opportunity to do that. [...] my plan now that I've got a bit more of an idea and I feel like I can, my plan is to hopefully build what I'm doing to a point where it is a viable business and it could be my, it can be an external income instead of just paying for itself. (Jax Isaacson, resin jeweller and homewares, established maker, July 2017)

Jax's story is typical of several women we interviewed for the project. Working from home today is a particularly attractive option for women accustomed to paid work but now also finding themselves with caring responsibilities within the household (see Luckman and Andrew (2018) for further discussion of this). Women's craft production wherever it has been undertaken has long had to fight to be seen as more than a 'hobby' (Parker 1984). Despite women's making skills for many previous generations being a primary way of making money for the family, this image of women's craft as not art and largely amateur is reflected in common references to home-based microenterprise being less serious than the 'real job' of a traditional wage earner. Consequently, commonly undertaken as a form of home-working, often part-time and all too frequently for little to no financial reward, craft practice continues to suffer from the long shadow cast by stereotypes of middle-class domestic-based labour being 'not a real job'. This certainly was still the case for some of the people we spoke to:

- A: I started the business in 1990 so I've been doing it a long time as a business. It was under a different name then, but I ran the business from home. We had a house that had a massive big room out the back that was totally separate from the rest of the house, so I ran the business from there, but because it was from a private address again it was difficult to get people to take me seriously that I really was—this was a business—this wasn't just a hobby in my back room. I was a registered business and put a tax form in every year and the whole bit, and it really wasn't until the GST was introduced and all that

business happened that it started to become serious because suddenly the government let me have an ABN and all that GST business and everything you have to be a lot more accountable when all that happened as a small business. So, people thought oh yeah, she's going to disappear, and I didn't—I just got stuck into it even more and that was when I went out and went into a shop and that was difficult too—very difficult.

Q: Have you found the attitudes to working from home have changed?

A: Very much so. In fact, it's quite acceptable it seems nowadays not just for crafts people, but it seems like office work from home is not at all frowned on anymore. It's very—in fact a lot of houses that are marketed now are marketed with a home office and all this sort of thing so yeah, very much more acceptable than it was in 1990 when I started. (Textile artist, established maker, May 2016)

Fortunately, this growing normalisation of small-scale, and often home-based, self-employment was clearly reflected in the taken for granted attitudes towards microenterprise encountered by many of our emerging makers.

Others articulated their choice to develop their making enterprise as a conscious decision to create and live a better lifestyle and thus are arguably more classic 'lifestyle entrepreneurs':

Know why you're going into it as a sole trader, I think. You have to be making that decision because of what you can get out of having your own business, not just because it seems like a good way to make money directly or to kind of be in control or not have to have a boss, or yeah, you have to see it for what it can give you. So, for me, it means I can ride my bike when I want to, I can knock off that afternoon and spend the afternoon with my wife instead. It's really for me is about being flexible and enjoying my life. It's not about, I'm not being a sole trader and have my own business so that I can made loads of cash. I don't think many people do. You have to run multidisciplinary or companies that involve employing lots of people to really make money, there's no-one really on their own making loads. Some people I know are still doing markets 10 years later because they have to keep going back. So even the most successful, they're still just doing every market. And you never are really going to be making lots of money, so it's not about that. Go into it because you enjoy living life, that's really what it's about. (BUCK!T Belts, established maker, October 2017)

Many makers we spoke to are perhaps more obviously what might be called hybrid entrepreneurs, pursuing their creative practice within a hybrid suite of jobs in the classic portfolio career model as discussed earlier in this chapter. For example, when asked about her plans following graduation, glass artist Briony Davis is clearly committed to generating an income within the creative sector, no matter what:

- Q: ... because you're still studying, do you consider that your practice is or is about to be a small business when you finish?
- A: I'm hoping to go that direction but I'm also very much aware of the fact that bills need to be paid. And so, I will work on the side but I'm hoping I can still continue with my practice and bring that up alongside so that I can actually afford life.
- Q: Are you working—are hoping to get a job that's more related to your practice?
- A: Yeah. I would love to—I have a lot of retail experience and so I would love to actually work in the shop side of art, either working in the shopfront of the JamFactory, or working at the art gallery, things like that. I just want to be around art in whatever way I can. (Briony Davis, glass, emerging maker, March 2016)

Writing specifically of creative employment pathways, Bridgstock (2011, 10) refers to the 'boundarylessness' that characterises creative industries employment, which is largely individually navigated and generally offers few opportunities for stable employment or progression through a firm as was once 'normal' in the labour market of the last century. Certainly the precarity of portfolio working was familiar to, if not the current situation of, the majority of the makers we interviewed.

Given this lack of employment stability, it is worth adding a further category to those offered by Milanese; Reynolds et al. have identified the category of 'necessity entrepreneurs', that is, those who develop an enterprise when there are no better choices for work (2003). Established furniture maker Julie Peda's motivation for establishing her practice was precisely out of necessity, as she explains below:

Because I didn't have an interior or an architecture degree and industry was low at that time—the housing industry. I went I don't have any choice. I'm never going to get a job in an architectural practice or an interior practice—maybe that wasn't true but that's how I felt and I went I don't have any

choice but to start my own business—there’s no other way to do it and I did a NEIS course and that was fantastic because they do this thing where they make you figure out what your competitive advantage is which took me weeks and a lot of tears and going no I’m no different to any furniture designer. How am I ever going to make a successful business? But what I figured out from that was there was lots of woody cabinet makers and people who did benches and tables and none of that has changed but there wasn’t many people doing upholstery. So that’s where I went; I’m focussing on the upholstery side of things and going from there and I still keep that upholstery focus and it’s interesting when I do work in—like I collaborate with architects all the time now and the fact that I do the upholstery side of it they really appreciate it because they can knock up joinery designs and stuff no problem but they all feel a bit lost on that upholstery side of that because it is a bit specialist. So it was a good choice 15 years ago. [...] So I started it in a studio in Coromandel Place. That was hiring a space in there and every year my partner and I sat down and went, ‘did we do better than last year’. Like the business had to grow. She was working really hard in lots of hotels and I wasn’t bringing home much money and I knew I had that emotional and financial support for a year or two but basically we went we can’t go on forever. If it doesn’t work I’ll have to go back to teaching. Teaching ironically was always the fallback trade just like dad said and then every year we sat down before Christmas and went did we do better than the year before and for the first 10 years it was 20% growth every year and it was like fine, we will hang in there. And I guess 20% is a really big deal for a business but it was 20% of nothing to start with. So it took a long time. (Julie Pieda, interior and furniture designer, established maker, August 2015)

We also heard from our research participants that many had undertaken teaching (usually on a sessional basis) as ‘a fallback trade’.

### THE REALITIES OF MAKER INCOMES (FROM MAKING)

These makers’ stories, as well as those outlined in Chap. 1, indicate a snapshot of the diversity of motivations and modes of creative enterprise developed by our research participants. With such diversity, accordingly, there are also differing notions of what success looks like (see Luckman (2018)). What unites these diverse experiences, however, are relatively low levels of financial return for effort. In this way, much like the Australian, Hawaiian and Californian surfboard makers Warren and Gibson researched, the majority of the makers we interviewed were more motivated by the rewards of the ‘emotional terrain’ of making, ‘not by a natural desire for profit’

(2013, 20). For despite the popularity of handcrafted bespoke objects around much of the industrialised world, and the ease of setting up a business identity and launching it online, the vast majority of both our emerging and established maker research participants are not generating significant net income from their creative practice (for further discussion on this, see Luckman and Andrew (2018)), as the following tables (Tables 4.1 and 4.2) illustrate. Many accountants would consider this level of income as a hobby; to our makers it is serious business that enables creative expression, defines their sense of self and in the most part generates an income to at least sustain the purchase of materials with which to continue making.

**Table 4.1** Established makers: ‘annual income earned from craft practice’ (if two selected lower option counted)

<i>Income bracket</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Couple</i>	<i>No response</i>
Below \$10,000	24	21 (33%)	3 (20%)	0	0
\$10,000–\$30,000	23	19 (30%)	4 (27%)	0	0
\$30,000–\$60,000	18	12 (19%)	4 (27%)	1	1
\$60,000–\$80,000	6	4 (6%)	2 (13%)	0	0
\$80,000–\$100,000	1	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0	0
Over \$100,000	4	3 (5%)	1 (7%)	0	0
No response	5	4 (6%)	1 (7%)	0	0
Total	81	64	15	1	1

**Table 4.2** Emerging makers: ‘annual income earned from craft practice’ (if two selected lower option counted)

<i>Income bracket</i>	<i>Number of responses: Year 1</i>	<i>Number of responses: Year 2</i>	<i>Number of responses: Year 3</i>
Below \$10,000	22	12	8
\$10,000–\$30,000	9	7	5
\$30,000–60,000	1	5	2
\$60,000–\$80,000	1	0	0
\$80,000–\$100,000	0	0	0
Over \$100,000	0	0	0
No response	0	0	0
Total	33	24	15

As we have seen, notably a fundamental way makers address income shortfalls is not through letting go of the making side of their practice and outsourcing this to others, but rather to take on outside employment, engaging in other aspects of their protean career ‘work portfolio’, ideally in a way that maintains a connection to the creative sector:

At the moment I work three days a week at a studio which is really so that I have enough financial backing to eat and pay the rent and have a little bit of fun and what not. And that way I can take the financial stress away from my personal practice. (Pip Kruger, illustrator, emerging maker, August 2015)

However, and it is important to note that precisely because of the ‘passion entrepreneur’ (Milanesi 2018) motivations driving many of the research participants, the discussion about relatively low income-generating capacity and outcomes was not all doom and gloom. That said, peak industry bodies and those selling the work of craftspeople and designer makers expressed concern that many creative aspirants have unrealistic expectations regarding the degree to which making a living from artistic work is not dissimilar to running a non-creative small business. So too, similar concerns were raised by some of the more established makers generating a sustainable income from their making, generally precisely because they do not avoid nor seek to somehow romantically transcend the small business realities of running a creative microenterprise:

The idea that you can make money as an artist while you know it’s really ingrained that you can’t [...] I’ve always been able to say, well actually my parents are artists and they have been full-time artists you know now for about 20 years you know and I’d really like to be able to say that to people and say, it’s perfectly possible, don’t say it’s not. But you have to, I think, one of the problems is people actually don’t work hard enough, and I know that sounds a bit cynical but, and I say it a little bit I guess from my own point of view. I think you can have this idea of ‘oh I’m going to be an artist and it will be so lovely, and I’ll do a bit of work and oh my work, you know I can sell at exhibitions’ [but in reality] it’s like anyone who’s making full-time money at art is working full-time at least. [...] I think if you want to get bigger you probably will have to hire staff eventually and I think about it myself, how do you make that step. Particularly just the simple thing of, so the way I’ve set up my business which again has come from my parents’ model that my mother always said to me, you need a bread and butter line, you need your bread and butter lines, you’ve got to get them going, get

them out there and then you have time to do your creative fine art, you know whatever that is. And she said you've got to make sure you still can do that, you don't want to just be a slave to that because that will drive you nuts, but you want to be able to have that space. But you need that income to be feeding into that. So that's the model I've really been taught, and I feel like right now, and I have to say it probably took me a while to get my head around that. I did it with my painting a bit, when I came to the ceramics, I realised one thing that I wasn't doing was I'm not very good at doing repetitive processes, I'm very easily bored. And so eventually I went, okay I have to really limit myself and so I said I'm going to come up with three designs and I've got a colour range of only three colours, you know and that's what I've done. And interestingly you organically add lines over time. You know like the noughts and crosses sets are one of the first things I had, but they're still there and you know they just tick away slowly but surely. (Ceramicist, established maker, November 2015)

The quote above is notable for the way it captures the other key 'portfolio' strategies long employed by successful craft makers: the studio model, whereby in addition to producing gallery-style work in their own name, the maker also strategically develops other lines of work, often under a 'brand' name, within their own practice (Fig. 4.3). Many high-profile critically and commercially successful studio potters in particular have long embraced such an approach. In our study, one of the country's leading contemporary jewellers similarly uses these two strands of her work to support one another, using her production lines to inform the development of and also cross-promote her exhibition work and vice versa, depending on where she is at in the making cycle:

The two strands of work, the exhibition work and the production work, I alternate with each other; one-year exhibition work takes priority, the next year production work takes priority. For a long time, Miyuki Nakahara managed the production work for me, and that used to help, you know, that would provide her wages and manage it. It's only recently I have been able to find other people that were willing to step in, in that way. [...] I find that it's a two-way street between the two. The exhibitions allow me to explore conceptual ideas and my thinking within the field, my philosophical thinking, as well as day-to-day things; production work either starts out in exhibition or ends up in exhibition. And when I have an exhibition it's a kind of marketing; people will remember the exhibition [...] one feeds the other. I have people come to the exhibitions who may have bought a pair of earrings, the earrings probably most of all because they're the most prolific of



**Fig. 4.3** Adam Coffey, Future Shelter (<https://futureshelter.com/>), in his workshop. (Photograph: Rosina Possingham Photography)

my practice, who would never step into an exhibition, or they might come to the workshop and they suddenly see all this other work, and vice versa; people that go to an exhibition may not be aware so much of the production work, then it opens that door. (Susan Cohn, jeweller and metalsmith, established maker, November 2015)

For others perhaps less comfortable with the art-money commercial relationship, such a strategy subjectively isolates their ‘real’ (artistic) work from any classic Bourdieusian-style art field ‘contaminatin’g effects of serving market demand and thus losing one’s creative ‘integrity’:

I’m a bit fearful that if my stuff was really popular [and] it started to take off and then I’d become a machine and it would be like ‘oh, what was the point of doing this in the first place?’ I’d much rather be an artist and pursue other materials rather than just silver.... because I’m a one-person-band, I don’t want to—I mean, sure it’d be fantastic to take on an apprentice and in a way I’ve supplemented my whole world by teaching, I teach short courses in silversmithing at TAFE one night a week for four weeks and from that I’ve

picked up some private students who want to pursue onwards, so that's good, that's a nice little—it's really nice to see other people interested in handmaking stuff and maybe they'll be the budding silversmiths of the future. (Curious Tales, furniture maker, established maker, February 2016)

As we have indicated, to differentiate these strands of work in the marketplace, some of our makers chose to adopt and trade under a business name other than their own name. For one emerging maker, having a business name made the everyday side of running a business flow more logically, without this 'brand' being tied up in their own artistic reputation as they balanced their work 'portfolio':

- Q: And so you're running a small business and you see this as a small business?
- A: Yes, trying to anyway, it's still new to me but that is the approach that I am aiming for.
- Q: Is this sort of full-time, is this what takes up most of your day?
- A: Right now this is full-time yes, so when I was working at the retailer that was full-time, so that was one of the reasons why I was moving away from that. Ideally I was always planning to have a part-time job and then give myself the time to pursue this but it didn't work out that way, so it was really work[ing] full-time and then jump into this full-time as well.
- Q: Are you having at the moment to supplement this work with additional work to bring in enough money?
- A: It's really all under the one name but I do several different things to sort of try to get my weekly income to a place where I want it, so I obviously sell, I'm starting to get some wholesale stockists in as well so that's helping a lot and while I'm in the space I'm also, have been booking in private and small group workshops because I've got the space available to me anyway and it's been a really great way to sort of get more people through the shop and build up a bit of a network of customers and followers and things like that. [...]
- Q: And you identify as an illustrator, we've discussed what projects you produce and sell, is this shop the name of your business?
- A: Yes, that's the name under which I chose to sort of have my own product range whereas as a freelancer I would use my own name still.
- Q: And that's a very deliberate business choice?

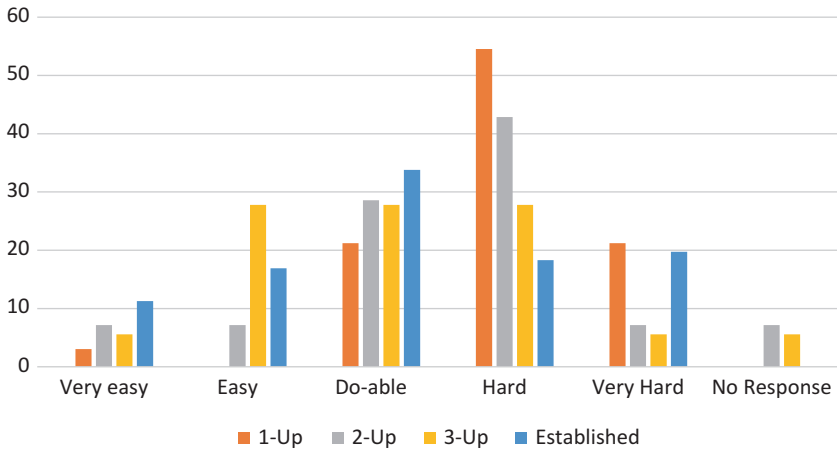
- A: Yes, I think it helps to sort of have a brand name and be able to tie that to your products [...] In my degree we were very much sort of encouraged to just go by our name. I think this was coming more from a freelance kind of a perspective I suppose rather than thinking of us as product designers or people starting up a small business and contacting retailers, etc., so certainly I would agree with that from a freelance stand point it's much better to keep it consistent, go by your own name and market yourself that way, but coming from a product design and distribution aspect I've really found that having a different name helps a lot. (Illustrator, emerging maker, September 2015)

### CREATIVE WORK AND (THE LACK OF) BUSINESS SAVVY

Reflecting the implications of the discussion in Chap. 2 of uneven business skills and educational outcomes in arts, craft and design degrees, other interviewees acknowledged their lack of experience and/or business acumen during the early days of developing their range of work and establishing their practice. This then set them up for some challenges when negotiating orders from retailers who may not see the subtle differences in lines of experimental and exhibition work as against retail production work when it is not differentially and clearly branded:

I find that they overlap quite a lot and maybe more than they should if I had been more business savvy when I started. They [my production line and artistic work] all came from the same place and from my materials that I loved making with, and sometimes it's a little bit tricky because I get inquiries for shops about my exhibition work and I have to go, "Well I like to keep these more one-off pieces and spend more time on them and make them individual, but these other pieces that I make for production but they're not necessarily always designed to be superfast." It's, I like to take the time in the making and labouring over them and how much I need to let go of that in the future I'll still, I'm still working on. (Ulrica Trulsson, ceramicist, established maker, August 2015)

For craftspeople in particular, having a clear distinction in their work between a production line and artistic works targeted more for exhibition also helps in delineating between price points for the work: higher for one-off pieces and lower for higher-turnover and not unique design items.



**Fig. 4.4** Responses to the following question: ‘How easy or difficult do you find the following aspects of running your business: making pricing decisions/appropriately pricing your work?’

This is important as pricing work poses a particular challenge for many in the creative sector (see Fig. 4.4), especially those starting out, as makers are fearful, or forget, to accurately price all inputs (including time spent training and studying), in addition to incorporating a healthy profit. Commonly emerging makers under-price their work in relation to the cost of production, often deliberately for fear of being uncompetitive through being seen as over-priced. Pricing work is especially challenging for those who produce one-off or experimental pieces. It is hardly surprising therefore that managing sales, in particular, is an area in which our emerging makers indicated they would have valued more information while studying and continue to seek advice on once they establish their enterprise. As the makers established themselves and their work in the marketplace, they were much more able to identify markets and sales environments into which their work would fit and to design and price their work accordingly.

Those craftspeople and designer makers that we spoke to who were fortunate to have professional practice or business courses embedded as core subjects within their creative studies or had participated in the NEIS (the Commonwealth government’s New Enterprise Incentive Scheme—refer to the discussion in the previous chapter) had been given useful professional advice around pricing that set them up well from the start of their career. These are the makers who had learned that in order to sustain and

build a business, you need to price your goods with a percentage of profit; the more profit you generate, the more you can invest back into the business and spend on yourself. Within a non-art-related business, the aspiring small businessperson may well be more likely to invest time and seek advice to write a business plan to assist in identifying market opportunities and to inform product development and pricing decisions. However, and perhaps not surprisingly when reflecting on the previous chapters' discussion regarding the lack of business or enterprise development content in many art and design courses, very few of our research participants had written a business plan. Of those that had written one, many had the opportunity to undertake the NEIS as discussed in the previous chapter. Others had experience of earlier government funding programmes that offered greater levels of individual funding, but in return necessitated makers familiarise themselves with being able to make a business case. Established makers such as Susan Cohn recalled preparing a business plan as part of the funding criteria for a previous grant programme:

With doing this grant, the Workshop 3000 grant, we had to show how we were going to manage it. [But] it's always morphing, I think there's a continual business plan [...] After every major exhibition, there's a re-addressing of the practice, both financially, because you're in huge debt after a show like that and how you're going to pay for it, pay it out, how you're going to manage the next range of deadlines, and support [that is]—mentor two people in here—so, yes I do have to have a business plan. (Susan Cohn, jeweller and metal smith, established maker, November 2015)

This criterion of reflecting on the state of the business, promotional strategies and the development of sustainable market opportunities was a particular focus of many of the Australia Council and state-based funding programmes of the mid- to late 1980s, specifically the 'Maker, Manufacture, Market' and 'Springboard' programmes. These funding schemes not only focused on enabling recipients to invest in the development of new work, but an important element of the programmes mentioned above was that applicants also needed to focus on the enterprise development/business development side of their practice (Fig. 4.5).

Ironically, with the winding back of federal and state funding for the arts in Australia, acquiring this level of business skills development is now largely de-incentivised within the contemporary craft and design community. For those not eligible or disinclined to put their hat into the ring for a shot at the ever-decreasing pool of arts grant funding, there are few



Fig. 4.5 Gill Cordiner (<http://www.gillcordiner.com/>) in her studio. (Photograph: Rosina Possingham Photography)

options to attract capital to invest in their creative enterprise. Unsurprisingly, and as has been acknowledged in numerous studies focusing on the generally low incomes of the creative sector (Throsby and Zednik 2010), the sector is currently significantly propped up by family savings, partner earnings, other employment and for the career changers at least often retirement or redundancy packages. Regardless of the motivation for establishing their making practice, the products they create and sell, their business structure, hours worked or level of income, there is an element of entrepreneurial risk-taking in pursuing a career in craft and designer making. With more craft and design education now being conducted at universities in Australia, this remains as true as ever.

*General advice arising from the research—What things can people creating small businesses actively do to keep their heads above water?*

- Figure out your unique factor, and be able to explain and demonstrate it.
- A day job can provide stability, structure and variety, help establish/extend networks and connections and provide insights into the

industry while you're building your creative business (e.g. a job in retail can help provide insight into what people are buying).

- Have good systems in place from the start.
- Further study can be a way of having access to a studio.
- Before you spend money on materials, think about business registration, insurance, tax and how to make it work for you.
- Focus on products that are commercially viable (this can be liberating because you are not so creatively invested).
- Have both online and brick-and-mortar presence.
- Have a range of price points at markets.
- Focus on turnover but don't undersell, don't take it personally when people think a price is too high.
- Don't undervalue yourself, take yourself seriously. Value your work and value the worth of being creative. Don't set prices too low.
- Capitalise on economies of scale by selling in more than one place.
- Develop the business slowly over time while maintaining other forms of income.
- Join retail collectives/creative co-working spaces and also other collectives that offer access to facilities (so you don't have to invest your own funds).
- Make connections by going to events, volunteering (if you can), joining professional organisations and committees and attending conferences.
- Explore residencies as spaces in which to further develop practice and networks.
- Learn from, and don't dwell on, failures.
- Before leaving the studio/office be able to know what you're going to do the next time you walk in.
- Know your customers—what they like, who they are, where they eat, what they drink, what they read and where they go on holidays; know as much about them as possible.
- Develop a practice that fits with the logistics and decisions of your wider life (e.g. markets and weekends—does this work for you?).
- Understand costs—be diligent in recording your time, weigh materials—use a spreadsheet for detailing costs of inputs and then calculate the final price.
- Keep applying for grants and entering competitions—look for grant opportunities outside the arts sector (e.g. small business grants offered by government and by businesses, commercial development grants to attend trade shows).

- Have one account for personal spending and one where creative business money comes in and goes out from so it's easy to do tax.
- Develop strong self-discipline to make sure that making isn't sacrificed for other family or work commitments.

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## What Does ‘Handmade’ Mean Today?

What I’ve always been really clear with in this business, that it only makes sense as long as I enjoy doing it, and you know it’s, I think it’s a very slippery slope in Australia, as soon as you’re paying wages and you need a bigger workshop, [...] you just end up offshore. (James B. Young, shoemaker and outfitter, established maker, October 2015)

The phrase ‘designer maker’ is being employed increasingly in the contemporary craft and design marketplace, especially among those seeking to make a full-time living from their practice. It marks those makers who may undertake original design and prototyping themselves, but who, in order to scale-up their production in ways not always possible for a solo hand maker, outsource some or all subsequent aspects of production to other makers or machine-assisted manufacturing processes. But despite widespread use of this phrase, some makers remain keen to manage the scale of their business. As a result, many of those craftspeople and designer makers we spoke to who were in a position to scale-up their production while stepping back from the making themselves were reluctant to go down this path. Elsewhere we have explored these issues in terms of balancing making income with quality of life (Luckman 2015; Luckman and Andrew 2018), as well as in terms of the desire to be a maker, to be doing the creative work oneself, and thus not ‘get too big’ with the added pressures and responsibilities of being an employer (Luckman 2018). In this

chapter, we home in more on what upscaling and outsourcing reveals about competing definitions of, and attitudes towards, the idea of ‘the handmade’. It also explores maker and thus perceived market attitudes towards handmaking versus other forms of production, including outsourcing and the use of digital tools.

### THE EMERGENCE OF THE DESIGNER MAKER AND CONTEMPORARY ‘CRAFT’ SCALING-UP

Across its full spectrum of practice, the field of craft is notable for the collegial way it tends to be somewhat friendly and benignly competitive; but a key site of boundary contestation does come into play around the perceived legitimacy as designer makers (at least of the handmade) of those who outsource—or who are perceived to outsource—significant aspects of production. It is especially contentious when such vendors end up selling from stalls at any one of the proliferating—and consecrating—designer maker or design markets (e.g. Finders Keepers, Bowerbird, Handmade Canberra, Big Design Market). There they are often selling alongside makers who may employ one or two people (often family or friends), or—more likely—make everything themselves, often one-off pieces that are a real challenge to make and sell sustainably in the post-Etsy craft marketplace, where everything must be beautifully photographed and written up for online sale. In particular, it was those who outsourced production but sold at these kinds of markets around whom some subtle criticism accrued in the project.

Such potential criticism is a direct outgrowth of genuine wider anger that products are being sold as handmade when that may or may not be the case, or that the hands that made it were not ethically employed. But it is also a result of the kind of disavowal of craft’s connection to industry that has characterised the field since the Arts and Crafts Movement’s positioning of craft as the Industrial Revolution’s ‘other’ (Adamson 2013, xiii). Whereby the ‘decorative arts’ became divided ‘between those practices connected closely with the craft ethic and those seen to be centrally a part of the world of large-scale manufacturing’ and thus design (Greenhalgh 1997, 39). Throughout the twentieth century and beyond, this romantic legacy has impacted how crafts are positioned in the marketplace across much of the Global North. For example, writing about the iconic decorative glass manufacture around Venice, Rossi (2015) observes:

All these decorative details functioned primarily as signals of an elaborate manual manufacture. They implied a small-scale, laborious manufacture, one that is undermined by the large scale of production suggested by the catalogues' existence and the absence of any mention of their productive reality. The Weil Ceramics & Glass catalogue advertised its wares as 'Hand-blown ... by Barbini' but does not mention that the name 'Alfredo Barbini' referred both to an individual producer and, by the early 1970s, a workshop of 40 employees. Furthermore, even when Barbini was directly involved in the production, glassmaking was a necessarily collective process, with one *servente* (assistant) often blowing the glass as it was worked by the *maestro*, while other elements such as the decorative elements were made in another part of the workshop by other hands. Finally, 'hand-blown' does not necessarily mean free-blown: the identical profiles and decorative details of several of the wares in the catalogue suggest the use of pattern moulds in this glass-ware's production. This makes these objects no less crafted, but does mean that the skill involved was not necessarily what the consumer imaged. There is no sense of the scale and standardisation of production involved, a lack of knowledge that the bounded-off island of Murano, and the air of mystery it carried, did nothing to dispel. (101)

Today, in Australia as elsewhere, with the winding back of expensive studio education, this status of craft ideally as handmaking by a single maker is further reinforced by an increasing connection of craft education to art education as discussed in Chap. 3 and thus identification with the symbolic capital of a more traditional Bourdieusian European art field. Certainly, one of the key tensions in play in the identity choices and boundary contestations between crafts practice and designer makers lies between those who seek to identify their craft practice with the arts field, and those desiring of, or more comfortable with, an identification closer to the economic field of power that tends to be marked by identification with 'design' in some form. These are also the people around whom Bourdieu's (1993) sense of 'selling out' continues to resonate:

Producers and vendors of cultural goods who 'go commercial' condemn themselves, and not only from an ethical or aesthetic point of view, because they deprive themselves of the opportunities open to those who can recognize the specific demands of this universe and who, by concealing from themselves and others the interests at stake in their practice, obtain the means of deriving profits from disinterestedness. (75)

Seen through this lens, these producers are profiting precisely from the ‘sacrifices’ required by others to sustain their not so disinterested practice, in contrast to practice that is deliberately grounded in a commitment to material, technique and provenance, as well as ethical labour practices, which affirms the symbolic capital—or ‘charismatic aura’—that accrues to the items produced in this way. Designer makers and design craft disrupt the taken-for-granted boundary-marking practices of established Western artistic fields. The key issue at stake concerns the opposition between two key sub-fields: the field of restricted production (handmaking) and the field of large-scale (or at least scaled-up) production. High-design items can be items of desire—limited, expensive and consecrated by the design field’s own gatekeeping structures. Design artefacts can also be (but rarely are) simply one-offs, for here ‘design’ denotes innovation and originality, but they also have the capacity for the kind of infinite reproduction more aligned with Bourdieu’s field of large-scale production (see Luckman (2020) for further discussion of this).

In this study we observed that, frequently, the relationship between craft and designer makers and the degrees of outsourcing and/or use of automation remains fraught. This is perhaps unsurprising in a market where consumer expectations are framed in terms of what can be an overly romantic vision of the realities of making, even on a small scale. Such expectations are the result of both the marketing (i.e. the story) surrounding products and their makers and the expectations potential buyers bring to the transaction themselves. Although many individually handcrafted items can be and are sold as distinctive items representing handmaking as an antithesis to mass production, the point at which something can be said to be still handmade or crafted was differentially contentious across the making practices examined in this study. Within the fields of craft in particular, especially those sectors that celebrate the handmade, the boundary of the definition of ‘handmade’ is hotly contested between those who choose to (or are perceived to) outsource aspects of production and those who keep it totally in-house. Of course, this itself is not a neat separation either. What does it mean if in-house makers employ other people on site? Indeed, what is the difference between outsourcing midway through the cutting of customised constituent pieces and starting a making process with ready-made purchased components? Handmaking processes have long imposed natural limits upon entrepreneurial growth for craftspeople, as is evident in the legendary artistic and cultural—but financially limited—success of the British Arts and Crafts Movement. More recently,

Warren and Gibson have noted how a number of competing factors such as 'uneasy relationships with retailers, declining margins, excessive debts, and corporate power' mean that most of the surfboard makers they interviewed in Australia, California and Hawai'i rarely move 'beyond their local base to become bigger commercial operations' (Warren and Gibson 2014, 7). Rather what they note 'artisanal forms of craft production' are thus bound by 'consistent limits to growth when making bespoke, functional objects for primarily local markets' (Warren and Gibson 2014, 7).

Theoretically, at least, designers are not bound by such limitations of scale; their practice is based on outsourcing production once they feel they have resolved prototypes ready for marketable replication. Hence the emergence of the figure of the designer maker in the contemporary artisanal marketplace as a mode of operation that does, potentially, enable scalable growth. Within the history of studio craft practice itself, the replication of a basic resolved design has long been a way craftspeople have derived a liveable, ongoing income that enables them to support their more artistic one-off or gallery-focused production. Moreover, at all stages of the making process, design is a necessary and central part of the creative method, as leading Australian craft, decorative arts and design writer and curator Grace Cochrane (2005) writes:

Those working in the crafts—potters, glass and textile artists, furniture makers, jewellers and metal-smiths—aspire to working out their ideas through a direct interaction, by hand, with their chosen materials, using a range of related tools and technologies. Like artists, they make their work for their own expression and satisfaction, and their customers are those who prefer the mark and name of a maker over objects that have been mass produced. 'Design' here, is as much part of the process as 'art' is part of the process, with, at the core, a crafts knowledge of materials and tools and the skills of the hand. (52)

However, as she goes on to note, design 'as a category of objects':

has been associated with the notion of working towards producing objects that serve a client or consumer's purpose. Designers either contract others to make their own 'signature' work, or are commissioned by companies who market their products with a 'designer label' around the designer's name, as well as the brand of the company itself. In acquiring these objects, the consumer enjoys becoming one of an elite group; the personal is universal. Despite the link with a personal identity through signatures and brands,

however (some of which, like Ian Thorpe’s underwear, are ‘celebrity-labels’ rather than ‘designer-labels’), a good deal of contemporary design has been stripped of any direct evidence of the human or the hand. [...] For some time I believe there has been evidence of a shift in consumer preferences in the design marketplace. People are again valuing the evidence of the hand, and the values that the handmade represents. [...] At the same time, there are huge changes in global manufacturing patterns that affect design and the crafts at many levels. [Whereas some overseas design and fashion houses, such as Alessi, have been able to respond to this market,] Australia’s factories were generally unable to change flexibly for small production and most have already closed their handmaking operations. (Cochrane 2005, 52)

Interestingly, the favourable comparison between scaled-up, high-end design and handmaking as a model to learn from was echoed in our interviews with one of Australia’s leading jewellers:

I learnt so much from the Alessi model. They also come from a craft background, one has to remember the family, you know, that everything in the factory is hand done, even the polishing. It is only the packaging that is automated. People don’t think that it’s hand pressed, hand finished. (Susan Cohn, jeweller and metal smith, established maker, November 2015)

This shift of market desirability towards the handmade is, as outlined in Chap. 1, the very context that has enabled the current growth of the marketplace for contemporary craft and designer maker goods. But this near fetishisation of handmaking—potentially at the expense of more economically sustainable modes of making—is significant, especially given the almost normative and possibly even less problematic relationship of craft to design at the more established and/or higher end of the local market. Ever since the Arts and Crafts Movement, the perceived failure (of craft at least) in the English-speaking world to be more than the province of relatively well-off producers and consumers has long limited its capacity to make realistic claims to offering a meaningful alternative to large-scale production. For Australian makers today it remains important for as we have written elsewhere (Luckman and Andrew 2018), the contemporary craft and design economy is masking considerable levels of un- or under-employment. The turn away from studio models of production and towards an idealistic vision of handmaking thus has substantial real-world impacts.

In our study, the majority of makers across all modes of practice and business orientation we spoke to felt the need to emphasise the handmaking aspects of their practice and to focus on handmaking, even at the expense of profitability. Sometimes this was not just about market expectation, but genuine personal commitment to making as part of an 'intentional economy' (Gibson-Graham 2006), as evidenced in comments by jewellery designer maker, Kate Hunter:

There's a lot of products that I find it difficult to compete with: laser cut stuff which is mass produced and it doesn't have the mark of the maker on it, like the hammer mark—I just find that endearing. I don't measure anything anymore, I'm not precise about anything anymore, I just do it and I just let it come out as not necessarily rough but as it happens [...] the mark of the maker is really important to me; I don't want it to be so highly polished that you can't see anything left of who made it. In mass-produced stuff I've seen enough of that in shops that I've worked in and I think it's soulless; it doesn't have that something that [says] somebody's two hands put this together. Or if you can see those marks and it was imported from overseas what were those poor people paid and I've been through Nepal and I've seen the guys sitting underneath the building and they have to make during a certain period of time because that's when the shaft of light hits down there so they can see what the hell they're doing. Then I've seen them begging in the shops for their work to be bought by the shopkeeper, so I've seen all of that in my travels and I just don't like it. [...] I mean that might be a suicidal business decision if you wanted to be a hardnose business, but I really like to relate to the people that buy my stuff and go "Oh, so you made this?" And I'm like, "Yeah". (Kate Hunter Designs, jewellery, established maker, November 2015)

Clearly, in this way, for many of the makers we spoke with, both the actual labour conditions under which a product is produced and the relationship to it this implies are an important part of the handmade end product their customers are purchasing:

I'd probably—I wouldn't be happy to outsource the final finishing process. I think one of the things is if people buy something off you and you're spruiking yourself as designer and maker you actually have to physically get involved with the making, and I think quality control goes down pretty quickly if you're outsourcing everything and you're just putting it in a box or you're sort of putting it together at the end [...]. It's just part of the busi-

ness and if that's how I sort of design the business around it, yeah I couldn't imagine getting to the stage where I was just doing a design and sending the files everywhere and never seeing them again, but never say never, but yeah I don't ever plan on being that sort of a designer. (Male furniture designer and maker, emerging maker, February 2016)

These makers would never outsource, and in the current consumer climate, that is a sound market-placement option.

However, outsourcing in some form has long been an important and central way many other makers have sought to scale-up and maintain an economically sustainable or even growing business. Nonetheless, as we have seen, it emerged as a problematic area for many of our interviewees even those selling as a designer maker, because of the persistent feeling that they should still, personally, be physically involved with the making:

No, no [I wouldn't outsource], purely for the fact that I think people are purchasing something that I've made, and the labour involved in it, and the handmade element is a big—it's a big—something that they're very interested in. People often sort of say, you know, could I automate the process perhaps, rather than outsource, so set it up so the machine just does it all, like more of a computerised thing. And I think even that dilutes the product a little bit [...] but yeah, I think the labour is an important part of it, and you know, I also like making. Although all the other things that come with the business are very important and take up a huge amount of time. The making of—the fact that I've been able to make a job of the making that I love is really why I do it, you know. I could probably earn better money stacking shelves at [the local supermarket], but I made it. (Meredith Woolnough, visual artist—embroidery, established maker, June 2016)

This desire to provide a handmade product is often coupled with a strong, personally felt desire to undertake such employment only on the condition—and so that—they can remain fundamentally makers:

So a lot of people say that to me [outsource/employ people], [...] I don't know, I just want to keep the control to myself. The thing is, I enjoy it, I enjoy being in the shed and doing it myself and that's the whole point. (Female, jewellery, established maker, July 2017)

We can see here echoes of the motivations for making discussed in detail in Chap. 2. A central part of the meaningful work experience being

pursued by most of the craftspeople and designer makers with whom we spoke was maintaining close proximity to the making process rather than being overrun by the business side of running a creative enterprise.

### MOVING FROM MAKER TO EMPLOYER

Given this, another way to grow a business but still maintain the much-desired capacity to stay in touch with the creative side of it is to employ other people to work with you. Unsurprisingly, we came across many instances of this—both on a regular basis and more ad hoc (e.g. just during peak times):

She's been around about three months now, [...] she comes on average just two hours a week and she does the assembling of necklaces and gluing of earrings and things like that. So she's my production assistant and she's very good, she didn't have any background at all in arts and crafts but it's quite simple to do. So I've trained her up and when times get busy, it was busy a couple of weeks ago, she did a full day's worth of work instead of her two hours. So she's very casual, very flexible as well. (Female, lasercut jewellery, established maker, November 2016)

A recurring practice was to carve off one of the more repetitive, less creative aspects of production—such as basic assembly—to hand over to someone else:

I would like to have the option to have one or two people to help. So, whether it's being able to outsource sewing—the printing I will never outsource because I really love doing it and I can't imagine not doing it—but things like outsourcing sewing when demand is big is definitely something I'd like to look at some time soon. (Simone Deckers, textile designer, established maker, March 2017)

Owing to the short notice, the unpredictability of working hours and the fact that employees would not uncommonly be present in the home, the employment relationships were often informal. Employees were often personally known to the maker and the work often provided through the desire to help out friends and family:

The only person I hire is—I've got a girlfriend, her daughter who's sort of like a daughter to me, she's just turned 17 and she makes my, I have little

denim noughts and crosses boards which just have the hash thing sewn in to them and they're overlapped around the edge—so I [outsource] that out to her and she does that, which is great. Every day I just ring up and say, I need 20 more boards and I'll get them in the post so it's good. [...] because I've often thought, where do you source your staff, and for me my thing is I always think of people like my friend's daughter. (Female, ceramics, established maker, November 2015)

But others viewed the responsibility for someone else's income security, coupled with the costs and paperwork of becoming an employer, as major barriers to taking on staff:

I want to be the only person in my business. [...] I won't outsource anything. [...] first of all I don't want that responsibility of being responsible for someone else's income in a way, so and plus I'm a bit of a control freak; I used to be a project manager and [...] I don't want any impacts on my business, I want to manage my whole business and a lot of the courses that I've talked about are maybe you could outsource your bookwork. No, I quite like doing my bookwork; I don't want anyone knowing my bookwork either, I don't want anyone looking at my books and making judgements on my bookwork, I like knowing my bookwork. So there's a lot of things you could outsource [but] I'm like no, if my business needs to be outsourced I've gotten too big and I'll scale it back, so I feel like at the moment I am as big as what I can be, I'm as busy as what I can be, I don't want to get any busier; it means too many compromises. (Female, glass jewellery, established maker, May 2016)

Although not a major theme in the interviews, the concern about 'getting too big' recurred often enough to be worthy of comment. Indeed, it will return in further interview excerpts in this chapter and is connected with another of the key findings from the study, namely, that the majority of craftspeople and designer makers we spoke with are reluctant entrepreneurs. Indeed, most eschewed any identification with entrepreneurialism at all (Luckman 2018).

For those engaging in the practice, one approach to mitigating concerns over outsourcing too much of the making work and thus losing quality control and one's own involvement in making, or of having a product perceived as 'too far' from 'genuinely' handmade, was to outsource minimally while retaining control of hand assembling and finishing. By 'minimal' outsourcing, we are referring to strategies of keeping in

contact with the process of making while limiting outsourcing to those aspects of the production least connected to creativity and more easily replicated *en masse*. Frequently, an important part of this process was to collaborate with local fabricators, often themselves self-employed or working in a small business, people with whom it was possible to have a direct relationship and talk to face-to-face, jointly encouraging and supporting each other as part of a complex, interconnected and enabling local making ecosystem:

And that's part of the reason why I'm really passionate about keeping as much stuff onshore, as possible, because it means you can have meetings either face-to-face or over the phone, have a real sort of dialogue with someone who's making it with you or for you, or whatever, and really sort of hone that manufacturing process and have a real dialogue, as opposed to, like, sending a CAD [computer aided design] file overseas to a factory that might not necessarily be all that worker-friendly or environmentally friendly. (Male, furniture and lighting designer maker, established maker, February 2016).

I make most of my stuff myself—yeah, people pigeonhole you a bit, which I don't like. [...] I've got lots of connections in Adelaide, well-used sometimes. A lot of them we just develop when we're an associate at the JamFactory [and so] fabrication, CNC and stuff like that, I outsource. [...] It is really important to have contacts, industry contacts, and to build up relationships with them as well. (Liam Mugavin, furniture maker and designer, emerging maker, September 2015)

This approach was particularly common among those working with smaller wooden items. The introduction of computer numerically controlled (CNC) cutting tools is particularly notable here for both outsourced production and in-house technological upskilling. Additionally, when working with materials with which they were not familiar, some makers commented upon the value of outsourcing as a way to access additional expertise and new ideas:

All the wood, all the timber side of it, I prefer to do myself, just because I can do it to start with, and I guess I can maintain the quality and the level of the detail that I want. But things like metal work and any sort of synthetic products, textiles, those sort of things I'm not familiar with, I'd like to try my hand at them but if there's a piece that I want to put in the shop or to

go out to a client, then [I'm] more than happy to collaborate and outsource those sort of things because it's silly not utilise someone else's expertise. (Curious Tales, furniture maker, established maker, February 2016)

[I'm] pretty much just still a designer maker, predominately I do most of the design work, outsource some of the manufacturing procedures and then do the final assembly myself, so that's, yeah, pretty much how it's still going and anything new that I'm developing I'm sticking to that model. [... I outsource] laser cutting, sandblasting, powder coating, that sort of stuff. Mainly I just do the timber finishing, sanding and stuff and finish myself or pay someone to do it if the job's big enough. [...] CNC I've just used [since] uni, it's like a tool, like it's—out of all the tools in the workshop to me it's, you know, that's the one I'd use more than anything and so we were making tonnes of boxes and it was like okay, well I take two hours to make this box or I pay someone two hours to make this box, it gets cut out on the CNC in 10 minutes and then someone screws it together in you know, half an hour, so it was kind of like, okay, well, yep it was more an investment in how we could be doing things and I'm sort of looking how to use it to cut cardboard to develop other boxes and things like that. [To scale-up] eventually what I'd like to do is outsource more work on the CNC with me driving it, essentially. (Male, furniture designer and maker, emerging maker, March 2018)

Again, even with CNC cutting, to mitigate the potential quality control, cost and market-impact downsides of outsourcing, many makers preferred to outsource locally as a way of supporting and maintaining a local supply chain and skill base, even if it was more expensive than outsourcing to another city in Australia, let alone overseas:

Well, my lights that I've made are steel and ply[wood], and I've made one out of copper too. So it's just—and that was the good thing at the end of second year at uni—I sort of made stuff that was very heavily based on me physically doing everything, [but in] third year I concentrated on designing things that were component-based, so I get Tas-Fab, which is a metal fabrication [company in Launceston] to do the laser cutting of the metal components. [... So] the metal components then go to the powder coaters, which are a kilometre away. The people that make my ply are a company on the North Coast [... in] Somerset, called Specialty Veneers, and it goes to Hobart then to a company called Xanderware and then they do the laser cutting and basically it comes back to me and I do the sanding and finishing and stick it all together. [...] That's another important thing that I'm finding is, if you help supporting other businesses to help your business grow sort of thing, [...] that's another good thing about being in Tasmania. Fair

enough, we don't have 27 different people who do laser cutting we can go and ask, but you do actually develop a personal relationship with them and even if it's just on the phone, they know what you're doing and they know what you're about. I'll go and see the people from Tas-Fab and actually talk to them and yeah, I think it's definitely a good way to do things. Obviously it may be a little bit more expensive than you can probably do it in Melbourne or Sydney or something like that, but it's just what you've got to deal with here. (Male, furniture designer and maker, emerging maker, February 2016)

This approach ticks boxes in terms of being able to keep an eye on quality and workplace ethics—knowing and having faith in local labour laws. It also enables makers to be in close contact with fabricators, allowing them to innovate and work through problems together:

Outsourcing production but still keeping the bits that I like to do, so the hand-knitting—there would always be a component of a handmade something even if it meant my website was five jumpers that are machine made and then a one-off handmade piece. That would be ideal. [I'd still be looking to use Australian suppliers and labour...] it's really expensive and from what I've heard from other designers, manufacturing in Australia isn't always that ethical itself, but the places where I have gone to do my production I've met and I visited and I know [them]. (Female, textile design, emerging maker, March 2016)

I guess, that's where I do need some business management in that I don't really know how to take it to the next step. If I want to go—right, I need to grow this a bit bigger, to turn it into a business that is my super fund, without me having to work my fingers to the bone until I die—that's where I need some assistance, because I have this business model, that if I do get bigger, what I want to do is actually to outsource the sewing to other stay-at-home mums and keep it all in Australia. Every now and again, someone comes and says, "Oh, why don't you take it to Bali?" It's because that's not what I want to do with my stuff. I want it to be made in Australia. I want it to be limited edition runs, but if I take it to the next level, I guess the beauty of that for me is that I can spend more time designing and less time sewing. I work up prototypes of new products. I design, and then I outsource that—kind of, right, well, we're going to make 49 of these because I think once it hits 50 it's mass production. [...] I want to do the creative stuff. I don't want to be stuck in being a manager. I'm not an entrepreneur. It's not what I am. (Robyn 'Boo' McLean, custom textile design, homewares and accessories, established maker, July 2016)

A (very few) others still sought to go further afield and outsource production of their designs to factories in Bali or China in particular, but again they were at pains to explain the lengths to which they went to check on the production processes, especially the labour conditions, in any—even offshore—factories to whom they outsourced all or an aspect of production:

We have had them manufactured in two different places now. We started in Indonesia, had problems with consistency of quality [...] and ability to scale, so China was the answer to that and that's been good. So, a lot of the behind the scenes with that manufactur[ing] process in terms of having a process and in particular a quality control process [...] was kind of spelled out and documented last year as well, in addition to the packaging and stuff like that. [...] So, that process which was quite manual before and labour-intensive for me in particular has now been [...] outsourced, with due care to quality and process. (Male, leather accessories, emerging maker, March 2017)

This openness to offshore production, or at least to so proudly speak to it, was relatively rare in our study. We were far more likely to hear, 'Going offshore scares me', or 'I don't want to lose control of the quality of my products'. Such production models remain sectorally contested and controversial, even when designer makers insist upon quality production and site visits to check the conditions in which the workers are operating.

Interestingly, towards the end of the study, a new, key area of outsourcing to enable growth—paying other people to do the non-making tasks required of the creatively self-employed—really started to kick in as both realistic and having potential. Most examples concerned the marketing and retail side of operations:

Mostly help in the shop I think, [...] so that I can have a day off, you know? Get someone in to do retail, more retail, and they might do a bit of sanding or a little bit of that at the same time, but yeah, nothing too difficult. (Naomi Schwartz, jeweller, established maker, August 2017)

Notably, social media was starting to be also situated in these necessary business terms, rather than just as a personal or individual networking activity:

Ideally it would be great to hire someone to do the admin or the networking side of things or whatever, but that's not realistic at the moment. I am sort of thinking two-year plan and then reassess. (Emma Young, glass artist, emerging maker, March 2018)

My sales through Instagram grow definitely if I post something somebody probably wants to buy it, which is awesome. But that is really time-consuming and a bit dull, I don't mind a little bit of social media but I'm not in for just sitting on my phone for hours and hours and hours. [...] I would happily outsource social media if it got to a point where that was worthwhile, I would definitely outsource my accounting because that is totally not my niche at all, and it just is hard work. (Established maker, jewellery, July 2017)

Makers have long used business support services such as accountancy, business planning, photography and website development. Our interviews revealed that, increasingly, marketing and social media promotion, as well as paying retail brokers to get products into independent stores, are also being seen by makers as desirable means by which to keep doing the making that they love, while also allowing business to expand.

### DIGITAL MAKING FUTURES FOR SMALL-SCALE PRODUCTION

The timing of the study meant that we could explore the emerging use of newer digital technologies, such as CNC cutting or milling as we saw above, but also additive manufacturing (AM or 3D printing), which offer new modes of production and even business growth (Figs. 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3). Whereas outsourcing CNC cutting or milling is a more established process and thus an increasingly normalised part of many makers' supply chains, AM is a newer technology, not yet established. Thus, although we sought out makers employing AM to be part of the study, very few were visibly doing so (mostly jewellers) and there seemed to be a reluctance to talk about their business. Again, this may partly be due to concerns about how the market will respond to products produced in this way. Thus, in this newer, broadened-out mass market for the craft and the handmade, we need to challenge David Pye's (1995, 20) pronouncement that 'Nobody [...] is prepared to say where craftsmanship ends and ordinary manufacture begins.' Certainly, in this day and age, whether or not they are able to articulate where the line should be drawn, romantic visions of handworking persist at the expense of much common sense machine intervention, even if modern and digital mechanisms are far removed from the 'dark satanic mills' of the Industrial Revolution. In her ethnography of North American lutherie (guitar making), anthropologist Kathryn Dudley (2014) explores the use of CNC routing alongside other automated



**Figs. 5.1–5.3** Future Shelter in Perth (<https://futureshelter.com/>) uses a range of both digital and more traditional tools to produce a wide range of homewares and accessories. (Photographs: Rosina Possingham Photography)

processes through the lens of perceived authenticity and the degree of 'acceptable' automation in handmaking practices. Though she observes the presence of some purists among both makers and consumers, her research also valuably points to the level of integration of both digital and handmaking, even within large commercial workshops such as the Martin factory. This said, she observes that management is much keener for visitors to see the hand assembling area than the automated areas where the wood is cut (97).

The most enthusiastic comments we encountered around the making potential of 3D printing concerned its capacity to make parts to repair traditional making tools. Our most cherished example of this came in an interview with the women at the Handweavers and Spinners Guild of Victoria. To organise the interview, they had been responding to an email on the one internet-connected terminal they had in their back office. The interview took place in this space, at the rear of their street-facing shop-front and meeting space in Brunswick in inner city Melbourne. The facility was full of the beautiful work of members, much of it for sale, and there were some more precious or specialist pieces on display (including the shawl so fine it could be pulled through a woman's wedding band). While resolutely 'old school' in their own making practices, they were well abreast of the growing significance among fibre workers of AM as a means of replicating missing or broken parts of older technologies to keep them going, in this case, spinning wheels. A member's husband had previously undertaken this repair for them using his woodturning skills, but was no longer able to do so:

Speaker 1: Well people are doing that [3D-printing bobbins] actually. On one of the Ravelry groups, it may have been Majacraft, which is a wheel manufacturer in New Zealand, it may have been theirs, but one girl was talking about using a 3D printer to make bobbins, and then some chappie who was the brother of some other member got involved and he had one and he made one that you can actually pull apart, and so you could post it, so, yeah, so they've actually been making bobbins.

Speaker 2: Yes, because there really aren't that many manufacturers of wheels and looms anymore, whereas like in Victoria there used to be, 30 years ago, 40 years ago, there were probably half a dozen people making spinning wheels, and now there

is nobody. And most of it comes from New Zealand, Ashford and Majacraft. [...] You just can't get spare parts for these, unless you know a woodturner or somebody who is handy with things, to get things repaired is difficult. That's why most people today go and buy just—it's all too hard, they go and buy a new wheel—yeah, particularly spinning wheels you cannot get spare parts for them. (Victorian Handweavers and Spinners, June 2015)

Much of the emphasis around showing off AM has been on the new, including through demonstration making of far more random useful plastic objects than the world will ever need; however, the repair functionality of AM in a low-carbon future remains an under-explored area. Rather than saturate the world with more 'stuff', AM has the capacity to work alongside skills such as knife sharpening, shoe repair and more readily identifiable craft skills, with a focus on keeping quality items functional. (The issue of craft practice and environmental impacts will be explored in detail in Chap. 7.)

This study revealed other valuable support roles played by digital tools, including their value in making the bespoke tools and forms used to make custom products, especially items such as moulds, jigs and templates. CNC technology is now widely used to produce easily replicable design items across a number of materials; wooden and Perspex jewellery, for example, are now a ubiquitous part of the retail designer maker landscape. More recently, it is being employed in the fashion industry as a tool for working with fabric. The use of AM in designer making is not yet as extensive as the more established CNC cutting, which is reported to be the most regularly used process in fab labs. However, this level of take-up of the 'low-hanging fruit of the new' also presents its own risks around market saturation:

We've definitely seen the laser cutting come through to a saturation point [...] of a certain style, too much of it. I see less of it now [...] the laser cut wooden brooches and things that were easily done but, well maybe people are being more creative with that technology turning [cut wood] into lights. 3D printing, haven't seen a huge amount. There's a little bit of jewellery that has come through on 3D printing. (Jane Barwick, Bowerbird Design Market, June 2015)

Unlike AM, individual makers have increasingly invested in laser CNC cutters. As the technology has become increasingly pervasive, smaller-scale and user-friendly, they were able to see the benefits of bringing this aspect of their making process in-house:

So with my laser cutter now being in-house, it means that my turnaround time for designs is going to be quite quick. So previously I'd make a design, or sketch a design, draw it on a computer, send it to my laser cutters, they'll send it back within three weeks. And then I may find that, oh I don't quite like that design, or it needs tweaking, so I redo it and that process can take up to three months. Now that it's all in-house, I suspect it's going to be a lot easier and the momentum will be there and the passion to create more designs will be consistent, [...] rather than being dragged out, painfully over three months or two months. So it's going to be now about scheduling time in my diary to do that and one of the things I'm doing over the next two weeks, is actually creating a 12-month plan for next year and what am I going to be doing every week, what am I going to be doing in January, February, March. And they're one of the things that I'm going to schedule out blocks of time to experiment with new designs and, and whether or not I add to the designs that I have, like I have the abstract collection, will I add, just add more abstract and more animals or will I do a whole new collection that's completely different to what I have at the moment? (Female, lasercut jewellery, established maker, November 2016)

This maker had no formal training but looked online (to YouTube videos in particular) to teach herself how to use her new cutting tool.

A number of makers we spoke to stood out as pioneers of new models of making, organised around taking advantage of the affordances of digital tools:

So we bought some textile printing gear and the laser cutter [...] we're on our third machine now, so we basically just roll it over, upgrade it, upgrade it, roll it over, upgrade it. [...] we bought a 3D printer at the end of last year, and at the moment, it's been making stuff for the workshop and I've been essentially playing with it. [...] For me as an engineer I am blown away by that, I'm like, it's not going to go into production tomorrow, but to be able to draw stuff and then just print it out, is a big [thing], in all of our making and so we've, the last thing we did was we 3D printed some moulds, which I think is really interesting, and so our whole workflow is actually digital. (Male, homewares, established maker, August 2018)

Importantly too, new designer maker business models are steadily becoming established around the AM-enabled possibilities of on-demand production, which ‘replace supply chains with demand chains’ (Pine and Gilmore 2011). One of the early pioneers was Shapeways, which is now just one of many online platform providers of 3D printing services. But even here, where makers have the potential to outsource production for a global market, there remains a frequent emphasis on hand finishing ‘raw’ subcontracted components in the context of digital outsourcing:

I make jewellery. So at the moment I’m mostly working on 3D printed jewellery [bangles, rings, necklaces, brooches]. They are 3D printed [by someone else] but I still do a lot of handwork [...]. So what I do is basically I design everything and then I get it printed from someone else, and when it comes out of the printer it’s rough and white so I dye them and I finish them all by hand so they are still unique just to keep them still particular because people associate 3D printing with mass production, which is actually not very true. (Valeria D’Annibale, jeweller, emerging maker, March 2016)

When working from such a model, not only is the market potentially global, but the business can be more mobile than is the case for most makers who remain variously tied to their making spaces:

[I use a] few different ones: Impress, in Holland. Materialise, which is in Belgium, and these are for nylon. For the metal pieces, [...] I 3D print the wax [mould] and I custom in silver. So for this, I can actually find a local business to do it for me. That was the same in Sydney. So in Sydney as well, I used local businesses to do my metal work, and same in Rome, I can find someone that can print wax and cast, but not nylon for some reason. [...] The need to be mobile,] yeah, that’s why I base my business right now in this way, with the 3D printing and the designing, mostly better than actually making, I mean most of the time on my business is designing rather than making, because it’s not home-made. So it’s a little bit different, but that was my point right now. (Valeria D’Annibale, jeweller, emerging maker, October 2017)

Here, we note an issue that will be discussed in depth in Chap. 6—the ongoing strength of face-to-face buying behaviours, in part because it allows the buyer to literally get a *feel* for the product. Introducing new processes and materials into the world of online retail can be a hard sell:

I tried to sell online but that's not really a channel that works for me. [...] I really, I always thought that because I work mostly with, like 3D printing but 3D printing in nylon, I believe that it's something that is a little bit different [for] most people. [...] So I just always thought that probably online sales don't really work for me because the material is so different that it's not easy for people to imagine what it is, by seeing a photo or reading a description online. [...] What I sell online is mostly to people that found me at the markets, [...] they get something, they like it, they go back home and then buy online. (Valeria D'Annibale, jeweller, emerging maker, October 2017)

Participants in our study frequently knew of the emerging digital tools, and many had even had the opportunity to experiment with them, often at university or school. Overall, however, despite there being examples of making innovation, this experience had not led them to feel that the technologies yet had anything superior or additional to offer to their existing practices:

[I explored Benson 2020, a 3D printer to make moulds for slip casting, but] I just felt that at the time it would take too much effort away from what I'm doing at the moment. So, although I'm interested it just seems a bit too much hard work at the moment. [...] Yeah, you have to get the right tools and then develop it all. So, and then yeah I'm not sure people will buy it either. (Female, ceramics, established maker, November 2016)

I've used 3D printing to go with my ceramics, [but] I wouldn't think about replacing a piece with a 3D printing piece. [...] Shapeways actually offers ceramic 3D printing, so you could print your porcelain pieces, so everything I've seen made that way is pretty [...] there's nothing, I've not thought anything has benefited from that process. (Vanessa Holle, ceramicist and designer maker, established maker, August 2016)

In his iconic 1968 book on craft and making, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*, leading British architect, industrial designer and craftsman David Pye (1995) famously proffers two key typologies of making: 'the workmanship of certainty' and 'the workmanship of risk'. The latter is associated mostly with skilled craft practice, where 'the quality of the result is continually at risk during the process of making' (20), being not predetermined but rather 'depend[ent] upon the judgment, dexterity, and care' of the maker (20). By contrast:

The workmanship of certainty [... is] always to be found in quantity production, and [is] found in its pure state in full automation. In workmanship of this sort the quality of the result is exactly predetermined before a single saleable thing is made. (20)

Once set in motion, he acknowledges the workmanship of certainty may look easy, but this ease is a realisation of significant skills and risky workmanship (i.e. it can represent the height of skill, not its absence). He posits this framework as a far more useful way to approach the issue of the workmanship underpinning making, rather than the persistent but unproductive division between ‘handmade’ and ‘machine made’. Indeed, the dichotomy is ontologically unstable. Just as hand assembly by people employing iterative judgement is an essential part of most highly mechanised production chains (e.g. the car assembly line—still), so too are tools and machines central to ‘handmade’ practice (e.g. the saw, pottery wheel, lathe and furnace). In this richer understanding of the human–tool–machine relationship, we can see echoes of Donna Haraway’s (1985) figure of the cyborg and its embrace of both the fetishised high tech *and* taken-for-granted low tech and thus frequently invisible tools, and of how new tools become visible and a source of concern at the expense of the relative invisibility of ‘older dependable artifacts’ (Wajcman 2015, 3).

That aside, in a marketplace clearly valued by consumers and experiencing growth as a direct result of an especially middle-class consumer fight-back around the ubiquity of ‘made in China’ objects, we found a powerful emphasis on the ongoing value of the ‘workmanship of risk’ in the contemporary craft economy. Through a focus on handmaking processes, claims can be made as to the uniqueness of each individual object:

I think that people just appreciate that it’s not mass produced and that they’re getting something that [... they can see that] each piece is individual and it does have its own little anomalies going on, it’s not like the one next door to it or the one next door to that. It’s not that you’re whipping out a replacement as soon as you’ve sold that piece, [like] you’re ripping out an exact replica replacement for it and popping that on your jewellery store stand—it’s like it’s, once that piece is gone it’s gone. [...] you know, you can’t say ‘oh, that’s a one of a kind’ if you’re mass producing. (Kate Hunter Designs, jewellery, established maker, November 2015)

Today, some craftspeople and designer makers are embracing the possibilities of technology to address two of the major challenges facing

craft- and design-based small and medium enterprises. Namely how to affordably prototype and innovate when the risks of 'blue sky' experimentation are high, and how to scale up a cost-effective, reproducible/customisable production line. The issue of scale—moving from a low-turnover, part-time and/or unsustainably low-income practice to an economically as well as personally sustainable one—has long been a key challenge for craft makers. Many are reluctant entrepreneurs and even more reluctant potential employers, often pursuing this kind of work as a perceived antidote to speeded-up lives and who thus regularly spoke to us of not wanting their business to not get 'too big'. It is into this space that iteratively programmable digital tools such as CNC routers and AM are slowly gaining some traction as enablers of new modes of localised, small-scale manufacturing. But all this gives rise to new takes on age-old questions around the nature of the handmade and the point at which an item ceases to be considered handmade in the eyes of both producers and consumers.

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## Selling Craft and Design: The Cultural and Economic Intricacies of the Contemporary Artisanal Marketplace

*Feature Interview 6.1: Laura McCusker, Furniture Maker, Established Maker (Interviewed February 2016)*

When I was getting my initial training [in the] mid-'90s, the poster child for a successful career in furniture design was Marc Newson. It was this kind of Cinderella story. He was “discovered” by Madonna’s team of stylists, his Lockheed lounge used in a video clip, and he was whisked away to fame and fortune in Europe. This was the only successful creation myth that existed at that time [ ... ] success was to be an internationally renowned designer working for a European-based company that shipped to all corners of the world from fabrication plants who knows where. [ ... ] I like making, that actual *making* bit. Getting my hands on the materials, prototyping, experimenting, refining [ ... ] and the other parts too: working collaboratively with the client, the end user, and being part of the complete cycle of making. So, for me, the model closer to how we work is more Butcher, Baker, Candlestick Maker than Cinderella. We figure that if there’s a local population [of around half a million people] then we only really need to access a very small percentage of these to have more than enough work to be financially viable and enjoy our work. Back in the '90s it was about educating the marketplace, letting people know that

(continued)

**(continued)**

furniture was actually made by real people, locally, and (and this next bit is key) it was not prohibitively expensive. Not as cheap as some outlets, but certainly nowhere near as expensive as others. And, of course, the quality is not even comparable. The landscape is quite different now, people are much more aware of the culture of local producers and the benefits of supporting your local economy, whether that's through buying at farmers' markets, cellar doors, or from local designers and makers. So, (eventually!) my advice to those just starting out—butchers and bakers always have work. (Laura McCusker, furniture maker, established maker, February 2016)

As outlined in Chap. 1, the current zeitgeist interest in craft and the handmade is not just about an upsurge in the number of makers keen to pursue a creative career; it is also, necessarily, about a there being a willing market enabling those makers—customers ready to pay for handmade or locally designed items that may otherwise look a lot like the cheaper ones now available in Kmart. Or, as Warren and Gibson have written of 'quality' small-scale surfboard production, customers who value the 'possibilities for customisation, the creativity of unique designs, craft skill and the value of artisanal labour—something 'made by hand' (Warren and Gibson 2013, 368). In this way, the craft and designer maker scene in Australia is one corner of a larger transnational trend towards the rise of artisanal economies based on small-scale production, with locality and visible making as key to provenance. It connects the contemporary Australian marketplace to similar trends across the Global North, especially in Europe, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, South Africa and North America. For this reason, although he is writing in the specific context of the USA, Ocejo's (2017) description of craft distilleries could apply just as equally to the marketplace for contemporary craft and design in Australia:

Craft distilleries are part of a groundswell of small-batch, 'artisanal' light manufacturing businesses that have recently emerged in the United States. Their closest cousin is the craft beer, or microbrewery movement. Along with their small size, businesses like craft distilleries have a number of attributes. They have respect for handmade products and all the subtle variations they contain. They promote a strong sense of localness in terms of where they source their ingredients, the regions where they sell their products,

and/or how they use place as a basis of their brand's identity. Perhaps most importantly, they create and promote a sense of authenticity, or the idea of a product full of integrity, truth, and real-ness as markers of its quality. And a product can be authentic because it is handmade and comes from a unique place. (54)

This chapter explores the contemporary marketplace for Australian craft and designer maker products as experienced by the makers and mediators in our study. What became clear was the ongoing importance of place—including localness and proximity—to the Australian market.

Here emerges a paradox in the current relationship between craft and digital technology. Whereas the whole moment of growth in handmaking is in so many ways a direct result of the internet, with its greater access to materials, skills knowledge and (potentially) markets, it is the value of a face-to-face, hand-to-hand economy that is clearly re-asserting itself in our study:

People that I speak to who aren't really in the arts are like "get it online, you have to be online". When actually I feel like my customers want the one-on-one connection before they make the purchase and I think that's so important. Why should they spend X amount of dollars on this or why would they want to buy something from an artist when they haven't actually met the artist? And like, for myself, when I want to buy an item of clothing or jewelry or that kind of thing, I want to know who it's coming from. And I have an appreciation if I have a high regard for the artist or that. [ ... ] I think perhaps if they market themselves like through Instagram and that kind of thing, showing a snapshot of their life you might get the sense that you know them and that might help. But I think it's still difficult. I think people in my position, they would do a lot better selling through markets because they do have the one-on-one interaction. (Laurence Coffrant, Australian contemporary jeweller, emerging maker, October 2016)

As we will see in Chap. 8, although having a readily available and polished online presence is an essential and expected new normal baseline to prove you exist—that you are a 'real' maker—most sales by the majority of makers we spoke with remain relatively direct and are mediated locally. This chapter outlines these findings, before drilling down more deeply into what the paradox reveals, not just about the contemporary creative marketplace but also about wider cultural and economic values in the broader community.

## WHERE PEOPLE ARE SELLING IN THE AUSTRALIAN CRAFT AND DESIGNER MAKER MARKETPLACE

Several questions in the study sought to identify the actual outlets people were selling through, in particular, the question, ‘Which of the following best describes the current distribution methods for your craft product?’, which participants completed directly onto the form. (See Appendix B for an example of the interview schedules employed in the study.) We placed no limit on how many options participants could choose—after all, their particular market profile is unique to them—but in what could at times be a tough ask, especially for those operating across a range of outlets, we also asked them to place a rough percentage next to each option to indicate how many of their sales were made through that particular avenue. Table 6.1 presents established makers’ responses to that question. Columns 1, 2 and 3 indicate the top three responses for each respondent, though this does not indicate whether there was a huge jump between the maker’s top outlet/s and the next most productive outlet. Column 4 shows the total responses for the top three outlets. The table clearly indicates that geography does continue to matter, and direct sales are still a key way Australian craftspeople and designer makers generate income. Indeed, the project clearly demonstrates the ongoing strength of face-to-face markets as key retail sites for the handmade, in line with the larger trend to ‘buy direct’:

I know personally when I go to a market, I want to talk to the person who’s made it, and if I have a really good connection with them, I’m more likely to like their work or buy their work at least, because I have more of an understanding. (Emma Young, glass artist, emerging maker, March 2016)

Without dismissing the impact the internet has had on the scene’s capacity to grow, one of the most striking findings emerging from the study was the ongoing proximity of sales in terms of limited degrees of separation between maker and seller, both geographically and in terms of friendship or social networks. For what is not evident in the figures presented here is that in approximately half of the cases where people sold primarily through public craft fairs or street markets, this was far and away their primary outlet, often listed at 60 per cent or higher.

But even online selling relationships tended to be both socially and geographically local. Although we did interview many makers who were

**Table 6.1** The three most significant outlets named by the established makers

<i>Distribution outlet</i>	<i>Order of significance</i>			<i>Total responses</i>
	<i>First</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>Third</i>	
Word of mouth	8	11	3	22
Direct to retailers (other than galleries)	10	6	1	17
Direct to public from studio/workshop/ home	9	7	1	17
Online	7	5	4	16
Public craft fairs	10	5	1	16
Through a commercially funded gallery or exhibition	9	5	2	16
Direct commissions	4	7	3	14
Through a craft shop	5	3	6	14
Wholesalers	2	4	4	10
Through a publicly funded gallery or exhibition	3	7	0	10
Street markets	4	2	1	7
Other (co-ops/artist collectives)	2	0	0	2
Trade-only fairs	1	0	0	1

*Note:* 20 of the 81 established makers gave no response or percentage

Where the first and second most significant outlets were given equal percentages, both were designated the main outlet and the next category left empty. Where equal percentages were given for the third most significant outlets, the data were not included; many of these figures were low and shared across multiple outlets, which would have skewed the significance of the higher percentage responses

distributing to markets interstate and internationally, the majority of sales by the majority of makers remain relatively local, even when conducted online:

The thing with the portrait commissions, they're all through Etsy, because yesterday I put up a portrait, a cute family portrait that I [had] commissioned, and then I said "Be sure to place your Christmas orders soon," and exclamation marks, "because Christmas is around the corner, make sure you don't miss out." About five minutes later, I got four emails saying, "Oh, that pet portrait." [ ... ] They're from Adelaide. But the portrait that I'd just finished, that was for a girl in Brisbane and I was doing some other dogs for a girl in [ ... ], they send me photographs and then I draw them up and get them printed onto really nice paper, and I offer framing for \$20 extra, because I'm open and honest about this, it's just the Ikea frame, and pretty much everyone says yes to that. (Pip Kruger, illustrator, emerging maker, September 2017)

Such commission work could be done anywhere in the world; clients send the illustrator an image file and an easy-to-send print is mailed back to them. But the reality is that, even when people spend a lot of time focusing on promotion including their online profile, networking and marketing (which are not mutually exclusive activities), the breadth of networks through which one can be known is limited. Even on the global marketplace that is Etsy, those finding or noticing your work are very often those who already know your work—often existing customers. In this way social media and platform (e.g. Etsy) contact are simply one mechanism by which existing friends and previous customers can look to reconnect and recommission work from a maker, hence the value of both having business cards available at markets and maintaining an active online presence. In Table 6.1 this is evident in the prevalence of ‘word of mouth’ sales—often repeat customers (having first purchased from them at the market) or people who aware of their work through friendship networks. In this way, the majority of the people we spoke to were still selling quite ‘directly’ to customers—if not directly ‘hand-to-hand’, then generally within limited geographies and/or social networks.

### ETSY AND ONLINE SELLING IN AUSTRALIA

I looked at Etsy but Etsy is just so full. I thought I wouldn’t be visible. I sort of thought that it was too late to join now. (Studio potter, established maker, November 2016)

When the project was initially proposed in 2014, Etsy and other online outlets for the handmade were experiencing a moment of exponential growth and media attention. Consequently, the possibilities for further decentralisation of production and distribution as a result of online international retailing, especially via Etsy, were an initial focus of the study. What we found, however, was that although some of the makers we interviewed were indeed having success online, very few stayed long on Etsy and equivalent sites after the initial excitement. Instead, the online mechanisms leading most directly to sales were social media—Instagram in particular—or simply direct contact via email or from a business or personal website. As we know, despite the hype of the global marketplace,

geography matters, especially when the products being sold exist as physical, often fragile, items, rather than digital files:

I have two online stores. One is my [onehappyleaf.com](http://onehappyleaf.com) and the other one is my Etsy store. So Etsy certainly gets more traffic and more sales than my online store, so what I do, I usually get about one or two online orders a day so I just go to the post office once or twice a week, so I'm not going there continuously and might be posting off a wholesale order as well at the same time. [ ... ] Because Etsy's obviously US-owned and they [US customers] always seem to think that I'm from the US as well, because after two days they wonder where their order is, which is fun. But [ ... ] my online store that, I'd say, it's the reverse—it's probably 70 per cent Australian and the rest, a mixture of US, some from France, just random places around the world. (One Happy Leaf, jeweller, established maker, November 2016)

I think Etsy is more about smaller products again and being able to ship them easily, and my stuff isn't like that. (Joslin Koolen, metalwares designer maker, emerging maker, April 2017)

For others, the low volume of sales they made through Etsy did not warrant the effort, especially factoring the costs of postage from Australia to elsewhere in the world into the buying decision:

Etsy was never my main focus anyway. I used Etsy as a way of creating an online portfolio for actual brick and mortar stockists. So if they wanted to see what my products were I said, "Go on to my Etsy shop, you can see all the prices, you can see everything photographed, you can see the whole range, then you can come to me again and tell me what you want and we can put a wholesale order together." But because I then have this Etsy shop set up, of course sales came through that as well. But my ideal way of selling is wholesale, big orders, sending them off, and being done with. Etsy has me running back and forth to the post office for one greeting card in my lunch break, and I just think, "This is not worth \$6." Yeah, unless it's a big order. (Pip Kruger, illustrator, emerging maker, August 2015)

Similarly, research participants who sought to focus on other sales avenues offered a number of reasons for their lack of success with selling online via Etsy or their decision not even to attempt to engage with Etsy. For many, the sheer number of sellers on the popular site was an impediment to the visibility of their products:

If you [didn't want to] get lost in the, in the massive thing of Etsy [...], you did have to fork out. So it's not as easy as they portray it. (Allison Howard, yarn worker, emerging maker, October 2017)

In fact, I don't even think we consider[ed] Etsy. At first we didn't want to go near there because [there's] so many people doing it. [...] It's so hard to be known. I mean, I feel like I'm just, we're just a small fish in this big ocean. (Textiles, emerging maker, April 2016)

I explored Etsy at one stage and couldn't be bothered. You'd look up jewellery on Etsy and there's 7,500 whatever pages. You'd think no, you'd get lost on something like that. (Alannah Sheridan, jewellery, emerging maker, March 2016)

Likewise, the lack of focus on the individual makers or their shops, with the Etsy brand itself so dominant, put some makers off wanting to invest in marketing via Etsy:

I find that you really have to make things in order to [succeed on Etsy], like it's like a second job, like you have to really make your descriptions and your text and your photos and your products for Etsy and everyone that I talk with, when I ask, oh where did you get these from? On Etsy, they always say Etsy, they never say the designer's name. So I feel it's not really, it doesn't really help. I find again, I don't get people from the Etsy public finding me there, but I have my own customers that I give the link and they go to my Etsy shop, so I just find it pointless in a way. (Valeria D'Annibale, jewellery, emerging maker, October 2017)

Others noted how focusing their marketing primarily around their Etsy shopfront also ran the risk of directing potential customers to competing similar products:

At the moment I'm just redirecting [my website] to my Etsy shop and, moving forward, I'm actually going to have a platform on Etsy and also on my website because Etsy is amazing and you get traffic from random places, which is great. However, it also means that if someone has been given my card and they go to my Etsy shop there's all suggestions for other people [producing similar items]. (Naomi Stanley, shoemaker, emerging maker, October 2015)

For others still, online sales sites lacked the personal touch and the opportunity for potential customers to 'try on' the highly tactile,

handmade product. For these kinds of reasons, for Valeria D'Annibale, Etsy was simply an easy way to set up an online shopfront for customers who found her in other, more local ways:

I have an Etsy [shop] The only things I have sold on Etsy were to people who saw me at the markets first. Because it's such a different material—like if you see a picture of this but you have no idea—it's light—it's inflexible—is it going to break—what is it? Probably my silver pieces will be easier to sell online; silver everyone knows what it is—everyone knows how to care about it. [ ... ] and I find it quite hard to keep it up because I make—like all the things I make are fairly unique so they are like one each of them. So I might have [ ... ] this bangle in a couple of colours, but I actually make 15 or 20 different colours and I don't update it all the time [because] I'm not really selling much. (Valeria D'Annibale, jewellery, emerging maker, March 2016)

Another interviewee deployed the Etsy website in a similar way:

I think it's [Etsy's] very valuable so that you have somewhere to direct people, especially if you're at a market or things like that; [ ... ] but it's not a regular source of income that I rely on. (Illustrator, emerging maker, September 2016)

For those who have had success on Etsy, the trick has been to find the right balance between the costs associated with uploading the item for sale (particularly the cost of photographing the pieces) and the income to be generated from it. There are two diverging paths one might take:

1. If it is a one-off product, make it a high-end/expensive one to cover the costs associated with photographing, describing, costing and listing it.
2. If it's a cheaper product, make sure it is reproduceable and list each colour in which it is available.

Makers with insecure supply chains, including those seeking to source environmentally (such as using off-cuts), found it more difficult to guarantee that level of product consistency. For their online advertising, they

tended to lean towards faster updating via Facebook and Instagram, rather than using Etsy or similar store-like interfaces.

Two connected observations can be made from the comments reported here. Firstly, even though we asked all the makers we interviewed whether they were selling via Etsy, emerging makers were more likely to have explored or at least considered this option and found it less than they had hoped for or expected. As can be seen in Fig. 8.2 (Chap. 8), just as many established as emerging makers were using Etsy, but they commented upon it less, suggesting they came to this experience with less sense of expectation and with a stronger sense of their product, the market and whether it would work in this context. However, emerging makers were not completely dismissive of the Etsy website, and even if the profits they may have wished were not forthcoming, many spoke positively about it as a valuable information-sharing community:

The Etsy sellers' handbook is pretty good. The bits I've seen of it they'll just have other writers from there or practitioners and sellers on there, successful sellers just giving you advice on heaps of different aspects, more so in a blog kind of format. So there'll be anything from product photography to marketing, packaging, all that kind of thing. (Tara Matthews, illustrator, emerging maker, August 2015)

Secondly, although our focus at the start of the project was on the promotional and distributional affordances of online communication, what quickly became clear was the internet's wider value as a source of information on everything from making techniques (including upskilling and new processes) to advice on how to run a small business (everything from the basic mechanics of organising payment systems to sophisticated approaches to marketing and achieving cut-through in this crowded field). Clearly, a new generation of makers are bypassing or at least augmenting traditional, more geographically bounded means of sourcing information and a sense of community (e.g. professional associations and state-based support organisations) to obtain a large part of this through information gathering and sharing on the internet, including through Etsy (Table 6.2).

**Table 6.2** How interviewees perceived Etsy

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Really easy to use, with lots of guidance about how to present work and so forth.’</li> <li>• ‘Good alternative for an online presence to support markets and other sales.’</li> <li>• ‘Trustworthy.’</li> <li>• ‘Easier to get traction with than an individual website.’</li> <li>• ‘Takes care of things like currency transactions.’</li> <li>• ‘Can develop good networks with other makers.’</li> <li>• ‘Great online tutorials and other resources for sellers.’</li> <li>• ‘Great benefits if chosen as a Featured Seller or get some other boost like that.’</li> <li>• ‘Potentially worth joining to be part of the local Etsy physical markets.’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Too big—easy to get lost.’</li> <li>• ‘People expect to pay low prices making it difficult to compete with cheaper markets; also competing with markets with greater economies of scale’ [e.g. USA].</li> <li>• ‘Perception that it is a saturated market.’</li> <li>• ‘Keeping your online shop updated is time-consuming and fiddly.’</li> <li>• ‘Pointing people towards Etsy can mean lost sales because potential customers are more easily able to access competitors.’</li> <li>• ‘Harder for people with less obvious products because of the limitations of the keyword search.’</li> <li>• ‘Not good for one-off designs because of the time it takes to get the descriptions and images online.’</li> <li>• ‘If you don’t want to get lost in Etsy need to pay for advertising.’</li> <li>• ‘Costs of running an Etsy shop mean that need a certain turnover to make it worthwhile.’</li> <li>• ‘It is reductive, individual makers and brands can get lost—“I got it on Etsy.”’</li> </ul>

### THE DESIRE FOR FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTION AND THE RISE OF CURATED DESIGNER MAKER MARKETS

Over the past decade in Australia a number of new large markets have emerged nationally, promoting themselves specifically as *designer maker* events largely to reach newer and often younger markets, including by distancing this contemporary marketplace from stereotypes of old-fashioned, poor-quality or simply twee craft street markets. Such ‘curated’

markets as Finder Keepers, Bowerbird Design Market, Big Design Market, Makers & Shakers and Handmade Canberra are now popular regular fixtures of the Australian designer maker scene. These events have thrived in a marketplace where, as Hracz and Jakob (2015) observe, ‘Consumers are drawn to these experiences because they are considered more authentic, facilitate creativity and self-actualisation and result in a “story” that can be converted into social and cultural capital’ (78). Although they are often not cheap to enter or travel to, for makers able to get a stall and stock it with enough produce to sustain them across what is often three days, they offer a guaranteed market of interested paying customers who are keen to buy ‘direct’ from the maker and/or designer (or their family or staff member who is staffing the stall at that moment).

The organisers of these kinds of markets locate them very much within the wider zeitgeist moment of interest in the artisanal and ‘buying direct’:

I do think there’s a soulfulness in handmade things, and I do wonder if people have got a little bit removed from that sense of community and actually meeting someone and hearing the story about how it’s made, hearing the story about them, how it’s come to be. So I think it’s the experience of actually being there at the event that people enjoy [ ... ], but, yeah, it is about the product as well. It’s just, it’s very human isn’t it the whole thing is very human. [ ... In addition to stalls selling wares] the other aspect of Bowerbird has been demonstrations and I think that’s been really key to what we’ve done and even workshops that we’ve run. Because I think initially we’d have people come through and a lot of people go, “Oh gosh, it’s so expensive,” they’re coming thinking it’s a market, and they’d go, “It’s really expensive,” and now we’ve had a few people who’ve demonstrated and one woman was weaving and people would come up and go, “Gosh they’re so expensive your shawls.” And then they’d actually see her weaving it and they go, “Oh you actually make the fabric. You haven’t just brought the fabric and hemmed it.” And then they go, “Oh okay, now I understand,” and—I think that comment comes out a lot less now and I think people come looking for quality and looking for things that are handmade and that they value it more. And so I think running workshops and things concurrently with the event, that’s just been our way of sort of saying look, this is what goes into the making process. It’s often incredibly involved. It takes hours and something might be \$60 but someone might have taken 10 hours to actually make that or certainly made the first prototypes and things that have taken ages and ages to get it started. So that was important that people actually value just how much goes into making things by hand. (Jane Barwick, Bowerbird Design Market, June 2015)

As Jane Barwick articulates, at least in the early days of the Bowerbird Design Market, it was important to demonstrate making as part of the process of educating this new audience for craft on the reason for higher price points for the handmade. This resonates again with Ocejo's (2017) study and his interviewees' educative work with their clients, which he refers to as "service teaching", or education through service' (192–193). For our makers, as likely also Ocejo's craft distillers, barbers, butchers and bartenders, this face-to-face interaction performs a two-way educative role. Just as potential customers are able to acquire a greater appreciation of the skills and labour that goes into what they may purchase through either seeing it being made (in person, images or videos) or speaking with the maker about it, makers, too, acquire invaluable (if not always comfortable) market feedback:

I think it's [getting feedback from interacting with people at markets] one of the most enjoyable parts about doing a market, and I think it allows you to see what areas you need improving on. Whereas like with a website or that kind of thing, selling your work online, you don't have that. (Laurence Coffrant, Australian contemporary jeweller, emerging maker, October 2016)

I like the personal relationship with people [you get at markets], but at the same time I get scared. [ ... ] there's this sort of barrier that you don't know how to break the ice. So you look at them looking at your work, right—It's really vulnerable. I don't know how to express that. If you are trying to put yourself out there and then they don't comment or anything. They do be like "that's nice" but you know, then they walk away. How [do] you infer from that behaviour? (Female, textiles, emerging maker, April 2016)

Makers, especially women makers, commonly expressed their discomfort with the market stall obligation of having to literally stand behind their products while people were walking by judging them. In this way, what is otherwise lauded (especially by buyers) as a valuable experience loses a little of its gloss.

## CRAFT, DESIGN AND LOCAL ECONOMIES IN A GLOBAL WORLD

In this marketplace of physical items and often localised or at least face-to-face interactions, it is not surprising that the 'tyranny of distance' still present in international and domestic supply chains continues to affect both

inputs and markets. This can have both positive and negative consequences, as will be explored via two diverse case studies from our study: Tasmanian-based furniture making and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander craft and designer made work, especially that of the Tjanpi Desert Weavers of Australia's Central Desert.

Distance as having an expensive negative impact upon their business was a particular frustration for Tasmanian makers,<sup>1</sup> especially those needing to move large items:

I do definitely have my eye on the international market, and I want to present myself as international and not local, although most of my work is local. I think the biggest challenge is for furniture, at least, it's really important to go to trade shows and stuff like that, and the price barrier to do that is just too much for me to make it possible. So that would probably be the biggest challenge, [the cost of] actually taking my work and exhibiting it overseas where people will see it. [ ... ] I guess because it's furniture and people want to see it in person before they buy it, so online doesn't really work for that well. (Liam Mugavin, furniture maker and designer, emerging maker, September 2015)

Already located in an island country that is geographically distant from many of the industrialised world's key markets, Tasmanian makers have the added disadvantage of being located on an island even further away—situated off the southern coast of the continent, separated from the mainland by 'frickin' Bass Strait [ ... ] the most expensive piece of water to cross. (Male, furniture designer and maker, emerging maker, February 2017)

The cruel irony of this is that a longstanding strength of Australian post-colonisation craft and making has been the Tasmanian furniture industry, an outgrowth of the state's legacy of plentiful and beautiful forests and thus timber. This legacy has been cultivated through successive commitments to supporting quality education and training, especially now through the University of Tasmania. But, whereas the materials for making the furniture items are easily available locally, the reality of getting them to markets beyond Tasmania remains a significant financial barrier to growth and a higher profile:

There's also that [Bass Strait's] one of the most costly pieces of sea across in the world, I think people don't quite fathom it unless you're from Tassie, like that piece of sea is actually quite costly to get things. (Male, furniture and lighting designer maker, established maker, February 2016)

It also impacts upon the costs of bringing in specialist heavy equipment:

This morning I got a call from this guy. I've had this piece of equipment on order for six months and it's finally arrived in Australia from Canada and the last little leg of the journey is proving to be quite complex and the freight charge was going to be 1300 to get this bit of equipment here, from the mainland, from Melbourne to here. So he broke this bad news to me and I thought, "Oh really." He said, "Yes this is often the case when you've got the Bass Strait involved," and so he was looking around because they can change their freight charge in a matter of hours depending on how much they've got on the ship, so if they've got a little bit of space left they're prepared to drop the price [ ... ] So yes he got a price which was 580 or something like that so I said "Yes" and I just thought that was him calling just now but he's obviously got my email and it's all happening so in a week's time—. That's the other thing, you have to think ahead and order way before you run out of something so you're also sort of paying out sort of before you actually need something so I've got lots of stock here that somebody in Melbourne wouldn't need to hold [ ... ]. Just because of geography. (Lunaboots, shoemaker, established maker, February 2017)

On the upside to the same equation, Tasmanian makers also, on the whole, spoke more consistently than any other geographic cohort in our study (barring the Tjanpi Desert Weavers to be discussed shortly) of the unique material aspects of place that they have exclusive access to. This took a number of forms. For Scott van Tuil, it was both the potential for an ethos of unique design based on local natural and built environments and the materials to work with. Such as the sandstone used in his 'Core' candle holders:

So this form is a reference to the dam wall in the Gordon River Dam, the double curvature wall, and looking back at our hydro-electric schemes and the engineering around that and that's where the turbine series came from as well [see Fig. 6.1]. [ ... ] so it might be through form or it might be through materials—so these sandstone, this is all about just using the material that's very Tasmanian and it has the GPS location of the quarry on the bottom also [reinforcing] that idea of knowing exactly where it's come from and just knowing that you—I love that idea of you literally owning or [that you] can hold a small piece of Tasmania [see Fig. 6.2]. (Scott van Tuil, furniture maker and designer, emerging maker, March 2018)

Another unique aspect of materials sourcing in Tasmania referred to by a number of the furniture and homewares makers we spoke to was the



**Fig. 6.1** A piece from Scott van Tuil's 'turbine' series. (Photograph: Rosina Possingham Photography)



**Fig. 6.2** Scott van Tuil holding the 'Core' sandstone case to reveal the latitude and longitude of where the stone was quarried on the base. (Photograph: Susan Luckman)

availability of one-off opportunities to access timbers such as Hydrowood—timber reclaimed from forests controversially flooded by dams such as the one on the Gordon River to make lakes feeding the production of hydroelectric power, often in the context of seeking to source materials sustainably.

Arguably, there is one sector of the Australian craft and designer maker market—contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander making—which not only benefits in some ways from the perception and realities of distance but has also been able to cut through the online marketplace with a distinct presence. Underpinned by millennia of storytelling and making, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander craft and design in country, sold via the internet, operates at the intersection of twenty-first-century economies and technologies, amidst the realities of lives disrupted across time and place. This is particularly notable as it is set against the ongoing backdrop of the dispossession of their land, a national failure to acknowledge the history of genocidal policies towards Aboriginal peoples and the associated ongoing collective failure to move forward with a true reconciliation. In many ways, it is in this sector, via online sales, that the potential of the decentralised geographies of Australian international online craft and design retail is being realised. Online sales through sites such as Etsy are an extension of the art centre model for creative production in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that has enabled artists to make a living while staying on their (frequently remote) country. In our project we identified more than 50 social enterprise art centres with some engagement with craft and design (Table 6.3 lists some of these for indicative purposes).

Working across a spectrum of creative practice and price points, what unites this work is that it is globally distinctive both visually and for its cultural meanings. A number of these organisations focus on printing unique local designs onto fabric, which is sold either as raw fabric or sewn into clothing, accessories or household items. Such items have the additional advantage of being easy to post as they are relatively lightweight and are not fragile. The expenses associated with distance become not only expected but part of the whole experience of purchasing work from these makers, with their own unique and significant to-the-product geographies. Similarly, whether it be in the maker's stories they represent, the design elements employed or the actual materials used in their production, these products tell a distinct story of place, which is then sent out to the world.

**Table 6.3** Some of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community centres producing craft and designer maker goods for sale

<i>Central Desert</i>	<i>Tiwi Islands (Northern Australia)</i>	<i>Arnhem Land (Northern Australia)</i>	<i>Kimberley Region (North West Australia)</i>	<i>Torres Strait (North-eastern Australia)</i>
Yarrenyty Arltere Artists	Manupi Arts	Maningrida Arts & Culture	Waringarri Aboriginal Arts	Gab Titui Cultural Centre
Ernabella Arts	Bima Wear	Elcho Island Arts	Nagula Jarndu (Saltwater Woman) Design	Moa Arts
Hermannsburg Potters—Aranda Artists of Central Australia Maruku Arts	Tiwi Arts	Bula'bula Arts  Bábbarra Women's Centre		

To tease this out through one example from our interviews, the Tjanpi Desert Weavers (<https://tjanpi.com.au/>) offers a unique take on the frequent hardwiring of making to the politics of social enterprise and connection to local environments (Fig. 6.3). *Tjanpi* means 'dry grass' in Pitjantjatjara. The Tjanpi Desert Weavers was formed by the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council 'to enable women in remote central deserts to earn their own income from fibre art' (<https://tjanpi.com.au/pages/about>, accessed 23/11/18):

[The] NPY Women's Council [ ... ] delivers a number of services across the NPY region that are not covered by government or any other organisation. So it's filling a need, a gap as expressed by the membership itself. The membership is composed of Aboriginal women that reside on the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara Lands, and what is also commonly referred to as the tri-state border region of Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. We cross three state jurisdictions [350,000 square kilometres] in the service delivery of that region. [ ... ] There has been a concerted shift to move Tjanpi into the fine art market with the evolution of sculptural work. Baskets alone mean we are lumped into the craft market inhibiting the price point for us and competing with a cheaper import mar-



**Fig. 6.3** Mary Katatjuku Pan from Amata (SA) collecting minarri grass to make works as part of Tjanpi Desert Weavers, 2017. (Photograph: Rhett Hammerton)

ket. But we also try to position Tjanpi more broadly in the Australia contemporary art landscape rather than just being Indigenous art. We are also making inroads into the design market as well with the creation of a bespoke lampshade range with Koskela. We are always working towards diversified revenue streams to ensure our long-term sustainability. It's quite challenging because Tjanpi operates across a vast region of extreme economic disadvantage and supports 26 communities within that region that are geographically isolated from mainstream markets. It is costly. We facilitate an annual program of skills development workshops in communities. We support senior artists, emerging artists and new women to create fibre art and elevate practice. This regular visitation allows us to also purchase artwork up-front and provide immediate income. We support between 300–400 women a year to create work. Some women prefer to make the occasional artwork, others are producing artwork more regularly. Senior artists will produce exhibition quality work and others are producing work to purchase food at the community store and feed kids. (Michelle Young, manager of Tjanpi Desert Weavers, NPY Women's Council, October 2015)

The hundreds of women working in 26 communities across three states, who are making woven products for sale or gallery display for Tjanpi Desert Weavers at any one time, are not only inspired by their country but weave the very landscape into their work by incorporating the local grasses, which are cultivated, collected and treated for this purpose. The presence of the grass actually poses a challenge to the growth of some international markets for the work, with customs requirements precluding easy importation. For this reason, at the time we spoke with the organisation, their primary focus for market growth was the urban domestic market, along with international art commissions (work by Tjanpi artists was featured in that year's Venice Biennale). Clearly, their country (the Central Desert landscape) and traditional forms (the coolamon or pittu bowl) are not only a source of inspiration but offer a unique product made by a diverse creative workforce, grounded in place and valued in a global market in search for points of difference—things with a story and a provenance.

For Tjanpi Desert Weavers, the relationship of care for the community even extends to being able to provide financial support in return for work for women who, for various reasons, find themselves near the headquarters in town (Alice Springs) and want to get back to country. Because some of the works that arrive in the Alice Springs office are not yet ready for retail sale in the urban coastal centres, additional employment can be provided to women who can work to refine these items to prepare them for sale. This saves them from having to find other means of making their way home.

## LOCALISM, CRAFT AND CONTEMPORARY EXCHANGE ECONOMIES

The emphasis on the local within the craft marketplace needs to be understood in a global context. In the context of increased globalisation, there is a desire to scale back damaging production systems and reclaim a sense of ownership and thus responsibility for the impact of production and consumption. As they do elsewhere across the Global North, the largely middle-class purchasing demographic dominating this part of the Australian market uphold the local, generally not in hostility to a sense of transnational or even global belonging, but largely because of it. Although the impacts of climate change are already starting to influence individual behaviour and will continue to do so, many of these people travel, and when they do, again they seek out the local not only for all kinds of ethical but also, importantly, point-of-difference reasons. Whether it be a Tasmanian wood product, hand-printed fabric homewares or clothing or a Tjanpi woven sculpture, each (like other handmade items) is unique. Although each locally designed item may not be unique per se (within makers' admittedly limited capacities to enforce intellectual property rights), the specific product at least should be.

In a world where so many of the things we encounter are now 'made in China' and exported widely to an increasingly homogenised market, it should be no surprise that crafts especially, as well as locally designed goods, are in demand. As British ceramic artist and writer Edmund de Waal has recently stated, 'Craft is the great otherness in our culture' (quoted in Gibson 2015, 35). This sense of craft pushing back against a rising tide of sameness in material goods was also clearly reflected in our interviews:

I think that that's a very critical ingredient that we need to put into the mix, which is [ ... ] why people would choose to buy a handmade or a, you know, it doesn't need to be handmade, but a designed thing, rather than a mass-produced object? I think that kind of turn of the wheel where people are feeling the [need for a] sort of antidote to globalisation [comes from] that sense of belonging to something that's very local. I think that it's one of the reasons that when tourists go to visit a place they pick up something that's made from that area, you know. [ ... ] it's a tangible trigger for their memory of that place and that time. (Tamara Winikoff, National Association for the Visual Arts, December 2015)

When people come to a region like this [Cairns, the visitor gateway to the Great Barrier Reef and Daintree Rainforest National Parks], when they're looking at souveniring from this region, and they are looking for something

that's unique and individual, [ ... ] they already have a price point in mind that they'll go to, no matter what it is. So they've got the spending money in their pocket, they'll buy five of that or one of that, and it's that particular item that sums up and embodies their experience, that will get it across the line. That might be a beautiful bowl or a cup, or it might be a print, or it might be a range of jewellery, whatever it might be. Yeah, I have noticed that unique individual pieces are being more taken up than in the past. (Justin Bishop, director of KickArts, November 2015)

I live in Coogee, but you know I don't want a cushion with "Coogee" on it, even though I make them. But they never go into [local] people's houses. The Coogee cushion nearly always goes to the UK. [ ... ] There's an Irish community live in Coogee, and there's a woman called Mary [ ... ] I am her go-to person for a going-away gift. And so I just get this person to ring me who says, "Hi Robert, it's Mary. Such and such is going home, can you do me a cushion in this colour? Kelly will be around to pick it up next week". And so I have a standard thing for these people now, it's called the Mary discount. If you're Irish and your part of this group you get a Mary discount. [ ... ] Ireland, it's full of them, full of cushions saying "Coogee" or "Bondi". (Bob Window, Handmade Cushions and Found Objects, established maker, October 2016)

Territory people like my stuff because I have lots of Territory-inspired designs and they're a very parochial mob. [Visitors too] definitely, and I think what they like about my stuff is that it's not like crappy souvenirs. It's got the tourist appeal without being some crappy plastic piece of rubbish with "Darwin, NT" printed all over it. (Robyn 'Boo' McLean, custom textile design, homewares and accessories, established maker, July 2016)

Much tourist practice is often legitimately criticised for cultural and social as well as economic and environmental reasons; however, the translocalisms implicit in the attraction of locally made goods tap into a long history of interest in unique material cultures. For many people, this is central to the experience of travel. Being able to do so speaks of economic privilege, let alone the genocidal history of colonialism, including, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, the theft of their cultural artefacts—even their very bodies—as mementos and trophies of otherness. Relationships of obligation and exploitation are not new. They are mentioned here to historicise the centrality of craft and making to tourism. What is new is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-controlled social enterprises are now in a position to capitalise upon the demand, and this is something to be celebrated and nurtured. Tourism—domestic and international—also provides a valuable

‘local’ outlet for many of the makers we spoke to in the Crafting Self project. In a globalised world, the handmade or locally designed object is the tourist antidote to material sameness and the ubiquity of mass-produced objects, where “‘China”, in this story of making, is shorthand for the logic of capitalism in extremis’ (Dudley 2014, 103).

## NOTE

1. Tasmania is the only Australian state not located on continental Australia. Rather it is an island located off the south-eastern corner of Australia, with its northern coastline beginning around 500 kilometres south of Melbourne.

On the upside, many Tasmanian makers, especially those based in or selling through Hobart, have benefited from the tourism boom that has accompanied the opening of the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA). With ferries regularly leaving to go to the museum from a nearby pier featuring craft, artisanal and designer maker goods, art retailers based in and around the Salamanca Arts Centre have felt definite flow-on effects from increased tourist numbers:

The rent is more where we are now, but because we’re in the middle of the Arts Centre we get a lot more walk-through traffic. Every time I’m in there I talk to people when they come in, and I ask them where they’re from, and have a bit of a chat. And there are a lot of tourists. [ ... ] I’ve had lots and lots of conversations with people, particularly when there are festivals on, to say “What are you doing” and “Why are you here”, and so much of it is due to MONA. So the ‘MONA effect’ it really is a big thing and it has had a massive impact, because so many people are coming to Tasmania to see MONA or to go to a MONA event, and everything else they do is just an add-on and everyone else benefits. (Tanja von Behrens, jeweller, established maker, February 2016)

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## CHAPTER 7

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# Craft and Design in an Age of Climate Crisis

Feature Interview 7.1. Laura McCusker, Furniture Maker, Established Maker (Interviewed February 2016)

It took me a while to really get an idea of what's been going on here in Tasmania on the ground. When I turned up, I was just really observant and I listened a lot, because there's obviously a huge history down here of environmental ethics and the importance of the environment and the timbers and the materials. And I was very conscious of just watching and listening and being aware of what was happening for a good few years. [ ... ] When I was in Sydney we used to pay a premium for Tasmanian oak and when I moved down here I noticed the people down here use Tasmanian oak as a building product or as firewood or fence palings. It really was a super-undervalued resource. [Instead] it was all about Huon Pine, myrtle, sassafras, celery top, all of these other timbers. And because I didn't have a really good understanding or I was very wary of the environmental, of the politics that comes with those timbers—where they were from, how they were sourced, was it ethically sourced, was it the right thing?—I basically just took a big step back and said I don't know enough and I'm not confident that I know where it's come from.

*(continued)*

(continued)

And then they locked up a lot of those timbers, and so the timbers that you could get, you were getting them from people who took them out; there are some cowboys out there that you don't know how and where they got the timber. So from an ethical point of view it's a little bit dodgy, but then also from a very practical point of view, if a timber hasn't been properly seasoned and air-dried and kiln-dried you can end up paying money for timber that's not going to work or isn't very good. So, from a consistency of pricing and product and quality and the ethics of it, I basically just said: "Okay, it's Tas oak. That's what we're working with and that's all we're working with." And we developed a number of different ways of using Tas oak that, I mean I've really enjoyed it. We've developed a way of triggering the tannin in the Tas oak to make it go black by mixing up a combination of steel wool and vinegar and then spraying it on and it comes up this beautiful black colour. We've been working with soap finishes which are traditional finish of European lighter timbers and that triggers the colour. It takes all the pink out of the Tas oak and it almost goes this sort of, it's almost this kind of cool olive green kind of colour, more like spotted gum, that's really beautiful. So there's ways of actually handling Tas oak that makes it, elevates it. And even just calling it Tas oak is the equivalent of calling a porterhouse steak 'meat'. It's just this generic term that covers about five different eucalypt species and they just call it "Tas oak". I mean it's *Eucalyptus regnans*, *Eucalyptus obliqua*, [*Eucalyptus*] *delegatensis*. They're the Latin names, but it's stringy bark or mountain ash, all of these names are really evocative and beautiful and totally—and even just calling it the right name or the local colloquial name elevates it to another level. [ ... ] Pretty much all of the timber we work with is Tas oak. There have been a couple of occasions we've made some stuff out of Huon Pine but that's actually when people have come to us with their own stack, which has been really, again a really nice opportunity. (Laura McCusker, furniture maker, established maker, February 2016)

In an age of climate crisis and too much 'stuff', it may seem a little strange to be talking about craft-based solutions to waste and the eco-impacts of making. Craft itself is already a big field, but it is also currently over-attenuated through constant evocation of the idea of 'craft', 'crafted' and 'craftsperson' as part of wider consumer and cultural trends around the

artisanal. ‘Craft’, too, is both a noun and a verb and ‘crafty’ an adjective. Accordingly, ‘craft’ today is an incredibly loaded term, just as likely to be evoked dismissively in reference to the incredible amounts of tat currently globally available and most famously mocked on the now (mercifully) defunct website that gave rise to the hashtag #regreetsy. The focus of ‘regreetsy’ was to shame pointless, embarrassing or just poorly executed amateur-made objects representing both a perceived waste of time and, importantly in this day and age, material resources. Regreetsy was living proof that ‘just because you can, doesn’t mean you should.’ But it is also important to acknowledge that the internet world of craft is just the most recent iteration of a much longer history of crafting with its deep, millennia-old knowledges of materials and processes. Contemporary craft practice can also offer insights into useful everyday material practices that mitigate the amount of waste humans generate. Thus a key tension at the heart of artisanal capitalism that revealed itself in our study is the desire on the part of many makers to work ethically as well as generate an income, all the while questioning: ‘does the world really need more “stuff”?’ This chapter explores how makers are working to negotiate these tensions and seeking to become part of the solution, not the problem.

A central tenet of craft practice has long been a profound respect for materials, a valuing that includes reuse, and this sensibility continues to inform much craft practice today. So too do ideas of workmanship, quality and building to last, which also have rich and long traditions in craft practice and are all the more salient in the age of ‘fast fashion’ and accelerating disposability. Writing on the cusp of the second Western craft revival in the 1970s, which was informed by a ‘back to basics’ sensibility and emerging environmental awareness, leading British architect, industrial designer and craftsman David Pye (1995), observed in his iconic book on craft and making, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*:

The traditional association between high regulation and durability, whether true or false, has no force any longer. The highly regulated ball-point pen with which I am writing will be thrown away next week.

We have already remarked that traditional ideas of workmanship originated when man-made things were few and highly prized, of whatever sort they were, and when highly regulated workmanship must have been so rare as to seem wonderful. But now things are all too many, high regulation is

commonplace, and free workmanship as such is fast dying out, and high regulation, of all things, is least respected. Consider any scrapheap. (83)

Evoking one of the leading thinkers of the earlier Arts and Crafts Movement that was influential across much of the Global North, not coincidentally in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, Pye (1995) continues:

Ruskin said ‘If we build, let us think that we build forever.’ Shall we say ‘If we build, let us remember to build for the scrapheap’? Shall we make everything so that it goes wrong or breaks pretty quickly? I think not. Men do not live by economics alone. There is a question of morale involved. A world in which everything was ephemeral would not be worth working for. There are overwhelming social and aesthetic arguments for durability in certain things even if, as we are told, there are no economic ones. (83)

Such an ethos certainly resonated with the 1960s and 1970s counter-culture and, with it, the last major wave of mainstream interest in craft. Craft practice has come a long way since the now clichéd 1970s brown ceramic mug and macramé pot hanger (though the latter at least is currently experiencing something of a revival), but the sense of craft as a practice with the potential to live and make in greater harmony with the environment persists.

Today we can see ways in which craft materials and practices embody a tangible sense of what American political theorist and philosopher Jane Bennett (2001) calls ‘enchantment’:

Enchantment is a feeling of being connected in an affirmative way to existence; it is to be under the momentary impression that the natural and cultural worlds offer gifts and, in so doing, remind us that it is good to be alive. (156)

Such a relationship to natural resources and skilled processes parallels that felt by many makers and craftspeople. For them, materials (e.g. rock, metal, clay, wood, glass, fibre) are to be worked *with*, not *upon*. The knots of the wood or the feel of the clay represents the material’s own more than human agency in the making process. This deep haptic knowledge, embodied tacitly by craftspeople, is something Bennett (2010) acknowledged more recently:

What woodworkers and metallurgists know quite well: there exist ‘variable intensive affects’ and ‘incipient qualities’ of matter that ‘external forms [can only] bring out and facilitate.’ Instead of a formative power detachable from matter, artisans (and mechanics, cooks, builders, cleaners, and anyone else intimate with things) encounter a creative materiality with incipient tendencies and propensities, which are variably enacted depending on the other forces, affects, or bodies with which they come into close contact. (56)

It is in this way that issues of sustainability, minimising one’s environmental footprint (including energy use and lifestyle generally) and being crafty with materials sourcing and reuse emerged consistently in our interviews with makers, the majority of whom were engaged either explicitly or implicitly with issues connected to a concern for the environment, waste and consumption. Although only one of our interview questions focuses on this, it was clear that for many of our participants contemporary environmental or social agendas provide a strong motivation and framework for professional practice (see also Schwarz and Yair 2010).

This was certainly the case for jeweller Clare Poppi of Small Green Leaf, whose general approach is not atypical. Her practice as a jeweller is based around sustainability. She is influenced by the activist–researcher approach of Kate Fletcher (2014, 2016) and discussions around makers not just designing in an ethical manner but also considering how, once an object is no longer wanted, it can be broken down into parts for reuse or recycling—jewellery as part of a circular economy. For this reason, she is also interested in the discussion around repurposing, recycling, fixing and maintaining items. These ideas inform the manner in which she makes jewellery. She is also concerned with the ethical sourcing of metals, including fair-trade sourcing, so she works with local fossickers who find and cut their own stones. This way she knows that they did not exploit others in sourcing their gems. In her studio she has tried to minimise the use of chemicals, for which jewellery production is notorious, and is always seeking solutions that are less damaging to the environment. Finally, she is glad to be a jeweller working with precious metals because such expensive items are unlikely to be simply thrown away:

Even just thinking about the value thing, with metals I as a jeweller predominantly will work with precious metals, whereas a lot of other jewellers may work with plastics and found materials and things, which is fine. But I like the idea that because that is so inherently precious, that material, people

won't throw it away. [...] It can just so easily be recycled and melted down. They can bring it back to me to do that or they can take it to somebody else, and people tend to hang onto it for that reason, that they have a perceived value attached to that. (Clare Poppi, jeweller, established maker, September 2016)

But while Clare's practice might be at the more deliberate and systemic end of the climate crisis-motivated attention-making spectrum, hers is hardly a unique commitment.

As materials specialists, many makers are drawn to working creatively to develop more sustainable modes of production and materials use. Indeed, looking across the whole project—not just the interviews but also the online searches undertaken to identify potential interviewees—we identified five different but often overlapping ways in which Australian craftspeople and designer makers sought to lessen the impact of their practice upon the environment:

1. Materials sourcing:
  - (a) Use of sustainable energy sources and materials
  - (b) Up-/recycling
  - (c) Whole-of-animal use (e.g. leathers, bones, feathers and other by-products of the meat industry)
2. Craft = quality = made to last/ made to hold onto/made to be repairable
3. Craft as part of a lifestyle downshifting choice
4. Low carbon futures and digital tools—seeking new ways to minimise waste through making/designing to order
5. Circular economies of craft

### MATERIALS SOURCING

The aspect of making around which the people interviewed in this project were most likely to express environmental concerns and awareness was in their sourcing of raw materials. This was especially the case for those working directly with natural materials such as timber, leather and fibres, though—interestingly—less so clay. Indeed the very choice to use natural materials rather than synthetic ones is often itself an environmental choice

and preference. Such an appreciation for the provenance of materials is perhaps unsurprising given their centrality to the practice of making. But importantly, and practically, it is also a key site for negotiations and trade-offs for makers between what is possible (what they can afford and access and what that particular material might be able to actually do, the final item's price point, the time available to them to search out alternatives and their own ethical belief systems) and what is not.

It is in care in sourcing materials that many makers most explicitly locate their making ethics. This particular manifestation of an attentiveness to the wider impacts of their making, especially as it impacts upon the natural world, is one important way in which contemporary craftspeople and designer makers seek to work *with* the affordances of resources as part of an affective, ethical relationship with their materials. We can see here again resonances of what Jane Bennett (2010) identifies as the vibrant materiality of non-human objects, which in this instance can offer an engagement of enchantment as the basis for moral action:

For me the question is not whether disenchantment is a regrettable or a progressive historical development. It is, rather, whether the very characterization of the world as disenchanted ignores and then discourages affective attachment to that world. The question is important because the mood of enchantment may be valuable for ethical life. (Bennett 2001, 3)

Caring about where things come from and whether this is sustainable and considering whether the maker's use of them justifies the act of creative destruction they are about to enact upon the materials in their current forms are in this context all-important questions to ask as part of making ethics. Makers in this study employed a number of sourcing strategies to enact this care.

### *Use of Sustainable Materials: Sourcing Timber*

An important concern about materials sourcing facing many of the makers we interviewed, again especially those working with natural materials, was seeking out sustainably sourced raw materials. This was most marked in those makers working with timber. Timber in Australia, as elsewhere, is a craft resource with a high-profile public history of protest and contention. For decades, protestors have rallied against the further logging of Australia's old-growth forests, already monumentally depleted by just over

200 years of European settlement. Agroforestry of both native and introduced timbers has been introduced, but by and large this has not focused on the artisanal production of fine furniture and household and personal items, and thus the supply chains and tree species involved are not always suited to this market. It is this larger context that operates as a backdrop to the challenges of sourcing timber that is at once workable and beautiful but also sustainable. ‘Sustainable’ here is a reference to maker and market desires for items that are made from ethically sourced timber, as well as a reliable supply chain for the maker. For, although one-off pieces are often produced, especially on commissions or as gallery pieces, from unique sources of timber (sometimes from literal as well as figurative windfalls), makers generally require some regularity in materials sourcing to ensure the sustainability of their own business.

Because Tasmania’s recent history of quality furniture handmaking is a direct result of proximity to quality timbers (including the highly prized but increasingly endangered Huon Pine), Tasmanian makers were particularly attentive to the challenges of ethical timber sourcing. For Laura McCusker (see Feature Interview 6.1), coming to Tasmania, famous for its forests and their timbers but also for the battles over them, the issue of the provenance of material cannot be ignored. In Tasmania, many of these debates are galvanised around the status and desirability of the timber known as Huon Pine or *Lagarostrobos franklinii*. Unique to the forest of south-west Tasmania, the fine-grained and warmly coloured Huon Pine is now increasingly threatened as the result of logging and habitat loss. A victim of its own success, initially, the timber was harvested aggressively for boat building, for which it is particularly well suited as its natural oils resist rotting. More recently, it has attained an iconic status, partly as a result of its relative rarity, and all sorts of smaller household items made of the timber are plentifully available, largely to the state’s growing visitor market.

This capitalising upon the mystique of the timber through the churning out of what many see as largely cheap tourist trinkets was generally looked down upon by the makers we interviewed:

I think that there are a lot of good practitioners that do use specialty timbers, but sometimes I think specialty timbers can be misapplied in their use. So, for example, I think boat building with some of the specialty timbers is what they’re designed—well not designed for, but you know, what they’re specifically really well suited for. But sometimes when you see like hundreds

of chopping boards [made] out of Huon Pine, and boat grade Huon Pine, you just kind of go, “Oh God what’s going on here”, like. And so, it’s being sold because its Huon Pine, but the thing is, often some people, if you show them a piece of Huon Pine, then show them a piece of radiata and macrocarpa, they wouldn’t necessarily know the difference. And even though they’ve both got very different properties in terms of manufacturing—making and appearance—it’s just like it’s a branding thing that [makes] people [ ... ] go for those things [made of Huon Pine]. So I’m not necessarily opposed, categorically, to people being able to use those timbers, I just think that the application should be limited to certain applications, or people should really think about what they’re using them for and if they’re using it responsibly. So either like very personal detailing in a cabinet or something, or reserved for [detail] work, or reserved for boat work, because a lot of those timbers take forever to grow, and [ ... ] they’ve got resistance, so they’re perfect for boats. [ ... So] if you’re using those timbers that are like really, really fine grade timbers and they’ve been turned into slabs of chopping board, or pepper grinders, or fruit, or something, [ ... ] that same thing could be made out of a fast growing timber and still sell, then maybe that’s something to consider. But if it wouldn’t sell out of that other timber, like that’s maybe a little bit of a judgement thing, but like why should it exist? (Male, furniture and lighting designer maker, established maker, February 2016)

It is in this context where Huon Pine is fetishised, that working with ‘Tassie Oak’ (which is actually not a single species but rather a range of local Tasmanian eucalypt timbers) and rendering it fashionable or at least desirable to a discerning market becomes a deliberate and calculated act of bringing the consumer market into a more sustainable relationship with the goods they buy:

All the timber [I use] is from responsibly managed sources, [ ... ] it’s not a difficult thing to do, to ensure that your timber is from those sorts of sources. [ ... ] In terms of actually working with timber, [Tassie Oak is] not the easiest, [but] it’s not bad. But machining and what not it’s kind of like it’s okay. I like it because it’s local and it’s easy to get a hold of, it’s cheap comparatively to other speciality timbers. And I think there’s an opportunity to—I’m sure other Tassie people might say this as well, that you talk to—there’s an opportunity to elevate its status a little bit. It’s probably seen as a lower grade timber commercially. But I think you can, as a designer, you can change perceived values of things, materials, and I think using Tas oak is a good opportunity to do that, because it’s a great resource and if we can

promote [it] through good design then that's a really healthy thing. (Scott van Tuil, furniture maker and designer, emerging maker, February 2016)

We also encountered some unlikely but illustrative examples of what can be possible at the intersection of desirability, technology and opportunity. During the course of our project, a new means of accessing Huon Pine and other rare rainforest timbers emerged. One of the reasons for the high profile of debates around timber sustainability that are particularly notable in Tasmania was the hard-thought, high-profile and ultimately successful protest blockades against the Gordon-below-Franklin Dam in the forests of south-west Tasmania in 1982–1983. The government's intention was to extend the state's hydroelectricity supply. The blockade and wider campaign to get UNESCO World Heritage status for the area is seen largely as a formative moment for the Australian Greens. In 1986, the Pieman River on the west coast was dammed, creating Lake Pieman and drowning what remained of the local forest. Recently, Hydrowood (n.d.)—the 'world's first underwater forestry operation'—has begun harvesting these rare timbers and drying them under controlled conditions. Recognising the specialist market for such wood on this significant but not inexhaustible scale, they are focusing on craftspeople and master builders as a primary market because of the uniqueness and qualities of the timber:

This is real wood. Solid timber that comes untouched and intact.

Wood that craftsmen and master builders dream of working with. Wood with a story to tell, a character like no other and in quantities thought never to be seen again. (Hydrowood n.d.)

As they go on to note, it is rare for this kind of timber to be available today as large intact logs rather than salvaged smaller pieces. In marketing storytelling that aligns perfectly with that of the crafts community, the undoubtedly 'unique story' of this timber is emphasised. We became aware of Hydrowood in 2016 when references to how they were sourcing timber began appearing in our interviews. Contact had been made with local craftspeople and designer makers:

But recently, maybe three weeks ago, this guy from Hydrowood came to visit. They've got the licence to go to Lake Pieman, which is one of the lakes that hydro [hydro-electric power plant] flooded, and pull out some of the trees that are standing there. And so there is a way to get some of those

timbers, which we know is ethical and they've been properly kiln dried and the timber is really stable. [ ... ]The dam is up to 30–40 metres deep in some areas so they know that these trees are huge, and they've been dead for 30 years so they're actually—they've realised that it's really well seasoned. There have been other lakes down here where they've been able to pull up Huon Pine from the bottom of the lake and it was a felled tree. And because of Huon's high resin and wax contents, it doesn't get waterlogged. So they were able to pull up the logs and they've been fine. But what's interesting about this is because the roots are still in the ground and the tops are above the water it hasn't sucked any of the water up. It hasn't become waterlogged. It's actually really well seasoned. It's been dead for 30 years and then when they're cutting it down and opening it up it's really stable. So it's an interesting way, and the scale of what they're getting, [there is] myrtle and blackwood. So the bark and the sap would sort of protect the internal, the hard wood, the heart wood. (Laura McCusker, furniture maker, established maker, February 2016)

The desire to source timber sustainably is hardly unique to Tasmanian makers, but it certainly is a concern built into that maker ecology, including its commercial supply chains. For reasons of space we cannot do justice to all the examples of timber sourcing attentiveness we encountered across the country. But in focusing on how this aspect of obtaining materials is playing out as a local making ecology in Tasmania, we seek to capture some of the breadth of what is possible and the important role of makers as conveyors of meaning and value in the consumer marketplace.

### *Negotiating, Sourcing and Using Animal-Based Materials*

Arguably the most overtly politically fraught aspect of making we encountered concerned the use of animal parts. Obviously, working with wool does not require the death of the animal, but making using of bone material, skins, fur and leather does. We encountered very few makers working with the first three items. Those who were tended to be making one-off pieces using materials sourced from second-hand markets and opportunity shops (e.g. fur and skins); they were reusing materials already well and truly in circulation and previously rendered 'waste'. Similarly, those whose work drew upon raw materials such as bone often were drawn to these by-products of the meat industry through a desire to turn them from 'waste' to use. Such an approach, which many may find ethically or aesthetically upsetting, was for many others part of an ethics of environmentally

sustainable making. A sense of the importance of using the whole animal permeates discussions with makers working with these materials, connecting their craft practice with contemporary international trends around food and the revaluing of offal and not just prime, choice cuts. For millennia, people have worked with the material affordances of the animals around them. In the Australian context, finding a use for the whole slaughtered animal or as much of it as possible connects this kind of making to the ongoing practices of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander living and making, offering insights into how on a small scale we can live more in tune with the natural environment.

Although small-scale making practices may be understood more easily within this kind of ethics, it is when things become industrialised on a much larger, global scale that the situation gets much more complex, and this is certainly the case with leather. Leather is a material with a long, deep and rich history in making, but it is also a material notoriously polluting to process. Historically, tanning has been a substantial contributor to the contamination of waterways in both urban and rural contexts. Today, the challenges of working with this important, durable and attractive material require ongoing negotiation on how best to minimise the impacts. Surprisingly given Australia's substantial beef industry, the country produces many skins but has limited leather production. Most tanning, even of Australian hides, is undertaken overseas introducing a whole series of negotiations around cost, travel miles, quality of product and environmental and worker protections for the Australian craftspeople and designer makers sourcing this material:

There's a lot of energy in any type of leather, and it is something certainly that I think about. I mean in shoes and boots I use more kangaroo really than anything, and that's for a whole lot of reasons but certainly ecological and environmental reasons come into that, it's as local a leather as I can get. Australia doesn't, unfortunately produce any high-quality leather once you step away from kangaroo. [ ... ] There are a couple of smallish tanneries in Australia, but for someone like me where 80 per cent of the cost of my product is my labour, you really need high-quality material. [ ... ] So I really do shop around the world, I tend to use really only vegetable tan leathers, which is a much less toxic kind of form of tanning. [ ... ] And the quality leathers come from countries like America, Italy, the UK where there are environmental regulations and safeguards in place. [ ... ] But as for the Australian beef hides, I mean some do get tanned here but a lot go offshore in a pickled state, and then the tanning happens overseas. And for the really

high-quality kangaroo it's tanned in Germany, it's not tanned, I mean kangaroo is tanned in Australia and you can get [it], I mean it's an excellent leather, you can get great kangaroo that is Australian, that's what I use, but you know the premium grade stuff is tanned in Europe. (James B. Young, shoemaker and outfitter, established maker, October 2015)

Well I love the fact [kangaroo leather is] relatively local and it's here in Australia and I know it hasn't come in from China and who knows what they've done to it. I'd love to be using more ecological leathers and they're quite expensive and so for classes and where I might buy the odd skin in for a particular job, I'm just getting what I can get because it's just so hard, there's only really one or well there's two places I use for leather. One's in Sydney, the other one is in Queensland, north of Brisbane. [ ... ] What I need here is a range of different colours and styles of shoe, [when] people come here they want, some want rustic leathers and some want really high-end looking shoes that are very fine leather, so I've got a real combination [ ... ] from one end to the other really. (Luna Newby, shoemaker, established maker, February 2017)

James and Luna represent here a number of the approaches regularly taken by the makers we spoke to when seeking to minimise the environmental impacts of working with leather. Paying extra to get leathers that are processed in Europe rather than China, the former with its much stronger protective policy frameworks, was a crucial one. So too was seeking out leathers coloured using natural, vegetable dyes. The foregrounding of kangaroo leather points to another way in which makers sought to minimise the environmental footprint—literally—of their leather use, albeit in terms of its impact upon the environment while the animal is alive. As an animal native to Australia (unlike all bovines and other hard-hoofed farm animals), soft-footed kangaroos leave less of an ecological footprint than farmed animals, whose hard feet churn up soil, making it more prone to erosion and the introduction of weeds.

Another approach often taken by makers working with leather was to source offcuts, end-of-run or remaindered pieces:

I use repurposed leather, which also makes it very unique. As far as I know there is only one person in Canada and one person in America using repurposed leather. [ ... ] I started getting offcuts from upholsters and also op shops buying up leather jackets and then sort of let myself believe that I could find full hides, that it was possible, and found in Melbourne—there's a lot of resources in Melbourne. [I] got onto people who had hides that had

just been sitting around for a really long time and they didn't want them, so I was able to buy them up and that's why you see a lot of leather behind you. And so it's not just about taking old things and using them like I'm using brand new old things, it's more about the ethos that there is so much waste out there and everything I am using was just going to be landfill at some point, because I am choosing to look further and to use the resources that we have already got rather than just consuming more and more. [ ... ] It means I don't have the instant success that a lot of people do when they're buying on-trend leather, like they will get the swatches and they will say, "What do you want?" and people will go metallic gold and dusty pink, and I can't offer that so my market is definitely much more specialised and is more for the people that are appreciating what I'm doing. [ ... ] So I'm doing soft-sole shoes for kiddies and I've just started doing adult sizes as well. [ ... ] The reason I started with kiddy shoes instead of with adults is because I didn't have a viable source for repurposed leather for adult shoes, because obviously you need a lot more—it needs to be bigger pieces to be stronger and there is certain technical requirements that aren't so relevant for a kiddy shoe or are a lot easier to get around. (Female, shoemaker, emerging maker, October 2015)

As this shoemaker makes evident, such an approach can provide interesting variety but is difficult to depend upon as a reliable and consistent supply chain. The same challenge faces the many other makers who deliberately choose to work with found, second-hand and other recycled materials.

### *Up-/Recycling*

At the moment all of my products are made from hardwood. And my decision was to use recycled hardwood because that resource is available, and I don't want to see it go to waste as buildings are demolished or wharves ripped up. [ ... ] It takes a bit more consideration to make sure you exclude pieces that have splinters or chips or cracks or any things like that, you'd have some of that in virgin timber anyway. [ ... ] It's a really key part of why I'm doing what I'm doing, and it kind of drives a lot of my decisions. (Corner Block Studio, picture frames, emerging maker, September 2016)

Across a wide range of practices, the materials-sourcing strategy our participants noted most frequently as the way they seek to reduce the environmental impact of their work was materials up-/recycling and repurposing. Indeed, many crafts have deeply embedded practices of materials

recycling and reuse, motivated by a respect for the ongoing value of the material. Many of these practices are considered common sense rather than anything worthy of comment or recognition. Some are so entrenched they have their own terminology—for example, jewellers’ use of ‘lemel’. This story of lemel comes not from one of our research participants, but in an email from our project team member Belinda Powles, herself a trained jeweller, expressing her surprise at the absence of a discussion of metal reuse by the jewellers with whom we had spoken. In her words:

Most jewellers have a specially designed workbench which has a half circle cut out and either a leather canopy or wooden tray to catch all the filings and small offcuts of precious metals. [ ... ] These filings are the sawdust of the jeweller’s world and are called lemel. Each time a jeweller changes the metal they are working with they shake these filings into a jar called a lemel jar—so you would have one [each] for fine silver, sterling silver, 9-carat gold, 18-carat gold, platinum etc. This material is low grade because it can contain solder and other contaminants. When these jars are full they are sent to a refiner to be cleaned and separated back to their metal elements and returned to the maker as new stock material, or the refiner can also purchase the material at the price of the metal set that day. If you were using a base metal such as copper or brass the same process would be followed—not because of the value of the metal but because these metals would contaminate the precious metals by reducing their alloy.

Jewellers also collect clean stock materials, for example small scraps of sheet material, rod or tube. These large pieces are also collected but are cleaner lemel and thus of a higher grade. At Art School we were taught how to ingot this material by running a magnet over it to remove any iron from filings or saw blades. We would then melt the metal in a crucible with borax to clean it and cast it into an ingot mould or for gold (which was often a smaller amount) we would carve a small depression into a charcoal block to form a small nugget. This metal would then be pickled (cleaned in acid), forged and rolled either into sheet or wire to make into the next piece.

I have noticed that many jewellers on their website have listed that they use recycled materials. It is funny—I had not really thought about it in the context of recycling/being green. For me it was economy—the materials I used were so expensive they had to be collected and reused because it was just too expensive not to, but I like the new lens through which this is seen. (Belinda Powles, pers. comm., 23 August 2016)

Only two of the jewellers we spoke with mentioned this in interviews when we asked about how they paid attention to the environmental impact in their practice:

A lot of people don't mention this, because it's just a given, but all the silver I use is recycled. It comes from a factory where it's gone through—it's been something else in a past life. Or the gold, if I've used gold, you know, there's only so much in the world, so it's possible that the gold I've used has come from Egypt, way back, you know, it's not going directly to the ground and digging it up. (Female, contemporary jewellery, established maker, February 2017)

Such re-circulation of precious metal is also possible on a hyperlocal level:

I've tested the water there and done some market research by being at the market and chatting to people and people are looking for someone like me who can recycle their old gold chains and turn them into bangles [with] that personal touch, when it comes to experiencing something that someone else made by hand and it was made from old stuff, that they didn't have to go and buy any materials. (Kate Hunter Designs, jeweller, established maker, November 2015)

Jewellery making, as indicated above in the opening discussion of Clare Poppi's alternative sourcing practice, is also notably connected to the international flow of not just precious metals but also precious stones, with all the histories of mistreatment of people and place that accompany it. For this reason, many jewellers we spoke with were committed to practices that actively sought to disconnect their making from all forms of exploitation:

I'm a founding member of this group called the Ethical Makers Movement. We're very new, and we're just putting it on the table the fact that we're making objects to be consumed and we're contributing to this whole capitalist society, and we want to do things better. Mining's a real issue and lots of jewellers aren't addressing that. You ask people, "Well how do you feel about using diamonds?" They just don't want to answer that question. So there's a lot of passion behind where materials come from, I think certainly amongst some of the jewellers and [they're] wanting to start to talk about it. (Vicki Mason, jeweller, established maker, April 2016)

But it is not just jewellers who are concerned about the environmental impact of their sourcing strategies.

The revalorisation of waste through, for example, the use of offcuts, industrial leftovers, opportunity shops and other second-hand goods was a recurrent theme across many of the interviews. Using ‘waste’ or excess, as we have already noted, is not necessarily a reliable business strategy for all makers; it does not tend to facilitate consistency of outputs or indeed a stable supply of materials. But it is worth also highlighting that for some makers waste does indeed provide a reliable means of running an economically sustainable business; some unwanted excess, such as used bike tyres and empty glass bottles, can be relied upon. For example, each year the UCI World Tour-accredited Tour Down Under not only brings world-class cycling to Adelaide, Australia, but it also churns through a lot of first-rate rubber. Like many of the makers we interviewed, BUCK!T Belts, who turn used bike tyres into belts, wallets and other everyday accessories, are passionate about finding ways to make a living while also minimising the impact of their production practices (see Figs. 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4). Similarly, in her glass bead making, Julie Frahm works with glass from a number of sources, including glass that is routinely discarded:

So my use of recycled glass was deliberate. I did start [my current practice] when the global financial crisis was on; the world was just ridiculous, no one knew what was going to happen, [ ... ] it was just at a time when I questioned a lot of things in my life. ‘What do I want to do that’s different? What do I want to do that’s important?’ Those big sorts of questions, ‘What am going to do in my practise that’s different from other people?’ So I came up with this idea and it was Depression glass. [ ... ] The exhibition was at Lustre Galleries and it really worked, it really resonated, people loved it; a lot of the work sold. I thought hey cool, this is cool and it was really simple, it was the first time I’d used recycled glass but it really—people really liked it, so it’s just been a part of my practice since then. [ ... ] So I’ve learned a lot over that time in terms of recycled glass. [ ... ] So you can’t just use any type of glass, you sort of have to be quite respectful of the glass as well so you don’t colour it too much, you don’t want to change it too much, you need to keep it quite pure in a sense. (Julie Frahm, glass bead artist, established maker, May 2016)

In addition to working with the Depression glass, which is still easily found second-hand, Julie capitalises on the everyday excess of richly coloured glass generated through contemporary everyday consumption: the light blue of Bombay Sapphire gin, the dark blue of Skyy Vodka, the greens of wine and even the ambers of beer—all can be and are reworked into handcrafted lampworked beads. (See Figs. 7.5, 7.6, 7.7 and 7.8.)



Figs. 7.1–7.4 BUCK!T Belts (and accessories) maker Craig in his workshop turning used bike tyres into products for sale. (Photographs: Rosina Possingham Photography)



Figs. 7.1–7.4 (continued)



Figs. 7.1–7.4 (continued)



Figs. 7.5–7.8 Julie Frahm working recycled glass into glass beads. (Photographs: Rosina Possingham Photography)

### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO GIVE ATTENTION TO THIS: THE TOXIC SHADOW REALITIES OF CRAFT

Despite the genuine best intentions of the makers, all the production and practices we have outlined remain bound up in complex negotiations and often easily critiqued environmental ethics. Again, do we really need all

this stuff? It may be useful, therefore, to consider the handmade cultural economy as operating within a complex band of activity that Kate Soper (2004) has referred to as ‘consumer citizenship’ or ‘alternative hedonism’. Even if it is not revolutionary in its own right, this activity points towards the possibilities of a better way of being (Sassatelli 2006, 2009). Soper argues for the importance of recasting the lifestyle changes necessary to facilitate a more sustainable way of life so they are not defined by their lack. But as we hope we have demonstrated here, to focus on the consumer side of design craft is to draw attention away from the deeper embeddedness of the craft economy within larger-scale systems of production and their impacts—good and bad. We need to look upstream as well as downstream.

Beyond and often even within many of the material practices we have outlined here, there remain shadow realities. Craft’s localised making and selling happens within transnational circulation networks, which the emphasis on the local can too quickly obscure. The strategies of waste reuse outlined here become more noteworthy, even when undertaken on a micro-entrepreneurial level, when you locate individual makers as themselves consumers within global supply chains where, for example, most raw hides from Australian animals are sent to Germany or China for leather tanning and Australian merino wool is turned into fine fibre in Italy. Indeed, reusing existing coloured glass becomes an almost radical gesture in the face of recent events at one of the world’s leading producers of art glass: Bullseye Glass Company in Portland, Oregon. In 2016, global supply chains for art glass were severely impacted by the voluntary shutting down of production following the initial finding of high lead levels in air emissions from the factory, which upon further inspection were joined by other irregularities. To quote from the company’s own announcement regarding the issue:

Although Bullseye was operating within EPA [Environment Protection Authority] guidelines and its DEQ [Oregon’s Department of Environmental Quality] air contaminate discharge permit, it voluntarily ceased all production of glasses containing cadmium and arsenic on February 4 when high levels of those elements were discovered in the surrounding area, and immediately took steps to limit emissions by beginning construction of furnace filtration systems. The following week it discontinued production of chromium glasses, shutting down more than 60% of its product lines. Oregon’s governor, Kate Brown, further restricted production of lead glasses plus

four additional metals that had never exceeded health benchmarks for ten days beginning on May 19, reducing the factory output to just 20% of its original product line. (Bullseye Glass Company 2016a)

The colours suspended from production at this time were those made with cadmium (bright yellows, oranges and reds) and chromium (greens) (Bullseye Glass Company 2016b). And as we have seen, for reasons similar to those in the Bullseye situation, Australian makers prefer German leather tanning, for although it represents far more ‘craft miles’, Europe, like the USA, is seen to have far stricter environmental and labour regulations than China and other lower-cost markets.

Beyond materials sourcing, actually working with these materials draws upon considerable resources, notably, electricity. To offset this, a number of the makers we spoke to who had some degree of control over their studio space have installed solar panels or sought to lease spaces where they were already present. Some warehouse making facilities require triple-phase power, which allows them to install large solar systems. But the shadow realities of much making remain and haunt the practice of craftspeople and designer makers with a genuine desire to reduce their environmental footprint:

I mean, if there is an option to use a more environmentally friendly process or product or glue or whatever, then I’ll try and find a way to use that. [ ... ] With this, so this bench, for example, the log bench, I use a glue which probably wouldn’t get a green star rating but it’s been tricky to try and find a replacement for that so that’s an ongoing thing actually, trying to find a different glue solution for that product. (Scott van Tuil, furniture maker and designer, emerging maker, February 2016)

With regard to the environmental concerns, I don’t think ceramics is terribly environmentally friendly. We use stuff that’s dug up from the ground. We use oxides, which can be quite toxic. We use electricity. What I do is, you know, I try and be water wise in that I have rainwater tanks that I use for, that I collect water to use for a lot of my work. I try and minimise the amount of firing work that I do. I recycle all my clay. As you can see by my front garden, I’m a really keen gardener. [ ... ] I’m really into the whole idea of permaculture, so I’ve been giving some of my leftover clay to some in the permaculture group that I’m a member of, because they’re using it to [improve] the soil here [which] is incredibly sandy, and you have to add clay to it to get it to grow, so a lot of my slops and things go on the garden. So,

yeah, I mean I'd like to be able to fire with gas, but in an urban backyard it's kind of hard and expensive to get it all certified. (Stephanie Hammill, ceramics, established maker, November 2016)

Interestingly, Stephanie was one of the few ceramicists to question the sourcing of their materials. Some commented upon the use of electricity, but few on the source of their raw materials.

CRAFT = QUALITY = 'MADE TO LAST'/'MADE TO HOLD  
ONTO' (AND BE REPAIRABLE)

Laura McCusker's contemporary furniture practice connects directly with John Ruskin's ethos evoked in the opening to this chapter: 'If we build, let us think that we build forever' (Pye 1995, 83), which advocates ideas of craftsmanship as representing quality, commitment and building to last. Laura and her partner make 'quality handmade, individually designed pieces' tailored to their clients' specific needs. Laura McCusker Furniture was established in 1996 under the flight path in Sydney's industrial inner west. They have since moved to Tasmania, where they now work in old farm complex in Hobart, next to a babbling brook and surrounded by heirloom fruit trees, with their main studio in an old apple packing shed. Arguably, they are thus also examples of design craft practitioners pursuing craft as part of a wider lifestyle downshifting choice, to be discussed further shortly.

Valuing materials as they generally do and in an attempt to have some control over their own resource security, craftspeople and often also their clients can tend to hoard materials, especially when an opportunity arises to secure any rare, unique or difficult-to-procure items. Rare native timbers are a case in point and may literally represent a windfall in the case of Huon Pine, as the live trees are now protected. Such raw material has value and significance to people in its own right, even before it is worked:

We had a client a few years ago who had these massive pieces of Huon Pine which he'd been carrying around from house to house to house over the last sort of 30 to 40 years, waiting to build his dream home. And he's finally finished his home out at Cambridge, really beautiful, simple and modest contemporary build and was now ready for the table to go with it. So they brought the Huon—they brought the timber to us. We made it into a table. We made it into a table. We delivered the table to them, put it in there—they

had some Jansz on ice for us when we arrived there and we had a glass of champagne looking out over this incredible view in Cambridge. And it was just—it was really lovely. When you know that the timber's got a provenance like that, and you can feel comfortable that it's ethically sourced and well-seasoned, and you've got an opportunity to do something like that, it's pretty special. (Laura McCusker, furniture maker, established maker, February 2016)

To hold onto this timber until such a time as the owners are in a position to turn it into a functional part of their everyday lives is to see this material truly, as a 'gift' offered by the natural world (Bennett 2001). The journey of this gift from raw wood to table is but one stage of this relationship, which today can also be shared between maker and client via digital communication, reinforcing the bond.

Laura describes another table commission. In a practice not unique to furniture making, in the spirit of building to last and to keep, social media is employed to nurture a deep relationship with the object even before the person paying for it has it in their possession:

If we're building a piece of furniture for someone we hash tag it so they can follow it and they can sort of see, they have a catalogue at the end of the actual development of the project as it goes. And we use it like that and we've found that as someone—like there's a guy we made a table for in Sydney. He was showing the hashtag to all of his friends and all of these other people were getting onto Instagram and watching his table progress and getting really excited about this table. And even progress from the timber for that table, we were able to get from Kevin Perkins down in Franklin, who's a significant furniture maker in Australia. And he'd cut the timber down in October 1984, this blackwood tree. And so we were able to find this—and it's sequentially cut and stickered out so we were able to take a photograph of it in the shed, photograph on the back of the ute, coming here, and actually have from that stage all the way through to the end. And so when we delivered it, we sent it up there, the client phoned back and said that—we had some offcuts, about 300 from the end of the table—and he's asked us to make two stools for his two sons out of those timber so that it comes—the table has these matching—because of that history, because we were able to put it into context like that. And so there's that ownership of the piece before it even exists and the whole family are kind of excited about it. (Laura McCusker, furniture maker, established maker, February 2016)

This connection with the material is in this way translated onto the quality, handmade table to come. Thus, in contemporary designer making, we can see further connections to Ruskin's notion of durability and to the more temporary (but nonetheless meaningful experience) of being able to work with it, as in Laura's case. This is a piece of furniture to be kept and valued, not replaced when fashions change.

Indeed, while it is owned by a particular person, the item animates affective relationships of care that now extend beyond the owner's proprietorial interest. Laura's sense of care to the item does not end when it leaves her studio:

So we'll give people a call a year after and say, "Does it need a refinish or does it need a touch up?" or whatever. But, because we do work mainly locally, people know where we are and if they've got any issues or if they—we get a lot of people who come back for other bits and pieces. We keep in contact and there's not much [that can go wrong], with this type of furniture that we're making, they're pretty bulletproof. There's not much that you can do that can't be repaired. And we say that. [Also] they might change and grow out of how—I mean obviously if you buy a table that's a 16-seater, at some point in your life you might downsize and move to a smaller house but the table doesn't get thrown out, it gets handed on. And you might come to us as a young couple that's living in a share accommodation or in rental accommodation and you might have something really small and at some point you get to a bigger house and you need something bigger. But that table still gets repurposed as a desk in an office space or something, and we say to them we can always help if they do need a hand moving it or if it needs to be refinished or what have you, all that sort of stuff. That's part of when you make a connection with a local maker you can actually do that. It's an ongoing relationship. (Laura McCusker, furniture maker, established maker, February 2016)

With the near global ubiquity of Ikea and the kinds of homewares once the sole province of design stores available at cheap prices in discount retail stores, high-turnover, non-recyclable fashion is no longer the sole preserve of the global clothing industry. Handmade items, especially crafts-built furniture, tend not to be cheap (up front at least); they reflect both the quality of the materials and the skill involved in their making. However, a return to thinking of furniture and homewares as investments with which we may even have a lifelong relationship clearly has a role to play in imagining sustainable climate futures. Furniture may be an obvious

candidate for such relationships, but makers of even what we might consider higher-turnover production (rather than gallery work) items sought to locate their practice within a setting of concern for sustainability marked by longevity:

We use every element of the canvas. We don't have wastage. We have a couple of scraps and usually the girls across the road come and grab those and we will have small cuttings but we make all these pieces that generally get smaller and smaller so we can utilise every element. I think probably we do try and keep all of our production here in Adelaide so it is focused on showing people that you don't have to make a cheap product and [ ... ] people will value a well-made product that might be more expensive. We probably have a lot more competition in the market at the moment of home mums making bags that resemble ours and they will sell them for maybe a quarter of the price to half the price, but the difference I would hope is manufacturing also the quality of the products that we use, and the level of quality that our product stays at consistently and the quality of our painting—that we have depth and we're constantly improving our processes and practices. [...] It's more about the ethics that we have in our product as such, and that it's something that is not fast fashion that you have it forever and it's maybe they are buying a very bespoke product that is not just a throw away item. (Tiff Manuell, handmade clutches, bags and accessories, established maker, September 2017)

Making to last and to be kept links strongly too with the capacity to be able to maintain the item as part of its ongoing durability.

Repair has a long history in and with craft:

Not only tools like lathes, drill presses, and looms but also power sources like steam engines, water mills, and blast furnaces: all were made using long-established crafts of blacksmithing, carpentry, and masonry. Keeping production going was also a job for artisans. In a sense the repair of these large-scale machines and even smaller bench tools was another imitative craft, in that the goal was to restore the tool to its original, or at least its working condition. This is a particularly elusive topic for the historian, because repair was (even more than other aspects of industrial craft) taken for granted in its own day. This is a subspecies of a more general problem in craft history, well described by Thomas Schlereth twenty years ago but that has not changed much since: 'Often in the fetish we make of finished things or the hero worship we accord individual artisans, we forget that in pre-industrial times craftsmen often spent as much (or more) time repairing rather than making from scratch.' (Adamson 2013, 147)

Today, being able to repair items in a contemporary world of too much stuff is emerging as a significant material battleground. Writing about the now iconic 2011 Power of Making exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, leading British craft writer Tanya Harrod acknowledges in a 2011 article in the *Times Literary Supplement* that it:

challenges the notion that manufacture has become a thing of the past in Europe and North America. Most of us assume, correctly, that the majority of our goods are made in factories in the Far East, probably situated in the Pearl River Delta of Southern China. And we are equally conscious that we no longer understand the internal workings of the products we buy and cannot fix them. There is little point in looking under the bonnet of a car these days. Cars come with their own software and a mechanic is more likely to tap at a laptop than use a monkey wrench. ‘Power of Making’ sets out to rectify this sense of helplessness by suggesting that we need not remain passive consumers. We can combine literacy and handwork. (Harrod 2015a, 20)

Whereas the right to repair movement is strongly associated with breaking into the white (black) box of digital technology, craft practices of repair—‘make do and mend’—have long been essential thrifty survival skills which need to be, and are being, reinvigorated. Furthermore, increasingly, among those in a socio-economic position to do so, its aesthetics are being valued as a marker of cultural capital and not just economic disadvantage. The wider revival of artisanal making practices offers a fertile ground within which reworking and repair practices can be reimagined for the current age.

#### CRAFT AS PART OF A LIFESTYLE DOWNSHIFTING CHOICE

For some of our participants, another less obvious way in which making is tied up with environmental awareness is the embrace of this form of income generation as part of a much larger approach to living all aspects of their life in a manner that reduces consumption and thus their personal environmental footprint. As something of a ‘downshifted cultural economy’ (although perhaps not a ‘drop out’ one), self-employment continues to attract people precisely on account of the greater freedom it grants individuals ‘to set the level of the necessary labor payment and the boundary between necessary and surplus labor’ (Gibson-Graham 2006, 89). As outlined in Chap. 2’s discussion of participant motivations, a number of

the craftspeople and designer makers we spoke with were deliberately pursuing making as part of a wider commitment to living what they saw as a more sustainable good life, one that may well lead to fewer financial rewards, but this is more than balanced through more time spent doing work that they love, as well as being more available for family and community.

With craft work often pursued alongside a larger strategy of personal or family downshifting, it also logically intersects with wider ‘slow living’ movements that are gaining traction in the Global North. Although many people, even in Australia, may feel they are not in a financial or personal position to be able to make this change, for many who have, their low-impact living works to mitigate the need for medium-to-high incomes. Many respondents who work from home note they are free from having to purchase a work wardrobe. They also value that they are not contributing to road congestion and private car use in the form of daily commuting. In this contemporary incarnation of craft we can see connections to a longer history of ‘back to basics’ lifestyles, including the 1960s and 1970s-style craft reuse and sustainable/organic living, which also sought to bypass accelerated cultures and practices of consumption. Such lifestyle approaches offer valuable insights into how—in a climate crisis future—we can re-imagine aesthetics in terms of what we are gaining, rather than what we are losing, when making the lifestyle and production changes that are essential to arrest climate change.

### LOW CARBON FUTURES AND DIGITAL TOOLS

A couple of makers we interviewed spoke of how working with digital cutters or digital printing allowed them to map out designs onto raw materials very tightly, far more than had previously been possible, leading to far less wastage after the desired shapes had been cut out. For example, Robyn (‘Boo’) McLean from Northern Territory-based Bippidii Boppidii designs and arranges her custom fabric designs for various personal and home-wares accessories on a computer before sending them off for digital printing. This means, firstly, that no dye is wasted on elements of the fabric that are not to be used (Fletcher 2014, 66) and, secondly, that as much of the fabric as possible can be used up to produce the various material elements (including product labels), ensuring minimal offcuts:

The way I print reduces waste. [ ... ] People are always asking me for scraps [but] I don't have any, because I make all these fridge magnets. They're the alphabets and I also do them with pictures on them, and so any bit on a piece of fabric that's too small to fit a sunglasses case or something, I fill it up with those. So, out of a metre I have these little tiny scraps. (Robyn ('Boo') McLean, Bippidii Boppidii, established maker, July 2017)

Other respondents reported similar outcomes from using computer numerical control routers and laser cutters to minimise waste when cutting out wooden component parts.

Commissions are a key part of many makers' sales. In addition to designing to order, another opportunity found among our participants was *making* to order, which is enabled by the on-demand production capacities of digital tools. Uploading designs to platforms such as Etsy that can be made only on demand via online 3D printing services such as Shapeways (<https://www.shapeways.com/>) enables new kinds of designer maker practices to emerge that reduce waste by producing an item only when there is demand for it. However, this practice has had limited take-up as yet in Australia, perhaps partly because of the still ambiguous market response to craft or designer maker items produced through additive manufacturing (this is discussed in more detail in Chap. 5).

## CIRCULAR ECONOMIES OF CRAFT

Finally, more attention should be given to the possibilities around circular economies of craft, such as Seljak Brand's recycled wool blankets, which can be returned to them for re-milling once they reach the end of their useable life (<https://www.seljakbrand.com.au/>). The kinds of waste minimisation practices detailed in this chapter are incredibly worthy and valuable, but the ongoing relationship to the object and its materials, even after its current use is exhausted, was beyond the scope of many of the makers we spoke to. There were some exceptions, such as Laura McCusker's repair and reworking of furniture for customers well after the initial point of sale, and Clare Poppi's reworking of jewellery. However as sustainable fashion researcher Kate Fletcher has written, the focus on materials is 'often the place where many sustainability conversations begin' and unfortunately end (2016, 170). In the context of fibre and fashion, she challenges makers and consumers to think beyond materials to the whole life cycle of goods (Fletcher 2014, 8). For this reason, the circular economy

remains an important and currently under-explored part of the contemporary craft and designer maker economy in Australia, where most makers are just trying to make enough to get by and do not always have the capacity to take such a long-term view.

The craft sector is a big and diverse space comprising lots of different communities of practice. Some craft makers do abundance well, but the design craft market is also contributing to the problem of abundance, of excess. In the 1990s, Whiteley (1997) asserted in his book *Design for Society* that the increasingly high profile of the ‘green consumer’ in the 1980s was just the exploitation of a consumer niche. Because we did not specifically interview consumers as part of this project, the place of craft within ethical consumption practices is something we cannot speak to in any depth. But while it cannot be said that ‘greenwashing’—promoting something as greener than it may actually be—does not exist in this space (for environmental awareness as a marketing strategy does play well with many craft and design consumers), what is clearly also present in our interviews is the deeper connection to craft’s history of respecting materials and processes, of being attentive to them. As we have seen, we need to attend critically not only to the post-making circulation of craft objects and challenge the value of so much ‘stuff’ but also to the input production chains within which craft operates. Harrod, writing in a 2013 article published in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences*, observes:

In a full world that means making anything at all is a responsibility. In the context of providing material services with less material production, visionary rather than practical responses to materials and processes should not be ignored. The activities of artists and experimental designers can offer alternative value systems and new ways of approaching sustainability and material efficiency. (Harrod 2015b, 338)

Many of the makers we encountered in this study are clearly seeking to contribute to this endeavour in their own ways. Scale remains a significant challenge though, and we should also be aware of the need to challenge the idea of the cultural economy as being somehow inherently progressive (Gill 2014), given the complicity of creativity within promotional economies and discourses of endless consumption as an ideal state of being. Makers, too, need to be part of challenging the growth narrative, and, as we have seen, many are very much aware of their environmental impacts.

The first two Western arts and crafts peaks both failed to translate into wider change and relevance because of the limits to scaling-up craft practice. Scaling from an individual to a larger-scale practice remains a key challenge for craft, having important affordability constraints for most people. But makers do have a pivotal role to play in a post-climate change understanding of the impacts and thus the potential preciousness of all materials, especially on behalf of the consumer, for whom the finished object may be all too often the prime focus. As Jane Bennett (2001) observes:

For me, the issue is not whether to live with commodities but how to participate in commodity culture, for there is no vision of capitalist or noncapitalist economy today that does not include some role for the commodity form. The pertinent questions become how to reform commodity culture to render it more just and ecologically sustainable and how to extract the ethical potential within commodity culture. (Bennett, 113)

In terms of crafts and designer making, the opportunity remains in the skill sets, implicit knowledges, and deep understandings of materials and process that craftspeople can bring to the challenge of thinking through the properties and affordances of materials within wider systems. This includes the capacity to tinker, to play, to repair, to reuse—for ‘waste’ is always on the move, always ‘becoming’. More and better ways need to be found for these knowledges to be brought into dialogue with, adopted by or give rise to larger scales of production.

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## Creative Craft and Design Microenterprise in the Age of Social Media

- Q: More people, younger people, [seem to be] setting up their own businesses these days than there was in my generation, Gen X. Do you have any sense of why that might be the case?
- A: A couple of things come to mind and one of them is, I wonder how important the role of the internet is to that, because [...] you can reach your customers quite directly, which maybe you wouldn't have had the opportunity to do not that long ago. You would have had to fulfil large orders or work for somebody. And there's quite a broad range of things, businesses, that my friends are running themselves, from fitness to art classes, to doing tourism, and a number of different areas. But yeah, I wonder if the access to the internet and access to the people [...] to your customers [is the game changer]. (Corner Block Studio, picture frames, emerging maker, November 2015)

In the new millennia, in most if not all sectors of the economy, markets have become increasingly globalised, disrupted and competitive. Not only has technology enabled advances in the means of production, but in the craft and design sector, as elsewhere, it has also given rise to changes to traditional distribution models, with the result that physical shopfronts and product shelf space are being usurped by or coupled with online retail options. However, the ease of establishing online shopfronts today hides the complex work required to start and run a small business, especially one operating in an increasingly competitive global space with isolated

producers and narrow profit margins. All this raises new challenges for craftspeople and designer makers, who, to operate successfully as a micro-enterprise in this emerging global market, require not only practice-based skills but also business knowledge and entrepreneurial talent sets. A creative micro-economy that emphasises ‘long tail’ buying (Anderson 2007) ‘directly’ from the maker offers both creative graduates and more established designer makers micro-entrepreneurial pathways not previously open to them. To realise the potential of these opportunities, skills in professional practice need to be complemented by competencies in other areas, particularly the use of social media as a marketing tool, which requires the promotion of producer self-identity (including the maker’s home and family relationships) as part of the value being sold (Luckman 2015).

In this chapter we report upon how makers experience and negotiate the increasing demands of social media. In particular, the highly visual and stylised world of photography-centred social media such as Instagram that emerged in this research as the dominant platform in this highly aestheticised marketplace. Even with the ongoing popularity of physical markets (as discussed in Chap. 6), maintaining an online professional identity is now a core part of the work involved in being a contemporary maker. But although the ease of establishing an online retail presence was a recurring theme, the work involved in maintaining and building their brand profile was identified as the real challenge by interview respondents (Fig. 8.1). Most found it relatively easy to set up their own website and even professional social media presence in this new and increasingly crowded market, but the challenge and time commitment was in developing and maintaining an online presence that meant they stood out from the crowd. In this way, the demands of social media as a new normal baseline are a new administrative burden facing the self-employed and creative microenterprises in Australia’s making community.

Social media has been a game changer for craftspeople and designer makers, albeit one very much linked with the experience of negotiating work–life relationships. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the simple reality is that, even for people with making spaces outside their place of residence, all makers spend at least some time engaging with their online worlds beyond their formal studio making time (often as frequently noted by our interview respondents: ‘in the evenings, after the kids have gone to bed’). Secondly, as we know, the identity of the maker as an identifiable individual with a story is key to the way the handmade is positioned in the market. The lines around what and how much of one’s self



**Fig. 8.1** Phillipa Julien, Till Designs (<http://www.tilldesigns.com.au/>), arranging products for sale. (Photograph: Rosina Possingham Photography)

to show, and how, are thus central questions makers need to negotiate as they position themselves, especially online. For craftspeople and designer makers, entrepreneurial labour, as it is for other parts of the cultural or creative industries, ‘is intertwined with’ one’s work identity (Neff et al. 2005, 308). This includes mobilising for sales purposes ‘the instrumentality of affective relationships’ enabled by social media (Duffy 2016, 443).

## THE ONLINE WORLDS OF AUSTRALIA'S CRAFTSPEOPLE AND DESIGNER MAKERS

Many of the current makers we spoke with still recall the pre-internet craft marketplace as a place where professional practice-based associations (not commercial operators) ran 'professional' craft fairs where stalls were run by, among others, potters, glass artists, jewellers, instrument makers and textile artists, all of whom handed their goods over to the purchaser wrapped in newspaper. In this still relatively recent past, branding was taken care of with a business card and, if one had a computer, a rudimentary website. In today's era of self-commodification, image is everything, and for creative workers self-branding is essential (Hearn 2008). It is expected that makers will have a social media presence on multiple platforms, alongside a professional-looking website, which adds a layer of complexity and demand to the time creative entrepreneurs need to spend working on the non-creative side of their business, above and beyond the actual work of making. It is not surprising, therefore, that the vast majority of our interviewees reported spending a significant number of hours creating and maintaining a professional and engaging online presence, as well as building and sustaining the networks that make these sites useful and viable promotional tools. Beyond the presentation of a branded self, social media were also seen as important in cultivating a connection with the processes of making itself, by providing some of the story behind the work as well as the making individual:

I feel like what I've been trying to specifically show is, I don't know what the specific word for it is, but like [cultivating] friendliness and the involvement of customers. So I've found through social media [I can describe] the different processes, sort of giving them a bit of an insight into something that is not known to a lot of people. Glass blowing is just this magical thing, a lot of people don't even know where it begins. So I've been trying to sort of show on my Instagram and Facebook little bits and processes and I feel like that gives a bit more of a connection to my work and also to me. Because I don't want to just sell my work off, I want people to interact with me as well. And I feel like especially with the Helpmann thing, for the VIP opening night, I chatted to so many different people and they were so fascinated

in my work, but also in me. So I think because I'm so connected with my work, I'm sort of selling a part of myself and my personality with it. So I think that connection is important. (Emma Young, studio glass blowing, emerging maker, March 2016)

Almost all participants felt there was room for improvement (especially in turning 'likes' and page views into sales), but on the whole they considered they were pretty adept at or at least familiar with using social media to tell a story about themselves and had cultivated the aesthetic, discursive and digital capabilities required to present the kind of personal statements that are becoming increasingly generic in this space.

The growing connection of craft and design to arts training in higher education is significant in this process of establishing a storyline, given the longer history of artists' statements in the visual arts as an established profiling genre. With crafts and design increasingly being taught in universities as part of fine arts degrees (Banks and Oakley 2016; Luckman 2020), the need to be able to write an artist statement—to articulate a sense of self and a vision to accompany the practice/work—is an increasingly normalised part of the craft and design curriculum, far more than it would ever be in a more vocationally oriented training context. This, coupled with students' own increasingly lifelong experiences of presenting themselves online as well as their knowledge through online immersion of the verbal and visual aesthetic codes of their fields, means the standards for self-presentation not only possible but demanded today are far higher than they were even a decade ago.

For the reasons above, the need to engage on social media as makers was taken as a given by most of the people we interviewed for this project. Indeed, a number of people we spoke with identified the capacity to control how others see them and their work from a relative distance as a major boon for a sector that demands self-promotion but attracts large numbers of women and/or creative introverts:

I think some people can struggle with that [directly experiencing customer feedback on their work at markets]. I think social media can be good in a way because that can actually give you a little bit of separation from it [because] I think it can be challenging for people who are new to actually promoting your work face-to-face with people; [it] can be really challenging that you're actually selling your work and standing by it and discussing it, rather than having had the time to actually prepare something beforehand

and put that on your website or take photos and show it and be totally in control of that situation. You are actually projected out there, aren't you, and that can be daunting. Particularly when you're highly invested in something that you've actually made. So in many ways, social media is a much less confronting way of presenting it, a sense of self and your relationship to your work, than the traditional standing next to your product at a stall at a market or doing the fair circuit. (Jane Barwick, Bowerbird Design Market, June 2016)

But with work–life negotiations being problematised by social media, interviewees also frequently commented on the need to make decisions about how much to share. Negotiating this presented challenges, especially in social media worlds where people had existing personal accounts:

I have a work [Facebook account, a] private one and a work one. You have to, I think. You've got to set up your private and then from your private you set up a business, is how it works and it's good because then you just keep it really business and whatever's related to your business on the business. It gives a good definition. (Till Designs, textile design, emerging maker, February 2017)

Q: So social media is big for you?

A: Yes, absolutely.

Q: Is that in terms of marketing or direct sales?

A: More from a marketing perspective, but it really helps to attract people into the space and also, if I've got other projects on, that is really essential. So I had a crowdfunding campaign actually to launch a new product before I moved into the shop. Partially obviously to fund the first print order but also to attract people back into the space, so as a reward I gave ten percent off of all store-wide in my Brick and Mortar shop to all backers who purchased something through the pre-order system, so that worked really well for me and Instagram helped a lot in getting people onto that page and making pledges.

Q: Does that present challenges, has it been sort of difficult to figure out how to present a sense of yourself as a professional maker and person but also keep something separate?

A: Not so much, I just try to filter everything through my “would I show this to my mother, past teachers etc.”, kind of a filter and that works quite well. (Illustrator, emerging maker, September 2015)

The reference to the ‘would I want my mum to see this’ test in some ways captures the wider maturation of social media use that occurred across the timeframe of the research project (2015–2018), as well its acceptance as a cross-promotional marketing tool. As a space where the boundary between work and private identity may seemingly and often does blur, the rules of how this is done are settling into place somewhat. Many people no longer considered it taboo or undesirable to display their non-work self publicly. Indeed, in a contemporary take on the family photo strategically positioned on the office desk, in many cases the opposite is also true as part of self-branding and professional relationship-building (Humphreys and Wilken 2015). The question thus becomes: In a multitude of professional contexts where these boundaries are becoming blurred, which representations are not only acceptable but perhaps desirable to project? The world of creative employment has long demanded of its workers particular performances of self. Today, a market intent on buying as direct from the hand of the maker as possible clearly is ripe for successful uptake on social media, but it also demands the performance of an ideal maker self as part of identity work—as a continual process of becoming (Taylor and Littleton 2016, 17). We will return to this discussion later in this chapter. But first, we need to map out in a little more detail how the affordances of different social media fit into the business practices of Australia’s contemporary craftspeople and designer makers.

### THE RISE AND RISE OF THE VISUAL: INSTAGRAM

[I have] just over 1000 Instagram followers at the moment. [...] I don’t really get a lot of business through Etsy direct, but Instagram I get about 98 per cent of my [sales] through Instagram. (Handmade toys, established maker, October 2017)

I’d be lost without Instagram. (Simone Deckers, textiles, established maker, March 2017)

Very early in this project the popularity and value of Instagram for Australian makers over websites such as Etsy emerged as one of the stand-out research findings:

I don’t like Etsy, I find it very difficult to navigate and pot luck if someone finds your work. I think you have more success through Instagram because

you're picking your audience and it's finding you as your right audience, and then [have a] website [you direct people to for] your sales. (Kate Evans, textiles, established maker, October 2017)

In this stylised, aestheticised and design-oriented marketplace, Instagram as a visually focused platform is proving successful even as a generator of sales, especially for those whose work lends itself to presentation in aspirational interiors or modelled settings:

[It] seems to be the hot thing at the moment. The ability to expose your work to a large number of people who are—I mean, it's visual work obviously, so to be able to promote it through a medium which is all about [the] visual is really good.[... it's] very important to fill in some of the story behind [the product]. I think those things are, I realise the importance of that. So posting a picture now, I'll always [provide] details about the piece, or hint at the back story, or something like that. (Scott van Tuil, furniture maker and designer, emerging maker, February 2016)

Why do I love Instagram—because it's quick and easy and it's not bitchy like Facebook. You haven't got all that political stuff and the personal politics and it's just—from the people I'm coming across anyway—it's just photo sharing, and I'm connecting with lots of other artists and Spoonflower people that I used to—we used to follow each other on Spoonflower, but because I don't really do it anymore, they probably think, “Oh, well, she's stopped doing it.” And now suddenly we're all finding each other on Instagram. So, I like that about it. (Robyn ('Boo') McLean, Bippidii Boppidii, textile design accessories and homewares, established maker, July 2017)

For those makers with a skill set that incorporates styling and photography capabilities alongside making, this aspirational styling in many ways forms a significant part of value of the product being sold:

- A: We're so active on Instagram. We get a lot of followers from Instagram coming to us and saying, sort of giving us feedback through that which is amazing and most of our orders are actually Instagram followers. [...]
- Q: Do you think having the design business and the design sensibility [of] interior design helps you there?

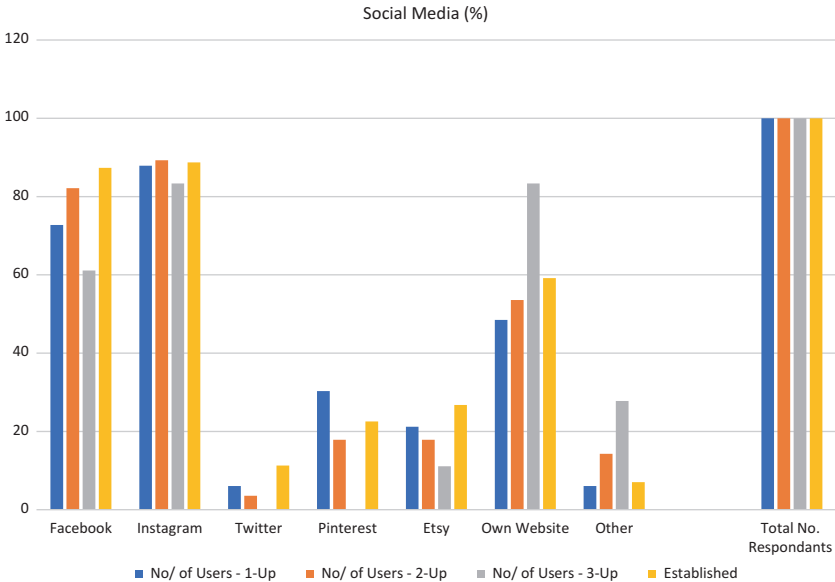
A: Absolutely. I'm trying not to cross those two businesses too much. So I have one account for my styling and one account for this. So I'm not sort of trying to show that I'm the two people, but I definitely find that if you have nice photos and style the photos it will definitely bring in more people. People want to see beautiful stuff. [ ... ] We get, I would say 90 per cent of our business coming from Instagram and that's actually only Instagram. We don't have Facebook. [...] The commissions find us through Instagram as well. [...] We have committed to Instagram for being our only sort of source. We haven't, we decided against Facebook because it feels like it's a, it's dying off a little bit especially for businesses, but Instagram is constantly updated, so easy to use and it's funny because [there's] some really big businesses out there that don't have many followers on Instagram so they must have caught their people from somewhere else. But it's such a new thing and it works really well. (Beatrice Fagerström, woodworker, emerging maker, October 2015)

Consequently, while most makers persisted with Facebook accounts (see Fig. 8.2), often as legacy accounts now focused largely on private use rather than business marketing and sales, Instagram was the platform our respondents preferred for promoting their work. It was also the one with the strongest ongoing growth and take-up among the making community across the four years of the project (Fig. 8.3).

The reasons for this were multiple, but ultimately most came down to ease of use and reward for effort. Simply uploading a photo was seen as less onerous than drafting promotional or descriptive text; adding some text on Instagram is possible but, importantly, not mandatory. Instagram was thus considered the doable way to engage in social media posting regularly without it being overly burdensome, especially for anyone who was constantly making and had new content to show. Even if this was not the case, images could be banked up for a more staged release:

Instagram[']s easy to update things, you just, every day take a photo or save up 10 photos for 10 days, publish one each day, and then you keep having new people look at your profile. Not potentially buying [...], but at least you get people looking. (Tian You, ceramics, emerging maker, October 2016)

Thus, the capacity to post something quickly, with minimal need to interrupt their making or other work, was key to this platform's value:



**Fig. 8.2** Online sites through which emerging and established makers were actively marketing/self-promoting themselves. *Note:* 1-Up, 2-Up and 3-Up refer to Years 1, 2 and 3 of the emerging maker interviews

[I like Instagram's] immediacy I think, because I can be sitting in the studio and making something and take a photo, and it's posted, and it doesn't have to be a really big effort. I mean website maintenance takes a lot of effort and time. Facebook, well the fact that you can link Instagram and Facebook is really good. I think Instagram is great because it's image driven, so you don't necessarily have to say anything. (Tanja Von Behrens, jewellery, established maker, February 2016)

Hashtags were another quick and useful way of connecting with new audiences, something much harder to achieve on Etsy and Facebook:

It [Facebook] is helpful to have there almost the same as I would say of the online shop, but it's not really the avenue where new people are finding my work; Instagram is something where it's very easy to discover new creatives, new accounts. Facebook is not driving any new customers to me, it's just something where I've got that link there on my website and if people want to use it they can. [ ... ] The Facebook account I [...] set it up while I was



**Fig. 8.3** Scott van Tuil (<http://www.scottvantuil.com/>) in his studio. (Photograph: Rosina Possingham Photography)

still at uni [...] and then actually really honed it after I left, but over so many years it's gained almost five hundred followers at the moment, but Instagram I've been using for one year and that already has overtaken the Facebook page by many times. So just the effort to get anyone on Facebook is [far greater.] People are discovering—I'll be at a market stall and the last [time] I was at Finder's Keeper's I think at least five people happened to mention to me, "I found you on Instagram". (Illustrator, emerging maker, September 2016)

The hashtags help in terms of people finding you that haven't seen you before. So it's quite, quite a good way, I'm surprised because I'm not really that keen on social media [...] I find that Instagram is working a lot better for me [than Facebook] it's just quite visual and I actually do enjoy it. (Ulrica Trulsson, ceramics, established maker, August 2018)

[With] Facebook I find [it] really hard to get out of just your friends because I think you need a lot of people to come and see your business cards and stuff to like it or be friends when you're "Hey guys I've got a page, come like it" on your normal Facebook profile. But whereas, Instagram, because

you use hashtags and stuff people can find you by looking for that hashtag, so I find it a lot more easier to get, for people to find you. [...] Yeah [it's] broader, randoms can find you so much easier and it's visual as well. (Tara Matthews, illustrator, emerging maker, August 2015)

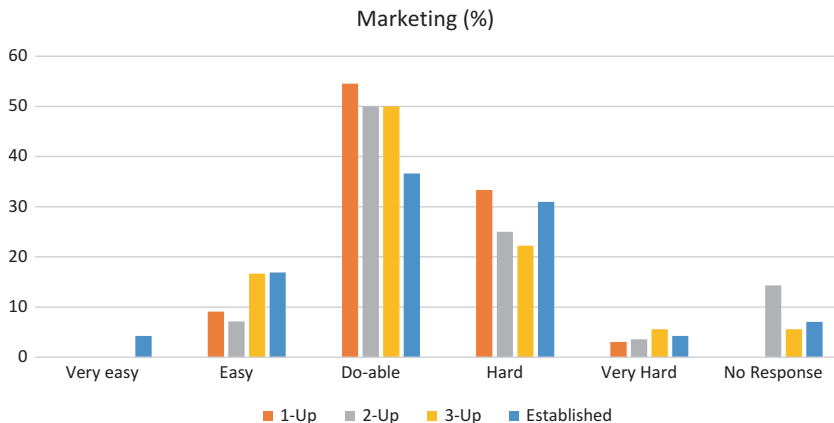
As is evident in these interview extracts, Facebook is not quite dead yet. Though it was far less of a focus for most of the makers we spoke with, and no longer at the heart of many makers' business communication plans. Initially it was commonplace for makers using Instagram to automatically link it to their Facebook account to enable easy cross-posting, but as always, the best platform is all about reaching the right market. If the client base is more accustomed to Facebook and less likely to be active on Instagram, the former remains a solid promotional option:

Well I know you're supposed to use them separately, but at the moment I'm just doing it on Instagram and sending it to Facebook as well. But I get a lot, we get a lot more response on Facebook. I think it's because our client base is a lot, is generally, probably 40-plus mostly. (Small and Pickering, metal sculptures, established makers, May 2016)

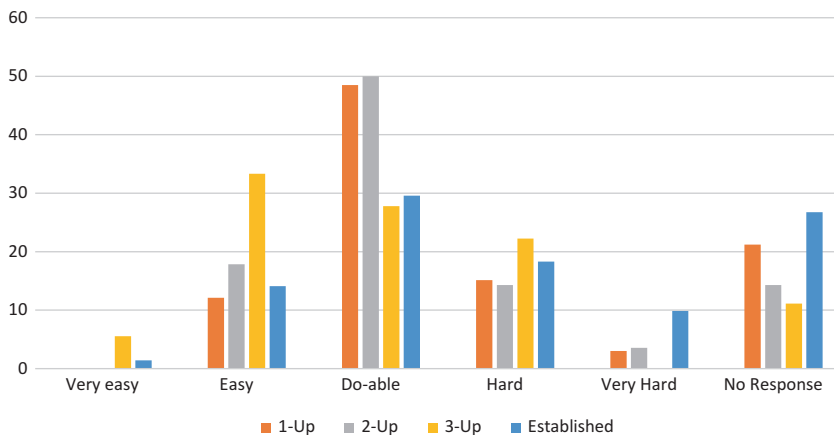
Twitter barely featured in our study. In the Australian context, it is considered a largely text-based forum more attuned to the needs of the white-collar work culture. A clear loser here was the similarly visually focused Pinterest, which for our respondents had been effectively superseded by Instagram, to the point that by the third year of the emerging maker interviews, not a single respondent identified as having an active account (see Fig. 8.2).

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE LABOUR OF MAINTAINING AN ONLINE PRESENCE

As we have just seen, the way in which Instagram is perceived to make regular and potentially far-reaching social media posting relatively easy when compared to other platforms and online communication modes is central to its attraction to large sections of the Australian craft and designer maker community. The significance of this becomes clearer when we drill down into the findings about how easy or hard respondents found marketing their work generally and keeping up with social media in particular. Almost everyone remarked on how much time and effort marketing (especially online) takes and said that there must be better ways to do it (see



**Fig. 8.4** Ease of marketing the business. *Note:* 1-Up, 2-Up and 3-Up refer to Years 1, 2 and 3 of the emerging maker interviews



**Fig. 8.5** Ease of updating the online shop. *Note:* 1-Up, 2-Up and 3-Up refer to Years 1, 2 and 3 of the emerging maker interviews

Figs.8.4 and 8.5). They sought such information and guidance through searching the web, networking with other makers and membership of professional associations. The centrality of the visual to Instagram’s popularity means that desired guidance included information on a broad range of proficiencies, including producing quality photographs:

I realise my photography is somewhat lame and it could be better and so I'm in the process of now remaking a lot of my work specifically to take good photos of it. [...] So that I can take really nice manicured photos, really styled photos and put them on Etsy and my own website. (Julie Frahm, lampworking/glass beads, established maker, May 2016)

Notably, across the board, in this project the main areas in which makers consisted reported wanting more support and training were marketing generally and social media marketing in particular.

### MANAGING SOCIAL MEDIA

By far the greatest burden makers felt marketing placed on them was the time involved, not only in regularly updating their own websites and accounts but also in responding to feedback and comments on previous posts and the addressing the networking obligation to reciprocate: to go out and 'like' or, preferably, comment upon others people's work in the community. We asked participants how much time they would spend each week updating their sites, 'liking' others' posts and similar networking activities:

I hate to start them [online accounts] and not invest time in them [...] they normally do take time. And Instagram, I don't think—well I said sort of 3 hours [as the amount of time a week I spend on this], it could do with more, and I will start giving it more time and more forward planning. And also because it's two-way, you're getting feedback back from people or comments, and I want to respond to those and keep up with them—which is an enjoyable part of it, it's connecting with people, it's really great. But it also, it's kind of like your inbox can get full of emails and it's not because you don't want to respond to them, it's just that you've got plenty on. (Corner Block Studio, picture frames, emerging maker, November 2015)

Oh it's, a lot, a lot and it's just styling and everything. That can take, that takes hours because, just getting the light right and getting all the setups and everything. So probably 10, 15 hours a week on Instagram if you combine that with the styling and everything and editing the photos. (Beatrice Fagerström, woodworker, emerging maker, October 2015)

They're [the Facebook and Instagram accounts] actually taking up a huge amount of time and especially because having images of your work is so important and I want to teach myself how to do that. So it might take me

an hour to take a decent photo and edit it and that kind of thing. But I think that's a really important part of making sure that I'm sustainable I suppose. (Laurence Coffrant, jewellery, emerging maker, January 2016)

Consequently, the makers we spoke to employed a number of tactics to try to keep on top of the work demands of social media. As we saw, the Instagram-to-Facebook combination was a common one for makers, effectively enabling them to post to two different platforms simultaneously. Some other makers sought to set aside a circumscribed amount of time each week to plan and prepare their social media:

So at the moment I'm hoping to have one day a week where I go through and choose things to go on there, or plan it for the rest of the week. I probably, I post a lot more to my Instagram but that's probably when and where things are happening, not so much advertising, or talking about different aspects of my practice. So I'm trying to work out at the moment whether I want to have the two separate Instagrams or just one, because I post a lot of what I do on my personal thing is kind of, there's an overlap. So just trying to work that out. (Cara Pearson, studio glass blowing, emerging maker, February 2017)

As these comments reveal, especially towards the end of the project, as the dust was beginning to set on the mid-2010s hype around Etsy and social media more generally, there was a growing tendency for makers to pick one or two platforms on which to focus and to prioritise doing these well rather than covering all online media to their mind badly. Similarly, we observed the emergence of greater differentiation between the platforms, with some being used to curate a record of collected works, while others were more focused on selling. Likewise, there was a greater emphasis on setting up accounts just for business purposes and thus having a clear demarcation between personal pages and business pages. In some ways this was a side effect of the decline of Facebook for professional purposes, given it is a more established platform and one with greater capacity to blur the boundary between the private and professional self (for both tech-related and, mostly, historical context reasons). In the final year of interviews, the idea that social media could or should be outsourced to specialists, just as taxation often is, began to emerge as a strong theme. One or two makers were already doing so; others aspired to. In this way,

even the ‘branded self’ (Hearn 2008) is now simply the kind of marketing work that can be outsourced.

This is notable, too, for how it connects with wider social trends around attitudes to social media and the way it has settled into our everyday lives. Certainly the period of the project coincided with growing mainstream critique of social media and a mounting discontent with its impact on people’s wellbeing across much of the Global North, if not beyond. Facebook, in particular, had been coming under increasing high-profile attack over a range of concerns around privacy, hacking and undue political influence (including possible fraudulent behaviour with the potential to manipulate national electoral outcomes). As a result, many people, including some that we spoke to, are stepping back or downshifting their personal engagement with social media, focusing on them as promotional/professional tools:

I have two Instagrams, one was sort of for private life and one was for [the business]—and that got too hard to handle [...] Now I’m just a bit more choosy about what I put on there in relation to myself. (Gabbee Stolp, jewellery, emerging maker, March 2018)

In this context, Instagram (like other, newer social media) has benefited from people learning from their earlier experience of Facebook and setting up subsequent accounts that were either work or personal—generally the former—with a more targeted purpose and thus potentially greater longevity:

I’m on Facebook but really the only reason I’m on Facebook is to spruik my wares otherwise I wouldn’t be on it. Same with Instagram, I’m in Instagram too, but only for that reason. (Minna Graham, ceramics, established maker, July 2017)

Facebook I have my own, so business account and personal. Instagram I don’t have a personal account, it’s all business and I just talk about business things on my Instagram page. (One Happy Leaf, jeweller, established maker, November 2016)

Without wishing to essentialise around age and digital proficiencies, there were also some notable generational differences in attitudes to social media and online sales generally and their cost benefits:

And I feel actually like I'm at a point with the whole social media and selling online thing where I'm just letting everything simmer a bit and working out what the hell I'm doing with it. Because I do find it a challenge, I don't want to spend my time doing that, it actually doesn't interest me at all. I'd rather be in my studio working. I find it really amazing that a couple of ceramic artists that I know appear to sell a lot of work online and I just think, 'I don't know how you do it,' it takes so much time. I mean even if you're producing that repetitive item so you only have to shoot it once and it's there in your shop and you've just got to keep the inventory up to date or whatever, you have then got to pack it, and you've got to drive to the post office and post it. And if it's ceramics and it's a big platter that's a lot of packing. In my opinion, that's hard work. [ ... ] And I just think I don't want to do that, I'd rather be making. [...] I have been bought up, see, with my parents' model, they have no social media, they have no website, they've never done that. They have outlets and those outlets send them orders, they basically work to orders you know, and I love that. [...] With some of the younger people I sense it's [selling and promoting online] busy work, it makes them think they're getting out there when you're not really. (Ceramics, established maker, November 2015)

I can only manage Facebook, it's that one thing I, I do. I would like to be on Instagram but I just don't have the time. It may come in the future, but also I find I have a slightly addictive personality and I just go down a tunnel. And I could waste an hour and I don't have an hour to waste, so I have to be incredibly disciplined so I think if I took on more social media, it wouldn't be good for my practice. (Vicki Mason, jewellery, established maker, April 2016)

On the whole, more established and/or middle-aged or older makers were more likely to report finding marketing and other social media-related tasks harder, if only in terms of the time burden, which they were more likely to factor into their personal accounting of the value of committing to this kind of labour. In comparison, emerging makers were far more likely than established makers to report finding marketing 'doable', but on the whole they nonetheless did not have the web traffic, sales or profile of those who found this aspect of their practice more difficult.

Thus, a concerning early tendency, especially among the emerging makers we interviewed, was the false security that having an online business identity brings. Maintaining social media profiles can take up much of the time makers have to give to their business each week. Especially for so-called digital natives, the simplicity of creating online professional

profiles—particularly across multiple social media (one’s own website as well as retail website platforms)—appears to be masking the real challenges of building a reputation or brand that converts to sales and not just likes. Emerging designer maker Joslin Koolen captured the cultural nuances in play beautifully in our discussions with her:

A lot of people [are] on Instagram, some people are very active on Instagram and it’s a great medium. But to be honest it’s very visual and I think people like what you do but it doesn’t necessarily mean they’re going to follow through and buy it. I think that’s what people have to understand is when someone likes you and they follow you they may just enjoy looking at your work, that in itself to a lot of younger people is ownership, so they don’t feel they need to then go and buy it. A lot will try and create a similar feel within their home or in their workspace. [...] it’s just an extension of Pinterest, really, and I think a lot of people when they go into business forget. (Joslin Koolen, metalwares designer maker, emerging maker, January 2016)

Oh, look, I think it’s just like a picture book. People acquire images. [...] I think if you really want to sell through social media your whole campaign has to be focused on just selling through social media because it is a massive world. I know that I’ve definitely raised my profile and that people have recognised my work and I probably have had some work through it directly or indirectly. [...] Initially I took it really personally if people didn’t like my stuff but it’s all about whether other, if other people like it or, and you have to be constantly in people’s faces. I find that blogs have the best followers on Instagram because they’re constantly adding information and people know that they don’t have to, they’re not obligated to buy anything or they’re just trying to sell a product. I think it’s very important that Instagram [posts] relate to people on a personal level but without getting too personal as well otherwise they see just you trying to sell something. [...] I mean some people are heavily involved in Instagram and they’re posting stuff daily. [...] People’s attention spans aren’t there anymore. They want instant gratification and they want something different all the time. [...] *collecting the images is a form of ownership*. (Emphasis added; Joslin Koolen, metalwares designer maker, emerging maker, April 2017)

Successful creative self-employment is clearly more than a case of ‘build it (online) and they will come’. Indeed, rather than being a licence for instant success and profile, having an online professional identity—not just for makers but for workers across many creative professions—is now simply a taken-for-granted starting point, not an end point. It is a necessary

default; it will not necessarily build reputation or sales. Existing online in a professional website proves simply that one exists and is contactable. Being ‘Google-able’ professionally is a new baseline, offering evidence of the reality and legitimacy of one’s professional identity. It operates in tandem with, but not necessarily in addition to, one’s offline presence.

A concern here then is that much social media activity undertaken by craftspeople and designer makers runs the risk of becoming a form of ‘hope labour’ (Kuehn and Corrigan 2013) whereby unpaid labour is undertaken ‘in the present, often for experience or exposure, in the hope that future employment opportunities may follow’ (Kuehn and Corrigan 2013, 9), though without guarantee. Duffy (2015) calls it ‘aspirational labor’:

[A] form of (mostly) unpaid work, aspirational labor involves productive activities that (1) participants believe has the potential to pay off in terms of future social/economic capital; and (2) ensures that female content creators remain immersed in the public circulation of commodities. (60)

For this reason, building an online profile needs to be grounded in a larger business strategy that has a focus not just on to how build it, but on getting word of your presence into the right markets. Without a considered approach, the time-sink that is online promotions (and social media in particular) can become a form of micro-entrepreneurial ‘busy work’, providing the illusion of productive activity to no actual profitable end.

### DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND CREATIVE SELLING: A BOON AND A CURSE

In a wide gamut of fields, including certainly in the world of social media-based microenterprise that features in the Australian craft and designer maker scene, individuals need to present to the market not only their professional skill set and relevant personal qualities but also a picture of themselves both figuratively and literally as socially embedded in non-work networks—families, personal partnerships and friendship. That is, they need to project themselves as having the kind of lifestyle potential customers or employers see as reflecting appropriate cultural capital:

Q: Do you have a story of yourself as a maker at all associated with that, or is it just the brand?

- A: Just the brand, that's the thing though from the creative courage thing, I need to get my story up on Etsy, so I really need to do more work on that because I don't have my story up there yet and that's, I know that's important as well. [...]
- Q: Did Etsy in their programme give any advice on that at all?
- A: Not specifically, they did sort of say in terms of your Instagram people like to see your lifestyle, they like to know a bit about you. And I kind of think, yeah that's kind of fair enough in a way. So [...] not specifically put a photo up of your kid, but about your lifestyle. So I do tend to, you know, if we go to the beach take a picture. The other day we were in the forest and I took a photo of that so I could give them an idea of where I live. But in terms of people in my life I'm not quite comfortable [putting them online]. (Sage and Peppa, ceramics, established maker, November 2015)

'Self-making' activities shared through social media normalise publicly marketing the maker through pictures of the home-based workspace and/or their making as a family-friendly practice that is successfully integrated into the rhythms of the household (Fig. 8.6). Therefore, portraying a perfect balance between work and life becomes part of the online marketing performance and, by extension, what consumers hope to buy into. This 'networked identity work' (Vivienne and Burgess 2012) or 'self-mythologising' (Conor 2014, 7) requires the skills and capacity to present an idealised online self, one operating successfully in personal and professional contexts simultaneously. This brings with it all sorts of challenges around what to show, especially in terms of drawing lines between family and/or 'private' self and business:

[I don't have any reservations about how much of myself or my family to put online] in the written form, but that's something I am struggling with or just getting my head around with, because I've got my Instagram account and Facebook. I love Instagram, love it. So many beautiful sites on there. But you know do I show my kids' faces? It's really, I don't know if I'm paranoid or what it is, it's not even paranoid it's more that, do I want to share that I don't know. So the only photos of [my child] are of the top of her head and things now. But then I look at other people's and I'm like well they're not funny about it, so do I need to be funny about it? So that's something right now I'm figuring out what I'm comfortable with and what I'm not comfortable with. (Sage and Peppa, ceramics, established maker, November 2015)



**Fig. 8.6** Doris Chang, Little Sister Co. (<https://www.doris-chang.com/>) in her workspace. (Photograph: Rosina Possingham Photography)

There is a growing and important body of scholarly work emerging on the topic of women’s use of social media as part of self-employment or small business self-promotion and the unique challenges women (and their families) face in this space (Duffy 2015, 2016, 2017; Duffy and

Pruchniewska 2017; Ekinsmyth 2012, 2013; Mäkinen 2018; Naudin and Patel 2019). But in the new occupations social media is creating, new opportunities for women are also emerging. Notable here is the dominance of women in the still relatively new and emerging promotional occupation of ‘influencer’ that has itself largely emerged out of the visual, aestheticised world of Instagram. This field, too, is coming under increasing critique as it matures and grows, but it is useful to mention here, if only to situate the social media labour we encountered in this study within a maturing set of ‘networked reputation’ (Deuze 2007, 77) behaviours that do privilege some women (and men) and which increasingly are being codified into wider sets of professional, performative norms.

On the whole, what we found in our project was that the experience of promoting oneself online and being part of online communities, although sometimes difficult to translate into sales and certainly time-consuming, was a positive one. Indeed the way social media enabled the boundaries between selling a product, being linked into a community, marketing and simply liking and sharing to become blurred actually mitigated a lot of the fears makers may have held around marketing, especially direct face-to-face pitches in market contexts. Arguably, it is the community-building or community participation aspect of this larger sense of self-promotion that mitigates some of the fears and reluctance this female-dominated group may have had around more flagrant or obvious self-promotional activity. There clearly are cultural factors behind this fear. As other scholars exploring gender and the promotional identities increasingly required of contemporary workers have written, ‘self-promotion’ has been seen as ‘problematic for women because it violates female prescriptions to be helpful, supportive and other-oriented’ (Moss-Racusin and Rudman 2010, 187). Similarly, drawing more specifically upon research into creative workers, Taylor (2011) has shown that the selfishness demanded by creative working conflicts ‘with long-established gendered positionings of women as other-oriented, attending to the needs of others and heeding their preferences’ (367).

This book opened with references to the current moment as a ‘third wave’ of craft, a time when the zeitgeist favours the artisanal, craft and handmaking. Riding on the wave has been the figure of the hipster and with it a visual language deeply tied to artisanal making and aesthetics. The mainstreaming of this post-Etsy performative craft aesthetic has furnished craftspeople and designer makers with a shared visual and textual language from which to draw out their own personas. In a classic cycle in

which previously niche activities become the mainstream, this aspect of running a craft is maturing and settling down in small and medium enterprises and sole trader businesses. Indeed, the enshrinement of particular performative codes as toolkit basics for a shared marketing aesthetic means that the challenge can now be to innovate, to stand out from the crowd, while still operating within a framework that provides sellers and buyers with a shared language of mutual understanding and a baseline for interaction and establishing maker belonging and credentials. But before seeming to end this discussion on too positive a note, it remains important to acknowledge that the aesthetic codes of the desirable artisanal persona are not equally available to all (Luckman 2015); rather, in many ways, this post-Etsy aesthetic has congealed into a new self-employed take on the more established workplace demand that creative organisations be “‘hip’ and informal’ (Conor et al. 2015, 10). A yet further instance of the ways in which the labour market is being restructured whereby ‘new resources—such as emotion and style or aesthetics—are being increasingly mobilized by workers and are productive of new hierarchies and divisions’ (Adkins and Lury 1999, 610).

There is also a dissonance we have to acknowledge between the necessarily relentless positivity of craft and design marketing and self-promotion and the much more complex and often painful realities of maker’s lives. Australia’s craftspeople and designer makers, like creative workers more generally, are required to occlude ‘all the affective features of cultural labour that do not involve affirmative feelings’ (Gill and Pratt 2008, 15). This is simply ‘part of the larger processes of governmentality in contemporary liberal democratic societies in which people have become self-governing subjects, disciplining themselves’ to adhere to relevant norms (Taylor and Littleton 2016, 34). On a few, rare occasions, respondents, including some who are outwardly extremely successful, were willing to speak of not feeling included, accepted or legitimately part of the contemporary Australian craft and designer maker scene on account of being the wrong class (working, not middle), the wrong look (perceiving themselves as not photogenic or conventionally attractive) or otherwise an outsider.<sup>1</sup> What we were not able to capture in this project were all those who had failed or chosen not to pursue this path, despite a desire to do so, as a result of their legitimate sense that this world was ‘not for them’. Given the relative decline of many of the former sectoral gatekeepers, such as guilds and industry associations, and certainly the absence of any national body, the online environment becomes a self-imposed gatekeeper, leading

to self-governing that conforms to its performative norms.<sup>2</sup> The rise of social media aesthetic performativity, and the entrenching of putatively ‘alternative’ and progressive norms around the artisanal and handmaking community online, only serves (potentially) to reinforce these exclusions. This is something we know would be the last thing the makers we spoke to would ever wish to do, but something we all need to be attentive to as a community moving forward.

### WORKING ALONE TOGETHER: CRAFT COLLECTIVES AND GUILDS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

We now live in a world in which technology and digital devices dominate our modes of communication and production. The internet is a game changer for craftspeople and designer makers in Australia, disruptive for the better in a classic long tail way (Anderson 2007). Research elsewhere, most notably in the UK (Harvey et al. 2011, 2012; Hawkins et al. 2009; Thomas 2018), has identified the important historical and ongoing role of guilds, training organisations, artists’ collectives (including retail outlets) and other collective organisations in supporting and resourcing creative micro-producers. This study coincided with a time of profound cutbacks to arts and cultural funding, especially at the national level. These cutbacks come on top of earlier years of declining funding for many parts of the sector under a conservative federal government. In contrast, the policy rhetoric and economic rationalism from both sides of politics has embraced the creative industries agenda, seeking to force those parts of the arts sector that can survive (but not necessarily thrive) in such an environment onto a more entrepreneurial footing:

Government action, in the creative industries model, is aimed at stimulating and liberating the latent, or untutored, entrepreneurial energies that lie in reserve in every pocket of cultural activity; a hand up, in other words, rather than a handout. (Ross 2007, 26)

Although little critical scholarship on the cultural and creative industries has focused on craft, it is notable that in this piece he singles out the historical collective power of this particular sector: ‘the traditional cultural industries have been a relatively significant union stronghold with a long and fruitful history of mutual support between craft-based locals’ (Ross 2007, 20). This, he suggests, could be why conservative governments

might be keen to dismantle collective support structures for artists and craftspeople.

Although it is almost guaranteed that Ross did not have the ‘new world’ context of contemporary Australia’s craft industry associations in mind when making this statement, (more likely the guilds of Europe), at the state and territory, if not the national level, in Australia, an important range of collective organisations continue to support local makers in various ways. Their evolution and survival has been in response to the ebb and flow of various state and national reviews and reports into the arts and, more specifically, the craft sector. The influence of these shifts in policy and funding paradigms was reflected within the discussions with our established makers. Although there is no longer a national body to represent organisations and individual makers in the craft and design sector and advocate on their behalf, and despite shrinking funding in real terms, the peak organisations training, supporting, promoting and advocating on behalf of the sector have endured. This can be attributed partly to a collective voice and sharing experience through the Australian Craft and Design Centres (ACDC) network, as well as the Australian branch of the World Crafts Council (<https://wccaaustralia.org.au/>) and the National Craft Initiative (a three-year partnership between the ACDC network and National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) (Hutchison 2016). Some of the ACDC member organisations<sup>3</sup> remain strongly member-driven and collectivised, offering services such as affordable insurance, marketing and promotion, as well as advice sessions and support, each of which our interviewees identified as key reasons they value their membership. Some of the traditionally craft-focused associations have retained a strong and proud craft focus, while others have felt the need to diversify their membership base to include those who identify as visual artists or designers. In most instances, the organisations themselves identified as significant challenges servicing members spread over diverse disciplinary domains and often large geographical areas. Digital technology is obviously an important tool here, but if information, support and community are being accessed online, there is also a whole world of possibility out there beyond one’s own state or territory. Regional, rural and remote makers singled out YouTube as a valuable resource for finding new making skills and helping with problem-solving (including social media and marketing issues), overcoming some of the negatives of being geographically located away from the offices of support organisations and other makers.

This said, as we have stated elsewhere in this book, geography does still matter. As does face-to-face community. As we have also seen, histories of making in particular places<sup>4</sup> have given rise to and sustained rich community ecosystems of making, such as furniture making in Tasmania and glass (and high-end craft generally) in Adelaide, thanks largely to almost 50 years of the JamFactory in that city (Fig. 8.7):

It's much deeper than that. So in fact [there is a physical series of interlinked spaces that] provides the hub, and all of this sort of old-fashioned social networking that happens around that hub is what builds a really strong and resilient community of practitioners. So Adelaide boasts one of the strongest and most resilient glass fraternities in the world because to some extent of that hub. I think it's the combination of the University of South Australia's School [of Art with its glassblowing courses] and the fact that a number of other people have chosen to reside here as [professional makers] who have nothing to do with the facility. [...] And all those things come out of the history that those two main centres have. So that enriches the [JamFactory] training programme, so the associates in the glass studio get to assist, work with, watch, talk to, learn from 50 regular glass blowers, many of whom are globally significant figures. (Brian Parkes, CEO of JamFactory, April 2015)

Individual artist-run initiatives, too, have long provided a supporting community for Australian craftspeople and designer makers, including some iconic ones such as Gray Street studio (jewellery and metal), Blue Pony (glass) and Jamboree Clay Workshop (ceramics), but many, unfortunately, are no longer in operation. This support is itself generally highly bespoke and personal and can take many forms, including a valuable and supportive family-friendly working environment for women makers—something that is nearly impossible to replicate online:

And I called them up and I said, “have you got a space there?”, and they were using that room as storage so they cleared it out for me and it was great. So my first year with [my daughter] she came with me. She was such a good little trooper that kid. Oh awesome. She'd sleep through hammering and the machines [...] So the studio was half nursery, half studio and, all the girls that worked there were like aunties to [her]. [...] it was a great year. Last year was great and I had a huge—it was probably the best year of making I've ever had and it was—lots of ideas had been bubbling around which I couldn't get to just happened. (Kath Inglis, jewellery, established maker, October 2015)



**Fig. 8.7** Emma Young blowing glass at the JamFactory. (Photograph: Rosina Possingham Photography)

Well you see my daughter she used to come in to Workshop 3000 and she used to sit in the little playpen in the workshop and, yeah, she was a constant in the room. (Marian Hosking, jewellery, established maker, October 2015)

We found that many contemporary creative makers who were sole traders still chose to join others working in the same market. This gave them

the benefits of a collective: enabling them to access and share knowledge; collectively market their businesses; and advocate for services, financial support and resources that they were unable to access individually. New forms of public and private co-working spaces are emerging, providing a rich local ecology within which to work. Both off- and online, we were struck by the visible levels of mutual support and friendliness permeating the maker community, at least in public. There will always be antagonisms, personal histories and jealousies, but overall (while acknowledging the concerns expressed in the previous section about ‘fit’), we found a highly friendly community that believed that all makers benefit from a lively, active craft and design sector, one with customers keen to choose local handmade goods over cheaper, industrially produced goods from overseas. This study may have coincided with a particular moment of peaking interest in craft, the handmade and the artisanal, but revealed within the deep histories of making presented here, both personal and collectively grounded in place, is the ongoing affective power of making. As we have written, Bennett (2001) writes of the ‘enchantment’ that is to be found in both doing it and purchasing into its world of values: ‘I locate the enchantment effect primarily in the aesthetic or theatrical dimension of commodities and in the way that commodities function as tangible and public elaborations of, and experimentations with, personal and collective identities’ (114). This role for craft and designer making is likely to become even more important as we, as privileged citizens of the Global North (such as most of the Australian population), find ourselves needing to make profound changes to how we live, including how we engage with the material world around us, in the face of climate change. We take heart from and agree with leading British craft writer and thinker Rosy Greenlees (2016) when she writes:

The fact of the matter is that those working around the fringes of craft may come and go. The current vogue for calling all things ‘craft’ will wane undoubtedly. But craft is a way of life and something well beyond glib fashion. Rather than worrying ourselves around linguistics, it seems to me that these are exciting times for craft. There’s a new sense of its possibilities and how its processes can extend beyond making beautiful objects and life meaningful, and move into areas such as technology, medicine and industry. By doing so, there is a developing comprehension that skill and a deep understanding of materials can help solve real problems. The truth of the matter is that we are surrounded by craft, and craft is here to stay. (97)

This study reveals that despite government funding cutbacks and the winding back of actual hands-on making skills development in higher education, for the time being at least, Australia's craft and designer maker sector is a strong and growing one. Moving forward, several challenges remain. Among these is to ensure, strategically and sustainably, the ability to transfer practical making skills across generations to new makers. It is critical that, in collaboration with both one another and other communities of knowledge and practice, the country's makers play their own essential role in addressing the wicked challenges of the future.

## NOTES

1. See Morgan and Nelligan (2018, 2015) for a detailed discussion of how class and gender impact upon the career aspirations and chances of success (in the form of sustainable employment) in Australia's creative industries.
2. The relative racial homogeneity of much of the Australian making community is a concerning example of this. Certainly, in her research into the experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) makers in the UK for the Crafts Council, Karen Patel has found that access to social media, not only in terms of actual skills but also, notably, concerns over the safety of making themselves visible in the ways required, was a significant barrier to BAME makers' involvement in online and, from there, face-to-face craft communities (Patel 2019).
3. ACDC members are Artisan (QLD), Australian Design Centre (NSW), Australian Tapestry Workshop (VIC), Canberra Glassworks (ACT), Central Craft (NT), Craft (VIC), Craft ACT (ACT), Design Tasmania (TAS), Form (WA), Guildhouse (SA), JamFactory (SA) and Sturt Gallery and Studios (NSW).
4. In a post-colonisation context, this experience mirrors the findings of British studies undertaken by scholars at King's College, London (Comunian and England 2018a, b).

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# APPENDIX 1: CRAFTING SELF-RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

## Participating industry organisations

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Business URL</i>
Artisan	QLD	<a href="https://artisan.org.au/">https://artisan.org.au/</a>
Australian Design Centre	NSW	<a href="https://australiandesigncentre.com/">https://australiandesigncentre.com/</a>
Australian Tapestry Workshop	VIC	<a href="https://www.austapestry.com.au/">https://www.austapestry.com.au/</a>
Bowerbird Design Market	SA	<a href="https://bowerbird.net.au/">https://bowerbird.net.au/</a>
Port Hedland Courthouse Gallery/FORM Port Hedland	WA	<a href="https://www.form.net.au/project/port-hedland-courthouse-gallery/">https://www.form.net.au/project/ port-hedland-courthouse-gallery/</a>
Craft ACT	ACT	<a href="https://craftact.org.au/">https://craftact.org.au/</a>
Craft NSW	NSW	<a href="http://www.artsandcraftsnsw.com.au/">http://www.artsandcraftsnsw.com.au/</a>
Craft Victoria	VIC	<a href="http://www.craft.org.au/">http://www.craft.org.au/</a>
Design Tasmania	TAS	<a href="http://designtasmania.com.au">http://designtasmania.com.au</a>
Guildhouse	SA	<a href="https://guildhouse.org.au/">https://guildhouse.org.au/</a>
Handspinners and Weavers	VIC	<a href="https://www.hwsgv.org.au/">https://www.hwsgv.org.au/</a>
JamFactory	SA	<a href="https://www.jamfactory.com.au/">https://www.jamfactory.com.au/</a>
KickArts Contemporary Arts	QLD	<a href="http://kickarts.org.au/">http://kickarts.org.au/</a>
NAVA	NSW	<a href="https://visualarts.net.au/">https://visualarts.net.au/</a>
Sturt	NSW	<a href="http://www.sturt.nsw.edu.au">http://www.sturt.nsw.edu.au</a>
Tactile Arts	NT	<a href="http://www.tactilearts.org.au/">http://www.tactilearts.org.au/</a>
Tjanpi Desert Weavers	NT	<a href="http://www.tjanpi.com.au">http://www.tjanpi.com.au</a>

## Participating established practitioners

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Business URL</i>
Adam Coffey	Future Shelter	WA	<a href="http://www.futureshelter.com">www.futureshelter.com</a>
Agnieszka Berger		ACT	<a href="https://www.artmajeur.com/agnberger">https://www.artmajeur.com/agnberger</a>
Amy Sierp-Worth	The Barn & Worth Gallery	SA	<a href="http://www.worthgallery.com/">http://www.worthgallery.com/</a>
Andrew McDonald		NSW	<a href="http://www.andrewmcdonald.com.au">www.andrewmcdonald.com.au</a>
Anna Anago	One Happy Leaf	WA	<a href="https://www.onehappyleaf.com">https://www.onehappyleaf.com</a>
Anna Small and Warren Pickering	A Small Art Factory	SA	<a href="https://www.asmallartfactory.com.au/">https://www.asmallartfactory.com.au/</a>
Bella Head		SA	<a href="http://bellatextiles.com.au">http://bellatextiles.com.au</a>
Blanche Tilden		VIC	<a href="http://www.blanchetilden.com.au">http://www.blanchetilden.com.au</a>
Carrie McDowell		WA	
Christina Darras		VIC	<a href="http://christinadarras.com">http://christinadarras.com</a>
Claire Beale	RMIT	VIC	<a href="http://batextiledesign.com.au/">http://batextiledesign.com.au/</a>
Clare Poppi	Small Green Leaf	QLD	<a href="http://clarepoppi.com/">http://clarepoppi.com/</a>
Corinne Snare	A Silver Circle	NSW	<a href="http://www.asilvercircle.com.au/contact/">http://www.asilvercircle.com.au/contact/</a>
Craig Northam	BUCK!T	SA	<a href="http://www.buckitbelts.com">www.buckitbelts.com</a>
Dana Kinter		SA	<a href="https://www.danakinterartdesign.com">https://www.danakinterartdesign.com</a>
Debra Senjuschenko	Sands of Time	NT	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/sandsoftimedesigns/">https://www.facebook.com/sandsoftimedesigns/</a> or <a href="https://www.etsy.com/au/shop/SandsofTimeDesigns">https://www.etsy.com/au/shop/SandsofTimeDesigns</a>
Duncan Meerding		TAS	<a href="http://www.duncanmeerding.com.au">http://www.duncanmeerding.com.au</a>
Elliat Rich		NT	<a href="http://www.elliatrich.com">http://www.elliatrich.com</a>
Emma Bugg		TAS	<a href="https://www.emmabugg.com">https://www.emmabugg.com</a>
Eugenia Neave		SA	<a href="http://www.eugenianeave.com">http://www.eugenianeave.com</a>
Gill Cordiner		WA	<a href="http://www.gillcordiner.com">http://www.gillcordiner.com</a>
Hanna Woolley	Nanna Woo Handmade	TAS	<a href="https://nannawoohandmade.com">https://nannawoohandmade.com</a>
Hayden Pratt	Pilbara Pens	WA	<a href="http://www.pilbarapens.com/">http://www.pilbarapens.com/</a>
Hayden Youlley		NSW	<a href="http://www.haydenyoulley.com">http://www.haydenyoulley.com</a>
Helen Mansbridge	Pili Pala	TAS	<a href="https://www.pilipalapieces.com.au">https://www.pilipalapieces.com.au</a>
Helen McEvoy	Copper Penni	SA	<a href="https://copperpenni.com.au">https://copperpenni.com.au</a>
Janie Andrews		NT	<a href="http://janieandrews.com">http://janieandrews.com</a>
Jacqui Renton		TAS	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/JacquiRentonJewellery/">https://www.facebook.com/JacquiRentonJewellery/</a>

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<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Business URL</i>
James Young		NT	<a href="http://www.jamesbyoung.com.au">http://www.jamesbyoung.com.au</a>
Jax Isaacson	Jax and Co.	SA	<a href="https://www.jaxandco.com.au">https://www.jaxandco.com.au</a>
Jeninda Fletcher	Deckle Studio	SA	<a href="https://www.deckle.studio/">https://www.deckle.studio/</a>
Jenny Glencross	Little Egret Fine Craft	NT	<a href="http://www.littleegretfinecrafts.com.au">http://www.littleegretfinecrafts.com.au</a>
John Firth	Unicorn Glass Studio	NT	<a href="http://www.unicornglass.com/">http://www.unicornglass.com/</a>
John Richardson		SA	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/johnrichardsonjewellery/">https://www.facebook.com/johnrichardsonjewellery/</a> or <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/johnrichardsonadelaide">https://www.flickr.com/photos/johnrichardsonadelaide</a>
Julie Abbott		SA	<a href="http://julesabbott.com.au">http://julesabbott.com.au</a>
Julie Fleming		SA	<a href="http://www.juliefleming.com.au">http://www.juliefleming.com.au</a>
Julie Frahm		SA	<a href="http://www.aussiejules.com">www.aussiejules.com</a>
Julie Piedo	Koush Design	SA	<a href="http://koushdesign.com/">http://koushdesign.com/</a>
Karen Warren	Tootsie Handmade	SA	<a href="https://www.etsy.com/au/shop/tootsiehandmade">https://www.etsy.com/au/shop/tootsiehandmade</a>
Kate Hard	Sage and Peppa	QLD	<a href="https://www.etsy.com/au/shop/SageandPeppa">https://www.etsy.com/au/shop/SageandPeppa</a>
Kate Hunter		QLD	<a href="https://www.katehunterdesigns.com/">https://www.katehunterdesigns.com/</a>
Katie Evans	Muesli and Yoghurt	WA	<a href="http://muesliandyoghurt.com.au/">http://muesliandyoghurt.com.au/</a>
Kath Inglis		SA	<a href="http://www.kathinglis.com">http://www.kathinglis.com</a>
Kim Haughie		VIC	<a href="http://kimhaughie.com">http://kimhaughie.com</a>
Laura McCusker		TAS	<a href="http://www.lauramccusker.com">http://www.lauramccusker.com</a>
Lucy Willy		QLD	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/LucyWillyCeramics/">https://www.facebook.com/LucyWillyCeramics/</a>
Luna Newby	Luna Boots	TAS	<a href="http://www.lunaboots.com">http://www.lunaboots.com</a>
Marian Hosking		VIC	<a href="https://galleryfunaki.com.au/artists/marian-hosking/">https://galleryfunaki.com.au/artists/marian-hosking/</a>
Meredith Woolnough		NSW	<a href="http://www.meredithwoolnough.com.au">www.meredithwoolnough.com.au</a>
Minna Graham		VIC	<a href="http://www.minnagrahamceramics.com">http://www.minnagrahamceramics.com</a>
Mollie Bosworth		QLD	<a href="https://molliebosworth.com/">https://molliebosworth.com/</a>
Naomi Taplin	Studio Enti	NSW	<a href="http://www.studioenti.com.au">http://www.studioenti.com.au</a>
Nicole Leutcher	Lilly and Mr Fletcher	WA	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/lillyandmrfletcher/">https://www.instagram.com/lillyandmrfletcher/</a>
Phil Astley	Astley Wright Collars	SA	<a href="https://www.astleywright.com.au">https://www.astleywright.com.au</a>

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<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Business URL</i>
Philippa Gordon	Green Door Art & Design Studio	WA	<a href="http://www.greendoorartgallery.com/">http://www.greendoorartgallery.com/</a>
Pip McManus		NT	<a href="http://members.ozemail.com.au/~pipmcmanus/mainpage.html">http://members.ozemail.com.au/~pipmcmanus/mainpage.html</a>
Rebecca Morgan	Tinkers World	QLD	<a href="http://www.tinkersworld.com.au/">http://www.tinkersworld.com.au/</a>
Rob McRae	Leatherworks Adelaide	SA	<a href="https://www.leatherworksadelaide.com.au/">https://www.leatherworksadelaide.com.au/</a>
Robert Viner-Jones	Bob Window	NSW	<a href="http://bobwindow.com.au">http://bobwindow.com.au</a>
Robyn Maclean	Bippidii Boppidii	NT	<a href="http://bippidii.boppidii.com">http://bippidii.boppidii.com</a>
Rodney Flint	Studio Flint	QLD	<a href="https://studioflint.com/">https://studioflint.com/</a>
Rose-Anne Russell		SA	<a href="http://www.rose-annerussell.com.au/">http://www.rose-annerussell.com.au/</a> or <a href="https://www.etsy.com/au/shop/RoseAnneRussell">https://www.etsy.com/au/shop/RoseAnneRussell</a>
Sangita Daniel		WA	
Sarah Green	Paper Reign	WA	<a href="http://www.paperreign.com.au">www.paperreign.com.au</a> or <a href="https://www.facebook.com/PaperReign/">https://www.facebook.com/PaperReign/</a>
Sarit Cohen		ACT	<a href="http://saritcohen.com.au">http://saritcohen.com.au</a>
Sasha Carroll	The Butcher Byrd	SA	<a href="https://www.etsy.com/au/shop/TheButcherByrd">https://www.etsy.com/au/shop/TheButcherByrd</a>
Shellie Blatch	Gypsy Rose Designs	WA	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/GypsyRoseDesignsGR/">https://www.facebook.com/GypsyRoseDesignsGR/</a>
Simon Bowley	Simon Bowley Pottery	NSW	<a href="http://www.simonbowleypottery.com/">http://www.simonbowleypottery.com/</a>
Simone Deckers	Femke Textiles	VIC	<a href="https://www.femketextiles.com.au/">https://www.femketextiles.com.au/</a>
Stephanie Hammill		WA	<a href="http://stephaniehammill.com">http://stephaniehammill.com</a>
Susan Cohn	Workshop 3000	VIC	<a href="https://ocula.com/artists/susan-cohn/">https://ocula.com/artists/susan-cohn/</a>
Tanja Von Behrens		TAS	<a href="http://www.tanjavonbehrens.com">http://www.tanjavonbehrens.com</a>
Tiff Manuel	Tiff	SA	<a href="http://www.tiffmanuell.com">www.tiffmanuell.com</a>
Ulrica Trulsson		SA	<a href="http://ulricatrulsson.com">http://ulricatrulsson.com</a>
Vanessa Holle	Vanessa Bean	NSW	<a href="http://www.vanessabean.com">http://www.vanessabean.com</a>
Vicki Mason		VIC	<a href="http://www.vickijewel.com">www.vickijewel.com</a>
Victoria Bosch	Buttony Handmade	SA	<a href="https://www.etsy.com/au/people/buttonyhandmade">https://www.etsy.com/au/people/buttonyhandmade</a>

## Participating emerging practitioners

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Business URL</i>
Alannah Sheridan		VIC	<a href="http://www.thealpacamark.com.au">www.thealpacamark.com.au</a>
Allison Howard	Bonnie Nell Crafts/Bonnie Nell Gallery	VIC	<a href="http://www.bonniennellcrafts.com">http://www.bonniennellcrafts.com</a>
Annie Xu		NSW	
Beatrice Fagerström	Stugan by Garvstrom	QLD	
Briony Davis		SA	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/brionydavisglass/">https://www.facebook.com/ brionydavisglass/</a>
Cara Pearson		SA	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/carapearsonart">https://www.facebook.com/ carapearsonart</a>
Chelsea Lemon		ACT	<a href="http://www.chelsealemon.com.au">http://www.chelsealemon.com.au</a>
Chere De Koh		NSW	<a href="https://www.behance.net/gallery/21742691/Cuterus-Uterus">https://www.behance.net/ gallery/21742691/Cuterus-Uterus</a>
Courtney Paige		SA	<a href="https://www.courtneypaigeart.com/">https://www.courtneypaigeart. com/</a>
Doris Chang	Doris Chang (illustration)/ Little Sister Co.	SA	<a href="http://www.doris-chang.com">http://www.doris-chang.com</a>
Emma Young		SA	<a href="https://www.emmayoungglass.com.au/">https://www.emmayoungglass.com. au/</a> or <a href="https://www.facebook.com/emmayoungglass/">https://www.facebook.com/ emmayoungglass/</a>
Gabrielle Stolp		VIC	<a href="https://gabbeestolp.wordpress.com/">https://gabbeestolp.wordpress. com/</a> or <a href="http://www.gabbeestolp.bigcartel.com">www.gabbeestolp.bigcartel.com</a>
Geoffrey Marshall		TAS	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/geoffreycameronmarshall/">https://www.instagram.com/ geoffreycameronmarshall/</a>
Hannah Gason		ACT	<a href="http://www.hannahgason.com">http://www.hannahgason.com</a>
Harriet Lee		ACT	
Robinson			
Janis Nah		VIC	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/nahbananas/">https://www.instagram.com/ nahbananas/</a>
Jordan Gower		SA	<a href="https://aburiceramics.com/">https://aburiceramics.com/</a>
Joslin Koolen	A.Nouk Style	SA	<a href="http://www.anoukstyle.com.au">http://www.anoukstyle.com.au</a>
Kate Nixon		ACT	<a href="http://katecnixon.com">http://katecnixon.com</a>
Laurence Coffrant		SA	<a href="http://www.laurencecoffrant.com">www.laurencecoffrant.com</a>
Natalie Lane	Corner Block Studio	QLD	<a href="http://www.cornerblockstudio.com">http://www.cornerblockstudio.com</a>
Peter Bollington	Curious Tales	ACT	<a href="http://www.curiousales.com.au">http://www.curiousales.com.au</a>
Pip Kruger		SA	<a href="http://www.pipkruger.com/">http://www.pipkruger.com/</a>

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<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Business URL</i>
Phillipa Julien	Till Designs	TAS	<a href="http://www.tilldesigns.com.au/">http://www.tilldesigns.com.au/</a> or <a href="https://www.facebook.com/Till.Designs/">https://www.facebook.com/Till.Designs/</a>
Liam Mugavin	JamFactory	SA	<a href="http://www.liammugavin.com">www.liammugavin.com</a>
Misha Dare		VIC	
Naomi Stanley	Anomaly Leathers	SA	<a href="http://www.anomalyleathers.com.au">www.anomalyleathers.com.au</a>
Scott van Tuil		TAS	<a href="http://www.scottvantuil.com/">http://www.scottvantuil.com/</a>
Shane Thompson		NSW	<a href="http://www.afternoonswithalbert.com">http://www.afternoonswithalbert.com</a>
Tara Matthews	Illustration by Tara	SA	<a href="https://www.theloop.com.au/TaraMatthews/portfolio/Illustrator/Wimmera-Western">https://www.theloop.com.au/ TaraMatthews/portfolio/ Illustrator/Wimmera-Western</a>
Tian You	Tian Ceramics	VIC	<a href="https://www.tianceramics.com/">https://www.tianceramics.com/</a>
Valeria D'Annibale		NSW	<a href="https://www.etsy.com/au/shop/ValeriaDAnnibale">https://www.etsy.com/au/shop/ ValeriaDAnnibale</a>

APPENDIX 2: INDICATIVE SEMI-STRUCTURED  
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (ESTABLISHED  
PRACTITIONERS)

### Promoting the Making Self in the Creative Micro-economy

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview ID: \_\_\_\_\_

*NB Remember to ask for a spelling out for the recorder of unfamiliar names and also for copies of any publications/brochures/publicity materials which are mentioned.*

*(Turn on recorder)*

#### Identifying yourself

How do you best describe your involvement in the creative sector? What is your principle area of craft practice?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you identify as a craftsperson, designer maker, other - why this choice?

Which of these best identifies your current making practice:

- 'Craft Careerist' – Contemporary craft-making as a first career & first or second degree in practice area
- 'Artisan' – Contemporary craft-making as a first career & other or no qualification
- 'Returner' - Contemporary craft-making NOT a first career & first or second degree in practice area
- 'Career Changer' - Contemporary craft-making NOT a first career & other or no qualification

#### Inspiration for Pursuing Creative Practice

- When did you start your/this creative activity
- what's its origin story or your creative awakening story? [Making motivations: more than generating income?]
- Do you have a family history of making or has there been a significant person in your past that directly influenced your pursuit of your creative practice?

#### Aspirations and Values

- What previous employment experience have you had? If you were previously employed outside the sector, could you say a little about how your current situation compares? Has your previous experience informed your current practice in any way (skills, inspiration, aesthetics, work ethic, etc.)?
- Where do you get your creative inspiration? Is place/location an aspect of this?
- Are environmental considerations an important aspect of your practice? If so, in what way and what informs this? Do you seek advice?

#### Education, Support and Training

- Do you have any formal training (in your creative field)?
- Is there any further education or training (formal or informal) you would like to pursue to improve your creative business?
- Have you applied for and/or received grants or prizes to support your practice? - If so what and at what stage of your career/practice? What was the impact of this on your life and practice? Do you feel that you've overall benefitted from this – did it have long term effects beyond the term of the grant itself?

*Do you have a public CV, artist statement or timeline you're willing to make available to us which summarises this information?*

#### Business Issues §

- Do you see your practice as a small business? What were the triggers for starting it (starting family, unemployment, etc.)?
- Are you able to pursue your creative practice because of the financial support of: a partner; family; other benefactor (interviewer circle as appropriate)?
- Do you consider your practice/business full time or alternatively what % of your overall working week would it occupy on average? \_\_\_\_\_%/FTE
- Have you applied for and/or received a grant or prize to support your practice?
- If not currently, has your creative practice previously been financially supported by: a partner; family; other benefactor (interviewer circle as appropriate)?
- Do you supplement your income with work outside the home, or other paid work?
- Do you contribute earnings from your creative business to a Super fund?
- Do you have a Super fund connected to another source of income?
- Do you have Income protection insurance?

#### Business skills

- What **business skills** do you consider necessary to run a successful online business?
- Have you attended any business training seminars or forums to better inform your business development? If so, which ones? Which have been most beneficial?
- Have you ever put together a formal business plan? If so, was it facilitated by an external partner (eg. Training organisation, NEIS, etc.)?
- Business vocabulary – do you feel comfortable in your business knowledge?
- Is IP a concern of yours, especially when putting images online? Do you have any strategies for protecting this?
- Have you found any web or other resources particularly useful if guiding you through the business, legal and taxation issues around your business? Australian-specific? Other?
- What bookkeeping system do you use? Do you use an accountant?
- What **personal qualities** have you found you've needed to draw upon to build your practice and business?
- Do you seek support/feedback from personal or creative practice associates to inform this aspect of your practice? (If so is this through a disciplinary specific community of practice, such as the Potters Guild, AusGlass, etc? Please nominate which one/s you associate with, or are a member of?)

- Do you have multiple **selling identities**/offerings?
- Do you find it easy to make or find time to develop new products/ideas?

How easy or difficult do you find the following aspects of running your business:

Making pricing decisions/appropriately pricing you work

Very easy     Easy     Do-able     Hard     Very Hard

Managing Customer relations

Very easy     Easy     Do-able     Hard     Very Hard

Managing your business accounts (including tax)

Very easy     Easy     Do-able     Hard     Very Hard

Balancing work and life/family

Very easy     Easy     Do-able     Hard     Very Hard

Updating your online shop

Very easy     Easy     Do-able     Hard     Very Hard

Maintaining your stock

Very easy     Easy     Do-able     Hard     Very Hard

Marketing

Very easy     Easy     Do-able     Hard     Very Hard

Negotiating copyright – yours and others'

Very easy     Easy     Do-able     Hard     Very Hard

- Are you looking to grow your business? If so, how do you intend to increase your sales and website traffic?  
Does this involve:

- o Employing other people?
- o Outsourcing production?
- o Changing your mode of production?
- o Using new technologies (eg. 3D printing)?
- o Other strategies?

**Distribution, Marketing, and Communication**

Which of the following best describes the current distribution methods for your craft product?

		%?
Online	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Word of mouth	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Direct to retailers (other than galleries)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Direct to public from studio/workshop/home	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Direct commissions	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

- Wholesalers  \_\_\_\_\_
- Trade-only fairs  \_\_\_\_\_
- Through public craft fairs  \_\_\_\_\_
- From street markets  \_\_\_\_\_
- Through a craft shop  \_\_\_\_\_
- Through a publically funded gallery or exhibition  \_\_\_\_\_
- Through a commercially funded gallery or exhibition  \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_

- Are there any of the above areas that you intend to focus on in the near future and why?
- Do you use experiential (eg. demonstrations of making) marketing as a promotional strategy? If so, what is the response?
- What is the **current geographic market for your product?** (should total 100%):

Within your home state/territory?

100%90%80%70%60%50%40%30%20%10%0%

National

100%90%80%70%60%50%40%30%20%10%0%

International

100%90%80%70%60%50%40%30%20%10%0%

Unknown

100%90%80%70%60%50%40%30%20%10%0%

If your market distribution has changed over the last 5 years please indicate below what the change has been?

	Increase	Decrease
Home state/territory	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
International	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- What **online marketing/distribution** websites are you involved in?
- What feedback do you get from people regarding why they buy your work? What do they value about it?
- What mechanisms, digital and otherwise, do you use to advertise?

What **social media** are you actively marketing/self-promoting through?

- Twitter
- Instagram
- Facebook
- Pinterest
- Other/s, \_\_\_\_\_
- None

- Do you have separate personal and professional social media accounts? Does this pose any challenges?
- What are you willing to make visible (literally and figuratively) online, what do you explicitly refuse to? (eg. Families, children, sexuality, etc.)?
- What do you do to relax? (your practice?)

**Work practices**

**What does your working week look like?** - Can you (roughly) shade out the times of the week when you engage in your practice and associated business development?

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							
Overnight							

**Studio Space / work environment**

- Where do you work?
- Do you operate your creative practice out of more than one location?
- What are the pros and cons of your current workspace?
- Is this location important to you and your practice (if so, how)?
- What are your times of work and what (who?) determines this?
- What is your dream workspace and why? (if this is at home, how it would impact upon non-work life and relationships in the home)

- Ask if can do **'walk-through'** of work-space (photos)

**[if people work from home]**

- Do you work longer hours at home than you would if you went out to work?
- Has the experience of working from home met or been different from your expectations? What were your expectations?
- What are the positives of working from home? The negatives?
- How do you negotiate the space and time for work at home with significant others and/or children? Are there, or have there been, any moments or sites of contest? How have you resolved these?
- How do you balance your family responsibilities with your business ones? (Are you from [this location] or have you moved here? Do you have extended family locally?)
- Are there 'sacred times' around which you do not work? Why?

**[if people work out of separate studio – private or ARI (Artist-Run Initiative)]**

- Where? How does it operate?
- How did you get involved?
- How do you balance your family responsibilities with your business ones? (Are you from [this location] or have you moved here? Do you have extended family locally?)
- Are there 'sacred times' around which you do not work? Why?

**Communities of practice**

- Do you belong to any **formal communities of practice** or other professional networks (which)?
  - what has been the role of professional and personal networks and industry associations in your career?
  - What organisations are you aware of?; if you're not a member why not?; what support/information would you like to see such organisations provide?
- What have been the **key barriers to, and enablers** of, the development of your professional practice?

**Understanding of Sector**

- o In your experience what is the ratio of men to women in this space? Is it an ethnically mixed space?
- o What are the specific opportunities and challenges facing Australian sellers?
- o What is the best advice you have ever been given?
- o What are the main traps for new players in these spaces
- o What is one thing you know now you wish you knew when you started?

**End Recording**

Interview ID: \_\_\_\_\_

**Demographic questions (to not be recorded or store with your name identified):**Gender (tick appropriate box): Female  Male 

Age Range (please circle):

10-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	
45-50	50-54	55-60	60-64	65-70	70-79	80+

Tertiary Education Degrees Completed:

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Size of your business (how many people do you employ)?: \_\_\_\_\_ Age of it?: \_\_\_\_\_

Which of the following best describes the % of your income generated by your craft practice?

 0-20%   
  20-50%   
  50-60%   
  60-80%   
  80-99%   
  100%

Which of the following best describes your annual income earned from craft practice?

 Below \$AU10,000   
  \$AU10-30,000   
  \$AU30-60,000   
  \$AU60-80,000

 \$AU80-100,000   
  Over \$AU100,000

Do you work from home? Yes / No

If 'No' or you also work elsewhere:

What kind of space do you work in (Artist Run Initiative, Studio-Shopfront, etc.):

\_\_\_\_\_

What is the approximate travel time to work?: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity (self-described) \_\_\_\_\_

Is there anyone else you recommend we talk to?

Thank-you for your time

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