



CRAFT CONNECTING ARCHITECTURE
ARCHITECTURE CONNECTING CRAFT



The Journal of
Modern Craft



The Built Environment Trust

The Building Design Centre

24th November 2017

Welcome to this one day conference which has been convened by the University for the Creative Arts and organised by the Crafts Study Centre, the International Textile Research Centre and the Canterbury School of Architecture. We are also most grateful for the sponsorship for the day from the Building Trust and the Building Design Centre.

The Crafts Study Centre and the International Textile Research Centre have worked collaboratively on many occasions, most recently on the Craft History Conference. Today's conference with its rich and connecting theme is especially timely, as it encompasses for the first time the Canterbury School of Architecture, highlighting the new close working relationship between the Schools of Architecture and Craft and Design under the leadership of Colin Holden.

The conference will explore how works of craft engage with modern and contemporary architecture through the interiors and exteriors of buildings and the spaces between buildings. It will enable a reflection on the ways that architecture makes demands of craft and its makers, or even rejects craft.

Our speakers will present papers that ask a range of questions from 'what is current practice', 'why is it happening', 'what is the recent history and why did it occur' where is work happening now and is it effective... and how do we know'. And where does craft and architecture fail?

It promises to be a day of stimulating debate, which we plan will not be lost for those who are not able to attend - Papers will be considered for publication in a special edition of The Journal of Modern Craft.

Professor Lesley Millar

Director, International Textile Research Centre

Professor Simon Olding

Director, Crafts Study Centre

| | | |
|-------|-------------------------|--|
| 10.00 | Registration and coffee | |
| 10.30 | Welcome | Professor Bashir Makhoul, Vice Chancellor, University for the Creative Arts |
| 10.40 | Introduction | Professor Lesley Millar and Professor Simon Olding |
| 10.50 | Petra Blaisse | KEYNOTE: In the making |
| 11.35 | Questions | Professor Lesley Millar |
| 11.45 | Christopher Tipping | Creative collaborators in making |
| 12.05 | Richard Kindersley | What is craft? |
| 12.25 | Questions | Professor Simon Olding |
| 12.40 | Lunch | |
| 2.00 | Piers Taylor | KEYNOTE: The work of the invisible studio and a journey into making |
| 2.45 | Questions | Colin Holden, Head of the Schools of Architecture, Craft and Design |
| 3.00 | Jo McCullen | Crafting a futurescape: exploring Japanese bamboo weaving as an informative practice for material computation. |
| 3.20 | Phillip Koomen | Co-Creation: The Art of the Commissioning Process |
| 3.40 | Questions | Professor Lesley Millar |
| 3.55 | Tea and coffee break | |
| 4.15 | Roz Barr | KEYNOTE: A Process in Making |
| 5.00 | Questions | Professor Simon Olding |
| 5.15 | Closing remarks | Professor Lesley Millar and Professor Simon Olding |
| 5.30 | Reception | |

In the Making

KEYNOTE ABSTRACT

With this lecture I want to illustrate the work process that the Inside Outside team goes through in relation to a number of selected projects. I would like to show some landscape and some textile works.

Crafts and architecture are intimately related in our work, in the sense that our interventions always take place around or within the architectural context, taking the mentality of the architect, the esthetic of the building(s) in question (the place and local culture and the expectations of the future users) into account; but also in the sense that spatial and technical issues; and the literal crafting – the hand work - are an integral part of our profession and of the objects we make.

In our work we need to understand the characteristics of the materials we use. We need to research the effect of handling and manipulating materials, and the effect of weight, behavior, wear and tear and of climate and human interaction on the objects in question. We need to foresee the effect of form, scale, colour, positioning – in other words the spatial consequences of our implementations and their influence on their surrounding – whether inside or outside, whether in large or in small scale.

Also, our interventions often trigger adjustments to the architecture they inhabit or envelope: ceilings need special structural configurations, dust-free storage spaces and secure place for motors need to be provided, roofs need a special build-up for soil, drainage and water-proofing, gardens and curtains need maintenance by trained craftsmen etcetera.

This talk will show examples of what we do and how a thought process and – very important and always inspiring - close collaboration with talents and specialists of different fields lead us to a final result that includes the input of many.

Petra Blaisse

Creative collaborators in making ...

ABSTRACT

I will present my role in placing 'crafted' elements & outcomes – *objects / materials / patterns / textures / influences / narratives* into interior and exterior environments in collaboration with others.

I have worked as an artist in the public realm for almost 30 years. I trained in craft-based ceramics at Farnham, now part of UCA and later at the RCA, where I gained that first opportunity to scale up my ideas & experience in surface, pattern, form & texture into my first architectural installation & commission for the Darwin Building – a bespoke in-situ terrazzo floor.

I have maintained a strong physical connectivity and intellectual interest and understanding of and for the making of objects. I have a considered understanding of materials & spatial form and its application in the built environment. My practice has evolved over time to work collaboratively on multi-disciplinary outcomes within urban regeneration, architecture & healthcare environments, employing pattern, texture and form underpinned by a contextual narrative. My formative experience of craft making, impacts on everything I now do.

I actively seek out partnership making, with manufacturers and specialist makers who exhibit methodologies and techniques I associate with aspects of craft making; skilled artisans delivering work, albeit often at a 'factory-led' scale. Some of these skilled forms of making, have all but disappeared or simply become far too costly for all but the most well funded and high profile projects. Interesting to note too, that the words 'artisan' & 'craft' are now associated with a new breed of creative small-scale entrepreneurship and manufacturing, often associated with an artisanal, urbane culture.

I adopt a hands-on approach, often spending long periods of time in factories watching, developing, documenting, collaborating and contributing to the process of making. It is a form of remote manufacture, becoming more common within digital production, but I am usually present, so the experience for me is more analogue, with my feet firmly on the ground.

Projects are never easy. Outcomes do not always go to plan. The projects I want are not always the projects I get. The biggest issues I face in my work are being brought into projects late and a risk averse and costs led culture.

I am a passionate advocate for change in this respect.

Christopher Tipping

What is Craft?

ABSTRACT

What is it that makes an object special when made by the human hand, recognized so readily when seen and touched? Objects beautifully made by hand have a resonance or music embodied in their form.

I will illuminate the subject of what is craft by describing and discussing my latest project, a large work of lettering commemorating the D-Day landings in northern France. The commission is particularly pertinent to this topic because it brings together the dilemmas of working with computers as opposed to drawing and carving by hand. The computers drive the machine cutting the lettering in order to address costs and to complete the project in the time allotted.

The project also has a requirement for hand carved inscriptions so that a ready comparison can be made. I will address the quality and the nature of lettering drawn and carved by hand as opposed to using a font with a graphics program linked through a digital output directly into a letter carving machine.

Richard Kindersley

Invisible Studio and a journey into making

KEYNOTE ABSTRACT

Piers Taylor will discuss the work of Invisible Studio and a journey into making, as he attempts to throw off the shackles of a conventional modernist architectural education and seek out a practice that embraces contingency, context, people, collaboration and material.

He will talk about his work founding the cult summer making programme Studio in the Woods, and the work he did at Hooke Park for the Architectural Association, where he co-founded the Design and Make programme.

He will also talk about Invisible Studio's own studio, made entirely by amateurs only from trees that grew on the site of the studio, and the recent work of the practice at Westonbirt Arboretum where they designed 2 buildings comprising the Tree Management Centre from timber from the estate, which have recently a RIBA National Award.

Piers Taylor

Japanese bamboo weaving

ABSTRACT

How can Japanese bamboo weaving act as an informative practice for material computation, within the context of crafting a futurescape? A futurescape is an ambiguous territory – an Anthropocene problem setting – in which to consider the impact of human habitation, via the proposal of responsive, connected structures. Both the Digital Revolution and the Anthropocene epoch have created a paradigm shift in architecture, challenging historical narratives and modes-of-making. In this context of rapid digital and environmental change, a form of expanded practice has emerged, one that pushes the boundaries of craft and material culture, resulting in intense transdisciplinary research and experimentation. Known as material computation, it operates as both a methodology, and as a technical framework used to model and fabricate material organisations that correspond to changing functional constraints.

This approach is bio-inspired, and therefore prioritises material distribution over traditional assembly methods (Oxman, 2012). In parallel, a theoretical fusion has emerged between complex systems theory, ecological anthropology, and digital craft (Alexander, 1977; Bateson, 2002; Ingold, 2013). This field of research emphasises the interdependence between nature's structural processes, the hand, and computational thinking (Menges & Ahlquist, 2011; Sennett, 2009).

In 2016, I undertook fieldwork in Japan, researching the bamboo weaving community. I sought to engage with practice, to document a pattern formation language: a developmental system of materials, techniques, and structures.

I also observed a distinct form of animism, one central to a reverence for bamboo, and demonstrated via a commitment to the unity of pattern, form, and environment. Perhaps suggesting that bamboo weaving is a critical element in the way humans' manifest nature's structural processes. If so, exploring Japanese bamboo weaving, as an informative practice for material computation, offers an avenue for traditional makers to contribute to multidimensional outcomes; to craft the futurescape.

Jo McCallum

Co-Creation: The Art of the Commissioning Process

ABSTRACT

This presentation explores the role of the designer-maker in the furniture commissioning process. I examine four institutional and domestic commissions to identify key factors that encourage a collaborative and creative process. I show how the relationship between the designer-maker, the client and the architectural space shapes the final furniture. I compare the complex, multi-layered process of institutional commissions with the relative simplicity and intuitive process of domestic commissions. I draw on my experience of less successful commissions to illustrate ways that as a designer-maker one can be creatively curtailed. I argue that successful outcomes are co-creative, with the designer-maker fulfilling the role of cultural facilitator.

I use the following successful commissions as case studies of good practice:

INSTITUTIONAL COMMISSIONS

1. A range of tables and chairs for "Window to the World", School of Government, Oxford University. Architects: Herzog & de Meuron (2015)¹
2. Choir stalls² and clergy seating for Dorchester Abbey, Oxfordshire (2012 & 2013)

DOMESTIC COMMISSIONS

3. Living room, dining room, master bedroom and study furniture for The Egyptian House (Sphinx Hill), Oxfordshire (2000 to present). Architect: John Outram, RIBA
4. Daybed and tables for an Islamic-inspired Contemplation Room, an extension to a 17th century country home in collaboration with Alan Caiger Smith, ceramicist (1999). Architect: John Pumfrey RIBA

Philip Koomen

¹ Awards: RIBA National Award 2016, RIBA South Client of the Year 2016

² Bespoke Guild Mark 2012, Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers

A Process in Making

KEYNOTE ABSTRACT

The act of making a physical artefact involves a to-and-fro engagement with an idea that requires a decision to be "made" and re-thought, and then un-made to be realized.

This roundabout but essential process of adaption is carried out in the work of my architectural practice through the use of maquettes. My first response is often a sketch, but this quickly moves into a discussion about form through modeling, where the process of making is what informs material, spatial and formal decision-making. Maquettes are a critical part of our process of developing a project in the office because for me an architectural idea is realized through its making. In making maquettes, the materiality of an initial concept can be made evident and then challenged through a synthesis of its content and context. By creating a 3-dimensional response that explores its materiality the essence of the first idea is quickly arrived at. It is a fluid process of thinking with the model and the drawings being the embodiment of the idea that is embedded at the beginning of the process.

The maquette is an act of manipulating the last act of thinking. Here we realize that "projects" are the constant development of the subconscious that become not one idea but evolves as many.

Roz Barr RIAS RIBA

Petra Blaisse

BIOGRAPHY

Petra Blaisse started her career in 1978 at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, in the Department of Applied Arts.

1986 onwards, she worked as freelance exhibition designer and won distinction for her installations of architectural works. Gradually her focus shifted to the use of textiles, light and finishes in interior space and, at the same time, to the design of gardens and landscapes.

In 1991, she founded Inside Outside. The studio worked in a multitude of creative areas, including textile, landscape and exhibition design. From 1999 Blaisse invited specialist of various disciplines to work with her and currently the team consists of about ten people of different professions and nationalities.

Inside Outside works internationally, on projects of increasing technical sophistication, ambition and scale. Throughout the years, Inside Outside has collaborated with various architects and designers. Blaisse has lectured and taught extensively in Europe, Asia and the United States. Her work has been included in numerous design and architecture exhibits internationally.

In 2000 a solo exhibition on Inside Outside's work was organized at the Storefront for Art and Architecture in Soho, New York, for which Dutch graphic designer Irma Boom created Blaisse's first publication, the "Movements, 25%" catalogue. The first monograph on the work of Petra Blaisse / Inside Outside designed by Irma Boom, has been published February 2007 by NAI Publishers and was reprinted by The Monacelli Press, a division of Random House Inc. New York, October 2009.



A number of public and private buildings in which Inside Outside implemented interior and landscape interventions brought the work of Inside Outside to the attention of a broader public.

Christopher Tipping

BIOGRAPHY

Born: 1960 St Helens, Merseyside

Education; 1982 – 1985 M.A. Ceramics - Royal College of Art and Design, London
1978 – 1981 B.A. (Hons) Ceramics - West Surrey College of Art and Design – now part of UCA

1985 – present - I have been a self-employed creative practitioner since graduating from the RCA in 1985– my practice is commission based, with projects varying in length from several months to several years. I have had some longstanding client relationships, most notably with Southampton City Council, which spans more than a decade – and several NHS Hospital Trusts.



Clients include NHS Trusts and Local & Regional Government structures delivering public realm, regeneration and new build projects. However, each project is underpinned by a desire to collaborate within multi-disciplinary teams and a personal emphasis and concern for contextual, site-specific research and the creation of new visual narratives and stories about place, with which to influence and focus project outcomes.

Recent projects have included Station Quarter North in Southampton and the Margate Flood and Coastal Protection Scheme, aka Margate Steps in Kent.

I am currently working on a number of projects, including public realm for Medway Council in Chatham, Kent and an large scale cnc routed drawing for the exterior façade of a new Gardening & Leisure Centre in Preston, Lancashire.

Website: christophertipping.co.uk

Richard Kindersley

BIOGRAPHY

Richard studied lettering with his father and Painting and Sculpture at Cambridge School of Art. His father David was a pupil of Eric Gill.

Richard moved to London in 1966 working mostly with architects for which he was awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Institute of British Architects and The Royal Society for Arts Award for Art in Architecture.

Commissions include the following: standing stones for The National Museum of Scotland; title lettering National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin. The Public Records Office, Kew; main entrance to Keele University. Group of eight standing stones for BP International Headquarters. The British 9/11 Memorial, Grosvenor Square.

Work on permanent display at the V&A Museum, including participating in the 100th anniversary of the Museum with 100 selected artists. Designed and carved inscriptions for the Bomber Command Memorial, St James's Park.

Currently working on the new D Day memorial in France undertaking the graphic work, designing lettering both for hand carving and state of the art digitally driven lettering machines.



Exhibited 2013 at the Roche Sculpture Park and solo shows at Monnow Valley Arts and William Road Gallery, London 2014

Piers Taylor

BIOGRAPHY

Piers Taylor is an architect and academic. He is a former design fellow at the University of Cambridge and a Studio Master in the Graduate School at the Architectural Association. Taylor has established two award-winning practices – first Mitchell Taylor Workshop and subsequently Invisible Studio in 2012. Invisible Studio is imagined as an alternative model of architectural practice, and a vehicle for wider collaboration in the field of architecture.



Taylor has pioneered a number of educational programmes including the Studio in the Woods where students use making to test ideas through making at 1:1. He also helped found the Design and Make masters programme at the Architectural Association where students design and construct buildings over 16 months at the AA's Hooke Park Campus. Taylor was the inaugural studio master for this program, and he also, in a professional capacity, delivered the prototypical Assembly Workshop at Hooke Park, which used small-scale juvenile 'waste' timber in the construction of big span structure, which was built by students alongside skilled carpenters.

Invisible Studio's own studio was constructed entirely by 'unskilled' labour and exclusively used timber grown on site in its construction. This method of working has led Invisible Studio to focus on projects that can explore the didactic consequences construction, which allow accident, chance and contingency to be present. Invisible Studio have recently completed two buildings for Westonbirt, the UK's National Arboretum which incorporated training programmes for volunteers and students, and used the largest single length timbers in the UK in their construction, which were also grown on site and hand hewn into structural members 22m long. The Tree Management Centre has won 4 RIBA Awards including the Sustainability Award and a RIBA National Award

Taylor lives in a self-built house in a working woodland, which he manages alongside practice and teaching. He is currently undertaking a PhD by practice titled 'Contingent Negotiation' which explores the consequences of using making to explore alternative design processes.

Jo McCallum

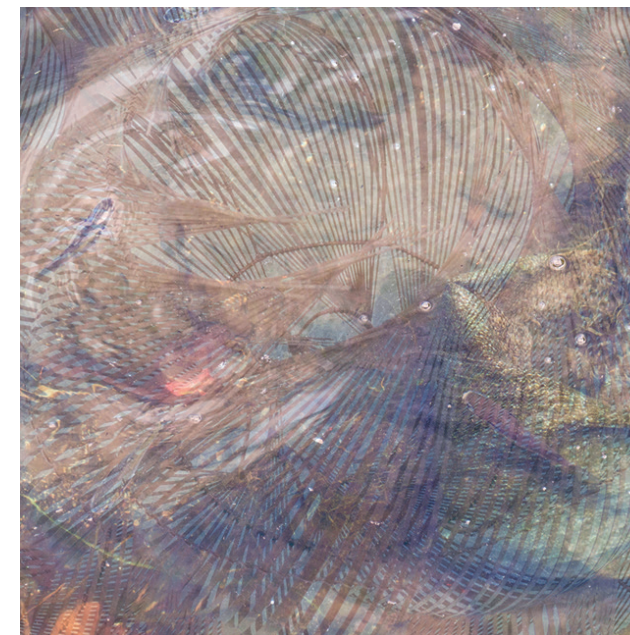
BIOGRAPHY

3D3 AHRC Studentship in Digital Craft, PhD 3D3 AHRC Studentship in Digital Craft, The University of the Arts London (UAL).

Jo McCallum (b.1975, Harare, Zimbabwe) is a digital craft maker and transdisciplinary practice researcher based in London. At present, she is an AHRC-funded PhD candidate, exploring the relationship between biomorphic design, Japanese bamboo weaving and material computation. In 2016, Jo completed an AHRC International Placement Scheme (IPS) Fellowship at Nichibunken, Kyoto, during which she undertook fieldwork with bamboo weavers.

Having trained as an architect, Jo has an inherent interest in pattern formation and growth structures. In 2013, she completed a City and Guilds NVQ3 in Structural Textiles (Basketry), the last vocational course of its kind in the UK. Jo is Human in Residence at FoAM Kernow, a transdisciplinary laboratory operating in the interstices of art, science, and nature. She also writes for The New Craftsmen, a specialist craft gallery in Mayfair, London. Creating and delivering projects across different disciplines is Jo's passion, particularly when craft is central to the work.

j.mccallum2@arts.ac.uk



Philip Koomen

BIOGRAPHY

Philip Koomen has been designing and making bespoke furniture since 1975. He has completed over 1000 commissions with a small team of craftspeople in his Oxfordshire workshop for private, corporate and institutional clients.

Philip studied furniture and wood technology at Buckinghamshire College; was awarded a PhD (Brunel) in 2007 for developing a sustainable local cycle, from Forest to Furniture and in 2013 received an Arts Council Award to develop his creative practice Ideas in the Making.

He has also been awarded three fellowships, including Royal Society of Arts and Chartered Society of Designers. In addition to working to commission he is currently a visiting senior research fellow at the Open University Business School, where he is engaged in a para-ethnographic study of how craft workshops develop a culture of inter-generational learning.



Roz Barr RIAS RIBA

BIOGRAPHY

Roz Barr founded Roz Barr Architects in 2010. Roz Barr's interest in developing an idiosyncratic process of making led her to pursue her own architectural studio, her portfolio has grown quickly, and the size of the studio has followed.

As founder and director, she has learnt through experience that being at the forefront of any design lead practice requires constant involvement in all stages of the design and delivery of a project. The office uses "models or maquettes" as a critical part of their process of developing a project, where architectural ideas are realised through its making. In 2017, following an exhibition of their work called "Adaptation" they published their first book which documents the first five years of making.

Her now 8-strong practice is currently involved in projects in London, Manchester, Scotland and Spain and New York. She has gained international recognition in Norway for her proposals for a new church, and was part of 2014 Venice Biennale with her proposal for a public square and the restoration of San Lorenzo in Venice. The practice is currently working on a new Augustinian Centre and Priory in London and is refurbishing the Building Centre on Store Street London.

Roz originally studied at Glasgow School of Art, before studying architecture where she completed her education in London at the Bartlett, UCL. Roz has taught at the Architectural Association and the Bartlett School of Architecture in London and is an External Examiner on the MA Architecture course at the Architectural Association, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen and Kingston University. She also sits on the RIBA National and International Validation Panel for Education. Roz was Vice President of Education at the RIBA between 2012 -2015.

Previous to setting up her practice in 2010 Roz spent nearly 10 years as an Associate Director with Eric Parry Architects, where she led projects from competition to completion such as 23 Savile Row, London, and the Holburne Museum of Art in Bath. She has extensive experience in working through sensitive planning issues and working with stake holder and client groups to maintain and achieve difficult and complex projects.

Roz Barr is originally from Scotland, she has worked in Hong Kong and Vancouver, and has been practicing in London for over 16 years.



Publication partners for Crafts Connecting Architecture – Architecture Connecting Crafts conference

The Building Centre, London
24th November 2017

The editors of The Journal of Modern Craft welcome papers of 5-6,000 words, including up to 10 images, from papers presented at this conference.

The Journal of Modern Craft is the first peer-reviewed academic journal to provide an interdisciplinary and international forum for the rigorous analysis of craft.

For details of the submission procedure and guidelines for manuscript preparation, as well as any other queries please send an email to Stephen Knott. stephen.knott@network.rca.ac.uk.

Further details about The Journal of Modern Craft

The journal covers all aspects of craft as it exists within the condition of modernity (from the mid-19th century to the present day), without geographical or disciplinary boundary. Its editors welcome articles and reviews that analyze the relevance of craft to architecture, design, contemporary art, literature, and other fields, as well as the central disciplines of clay, wood, fiber, glass, metal, paper, etc.

The overall editorial objective is for the journal to support a mobile and wide-ranging contemporary discourse on craft as an issue in all creative fields, while also being an authoritative historical voice on the subject of craft as a field of historical practice in its own right.

The Journal of Modern Craft includes peer-reviewed articles; exhibition and book reviews; reflections on practice; and reprinted historical texts, sometimes in translation. The editors welcome suggestions and submissions for any of these sections.

Submission of a manuscript to the journal will be taken to imply that it is not being considered elsewhere for publication, and that if accepted for publication, it will not be published elsewhere, in the same form, in any language, without the consent of the editor and publisher.

The Journal of Modern Craft operates on a single blind peer-review basis, and sometimes seeks a second peer review in cases where multiple areas of expertise not covered by the editors are required.

The Journal of Modern Craft

The Journal of Modern Craft is edited by:

- Glenn Adamson, Senior Scholar, Yale University, USA
- Tanya Harrod, Independent Scholar, UK
- Edward S. Cooke, Yale University, USA
- Elissa Auther, Windgate Research Curator, Bard Graduate Center and Museum of Arts and Design, USA
- Stephen Knott, Kingston University, UK
- Jenni Sorkin, University of California, Santa Barbara, USA

Namita Wiggers (exhibition review editor),
Critical Craft Forum, Portland Oregon, USA

Joseph McBrinn (book review editor),
University of Ulster, UK

CRAFTS STUDY CENTRE

The Crafts Study Centre is the university museum of modern crafts. Founded in 1970, it was first situated in the Holburne Museum of Art, Bath, and relocated to Farnham in the year 2000. The collection and archive, described by Dr Glenn Adamson as 'Britain's memory bank for craft' has been presented in a purpose-built museum called the Crafts Study Centre at the front of the Farnham campus of the University for the Creative Arts since 2004.

These collections and significant associated archives include founding gifts of material from pioneer craft makers such as Bernard Leach, Ethel Mairet and Rita Beales, and are especially strong in the period from the 1920s to the 1970s.

In recent years, collecting has focused on contemporary makers, alongside the addition of three major archives from the furniture designer Alan Peters, the letter carver Ralph Beyer and the ethnographic collection of the weaver Peter Collingwood. The Crafts Study Centre is a major research centre for the field, and runs a year round programme of exhibitions and events, often collaborating with the International Textiles Research Centre.

THE INTERNATIONAL TEXTILE RESEARCH CENTRE

The International Textile Research Centre brings together textile research across the university. We facilitate national and international networks and collaborations in order to ensure that methods of practice and material understanding are placed at the centre of critical debate, promoting national and international dissemination of contemporary textile practice.

The International Textile Research Centre builds on the work of the Anglo-Japanese Textile Research Centre, which was established at UCA in 2004 to develop networks within and between the UK and Japan. These networks embraced contemporary textile practice, educational establishments, funding organisations and exhibition venues in the two countries. As projects have developed, networks and connections have extended beyond the UK and Japan to those countries where textile practice occupies a corresponding position.

In 2014 UCA decided that the research outcomes and interest of the Anglo-Japanese Textile Research Centre now encompass many different cultures and approaches and the International Textile Research Centre was established. The outstanding work of the International Textile Research Centre at UCA was acknowledged as world leading (4*) in REF 2014.

THE CANTERBURY SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

The Canterbury School of Architecture (CSA) is situated within the University for the Creative Arts. Our School is a laboratory for architecture and spatial design. Where many schools of architecture have either abandoned traditional methods of design communication, including hand drawing, or conversely resisted the transformations in both information technology and computational design, we believe that it is the inter-relationships between these processes and media that provide the spaces for spatial imagination to be enacted. Increasingly the School acts as a new kind of architecture centre for the region hosting conference and networking events and generating audiences for our work. We are a Key Partner in a new regional initiative, 'Kent Design', that brings public and private sector organisations and stakeholders together to debate and consider the future of the region and the impact this will have on its communities and places.