Plate 9: Mark Thompson
(see page 99) *Buy Australian Maid*, high fired clay with enamels and lustres, porcelain flowers, sterling silver wires and kangaroo, braid and velvet, handbuilt in Adelaide in 1977. (h. 65cm)

With a background in painting as well as ceramics, and an interest in stage design, Mark Thompson (b1949) was among the first to successfully work from other ceramic traditions. He drew on the example of porcelain dolls, Meissen figurines and the angels, cherubs and Madonnas of the Italian Renaissance, to make political and social satires. Other titles reflect his interests: *Fetish/Votive Object for the Kingaroy Peanut* commented on the Queensland premier in 1977; *The Martyrdom of Christopher the Unwise* in 1980, with nine circles of naked buttocks, referred to the management of the Adelaide Festival.
Chapter 3:
The crafts as art: a shift in ideology, 1960s and 1970s

This chapter will look at the ways in which the contemporary crafts movement in Australia responded to social changes, and to both contemporary art and design in the 1960s and 1970s. It will show the development within the movement of different ideas about what the crafts and crafts practice might be, and focus on those who began to pursue the ideal of 'craft as art'. It will identify the main source of the change in ideals as the organised international crafts network centred particularly in the United States, and will discuss the ways in which some practitioners sought to pursue art ideals, in the context of changing values in the art world itself.

Introduction

The crafts movement's pursuit of art ideals was not a sudden phenomenon; nor was it something that replaced other ideals completely. It occurred alongside the continuing ideals associated with both traditional practice, as at the Sturt workshops, and design for limited production, like Frances Burke's textile screenprinting business. Nonetheless, by the 1960s, the desire to be an acclaimed expressive individual, with the status of artist or designer, making work that was to be seen to have the status of 'art', whatever its form or function, became increasingly important to many craftspeople.

Most crafts practice from the 1960s, overseas and in Australia, continued to pursue a fairly conventional or 'traditional' course. But historians like Philippe Garner believed that by this time crafts practitioners had become somewhat of a symbol of another age. 'There will always be a role for the handcrafted object', he said, 'but more as a romantic symbol for the rich, than as a viable possibility for everyday use.'216 British writer Peter Dormer suggests the crafts 'changed class' after the war, being practised by the educated middle class, who made products for aesthetic value rather than practical use. The crafts, he said, 'changed from being working-class or artisan, commercial occupations into middle-class, creative, art-like activities. Art-like in the sense that the objects produced are made and bought primarily for contemplation.' Moreover, he continued, 'As soon as people were willing to buy hand-made pots because they liked their look rather than because they were cheap and useful, a trend began whereby craft objects could be sold for their aesthetic content alone.'217

216 Philippe Garner Contemporary Decorative Arts, 1940 to the Present Day (1980) 45
217 Peter Dormer The Meanings of Modern Design (1990) 150, 148
This circumstance had clearly been developing since the late nineteenth century crafts revival, where handcrafted items became products for the rich rather than for the general mass of people, for whom they had been initially intended. However, for many, the ethical ideals remained, and 'a sense of nostalgia, for traditional methods of production rather than for decorative styles from the past, led to a search for new forms which fulfilled the craftsman’s criteria of “quality and variety,”' 218 characteristics that had been considerably undermined by industrial manufacture. The crafts also continued to appeal because of their association with criticism of consumerist ideals that linked mass-production with ‘progress’ and ‘development’.

However, a number of key issues in art and design, to be discussed in this chapter, affected the crafts as they were practised from the 1960s and influenced a reorientation of attitudes amongst some practitioners towards the purpose and meaning of their work. One was the strong influence of post-war university education programs in the United States and elsewhere that had placed an emphasis on the expressive development of the individual, and that, in the developing supporting infrastructure of the fine arts, served to increasingly separate artists and their work from society. This view co-incided with the persistence of the ‘nineteenth-century success ideology, which held aloft the example of the self-made man’, a view that T. J. Jackson Lears insists was always a false world view, despite its traces ‘today at all levels of our culture, from the calls for “self-starters” in the want ads to the fascination of ego psychologists with autonomy...’ 219

Another was the increasing influence of modernist design and attitudes towards the role of designers. In Australia, this influence came through the architecture and design styles that were introduced after the war from Europe and the United States, Scandinavia and Italy. Young architects like Harry Seidler, who was born in Europe and trained in the United States, and the designers who worked with them, had a fresh approach to a consumerist marketplace, and increasingly began to make their names in their field.

Both directions gave the designer or artist a status that was not afforded craftspeople who had been making utilitarian items for the domestic market. The multi-crafts associations that developed in the 1960s and 1970s at local, national and international levels, were formed out of the experiences and wider aspirations of some of the members of existing specialist crafts groups and crafts communities. They began to lobby with a cohesive voice for a new status for the crafts that would be equivalent to that of design and fine art. They discussed their aims in terms of a world crafts fraternity based in tradition - but a fraternity of acclaimed individuals seeking national and international status.

218Penny Sparke Design in Context (1987) 230
Changes in the crafts as a result of art, design and related social influences occurred where those influences first appeared. They arrived in other countries like Australia later, often, but not always, as stylistic imitation rather than as a critical participation in the initial prompting issues. Usually they were adapted and associated with a search for personal and national identity, but in the aims of the organisations of the crafts movement, there remained an increasing, underlying desire to be professional and to be international - as well as to be Australian.

For many, the path to this desire lay in being like an artist.

A national and international network

A distinctive characteristic of the contemporary crafts movement's desire to be both professional and international was the way it became part of a national and international network, with a 'world' philosophy.220

The status given to visual artists, as the network of dealer galleries developed and as connections with the art centres of the world increased, prompted the leaders of the new crafts movement to emulate their institutional and promotional framework. This was a more effective model at the time than that offered by design and industry, although a design infrastructure was also developing.221

The World Crafts Council

Quite at odds with the competitive internationalism of mass market consumerism, an international crafts network took shape in the 1960s that had its beginnings in the philanthropic ideals of an American woman, Aileen Webb. Since the years of the Depression Mrs Webb (as she was known) had worked to set up professional crafts organisations in the United States that were to be a model for dozens of countries in the following decades.222 In 1963 Webb wrote:

> Our century will surely be considered by future historians as that in which practical steps on an international level were first taken to make a working

220 Despite its international origins, the Arts and Crafts movement in Australia had been regional in its effect, and subsequent individual crafts practice had similarly been regional because of the lack of national communication. Post-war specialist groups were focused primarily on their own practical needs.

221 See Michael Bogle Design in Australia 1880-1970 (1997) for a summary of the development of professional design associations.

222 Mrs Webb (sometimes identified as Aileen O. Webb, sometimes as Mrs Vanderbilt Webb) established the Handcraft League of America in 1939; America House in New York in 1940; School for American Craftsmen in New Hampshire, early 1940s; the Craftsmen's Educational Council in 1943; American Craftsmen's Council (later American Crafts Council) in 1958; Craft Gallery, later the Museum of Contemporary Crafts (now American Crafts Museum) 1956; also the journal Craft Horizons. Obituary for Mrs Webb Artisan News Sept/Oct 1979 7
Chapter 3: The crafts as art

reality of the ideal of the brotherhood of man. The League of Nations and the United Nations, even the Common Market, are evidence there is a will for greater understanding, a desire among men to live at peace with one another, to establish the structures to make this possible. In this nuclear age, we stand at the threshold of two opposite directions: a new era of humanistic values or the total destruction of those values, past as well as future. The development of mankind has been marked by two forces: the drive of the individual to attain power, and the need of man to live creatively and cooperatively in the society of his fellow man.223

Webb’s zeal was evangelical: she saw the crafts as an international unifying force, at a time when others were looking for similar unifying links.224 She wanted to extend the values she associated with the crafts to other countries, and to include in this net the craftspeople in less-developed countries, where both traditional and transitional work was made as a national economic necessity. Towards these ends, she organised, through the American Craftsmen’s Council, the First World Congress of Craftsmen, which ran for two weeks at Columbia University in June 1964. Nearly a thousand people attended from the United States and forty-six other countries, and many of the overseas people had been sponsored by Mrs Webb herself. The ensuing organisation, the World Crafts Council (WCC), has held a biennial World Crafts Conference since that time.225

Speaking in 1964 to an audience of craftspeople, educators, writers and government representatives, Mrs Webb suggested that the aims of the organisation should be to provide markets for the work of each country’s craftsmen (sic), to educate the people of the world in the values of craftsmanship, and to bring this about through proper leadership, in a spirit not of competition but of co-operation.226

From the beginning there was always a difference in need and intent between the member countries of the Western world and those of the Third World. While representatives of Western countries tended to be independent craftspeople and representatives of crafts organisations, those of the Third World countries were often trade officials. The difference was clear at the first conference, when American art critic Harold Rosenberg said, ‘In the future, [the arts’] major function will be to serve as a means for individual

223Aileen Vanderbilt Webb Craft Horizons Jan/Feb 1963 11
224For example, Edward Steichen’s photographic exhibition Family of Man (1959) ‘brought together photographs from all over the world, allegedly in celebration of the universality of human experience, but promoting the “American way of life” and American values.’ Anne-Marie Willis Picturing Australia; a History of Phography (1988) 218
225Mrs Webb’s close friend Mrs Margaret Patch took a trip round the world in 1960-61 to lay the groundwork for this conference which set up the WCC. Eventually regional zones were formed, which generally held meetings in the intervening years, and from 1981 the WCC had UNESCO funding status. This was achieved during Australian, Marea Gazzard’s, presidency in 1980-84.
226Aileen Vanderbilt Webb Craft Horizons Sept/Oct 1964 8,9
selfdevelopment - and this will also be the primary aim of the crafts, and ultimately, of all human work’; whereas Patwant Singh, editor of Design Magazine of the Arts in New Delhi, argued:

So long as certain crafts are vital as a source of employment in countries where unemployment is a pressing problem, they have to be encouraged and sustained. When a point is reached where they are subsidised and kept alive out of nostalgia and romanticist ideas rather than valid economic or aesthetic reasons, it is time for serious examination.\(^\text{227}\)

Rose Slivka, editor of the journal *Craft Horizons*, set up by Mrs Webb in the early 1950s, had said of contemporary developments in 1959:

This is not merely a revival of crafts. This is not a nostalgic return to the handmade object on a wide functioning scale. We are as we must be, irretrievably an industrial society. What has happened is this: the crafts have realised their own distinct, necessary and rightful place in it - not in conflict with it, not absorbed into it - but existing within the larger structure, true to their own identity and to their own continuity...We are not harking back to old methods; we are creating new values in an entirely new situation... [The craftsman] has substituted the world heritage for lack of an indigenous one...Maintenance of control over product from impetus of idea to completion, is a reaffirmation of humanistic relationships - a relationship and responsibility to the object with which he invests his personality, and a relationship and responsibility to the person who uses it.\(^\text{228}\)

This view, which was to be largely adopted elsewhere - and indeed, still holds strength as an ideal - was nonetheless influenced by the strong connections between the American Craftsmen’s Council and the New York art world. Slivka’s personal connections with artists, and art critics of the time like Harold Rosenberg, clearly came to focus her view of the development of crafts traditions in the context of the pursuit of individual artistic freedom and expression.\(^\text{229}\)

The WCC was formed at a time when Australian craftspeople were seeking links with one another, and needing to make more contact with others overseas. It not only provided information and first hand experience of other places and other ideas, and important links with people who would come to teach, lecture and bring exhibitions in the 1970s, but also reinforced a common feeling of purpose and value that had a significant effect on the strength of the organised movement which developed in member countries.

The views of this group, as expressed by the influential American writers of this time, were to influence craftspeople and leaders in crafts organisations elsewhere.

\(^{227}\)Harold Rosenberg and Patwant Singh *Craft Horizons* Sept/Oct 1964

\(^{228}\) Rose Slivka *Craft Horizons*, Mar/Apr 1959

\(^{229}\) The contradictions that were set up between the valuing of tradition crafts and their reinvention in the West, and the ideals of the New York art world, were introduced in Chapter 1, ‘The start of the chase’.
Chapter 3: The crafts as art

The Crafts Councils network in Australia

By the early 1960s in Australia, many craftspeople were aware of the organisational developments in America, subscribed to *Craft Horizons*, and through travel had seen how an organised network or lobby could be successful in other countries.\(^{230}\) The British Crafts Centre, for example, had been set up in the early 1960s, and this was well known to Australians, as were some of the Scandinavian organisations for crafts-based design, production and marketing.\(^{231}\)

In the early stages of the development of a national support structure, and through to the late 1970s, this largely amateur movement was led and supported by a very small truly professional core. Their combined efforts provided the basis for a strong lobby, supported by public opinion at a number of levels, that was influential in the development of formal government financial support, the development of courses, the inclusion of their work in galleries and exhibitions, and involvement in an international scene.\(^{232}\)

Crafts Council of New South Wales, 1964

A national crafts network started in Australia with the establishment of the Craft Association of Australia (New South Wales Branch), in 1964. A number of people in Sydney from various backgrounds, and with various objectives, had felt the need for a multi-craft national organisation. Partly prompting this activity was the letter sent to Marea Gazzard by Mrs Webb inviting a craft representative from Australia to attend the first World Crafts Conference in 1964.

‘Really, what we were concerned about’, said Marea Gazzard, ‘was changing the environment from mediocrity to one of excellence. We wanted to get good people in different fields together so that there would be a cross-fertilisation of stimulation and interest, and more excellent craft would be the result.’\(^{233}\) Les Blakebrough, a potter who was at that time manager of the

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\(^{230}\)By this time, a number of potters societies and handweavers and spinners guilds had formed as state and national organisations; other groups, like the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria, provided a regional strength; some courses, such at East Sydney Technical College, or centres such as Sturt, also provided a national focus.

\(^{231}\)There had been other models for multi-crafts organisations. Les Blakebrough recalls: ‘There had been a first meeting of craftspeople outside specialist groups at Dartington Hall in England in about 1952, with Hamada, Leach and Mrs Webb. Dartington Hall had a similar philosophy to Sturt, and was a big influence on the crafts, theatre, ballet - an experiment that would capture anyone’s imagination. There was another similar conference in Tokyo in 1959 masterminded by Leach and Hamada, and Mrs Webb went there too.

Interview with Les Blakebrough (1986)

\(^{232}\)For a full account of the histories of the Crafts Council network see Grace Cochrane op cit (1992) Chapters 4 and 7

\(^{233}\)Marea Gazzard in April Hersey *Women in Australian Crafts* Craft Australia (1975).

‘Finding a representative from Australia was not easy. The letter seemed to arrive out of the blue and it was felt that the only representative group in Australia was the Potter’s Society."
Chapter 3: The crafts as art

Sturt workshops, adds 'the nucleus of the Crafts Council came really from the agitation and expansion that a group wanted for the Potters Society...it was a real ferment, but it had a kind of parochialism, a reluctance to take challenges.' From the beginning it was thought that any crafts organisation of real standing must be a national one, and must involve all states. ‘There was initially a slight resistance to joining an association,’ Gazzard remembered:

Craftsmen are all very much individuals and I think they felt they might lose their autonomy if they became joiners. The good thing was that right from the beginning the good craftsmen could see how valuable it would be for Australia and we virtually had top people in every field in that first association. We always had this layer of very good professional people involved...[although] we didn’t want to be exclusive and elitist...the whole purpose was to have an intermingling of different categories...if we had insisted upon special training and complete professionalism we would have had an organisation of ten people, and what would have been the point of that?

Moira Kerr also recalled that:

...there was a great urge at that time to be part of this wider movement, and I think that Mrs Vanderbilt Webb really picked up on a feeling that was simmering not only in the United States, but also in Australia, Europe and Britain. The push of the crafts here was to do with people looking to establish more of a professional base; they were looking for an international levelling; they wanted to be making things like those overseas were making.

Crafts Council of Australia 1971

The urgency for the formation of a national body increased, when it was thought that the new federal arts funding body, the Australian Council for the

They voted to send Miss Mollie Douglas, and for the first time Australian craft was represented overseas.' Also there in 1964 were Bob Hughan and Mrs Hughan from the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria, Anita Aarons from Caulfield Technical College, and Narelie Townsend, who was a Sydney architect working in New York.

In other states, existing groups were invited to be involved in forming an association, and NSW members travelled to speak at public meetings to convince interstate craftspeople of the value of such a national network.

Interview with Moira Kerr (1986). Apart from encouraging development of associations in all states, the Craft Association also set out to show Australian work in Australia and abroad. It sent an Australian crafts exhibition to Stuttgart in Germany in 1969 and a selection of work to the Asia and Pacific Council (ASPAC) exhibition in New Zealand in 1970. Their first overseas exhibition in Australia was the batik of Irwan Tirta Amidjaya, from Indonesia, in 1968. Biennial exhibitions were established, the first at the Design Centre in Bridge Street in 1967.
Arts, might include support for the crafts as well. One of the stipulations for the proposed funding of any national body was that it be representative of all states, so efforts increased in 1970 to establish the last few state Craft Associations. The Crafts Council of Australia, set up in 1971 as a national body, was made up of delegates from states. As well as co-ordinating these national connections, the council maintained links with other countries the World Crafts Council. It also published the journal *Craft Australia* from 1971, co-ordinated national projects like touring exhibitions and itineraries for international visitors, embarked on a number of research and lobby projects and set up a resource centre in 1976.

**State Crafts Councils**

Following the formation of the Craft Association of NSW in 1964, craft associations were eventually established in all states and territories. While there were regional differences, all councils embarked immediately on exhibition programs and published newsletters. One of the major objectives was to provide, through workshops with local and international professionals, education and training experiences that were not available in teaching institutions. They developed registers of craftspeople, guides to shops and galleries, lists of suppliers and calendars of events. Every association also became involved in major public participatory events that served not only to promote their own work, but also to introduce it to others. Craft Happenings, Summer Schools, school holiday events and craft demonstrations in public places, agricultural shows and craft markets were all part of the program. By the 1980s a number of other institutions, including art schools, galleries, libraries, magazines and small artists collectives, had taken a lead from the councils and had incorporated some council-initiated activities into their own programs.

The council network was very aware of what was occurring overseas; funding from the Australia Council from 1973 allowed contact with overseas visitors and exhibitions never before possible; and the differing and changing ideals of crafts practice were to be increasingly disseminated through the efficient and wide-reaching network.

**The influence of art**

The development of crafts practice as a movement was especially influenced

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238 Australian Council for the Arts, established in 1969; reformed to include a Crafts Board (and others) in 1973; renamed the Australia Council in 1975; and the Australia Council for the Arts in the 1980s.

239 Formation of Craft Associations: South Australia, 1966; Western Australia 1968; Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria and ACT 1970; Northern Territory 1973. From 1973, with the formation of the Crafts Board of the Australian Council for the Arts, the state Craft Associations (or Councils as they were called after 1978), were separately eligible for financial support, but increasingly from state governments as well.
by what was happening in the visual arts, particularly the ways in which art was marketed and the status it commanded. There were two clear and contradictory art influences on the crafts during the 1960s and 1970s: celebrating the object and then rejecting it.

**Celebrating ‘the expressive object’**

After the war, the perceived centre of the international art world had shifted from Paris to New York, partly because so many European artists moved there, but also because America represented freedom and independence. New York’s position in the art world was reinforced by the establishment of powerful art critics, and the development of an influential dealer-gallery system with its associated development of wealthy private patronage of contemporary art.

As an example of this freedom, the bold gestures of the painting movement Abstract Expressionism emphasised the physical, personal expression of the artist. This movement, which had appeared first in New York in the 1940s, ‘flourished’, said Edward Lucie-Smith, ‘in the soil already fertilized by the Surrealist immigration during the war. The stress was on truth to one’s own psyche, and on innovation without reference to anything which had happened previously.’\(^{240}\) The concerns of Abstract Expressionism for process almost as a ritual, and its use of unconventional techniques such as pouring, splashing and dribbling paint - later associated with modernist ‘organic free-form’ styling in design - were to have a strong effect on the attitudes of crafts practitioners in furniture, ceramics, glass, jewellery and textiles.

By the early 1960s Abstract Expressionist painting in the United States was giving way to other mid-century modernist ‘movements’. One was identified in the paintings of what became known as Hard-Edge Abstraction, Colorfield and Post-Painterly Abstraction, which were championed by critics such as Clement Greenberg. Here, ‘modern art was obsessed with the specificity of painting, with its flatness, its saturation, its colour composition, [and] its emotional depth corresponding to the presumed emotions of the painter.’\(^{241}\) This ‘formalist dialectic of the New York School’\(^{242}\) encouraged the ‘autonomy’ of art works that had little reference other than to themselves. As well, with the influence of sculptors like Anthony Caro in England and David Smith in the United States, both the convention of using pedestals and their association with producing heroic monuments were increasingly abandoned as sculptors sought instead, to make three-dimensional works that ‘articulated’

\(^{240}\)Edward Lucie-Smith *Cultural Calendar of the 20th Century* (1979) 118

\(^{241}\)Sandy Nairne *State of the Art* (1987) 25

\(^{242}\)Norma Broude ‘Miriam Shapiro and “Femmage”: Reflections on the Conflict Between Decoration and Abstraction in Twentieth Century Art’ in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (ed) *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany* (1982) 315
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space as kinetic sculpture, mobiles, junk assemblages, and installations of industrially-manufactured components.\textsuperscript{243}

In the United States, the crafts, fostered in a university education context that encouraged the critical assessment of tradition and convention in art and design, had been working out notions of Modernism alongside these art movements. The modernist ideals of art as an act of individual personal expression, and of an artwork as an ‘avant-garde’ autonomous object detached from an audience or a context, were the key elements that influenced a change for some crafts practitioners in their pursuit of a cultural status equivalent to art, and towards providing the crafts world with an ‘art’ rationale for its own practice.

Those, for example, who had worked around ceramic artist Peter Voulkos at the Otis Art Institute in the United States in the mid-fifties, rejected the prevailing romanticism of the crafts revival. They sought, as Garth Clark and Margie Hughto observe, a contemporary vocabulary influenced also by jazz, the beat poets, and a Zen aesthetic as it had been introduced to them by Bernard Leach and the ‘general climate of urgency following the war’. Clay was treated by those such as Voulkos and his student Paul Soldner as simply ‘another expressive material’.\textsuperscript{244} They were translating into ceramic practice the ideology of the Abstract Expressionist painters.

Also influential was the subversive movement that emerged in California in the late 1960s as Funk ceramics. ‘Funk’ art, as Clark and Hughto point out, had its roots in Dada and Surrealism in art and surfaced in ceramics with Robert Arneson in 1962, who ‘placed a ceramic cap on a “handsomely-thrown bottle” and marked it \textit{no return}’. He and his students at the University of California at Davis began to explore Funk ceramics making objects that were figurative, funny, surreal and sometimes objectionable:

...as an alternative to both the cool, mannered Pop Art and the so-called Abstract Expressionist ceramics that were being referred to as “the blood-and-guts school”...the impact was enormous, fashionably but superficially seen as the ceramic hippiedom; it was linked with the youth protest movement that had emerged at the same time.\textsuperscript{245}

The work of people experimenting in these ways was picked up by collectors\textsuperscript{246} and discussed in the terms of the art world of the time; ‘a broad-ranging experiment taking craft to the point that the critic Harold Rosenberg proposed as the ideal for contemporary art, an unfocussed play with

\textsuperscript{243}See for example, Edward Lucie-Smith op cit (1979) 154
\textsuperscript{244}See Garth Clark and Margie Hughto \textit{A Century of Ceramics in the United States 1878-1978} (1979) 129
\textsuperscript{245}Clark and Hughto ibid (1979) 160, 163
\textsuperscript{246}Collectors such as Fred and Mary Mahrer whose Funk ceramic collection came to Australia in the 1970s.
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materials'. Other sculptural ceramic work was also being made, ranging from the stylistic modern forms of Hans Coper in England, to what Clark and Hughto called the 'art of the clean' in America, where immaculately crafted 'fetish finish' works appeared, from the early 1960s, using white-ware rather than stoneware, and often decorated with china painting techniques.

With the development, or adaptation, in the United States in the early 1960s of glass-making technology that allowed artists to work on their own or as small groups in a studio, rather than in a factory, glass production also tended to follow an expressive rather than a functional direction, and was influenced by the 'organic' design ideals of the time. Glass-blowers such as Sam Herman, who followed the 'pioneers' Harvey Littleton and Dominick Labino in America, and who was to set up the Jam Factory workshops in Adelaide in 1974, made expressive, free-form, functional and sculptural works (see Plate 10: following page, for an example of a return to skilled traditions). 'The freedom of this compared with the formal “designed” work of Europe,’ said Michael Esson, writing in a catalogue for an international glass exhibition in Australia in 1982, ‘was spontaneous and refreshing, seducing audience and glassmakers alike.'

Also to seek the validation of the art world were those working in textiles, particularly weaving. Although the sources for new work were diverse, the relationship to the ideals of Expressionism and 'art' was identified from the 1950s. Some weavers, like Magdalena Abakanowicz and Ewa Jaroszynska (later Pachucka), had studied sculpture in Poland but within an awareness of a Polish textile history, which in the 1950s had been part of the Polish government's program to restore skills in 'native handcrafts'. A logical progression was to combine both, and their work moved towards free sculptural weaving, in forms that were seen first at the 1957 Milan Triennale, and at the 1958 Brussels World Fair. At the same time there was an interest in new weaves and textures associated with the pre-war revival and development of modern tapestry in France through artists such as Jean Lurçat, who in 1962 established the Lausanne Biennale Internationale de la Tapisserie (woven tapestry).

Weavers and writers Jack Lenor Larsen and Mildred Constantine, in particular, were influential in the United States in encouraging the development of what they called the Art Fabric, through publications, and through a number of exhibitions that included Art Fabrics amongst industrial and fashion fabrics. The new development in textile art took a number of forms. One was the wall hanging, which was often monumental in size, abstract in design and form, usually made from natural materials, and often

247Clark and Hughto op cit (1979) 134, 138
248Michael Esson International Directions in Glass Art catalogue (1982) 23
249Larsen & Constantine's exhibitions started with Textiles USA, Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) 1956
Plate 10: Ben Edols and Kathy Elliott

(see page 86) Two bottles, Unravelled and Undulating, blown by Ben Edols and wheel-carved by Ben Edols and Kathy Elliott in Sydney in 1997. (tallest 75 x 11 cm)

'Studio-glass', as against factory production, appeared in Australia from the early 1970s, following the American expressionist lead. This espoused an organic, free-form aesthetic that (apart from reflecting the limited control that practitioners had over their materials and equipment) also celebrated the expressive autonomy of the individual.

By the 1990s new generations of glass artists, like Ben Edols (b.1967) and Kathy Elliott (b.1964), both well-educated and widely-travelled, were returning to Italian traditions of working in teams, and re-valuing vessel forms. Both of these practices had, to a large extent, been seen as contrary to the idea of the autonomous, individual expressive artist.
hung ‘in the round’. Larsen and Constantine linked these works aesthetically with the environmental installations and events of artists such as John Cage and John Segal. By the early 1970s Constantine and Larsen concluded that:

...it can be claimed with assurance that these are works of art. The artists who create with fiber have united creativity and intuition, principles and skills to form an aesthetic entity. They have moulded and extended the meaning of their medium and transcended technique and materials; they have liberated their work from tradition and thus heightened their recognition by critics and public...Their works have gained status throughout the world, and while this art form may be in search of nomenclature, it demands and deserves autonomy.250

Perhaps more than any of the other crafts, jewellery and gold and silversmithing had identified and reinforced distinctions of class, gender, religion, wealth and status, through their prestigious functions, symbolic images and the use of precious metals and stones. Apart from the continued production of conventional commercial works, the strongest contemporary influences in jewellery and metalwork overseas in the early 1960s had been those of the restrained forms from Scandinavia and Germany, sometimes using non-precious metals like stainless steel. One of the first to provide a different direction was the jeweller and metalsmith Andrew Grima, who opened his first shop in London in 1966. His ideas came from natural textures and patterns such as from crystalline structures or rock formations; an ‘organic’ style compatible with the aesthetic of the time.

When social distinctions were being questioned and overturned in the late 1960s, jewellers were among the first to be involved in a reassessment of the social purpose of their products. They were influenced by Pop Art and by changes in fashion. By the 1970s a number of jewellers were experimenting with non-precious materials, and questioning traditions of construction and the values associated with wearing jewellery - a line of questioning that had parallels with many in the fine arts who were seeking acknowledgement for community art, and using art (through, for example, badges, banners and posters) as a subversive activity. New materials like acrylic, new extravagant forms like huge collars, and the use of photography to promote and display works were characteristic of the changes. This work was exposed in a number of new specialist dealer galleries in England and Europe, which provided not only a forum where travelling Australians could see jewellery, but also one where they could eventually show their own.251

Rejecting ‘the object’: redefining ‘art’

Ironically, just as part of the crafts world was beginning to adopt the autonomy

250Jack Lenor Larsen and Mildred Constantine Beyond Craft: the Art Fabric (1973) 7
251For example, Galerie Sierraad in Amsterdam, 1969; Electrum Gallery in London, 1971; the Pforzheim Schmuckmuseum in Germany.
of the personally expressive ‘non-functional art-craft object’ as an ideal, visual artists started to abandon the object as an artform.

By the early 1970s, despite its opposition to the market by virtue of being ‘avant-garde’, modernist art had become commodified. The market infrastructure of the capitalist economy that supported their work was no longer acceptable to many visual artists.\textsuperscript{252} In New York, and later in countries like Australia, they sought to remove themselves and their work from galleries. Reassessment of Modernism in the visual arts centred on the roles and relationships of artists, galleries, viewers and audiences, and markets, and by implication the place of the object, content, intent, meaning, materials and processes in the production of artwork.

Making an art object was not now the ideal: the emphasis was placed on the concept of the work or the artist’s idea, and the viewers could participate in this idea rather than own it. By the mid-1970s an astonishing range of radical art practices was carried out in Australia, still influenced by overseas trends. Conceptual art, ‘happenings’, earthworks, body art, installations, performances and other ephemeral or temporary works, were often combined with experimental music and theatre.\textsuperscript{253} Artworks included the use of found objects, objects in the environment, body mutilation, ritual, text, photographs and non-art materials.

Writing in 1976, critic Kenneth Coutts-Smith discussed the fundamental changes that were taking place in collective thinking about the role and function of art. ‘From the end of the nineteenth century until a few years ago’, he said:

\ldots the modern mainstream of art remained a more or less homogenous whole, and the social role of art appeared reasonable well-defined. It echoed, above all, an optimistic and expansive view of bourgeois material life and society, awarding it a “spiritual” justification. The symbolist and expressionist tradition confirmed the romantic and individualistic concept of men and women asserting their personal egos in the face of both society and the cosmos, while at the same time competing with one another.

Coutts-Smith noted in the increasing dematerialisation of the physical presence of art in the previous decade a parallel breakdown of bourgeois confidence and optimism, where ‘the bourgeoisie...bitterly condemn the artists for their heresy, and are deeply shocked that culture now appears to be failing their myths, myths so necessary for their own identity and justification.’ He believed that, blinded by a self-validating system, ‘the art subculture’s sense of its own identity has subsumed and overlain its awareness of society as a

\textsuperscript{252}See Charles Merewether, Ann Stephen (eds) \textit{The Great Divide} (1977)
\textsuperscript{253}Drawing on some of these experiences, George Gittoes and Martin Sharp established the Yellow House in Kings Cross in Sydney in the early 1970s as a centre of psychedelic art, design and performance.
whole'. He criticised art that was separated from society and advocated that 'if we are to develop an art that will restore dignity to the human individual...then we must develop an art that will echo the lived realities of our time, that will assist in the transformation of our society.'

Along these lines, 'community art' developed as one of the forms of art activism, as more artists became disillusioned with the perceived elitism of the art world and the art market. Those involved in the community arts movement in Australia 'believed that creativity was an essential tool to any kind of radical struggle,' and worked towards revaluing the making of art in different cultural, social and working backgrounds, often to effect social change, and alter attitudes about cultural values. Some artists worked with the unionised labour movement, through Art In Working Life projects in all artforms. Many retained a personal practice as well, but saw their involvement as artists working with communities as a different but valid professional activity, producing different but nonetheless valid work.

Community arts activities occurred in all art forms, in the form of group efforts like murals, community tapestries, poster and photography projects, and through happenings, workshops, events, festivals and performances.

Much of the new art was associated with redefining content, and many artists started to make work that addressed 'social comment'. The women's art movement of the mid-1970s was crucial, among a number of groups, in exposing the white, male orientation of art, in both the content of the work and the infrastructure that reinforced it. Women artists demanded validation for different, often domestic materials, different content and different language. They also reviewed art history, looking at historical biases against women and the crafts they practised, and, with political intent, sometimes adopted the materials, processes and functions of traditional and domestic crafts in their work. Rozsika Parker, for example, who wrote *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, 'wanted to know how embroidery and a stereotype of femininity have become collapsed into one another, characterised as mindless, decorative and delicate...good to look at, adding taste and status, but empty of much meaning'.

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254 Kenneth Coutts-Smith 'Theses on the Failure of Communication in the Plastic Arts' *Praxis: Journal of Radical Perspectives on the Arts* No 3 1976 78-79
255 Kenneth Coutts-Smith ibid (1976) 93-94
257 In 1985 the publication *Working Art*, produced in association with the Art Gallery of New South Wales's exhibition Project 49, surveyed the art in the labour movement in Australia in the 1980s, as well as the historic involvement of the union movement in arts activities. The Australian Council for Trade Unions had developed an arts and creative recreation policy in 1980, and working with the Community Arts Board of the Australia Council, held an Art in Working Life Conference in 1981.
centuries, embroidery had been both a source of pleasurable creativity and of oppression, and yet also, had been often subversively political.

From the early 1970s artists like Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro led women's art movements in the United States that used 'women's' materials, forms and decorative motifs, and domestic crafts processes, to expose the male biases of the mainstream art world. They wanted women's 'crafts' to be seen equally as art, and used craft techniques on works that they placed in a fine arts context. Chicago, for example, worked to bring knowledge of women's culture and history to a wide audience through art projects like *The Dinner Party* of 1974. 259

In Australia, the Women's Art Movement (WAM), took form in Sydney in the summer of 1973-74, associated with feminist critic Lucy Lippard's visit to Australia and New Zealand during International Women's Year in 1975. 260 Issues raised by artists in this movement centred on questions of representation, content and imagery, gender-based language, social roles and the sexual division of labour. They looked at the unequal ways in which women were represented in exhibitions, publications, employment (particularly in leadership positions), in servicing the arts and in receiving grant moneys. They consciously explored ideas associated with materials and processes traditionally associated with women's work; earlier domestic crafts were revalued as a political statement by contemporary artists. They also explored what they saw as explicit female issues and concerns as content in their work.

Influential art exhibitions of works exemplifying the new directions in art came to Australia from overseas and others were mounted within Australia; new dealer galleries were established; and by the early 1970s the Sydney Biennale and the Mildura Sculpture Triennial became important exhibition events for new work and new ideas. Nonetheless, said Terry Smith of the fine arts in 1974, 'New York remains the sole judge of who gets to play, of how one plays, and of who wins...If one accepts this system, its rewards can be attractive: a sense of being deeply tested, of lining up against the best from everywhere, of believing that one's acts count within art and the whole culture... [but] as long as strong metropolitan centers like New York continue

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259 For example, Judy Chicago *Through the Flower* (1977)
260 The Women's Art Movement (WAM) started when a group including Barbara Hall, Vivienne Binns, Joan Grounds, Jude Adams, Toni Robertson and others started to meet to address issues of discrimination and mutual support. A Women's Art Movement group was set up in Melbourne in 1975, while the South Australian Women's Art Movement started at a meeting in the Experimental Art Foundation in the Jam Factory Building in August 1976. Women at the time were also responding to the issues raised in publications like Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* in 1971, and the political focus that was being given through organisations such as the Women's Electoral Lobby from 1972. A Women in Media Conference had also been held in 1972.
to define the state of play, and other centers continue to accept the rules of the
game, all the other centers will be provincial, ipso facto.261

Not only were the crafts in a 'provincial' relationship to the fine arts at this
time, in seeking to acquire an equivalent status to them, but the fine arts
themselves, in Australia, were trying to seek their own identity in relation to
powerful 'international' forces.262

The influence of design
Many in the developing crafts movement aspired, simultaneously, to the ideals
of contemporary designers who, by this time, were also achieving the status of
artists, as independent expressive individuals making their own statements,
albeit on projects that might have a social purpose. While not necessarily
wanting to be part of industry, and indeed there were few industries in
Australia to design for, there were many craftspeople who wanted to maintain
a connection with function and form - and society - within a modern context.

Design itself was also strongly influenced by art, especially sculptural forms
like those of Henry Moore, and kinetic sculpture that featured flat planes
linked with fine lines. Among the most notable influences in Australia from
the 1950s and 1960s was the expressive style of Organic Modernism from the
United States, where designers used new technologies and new materials like
plastics to make furniture. Also influential were the various spare and
functional contemporary Scandinavian, Italian and British product design
styles and their architectural counterparts. These contemporary styles
developed in the later 1960s as a more homogeneous International Modern
style, which also incorporated aspects of Japanese aesthetics like the use of
natural materials and a simple ordering of objects and spaces.

British style was reinforced by enterprises like Terence Conran's Habitat
shops, first opened in 1964 to bring 'good taste' to the mass market.
Successful crafts-based design appeared mostly from Scandinavian
workshops, where artist/designer/craftspeople not only designed for
production, but also worked as artists in factory studios. Designers in Sweden
also put their energies into designing products for social use - for the elderly,
the disabled and for the workplace. There was, in their ideology, an interest in
the use of natural materials and the maintenance of a sympathetic relationship
with the environment.263 In Scandinavia, through association with the

261 Terry Smith 'The Provincialism Problem' Artforum September 1974, cited in Paul Taylor
262 By the Sydney Biennale of 1979, 'European Dialogue', artists demonstrated for equal
representation of Australian artists, and of women artists.
263 Advocating 'design for need', writers like such as Vance Packer, Ralph Nader, Alvin
Toffler and Victor Papanek in the 1960s and 70s called for more moral and social
responsibility in the design of products for mass consumption. See Penny Sparke Design in
Context (1987) 234
development of modern furniture, and ‘natural’ interiors, there was a revival of traditional rya weaving, and of damasks in new colours and new fibres. From about 1966 the Kilkenny Workshops in Ireland developed from the Scandinavian example as an important design workshop that became a model for similar developments in Australia in the 1970s.264

The Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen and his wife, designer Loja Saarinen, had moved to the United States in 1925, and had set up the Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1926. Loja directed the weaving studios there, and their work was noticed by those in America who identified links in intent with the practices of Abstract Expressionism. These efforts were reinforced by increasing interest in American Indian and Pre-Colombian basketry and fabrics. It was through these connections that the woven work of Colombian weaver Olga de Amaral, who was also influential in Australia, was associated with the new expressive textile movement.265

The fashion world of the 1960s also reflected changing social and aesthetic notions of value, status and symbolism, and indirectly influenced jewellery and aspects of the textile crafts. Fashion in the sixties was largely directed towards the affluent young: clothing was greatly influenced by Pop Art and design and was designed as body adornment, often making symbolic statements and worn with theatrical effect. Some designers used unfamiliar materials like metal and plastic as well as synthetic fibres to meet a demand for designs that were modern, popular, space-age and accessible.

In the 1950s and 1960s people travelled more than ever before, and ‘primitive’ or ‘ethnic’ art and artefacts from out-of-the-way places became an important source of ideas and techniques, and a symbolic part of the ‘alternative lifestyle’. Embroidery held:

...a special place in counter-cultures and radical movements...For the hippy era, embroidery symbolised love, peace, colour, personal life and rejection of materialism. Everything in fact that embroidery and femininity had connoted since the nineteenth century...For men, long hair and embroidered clothing constituted a rebellious gesture against a hierarchical, puritanical, masculine establishment.266

The jeans, ethnic fabrics and embroidery of the international hippie style was also appropriated by high fashion houses in what style commentator Tom Wolfe described as Funky Chic.267

Pop Art, which originated in Britain in the late fifties and followed soon after in the United States,268 and Hard-Edge painting, with their use of bright

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264 See Chapter 4 'Crafts centres' for further discussion of the Kilkenny Workshops.
265 Craft Horizons May/June 1967 29
266 Rozsika Parker in The Subversive Stitch (1984) 206
267 See Tom Wolfe 'Funky Chic' in Mauve Gloves and Madmen, Cluster and Vine Picador 1990 174-190
primary colours and bold shapes, greatly influenced the industrial design and fashion industries. In return, the industrial processes, materials and images of mass production were used by painters and sculptors. As it was translated to product design, Pop Art was an expression of recognition of the need for personal symbolic identification and expression: the form-follows-function ethic, in its 'revolt against deceitful distinctions',\(^\text{269}\) had not been fun. The Anti-Design movement in Italy, influenced by Pop, and also by Dada and Surrealism, worked through architectural groups such as Archizoom and Superstudio in the late 1960s. Their projects:

...set out to ridicule the economic and cultural status quo and move towards a set of alternative premisses on which to base the definition of design...with overt references...to 'bad taste', nostalgia, eclecticism and popular styling as a means of undermining both the aesthetic and the ethic...of Modernism, and 'good taste'.\(^\text{270}\)

As well, the small scale of Italian industry as extensions of family-owned craft shops enabled a flexibility where design changes could be made, and risks taken.

At this time, design practice, itself, was influenced by the art world: not only through colours, motifs and materials as in the relationship between Pop art and design, but in that 'designed' products came to be sometimes identified, like art objects, as the independent creation of the designer, isolated from market forces and production issues. Some designers became international 'names', and craftspeople identified with the status value of design as well as its social function.

'But', as Adrian Forty points out, criticising the dependence of design on art values in this way, 'calling industrial design “art” suggests that industrial designers occupy the principal role in production, a misconception which effectively severs most of the connections between design and society'.\(^\text{271}\)

\(^{268}\) Pop Art was practised by such artists as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein and Robert Rauschenberg using the familiar images of consumer society, non-traditional processes, and often 'found' materials.

\(^{269}\) Mark Brutton Design 368 August 1979, discussing the way in which designers had disguised utilitarian products with decorative features.

\(^{270}\) Penny Sparke An Introduction to design and Culture in the Twentieth Century (1986) 200. This Anti-Design movement was to develop in the late 1970s through studios associated with Italian designers like Ettore Sottsass and Alessandro Mendini that sought, among other things, an aesthetic that would ally mass culture with high culture, providing the elements of a visual style that became associated in the 1980s with what was to be called Postmodernism.

\(^{271}\) Adrian Forty, Objects of Desire (1986) 7. He was criticising Stephen Bayley's view that industrial art was the design of the twentieth century, in In Good Shape: Style in Industrial Products 1900 to 1960 (1979) 10
movement, and within all media, it was evident that influences from elsewhere were taking effect, and that acceptance by the art world had increasingly become the measure of greatest value.

This shift had been encouraged and reinforced through the American philosophies and practices documented in the American journal *Crafts Horizons*, as well as the programs of the British Crafts Centre and the Crafts Advisory Council in the United Kingdom. The 1973 exhibition, The Craftsman’s Art, for example, sponsored by the new Crafts Advisory Council and held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, reinforced the swing away from a connection with design and industry towards handmade craftworks whose material was subordinate to the artist’s expressive intentions.

Fifteen years later, its curator, John Houston, talked about the influence of art at that time, when craftspeople ‘had to face up to the problems of not being painters or sculptors, but not being industrialists either.’ They were ‘...trying to evolve an aesthetic which is to do with the way you make objects, and which allows a teapot to be as expressive as a piece of sculpture the same size.’ However, he pointed out that changes were evolutionary:

> The idea of sculpture as we know it today is about 800 or 900 years old. Nine hundred years ago, sculpture was something which was a pillar in Chartres cathedral. It has taken a long time to slither down the pillar, walk across the grass, hop on a plinth, fall off the plinth, become a situation and move into the landscape. It’s a real evolution and not just with hindsight. That piece of sculpture really means different things at different times, and the crafts, as we know them, have only existed for a hundred years. In that time they have changed a great deal; if you look at a Morris tapestry and compare it with the work of a tapestry weaver now, the makers’s hopes of what that tapestry will mean to you will be quite different.272

While the modernist ideals of art were pervasive within the crafts world, those very ideals were at the same time being challenged within the art world by new questions of access to the arts. The shift by some craftspeople in the early 1970s towards art ideals and ‘craft-as-art’, was also affected by some of the broader cultural issues of the time.

**Crafts and the community**

Craftspeople, for example, were also involved in some of the projects encouraged by the community arts movement. From the beginning, members of crafts organisations had made themselves available at markets, festivals, conferences and other public places, to sell and demonstrate their work and talk about it, with the objective, not only to make a living, but to encourage others to involve themselves.

While this was not understood to be 'community art' at that early stage, it was a clear attempt to encourage the use of these activities as a means of promoting collective and individual expression. In these contexts, crafts events were philosophically close to a radical counter-art movement in the art world, although they were more associated with community expression (like community tapestries) than radical statements, other than banners for trade unions. Many specific participatory events were organised by the various crafts organisations, including ‘happenings’ (using the art term for these events), ‘spin-ins’ and ‘entanglements’ in public places.273

Like many visual artists, some craftspeople also confidently used the medium and tradition of their work to demonstrate or explore a political position within the community: works that made ‘social comment’.274 But many did not want to work in this way - nor did they need to - their work was not about political issues, even if their own position in the artworld (for example as people working within women’s traditions) may have been seen to be political.

**The challenge of the women’s movement**

As social changes occurred, new questions challenged some of the comfortable assumptions of the crafts movement. The women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s was central to changes in attitude in the visual arts, through drawing attention to the marginalisation not only of women and ‘women’s art’, but, by association, of other groups - like those in the crafts movement - that had not been part of ‘the mainstream'.

But within the Australian crafts movement it was not recognised at first that patriarchal language served to distinguish the amateur (as female) from the professional (as male), and art (as what men do) from craft (as what women do). The words artist, performer, dancer, musician, painter and sculptor are all gender-less, as are weaver, jeweller and potter, but the crafts world at that stage identified its makers as ‘craftsmen’and ‘master-craftsmen’. Like the terms ‘chair’ and ‘chairperson’, which the Australia Council and the Australian Broadcasting Commission started to use in the late 1970s, the new words ‘craftsperson’, ‘craftspeople’ or ‘craftsworker’ at first sounded clumsy and unfamiliar, and people claimed the old terms had been used so long that they were now neutral. However, the women’s movement provided a mass of

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273 Examples include ‘entanglements’ in Melbourne’s Fitzroy Gardens, the participatory activities in Elder Park during Festival Week in Adelaide, the Easter Arts Embassy in Darwin, Sunday in the Park in Canberra and Crafts in the Park in Sydney. Spin-ins and craft-ins (taking their title from ‘love-ins’ and ‘sit-ins’ characteristic of the time), sewing-events and tiled pathways were all early examples of such initiatives co-ordinated by the crafts councils.

274 Mark Thompson's painted porcelain figures satirised art politics in Adelaide; Sandra Taylor and Margaret Dodd made ceramic forms that questioned myths of Australian lifestyle; and Pru La Motte challenged sexual relations in her tapestries.
statistical information that showed that such terms indisputably altered people’s perceptions of themselves, and thus affected other social and economic relationships.\textsuperscript{275}

Some aspects of the crafts were ‘adopted’ by the visual arts as part of their review and critique of art values.\textsuperscript{276} Earlier domestic crafts like quiltmaking and embroidery were also revalued as a political statement. In Sydney for example, The D’Oyley Show was put together as a collection by the Women’s Domestic Needlework Collective, and opened (to criticism from male artists bearing placards) at Watters Gallery in 1979. Sculpture departments in some art schools in Australia, responded in the late seventies and early eighties by accommodating three-dimensional fabric objects as ‘soft sculpture’, beside other sculptural practices.

Few women in the crafts were initially involved in these efforts. They were more interested in making their work than in using it to debate their position. In Adelaide, discussing the activities of the W.A.M. (the Women’s Art Movement) in 1980, visual artist Cath Cherry acknowledged: ‘I guess the difference between Art and Craft is either you get better at your skill or you become interested in ideas and concepts, which incorporate much more than the actual practical object that you are working on’.\textsuperscript{277} But some craftspeople, like Pru La Motte (formerly Medlin), working in tapestry weaving, and Margaret Dodd, working in clay to make her This Woman is not a Car series, also in Adelaide, were in fact, central to the development of works that used the process and history of the media in which they worked to critique the status of women and women artists.

In the crafts movement, La Motte and Vivienne Binns were two of the most vocal advocates for change. Prompted by a National Times article in 1978, which noted that ‘Australia’s elite craftsmen - it’s leading potters - are a worried group of men...they see hobbyists getting the grants; they blazed the trail for the craftsmen, but now think women run the show,’\textsuperscript{278} La Motte commented on the sexism of the potters interviewed, her views summarising the concerns of the time.\textsuperscript{279} She argued that the Crafts Council newsletters

\textsuperscript{275} See Annette Van den Bosch ‘What is the Situation for Women Working in the Visual Arts?’ Art Network Summer (1983). See also the Australia Council’s reports Women and the Arts and The Artist in Australia Today (1980s)

\textsuperscript{276} Women artists like Annie Newmarch and Anne Marsh in Adelaide consciously explored ideas associated with the materials and processes traditionally associated with women’s work, and used these forms to explore feminist responses to, for example, motherhood, war and sexuality.

\textsuperscript{277} Cath Cherry ‘The Women’s Art Movement’ in Women’s Movement: South Australia Experimental Art Foundation (1980) 54

\textsuperscript{278} Report: National Times 2 June 1978

\textsuperscript{279} La Motte said: ‘Sexism is almost a taboo subject in the polite apolitical world of craft. To remain apolitical on such an important issue as this is to support the status quo, and the status quo is: 1) though female students at art schools number over 50% of the student body, the average female staff in art schools is 10%...female students have no role models.
should change their use of the word 'craftsman', saying if people 'have to consciously think of saying craftsperson (crafter, craft worker, take your pick, designer-maker even) then their consciousness is being changed just as it is when people are persuaded to say black rather than nigger.' Vivienne Binns also argued that 'some of the conditioned attitudes of women towards themselves and their capabilities are reinforced by language...they do not feel/think they are capable of this or that because everything associated with it is masculine.'

Language was not the only issue, but it reinforced the political framework in which people worked. Women, in fact, had figured prominently in leadership positions and as role models in the history of the Australian crafts movement in the postwar period (in contrast to the visual arts). These women saw themselves not as passive supporters, but, like their male colleagues, as people seeking a professional working life and the status it deserved. But it also appears that many women in the crafts movement - and it was largely a women's movement - did not have professional aspirations and were content to maintain traditional terminology and a traditional perception of what the crafts might mean.

**Links with design**

At the same time as it was seeking identity with art, the crafts movement also maintained an anomalous relationship with interior and industrial design. Most designers did not consider themselves as craftspeople at all, and seemed to succeed, not through art galleries but through design showrooms, and as businesses working in collaboration with architects and interior designers. Textile designers Annan Fabrics and Frances Burke and furniture designer Fred Ward, for example, saw themselves as designers making handmade

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2) Lack of recognition at an educational level of the possibilities of traditional female craft skills in areas like sculpture; mostly staffed by males, therefore male techniques. 3) sex-typing in occupations. 4) because of the above, women are less successful in [gaining] Crafts Board grants, where successful individual applications total 30.5 per cent.' Summarised from Pru La Motte *Craft Australia* 1979/1 50

280Pru La Motte ibid (1979)
281Vivienne Binns, cited in La Motte, ibid (1979)
282Although at the end of the 3rd Potters Conference in 1983, June Lord pointed out that she still had to remind people that: the 3 opening speakers were all men; evening lectures were given by 5 men and 1 woman; the panellists were 29 men to 9 women; the demonstrations were given by 47 men and 13 women. The conference working committee, however, was made up of 9 women and 5 men, and the participants in the conference were 375 women and 102 men. June Lord, *Report of 3rd Potters Conference*, Potters Society of Australia (1983)
283Interview with Margaret Ainscow 1986. Ainscow was one who noted this attitude amongst her mature-age textile students.
284Annan Fabrics was established by Anne Outlaw and Alexandra (Nance) Mackenzie in 1941; Frances Burke Fabrics established 1937, Fred Ward active from the 1930s. See Grace Cochrane op cit (1992) 55, 176-177, 190
production items. They found work in providing items that complemented and 'warmed' the starkness of the new architecture. While some craftspeople did seek a place within the development of modernist architecture and design, the primary response was still to provide an alternative to its perceived inhumanity.285

On the one hand the crafts movement tended to reject anything that was linked too closely with industry and production, which included the metal, plastic and plywood furniture of contemporary Australian furniture designers like Grant and Mary Featherston (see Plate II: following page) and Clement Meadmore, and the semi-industrial production wares of the Martin Boyd Pottery. But on the other hand, it is significant that there were architects and designers on the committees of almost all the Craft Associations when they were formed later in the 1960s, and that the 'humanising' crafts and design objectives coincided in a number of ways with their architectural practice.286

Those in the crafts movement were consistent in wanting to use the skills of designers in presenting exhibitions, and in providing a professionally organised environment where crafts could be considered. Despite the rejection of industrial processes and products, many craftspeople knew that interest, enthusiasm, skill, the enjoyment of materials and the importance of personal expression were not enough. As Heather Dorrough remembered: 'Design was a magic word; people thought if you had it you'd be OK. It was the magic key, but you couldn't tell anyone how to do it'.287

Into the 1970s, in each media, while there remained a core of practitioners interested in working in a 'traditional' way, the effects of new influences in art and design could be clearly noticed. In particular, art ideals were to have an identifiable attraction and effect.

### The crafts in Australia: towards art ideals

#### Ceramics

In ceramics, throughout the 1960s, while the Anglo-Oriental aesthetic

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285 For many people, the new functionalist International architecture, with its use of concrete surfaces, curtain walls and 'glass box' buildings, was eventually to lose favour because of its inhuman scale and appearance. Many craft trade skills were lost as the architects of these buildings abandoned 'decoration'.

286 Potter Harold Hughan was an engineer; machine-embroiderer Heather Dorrough had trained as an interior designer in London. Many on the early committees of the Crafts Associations were architects; in galleries, Betty Beaver in Canberra and David Foulkes-Taylor in Perth had trained in interior design and potter Ian Sprague, who set up the Crafts Centre in Melbourne in 1964, was an architect. Mary White was a founding member of the Craft Association of Australia (NSW) and also president of the Society of Interior Designers in the 1960s; Frances Burke, who established the first registered screenprintery in Australia, was president of the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria for many years, and a founder member of the Society of Industrial Designers in 1947.

287 Interview with Heather Dorrough (1986)
Grant Featherston (1922-1995), in partnership with Mary Featherston (b.1943) from 1961, was one of the first post-war designers to embrace new materials and technologies (like moulded plastics and plywood, later fibreglass and polyurethane foam) in the production of furniture. Their furniture was designed with the user in mind, especially chairs "where the forms may be read as the "negatives" of the human body...It is certain", they said in this catalogue in 1975, "that our designs are evocative of the biological. We constantly collect and photograph animal and plant life forms. In these we find a profound order surpassing the designs of man."

However, Grant Featherston had started in the 1940s as a hand-craft manufacturer before developing template manufacturing processes, and, like craftspeople at the time, felt strongly about materials and the social purpose of a designer. "Looking back, the spirit and enterprise of the 1940s and 1950s were extraordinary. Architects, designers (and others) kicked off the traces of pre-war lethargy, confident of making a new society - a new society with its own interpretation and expression in the arts."

Grant Featherston in Terence Lane, *Featherston Chairs* (1987)
remained strong in Australia, supported by all the ceramics courses, potters' societies and literature, the pursuit of an art ideal either in form or in its reception, became prevalent. Wanda Garnsey and Ken Hood had written of the former direction in 1972:

In recent years the upsurge in the number of people who want to know more about pottery has been overwhelming. Though it is the most disciplinary of all the crafts, it has been the most sought after, either as a form of pure creative expression or as an outlet from the pressures of daily life. The urge to create something personal and expressive from the elements of the environment is still an aesthetic and psychological need for man everywhere...If the machinery of our atomic age has left its trail of bewilderment and confusion it has also called upon the resilient nature of mankind to find a way to that renewal of spirit from which will evolve the adaptation and fundamental reconstruction necessary to survival.

However, with the increasing contact through overseas networks, the influences of other practices were noticed, such as the modernist ceramics of Lucie Rie and Hans Coper in the United Kingdom, the expressionist work of Peter Voulkos in the United States and Funk ceramics from Robert Arneson and others in California. The sculptural ceramic forms of Bill Gregory, Bert Flugelman and Alex Leckie, for example, sometimes in organic shapes and sometimes figurative and often painted with bright colours, provided a new direction in Adelaide in the 1960s.

What was later dubbed 'Skangaroovian Funk' by Daniel Thomas, developed around ceramic artists who followed them in Adelaide, including Margaret Dodd, who had worked with Arneson in California in the late 1960s, and developed her series of ceramic Holden cars based on gender relations that exist in the surf/car sub-culture. During the 1970s more ceramic artists, like Mark Thompson (see Plate 9: before page 76), Sandra Taylor, Lorraine Jenyns, Joan Grounds and Bernard Sahm, were to move away from the predominant functional aesthetic and experimented with satirical forms, sometimes drawing on earlier ceramic traditions like painted porcelain figures.

Similarly encouraging was the 1971 visit of expressionist ceramic artist Paul Soldner, who, in his raku workshops, is remembered for his showmanship, enthusiasm, and irreverence for something most people were taking very seriously. His example of punching and tearing clay to make expressive

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288 Australians started to make their own direct links with Japan, where the revived folk craft philosophy held great appeal, and Japanese potters like Takeichi Kawai and Shoji Hamada were invited to Australia and New Zealand to lecture, give workshops and exhibit. Other Japanese potters, like Hiroe Swen (formerly Takebe) and Shigeo Shiga came to Australia to live. English visitors like Michael Cardew, also part of the crafts revival, were also to have long-term influences.

289 Kenneth Hood and Wanda Garnsey *Australian Pottery* (1972) 7

290 Daniel Thomas in Judith Thompson *Skangaroovian Funk* catalogue (1986)

291 Interview with Janet Kovesi (1986). Soldner's visit was initiated by Joan Campbell, who had visited him in America, and he was brought out by the Potters Society of Australia.
forms was followed enthusiastically in Australia. Potters also became involved in other art-like activity: ‘performances’ and ‘happenings’, involving rolling in wet clay and creating installations not intended to be fired, also became part of ceramic practice.

**Textiles and fashion**

For Australian weavers, travel, combined with illustrations and explanations of work seen in magazines, brought some into contact not only with the best exponents overseas of conventional rug and fabric weaving, but also with the new tapestry and large sculptural wall hangings that were being made. Added to those working in the guilds, and those highly trained weavers who had migrated to Australia, were a growing number like Mona Hessing (who spent some time studying weaving techniques in India), Pru Medlin (later La Motte) and Fay Bottrell, who had trained in design or art and who were interested in weaving as an expressive form. Jutta Feddersen shifted from her disciplined German ‘master-weaver’ background to make large free-hanging works. Towards the end of the sixties and in the early seventies, artists such as Eva Pachucka from Poland and Rinske Driesens from Holland, trained overseas and also making large textiles in this way, also came to live in Australia.

Within the embroiderers guilds, which maintained traditional practices and oriented themselves towards London qualifications and standards, small groups appeared such as the Creative Embroidery Group, established in 1974, following the ‘art’ directions of the time and aiming to encourage expressive and innovative work. The ‘62 Group’ in London had set up in association with the guild there in order to work more professionally in embroidery. The Australian creative embroiderers modelled themselves on this group and were similarly motivated by their interest in also being involved in ‘art’.²⁹²

Fashion was also influenced by contemporary art, and contributed, in Australia, to the development of ‘art clothing’. Australians entered the fashion world led by London and Paris, with Pru Acton and Carla Zampatti, for example, starting to design for young markets in Australia from the early 1960s. Imported textiles such as Marimekko prints and Indian silks began to appear in all states, and by the early 1970s the making of batiked and tie-dyed fabrics became popular, influenced by ‘ethnic’ and ‘primitive’ art, and associated with ideals of both alternative life-styles and modern design.²⁹³

At the same time, the 1970s saw a proliferation of handwoven, crocheted and knitted shawls and clothing lengths, usually in natural, hand-dyed colours. Designers like Jenny Kee and Linda Jackson, working out of their Flamingo Park outlet in Sydney from the early 70s, drew on many of these sources and

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²⁹²Interviews with Heather Dorrough and Meg Douglas (1986)
²⁹³The Batik Association of Australia and the Australian Lace Guild were also formed in the 1970s and numerous quiltmakers groups followed the revival of interest following the American bicentennial celebrations in the late 1970s.
provided a lead in colourful, exotic clothing with motifs of Australiana. They pioneered the idea of ‘art-clothes’: clothes made not only to be worn, but also as expressive art statements, shown in galleries in the 1980s in exhibitions like *Art Knits* and *Art Clothes*.

There was a remarkable burst of activity in Adelaide in the 1970s, centred on both exotic clothing and fibre sculpture events like performances, each of which saw the establishment of groups to further these ends.\(^{294}\) In 1979 both the Designers Collective and the South Australian Fibreworks Collective emerged to discuss ways of extending people’s perceptions about working in fibre, and to organise a project for the 1980 Adelaide Festival. Some of the events in the festival included Tineke Adolphus’s *Laundry Line*, of giant clothes strung across the Festival Centre plaza; Pat Grummet and Richard Brecknock’s *Monday Blues*, a daily performance of ‘twenty years of family sagas’ where indigo-dyed items of family clothing were hung out in a public space near different sized tents representing changing family structures; and Pru La Motte’s performance *The Weaver as Unraveller*, where she shut herself in a cage in the Mall for three days and wove and unravelled according to the legend of Penelope. Members of these collectives carried out a number of innovative events and works over the next few years.\(^{295}\)

In all textile fields, the influence of art was extraordinarily challenging to what had been a conservative field that had been obsessed with technical perfection. The new textile works were regarded warmly by their audiences: people quickly adopted embroidered, crocheted, handspun and dyed clothing. Architects commissioned huge textile works for new public buildings that could be at once, a sculptural form, an ‘environment’ and sometimes a ‘happening’. From the more sceptical design-orientation of the eighties and beyond, this decade is remembered familiarly as the time of the ‘hairy wall-hanging’.

**Jewellery and metalwork**

In jewellery and metalwork, changes influenced by both art and design overseas were brought to Australia through magazines and travel, and the first hand experience of apprentice-trained migrant jewellers and silversmiths from Europe and Scandinavia. For migrants like Helge Larsen, who were used to the possibility of designing for commissions or for trade, it was disconcerting to find in the sixties that art galleries and exhibitions were the main

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\(^{294}\) In 1978 professional textile designers in Adelaide met to discuss a proposal for a union, and, after a few months as the Cloth and Clothing Union, they formed as the Fashion and Textile Designers Guild, and planned a sequence of performance events to promote a collective range of clothing. Two separate groups grew out of this guild in 1979: the Designers Collective, and the South Australian Fibreworks Collective.

\(^{295}\) See Grace Cochrane (1992) 362-3 for further examples of these events.
marketplace for their work. Alongside trade jewellers, and the few small studio jewellery workshops like Rhoda and Dorothy Wager and Niina Ots in Sydney and the Lintons in Perth, some sculptors in Australia, such as Emanuel Raft and Inge King, had also been exhibiting and creating a market for jewellery in the 1960s.

Through the challenges posed from the early seventies by jewellers associated with the new galleries like Electrum in London and Gallery Ra in Amsterdam, jewellery increasingly became more an artist’s statement about what ‘wearing’ or ‘value’ might mean, rather than an object for investment and adornment. Jewellery was now discussed as small ‘sculpture’.

At the same time, through their aggressive worldwide promotional programs, Scandinavian design industries sent speakers, demonstrators and exhibitions round the world, and a few outlets, like Georg Jensen’s, were established in Australia. Norman Creighton remembers a Jensen exhibition in Melbourne in the late 1960s: ‘We went as a group, and saw the film of the factory - we were goggle-eyed. It was the first opportunity to pick up a piece of handcrafted silver, a fish-dish 2-3 feet long. That day electrified the next ten to twelve years.’

The main jewellery and metalworking ‘schools’ emerged, perhaps too easily generalised as German in Melbourne, centred on the established courses offered at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) with Wolf Wennrich (from the early 70s with an abstract graphic aesthetic); and Scandinavian in Sydney (focusing mostly on concept and form), centred on a number of independent migrants like Helge Larsen working there. Ray Stebbins also recalls the influence in the 1960s of the Goldsmiths Hall catalogues from Britain, showing the work of, for example, Gerald Benny and Andrew Grima, British jewellers making ‘organic’ decorative work, following the lead of the free forms of abstract expressionism in art, in reaction to the more austere Scandinavian aesthetic. Robert Bell observed that the interest in these designs in Western Australia in the late sixties and early seventies coincided with the mining boom there, encouraging the expressive and symbolic use of uncut stones and natural rock forms.

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296 Interview with Helge Larsen and Darani Lewers (1986). Larsen trained in an apprenticeship system in Denmark and came to Australia in 1961.
297 Interview with Norman Creighton (1986)
298 Dorothy Erickson (interview, 1986) adds that the popularity of their style also spread though being illustrated in the *Australian Women's Weekly.*
299 Interviews with Ray Stebbins, Dorothy Erickson, Robert Bell (1986). As well as Rod Edwards, who had moved to England earlier, Stuart Devlin also established himself in Britain in the 1960s. Some Australians like Larsen & Lewers were invited to exhibit overseas from the early sixties, and some were commissioned to make work for Expo ‘67 in Montreal.
With few formal training courses in jewellery and metalwork elsewhere in Australia, a strong demand grew for informal teaching workshops. As the crafts council network developed, jewellers met overseas were invited to Australia. Arline Fisch, an American jeweller, was a key member of the World Crafts Council and came to Australia first in 1972, giving lectures and workshops round the country. Working with woven wires, body-plates and primitive imagery, she was amongst the first to bring a strong influence towards making theatrical ‘art-jewellery’ for the body. Following, was the provocative exhibition, On Tour: 10 British Jewellers, brought by Ralph Turner in 1977, where the jewellery was made primarily as a statement of the maker, which might find a similar response from a potential wearer.

Some of the ideals of art were clearly of importance to craftspeople and contributed to important changes in attitude. In 1980, for example, speaking to jewellers at their first national conference, Tom Arthur considered the change that took place in the relationship between Minimal artists and their audiences in the 1960s: a change that questioned the values people had placed on art.

That was, he said:

...the minimalist’s decisive rejection of the self-sufficiency of the object, in favour of the context it was placed in...It was a radical shift from the object as being all-important, to what the observer perceives and experiences as being all-important, and in that sense was aesthetically what was being marketed.

He suggested that even though jewellery had the advantage of an involvement with the audience through being work on the body, it still subscribed to a one-way relationship. ‘I think that much of the work that we see is work that seeks to explain to other people in a really dogmatic fashion that this is the way the maker sees it. What is needed is work that lets other people have a part in what it is...’

By 1984, in the exhibition Cross Currents, showing work from Australia, Germany, Holland and Britain, curator Helge Larsen confirmed the changes that had taken place during the 1970s:

Jewellers seem interested in reaching a wider public than the traditional small circle of wealthy patrons. By exploring new production methods and a variety of non-precious materials they are seeking to establish a more direct contact with the public.

He pointed out that the exhibition included some of the radical influences from Europe alongside the work of a new generation, showing that jewellers

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300 The Queensland Jewellery Workshop Group, the first self-help jewellers group, started in 1971; the Tasmanian Metalcraft Group was set up as part of the Craft Association of Tasmania in 1974. Associated with their first national conference in 1978, in Melbourne, the Jewellers and Metalsmiths Group of Australia (JMGA) was formed as a national organisation.

were addressing issues of the environment, alongside and interest in technological and economic changes. Moreover, the contemporary interest in the human body and the choice of clothes as a medium for self-expression has resulted in work of a new dimension.\textsuperscript{302}

Glass
Following the art direction being pursued in other areas, studio ‘art-glass’ also made an appearance in Australia from the early 1970s.

During the 1960s most of the glass companies working in either hot-glass production or making windows, had declined in size and scope.\textsuperscript{303} Some major sculptural glass commissions were carried out by designer Douglas Annand, and windows by artist Leonard French, but the absence of sufficient major architectural commissions, combined with the development of a gallery system in the sixties that encouraged the production of craftworks as art objects, led stained-glass artists from the early seventies to make ‘autonomous panels’, or small panels to be considered as art objects. Some no doubt considered that these would advertise possibilities for larger work to architects, although others, such as Bill Gleeson with a background as a painter, and Klaus Zimmer as a printmaker, saw their glass panels as extensions of those practices.

Meanwhile commercially produced functional, simple hot glass pieces designed by craftspeople for industry, had appeared in Italy, Sweden, Finland and Czechoslovakia. This work was illustrated in Studio International, and was brought to Australia largely through the promotional tours of firms like Kosta Boda. When the Crown Crystal Glass Company transferred its hand-blowing operations from Australia to New Zealand in the late 1960s, the Leonora Glass Works near Newcastle, with its skilled glass-blowers, was the only remaining firm making hand-blown glass until it too, closed in the late 1970s.

Hot glass-blowing as a studio art-practice was not seen in Australia until Stephen Skillitzi and a few others started blowing glass, following the American expressionist lead, in 1972-1973. This small area was encouraged during the 1970s by direct intervention from the Crafts Board of the Australia Council, who brought out Americans Richard Marquis and Bill Boysen in

\textsuperscript{302}Helge Larsen ‘Cross Currents: Jewellery from Australia, Britain, Germany, Holland’ Powerhouse Museum, Sydney 1984
\textsuperscript{303}Interview with Bill Gleeson (1986). Gleeson, who had worked with the Melbourne firm of Brooks Robinson and Co., believes that after the proliferation of restoration, memorial and centenary windows following the war, the big companies were too slow to offer modern designs, and architects could not commission their work for new buildings. Hot glass industries, like Crown Corning, Phillips and other, declined in the sixties and by the late 70s all blowing facilities were closed.
1974, to give a series of workshops and residencies designed to establish glass studios in art schools and train local glassblowers.\textsuperscript{304}

They, along with American Sam Herman, who came from Britain to set up the glass workshop at the Jam Factory Craft Workshops in Adelaide, also in 1974, had gained their experience in the university glass studios in the United States. They espoused a free-form aesthetic that (apart from reflecting the limited control they had over their materials and equipment) also celebrated the expressive autonomy of the individual.

\textit{Furniture and woodwork}

The predominant interest in the 1960s in this area had been for mass-produced or small-production furniture made in new materials and modern designs by people like Grant and Mary Featherstone and Clement Meadmore, following the lead from overseas designers.

There were few fine furniture designers and makers using wood from the 1940s to the 1960s to follow the example of Fred Ward and Schulim Krimper in Melbourne. When the woodcrafts revival did begin in the mid-1970s, it was to be in the context of an expressive personal alternative to industry, under the umbrella of the crafts movement.\textsuperscript{305} Woodturner Stephen Hogbin and furniture designer Donald Lloyd McKinley were brought from Canada in the 1970s,\textsuperscript{306} drawing attention to the work of Americans like Wharton Esherick, Wendell Castle and James Krenov, who had been key figures in the development of ‘art-craft’ timber furniture. While their work paid attention to fine construction, it was also often eccentrically abstract and ‘organic’ in its form.

From this time, through the development of woodworking organisations around the country, works following a similar aesthetic provided an opportunity for expressive virtuosity in both furniture and sculptural forms. Tasmanian maker, Kevin Perkins, for example, made furniture that combined exceptional construction with timbers that retained elements of their natural form and texture, and carved elements that provided personal narratives of family and place. By contrast, the English designer-maker, John Makepeace, who also visited Australia in the 1970s, set up a woodworking school at Parnham House in England that focused on finely-finished formal designs. Australians travelled to continue contact with this diverse range of people or to enrol in their courses, and their influence returned, with them, to Australia.

\textsuperscript{304}Following the first Glass Conference in 1978, a national organisation, eventually called Ausglass, was formed.

\textsuperscript{305}The Tasmanian Woodcraftsmen’s Association was set up in 1976; the Woodworkers Group of New South Wales in late 1977, and other groups or guilds in other states. Some, such as the Victorian Woodworkers Association, formed after the first National Wood Conference in Melbourne in 1979.

\textsuperscript{306}Hogbin was originally from England; McKinley from the United States.
As the revival of crafts wood-working progressed, for many the interest in materials, techniques and fine finishes was matched with a desire to include sculptural features on furniture, or to make sculpture that was often suggested by the natural form of the timber. While some woodworkers had had (often very basic) design training, very few indeed had any experience of the changing issues of contemporary sculpture. This group was still strongly influenced by an ‘object’ aesthetic, although there were also a number of forays into chainsaw-made furniture and sculpture, as part of the art aesthetic that denied the value of materials and skills.

Conclusion
During the 1960s and into the 1970s, there remained continuing philosophical connections and contradictions between the foundation of a crafts-based aesthetic and practice and the ideals of designing products for a marketplace.

But postwar educational philosophies and international responses to Modernism in art and design included an emphasis on the personal expression and development of the individual.

Increasingly, for many craftspeople, the values of the fine arts that favoured the ideal of the independent, expressive individual and of making ‘sculptural’, ‘non-functional’ or later ‘conceptual’ craft objects, became more appealing than ideal of making functional crafts for a domestic marketplace.

At its extreme, this ideal included a denial of the values associated with a concern for materials, skills and processes, and a rejection of ornament, decoration and function. Australian craftspeople developed a strong organisational infrastructure to better give them a status equal to visual artists and this put them in direct contact with their international counterparts who were making close connections with art ideals.

But the dominant influence of centres like the New York art world not only created a ‘provincialism’ in relation to the rest of the Western art world, which deferred to its identity as a centre, but also caused some in other practices, like the crafts, to begin to deny their own histories, processes and purposes, in favour of similar dominant art ideals.

While some craftspeople successfully met the challenges of pursuing art ideals, many others did not: they were either working with ideas the art world had discarded; were too far detached from the initial source of current radical challenges to be able to successfully respond to them; or were unable to draw contemporary art meanings from within the traditions of their own practice.
Within such significant contradictions, crafts practitioners were maturing in all their experiences and attitudes, and during the 1970s their support structure of education and funding institutions and the marketplace strengthened.

The next chapter will explore the contributions of this infrastructure towards changing ideals, and more significantly, the art world’s response to its efforts.