

CLINKPROJECT3: COLLABORISM

Johanna Zellmer

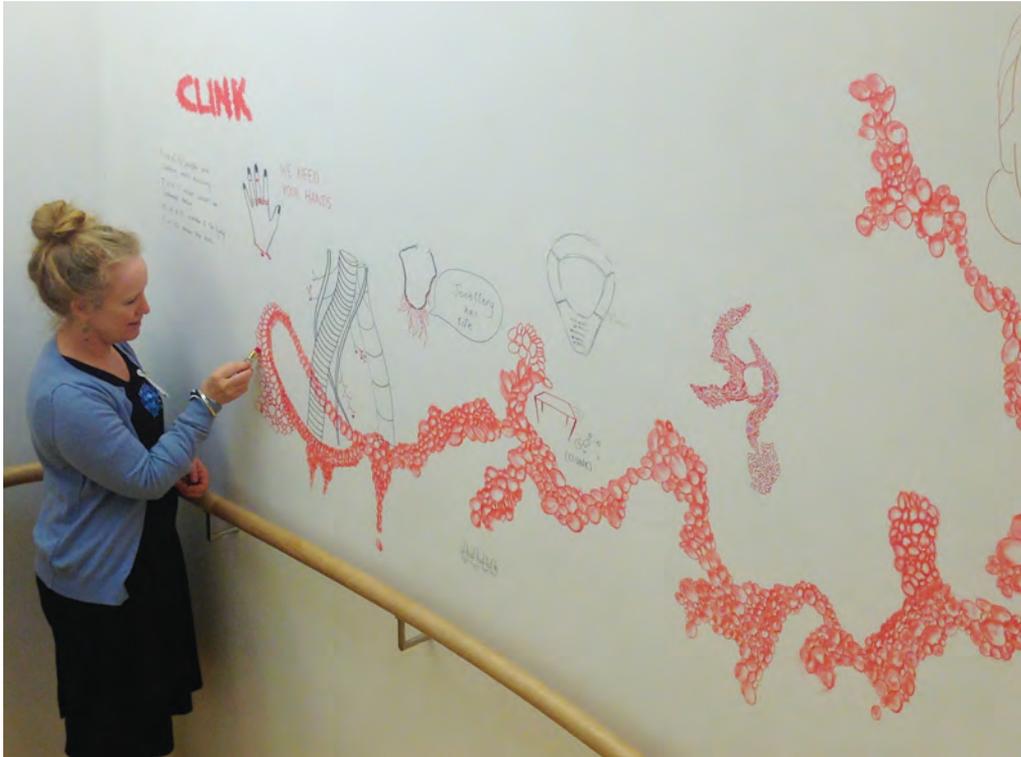


Figure 1. Susan Videler sets up the exhibit MAKE. The wall in Te Uru's stairwell leading down to the level 3 seating area becomes a dynamic drawing surface, highlighting the studio synergy of drawing and making.

CLINK Project is a collaborative jewellery initiative established in 2014 jointly by Hungry Creek Art and Craft School in Auckland and the Dunedin School of Art. It plays with the experience of disruption or intervention, often in the form of unannounced pop-up events in central Auckland, such as jewellery-making on the street or deploying clear plastic umbrellas as moving showcases. Each year, CLINK Project gathers for a frenzied week of brainstorming, planning, collaborative making and public interaction, in an endeavour to share contemporary jewellery with a diverse audience. In 2016, for its third showcase, CLINKProject3: Collaborism was working with the challenge of how to enact these driving forces within the context of the public gallery setting at Te Uru, and set out to intervene with expectations of authorship.



Figure 2. Pin-swap 1 and Pin-swap 2. Pin-swapping at Whau Studios – happy 'swappers' Andrew Last and Tayla Edmunds.

PIN-SWAPPING

On the first day of 2016's CLINK Project, the collective was invited to participate in a pin-swap at Whau Studios at 161 Point Chevalier Road in Auckland as active members of the New Zealand contemporary jewellery culture. An integral part of the jewellery community is the coming together to share knowledge between established and up-and-coming artists. This practice breaks down the elitism that often accompanies the arts. Jewellery objects make this possible through their intimacy, mobility and variability, a collection of traits that is unique to jewellery and its making culture. By making a pin with a brief, and a time limit, a pin-swap puts everyone on equal footing amongst other makers.

Prior to leaving Dunedin, the Dunedin participants had a mad frenzy in their shared workshop at Dunedin School of Art, each making a pin with a 'connections' theme, a three-hour time limit, and the added pressure of trying to make something presentable. Many of them found the synergy of working together in the studio to be energising. Pin-swaps are an opportunity to market skills, so it's important to put in your best work. Everybody was worried about how their work would be received, and how awkward it would be to talk to strangers, let alone jewellery celebrities.

The collective assembled at Whau Studios with plenty of time ahead of the pin-swap to settle in and have a debrief about the ensuing ten days of *CLINKProject3: Collaborism*. Subsequently everybody went their separate ways to bring some food back to share, resulting in an impressive spread of finger foods and wine. Slowly jewellers began to trickle in and mingle.

All the pins were wrapped and put into a basket in a corner of the room. Once everyone had arrived, people were invited to draw a pin out of the basket, one at a time. Upon unpacking the pins and putting them on, everybody was encouraged to find the maker and have a discussion with them, using the pin as a conversation starter. This led to learning about other artists' processes, motivations and practice.

The event was a success, with everyone feeling like a welcome part of a larger community. The up-and-coming jewellery artists found the networking opportunity to be incredibly beneficial, and the interactions that occurred set them up well for the rest of their CLINK collaborations.

CURATORIAL

The two previous CLINK projects set out to challenge conventions of presenting jewellery to an audience by using the street as an exhibition venue. Following those past projects, CLINKProject3 used the same methods of collaborative planning and short but intense workshop preparation. This year brought exhibition practice back to the gallery, but also looked for ways to emphasise participation, touch and engagement with jewellery-making to a gallery

audience. Te Uru gallery curator James Anderson responded enthusiastically to a loose proposal generated through CLINK pre-planning discussions. CLINK participants met in Auckland knowing that we had four unconventional exhibition locations within the gallery to work with, but no clear idea how we were going meet our aims of working together and extending the boundaries of jewellery exhibition.



Figure 3. Curatorial 1 and Curatorial 2. The exhibit LOUNGE converted Te Uru's Curiosity Corner into a small slice of domestic chill-zone. Johanna Zellmer, Michelle Wilkinson and Ildi Juhasz setting up the interactive exhibit ADORN in the gallery's level 4 changing room.

FRIDAY (DAY TWO)

On site at Te Uru the collective spent a day of insane brain-soaring, thinking, looking, discussing and summarising. Groups were inventive, respectful, coming up with interconnected themes curating work yet unknown, as it was not yet made! A last-minute-before-brain-crash pulling together of common threads resulted in themes of Architecture, Touch, Chain and the Domestic. We wanted visitors to:

- engage with drawing and jewellery skills while descending to the Learning Centre;
- try on jewellery and take selfies in the bathroom;
- stitch, embroider and crochet in the domestic setting transforming the stairwell landing; and
- satisfy their curiosity peeking through the covered front window.

SUNDAY (DAY FOUR)

After having spent Friday in the gallery spaces brainstorming in small groups, we gathered at the Hungry Creek studio to combine our ideas into a plan of attack. Up until this point we had been in a limbo state, knowing an exhibition must happen, but not knowing what or how! This anxious unrest left the best of us feeling nauseous. But luckily, this final day of decision-making, sorting logistics and so forth helped to relieve most of the worries and enabled us to absorb the proposed plan and get stuck in. The general enthusiasm lifted and gained momentum, throwing us into a frenzy of making, deliberating and getting things done! What then transpired made all the stresses worthwhile, and we were rewarded by the satisfaction of a most successful achievement.

During the weekend jewellery pieces were created collaboratively by the 16 group members, each taking turns to extend and change the pieces that were circulating among them. The mode of making also changed in response to the different spaces occupied and the varying nature of public interaction, which was only revealed during the CLINKProject3: Collaborism brainstorming week. The objects generated were unpredictable and driven by each maker's inherently different methodology. Making unfolded over two days in the traditional jewellery workshop/studio setting at Hungry Creek Art and Craft School, and then moved into the public sphere at Te Uru from 24-25 August.

COLLABORATIVE MAKING

Making is often a solitary and quiet process, but by bringing it into a group situation, new kinds of interactions and elements are unlocked, with each person being challenged to add novel aspects to a piece created by someone else.

The works exhibited at Te Uru were the result of collaborative making. The 16 participants of CLINK 2016 were split into smaller groups of four with the purpose of creating jewellery that had been made by all members, built, layered, deconstructed and altered until a final communal piece emerged.

This dissolving of authorship and the passing of work from one set of hands to another resulted in spontaneous and intuitive making and a synergy that is not often found in works made in the traditional way. The short time frame that each piece had with each person meant that there was no time for second guessing, leading the maker to think using their hands.

Working with people only recently met, and from widely diverse backgrounds and making styles, lead to interesting conversations, both within the group and within the pieces made. The resulting jewellery was full of unexpected symbioses, discordant harmonies, and contradictory materials and forms that came together to create pleasantly cacophonous final works – pieces that talk not of each maker but of the group as a whole, influenced by the studio environment and materials available at the site of construction.

Te Uru's front 'Window Space,' the level 3 seating area, level 4 changing room and level 4 back stairwell landing became interconnected CLINK Project spaces from 24 August to 30 September, with free live events at Te Uru on 24 and 25 August 2016, including a presentation by Wellington-based jeweller Sarah Read in the seminar room of Lopdell House. The objects and interventions outlined below, generated by the diverse makers, were accessible to the public within the gallery until the end of September.

PEEP

The street-access window box offered tantalising glimpses of the jewellery objects made within the gallery walls. CLINK makers were building both the display installation and the jewellery works as the project unfolded.

MAKE

Jewellers were working live in the level 3 seating area. Gallery visitors were invited to sit in with the jewellers and engage actively with the jewellery-making. The staircase walls became a dynamic drawing surface, highlighting the studio synergy of drawing and making. Everyone was invited to grab a pen and draw on the wall.

ADORN

Jewellery's private/public dynamic was enacted with the works installed in the gallery's level 4 changing room. Visitors could touch and wear contemporary jewellery works in an intimate setting. A dress mirror allowed selfies to be added to the CLINK Instagram image collection.

LOUNGE

The Curiosity Corner got converted into a small slice of domestic chill-zone; reading, watching and soft-making with textile materials happened on the sofa. Both participants and visitors were invited to be part of a more relaxed making experience.

COLLECT

Postcards printed at the front-of-house counter added to the documentation of CLINK Project. These images and

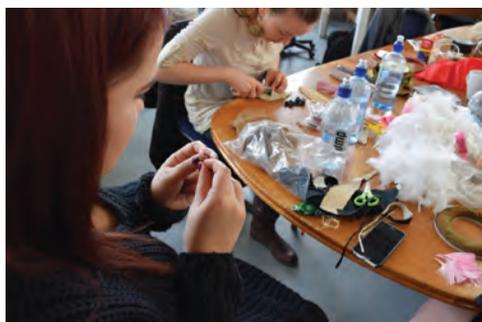


Figure 4. Colab 1-5. Collaborative making full of unexpected symbioses at Hungry Creek Art and Craft School.

graphics were both a take-away and tangible record of CLINK's endeavours to broaden public engagement with contemporary jewellery practice.

The exhibition finished with the work being given away to members of the public.

SEMINAR

Sarah Read presented her seminar while we were working on the exhibition events at Te Uru Gallery. She spoke about her experience as a maker and was very honest about the struggles included in this. Her honesty in advocating 'letting ideas go' was of particular interest. She said: "Be clear about the message and dare to remove everything not to do with the message." It was valuable to hear her speak about her experience with making work – how making with her hands and her body brings her work into the field of jewellery. She also spoke about the generosity of spirit evident within the field of jewellery, the support given and willingness of people to help.

Sarah spoke eloquently of mentors Peter Deckers, Iris Eichenberg and Liesbeth den Besten, and her battle with an arthritic condition that has caused a rerouting of her jewellery practice. Two projects she spoke of resonated and aligned with seminars given by keynote speakers Pravu Mazumdar and Goliath Dyèvre the following weekend, during the National Symposium of Craft, Applied Art and Design. Her group project, Golden Section (Parking Day Wellington, 2016), was a statement about escalating real estate prices and their effect on communities.



Figure 5. Sarah Read seminar. Sarah Read, *Golden Section @ PARK(ing) DAY*, Wellington, 2016. An OCCUPATION:Artist project. Photo: Sarah Read.

She spoke of how the last thing she had wanted to do on the morning of her talk was kneel on the pavement adhering to gold leaf. However, she marvelled at how the reflections from the gold made her feel, how uplifted and fortified she felt working in the reflected gold radiance. What a joy the experience had been. Sarah imported a special lamp that radiated the same health-giving light frequencies as sunlight, and installed it in a gold-framed window space during the cold Wellington winter. Passers-by were invited to stand before the health-giving rays for 15 minutes to get maximum benefit. Bathed in light.

THE NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM OF CRAFT, APPLIED ART AND DESIGN AS FINALE

During the final weekend of *CLINKProject3: Collaborism*, the Auckland Museum hosted Objectspace's National Symposium of Craft, Applied Art and Design. The three keynote speakers were Misun Rheem, a Korean crafts and design art critic; Goliath Dyèvre, a French designer; and Pravu Mazumdar, an Indian philosopher residing in Germany.

Designer Goliath Dyèvre was the second keynote speaker at the Objectspace symposium. The signature seminar photograph was of his work *Tin Lamp and Gold Leaf*, a selection of architectural geometric shapes covered in gold leaf by a Japanese-French gild-maker that could be moved around, reflecting the light shining at their base.¹ Again we encountered reflected golden light, almost an amalgam of Sarah Read's two works emphasising the power of light to illuminate not only space, but also the body and mind.

Some of Goliath's work focused specifically on the relationship between man and nature, a theme which was particularly captivating. Dyèvre mentioned an important text that had inspired him to explore this subject in design – Victor Papanek's *The Green Imperative: Ecology and Ethics in Design and Architecture*. Ecology and ethics is an important theme in Dyèvre's project, "Animal Silence." Dyèvre explores how humans control animals, with a focus on "horrid nature," such as ants. After learning that houses in Greece are painted blue to keep insects out, Dyèvre used blue materials as a means of controlling ants inside the home. He created pathways that led the ants inside and to their own assigned "eating space" at the dining table, so that they could share a meal "in your company."

With a focus on apartment buildings, Dyèvre also created an indoor garden, making use of an unused stairwell space. Again, controlled pathways were used to lead the ants inside and to an assigned zone – this time the pot plants. Dyèvre also examines the difference between "caged and free." He designed a self-contained ant farm that doubles as a hot-water bottle, making use of the heat created through the energy produced by the ants' activity.

"Animal Silence" is a project that aims to integrate human spaces and activities with the natural world. With a particular emphasis on "horrid," creepy or unloved creatures, Dyèvre explores possible new "comfort zones" through controlled interaction, or interaction "on your terms." At the end of each talk, the audience was invited to ask questions, but it wasn't till later that mine was formulated. My question for Dyèvre is – does this controlled and constructed interaction with nature highlight man's separation from the natural world, or does it help to dissolve the perceived separation?

Perhaps it serves to do both.

In his session, Pravu Mazumdar asked, "What is value?" He discussed radiance and its associations with transcendence, how previously a glowing skin was seen as evidence of an inner, elevated vitality. Now, however, cosmetics can deliver the same appearance and "skin is no longer a window, but a mirror." He spoke of gold and its association with sunlight, offering the promise of power and durability, and how it predates currency and had a sacred function. The divinity inherent in its symbolism has been compromised, however: once coins were minted in the seventh century BC, gold became a commodity. Of necessity it had a limited value, whereas the value of the sacred is limitless.

So, three different speakers all attracted to the luminosity of gold, captivated by reflected light and our recognition of the value of gold beyond that of currency. There seems to be an enriching quality inherent in the metal itself that endures.

The textile-based artists in this year's *CLINKProject* collective found themselves contributing to the panel talk, "Practice/Practise Perspectives on Making Now." Artists Luisa Tora and Jasmine Te Hira, craftsman Areez Katki and architect Sarosh Mulla each brought a different aspect of making to the conversation.

Luisa Tora spoke about her work as an indigenous feminist practitioner. She spoke about her collaborative work and the importance of building your own archive of works and objects key to your practice. She emphasised the

importance of “finding yourself in the narrative” – if you can't find yourself in it, then strive to find a way to put yourself in it.

Areez Katki in particular grabbed this collaborator's attention. Areez is a textile-based artist working in New Zealand who learnt his craft from his grandmother, who he refers to as the Persian matriarch in their home. Areez's practice focuses on the handmade and the use of artisanal techniques – again handed down by his grandmother. He focuses on using raw materials carefully sourced and treated with integrity. Areez emphasised that he would rather make a work with his own two hands, and take longer doing it, than fall into the trap of delegation and the fast-fashion trend. This comment grabbed my attention in terms of the value of the handmade and making something yourself versus buying something off the rack. This is something we as creators all experience, whether it be a piece of clothing or an item of jewellery; it becomes of greater value to us if we know where it has come from in the first place.

Areez went on to discuss the importance of craftsmanship and the fact that people have now lost the knowledge of how to use the word 'craftsman' with respect – craft has become a negative term. Areez noted that although he is often referred to as a fashion designer, because he makes fashion items, he feels that he is more a creator or a craftsman, as his focus is not on what the finished article looks like, but what it is made of – substance before style. For him, there is no greater aesthetic sin than ignorance.

CONCLUSION



Figure 6. PEEP Peeking through Te Uru's covered street access window box for a glimpse of the jewellery objects to be given away to members of the public.

This third iteration of the CLINK Project once again provided an intensive learning opportunity through experiencing contemporary craftwork at first hand. The project presented professional networking opportunities, as well as the awareness of belonging to a wider community of craftspeople who inherently embrace a philosophy of generous sharing. Last but not least, *CLINKproject3: Collaborism* compelled the participants to not only be artists and curators, but to also collaborate as writers; this project report bears the fruits of a final writing workshop gathering. On reflection, our own experience of interaction with other professional speakers and makers mirrored the engagement we provided for the wider public in Te Uru's gallery setting.

An additional text has been written by Otago Polytechnic's Research and Project Assistant Lesley Brook, who evaluated the project from an objective standpoint. She recorded the group's initial intentions, facilitated the public interaction at Te Uru and recorded her findings. In the visitor feedback report she produced for Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, she quotes the following comment from a visitor (25 August): "Great, this type of interaction, lacking in a lot of exhibitions. Way of future, to learn by touch and interaction with people, who know what they are doing, artists. Always wanted to touch. Shouldn't be just for kids, permission to play."

CLINKProject3: Collaborism crossed craft discipline boundaries and, for the first time, also included textile artists. The 2016 collaborators and authors were Kanisha Aldred, Sarah Beaumont, Antonia Boyle, Emily Brain, Tayla Edmunds, Rob Fear, Ildi Juhasz, Brogan Nutall, Andrew Last, Eileen Leahy, Catherine Randall, Meg Van Hale, Susan Videler, Ali Wallace, Michelle Wilkinson and Johanna Zellmer. To find out more about this collaborative initiative between the Dunedin School of Art and Hungry Creek Art and Craft School, see <http://www.thescopies.org/> (Art & Design issues 9 + 11).

Johanna Zellmer completed a Masters degree at the Australian National University, Canberra School of Art, and a formal apprenticeship as a goldsmith in Germany. As senior lecturer in jewellery and metalsmithing at the Dunedin School of Art, she also coordinates the artist-in-residence programme there. Her research interests focus on the construction of national identities and cross-cultural themes within contemporary jewellery and metalsmithing. She calls a small farm in Dunedin home.

1 See <http://objectspace.org.nz/Downloads/Assets/5484/Objectspace+National+Craft%2C+Applied+Art+and+Design+Symposium+Full+Programme+2016.pdf> (accessed 13 Mar 2017).