Ming dynasty incense stand,
Wang Shixiang Collection
photo from *Classic Chinese Furniture*,
Joint Publishing (H.K.), Ltd. 1988

Contents

4 Editorial
The Future is Handmade:
The Survival and Innovation of Crafts

Tradition and Innovation

6 Craig Clunas • Wang Shixiang: Spiritual Resonance and the Ten Thousand Things • PR China
14 Wang Shixiang • On Pigeon Whistling • PR China
30 Jim Supangkat • Upside-down Mind: the Art of Heri Dono • Indonesia
42 Amanda Rath • Shadow Stories: Wayang in the Work of Heri Dono • Indonesia

Popular Design and Crafts

60 Li Edelkoort • Crafts: On Scale, Pace and Sustainability
72 Dapo Adeniyi • Cataloguing Women's Hairstyles: The Photographs of J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere • Nigeria
84 Sandra Klopper • The Post-modern Context of Rural Craft Production in Contemporary South Africa • South Africa

From Arts to Crafts

100 Virginia Pérez-Ratton • The Art of Authentic Fraud • Colombia
108 Louise Schouwenberg • A Dutch Perspective • The Netherlands
122 Laila Tyabji • Tradition and Transition: A Crafted Solution • India

Globalisation and Crafts

134 Néstor Gracía Canclini • Prosperous Popular Cultures • Mexico
142 Iftikhar Dadi • Plastic Toys and 'Urban-Craft' in South Asia • Pakistan
154 Patricia Zimmermann • Looking for Buddha • Cambodia

170 Contributors
174 Contacts & Addresses

Editorial

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The Future is Handmade: The Survival and Innovation of Crafts

What is 'craft'? The word has a complex history and equally complex associations. This special edition of the Prince Claus Fund Journal compiles writings and visual materials from across the world on the changing role of crafts in contemporary life. In it, writers and artists explore the emerging meanings of crafts in the global arena, with emphasis on innovative practices in the production, circulation, and consumption of crafts in contemporary social and aesthetic contexts.

Crafting is a material process, as a skill by which a material product is created, but also as an immaterial skill or practice by which a service is offered. Contributors to this Journal examine the developments and initiatives that explore innovation. It does not focus on crafts as preserving a particular heritage, but one that relays the perpetuation and transformation of skills and motifs in new media and changed social contexts. This wider context necessitates seeing how crafts practices migrate, bridging one medium to another, linking crafts and mass culture, high art and artisanal practices, formal and informal economies.

Indeed, crafts today can be seen as a medium through which some of the most significant issues of contemporary life are articulated. How do issues such as mass immigration, the creation of multicultural cities across the world or accelerated tourism and travel relate to the ongoing transformation of crafts? Crafts, as readers will discover, are not silent agents in these processes.

In the following four sections, this edition of the Prince Claus Fund Journal hopes to reflect this and contribute to the contemporary debate.

Tradition and Innovation

With the loosening of the formal language of Modernism, many fine artists now draw upon crafts practices to explore social and aesthetic dilemmas, by creating works which refer simultaneously to the specificity of artisanal practices and objects, while making works that address global issues. The essays on the remarkable works of the Indonesian artist Heri Dono, who deploys puppets to comment on contemporary political situations, explore these emergent relationships between fine art, crafts, and society.

Popular Design and Crafts

If the received image of crafts is that of a medium unresponsive to change, consider J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere's photographs of elaborately sculptured Nigerian hairstyles detailing a map of the country's roads, or Sandra Klopper's essay on how beadwork has evolved in post-apartheid South Africa. The designers of these beaded ritual 'skirts' have more in common with the works of a designer such as Versace than realised at first. International trends-forecaster Li Edelkoort explores the transformation of fashion and interior design, and articulates the role of crafts in fresh contexts. These are just three examples of how the extended range of crafts practice addresses the larger world.

From Arts to Crafts

Crafts practices remain important for groups affirming their identity. Their sphere of informal production and consumption demands a new understanding, which is not easily read in terms of traditional/modern, public/private, sacred/secular, and craft/non-craft distinctions. The Colombian artist Nadín Ospina's appropriation of cartoon icons revitalises traditional forms, while new trends in Dutch design explore crafts in a thoroughly modern context. For Laila Tyabji, crafts is a vehicle for social change introduced by the women's DASTKAR cooperative in India, which offers new possibilities of positive transformation.

Globalisation and Crafts

Crafts practices today intersect with techniques of mass production. While it may appear that crafts is antithetical to the latter, in reality, their mutual relationship is far more complex. To what extent, and in which sector, are urban habitats, machines and industrial practices helpful to the production of 'crafts'? Essays on the confluence of the folk with urban mass culture in Latin America and the world of plastic toys in South Asia scrutinise the meeting point of craft and mass culture, while the Buddha as a tourist souvenir serves as a reservoir of memory and identity.

Finally, the survival of crafts in very difficult circumstances is eloquently exemplified by the 2003 Principal Prince Claus laureate. In his long career that spans the turbulent years of the twentieth century, including the Cultural Revolution, Wang Shixiang has not only studied and conserved the important and sophisticated crafts of China, but has retained his interest in its most minor and ephemeral expressions as well. This issue of the Journal includes his extraordinary writings on the craft of pigeon whistles, which are equally a meditation on the passage of history, and its embodiment in crafts.

Iftikhar Dadi, Special Guest Editor,
and the Prince Claus Fund

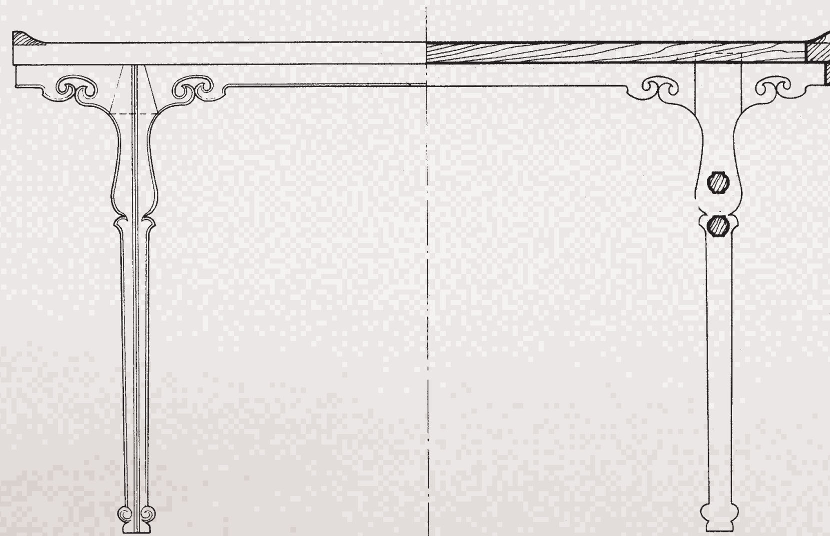
Wang Shixiang: Spiritual Resonance and the Ten Thousand Things

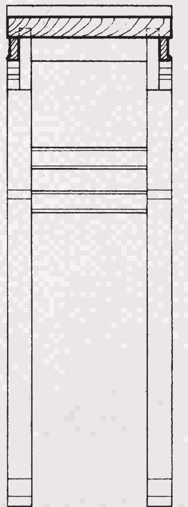
Craig Clunas
PR China

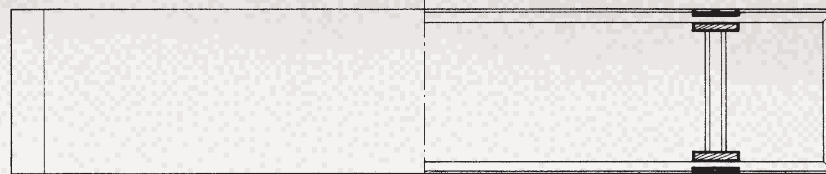
Wang Shixiang is the recipient of the 2003 Principal Prince Claus Award in recognition of his meticulous research into popular culture and crafts of PR China. His documentation and writings about these traditions and skills, some of which were threatened with extinction during the Cultural Revolution, has made him an invaluable historian and critic. Known for his study of the design, technology and social history of Chinese furniture, he created a unique collection that was confiscated and then later returned. It is now a national heritage treasure, one that is an inspiration to museums, craftspeople and scholars around the world.

Too many men have been called 'last of the literati'. The term, one drawn from the writings of Cicero and other Latin authors by the first Jesuit interpreters of Chinese culture to its European interlocutors at the turn of the seventeenth century, remains a locus of western fantasy to this day. Never mind that its usage invariably occludes an entire Chinese tradition of the female savant (one of the most noteworthy of whom, Yuan Quanyu is the wife of the writer and scholar fittingly honoured with the Prince Claus award for his lifetime of achievement, as he approaches his ninetieth year). It is also inappropriate in that it seems to see China's engagement with its historic culture as being at the end of something, never at the beginning; it makes the mistake of assuming that those who study the past are somehow *of* that past. However tempting its superficial attractions in relation to a man who is, among so many other things, a masterly user of the classical Chinese language, it has as a description a particularly poor fit with the career and character of Wang Shixiang. Instead, it should be celebrated that he is someone whose long span of highly-productive life, however closely attentive it may have been to the achievements of those who have gone before, in fact embodies a distinctive Chinese sense of the possibilities of modernity. That modernity was born in the decades around his birth in 1914, in a re-evaluation by a whole generation of intellectuals of elements of the cultural heritage whose worth they perceived as being undervalued by conservative elements in culture and society. These men and women included in the ambit of their studies the vernacular novel, and the illustrations of its earliest editions, the history of architecture and the environment, and the recovery of China's scientific and technical traditions, often by engaging with the oral knowledge of previously disregarded artisans. They also included a material culture which might have been

One corner of table, Ming dynasty huanghuali **waisted half table in the form of a low table with extended legs, Wang Shixiang Collection photo from** Classic Chinese Furniture**, Joint Publishing (H.K.) Co., Ltd, 1988**







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Ming dynasty huanghuali **wood narrow table with recessed legs, everted flanges and inserted shoulder joints, Wang Shixiang Collection**
photo and drawings from Classic Chinese Furniture**, Joint Publishing (H.K.) Co., Ltd, 1988**

cherished by older elites, but which had been the objects of little serious or coherent analysis, a lacuna they resolved to correct. In so doing they sought to remake China's past as a way of remaking its future. They sought as patriots but also as internationalists to value their own culture more while valuing the culture of others no less. It is in this context of patriotism and internationalism that the work of Wang Shixiang must be situated.

His recently collected essays, spanning over six decades of intellectual labour and published under the title *The Brocade/Ash Heap*, divides his output under a number of headings.[1] These are broadly; furniture, the art of lacquer, of carving in bamboo, the crafts in general, the study of imperial building and artisan regulations, calligraphy and painting, sculpture, music and dance, reminiscences and recollections, sports and games, the arts of cuisine and of the table. These are simply his major areas of activity. Hidden among the category 'miscellanea' are essays on the history of gardens and of dwarfed plants (the miniature trees known in Chinese as *panzai*, the Japanese *bonsai*), of archaeology, travel writing and the history of wrestling. They include a generous selection from his extensive output of poetry, poetry which is written in the classical language but which nevertheless remains a vital part of modern culture, from the verse of Mao Zedong to the lyrics of some of Beijing's cutting-edge rock bands. First published in 1999, when their author was already into his high eighties, they went through three printings in a year, a testimony to the relevance the Chinese-reading audience, on a global scale, felt that this material held in present circumstances. A second collection, published in 2003 as *The Second Brocade/Ash Heap*, completes the publication of Wang Shixiang's essays to date.[2] They stand alongside his books (36 of them, according to the bibliography published in the *Second Heap*) as one of the most compelling bodies of work in twentieth-century China, one which will take decades before we see its full assessment and assimilation into the scholarly bloodstream.

It is the magisterial volumes on the history of Chinese furniture which have commanded the greatest degree of attention on the international stage. Wang Shixiang's *Ming shi jiaju zhenshang* of 1985 was published in quick succession in English (as *Classic Chinese Furniture*) in French and in German, its avid readership guaranteeing a total of eleven printings of its various editions. The furniture of the Ming period, with its sometimes eerie reminiscences of modernism *avant la lettre*, had become a subject of scholarly writing by Europeans and Americans as early as the 1940s, but the mistake was perhaps made of assuming that it was an artistic achievement undervalued in its own land, unstudied within the culture that produced it, that it had in some sense been the object of a western 'discovery'. What the scholarship of Wang Shixiang demonstrated, by being so clearly the product not only of decades of study but also of a whole tradition of connoisseurship and collecting unknown outside China, was that the study of furniture had on the contrary an honoured and central place in the creation of a culture of Chinese modernity which was decorous in its treatment of the past, and generous in its sharing of that past with an international audience. It is this

wider context in which Wang Shixiang's work on furniture must be situated, a context of broad and humane sympathies for the cultural achievements of *all* China's people, which has found room to admire the maker of paper cuts or pigeon whistles alongside the literati painter, calligrapher and poet.

When Wang Shixiang was only in his early seventies he visited the UK, where I was at the time a relatively callow curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum, responsible for the Museum's fine (by European standards) collection of Chinese furniture.[3] If I stand before those pieces now, or before other Chinese objects in the collection, I often find the first thing that comes into my mind is what Wang Shixiang told me about them. I can still hear him, faced with one optimistically attributed painting, wryly offer to paint a better version there and then. I can still hear him explaining the literary allusions on the decoration of lacquer, images probably familiar to any Ming dynasty schoolboy, and as comfortable to him as they were unfamiliar to me. I can hear him explaining the technical terms for the parts of a table, as he in turn learned them from makers with decades of practical experience. In my memory, as in truth, the voice doing this is without the slightest touch of patronising or impatience in its tone. Knowledge gives Wang Shixiang pleasure, and that pleasure in knowledge is conveyed through his writing to an international audience, but also through his personal interaction with a surprisingly large body of people across the world. I feel enormously privileged to have been among them.

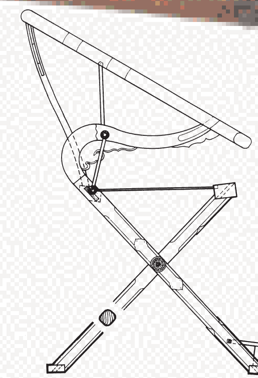
Wang Shixiang began his career as a recoverer and recuperator of what was lost, in the most immediate sense and in the most challenging of circumstances. It was in the chaotic aftermath of a world war, in 1947, that he journeyed to a devastated Japan to retrieve looted rare books and return them to Chinese collections. This first trip outside China was followed immediately by a tour of the US and Canada, where he became aware of the flow of China's heritage to foreign museums, by less violent but even more irreversible processes.[4] If his career since then (a career severally interrupted by the immense stresses and strains China's politics has placed on so many of its best and brightest) can be seen as one of conservation, the conservation of objects as well as of the cultural practices in which they are embedded, this must not be confused with a narrow or a suspicious keeping-to-oneself. It is the confidence of the true patriot, that China's culture is a treasure worthy of the whole world's keeping, which has made Wang Shixiang so generous with his time and his immense learning. It is the modesty of the true scholar, the recognition that the achievements of today are but the foundations of tomorrow's work, which has made him such a worthy recipient of an award dedicated to the recognition of outstanding achievements in the field of intercultural exchange.

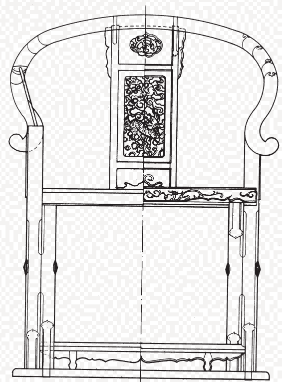
Notes

1. Wang Shixiang, *Jinhui dui*, 3 vols. (Beijing, 1999).
2. Wang Shixiang, *Jinhui erdui*, 2 vols. (Beijing, 2003).
3. This prompted a first piece of writing about Wang Shixiang: Craig Clunas, 'The Apollo Portrait: Wang Shixiang', *Apollo*, vol. 127 (1987), 350-1.
4. Both trips are described in the essay, '*Yijiusiqi nian sanyue zhi yijiusijiu nian bayue huiyi lu*' ('Reminisces of March 1947 to August 1949'), in Wang Shixiang, *Jinhui erdui*, 2 vols. (Beijing, 2003), 12-34.

Wang Shixiang

Ming dynasty huanghuali **wood folding armchair with curved rest,**
Wang Shixiang Collection
photo and drawings from Classic Chinese Furniture,
Joint Publishing (H.K.) Co., Ltd, 1988





On Pigeon Whistling

Wang Shixiang
PR China

Lacquerware, carved gourds, classical Chinese language manuscripts, bamboo, ivory, wood and horn carving, as well as ancient Chinese lute, gourmet food, falconry, breeding crickets, pigeon rearing and pigeon whistling are just some of Wang Shixiang's interests. In many cases, his books and publications are the only texts available on particular subjects. A highly respected classical scholar, he has been involved with Chinese culture abroad, and his work forms a bridge between old and new China. The following excerpt from *Beijing Pigeon Whistles,* by Wang Shixiang, was published in China by Liaoning Education Press in 1999.

In the late 1920s I went to a school in Beijing called Peking American School where I studied until I graduated from high school in 1934. While in school, I learned an American saying: 'All work and no play makes Johnny a dull boy.' As I was brought up to believe that all good boys should study assiduously, I liked this saying very much. For a little while 'all work and no play' changed to 'work hard and play hard'. But soon after, unfortunately for me, it again changed gradually to 'all play and no work'. During those happy years, I enthused over so many kinds of hobbies that I almost completely neglected my studies. I kept fighting crickets in autumn and chirping katydids in winter. I trained falcons to catch rabbits and dogs to catch badgers. Aside from these sports, raising and flying pigeons gave me even more pleasure, as it was a yearlong hobby not restricted by the change of seasons. In high school we were supposed to write a composition each week. I remember for four weeks in a row, all my compositions were concerned with pigeons. Our teacher was so exasperated. 'If you write another composition on pigeons,' he scolded, 'I'll give you a P (poor) no matter how well you write!'

After graduating from PAS, I studied at Yenching University. Professor Liu Pansui was teaching a course in classical Chinese. The students were assigned to write a *fu* (an intricate literary style of poetic prose). Though I was more mature and by this time tended more to my studies, my old addiction returned, and I could not resist the temptation to write on this same subject again. I wrote *A Fu on Pigeon Whistles*.

Now I am well over 70, and I again pick up my pen to write on this same subject. I must admit that I am still infected with this incurable and chronic disease. I cannot help but heave a big sigh and chuckle to myself.

In Beijing, on a balmy and sunny day in spring; or when the sky is rain-washed clear in summer; or when the space is a blue-green hue in autumn; or on a crisp and chilly morning in winter, one can always hear a pleasing flute-like music coming from

Wang Shixiang

Picture shows how the whistle is attached to the pigeon
photo *Beijing Pigeon Whistles*, Liaoning Education Press, 1999

the heavens. It may swell and shrink, may come nearer and nearer as if approaching from a distance with a crescendo, and then slowly fade away; its tempo may suddenly accelerate and as abruptly may slow down, or it may soar or level off. It is the divine music played in heaven that exhilarates the mind and delights the spirit.

This is a typical Beijing experience. Who knows how many times it rouses a person from slumber; how often it lifts a person's eyes toward the heavens; how many times it brings joy to both adults and children? When we hear this music, it restores to us a lovely memory of this ancient city. Beijing once suffered devastation, and the distant music was heard no more. The silence only evoked anger and despair.[1] The music has penetrated our lives and has become a symbol of Beijing. It has also left a deep impression on foreigners who used to reside here. An American, Mr. H.P. Hoose, wrote on this flute-like sound some 50 years ago[2] and introduced it to the west. A person ignorant of where the sound comes from may not know that it comes from whistles attached to pigeons' tails.

Pigeon whistles, also called pigeon bells, are actually whistles rather than bells. They have an ancient origin. Pigeon whistles have a history of nearly 200 years counting from the time of the first Beijing master artisan who made them. Since that time many generations of skilled craftsmen have appeared, constantly improving the technique. More and more pigeon-raisers attached whistles to their pigeons. Pigeon whistles became folk artefacts. It was not until the middle of the twentieth century with social changes and the withering away of the old artisans that this craft of making whistles rapidly declined. Only Zhang Baotong, a textile engineer, still makes them in his spare time. In his childhood Mr. Zhang lived at the Longquan Temple in Beijing as a neighbour of the master artisan Tao Zhuowen who taught him the craft. Mr. Zhang's products, which bear the logo of the Chinese character *tong*, are excellent both in sound and form, so we can say that a standard of excellence is preserved. However those sold in markets today are coarse and crude.

Since pigeon whistles are seen as a type of folk artefact, like a toy, they are not deemed sophisticated enough to be found in scholars' studios or to be viewed as antiques. I raised pigeons when I was young and often asked master artisans to make whistles to order or visited temple fairs in search of old masterpieces. I did not stint at paying a high price. But all in all I was more interested in raising pigeons and hearing the delightful music they made. Not many people collected pigeon whistles, or researched on them in depth, or knew all their ins and outs. To find a person who has committed a lifetime's understanding and experience to writing is even rarer. If there ever was one who had done all this it was my old friend Wang Xixian. In my wide circle of acquaintances of many decades this venerable gentleman was the only one.

Wang Xixian (1899–1986), whose ancestors lived in Shaoxing, Zhejiang, and moved to Beijing in the reign of the Emperor Qianlong (1736–1796), began to raise pigeons when he was fifteen years old. Soon his interest shifted to whistles for which he developed a profound passion. Collecting whistles became his lifelong and sole obsession. He called himself the 'Obsessed Whistle Lover'. He was upright and

straightforward by nature but was inept in controlling his means of livelihood. Although he once studied at Guoming University, he became a primary school teacher with a very meagre income. His poverty made his life austere. Yet, when he found a pigeon whistle he would buy it without hesitation, sometimes even pawning his clothes for the cash. He had to have it or he could not sleep. Decades passed in this manner and his collection and his knowledge of pigeon whistles became rich and abundant. He knew the names of all the master artisans, the characteristics of their products, how many of their products that had been preserved, and the authenticity of these products. I had known him long before 1949, and for 40 years I pleaded with him to write down all he knew. Finally in 1976, he showed me his draft, written in old Chinese classical style. But I found it too sketchy in some places. Together, we discussed and probed into the manuscript. After we had edited his draft it added up to 7,000 Chinese characters. Previous publications on pigeon whistles had never been so detailed or so penetrating in exploring their mysteries. It is certainly the most important extant document on pigeon whistles.

However, Wang Xixian's *Old Tales about Pigeon Whistles* seemed to have been written for the *cognoscenti*. Some basics, such as the types of pigeon whistles, the material used, how the whistles are attached to the pigeon were ignored. Apparently, the author thought these were too elementary to be noted down. Today, however, even those who have pigeons and whistles may not be very clear on these matters, much less those who know nothing about the practice. Moreover, as to the types of whistles, one has to see them before one can learn their names. One has to learn the stylistic particulars and the logos of each maker before one can discriminate between the authentic and the imitation. All these aspects can only be explained and seen clearly with a generous amount of pictorial illustration. It was only recently that books like this could be illustrated with pictures. For all these reasons, I edited and prepared this booklet. Apart from giving a systematic introduction to the subject it also contains anecdotes and stories of famous artisans and famous whistles as written in *Old Tales about Pigeon Whistles*. This booklet may also be considered as a memento to cherish the memory of my old friend Mr. Wang Xixian …

Types of Pigeon Whistles

Before we explain the types of whistles, let us see how a pigeon whistle makes a sound. The pigeon whistle is a wind instrument, like a flute or an ordinary whistle of a basketball referee. One blows through a slit of a flute or a referee whistle; it will create a sound. An empty glass bottle with a small opening will also create a sound when one blows through the opening. Similarly, when a pigeon flies, the air rushing by it will go through a slit of the whistle attached to its tail and the whistle will generate a sound just like a flute, a referee's whistle or a bottle. This principle holds for all types of pigeon whistles. From high-school physics, we also know bottles of different sizes and shapes make tones of higher and lower pitch. Whistles with different shapes will also give different pitches. That is why there are many types of whistles.

The different types of whistles have never been systematically classified before. Here they are grouped into four major types according to their shape: gourd type – those made from round gourds; tubular type – those made with a row of lined-up reed tubes or bamboo pipes; platform type – those made with many rows of lined-up tubes attached to a platform that serves as a base; combined type – those made with a combination of gourd and a number of tubes and pipes.

Each type can be subdivided into various minor types and altogether there are 35 different types of pigeon whistles. However, this does not include those conceived and custom-made by pigeon fanciers or created by master craftsmen.

The following is a more detailed list of combined type (also called star-and-eye type): 1. seven-star; 2. nine-star; 3. eleven-eye; 4. thirteen-eye; 5. fifteen-eye; 6. seventeen-eye; 7. nineteen-eye; 8. 21-eye; 9. 23-eye; 10. 25-eye; 11. 27-eye; 12) 29-eye; 13. 31-eye; 14. 33-eye; 15. 35-eye types. Fifteen types in all.

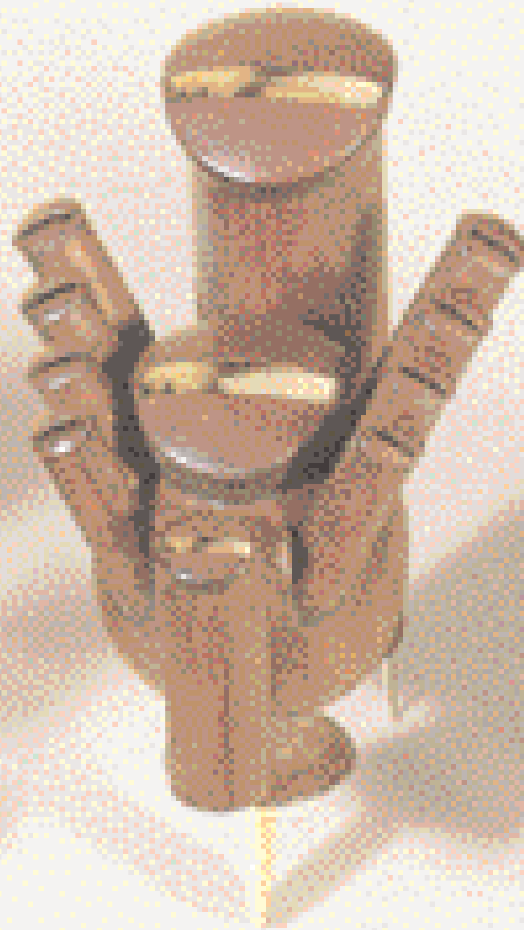
These whistles, no matter whether they are called 'star' or 'eye', have an oval body at the middle of the whistle called the 'star belly'. This body can be made in two ways:

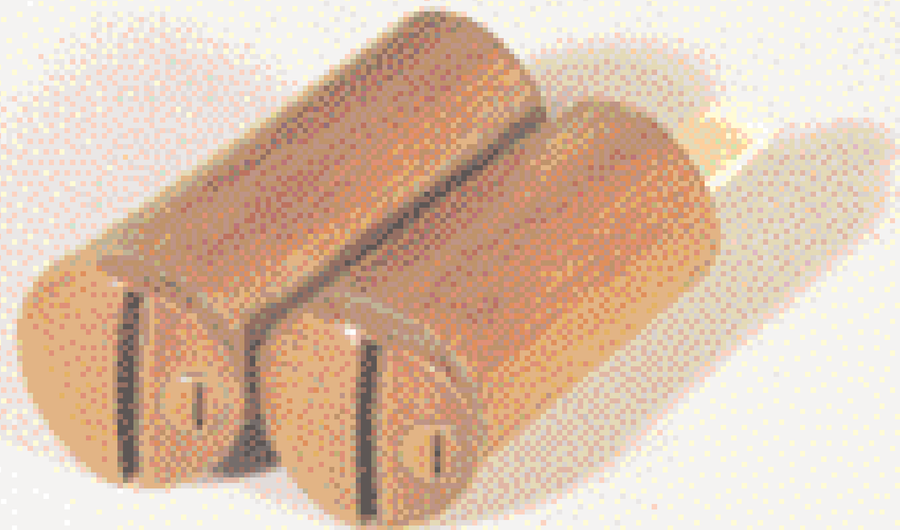
1. Use the top belly of a gourd with a narrow waist; split it vertically in two and cut away a portion slightly less than one third; then glue the two pieces together. The gourd that was spherical now has an ovate shape similar to an egg standing up.
2. The star belly can also be made with bamboo. Take two thick pieces of bamboo, cut and file them into the desired shapes and glue them together. The first method is more labour saving and more common, whereas the second method is used in making the so-called 'all-bamboo' whistle which requires much more work and costs three or four times more than those made by the first method.

When the star belly is finished, the cap is glued on top and the tang below. A narrow tube is placed in front of the body and a pipe at the back. Smaller tubes are then added to the two sides of the star belly. The minimum number of tubes on the sides is two on each side. Together with the star belly, and the front tube and back pipe, the total number of whistle is seven, hence the 'seven-star'. An additional tube on each side makes it a 'nine-star'. When the number of whistles exceeds nine, the whistle is called an 'eye' whistle and thus there are eleven-eye, thirteen-eye, up to 35-eye whistles. The small tubes are always increased by pairs, one on each side of the body in order to maintain structural balance. Sometimes, but very rarely, a pair of small tubes is in front of the body instead of one, thus making the number of whistles an even number. The whistle known as the '28 Constellations' mentioned in *Old Tales about Pigeon Whistles* has 28 whistles. However, extant combined-type whistles with even number of tubes are extremely rare. They may be considered as a variation of the combined type.

An increasing number of tubes, on the two slides of the 'star belly', will take up space no matter how one makes the tubes and that of course affects the sound. So when the number of eyes becomes more than 21, the star body is filled up and the sound that comes out is very weak. The 35-eye whistle literally resembles a hedgehog and cannot produce any sound. Strictly speaking, the combined-type

Five *Hong* whistles, from the left, two eleven-eyed, a nine-starred, a two pipe and a seven-starred
photo *Beijing Pigeon Whistles*, Liaoning Education Press, 1999





whistle of more than 21 whistles is looked down upon by the true connoisseurs, even though their makers attempt to show-off their skill, and their collectors the completeness of their collection. Wang Xixian mentioned a man named Li who owned a pair of 39-eye whistles which 'were large in size and gave forth a loud sound'. They could issue a large sound because they are large, but large whistles are not suitable to be attached to pigeons too often.

The combined type has a gourd, a pipe, and many tubes making a sound with soprano, baritone and bass tones. It is a 'chorus' by itself.

The total of four types with 35 types is naturally not a complete list. For example, there are gourd whistles made to resemble the fictional characters such as the Monkey King or Zhu the Pig from the novel Journey to the West, and the 28 Constellations, and combined-type with more than 35 eyes. Yu Fei'an's book has a chapter on 'Bells Attached to Pigeons' mentioned 'The Eighteen Stars' and 'The Mother-and-Child Type'. They are rarely seen, so are not included in my list. Mr. Yu called the fourteen types he listed (including the above-mentioned Eighteen Stars and Mother-and-Child) as one 'set'. If one or two types were missing, he considered the set incomplete. However, this view was not held by pigeon-fanciers of Beijing. I checked with Wang Xixian and whistle merchants Dui'r Bao (also known as Erbao) and Ruisi. They all said that there were collectors who after collecting ten or twenty pairs processed by famous master craftsmen with logo of hui or yong would place them in a brocade box sometimes with a glass lid and called their collection 'a set'. But without the strict restriction as to the number and types in each set. Since the beginning of this century, such masters as the ones with the Xiang logo and the Wen logo usually made whistles on commission. The number of whistles and the number of types were always determined by the whim of their patrons and were in great divergence. Neither Wang Xixian nor Erbao and Ruisi had ever heard of Eighteen Stars and Mother-and-Child Type. If what Yu Fei'an wrote was true, then a set should consist of fourteen types including the Eighteen Star and Mother-and-Child types. So what Yu wrote did not conform to the practice of this century. He probably recorded some gossip and recorded it without further investigation thus resulting in this fallacy. I added this to clarify the matter and to prevent further circulation …

Master Artisans

Beijing pigeon whistles have a long history and were produced by professional artisans from an early time. But historical evidence of time and place and actual examples still await discovery. We know that by the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), the making of excellent whistles with brilliant tones was already known to many. However the first person to be acknowledged as a head of a school of whistle-making was an artisan whose products bore the logo Hui in the reign of Emperor Jiaqing (1796–1821). After him, there were seven other artisans whose products bore the logos Yong (Yong the Elder), Ming, Xing, Yong (Yong the Younger), Xiang, Wen, and Hong. Thus, the total number of master artisans is eight. All logotypes are designated by a Chinese character. For Hui whistles, the logo is the Chinese character hui.

Other less famous artisans will not be recounted in this booklet though they and their logos were mentioned in Wang Xixian's Old Tales about Pigeon Whistles …

The Xiang logo belonged to a person named Zhou Cunquan (1874–1956). He was a man of short but sturdy nature with a heavy beard. For many years he lived near the Baita Si (Temple of the White Dagoba). Every time I visited him I would watch how he proceeded with his work. He would describe in detail how he prepared his materials, cut openings, tuned, glued and applied lacquer. Probably he knew that I was an amateur, so did not hide his technical know-how from me. His movements were dextrous and precise. When he made many gourd whistles at the same time, he made them in a mass production process. He would first split bamboo slabs, arranging the caps of the same size on the same piece of slab. Because bamboo slabs come in long strips, they are easy to hold and to hollow out the caps, and it is possible to regularise sizes of the slits. Once the back of the cap is hollowed out, then a few vigorous strokes with a file, and the forms of all the caps are roughly completed. After this is done, the bamboo is sawed into separated caps and can be placed over the gourd to cut the holes to fit. With such a process, of course the whistle caps and the gourd's holes always matched exactly.

Toa Zhuowen who made the Wen logo whistles, used exactly the reverse process. He made each whistle separately. First he cut an opening on the gourd, and then he would carve out the whistle's cap. This made wielding the knife difficult, as the bamboo could not be grasped firmly. Moreover, he had to compare the size of cap and the opening repeatedly. A little carelessness or one cut too deep and the cap opening would be too large for the cap, thus wasting all the previous efforts. I repeatedly explained Zhou's process to Tao, but he would only smile and say nothing. Artisans apparently have an unalterable habit, and would not condescend to change their practice. However, both Xiang and Wen whistles were excellent, though Wen whistles could command a higher price. Those who knew said that even though Wen whistles were more expensive, but because Zhou made his whistles in a more efficient way, his sales were better and he had a higher monthly income than Tao.

In my youth, I loved to raise chirping insects in winter. I caged various kinds of crickets, youhulus (a kind of chirping insect a little bigger that the cricket) and katydid in gourds. Moreover, I liked to heat-engrave designs on the gourds with a hot needle. I heat-engraved on pigeon whistles as well. Only gourd whistles were heat-engraved, as other types of whistles do not have enough space. Whistles come in pairs, and the two gourds should match in shape and size. I used to buy gourds by the hundreds, as there were a multitude of considerations in selecting gourds for heat engraving. I used to send these gourds to Xiang, Wen, or Hong and asked them to lacquer the caps only, while the gourd bodies were to be left plain for me to heat engrave. Landscapes, human figures, flowers, birds, animals, and ancient scripts were the designs I engraved. These whistles would be arranged in rows in boxes made of camphor wood for people to view. In the seven or eight boxes totalling about one hundred pairs, some 70 per cent came from Xiang's hand (plates 1–2) and the remaining 30 per cent from Wen's and Hong's. Zhou Cunquan's Xiang whistles dominated my collection because Zhou was prompt in

Plate 1
A *Xiang* gourd whistle, with plum blossoms heat-engraved by Wang Shixiang.
photos from *Beijing Pigeon Whistles*, Liaoning Education Press, 1999

Plate 2
A *Xiang* gourd whistle, with partitioned-slit, with chrysanthemums heat-engraved by Wang Shixiang

delivering goods. Moreover, Zhou was actually superior in making gourd whistles than the other two artisans. Wang Xixian also agreed with me in this respect without prior consultation. Zhou Cunquan was a Muslim, but once made a gourd in the shape of Zhu the Pig (as told in the novel Journey to the West) as a gift to me. Had we not been good friends for many years, he would not have made a pig-shaped whistle even with the offer of a large sum of money. To ask him to make such a work to order would have been denied.[3] When I was a university student, I had my picture taken with him in a studio. Much to my regret, the picture was lost during the Cultural Revolution.

Zhou Cunquan was also an innovator. Many of his products have various patterns on the base of the whistle body and are lined with silk and the effect was most pleasing. He also carved or hollowed designs on knobs and supports on star and eye whistles and one could see his sculptural ability. Tao Zhuowen, the maker of Wen whistles, was condescending toward these works, saying, 'What do these have to do with the tone?' Literati have the habit of looking down upon each other; it is not surprising that artisans do also …

The artisan who made the Hong logo whistles was named Wu Zitong (1894–1968), a man of immense physique. When he made whistles for me, he was about 40 years old. He lived alone all his life in the East Wing of Guanying Temple in Jishikou Qitlao outside of Chaoyang Gate. In those years, apart from making gourd whistles for me for heat engraving, he also custom made two-pipe, three-tube and seven-star and fifteen-eye whistles for me. Each type came in five different sizes. Altogether I have 40 pairs of his work. As traditional gourd whistles have tubes and never have small gourds for their sub-whistles, I thought up this innovation and asked Wu Zitong to make such a pair for me. I engraved this pair of gourds with lotus blossoms. It can be said that this pair of whistles has a unique style all its own.

Wu Zitong whistles commanded a price about one half of Toa's whistles. It was also cheaper than Zhou Cunquan's. His workmanship was less refined though his whistles have excellent tone. After Zhou died and Tao laid down his implements in old age, Wu was the sole master for a time. Unfortunately his good days were short. Due to changes in human events, pigeon raisers became fewer and fewer and the sale of whistles dropped also.

I wrote a short article called 'Pigeon Whistles Make Aerial Music'. It was published in the English edition of China Reconstructs.[4] After this, I received a few letters from abroad asking where to buy pigeon whistles. I sent out letters to a craft export corporation and recommended Wu Zitong to make the whistles. He was commissioned and his whistles were exported. But very shortly after this business also ended. During the Cultural Revolution, there was a political movement called 'Abolish the Four Olds' where old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits were to be abolished. Strange as it may seem today, pigeon whistles were listed as one item of the things that were to be destroyed. Those who owned whistles were so intimidated that they destroyed them themselves before the Red Guards came to destroy them. My old schoolmate, the famous surgeon Gu Yuzhi, had Wen whistles that he particularly cherished. But he trotted down on them and threw them into the fire. To this day he cannot speak of this without remorse and contempt. I often thought of Wu Zitong and wondered what could have happened to him. One day after I was released from the 'cowshed' where I was kept during a period of time of the Cultural Revolution, I passed Jishikou Qitiao where Wu used to live. I encountered an elderly neighbour of his who told me that Wu died in poverty and had long since been buried in a ditch somewhere …

Information p. 174

Notes

1. When Beijing was under Japanese occupation and its people hungry, who could afford to buy grain to raise pigeons? The sound of pigeon whistles disappeared and the city became silent and lifeless.

2. H.P. Hoose, 'Peking Pigeons and Pigeon – Flutes', a lecture delivered at the College of Chinese Studies, Peking 1936.

3. Translator's note: no Muslim would make a toy in the shape of a pig. That would be very sacrilegious.

4. Wang Shixiang, 'Pigeon Whistles Make Aerial Music', *China Reconstructs*, 11, 1963.

Heri Dono, *Flying Angels* **(detail), 1996**
fiberglass, mechanical system, electronic parts, cotton, acrylic
approx. 400 × 500 cm (each piece 100 × 60 × 25 cm), ten figures

Upside-down Mind: The Art of Heri Dono

Jim Supangkat
Indonesia

For the 2003 Prince Claus Awards ceremony on 10 December 2003 in the Citizens' Hall of the Royal Palace Amsterdam, the artist and 1998 Prince Claus laureate Heri Dono created *Running Puppet*, a fusion of traditional crafts and contemporaneity. His ability in painting, sculpture, installation, performance and music, according to Apinan Poshyananda in the *1998 Prince Claus Awards* book, 'allows him to mix freely many types of technique and content, reflecting complex layers of hybrids and heterogeneities'. Jim Supangkat, the curator of CP Artspace in Washington, DC and a 1997 Prince Claus laureate, reveals the ancient roots in the artist's modern-day subversions.

Heri Dono is a Yogyakarta based artist with an international reputation. In the last ten years he has travelled extensively on a creative odyssey and is widely recognised for his unique works depicting current issues in contemporary art. Born in Jakarta, Indonesia, Dono, who is now in his forties, started his career in the late 1970s. Early on he attracted controversy with his statement that art should be like the world of cartoons. He said that this was an outcome of his insights into the questioning of what art is. For him, the world of cartoons is particularly interesting because it does not make sense.

Based on his belief that everything, including objects, is alive and has its own soul, spirit and feelings, Dono came to the understanding that the main purpose of art is to explore the illogical world of the mind. When 'twisted logic' is expressed artistically, he maintained that it has the possibility of triggering people to resist the domination of logic. Seeing reality through an upside-down mind is a way of finding a subversion of the truth.

There is a certain reason in Dono's thinking. With globalisation, technology and systems of mass production affect both our perceptions and sensibilities as we try to virtually understand everything around us. Consequently, all efforts to understand reality are constrained by techno-industrial images, symbols, and signs, which do not have human values at their core, but rather function to ensure the continuity of commodity production in a smoothly operating economic system. Faced by this siege against culture, artists have not revolted and totally dismissed the dominant images. Rather, they have deconstructed those images and symbols and used them as a subversive idiom in their own works. Very often, these images and symbols are seen through an upside-down mind.

After exploring the cartoon world, by the early 1980s Dono was captivated by

Heri Dono, *Kuda Binal Property*, **1992**

wayang, Javanese traditional puppets. Despite his Javanese origins, his encounter with the wayang was not related to his efforts to find an exclusive identity. Because Dono grew up in the urban metropolises of Jakarta and Yogyakarta, he brought a kind of wayang illiteracy to this meeting. At least he faced an inside-outside dilemma when he tried to understand his so-called own culture.

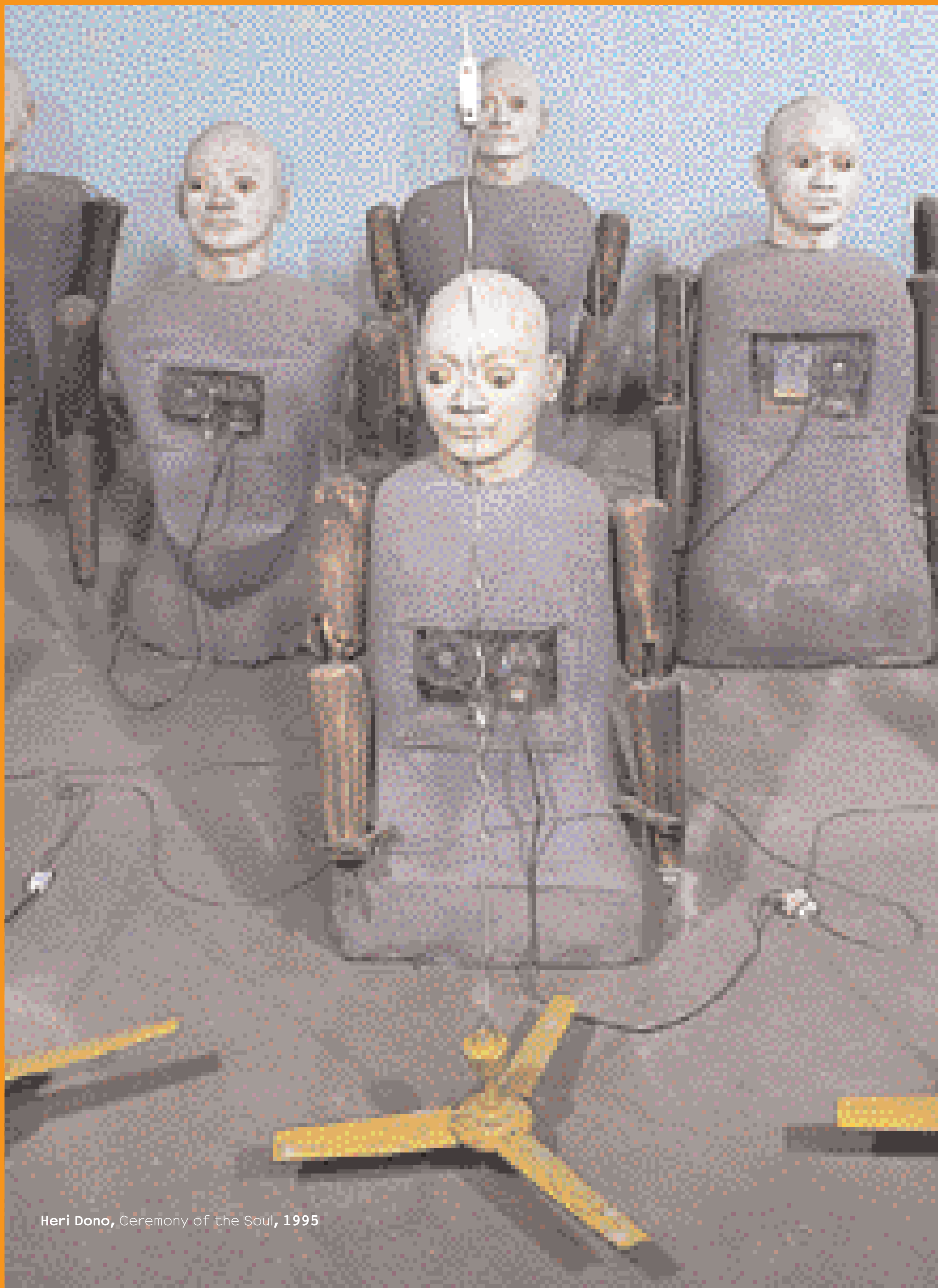
Wayang gave him a new understanding on the aesthetic experience, an enlightenment of sorts. On one side, he felt the aesthetics and the philosophy of wayang have a strong spiritual dimension. However wayang is also strongly related to matters in everyday life. 'Wayang made me think that there is a difference between art expression and cultural expression,' Dono says. 'I think representations in art tend to find the essence of nature while representations in cultural expression show efforts to communicate and search for shared values that do not have to be absolute and eternal.'

Based on that insight, Heri Dono came to the belief that art expressions should be based on the cultural, rather than the personal.

Wayang is not only a matter of making puppets, although it is a sophisticated art practice. Similar to puppet performances everywhere, a wayang performance is both musical and theatrical. Faced with this, Dono felt the need to explore musical and theatrical sensibilities alongside the visual one. Here he started creating installation, mixed-media works and performances.

Using new media after years of painting has brought Dono to a new

Heri Dono and details from *Kuda Binal Property*, **1992**


Heri Dono, Ceremony of the Soul, **1995**

awareness of art and its medium, which he refers to as 'merely vehicles'.

'That is why the importance of art lies not in its beauty, expressed through the medium, but in the content which reflects shared values,' he says. For Dono, the medium for expressing art is not the personal domain of the artists. The medium in art expression is one that is collectively built. It is not related to originality or individuality. It is a language whose origins are hard to know or discern. In his opinion, artists should build the medium by taking things from their surroundings. As a result, the medium could be anything: an object, readymade, a sign, a symbol, even an idea. Through this practice, artists borrow the medium from a culture.

Intuitively, Dono was going back to Javanese morality, which is still widely believed by many people. In Javanese ethics, there is no tendency to look for an absolute, eternal truth (in the philosophical sense). Instead its fundamental premise is the discussion of 'rightness' within the problematic of good and bad.

This search of rightness, which tends to explore the tensions between good and bad, is based on *rasa* (sensibility) and *akal budi* (wisdom, prudence). The result is a sophisticated way of feeling and understanding rightness, in depth, and not just in the sense of knowing what is good or bad, right or wrong.

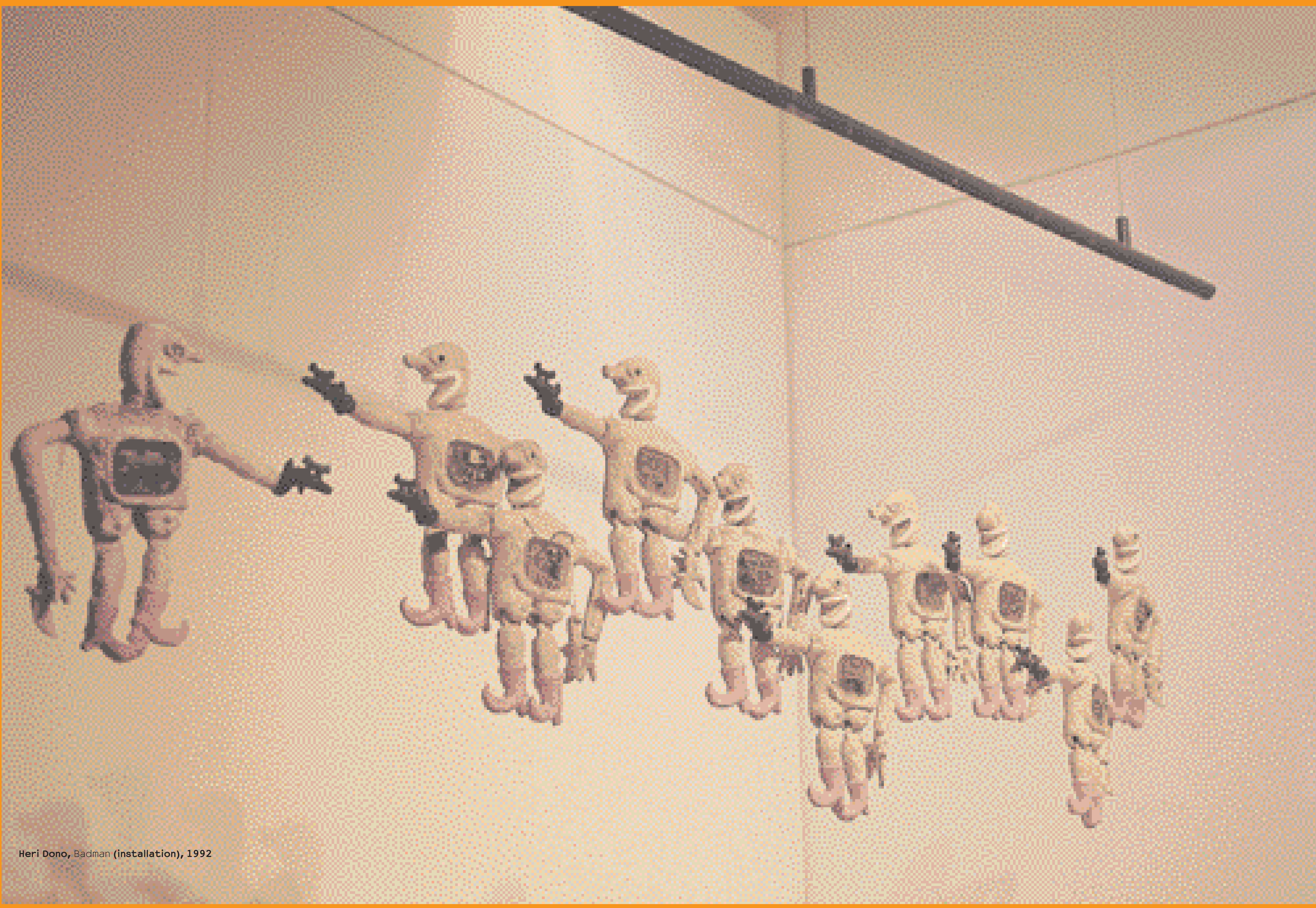
Rightness in Javanese morality is not so much a concept as a discourse. Understanding rightness depends on a negotiation where representations, including those in art, are discussed. This process has a particular context and time frame. Outside of that, rightness can be unstable and continually changing. It could also be different if seen within another time frame.

Dono's representations mingle traditional and modern realities, and reflect a vision that attempts to understand the relevance of Javanese morality within the modern world of Indonesia. Basically because he has witnessed how the understanding of rightness can no longer be negotiated; how the societal opinion on rightness is dominated by taking for granted the techno-industrial logic in which the understanding of rightness has become insensitive and insensible.

By scrutinising Dono's work closely, it is apparent that nearly all of his representations are a kind of self-criticism that celebrates the paradoxical oddness in his daily life, which mostly stems from an obedience to executing conventions no longer completely understood. This self-criticism shows a strange positive optimism based on Javanese spiritualism. Through black humour, Heri Dono tries to understand this reality.

Based on his belief that art practice has a close relationship with culture, Dono gravitates toward making his work of art collaboratively, in the sense that he tends to work with everyday people to create the works. It is as if he wants to assure himself that he is doing work that deals with culture and avoids personal artistic sentiments.

He explores communities that are less developed in the modern sense. As a result, he has found people who are still committed to *rasa* and *akal budi*, the basis of Javanese traditional morality. By collaborating with them, Dono tends to make works out of discarded objects, such as old radios or empty Coca-Cola



Heri Dono, Badman (installation), 1992

cans. The incorporation of these objects reflects the efforts of the urban poor to survive a difficult economic situation through the use of their artistic sensibilities. To Dono, recycling junk is an innovative practice because it is a cultural matter. 'The facts show the efforts of poor people using tradition to survive in a difficult modern situation. The creations show how tradition continuously makes breakthroughs, not only for the sake of artistic means but more for survival,' he believes.

Heri Dono has worked with mechanics to develop the machinery of his installation from bits of old transistor radios. He knows the people who help him well. 'They work every day at their small radio shops repairing used transistor radios. There are thousands of them in Yogyakarta. After repairing them, they sell the radios cheaply to the grassroots.'

It is a matter of fact that in traditional Javanese society every person is a craftsman because they make their own utensils. However they also make works of art. The term for doing this kind of work is penciptaan. The direct interpretation of the penciptaan is creating. The term also has a unique meaning. The word penciptaan, derived from the term cipta meaning imagination, hopes, fantasies, and dreams, also includes the notion of communal idealism, shared values in daily life.

Correspondingly, penciptaan means making dreams, fantasy and idealism become tangible or visual, through the capacity of hands by enforcing rasa (a kind of intuition) and the feeling of beauty that goes beyond sensation. This artistic practice is far from expressing opinions or making statements. Related to this, art in Javanese is kagunan, an activity of emitting feelings that express the beauty of moral ethics. The term kagunan is derived from guna, which means the insightful idiosyncrasy of a person.

Perceiving this artistic sensibility, Heri Dono asked people to collaborate with him in making works of art, and those who were craftsmen graciously accepted the invitation. During the process of collaboration, these people did not just help Dono; they also gave him advice and ideas. Together they created works that not only show Dono's convictions. The art also reveals the surprising dreams, hopes, fantasies, and beliefs of the urban poor in facing today's harsh realities. And these, in turn, have enriched Dono's representation of the world.

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Heri Dono, Political Clown **(detail), 1999**

Heri Dono, Wayang Legenda **(The Shadows), 1988**

Shadow Stories: Wayang in the Work of Heri Dono

Amanda Rath
Indonesia

The helmets, artificial limbs and puppets employed by Indonesian artist Heri Dono may seem to inhabit a surreal realm. But like all dreams, they have a closer contact with reality than first suspected. So close, that even the Suharto regime took an interest in Dono, a 1998 Prince Claus laureate.

The Indonesian curator Asmudjo Irianto has argued that, although art academies in Indonesia still maintain western-colonial categories of artistic and cultural production, Indonesian contemporary art practices do not differentiate between craft and art. Students of the academies often rebel against the constraints of such categories and seek inspiration elsewhere in their attempts to blur the artificial lines drawn between high and low art, traditional and modern, art and craft. Heri Dono (b. 1960) is one such artist who, upon leaving the Institute of Art (ISI) in Yogyakarta, became increasingly interested in the social, artistic, and cultural uses of wayang as a form of communication.

Simply, the narrative of the wayang consists of a series of plots and characters delineated in fairly set sequences of action through a variety of media, such as dance (wayang wong), and wooden puppets (wayang golek). Wayang is found on the islands of Java and Bali and comes in a variety of forms, depending upon the interweaving of cultural influences and local circumstances. The most popular form in Central and East Java, and the one discussed in this article, is the wayang kulit, or the shadow play using flat puppets,[1] and in which reality and meaning exist in between the space separating light from shadow. Each leather puppet is manipulated by using three sticks of translucent buffalo horn attached to the body and arms of the figure. Puppets not meant for official or commissioned wayang performances are also available in a variety of materials that deviate from tradition. Wayang figures – with their characteristic elongated limbs, frontal torsos, facial profiles and representations of easily recognisable characters based on Javanese physiognomy – can be found in comic books, cartoons, television shows, books of legends, etc.[2] Puppets made of these materials are part of the popular art of the lower classes, as well as tourist trade in souvenirs.[3] Such diversity and cross-class popularity highlights the fact that, although until recently most historical sources about the development and history of the wayang emphasised court traditions and conventionalised performances, wayang remains an important form of popular culture as well.

This is largely because of the multi-layered meanings and functions of the

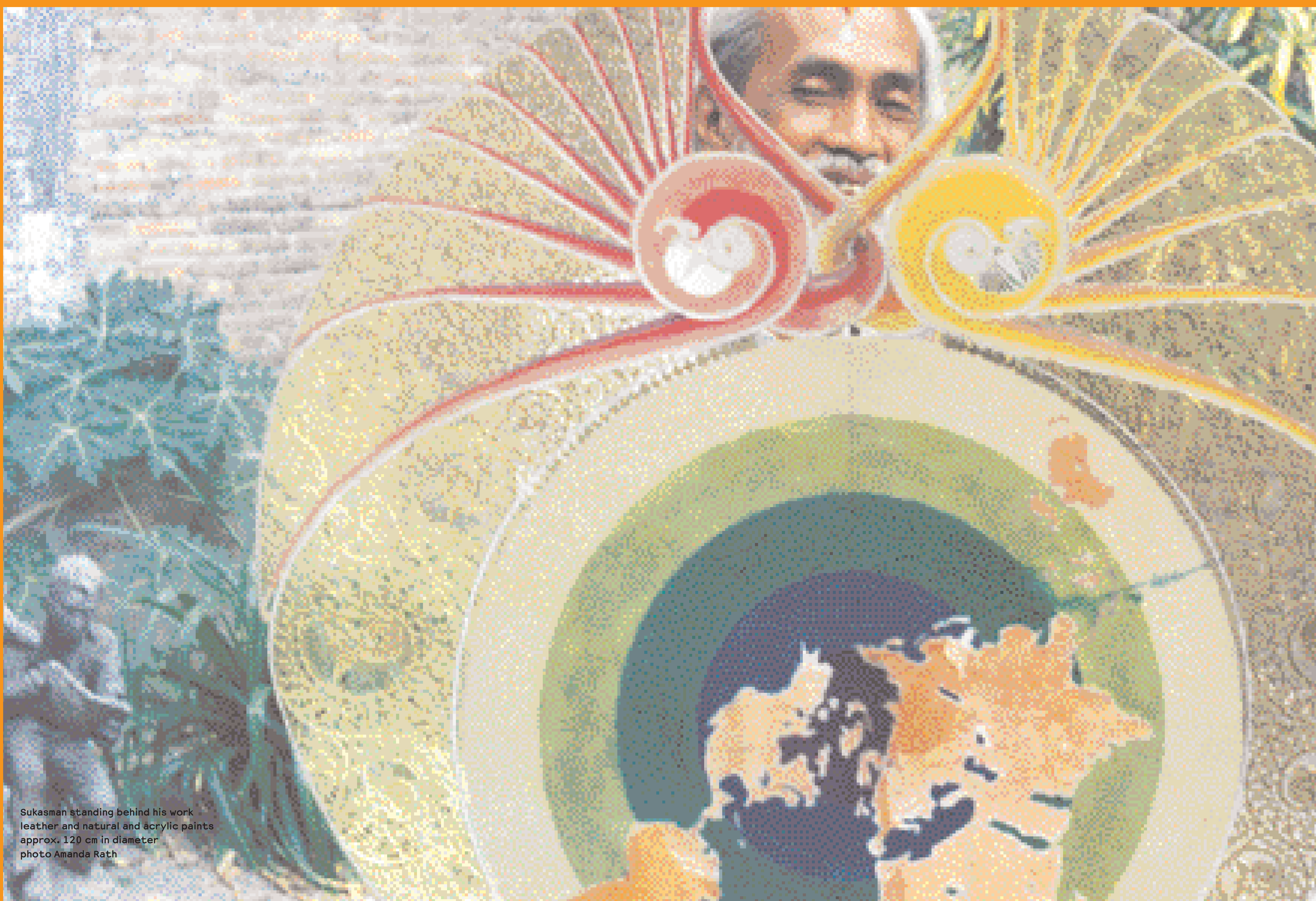
T. Sutanto, cartoon in the Jakarta Post following the 2002 verdict sentencing Tommy Suharto, the son of the former President Suharto, to fifteen years for orchestrating and ordering the assassination of a court judge. Tommy Suharto is seen as the dalang of the assassination. His accomplices/puppets are given life in prison for their part in the murder.

wayang as both form and content. Its visual representations of classic and local stories and legends; combined with direct and metaphorical discussions of current events; the depiction of cultural and national heroes, and the additional emphasis on self-cultivation and proper behaviour resonate across social classes and hierarchies. So too does the political potential of the wayang in its many forms. For example, the puppet master or dalang has historically been not only the disseminator of information, and governmental policies, but also a critic of higher levels of society.[4] Through their ability to weave a plot embedded in both the time of the gods, the ancestors, and the present, dalangs can criticise higher levels of society and comment on current events through illusions to, and invocations of the past. Wayang retains its popularity by drawing upon precisely these expressive possibilities, and has been used by a number of contemporary artists, such as Heri Dono in constructing their own contemporary artworks.

In order to learn more about the performance and production of the wayang, Heri Dono entered the atelier of the wayang puppet artist Pak Sigit Sukasman (b. 1932) in 1987 and remained with his Ukur Group (founded in Yogyakarta in 1972) until the following year.[5] Sukasman's work is notable for his alterations to both the foundations of the classic stories enacted through the wayang, and the conventional forms through which the stories are told.[6] His premise for enacting this transformation is his belief that traditional art is contemporary too, existing in present time, and should be allowed to evolve as does society and culture. Sukasman, like other dalangs who use traditional stories, incorporates contemporary issues into his plays. However, he goes further by incorporating present concerns and circumstances into the wayang figures themselves.[7] For example, his atypical ogres and demons represent more than just the 'foreigner' or the 'outside' as common in typical wayang. Sukasman's ogres, with large, bulbous features and grotesque bodies emblazoned in bright colours (not found in classical wayang) are the new demons of the late twentieth century, representing themes such as corrupt politicians, consumerism, the inequalities of capitalism, and the stripping of the environment of its life sustaining forces.

Sukasman's concern for the state of humanity is also mapped onto his version of the kayon or gunungan (tree of life), the most mystically powerful symbol of the wayang as the threshold and entity containing all forces in the universe. It is the alpha and omega of all existence, the beginning and the end of time and of plots in the story. To the kayons, Sukasman has, in some cases, added a globe of the earth, and has, at least in one case, replaced the conventional mountain/tree form with a circular one. A primary element of this delicately carved symbol is a pair of ascending wings that merge into a stylised shape of a heart. The wings both stretch for the heavens and encompass the earth. According to Sukasman's personal iconography, these wings signify man's dignity and ideal potential. In other kayons, Sukasman points to the destructive tendencies of humans, by depicting a globe of the earth threatened to be engulfed by the destructive forces of men who have 'forgotten their mother earth'.[8] This is a poignant juxtaposition because usually one side of the kayon is painted with a variety of

Sigit Sukasman, Ogre Figure, mid 1990s
leather and natural and acrylic paints
approx. 90 cm in height
photo Amanda Rath



Sukasman standing behind his work
leather and natural and acrylic paints
approx. 120 cm in diameter
photo Amanda Rath

animal figures on a background of the 'tree of life', while the reverse is most often painted with red flames. In combining generative powers with destructive forces, Sukasman has changed the significance of the 'ultimate symbol' to effect a personal and social commentary. He further underscores his visual-moral message by encircling the earth of a particular *kayon* with the English text: 'The brainless animals keep mourning at the mortal polluted world that thinking humans never take care of, he keeps polluting it.'

Similar concerns, as well as pertinent changes to and uses of wayang forms are prevalent in the works of his former pupil, Heri Dono. An art institute dropout, Dono emerged as a successful grassroots artist in the late 1980s, concerning himself with the position of the lower classes in relation to the dominant culture of the elite's high Javanese cultural forms and the nation state. While recognising that wayang form and content pervasively influences both his paintings and installations, for space constraints, I will here discuss only a few of his works.

From his experience with Pak Sukasman, Dono constructed *Wayang Legenda* (1987–1988), a work consisting of a full set of new wayang characters for a *wayang setan* (Devil's Wayang), which puts into question the traditional dialectical relationships maintained in classical wayang, such as the opposition of good and evil, refined and vulgar. Dono also included representation of figures uncommon to the wayang, namely the lower and poorer disenfranchised classes, and the masses. These figures are, like the traditional characters of the wayang, essentialised types and characteristics but with new forms such as demons with three heads, modern clothing of the poorer classes and so on. Dono also decentralised the wayang from Java-centric stories by using a genesis story from the Batak region of Western Sumatra. Rather than performing as the *dalang* himself, Dono provided the scripted story to be performed by young *dalangs* from the Yogya area.

Dono's *Wayang Legenda* is strategically important because Dono introduces non-Javanese cultural sources into his shadow play. More significantly, he also includes previously 'unrepresentable' sectors of society, socially and aesthetically unrefined characters, both in form and content, which problematises traditional social hierarchies mapped onto the wayang that have been inscribed into the psyche of most Indonesians as to what is appropriate to represent in certain cultural practices. In traditional wayang, certain human characteristics pertain to discrete social levels and these inhabit fixed locations in the space of the shadow theatre. In other words, Dono's wayang-inspired work blurs the absolute distinction of types and attributes which one usually witnesses in the eternal and cyclic battle within the wayang. However, this should not be seen only as one artist's individual innovation of a traditional art form. Rather it is part of an overall development in contemporary wayang performances, which often challenge, rather than reaffirm, dominant values persistent in more normative, conservative wayang performances.[9]

Wayang Legenda is not only an experimentation in the content and form of the wayang, but also in its significant use of non-traditional and cheap materials of cardboard and bamboo. This redemption of the low has several functions, not

Sigit Sukasman, *Kayon/Gunungan*, **mid 1990s, leather and natural and acrylic paints, approx. 90 cm high, width variable**
photo Amanda Rath

least of which is to associate this ancient yet timely form of communication with the lives of the majority of Indonesians who have made their own forms of art from the refuse of the higher classes.[10]

One of the most popular characters of the Yogyakarta wayang stories is the fat, deformed dwarf named Semar, the clown servant of the noble warrior Ardjuna. Siva's brother Ismaja, or Semar, was cursed and transformed into the misshapen androgynous figure whose primary role is to both deal with his unruly and impetuous sons Petruk and Gareng, and to counsel his master whose mortality places Semar in a cosmically higher position. Semar embodies seemingly contradictory attributes exemplified in his vulgar jocularity and high levels of mystical and political speech, thus acting as a bridge between the lower classes and higher levels of power and society. His attributes of wisdom and his contradictory existence as the containment of oppositions have attracted many artists and writers to his character. Semar's presence in contemporary art obviously goes deeper than merely his position as 'patron saint' to the arts.

Semar and his attributes have been associated with political and religious leaders such as Suharto when he was president. Semar, the benevolent demigod whose squat body, base jokes, yet eloquent and poignant advice and sharp criticisms of his patrons, also closely mirrored the person of Gus Dur, or at least this is how he appeared to his followers within the Islamic party Narul Islamiyah (NU) who ascribed this comparison to him.[11] Such an association with the wayang world pointed to a representation of an ideal ruler/leader, teacher, and in current terms, the ideal president of a nation.

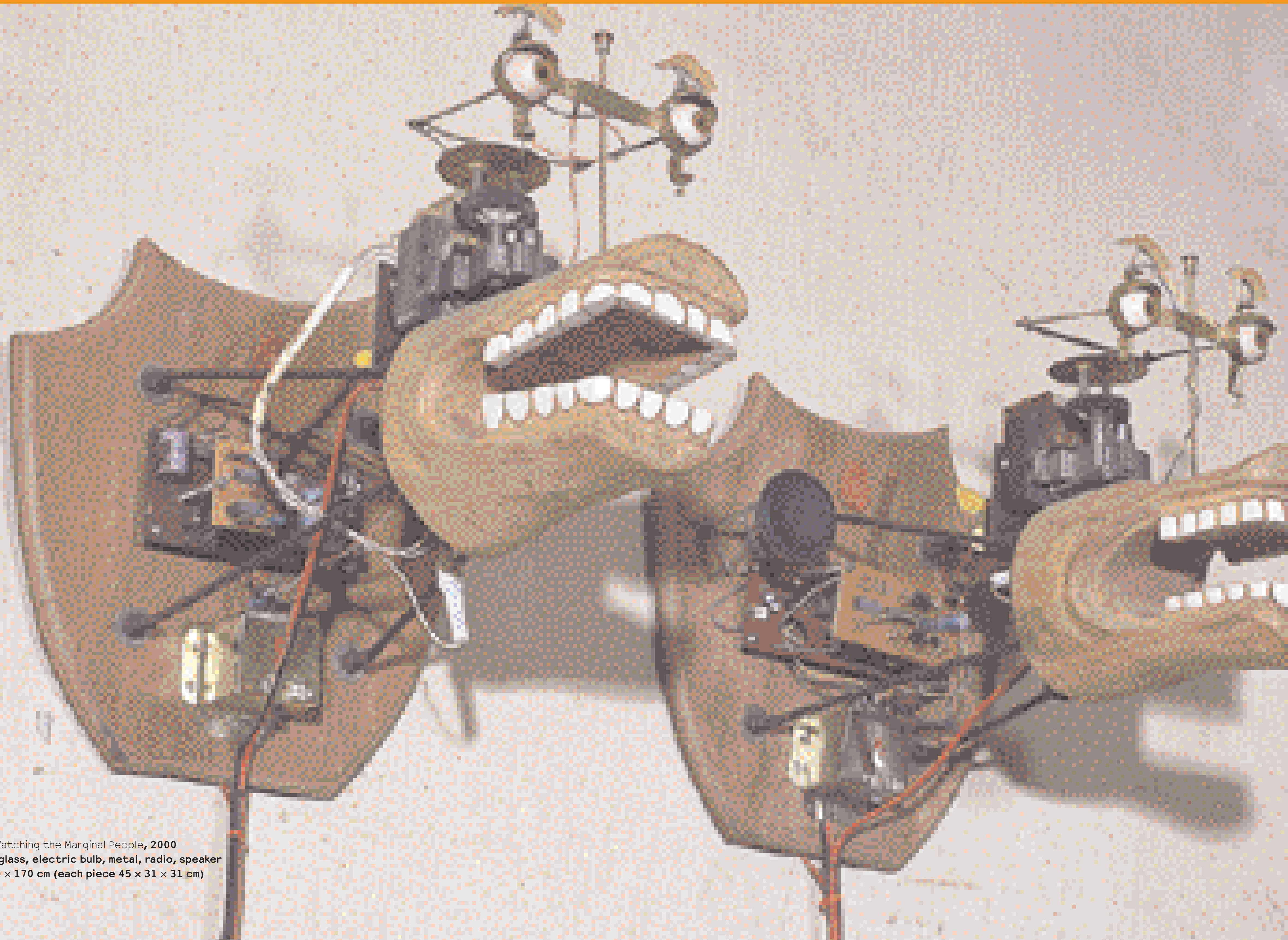
Semar's figure and conceptual meanings, having been integrated into Javanese political and cultural discourse, have also been used to make sharp social commentary by a number of contemporary artists who, like Dono, point out the absurdity of the political circus which followed Suharto's downfall. During the months leading up to and directly following Suharto's demise as president in the spring of 1998, images of Semar dramatically increased in contemporary artworks and popular culture such as cartoons and comic books. This time was known as the *era reformasi* or the era of reformation. It was also referred to as *zaman edan*, or the time of chaos, which according to Javanese cosmology and the time within the wayang, is the time when the universe and the world are in a state of upheaval and in danger of complete destruction. In some wayang stories, this is brought about by Ardjuna whose meditation is so intense that the world is brought to the brink of extinction, signalled by earthquakes, plagues, tidal waves, etc. Although these are natural calamities, *zaman edan* can be attributed to any political chaos, wars for succession, and other forms of political turbulence. In wayang stories, Semar typically does not make his appearance until *zaman edan* and this signals that the time of the *gara-gara* or ultimate battle between the Pandawa and Karawa royal houses has commenced. Hence, Semar's entrance and advice in times of chaos has great significance for the Javanese. In one story of the wayang, Siva, his brother, has Semar (being semi-human) assassinated in order to end the eternal war. But Semar is resurrected and thus the war restarts, to continue for all time:

there can be no end to the battle between the hidden forces of the universe, nor to the endless battles over power. It should be clear from these various associations of Semar why his image should proliferate in the days leading up to and after Suharto's stepping down, which resulted in some of the bloodiest mass riots and violence Indonesia had experienced since the late 1960s purge of the Communist party. *Era reformasi* proved a failure in many ways, and in fact ushered in a public political circus of open battles for power among various sides, which until that time had been heavily controlled by Suharto's regime.

Heri Dono has used Semar as a primary character in many of his wayang-inspired works, most importantly in his collaborative performance *Semar Kentut* or *Semar Farts* (1999). This work has never been shown in Indonesia but was created as part of an artist-residency in New Zealand. Tim Behrend has comprehensively analysed this work:[12] here I only want to highlight Dono's effective use of vulgarity and humour. Semar's flatulence is legendary as a substance that could wipe out the world if he chose to do so. It was the awesome power of Semar's farts, or the power of the vulgar, that Dono emphasised in this combination of wayang, performance art, and installation work. During one part of the performance, volunteers sat in a small room eating flatulence-causing foods. Their gaseous emissions were collected into bottles already set into the floor, while speakers emitted the sounds of flatulence to the audience outside. The next day, Dono sold more than 40 bottles of bottled farts for five dollars each. In this performance, Semar's flatulence is collected, bottled, and commodified while at the same time its destructive power, although restrained, is potentially and always threatening to be unleashed. *Semar Kentut* was performed to mark the coming millennium. According to Javanese legends, the passage from one century to another is of profound significance, in which the forces of the universe, represented through the wayang, are in deadly battle; a battle that can portend destruction on a universal and global scale (*zaman edan*).

In his reinterpretation of wayang form and content, Dono also hybridises characters from the wayang with popular culture such as superheroes from DC Comics to create absurd scenarios. Not only did Heri grow up with comics – both Indonesian and foreign – he has developed a philosophy of the cartoon that also encompasses his philosophy of the wayang. As much as wayang puppets are thought to possess a life and soul of their own, possessing powers beyond human capabilities, so too does cartoon animation imbue inanimate objects with a life force. Dono cites the morphing that happens in cartoons (i.e. chairs come to life; eyes, limbs and other things spontaneously sprouting from any part of the body) as examples of a world of endless possibilities for manipulating the figure to produce new meaning and relationships.[13]

Superman is now part of Dono's personal iconography that he deploys to comment on contemporary issues. For example, in several of his paintings, Dono hybridises Semar with Superman, creating Super Semar or Semar Super. This is not simply a combination of a local and foreign culture or superhero, but in some of his paintings, also is a sophisticated reference to an actual historical event and its



Heri Dono, *Watching the Marginal People*, **2000**
wood, fiberglass, electric bulb, metal, radio, speaker
approx. 500 × 170 cm (each piece 45 × 31 × 31 cm)
ten figures

missing documentation in official history. In 1966, Sukarno officially and through coercion handed over power of the country to General Suharto in a letter called *Supersemar*, an acronym for *Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret* (March Letter of Instruction). Upheld as legitimating Suharto's *de facto* taking over of the presidency, *Supersemar* marked the beginning of the Indonesia's New Order and the beginning of a 30-plus year dominance of Golkar, or Joint Secretariat of Functional Groups.[14] Dono's Super Semar is also a veiled reference to Suharto's own supposed embodiment of Semar in public political discourse, in which Suharto adopted such an analogy as a means of attributing to himself those very attributes admired in the figure of Semar.

This series of cultural, historical and political associations perhaps helps us better understand Dono's hybrid Super Semar as painted in his *Pemegang Gunungan/Provakator* (the holder of the Tree of Life/Provocateur). As explained above, the *gunungan* or *kayon* is a most important aspect of the wayang, not only does it represent the powers of the universe, it also marks time in the wayang by signalling shifts in location and the beginning and ending of sections in the plot. The *dalang* manipulates this *kayon*, meaning they are masters of time and space, as well as the narrative during the actual play. In Dono's painting, a giant figure holds the *kayon*. This figure, again in flat wayang style, is painted yellow, indicating the colour of Golkar, and wears a red cape similar to that of a superhero. Emanating from its chest is a television screen upon which a battle takes place between two human-animal figures; thus making reference to the power of television in political marketing within Indonesian society. This giant Golkar figure is supposedly so full of mystical powers that even its urine is worth preserving.[15] The *kayon* this figure holds depicts two male characters that seem ready to engage in a duel to the death, one holding a club, the other a pistol, and both are donning boxing gloves. Super Semar flies on a small flying-machine barely big enough to transport his rotund body. The crest of Superman is emblazoned on his chest and a red cape floats behind him. In characteristic fashion, Semar farts while he counsels, thus displaying his contrary nature. It seems, however, that he is powerless to really effect change. This ironic twist to the awesome power of both Semar and Superman is a common feature in Dono's work, which signifies the absurd realities behind ideals.

Dono has carried this over into his most recent work produced for the 2003 Venice Biennale. *Trojan Cow* is Heri Dono's protest against the war in Iraq, which he and most Indonesians feel was, and remains, an unjust invasion and occupation. In this work, which consists of his characteristic flat painting style and large distorted figures, Dono has recycled and reinterpreted the DC Comic superheroes, Superman and Batman. One need not think very far to grasp that Superman, with his cowboy hat and cowboy boots, represents the American President George W. Bush, whose urine is also preserved in a glass. Beside him stands a pipe-smoking Batman, here representing more than just a badman as Dono has portrayed Batman in the past. Rather this current incarnation is Dono's icon of the British government, and more precisely, Tony Blair. Batman/Badman points a

pistol at 'Saddam Hussein' represented by an oilcan, who is also the target of a cartoon-like aeroplane that drops bombs over his head. The entire scene is framed by drapery thus emphasising the staged, theatrical, and unreal quality of the war and its pretences. The powerless people, represented by the enormous and exaggerated form of a purple cow/bull, are separated from the main stage of war, but nonetheless remain its victims.[16]

As much as the wayang and its constellation of stories – with gods and noble warriors as the primary characters – reflect the goals, desires, and ideal narratives of a 'just state', contemporary artists such as Heri Dono redeploy and manipulate this local form to question and critique dominant narratives and absolute 'truths', more precisely the myth of the state.[17] In their reinterpretations, the overall critical potential of the wayang is maintained, but the *dalang* and the traditional theatre of shadow and light is now replaced by the artist and the materials of contemporary art. In Dono's work, the shadows have been moved aside, revealing an absurd reality through his appeal to collective memory and therapeutic use of humour. Some critics have argued that Heri Dono's social commentary is parodic.[18] In one sense this is true, in that he underscores and affirms the cultural and social codes contained within the wayang, only to invert them or take the characters out of their proper place. However, his artworks less to moralise and ridicule than to ridicule dominant cultural, political, and social 'truths' does. By ridiculing known political figures and contemporary situations, Heri Dono hopes to make people realise themselves and their relation to these 'truths' through the revelatory power of humour. Like the wayang, however, Dono's humorous depictions put us, the audience, in a double bind: in order to laugh at and grasp the significance of the ridiculous, we must enter the shadow side of reality, we simultaneously also become conscious of the potential power and horror of the reality beneath the ridiculous.

Notes

1. For the shadow theatre, cured water buffalo hides are used. For non-performance sets, the less expensive lamb hides are used. Lamb hides are less expensive because hundreds of thousands of lambs are slaughtered each year for the Islamic Eid-al-Adha ceremonies. After this ritual, which approximately falls two months after the end of Ramadan, one can find wayang figures combined with Javanese and Arabic calligraphy of verses taken from the Qur'an painted directly on the outer side of the lamb skin. These are sold in local markets as well as tourist areas.

2. Many Javanese continue to distinguish between the court and popular forms of wayang, and it has been a point of contention for some who would wish to see the 'purity' of wayang maintained.

3. I recently bought a set of large and brightly coloured plastic *Teletubbies* wayang figures from a street hawker in Bandung. Similar children's toys can be found riding small white chariots placed in convenient rows, which line the tourist market streets in Yogyakarta. Full sets and individual wayang characters made from low-grade lamb's leather and roughly painted are available in endless quantities on Yogyakarta's famous Malioboro Street. Rather expensive sets and individual figures can also be found in the large multi-storied government controlled outlets for Indonesian crafts, designed for the tourist trade in Jakarta. In these malls, one can also find the *wayang golek* or wooden, three-dimensional puppets as well as every imaginable type of object with a wayang motif imprinted or painted on.

4. The wayang has also been put to use by religious missionaries, and culture, education, and health ministries, as well as those in and vying for power to persuade, educate and indoctrinate the masses. It is this potential of the wayang that has also caused it to be censored, first by the courts, and later by Sukarno and Suharto. *Dalangs* have been arrested for their veiled critiques, which emerge through the combination of characters and plots they choose to use. Muslim and Christian missionaries have created

their own sets of shadow puppets to help in the religious education and conversion of the mainly non-literate classes. The courts of Java recreated wayang to better suit Islamic doctrine, as well as incorporated characters representing the Dutch during the colonial era, and most especially during the war for independence. Wayang characters have also been used to promote government family planning programmes, such as the 'two is enough' campaign.

5. Sukasman is known for taking in apprentices who come to study not simply the making of wayang puppets and also to learn how to perform as amateur *dalangs*. Artists such as Sigit Pius, a co-founder of the performance/ theatre group Geber Modus Operandi, were also drawn to the regimentation that Sukasman imposes on the internal running and life style of his studio (from my interview with Sigit, May 2002, Yogyakarta).

6. Sukasman's sustained contributions to the *wayang kulit* can in part be measured by his induction into the latest edition of the *Wayang Encyclopedia*, published in Indonesia. His altered designs to standard characters are illustrated alongside more conventional, traditional forms from around Java.

7. For the most recent article concerning Sukasman's controversial work and philosophy of the wayang see Hardja Susilo's 'The Personification of Tradition: The Case of Sukasman's Wayang Ukur' in *Puppet Theatre in Contemporary Indonesia: New Approaches to Performance Events*, ed. Jan Mrázek (Ann Arbor: CSSEAS, University of Michigan Press), 179-188.

8. In an interview in Sukasman's studio, March 1997, Yogyakarta.

9. Richard Curtis, 'The Wong Cilik Audience and the Dhalang Entrepreneur', in *Puppet Theatre in Contemporary Indonesia*, ed. Jan Mrázek, Michigan Papers on South and South-east Asia (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Centre for South and South-east Asian Studies, 2002).

10. For an in-depth discussion of the aesthetic strategy of the redemption of the low in artistic production in 'Third World' and post-colonial countries, see Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, 'Narrativising Visual Culture: Toward a Polycentric Aesthetics', in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzeoff (London and New York: Routledge, 1998). The late art critic Sanento Yuliman also attempted to redefine the confines of 'Art' through his recuperative efforts concerning the use and incorporation of the cultural forms of the lower classes in contemporary art forms of the late 1970s. See Sanento Yuliman, 'Perspektif Baru', in *Pameran Seni Rupa Baru 75*, ed. Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru (Jakarta: 1975), Sanento Yuliman, *Seni Lukis Indonesia Baru, Sebuah Pengantar* (Jakarta: DKJ, 1976).

11. For an in-depth look at the present day embodiments of Semar in the persons of political and religious leaders, namely that of Suharto and Gus Dur, see Arndt Graf's *Political Marketing in Indonesia* (forthcoming, 2004). See also, Marcel Bonneff, 'Semar révélé. La crise indonésienne et l'imaginaire politique javanais', *Archipel*, 64, 2002, 3-37; and Kathy Foley, 'The Clown in the Sundanese Wayang Golek: Democratisation of a Feudal Ethos', in C.P. Epskamp et. al., *Theatre of Java*, 1985, 88-99.

12. Tim Behrend, 'The Millennial Esc(H)atology of Heri Dono: "Semar Farts" First in Auckland, New Zealand', *Indonesia and the Malay World* 27, no. 79 (1999).

13. Interview with Heri Dono, July 2002, Yogyakarta.

14. Ostensibly not a political party, all civil servants and military were nevertheless obliged to join Golkar, a body established by the military in 1964 to co-ordinate civil and military functions. For a political history of this period, see M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since 1300*, second ed. (London: MacMillan, 1993).

15. It could be argued that this collected urine is an ironic reference to the mystical elixir of life sought after by Garuda, the mystical bird-animal vehicle of the Hindu god Rama. Garuda is the central figure on the Indonesian national crest.

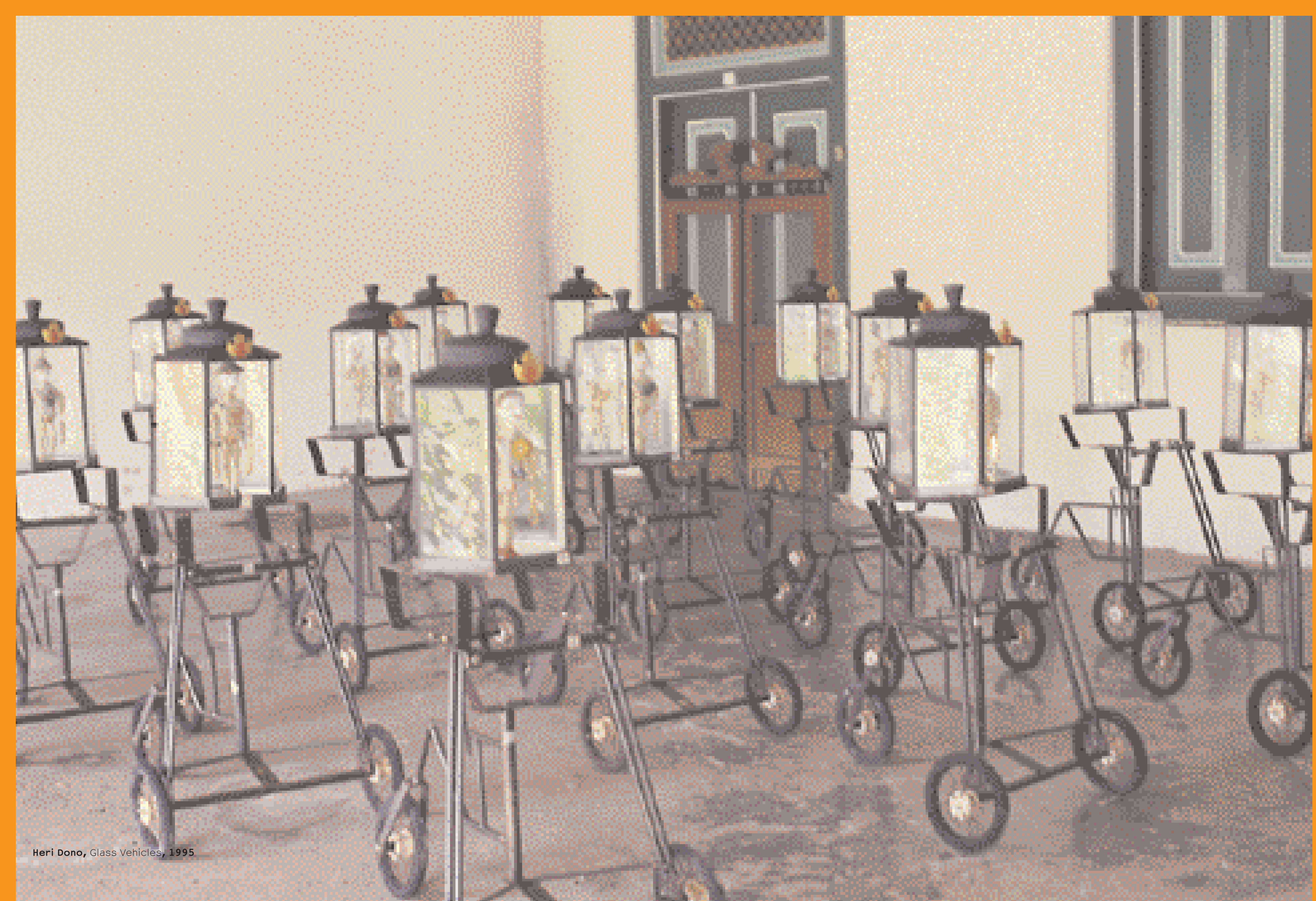
16. Video recorded interview for the Venice Biennale. From the Biennale website.

17. Sindhunata, 'Hidup Untuk Tertawa (Live to Laugh)', *Basis*, 9-10 (2000).

18. Dwi M. Marianto, 'Surréalisme dans surréalisme Yogyakarta', in *Surréalisme Yogyakarta* (Yogyakarta: Rumah Penerbitan Merapi, 2001).

Heri Dono, Unknown

Tradition and Innovation



Heri Dono, Glass Vehicles**, 1995**

CRAFTS: On Scale, Pace and Sustainability

Li Edelkoort

Craft, an activity that expresses something about its own origins by utilising local resources, has also remained constantly in contact with the outside world via trade and travel. And never more so than now, as international fashion and interiors generate a global demand for new seasonal looks. The result, writes international trend-forecaster Li Edelkoort, could be a world marketplace energised by authenticity and character.

Some years ago while strolling through the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris one April, I discovered a unique nest in a tree, crafted by an avant-garde bird. Its outer layers were made from twigs, while the inner side was woven from plastic McDonald's coffee sticks: a perfect blend of the old and the new, the organic and the inorganic, bridging the past with the future.

This image has stayed with me, becoming a metaphor that has inspired and taught me to understand the future of arts and crafts, its possibilities and its requirements.

Ethnological museums such as the striking National Ethnological Museum in Osaka or the endearing Indonesian National Museum in Jakarta, show us in often touching ways how mankind has crafted its way from prehistoric to post-modern times. We have created cultures and forged traditions; local populations have developed hunting weapons and fishing tools, cooking vessels and utensils, patterned bark and dyed textiles, braided baskets and woven carpets for humble but perfectly designed abodes in local materials ingenious with indigenous techniques. Craft is born from human needs, and therefore will possibly sustain itself into the far future as long as our species survives.

These archaic examples of arts and crafts still inspire us. Through time, however, other techniques and materials have been introduced to enable creative spirits to develop and broaden their horizons, often borrowing ideas from other groups, regions and beliefs. For example, the use of skin, feathers, beads and blankets can be traced back to tribes in the extreme north and the extreme south of our planet, from Africans to Native Americans, from Inuits to shamans. Craft began to travel, becoming a trading device, a business model, a cultural icon and a messenger. Cross-fertilisation started to influence local colour and regional patterns, while trade routes influenced its design. New materials and techniques developed over time: metal, glass and plastics all lending their endless variations to the expression of the individual artist within this common experience.

photos on p. 61: Cora Büttenbender, on pp 62–63: Romain Lienhart, on pp 66–67: Michael Baumgarten, on p. 70: Cora Büttenbender, on p. 71: Michael Baumgarten

The famous Silk Road opened Asia up to Middle Eastern splendour while instilling Buddhist rigour in Islamic expressions – Indian block prints became the trademark of French provinces, while exotic cashmere patterns became a traditional staple among the western bourgeoisie. As if in telepathic empathy, several regions of the world developed similar techniques; for instance in textiles, the dyeing of indigo or the weaving of intricate ikats. We can observe that craft has the power to express a local as well as a universal identity at the same time. This double layered identity is typical of arts and crafts and today guarantees their survival.

By and large, applied and artistic crafts developed and thrived, translating social, political and economic currents and illustrating the shift in world affairs from Istanbul to St. Petersburg, from Vienna to Paris, from Lisbon to Goa, from Venice to Udaipur and from Kyoto to Como. The rigorous is alternated by the superfluous, the bold by the refined and the sombre by the splendid; today's market of antiques is witness to this eternal swinging pendulum of change.

But just as man invented the wheel, he also started to rationalise the production of craft, still using his hands but with a little help from the machine. In turn, as the machine became advanced, our minds had to preview the production process beforehand, giving birth to the concept of design.

Design is a young discipline. A process engineered at the beginning of the industrial age that first and foremost developed function and derived beauty from it. Up until today, function is the trademark of industrial and serial design, reluctantly giving way to the emotional and the ephemeral. But it seems that mankind has a limited interest in pure functionality. Decor, surface effects and inlay techniques evolved blending industry, art and design; it is this movement that is making a revival at present. Then came a period of great innovation, aerodynamic design and streamlined form. What followed was a time of space-age shapes and science fiction volumes: our fascination with form for form's sake was born. As time passed, shape changed shape, and decor followed décor, just as Wallpaper* reintroduced wallpaper.

Function became remote and voice-controlled and morphed into virtuality, giving function an ungraspable quality. Thus arrived matter and the development of our fingertips as important consumer tools. Material development became a major focus of the art and design worlds; the concept of second skin was born, forecasting a future of genetic engineering and human cloning. The more virtual life became, the more tactile we wished to become. Matter called for colour to make up its mind and express its mood, ultimately making colour the overruling reason to select an outstanding work of design. Once design had acquired a sense of function, decor, shape, matter and colour, the insatiable and by now global market requested more. Needing a code, a name, a logo, it invented and perfected the brand: a passport to international shopping pleasure. With this last step, the world could sit back, relax and contemplate a century of learning, accumulating in a completed and perfected design process.

The demand for design has been explosive over the last decade, stretching our imaginations thin, and has engendered an enormous appetite for new experiences from a world already drowning in consumer products. Today, the design community is experiencing a need for reflection and a need to rethink the (non)sense of design.

To answer the growing global resistance to constant renewal and limitless expansion, humanity and integrity are requested for the years to come. It is time to empower goods with a new dimension; their own character, an invisible energy locked into the design process.

I believe that we will be able to make the object (concept or service) come alive to be our partner, pet or friend, thus relating to us on a direct and day-to-day level. Only when design is empowered with emotion will we be able to create a new generation of products that will promote and sell themselves; they will have acquired an aura able to seduce even the most hardened consumers on their own terms. Only then will design have acquired a soul.

With consumers ready to embrace the rare, the unravelled and the irregular in this quest for a product's soul, the arts and crafts movement has returned to the forefront of fashion and interior styles. The ritualistic qualities inherent in the making of the craft object or the symbolic quality in the concept of a human service will gradually become more important; in their quest for experience, consumers will want to embrace their inner selves and choose merchandise to appease this need.

In an evermore complex and information-laden society, it will be important to touch base and to feel real matter, as if literally getting in touch with society. This is why the human-to-human revival of craft will flourish, lending well-being to uprooted westerners longing to get in touch with their original selves. Well-being industries and eco-tourism will rely heavily on human skills for preparing oils and potions, herbal medicines, pamper products and regional food preparations. This immaterial approach to craft will necessitate far-fetching conceptual design and strategy to ward off the relentless advance of the branded superpowers.

What does this mean for emerging economies and markets? What influence will this longing for human design, local craft and the uniquely man-made, have on regional artistic developments and the global commercial markets?

Before we can develop and sustain the craft movement in our world, we will have to design new strategies of retail and new categories of merchandise, new ways of sharing profits, and fresh ideas of showcasing and promoting these goods.

Based on ten years of experience with Heartwear, a Paris-based design collective developing crafts from different countries – pottery from Morocco, khadi from India and indigo from Africa – and armed with recent observations from the master's course on humanitarian design and sustainable style at the Design Academy Eindhoven, I have developed the following observations:

• Crafts run on local time, a rhythm that is considerably slower than the hectic pace of the international markets. This is why the public, especially western consumers, easily embrace and discard items and trends, leaving entire regions without markets by the sheer strength of changing fashions. Therefore we have to develop strategies that play on a once-in-a-while rhythm, exposing and withholding these works of craft so as not to allow the public to become jaded.

• Based on better and equal opportunities, we will have to build up new networks of distribution. For example, playing with exhibition-style events, elevated garage sales or highbrow home-selling parties developed to encounter clients directly, intimately and sporadically. The retail space takes on the appearance of a gallery and its workings.

• Without doubt, we will have to settle for smaller quantities and higher pricing. After all, these goods are made by hand, one by one. Large companies should therefore refrain from delving into craft ideas, exposing them for one season only to discard them the next. Global markets ruin the sustainable perspective of local arts and crafts; they devour their ideas, modify their production rhythm, demand much in little time and then only demand little for a long period. The fatigued fashion cycles of style turn the wheel ever more quickly, yet ultimately feel unsatisfied about everything. Craft distribution will become the mechanism of editing the pace.

• Based on the power of slow change, we will have to stimulate the creation of better goods with higher creative content and a stronger emphasis on quality, discarding the nostalgic western notion of the primitive and the exotic. If a technology or material does not exist in a certain region, I see no reason to withhold its use from the local artists and artisans. Individual creativity filters through new opportunities and options to create one's own opinions and a new dialect of design. Popular culture, outsider design and Sunday artists use contemporary images, technologies and sounds in their work, just like the Parisian bird making its nest. By embracing the new, craft guarantees its own survival.

• We must teach art, craft and design in the emerging economies (as well as in our computer-driven art schools), through craft and design institutes, museum-quality craft centres and artist-in-resident initiatives in the emerging world. Education is the key.

• Another social factor is emerging, creating new possibilities for the craft and cottage industries: the birth of the creative consumer. Educated by retail and press, informed by new media, trained by television, and gifted with a broad schooling, we see the birth of a brand new consumer group yearning to be involved in the creative process. Far-reaching studies are currently underway at economic and technical universities in conjunction with large companies such as Audi and

Adidas, to figure out how the industrial process can be modified to let the consumer participate as a partner. Obviously, here is a challenge for the arts and craft movement: based on the production of one-on-one and one-of-a-kind, its structure is able to embrace the creative consumer, as it still exists today in societies from India to Africa, for example. Workshops in city centres could facilitate this encounter of talents.

• Arts and crafts can only develop in a new economic landscape built on the sustainability of style and in a networked economy. Local markets must be developed and take on an important role: the people-to-people service industries emerging all over the world will furnish local, embellish local and serve local, thus enabling small cottage industries to emerge.

At the Design Academy Eindhoven I have seen glimpses of this immaterial world to come, as translated by students from our new IM master's course. These mostly foreign students come to The Netherlands to train in the conceptual side of design, a discipline they haven't yet mastered in their previous education. Their keen interest in the conceptual and the immaterial gives us food for thought and hope for a distinct and other future.

For example, working with the elderly was a goal of Thai student Ann Praoranuj. She located a group of senior citizens from Eindhoven and introduced them into a total concept, running a slow restaurant with slow service and slow food, completed by a slow chamber music ensemble for the opening of the event.

Or San Hoon Lee from Korea, a student who had a hair loss problem in his youth which he wanted to eradicate. He created a brand called 'I'M-PERFECT', collecting and editing the rejects of our industrial process. To general amazement, these rejects echoed the unique and lively quality of the handmade and the crafted. This concept made us understand many of our motivations to cherish, to hold and to buy. It also made me aware that the industrialised will ultimately be able to obtain a crafts quality.

Today we see borders blurring between disciplines: art is using fashion, fashion is using craft, craft is using industry, industry is transforming design, design is approaching art. Suddenly, the traditional feud of the industrial versus the artisan, and craft versus art, becomes irrelevant. 'Who cares?' is often the answer of a new generation of all-encompassing creators.

I believe that we will see the day when the industrial will carry the soul of the crafted, while arts and crafts will sustain itself through the discovery and acceptance of virtual technologies. There will come a day when the two fields will merge and become an indiscernible whole. This is when humans will have come of age, wise enough to opt for sustainable quality and style in design, blending together all that is believed to be in conflict today: old and new, nihilistic and decorative, male and female, first and emerging world, ethno and techno. You may think I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one.

Cataloguing Women's Hairstyles: The Photographs of J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere

Dapo Adeniyi
Nigeria

The relationship between crafts and the body is long established. With ceremonial and everyday styles of African hair inspired by bridges, movie stars and even Nigerian independence, the names of these hairstyles have long offered a humorous running commentary on contemporary African life. Since the 1950s, photographer J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere has been photographing plaiting styles, mainly in his own country of Nigeria. Today, he is concentrating on his photo library which includes 20,000 negatives, among them more than 1,000 of hairstyles. A part of his unique collection, photographed between 1968 and 1985, was published by the curator André Magnin for the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain and Scalo. From Lagos, Dapo Adeniyi, the editor of *Position International Arts Review* considers the artistry of African hair design and Ojeikere's photographs.

J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere's almost wholesale coverage of women's hairstyles using the medium of photography is especially captivating as a practice, precisely because his work elevates what has belonged in the general feature of everyday life to the status of a high art. Women's hair art is viewed, and wrought, in assortments of forms. They are even quite outspoken about societal issues and devise their own representations of observed phenomena in the environment.

The inception of high-rise office block buildings in the cities for example was met by a set of designs that imitated the steep rising of architectural forms in hair design. Yoruba women found an apt name for the set of hair patterns – Onile gogoro. Nigerian bridges – from mere girders to full-length and the outsized, such as the Niger bridge in Onitsha – were given different expressions in hairstyles. Road networks are simulated in woven designs, key events of social and political significance are documented; names of infamous rulers have been known to inspire suggestive constructions. Even international pop stars have occasionally had hairstyles named after them. It needs saying that social commentary through the medium of women's hairstyles is not pursued with any seriousness of intent. They are construed rather in the comical mode. These are visual modes designed or conceived to effect a comical relief and provide content for conversations among women. They resemble the bite of social commentary we may find in a newspaper's political cartoons. They emerge from a vast creative resource pool that is inexhaustible. It is a collective enterprise whose key architects are hardly identifiable. They are spontaneous and instant in their dissemination and spread. Without Ojeikere's kind of documentation, patterns are easily formed, used, enjoyed and as with all fashions, rapidly discarded to pave way for new entries of ideas. Ojeikere himself reports in his coffee-table photo book devoted exclusively to women's hairstyles that he witnessed a phase during the 1950s when hairstyling in Nigeria was on the verge of extinction. This was the period when city fashion dictated the use of wigs; as a consequence, the numbers of those continuing the hairstyle tradition became quite marginal. Fortunately, it was not for long that hairstyles returned and even more detectable styles were improvised. Now aged 74, Ojeikere has a photo archive of thousands of women's hairstyles mostly from southern Nigeria; even so, as he began to tour more Nigerian cities in the north, he found also a wealth of hairstyles to include in his store. Before André Magnin, the curator who was to stage Ojeikere's exhibition, discovered this image-bank, any attempt to get the collection published on a local or international level were frustrated, as publishers misplaced or damaged photographs. Ojeikere however keeps his original negatives and has over time devised a most impressive photo tracking system within his studio – with the aid of serial numbering he retrieves even commercial photo-snaps taken as far back as the 1950s.

The photographer comments in his 157-page album that he began by making painstaking notations of the names and origins of the hairstyles; in the end, he changes his mind completely: 'I preferred not giving them any title. The concept and the names of the hairstyles aren't important and don't influence our enjoyment.'

Ojeikere's first publication, a massive photo book on Lagosian architectural landmarks and open spaces, was commissioned by the Mandilas corporation. Its founder Mr. Mandilas started his business in Nigeria in the 1940s and came to consider himself a son of Lagos. He funded Ojeikere's first book as a tribute to a fast evolving city. Ojeikere's photographs on African hair design continues in this tradition.

J.D.'Okhai Ojeikere Photographs is published by André Magnin for the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain and Scalo, Zurich, 2000. Photographs © J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere. Courtesy of the C.A.A.C. – The Pigozzi Collection, Geneva, and André Magnin.
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For information, p. 174

Pineapple

Ito Lozi

Ogun Pari

Ojo Npeti/Kiko

Shangalti

Star Koroba

Ife Bronze

Traditional Ceremonial Suku

Udoji

Roundabout Kiko

The Post-modern Context of Rural Craft Production in Contemporary South Africa

Sandra Klopper
South Africa

The beadwork decoration used in South African ritual not only straddles the fine line between tradition and modernity, it also establishes both designer and wearer in a unique relationship. Sandra Klopper celebrates the creativity of adversity.

> '… it may be that certain kinds of symbolic creativity in the expressive and communicative activity of "disadvantaged" groups exercise their uses and economies in precisely eluding and evading formal recognition, publicity and the possible control by others of their own visceral meanings. In this case, the decontextualised search for aesthetics is, by definition, doomed to endless labour, for the aesthetic will be wherever it isn't'.[1]

Until very recently, South Africa's rural communities were commonly studied as discrete cultural or ethnic entities. In the course of the twentieth century, this notion of ethnicity as a primary framework for understanding, not only political structures and histories, but also the socio-cultural domain, was entrenched through the significance racist ideologues ascribed to 'tribal' identities in an effort to sustain the dominance, in the region, of white settler communities. In some cases, indigenous communities tried to influence these ideologues by manipulating ethnic identities through a persuasive use of expressive cultural forms, such as the art of mural decoration. By painting murals on homestead walls and thereby becoming (quite literally) more visible, they sought to lobby state support for their efforts to secure access to resources like land.[2] In other contexts, ethnicity played a central role in strategies of resistance to white domination, and to the growing impact of Christianity on African values and cultural practices.[3]

Especially in recent years, however, historians and anthropologists have repeatedly questioned the role ethnicity plays in rural communities' understanding of their life experiences. It has, for example, been suggested that the increasing fluidity of global capital has led to a loss of any kind of stable self-identification based on a sense of place.[4] As Zegeye points out, moreover, in South Africa, resistance against apartheid afforded people opportunities to share 'not only values, but also daily life strategies and tactics within the social movements they partook in'. As he rightly notes, these factors have had a huge impact on post-apartheid South Africa.[5] Following the release

Figure 1
Apron, Limpopo Province, South Africa,
45 x 45 cm, private collection
photo A. van Eeden

from prison of Nelson Mandela and others in the early 1990s, a range of nation-building projects has encouraged the emergence of new, more inclusive cultural identities. On the other hand, local identities have also become increasingly fragmented and more individualised. For this reason, the contemporary South African situation evokes comparison with Appiah's description of the post-modern/post-colonial African polyglot whom outsiders refer to as 'Yoruba' – thereby affirming their own clichéd assumptions about cultural identity – but who no longer regards this ethnic designation as relevant to his understanding of himself.[6]

In South Africa, little, if any, attempt has thus far been made to address the implications of this refusal to embrace ethnicity as a primary frame of self-reference. Nor has any concerted attempt been made to explore the possible role of individual aesthetic choice in the production of long-established art forms like beadwork, presumably because artistic traditions like these still seem to validate the idea that both the producers and the consumers of these craft forms celebrate ethnicity through style: even in post-apartheid South Africa, most local beadwork styles are still readily identifiable as 'Xhosa', or 'Zulu', or 'Sotho'. This evidence notwithstanding, the impact globalisation and the democratisation of South African society have had on local social relations is far greater than it might appear at first sight. Even in some outlying rural areas, ethnicity has become 'conspicuously devoid of solid cultural content'.[7] In keeping with recent observations regarding contemporary social networks in the US, it would in fact seem that, in many cases, South Africa's ethnic communities are separated from one another by the same culture.

Using this idea of cultural 'sameness' as a point of departure, the present discussion focuses on a number of beadwork and other garments produced in the course of the 1990s for use on special or ritual occasions. Some of these pieces, which are associated with initiation practices in present-day Limpopo Province, close to South Africa's border with Zimbabwe, are worn by girls. (figs. 1, 2 and 3). Others, known as *imithika*, were collected in the Debe Nek and King Williamstown districts in the Eastern Cape (figs. 5, 6, 7, 8). Although acquired from diviners who dress in garments like these during their consultations with clients, in rural Xhosa-speaking areas and in Cape Town's historically black satellite neighbourhoods like Langa and Khayelitsha, *imithika* are also worn by young male initiates prior to leaving their homes for initiation lodges.

These beadwork garments and 'skirts' are all characterised by an extraordinarily abundant incorporation of discarded plastic trinkets, broken watches (fig. 1), small action toys (figs. 3, 4), birdcage mirrors (figs. 1 and 3), old strips of material (figs. 5 and 6), bottle tops (fig. 7), medicine spoons (fig. 8), cheap costume jewellery (fig. 1), and other recycled items. Richly colourful, they sparkle against the light and jingle to the rhythm of the wearer's body. Given both their remarkable quality of excess, and the eclectic materials from which they are made, they bear comparison with the glitz and glamour of famous designers like Versace, whose fashion items were described on one occasion as 'following

Figure 2
Apron, Limpopo Province, South Africa
45 x 49 cm, private collection, Cape Town
photo A. van Eeden

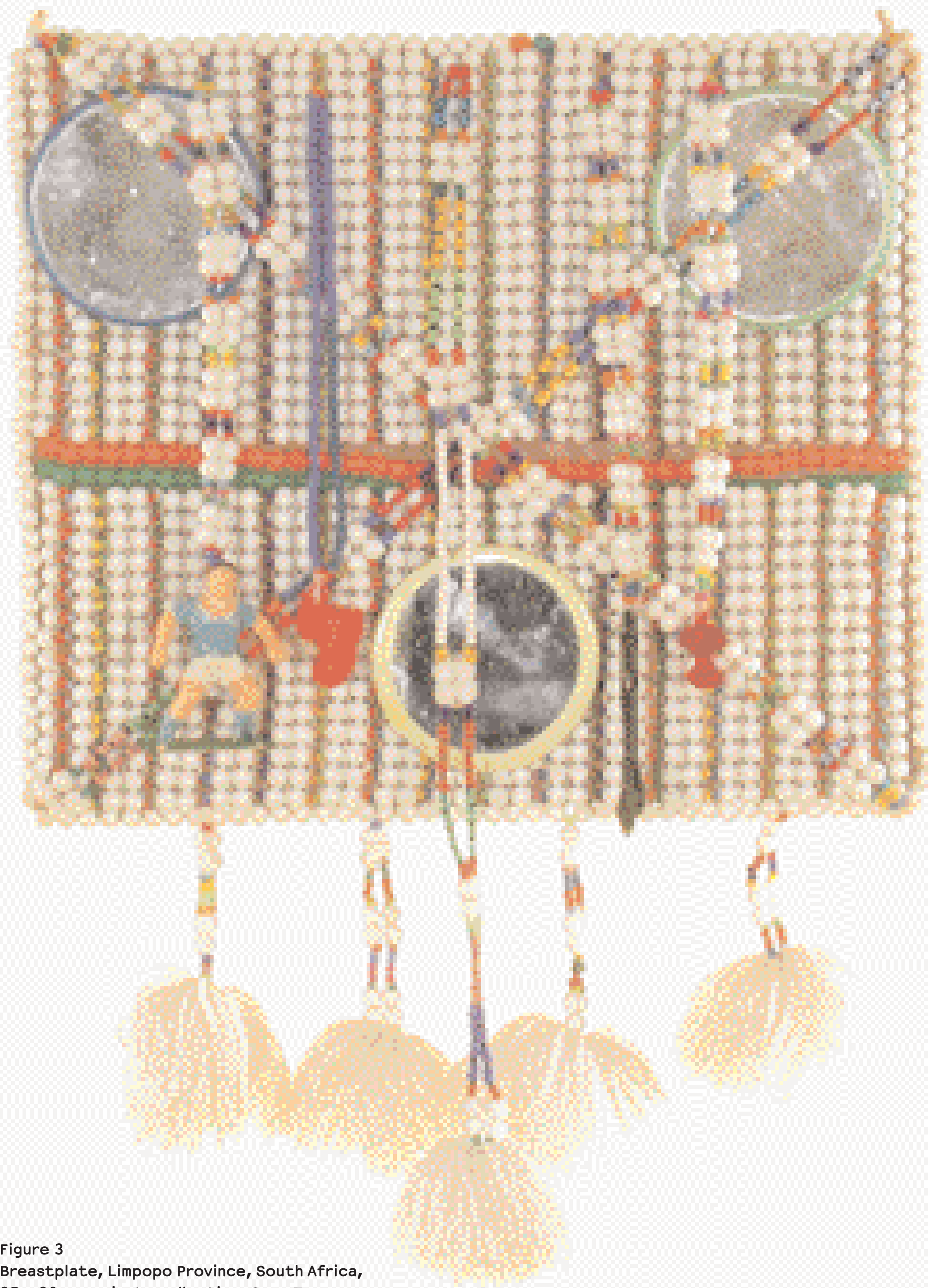


Figure 3
Breastplate, Limpopo Province, South Africa, 25 x 29 cm, private collection, Cape Town
photo A. van Eeden

Oscar Wilde's dictum that nothing succeeds like excess'; on another, as combining 'beauty with vulgarity'.[8] Actively eschewing 'the bourgeois idiom of understatement and tastefulness'[9], prior to Versace's untimely death in July 1997 he produced clothing that was overtly opulent, and loudly eye-catching; in fact, not dissimilar to many of the garments currently being made by some of South Africa's rural traditionalists.

Economic Necessity vs. Aesthetic Choice

Because of the realties of massive unemployment, especially in rural South Africa, it would be easy to dismiss as absurd the suggested comparison between Versace's clothing and the dress worn by these local traditionalists. In contrast to leading countries in the west, South Africa's private wealth is concentrated in the hands of a very small number of people.[10] By the early 1990s, fewer than ten per cent of the country's population seeking to enter the labour market managed to find work in the formal job sector,[11] while estimates of employment in the informal sector ranged from ten to 29 per cent.[12] Particularly in rural areas, people with low skill and educational levels often fail to generate any income at all, and those who do find employment commonly earn a tenth of the wages earned by workers employed in the manufacturing sector in urban areas.[13]

Frightening though these statistics may be, they should not encourage one to assume that the crafted garments currently produced by women from economically marginalised communities living in the country's rural periphery are inevitably shaped by an aesthetics of necessity rather than an aesthetics of choice. Even though some researchers have cautioned – no doubt rightly – that the recycling practices of impoverished communities[14] are sometimes far from ennobling or liberating, let alone deliberate comments on the global circulation of cheap commodities, questions regarding the creative agency of African producers are never as simple or as straightforward as they might seem at first sight. On the contrary, as Appiah notes in his consideration of contemporary African creativity, 'despite the overwhelming reality of economic decline; despite unimaginable poverty; despite wars, malnutrition, disease and political instability, African cultural productivity grows apace …'[15]

In South Africa, where impoverished rural traditionalists have shown a growing interest in using plastic, rather than glass beads since the early 1970s, it is quite common for outsiders to 'misread' the reasons for this development. Because these plastic beads are now manufactured locally by a factory linked to Pretoria Distributors, a wholesaling group that sells beads to other wholesalers throughout the country, there is a vast difference in the local price of plastic and glass beads. (The latter are still imported from various centres in Europe and in the east). Today, 250 grams of white glass beads retails for about R50, while a large bag of plastic beads costs about R10.[16] Unlike glass beads, which differ in price depending on colour – for example, pink beads are so expensive to manufacture that those currently being produced tend to be a milky, watered-down camomile colour – plastic beads all retail for the same, comparatively low price.

Some dealers now ascribe the growing interest in plastic beads to the impact the country's weak currency has had on the buying power of women seeking to purchase imported glass beads. But this argument is not borne out by the historical evidence, for plastic beads were introduced at a time when the exchange rate was comparably favourable. In fact, South Africa's currency was stronger in the mid- to late-1970s than it has ever been before or since. It was only in the course of the 1980s that it began to weaken markedly, reaching an all-time low soon after 2000. Moreover, even though today there is a huge difference in price between glass and plastic beads, according to Nalin Kalla of Pretoria Distributors, who calls himself the 'king of beads' in South Africa, it is impossible to sell plastic beads to some female beadmakers. In his view, these women 'wouldn't take them if you gave them away'.[17] Nor would they dream of incorporating recycled materials into their garments. Why, then, have others chosen to use plastic beads, along with plastic trinkets and discarded materials, thereby developing new aesthetic forms that bear very little relationship to so-called 'traditional' beadwork and other garments?

The Artist as Bricoleur

While possible reasons for the adoption of plastic beads no doubt vary considerably from one context to another,[18] notions of economic necessity clearly do not provide an adequate framework for understanding or explaining the material choices of contemporary beadmakers, including their tendency to recycle discarded trinkets and other materials. Nor can it account adequately for the eclectic collaging of materials in the production of diviners' imithika which, until recently, were made from strips of leather. In the past, these 'skirts' were decorated very sparingly, in most cases by having a few bells sewn to the ends of the leather strips.

Like consumers elsewhere in the world, the producers of these garments and beadwork items are caught up in the global circulation of cheap commodities. As such, they often communicate values and ideas through pre-existing, or ready-made forms. It is partly for this reason that their aesthetic choices bear comparison with that of fashion industry stars like Versace, who played a significant role in furthering the post-modern expansion of eclecticism following the demise of the orderly evolution of fashion styles in the course of the 1970s.[19] But this comparison obviously also raises crucial questions regarding the intentions of the designers and the markets for which they work.

Since outsiders commonly dismiss African fashion as 'costume' or 'ethnic garb', it would be unfortunate to abandon this comparison with the contemporary fashion industry altogether. But the relationship between the post-modern practice of quarrying both the past and popular mass culture, and the aesthetic choices of economically marginalised producers, is probably best explained through the concept of bricolage. Adopted by Hebdige and others in their attempts to make sense of the innovative cultural practices of highly visible British youth cultures dating to the 1960s and 1970s, this notion has also been

Figure 4
Breastplate, detail of figure 3
photo A. van Eeden

used to explain the recycling activities of contemporary African communities. Like many of these African communities, British youths recycled consumer commodities and other materials, thereby establishing an active or 'productive' relationship to existing cultural forms and artefacts. In the process, they developed what Willis calls a 'grounded' aesthetic, i.e., an aesthetic that breaks the 'ordered categories' of clothing sold in retail stores. By 'choosing their own colours and matches and personalising their purchases', these young consumers create new meanings: 'They make their own sense of what is commercially available, make their own aesthetic judgements, and sometimes reject normative definitions and categories of 'fashion' promoted by the clothing industry.'[20]

Hebdige first adopted the idea of *bricolage*, derived from Levi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind*, in his effort to make sense of the punk practice of transforming everyday objects like pins, plastic cloths' pegs, television components, razor blades and even tampons, into unusual fashion items. For Hebdige, the radical nature of this aesthetic intervention suggested comparison with the methods used by dada and surrealist artists whose dream works, collages and readymades achieved a similar disruption and reorganisation of meaning through an appropriation and transformation of the commonplace. Ultimately, therefore, punk innovators achieved an 'implicitly coherent, though explicitly bewildering, system of connection between things which perfectly equip their users to "think" their own world'.[21]

Contemporary African artisans have been equally inventive, often appropriating, adapting, and ultimately extending the life of existing commodities. According to Roberts, the activities of these 'recycle' artists, or *bricoleurs*, are probably best explained by referring to a passage from *The Savage Mind* in which Levi-Strauss argues that: 'In its old sense the verb *bricoler* applied to ball games and billiards, to hunting, shooting and riding. It was … always used with reference to some extraneous movement: a ball rebounding, a dog straying or a horse swerving from its direct course to avoid an obstacle. And in our time the *bricoleur* is still someone who works with his hands and uses devious means.' For Roberts, the key issue highlighted in this passage is the notion that the *bricoleur* is devious: 'not as that word is sometimes used in English to connote underhandedness, but in positive reference to his or her ability and willingness to deviate from the usual or proper courses defined in some socio-historical circumstances'.[22] Viewed from this perspective, African art is always innovative, adaptable, and capable of coping with social change.[23]

For Hebdige, the *bricoleur* is engaged in an act of resistance, for Roberts it is above all her inventiveness that defines her. Viewed from the former perspective, he plunders and recontextualises forms and commodities in an active 'challenge to the hegemony of the dominant culture'.[24] Hebdige described this process as one that is often violently confrontational and intentionally challenging: 'Cheap, trashy fabrics (PVC, plastic, Lurex, etc.) in vulgar designs (e.g. mock leopard skin) and "nasty" colours, long discarded by the quality end of the fashion industry as obsolete kitsch, were salvaged by the punks and turned into garments (fly boy drainpipes, "common" mini skirts) which offered self-conscious commentaries on the notions of modernity and taste.'[25] From Roberts' perspective of the African contexts he describes, *bricoleurs* 'are able not only to hang on but to flourish in changing contemporary circumstances by finding solutions' that, according to Stephen Gould, are sometimes 'comically different' from that intended by the original producers of the commodities African artisans recycled and reuse (or 'misuse').[26]

The latter perspective bears some comparison with Muggleton's assertion that, far from engaging in political resistance, as Hebdige argued in the 1970s, British youths tend to 'exhibit a celebratory attitude towards style, fashion and the media'.[27] Muggleton extends this discussion by underlining the importance of individuality for an understanding of the *bricoleur's* stylistic innovations and interventions.[28] According to him, once one accepts that the *bricoleur's* concern is not to challenge the system, one has to acknowledge that he is asserting a right to freedom of expression. For this reason, he suggests, punk politics is best understood in terms of notions of self-determination. Opposing 'predictability, order, regulation, restriction, demarcation and structure', punk stylists can ultimately be described as post-modern 'in that they demonstrate a fragmented, heterogeneous, and individualistic stylistic identification'.[29]

Symbolic Value

Recently produced beadwork items associated with initiation practices in Limpopo Province are characterised by a similarly striking individualism. Yet they also raise interesting questions regarding notions of value, both symbolic or cultural, and commercial. The addition to these aprons of potentially expensive goods, like watches (fig.1), suggests a concern with consumerism, which is actively reinforced by the sense of excess in the decoration of these items, and by their extraordinarily colourful opulence (figs. 2, 3, 4). What Nettleton *et al* refer to – in works of this kind – as the transformation of the commonplace,[30] thus becomes a transformation of the discarded and the valueless into symbols of (material) value. Because beads themselves were once regarded as valuable repository of wealth, this 'transformation of the commonplace' involves a highly inventive, but also playful re-enactment of a lost code of value.

The tendency to excess in the incorporation of discarded consumer items evidenced in the production of these aprons is also apparent in recent examples of diviners' 'skirts' from the Debe Nek and King Williamstown area in the eastern Cape. In contrast to the earlier *imithika* made from sparsely decorated strips of leather, these examples are covered in bottle tops (fig. 7), colourful pieces of cloth (fig. 5), medicine spoons (fig. 8) and other items (fig. 6), all of which serves to transform them into opulent, shimmering percussive instruments. In these dance costumes, which diviners wear when they attend political rallies, or to welcome young male initiates returning from their initiation lodges, the use of recycled materials – percussive and otherwise – contributes to a sense of festivity, a feeling of celebration that is reinforced through song and dance.

Figure 5
Diviner's Skirt, Eastern Cape, South Africa
Iziko Museums of Cape Town, length 71 cm
photo Cecil Kortjie

Figure 6
Diviner's Skirt, Eastern Cape, South Africa
Iziko Museums of Cape Town, length 80.5 cm
photo Cecil Kortjie

Some researchers continue to deny the post-modern context of contemporary African craft production – including rural craft forms made by women (and men) associated with particular ethnic groups. In keeping with this position Hastrup argues, for example, that 'While each one of us would admit that today "more persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of 'possible' lives than they ever did before", [31] we would be deceiving ourselves (and "the natives") if this was presented as an actual choice of culture. The image conveyed by the mass media may give us a sense of a shared world, but one's social space is not reducible to images. The imagined worlds may feed into and blur the boundaries of culture through processes of mimicry, but people still live in real worlds that are socially constrained – also by their own definitions'.[32] In contrast to this view of 'the native', Appiah points out that 'in Africa's cultures, there are those who will not see themselves as Other'.[33] If anything, their sense of self is both expansive and inclusive. Thus, whereas before, their primary self-definition may have been ethnic, the boundaries they now embrace are more generally both national – witness, for example, the new South Africa flags on one of the aprons from Limpopo Province – and global.

Notes

1. P. Willis, *Common Culture* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1990).
2. E. A. Schneider, 'Paint, Pride and Politics. Aesthetic and Meaning in Transvaal Ndebele Wall Art', PhD thesis, (University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1986), and her article in *African Arts*, 18, 1985. See also P. Delius, 'The Ndzundza Ndebele. Indenture and the Making of Ethnic Identity', in P. Bonner et al (eds), *Holding Their Ground. Class, Locality and Culture in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press and Ravan Press).
3. See P. Mayer, 'The Origins and Decline of Two Rural Resistance Ideologies', in P. Mayer (ed.), *Black Villagers in Industrial Society. Anthropological Perspectives on Labour Migration in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1980).
4. See, for example, J. Sharp, 'Culture, Identity and Nation in South Africa', in G. Maharaj (ed.), *Between Unity and Diversity. Essays on Nation-Building in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Cape Town: Idasa and David Philip Publishers, 1999) 63.
5. A. Zegeye, 'Conclusion: Depoliticising Ethnicity in South Africa', in A. Zegeye (ed.), *Social Identities in the New South Africa* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2001) 333.
6. K. A. Appiah, *In My Father's House. Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 157.
7. T. K. Fitzpartick, 'Media, Ethnicity and Identity', in M. Gurenvitch (ed.), *Media, Culture and Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988).
8. R. C.V. Buckley and S. Gundle, 'Flash Trash. Gianni Versace and the Theory and Practice of Glamour', in S. Brucci and P. C. Gibson, *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations and Analysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) 331.
9. Buckley and Gundle, 'Flash Trash', ibid, 341.
10. See, for example, M. McGarth, 'The Distribution of Personal Income in South Africa in Selected Years over the Period 1945 to 1980', PhD thesis, (University of Natal, Durban, 1983).
11. A. Roux, 'Options for Employment Creation', in P. Moll, N. Nattrass and L. Loots, *Redistribution. How Can It Work in South Africa?* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1991) 101. This compares very unfavourably with the 1950s and 1960s when the percentage of the workforce *without* formal sector employment tended to fluctuate within a band slightly above twenty per cent.
12. Roux, 'Options for Employment Creation', ibid, 103
13. P. Moll, 'Conclusion: What Redistributes and What Doesn't', in Moll, Nattrass and Loots, ibid, 119.
14. See, especially, C. A. Kratz, 'Rethinking Recyclia', *African Arts*, 28, 3, 1995, 1-12, 7, 11.
15. Appiah, *In My Father's House*, ibid, 157.
16. At the current exchange rate, R10 is equivalent to approximately $1.50 US.
17. Telephone interview, 5 September 2003.
18. One very important factor for the use of plastic beads in the production of large items like capes is weight. Used in large quantities, glass beads are extremely heavy. This is clearly borne out by a comment in George Angas' *The Kafirs Illustrated* (London: Hogarth, 1849, 87) in which this British artist-traveller noted that 'on grand occasions the amount of beads worn by the (Zulu) king's women is almost incredible, a single dress having been known to consist of 50 pounds weight of these highly-valued decorations, so as to render it a matter of some difficulty as well as personal inconvenience for the wearer to dance under the accumulated weight of her beads'.
19. See, for example, E. Wilson, 'Fashion and Postmodernism', in R. Boyne and A. Rattansi (eds), *Postmodernism and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1990) 222-36.
20. Willis, *Common Culture*, ibid, 85.
21. D. Hebdige, *Subculture. The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979) 135, and 'The Great Divide: *Territories*' in *Prince Claus Fund Journal* 7 on Carnival (The Hague: Prince Claus Fund, 2001) 20.
22. A. Roberts, 'Chance Encounters, Ironic Collage', *African Arts*, 25, 2 April, 1992, 54-63, 97-98, 56.
23. Roberts, 'Chance Encounters', ibid, 55, 58.
24. D. Muggleton, *Inside Subculture. The Post-modern Meaning of Style* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000) 131.
25. Hebdige, *Subculture*, ibid, 107.
26. Roberts, 'Chance Encounters', ibid, 62-63.
27. Muggleton, *Inside Subculture*, ibid, 132.
28. Muggleton, *Inside Subculture*, ibid, 147.
29. Muggleton, ibid, 149, 161, 158.
30. A. Nettleton et al., *Engaging Modernities. Transformations of the Commonplace* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Galleries, 2003).
31. This quotation is from A. Appadurai, 'Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology', in R. G. Fox (ed.), *Recapturing Anthropology. Working in the Present* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1991) 191-210, 197.
32. K. Hastrup, 'The Native Voice – and the Anthropological Vision', *Social Anthropology*, 1, 2, 1993, 173-186, 179.
33. Appiah, *In My Father's House*, ibid, 157.

Figure 7
Diviner's Skirt, Eastern Cape, South Africa
Iziko Museums of Cape Town, length 83 cm
photo Cecil Kortjie

Figure 8
Diviner's Skirt, Eastern Cape, South Africa
Iziko Museums of Cape Town, length 75 cm
photo Cecil Kortjie

The Art of Authentic Fraud

Virginia Pérez-Ratton
Colombia

Imagine the day when an archaeologist digs up a pre-Columbian statue of Bart Simpson or Mickey Mouse and starts to theorise … artist Nadín Ospina does. Manufacturing models of international icons in a style reminiscent of his pre-Hispanic ancestors, Ospina's practice appropriates Pop art's techniques to raise questions about cultural colonialism. Virginia Pérez-Ratton, the curator of TEOR/éTica, San Jose, Costa Rica, and a 2002 Prince Claus laureate, describes the background to Ospina's 2001 exhibition.

The work of many Latin American artists of the last two decades relates to the observation and critique of their surroundings, putting forth their ambiguous relations with a frequently conflictive context – political, social, but also artistic – with an unresolved past and a manipulated present. And they have boldly appropriated whatever was useful from the repertoire of the twentieth century avant-garde, from their own perspectives and requirements, boosting the former with experiences and questionings stemming from another perception of an artistic practice which usually requires of frameworks and interpretations different from those of the traditional hegemonic discourses. Black humour and a good dose of irony are usually integrated in these dynamics. In other cases, a certain evocative, censorial and symbolic charge emerges without fear, instead of hiding behind a contained coyness or disappearing in formalism. Latin America's contemporary art produces thus its own versions of movements that originate in a certain minimalism and are anchored in conceptual art.

So, by means of this reconfiguration, an art is produced which is socially immersed in its historical moment, widening the scope of its language through contamination and hybridisation as well as by the possible and unexpected overlapping and crossings. Nadín Ospina is one artist who permeates such trans-generational sensibilities by means of referents from a dominating popular culture that, now so ubiquitous, is no longer perceived as foreign or external.

Following this line of thought, one could say that an artist with Ospina's humour could not help subverting a movement like Pop art. Just as even post-colonial theory tosses and turns in its own re-reading, Ospina's work appropriates pre-Columbian and pre-colonial forms, to draw an ironic focus on the neo-colonising powers of the mass media, of the insertion of characters of Hollywood animations, in our everyday iconography and our imaginary lives.

If Pop art transferred supermarket products, comics, movie stars and animated cartoons – the banal objects of daily North American life – to the exhibition space, Ospina helps himself from the Pop tray and chooses the contrivances he finds useful, turning them around in his 'pop-colonialism', by which he modifies objects that have kept a certain aura, with the features of these new gods, originated in the North American mass culture and now belonging to the global mass culture.

It is known that the use of Disney's Mickey and Donald, and other animated characters, is not new. Roy Lichstenstein had made drawings of them as early as 1955, and his 1960s paintings with related themes are well known. Spain's Equipo Crónica also appropriated the world's most famous mouse for sequences in linoleum cuts around 1965. However, Ospina's work is not a transposition from the comic strip world to art, or a reproduction of a given sequence for its own sake. There is a long, reflective process around the meaning of the character within the contemporary imaginary of a continent that receives – and, one must admit, receives willingly – an endless invasion of massified referents. Artists like Enrique Chagoya, a Chicano, place themselves in a similar line, using Mickey in a more symbolic manner. Ospina, though, takes this process to its extreme consequences, systematically proposing monstrous figures with a pre-Columbian body and a Disneylandish head. This acts exactly as a symbolic or metaphoric form of the identity process of the Latin American continent: an autochthonous root is still kept to a large extent, an attachment to an inherited multiple identity, but over which hovers another process located within the unequal cultural exchange. This is promoted in a way by the lack of interest in supporting expressions originated in the local popular culture, and by the desire of inclusion into the north's reference system.

With planeloads of Latin American families now travelling to Mickey's Mecca, the organised tours to Disneyland have become the new obliged pilgrimages, not only for the affluent, but for anyone who can raise enough to pay for this new ritual, all facilitated by fabulous group rates and credit plans, unavailable for visiting attractions of another cultural level. How many Latin Americans have visited Tikal? Or climbed Macchu Picchu? Or taken a boat down the Rio de la Pasión? And how many really know their own stories, even if only as a visual image from the archaeological collections? Few, and even fewer in relation to those who – sometimes year after year – go to pay their respects to Mickey and his buddies, have had their picture taken with Pluto or have squealed with pleasure because Porky Pig has embraced them!

Meanwhile, our pre-Hispanic treasures rest quietly in national and international museums, arousing the curiosity and avarice of many foreign visitors. Everyone wants an 'authentic' fragment of the Giza Pyramids or 'authentic antique' *huipiles* from Chichicastenango's open market. Mass tourism has produced an informal economy of fake-producers – obscure characters peddling 'real' jade and ceramics, all contemporary resins or recently baked crocks, skilfully aged.

Nadín Ospina takes advantage of all this trickery and mutual deceit, and from the reflection of the present fate of the pre-Columbian productions – and of their replicas – puts up this fraudulent show, in which TEOR/éTica admits its complicity. We have completely modified the gallery to replicate the atmosphere

Nadín Ospina, *Antique Pieces*, **1996**

of the old archaeological museums, with their low lighting, directed to the objects, their greenish wallpapered rooms. In this way, the exhibition context enters the artist's game, recreating the pieces with a surprising verisimilitude, leading the spectator to a hoax. After all, the artefacts look 'real'… until you notice the round ears or the beak.

A project with Nadín Ospina was in my pending drawer for a long time. It started to take form around the end of 1999, and in April 2000, we agreed to plan and carry out one more fraud: with the help of ceramists, goldsmiths, and stone cutters from Costa Rica, pieces were manufactured over a period of more than a year. The starting point was a selection of digitally modified images of pre-Hispanic objects from the collections of the National Museum, the Gold Museum and the Jade Museum. The occupation of these craftsmen sometimes borders on the imposture we mentioned above: the fabrication of objects like those that, once their ritual content vanished in the night of the Conquest, only exist as museum pieces of cultures we have not and probably never will really know deeply. The fascination for this mysterious past persists – exacerbated by the ever-growing tourism – but usually as the ideal image of the unknown and the exotic, stimulating the desire for 'authentic souvenirs' which represent a certain cultural identity, the idealised stereotype. Its present meaning is in fact irrelevant, as long as it remits to that nostalgia for ages presumed as glorious, that pre-Columbian arcadia, an *a posteriori* construct which functions in the invention of the image of how the outside world wishes to see us, and maybe even wishes we still were.

By subverting this process of deceit and falsehood that occurs anyway in most countries, one could say then that Ospina is an impostor all around. He starts by retaking the Pop and conceptual procedure of conceiving the work to be executed by third parties, then he alters it. While industrial manufacture produces identical objects, Ospina's editions reflect a pre-industrial, pre-modern moment, as each number of the edition is the differentiated product of popular, manual craftsmanship. Furthermore, he becomes a falsifier of authentic objects or an authentic maker of invented objects. In any case, his work has chosen to situate itself within the authentic fake or the faked authentic: this is the terrain of the ambiguous and the intentional hoax, starting out from the historically sacred.

The show has provoked diverse reactions: the ecstatic, the scandalised, a series of thoughts about kitsch and the nature of popular culture. It has not left its spectators untouched. Impressive media coverage, showing a pronounced interest by an otherwise cautious cultural press, demonstrated how the show's artistic proposal was. It showed a surreptitious way to step around global images, as the emergence of the local responded to the homogenising flux.

All of a sudden any object with round ears is no longer what it was; it has become a 'nadinospina'. Could these fraudulent objects replace Disney's characters in the hit parade of popularity and circulation? Or would this be a reaction revealing a real awareness of the decapitation of our culture,

symbolically replaced by these international icons, these figures which have become the new deities adored by Latin Americans and Africans, by Asians and Europeans? Even the Old World has also started to wear these ears, notwithstanding its heavy cultural past, acknowledged until recently as the only universal culture.

I would like to share some of the consequences of the show. Given the quality of the ceramics produced by the artisan Mario Montoya, he has been engaged by the National Museum to produce 'authentic replicas' for local touring exhibits. Meanwhile, another museum dealing with pre-Hispanic artefacts sent its staff to check on the show to investigate whether this usurpation justified a letter of protest. Finally, so the artist could take part of the pieces back to Colombia with him, we had to make a 'falsehood authentication' to present at the Costa Rican customs upon leaving the country. In this way, the fraud was completed.

The original Spanish text of 'The Art of the Authentic Fraud' by Virginia Pérez-Ratton is available on the Prince Claus Fund website, www.princeclausfund.nl. For information p. 174

Nadín Ospina, Ritual Vases**, 1997**

photos courtesy of the artist

A Dutch Perspective on Craft

Louise Schouwenberg
The Netherlands

While Dutch designers are known for their conceptual minimalism, the increasing popularity of crafts means that traditional techniques are penetrating the world of art and design in The Netherlands.

Pigs covered in tattoos and a gigantic lorry meticulously carved in wood – setting different worlds side by side, the Belgian artist Wim Delvoye appeals to both 'the common people' and the formal art circuit. He leaves the technical execution to craftsmen. Traditional techniques and decorative patterns have also surfaced in the work of the Dutch designers Marcel Wanders and Hella Jongerius, among others. Wanders' *Knotted Chair* ignores specific properties of material and reverses expectations. Jongerius has embroidered a plate on a cloth for *Embroidered Tablecloth* which tells a story of conventional etiquette and new traditions. Awareness that traditional craft is an excellent means of telling stories and visualising ideas has penetrated the world of contemporary art and design in the last ten years. The impressive expertise of Babs Haenen, Barbara Nanning, Irene Vonck, Mieke Groot, Richard Price and fellow colleagues demonstrates that traditional craft could do even more than this. For centuries ceramists, glass designers and textile artists have understood that traditional techniques are not only the means but can also be the goal.

Craft is in. Since globalisation is an item on the agenda of world politics, preservation of traditions that are deeply rooted in local history is strongly advocated as well. Everywhere in the world, a unique, cultural identity is sought through, among others, handmade examples of age-old craftsmanship such as Venetian glass, Moroccan pottery, Turkish rugs, lace from Bruges, elaborate decorations from Mexico, Kenyan basket-weaving, wood carvings from Indonesia. Every corner in this world has its own speciality. However, there are more reasons behind the current revival of interest in local craftsmanship.

In 2004, Premsela, Dutch design foundation, in association with the Prince Claus Fund, is organising a travelling exhibition which shows the importance of crafts from all over the world: *The Future is Handmade*. What will be on show – relics from an ancient past as well as contemporary representatives of similar crafts, or the work of designers and artists that incidentally use traditional techniques, while ignoring the orthodox rules of the *métier*? The launch of the exhibition in The Netherlands provides a good reason to investigate the practice of traditional techniques in this country.

Gijs Bakker, Knitted Maria

Worlds of Differences

The people who work with these techniques are roughly divided into two separate groups who hardly communicate, and worse, they look askance at each other's work. For the craftsmen, technique takes precedence over everything else. When it comes to know-how and skills, they surpass themselves and each other, usually using a peculiar mix of pragmatic information and obscure insider's jargon. So the viewer has to assume that these very secrets, which are unchangingly connected to the method, define the object's exclusivity. It's no wonder that these 'experts' know how to pick out the failings in the works of inexperienced newcomers. In turn, the newcomers believe that the old school is too focused on the medium, neglecting its conceptual side. The fact that these two groups have grown apart from each other is connected to a persistent notion that craftsmanship has a very special place in the cultural spectrum.

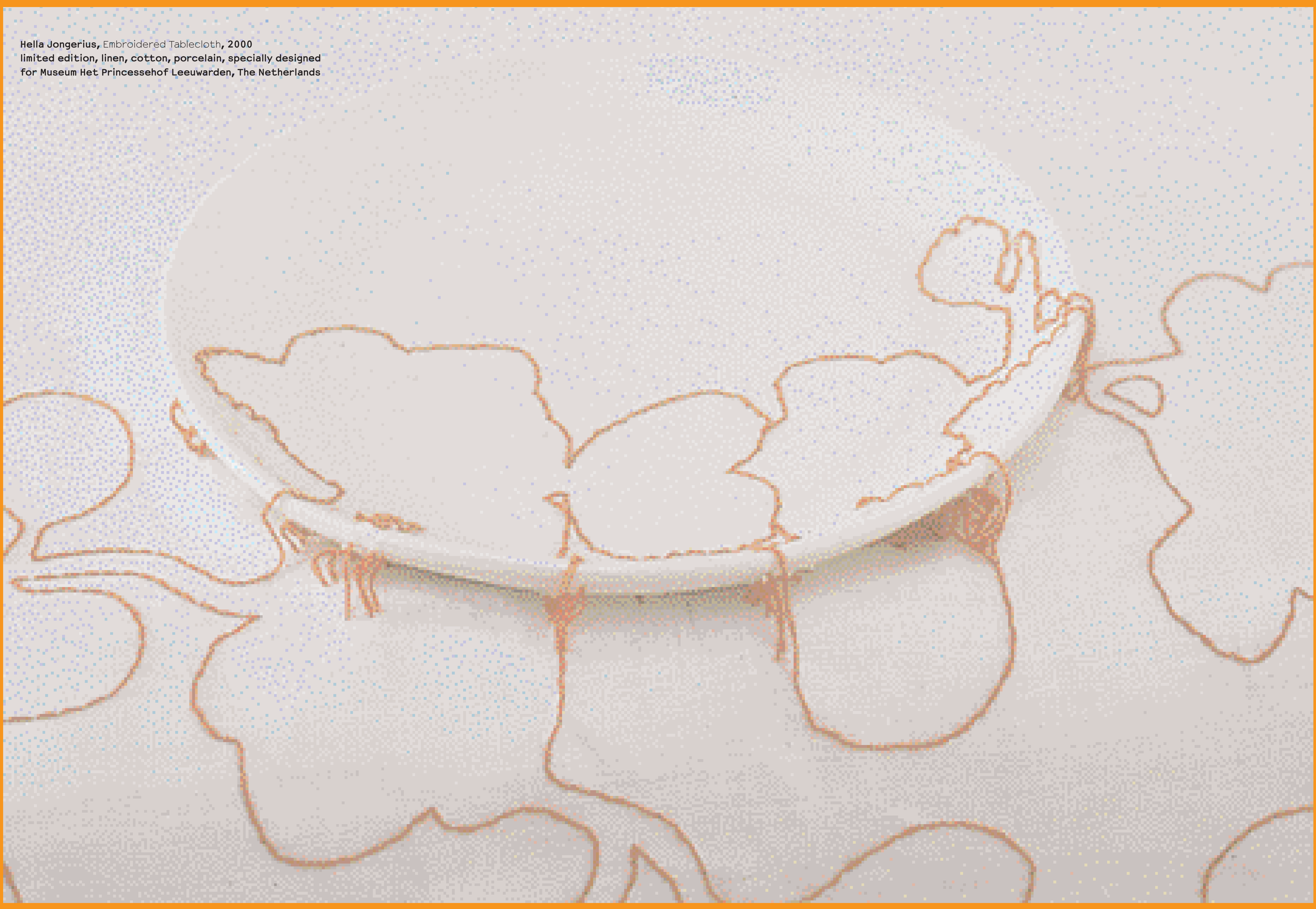
Because of ceramists and glass and textile designers, craft has survived. After all, these disciplines have been in trouble since the coming of industrial production methods. Why care for time-consuming and expensive procedures when utensils can be fastly and cheaply produced? Because of the artistic quality, as the crafts community would answer. However, development in technical terms has not led to pragmatic and economic results only. In the era of technical reproduction the unique and traditionally made object has also dropped in value from the artistic point of view. Artists and designers have seized reproduction techniques with both hands thereby robbing the unique object of its aura. Concepts like originality and authenticity lost their shine, the evidence of the making process and personal signature were looked down upon. If everything can be copied perfectly, there needs to be a better justification for art and design. At least, this was the issue for the avant-garde.

Transience in Art and Design

In the course of the twentieth century, the increasing possibilities of production would question the nature of the so-called *object d'art* in the art world. Reflection on the discipline and the growing importance of context swept aside the object. Sculptures and paintings, which by virtue of their nature claim uniqueness and originality, have been pushed away by more transient and non-substantial media.

The explosive development of production methods generated interesting viewpoints on originality and authenticity in the design profession as well. Of course, they could not take shelter in transience like visual artists (in life we need to find a real bathroom not a virtual one), but they came close. Industrial production summarily dismissed the marks of the making process in the final product and – perhaps even more essential – it became an economic factor of importance. For the first time in history, good design was available for a large number of people, and products manufactured in greater amounts gained ascendancy over traditionally made, unique objects. Innovation blended with ideology. From that time the avant-garde considered the marks in handmade

Babs Haenen, *Résistance*, 2002
porcelain, glaze, 40 × 35 × 46 cm
photo Peter Edels



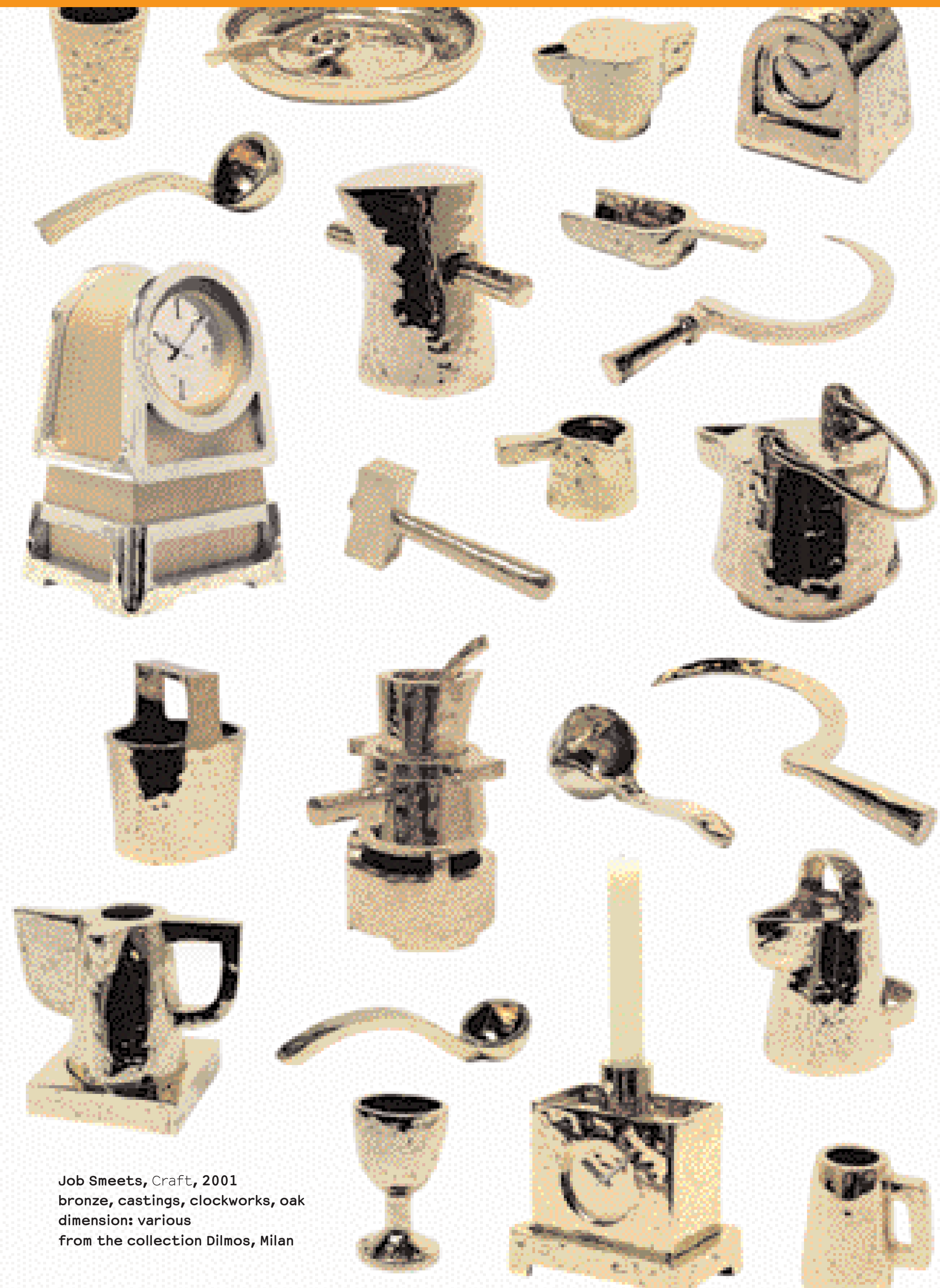
Hella Jongerius, *Embroidered Tablecloth*, **2000**
limited edition, linen, cotton, porcelain, specially designed
for Museum Het Princessehof Leeuwarden, The Netherlands

products as a preoccupation with substance, an outdated and even petty way of producing and, overall, as a regressive way of thinking. Elaborate embroidery, rich carvings and meticulously applied patterns of glaze did not agree with the strict hygiene of the visual image which 'good' design demanded. Not surprisingly, the Bauhaus philosophy of form-follows-function found receptive ground in The Netherlands since the 1920s and 1930s. Modernism would enthral Dutch designers until the end of the twentieth century when the slogan changed into form-follows-concept.

Droog Design, the Dutch platform of conceptual design promotes the work of designers who believe that form, function, use of material and decoration are rigorously subordinate to underlying ideas. Concept, humour, simplicity, and comment on the world and its own discipline come first. And all these ideas should be designed with a minimum of means. Conceptual design turns out to be closely related to the non-substantial world of contemporary visual art in terms of concept and ambition. For years now Dutch designers are reaping respect worldwide for most projects and products, even to the extent that Dutch design is mostly equated with conceptual design.

Tradition vs. Renewal

Of course, this does not concern those who have never left the traditional trades. While artists and designers abandoned crafts, ceramists and glass designers proudly retreated behind self-erected fortress walls of specialised expertise. They studiously control their own production capacity and potential markets; in art schools separate ceramic, glass and textile departments exist, and there are numerous profession-specific presentation platforms in galleries and museums. Tradition and skill are maintained for their own sakes, renewal takes place within the boundaries of these skills. So, it is not unusual that the craft disciplines have manoeuvred themselves outside the world of art and design with their own quality standards. These generalisations are certainly unfair to the artists Nick Renshaw, Jens Pfeifer, and designers Geert Lap and some others who, originally trained as ceramists and glass artists, have received recognition within contemporary design and visual art. However, the majority of their similarly trained colleagues just work inside their own traditional section irrespective of whether they see their products as functional or autonomous objects. Even though the avant-garde has again taken up experiments in traditional techniques, these two separate worlds still exist. Rediscovered decoration patterns, traces of burrs and deliberate mistakes are conceptually controlled marks of traditional manufacturing, and they hardly look like the traditional marks that should refer to ingenuity of the maker. The avant-garde even believes that renewal of applications of crafts cannot be expected from the traditional adherents, because they do not question the whys and wherefores of the technique itself. To the newcomers these particular questions are crucial: only if concept, function and context demand a craft approach, one opts for a specialised technique. They are



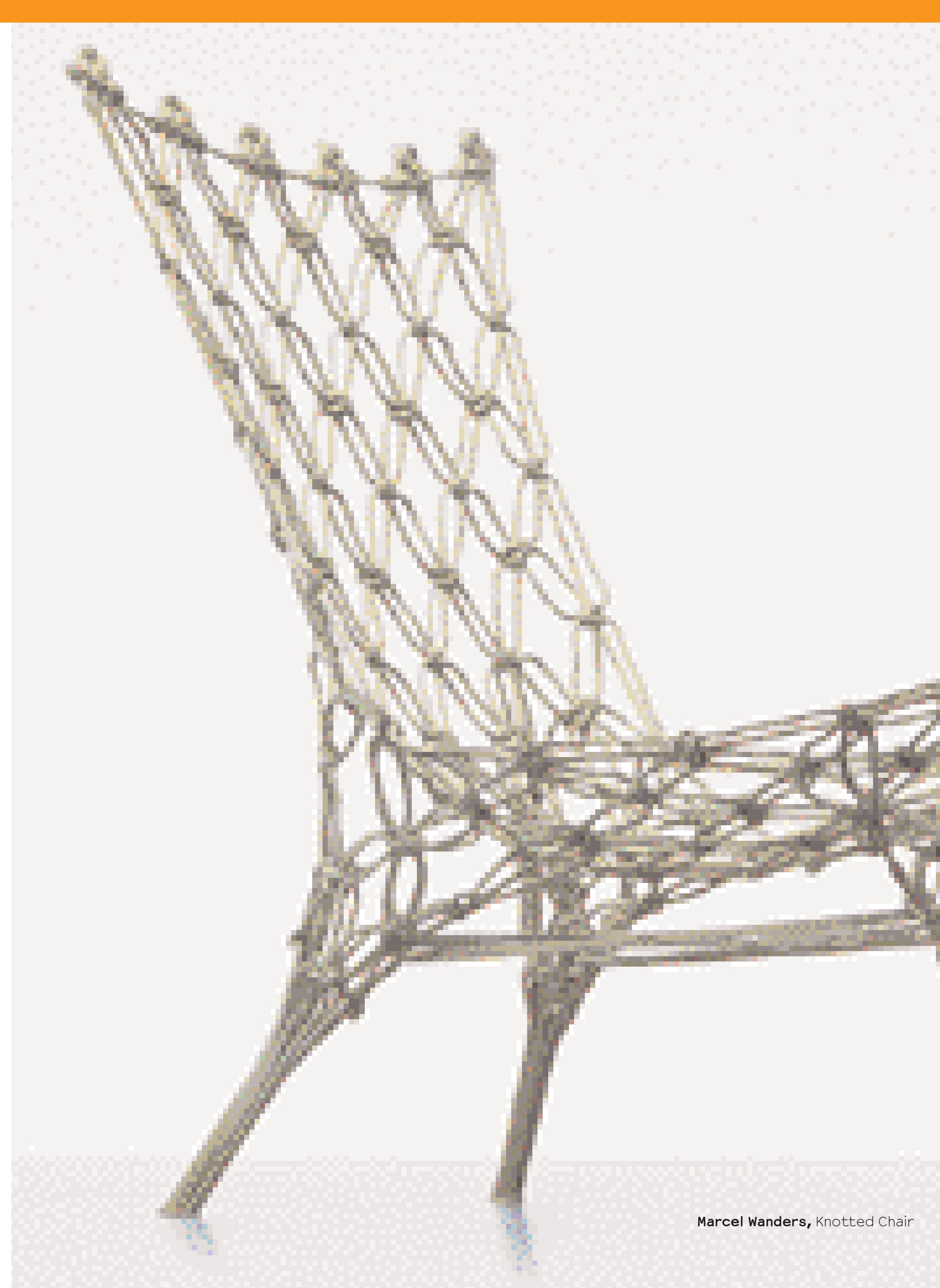
Job Smeets, *Craft*, 2001
bronze, castings, clockworks, oak
dimension: various
from the collection Dilmos, Milan

uninhibited by lack of expertise, which they owe a great deal to institutes like European Ceramic Work Centre (EKWC) in Den Bosch, the glass factory in Leerdam and the museum of textile in Tilburg. EKWC especially has encouraged emancipation of the ceramic discipline by being accessible when it concerns expertise. EKWC's friendly approach disturbs many traditional ceramists. It is not a coincidence, that a recent discussion about why ceramic and glass departments in art schools cannot simply be called workshops has restarted. The argument of the traditional side remains always the same: the expertise should be protected fiercely, which calls for a lot of attention, money and care, and in order to do so specialised departments are essential. Strangely enough there has hardly been an investigation of whether well-equipped workshops with a staff of experienced specialists would not better suit the contemporary art and design practice. Then the art schools would train artists and designers who may (or may not) have used traditional techniques instead of training a separate group of ceramists and glass artists.

Crafts Restored

The reviving interest in crafts can be explained as a logical reaction to globalisation. However, the industrialisation process spinning out of control has contributed to this development to a great extent as well. Industry has made good design available for the public. On the other hand it has also made redundant and boring disposables mainly characterised by unimaginative uniformity. This is, ironically, enhanced by the most important quality of the industrial product, namely the fastness with which it renews itself. Materials and products are constantly being innovated; traditions are born as quick as a flash. It seems as if everything is happening at the same time, NOW, without having a past. Terms like old and new have become relative concepts and the frame of reference we used to attach to these words is no longer relevant. Liberated from aggravating connotations – like regression, nostalgia, smugness – crafts can now be assessed at its qualitative and effective merits. Even obsolete activities like casting bronze figures, knitting and embroidery have become fashionable provided that they are appropriately dealt with. Paradoxically, the scope of production possibilities has not been extended by industrial process only, but also by rediscovered old methods and techniques.

It is remarkable that the interest in traditional trade is reviving at this moment, because it does not look like the pastiche, irony and disturbance of post-modernism, which was in vogue in the design world for a short while. A new creed was not born nor was there a definite breach with the modernistic austerity that had basically never left The Netherlands. In the beginning, conceptual design linked up closely with the plain dictates of form of Modernism. However, the connection between these two is questionable, as conceptual design seems to agree with extravagant design and marks of traditional manufacturing as well provided that function and concept give a reason to this.



Marcel Wanders, Knotted Chair

Furthermore, we should realise something else. Regretfully, and despite all illusions, we know now that only a small group of people at the top of the market appreciate avant-garde design irrespective of industrial or traditional manufacturing, whether cheap or expensive. The Bauhaus designers, too, had to admit this, when their plain and cheaply manufactured furniture was not bought by the target group, that is underpaid workers, but by highly educated and well-paid design lovers. In 2004, cheap production is no longer an essential part of a design philosophy for most designers, although quality is. And it does not really matter how these standards of quality are achieved, which means that time and energy consuming production processes are acceptable once again: the taboo has vanished.

Did the worlds of crafts and the avant-garde come closer to each other? Not at all. Basically, the differences are still the same. The beauty of outstanding skill remains the most important standard in traditional crafts, which is hardly an issue in art and design. In other fields technique is not the major quality standard either. Maria Callas, according to the experts, sang slightly out of tune. It must have been awful for her competitors to witness her growing popularity – though they should have known that passion and beauty can benefit from a wrong note at the right time. It is similar to the practice of contemporary art and design, which prioritises the impact of ideas and images over their technical realisation. What counts is the story and the kitsch in Hans van Bentem's images on page 176, the sacred character of Thom Puckey's work, the coincidence and the banal traces of the making process in the works of Hella Jongerius, Dick van Hoff and Joris Laarman, the fragile quality of Jan Broekstra's china disposables and the vase by Frank Tjepkema and Peter van der Jagt, the clash of materials of Gijs Bakker's teapot, Marcel Wanders' knotted chair and Hil Driessen's fabric designs, Arnoud Visser's unorthodox applications of materials, the decorations of Ineke Hans' furniture, Wieke Somers' vases, and Job Smeets' bronze spoons whose weight is burdened with history and are ironically named Craft.

Translated by Maudi Quandt
Information p. 174

Richard Hutten, de Sexy-relaxy

Ineke Hans, Laser Chairs Close

Tradition and Transition: A Crafted Solution to Development

Laila Tyabji
India

A pen is no harder to handle than a needle, and both can change your life. The story of how a unique Indian project to promote traditional embroideries is not only generating income, but also liberating and educating its participants.

All over India women sew and embroider. Their stitches tell not only their own stories, but those of their cultures and lives. Through those stitches, women reach out to the rest of the world, finding markets and generating incomes for themselves and their families. As Ramba ben, a mirrorwork embroiderer from Banaskantha in Gujarat, once said to me, 'The lives of my family hang by the thread I embroider.'

Some years ago, in the mid-1980s, I was doing a design workshop on patchwork appliqué with a group of women in a resettlement colony outside Ahmedabad in Gujarat. Three days into the workshop, a riot broke out in Ahmedabad city. Arson and looting turned into mob warfare and killing and the trouble spread into the slum suburbs. The patchwork women were Muslim; most of their husbands and fathers worked in the city. They rode bicycle rickshaws, sold vegetables and groceries on small handcarts, or were unskilled labourers in factories. Now they were trapped. Those who ventured into the city were drawn into the violence; those who stayed at home forfeited their daily income.

Every day people were brought into the community centre, where we sat matching colours and cutting patterns, burnt, wounded, maimed. A child's eyes had been gouged out; the brother of one of the women had been burnt alive in his cycle rickshaw. It seemed stupid and callous to the point of hubris to be sitting there making pretty patterns while people were dying – a little like Nero fiddling while Rome burned.

Nevertheless, the income the women were making from what we stitched was the only money coming into the community. They were, quite literally, living off the patterns of circles and squares they cut and sewed. Ironically, the disregarded, decorative activity done by the women had turned out to be life-lines for their families.

This is a rather sombre note on which to begin an article on Indian handcrafts and women. Nevertheless, I want to set the context in which DASTKAR, a Society for Crafts and Craftspeople, and I work. A context where the beauty, authenticity, original creativity and spontaneity of the product is second to the sheer economic necessity of its production and sale. In the west these days, craft is something that people, weary of the relentless pressures and uniformity of the industrial and professional sector, turn to in search of freshness and individual self-expression. In India, craft is an industry and profession.

As I write I'm haunted by the words of Geetha Devi, a sujni[1] embroiderer with whom DASTKAR works: 'To work is forbidden, to steal is forbidden, to cheat is forbidden, to kill is forbidden, what else is left except to starve, sister?' As per the present going rate for female agricultural labour in Bihar, a woman would have to work 70 days a month in order to feed her family. Geeta Devi's slow stitches, telling stories, have become the alternative to starvation. Women used to exchange their old embroideries for utensils; one pot for an embroidery worth 2,000 rupees. They never thought that they had a living skill in their hands. Now they embroider new pieces and earn cash for their families and their future.

The story behind the stitches – of craft, women and development in contemporary India – is both a parable and a paradox: craft traditions are a unique mechanism for rural women entering the economic mainstream for the first time, but they also carry the stigma of inferiority and backwardness as India enters a period of hi-tech industrialisation and globalisation.

A Dutch diplomat visited a DASTKAR exhibition some years ago. Looking at the women's intricate embroideries, he remarked sadly: 'They are so skilled; why doesn't anyone train them to make electronic spare parts?' An illustration of the relative values the urban educated elite places on twentieth-century technology versus traditional skills.

But, in India, craft is not just a production process. It is a rural woman's means to conquer her desert landscape and the confines of her limited income – her way of transcending the dependence and drudgery of an arduous agrarian and domestic life-cycle. It is a creative skill and strength that is uniquely hers: an individual statement of her femininity, culture and being.

The crafts sector, where I work, is the largest source of employment and income generation for Indian women. (Numerically, more women work in agricultural labour, but their contribution is generally unpaid.) It is also the one area of acknowledged skill, creativity and expertise (apart from child-bearing) where women are not just on par, but ahead of men. It is also the one area of economic and productive strength that western countries have lost.

While international agencies, economists and activists agonise over the conflicting interests of unemployment, the depletion of natural energy resources and the degradation of the environment through industrialisation, craft continues to be a viable alternative. With a simple, inexpensive, environmentally friendly needle, palm leaf, spindle or loom, and the inherent skill of her hands, a woman can both support her family and enrich the national economy and export trade.

Many Asian countries have the same untapped strength – of literally thousands of women whose discounted, but extraordinary, skills give us a cultural and aesthetic identity uniquely our own. But, because these women are village bound,

unorganised and illiterate, their voices and needs are never heard in international forums. The raw materials they depend on – yarn, bamboo, cane, lac mirrorwork and leather – are being exported abroad or diverted to the industrial sector. Financial credit, social security schemes and investment ignore them.

Their priorities – both on spending international resources, and on the issues themselves, might well be different from politicians, bureaucrats, and other movers and shakers who prefer to move into the 21st century to more technological tunes. But we must listen to those voices and give them space, even when we disagree.

We are all super-sensitive to vestiges of colonialism and exploitation, but we practise a cultural imperialism of our own: dominance by virtue of education, language and profession. 'We may be wage earners, but we are still walking on someone else's feet. Because we lack the tools of education and language we are still dependent,' says Shiva Kashyap, a DASTKAR craftswoman from Bihar. Expertise has its own class system: the designer dominates over the craftsperson; the urban-management consultant dictates the rural-development process.

Having gotten the DASTKAR craftswomen out of their veils and villages into the international market place, we should help them take that next difficult but vital step: get them into the election process and government forums. That way, they become their own spokespeople, celebrating their own identity and setting their own agendas.

Some years ago, I sat with a group of mirrorwork craftswomen in Lakhu ben's mud and thatch house in Gadda village. They were part of the Rabari women's embroidery group that is the nucleus of the DASTKAR Kutch Project, and we were working on a mirrorwork panel that would go to the Women's Conference in Beijing. None of the women quite knew where Beijing was, or what it was all about. But they liked the idea of thousands of women getting together to shape a new world, and they wanted to be part of the action. Working collectively on the piece, deciding its design, and sending it out to the international forum of women as their message of strength, creativity and independence seemed to mark their coming of age.

They bank their payments and earnings and have started a cooperative loans and savings scheme. Reacting to the exploitation of illiterate women by both village men and urban tradespeople, they have taught themselves to read and write and do simple accounting. This time, Lakhu ben had gone one better: her Work Issue Register had each woman's name written in English! She had gotten her son to teach her. Coming to Delhi had made her aware, she said, of the importance of being able to speak and make bills in English. They have realised that a pen is no more complex to handle than a needle.

Ten years later, Kutch was at the epicentre of India's most devastating earthquake in living memory: an estimated 80,000 people lost their lives. But Kutch is also the focus of India's richest concentration of craftspeople – over 52,000, according to the 1995 NCAER census. Government figures estimated that 22,800 artisans were severely affected by the quake, losing their families, their homes, and their livelihoods.

In Kutch, in an otherwise barren, drought-prone environ, almost every household is dependent in some way on the production and sale of craft. Village after village of once prosperous, self-sufficient crafts communities were now reduced to rubble. But that same spirit which made Lakhu ben learn English impelled the craftspeople not to buckle under. Visiting Kutch in the aftermath of the earthquake, seeing mile after mile of devastated villages and shattered, grieving families – counting their losses and their dead – it was moving to see that no one was begging, or passively waiting for dole.

'It is God's will. It is a time to test us,' said an old Rabari artisan in Bhujodi village. Ironically, craftspeople, who had no pensions, insurance schemes or social security, were the first to recover from the terrible trauma of the earthquake – through the inherent skills in their hands.

Almost nine years ago, a young woman in Rajasthan killed herself. I knew Dhapu well. I was living and working in her village at the time. We were neighbours. She soaked herself in kerosene and set herself afire. We were only a few houses away, but the drums of a wedding procession drowned her screams. By the time we reached her and broke open the door, she was dead. Later we heard she still owed the village shopkeeper for the kerosene.

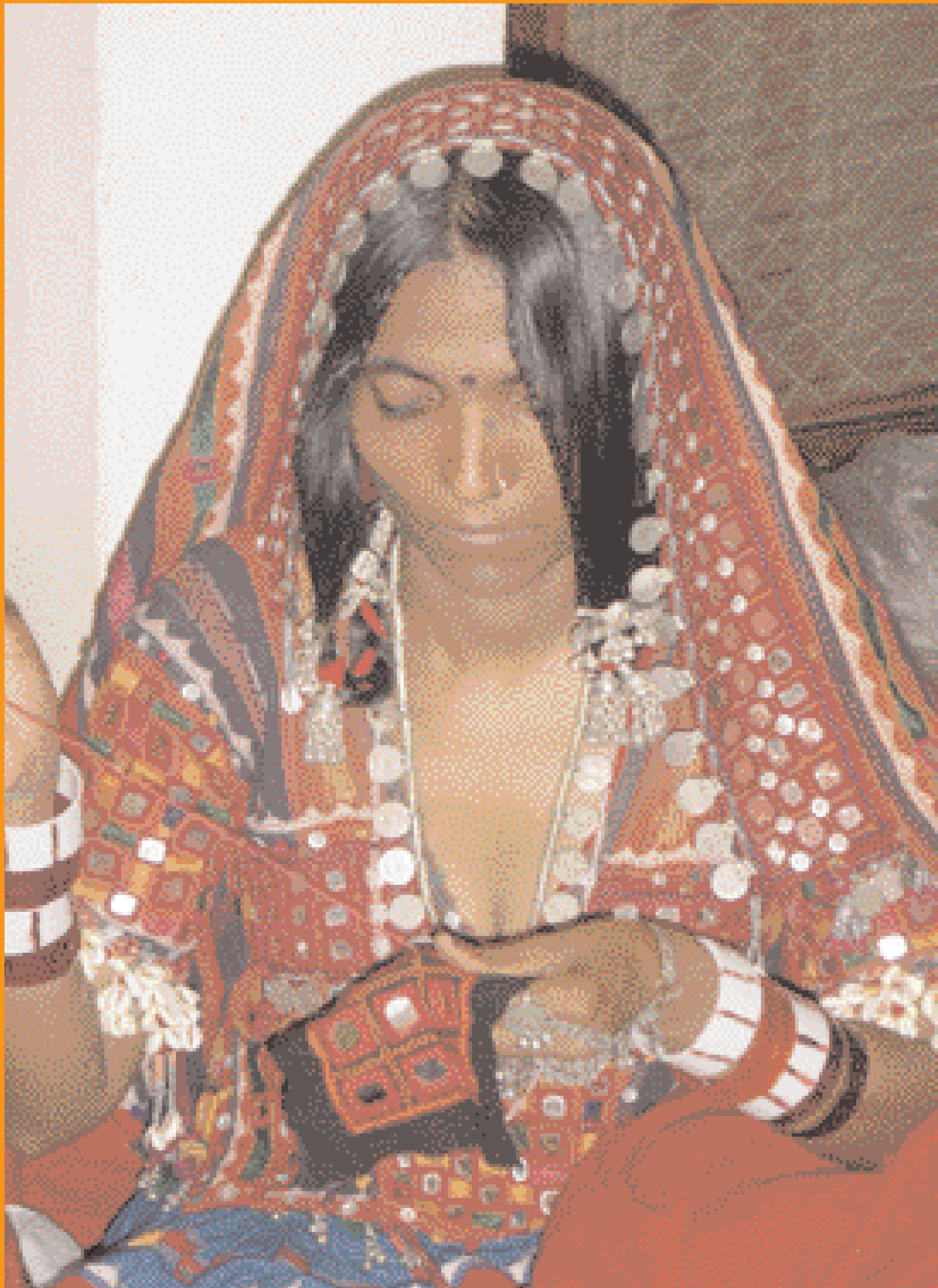
Dhapu was bright, young, lively, beautiful, the mother of five children. She killed herself because she had so many skills but no opportunities.

She lived in a part of India that is semi-desert – dry, desolate, deprived. The villages in that area had been re-settled as part of a government scheme to create a tiger park. Dhapu and her family were small herders who depended on access to the forest for firewood, fodder and water for their herds. Now that was gone. Five years of drought had created further hardship.

Life was incredibly hard. Dhapu's daughter Indira was about to be engaged. She had saved desperately to put together a dowry. Then disaster struck. Her husband's elder brother suddenly died. Dhapu's husband's sense of family honour was greater than his income as an agricultural labourer. He told her that his brother's widow and her four children would come to live with them. There were five more mouths to feed. Indira's dowry would have to be given to his brother's eldest child. It was too much for Dhapu. She killed herself for lack of an economic alternative.

Dhapu's death had a profound effect on me. The tragic irony haunts me still. The group of us who rushed to save her from the flames was working to create economic opportunities for women just like her. Dhapu's daughter Indira, her widowed sister-in-law and her niece became among the most prosperous women in Sherpur village. They were among a group of a hundred women whom DASTKAR has trained to earn their own livelihood through their own hand skills – patchwork, tie-dye, embroidery and printing. Dhapu's daughter didn't need a dowry; she was sought after as a bride by everyone because she was bringing in her own income.

Today, Rameshwari, Raeesan, Shameem, Badam, Farida and the other women recall those first early days in the tiny DASTKAR room in Sherpur nine years ago, and the fear and suspicion with which they had greeted the idea that something they



made with their hands could sell in the Delhi market, the disbelief at receiving their first earnings. They thought I had come to kidnap their children. Today they are the leaders of approximately one hundred families in the area who make and sell products through DASTKAR – crafting quilts, soft furnishings, garments, mobiles, toys and accessories for both local and urban markets. Their daughters, Bina, Mumtaz, Laado, are also learning the old skills as well as new ones – reading, writing and ciphering form the first part of the morning for both mothers and daughters.

In the wasted, deprived landscape around Ranthambhore, where the only water and forest has been reserved for the tiger, craft is the practical use of waste and found materials: a means of recycling and value-adding reeds, old paper, cloth scraps, and the debris of the forest. Vegetable dyes, block printing, and tie-dye enhance simple handspun cotton; patchwork or sewing sequins is something a comparatively unskilled woman can do while she rests from her work in the field, in between tending her children.

Income generation is not, by itself, a synonym for development, but it can be the key and catalyst to development's many processes: education, health, community building, the repudiation of social prejudices, the empowerment of women.

As we sew together, I ask the women what they will do with their money. Some silver jewellery, but also better seeds and a buffalo. The ability to send their children by bus to a fee- paying school. Medical treatment and their tubes tied at a 'proper' hospital. A new well for the village. They have their own bank accounts to prevent misappropriation by drunken or gambling husbands. They all want pukka houses – steady, permanent homes. Rameshwari is a widow and is saving for her children's weddings.

Methods of birth control are canvassed along with colour combinations; old women learn that writing their names is no more difficult than threading a needle. Children who wander in are conned into running errands. Wholesalers coming to deliver our orders become an informal weekly market where women can make purchases without an expensive trek to the town. Cotton rather than synthetic, traditional block prints rather than mill-printed roses, have become the in-thing again, both to make and to wear. In the evenings, songs and stories and folklore are swapped for political gossip and revolutionary ideas of social change. The women have set up their own savings and loans micro-credit group. They are money-lenders to the whole village.

DASTKAR products range from table linen, cushions, and throws to jackets, kurtas and stoles saris. All represent a more or less traditional usage of motifs, stitches and techniques, in pieces that incorporate themes and motifs familiar to the women; and use materials that are locally accessible or hand-woven by other DASTKAR crafts people; combining these familiar elements into contemporary soft furnishings, accessories or garments re-designed for the urban Indian consumer.

Though they are functional objects of everyday usage – articles designed for daily wear or the home – their motif and colour, as in most Indian craft objects, however utilitarian, have a significance that is deeply rooted in socio-cultural

and votive traditions, which we have tried to respect, even while adapting them. Including the craftswomen in the design process: helping them understand the end usage and methodology, sharing the fun of experimenting with new layouts and a different colour palette, is an integral part of DASTKAR's development of new products.

The products do not merely showcase the skills, creativity, and strength of Indian textile craftswomen, and the beauty and range of their craft. They attempt to show how both women and embroidery can adapt and change as society and markets change, while still remaining true to their own aesthetic and tradition.

They illustrate DASTKAR's belief that the continuing existence of an extraordinary diversity of craft traditions and producers is one of India's unique strengths as it searches for its own identity in a world that is increasingly uniform and technological.

It is extraordinarily exciting to work with the traditional hand skills of women, previously used to craft products for themselves and their families, now gradually changing into a contemporary, urban, market-led product, still strongly reflecting the cultural identity and individual skills of the makers. They also tell the story of women, subtly changing themselves in the process. Everywhere, the energy of a source of new employment and earning binds together and revitalises communities that were as deprived and denuded as the desert around them. This is particularly true when one works with the latent skills and strengths of women. They suddenly discover their self-worth, seeing themselves as active participants in the community rather than passive recipients of welfare. Wells are dug, children educated, social prejudices and taboos are thrown away when women discover their own power.

What has using their inherent craft skills as a tool of empowerment done to these and the many other crafts women? The process is not without conflicts, but it is invariably catalytic. Like a kaleidoscope, familiar elements, transposed, take on a new, dynamic pattern.

Lucknow in northern India is a city where Hindu and Muslim culture, language, and religion mingle. Tucked into the dingier corners of its elaborately curliqued stucco-work palaces and arched gateways are narrow, winding, overpopulated lanes, and dark, squat houses, inhabited by women who are themselves enveloped in gloomy, black veils and desperately poor – oppressed not just by economics, but by their own social and domestic circumstance. Illiterate, devoutly Muslim, locked into marriages and family structures that allow little room for individual expression or creativity, they produce one of the most subtle and sensitive of India's myriad embroidery traditions. The delicate, pristine white-on-white of *chikankari*, the embroidery characteristic of Lucknow, the epitome of fastidious refinement and esoteric elegance, emerges from these dim, dirty, tenement dwellings where children, chickens and goats squabble and squeal and cooking pots smoke, is one of the paradoxes of the city.

In 1985, I went to Lucknow to work with a hundred chikan embroidery women. Veiled, they were purdah, illiterate, house-bound, and previously totally dependent on the local *mahajan* or broker to fetch their work and pay them. Sitting together embroidering, teaching them new skills and designs, we naturally talked about everything under the sun. They were stunned that I, a well-brought up, believing Muslim woman, could also be liberated, happily unmarried, earning my own living and travelling the world, untrammelled by purdah or convention.

Our first argument was when I was furious with them for signing, unread, a petition about the path-breaking Shah Bano judgment,[2] just on the say-so and a biased and retrograde interpretation of the Qur'an by local *maulvis* or Muslim leaders. They listened to all this chat, wide-eyed, slightly disbelieving, slightly envious, slightly shocked. They certainly didn't relate it to the realities of their own lives. When six of them bravely agreed to come to Delhi for the first *chikan* exhibition, the men of the *mohalla*, the city ward or locality, threatened to burn down the SEWA Lucknow office, accusing us of corrupting their women's morals.

Today, those hundred SEWA women have grown to over 7,000. They can be found all over India. They interact with equal ease with male tribals from Madhya Pradesh and sophisticated buyers from Habitat in Europe; they march in protest against dowry deaths as well as Islamic fundamentalism; demand financial credit and free spectacles from the government. A new self-confidence allows them to refuse discounts to powerful local politicians or bigwigs! They earn in thousands rather than hundreds, have their own savings bank accounts, and have thrown away centuries of repression and social prejudice along with their burkhas.

But these new entrepreneurs, saleswomen and executives are also housewives and mothers. The additional weight of responsibility, independence and experience has changed women, even if it hasn't materially changed male attitudes. Sometimes the added stresses and pressures have destroyed them; sometimes it has made them stronger and more self-confident. In our project in Ranthambhore (where Dhapu's daughters now work) the local doctor says he can recognise a DASTKAR craftswoman from half a kilometre just by the way she walks and holds her head.

It has changed their attitudes to society, caste, marriage, purdah. They are more able to objectively evaluate the gospel as preached by men. Initially, in Sherpur village, women of different castes and religions wanted separate timings to come to the room where I lived and worked. The first time a *harijan*[3] woman came for work she crouched outside the door. It was she herself, not the upper-caste women, who explained – with shocked disbelief at my naiveté – that she could not enter. I had to literally pull her in. When a Muslim child urinated on the floor, the Hindu women fled in horror and wanted the whole place *lippai*-ed![4] Today, the hundred men and women in the project work, travel, cook, eat and drink together, marvelling at the folly that kept them separate for so long. At the annual picnic, the men made the women sit and served them, Hindus and Muslims, *harijans* and upper castes alike.

The changing woman has changed a few male mind-sets. The same men who threatened to burn down the SEWA office now help pack the exhibition stock, and

escort their wives to night school. Money power is a most amazing thing. But the men at the picnic did make it plain that this was only once-a-year! Normally the women cook for and feed their menfolk before they come to work and on their return, even now when they are the principal earners in the family. They are still expected to gather the firewood, work in the fields, care for the children, in addition to being entrepreneurs and wage earners.

It would be simplistic to pretend that the shifting balance of power and the new self-worth of the women have not created enormous family strains: between husbands and wives, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, between self-realisation and traditional mores. It would be foolish to ignore that it is the woman who always has to bear the burden of this. Also, that her inherent tendency to silently take on more and more, rather than scream with rage and rejection, often makes the burden well-nigh unbearable. Naive too, to think that without the carrot of cash payments, women would voluntarily rise up and change the status quo. There is a security in being inferior yet protected; the burkha can be a comfortable and addictive escape route from the adult responsibilities of an independent life. But the changed confidence of the women – their ability to take and make decisions, to disagree with their husbands, to plan their own and their children's future – is not a once in a blue moon phenomenon that is going to go away.

Sawai Madhopore in south-east Rajasthan was once the centre of dabu or indigo resist printing. When we tried to revive it (initially only as a means of getting interesting, locally-made raw material for the women's patchwork), the one surviving craftsman, although he had no male karigars (or crafts artisans) left to fulfil his mushrooming orders, refused to teach women to block print. He felt extraordinarily threatened by the thought of women entering his all-male bastion; and of sharing his expertise with those he had previously regarded as inferior. He feared, rightly, that once women left their traditional place, they would never quietly return to it. Their new economic strength and earning power has changed their ability to implement their dreams and aspirations. Even more importantly, it has given them the strength to dream. Women who had nothing, whose highest aspiration was a husband who didn't beat them or drink away his earnings, can today educate themselves and their children, save for a house or a cow, invest in their daughter's future.

Recently, working on creative panels for an exhibition in Sweden, DASTKAR craftswomen were asked to represent their lives and their dreams. Stitching away, their vision was of themselves as a group, not as individuals. The 'I' as heroine or single protagonist is not a concept rural Indian women understand. Even in the village they are always Ramu's wife, or Karsan's mother – never called by their name. Their dreams and aspirations were also collective ones. Health, education for their children, a good harvest, social status – expressed by images of spreading trees, an aeroplane soaring in the sky, a girl child reading a book – were what they wanted. Not for them the intangible 'happiness' and 'love' for which most of us wish.

The American writer, Tennessee Williams, said 'Make journeys, attempt them. It's the only way …' For the DASTKAR craftswomen, their journey from their villages in Gujarat, Karnataka and Bihar to India's urban marketplace has been not only a physical journey, but a voyage of inner and external discovery – a reaching out to new horizons of the mind and spirit.

Indira-ki-maa, Kalu-mian-ki-aurath – Indira's mother, Kalu's wife, so-and-so's mother, so-and-so's wife – have turned into Rameshwari, Nafeesa and Azeezan. Their ability to influence the lives of their families and community has altered and grown, and they have altered and grown with it.

Information p. 174

Notes

1. *Sujni* is decorative quilting made in Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh.

2. In 1985 Shah Bano was a Muslim whose husband divorced her after 30 years of marriage. She was awarded maintenance payments in the High Court. Her husband appealed against the decision in the Indian Supreme Court, arguing that under Muslim personal law he was not liable to further maintenance payments, but his case was rejected. Muslim fundamentalists strongly opposed the ruling, and despite campaigns of women's groups to support a deserted and destitute woman's right to maintenance, the government capitulated and introduced a Muslim Women's Act. Now a Muslim husband is only legally obliged to return the divorced wife's dowry, and maintain her for three months following the divorce.

3. *Harijan* is the name coined by Gandhi for 'untouchable' lower castes; literally meaning 'son of god'.

4. *Lippai* means whitewashed.

Prosperous Popular Cultures

Néstor García Canclini
Mexico

Modern mass communications and its attendant economies are not necessarily sounding the death knell for traditional practices.

The reformulation of the popular-traditional that is occurring in the self-criticism of some folklorists and in new research by anthropologists and communications specialists allows us to understand the place of folklore in modernity in a different way. It is possible to construct a new perspective for analysing the popular-traditional by taking into account its interactions with elite culture and the culture industries. I will begin to systemise it in the form of six refutations of the classic view of the folklorists.

a. Modern development does not suppress traditional popular cultures. In the two decades that have passed since the issuing of the Charter of American Folklore in 1970, the supposed process of folklore's extinction did not become more marked, despite advances in mass communications and other technologies that either did not exist in 1970 or were not used then in the culture industry: video, cassettes, cable television, satellite transmission – in short, the series of technological and cultural transformations that result from the combining of microelectronics and telecommunications.

Not only did this modernising expansion not succeed in erasing folklore, but many studies reveal that in the last few decades traditional cultures have developed by being transformed. This growth is the result of at least four types of causes: (a) the impossibility of incorporating the entire population into urban industrial production; (b) the need of the market to include traditional symbolic structures and goods in the mass circuits of communication in order to reach even the popular layers least integrated into modernity; (c) the interest of political systems in taking folklore into account with the goal of strengthening their hegemony and legitimacy; (d) continuity in the cultural production of the popular sectors.

Studies on handicrafts show a growth in the number of artisans, the volume of production, and its quantitative weight: a report by Sistema Económico Latinoamericano (SELA) calculates that the artisans of the fourteen Latin American countries analysed represent six per cent of the general population and eighteen per cent of the economically active population.[1] One of the main explanations for this increase, given by Andean as well as Mesoamerican authors, is that the deficiencies of agrarian exploitation and the relative impoverishment of products from the countryside drive many communities to search for an increase in their incomes through the sale of handicrafts. Although it is true that in some regions the incorporation of peasant labour power into other branches of production reduced artisanal production, there exist, inversely, communities that had never made handicrafts or only made them for their own consumption, and in the last few decades they were drawn into that work in order to ease the crisis. Unemployment is another reason why artisanal work is increasing, both in the countryside and in the cities, bringing into this type of production young people from socio-economic sectors that never before were employed in this field. In Peru, the largest concentration of artisans is not in areas of low economic development but in the city of Lima: 29 per cent.[2] Mexico shares its accelerated industrial reconversion with an intense support of artisanal production – the greatest volume on the continent and with a high number of producers: six million. It is not possible to understand why the number of handicrafts continues to increase, nor why the state keeps adding organisations to promote a type of work that, while employing 28 per cent of the economically active population, barely represents 0.1 per cent of the gross national product and two to three per cent of the country's exports, if we see it as an atavistic survival of traditions confronted by modernity.

The incorporation of folkloric goods into commercial circuits, which tends to be analysed as if their only effects were to homogenise designs and eliminate local brands, demonstrates that the expansion of the market needs to concern itself also with the sectors that resist uniform consumption or encounter difficulties in participating in it. With this goal, production is diversified and traditional designs, handicrafts, and folkloric music are utilised that continue to attract indigenous people, peasants, the masses of migrants, and new groups, as well as intellectuals, students, and artists. Through the varied motivations of each sector – to affirm their identity, stress a national-popular political definition or the distinction of a cultivated taste with traditional roots – this broadening of the market contributes to an extension of folklore.[3] As debatable as certain commercial uses of folkloric goods may seem, it is undeniable that much of the growth and diffusion of traditional cultures is due to the promotion of the record industry, dance festivals, fairs that include handicrafts and, of course, their popularisation by the mass media. Radio and television broadcast local forms of music on a national and international scale, just as the Peruvian criollo waltz, the chicha, the chamamé and the quartets in Argentina, the music of the north-east and gaucho songs in Brazil, and the corridos of the Mexican Revolution, were included in the electronic media.

In the third place, if many branches of folklore are growing it is because in the last few decades Latin American states have increased their support to its production (credits to artisans, scholarships and subsidies, contests, etc.), conservation, trade, and diffusion (museums, books, sales, tours, and halls for popular events). The state has various objectives: to create jobs that reduce unemployment and the exodus from the countryside to the cities, to promote the export of traditional goods, to attract tourism, to take advantage of the historical and popular prestige of folklore to cement hegemony and national unity in the form of a patrimony that seems to transcend the diversions among classes and ethnic groups.

But all these uses of traditional culture would be impossible without one basic fact: the continuity in the production of popular artisans, musicians, dancers, and poets interested in maintaining and renewing their heritage. The preservation of these forms of life, organisation, and thought can be explained by cultural reasons but also, as we said, by economic interests of the producers, who are trying to survive or increase their income.

We are not overlooking the contradictory character that market stimuli and governmental bodies have on folklore. The studies we site talk of frequent conflicts between the interests of the producers or users of popular goods and merchants, promoters, mass media, and states. But what can no longer be said is that the tendency of modernisation is simply to promote the disappearance of traditional cultures. The problem, then, cannot be reduced to one of conserving and rescuing supposedly unchanged traditions. It is a question of asking ourselves how they are being transformed and how they interact with the forces of modernity.

b. Peasant and traditional cultures no longer represent the major part of popular culture. In the last few decades, Latin American cities came to contain between 60 and 70 per cent of their country's inhabitants. Even in rural areas, folklore today does not have the closed and stable character of an archaic universe, since it is developed in the variable relations that traditions weave with urban life, migrations, tourism, secularisation and the symbolic options offered both by the electronic media and by new religious movements or by the reformulation of old ones. Even recent migrants, who maintain forms of sociability and celebrations of peasant origin, acquire the character of 'urbanoid groups', as the Brazilian ethnomusicologist José Jorge de Carvalho puts it. Hence current folklorists feel the need to be concerned at once with local and regional production and with salsa, African rhythms, indigenous and Creole melodies that dialogue with jazz, rock, and other genres of Anglo-Saxon origin. Traditions are reinstalled even beyond the cities: in an interurban and international system of cultural circulation. Although there was always a current of traditional forms that united the Ibero-American world, Carvalho adds, now

> there exists a flood of hybrid forms that also unite us, it being possible to identify relationships between new Brazilian popular rhythms and new expressions from Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela, the Caribbean, Mexico, and so on. It is not possible to understand tradition without understanding innovation.[4]

c. The popular is not concentrated in objects. The current study of culture by anthropology and sociology situates popular products in their economic conditions of production and consumption. Folklorists influenced by semiotics identify the *folk* in behaviours and communicational processes. In none of these cases is it accepted that the popular is congealed in patrimonies of stable goods. Not even traditional culture is seen as an 'authoritative norm or static and immutable force', writes Martha Blache, 'but as a wealth that is utilised today but is based on previous experiences of the way a group has of responding to and linking itself with its social environment'. Rather than a collection of objects or objectivised customs, tradition is thought of as 'a mechanism of selection, and even of invention, projected toward the past in order to legitimise the present'.[5]

The interactionist and ethnomethodological influence also contributes to conceiving of the formation and the changes of social signification as a product of interactions and rituals. From its perspective, popular art is neither a collection of objects nor the subaltern ideology of a system of ideas, nor customs fixed repertories of practices: all are dynamic dramatisations of collective experience. If rituals are the domain in which each society manifests what it wants to situate as perennial or eternal, as Roberto DaMatta explains,[6] then even the most durable aspects of popular life manifest themselves better than in the inert objects in the ceremonies that bring them to life. (Although DaMatta does not establish an exclusive relation between ritual and the past, he emphasises that even what is tradition in society is better revealed in interactions than in motionless goods.)

d. The popular is not a monopoly of the popular sectors. In conceiving of the *folk* as social practices and communicational processes more than as packages of objects, the fatalist, naturalising link is broken that associated certain cultural products with fixed groups. Folklorists pay attention to the fact that in modern societies the same person may participate in diverse folkloric groups, and is capable of being synchronically and diachronically integrated into various systems of symbolic practices: rural and urban, neighbourhood and factory, microsocial and mass media-based. There is no folklore belonging only to the oppressed classes; nor are the only possible types of interfolkloric relations those of domination, submission, or rebellion. In the last instance, we are coming to no longer consider

> groups as organisations that are stable in their composition and in their permanence, endowed with common characteristics. There is no set of individuals that is folkloric in itself; there are, however, situations that are more or less favourable for a person to participate in folkloric behaviour.[7]

The evolution of traditional fiestas and of the production and sale of handicrafts reveals that these are no longer exclusive tasks of ethnic groups, nor of broader peasant sectors, nor even of the agrarian oligarchy: ministries of culture and commerce, private foundations, beverage companies, and radio and television stations also intervene in organising them.[8] Folk or traditional cultural facts are today the multidetermined product of actors that are popular and hegemonic, peasant and urban, local, national, and transnational.

By extension, it is possible to think that the popular is constituted in hybrid and complex processes, using as signs of identification elements originating from diverse classes and nations. At the same time, we may become more perceptive in

the face of the ingredients of so-called popular cultures that are a reproduction of the hegemonic, or that become self-destructive for the popular sectors, or contrary to their interests: corruption and resigned attitudes in relation to hegemonic groups.

e. The popular is not lived by popular subjects as a melancholic complacency with traditions. Many subaltern ritual practices that are apparently devoted to reproducing the traditional order humorously transgress it. Perhaps an anthology of the scattered documentation on ritual humour in Latin America would make it clear that people resort to laughter in order to have a less oppressive relation with their past. We propose the hypothesis that the attitude is most antisolemn when it is a matter of crossed traditions in conflict. In the carnivals of various countries, dances by indigenous and mestizo people parody the Spanish conquistadores, making grotesque use of their costumes and the warlike paraphernalia they brought along for the conquest. In the Brazilian carnival there is a reversal of the traditional orders of a society where the intersection of blacks and whites, and old ethnic groups and modern groups, seeks resolution in severe hierarchies: night is used as if it were day, men dress up as women, and the ignorant, the blacks, and the workers appear to be 'showing the pleasure of living the latest fashions in song, dance, and the samba'.[9]

It is unnecessary to optimise these transgressions to the point of believing that, by vindicating people's own histories, they undo the fundamental tradition of domination. DaMatta himself recognises that in carnival there is a play between the reaffirmation of hegemonic traditions and the parody that subverts them, since the explosion of the illicit is limited to a short, defined period after which re-entry into the established social organisation takes place. The rupture of the fiesta does not eliminate hierarchies and inequalities, but its irreverence opens a freer, less fatalistic relation to inherited conventions.

In Mexico too, in the highlands of Chiapas, carnival is a moment of symbolic and humorous working out of superimposed conflicts. Blacks caricature ladinos, Indians caricature other Indians as ethnic tensions are staged, ironically recalling the Caste War of 1867–70. Parody is used in Zinacantán, Chamula, and Chenalhó, as in other areas, to disparage those who are different (other Indians, ladinos, whites) and to disapprove of deviations in conduct within the group itself, that is, as an ethnocentric self-affirmation.[10] But the interpretation is also possible that this is done to reduce the oppressive character of centuries-old forms of domination.

Because intercultural conflicts have been similar in other areas of Mesoamerica, it is not strange that similar parodying tactics are found in many communities. Nevertheless, the exegesis of these fiestas tends to emphasise only what in ritual humour serves to make fun of authorities and caricature foreigners. Some authors, such as Victoria Reifler Bricker, in observing the frequent relation of ritual humour to deviant behaviours, suggest another function: social control. Ridiculing someone who wears ladino clothing or a corrupt functionary would, for indigenous communities, serve to anticipate the

sanctions that would be suffered by those who diverge from traditional behaviours or attack the group itself. But no one, this author notes, proves that there is a causal link between ceremonial caricature and a reinforcement of rules. It cannot be affirmed that in societies that make fun of certain types of conduct these types of conduct occur less frequently, or that the fear of being ridiculed rather than some other fear – supernatural or legal – is the motivation for avoiding them …

f. The pure preservation of traditions is not always the best popular resource for reproducing itself and re-elaborating its situation. 'Be authentic and you'll earn more' is the slogan of many promoters, handicrafts merchants, and cultural functionaries. The studies that some undisciplined folklorists and anthropologists have finally ended up doing on impure handicrafts demonstrate that sometimes the opposite happens.

In an analogous way to the potters of Ocumicho, amate painters are making us rethink the apocalyptic alarms about 'the inevitable extinction' of handicrafts and the nexus between the cultured and the popular. Thirty years ago, when several Guerrero communities began to produce and sell paintings made on amate paper, in part influenced by artists, some folklorists predicted the decline of their ethnic traditions. Catherine Good Eshelman began a study on these crafts in 1977, starting from the then predominant theory about the place of peasant production in Mexican capitalist formation: handicrafts would be a specific form of participation in this unequal system, one more way to extract surplus and weaken ethnic organisation. After living for several years in the producing communities and following the cycle of their adaptations, she had to admit that the growing commercial interaction with the national society and market not only allowed them to improve economically, but they were also strengthening their internal relations. Their indigenous origin was not 'a folkloric detail' that gave an exotic attraction to their products, nor was it an obstacle to incorporating themselves into the capitalist economy; rather, it was 'the mobilising and determining force in the process'.[11] As the author's historic work demonstrates, those communities spent long periods experimenting with strategies, which were often frustrated, until they arrived at the economic and aesthetic achievements of painting on amate. Their origin is multidetermined: they were born in the 1950s, when the Nahuas of Ameyaltepec – potters since before the conquest who sold their masks, flowerpots, and ashtrays in nearby cities – transferred the decorations of their ceramics to amate paper. The drawings were ancient but their national and international diffusion began when they were put on amate, which – in addition to allowing for more complex compositions – weighs less than clay, is less fragile and is easier to transport.

The 'paintings' are made by men and women, adults and children. They show scenes of their work and their fiestas, valorising in this way ethnic and familiar traditions that they continue to reproduce in their peasant tasks. The artisans themselves control almost all their trade, allow middlemen less interference than in other artisanal branches of production, and take advantage of their stands

and itinerant sales to offer works from other communities (masks, carved rocks, and copies of pre-Hispanic pieces).

According to the poll done by Good Eshelman in Ameyaltepec in 1980–81, 41 per cent of families earned more than four minimum-wage salaries and another 42 per cent from two to four minimum-wage salaries. There continue to be middlemen who appropriate part of the profit; those who speculate the most are the ones who pay between ten and twenty dollars for each amate and resell them in the US as 'genuine Aztec tribal art' for $300 or $400 US. There are also companies that use the designs of these communities on tablecloths, postcards and facial-tissue boxes, without paying them anything in return. Despite these forms of exploitation, which are common in other types of handicrafts, their incomes and level of consumption are much higher than those of the average Mexican peasant.[12]

Although these artisans engage in profuse commercial activity, which extends across almost the entire country, they are organised so as not to neglect agriculture, ceremonial obligations or community services. They invest the profits from their crafts in land, animals, housing, and internal fiestas. Inasmuch as all families are employed in the sale of handicrafts, it is in no one's interest to use their resources and labour power as commodities. In commerce they move individually or by family, but they carry out their sales by using collective networks for sharing information about faraway cities and settling in them by reproducing the material and symbolic conditions of their daily life. Dozens of Nahua artisans arrive at a tourist centre, rent part of a cheap hotel and immediately put up ropes to hang clothes instead of keeping them in closets, store water in clay jugs inside the room, erect altars, and prepare food or convince someone in the market to cook it their way.

Through the purchase of materials and the consumption of alien goods, they transfer part of their profit to the national and international market, but the more or less egalitarian control of their sources of subsistence and of the handicraft trade allows them to maintain their ethnic identity. Thanks to their concern for certain traditions (collective control of land and the system of reciprocity), the renewal of their artisanal trade, and the readjustment to a complex interaction with modernity, they have achieved a flourishing independence that they would not have obtained by enclosing themselves in their ancestral relations.

'Prosperous Popular Cultures' is an excerpt from *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* by Néstor García Canclini, translated by Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995) 152-158, 168-170. For information p. 174

Notes

1. Mirko Lauer, *La producción artisanal en América Latina* (Lima: Fundación Friedrich Ebert, 1984). SELA's estimate does not include countries that do not belong to this system, but the only country absent from it that does have significant artisanal production is Brazil.
2. Lauer, *Crítica de la artesanía. Plástica y sociedad en los Andes peruanos* (Lima: DESCO, 1982).
3. Since the beginning of the 1980s, authors from various countries have been interested in the revitalisation that commercialisation and consumption of non-traditional sectors have made possible for folklore namely in Berta G. Ribeiro, Maria Rosilene Barbosa Alvina, Ana M. Heyer, Vera de Vives, José Silveira D'Avila, and Dante Luis Martins Teixeira, *O artesão tradicional e seu papel na sociedade contemporanea* (Rio de Janeiro: FUNARTE/ Instituto Nacional de Folclore, 1983). Also see Rodolfo Becerril Straffton, 'Las artesanías: la necesidad de una perspectiva económica,' *Textos sobre arte popular* (México: FONART-FONAPAS, 1982).
4. José Jorge de Carvalho, *O lugar da cultura tradicional na sociedade moderna* (Brasília: University of Brasília Foundation, Anthropological Series 77, 1989) 8-10.
5. Martha Blache, 'Folclor y cultura popular'. *Revista de Investigaciones Folclórias* 3, December, (University of Buenos Aires, Instituto de Ciencias Antropológicas, 1988) 27.
6. Roberto DaMatta, *Carnavais, malandros e hérois* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1980) 24, and 'A Special Place', *Prince Claus Fund Journal 7* on Carnival (The Hague: Prince Claus Fund, 2001) 70-72.
7. Blache, 'Folclor y cultura popular', ibid, 29.
8. For further discussion, see Gobi Stromberg, *El juego del coyote. Platería y arte en Taxco* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1985); Catherine Good Eshelman, *Haciendo la lucha. Arte y comercio nahuas de Guerrero* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988); and Lauer, *Crítica de la artesanía. Plástica y sociedad en los Andes peruanos*.
9. DaMatta, *Carnavais, malandros e hérois*, ibid, 99.
10. Victoria Reifler Bricker, *Ritual Humor in Highland Chiapas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973).
11. Catherine Good Eshelman, *Haciendo la lucha, Arte y comercio nahuas de Guerrero* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988) 18.
12. At the time that the poll mentioned earlier was conducted, at the beginning of the 1980s, 35 of every 100 Mexican homes had incomes below the monthly minimum wage, that is, a little less than $100 US (Héctor Aguilar Camín, *Después del milagro* (México: Cal y Arena, 1988) 214).

Plastic Toys and 'Urban-Craft' in South Asia

Iftikhar Dadi
Pakistan

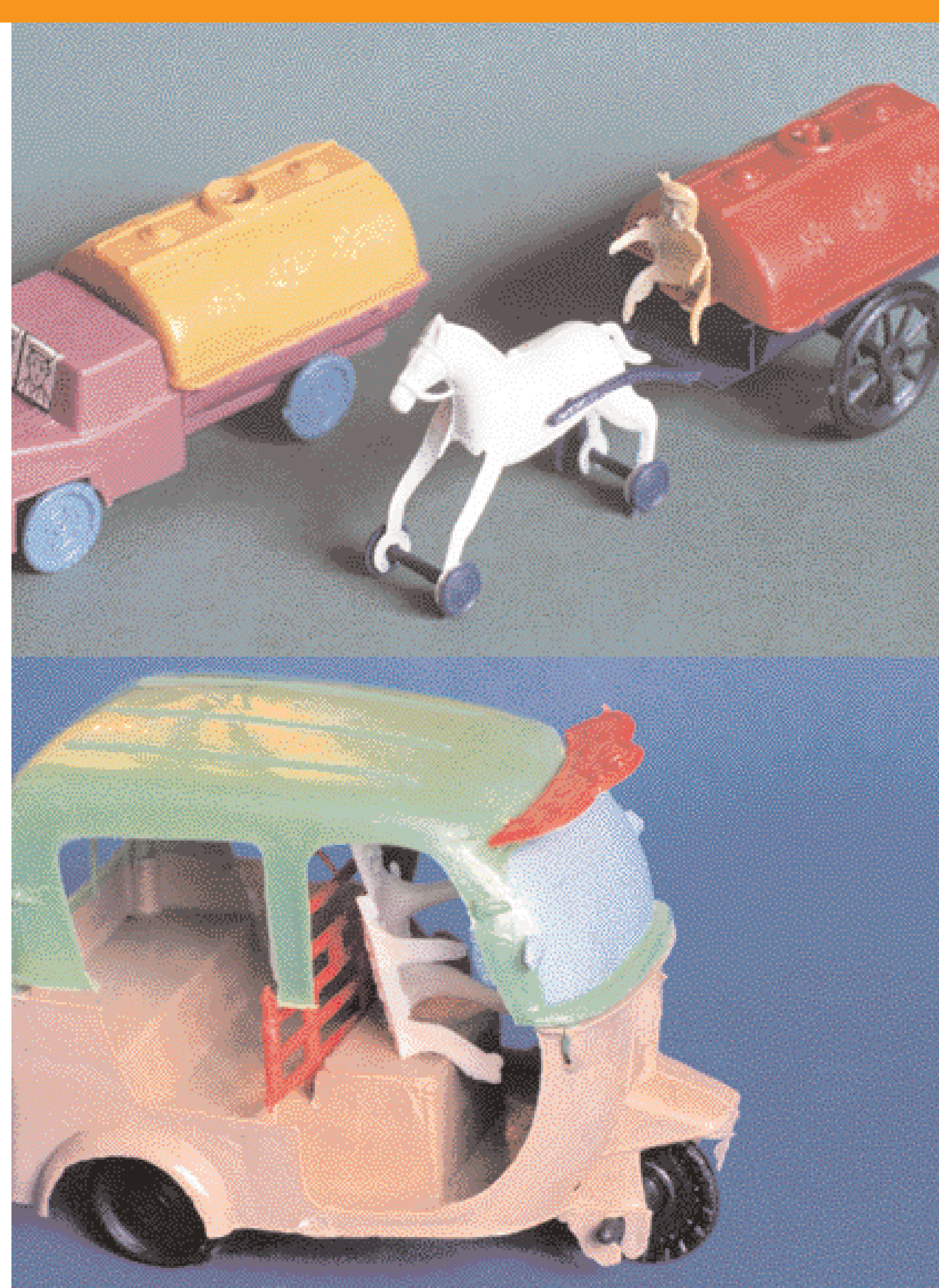
Who plays with what: children's plastic toys offer a simple but effective key into the circulation of wealth, global media and modernity in a society, writes Iftikhar Dadi, the guest editor of the *Prince Claus Fund Journal #10a* special issue on the Future is Handmade: The Survival and Innovation of Crafts.

Modernity in South Asia has unfolded in a paradoxical fashion, and its fault lines have become especially visible during the last two decades as the region has been increasingly incorporated in globalisation, transnational corporations (TNC), and the culture industry. However, during the same period, South Asia has also experienced the phenomenal increase in 'unplanned' urban areas, the 'informal' economy, and the intensification of living practices that fail or refuse to conform to metropolitan norms of citizenship and its attendant conceptions of the public and the private.

This relationship between global and the local is arguably co-dependent and well-articulated – the transfer of manufacturing to developing countries impels the latter to retain and amplify its mode of production in the informal sector, in order to produce exportable commodities under the aegis of TNC. Undoubtedly, the differential of exchange in this transaction continues to be characterised by a high degree of inequality. On the other hand, this growth in informal living practices has meant that urban South Asia today is saturated with diverse new forms of cultural expressions, which are a result of a complex dynamic interplay between globalising industrial and media technologies, with the premodern or the antiquated, to create new everyday cultural forms. These imaginings are most visible in the realm of popular culture, and here my use of the 'popular' is analogous to Néstor García Canclini's conception in relation to Latin America:

> [T]he popular is the excluded: those who have no patrimony or do not succeed in being acknowledged and conserved; artisans who do not become artists, who do not become individuals or participate in the market for 'legitimate' symbolic goods; spectators of mass media who remain outside universities and museums, 'incapable' of reading and looking at high culture because they do not know the history of knowledge and styles.[1]

Dipesh Chakrabarty has cogently argued that modernity, even while consolidating a universalisation based upon metropolitan norms, fractures and differentiates



incessantly. Extending Chakrabarty's view with a reading of García Canclini, I argue that this resulting 'difference' manifests itself in popular culture as a supplement to the universals proclaimed by the ideals of the modern. To be a modern person was to be seen to embark on the path to urbanisation and development that inexorably led to a western-style conception of an urbanised, individuated citizen and his role in public life. In practice, neoliberal transnational capitalism, by promising a consumerist utopia that can at best be fully enjoyed only by a small elite, has shattered that homogeneous ideal for the majority of peoples in the developing world. A consequence is a renewed 'worldling' enacted by the 'popular', characterised by a weak utopianism, and an indifference towards specific orientations in organised politics. The proliferation of new modes of production – engendered by capitalism itself – interacts with specific historical formations of premodern practices, materiality, and memories to engender new heterogeneities in the quest by uprooted and marginalised social groups for finding a dwelling in capitalist modernity.[2] The site of the popular marks this quest and is simultaneously both within and outside the domain of the global.

Since the 1970s, South Asia has witnessed the proliferation and modification of such new popular forms, which have included youth culture, popular music, new magazines, the spread of audio, video and photographic images and technology, the emergence of fashion designers, etc. Although these forms have emerged from the two great modern revolutions of industry and media, in them a local difference is marked by the persistence or revival of tradition – whether discursively and visibly articulated, or faintly but unremittingly experienced in daily praxis. It is precisely this site where a transformed conception of craft resides, either displayed openly as in a tourist or heritage craft-object, or subtly present in the aesthetics of locally produced objects of daily use. By this characterisation, craft travels from being a handmade, decorated object of daily or ritual use to one that exemplifies the very performative surface of tradition, or the trace of the local, in itself. However, this transformed 'urban-craft' is no longer rural, and neither based on a rigid separation of the human from the machine or the reproducible image, nor composed solely of authentic materials. Rather, it flourishes in the informal networks of production and exchange in the gigantic cities of South Asia; problematises the human-hand/machine binary by drawing freely upon industrial materials and media images and relaying these reproducible objects and images in a conjuncture with hand-work; and covertly or openly reproduces difference that serves to distinguish it from globalised commodities – although sometimes the difference may be found only in the quality of manufacture. In the remainder of this essay, I will consider a set of objects, plastic toys as examples 'urban-craft' objects that I hope will illustrate and clarify the above arguments.

The toys shown (figs 1 –9) have been produced and collected by the author in the 1990s from Karachi and Lahore, the two largest cities in Pakistan. They are quite fragile and very inexpensive, averaging 2 to 12 rupees each (about $0.04 to $0.20 US); other, better-made toys that command a higher price are also manufactured locally but also imported from China and Taiwan, cost some 20–100 rupees. Imported western toys (although manufactured largely in East Asia) – action figures, Lego sets, etc., are available in selected upscale shops as well, costing between 300–5,000 rupees. As is immediately obvious, there is a very clear separation in terms of access to the kind of toys a child normally plays with, based on class and wealth distribution. But what may not be so obvious is the surprising variety and the great range of motifs being made at the least expensive end, expressing the vitality of what is often celebrated in development economics as the informal sector – what I am showing here is a very small sample.

Due to their very low cost and localised production, two urban areas within Pakistan may have an overlapping, but different, set of toys available. For this reason, it is tempting to place them closer to the local pole of a local-global axis, although the objects seem to be hybrid in every sense. Over a course of months, the objects may be replaced by completely different ones, or may be produced with modifications in both form and material. For example, a sense of the variety of local/global motifs and hybrids can be seen in the vehicles shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. Figure 1 portrays animal-drawn and motorised tankers that are a common feature in Karachi, routinely selling water to households of all classes to alleviate chronic water shortages. Figure 2 is a miniature version of an auto-rickshaw, which is a three-wheeled vehicle converted from a Vespa scooter, and

provides a less expensive – and jauntier – form of taxi service. The truck in figure 3 is similar to the Bedford, a common sight in Pakistan.

Figure 4 shows two similar miniature cabinets that have been produced by two different workshops. The names of the manufacturers are not visible here, but are embossed on the back of each object; one is written in Latin script and the other, in Urdu script. The repetition and transfer of forms and motifs is also evident in figure 5, where the smaller house serves as the top floor 'module' for the larger house, with some differences in embellishment. The two houses may well have been made in separate workshops, but obviously display extensive borrowing of forms. Similarly, figure 6 exemplifies how motifs vary over time; the pink doll appeared in the wholesale markets a few months after the green one, with the addition of the crown, as well as the absence of paint on its dress. Figure 7 portrays an elegant woman wearing a sari. This doll-figure may well be adapted from an Indian toy figurine, as might be the elephant and rider on page 1, which strikingly evokes the nostalgia for a vanished courtly life of premodern and colonial South Asia. Finally, figures 8 and 9 portray everyday domesticity. The objects of figure 9 are clearly demarcated by class, as these cooking stoves are not used in upper-class households in neighbourhoods that are connected to the gas mains.

What is worth noting is the rapid transformation in production – the toys are made in small batches in a cottage industry type of production.[3] Usually, they are manufactured by hand-operated plastic-moulding machines, often using recycled or leftover plastic as raw material, and are sometimes finished by hand-painting highlights. The moulds for the toys are also made by small-scale metal foundries located in the informal sector, and finished by hand. The rough quality of many of the moulds is clearly visible in figure 2. Many of the designs are initiated locally, but others may well be copied off and adapted from toys originating in Asia.[4] Such manufacturing methods profoundly question the separation between a machine-made (industrial) object and a handmade (craft) object, as well as the clear division between the original and copy.

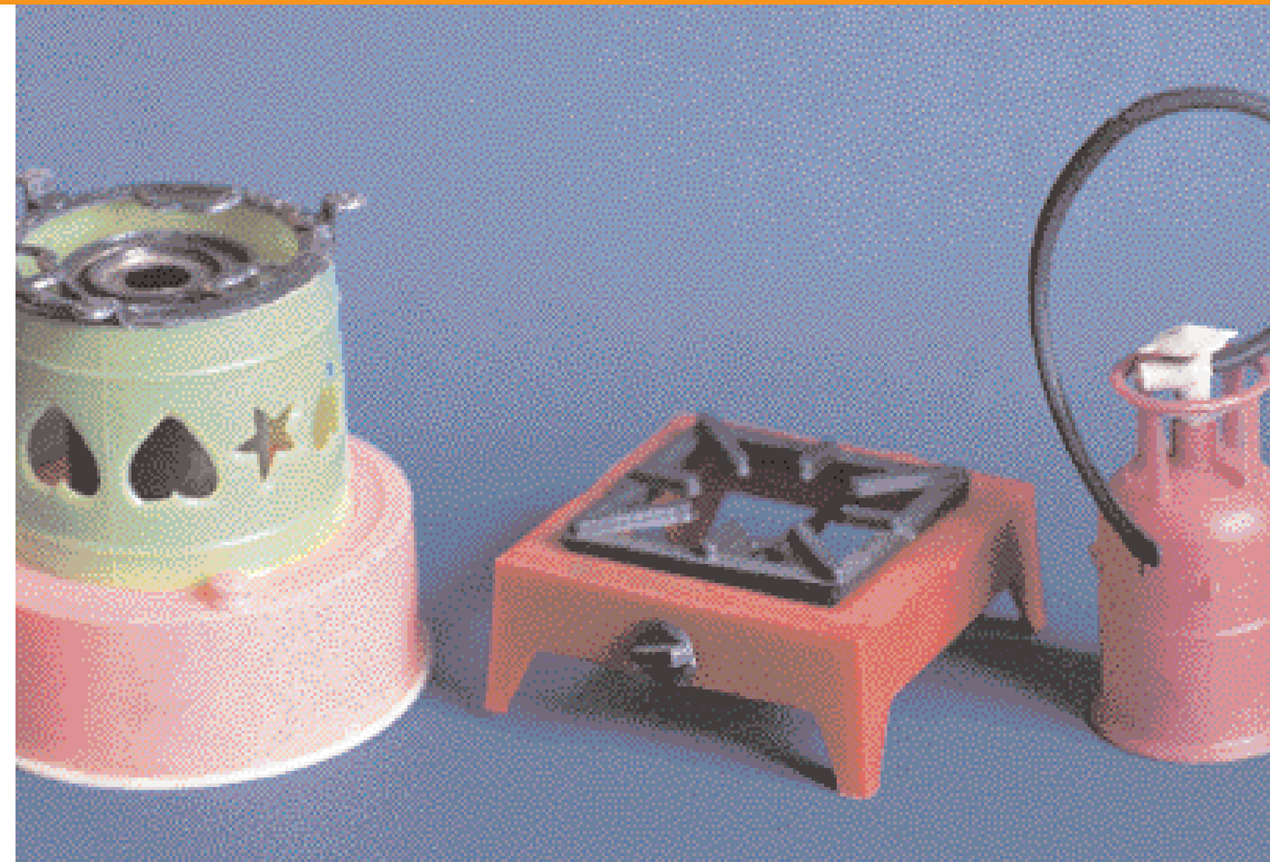
Adding to this uncertainty are the questions of genealogy, dating, and attribution, which also remain ambiguous, according to modern epistemological and museological imperatives. While many of the plastic objects do not mention the name of the workshop at all, some may, at best, be embossed with a brief name. But even in such cases, the listing of the mere first name of the workshop owner is insufficient to identify and locate the workshop, unless one spends time immersing oneself in the markets and tracing its site of production through interviews with the dealers and middlemen. This is characteristic of production in the informal sector, which by definition is not documented.

The extremely low economic return from such inexpensive toys means that their distribution is frequently handled by itinerant peddlers in poor neighbourhoods. In an important sense, this network of production, exchange,

and consumption remains largely invisible, outside the attentions of the national public media, as well as lying below the threshold of the economic interests of TNC. Needless to say, this realm of toys is conceptually very distant from the globalised circulation and legal protection of corporate commodities, logos and intellectual property. However, it is important to note that contestations of global intellectual property and copyright laws occur in the same cities – whether through piracy or by legal challenges mounted by TNC – in a temporal and spatial realm that is parallel with the circulation of the plastic toys. In this sense, the near-invisible realm of this 'urban-craft' supplements the highly visible, universalising, and globalising dimension of transnational capital.[5]

These objects do not circulate as tourist souvenirs or objects that consciously embody an invented tradition, yet a forceful argument can be made for continuity from the reappearance of morphological correspondences with traditional motifs. For example, the horse-drawn tanker in figure 1 and the elephant and rider on page 1 betray intriguing similarities with artefacts from the Indus Valley civilisation (c. 2000 BCE), and with modern South Asian tribal motifs.[6] In such assessments, however, we sacrifice all the potential richness of the contemporary context to create a formal homology with objects about whose social contexts we know very little. And yet these comparisons remain important in evoking prior meanings, which cannot be fully excised by appeals to a homogenising modernity but persists and returns constantly, here seen in the guise of urban-craft.

This tenuous sense of popular culture in urban-craft is thus located at the axis of a double translation of modernity, pointing towards both the homogenising depredations of the global culture industry as much as it indexes a specificity of the local that refracts and pluralises modernity – a local that is not homogeneous but already bears within it a complex genealogy of prior translations. While seen individually these toys may be simply dismissed as lower quality copies or localised adaptations of toys circulating internationally, I argue that taken together in a constellation, the aesthetics of these toys as urban-craft opens out towards 'worldling' the modern city for the popular sectors, those, according to García Canclini's characterisation, excluded from official and symbolic participation in civil society and public life.



Notes

1. Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, Christopher L. Chippari and Silvia L. Lopez (trs), (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995) 145. See page 134 in this issue of the *Prince Claus Fund Journal* for 'Prosperous Popular Cultures', an excerpt from García Canclini's *Hybrid Cultures*.

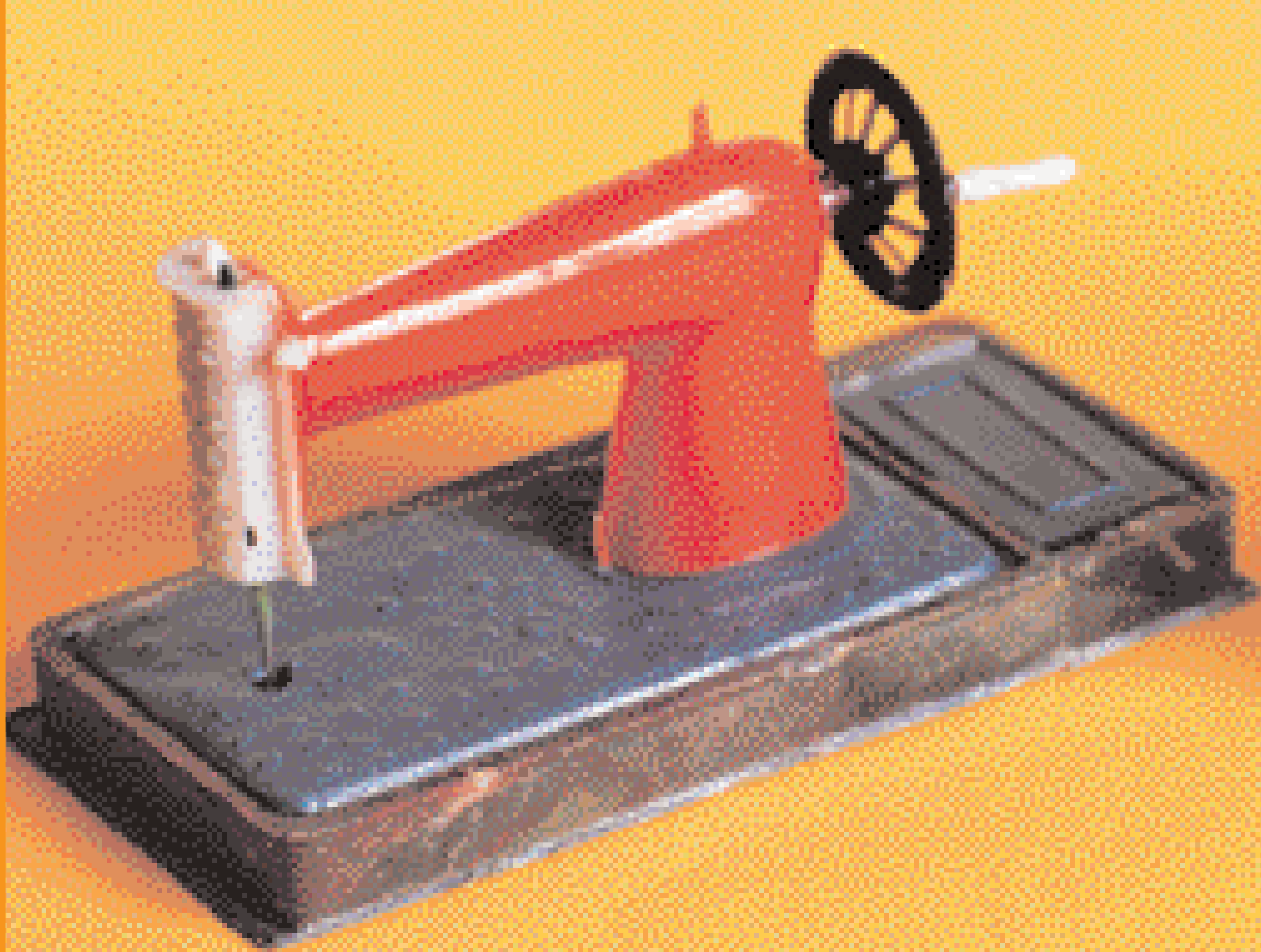
2. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

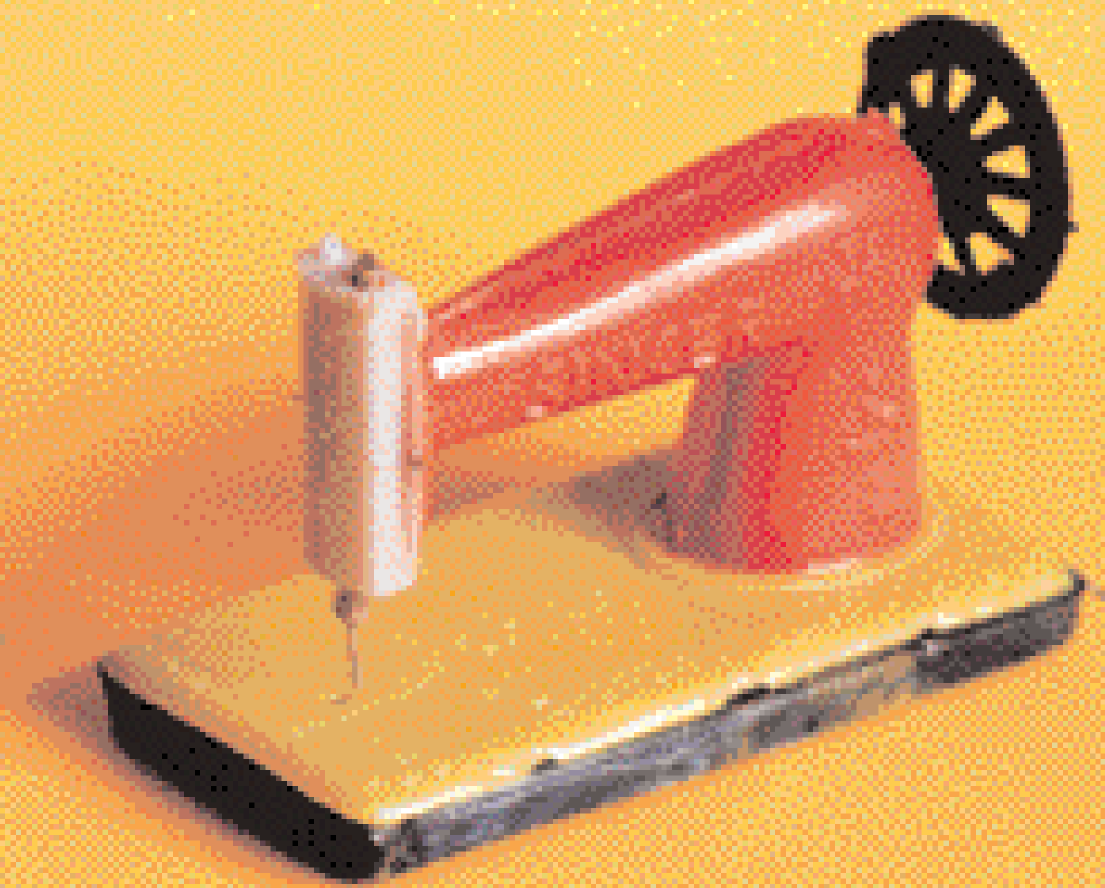
3. I employ the appellation of 'cottage industry' in its legal and economic sense, and disavow the kind of pleasant associations that 'cottage' industry evokes – artisans working harmoniously with authentic materials to create expressions of local culture. The working conditions in the 'informal' sector are beyond the scope of this essay, but clearly this sector is also the locus of massive exploitation of labour.

4. Nita Kumar's study of craft in Banaras includes artisans who make traditional wooden toys by turning them on motorised lathes and finishing by hand painting. The plastic toy and many of the wooden toys are thus made by a similar combination of hand-labour and small-scale machinery. See *The Artisans of Banaras* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) 35-37.

5. The idea of 'artisanry as supplement of labour' has been discussed by Arindam Dutta. See his 'Designing the Present: The Cole Circle, and the Architecture of (an) Imperial Bureaucracy, 1851-1901' (PhD. Dissertation, Princeton University, 2001), Chapter 4.

6. S.A. Sali, 'Late Harappan Settlement at Daimabad', *Frontiers of the Indus Civilisation: Sir Mortimer Wheeler Commemoration Volume*, B.B. Lal and S.P. Gupta (eds); Shashi Asthana (ass't ed.), (New Delhi: Books & Books on behalf of Indian Archaeological Society/Indian History & Culture Society, 1984) plates 94-97; *Les Cités oubliées de l'Indus: archéologie du Pakistan*, Exposition, Musée national des arts asiatiques Guimet, 16 novembre 1988-30 janvier 1989 (Paris: Association française d'action artistique, Ministère des affaires étrangères, Secrétariat d'état aux relations culturelles internationales, 1988) plate 267, 172; Stella Kramrisch, 'Unknown India: Ritual Art in Tribe and Village', *Exploring India's Sacred Art: Selected Writings of Stella Kramrisch*, Barbara Stoler Miller (ed.), (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).





Looking for Buddha

Patricia R. Zimmermann
Cambodia

How easy is it to buy a Buddha in Cambodia? Patricia R. Zimmermann's search for the perfect Buddha leads her through a history bloodied by war and genocide to a present where crafts' hand-rendering manual skills are more likely to be employed in digital sweatshops or piracy.

Mithona

Anne, my closest friend, asked me to bring her back a Cambodian Buddha from South-east Asia. Anne forms part of our extended, non-biological family: a sister, a comrade, a feminist and my oldest friend. I called her in Boston on my global satellite phone card. I asked what I could bring back for her. It was June. The so-called SARS epidemic had inhabited Hong Kong, China, Singapore, and parts of North Vietnam in spring, 2003. It was, as a result, difficult for Anne and her daughter to travel with us to Cambodia as we had fantasised months before when we were all Stateside.

Anne was explicit in her instructions: no fat Chinese Buddhas with their flowing robes and goofy grins; no Thai machine-made Buddhas varnished to look old and hand carved and hustled in street markets. If possible, the Buddha needed to be bought from a non-governmental organisation that re-trained Cambodians to insure that the money went to them as a form of war reparations. She did not want the money to go to Thai, Vietnamese or American middlemen trafficking in western orientalist fantasies that now framed Buddhism as a new-age remedy for the work speed-ups of globalisation, a kind of Prozac without a prescription, shorn of location. She wanted the money to remit to the craftspeople themselves. Cambodia is one of the poorest countries in the world. It is classified by the UN as a least-developed country (LDC).

Anne, a single mum who was raised as an Irish Catholic in Indiana in the heart of the American Midwest, wanted the Cambodian Buddha for her daughter, Mithona. Mithona is Cambodian for June. That is the month her daughter was born. Mithona's Cambodian parents had given her up to an orphanage because they could not afford her. In July 1998, two days before the first democratic election in Cambodia when strongman Hun Sen was voted into power, Anne travelled on short notice to Cambodia to adopt Mithona. Mithona is now six years old.

Holed up in the Sunway Hotel – the famous outpost for adoptive parents – with other single mums, couples, both heterosexual, and gay, wanting children, she was in the middle of the intense political volatilities and instabilities between three rival candidates. There were guns. There was shooting in the streets. If someone other than Hun Sen won the election, the adoption agencies worried that adoptions by the west would be shut off.

Adoption in Cambodia is often a life or death issue for children: the country has one of the highest infant-mortality rates in the world, a high level of child labour in sweatshops, and child sex trafficking to other parts of South-east Asia. As Dr. Beat Richner pointed out during a fundraising cello concert in Siem Reap for Jayavarman VII Children's Hospital in June 2003, the number of children who died from dengue fever and tuberculosis that week far exceeded the number who had died across the globe from SARS. We donated money in Mithona's name.

Buddhas and DVD pirates

I had been living in Singapore for six months with my family. I had never been to Asia before I was invited to teach cinema and digital theory at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore during my sabbatical. With my husband, a public health professor, and ten-year-old son, I had travelled throughout South-east Asia: Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. We made a trip to Nepal. We visited tropical islands in the South China Sea. In each place, we tried to visit non-governmental organisations so that our flurry of sightseeing temples and shopping for artefacts and crafts would be anchored in some kind of localised, social and political reality that was not about things to bring back to Singapore and the States, but about people. In most of the places we visited, tourism constituted the major industry. And every tour guide, whether in Bali, Kathmandu, Chaing Mai, Bangkok, or Ho Chi Minh City escorted us to collectively-organised craft workshops or NGO-sponsored shops for handicrafts and artefacts.

However, these traditional crafts must be viewed in dialectic with the more contemporary high-tech craft of media piracy that stands in opposition to global capital. The Motion Picture Association of America, under the helm of Jack Valenti, functions as the major police agency to protect US-copyrighted products. It identifies South-east and South Asia as posing the largest threat to intellectual property after China. Copyright products – software, films, videos, music and games – now constitute the largest US export, exceeding aerospace and military products. The transnational media corporations are no longer in the business of producing media, but are in the business of advancing and protecting intellectual property rights.

In virtually every city in South-east Asia except Singapore, where international copyright conventions are strictly adhered to, pirated copies of *The Matrix*, *Tomb Raider* computer games, Hong Kong chop socky[1] films and Adobe PhotoShop programs abound, sold for the equivalent of one US dollar. In Johor Bahru, across the straits from Singapore in Malaysia, shopping malls openly hawk DVDs of bootlegged Hollywood films and music, the sales staff listing genres and actors with the acumen of PhDs in cinema studies.

In each place, we shopped in markets overflowing with the most gorgeous, evocative handicrafts cascading from makeshift stalls like waterfalls of colour, design and excess: hand-woven baskets, mango wood vases, *thangka* paintings, batiks, shadow puppets, hand-carved chopsticks, silks, intricately woven fabric, embroidery, lacquerware, beadwork, masks, figurines, folk art and fine-art

Fragment of a statue of Buddha, twelfth to thirteenth century
45 × 45 × 27 cm, Cambodia, 2512-1
courtesy of the National Museum for Ethnology in Leiden

paintings, silver, gems, carpets. Each market was filled with ex-pats from around the world, living in global capital entrepôts like Singapore, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Hong Kong, earning high salaries with subsidised housing that allowed them to travel extensively and shop with an abandon unknown for middle-class professionals back in the more developed countries they called home. Whether in Europe, US or Australia, the economy had plummeted and the cost of living was triple, quadruple, compared to South-east Asia.

The members of this new colonial order used the global capital earned in the high-tech and financial sectors of the new knowledge economy to travel to the least-developed countries, and acquire crafts and art to demonstrate the difference of living overseas when they returned. In these global cities, wireless internet, mobile phones, high-end computers and MP3 players were commonplace. Many ex-pat families didn't ship much to Singapore: hardly anyone stays too long. It is a kind of tour of duty in one of the most high-tech and safe places in the world that has functioned as a global entrepôt for centuries. It is a point on the map through which all manner of goods and crafts circulate: Vietnamese beaded purses, Thai silk, Afghani kilims, Indian cotton tablecloths, Malaysian batik, and computer hardware pieced together in digital sweatshops in Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia.

The acquisition of crafts and artefacts from South-east Asia for business or academic ex-pats should not be read as a simple colonial revival. The hand-carved Buddha heads from Bali, hand-knotted Persian rugs and meticulously detailed Vietnamese lacquerware signify the localised, historical other of the transnational capital sectors in which the ex-pats operate. These material artefacts marked by place, folk culture, and the hand function as a manifestation of all that the dematerialised digital flows of data, information and money repress.

This contradiction between the material and the dematerialised is important because it is both psychic and economic, fantasy and reality, local and global. On the one hand, these artefacts and crafts represent the bounty acquired through the largesse and mobility provided by transnational capital. On the other hand, international non-governmental organisations have advocated for development initiatives that revitalise traditional crafts for export to the global market throughout South and South-east Asia as a way to help people, especially women, the poorest of the world's poor, achieve self-sufficiency.

Handicrafts, as well as the NGO-sponsored workshops, need to be situated within two larger racialised and gendered global flows, particularly in Cambodia. On one level, Cambodia suffers from a huge sex-slave industry, with an estimated 15,000 children trafficked to Thailand. Twenty-three per cent of children aged between ten and fourteen work. The NGO workshops, which revive lost artisan skills like stone- and woodcarving or lacquerware, provide income and a deterrent from entering the sex trade.

On another level, textile sweatshops have multiplied in Cambodia, growing from

30 in 1996 to 110 within one year. This explosive growth of US apparel exports has escalated labour- and human-rights abuses, with two protesting Gap textile workers shot dead in June 2003 in Phnom Penh. Since 1997, the EU, US, Malaysian, Hong Kong, Chinese and Singaporean manufacturers have been attracted to Cambodia for outsourcing due to low wages in one of the poorest countries of the world and quota-free access. Within these two flows, the global circulation of Cambodian handicrafts serves a quite different function than simply touristic orientalist appropriation of exotica.

Make Me an Offer

Ex-pats love to point out their collection of crafts, carpets, and folk art paintings in their air-conditioned condos. These items are purchased on family trips during school holidays, during weekend getaways to Bangkok or Bali, or at auctions or fancy fairs at clubs or hotels in Singapore. Each piece holds a story of contact between ex-pats from the developed world navigating language and cultural differences with craftspeople, shop owners or stall salespeople. Each is more beautiful, more artistically complex than the next. Each requires the retelling of the story of contact as well as the Hindu, Muslim or Buddhist religious or folktale inscribed into the shape of the object: the Barung story, the Ramayana, Garuda, Hanuman, dragons, mermaids, phoenixes. It is a complex interplay of cultural encodings, recodings, deconstructions, and interpretations.

Each tale is doubled by a tale of capital in its most undiluted form: bargaining aggressively with the hawkers for lower prices on intricate, high quality, detailed textiles, carvings, rugs, paintings. Will you take less bhat? What about only 200 rupiah? What about less ringgit for this batik? Each of these crafts cost less than a ticket to *Tomb Raider* in a multiplex Stateside. The bargaining is literally about pennies.

But this bargaining is complicated by cultural differences about economic exchange. When we tried to buy a carved Buddha head from a woodcarving workshop in Bali without bargaining (we were embarrassed by the hardships of the Balinese in the aftermath of the 2002 bombing that drove all the tourists – the major source of revenue for the island – away), the young saleswoman said, but no, we must fight about the price so we can learn about each other and share something. Fixed prices are perhaps the static cultural hegemony of corporate capital where exchange is only about money, not about people, where it is a commodity and not a craft. In South-east Asia, prices were fluid, social, and debated. They required time. They had a rhythm. They were not a transaction, but a shared narrative of cultural difference.

Genocide and Crafts

The Khmer Rouge was in power from 1975 to 1979 in Cambodia. It murdered approximately 1.7 million people, roughly 21 per cent of the population. Prior to the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia was one of the largest exporters of raw silk in South-east Asia. The Khmer Rouge killed teachers, professionals, farmers, engineers,

students, musicians, dancers and artisans, ranging from silversmiths to wood-carvers. It considered the arts and crafts elitist, forcing craftspeople into the fields.

The Khmer Rouge's major craft, besides murder, was photographing its victims to document an archive of death. In this context of genocide, the revival of traditional crafts like textile-weaving, carving and silverware by international non-governmental organisations (especially from France and Germany) represents something more than the colonialist trope of trafficking in South-east Asian artefacts and tomb-raiding.

The adoption agency gave Anne and the other soon-to-be parents a list of NGOs in so-called safe areas where they could buy Cambodian crafts like silver, fabrics and carvings. The parents wanted some artefacts of Cambodian culture to bring home with them to the States. From an NGO workshop that retrained landmine amputees in woodcarving, Anne bought two carvings: a mermaid from the Ramayana, and an image of the monkey king, Hanuman.

Among parents who adopt children from Asia, there is a strong ethos of supporting the cultural identity of origin of their children. In the 1970s and 1980s, with a wave of Korean and Chinese adoptions, families raised their children as white, eradicating their Asian identities and roots. This parenting model, which deleted history and difference, created a post-traumatic sense of loss in the children about their identities and their location between two different worlds, between east and west.

Anne, however, was in Cambodia for less than 48 hours. Most of her time was spent sitting in the US Embassy waiting for the visa to bring her new daughter home. Mithona was suffering from malnutrition: at thirteen months, she weighed only eleven pounds. She had an ear infection and a 102-degree temperature.

Now, in the 21st century, especially among parents adopting children from South-east Asia, the history of the US military interventions, bombings and landmines in these countries weighs heavily as a moral imperative to promote peace and reconciliation. Among international peace activists, the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge are only the second phase of the Cambodian genocide. President Nixon's secret bombing of Cambodia during the Vietnam War (or American War, as it is called in South-east Asia), which commenced in 1969, killed 600,000 Cambodians and produced over two million refugees. Similarly, parents work to think through and materialise the interrelationships between the personal and political by inventing ways of raising their children within a mixed-race family that also recognises their South-east Asian origins.

Folk festivals like the Water festival and Cambodian New Year and Khmer crafts like Buddhas, textiles and temple-rubbings, play a major role to extend the adoptive family beyond its privatised realms into a more social and hybrid sense of family. Within this transnationalised sphere, family traditions and identities must always be imagined differently, continually reinvented, and concretely forged, never taken as a given of patriarchal familialism.

For example, north of Boston, the town of Lowell, and formerly the site of

women's labour union organising around the textile mills, now houses the second-largest Cambodian refugee population in the US after Long Beach, California. Cambodians, who were fleeing the Khmer Rouge and then the Vietnamese occupation that followed, were resettled in Lowell from the refugee camps in Thailand.

This Cambodian community has close ties with various organisations for parents who have adopted Cambodian children. Each summer, in New Hampshire, for example, they sponsor a Cambodian Jamboree featuring Apsara dancers, traditional Cambodian music and crafts vendors. On the Silk Air flight returning from Siem Reap, Cambodia, to Singapore, I met a Cambodian woman from Lowell who was returning from a buying trip to stock her store with Khmer crafts. When I asked her who bought these crafts, she said, adoptive families, Cambodian immigrants and collectors.

The Psychic Economies of the Global Circulation of Craft

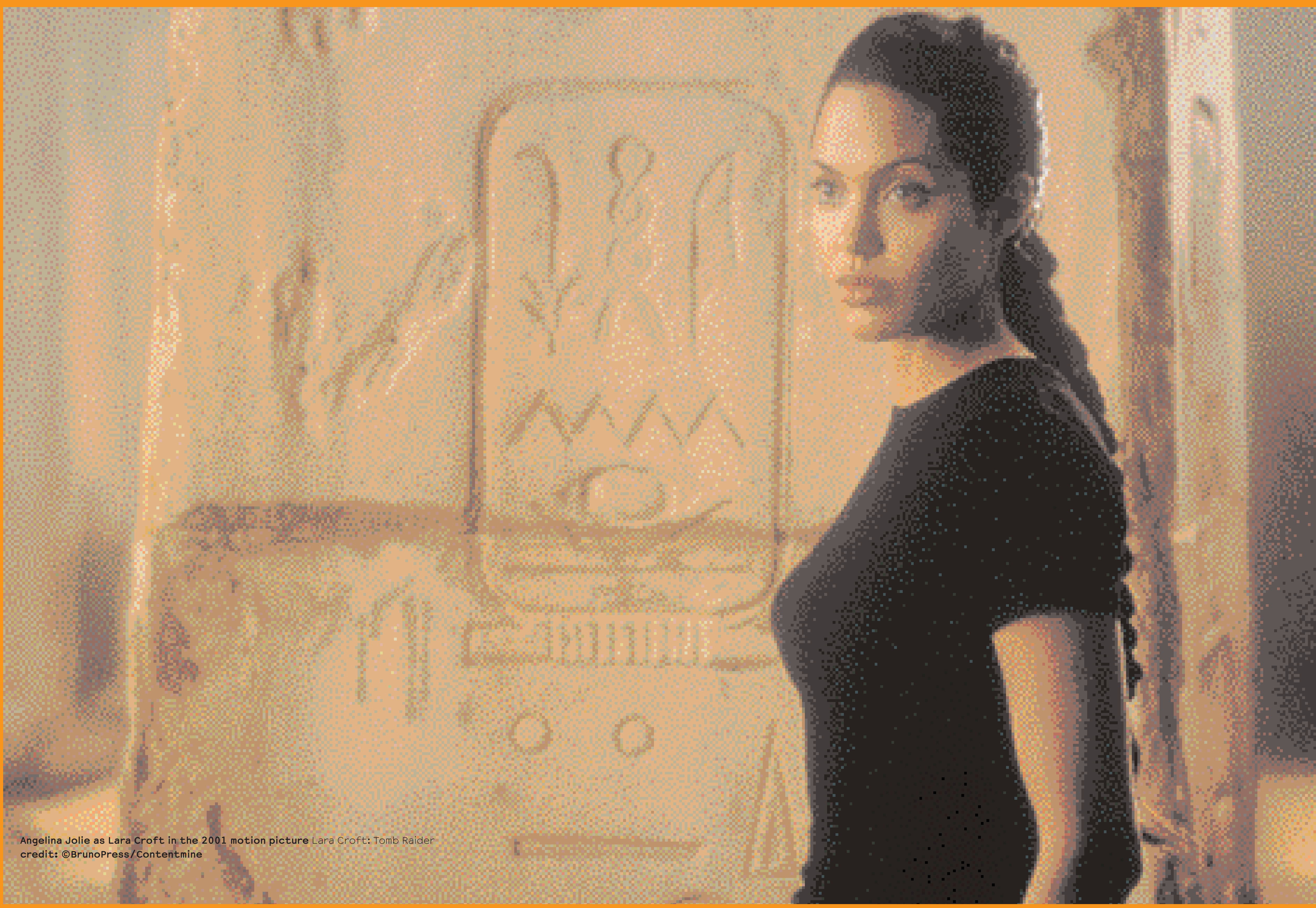
Cambodian crafts in this social/political/familial construct of the forging of adoptive, interracial families do not simply function as an orientalist artefact of the South-east Asian exotic. Instead, it moves within a much more transnational, fluid arena where artefacts and crafts, as my friend Anne says, 'aid children in the understanding that it is normative to be different'.

Mithona is one of only two children of colour in her first-grade class in her private Boston elementary school, the only child in a non-nuclear, non-traditional family, and the only adopted child. This autumn, Mithona brought a small, slim Khmer-style Buddha with a bell hanging from his feet to her class show and tell. In her mostly white class, the Buddha's bell rang out her difference without words, the sound creating a space for her own racialised identity.

As Anne explains it, some parents consider it easier to culturally negotiate an adopted child from China than a child from Cambodia simply because the Chinese diaspora is more visible in the US in Chinatowns, museums, and contemporary multicultural revisionist American history. Most museums in the US almost exclusively focus on Chinese artefacts and art, perhaps replicating the hegemonic power, size, and influence of China.

At the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, an entire wing is dedicated to China, with not a single piece of Khmer art despite the large population of Cambodians in nearby Lowell. At the Metropolitan in New York, the South-east Asian collection features only eight Khmer pieces, many more Thai pieces, and thousands of works from China. A very limited number and range of Cambodian and Khmer crafts are sold on eBay. Khmer art and Cambodian artefacts lack visibility and space in the US, in contrast to the many important and moving websites documenting the genocide committed by the Khmer Rouge, such as Yale University's Cambodian Genocide Project (www.yale.edu/cgp).

For Anne, Khmer crafts and Buddhas give folk art and Buddhist art presence, despite a high art, museum absence. It is a presence that forms part of daily life, with incense lit daily in her home to the Cambodian Buddha. Mithona, who is now six, asks her playmates to light incense to the Buddha.



Angelina Jolie as Lara Croft in the 2001 motion picture Lara Croft: Tomb Raider
credit: ©BrunoPress/Contentmine

Lara Croft

Cambodia has no movie theatres anymore. They have been converted into warehouses or shops. In the late 1960s, King Norodom Sihanouk made films, often starring himself, various Cambodian ministers, officials and the country's military. His films, which historians note as lacking any redeeming artistic merit, epitomise the conflation of total control over the narration of the nation and absolute state power. Representation and nation blur into one.

Yet another history of Cambodian cinematic imaging also exists, one that moves across borders forming the Cambodian traumatic imaginary for global consumption. At one end, Roland Joffe's *The Killing Fields*, a Hollywood studio production shot in Thailand in 1984, chronicled the relationship between *New York Times* reporter Sydney Schanberg and his translator Dith Pran as they covered the brutal civil war in Cambodia. It won several Academy Awards. Most recently, in 2003, Rithy Panh, a Cambodian living in Paris, produced the documentary *S 21: The Khmer Rouge Death Machine*, which interviews prisoners and guards at the Khmer Rouge's notorious and deadly S 21 camp. Co-produced by Franco-German TV Arte and France's National Broadcast Institute, the 2003 Cannes Film Festival bestowed the *Un Certain Regard* award on the film. These works situate the Cambodian cinematic imaginary as always marked by a collective political trauma that must circulate in realist visual modalities across the globe. On one end of the period, a Hollywood action film, on the other, a modest documentary.

The relationship between Cambodia's craft heritage in the temples of Angkor Wat with their intricate stone carvings of Apsaras, Vishnu, Kali and Buddha and the global entertainment industry with its digital imaging and special effects converged in the filming of Paramount's *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*, starring Angelina Jolie, daughter of Jon Voight, in 2000. Filmed at the temples of Angkor Wat, featuring scenes of Ta Prohm, the deteriorating temple overgrown with large tree limbs, *Tomb Raider* was the first commercial film to be shot in Cambodia since 1964. The Angkor Wat conservation authority charged Paramount $10,000 US a day for shooting at the temples, a fortune in Cambodia. Based on a popular computer game produced by Eidos, *Tomb Raider* suggests the constant shuttle of the transnational media corporations between the digital and the analogue.

When I asked our guide in Siem Reap, Phailim, a former lawyer who earned more escorting English-speaking tourists around the temples than working as a lawyer in a country where laws change incessantly, what he thought about the filming of *Tomb Raider* in Angkor Wat, his reply surprised me. He replied that Angelina Jolie was a great woman, a heroine in Cambodia because she adopted a Cambodian child, bought a house in Cambodia, and has advocated for Cambodian human rights across the globe as a Goodwill Ambassador for the UN High Commission for Refugees.

Shopping for Mithona's Buddha

In Siem Reap, my family and I searched for the perfect Cambodian Buddha for Mithona and Anne. Several weeks before, my partner and I had read Jeff Greenwald's 1996 book, *Shopping for Buddhas*. Greenwald, who had lived as an ex-

pat journalist in Nepal in 1980s, describes his search for the perfect Buddha in Kathmandu. The story mixes a western consumerist quest for the perfect art object, a journey into Nepalese Buddhism, and the saga of the illegal trade in antiquities. The book fuelled us to find the perfect Buddha for Mithona.

A colleague in Singapore instructed us to look for the most seductive, all knowing smile. Another colleague suggested analysing the eyes. Our family scoured the Psar Chas market souvenir stalls, where wood, clay, silver, and bronze Buddhas in every pose and every shape were stacked from floor to ceiling. We debated each Buddha. We needed a Buddha made in Cambodia by Cambodians. The market Buddhas were of unknown origin. Sean, my ten-year-old son, insisted that we think of Mithona during our shopping. He bought her rings, temple rubbings, elephants, and textile hangings.

We bought Mithona's Buddha from the French NGO-supported Artisans D'Angkor, a retail shop in the centre of Siem Reap that also functioned as a training centre for young adults to learn stone-carving, woodworking and lacquerware. We found a Buddha in the teaching Buddha pose, with one hand down and the other raised. This pose seemed appropriate, since Anne was a college professor. It was carved from wood, and then lacquered, from snapshots of the Buddhas at Angkor Wat. It was also signed, a rarity in South-east Asian folk art. We toured the workshops and took photos of the carvers working on the Buddhas for Mithona. We also bought one for ourselves.

Because Anne and Mithona were coming to visit us when we repatriated, we decided to pack the two Buddhas in our suitcases rather than ship them back to the States via sea with our other possessions. In Detroit, after going through customs, all of our suitcases where searched and then scanned by the high-tech security system. The security guards yanked the Buddhas out and checked their pointy heads. In South-east Asia, snails on the Buddha's head signify how these animals protected the Buddha from sunstroke during meditation. In Bush's National Security State, the scanners interpreted them as a potential threat or a weapon.

From Beads to Pixels

However, amid and beyond these gripping, realist epics of exposing genocide for the world, looms a Cambodian digital imaginary threaded into transnational capital. Neo-Hollywood is the international entertainment industry that spans the globe in multi-platformed modes that transform what was formerly called cinema into 'franchises' and 'tentpoles' for the distribution of various forms of repurposed intellectual property, tie-ins and products. Neo-Hollywood no longer has a centre of production or a studio in a specific location: it is nowhere and everywhere, constantly reorganising capital and information. Theorist Aida Hozic has identified the entertainment industry's new economy as 'Hollywood in Cyberspace', where special effects, digital imaging, CGI, compositing and manipulation of bitmap images replace cameras and studios. This transformation has shifted commercial filmmaking from a craft-centred practice of lighting,

cinematography, costume and *mise-en-scène* focused on production to algorithm-based computer engineering located in post-production facilities.

Further, as many communication political economists have noted, neo-Hollywood operates as a studio without walls, constantly searching for economies of scale by outsourcing digital effects and location shooting to countries with weak currencies against the US dollar such as Canada, Mexico, Australia, the former Eastern bloc countries and Asia. Since the economic crisis of 1997, countries in South-east Asia, in particular Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam have aggressively cashed in on the west's orientalist cinematic fantasies, offering 'exotic locations' and cheap labour for extras, drivers and helpers to the global entertainment industry. Throughout Thailand and Malaysia, one can find islands, jungles, beaches, and cities sold to international tourists as the sites of various Hollywood films. For example, remnants of the TV show *Survivor* sets litter the tropical islands called Sibu in Malaysia in the South China Sea, decomposing from sun and sea.

In particular, East and South-east Asia now produce over 80 per cent of the analogue and digital animation broadcast in the US in operations often nicknamed 'digital sweatshops'. One Singaporean observer of new media policy told me that 'there is not that much of a jump between intricate South-east Asian beadwork and embroidery and pixels on a computer bitmap. Both require detailed manipulations on a minute scale and both require enormous time'. In 1999, the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) developed a comprehensive plan for member countries to compete in the global information networked economy. In a special report on the particular challenges for Cambodia, it argued that the development of an information economy is critical for economic competitiveness, advocating 'leapfrogging' technologies to build a network of broadband multipurpose networks around the country. Digitisation and networking will form the basis for industrial reorganisation.

Yet it is important to remember the other side of the digital divide, even in the context of public and economic regional policy that advocates leapfrogging. Cambodia has the lowest number of telephone lines per person, the lowest number of mobile phones, the lowest number of personal computers, and nearly the lowest number of internet hosts of any of the ASEAN ten nations, Northeast Asia, and India. As a post-conflict nation, Cambodia lacks a viable physical infrastructure: most rural areas have limited access to roads, water supply and electricity. It is one of the poorest countries on the globe, with the highest infant and child mortality rates in the world. According to the Sharing Foundation, a NGO supporting children, the average GDP is $300 US. Forty per cent of the children are malnourished. Only 36 per cent of the population have access to safe drinking water. Much of Cambodia is literally 'off the grid'.

Evil Is Easy, Goodness Is Hard

We asked our guide Phaillim why the steps to the main temple at Angkor Wat were so steep as we gingerly climbed up on all fours. He replied that for Cambodian Buddhists, 'evil is easy, goodness is hard'.

When I asked my ten-year-old son what he remembers most about being in Cambodia, he didn't say shopping for Buddhas or seeing the magnificent Angkor Wat temples. He said, the bones in the stupa, which made him so sad. Outside Siem Reap on the road to the temples of Angkor Wat, there is a small Buddhist stupa made of glass. It recognises the victims of the Killing Fields. The Buddhist monastery that occupies this site was once a school where the Khmer Rouge killed all the teachers. The stupa is filled with skulls and bones recovered from the Killing Fields around Siem Reap, a makeshift memorial to historical reclamation of both artefacts of bodies and memories of a community. A sign in English explains that the Cambodians endured a genocide of massive proportions on this site. It says that the people of this community are too poor to build a proper memorial to the dead; they ask for donations in a box. Under a pavilion next to the stupa, children played soccer with a makeshift ball of crumpled cloth. My family and I donated money into the box.

But for Cambodians, the US secret bombings and the Khmer Rouge are not over. This history continues, marking bodies, psyches, handicrafts. Cambodia has the largest number of amputees in the world, a result of land mines abandoned by the US, Thailand, France and Vietnam for which there are no maps. Nearly every Cambodian we met had had a relative murdered by the Khmer Rouge. To buy a Buddha carved in Cambodia is to remember this history, and to resist it.

Anne told me that Mithona has a game. She makes what she calls museums out of the pictures we took in Cambodia and the little Buddhas we gave her in her bedroom or on the kitchen table. Mithona's installations are an act of history, an act of secular spirituality, an assertion of a racialised and located identity. As a form of folk art, Mithona's museums resonate with the bones in the stupa. These little shrines insist that craft is that which is used by the living to remember, and to re-live, all that is lost.

Note

1. A generic term for 1970s kung-fu films.

One of the Biboki Weavers works at the loom in Indonesia's West Timor.
The Biboki Weavers are the recipients of a 2003 Prince Claus Award
photo courtesy Biboki Weavers

Contributors

Dapo Adeniyi is the editor of *Position International Arts Review*, a quarterly journal in Lagos, Nigeria. His translation of the Yoruba classic, *Irinkerindo Ninu Igbo Elegbeje* (Expedition to the Mount of Thought) into English, is an important linguistic text for Nigerian universities. Adeniyi travelled extensively as editor-in-chief for the arts section of the *Nigerian Times* and for Lagos TV. In 1994, he served as a Fellow of Downing College in Cambridge University. In 1986, his play *Herlot*, about a charlatan growing metal crops, was broadcast by the BBC World Service.

Craig Clunas is Professor and holds the Percival David Chair of Chinese and East Asian Art, Department of Art and Archaeology, School of Oriental and African Studies at London University. From 1979 to 1994, he was a curator in the Far Eastern department of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and from 1994 to 2003, he taught history of art at the University of Sussex. His publications include *Chinese Furniture* (1997) and *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (1997). In 1981 he was the first person to translate the writings of Wang Shixiang into English.

Iftikhar Dadi is currently Visiting Assistant Professor in History of Art at Cornell University. He has co-curated, with Salah Hassan, the exhibition *Unpacking Europe*, at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam in 2001, and has co-edited the reader *Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading* (Rotterdam: NAi Uitgevers, 2001). As an artist, in collaboration with Elizabeth Dadi, he has exhibited widely in international arenas, recently at the Sao Paulo Biennale, Brazil (1998); the Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan (1999); the Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis (2000); the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2000); the Miami Art Museum, Miami (2001); the Liverpool Biennale, Tate Liverpool, UK (2002); and the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University (2003). The Dadis' work is featured in *Fresh Cream* (Phaidon Press, 2000).

Heri Dono is a multi-media artist whose work incorporates video, music, and found materials. Born in Jakarta, Indonesia, he currently lives in Yogyakarta. Some of the exhibitions he has participated in include: *Exploring the Future of the Imagination*, the Intercommunication Centre Tokyo, Japan (1997); *Universalis, 23rd International Biennale Sao Paulo*, Brazil (1996); *Tradition/Tension – Contemporary Art in Asia*, the Asia Society, New York (1996); *Jurassic Technologies, Tenth Biennale of Sydney 1996*; *Beyond the Border, First Kwangju Biennale 1995*, Korea; *Inner City* (1997); and *Inner City* (1999). In 1998 he became a Prince Claus laureate, and in 2000 he received the UNESCO prize for the Promotion of the Arts at the Shanghai Biennale. Earlier this year, *Upside-down Mind* at the CP Artspace in Washington D.C. was his first solo exhibition in the US.

Li Edelkoort, originally from Holland, has been based in Paris for over twenty years. She has created and directed a studio that provides trend analysis and consulting services to major international companies in a wide range of sectors, including fashion, textiles, interiors, cosmetics, automobiles, food and flowers. L'Usine, her converted factory in Montparnasse serves as headquarters for five companies: Trend Union, Studio Edelkoort, United Publishers, Edelkoort Etc., and Heartwear, a non-profit foundation that supports the continuation of arts and crafts in developing nations. Edelkoort is also the chairwoman of the Design Academy Eindhoven, and more recently curated *ARMOUR: the Fortification of Man* for the 2003 Fort Asperen Biennale in Acquoy, The Netherlands.

Néstor García Canclini is an anthropologist and the director of the Program of Studies on Urban Culture at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico City. He has been a professor at the universities of Stanford, Austin, Barcelona, Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo. He has published several books on cultural studies, globalisation and urban imagination. The Spanish-language edition of *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* won the 1992 Premio Iberoamericano. His recent books include: *La Globalizacion imaginada* (Globalisation Imagined) (1999), *Consumers and Citizens: Globalisation and Multicultural Conflicts* (2001) and *Latinoamericanos buscando lugar en este siglo* (Latin Americans Looking for a Place in this Century, 2002).

Sandra Klopper is Professor and Head of Fine Arts at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa. She has lectured and published widely on various forms of popular culture and the past and present arts of South Africa's rural traditionalists. She recently mounted an exhibition on South African artist Willie Bester and has written on both his work (with Michael Godby) and that of Alan Alborough.

André Magnin has been a curator of contemporary art since 1978. In 1986, he started researching art from different cultures, particularly African art south of the Sahara, in approximately 30 countries. He was co-commissioner of the exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* in 1989 and has continued his research for the Contemporary African Art Collection (C.A.A.C.)-the Pigozzi Collection, Geneva, Paris, and New York, where he is a director and curator. He initiated numerous private and group exhibitions for museums all over the world and is the author of *Contemporary Art of Africa*, published by Abrams. He has written several artists monographs for Scalo, Thames & Hudson and Actes Sud.

J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere is a photographer who lives and works in Lagos. Born in 1930, he began his career as an assistant in the dark room of the government's Ministry of Information, in the 1950s. By the 1960s, he was the still photographer for the first African TV channel, and was working for West Africa Publicity until 1975. Soon after he started his own studio Foto Ojeikere. Since 1967, he has been a member of the Nigerian Arts Council, which organises visual and cultural arts festivals. During a festival in 1968, he began documenting Nigerian culture for what has become an impressive photographic archive containing thousands of pictures. Women's hairstyles is just one of his many themes. He said that he photographed the back of the hairstyles to emphasise their sculptural qualities.

Virgina Pérez-Ratton is the director and founder of TEOR/éTica, a private, independent, non-profit project based in San José, Costa Rica, where she has organised both local and international exhibitions since 1999. She writes and publishes extensively in periodicals, catalogues, and compilations, and participates regularly in conferences and symposia around the world. She has been local curator for the Lima 1997 and 1999 biennales, the 1997 Venice Biennale, the 2001 Cuenca, the Sao Paulo Biennale (1996 for the Costa Rican participation and 1998 for Central America and the Caribbean). She was also a member of the international jury for the Venice Biennale in 2001. She was the recipient of a Prince Claus Award in 2002.

Amanda Katherine Rath is currently a PhD candidate in the Department of the History of Art and Archaeology and Visual Studies, and is an adjunct graduate student to the South East Asian Studies Program at Cornell University. She has studied and taught courses on the modern and contemporary art of Indonesia and Malaysia for the last eight years. She is currently writing her dissertation 'Mutable Signs As Forms of De/con/struction: Experimental Art in Indonesia, 1975-2000', portions of which have been published: 'Altered-Natives, Altar-Spaces/ Alternative Art and Alternative Art Spaces in Indonesia' in *Karbon* 5 (05), 2003; 'Concerning the "Work" of Art' in *Exploring the Vacuum II* (Yogyakarta, Cemeti Art Foundation, forthcoming December 2003); and 'The Conditions of Possibility and the Limits of Effectiveness: the Ethical Universal in the works of FX Harsono' (in a manuscript on the life and works of FX Harsono, forthcoming 2004).

Louise Schouwenberg is an artist and writer who has been published in *Frame Magazine*, *Metropolis M* and *Archis*. Her book on Hella Jongerius was published earlier this year by Phaidon. She is also a lecturer at the Design Academy Eindhoven.

Wang Shixiang, the Chinese folk-art expert, researcher and archivist, is widely known for his knowledge of Chinese traditional furniture. His groundbreaking publications include *Classic Chinese Furniture: Ming and Qing Dynasties* (English edition, 1986) and the two volume *Connoisseurship of Chinese Furniture: Ming and Early Qing Dynasties* (English edition, 1990). Through Wang's efforts, Chinese ancient handicraft skills such pigeon whistling, which were threatened with extinction during the Cultural Revolution, were saved. Last year he was one of the founding members of China's Lost Cultural Relics Recovery Program of the China Foundation for the Development of Folklore Culture, the country's first civil group raising money to retrieve and rescue cultural relics. He is the recipient of the 2003 Principal Prince Claus Award.

Jim Supangkat, a curator, writer and critic, was involved in Indonesia's 1970s *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru* (New Art Movement). As an independent curator between 1993-2000, he was involved in curating international exhibitions, among others, *Asian Modernism*, and *The Contemporary Art of Non-aligned Countries*. He has written several books and articles introducing contemporary Indonesian art to the international art world, and in 1997 received a Prince Claus Award. In 2001, Supangkat established CP Foundation, which opened CP Artspace in Washington D.C. and in Jakarta, where he also curates. Recently he has been planning a cultural centre to open in 2005 in Padalarang, a new city in West Java.

Laila Tyabji is a freelance designer, writer, and founder member and chairperson of DASTKAR, a Society for Crafts and Craftspeople. Helping craftspeople, especially women, learn to use their own inherent skills as a means of employment, earning and independence is the crux of the DASTKAR program. Tyabji's own speciality is textile-based crafts, especially embroidery and appliqué, using the traditional craft skill and design tradition as a base for products with a contemporary usage and appeal.

Patricia R. Zimmermann is Professor of Cinema and Photography and coordinator of the Culture and Communication Program in the Division of Interdisciplinary Studies at Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York. She is the author of *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film*; *States of Emergency: Documentaries, Wars, Democracies*; and *Digital Memories: Cinemas, Histories, Visualities* (forthcoming) as well as numerous articles on cinema, media art, and digital theory in both scholarly and popular publications. She also works as film/video/new media curator in the US and internationally.

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Prosperous Popular Cultures

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Hans van Bentem, *Bomb*, **2002, crystal, metal and electricity, 150 cm high**