

ChallengingCraft  
Guest Speakers  
Index of Papers  
Sponsors  
Contact

Jayne Wallace  
Sheffield Hallam University, UK

Sometimes I forget to remember

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

There *are* many challenges facing us as practitioners, researchers and commentators of craft, as discussed and expressed here over the past few days. If we are to assert the relevance of our discipline within our current culture *and* that of the future we need to engage with the challenge that lies centrally to this question: that of communication.

How do we communicate that craft is a valuable, relevant, unique force within our fast changing world? Or communicate the value of knowledge within craft practice and the value of craft as a form of exploration involving human meaning and significance?

The theme of communication is one that has arisen within my current doctoral research into the integration of digital technologies within Contemporary Jewellery. Within this area of investigation the core of my work is to explore how jewellery can act to express and play a role within what we each consider to be meaningful for us in our lives and how the expression of fragments of this can be expanded through the integration of digital technologies.

Many of the key issues for me within this research pivot on the relationship between craft and digital technology. Sensitivities such as beauty & personal meaning have helped me to gain an understanding of this relationship and I am going to focus on how communication is a vital aspect of this.

So what is digital jewellery?

As computing and technology become more ubiquitous in their conception ideas are growing of how the body can be used as a location for digital devices. Corporate examples include Philips, IDEO and IBM amongst many others.

Almost all of these devices are products from designers and not jewellers however.

The motivations in making objects to be worn on the body are different to those of contemporary jewellers.

Some approaches show an openness to form and modes of interaction, some have playful elements, but I would argue that most if not all are driven by an opportunistic approach to using jewellery and the body as their stage. The body is used for convenience, to be able to access your technology whenever and where ever you want. That's fine, but these concepts miss many of the subtleties and meanings possible in creating interactive jewellery objects. The thrust is the technology, not the jewellery or the person.

There are other forms of current digital devices, which relate to the body where the attention to user aspirations and needs are less rigorous. Here are some examples A talking Pedometer, 'FingerBeatz', a hand operational drum machine, The 'Tokima', a watch which transforms into a robot and emits random Zen like messages and the Samsung virtual keyboard.

Most if not all electronic, or digital appliances have a lifespan, governed not by a technological defect of the appliance necessarily, but by its function or usefulness becoming usurped by another, newer, faster, 'better' one. Such appliances are often referred to as gadgets.

[ChallengingCraft](#) [Guest Speakers](#) [Index of Papers](#) [Sponsors](#) [Contact](#)

[ChallengingCraft](#)  
[Guest Speakers](#)  
[Index of Papers](#)  
[Sponsors](#)  
[Contact](#)



**Jayne Wallace**  
Sheffield Hallam University, UK

**Sometimes I forget to remember**

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

Gadgets have little lasting meaning for us and aren't designed to be lasting – they are about newness and novelty. Neither of which are a bad thing in themselves but as a jeweller it goes against my grain. My craft education has given me a desire to make jewellery which has a lasting value, objects which explore our relationships with the world and each other. Ones based on personal significance which highlight and amplify elements of our lives that are important to us.

Two interactive projects that have been inspirational to me are 'Kiss Communicator' by Heather Martin and 'For Two Rings' by Nicole Gratiot Stöber.

'Kiss Communicator' is a way of digitally blowing someone a kiss over distance. When you blow a kiss into the mouth of the device a sensor picks this up, translates it into a series of pulses of light and sends them to the other pod, which glows in length and strength according to the kiss you blew. There is an importance for me here in the way digital technology can relate to a human element of communication, there is also openness to the interaction; a personal language of lights can be built up between people.

'For Two Rings' by jeweller Nicole Gratiot Stöber is motivated again by human centred concerns; the jewellery is physically activated and visually changes in response to interaction between people. Sensors detect the interaction and light sources illuminate when the forms are touched. Human interaction and relationships are central to the pieces. The private gesture of holding hands is amplified by the jewellery thus making a private gesture very public. The pieces highlight the thrill of a touch and also the potential embarrassment of the public display.

Both of these pieces are important because there is an emotional function to them, they are about human relationships and use technology as a kind of magic, something playful, something not strictly necessary in terms of usefulness or utility, but I would argue that they are completely necessary in the development of what technology can bring to jewellery and how interactive jewellery can contribute to our lives and relationships.

As practitioners we often explore our own personal criteria for significance. For me fundamental challenges to this have arisen from firstly working with wearable digital technologies, which often brings with it the assumption of mass production, task orientation, speed, ubiquity and repeatability. I have chosen to challenge many of these assumptions by approaching the technologies as I would any other material, tool or process at my disposal, not to be beguiled or seduced by the gimmicks of new technologies but to see them as an extension to my palette. The second challenge has arisen through my extended role of researcher along with practitioner. This brings with it the dynamic of an internal relationship between these roles; the need for an internal form of communication, an understanding of how the decisions made within the research are communicated and rendered transparent to others and also how to communicate across disciplines.

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

---

[ChallengingCraft](#) [Guest Speakers](#) [Index of Papers](#) [Sponsors](#) [Contact](#)

ChallengingCraft  
Guest Speakers  
Index of Papers  
Sponsors  
Contact

Jayne Wallace  
Sheffield Hallam University, UK

Sometimes I forget to remember

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

So my perspective of my practice has been altered, from an expression of my personal perspectives to a more open one

Engaging with digital technologies I am a researcher and jeweller often presenting, discussing and opening my work up to the disciplines of Human Computer Interaction, Interaction design and Product design. In these situations I have often felt myself defending the values and perspectives of my craft education and realise that craft knowledge and sensibilities have much to bring to other disciplines.

Often other human centred disciplines focus on people as users, on tasks, which are perfectly valid and necessary, but what other areas often do not focus on are challenging the boundaries of ways of interacting with and experiencing objects, each other and in this case new technologies. Our craft training is worthwhile because it teaches us to think creatively, to deal with human issues, with feelings, meanings, emotions - perhaps what are really essential to people, to work to high standards, to produce expressions of these things in the form of beautifully crafted objects. We are taught to search for new levels of engagement with our materials, our ideas and ways of expressing them. We are taught to push boundaries, to challenge and extend our material, process and form vocabulary,

Interaction design is one of the creative thinking new technology disciplines and frequently *does* challenge these boundaries, but although these designers share many aspects of our thinking space they often lack our vocabulary with objects, our understandings of making and our understandings of human relationships centred around objects. Many other disciplines are not equipped to tackle the emotional, human qualities of experience that are so central to craft sensibilities.

For me similarly the change of perspective of working with digital technologies and conducting research has fundamentally shifted the way I perceive my practice and its credibility. I now seek to explore the personal criteria for meaning of others as well as of myself, to create environments for experience possible through and because of digital technologies and jewellery.

In exploring aspects of people's lives that are meaningful to them two projects have influenced me in terms of methods:

The Presence Project collaborated on by the Computer Related Design course at the Royal College of Art, which used creative tools termed probes to find out inspirational information from participants, and KPZ-02 a project from two jewellers based in Amsterdam.

KPZ-02 is an interactive art project within a culturally varied neighbourhood, where the council and tenants wanted to enhance interpersonal contact in the area between the neighbours. The focus of the project was 'home'. Here members of the community shared their stories of what 'home' means to them, which were interpreted by the jewellers through making pieces of jewellery and other objects for each participant.

These methods fed into my approach to work with individuals to explore elements of emotionally significant aspects of our lives: meaningful experiences, stories and triggers to significant memories that we each have as individuals. My research methodology has been to work with individuals; asking questions in different ways through the use of objects and interviews and then to make jewellery in response to these which have digital capabilities specific to that individual. Within this process my aims are not to try to find out what a person

needs, or what I should make for them, or to be instructed what to make, but to use sensibilities I feel to be evident in my craft practice and perspective, to interpret the responses and conversations through making jewellery with digital capabilities. To make pieces which echo aspects of the participant's lives that they feel to be meaningful, as well as unavoidably echoing elements of my own criteria for significance.

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

---

[ChallengingCraft](#) [Guest Speakers](#) [Index of Papers](#) [Sponsors](#) [Contact](#)

ChallengingCraft  
 Guest Speakers  
 Index of Papers  
 Sponsors  
 Contact

Jayne Wallace  
 Sheffield Hallam University, UK

Sometimes I forget to remember

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

One of my first resulting pieces: is a necklace made from enamelled copper and synthetic silk. When worn the necklace has the capability of communicating a small number of silent image sequences, of significance to the wearer, onto digital displays in the near radius of the necklace. These digital 'visits' will not occur often, only occasionally. The digital potential is future focused, where these sequences could occur in a personal or public environment.

There are connections to objects now aged and frail through years of attention and use; an old costume doll's ragged skirts, the white enamel of children's milk teeth and of glass feathers, a white horse, a miniature pastry cutter and a daughter's curls. There are references to objects once treasured and now lost, to current human relationships and to dreams.

When these 'digital' events do occur the result may be an environment where, for a few seconds, the surroundings appear to be paying particular attention to the wearer; the locality is literally acknowledging something personally meaningful, these moments are for and about the wearer.

My way of communicating this concept of the piece to the participant has been through making a short film

To acknowledge that it is important enough to create an environment where personally significant aspects of someone's life can be referenced and paid attention to is to engage with and respect the concerns and hopes of another person. This piece is not about sentimentality, rather a balance between personal value systems and an interpretation of these personal significances resulting in a new experience.

To conclude; my perspective as a jeweller & as a researcher is to acknowledge the importance of continuing a strong aspect of my craft education; that of challenging ways of making, ways of thinking and ways of interacting with objects and people. There is currently a blur between disciplines, between relevancies and in many ways this is a good thing. Our potential roles within craft are changing and we have the opportunity to extend our field, to be forward facing whilst holding on to our values and human centred approach, communicating these to new arenas and collaborations.

Craft, while it is rooted in the making of physical objects, provides the conceptual and empathetic means of addressing a far broader range of experiential issues that extend the relevance and value of new technologies.

The challenge we face as practitioners, researchers and commentators of craft is to firstly realise, then emphasize and finally communicate the values and sensibilities evident within craft practice and knowledge to other disciplines and arenas.

The future is to rise to meet each new challenge. It is important to realise the challenges facing craft, but it is also important to see the challenges craft poses for other disciplines and for our possibilities of future interactions with our environments.

[\[ Figures 1 - 2 \]](#)

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

---

[ChallengingCraft](#) [Guest Speakers](#) [Index of Papers](#) [Sponsors](#) [Contact](#)



**Jayne Wallace**  
Sheffield Hallam University, UK  
**Sometimes I forget to remember**



**Fig 1**  
Sometimes tryptich



**Fig 2**  
Screenshots from DVD

Fig 1



Fig 2

