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Crafts

LAURA GILLI¹, ANDREA MECACCI²

¹ Università IULM Milano

² Università degli Studi di Firenze

Talking about crafts today may seem like a comeback on paths that have been trodden away too much. An impression that may probably arise from the idea that such a matter has recurred since the very beginning of human thought, i.e. the classification of the arts whose reflection involves the whole human being in its various activities. The theme is therefore definitely an ancient one, yet demanding for further investigations as of today. In the contemporary world, where the differences between the wide spectrum of activities are always in perennial movement, the theoretical debate requires focusing back on craftsmanship through its bringing to the fore the problem of its own essence, mixing levels that have sometimes been perceived as distant, as is the case of notions such as beauty and usefulness, often thought of as antithetical in the history of aesthetics. First and foremost, however, when investigating craftsmanship there is necessarily a convergence emerging between the notions of art and technique, which in contemporary world shall always raise new questions about their own definition, the role they play in society and the possible interactions, if not overlapping, that might take place within their dialogue.

Moreover, at a quick glance, craftsmanship may appear very circumscribed in well-defined scientific fields, whereas at a more in-depth investigation, it can open up questions concerning the very heart of human activity. The theoretical boundaries of craftsmanship are rather vague, today; this explaining the need to focus on the theoretical roots following the paths that have developed within the conceptual area of craftsmanship, examining what the features recognized as specific to craft itself are. The main interest of the issue has concerned the outlining of the contours of craftsmanship in their perennial flowing influenced by cultural mutations. In particular, the issue aimed at promoting a reflection that could inquire at a theoretical level the notion of craftsmanship, studying its aesthet-

ic boundaries. The issue also intended to explore the pervasive capability of the subject, highlighting the modes of penetration of craft concepts, structures and languages in different areas. It also sought to understand how the distinctive traits that define craftsmanship emerge in different spheres.

This volume thus welcomes, among the various contributions, some articles marked by a stronger theoretical focus on the concept of craftsmanship often related to the definition of other fields, as in the case of Aurosa Alison's essay on Artidesign (*L'Artidesign: il dialogo fruttuoso*), which presents a theory concerning the relationship between art, technique and craftsmanship. The question of art is also discussed in its relationship with new technologies: this is the case of James Krasner's contribution (*Embodied Craft in Lia Cook's Textiles and «The Lady of Shalott»*) which portrays the work of the artist Lia Cook showing how a very ancient activity such as weaving can feed on the most innovative inputs of technology.

These intertwinement emerge, though declined under other perspectives, in the contribution of Alessandro Cazzola, *Art as Formative Technique. The Human Behaviour Between Art and Nature*, which focuses on the notions of artistry and formativity, respectively introduced by Dino Formaggio and Luigi Pareyson, and in Gregorio Tenti's, *Pratiche viventi: Temi di una poetica contemporanea*, which analyzes the theme of poiesis in Gilbert Simondon's reflection.

A field close to craftsmanship is obviously design. In the present-day world it arises the need to rethink its relationship with craftsmanship, whose discourse is increasingly present in the culture of design. A classic example of this complex relationship is the *Bauspiel* designed by Alma Siedhoff-Buscher, the most famous toy of Bauhaus, key to the reflection of Andrea Mecacci (*Ontologia del giocattolo. Il Bauspiel di Alma Siedhoff-Buscher*).

Some articles, on the other hand, focus on the development of craftsmanship aiming at some distinctive declinations. The article by Riikka Latva-

Somppi and Maarit Mäkelä shows how it blends in with the very topical issue of environment: the experimental essay *Exploring Ecological and Material Sensitivity through Craft Practice in the Context of the Venice Lagoon*, engages with the multisensorial aesthetic experience of environmental materiality. The paper takes advantage of an artistic research project in which craft is put into place in order to explore the human imprint in the unique environment that is the Venice Lagoon. In the wake of this multidisciplinary viewpoint also sits Martha Friel's paper *Crafts in the contemporary creative economy*, which, after an introductory look at the role of today's craftsmanship within the framework of "creative economy" enucleates the critical issues related to this productive and cultural sector while outlining the challenges up to come. The various contributions demonstrate how craft has become a concept projecting well beyond the field of the so-called "applied arts" to turn in a conceptual category suitable for application to different fields. One might recall, for example, Colin Campbell's 2005 study "*The Craft Consumer*", which highlights a two-folded dimension of contemporary consumption, with a crafts logic on the one hand and an aesthetic dimension on the other.

The *Varia* section of the issue covers a wide range of topics. Two essays are dedicated to Foucault's. Andrea Nicolini's reconnaissance of Foucault's ethical thinking over the period of eight years between the first and the second volume of *The History of Sexuality* in which Foucault released nothing but interviews (*Se dépandre de soi-même: A Critique of Foucault's Ethics*) and the comparative analysis provided by Maryam Madadzadeh and Mohsen Hanif between Foucault's notion of biopower and E.M. Fortster's novel *A Passage to India*. Two essays are dedicated to the literary field: *Riscrittura e maschere dell'io* by Laura Brignoli which investigates the theme of the rewriting of a classic, namely the *Liaisons Dangereuses* by Laclos in *Le Mauvais genre* by Laurent de Graeve; and Lucia Rodler's *La post-fisiognomica di Goffredo Parise* in which the author poses the problem, theorized by Parise during the 1960s, of the overcoming of a traditional physiognomy,

anticipating a post-human vision. Fabio Tononi in *Aesthetic Response to the Unfinished: Empathy, Imagination and Imitation Learning* analyzes the way beholders may internally process unfinished works of art by accounting for five incomplete sculptures by Michelangelo Buonarroti. The interweaving of material culture and identity construction, in the light of the notion of performativity developed by J.L. Austin and Judith Butler, is at the basis of Anna Caterina Dalmasso's contribution *Things That Matter: Agency and Performativity*. Finally, the essay by Darius Pacauskas and Ossi Naukkarinen *Finnish Aesthetics in Academic Databases*, examines a specific case, i.e. the scientific production of a non-English speaking country (Finland), and proposes an approach that allows a critical gaze into the representation of local art or studies related to humanities in wide-spectrum academic databases such as *Scopus* or *Web of Science*, trying to understand to what extent we can trust those sources in displaying realistic pictures of the research fields.

The final section of this issue hosts a thorough book symposium around Nicola Perullo's most recent publication *Estetica ecologia. Percepire saggio, vivere corrispondente* (Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2020), in which the author puts forward a new interpretation of the aesthetic experience in terms of being embedded in and "in correspondence with" an environment ("correspondence" in a critical concept of the book). The symposium features a short piece by Perullo himself and two insightful commentaries by Manlio Iofrida, on the relationship between Perullo's idea of "haptic experience" and the classical concept of "logos" in the Greek-Latin tradition, and Giovanni Fava, on the implications of Perullo's ecological aesthetics for ecology as a science.