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pack

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Intro- duc- tion

This resource pack was created by artist Russell Martin for the Craftspace *Taking Time: Craft and the Slow Revolution* exhibition. It forms a part of Martin's *Analogue* commission for Craftspace, an offline dialogue project seeking to respond to the strands of thought in the *Taking Time* project blog at makingaslowrevolution.wordpress.com and create new possibilities for conversation about practice and how craft makers and users experience time. More information about *Analogue* is at the back of this pack.

Download-a-Dialogue is intended for institutions that are part of the exhibition tour, audiences and members of the public with an interest in contemporary crafts to consider some of the themes in the exhibition and the place of the slow movement in contemporary making.

About *Analogue*

The *Analogue* commission, which took place in the development period before the *Taking Time* exhibition opened, was intended to contribute to discussions on the project blog, at makingaslowrevolution.wordpress.com, and to initiate live dialogue sessions between crafts practitioners and specialists from different backgrounds. It acted as a bridge between the themes and processes emerging online and the real-life experiences of craftspeople by provoking, recording and publishing audio recordings of dialogue between practitioners. *Analogue* was a focussed platform for gathering and transmitting research from the lived experience of practice.

More a 'talking' programme than a 'talks' programme, *Analogue* sought to continue and deepen conversations happening amongst the blog community offline, encourage practitioners to get more closely involved in the ideas around the exhibition, consider how the tenets of the slow movement coincide with contemporary crafts practice and remember the value of 'speaking to one person at a time'. In short, the main aim of the project is to *encourage practitioners to talk to each other*.

What is dialogue?

Throughout this pack, the word 'dialogue' has a very specific meaning, not to be confused with ordinary conversation, discussion or debate.

Dialogue, derived from the Greek dialogos (*dia-* = 'through' or 'across'; *logos* = 'the word' or 'the meaning'), permits a cumulation of meanings to emerge within a group of people.

It is a creative, dynamic, shared activity, requiring listening as well as communicating one's own thoughts, and a subjugation of one's own defensive preconceptions to allow new, common meanings to emerge.

It is performative and unique, non-competitive and not chaired, symbiotic, cannot be repeated, and is totally reliant on collaboration.

To initiate a truly collaborative dialogue requires a commitment from all participants to learn from each other and question their own cherished beliefs, sometimes to revoke them entirely. Dialogue is a difficult activity to maintain, and often does not happen at all.

What is dialogue useful for?

Dialogue is an excellent way to:

- Seek consensus within multifarious opinion.
- Help collaborators together find direction within a project or design.
- Reinforce the idea of creative practice as an ongoing activity.
- Train oneself to listen to others and work in a team.
- Dismantle the social boundary between audiences and experts, enabling all attendees at an event to contribute to a discussion.

It allows for a completely flat structure, encouraging contributions from everyone present and resists the formation of a passive audience.

People with specialist knowledge are equal to those finding out about something for the first time, and new knowledge is simultaneously created and shared amongst the whole group.

Topics *Analogue*

from research

The project blog (at makingaslowrevolution.wordpress.com) has provoked a number of strands or themes for further dialogue including:

- The uses and abuses of different technologies – digital, manufacturing, hand-made, chemical, design-led – in the making of contemporary craft.
- Towards a notion of 'practice' as: a daily activity; a habitual way of drawing inspiration from the world; an ongoing mental creative process which includes the manufacture of objects.
- How immaterial ideas are translated, through design processes and practice, into a finished product.
- How specialists from different disciplines can positively influence how creative practice can be thought through.

- The experience of how 'time passes' during making.
- The implications of the wider slow movement on craft practice, manufacturing and design processes, and commercial activity.
- How 'connectedness' – a major strand of thinking informing the wider slow movement – changes thinking about professional negotiation and social collaboration.

This is necessarily a partial list; every dialogue within the *Analogue* project is more complex than a simple list of topics can convey, and many people who took part in a dialogue will have a very different list to this one. These topics, however, may form a good initial starting point for your own dialogue activity.

Tips and

traps

Choose your group carefully. People who know each other in advance of the group starting can unconsciously form groups within the group, making dialogue involving the whole group difficult.

Although it's best not to have a chairperson for a dialogue, sometimes people need to be made aware if they're speaking too much, or not enough. The chair of a dialogue group should be working to remove the need for their role, encouraging participants to regulate themselves and ensure everyone has a say.

Creating the framework for a good dialogue can take a lot of time – a series of sessions will normally be required to make everyone feel comfortable with each other, and encourage those less confident about speaking in public to join in.

Be aware of your influence on the group. Are there opinions and ideas you hold especially dear, that you want to share, that you believe are important? These topics can form blocks in the dialogue, preventing others from having their say or artificially keeping the dialogue in one place.

Although all the dialogues in Analogue were recorded, recording will change the atmosphere of discussion, as people are less confident about making mistakes, trying out new ideas or speaking confidentially if they know their words have the potential to be repeated. Sometimes it's better to let things go.

Get involved

The best way to get involved with Analogue and Taking Time is to access the project blog at makingaslowrevolution.wordpress.com:

- Organise a dialogue and upload information on it, or a recording.
- Listen to the recordings already online.
- Submit information about your related exhibition or event.
- Contribute to the ongoing dialogue, or begin a new topic.

Go and visit the show at the following venues:

The Waterhall, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

17 October 2009 - 4 January 2010

www.bmag.org.uk

Dovecot Studios (Innovative Craft), Edinburgh

18 January – 22 March 2010

www.dovecotstudios.com

Harley Gallery, Worksop

2 April – 6 June 2010

www.harleygallery.co.uk

Millennium Court Art Centre, Portadown

4 August – 25 September 2010

www.millenniumcourt.org

University of Hertfordshire Galleries, St Albans

13 October – 20 November 2010

www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/arts-and-galleries/arts-venues/

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

12 February – 9 April 2010

www.plymouth.gov.uk/museumpcmag

Platform Gallery, Clitheroe

9 May – 20 June 2011

www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/info/200238/museums_and_galleries/984/the_platform_gallery/1

Re- sources

On Dialogue, David Bohm

Routledge 1996, ed. Lee Nichol

Physicist David Bohm had a lifelong commitment to experimenting with dialogue in a variety of social situations, and presents his ideas and methodologies in this text.

Knots, R.D. Laing

Penguin Books 1972

Laing, a psychiatrist who wrote extensively on the experience of psychosis, explores through performative writing the ways in which human dialogue and relationships can break down.

In Praise of Slowness, Carl Honore

HarperCollins 2004

Philosophical look at 'balance', not prioritising slowness over speed, but trying to find an equilibrium in life.

The Slow Movement

www.slowmovement.com

Information resource on the wider slow movement, including slow food, travel, cities, schools and living.

Ex Machina conference, February 2009

www.artquest.org.uk/projects/archive/ex-machina.htm

One-day conference exploring the ways in which visual practitioners embrace and exploit new technologies in order to produce contemporary craft objects, including rapid prototyping, CNC (computer numerical controlled) milling and 3D digital printing. The above website address also provides access to audio recorded of all the presentations.

Analogue was devised and conceived by Russell Martin, a visual arts practitioner who has been working exclusively within an ongoing practice of dialogue for over ten years.

Taking Time: Craft and the Slow Revolution is an exhibition curated by Craftspace with Helen Carnac.

russellmartin.org.uk
craftspace.co.uk
helencarnac.wordpress.com

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