

Examining the current environment of cumbrian craft and proposing an infrastructure to champion it's advancement through education, economics and advocacy.

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1 Executive summary

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Cumbria Institute of the Arts commissioned this research in January 2006. With funding from HEFCE, a twelve month, part-time research post was created with the aim of investigating the current condition of the craft sector in the region. The agenda covered the decline of traditional crafts within the region, the conservation and regeneration of craft skills, the development of sustainable cultural initiatives in rural contexts and the creation of networks and collaborations between agencies, artists and craftspeople.
- 1.1.2 The Cumbria Craft Review is the first survey to carry out an in-depth study of the craft sector throughout the region, its aim being to provide evidence to support the establishment of a regional strategy for the conservation, development and support of the craft sector; The Craft Futures Strategy.
- 1.1.3 The Cumbria Craft Review was undertaken to gain a greater understanding of the characteristics and scale of the craft economy in the region, the education requirements of both current and future craft makers and sellers, and the infrastructure around which the craft sector operates. Primary quantitative research was carried out through separate questionnaires that were sent out to 294 craft makers, 103 craft venues and the 329 Heads of Art and Design in regional schools. Secondary research was also undertaken focusing on similar studies that had been carried out in other regions. Qualitative research was undertaken through observations made during unannounced visits to studios, retail outlets and venues, and also during more formal conversations with makers and venue managers.
- 1.1.4 During the initial stages of the research it became clear that the term craft is perceived in many different ways. In this study, the term maker encompasses practitioners who may describe themselves as crafts people, applied artists or designer-makers. And the term craft will be employed to describe the work that they produce. Craft constituents is a term that will be used to encompass all those who work in or alongside the craft sector

1.2 Key Information

- 1.2.1 The Craft Council has recently completed a major strategic review of its role, and is now actively recruiting staff and trustees with the aim of positioning the UK as the best place to make, see and collect contemporary craft. Cumbria must now act swiftly to ensure that it positions itself as the best place in the UK to make, see and collect not only contemporary craft, but also the traditional craft from which it descends. The talent already exists, however the infrastructure and funding to conserve, develop and support this sector of the creative industries is still to be secured.
- 1.2.2 Throughout this research it has become clear that many short-lived agencies in Cumbria have promised much, but achieved little or nothing. This Craft Futures Strategy will only succeed if funding is secured to employ both a full-time administrator and a full-time Craft Development Officer (CDO) for a minimum period of three years. This time will enable the Craft Futures Strategy to be implemented and good practice to be developed. Short-term funding will prove to be a waste of public resources. The CDO position must be undertaken by someone with an in-depth knowledge of the craft sector who can respond to, develop and implement the strategies laid out in this report. The post holder would be equally responsible to all members of the craft constituency, and would be expected to develop good working relationships with makers, venues and agencies within the county. The administrator post would provide a constant voice for craft constituents and day to day administration for the CDO who would spend at least 50% of their time working on the ground. If funding is secured to employ a full-time Craft Development Team (consisting of both CDO and Administrator) they should be responsible for the overall management and planning for the continued conservation, development and support of the craft sector within the Cumbria region.
- 2.1 Conservation of craft values and skills**
- 2.1.1 The current profile of craft makers in the region is female, producing textiles or ceramics at home as a second career.

Peacock in a Garden Rug Chris Crofts



- Affordable Marketing Strategies—PR, how to write a press release
 - Database management and direct mail
 - Time management—how to be a creative, accountant, administrator and salesperson.
 - Pricing and costing craft work
 - How to present yourself to galleries, including portfolio and CV advice
 - Photographing 2D and 3D artwork (access to studio resources after accreditation)
 - Understanding your customer profile and acting on it
 - Selling your work nationally and internationally
 - Galleries and their role in your business—how and why they operate.
- 1.5.18 Consider developing post-graduate diploma, or fourth year of BA in creative business management. This should be taught in modules based on the above topics and provided as part of the Distributed Learning Network. This would enable graduates to go into the market place with sufficient knowledge to run a successful business. These modules must also be made available to all makers at any stage of their career so that we can reduce the skills gap between those who have a degree and those who are self taught.
- 1.5.19 The Crafts Development Officer should regularly assess individual makers professional development needs in order to recommend them for furthering professional development courses. Courses should be supplied by Cumbria Institute of the Arts, Design Initiative and other regional partners with a specific knowledge in the creative business sector.

“After college you feel isolated and soon realise that you don’t have half the knowledge you need to run a successful craft business, who do you turn to?”

Felted and Printed Wool Scarf Patricia Andrianou

