

APPG for CRAFT

All-Party Parliamentary Group for Craft

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 24th October 2023 at 4–5.30pm

Attending in person:

Baroness Garden	House of Lords	Dr Kelly Cordes	Independent Researcher
Sir John Hayes MP CBE	Chair	Dr Harriet Deacon	ICH and IP Consultant
Ekta Kaul	Speaker	Gil Dye	Lace Maker
Patricia Lovett MBE	APPG Secretariat	Dr Chrissie Freeth	Tapestry Weaver
Jeremy Nichols	Art Workers' Guild	James Grierson	York Consortium
Dr Kate Noble	Speaker	Lewis Heath	Watch Dial Enameller
Ellie Noble	Observer	Mary Lewis	Heritage Crafts
Rose Sinclair	Speaker	Kate Mason	Soc Designer/Craftsmen
Derek Stimpson	WC Gunmakers	Natalie Melton	Crafts Council
Ann Whittall	National Wool Museum	David Mortlock	Worshipful Co of Wheelwrights

and on Teams:

Joby Carter	Speaker	Ann Packard	RSA MCICH Network
Judith Cobham-Lowe OBE	WC Goldsmiths	Paul Playford	Benefact Trust
Susan Cole	Educational Consultant	Wendy Shorter-Blake	WC Upholders & AMUSF
Prue Cooper	Potter	Rebecca Struthers	Watchmaker
		Margart Walker	Crafts Consultant

1. *Welcome:* Sir John Hayes was delayed and Baroness Garden took the Chair and welcomed the group.

2. *Apologies for absence:* Apologies for absence had been received from: Daniel Carpenter, Lord Cormack, Dr Brian Crossley MBE, The Earl of Clancarty, Phil Foxwood, Lisa Hammond MBE, Michael Osbaldeston.

3. **Joby Carter:** *Carter's Steam Fair*

Joby began by explaining how Carter's Steam Fair started with his parents John and Anna Carter, who rescued and restored a gallopers funfair ride. This was followed by a set of aeroplanes, swingboats and then steam yachts and dodgems. Joby was part of the restoration process for the rides and practised lettering and painting the designs until he became expert in fairground art. In fact, he became so accomplished that 17 years ago he started to teach courses in these skills. The pandemic was disastrous for the Fair so Joby then began to teach online with students from all over the world. The worksheets he produced for this led to his first book which has sold over 10,000 copies. The Fair started touring again in 2021 but 2022 became their last which was very sad. The rides are now being sold to those who appreciate the heritage. Fairground art is produced now mainly on vinyl stickers – not at all traditional. Joby wrote his first book based on his online courses, and his second and latest book 'All the Fonts of the Fair' took over 30 months and contains letters completely hand painted, photographed and then printed in a variety of

traditional fonts. (There is a link on how to buy these books in the accompanying email to these minutes.)

[Because of the technical difficulties at the start of the meeting there was sadly no time for questions for any of the speakers]

4. **Ekta Kaul:** *Artist and Stitcher*

Ekta's focus is on stitching, making maps of locations that lead to a sense of place and belonging. Coming from India needlecraft was part of her family traditions, with both her mother and grandmother stitching, in fact Ekta was taught by her mother who was an embroiderer and knitter. Her parents were both scientists and teaching was in the blood. After she came to England Ekta became artist in residence at Bath Spa University, and she has been making stitched maps since 2010. Her maps focus on the meaning of home and the attachment to an area. Stitching for Ekta is about story telling, and as part of this her walks around London were incorporated into a map of routes and what she passed – bridges, a bench where she sat, trees, and in particular the motif of a sycamore seed which has become her 'emblem'. Ekta uses traditional Indian stitching techniques but applied in a modern way. On one piece she used thread from an old pair of much loved jeans, however, vowed it would be her last due to the challenges! Stitching means language, geography, cult and generations, and the classes Ekta runs incorporate all of that. They also facilitate sharing, making friendships, exchanging cultures, and for those with restricted accommodation, a safe space away from home. With courses and exhibitions in museums the reaction has been most positive including people who would not normally even come through the door. During Covid Ekta set up the 'Soothing Stitch Circle' that has members all over the world who still spend an hour stitching together. Ekta is now working on a book of stitching traditions of Bengal and Kolkata.

5. **Rose Sinclair:** *Crafts of the Windrush Generation*

Rose was inspired to focus on the stitching crafts of the Caribbean brought to the UK on receiving an embroidered gift from her aunt when she got married. Dorcas Clubs, focusing on sewing and textile crafts, were set up by the Windrush generation; these are named after Dorcas, an early disciple of Christ who made clothes for the needy. The clubs were a way in the UK of continuing craft in the home, church and community. These crafts are not new, as the history of these crafts in the Caribbean goes back some way in that traditional cotton, linen and wool were not grown but plant fibres were used. Flour and jute bags containing imported goods were also used, and once processed the former were made into clothes and the latter threaded with textiles and made into rag rugs. Sadly, highly skilled needlewomen from the Caribbean found it difficult to practice their crafts once in the UK. Their skills, honed over many years, had no paper qualification to show the level of expertise. They were

also told that 'Black hands can't touch white bodies', so any kind of dress-making wasn't possible. Rose realised that historical aspects, the heritage, and value to the communities and beyond were not being recorded, saved or collected, so she started doing this herself and now has a large collection of beautiful and finely worked pieces, some of them immensely delicate. She has also had items photographed and Rose sets up exhibitions showcasing the crafts and their legacies. She runs workshops and suggested that empty shops in high streets could be used as venues for these courses.

[Due to the lack of time, Mary Lewis very kindly stepped down so that Kate Noble could make her presentation. Mary and the 2023 edition of the Red List for Endangered Crafts will be the first item in the spring APPG meeting.]

5. Dr Kate Noble: Art Now

Kate explained that a number of expert and eminent people worked on the 'Art Now' report which was commissioned by the APPG for Art, Craft and Design Education and focused on the period from Spring 2020 to Spring 2023. It was both a review and a survey, and makes the case for art, craft and design education; the review looked at research over the last 20 years.

The results were concerning and also stressed the importance of the arts in education.

In summary:

- a. Art, Crafts and Design lead to a range of positive outcomes.
- b. OFSTED promises foundation subjects in art and design.
- c. There is a need to address diversity and representation in the workforce.
- d. There is a serious deficit in the provisions for these subjects in teacher training, with only from 3–12 hours training given throughout the whole course.
- e. Continuous Professional Development is patchy and often in teachers' own time and expense.
- f. 67% of teachers in these subjects are thinking of leaving the profession.
- g. There are well-being and workload problems.
- h. Pupils have less access to these subjects than before the pandemic.

The recommendations included addressing the deficit in specialist teachers, investing in subject specialist professional development, addressing teacher well-being and workload and also addressing teacher recruitment.

[Due to the timing issues, all presentations were sadly shorter than planned.]

6. AOB.

As members of the APPG for Craft will know, in August Patricia contacted a number of organisations and makers to seek experiences of dealing with the EU post-Brexit. There were almost 40 responses and all but one detailed how much worse their trade, travelling, teaching, training etc was both to the EU and from the EU. This is being formatted and then sent to the Lords to feed into debates. It is hoped that it will also be posted on the APPG for Craft website.

