

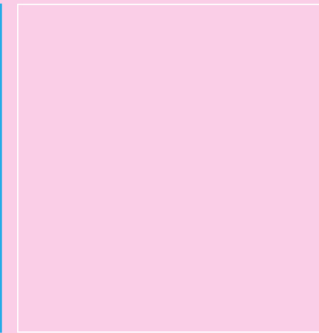
# looking at the overlooked

Nicola Perren



Nicola is an artist and Senior Lecturer in woven textiles and Course Leader for Textile Crafts BA(Hons). She is currently completing an MA in Contemporary Fine Art. In 2005 she collaborated with the artist Barbara Howey and as a result exhibited her work at the *Huddersfield Art Gallery* and at *The Outpost Gallery*, Norwich. Also in 2005 Nicola established SAMPLE, which currently includes both a publishing and enterprise unit for education, and an annual publication of a catalogue that presents the work of the Textile Craft final year students.

Nicola has recently presented a number of collaborative conference papers: *Crafting Sustainability*, 2009, Making Futures, Plymouth and *Sample Enterprise*, 2009, Futurescan, Liverpool. These papers reflect her pedagogic practice over the previous four years including SAMPLE and the Textile Craft in the Community II projects in association with project director Penny Macbeth, which include: *Interdependence: The Tree Project*, The International Fibre Collaborative, Jennifer Marsh, USA in association with: Mencap and Calderdale Childcarers; *The British Tapestry Group: Tapestry 08* at Dean Clough Galleries, Halifax and Bankfield Museum, Halifax; Castle Hill School, Huddersfield 1:1 student led workshops for children with special needs.



Nicola's current research is based on both pedagogy and art practice. As Course Leader in Textile Crafts and in her teaching she seeks ways to engage with the use of sustainable resources and the realities of material costs in professional practice. In practice she is particularly interested in the craft industry as an ecological and sustainable global economy. These sensibilities are realised both within and outside of the curriculum; SAMPLE Publication, *Crafting the Community II*, SAMPLE Enterprise and SAMPLE Communication. Nicola currently project-manages a team of staff who actively engage with over 130 students annually and varying numbers of local, national and international community partners. Nicola proposes these projects have the potential to become recognised as a brand identity externally while fulfilling a core internal learning experience.

Her current work is placed and fixed in a matrix of codes, histories and tradition that reverberates through the choice of material and methods of production. This matrix is engaged in the studio, explored, utilised and adopted in order to observe, question concepts and make new work. The matrix can be read in a number of ways; isolated groups, laterally or through linear sensibilities that repetitively reflect studio processes.

		Status
Society	System	Code
Mapping	Trace	History
	Forensic	Truth
Exhaustion		Materiality
Observation	Space	
	Constrained	

Of particular interest is the genre of still life that provides the visual and historical basis towards looking; a simple observational study provides scope for further investigation. She is currently studying Norman Bryson's

work on the purposefulness and status of objects that recur within still life painting.

*"Though humble, the forms represented in still life are virtually indestructible. Either because they come from nature, or they are intended for purposes that do not vary, they are forms which do not change much over long periods of time."*<sup>†</sup>

Nicola's interest is where still life negates the presence of the human, elevating the status of the object. The gaze of the observer is directed at the object, the space in which the object sits may or may not provide further narrative or direction but the intention remains; the observation of the insignificant. Within the still life paintings of Juan Sanchez Cotán, Nicolas de Staël and Paul Cézanne particular references can be taken. Cotán's removal of the object from the domestic space / table to the darkened cube of the *cantarero* while utilising the process of chiaroscuro,

de Staël's creation of space within his paintings through composition and the reduction of objects to their essential form. Finally the notion that aesthetic judgement is paramount can be found within the works of Cézanne.

The processes utilised within the works tend to draw from different disciplines; the investigative nature of an artefact or an object relates to forensic science, and the results of such an investigation often lead to the production of the work itself.

The materials and technologies that make textiles (weaving / embroidery) have the status of objects in themselves and are often present in all studio observations, including painting and drawing. Nicola's work positions itself in the cross-over and inter-relationship between art, craft and design.

<sup>†</sup> Bryson, N. *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (London: Reaktion 2008) p.71