



# Making Makers



# Learning from Indian and Japanese craft practice

**Rajni Patel**

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## Contents

1. Gratitude - Dedication - Thank you
2. About the author
3. Summary
4. Introduction
5. India: Making is all around
  - 5.1 Craft context
  - 5.2 Impact of caste
  - 5.3 Arts and Crafts Education
6. Meet the change makers
  - Cultural Heritage
    - 6.1 Shrujan Trust
    - 6.2 Bagru/Dheeraj Chhipa
  - Enterprise
    - 6.3 Saksham/Ashanari
    - 6.4 Sebastian Indian Social Projects
    - 6.5 Chandrakanta Arts
  - Technical Training
    - 6.6 Indian Institute of Crafts and Design
  - Health & Wellbeing
    - 6.7 Centre for Learning
7. Japan: An acceptance of transience and imperfection
  - 7.1 Craft context
  - 7.2 Arts and Crafts education
  - 7.3 The importance of tea ceremony
8. Meet the change makers
  - Cultural Heritage
    - 8.1 Hagi
    - 8.2 Hideaki Kimura
  - Enterprise
    - 8.3 Hagi Ceramics Association
    - 8.4 Nobuhiko Kaneko

Technical Training

8.5 Tamara Shinichi

8.6 Akifumi Murashima

8.7 Michihisa Inoue

Health & Wellbeing

8.8 Collaboro-Ohmori

8.9 Uchimura Mikio

8.10 Hagi Elementary school

9. Conclusions

10. Invitations

11. Personal Impact

12. List of illustrations

## 1. Acknowledgements: gratitude, dedication and thanks

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I will use the term craftsperson throughout the report to refer to artisans, craftsmen and craftswomen. In India the term artisan and craftsmen is used interchangeably to refer to those working in handicrafts/crafts.



## 2. About the author

I am a Relationship Manager for Children Young People and Learning with Arts Council England based in Bristol, supporting the development of national arts and cultural policy and programmes for, by and with children and young people.

My background is as an urban planner who retrained as a visual artist which has led to me working for the last 20 years in the context of community development through arts and culture. Harnessing the power of the arts to initiate dialogue, challenge convention and support change.

Alongside my Arts Council role I am exploring and developing my own visual arts practice which revolves around being with trees and making with wood. Focusing on the role of crafts in supporting nature connection and well-being. Based on a relationship of making connected to landscape traditions such as coppicing.





### 3. Summary

#### The current context for craft in schools in England

**“Design and Technology is a phenomenally important subject. Logical, creative and practical, it’s the only opportunity students have to apply what they learn in Maths and Science.”**

Sir James Dyson Founder and Chairman of Dyson and Patron to the Design & Technology Association.



Since 2000, when Design & Technology (D&T) stopped being a compulsory GCSE subject, there has been a steady decline in the number of pupils achieving a GCSE in the subject.

Latest data from the Joint Council of Qualifications shows a 57% decline in the number of students taking GCSE Design and Technology over the period 2010-2018. This decline seems to be accelerating with a 35% decline between 2016-18.

Between 2010 to 2018 in England there was a decline of 35% in the number of arts GCSE entries (Art and Design, Dance, Design and Technology, Drama, Media/Film/TV Studies, Music and Performing/expressive arts).

GCSE entry numbers are from the Joint Council for Qualifications annual results tables <http://www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results/gcses>.

Given this challenging context for craft education the starting point of my Fellowship was to explore what we can learn from India & Japan as countries with deeply embedded artisan/heritage craft traditions.

With a focus on:

- promoting craft awareness & understanding amongst children & young people
- inter-generational exchange
- exploring approaches to skills development and enterprise

## **The state of crafts in the UK**

**Craft:** An activity involving skill in making things by hand. An occupation or trade requiring manual dexterity or artistic skill (Oxford/Merriam-Webster dictionaries definition). Crafts is one of the 9 Creative Industries sectors as defined by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

According to the Crafts Councils' Measuring the Craft Economy report (2014) craft skills contribute £3.4 billion to the UK economy. Most of the cash the crafts generate for the economy come from craftspeople who are active in high-tech industries such as bio-medicine, science and engineering, contributing an estimated £2.4 billion.

Evidence from the Crafts Council's Innovation through Craft report (2017) suggests that developing practical craft skills is the starting point for innovation with the combination of craft skills with wider skills, such as engineering, science and technology, which helps to deliver even greater economic impacts.

Overall the creative industries are worth £92 billion a year to the UK - more than the oil, gas, life sciences, automotive and aeronautical industries combined. (DCMS Sector economic estimates for 2016)

However, by nature, craft skills take time to develop. Years of training and practical experience are required by craft practitioners before they are able to successfully deliver craft innovation. The Innovation through Craft reports' case studies demonstrate that investment in craft skills and education are imperative to ensure a future pipeline of makers and craft innovators.

The report recommends developing a 'fused' education agenda to ensure that all levels of the education system support students to develop their creative, practical talents alongside their scientific, technological and enterprise skills.

**“The notion of education through handicrafts rises from the contemplation of truth and love”**

Mahatma Gandhi

## Insights and Invitations

The purpose of this report is to share the insights gained from my field research as a basis for promoting dialogue to effect change in regard to protecting and developing craft education practice in the UK.

Through the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Travelling Fellowship I developed a range of insights into traditional and contemporary craft practice and arts and crafts education in India and Japan.

These insights arose from a dynamic interplay of a desire for social change, innovative approaches to creating the next generation of makers, deep connection to living local traditions of craft practice and the importance of exploring self expression and emotional intelligence through a positive arts and crafts curriculum.

Based on the findings of my Fellowship I have advocated a range of invitations that offer transferability of learning to the UK. These are derived from a potent fusion of Indian and Japanese craft practice across: **Cultural heritage, Enterprise, Health and Wellbeing and Technical Training.**

### Acting together

These invitations are a call to action to alliances of the willing, involving young people, teachers, parents, craftspersons, researchers, environmentalists, businesses, public bodies, institutions, designers, artists, entrepreneurs and agencies **to experiment, prototype new ideas and effect change locally.**

An encouragement to come together in community to embed making into the ways of schooling. To work together to offer a contemporary, fit for purpose primary and secondary education for young people based on **‘exercising their right to be individual and learning skills to develop their confidence and self-esteem’**. (Durham Commission on Creativity and Education 2018).

## Invitations

### A. Cultural Heritage - Protecting the intangible

1. **Use and develop** traditional crafts knowledge and skills. It is the new that gives craft the relevancy for that continuum of tradition.
2. Explore how a desire to create beautiful things can align with a mission to promote local cultural heritage and **community and traditional craft practice.**

### B. Craft enterprise - contributing to sustainable livelihoods

3. Commit to **sustainable livelihood** development and sustained engagement to address issues of low pay, exploitative practice and gender inequality.
4. Explore how **social enterprise** approaches can foster a new generation of craftspersons. Shape **business support** to ensure it builds individual capacity and promotes entrepreneurialism. Combining **traditional crafts skills** and knowledge with business skills.



### **C. Health and Wellbeing - a role for making and nature connection**

5. Experiment with opportunities for **early years children and their parents** to purposefully make. Start young and determine the outcomes and impacts.
6. Offer students time and freedom within the education system to have space to think, to self express, to develop creativity through compulsory arts and crafts timetabling. Research the impact of creating opportunities that enable children to savour the **joy of creating** while bringing their sensitivity into play.
7. **Take time** to understand and support the inter-connectedness between maker, material and ecology. Connecting with nature offers the opportunity to understand the material world more deeply.
8. Explore how arts and crafts can **support children and young people's mindfulness**. Learning about and describing ones emotions, enjoying self expression and reflecting on feelings.

### **D. Technical training - Creating successors to the current generation**

9. **Catch them early.** Support 12-13 years+ young people to develop self made internships to challenge the misconceptions from parents and schools that arts and crafts is a non- viable career path. Evolve new and innovative educational programmes for young people to develop entrepreneurship through the use and development of craft skills, including upskilling non-specialist teachers.
10. Explore how the increasing gaps in UK **D&T provision** at school and college could be addressed through work based, live project and skills based learning approaches for children and young people working with specialist craftspersons.
11. Experiment with new approaches for **technical training** and transitional programmes to bring through the next generation of craftspersons within the context of creating a sustainable livelihood. How might specialist craft colleges foster the flow of new talent, innovation and enterprise?
12. **Work holistically** to create a curriculum for craftspersons focussed on marketing and business skills and collaborative working.
13. **Gifts and needs.** Foster the gifting of time by craftspersons, parents and teachers to children and young people inside and outside school to develop collaboration, self-expression, creativity and control.

#### 4. Introduction

Research has shown that crafting with materials, learnt at an early age in school continued through the key stages of learning develops creativity, problem solving & practical intelligence.

Once D&T was the most popular optional subject at GCSE, now it is less popular than religious studies, history and geography. (D&T Association 2017).



According to the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL March 2017) GCSE courses in design and technology have disappeared from nearly half of schools amid pressure to succeed in core compulsory subjects.

Following the pattern of fewer D&T GCSE entries A Level entries are also falling, with a **-41%** change over the period 2010-2018

Department for Education figures published in June 2018 show that between 2010 and 2017 the number of hours D&T were taught in England's secondary schools fell by **-36%** and the number of arts teachers fell by **-32%**. In the last year alone the number of D&T teachers fell **-10%**. (Department for Education School Workforce in England statistics - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-workforce>).

Across the curriculum in England children and young people right through from primary school are experiencing a systematic diminishment in teaching time involving making. This means that for many students, the end of the second year of secondary school (age 13) is the last time they will have the opportunity to undertake any form of making.

***“Crafts are an important part of the world of work, the local ecology, and a great source of personal satisfaction.”***

*Robin Wood, Chair of the Heritage Crafts Association*

### **What can we learn from India and Japan in regard to developing the next generation of makers?**

Through my field research I sought to discover how embedded cultural traditions around making in India and Japan can offer insight and best practice in regard to promoting craft awareness and the passing on of skills to the next generation of makers.

My approach involved exploring and engaging with craft through the lens of meeting the largest possible group of craftspersons, entrepreneurs, artisans, artists, academics, educationalists, designers, students, trusts, not-for profits and charities involved in crafting across a range of contexts and settings in both countries.





## 5. INDIA : Making is all around

### 5.1 Craft Context

Crafts have been an integral part of Indian daily life in villages, towns, courts and religious establishments for centuries. An ingenious, spiritual, complex continuum where the artisan was considered a medium for the divine and ancient texts expounded exacting rules on how iconography, carpentry, textiles, jewellery and painting should be produced and which today are still a vibrant aspect of Indian culture and society.

It is estimated that there are over 12 million artisans/craftspersons working in the crafts sector, forming part of India's living heritage, practicing unmatched hand skills. The crafts sector makes an enormous contribution to India's export and foreign exchange earnings.

However industrial mass production manufacturers in India and abroad, who can produce cheap products in large quantities and are quick to diversify to meet changing trends and fashions are endangering the traditional craft forms as artisanal communities are forced to abandon ancient family traditions as they are increasingly deemed 'worthless' by market forces.

In spite of government policy to enhance opportunities for employment and income from crafts, sustain craft as an economic activity by enhancing its market and preserve the traditional beauty and skills of crafts. The lack of raw material, working capital, educational facilities and poor understanding of the changing markets have made the Indian crafts community extremely vulnerable.

The vast majority of India's crafts producers, struggle to eke out a meagre living and suffer from poverty, lack of access to social services, illiteracy, exploitation by middlemen, and extremely low social status.

In this context it becomes critical to find ways of integrating culture into livelihood as a force for inclusive socio-economic prosperity, peace and security.

Realising this need many individuals, not for profit organisations and trusts along with government bodies are innovating models for converting traditional skill into employable expertise by enabling both women and young people in artisan communities to develop sustainable livelihoods by transforming cultural capital into economic asset.

***“Handicrafts described simply are objects made by the skill of the hand which carry a part of the creator as well as centuries of tradition in which they have been created”***  
*Jasleen Dhamija Craft historian*





## 5.2 Impact of Caste

India's caste system is perhaps the world's longest surviving social hierarchy. A defining feature of Hinduism, caste encompasses a complex ordering of social groups on the basis of ritual purity. Artisans are ascribed to the 3rd class the Vaishyas, along with merchants, tradesmen and farmers. A person is considered a member of the caste into which he or she is born and remains within that caste until death.

Despite its constitutional abolition in 1950, the practice of "untouchability" the imposition of social disabilities on persons by reason of birth into a particular caste remains very much a part of rural India. Many castes are identified with a craft and in many parts of the country for artisans experiencing extremely low social status and associated poverty caste is something to be removed.

Accordingly many artisans are increasingly choosing to shift to other professions rather than sticking to their hereditary occupation. Over the past 30 years in India the number of artisans has declined by at least 30% with many joining the ranks of casual labourers and the informal economy.





### **5.3 Arts and Crafts education**

Education is compulsory in India for all 6-14 year olds. Though progress has been made regarding the universalisation of elementary education, India's education system still faces significant challenges. Specifically, the education sector is burdened by high dropout rates, low-level learning outcomes and outstanding gender disparities in literacy. The main barriers are poverty and gender discrimination.

Arts Education has always been priority area in the education policy of the Government of India. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005, recommends improving value base learning through mediums like art and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 in India specifies that every child has the right to arts education as a subject.

The national art education syllabus covers the years 6-17 and has points of focus around: educating for creativity through bringing art into schools with a focus on student creativity; student awareness of issues around social justice through arts and crafts; student skills in art production and vocational training; student and teacher awareness of national and local cultural heritage and connecting schools and communities on sites and resources in heritage arts and crafts.

One of the key recommendations of the NCF is to increase the number of options available at the senior secondary level. Following this recommendation, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) decided to introduce certain new areas highlighted in the NCF for their potential for encouraging creativity and interdisciplinary understanding.

India's heritage crafts constitute one such area and the Craft Tradition of India, Past Present and Future syllabus 2011, attempts to provide a new pedagogic approach to the specialised study of India's living craft traditions, focused on combining background knowledge with field study and the experience of engagement with artisans and their crafts, by giving higher priority and space for activities requiring hands-on experience.

The reason why this subject has been offered at the senior secondary level in schools is in recognition of the need to evolve a new and innovative educational programme for young people from the crafts community and to develop entrepreneurship more generally through the use and development of existing craft skills.

## **6. Meeting the change makers**

### **Cultural Heritage**

#### **6.1 SHRUJAN TRUST**

My first visit in India was to the Shrujan Trust located just outside Bhuj, the capital of Kachchh an area known for its amazing handicrafts.

Kachchh, commonly written as "Kutch" is the largest district in India and is located in Gujarat state. It is a mosaic of diverse landscapes, people, and cultures that together create a distinct identity. The district is surrounded by ocean on one side and the Rann of Kachchh, a vast salt desert, on the other. Once a major trade hub of the Indus Valley delta, Kachchh has long been a melting pot defined by fluid boundaries. A meeting point of people, cultures, faiths, languages, and traditions across a diversity of ecosystems and terrains.

From bell-making to block printing, from pottery to woodcarving, Weaving, tie-dye, discharge printing, batik, woodwork, silver work, metal work, lacquer work, mud work, painting, pottery, and embroidery. Kutch has a vibrant crafts tradition that has been enriched over the centuries by the communities that have migrated to this region. A tradition of excellence in handmade artefacts has continued down the ages and 22 different crafts are today practised in Kutch.

The work of Shrujan (meaning *Creativity* in Sanskrit) a not-for-profit organisation began in 1969 when Chanda Shroff visited Dhaneti village in Kutch

to help run a free kitchen. The village women were reluctant to accept charity. But in the exquisite hand embroidery displayed on their clothing, she saw a way to enable them to earn a livelihood.

Today over 4000 craftswomen, spread over 120 remote villages across Kutch, create a range of beautiful hand embroidered items that are sold in Shrujan shops and through regular exhibitions all over India and abroad.

#### INSIGHT - LIVELIHOOD

How an innovative social enterprise approach based on traditional skills can address the challenge of extreme economic hardship. Resulting in rural women earning a sustainable and dignified livelihood within their community.







The craftswomen work from their homes 10-125 km from Bhuj. Shrujan's kit team create and distribute embroidery kits that ensure that the fabrics and threads reach them wherever they are, right at their doorstep.

The women do not have to pay for the materials, and receive their fair dues for their skill and their time, as soon as they have completed the embroidery, which can take up to 10 days.

#### INSIGHT - ACCOMMODATING NEEDS

The craftswomen of Kutch aren't just craftswomen they are mothers, farmers, labourers and animal husbanders. Shrujan has shaped their business model around accommodating the needs of the women so that they have all the materials to hand where they live to be able to embroider when they can fit it in to their working day. A unique piece work approach.

The Shrujan campus at Bhujodi is home to the Shrujan Campus production centre for the Trust. Here production is spread across 5 depts.

1. Design and Printing where designs are pinned and printed onto fabric.
2. Kit Department where fabric is colour matched with threads.
3. Production who take out kits and bring back semi- finished items and determine pricing.
4. Washing, Ironing and Tailoring where all items are washed and pressed. and fashioning into high quality apparel and accessories takes place.
5. Finished Goods responsible for distributing completed embroidery goods to Shrujan sales emporiums and Shrujan exhibitions.

#### INSIGHT - SUSTAINABLE PIECEWORK

Shrujan enable a social enterprise approach based on a skilled artisan commissioned on a task and finish basis paid at the point of completion and in between these commissions they continue with their other roles. A micro-enterprise and craft development approach embracing flexibility which challenges the convention of piecework as low paid.

***“Some stitches are difficult, others are easy. That way our embroidery is thoughtful - it has something for everyone. So we can choose. But we all want to be known for our skill. That is a matter of pride. So we will attempt the difficult stitches and become good at them.”***

Shrujan embroider



In 2010, Shrujan split into two separate organisations. Shrujan Creations works with craftswomen to create and sell hand embroidered products. Shrujan Trust aims to take forward the effort to revive and preserve the crafts of Kutch. As part of this effort, the Living and Learning Design Centre (LLDC), a crafts museum and resource centre, was set up in 2016. It is situated on a three-building, eight-acre campus in the village of Ajrakhpur.

I visited the LLDC team to learn about their plans to develop LLDC as a museum, craft education and resource centre for the craftspeople of Kutch. Envisioned as a multi-dimensional crafts education and resource centre, where craftspeople can meet and learn from one another. The ambition is that it will help Shrujan do for the other crafts of Kutch what they have been able to achieve for hand embroidery in Kutch.

The vision for LLDC is as a Craft School and working studios for all of the 22 crafts of Kutch. LLDC aims to train, educate and support craftspersons to practise their traditional crafts for contemporary markets so that they can earn a dignified and prosperous livelihood. LLDC combines a living museum with research centre and craft studios. Craft studio designers, craftspersons and experts/specialists will collaborate in fully equipped studios to create new designs and products.

#### INSIGHT - A HOLISTIC LIVING MUSEUM APPROACH

Shrujan have sought to create something new based on their experience of enterprise and social justice. Developing LLDC as a place where the skill and potential of practicing and aspiring craftspeople across all the 22 crafts of Kutch can be enhanced to enable them to earn a dignified and prosperous livelihood. Integrating research and documentation of the history and practice of each craft with a drive to create new designs and new products from a new generation of craftspersons.



#### INSIGHT - CULTIVATING PERFECTION

Throughout the museum the exhibition panels spoke of how to recognise expertise and quality, naming the contributing factors. Evidencing an enduring focus on perfection in the finished pieces of embroidery.

For a significant number of the craftswomen the financial imperative is not the reason they make. Many of the women now employed are not poor.

Making for Shrujan is part of an ongoing tradition of high quality handicrafts within these communities that produces a drive to constantly innovate and to learn more and more.

#### INSIGHT - SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT

When a commitment to social justice combines with an empathetic long term engagement with crafting communities then what flows is a genuine respect for the handmade artefact and the artisan, a recognition of the need to ensure a dignified and sustainable livelihood for rural craftswomen and a passion for excellence.



## **6.2 BAGRU/DHEERAJ CHHIPPA**

Next I travelled to the printmaker village of Bagru in Rajasthan to meet Dheeraj Chhipa. For at least 400 years, Bagru has been home to the Chhipa — a clan whose name comes either from a Gujarati word meaning “to print” or from combining two Nepal Bhasa words: ‘*chhi*’ (“to dye”) and ‘*pa*’ (“to leave something to bask in sun”).

Dheeraj is a fourth generation printer from Bagru, who has not had a traditional route into the family trade. He completed a BA in Commerce to learn about developing the business within the family and then studied at the Indian Institute of Crafts and Design, to learn design and to seek to expand the family business through understanding how to employ designers, the elements of design, garment construction, textiles communication, innovation and introducing new fabrics.



### INSIGHT - A NEW GENERATION

Dheeraj is one of a new generation of younger craftspersons combining the traditional skills and knowledge with business skills to promote entrepreneurial development. Applying their knowledge and broadening their perspective to embrace new national and international markets.

Dheeraj took us to meet his local wood block carver. Once the block's design has been sketched on paper and the block has been cut to size, the pattern is drawn directly on the wood. The carver then uses drills, chisels, hammers, nails, and files to recreate the pattern on the block.







It can take one or two days to carve and prepare a single block as the selection and seasoning of local woods is an involved process and specific to each pattern design. A Chhipa printer decides how many blocks to use by the number of colours and shapes in the print design. Generally, a printer first stamps the background block (called a *gudh*), followed by an outline block (the *rekh*). The *datta* are the filler blocks which complete the design. On average, a printer will need at least 4 or 5 blocks to create a hand printed cloth.

Next Dheeraj took us to his printing space where we found the same tools used for the last 100 years. A long, low printing table, the blocks and a rolling trolley which holds a dye tray and a few other items. For regular hand block printing, a printer first dips the wooden printing block in the dye tray before pounding the centre of the block onto the fabric with his or her fist. The pattern is repeated, aligning the blocks by eye.

Traditional Bagru prints use dark (or coloured) patterns on cream or dyed backgrounds. Another style, called *dabu*, creates light-coloured motifs on a dark background using mud-resist printing. There are also items made with discharge printing, using citric acid on grey alum dye.



In Bagru, the cloth has either a cream-coloured or a dyed base. Bagru prints use floral and leaf motifs but also incorporate geometric shapes — such as *leher* (waves), *chaupad* (checks), and *kangura* (triangles), and *jaali* — a gridded trellis pattern which may have been adapted from Islamic architecture.

Adapting these motifs to contemporary fashion requires added precision. The abundance of empty spaces in modern patterns tends to reveal the unintentional dye drips which often go unnoticed in busier, traditional designs.

Dabu is an ancient printing process kept alive mostly by the Chhipa community. Earlier Rajasthan province was densely peppered with Dabu printing clusters. Now very few remain carrying on the legacy.

Dabu is a mud resist mixture made from local black clay (*kaali mitti*), wheat powder (*bidhan*), guar gum, and lime water. After the printer applies the dabu print pattern, a fine layer of sawdust is sprinkled over the fabric to help prevent it from sticking to itself during the dye process. The motifs made with the mud resist remain uncoloured while the rest of the fabric is dyed. A printer can produce 20 metres per day working 8 hours.

Dheeraj's family business employs 25-30 family members as the master printers, dyers, block carvers, *dhobiwalas* (laundry people). He showed me the natural dye pits located in the communal drying fields and explained the 5 stage process for preparing the raw material prior to dyeing. This involves taking the hand-woven fabric, washing and soaking in a goat dung and sesame seed oil solution, thrashing and laying out to dry.

Before dyeing, fabric is soaked in *harda* — a natural mordant made from the myrobalan fruit and which binds colour to the fabric and gives it a distinct yellowish colour. Blues are made from *Indigofera tinctoria*, stored in dye vats 10 to 12 feet deep. Different hues of red colours (*begar*) are created by mixing varying proportions of alum (*fitkari*), madder (*lal mitti*) and acacia arabica (also called *babul gond*). Alum is used for greys and *syahi* (fermented waste iron, jaggery and water) for blacks.

There is a significant contrast between the making time and volume of product that can be produced between organic and in-organic processing. One pit of synthetic indigo can dye 600m of fabric in a day compared to organic indigo dyeing which only produces 50m and takes 2 days.

The seasons which drive production here are natural, not industrial. During the hot and dry months, the courtyards and fields around the dyeing pits and printing spaces fill with fabrics — until monsoon season brings work to a halt.



#### INSIGHT - CULTIVATING INTERDEPENDENCY

The village operates as self-sufficient system for Dabu printing. Block carvers sculpt the blocks, the earth lends mud and the river bestows water, with the fabrics and pigments sourced from nearby towns and villages.

#### INSIGHT - THE THREAT OF SYNTHETIC FABRICS - BOTH FOR BUSINESS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Using organic fabrics and natural processing and dyeing processes is significantly more time consuming than using non-organic cloth and dyes. 40-50 years ago there was a high demand for natural, not so today with demand for the cheaper synthetic and non-organic cloth much higher. 90% of Dheeraj's fabrics are sold in Mumbai and only 10% is organic because there is currently little market in India for organic textiles.

#### INSIGHT - MAN MADE AND NATURAL CHALLENGES

The Chhipa traditions illustrate an ecology of inter-dependency between wood block carver, printer, dyer and local materials. The business of printing which has been a harmonious relationship for centuries when serving a local market.

But now with climate change the region's water table has dropped and unskilled families are moving into Bagru, trading on the Bagru name but without traditional knowledge or skills and not working with natural dyes. Threatening the long-term traditional production of textiles in the village.





## Enterprise

### 6.3 SAKSHAM/ASHANARI

I met Nitin Sharma as my accommodation host in Jaipur while I was visiting the Indian Institute of Crafts and Design.

He uses the money from B&B accommodation in his family home to support Saksham - Center for Child Education & Women Empowerment, a not for profit founded by Nitin and his wife Deepti in 2013 to enable children and women living in slum areas get access to education. Providing free education, clothing, school books, midday meal and vaccines.





Nitin and Deepti gave up their jobs to run the project and in 2016 Nitin purchased 4 sewing machines and started teaching the women to sew. Nitin's ambition was to create ethical fashion incorporating local traditional skills involving the use of natural dyes and colours, organic textiles, block printing and wood block making.

#### INSIGHT - EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MAKING

The women aren't defined by being slum dwellers they are human's first and foremost. Learning to read and write and to sew has offered them the opportunities and experience to develop their ambitions and goals in life.

Recently the Ashanari - Jaipur Clothing Project was incorporated into Saksham teaching women to make clothes for sale to the international market. Ashanari buy organic cotton directly from farms, order the wood blocks from local woodcarvers, and use local block printers to create the printed fabric used by the women to create a range of clothing. All within a commitment to ethical production, retail and purchasing. Ensuring good working conditions, fair pay, using organic fabric and natural dyes.



Based on an intention **“to put love in every thread to create something different and beautiful.”** Nitin’s ambition is to create a global ethical Indian brand that responds to the need for high quality handcrafted products within India which is currently met through expensive imported products.

INSIGHT - ETHICS AND SOCIAL CHANGE A VIRTUOUS CIRCLE IN HARMONY.

Ashanari aims to address the problems it sees with the way the fashion industry currently operates, such as exploitative labour and environmental damage. Placing them at the forefront of challenging issues in the fashion business in regard to fair pay and ecological impact.

Evidencing how a desire to create beautiful things can align with a mission for social change to give slum women a better life, based on a deep mutual respect for community and traditional craft practice.

#### 6.4 SEBASTIAN INDIAN SOCIAL PROJECTS (SISP)

SISP was founded in 1996 offering a free education centre and training in self-employment for women and unemployed youth living below the poverty line. It is a non-profit, charitable organisation working in the outskirts of Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of the most southern state of India, Kerala. Supporting 50 7-18 yr olds to get a free education and 48 micro credit unions in the surrounding villages, many of which have supported self-employment.

Some of the older teenagers from the school formed Kovalam Surf club, India's first surf club, offering free lessons and equipment to students with the proviso if you don't meet the attendance requirements for school you don't get your ticket to surf. The school has also built a skatepark offering free skateboarding lessons to motivate the school drop-outs of the area to participate in the educational program of SISP via it's 'No school-No Skating' approach.



One of the main goals of SISP is to find and/or create jobs for unemployed youngsters and women from impoverished backgrounds who have had little or no schooling and therefore little chance in finding a decent job in the regular employment market.



In order to offer a technical training, work experience and to provide an income for these people, SISP set up it's Social Employment Programme (SEP).

SEP consists of several handicraft units working with three kinds of material: coconut shell, paper and textiles. Almost all their handicrafts are made out of waste materials such as newspapers, magazines, fabric leftovers and coconut shells. These products are aimed at being environmentally friendly, recycling materials including using coconuts for household items and paper for jewellery and bags

The women and young people learn how to make greetings cards and paper bags out of newspapers and earrings and bowls from coconut shells. There is a particular focus on the young people learning and earning, with young people encouraged to work on fulfilling handicrafts orders for national and international markets as a way to generate independent income.

#### INSIGHT - SOCIAL ENTERPRISE THROUGH MAKING

Applying enterprise approaches to social problems through developing self-sustaining business models supporting the most excluded locally.





## 6.5 CHANDRAKANTA ARTS - A STORY OF CRAFT LIVELIHOODS AND INNOVATION.

I met Raju, owner of Chandrakanta Arts in Kovalam Kerala, where he told me about the history of how his family came to painting. Raju's father left the small village of Paisagen in Rajasthan 30 years ago to work in Ajmer as a sign writer painting on boards, walls and shops. He then met and learnt from a Rajasthani traditional painter.

After learning these techniques and styles he returned to Paisagen and shared his knowledge and trained 14 men from the village who started making an income from producing paintings for the tourist market. There was no tradition of this type of craft in his village. His father's initiative created livelihoods and opportunities as well as a new local painting tradition.

However their income was dependent on selling through middle men who sold on to tourists and supplying shops selling to tourists. Over time they realised that they could earn more if they created the work and sold directly to customers. 14 years ago they opened their first shops in Rajasthan and 10 years ago in Kovalam. The family now have 4 shops run by Raju, his father, brother and cousin.

Raju is a painter of large scale photo realist paintings which are specifically commissioned at 20k (Rs) Indian Rupees each (£220). He has a team of 4 painters creating historical Rajasthani paintings back in the village. They receive a salary back of 30-40k Rs (£330-440 pcm)

The Kovalam shop is 3/4 contemporary photo realist paintings and 1/4 Rajasthani historical paintings. Previously the historical paintings would have been big sellers but tourists are no longer interested, preferring more contemporary works. He sells maybe one or two a month, "giving them away" at 500 Rs each.

In Rajasthan the standard rate for artisan painters is a maximum of 300Rs (£3.30) a day, 8400Rs (£93) pcm which compares unfavourably with construction workers in the city earning 800Rs (£9) per day 22,400 Rs (£248)pcm or a fruit salad seller on Kovalam beach earning 1500 Rs (£17) per day 42,000 Rs (£463)pcm.

There used to be 14 shops in Pushkar (One of the main tourist cities in Rajasthan) selling Rajasthani paintings now there are only 2. Raju himself used to employ 14 painters now he has reduced this number to 4.

**"The children of these families are not learning the skills and techniques and it's likely that within the next 5 years no one from our community will be doing traditional Rajasthani paintings anymore."**

### INSIGHT - WHAT FUTURE FOR TRADITIONAL RAJASTHANI PAINTING?

Challenge of market forces and the low status of craft socially and economically drawing the next generation away from continuing craft.





## Technical Training

### 6.6 INDIAN INSTITUTE OF CRAFTS & DESIGN



My main purpose for visiting Jaipur was to spend time with faculty and students at the Indian Institute of Crafts and Design (IICD). IICD's mission is to develop high quality professionals to act as catalysts of change in the craft sector and I was interested in their approach to innovation and entrepreneurship.

During my stay the International Conference on Recent Trends in Crafts and Sustainability took place to facilitate networking amongst the artisans community and academic researchers in the crafts sector.

The conference offered a unique perspective into the challenges for Indian handicrafts that urbanisation and digitisation has created in shifting young people away from practicing craft. The conference offered a rich debate on the issues facing the skilling of a new generation of craftspersons and the challenge of developing sustainable livelihoods for current practicing craftspersons.



Research papers and presentations revealed major shift in crafts in India from the everyday to the luxurious. With the growth of new international markets for luxury goods abroad whereby craftspeople are able to export directly to the Middle East, US & UK via export houses.

#### INSIGHT - COMMUNITY = CRAFTS

Crafts are not just a means of employment for rural people they are also a creative expression of each community's distinct culture and identity through which utilitarian objects are transformed to art forms.

Particularly note worthy were the many papers about field experiments and action research projects led by Trusts such as Jaipur Rugs and Tata Trusts, which revealed an approach to addressing the social and economic challenges for those practicing craft through livelihood and status development but also aesthetic expression. Addressing poverty and gender inequality through sustainable livelihood opportunities for marginalised women at their doorsteps.

#### INSIGHT - MAKING FROM THE HEART

Exploring the role of field experiments/action research activity in developing new approaches to sustainable crafting.  
What happens when village artisans are given the resources and freedom to express themselves?

IICD run a specialist one year course for artisans on craft design and techniques, offered to 10 students from low income tribal artisan families in Central India aimed at incentivising a new generation to retain and develop craft skills. This government backed initiative seeks to conserve crafts through education, develop community leaders and address current exploitative practices in craft clusters.

I had a number of discussions with current students and recent graduates most of whom were not from a craft/artisan background who were all very active in seeking to address what they see as the often exploitative nature of the designer/craftsperson relationship.

Dhruv Saxena a recent graduate has set up a design studio working with brass, marble and woodturning artisans in the old city of Jaipur. He designs, they make and then he sells online. He plans to offer 4-5 craftspersons space on his website where they can sell their work and he will take a nominal 10% commission.





3rd year student Kanishka Chhajer plans to take this idea of empowering local artisans even further by developing a curriculum for artisans in Jaipur focused on marketing and business skills, sensitivity towards design and collaborative/co-design working with arts students and craft clusters.

#### INSIGHT - CRAFT AS A JOB

Though academics and researchers may eulogise about a craft or local traditions of making. For the vast majority of artisans working in India they don't know it as craft, they are simply working to make a living. Initiatives like Kanishka's, essentially a design school for artisans provide a powerful impetus to shift the conditions and status of artisans.





“A school is a place where one learns about the totality, the wholeness of life.

Academic excellence is absolutely necessary, but a school includes much more than that.

It is a place where both the teacher and the student explore, not only the outer world, the world of knowledge, but also their own thinking, their own behaviour.”

J. Krishnamurti



## Health and Wellbeing

### 6.7 CENTRE FOR LEARNING (CFL)

CFL is a small school on a twenty-three acre campus about 40km from Bangalore for students between the ages of 8 and 19. It is founded on the principles of the Indian educationalist J. Krishnamurti whose educational aim was a holistic global outlook: A vision of the whole as distinct from the part and concern for man and the environment which views humanity as part of nature and an awareness of nature and natural processes as an important aspect of learning.

CFL is a community of students and adults interested in learning about themselves and their relationship with the world. This learning involves not only academics and other life skills, but also a deeper exploration about individual emotions and thought processes and responses to the challenges of life.

Students and staff learn to care for the land and use it as a rich educational resource, both through observing the natural world (it is home to a wide variety of plants and animals) and learning about the impact that human settlement has on land. The curriculum also aims to help students discover their interests and nurture rigorous skills in academic and non-academic areas.

Sandilya Theuerkauf works with engaging the students in managing the land, nature observation, vegetable gardening and woodwork. The day begins for his class at 7am walking barefoot in the landscape observing/noticing.

I spoke with Sandy after breakfast about his approach to retraining how we interact with nature. Switching off from the cognitive engagement, what am I seeing, what is it called? Fostering engaging in a more intuitive manner. Where am I at this present moment? How is being in this present moment making me feel? Students bring this approach into their classrooms, lab and workshop.

Sandy showed me how his artwork has developed over the last two to three years through this approach of nature connection. Using gatherings, accumulated from his time on the land. A rich resource of lightening strike wood, thorns, twigs and seed pods all carefully collected and stored until they can be fitted together.

**“I am developing an approach for each work that is about working with the material just so..finding a way”**

#### INSIGHT - ADULTS AND CHILDREN INQUIRING TOGETHER INTO THE MATERIAL WORLD

Through interacting with nature CFL offers a creative learning environment where children and adults can inquire together in freedom, security and affection providing an opportunity to understand the material world more deeply.

For craftspersons perhaps such an approach can offer insights into how they might deepen their practice, their connection to place and how they can learn alongside all ages.

*“Culture is usually thought of as something created, maintained, and developed by humanity's efforts alone. But culture always originates in the partnership of man and nature.*

*When the union of human society and nature is realised, culture takes shape of itself. Culture has always been closely connected with daily life, and so has been passed on to future generations, and has been preserved up to the present time.*

*Something born from human pride and the quest for pleasure cannot be considered true culture. True culture is born within nature, and is simple, humble, and pure”.*

M. Fukuoka, One Straw Revolution

## 7.0 JAPAN - An acceptance of transience and imperfection.

In traditional Japanese aesthetics, *wabi-sabi* is sometimes described as one of beauty that is "imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete".

### 7.1 Craft context

Craft (工芸 *kōgei*, lit. engineered art) in Japan has a long tradition and history. In order for an object to be officially recognised as traditional Japanese craft, it must meet five requirements: The item must be: used routinely in everyday life, primarily manufactured by hand, manufactured implementing traditional techniques at least 100 years old, the main materials used have remained unchanged for at least 100 years and crafted at its place of origin.

The diversity, richness and depth of contemporary craft activities in Japan is quite unique. Crafts are primarily regarded as a form of highly specialised professional art, regardless of the type of craft, the makers are all conscious of being artists. There are four distinctive types of professional craft activities that are equally active in contemporary Japan. However, these types are clearly separated and institutionalised under the Japanese system, with their own critical languages and conventions of aesthetic evaluation.





### **a. Traditional art crafts (*dentō kōgei*)**

In traditional art crafts, the core works are created by master craftsmen – the ‘Living National Treasures’ this status was set up in 1955 and is conferred on a person who hold skills ‘of particularly high value’ in the field of traditional crafts and for whom ‘... if they were not supported by the government were in danger of disappearing’. Craft makers who are so designated enjoy a high level of prestige, but also have a national responsibility to transmit these skills to the younger generation.

The essential notion of Japanese ‘tradition’ is defined through craft skills and widely disseminated through an annual Exhibition of Japanese Traditional Art Crafts (Nihon Dentō Kōgei ten), funded by a mixture of Japanese government and commercial bodies. Every autumn, it opens at the Mitsukoshi department store in Tokyo and travels throughout the nation to be hosted at major department stores over a period of six months.

### **b. Mingei-style crafts**

*Mingei* or Japanese Folk Crafts (hand crafted art of ordinary people) developed in the late 1920’s and 1930’s involves traditional, handmade, functional crafts using regional materials and techniques. These crafts continue to be produced and are currently undergoing a major revival based on creating a lifestyle trend led by high-end boutique stores, where customers are interested in the lives of the craft makers.

### **c. Kurafuto / Craft design**

Kurafuto or craft design has roots in the export craft design of the 1920s and is centred on the activities of the Kōgei Shidōsho (national Industrial Arts Research Institute). In the 1950s these types of crafts were promoted as part of the global ‘Good Design’ movement. Japan’s representatives of this movement established the ‘Good Design’ award system in 1957, which has tended to reward these products originating from locally made Mingei objects but with some involvement of contemporary design and designers.

Handmade and partially machine-made, not one-off but made by small to mid-sized companies. MUJI emerged from this line of development. Generally, this is an area witnessing a boost in collaboration between regional manufacturers and designers.

In 2004, the Japanese government launched its ‘Japan Brand’ project, which subsidises and offers advice to regional handicrafts industries with the aim of revitalising regional economies through the development of branding for craft design products that could be useful for the contemporary Japanese lifestyle, as well as being marketable worldwide.



#### 4. Craft art or ‘craftical formation’

This last type of craft comprises individualistic one-off works, often produced by art college graduates and categorised as studio crafts. Many female artists can be found working in this area, outside the state-sponsored, highly privileged field of traditional art craft. Whether working with traditional functional forms or not, makers pursue individual expression as is customary in fine-art practice, but the works reflect a fascination with specific materials and techniques.

The Association for the Promotion of Traditional Craft Industries "DENSAN Association" was established in 1975 to promote traditional craft product industries in Japan, in affiliation with the Government Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI).

Based on a Japanese Government programme to foster designated traditional crafts, as of 2018, the number of officially designated traditional craft products by the METI has reached 230 selected from over thousands of traditional craft product groups in Japan, with an associated training school for each craft. The DENSAN Association also actively promotes Japanese handicrafts on a global scale and contributes to their market expansion.

**“Rooted in century-old traditional techniques, these handcrafted household items have developed over times in accordance with changes in our lifestyles and still remain an essential part in our everyday life.” (DENSAN Association 2018)**

In terms of arts and crafts learning in High School there is the opportunity for students to decide on an arts or technical path by age 15. However for many Japanese parents a priority remains choosing career paths for their children providing job opportunities that offer a stable income and for many families the arts and crafts alongside farming and fisheries are seen as unstable and lower income professions.

Many leading figures in traditional craft are warning of the challenge of the decline in traditional craft practice, with the likelihood that some practices such as kimono making could die out altogether as a generation of Japanese craftsmen who have spent a lifetime using specialist skills inherited from their own parents are now in their eighties and these craftsmen are seriously struggling to find ways of passing on their precious craftsmanship to the next generation, with the loss of thousands of years of craft making techniques.

### **7.2 Arts and crafts education in schools: Craft a way of being, teaching and learning**

In Japan, craft subjects are introduced at an early age and children will typically have obligatory classes in crafts throughout their education - be it woodwork or technology.

The overall objective of the Japanese arts and crafts elementary curriculum is to....**’enable children, to savour the joy of creating while bringing their sensitivity into play. To enable children to activate sensations and skills over the whole of their body and at the same time, to foster the fundamental abilities underlying the creative activities that take the form of shaping and moulding, thereby nurturing a rich fund of aesthetic sensitivity.’**

In Japanese nursery schools (3-5 yrs old) art is integrated into the general curriculum every day. The integrated arts including music and movement comprising unto five hours a week of the total programme.

From age six (reception) when Japanese children enter the first grade of elementary school through to age 12 the sixth grade (Year 6) they typically receive two hours of art instruction a week. In cities such as Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka, an art specialist typically teaches elementary art but that isn’t the case everywhere. At this stage, much time and emphasis is given to music, fine arts and physical education.

The standard curriculum for junior high school (12-15 yrs) includes the following required subjects: Japanese language, social studies, mathematics, science, a foreign language elective, music, fine arts, health and physical education and industrial arts or homemaking.



Students in high school (15-18) usually complete an elective from among Music, Fine Arts, Crafts Production, and Calligraphy. The high school core curriculum includes art, whilst students in special vocational programs also take courses in industrial arts/crafts, while spending less time on the core curriculum than regular students.

One of the key phrases in the objectives of the course of study for Arts subjects at Junior and High School is cultivating fundamental abilities. These fundamental abilities do not refer only to knowledge and skills they also refer to the abilities of pupils and students to express their feelings, imagination and thinking.

By such means as writing, drawing, performing and making (expressive skills), and to the abilities of pupils and students to recognise positively strengths and aesthetic values. Students' creative activities are viewed as crucial to cultivating these fundamental abilities, because such activities are the very basis of other activities.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) believes that pupils and students' realisation of the values of Japanese traditional arts leads to the establishment of their identities as Japanese as well as the establishment of a platform from where they understand other cultures and values.

## 8. Meeting the change makers

### Cultural Heritage

#### 8.1 HAGI

Next I travelled to Hagi famous for Hagi-yaki (Hagi ware) where I was hosted by Hagi City Hall Commerce Promotion Division, who provided extensive contacts with craftspersons, local museums and schools, through the Hagi Ceramic Artists Association (HCA) enabling me to immerse myself in all things Hagi-yaki.

Pottery was born here in the 17th century and matured over nearly 400 years of activity. Today Hagi is filled with potters and ceramic shops with all pottery workshops offering hands-on pottery making experiences. The tradition of tea ceremonies and tea houses continue to this day in Hagi and Hagi was my first introduction to the Tea Ceremony and its importance in shaping Japanese craft.

The Japanese Tea Ceremony, also known as the **Way of Tea**, is a ritual in which tea is prepared and served following a strict protocol. It is considered one of the classical Japanese arts of refinement and has had a huge influence on the appreciation of ceramics in Japan. There is a famous expression in Japanese regarding tea wares, that it is "Raku first, Hagi second and Karatsu third".

The Zen Buddhist ideals of humility and simplicity inspired tea masters to take simple rustic pots for use in the tea ceremony. Wares produced at the native kilns embodied an aesthetic which embraced the imperfections and natural accidents of the making and firing process.



The choice of utensils for each tea event is determined by the season and the particular occasion. As well as tea bowls, the special utensils used in the ceremony include a water jar, waste water pot, a lacquer container for the tea, a bamboo whisk, a bamboo scoop, an incense pellet container, an iron kettle, and a charcoal brazier.

The appreciation of the tactile qualities of objects, the love of simplicity and acceptance of imperfections embodied in the way of tea are also a reflection of Japanese traditional crafts, aesthetic and cultural meaning.

The subtle form and natural, subdued colours of Hagi ware are highly regarded. In particular, the beautiful contrast between the bright green colour of matcha tea and the warm neutral tones of Hagi ware is aesthetically notable.



A unique characteristic of Hagi-yaki is the soft feeling of the pottery. Amongst tea ceremony aficionados, this texture is referred to as the 'feel of the earth' and is a highly-appreciated aspect of Hagi-yaki.



#### INSIGHT - WAY OF TEA

Importance of tea ceremony as one of the classical arts of refinement where appreciation of craftsmanship in the utensils used is an integral part of the appreciation of the ceremony.



## 8.2 HIDEAKI KIMURA

Boasting a history going back 1,000 years, Imbe (Bizen pottery village) is the hometown of Bizen pottery, one of Japan's oldest forms of pottery, and features more than 100 potteries and galleries. The old townscape of Imbe is filled with buildings made with red brick chimneys and Bizen pottery roof tiles. Even tiny Imbe Station has Bizen pottery on display and for sale.

During the 12-14th centuries 6 large pottery production centres came to prominence in Japan evolving to produce rougher, heavier, higher fired, more durable pottery and Bizen was one of those centres. The Bizen pottery tradition was protected and encouraged by the master of the tea ceremony and by the local Lord who gave manufacturing permission to the kilns of six families (including Kimura) in Bizen.



Since that time these families have kept the original pottery making techniques alive, whereby the clay is won from local rice fields, no glaze is used and firing involves a 8-20 day long burning using only red pine as fuel, with temperatures reaching 1250C to produce a natural glaze with pine ash. Bizen ware is renowned for it's water preserving qualities which allow flowers to last longer and beer retains a wonderfully full head in Bizen cups.

Imbe is home to 5 national living treasures and the kiln of the Kimura family who have been master potters for 17 generations. Tozan Kimura is 76 yrs old. In 2008 he was authorised as the master of traditional arts and crafts, in 2012 he was awarded the distinguished service award of traditional arts and crafts and in 2016 he was decorated for the order of the sacred treasure silver rays. This was given in recognition of 50 years practice and teaching. He currently has 10+ apprentices.

Hideaki Kimura is the son of Tozan Kimura and was 34 when he succeeded his father as head of the pottery. Hideaki studied foreign languages at University and after graduation studied ceramics at Massana Art School in Barcelona living 2 years in Spain and a year in Australia. This international experience has given him a unique perspective combining Japanese tradition and a contemporary western craft aesthetic.

After graduation he had planned to study an English degree but instead he developed what he describes as a sudden interest in pottery which led him to 6 years of ceramics study and 13 years learning from his father.

I was invited to visit the Kimura pottery whilst Hideaki was in the latter stages of a 20 day firing of 1500 pieces. We spoke over the course of the day interspersed with his regular feeding of the kiln and between him being interviewed by a local television channel with a drone buzzing overhead.

The local elementary school has a kiln and Hideaki goes into school each year to work with 10 year olds so they get hands on experience of Bizen-yaki as part of learning about the areas industrial and local culture. He also teaches about Bizen-yaki and the tea ceremony in elementary and junior high school.

For Hideaki there is an intrinsic connection between Bizen-yaki and tea ceremony. Locally, regionally and internationally he lectures about the tradition and importance of tea ceremony. He has held international tea ceremony in Barcelona and created a cart for anywhere tea (Dokodemo Rakucha Go) where he held small, intimate tea ceremony across Japan via a tearoom set up on a bicycle trailer.

#### INSIGHT - CRAFT VS ARTISTRY

Hideaki makes a distinction between artistry where sense is important and craftsmanship where shape is important.

Currently in Bizen his belief is that most potteries are focusing on artistry, Whereas his belief is the highly technical precision that comes from being able to replicate a shape 100's and 1000's of times makes craftsmanship more important in a type of ceramics where there is no glaze, so nowhere to hide mistakes.









## Enterprise

### 8.3 Hagi Ceramics Association/DENSAN.

The Hagi Ceramics Association (HCA) was set up in 2000 to promote and revitalise Hagi-yaki. Supported by DENSAN to undertake events including exhibitions, sales events and crafting demonstrations utilising traditional Hagi-yaki crafts practice. To promote and support existing Hagi potteries and to seek to develop the next generation of pottery businesses in Hagi.

HCA has focused on creating links with local potters to promote collaborative working such as joint exhibitions and attending regional and national crafts shows. Together with a particular focus on local schools through potters offering experience based craft-making.

HCA have an annual callout to local schools to have a potter hosted in schools for free to nurture children's interest and provide the opportunity to interact with the clay based on self expression. With the objective to retain and build the interest amongst schools and children and young people to support the continued nurturing of traditional craft.

HCA and the DENSAN designation of Hagi-yaki as a traditional crafts product has had the impact of increasing the level of interest from young people in Hagi. Connection and collaboration between potters has increased and this has made it easier for young people to experience Hagi pottery.

#### INSIGHT - CRAFTSPERSONS ENGAGED WITH SCHOOLS

Offering hands-on experience to children to promote understanding of their local industrial and cultural heritage

#### INSIGHT - AN UNHELPFUL MINDSET

Whilst Hagi-yaki is nationally and internationally revered and there is national support for HCA to promote Hagi-yaki making experiences in schools, the uptake is low and ceramics has to compete with a mindset from parents and schools that crafts is an unstable source of income.



#### 8.4 KANEKO NOBUHIKO

Jozan pottery is a unique pottery business combining traditional climbing kiln, folk craft museum, working pottery, shop, schools programme and hotel, that was set up 50 years ago to give people experience into 'the vastness of Hagi-yaki'.

I met pottery manager Kaneko Nobuhiko, 66 yrs old born and bred in Hagi, where he grew up close to a pottery, which he described as a 'magical opportunity' to see a potter at work.

**“My elementary school had a small kiln and I vividly remember after one school project carrying my piece home and one of my neighbours saying wow you made this!... it's beautiful! It was the first time I was touched by the power of making”**

At 16 he joined the Jozan pottery and also learnt lacquering, glasswork and metalwork at the craft design association in Yamaguchi. He was interested in exploring pottery in the context of these other crafts.....**“warping tradition to imbue myself in a simple soil”**.





The development of the tea ceremony was the origin of the Japanese concept of hospitality. Kaneko sees his role to protect but develop that tradition. In order to do this it is very important to learn base skills derived from the principles of harmony, peace and respect. Creating pieces to provide people the opportunity to enjoy beauty.

Today 4 potters are employed at the pottery including his two sons who have picked it up from him. They have had no formal teaching, just learnt by watching their father, elder son for 20 yrs and younger son 10 yrs.

#### INSIGHT - THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EXPERIENCE

The pottery has an extensive school programme capable of accommodating up to 200 children a day. The Jozan Pottery aligns it's educational programme with a junior school project that all students have to undertake . In which students are invited to experience a potters studio for a day to create a piece of pottery and then write a report on what they have made including the potters feedback on their completed work.

## Technical Training

### 8.5 SHINICHI TAMAMURA

Hagi pottery is in the family, so when he was growing up Shinichi was helping all the time organising clay, glazing objects etc, He remembers coming home from school to help his father in the studio whilst talking about his school work.

His father was formerly apprenticed to his grandfather at age 15 and it took him four years before he was permitted to even touch the wheel.

Shinichi studied Social Sciences at University and whilst there he would return during the summer holidays to assist his father. There was an unspoken assumption that he would take on the family business, but he was unsure. It was the move to University that made him realise that he loved being a potter.

At the age of 30 he started formally learning with his father, he found that he didn't need technical vocabulary because he had spent so much time learning by watching that when he started training his hands and head were already in sync.

**“Since my father died my duty is to be transmitter of tradition to the next generation”**

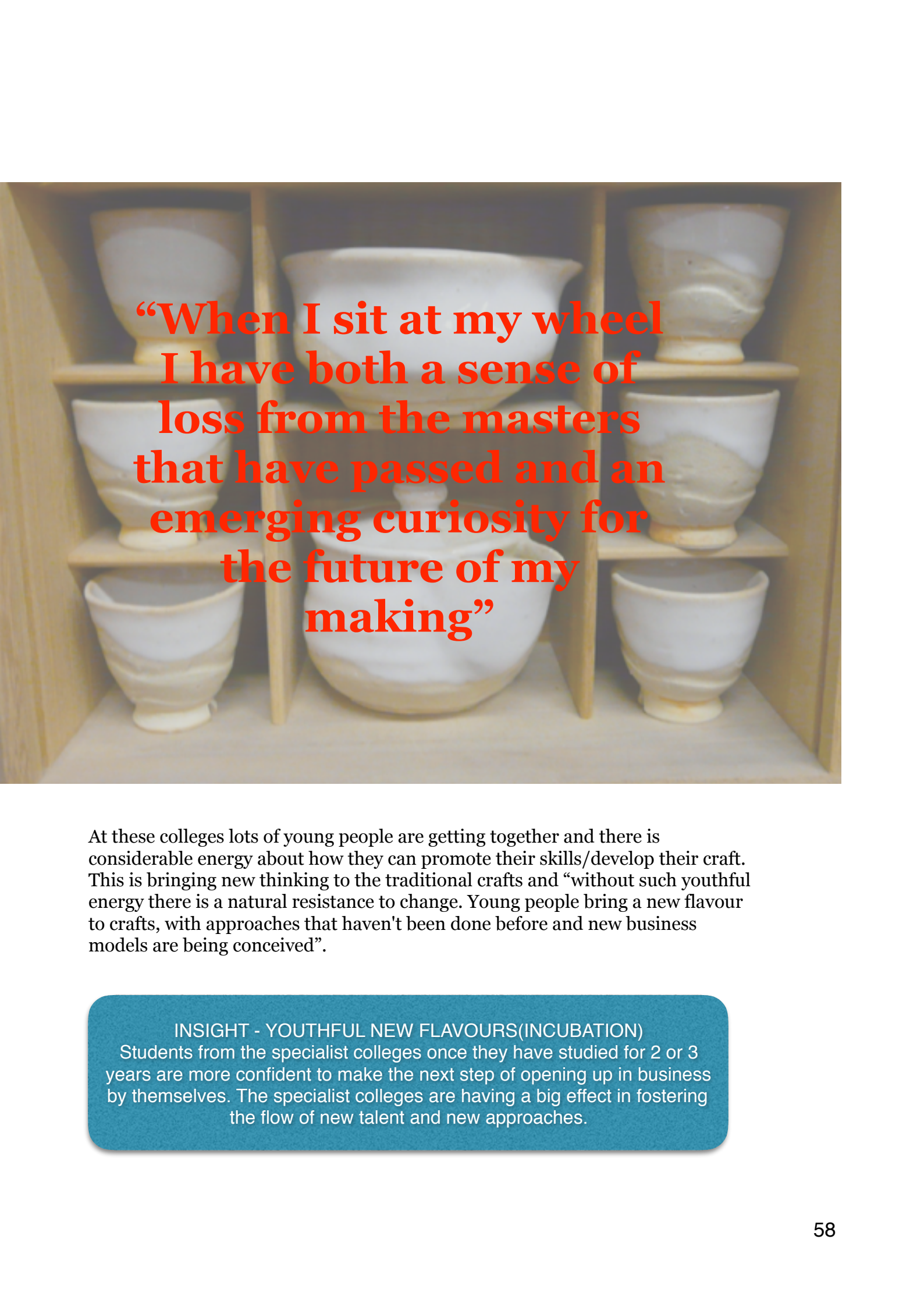
He strives to balance self-expression with tradition, his style evolving through making different objects not just tea bowls and tea ceremony objects and experimenting with colours.

**“What is tradition? If I'm making a tea bowl even if it is a traditional design, as I'm making it a sense of self is transmitted to the object....tradition evolving.”**

Shinichi has noticed that very few people are now seeking to become apprenticed in the traditional way. Today potteries can't afford to pay an apprentice. 40 years ago with the economic boom Hagi pottery was selling well and many people came to Hagi and started up potteries. Now the current wave of potters are concerned for their children's future and want them to do other work. (Average annual income in Japan is 4.4m yen (£31k) average potter annual income is 3m yen (£22k).

He is 48 and believes that the average age of potters will continue to grow, together with a reduction in the 80 potters practicing in Hagi by half over the next 10 years.

He believes there is an important role for vocational training colleges. The future of traditional crafts and the picture of the challenges for ceramics is the same across Japan. Those crafts with facilities actively providing places to learn the craft are doing better.



**“When I sit at my wheel  
I have both a sense of  
loss from the masters  
that have passed and an  
emerging curiosity for  
the future of my  
making”**

At these colleges lots of young people are getting together and there is considerable energy about how they can promote their skills/develop their craft. This is bringing new thinking to the traditional crafts and “without such youthful energy there is a natural resistance to change. Young people bring a new flavour to crafts, with approaches that haven't been done before and new business models are being conceived”.

#### INSIGHT - YOUTHFUL NEW FLAVOURS(INCUBATION)

Students from the specialist colleges once they have studied for 2 or 3 years are more confident to make the next step of opening up in business by themselves. The specialist colleges are having a big effect in fostering the flow of new talent and new approaches.



## 8.6 MURASHIMA AKIFUMI

Murashima Akifumi was born and raised in Arita. 400 years ago Arita was the birthplace of porcelain in Japan. The 1868 Paris World Exposition led to the recognition of Arita porcelain by the outside world. Today the annual Arita ceramics fair attracts 1m visitors to a 3-4 km street full of porcelain shops. Arita ware is prestigious but difficult to sell as it's very expensive, as it is costly to produce.

Mr Akifumi's father worked at a prestigious Arita pottery and at 15 (67 years ago) he started at the potters wheel, for 40 years producing pieces at the renowned Fukagawa-Seji pottery, including producing pieces for the last two Emperors and for HRH Elizabeth II's visit to Japan in 1975.

Arita is also home to the Arita College of Ceramics (ACC) which is run by Saga Prefecture and exclusively teaches specialistic knowledge and techniques on porcelain and earthenware. The headmaster is Kakiemon Sakaida XIV, a very famous ceramic artist who has been designated as a living national treasure.

ACC's aim is to have apprentice potters who are craftsmen but it takes a very long time, the training period can be anything between 20-40 years so in the end many of the students become artists and potters.

Mr Akifumi believes his is the last generation who are going to study this long.



He currently has 5 apprentices. One has been working with him for 25 years. They come to his studio twice a week while practicing as a potter the rest of the week. Mr Akifumi makes a distinction between artist and craftsman. He believes artist and potter are current trend words.

**“A craftsman can produce thousands of pieces of porcelain all looking the same. However an artist/potter attitude is to produce unique pieces based on a sense of self and the individuality of the maker - a sense of expression. A craftsperson doesn’t have this approach. The practice is not about personal expression it’s about craftsmanship”.**

In this context, he believes the current status of craftsperson is the lowest part of the hierarchy in society and craftsmanship in Mr Akifumi’s opinion is lessening.

#### INSIGHT: CATCH THEM EARLY

In terms of training and learning techniques Mr Akifumi believes that 12 /13 years is the ideal age to start because then trainees don’t have any experience of bad habits and it’s easier to teach from scratch than a person experienced from something else.







### **8.7 INOUE MICHIHISA**

Ceramics fired in Kyoto is known as Kyo-yaki (Kyoto ware). The first time this word was recorded was in the year 1605. I met Inoue Michihisa at his studio in Kyoto which has been in the family for 3 generations.

He learnt Japanese painting at University, as this was an area his father hadn't studied and he wanted Inoue to bring this to the business. After graduating he studied for a further 2 years at the Kyoto Pottery Training School. Unusually he didn't learn directly from his father, as he had died by the time he graduated so he learnt from studying his father's work and written documents.

Kyoto is a city with a very strong ceramics tradition with clay craft classes part of elementary school learning where it is included as part of 'knowing your city'. Understanding that ceramics is a living craft in Kyoto and continuing to create pottery is important in keeping that tradition alive.



At the end of elementary school when children graduate they make a pot to take home to mark the transition to junior high school. All the potters give their time on a voluntary basis for these classes.

**“Every pottery crafter in this town, we must teach the next generation... that is our fate”**

**“When I enter the wheel room I feel the weight of tradition, this pressure gives me the impetus to focus”**

Every year young craftspersons go into elementary schools. They are given this role by the local neighbourhood association who want children to feel more familiar with the job of ceramics craftspersons. Children are very familiar with the look of Kyoto pottery but crafting opportunities are limited so neighbourhood associations make opportunities 3-4 times a year to learn skills and practice them. Schools and teachers in particular, value this activity highly.

There is a national curriculum requirement at elementary school for 10 year olds to host a traditional tea ceremony tea party. In Kyoto the children are given the opportunity to handle masterpieces valued at 1m yen (£7000) as part of these tea parties.

Within Kyoto there is a successor shortage, as the traditional model of apprenticing oneself to a craftsperson is no longer financially viable. Previously 16-20 year olds would undertake such apprenticeships, now more likely to be a graduate.

Internships have replaced apprenticeships, with students independently learning part time on the job whilst working elsewhere. 3 days with potter (8 hr days but sometimes 10-12 hr days and at times longer in terms of when firing is complete) and 3 days working elsewhere.

This on the job training needs to take place for 5 years at least at which point the internee is considered to be only just beginning to be crafting.

#### INSIGHT: THE NEXT GENERATION

In regard to the current state of crafts in Japan there is still a vibrant appreciation for the arts and traditions. This combined with a recognition that traditional crafts skills are worth protecting and handing down led to an overall confidence amongst the craftspersons I spoke with that young people will come forward to become the next generation but via an evolving new model of self-made internships and apprenticeships.

## Health and Wellbeing

### 8.8 COLLABORO-OHMORI TOKYO

As I arrive at Collaboro-Ohmori at 4.30pm the halls and stairwells of the building are full of the silent bustle of children heading to and from classes.

The former Tokyo elementary school has been converted into an arts rich community centre open from 9am-7pm every day for an age range of 0-18 years. After being invited to watch a traditional dance class we are shown around by Akiko Sugiyama, affectionately known as Sugi-mama.

She studied textiles at University before embarking on a career at Sony. She leads the craft programme at collaboro-ohmori offering sewing, natural dyeing, hatari weaving and cooking.

The programme is truly for all ages. Sufi-Mama gave an example of a dyeing workshop working with natural dyes made from sunflower petals and loquat leaves, involving babies aged 18 months.

#### **“The babies loved it stomping the fabric into the dye with their feet”**

A recent weaving project involved 3 year olds. The centres’ weaving loom was actually found on the street next to a primary school where they had deposited it for rubbish collection. The emphasis is on practical skills. The dyeing that takes place is based on the principle of zero waste using natural dyes to reinvigorate old clothing.

#### INSIGHT - NEVER TOO YOUNG

The opportunity for children and their parents to purposefully make by rejuvenating old clothing using natural dyes provides a powerful reminder that age truly is no barrier to starting making with a purpose.

### 8.9 HAGI HAKUSUI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

We were invited to the school as a family to meet the Headteacher and students who had taken part in the annual pottery experience. First off we met the headteacher Mr Tanaka Hirofumi where he showed us the taketonbo a traditional Japanese toy made by students, consisting of a short bamboo or wooden dowel with a propeller affixed to one end, that flies when the dowel is spun and released. Much merriment ensued as he invited us to have a go flying them around his office.



Bamboo is a ubiquitous plant locally being much used for basketry making and featured in the schools emblem. Fresh bamboo shoots, are considered a highly nutritious springtime delicacy. 6th graders pick the shoots from nearby forests which are then used in school lunches.

Mr Hirofumi described how the school curriculum is inspired by nature, seeking opportunities to connect with the other than human world.



Finding materials from time spent in the forests and bringing these back to work with in class, learning new techniques and skills.

Within school across all ages children have the opportunity to work with clay both hand forming and using the wheel. The transition from kindegarden/ nursery to Class 1(reception) is marked by making a commemorative piece in clay for the students to take home.

The students we met were aged 6 and 7 and the level of proficiency was striking.



Fresh from their pottery experience they spoke eloquently about their pieces, the design idea and bringing it to fruition. The impact of the experience was clearly visible on the students. Their faces lit up as they talked about how their ideas for making were translated to the finished piece and how they had overcome

difficulties in the construction to reach the final piece to their satisfaction. They were all keen to continue having more hands on making.



#### INSIGHT - HANDS ON

From our meeting it was clear to see the impact that working with a craftsperson had had on the children and how they had responded to the making opportunity.

The school has embraced Hagi's pottery traditions and natural landscape as a learning environment. Providing opportunities to enable children, to savour the joy of creating with local materials

#### INSIGHT - MINDFULNESS

At elementary and high school arts and crafts is taught for children's mindfulness, to enjoy self expression and for character formation.

It is not considered important to learn techniques. Instead the focus is on learning about and describing emotions i.e draw your emotion using colours and formative play making.

The focus is on active learning and reflection on feelings.





### **8.10 MIKIO UCHIMURA**

Mikio Uchimura was born in Hagi. Now in his mid-60's he didn't have any pottery classes at school, but his family collected pottery pieces so he was able to experience it at home.

He studied Engineering at University at a time when there was focus on radical thinking with encouragement to try out other areas of study such as sociology. He graduated with an engineering degree and for 2 years worked in an office, then at the age of 24 he decided he wanted to become a potter.



He moved to Bizen to study Bizen-yaki at the specialist college and work part time at the pottery there. Here he was exposed to a range of techniques and skills taught by a range of craftspeople.

He then returned to Hagi where he met a ceramics professor from Yamaguchi University who taught him for free and learned how to appreciate a western perspective and aesthetic in pottery. He apprenticed for 10 years before opening his own studio.

**“I was born and raised where craft is important. Appreciating a piece... is you and your heart having a conversation”**

In relation to the current issues in Japan regarding the training of the next generation. Mr Uchimura recognised the issue of lower income as a significant one in affecting parents consideration of whether they support their children's wish to proceed down the craft route.

Whilst crafts is certainly not considered as the same level as an office profession he does not believe it is particularly hard to make a living as he has sent 3 children to University.

A bigger issue is that in the convention of contemporary Japanese society it is still seen as slightly odd to do what you like in terms of a career path.

**“Study your passion by all means but get a proper job in something else”**

**“It's important school offers you the opportunity to experience a lot because you don't know what you are going to be good at”**

The Japanese school system provides for this in the curriculum. Children at school create objects both to be appreciated at home but also as practical pieces for everyday use.

#### INSIGHT - ENCOURAGING SELF EXPRESSION AND PLAY

Government education policy still offers students time and freedom within the education system to have space to think, to self express, to develop creativity through compulsory arts and crafts timetabling.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

**“Young people have so little experience of craft skills that they struggle with anything practical. It is a concern of mine and my scientific colleagues that whereas in the past you could make the assumption that students would leave school able to do certain practical things - cutting things out, making things - that is no longer the case.**

**It is important and an increasingly urgent issue with medical students having high academic grades, yet they cannot cut or sew.”**

Roger Kneebone, Professor of surgical education at Imperial College, London.

### **Cultural Heritage**

‘Cultural heritage includes many different things from the past that communities value and want to pass on to future generations’. (British Council)

In both India and Japan many of the artisans and craftspersons I met had a strong ongoing relationship with nature epitomised by the traditions of ritual and ceremony in both cultures. Indeed for many Japanese people there is still a magnified and ongoing relationship to nature.

Historically across the UK, India and Japan craftspersons used local materials developed in an effort of ingenuity across the seasons and with an artfulness which epitomised local identity and cultural traditions. In the UK we have lost this connection to our cultural heritage, to place and people, to the detriment of personal identity and social cohesion.

Cultural heritage is directly linked to economic prosperity– for example, cultural industries and tourism, traditional livelihoods, micro-enterprises and the development of cultural infrastructure and institutions. Cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, can cover many areas, from the built environment through to cultural traditions and knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.

### **Social Enterprise**

In India I visited a number of projects applying business solutions to social problems, through developing self sustaining business models supporting the most excluded people. Providing training and employment opportunities, retaining and reinvesting profits into the local economy.

These social enterprise businesses, with primarily social or environmental objectives were created to solve community based problems. Focussed upon developing making skills as a way to innovate and experiment around craft enterprise and to help develop the self confidence of local people, sustainable livelihoods and contribute significantly to local identity.

## Health and Wellbeing

“The arts, creativity and the imagination are agents of wellness. They help keep the individual resilient, aid recovery and foster a flourishing society” (Cultural Health and Wellbeing Alliance 2018)

Absorption in rhythmic, repetitive movements characteristic of many craft activities not only occupies and distracts the brain, but has also been clinically proven to raise levels of the mood-enhancing chemical serotonin, whilst inducing the relaxation and ‘mindfulness’ more often associated with meditation. (Craft and Wellbeing Dr K Yair 2011)

Research on craft education in Finland has identified that craft provides 1) cognitive development in several dimensions, 2) learning about living in the world, 3) understanding of local and national traditions and culture, 4) social and individual growth, and 5) a break from the demands of academic subjects (Craft Education in Finland: Definitions, Rationales and the Future Elizabeth Garber 2003)

‘Culture brings huge benefits by providing better quality of life and wellbeing within local communities. We want communities to consider how culture could be central to their plans for wellbeing, for regeneration and for economic growth’ (UK Culture White Paper 2016)

## Technical training

Through Japanese craft subjects in schools children and young people develop an appreciation of the way in which objects around them are made and the quality of materials.

There is no lowering of standards in the technical quality of the crafts being taught and attempted and yet there is great latitude and reception - doing the best one can in the process of trying to accomplish the task. The Japanese approach is one of encouraging an attitude of exploratory play, an open, low stress approach to making.

Currently in the UK and to an increasing extent in India and Japan, strong traditions of handcraft education in the general education of children are struggling to survive. In England, craft education is particularly endangered, the current focus of the government on Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) and literacy targets and strategies, combined with the devaluation of crafts relegate craft education to a nonessential position.

Somewhere down the line in the UK, India and Japan we seem to have lost a balanced approach to promote, pursue and reward the vocational aspects of learning by doing. This was one of the main tenets of Gandhi’s concept of craft-centric education that seems to find an echo in present initiatives at skill development and vocationalisation of school education in India. Mahatma Gandhi had emphasised that handicrafts should be taught “**not merely for production work but for developing intellect of the pupils.**” This idea has been implemented in Indian schools as Socially Useful and Productive Work.



Pupils cannot be expected to magically have skills in place, ready for secondary school challenges, if they've not had rich experiences at primary school. Creative skills, like everything, take experience and practise to develop and mature. Even the most naturally gifted need to develop their creative thinking and expressive skills to truly reach their potential.

There is the potential of significant blended value accruing from the interdependence of cultural heritage, enterprise, health and wellbeing and technical training discovered during the Fellowship.

When people engage with, learn from, value and promote their **cultural heritage**, it contributes to both social and economic prosperity.

**Enterprise** supports community by providing **training** and employment opportunities and fostering the development of sustainable livelihoods.

Creativity in the form of making enhances individual and social growth enhancing the **health and wellbeing** of the individual in society.

Crafts are a fundamental element of cultural heritage and enterprise is an intrinsic element of cultural identity. Which combined with a creative education promotes health and well-being and technical skills acquisition.

A focus on crafts offers a fusion of cultural heritage, enterprise, health and well-being and technical training. A virtuous circle of action and interaction. An inclusive way of working, that engages individuals and communities in their heritage and supports positive change for all levels of society.

**We have a choice. De-skilling through monotonous learning or a future based on skilling for the future through creativity.**

There is a pressing need to reconfigure primary and secondary education to meet both the wellbeing requirements of students and the demands of society and economy. Fostering an approach based on the development of practical skills and self-expression to ensure academic excellence and theoretical knowledge is more balanced with practical exposure and applied learning.

Learning from Japan and India offers the opportunity to rectify the current imbalance in our education system, the potential of instilling a new hybrid vigour, fostering a culture of exploration and expression with regard to children and young people's creativity from 0-25 years of age. Starting at primary school with a holistic, blended approach to making that fosters children and young peoples health and wellbeing, technical expertise and enterprise, inspiring a new future for contemporary crafts in the UK.

**Whatever we are striving for in the  
education and careers of  
our young people  
in the UK.**

**Subjects like design and technology,  
music, art and drama are  
vitally important for children to  
develop imagination and  
resourcefulness,  
resilience, problem-solving,  
team-working and technical skills.**

**These are the skills which will enable  
young people to navigate the changing  
workplace of the future and stay ahead  
of the robots.**

**We need to be fostering a new  
generation of makers being true to  
their creativity.**

## 10. INVITATIONS - A call to action

I have chosen to offer invitations (a situation or action that tempts someone to do something or makes a particular outcome likely) rather than make recommendations (a suggestion or proposal as to the best course of action) because it would be presumptuous of me to believe that I know the best course of action in regard to the complexity of the current operating environment for traditional crafts, craft education, skills development and enterprise.

Rather I seek to use these invitations, drawn from the insights gained during my field research, both as a provocation and an encouragement to effect change across the cultural heritage, social enterprise, technical training and health and wellbeing agendas.

These invitations reflect the crucial nature of the interplay and interdependence of these 4 areas in cultivating change around craftspersonship and learning.

An invitation to an alliance of the willing to come together **to experiment, to prototype new ideas and to effect change locally**. A call to action to children and young people, teachers, parents, craftspersons, researchers, environmentalists, businesses, public bodies, institutions, designers, artists, entrepreneurs and agencies to work together to develop a contemporary, fit for purpose primary and secondary education based on self expression and practical skills development.

Promoting contemporary crafts practice as a source of sustainability and to celebrate the past in today's evolving world. Supporting students wellbeing through sustained making and phenomenon based learning. An approach that is intertwined with new forms of local working across cultural heritage, education, crafts and enterprise. Offering a creative environment for learning allied to creativity in the individual.

## Invitations

### A. Cultural Heritage - Protecting the intangible

1. **Use and develop** traditional crafts knowledge and skills. It is the new that gives craft the relevancy for that continuum of tradition.
2. Explore how a desire to create beautiful things can align with a mission to promote local cultural heritage, **community and traditional craft practice**.

### B. Craft enterprise - contributing to sustainable livelihoods

3. Commit to **sustainable livelihood** development and sustained engagement to address issues of low pay, exploitative practice and gender inequality.



4. Explore how **social enterprise** approaches can support the development of a new generation of craftspersons. Shape **business support** to ensure it builds individual capacity and promotes entrepreneurialism. Combining **traditional crafts skills** and knowledge with business skills

### **C. Health and Wellbeing - a role for making and nature connection**

5. Experiment with opportunities for **early years children and their parents** to purposefully make. Start young and determine the outcomes and impacts.

6. Offer students time and freedom within the education system to have space to think, to self express, to develop creativity through compulsory arts and crafts timetabling. Research the impact of creating opportunities that enable children to savour the **joy of creating** while bringing their sensitivity into play.

7. **Take time** to understand and support the inter-connectedness between maker, material and ecology. Connecting with nature offers the opportunity to understand the material world more deeply.

8. Explore how arts and crafts can **support children and young people's mindfulness**. Learning about and describing ones emotions, enjoying self expression and reflecting on feelings.

### **D. Technical training - Creating successors to the current generation**

9. **Catch them early**. Support 12-13 years+ young people to develop self made internships to challenge the misconceptions from parents and schools that arts and crafts is a non- viable career path. Evolve new and innovative educational programmes for young people to develop entrepreneurship through the use and development of craft skills, including upskilling non-specialist teachers.

10. Explore how the increasing gaps in UK **D&T provision** at school and college could be addressed through work based, live project and skills based learning approaches for children and young people working with specialist craftspersons.

11. Experiment with new approaches for **technical training** and transitional programmes to bring through the next generation of craftspersons. How might specialist craft colleges foster the flow of new talent, innovation and enterprise?

12. **Work holistically** to create a curriculum for craftspersons focussed on marketing, business skills and collaborative working.

13. **Gifts and needs**. Foster the gifting of time by craftspersons, parents and teachers to children and young people inside and outside school to develop collaboration, self-expression, creativity and control.

“Crafts don’t belong to the past, every artefact created today shines with vibrancy so that when we buy handcrafted products, when we interact with craftspeople and work closely with them or we simply appreciate the crafts....they remind us what is bright and good in all of us and the truth we carry in our hearts”.

**“Crafts brings us closer to ourselves and to each other”**

Sushma Iyengar Founder Kutch Mahila Vikas Sanghathan  
Rural women empowerment NGO.

## **11. PERSONAL IMPACT**

The Winston Churchill Fellowship and my time spent in Japan and India has provided me with a unique opportunity to reflect on my role as a Relationship Manager with Arts Council England, as a parent and as an artist.

It has inspired me to consider how I can take forward the learning gained during my time in India and Japan looking at where the new, the innovative and the traditional can work side by side to offer new opportunities for inclusive creative practice in the field of crafts. Across enterprise, health and wellbeing and technical training adding new layers in new times, in new ways.

### **11.1 Relationship Manager - Creativity in Education**

I care about every child having access to an abundant range of creative experiences. The Winston Churchill Fellowship offers opportunities to catalyse new thinking and activity about the importance of and opportunities for craft learning and to develop new relationships between craftspeople and craft development organisations across the South West and internationally.

**ACTION:** My objective is to synergise the Fellowship learning in my ACE role going forward. Enabling local and networked innovation in regard to practical skills development and enterprise.

- To foster and facilitate ongoing exchange, dialogue and knowledge transfer in regard to craft progression and skills development.
- To support the development of new multi-disciplinary and cross-sector partnerships and networks promoting crafts.

### **11.2 Parent - Craft centric learning: A foundation in hand-skills**

As a parent of 9, 13 and 19 year olds, I believe that the current educational focus on academic excellence and theoretical knowledge, evidenced in India and Japan as well as here in the UK is to the detriment of the development of practical skills, self expression and wellbeing in children.

Instead a holistic, making education that engages children through skills such as clay work, sewing, woodworking and weaving, has the potential to rectify the current imbalance in our education system, back towards learning by doing, a respect for manual skills and work integrated learning.

**ACTION:** Support self-expression and the practical skills offer in schools.

- Meet with head teachers to support them to integrate creativity into every day learning, so that skills can be nurtured and developed.
- Work with my son's primary and secondary schools to explore how creativity and practical skills can be embedded in their education.



### 11.3 Artist - Being connected with the land

Knowledge is not created by encounters with concepts but rather through our own practical observational relationship with things and beings. Clay, wood, stone, metals, glass. New use of materials has always created new ways of thinking which in turn offer new possibilities for thought and innovation.

Making engages with the flows and transformations of materials and offers a deep connection with place. I'm particularly interested in wood as a material. I love being with trees, making with wood and handling wooden objects. With the movement of making and the act of improvisation one finds new ways which can foster new connections and relationships with materials, beings and ourselves and a keen connection with what is going on around us.

I believe we have moved away from developing making skills as part of the skill set for children and young people and also connection with our native woods. This gap needs to be addressed through learning by doing and re-engaging with nature through making.

Handicrafts are, by definition, 'made by hand' using simple energy efficient tools, with minimum environmental impact and a low carbon footprint, using locally available natural raw material.

As an artist I want to explore how local traditions around greenwood working and coppice management can offer insight and best practice in regard to promoting woodcraft awareness and the passing on of skills to the next generation of makers.

**ACTION:** Old Skills New Ways programme

In September 2018 I began Old Skills New Ways as an 18 month action research project which focusses on trees, wood and the skills associated with the 600 year old tradition of coppicing.

Enabling primary and secondary school children from a range of backgrounds and abilities to work on a foundation in woodcraft with master craftspersons to taste the wonders of what our local woodlands have to offer. Creating green woodwork products using traditional making processes. Connecting with nature, learning new practical skills and developing their confidence and self expression.

I have developed this project as a response to the current deficit in craft learning and to pilot how local schools might embrace craft in their curriculum. The activities support the creation of new works by students and enable progression for students over the course of the project. Combined with opportunities for enterprise learning and intergenerational skills exchange with master craftspersons.

“We need a radical rethink of our education system.

Our schools have become an academic sorting machine celebrating a narrow range of academic and memorisation skills, but neglecting other talents, be they creative, practical or vocational.”

Lee Elliot Major, Chief Executive of the Sutton Trust.

## 12. List of Photographs

Page no.	Location	Description
1.	Coonoor and Hagi	Temple statue in India and shrine figures in Japan
4.	Bagru, Rajasthan	Author with woodblock carver
5.	Finland	Design and Craft class
9.	UK/Goa, India	Potters Wheel Waldorf/Carpenter
11.	Adas, Gujarat	Tailors Shop
13.	Goa/Karnataka, India	Carpenter/Basketmaker
14.	Jaipur, India	Student using handloom at IICD
16.	Bhuj, Gujarat	Hand stitching at Shrujan
17.	Bhuj	Printing and tailoring departments at Shrujan
21.	Bagru, Rajasthan	Dheeraj at his washing and dyeing unit
22.	Bagru	Woodcarver
23.	Bagru	Dabu printer
24.	Bagru	Dabu printers
27.	Jaipur, Rajasthan	Saksham Centre
28.	Jaipur	Women in class at Saksham
29.	Jaipur	Women sewing at Saksham
31.	Varkala, Kerala	SISP bag
33.	Varkala	SISP bag making
35.	Kovalam, Kerala	Chandrakanta Arts
36.	Jaipur	Poster at IICD
38.	Jaipur	Student work
39.	Bangalore, Karnataka	Sandilya Theuerkauf in his classroom
43.	Tokyo, Japan	Pottery demonstration at Aoyoma Square
45.	Tokyo	Kokeshi Doll display Aoyoma Square
48.	Hagi, Japan	Hakusui Elementary school, display board
49.	Hagi	Matcha tea bowl
50.	Imbe	Kimura family kiln in action
52.	Imbe	Cart for anywhere tea
53.	Imbe	Cart for anywhere tea
55.	Hagi	Kaneko Nobuhiko -Tea ceremony display
58.	Hagi	Shinichi Tamamura -Tea ceremony collection
59.	Arita	Murashima Akifumi in his studio
60.	Arita	Turned bowls in the stAkifuma
61.	Kyoto	Inoue Michihisa
64.	Hagi	Taketonbo
65.	Hagi	Hakusui Elementary school students with their work
66.	Hagi	Tea bowl, Hakusui Elementary school
67.	Hagi	Mikio Uchimura