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Craft labour, entrepreneurialism and social class in contemporary Australia

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Introduction

The choice to dedicate one's life and work to craft practice is an inherently political decision. This is especially the case within neoliberalized Global North economies, such as Australia. As D Wood has previously argued, 'the very fact of making a thing by hand is political because handcraft runs counter to the hegemonic industrially made, mass-produced environment that pertains today'.[1] Craft is inefficient, expensive and it tends to resist capitalistic expansion and 'scaling-up'.[2] It can be seen to represent a political determination to operate in ways that are slower, more ethical and environmentally responsible. From this viewpoint, the commitment to labour in craft is a refusal to capitulate to the dominance of contemporary capitalist modes of production, driven as they are by capital's expansive need to exploit, produce, consume and discard. In this way, Wood notes, 'craft represents an alternative economic and ontological paradigm', a political alternative.[3] This is an ethos that many Australian craftspeople understandably seek to define themselves by. It is a satisfying thing, to declare that your practice politically separates you from the destructive grind of neoliberal capitalism.

Things are, however, not quite that simple. The uncomfortable reality is that craft, unavoidably, exists in the market, and craftspeople still need to pay the rent. Try as we might, it is virtually impossible to avoid the social and economic systems within which we are embedded. This, in part, is what makes the ethical commitment to craft a complex and often compromised path for craft practitioners. In everyday life, craftspeople grapple with the very personal problem of where one's political subject position meets matters of livelihood and survival.

The tensions between personal ethics and economic reality are often experienced by craftspeople as highly individualized struggles. Many craftspeople feel they must face these challenges alone, or in isolated family units. But such challenges and tensions are collectively experienced by a great many practitioners.[4] Precarity, individualization, exploitation and alienation are features that almost all craftspeople (and culture workers more broadly) experience at various stages of their lives.[5] These experiences are often combined with a decrease in organized forms of collective solidarity (e.g. lower union membership, fewer craft guilds), and a decrease in social-welfare support structures (associated with neoliberal policies of austerity).

Accordingly, to be a craftsperson in the twenty-first century can be an atomizing experience, as if one does not quite fit into their own time. Inconsistencies abound: craftspeople's products are at once in demand as desirable bespoke commodities, many trade skills are widely understood to be in national shortage, and yet, simultaneously, the income afforded from craft labour is often meagre and insecure. While the cost of living is currently a significant concern for many, for craftspeople specifically, expenses are considerable and wide-ranging. These include the costs of studio or workshop space, specialist materials, tools and equipment, online marketing and sales platforms, insurance and large amounts of labour time. The need to cover these costs leads to the question of income: where does it come from? From a job? If so, what job? Within craft or in another sector? If not a job, then what about a small business? I will address the implications of some of these questions further on.

This chapter treads – lightly I hope – into some uncomfortable spaces for craftspeople, sitting somewhere between craft's various political ideals and economic realities. In writing this, I have two objectives. The first is to stimulate more candid conversations about how contemporary craftspeople wrestle with these political–economic complexities and contradictions. Secondly, I argue that it is important to situate these struggles in the *relational and economic* context of social class. In being more open about the economic relations of contemporary craft labour, I seek to bring more awareness to these key issues, both for craftspeople and for scholars who analyse craft's social dynamics. For instance: how do the concepts of individualism, entrepreneurialism and

solidarity figure in contemporary craftspeople's labour practices? Where do craftspeople's interests lie? If their interests have become individualized, what other possibilities might there be for collective organization? These questions are evidently connected to issues of social class, but I acknowledge that contemporary craft labour is shaped by other intersectional factors. Education, gender, ethnicity, geographies, generation, bodily ability, care responsibilities – these and other factors play significant roles, today, in shaping the experience of craft labour. It is my hope that discussions such as these might allow us to further reflect on the implications for twenty-first century craft solidarity, in attempts to garner stronger and more inclusive political resistance to the neoliberal status quo.

My use of the term 'craft' refers to both artisanal and industrial craft, in an approach similar to the one applied by cultural industries scholars Susan Luckman and Ash Tower in their comprehensive review of craft skills in Australia.[6] Luckman and Tower attempted to parallel definitional frameworks used by the Crafts Council (UK) with the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZCO), although they note that these classification systems do not map neatly.[7] It was therefore necessary to further define what was meant by 'craft skills' in order to reach useful conclusions. Luckman and Tower emphasized *process*, rather than *product*: 'The mode of interaction with a material is crucial to identifying craft activity'.[8] This process-oriented definition of craft not only captures high manual skill, but also the thinking and knowledge required to bring high quality material objects into being. Such a framework also avoids separating artisanal craft from industrial craft in manufacturing. In practice, there is significant blurring between these categories.

In writing this essay, I draw upon my background of over twelve years of empirical research, which focused on Australian craftspeople, manufacturing tradespeople, designer–makers and vocational and tertiary educators in trades and design. Since 2011 I have conducted oral history interviews, with a particular emphasis on the following trades and crafts: printers (compositors, printing machinists, etc.), engineering patternmakers, artisanal woodworkers, industrial modelmakers, moulders and textile patternmakers. Of the twenty-four most recent oral history interviews that I have conducted (or coordinated), eleven were with business owners, seven were retirees, and only six were employees (wage labourers in craft/trades).[9] Of the past three oral history interview projects I have managed, the interviewees have been aged between 32 and 102 (at the time of interview), from a variety of class and educational backgrounds, also incorporating other points of difference such as gender, geography, ethnicity and diverse political persuasions. Accordingly, while this chapter remains a form of theoretical commentary, it has emerged from years of empirical observation.

When it comes to questions of social class, the interplay between theoretical and empirical analysis is a complex one. As social theorist Greg Noble argues, however, the difficulty of describing class locations need not be framed as a problem to be solved through pure categorization.[10] Rather: 'foregrounding this complexity is especially important if we are to fully understand the intersectional logics of a settler-colonial society such as Australia'.[11] Permeable boundaries between social classes are now a social norm, as people are increasingly thrown into competition with each other amid the maelstrom of neoliberal economic relations.[12]

In the following section I provide some contextualization behind the historical shift towards small-business and sole-trader status for craftspeople. This discussion steps into existing debates about the social class category of the *petty bourgeoisie*. Here I explore the ways in which craft politics maps uncomfortably onto the established politics of the contemporary petty bourgeoisie. In conclusion, I address alternative possibilities for new forms of organizing and collective interests.

Context: economic restructuring and craft jobs

It is not an accident that craftspeople are among some of the lowest paid workers in the Australian economy. A wholesale cultural and economic devaluation of craft labour, vocational education and manual trades has accompanied Australia's process of economic restructuring from the 1980s onwards. The decline of local Australian manufacturing and the underfunding of public education are related political–economic patterns that have had major implications for the viability of industrial and artisanal craft employment. The loss of craft skills and craft jobs in Australia is in no way an inevitable outcome of so-called 'technological progress', but rather, the specific outcome of government policies – since the 1980s – that have encouraged global trade, deregulation, financialization, international tertiary education and raw materials extraction. The encouragement of these areas has been at the expense of sectors such as local Australian manufacturing and technical education, which has had direct implications for the viability of manual trades and artisanal crafts.[13]

Recent research makes clear that in deindustrializing capitalist economies in the Global North, opportunities for reasonably paid craft work – as an *employee* – are increasingly rare.[14] In the contemporary Australian economy, there are very few secure, full-time 'craft jobs', and those that do exist typically command relatively low incomes, with little or no scope for advancement. For craft practitioners to make a basic living from their work, they often must 'cobble together' an existence combining insecure contracts, a micro-business, and

taking on contract work outside the craft sector.[15] Industrial craft occupations in manufacturing – which once provided a secure source of a 'job for life' for tradespeople – are also increasingly casualized and contract-based.[16] Craft education roles in vocational training and the university sector are similarly precarious.

Given the insecurity of these employment options, contemporary craftspeople are far more likely to be small-business owners, contractors, freelancers, micro-business owners and sole-traders, compared to the mid-twentieth century. These forms of self-employment are often seen as the *only* financially viable path, for those who wish to practise their craft or creative making practice intensively (rather than crafting 'on the side' in a wholly unpaid capacity). In 2014, the *Mapping the Australian Craft Sector* report noted: 'Craft practitioners earn low incomes from their professional practice despite acquiring a high level of tertiary qualifications and the high level of interest in crafts from the general public … The vast majority of craft practitioners operate within a small business model, rather than as employees'.[17] A 2010 study estimated that 92 per cent of Australian craftspeople worked freelance or were self-employed.[18] Data from 2021 demonstrated that for 'visual arts and craft professionals', the overwhelming majority were the 'owner manager of unincorporated enterprise without employees'.[19]

In short, craftworkers have become entrepreneurial, even if this shift was not a desirable one. As a wide range of labour sociologists and cultural industries scholars have argued, self-employment in creative fields has many negative sides: it is characterized by insecurity, isolation, self-exploitation, unpaid labour, and an uneven 'playing field' that favours the already-privileged.[20] In addition, there are practical and emotional challenges entailed in this shift, such as the need to develop business skills, and the relentless engagement in self-promotion and marketing.[21]

On the other hand, the move toward self-employment affords flexibility and creative autonomy, factors that understandably have appeal, particularly for those with care responsibilities or other employment commitments, and for those who feel distinctly uncomfortable working in an institution or for 'a boss'.[22] These positive elements are often highlighted as great benefits in what has become a normalized discourse of entrepreneurial success in the creative industries. Entrepreneurialism in cultural work has been encouraged by many Global North governments (such as in Australia and the UK), particularly since the 1990s push towards 'creative industries', as part of broader economic restructuring policies.[23]

This same period has witnessed the increasing visibility of certain kinds of craft activity (particularly aestheticized, nostalgic and urban artisanal crafting), in association with the cultivation of certain craft identities which are largely white and middle class.[24] But while artisanal craft is valued for its contribution to urban renewal, it is simultaneously devalued (or taken for granted) by

governments and educational organizations, for example, by being subject to funding cuts, job losses and course discontinuations.

Shifting class locations

The changing conditions of craft labour make it necessary to re-evaluate the position of the Australian craftsperson vis-à-vis class and political subject positions. Here I urge a return to social class as an analytical tool (but not as a rigid form of labelling). Identifying and analysing the complexities and inconsistencies of class location form an important basis for understanding the politics of craft labour. However, for contemporary Australian craftspeople specifically, the alignment between class position and political subjecthood is often an uneasy fit. Craftspeople may not see themselves fitting into a particular class category, owing to the lived complexity of both craft practice and the nature of economic and cultural class relations.

The move into small business ownership and sole-trader status means that many craftspeople in Australia now sit loosely within the class category of the *petty bourgeoisie*; the broad majority are not part of the 'working class'.[25] By contrast, in the twentieth century, many Australian craftworkers (broadly defined, including women's less recognized craft labour) sat in loosely 'working class' categories. Here I am encompassing both artisanal and industrial craft labour (but note that significant occupational differences exist between these sectors). Speaking generally, the twentieth century in Australia featured strong craft unions, large industrial employers (both public and private), and networks of art schools and technical colleges, as well as Mechanics' Institutes of Arts.

Local manufacturing, publicly owned utilities and public education afforded a variety of industrial craft-related employment options for working class families, and for those more inclined to 'work with their hands'. In manufacturing, the educational framework of the formal apprenticeship played an important role in shaping craft enskilment, at least for some.[26] Apprenticeship (inherited from the United Kingdom), added a formal system for craft training and follow-on employment that functioned extremely well for training working-class *boys*. (Noting, however, that apprenticeships at various historical stages functioned to exclude women, non-white workers and others who did not fit the norm.[27]) By 1960, one person in sixteen of the entire Australian workforce was employed in manufacturing, meaning there was an abundance of opportunities to train and work in (industrial) craft.[28]

For those who laboured in larger companies and state-run industrial organizations, union presence was a key influence in terms of how

industrial craftspeople learned to understand their own labour and skill. Trade unions, craft guilds and professional associations provided an educative function that enabled craftspeople to understand their labour collectively, as part of a production process (where applicable), and to comprehend the power of worker organization. Such organizations engendered workers' consciousness, although it is noted that the levels of solidarity differ, depending on the sector, trade/craft or union/guild in question. Alongside apprenticeships, trade unions and trade schools, there existed a healthy ecosystem in visual arts and artisanal craft training, through both public and private art schools and technical colleges, which together provided a wide variety of opportunities to train in crafts, both via more or less formal routes.[29]

To be clear: not all Australian craftspeople in the twentieth century occupied a straightforward place in the 'working class'. Certainly some did, particularly those who were employees of large public departments or private companies, for instance. Historically, some skilled craftspeople defined themselves as highly skilled artisans, a form of elite within a working-class craft hierarchy (e.g. linotype operators).[30] Further complicating matters is the fact that, in the context of Australian industry throughout the twentieth century, patterns of small businesses in craft and manufacturing were common.[31] All this is to say – Australian craftspeople are not wholly new to the petty bourgeoisie as a class category.

The twenty-first century iteration of craft enterprise, however, differs significantly from this older form of small-business ownership, which tended to be oriented around localized networks and domestic markets. Today's economic context necessitates a far more entrepreneurial, globalized and competitive edge.[32] In stark contrast to craft labour options in the mid-twentieth century, in the contemporary context craftspeople have largely been dislocated and isolated, removed from clearly visible supply chains and often individualized in their relation to the economy. In some cases, craftspeople's relation to the market is reliant on global digital platforms such as Etsy and Instagram, with the attendant imbalanced power dynamics.[33] Their 'competitors' may be large, multinational companies, or something harder to pin down: opaque supply chain producers of nameless brands, producing and exporting cheap 'knock-off' products at extremely low prices, distributed on global network platforms such as eBay, Temu and Amazon.

Revisiting the petty bourgeoisie

Despite this challenging context, some craftspeople are succeeding remarkably well, while many others are struggling. Regardless, the majority

of professional craftspeople now own their own 'means of production' (even if they rarely extract much, if any, profit from this situation). This means that – at least in terms of economic relations – Australian craftspeople are now far more likely to be members of the petty bourgeoisie*,* than to belong to any other social class. This shift in class location is significant, yet is rarely acknowledged in otherwise critical and analytical work about craft labour.

One of the most useful (albeit dated) commentaries on *craftspeople* as members of the petty bourgeoisie comes from Nicos Poulantzas, who noted that interpreting the petty bourgeoisie as a small version of the established bourgeoisie (merchant middle class) is unhelpful:

> The petty bourgeoisie … is not part of the bourgeoisie at all, since it does not exploit, or at least is not chiefly involved in exploiting wage labour. The difference between a craftsman in an artisanal … enterprise, and a small employer who exploits ten workers, is not of the same order as that between the latter and an employer who exploits twenty workers.[34]

(This is also why I find using the anglicization 'petty' more useful than the French 'petite'.) We will return to this lack of worker exploitation in later discussions of contradictory class locations. First, however, let us consider the petty bourgeoisie in the context of the twenty-first century.

In his 2023 book *A Nation of Shopkeepers*, UK class analyst Dan Evans calls for a contemporary re-evaluation of the petty bourgeoisie in the UK.[35] For too long, Evans argues, social analysis has neglected class, giving less attention to materialist and structural contexts. Instead, recent years have seen a strong focus on other factors of 'difference' as the major shapers of identity and experience (e.g. gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, cultural background, etc.). Following Poulantzas and Erik Olin Wright, Evans favours a multiple and relational understanding of class structure and identification, one that incorporates cultural, social, educational, historical *and* materialist/economic dimensions.[36] Economic relations matter, as they determine our class interests. The lack of recent attention given to the petty bourgeoisie has meant, Evans argues, that many have failed to anticipate the petty bourgeoisie's growing size and significant political influence in recent major upheavals in the UK and elsewhere (e.g. Brexit, Trumpism, etc.).[37] The current status quo is not what Poulantzas (and earlier, Karl Marx) predicted. The petty bourgeoisie was anticipated to decline, as it was assumed to be absorbed by large monopoly capital.[38] But under neoliberalism the petty bourgeoisie has in fact grown in size and influence. This is, only in part, an outcome of big capital's efforts to rid itself of the responsibility to employ workers as *employees*, a gig economy strategy. However, this is not the whole picture, as there now exists a culture that valorizes entrepreneurial risk-taking and individual responsibility.

According to Evans, the legacy of this growing petty bourgeoisie is apparent in widespread aspirational interests in libertarian individualism, entrepreneurialism, home ownership, self-commoditization and hyper-consumption. If this sort of definition of petty bourgeois tastes and interests feels uncomfortable to craft readers, this is understandable. Wright reminds us that: 'Actual societies, of course, are never made up of pure modes of production, whether capitalist or other'.[39] The awkwardness of pinning craft labour into class categories should not dissuade us from interrogating craft politics through the lens of class. When we look to individuals' stories, exceptions will invariably arise, and I am not concerned with achieving some kind of pure class location. As noted earlier, the slipperiness of class categories should not necessarily be seen as a problem to be resolved, but, in fact, an important part of understanding the relational and co-constitutive nature of class struggle.[40] It is this ambiguity – the feeling of fitting in a loose social grouping, yet with one's feet in a different economic category – that is worth further interrogating.

Evidently, Australia and the UK differ to a certain extent with regard to class politics, but taken broadly, Evans's work provides some useful reminders. In an Australian context, 'small-L liberalism' has for many decades held political influence, well encapsulated by former Prime Minister John Howard's leveraging of 'Aussie battlers' (which gestured more to small business owners than to the working class).[41] More recently, the voting power of small-business and sole-trader 'tradies' has been openly tapped by conservative politicians as a key battleground for 'swinging' voters in marginal electorates.[42] Evans notes that the *political* persuasions of the petty bourgeoisie can differ strongly from, for example, the professional middle class, who tend to be more vocally 'left wing' and more financially secure.[43] By contrast, the petty bourgeoisie, as a generalized group, tend to be less financially secure, and their interests are often primarily in their own individual (or family) survival. For our purposes, it is worth noting that this rule may not hold neatly when it specifically comes to craftspeople, as discussed in the following section.

Craftspeople and the petty bourgeoisie, an awkward fit

Evans reminds us that: 'The petty bourgeoisie is both a worker and a capitalist. … This was – and remains – necessarily a unique, schizoid experience …. [their] interests are neither purely on the side of labour nor purely on the side of capital'.[44] It is useful to go back to Marx (as Evans does), to further understand this conflict. In 1863 Marx described how:

> The independent peasant or handicraftsman is cut up into two persons. As owner of the means of production he is capitalist; as labourer he is his own wage-labourer. As capitalist he therefore pays himself his wages and draws his profit on his capital; that is to say, he exploits himself as wage-labourer, and pays himself, in the surplus-value, the tribute that labour owes to capital.[45]

The tendency to self-exploit is a useful concept, given the labour-intensive nature of a great deal of craft labour, and the fact that craftspeople regularly under-price their work, because a truly 'fair' price would often make work simply unsalable on the market. In this way, the petty bourgeoisie are often as much a victim of the capitalist system as the worker. The petty bourgeoisie as a class have always suffered hardships and experienced exploitation, but their social relationship to the means of production differs from the wage labourer.

Wright's work on 'contradictory craft locations' is useful in understanding the conflicted status of contemporary petty bourgeoisie craftspeople.[46] Wright draws attention to those in 'simple commodity production' – much craft practice would still fit this description. Because small-scale producers own and control their own productive means (and sometimes pay wages to a small number of other workers, while continuing to themselves undertake labour), their interests are conflicted. In identifying this contradiction, Wright aimed (in the 1970s) to show how the petty bourgeoisie could become allies of the working class, in a wider struggle against capitalist exploitation.

Evans does not dwell specifically on the subject position of craftspeople or artisans, per se. To some extent, craftspeople sit awkwardly in Evans' contemporary characterization of the petty bourgeoisie. While craftspeople are increasingly small business owners (etc.), they may have arrived in that class location reluctantly (as discussed earlier). Their educational background and other cultural contexts may also mean that contemporary craftspeople may have different political preferences compared to their petty bourgeoisie counterparts in other sectors (e.g. they may differ from, for example, real estate agents or fish'n'chip shop owners). It is difficult to generalize, particularly when one is comparing Australia and the UK, and incorporating both artisanal and industrial craftspeople. Suffice to say, despite owning their own means of production, many Australian craftspeople have *very* limited financial power, and often share the (left-leaning) politics of their more privileged, middle-class professional 'allies'. This includes a subtle or more overt mistrust of capitalism, and little desire to 'scale up' production, alongside generally socially progressive views.

There is no single pattern that can be discerned, but there is a shared hesitance – expressed by many craftspeople – to embrace an entrepreneurial approach, as Susan Luckman and Jane Andrew have explored.[47] Some simply 'don't like selling things', finding the commercial and business sides of the work uncomfortable and off-putting. Others may have some acumen for entrepreneurialism, but this is often kept at a suitable small to medium scale. As Luckman (among others) found, craft practitioners often resist, or baulk at, the clichéd Silicon Valley ideal of the heroic creative entrepreneur preferring smaller-scale enterprises where they can maintain creative control and personal connection to their products.[48] Additional benefits include better quality of life, and the ability to choose more ethical and sustainable materials and production methods. Understanding the personal, political and structural nature of these tensions is crucial for how we move forward with supporting the craft sector, particularly at a moment when craft is at a crisis point in terms of generational skill loss.

The tension between the pressure to be 'entrepreneurial' and individuals' personal political beliefs is often a difficult balance, and one that is rarely discussed openly. Even the act of putting a 'true' price on a finely crafted piece can cause stress, let alone hiring an employee to help. It is often easier to give things away than sell them. Many craftspeople have complained to me that if they put a genuine price (reflecting actual labour time) on their work, they would not be taken seriously by buyers. There is a shared frustration that the public does not understand the time, effort and skill required to craft physical objects *well*. This routine undervaluation of craft labour is, in part, a result of consumers being so accustomed to the price points of poorly made, mass-produced items on the global market. Another dimension is a lack of public knowledge about *how* things are made.

There are other frustrations: some practitioners might like to hire workers to help with large orders, but finding skilled craft labour is increasingly difficult. There are uncomfortable decisions to be made: telling an assistant you can no longer afford to hire them; using slightly sub-standard materials due to rising costs; rushing an order because taking the usual time would result in significant losses. For a craftsperson accustomed to making high quality work, these decisions can hurt. Sometimes the decision is a refusal of more orders, given an extensive backlog. Other times, a resolution might be to abandon a much-loved but highly time-consuming making process, because it is simply too expensive to continue producing things in such a manner. Some decisions are prosaic: how many years can I continue to use an Adobe software licence before it is no longer compatible with clients' files? All these decisions rest on compromise. They show us points of tension where class interests confront personal/political values.

Where to from here? Award wages, shared values and collective action

As a loose, disconnected group of sole traders and small business owners (etc.), craftspeople can often feel isolation due to the lack of support structures in the contemporary Australian context. In the case of sole-trader industrial craftspeople, for example, while they may own their means of production, their labour and income may be entirely at the mercy of large, multinational company 'clients', rendering them highly vulnerable. The nature of collectivity in the craft landscape is vastly different, compared to the twentieth century.[49] Craft guilds and other communities of practice continue to exist, but they often represent small, sub-sections of practice and no longer hold any economic power. Right now, such organizations exist largely for social, knowledge-sharing and community-building purposes.

In Australia, a number of unions and organizations have called for the review of modern award wages as they apply to arts and culture workers.[50] Many visual arts and craft workers are not covered by existing modern award wages, for some or all of their labour activities.[51] In a submission to the Fair Work Commission, the ACTU and several unions noted that visual arts and crafts employees in 2023 frequently fall into an ambiguous and often ignored category: they are effectively 'gig workers' who are not employed on a digital platform. Referred to as 'non-digital platform workers', the unions noted that such workers are currently not receiving any attention in gig economy discussions, as they generally do not use an 'app' to find contract work.[52] While calls for award wages for arts and culture workers are a welcome step, given the genuinely self-employed nature of contemporary craft labour, there may be limits to the effectiveness of this strategy.

Another option is for craft practitioners – across a broad spectrum of employment characteristics and class locations – to consciously recognize their interests and harness those that are collective in nature. Rather than looking back to twentieth-century collective forms (e.g. larger unions), it may make more sense to seek to revive eighteenth- and nineteenth-century forms of craft guild solidarity.[53] The 'cottage industry' nature of sole-trader and small-business labour in the twenty-first century bears notable similarities to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Such guilds could combine to standardize rates, and pressure governments with regard to grant funding, educational offerings, at-risk skills and government procurement, etc.

Although, at times, contemporary craftspeople's economic interests may conflict (by virtue of business ownership), there are certainly shared values across the craft sector, both artisanal and industrial. These include a commitment to quality, a deep respect for manual skill, the desire to maintain

and transmit those skills generationally, a widespread commitment to ethical labour principles and environmentally sustainable practices, and a shared mistrust of neoliberal capitalist expansion and corporate dominance. Finally, from a policy perspective: future arts, education and industry policies need to include a recognition that industrial and artisanal craft practitioners are rarely motivated by capitalistic entrepreneurial drives. There is a great deal of value that craft can offer the economy in terms of sophisticated manual skills, genuinely sustainable practices, local production 'know-how', repair capacities and materials knowledge. But while the Australian political class remains fixed in an extractivist, neoliberal mode, those qualities will not be fully appreciated.

Notes

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2 Xin Gu, 'Crafts Community: Physical and Virtual', in *Craft Economies*, eds Susan Luckman and Nicola Thomas (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 17–27.

3 Wood, *Craft is Political*, 2.

4 Nicola Thomas, 'Modernity, Crafts and Guilded Practices', in *Geographies of Making, Craft and Creativity*, eds Laura Price and Harriet Hawkins (London: Routledge, 2020), 60–77.

5 Susan Luckman, 'Craft Entrepreneurialism and Sustainable Scale: Resistance to and Disavowal of the Creative Industries as Champions of Capitalist Growth', *Cultural Trends*, 27, no. 5 (2018): 313–26.

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8 Luckman and Tower, *The Value of Craft Skills*, 24.

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10 Greg Noble, 'Contradictory Locations of Class', in *Class in Australia*, eds Steven Threadgold and Jessica Gerrard (Melbourne: Monash University Press, 2022), 23–39.

11 Ibid., 36.

12 Dan Evans, *A Nation of Shopkeepers* (London: Repeater, 2023).

13 Luckman, 'Craft Entrepreneurialism and Sustainable Scale'.

14 Susan Luckman and Jane Andrew, *Craftspeople and Designer-Makers in the Contemporary Creative Economy* (Cham, CH: Palgrave Macmillan 2020); Luckman, 'Craft Entrepreneurialism and Sustainable Scale'.

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18 David Throsby and Anita Zednik, *Do You Really Expect to Get Paid? An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia* (Sydney: Australia Council for the Arts, 2010). Note: this statistic was focused on artisanal/arts-based craft practitioners and did not include industrial craftspeople.

19 ABS data discussed in: Fair Work Commission, *Discussion Paper Arts and Culture Sector Modern Awards Review 2023–24* (Fair Work Commission, 2023), 87.

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22 Luckman and Andrew, *Craftspeople and Designer-Makers*.

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40 Noble, 'Contradictory Locations of Class'; R. W. Connell and Terry Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1992).

41 Judith Brett, *The Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

42 Matt Wade, 'From Battlers to Basket Weavers: A Guide to Australia's Voter Types', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 May 2022.

43 Evans, *A Nation of Shopkeepers*.

44 Ibid., 102.

45 Karl Marx, 'The Labour of Handicraftsmen and Peasants in Capitalist Society, Theories of Surplus Value', in *Capital Vol IV* (Progress Publishers, 1863).

46 Wright, *Class Counts*.

47 Luckman and Andrew, *Craftspeople and Designer-Makers;* Luckman, 'Craft Entrepreneurialism and Sustainable Scale'; also borne out through my empirical research.

48 Luckman, 'Craft Entrepreneurialism and Sustainable Scale'; Luckman and Andrew, *Craftspeople and Designer-Makers*; Andrew Warren and Chris Gibson, *Surfing Places, Surfboard Makers* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014).

49 The question related to unionized vs. non-unionized craft labour experience is an area in need of more research; however, the following texts offer diverse and useful insights: Jennifer Hambleton, 'Collective Values in an Entrepreneurial World: Imagining Craft Labour in Cultural Work', *Work Organisation, Labour & Globalisation*, 12, no. 1 (2018): 43–61; Andrew Warren, 'Working Culture: The Agency and Employment Experiences of Nonunionized Workers in the Surfboard Industry', *Environment and Planning A*, 46, no. 10 (2014): 2300–16; Kate Oakley, 'Absentee Workers: Representation and Participation in the Cultural Industries', in *Theorizing Cultural Work*, eds Mark Banks, Rosalind Gill and Stephanie Taylor, 56–67.

50 Leya Reid, 'Jobs and Skills Summit: Three Opportunities to Maximise Contribution of Arts and Culture', media release (Sydney: National Association for the Visual Arts, 2022); Joint submission by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance

(MEAA), and Professionals Australia (PA), 'Modern Award Review – Arts and Culture Sector' (2023), in response to: Fair Work Commission, *Discussion Paper*.

51 ACTU, MEAA and PA, 'Modern Award Review'.

52 Ibid., 8.

53 Well described in Brian Merchant, *Blood in the Machine* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2023).