The Practice of ‘Handmade’ in the Contemporary Designer-Maker Marketplaces of Melbourne

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Luise Adams
Bachelor of Arts (Textile Design), RMIT University
Bachelor of Arts, Swinburne University of Technology

School of Fashion and Textiles
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University

October 2018
Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Luise Adams
October 2018
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors for their guidance throughout my studies; namely Dr. Jenny Underwood, Dr. Suzette Worden, Professor Michael Beverland, Dr. Sean Ryan and Dr. Juliette Peers. Each of you have offered pertinent insights and sage advice. In particular I would like to acknowledge the consistent, calm, good humored and unwavering support that Dr. Jenny Underwood has given me throughout this part time journey.

I would also like to acknowledge my market friends and associates who have shared their thoughts, camaraderie and passion for designing and making. In particular my immediate gang, Jenny, Celia and Sarah have been a source of inspiration and joy. And to Jenny I say a special thank you for long conversations about our creative explorations together, the support, friendship and inspiration that you have given me makes this all worthwhile.

I would like to say a big thankyou to my colleagues. Our little discipline of Textile Design is special. We have kept this jewel of knowledge alive and well assisting new generations of creative designers to make their mark on the broader design community, carrying strong values and material knowledge to make better futures. In particular I would like to acknowledge Dr. Patrick Snelling, Emma Lynas, Verity Prideaux, Esther Paleologos, Lisa Carroll, Claire Beale, Jason Cesani, Amy Carr-Bottomley, Georgia Chapman, Jacqui Baxter, Esther Sandler and Emily Wills.

And finally, I would like to say a big thankyou to the unstinting support of my partner William and to my family and friends who have tolerated me living in my head for so long. Without their unconditional love and understanding this outcome would not have been possible!
## Contents

Declaration .......................................................... II  
Acknowledgements ................................................ III  
Contents .............................................................. IV-V  
Abstract ............................................................... 1  
Preface ................................................................. 2-3  
Chapter 1: Introduction ........................................... 4-9  
  My contribution to knowledge ................................ 5  
  My practice and why gift cards? ............................ 6  
  Knowledge and handmade .................................... 7  
  Chapter Summaries .............................................. 8  
Chapter 2: Methodology .......................................... 10-29  
  Practice-based and practice-led research ............... 11  
  Knowledge: my epistemological foundations .......... 13  
  Research Methodology ....................................... 18  
  My Research Methods ....................................... 20  
Chapter 3: My Practice as a Designer-Maker: What I make and how I make 30-59  
  Framing: Designing and Making as a method of research 31  
  Handmade meanings and processes .................... 32  
  Handmade and Tools ......................................... 39  
  Digital Tools .................................................. 41  
  My Practice History – what I make for market ...... 47  
  Designer Makers – the term .............................. 49  
  My definition of Designer-Maker ....................... 51  
  Who are Designer-Makers in this community? ....... 55  
  In Summary ................................................... 58  
Chapter 4: Designer-Maker Marketplace and the’ handmade’ 60-85  
  Opening statements .......................................... 61  
  The Designer-Maker Market Sector ..................... 62  
  What do Designer-Maker-Markets look like? What are the segments? 64  
  1. Large-sized and design-driven ...................... 64  
  2. Local and Values Driven ............................... 66
3. Community and art and craft  
Curating the Message - Authentic Making and Trading  
Curating the Message – The Look  
Curating the Message – The Culture  
What do Designer-Makers stand for and how does what they make express  
their values?  
Contemporary Trading  
In Summary  

Chapter 5: Making and Knowledge: ‘Handmade’ is a Conceptual and Cultural  
Signifier  
1. ‘Microtopia’  
2. ‘The First Hypothesis’  
3. Evolution of Card Designs – transformation through insight of practice  
   a. The Crown vs. The Heart  
   b. Photographic Transformation  
   c. Blended Designs  
4. The Inside Knowledge of Designer-Makers about making by hand  
In Summary  

Chapter 6: Conclusion  
In summary, my contribution to the discourse of ‘handmade’ is threefold  
But will it remain so? What of the future of Designer-Maker markets?  

References  
Image References  
List of Images  
Appendix I  
   Questionnaires, Conversations and Interviews  
Appendix II  
   Summary data relating to ‘The Big Design Market Gazette’ 2012, conducted in 2013  
Appendix III  
   Chronology of Practice (Cards) from Presentation on 4th February 2019  
Appendix IV  
   Selected images from PhD Presentation on 4th February 20
Abstract

The stellar rise of the Designer-Maker marketplace in Melbourne from the early 2000’s has been marked by a growth in the acceptance and appreciation of the validity of design and handmaking, a growing rejection of mass-manufacture and new modes of work. A new generation of practitioners who are rejecting of previous disciplinary monikers have come together under the banner of Designer-Maker. Not only are they handmaking, they are also handmaking in a 21st Century manner, engaging with digital design, digital tools, machinal methods of making, along with communicating through online communities and social media. Further, their handmaking is motivated by value sets such as local, authentic, socially aware, digitally present, experience-based, sustainable, at times nostalgic and rejecting of mass-production. These Designer-Makers have multi-faceted careers, one part of which is set in the Designer-Maker marketplace.

This practice-based research explores the concept of ‘handmade’ using my artefacts (gift cards) as the site for the research set in the Designer-Maker marketplace. I reveal the shifts in my handmaking processes and how all tools and skills including digital engagement are now part of my ‘handmade’ continuum. I also examine my philosophical rationale and aesthetic choices that form part of my practice as it has evolved over time. In a climate of mass production to hand make takes back control and maintains a connection to the knowledge of how to make. Being part of the Designer-Maker community, which aligns itself conceptually and culturally to the concept of ‘handmade’ emphasises these particular value sets, in particular, that knowing how to make is important. The conceptual signifiers are the constellation of aspirational ideas associated the term ‘handmade.’ The cultural signifier is the Designer-Maker marketplace itself, the locus under which these ideas come together and are played out.

Through practice-based inquiry this research reveals the nuanced nature of handmaking as understood by contemporary practitioners and it also offers an inside view of how the performance of artefacts shift and can be recommodified by the environment in which they are set, in this instance the commercial setting of the Designer-Maker marketplace to communicate the values associated with being ‘handmade.’
My research explores the concept of ‘handmade’ within the Designer-Maker marketplace of Melbourne, Australia. In 2010, when I commenced this research part-time, I was curious about the relationship and apparent tensions between hand and digital making methods within the craft-design continuum as experienced within the Designer-Maker market scene. As a Textile Designer selling gift cards in the Designer-Maker marketplace since the mid 2000’s when these markets were in their infancy, I was becoming aware of and questioning what handmade meant. Within this market scene the term ‘handmade’ was a dominant descriptor for objects, yet the use of digital technologies for making were increasingly being used, something that I could see happening in my own practice. Could the use of digital skills associated with new technologies be considered an act of hand making? Does this undermine the use of the term ‘handmade’ within the Designer-Maker marketplace? What is the term ‘handmade’ really about?

In my own design-led practice, I have always embraced new technologies and the development of new skills. While my skills can loosely fall into two sets – hand and digital
skills – they are inextricably entangled with each other. My hand skills support my digital skills, and my digital skills support my hand skills. I always use a combination of both skillsets in every design I do. My hand skills are the traditional ones I learnt through my professional training, a three-year degree in Textile Design. They underpin my practice and include drawing, mark making, painting, collage, paper cutting, pattern repeat design, stitching and sewing. In contrast my digital skills are those I have learnt on the job in industry as a commercial designer, freelancer, small business operator and textile design educator. These digital skills that include Computer Aided Design, paper printing, digital textile printing and laser cutting have over time become as core to my practice as my hand skills. They allow my practice to remain commercially viable, independent, culturally relevant, and importantly have kept me creatively engaged.

So why is it, that when asked to describe my own practice, particularly in relation to making gift cards I privilege ‘being handmade’ above all other descriptors? Are my digital skills just as valuable to me? Do I consider my knowledge as a textile designer only coming from my deep connection to hand making? What about digital making, doesn’t this too provide knowledge? It was these initial questions that motivated me to undertake this practice-based PhD.

This dissertation is a way to disseminate how my practice has evolved and informed my research. It is a way to communicate my knowing as knowledge. The dissertation interweaves discussions of my approach to making through design ideas and processes with images of my creative work, as well as a theoretical positioning, personal reflection and cultural observation of the ‘handmade’, and interviews with participants and organisers of Designer-Maker markets.
This PhD takes a blended practice-based approach to examining the concept of ‘handmade’ set within the Designer-Maker market sector, in Melbourne, Australia. I am a Textile Designer and I design and make gift cards that I have sold in a variety of Designer-Maker markets since 2005. I show that the idea of ‘handmade’ has evolved to be more than made by hand and analogue methods, but rather, equates to a desire to maintain knowledge, specifically about the knowledge of making. As mass manufacturing has distanced us from ‘making’ skillsets and created unsustainable production systems of mass commodification, the desire to know how to make things has become an important value-set within Designer-Maker markets. As Margetts (2015) contends “The reward of making is the opportunity to experience an individual sense of freedom and control in the world”. (p.39)

The aim of this research is to explore and critically examine what ‘handmade’ means in the contemporary Designer-Maker marketplace of Melbourne, Australia. In this research, I have explored how the signifying nature of ‘handmade’ plays out in practice and have considered what the implications of this are for Designer-Makers, market attendees, market organisers and the marketplace itself. This research also offers a longitudinal view of the evolution of the Designer-Maker marketplace in Melbourne from late 2010 to 2018 where shifts in attitudes and practice have been explored through my immersion in and observation of this environment.
My contribution to knowledge is threefold:

1. I provide insight into how the idea of ‘handmade’ has evolved as a conceptual and cultural signifier for values of the marketplace through an examination of the interconnection of artefact, person and place. As a researcher working within the Designer-Maker market scene, I provide a practice-based lens and practitioner’s perspective to build upon knowledge that considers theoretical understandings of how the concept of ‘handmade’ operates. In particular I draw and link my practice to the work of Luckman (2015), who considers the signifying nature of handmade along with the economic interface of craft with creativity and entrepreneurialism and to the work of Kopytoff (1986) and Epp & Price (2009) who investigate the notion of biography in relation to ‘things’ and the process of commodification. I extend this further offering insider perspectives that show how Designer-Makers build multi-faceted careers, one arm of which is the Designer-Maker marketplace. Refer to Chapters 2 and 4.

2. I provide insight into how design-led making practices set within the Designer-Maker market scene have evolved. I reveal how my hand and digital skills come together to create a ‘handmade’ artefact that reflects and responds to the shifting attitudes and advances in digital design tools collapsing the digital and analogue divide. I also show how post-specialization (the absence of traditional professional delineation) is a feature of this marketplace. I do this through an examination of (i) the artefacts (gift cards) I make, (ii) my practice and how I make my artefacts, and (iii) my participation as a Designer-Maker within Designer-Maker marketplace. Refer to Chapters 2 and 4.

3. I provide insight into the Designer-Maker marketplace of Melbourne, Australia. I reveal the changing nature of this landscape and how the term ‘handmade’ has come to be an important conceptual and cultural signifier reflecting Designer-Maker marketplace participants’ values. As a marketplace that encourages innovation and the incubation of making and trading ideas, I reveal that ‘handmade’ embeds perceived and aspirational values of market participants (for both Designer-Makers, organisers and consumers): be it local, authentic, socially aware, digitally present, experience-based, sustainable, a rejection of mass-production, and at times nostalgic. I do this through my historical involvement with Designer-Maker markets in Melbourne, Australia from 2005 to 2018.
that incorporates (i) my participation and observations as a Designer-Maker in the Designer-Maker market scene, and (ii) qualitative research methods of interviews with stakeholders (organisers and participants) in the Designer-Maker market scene of Melbourne. Refer to Chapters 3 and 4.

My practice and why gift cards?

My practice is manifold in nature. I have been practising as a Textile Designer since 1993. After working commercially in-house, I started my own freelance textile design business in the late 1990's. Along with this I pursued a small art practice allowing me to work outside of the strictures of purely commercial briefs. I continue to design and make gift cards and textile related products, take on freelance Textile Design briefs along with working as a Textile Design academic.

In the mid 2000’s, I began to explore alternative design possibilities that led me to designing and creating small ranges of custom handmade gift cards. I had always liked gift cards and collected them for a period of time and it seemed to me that there was an aesthetic gap in the marketplace. For my PhD, I chose to focus on my gift cards, as a useful device to reveal how I make ‘by hand’, and to show what I attempt to communicate through the process of hand-making. My gift cards also track how handmade practices have shifted in the early 21st century responding to new technologies that have enabled different kinds of hand-making and to shifting consumer attitudes. Practising in the Designer-Maker market scene over an extended period of time gives me a first-hand view of the dynamics of this cultural space from within.

The site for this research, gift cards, might seem a surprising choice. Textile Designers usually focus on fabric outcomes, but in my freelance practice my clients have frequently needed more than fabric designs. Invariably I find myself designing both traditional textile designs along with graphic prints and point-of-sale products such as swing tags and catalogue materials. While creating gift cards grew out of a desire to make something that was more artistically focused the choice also reflected the looseness of my professional practice. As my textile design career evolved to encompass skills and substrates that were not strictly textile-related so too would my creative explorations. Gift cards have provided me with an opportunity to work with small, easily accessible objects that are creatively driven in the
Designer-Maker market context without abandoning my textile design skills. My designs are often pattern rich and I use analogue textile skills such as sewing to enhance them. Perhaps more contentiously, gift cards are generally stigmatized and considered to be of little worth. As West (2010) asserts, the greeting card is viewed as “denigrated cultural form” (p. 362) because of its mass-produced nature. She goes on to say that “consumers put a premium on originality in their self-expression” (p.362-363) which then causes tension for them when they come to buy a gift card because what they are offering to someone is a mass-produced object. She found that consumers “with higher cultural capital seek out cards that either are not mass-produced, such as many cards found in boutiques and art stores, or cards that appear to be distant from the mass market because they have a handmade or handwritten look” (p. 374). Cultural capital is here defined as “not something one has but something one performs, lays claim to and reproduces with each consumer choice or selection” (p. 366-367). My gift cards are created in limited runs. They come in a variety of sizes and they merge digital design skills with analogue handmade details. They are designed to be distinct from the mass-produced alternatives available in mainstream retail environments therefore appealing to those who want something original and handmade in nature. And it is this consumer that can be found in the Designer-Maker marketplace. My gift cards are in fact surprising little packages of design thinking, aesthetics and skills and as such suit the purpose of this research well.

**Knowledge and handmade**

I have learned through making by hand that I acquire knowledge which leads to power and self-determination. Understanding how contemporary hand-making is enacted enhances this knowledge. If as I believe, knowledge is formed through the act of making (Valentine 2011; Lehmann 2012) and is embodied in the objects that we make (Fariello 2004) then to lose touch with how to make objects puts us in danger (Beaven 2013; Charny 2015). If we lose the ability to make, then we lose this knowledge: at the very least, the procedural knowledge. (Niedderer 2009; Lehmann 2012; Juvonen & Ruismaki 2006) In a broader sense knowledge has become capital in the 21st century and is how and what we trade; the ‘Knowledge Economy’ defined as one “in which the production and management of knowledge is a significant component of total output” (A Dictionary of Economics, 2013) has become the centre of ‘making’ action (Wright & Davis 2017; Charny 2015) and in my context this is found through an exploration of the handmade movement in the Designer-Maker market context.
The following five chapters address these questions. I have taken for my research an exploration of contemporary modes of making, the context of Designer-Maker markets in which the research is set, the connectivity of making with knowledge and the consideration of the future of hand-making. Each chapter references aspects of my practice in the form of artefacts, reflections and projects.

Chapter 1: Methodology
This chapter addresses the epistemological and methodological approach I have taken in my research. I position my research as a blended practice-based methodology, bringing together an examination of my practice through my creative outputs, auto-ethnographic methods of personal reflection (autobiography) and cultural observation (ethnography), the latter using qualitative methods in the form of interviews with participants and organisers of Designer-Maker markets. All of these activities have contributed to my thinking and underpin my assertions.

Chapter 2: My Practice as a Designer-Maker: What I make and how I make
This chapter reflects critically on my design practice and how it fits within the Designer-Maker market context. It covers how I express ‘handmade’ ideas through examining the history of my involvement in Designer-Maker markets, the ideas that drive my making, the aesthetic choices I have made, the context in which I have placed my artefacts and the skills I have used, tracking the transitions of my work in keeping with contemporary practice. Throughout the chapter I draw upon personal reflection, designs I have made and questionnaires and interviews I have conducted with Designer-Makers. I conclude by showing how the practice of Designer-Makers has expanded to become multi-platform in nature using various online applications along with diverse career activities which are part of the surrounding spectrum of Designer-Maker markets.

Chapter 3: Designer-Maker Marketplace and the handmade
In this chapter, I discuss the rise of Designer-Maker markets. I outline the growth of Designer-Maker markets, focusing on Melbourne, Australia between 2005 and 2018. I explain the different ‘segments’ within the sector, what they typically contain, what they look like, how they feel and how Designer-Maker’s participate in them. When considering who Designer-
Makers are, I define them through the identification of what they make, their creative and practical methods and how they describe and present themselves along with their products. Within this chapter I draw on interviews with market participants and organisers, the results of questionnaires I conducted in 2011 and 2017, and a study of the Big Design Market conducted in 2013, along with my own personal observations and reflections on the marketplace.

Chapter 4: Making and Knowledge: ‘Handmade’ is a Conceptual and Cultural Signifier
This chapter explores how I find and make knowledge through my practice and how the notion of ‘handmade’ as a signifier has emerged. I ask, how is the concept of ‘handmade’ understood through my practice? To do this I examine two exhibitions and my card making processes.

Firstly (1) I discuss ‘Microtopia’ which was an exhibition I participated in where I examined the contemporary practice of Textile Design. Secondly (2) I provide an analysis of my gift cards that was investigated through an exhibition I held: ‘The First Hypothesis’. This entailed exhibiting my gift cards, paintings of the cards, a film tracking my making processes and subsequent reflections drawn from a focus group discussion I held after the exhibition. Thirdly (3) I provide examples of the evolution of my designs referencing aesthetic choices, skills and tools used. Fourthly (4) and finally I juxtapose the ideas I have developed, with the views expressed by other participants in Designer-Maker markets and the views of Designer-Maker market organisers. It is here that I reinforce the depth of my insider knowledge and demonstrate this through my practice with particular emphasis on my artefacts.

Chapter 5: Conclusion
This chapter sums up my research and reiterates my contribution to the field of design-led making where ‘handmade’ is a signifier for cultural and conceptual values associated with engagement in authentic consumption. I explain how my practice in the setting of the Designer-maker marketplace reveals the shifting ideas and applications for making which preserves knowledge about how to make and I discuss how Designer-maker markets have a role to play by acting as testing grounds for possible futures that include, sharing, multi-skilling, multi-working and digital sophistication.
This chapter addresses the epistemological and methodological approach I have taken in my research. I position my research as a blended practice-based methodology, bringing together an examination of my practice through my creative outputs, auto-ethnographic methods of personal reflection (autobiography) and cultural observation (ethnography), the latter using qualitative methods in the form of interviews with participants and organisers of Designer-Maker markets. (In this research I use the term ‘participant’ to refer to Designer-Maker stallholders.) All of these activities have contributed to my thinking and underpin my assertions. I begin by describing the rationale for taking a Practice-Based approach for my research and follow this with an outline of my epistemological foundations along with describing my context made up of Temporal (early 21st Century), Cultural (Australian/Urban), Social (Values Driven Artisan), and Political (Feminist and Sustainable) frames.

I then detail my blended practice-based approach bringing together the methods of:

a) Artefacts (Gift cards)
b) Auto-ethnographic: Research made up of a combination of (i) practice and personal reflection on practice and (ii) observation and interviews. Together these approaches provide me with a deep understanding of and insight into (1) my design practice, (2) the Design-Maker marketplace, and (3) what ‘handmade’ signifies within the Design-Maker marketplace and for making in the early 21st Century.

Practice-based and practice-led research

This research consists of many layers that support and influence each other. As such I need to acknowledge, understand and critically interrogate each of these layers and how they come together. This includes my creative practice, the academic research methods I have used to form my methodology and my epistemological foundations.

“When research is undertaken through practice, the site of the research is the site of the practice: this is the location where the action takes place. These everyday sites of practices are integral to research enquiry; they provide the context, means and parameters of the study” (Vaughan, 2017, p.12).

At the heart of this research is a Designer-Maker practice. I develop artwork that leads to both commercial and creative product outcomes using my textile design skills in a home-based studio. The artefacts that I create offer an insight into the role of the designer and the dynamic mediation between outward facing commercial realities and inward personal artistic motivations. There is both the commercial interface with the Designer-Maker community that encapsulates professional, technical and creative skills and there is the internal reflective and artistically motivated genesis of imagery that commentates on the world around me.

Overlaying my creative practice has been the development of my academic research, which has sought to bring together my creative exploration and scholarly reflection and actions with the intent to contribute to knowledge. What is the relationship between my practice and my academic research? And how does this relationship contribute to knowledge? Am I undertaking research ‘through’, ‘by’ or ‘for’ creative practice? Am I ‘Practice-Based’ or ‘Practice-Led’? Or do I situate my research between the unclear boundaries drawn between these approaches?
I align myself with Practice-based methodology and refer to Candy (2018) who assists in offering a strongly defined distinction between Practice-Based research and Practice-Led research where, “if the creative artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge, the research is practice-based and if the research leads primarily to new understandings about practice, it is practice-led” (p.64). The work of Milech & Schilo (2009) is also of relevance where they have examined what they identify as three models of the exegesis, namely ‘The Context Model’, ‘The Commentary Model’ and ‘The Research-Question Model’. Proposing ‘The Research-Question Model’ as best practice, they consider that the research question is answered by means of bringing the artefact together with the written work saying, “In this way the two components of the creative or production-based thesis are substantively integrated, [sic] form a whole” (pp. 6-9).

As Bolt (2010) argues “new knowledge in creative arts research can be seen to emerge in the involvement with materials, methods, tools and ideas of practice” (p.31). She expands upon this in a couple of ways. Using the artist David Hockney’s examination of Ingres portraiture she demonstrates that his immersion in practice enables him to ask questions that leads to the discovery of new knowledge of art practices (the use of camera obscura) from “the fourteen hundreds to the nineteenth century (p. 28)”. Examining this notion further she then reflects on her experience of painting landscapes in Kalgoorlie where, because of the extremes of climate “the principles foundational to my art education were no longer of much use to me” (p. 32). She elucidates, saying the, “situated knowledge that emerges through the research process has the potential to be generalized so that it sets wobbling the existing paradigms operating in a discipline” (p. 33). Taking discoveries that arise from practice, can lead to the expansion of knowledge that has the capacity to be generalizable in other contexts, or conversely, that challenges existing generalizations.

Niedderer (2009) offers a viewpoint that emphasizes the importance of tacit knowledge, which arises from creative practice. Most particularly she argues that “the key characteristics of creative practice in art and design is the production of new artefacts” (p.59) as distinct from knowledge production research reliant on written communication. This leads to a focus on the artefact as a site for the consideration of knowledge production. She makes it clear that she considers the artefact to “provide data from which to build knowledge” (p. 65) rather than containing knowledge in itself but most importantly she argues that “where it is
necessary to gain insight into the complexity of a concept, situation, phenomenon or process, and where scientific reduction is unable to provide a sufficiently rich or coherent picture of the subject under investigation” (pp. 65-66), artefacts can offer a way to access this. 

For me, these propositions have resonance. I can relate to being mindful through my practice, which is the site of knowledge production. Materials, methods, tools and ideas along with tacit understandings of working amassed through a long professional career that is evidenced in the artefacts I make drives my investigation forward. It is my professional design practice that forms the backdrop to my research, spanning creative artistic work and commercial practice. The particular focus of my PhD are the gift cards that I design and make for Designer-Maker markets in Melbourne.

Downton (2003) states that, “individuals gain experience in how to design or research through designing and researching. Their learning is ongoing and their knowing is embodied in their doing. Through this doing they advance and extend their knowing of their field and perhaps the total knowledge of the field itself” (p.9). The ‘doing’ for me is designing and making and all that is captured in the continuum from concept through to outcome and the final entry of products (and myself) into the marketplace. All of these acts constitute the research for this dissertation.

Knowledge: my epistemological foundations
This research arises from my personal philosophy, which I call knowledge positions. From an epistemological point of view, I consider my knowledge of life to be contingent. I have an inner world that consists of ideas, motivations, plans and goals and these operationalize and also respond to an external physical world. My world is temporal, cultural, social and political. Temporally I am located in the 21st Century, culturally I am an urban Melbourne-based Australian, socially I am a values-driven designer and politically I am a philosophical socialist. Key discourses that have informed my thinking in these matters come from broader theories of knowledge; how we come to understand the world around us. Four key ideas arising from ‘hermeneutic phenomenology’, ‘post-structuralism’, ‘social semiotics’ and ‘critical realism’ capture my epistemological positioning that help me make sense of my research are described below.
I. I align myself with hermeneutic phenomenology, which values using objective research to analyse human behaviour to reveal subjective perceptions and motivations. This also allows me to consider the broader communities of practice in which I am situated. I relate to Heidegger’s notion of ‘being-in-the-world’, being engaged and ‘concernful’ which aligns with mindful engagement with practice (Bolt, 2014), Merleau-Ponty’s (2014) contention that knowledge arises through connection between the body and the world supports my view that perception cannot be disentangled from action. As Pernecky & Jamal state “…adherents of hermeneutic approaches seek to understand meanings objects hold for the perceiver(s), but they also seek to understand the relationships between them (including tradition, culture, heritage, history, and social settings) (p.1059)”.

II. The post-structuralist work of Jean Baudrillard (Smith, 2010) as it pertains to the notion of ‘Simulacra’ and the ‘Hyperreal’ is particularly relevant for me. One of his four stages of representation states that it is possible for an image or copy of something to exist where no original exists. This has consequences for how I interpret my artefacts (gift cards) as those that can contain the idea of ‘handmade’, and how many of my gift cards are compendiums of ideas about ‘handmade’ and indeed can be multiples (copies) of an original design.

III. The work of social semioticians, O’Toole (1991) and Kress (2006) offer models of unpacking the textual meaning found in language systems that arise from the visual arts.

As O’Toole (1991) states:

“According to this model semiotic codes fulfil [sic] three main functions, communicate three types of meaning:

1) Experiential meaning, relating to the “content” of the world around us;
2) Interpersonal meaning, conveying the nature of the interaction between speaker and hearer, writer and reader, or artist and viewer, as well as some attitudinal slant towards the experiential meaning;
3) Textual meaning, binding together the elements into a coherent “text” and signaling the text’s links with its physical and social context. (p.37)”
Gift cards are sign-laden and sit within social performances (West, 2010), so for me, analysing them is important in relation to message carrying and giving, particularly related to the context in which they are found.

IV. Critical realism offers useful insights particularly in connection to the idea that an external and independent reality is at play along with our internal and created realities and, while we try to make accurate observations about meaning, we are still fallible. (Sayer, 2000) My embeddedness in practice and in the Designer-Maker marketplace is advantageous (Roberts, 1989) however it is a shifting space in which I am located so this is something I need to keep in mind.

To further frame these foundational epistemological alignments, I have four modes through which to examine these ideas.

a) Temporal

This research started with a recognition that something was changing in the dawning years of the 21st Century. History offers perspectives of past learning and skills building; a culmination of what is known at different points in time and place as does the immersion in social and cultural exchange. Grierson & Brierley, (2009) discuss the methodological strategy of utilizing ‘Communities of Practice’ to “enable diverse researchers to find place and purchase for their own creative strategies” [that come] “from a different time, place and lineage” (p.2). Using the historical perspectives offered by theorists from Art, Design, Craft and Cultural Studies has enabled me to frame my thinking about my current time, location and social milieu. This has contributed to the development of my knowledge, opening up insight into my skill sets which have incrementally accrued through acts of designing and making through time. I recognized that when I started my design career in the early 1990’s, making and designing was done differently to the way it works today. The advent of the Internet and sophisticated digital design tools means that engagement with the idea of what is called ‘handmade’ is shifting. In 1993 I started my design working life when hand painting was still a central skill for the Textile Designer and one of my first jobs was to ‘paint up’ design concepts. Around this time the first computers with design software were starting to enter the design workforce and luckily for me the company I worked for were early adopters of the technology. This totally and radically changed the face of professional design.
Fariello & Owen (2004) propose that all tools reflect the times in which they are set and determine, to some extent what is possible to make as an individual or as an organisation. Each century offers its own technology and the objects that arise, paint a picture of what is possible and what is deemed to be valuable. When the Designer-Maker market community began its stellar rise in the early 2000’s, design technology in the form of specialist design software and online forms of communication was certainly present, but now in the late 2010’s it is a central feature and the methods of making along with the products themselves reflect this change.

b) Cultural

As a Melbourne-based designer I am a part of a creative culture. Melbourne has been described as the creative capital of Australia (Shaw, 2014, p.143) and recently a report prepared for the Victorian State Government’s ‘Creative Victoria’ found that “Cultural tourism is worth more than $1 billion to Victoria each year. Outside of visiting family and friends, arts and culture are Melbourne’s biggest and most lucrative tourism drivers.” (Creative Victoria, n.d.) The Boston Consulting Group’s Melbourne as a Global Cultural Destination report also provided evidence that “Melbourne [was] rank[ed] as the number one cultural destination in Australia, number three in the Asia Pacific and number 12 worldwide.” (Creative Victoria, n.d.)

I have always felt that this cultural and creative identity of Melbourne supports my being and working as a designer, where it is considered a worthy profession and is valued and respected in the community. In a broader sense, this support is outwardly celebrated through various annual festivals, arts venues and events along with localized support for the arts. From an institutional standpoint the Australia Council for the Arts Strategic Plan (n.d.) reinforces this view stating that ”The arts can be seen as the research and development arm of culture: artists are experimenting with new ways to look at the human experience” (p.5). My view is that communities who support creativity are part of healthy cultures. Design as a discipline is a problem-solver as much as it is an aesthetic force. Often it is the spearhead that carries change with it, where society begins conversations and seeks to improve itself. As Buchanan (1992) argues, design is a “discipline of practical reasoning and argumentation” where designers integrate “conditions and shapes that are ‘useful’ in human experience” (pp.19-20)
c) Social

The social aspect of my practice relates to the design community of which I am a part. Being part of a diverse community has offered a variety of perspectives about designing and making. Where the agency of objects offered in the Designer-Maker market practice can signal value, so too can the context in which the offerings are made. Acknowledging the ideas of Miller & Preda, Epp and Price (2009) argue, “The objects and persons that constitute a particular network engage in joint processes of knowledge creation, responding to and affecting one another” (p.821). Designers and makers who participate in Designer-Maker markets approach their work in a variety of ways, they use a range of differing tools, make multiple products and present their products to market in individualised ways. Despite these differences, there are values that I consider underpin the network of Designer-Maker communities that differ from the mainstream retail community. This is a theme I discuss in chapters 3 and 4.

d) Political

Through my immersion in Designer-Maker market spaces I have seen how they have become focal points out of which contemporary debates arise related to their existence, management, activities and the expression of materiality. Economics, social media, feminism and sustainability are noticeable in this space. Many Designer-Maker markets also frame themselves around value sets connected to sustainable production, the majority are strongly connected to online capabilities and they all are about selling products along with ideas.

This century’s growing peer-to-peer economy enabled by technology distinguishes itself from the 20th Century where ongoing work in one place might once have been expected. Creative responses have been necessary for new entrants to the workforce and for those with design interests and goals, Designer-Maker markets have been a great entry point. Hand-in-hand with the growth of this economy is how communication and promotion of Designer-Maker market events is managed. Most stallholders need an online presence. Social media is central to the operation of the markets and through its use the value sets of sustainability, the nature of making such as handmade are declared.

The gender of Designer-Maker stallholders is mainly female (in outward appearance). The Big Design Market (The Big Design Market, 2018) which is due to be held in Melbourne on 30
November - 2 December 2018, lists 217 stallholders of which, according to their individual websites 57.6% are female operated businesses and 14.7% are male and female operated businesses. Luckman (2013) examines the rise of “the handmade and craft production” forming “part of a return of broader credibility to previously disparaged women’s craft practices (p.249).” With an emphasis on the enabling opportunities of the Internet and specific focus on the online trading platform Etsy she demonstrates that what had been seen as predominantly diminished, female, amateur and domestic craft activities has altered stating “It is now well established that previously unfashionable women’s crafts such as knitting and crochet have been stripped of their embarrassing ‘nana’ or even outright anti-feminist connotations and in the noughties have become fashionable once more” (p. 255). The growth of the Designer-Maker market sector is a demonstration of a growth in acceptance and appreciation of the validity of design and making in the broader sense where gender does not disadvantage the medium.

Research Methodology

The previous section outlined ‘knowledge’ positions that are the contextual lens through which I have approached my research. On a practical level, in order to bring together examples of my own insights gleaned through the practice of Textile Design and to synthesize and analyse the experience of participation in and observation of the Designer-Maker market sector it has been necessary to develop what I call a blended methodology. I have seen the growth of Designer-Maker markets from an inside perspective and I have come to know other makers and organisers. All of this means that I bring intimate knowledge to the research and by combining it with the broader lens of academic research, I can offer insight into a contemporary understanding how ‘handmade’ is understood in this context.

My way of considering the inward and outward sources of information taken from my practice aligns with the notion of ‘Bricolage’, which has been helpful to clarify this standpoint. Stewart (2010) asserts that “relationships between studio and theory form meaning-rich partnerships” (p.127) and she extends this to include the notion of Bricolage defined for her as “approaches to research that use multiple methodologies” (p.127) where essentially the researcher chooses the necessary tools that fit the purpose of the question.

For Stewart (2010):
“Bricolage is a hybrid practice. It presents an approach that places the researcher’s discourse and practices within another space, between artist and product, producer and audience, theory and practice so that it becomes the space for reflection, contemplation, revelation. The bricoleur is positioned within the borderlands, crossing between time and place, personal practice and practice of others, exploring the history of the discipline and its changing cultural contexts...The bricoleur is seeking to explore, reveal, inform and perhaps inspire by illuminating aspects of insider praxis within their field” (p.128).

In addition to Bricolage I also use the idea of the ‘polyvocal’ drawing on theories from a range of disciplines; not just strictly Design. For me, Burdick et al’s (2012) assertion that a polyvocal approach to the exploration of ideas drawn from multiple disciplines is a necessary foundation for expansion of humanities knowledge, demonstrates contemporary thinking. With the advent of the Internet we can now all learn, get instant access to information and draw knowledge from multiple sources. The idea that “Digital, polyvocal expression can support a genuine multiverse in which no single point of view can claim the centre” (p.24.) refreshingly challenges the tightly held boundaries between academic disciplines. Burdick et al’s (2012) example of the contribution of digital tools to facilitate connectivity between disciplines, literally works where digital tools “allow for polyvocal imagination with an emphasis on making, connecting, interpreting and collaborating” (p.24). Buchanan’s (1992) observation that no common definition for each subsection of design exists, rather each is interested in “the conceptions and planning of the artificial” (p.14) demonstrates a thematic rather than strict disciplinary approach to problem-solving. Seeking perspectives from other (or kindred) schools of knowledge polyvocally enhances knowledge.

For me, a blended approach makes sense. I am embedded in Textile Design’s disciplinary practices which has multiple vested interests and skill bases drawn from and impacting the Art, Craft, and Design disciplines. In addition, Textile Design contributes to and utilises knowledge in the spheres of digital, technical, cultural, anthropological, philosophical, economic and political activities and debates. Multiple conversations arise from the field and contribute to discourses dealing with topics such as the feminist positioning of textiles, new frontiers of fibre and digital technology, the world of sustainability, engagement with social media and fostering social enterprise to name a few.
The practical application of this does have its limits and a need to be responsive to my focus has been important. The framing of this research could have moved in the direction of New Media theory particularly given my interest in the intersections of analogue methods of handmaking and the use of digital processes. For example, Novakovic (2010) has explored her art and its digital intersections and Graham (2010) has examined the tools of practice using New Media theory perspectives. The body of growing research particularly since the advent of the internet in the 1990’s in New Media theory seeks to tease out the impact of digital technologies on all realms of life; from the social to the political. (Hassam & Thomas, 2006). As my research has developed over time, the significance of readings of handmade depending on the context in which handmade artefacts are found has also became apparent. Ultimately, I have chosen to emphasize Cultural Studies commentaries which factor in the idea of ‘community’ more strongly. There is great potential for further research from a New Media perspective. As Hassan and Thomas state; “Deep-level computability transforms how we represent life through the ubiquity of mutable digital imagery; and transforms life through the industries, cultures, and institutions that produce and sustain our sense of being in the world.” (p.2).

My Research Methods

Alvesson & Skoldberg (2009) argue that taking a pluralist approach to the management of research gathering and interpreting by offering, “an element of skepticism and self-criticism with regard to the theoretical frames of reference is fully justified. …By using different theories or different metaphors for the research object, it becomes easier to emphasize and handle multiplicity” (p. 218). In this spirit I have utilised Qualitative/Auto-ethnographic models of enquiry. Here I blend my personal reflections on practice with interviews of key individuals in the same field and most importantly I incorporate an examination of my artefacts. In keeping with the idea of actor-network theory where the “‘actant’ [is] a kind of generalized actor who does not need to be a person but can be an artefact” (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p.32), my research methods open up the possibility of developing mechanical and philosophical lexicons that arise from my acts of making. This provides insight into the proposition that ‘making’ provides a place to problematize and problem solve which in turn responds to the changing landscape of aesthetics and new technologies.
It is possible to see that the modus operandi of Designer-Maker markets is to preserve and/or develop making skills both literally and conceptually. While research into the concept of ‘handmade’ has become a more frequently considered topic in both mainstream and academic literature in the last decade (See Quibell, 2016; Fuchs, Schreier & van Osselaer, 2015; Luckman, 2013 and 2015; Luckman & Thomas, 2018) my research offers a focused representation of what ‘handmade’ signifies through the identification of the processes of making and of the discourse that surrounds making from within this Designer-Maker market environment.

a) Artefacts (Gift Cards)
Robert Bell’s (2002) introduction to the catalogue for the exhibition ‘Material Culture: Aspects of contemporary Australian craft and design’, held at the National Gallery of Australia in 2002, reflects on the work exhibited. He states:

“The objects in Material Culture demonstrate an easy physicality, a sense of lightness, a confidence, a precision and their makers’ pleasure in controlling and manipulating materials. Each object is a theatre for experimentation and interaction where intuition, design and the mastery of skills are a cause for celebration. This is an art that communicates through the head, the heart and the hand” (para, 5).

When I reflected on this I was struck by what Bell saw as the richness of what an object can contain beyond its physical or prosaic intention. The made object is a place for the gathering of ideas, for the expression of emotions and the demonstration of skills. This is not just what the Designer-Maker experiences either, for once the object goes beyond the studio to be either sold or exhibited it has the potential to excite those responses in the purchaser, gift receiver or viewer. It also struck me that these are similar observations I make when either attending or participating in a Designer-Maker market.

The multi-faceted nature of objects (artefacts) that Bell referred to and the understandings he felt the objects communicated, reinforce for me that my made objects (gift cards) are the locus from which imagined possibilities of skill, form and aesthetics can arise and from which I can gain knowledge through my practice. I have used the thinking of Bourriaud (2002) to tease this out further. He sees the role of artworks in our current modernity as “no longer to form imaginary utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever the scale chosen by the artist” (p.13). He sees art as relational, where it
is not simply the expression of an artist’s “private symbolic space” (p.14) but also where, through the image, “linkages” are made which generate “bonds in the viewer” (p.15). Using Karl Marx’s term ‘interstice’, he refers to the social semantic value of artworks that are freed from capitalist economic value and that, in the context of an art exhibition, or as he describes it, the ‘arena of exchange’, there are opportunities for focused sociability, which for him becomes “a founding principle of dialogue” (p.15), the ultimate goal of the artist. While Bourriaud (2002) quite specifically discusses artwork in the gallery context, “Practices stemming from painting and sculpture which come across in the form of an exhibition” (p.15) for me there is a natural connection to the Designer-Maker market context. These markets bring together various designers, artists and craftspeople. It is a curated space, particularly at the large sized design-driven end of the Designer-Maker marketplace and interaction between stallholders and customers are central to their operation. The objects being made and sold in this space are facilitators of the social interstices to which he refers, despite the fact that the commercial nature of the market is dominant. The social and semantic value that he emphasizes is working in parallel in this space.

Artworks according to Bourriaud (2002) are part of the world of “forms” that are “lasting encounters” (p.19). For him “Art keeps together moments of subjectivity associated with singular experiences” which as he goes on to say are “dependent on the historical context” (p.20). It is not difficult to apply this idea to the Designer-Maker artefact even if it is not an art gallery piece. Within the context of my practice I can examine my artefacts in order to understand my subjective experiences in their creation and to gain insight into their role in the interactive space of the marketplace which becomes the catalyst for social dialogue. From a methodological point of view my ideas arise from and rest in my made objects which are foregrounded here as the main reference point for my research.

I have also used the thinking of Valentine (2011) who proposes a methodological paradigm centred on the idea of ‘Mindful Enquiry’ where the craft practitioner is constantly responsive to the effects of “social, political and technological change” (p.283). She refers to Bentz & Shapiro’s concept of ‘Mindful Inquiry’ where “research is intimately linked with the researcher’s awareness of his/her life lifeworld” (p.283) and that “awareness and reflection on your world and the intellectual awareness and reflection that are woven into your research affect – or should affect – one another” (p.285). This proposition is of interest to me as it
acknowledges the outside impacts that effect my creative practice and the internal dialogues that I have within the process of designing and making. In particular how I make and what I make, responds to the marketplace and to my ongoing development of skills and aesthetic interests. This means that I can examine my gift cards as artefacts containing some of this knowledge capturing new ideas, responding to social and cultural issues experimenting with new technology and so on. The examination of the artefacts I produce becomes the place where knowledge is revealed to myself and to others though this mindful enquiry approach.

Niedderer (2009) states “artefacts may be used as both indicators of procedural knowledge gained with the research process and to demonstrate any results of research, in particular in relation to aesthetic or user experience” (p.66). This further reinforces the opportunity to seek what is revealed in the designs and objects I create; to consider things such as the various substrates and creative tools that impact on the works themselves and the intellectual, aesthetic and emotional engagements elicited from the designs and objects. And once the objects meet the world beyond the studio there is the chance for them to reveal themselves and what is vested in them and to test how others engage with them, which ultimately creates a cumulative circle of knowledge.

Finally, there is a kind of natural fit for me in relation to the examination of artefact as part of my research practice. As a Textile Designer I intimately understand the role of textiles as carriers of messages. As Andrew (2008) attests, there is a growing body of work that reflects the semiotic power of textiles in what she terms ‘Textile Semantics’. The historical traditions of Textile Design are replete with examples of illustrative design where conversational prints and genres such as the ‘Toile de Jouy’ literally represent narratives about culture and social relationships. She also provides examples in which political debates are showcased through ‘textile art’ where traditional forms of design are subverted to carry arguments, for instance about peace (p.58), the ironies of class (p.59) and so on. She acknowledges that intended messages created by the artist/designer are not always understood by their audience however she offers Olson’s view, where “there are three factors that influence viewers: “aesthetic responses”: the characteristics of the object; the environment in which the aesthetic response occurs; [and] the characteristics of the consumer themselves” (p.45). This ultimately reinforces the importance of the object as part of the spectrum of research that is
undertaken here. As artefact it is activated in its relation to me (as Designer-Maker) and the
place in which it acts (the Designer-Maker marketplace).

b) Auto-ethnographic Research made up of a combination of: (i) practice and personal
reflection on practice and (ii) interviews and observation
Auto-ethnographic research methodology is made up of the dual processes of personal
reflection (autobiography) and cultural observation (ethnography). I subscribe to this form of
research because as (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011) say it “opens up a wider lens on the world
eschewing some of the previously held rigid definitions of what constitutes meaningful and
useful research” (p.3). They also state that the autobiographic component of such research
needs to be offered in such a way as to “use personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural
experience, and, in so doing, make characteristics of culture familiar for insiders and
outsiders” (p.4). As a result of the many conversations that I have had with Designer-Makers
and others there appears to be a genuine interest in my research so this PhD is an opportunity
to share this research. Pairing written outputs of my research with artefacts becomes an active
and accessible way for such conversations to occur.

Using Sennett’s (2012) proposition, that there are two forms of communication, the dialectic
and the dialogic has offered a way of framing my auto-ethnographic process. He describes
the dialectic/sympathy relationship as one that is concerned with assertion, argument and
the rational in communication and he aligns this with sympathy, the feeling of sorrow for or
of having a feeling of accord. He suggests that sympathy is warmer yet more surface in nature.
By contrast and preferentially, he describes the dialogic/empathy relationship, as one that is
a more open form of communication, concerned with the exchange of ideas and participation
in conversation. This is aligned with empathy, a curious, deep listening and a cooler position
and in this communication, definitive answers are not so important. For me this dialogic
method enables a kind of ‘outside of, looking into’ perspective that is still an immersive
response to enquiry.

i. Practice and personal reflection
This reflective practice which adopts the dialogic and empathic position offers me a way of
thinking about discovery through practice; a way of gaining knowledge and of not trying to
reach definitive answers. A recognition that it is almost impossible to be totally intellectually
engaged or searching for answers when in a practice phase has led to a stronger sense that listening without critique, following instinct, playfulness and curious engagement with tools, has led to a clearer sense of my practice.

In a similar way, Ingold’s anthropological examination of the process of making, broken into incremental steps in his ‘Walking the Plank’ essay (2011), offers a way of thinking to enable my reflective process further. Following his example of thinking about the journey into the nature of making itself, along with the interplay between hand and tool deepens the insights of his forerunner Pye, who explores the minutiae of making processes. Pye’s (1995) identification of makers decisions through in-action commentaries and dialogues of the maker has also been helpful to the extent that I have been able to consider moments of decision-making in my own work.

Both the preparation for design and the execution of design along with my resultant objects, has offered points along the way that I been able to use for the gathering of ideas in my research. Exploring intentions, actions and ideas at the preparatory stage of designing is one part of my practice, like a form of nesting. Connecting them to the performative aspects related to my design goals, the development work, the mood and space creation, the preparation of tools etc. are intellectual and behavioural aspects bound up in making. Ingold (2011) describes these processes as a “getting ready” phase, followed by the point where plans become reality and although a “pencil line can be erased…. an incision made with the blade of a saw cannot be contrived to disappear” (p.54). Understanding these parts of my practice, where the work moves from nesting to transformation or from my perspective; from plan to object, can be used as a model to track the making phases of the artefact’s and to then consider the social and public life beyond the studio.

I have used reflective writing to review my making processes as they have unfolded. I have made a film that captured the various stages of making cards by examining processes, materials and tools. I have diarized my thinking in the build-up to phases of making and the experiences of participating in markets. I have held a solo exhibition interrogating the nature of art, design and values and I have participated in a Textile Design themed exhibition. Along with my personal experiences of immersion in practice and participating in Designer-Maker markets I have also visited a wide range of markets where I have endeavoured to critically
analyse the look and feel of them from a customer point of view using photography and note taking to capture my observations. Reflection through all of these means amplifies the examination of my artefacts in such a way as to open understandings of ‘handmade’ up beyond my own inner understandings.

ii. Interviews and observation
As my practice has a public interface with the Designer-Maker marketplace I needed to incorporate the experiences of others who participate in this environment because object based, personal, reflective and contemplative methods alone are not enough to adequately make holistic assertions beyond what I know for myself. It should also be stated though, that this research is not setting out to conduct formal empirical analysis (for example I did not conduct another larger comparative questionnaire towards the end of my research as a follow up to the one conducted in 2011 - see below), however seeking the views of others who also participate in this environment and testing the ideas of the community that I am investigating has been important in order to gain broader perspectives other than my own in order to avoid overly subjective judgments. The smaller range of activities described in the next paragraph have been conducted as a way of broadening my knowledge from an outside (of me) perspective.

Over the course of my research I conducted (i) 2 questionnaires with Designer-Makers participating in Designer-Maker markets in 2011 (25 respondents) and 2017 (3 respondents), (ii) a study into the motivations/values of Designer-Makers participating in the ‘Big Design Market’ in Melbourne 2013, (160 stallholders biographies examined in the Gazette published for the market (See pages 62 & 72) and (iii) a series of longer recorded interviews with Designer-Makers who participate in Designer-Maker markets and organisers of Designer-Maker Markets in 2016 and 2017. (4 Organisers of Designer-Maker Markets and 6 Designer-Makers representing the market segments identified in this research. (See page 66 for a definition of this). In addition, I have had many informal conversations with Designer-Makers and Designer-Maker market customers. These activities were qualitatively framed and enabled me to draw some conclusions and have served to challenge some of my assumptions. This work is referred to throughout this dissertation.
My experience and participation in the Designer-Maker world positions me well from a phenomenological perspective where a “lifeworld” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p.76) view allows for an awareness about the subtleties and nuances of the Designer-Maker market space. This has aided me to frame questions, and devise ways to summarize the data, particularly for the questionnaire I administered to market participants in 2011 and the study of the Big Design Market conducted in 2013. As Roberts (1989) states “The coder [researcher] must be familiar with both the context in which a statement is made and the cultural universe within which it was intended to have meaning” (p.164).

I am also aware of the need for cautious interpretation of the data gathered. According to Alvesson & Sköldbergs’ (2009) ‘reflective (or reflexive) empirical research’ framework, the importance of “careful interpretation and reflection” (p.9) is foregrounded. For them reflective research captures “as far as possible, a consideration of the perceptual, cognitive, theoretical, linguistic, (inter)textual, political and cultural circumstances that form the backdrop to – as well as impregnate – the interpretations” (p.9).

The questionnaire I undertook in 2011 of 25 participants in a Designer-Maker market was used to support my understanding, test assumptions, and qualitatively validate some of my thinking. While the population size of 25 meant the results could not be considered statistically significant, there was however rich qualitative information that flowed from it. According to Andres (2012) there has been a move away from previous held truisms where “survey research design...[is] grounded solidly in the positivistic paradigm and related notions of objectivity and parsimony”...to an acknowledgement that the world is full of “subjectivities and objectivities” and that “survey research need not be limited to a tight set of rules that limit our ability to capture life as experienced by our respondents” (p.3). This opened up the possibility that despite the statistical failure in outcome, the rich qualitative data could still be considered to have relevance.

The interviews I have conducted have been addressed to both Designer-Maker market organisers and Designer-Maker market participants. These took the form of questionnaires in some instances and recorded face-to-face interviews in others. I have incorporated this strategy in the belief that conversations can broaden the insights gleaned for information
gathering. As Leavy (2014) states “arts-based practice and traditional method(s) ideally inform each other, constituting an integrated approach to the methodology” (p.258).

Skinner (2013) refers to Kvale, who wrote a seminal anthropological book investigating the nature of qualitative interviewing, where interviews are “conversations that coproduce[s], cocreate[s] knowledge” (p.8). Quoting Kvale he states that the purpose of an interview “is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena (pp.5-6)”. Interviews as he describes them are “literally an inter-view” which are in nature “qualitative and descriptive, seeking the nuances and particularities of the human condition in a humanist tradition. It is expansive rather than reductive, preferring the complexity, ambiguity and irony of a memory” (Skinner, 2013, p.9). Kvale (2006) writes a more cautionary account of the need for mindfulness of the power relationships that can exist between interviewer and interviewee but nevertheless the power of the co-creation of knowledge is evident. For me, through having learned more about the views of others in the Designer-Maker marketplace, I have been able to respond to these lessons in my practice. As an example, for one of my interviewees the over-riding imperative was to earn a living from the marketplace which meant that certain design compromises were made. (Respondent no. 8) This is something I have also been aware of in my own practice so their observation confirmed my experience. I discuss this in further detail in Chapter 4 in my reflections called ‘The Crown vs. The Heart’.

Along with the formal and arranged interviews that I have conducted I have had many informal conversations with co-market stallholders and customers. These have not been deliberately constructed rather they have naturally evolved in the everyday experience of being at the market. These have enriched my perspectives and added weight to my research. Pink (2009) offers a view that interviews need not be conducted in the formal setting of “sitting down, [being] immobilized and simply speaking”… and that “ethnographers and research participants continue to be active participants in their environments, using whole bodies, all their senses, available props and the ground under their feet, to narrate, perform, communicate and represent experiences” (p.6). I assume she refers here to the idea of a pre-arranged interview, but it is also tantalizing to consider how my situated environment has led to genuine insight in non-formal research gathering.
This blended approach of artefact-based and auto-ethnography-based research has deepened and enriched my reading and understanding of my practice, how I make and how ‘handmade’ is signified in the Designer-Maker marketplace as lived for myself and for others who participate.
This chapter reflects critically on my design practice and how it fits within the Designer-Maker market context. It covers how I express ‘handmade’ ideas through examining the history of my involvement in Designer-Maker markets, the ideas that drive my making, the aesthetic choices I have made, the context in which I have placed my artefacts and the skills I have used, tracking the transitions of my work in keeping with contemporary practice. Throughout the chapter I draw upon personal reflection, designs I have made and questionnaires and interviews I have conducted with Designer-Makers. I conclude by showing how the practice of Designer-Makers has expanded to become multi-platform in nature using various online applications along with diverse career activities which are part of the surrounding spectrum of Designer-Maker markets. Appendix III offers a visual chronological survey of my designs tracking how they have changed since 2006 in response to my aesthetic considerations, responses to customers and skills development. In addition, the chronology also demonstrates how new digital technologies have impacted my designs along with considerations arising from the context of the Designer-Maker market environment.
Framing: Designing and Making as a method of research

The evolution of my practice is situated in the early 21st Century where exciting and revolutionary changes have been developing. Socially there have been shifts in the way people are choosing to engage in trade, politically sustainable agendas are being foregrounded by governments and the expansion of digital forms of designing, making and communicating has significantly altered what and how we make. The focus of this research has come from my practice, and in particular its connection to and involvement in Designer-Maker markets. I see Designer-Maker markets as contexts where Designer-Makers and consumers can and are asserting a position about how the world could be in relation to what we value materially and experientially, and that this is expressed through the objects that are designed and made and how they are presented. In particular I am interested in the dominant use of the term ‘handmade’ as a way of describing the values of this sector. I use the term ‘Designer-Maker’ to describe myself because of the connection between my designing and making relationship. This places emphasis on the key skillsets that I have and describes my process as well as the design aesthetics that frame my making decisions. This is a consistent self-description that I have used and despite the shifts in my practice over time it remains an appropriate definition.

As indicated earlier the blended approach I have taken to my research includes the examination of my artefacts and auto-ethnographic research. Using an approach of mindful inquiry where I have deliberately recorded the actions of my making by examining the constituent parts of my artefacts, custom made gift cards, I have been able to track aspects of my design practice to understand how it has evolved over time in multiple ways. The ways relate to intentional values-based goals, aesthetic preferences, shifts in making skills and tools along with the interface of my practice in the Designer-Maker marketplace. As Bentz & Shapiro (1998) state the “phenomenological researcher becomes the instrument of articulation” where the researcher must have as much “empathy” [with] “the topics as is possible” (p.100). I am the communicator of my process and also the interpreter of the context - Designer-Maker markets - in which this research is set.

This research approach teases out how environment can also impact the way that we engage with the idea of ‘handmade’. Niedderer (2013) points out that there are some risks when using reflective practice that might diminish rigour, but the risk can be overcome when
reflections are “operationalized” (p.12) if combined with appropriate creative output. One approach she proposes is where “‘Designing as Creative Exploration’... [to] better understand a theoretical concept, such as emotion, function, etc.” (p.13) is used. Referring to Hamberg’s ‘Parameters of the internal logic of research’ Niedderer (2013) states, “for the purpose of qualitative research, the traditional parameters of rigour (validity, reliability, objectivity and generalization) may be re-interpreted as credibility (something is believable), dependability (similar results can be achieved in similar contexts), confirmability (others can follow what has been done) and transferability (knowledge gained from one case may be adapted for another” (p.6). My research model which incorporates reflective writing, filmmaking and exhibitions, focus group conversations and interviews has facilitated durable records of my practice and the subsequent insights are in keeping with these standards of rigour.

Handmade meanings and processes

Foregrounding ‘handmade’ in my work explores the development and preservation of skills along with responding to contemporary social issues related to sustainability and consumerism. When I commenced my professional Textile Design career (1993) concern for the impact that mass-production was having on the environment was just starting to emerge. The concept of sustainability was largely absent in the retail sector and this was something that I felt was important. Also, it seemed that attention to the complexity of what constitutes making and the nature of how things were made was largely unknown and out of the public eye. The Do-It-yourself (DIY) movement was just beginning but it was more closely aligned with hobby-ism. The idea that design might play a role to address sustainable agendas was present but in its infancy. In my academic life for instance, Textile Design practice was and still is strongly aligned with hand-making, but it was not until 2008 that the Textile Design program was exploring how such ideas might be incorporated into holistic teaching delivery (Wahr et al. 2013).

Given that I am making ephemera, this has presented some challenges as a site for research. How can I justify a throw away product and how can I communicate my values simultaneously? As West asserts (2010) “Greeting cards are used in consumption performances with multiple possible inflections...they mean at more than one level simultaneously” (p.367). She goes on to say that “…greeting cards highlight the tension between communicating with the other
and communicating about the self” (p.367). As for me when I give a card I want it to perform on a number of levels. I want it to appeal to me aesthetically and for it to be a fitting choice for the recipient and I also want it to offer aspects representing my values. I will only buy a card if it is made with recycled paper for instance and I want it to be made by someone I have a connection to, if not myself or a design colleague, at least from a local Designer-Maker. So, the card choice reflects both my aesthetic preferences and my values.

West (2010) also distinguishes between the mass-produced card and those that might be considered ‘craft objects’; those that “present themselves as worthy of an artistic gaze” (p.375). Cultural Studies writer Jaffe (1999) extends upon this idea saying “the [greeting] card treats gift and commodity as qualities or values that are assigned to objects in the course of human interaction and transaction” (p.137). A gift card can act as a representative for the giver.

Providing a semiotic framework, Andrew (2008) suggests that communication-based readings are possible for textiles and given that it is my textile design practice I utilise in the development of my gift cards, this has relevance. Referring to Jeffries, she states, “Jefferies particularly perceives fabric as “text,” not in the typographic sense, but as a carrier of information from the “author” (artist/designer) to the “reader” (viewer/consumer), in much the same way as a book or film can be “read” and meaning derived from it” (p.45). She notes that the viewer is a participant in the communication process through textiles, creating “their own meanings from textile work, in addition to those intended by the producer of the work” (p.45).

The rationale I settled upon to address this ‘ephemera’ concern, was to endeavour to make the gift cards as desirable as possible (beautiful) so that people want to keep them rather than throw them away. I use recycled paper, a fact printed on the reverse of the cards declaring my interest in sustainability. I don’t shy away from the obvious which is that I use digital skills to develop my patterns and use my printer to print the designs acknowledging the contributions of digital technology but I highlight the importance of ‘handmade’ through the use of techniques such as collage and sewing where it was plain to see that my hand has been involved.
Adding elements like cut out forms to my cards commenced further along my card-making journey when I could see it was not always immediately apparent to the consumer that my cards were indeed handmade. In addition, I create an ‘About the Cards’ document that I display on the market table so people can read about my intentions and values and the fact that the designs are original and unique. Declaring this ‘handmade’ idea strongly also reinforces that there is an extra investment of labour and time in the making of the cards which also can potentially be read as an add-on in terms of values and value for the consumer. All of these elements come together to communicate the intricately bound nature of my handmade practice which incorporates digital tools that enabling a contemporary offering in the Designer-Maker marketplace.

In my research I have also wanted to understand and define what a contemporary idea of ‘handmade’ actually entails. I work continuously between using my hand skills of painting, cutting etc. alongside my digital skills of scanning, using digital software and printing etc. For me, combining the digital with the analogue is a contemporary method of making ‘handmade’. Below is an example of a card I designed and made in 2013 that communicates this combines analogue and digital skills.

Image 5: Adams, L. ‘Small Koi’ gift card, designed 2013
The techniques I use combine initial sketching, digital design, printing, cutting and sewn collage. I also hand cut, hand fold, hole-punch and attach the string by hand. The pattern on the card (see below) that sits behind the ‘Koi Fish’ was designed separately. Starting its life as a hand sketch, I scanned the motif and then created a repeating pattern with digital software. I coloured it and scaled it according to what I wanted and generated a number of colourways, one of which I settled on for this card. The ‘Koi’ fish motif (below) also started as a sketch which I scanned and manipulated using digital software. The individual fish were printed separately, cut out and then sewn onto the card.

Image 6: Adams, L. ‘Heart and Leaf’ motif and pattern and ‘Koi Fish’ design elements, designed between 2006 and 2012

This gift card sends a message about my means of making to the consumer on two levels. Firstly, the final step of sewing makes its ‘handmade’ nature obvious, even though much of it contains digital rendering and multiple methods of making. Here the analogue and digital can sit comfortably together and be considered ‘handmade’. Secondly, I hope that the consumer understands and values the knowledge associated with the gift cards being ‘handmade’. This understanding is embedded in the gift card and they in turn pass this on when giving it to others thus opening up a ripple of discourse about ‘handmade’. The artefact becomes the messenger and from a 21st century perspective, the embeddedness of my digital rendering that forms part of the design is part of the ‘handmade’ continuum.
Clarifying what I mean by ‘handmade’ has been central to this research. There are many examples of how ‘handmade’ is defined depending on the context in which it is discussed. The Oxford dictionaries define handmade as “Made by hand, not by machine, and typically therefore of superior quality (Oxford Dictionaries, Definition of handmade in English).” Fuchs, Schreier & van Osselaer (2015) define ‘handmade’ from a marketing perspective. They propose that handmade products are perceived to be made with love by the craftsperson and that they even do contain love. They argue this significantly contributes to product attractiveness. Their definition states “a handmade versus machine-made product [is]… one that is presented (e.g., by the producing company) to consumers as being made by hand or a hand process and not by a machine or a machinal process” (p.99). They add “almost no production process involves no machines” (p.99) so it is the message given to the consumer rather than the actuality of how much hand making is involved that is important.

Luckman’s (2015) Cultural Studies-based perspective offers the view that, “Handmade objects are imbued with touch and therefore offer a sense of the ‘authentic’ in an ‘inauthentic’ world” (p. 68). Citing Turney she continues, “They [handmade objects] offer a connection to the maker through the skill and learning apparent in their construction and they demonstrate time spent in a way in which other objects cannot (p. 68).” Extending this idea further she also contends that “Making reminds us of our agency within the physical world. … It is the process of making as opposed to the object itself where the “enchantment [of] making” (p.82) lies. As a Designer-Maker I certainly understand the allure of process and of course the importance of this to knowledge preservation and development. I do not dismiss the power and central importance of the artefact. It is after all the tangible record of the making act.

Risatti’s (2007) craft and materials perspective contends that it has only become necessary to start discussing the nature of handmade vs. machine made with the advent of the 19th century Industrial Revolution because before “All objects …were essentially handmade” (p.152). He states that it is possible to understand the difference between handmade and machine by unpacking the differences between what he calls “Design”, “Workmanship” and (true) “Craftsmanship.” For him, there is a 20th century notion “where design involves creative imagination” (p.166) that is not necessarily involved with the act of making, leading to a separation from the understanding of handmade making and therefore true “craftsmanship”.
Craftsmanship he contends is where “technical skill and creative imagination come together…to bring the thing into being as a physical-conceptual entity” (p.168).

Online ‘making’ environments such as Etsy (2018) have their own definitions of handmade. For Etsy the definition has been contentious, so they are now more concerned about ensuring that an open declaration about how products are made, is given by sellers to their consumers stating “On one end, we have makers - sellers who are literally making their items with their own hands (or tools). On the other end, we have designers - sellers who design their items, but rely entirely on production partners to help physically produce them” (para. 1). The meaning of ‘handmade’ has to be teased out in this context.

Within the Designer-Maker market sector the term ‘handmade’, is variously defined. The Made’ n’ Thornbury market defines ‘handmade’ where objects are “being made in your home or studio, and by the stallholders themselves” (Respondent 10, pers. comm., 22 January 2017). For Seddon Makers Market, goods “MUST BE hand-made or crafted by the stallholder” and they specifically state that, “this will be verified” (Seddon Makers Market, 2017, Application Criteria para.10). For the Finders Keepers market one of the selection criteria is that objects are “Creative and original work; independent designs, or products of a handmade nature” (Finders Keepers, Stallholder information, 2018, para. 1).

While the definitions from Oxford Dictionaries, Fuchs, Schreier & van Osselaer (2015), Luckman (2015) and Risatti (2007) endeavour to describe what the constituent parts of what ‘handmade’ entails, Designer-Maker markets and Etsy are more interested in avowals of ‘handmade’. Respondents who participated in my research, (referred to below) also have varying responses to what they feel communicates how ‘handmade’ is expressed in the Designer-Maker market context. For Respondent 2 the words “Organic, Pure and Locally Made” (pers. comm., 30 November 2016, p.1) were important along with packaging that visually signalled this. For Respondent 1, using the words “Handmade in Melbourne, Handmade and Hand-poured in Melbourne” (pers. comm., 30 November 2016, p.1) along with descriptions of, for instance, the type of fabric used with how to care for the product was important. For Respondent 9, the use of the words such as “handmade, homemade, artisan” and phrases like “locally made” and “made with love” (pers. comm., 30 November 2016, p.1) along with the provision of supporting marketing materials to attest to this was important.
Respondent 9 also stated “While they may be well-made, there are often minor differences between items; imperfections that don’t detract from the charm and/or functionality of the item. Uniqueness is another sign that they’ve not been mass-produced in a factory” (pers. comm., 30 November 2017, p.1).

These responses reveal that handmade is a compelling idea. Equally for Designer-Makers it is a compelling force. Quoting Respondent 9:

“I love that craft used to be ‘daggy’ and uncool, but now it is respected and highly regarded. I love that people are thinking more about how and where things are made. I don’t think this is a fad or trend. I think more and more people will start to think this way. I feel sorry for people who don’t make things. It gives me such pleasure. I can’t imagine a life in which I didn’t make things” (pers. comm., 22 January 2017, p.3)

For me, this conversation about how to define ‘handmade’ leads to where knowledge vests. Handmade is the first step in a chain of knowledge where understanding construction, the how to of building, without which objects cannot come into existence is central. As Pallasmaa (2009) states “The hand grasps the physicality and materiality of thought and turns it into a concrete image. In the arduous processes of designing, the hand often takes the lead in probing for a vision, a vague inkling that it eventually turns into a sketch, a materialization of an idea” (pp. 016-017). The things we surround ourselves with could not be made otherwise. Learning just how difficult it can be to design and make something by hand builds respect for the objects we have come to rely on and forms part of the foundational knowledge that we use to improve not only ourselves but also our environment.

To unpack my hand making process further and to document the actual steps of making gift cards I made a film (directed by Josh Waddell), which screened in an exhibition I held called The First Hypothesis (2013). [See Chapter 4 for a detailed account of this] The film shows the various stages of card making, representing the small decisions that bring together a broader vision. It shows the transitions of design ideas and pattern aesthetics, the move from paper design work to the computer, the physical assemblage of cutting, sewing and construction, demonstrating that each have a role to play in the realization of the final artefact – the gift card. My knowledge is expressed here through a mix of ideas, whimsy, design skills, know how, doggedness, all bound up in the creative journey to make something new.
Handmade and Tools

Hand making for me relates to a feeling – it really feels better if I incorporate drawing or painting, cutting or sewing and other processes that literally involve using my hands. But there lies the slippery slope! Is drawing with a pencil or painting with a paintbrush handmade? After all the pencil and paintbrushes are tools. What about cutting with a knife or scissors? Well yes, again it feels handmade, particularly due to the arbitrary twist and turn of my hand engaged with the tool. There is a degree of danger with the process; I might make an error. So, hand making involves risk taking, where a wrong move might result in disaster. Pye’s (1995) oft-quoted phrase the “workmanship of risk” (p.20) refers to how the skilled worker knows at what point it is crucial to see a moment for opportunity or for failure where split (unthinking) decisions are made. In fact, it is through the “workmanship of certainty (p.20)” that tools can assist to minimize the risk that is tied to the act of making by hand. Embracing the risks and certainties of workmanship, where my hand and tools have come together is what provides much of the excitement of design and making for me. Achieving successful design outcomes through my own ‘knowing hand’ which understands the tools I use and taking risks at key moments has provided me with enormous satisfaction as well as learning from the revelations of risk which has at times led to failure. Through these trials I have built a body of knowledge. Without the acts of making, my knowledge would merely be imagined or theoretical. And while imagination is an essential feature for design and innovation, it alone cannot test the veracity of ideas that come from the creation of objects. Luckman (2015) suggests that the idea of ‘enchantment’ plays a role in the making process where “productive flow states represent a perfect balance of skill and challenge; a rare confluence of time-space, creativity and immersion that demonstrate a complex assemblage of hand and mind” (p. 82). Here a synergy is formed between thought and action.

Handmade is also about the idea of control and for me it definitely involves the direct use of my hands at some point in the making process. As a Designer-Maker I understand the power of taking something such as a pen or paintbrush and using my hands to transform an idea into an object. As Charny (2011) says handmade “is a way of exercising (free) will” (p.7). I recognize the hand in, and through the activities of my practice and I can see the traces that my hand leaves; a kind of evidentiary record of my actions in the artefact. I draw, rub, paint, scratch, move a mouse, swipe track pads, cut, sew, fold, smooth, construct and much more,
all with my hands. My hand sometimes feels like it knows more about what I am doing than my conscious thought. This is because it is a practiced hand. McCulloch’s (1996) reflection on the physical action of hands reinforces this idea of power where “In sum, hands are the best source of tacit personal knowledge because of all the extensions of the body, they are the most subtle, the most sensitive, the most probing, the most differentiated, and the most closely connected to the mind” (p.7).

Hand making is not just about using my hands alone, rather, it is a partnership formed with creative thinking, my hands and the use of tools. Margetts (2011) states “Tools and equipment are prosthetic extensions of the body that carry the thought of the maker wholly different from the autonomous production of machines” (p.41). Bolt (2014) using Heidegger’s idea of ‘handling as care’ states “Tools are no longer conceived of as a means to an end, but rather are co-responsible (along with other elements) for bringing forth something into appearance” (p.3). For Ingold (2011), the tool offers a narrative that is connected to the maker’s amassed skill in the history of its use in combination with the gestural actions of the makers hand and the materials the maker engages with.

“The practice of sawing issues as much from the trestle and plank as from the saw, as much from the saw as from the carpenter, as much from the carpenter’s eyes and ears as from his hands, as much from his ears and hands as from his mind. You only get sawing when all these things, and more, are bound together and work in unison” (p. 58).

This eloquent excerpt confirms the extraordinary relationship that exists between the maker’s hands, skills and tools. Most particularly for me this also includes digital tools.
Digital Tools

The late 20th and early 21st century has seen a growth in the use of digital tools for designing and making and now we seamlessly integrate digital technology into our lives in a way that was not present in the earlier part of the 20th century. In the 20th Century a (hand) swipe action might be read non-verbally as a wave of greeting or dismissal. Today it can still be read this way, but it has also become a non-verbal signifier for engagement with a laptop or hand-held device that represents turning the page or moving on. Our lexicon has expanded to accommodate our new tools and the resultant methods of communicating and behaving in the world that arise from them.

In this research I show how we understand ‘handmade’ in the context of the Designer-Maker market. This knowledge has emerged for me through identifying how my handmade methods have altered over time and through my immersion in the Designer-Maker. My earlier gift cards (see below) all started their lives as original artworks and then used digital methods for colour and printing. They were flat printouts that I assumed the consumer could still understand as ‘handmade’. In fact this was not true. Bringing this message home at one market was when a customer asked me where I got my nice paper from to make the cards! She had assumed I was sourcing the designs and that the making aspect was tied to the cutting and folding. This was not the message I wanted to communicate!

My subsequent cards still contained all of the same design and making elements, but I increasingly started to incorporate sewn on elements and different sized cards (see below) with the view to diminishing the misconception. While it could be argued that the customer still thought my cards were handmade, I was more concerned about ensuring that my designs were seen as part of the making spectrum. That additional layers that I added reinforced the designed aspect of my handmade process.


From a Textile Design perspective many 20th century Textile Designers including myself learned how to create designs solely with the traditional tools of gouache and paintbrush.
The then subsequent challenge to have to up-skill and embrace digital tools and to some extent overcomes a doubtfulness about digital technology has become a conversation for contemporary handmaking. The still current need to discuss the importance of incorporating hand-making into our lives is testament to this. As Treadaway (2016) says when speaking about the shifts in Textile Design production, “Although traditional and digital media are converging through the development of increasingly sensitive and sophisticated interfaces, the importance of hand skill and physical craft is unlikely to be replaced entirely. Our hands help us think and physical making provides opportunities for serendipitous and accidental creative insights that the logic and control of the machine can often inhibit” (p.30). And recently, Doyle, Day Fraser & Robbins (2018) suggest that “Craft is lost” along with its associated connection to the “allure of the genuine” … “When machine actions and/or strategic rationale of production take precedence over possible choices and the insight of a skilled maker’s intuitive/tacit actions” (p. 219). These statements carry the hallmarks of an ongoing perception, that machinal reliance and intervention damages the handmade contribution.

A way to respond to this in the Designer-Maker market context is to consider Johnston’s (2017) view, where “digital handmade – describes a new aesthetic for our times; an exciting beauty, achieved only through the fusion of hand and machine, which presents a uniquely modern understanding and exploration of the relationship between designer and maker” (p.8). Designer-Makers’ toolboxes are merely made up of additional tools where glorious new creative forms are being made using technologies such as digital design, 3D printing and modelling. Products have been conceived, designed and made to exacting standards, carrying all of the characteristics of good design, precision, uniqueness, purpose made and made with love which constitute the meanings typically associated with ‘handmade’. In the Designer-Maker market context this array of tools is in evidence and enhances Designer-Makers’ opportunities to manage their design goals while still capturing the essence of ‘handmade ‘sensibilities. As Johnston (2017) states new technologies [are not] tools of mass production but … tools to free the making process from traditional aesthetic expectations and physical material limitations” (p.7).

In Ingold’s (2011) exhibition piece entitled “Seven Variations on the Letter A” he created a body of work utilizing the ‘Letter A’ exploring a range of ideas to do with the relationship
“between surface, line, inscription and notation” (p. 181). Asking “What is a line of writing? What is the difference between a handwritten line and a typed one? Do typists write?” prompted me to think about the idea of the nuanced machine; one that takes on the qualities of the hand through pressure and the peculiarities of the machine itself. While Ingold acknowledges that “the appearance of the [typewritten] letters is not wholly devoid of expression he explains them away as marks made by “the wear of the ribbon” (p.190) and he does not extend upon the point. Interpreting the marks on the page made by an old typewriter for a current generation of people, who have perhaps never experienced such a machine, is arguably a handmade act, one that is entirely different to the experience they have had with a computer keyboard or touchscreen.

Examples of this kind of idea are demonstrated through the emergence of custom made ‘letterpress’ businesses. Bespoke Letterpress a boutique business which at different times has participated in Designer-Maker markets use printing machines to create stationery. They express the values that are often associated with the idea of the handmade by saying that they “print the old-fashioned way, using antique cast iron machines, …mixed with patience, perfection and a whole lot of love” (2018, About, para. 3). Similarly, a Melbourne based business Saint Gertrude Letterpress utilises old letterpress machinery. As they state, “A self-taught printmaker, Amy is passionate about the so-called ‘dying’ craft of print and has brought six printing presses back from the brink of extinction” (2018, Homepage, para. 2). These descriptions communicate nostalgic notions of value that are kindred with the idea of ‘handmade’ capturing care, love, craft and so on. But they are very modern businesses, with smart online profiles that embrace the digital world.

This has resonance for me in the way that I work with my digital and physical tools.
A personal reflection from 2013 demonstrates this:

One of the things that happens, as you become intimately acquainted with your craft is that you develop a sensitivity not only to your manual skills and the materials that you use, but also to the tools that assist you. So, even though my computer, my ruler and blade, my paper and sewing machine are all inanimate objects, I can tell if things are awry. I get a sense of when the sewing machine is not going to behave well, despite the absence of particular mechanical cues (noises etc.). Nine times out of ten I am correct.

And there are environmental sensitivities; if the weather is hot or dry cold or damp – my paper
will absorb ink differently and the colours seem different. I often think of musicians and how damp weather must affect their ability to tune their instruments... I don’t know if it this is the case, but I imagine it might be.

It is that intimacy that we develop with our tools that assists in the mastery of them somehow. They step up from being inanimate. It is like the unspoken language that you have with a beloved animal. We don’t speak the same language, but we have an understanding or simpathico. I am not investing my machines or tools with a reciprocal understanding (as an animal might offer), but certainly my close relationship with my tools means that I am observing them all the time – extra close scrutiny makes me notice tiny clues that I am not even aware of – that allows me to predict their performance.

In 2011, I conducted a small survey of some of the participants at the Northcote Kris Kringle Market. I asked them a range of questions related to reasons for participation. In particular I also wanted to understand the extent of their engagement with digital methods for making, promotion and selling. The results revealed that digital engagement was still relatively new for many. The potential of a new platform to provide an opportunity for Designer-Makers to not only bring handmade objects to market in a face-to-face relationship between maker and consumer but also to take it beyond, was understood but not necessarily fully operationalized. At the time of the survey, 14 out of the 25 respondents to my questionnaires did not use Computer aided design, particularly in relation to the designing and making their products and the 11 that did, used Computer aided design for design refinement, technical preparation for production or for advertising. Since then digital engagement both as a means of making and communicating has blossomed and in 2018 it is hard to imagine such a large proportion, (56%, of the Designer-Maker population that I surveyed) would not be digitally engaged.

In the Designer-Maker marketplace context, not only is the growth of digital technology being used to assist the making process, so too is the importance of having an online presence. IBISWorld (2017) estimates that there are 89% of households that now have an Internet connection and forecast that 93.2% of households will have an Internet connection by 2022-23 (report no.C26331, p.1). They predict an “increasing use of online retail in Australia, which has lower overheads and hence lower product prices than bricks-and-mortar retail, [which] will be a major driver of growth” (C26331, p. 2). Magner (2017) identifies ongoing growth in the sector, which will feature multi-channel marketing being enabled by
“mobile-optimized websites and applications” (p. 8). The need for Industry to respond to changing technologies is seen as key to future success in retail where ultimately, “The line between traditional and online retail is expected to become increasingly blurred as these hybrid models emerge” (pp. 9-10.) She also states, “Traditional retailers and department stores have an advantage over online operators as they can provide customers with face-to-face service, the ability to physically inspect products and instantly receiving [sic] purchased goods” (p.7)

Neslin et al (2006) define a channel as “a customer contact point, or a medium through which the firm and the customer interact (p.96).” Kent et al in Vecchi & Buckley (2016) group channels into online (Store and catalogue) and offline (Internet and Mobile); the multi-channel ways in which consumers can connect with companies. (399-401). The Designer-Maker market sector is already highly engaged with social media, offering pathways to the product via online platforms such as Instagram and through their websites. This is particularly evident in the large-sized, design driven segment and through this they are fostering handmade values reaching large audiences. In the Designer-Maker market sector the benefits of all channels is offered where, in addition to online and social media engagement the consumer meets the maker, understands the chain of production, and gains access to a unique and well designed and made object.

Combining the experiences offered by the Designer-Maker Market environment along with online services gives the contemporary consumer full and rich access to its handmade offerings.

One Designer-Maker who has combined these channels successfully uses “online, markets and retail or wholesaling… focusing on the places where I make more margin is more important to me because its handmade products.” (2017, Respondent 5, pers. comm. p.1)

This designer participates in the large-sized and design-driven markets, has a strong presence on social media via Instagram, they maintain a website that includes a shop, an ETSY shop and business on their Facebook page. They actively participate in collaborations with other designers, recently designing interactive play spaces for the Big Design Markets held in Melbourne and Sydney and have co-organised artwork exhibitions. This designer also works as an illustrator and freelance Textile Designer and educator. This is a multi-channel business
representing a snapshot of how many Designer-Makers practice today. The fundamental nature of their practice, while using all of the online channels available is still essentially a design business that is driven by hand making. Illustration and Textile Design, fabric printing, sewing, ceramic formation is the groundwork for their contemporary Designer-Maker practice.

Ultimately for me, ‘handmade’ is a complex of ideas which are expressed through tightly bound analogue and digital skills that lead to knowledge about how things (objects) are formed and that open up discussions about why things (objects) are made. This extends to included online communication where Designer-Makers can engage with each other and their customers. These combined reflect how the word ‘handmade’ acts as a conceptual and cultural signifier in this Designer-Maker community expressing a philosophical and political position that emphasises particular value sets and the use of both digital design and machinal methods is a part of this spectrum. As Luckman (2015) succinctly points out “to focus more on making and it’s enchantment, rather than fetishising any particular deployment of tools – or their absence – allows us to reconcile crafts traditions” (85).

My Practice History – what I make for market

Entering the Designer-Maker marketplace facilitated an opportunity for me to express my creative and philosophical ideas and to engage with a different kind of trade.

The following reflection offers a taste of an early market experience where I tested my first range of gift cards in a market setting.

One of the first markets that I participated in was an early offering of the “Shirt and Skirts” market that was then held outdoors at the St Kilda Primary School in 2006. [It subsequently moved to the Abbotsford Convent] Aimed at showcasing emerging Australian designers with a focus on fashion and accessories, I was offering my first range of gift cards in this market sector. I had teamed up with a friend and jewellery designer, so we managed to qualify to be included because of her accessories.

It was a very hot, blustery day and our Marquee was precariously anchored by filled up water bottles on blistering bitumen. We had brought along a couple of card tables and fold up chairs, lots of hope and not much idea about how to market ourselves. I had put together a board to which I had fixed examples of my gift cards and if people liked them, I could retrieve one from the stock I had in a shoebox. My friend had brought along a velvet-covered box on
which an array of rings was displayed. The extraordinary effort involved in getting there, setting up and waiting to engage in selling and communicating for 6 hours (10am-4pm) was ridiculous from a monetary return point of view. While our sales were optimistic and earnings covered the basic cost of stall hire (I think it was something like $40), we did not go home with much money, and we were hot and tired. BUT we were hooked.

While this is a demonstration of an early foray into markets as a green and unseasoned performer, for me, along with many other Designer-Makers these were the heady days of a new and emerging means of bringing designed products to the consumer freed from the challenges of mainstream retailing. Previously controlled by the whimsy of retail buyers who decided if your work was commercial enough and if they did deign to accept it, offered meagre wholesale prices, instead I could directly engage with the buying audience. I could receive feedback and at times ego boosting admiration and be my own boss. I could also decide what I considered was a good object and express values about making that were important to me. As a Designer and Maker this is a delicious mix and while other independent markets have had a long history in Melbourne, this was a new stream of markets that carried a specific ethos that was connected to ideas and values such as handmade, sustainable and more.
Since this time, I have participated in a number of markets and these include: The Rose Street Market, Fitzroy; Northside Makers Market, Northcote; Found It Market, Alphington; The Substation Market, Newport; The Design Exchange, Ballarat; The Winter Artisan Market, Northcote; The Kris Kringle Night Market, Northcote; The Fine Design Market, Manningham. For all of these markets I have designed and made gift cards, the focus of which has been on the generation of original artwork using a combination of digital and handmade methods of designing and construction. The presentation and display of my products has included statements about how I make my cards with an emphasis on originality and design.

In the early 2000’s the gift card industry was still a buoyant market, where the exchange of paper-based cards was common. Aesthetically, I wanted to foreground my Textile Design skills by using pattern on cards and after selling cards into the domestic retail market I decided to try my hand at participating in the developing Designer-Maker market scene - and business was brisk.

As it has turned out, the gift card has become a very interesting site for reflection when it comes to considering shifts in material choices made by contemporary consumers. The current greeting card marketplace has seen a significant downward trend as a result of the rise of online communication and proliferation of digital cards. (Greeting Cards - Global Strategic Business Report, 2017) and I have not been immune. Nevertheless, I have continued with my paper practice and it is through the melding of analogue with digital skills that I have been able to meet contemporary tastes. In fact there is still a relatively strong niche that exists and that may be expanding for handmade paper gift card versions. (Gaille, 2016). As an example, the small business ‘Lovepop’ has more recently challenged the so-called status quo by combining tailored digital design with outsourced hand cutting to make 3D pop up cards. (Kim, 2015). And there is strong representation of Designer-Makers at markets who continue to specialize in paper products.

**Designer-Makers – the term**

Designer-Makers are skilled individuals who describe themselves in a variety of ways and I use the Oxford Dictionary here to provide definitions for some of the self-descriptive terms Designer-Makers use. A ‘Designer’ is defined as “a person who plans the look or workings of something prior to it being made, by preparing drawings or plans” (Oxford Dictionaries, Definition of designer in English). ‘Maker’ is defined “usually in combination with a person or
thing that makes or produces something” (Oxford Dictionaries, Definition of maker in English), for instance ‘film-makers’ ‘a cabinetmaker’. ‘Craftsperson’ is defined as “a person who is skilled at making things by hand” (Oxford Dictionaries, Definition of craftsperson in English). ‘Artisan’ is defined as “a worker in a skilled trade, especially one that involves making things by hand” (Oxford Dictionaries, Definition of artisan in English). ‘Street markets where local artisans display handwoven textiles, painted ceramics, and leather goods’ is cited as an example of this. ‘Artist’ is defined as “a person who creates paintings or drawings as a profession or hobby.” The Artist is also defined as “A person who practices or performs any of the creative arts, such as a sculptor, film-maker, actor, or dancer” (Oxford Dictionaries, Definition of artist in English).

Each of these definitions have relevance to a greater and lesser degree and many individuals in this sector now prefer to describe themselves as Designer-Makers because this captures the multiple definitions cited above without favour for one over the other. The term ‘Designer-Maker’ has strong everyday use in the art, craft and design community along with online and non-academic fora that frequently use the term and it is also being used in education. Camberwell College of the Arts in the UK which offers an MA Visual Arts: Designer Maker (2017) and Cardiff Metropolitan University which offers a ‘Artist Designer: Maker - BA (Hons) Degree (2017) are examples of this.

For Gale and Kaur (2002) the Designer-Maker is a more recent description used for one “who designs and produces items in small or batch quantities, usually operating as an independent or in a small-business context” (p. 49). Cochrane (1992) offers an Australian interpretation saying the use of the term Designer-Maker was one that arose in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s. Then it was seen as an expression of “when craftspeople started to accept the legitimacy of the production side of their activity” (pp. 104-105) in contrast with previously distancing themselves from production when seeking equal status with the fine arts. A broad internet search using such words as ‘artisan’, ‘craft’ and ‘artists’ will also locate some of the markets that Designer-Makers participate in and that are the subject of my research but each of these individual terms used in isolation doesn’t quite capture the essence of what Designer-Maker entails. The Designer-Maker moniker acts as an umbrella term acknowledging the multiplicity of skill sets and attitudes within this sector.
My definition of Designer-Maker

In this research, for myself and other Designer-Makers there is a generally established expectation that we are local (if not Melbourne based, then at least Australian) and we actually make, design or control the making of our products. From an ideal perspective the Designer-Maker can best be described as someone who conceives of, designs, sources key materials and constructs using a combination of the actual handmade activities and tools that produce an object. Of central importance is that the Designer-Maker must understand the making process through direct experience, even if their ongoing practice does not always involve the making. Intimate knowledge of the small steps of making is an essential ingredient and while the reality of just how much is handmade in some Designer-Maker markets it is not always in alignment with this ideal, this is the broad principle that underpins my practice and my research.

For me, designing and making are tightly intertwined and they need each other. This entails both the aesthetic nature of imagery and the physical expression of design in the form of artefacts such as my gift cards. What is foregrounded in the use of the term ‘Designer-Maker’ in the marketplace I am examining, is its connection to the idea of the symbiotic nature of the designing and making relationship. I describe myself as a Designer-Maker because this places emphasis on the key skillsets that I have and describes my process. There is a form of circularity to this concept that works for me. Design drives my ideas and hand-making is an expression of my ideas, but the making can give rise to ideas which subsequently then informs new design concepts. The following sequence of images demonstrates this. I was interested in the rising trend of representing Australian native flowers in local design, so I made some ink sketches in preparation for design that responded to this.
I also wanted to play further by combining the original art with some cut paper flowers that I had previously used in other designs, so I laid these on top of two of the ink sketches and photographed this. Combining different mark-making methods added depth to the imagery and reinforced the handmade nature of the artwork through both contrasts of mark-making and adding a depth of field.
I then uploaded the photograph to my computer and used Photoshop to make further digital collage designs from the main source, I manipulated colour and from this work created a variety of card options which I printed, cut and folded.

Image 14: Adams, L. ‘Native Flower Gift Tags, designed 2017

In the last few years I have increasingly used photography to capture things of interest to me, particularly with the advent of the smart phone. This has meant that I more frequently mix hand mark-making with digitally sourced imagery. This Hydrangea image taken in my local neighbourhood became a backdrop to a number of designs including a range of tea towels.

I uploaded the image to my computer and used Photoshop to work on the design, combining it with copies of itself and filters in the software. I also created a range of colourways. I outsourced the printing of my tea towels to a Digital Print service and after the fabric was printed I cut and sewed the edges as well as packaged and labelled them. The Tea Towels were well received, so I decided to keep the Hydrangea artwork in play.

![Image 17: Adams, L. ‘Hydrangea Tea Towels’, 4 Colourways, designed 2016](image17)

I wanted to blend the idea of my Australian native flora with the ‘Hydrangea’ design because both feature strongly in our urban landscape. Modern florists were also re-discovering the Hydrangea which had been a somewhat out of fashion flower up until this time, and so I brought the Hydrangea artwork together with the native flower digital collages. I printed the designs on my home printer and then cut them, hole punched and tied them to create gift tags.

![Image 18: Adams, L. ‘Native Flower and Hydrangea Gift Cards’, designed 2018a](image18)
What this series of images showcases is the various stages of designing and making and the interconnectedness of the two. Design thinking, design development including my initial mark-making right through to digital engagement and the different material outcomes, all form part of an ongoing exploration of skill refinement and material expression. Each stage blends analogue and digital skillsets and it is non-directional as each outcome potentially leads to something new and each may contain a variety of skill bases and tool applications. This is what a designing and making is for me.

In the context of the Designer-Maker marketplace, there is an understanding of design and of making involved. As Tanner (2010) states the term Designer-Maker is one that is a ‘hybrid’ title that captures a blend of craft with design that is “as ambiguous and diverse as the work the designer-maker create[d]s” (p.10).

**Who are Designer-Makers in this community?**

There is same useful reportage that has recently started to emerge that describes the Art, Craft and Design sector from an Australian perspective that has relevance to this research.

A report entitled “Mapping the Australian Craft Sector” (Heath & Pascoe, 2014) initiated through the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council for the Arts highlighted the dearth of quantitative data in the crafts sector, citing ABS data that also attests to this” (Australian Bureau of Statistics 4172.0, 2014). The “Mapping the Australian Craft Sector” (Heath & Pascoe, 2014, p.9) report provides a definition of who a Craft Practitioner is and offers relevant information in relation to how craft is marketed, which can be taken to include Designer-Maker markets although it uses the more general description of Craft/Design fairs and markets. The report uses data drawn from an online survey “conducted with a representative sample of 644 crafts sector stakeholders… interviews with 46 industry experts and leaders… and desk literature on current consumer trends” (Heath & Pascoe, 2014, p.6).

Of particular interest, the online survey reveals that 22.98% of respondents said that they sold their work through Markets. This was the second highest ranking of sales outlets for the surveyed group. Galleries ranked highest at (29.80%) and Markets rated higher than shops (10.86%) and Etsy (10.35%) (Heath & Pascoe, 2014, p.56). This gives an indication of the
significance of the Markets’ role when it comes to assisting Designer-Makers to derive some of their income.

The report falls short in assisting me with a more nuanced examination of the Designer-Maker market sector I am exploring, however the particular definitions that the report offers related to ‘craft’ including a description of who a ‘craft practitioner’ is, are useful. They define Contemporary craft as “Original, high quality, craft that was recently made and/or produced by a living craft practitioner and the result of an individual process of investigation and critical enquiry. This can include work that is designed by a practitioner and produced by another practitioner or machine process (Heath & Pascoe, 2014, p.9). While not all participants in Designer-Maker markets would identify as ‘craftspeople’ or ‘craft practitioners’, the broader definition of ‘making’ for Designer-Maker markets does represent engagement with and in practice.

Another report, the Australia Council for the Arts summary of and response to “Making Art Work: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia (Throsby and Petetskaya, 2017) seeks to examine how artists derive incomes either through “Creative work, arts-related work (or) non-arts work” (p.15). This report discusses the need for artists to derive income from a variety of sources other than just their principal arts practice. As the report states “While arts-related work and non-arts work takes a range of forms, artists predominantly work on a freelance or self-employed basis in their principal artistic occupation – 81% are doing so, up from 72% in 2009 (p. 15)”. As the report affirms, “Artists are now spending an average of 57% of their working time on creative work, and it is generating only 39% of total income, pointing to an increased reliance on income from other work and decreasing earnings from artistic work” (p. 15). Other forms of work can include seeking income from Designer-Maker markets.

Throsby and Petetskaya (2017) define Craft Practitioner as: “– includes ceramic artist/potter, fibre/textile artist, leather worker, glass artist, metal worker or jeweller, wood worker, paper maker, craft practitioner – other material, craft practitioner – new/digital media, craft practitioner – mixed media, other craft practitioner” (p.30). They define Visual Artist as: “– includes painter (including drawing), muralist, sculptor, printmaker, photographer, video/film maker, performance artist, illustrator, cartoonist/ animator, calligrapher, graphic artist,
installation artist, set designer/ costume designer, visual artist – new/digital media, light artist, collage artist, visual artist – public art, visual artist – mixed media, other visual artist” (p.31). The definitions offered above help to capture the range of creative activities that Designer-Makers engage with and how they might be described.

It should be noted that the definitions of practice or title variance that are shown here, particularly in terms of how the ‘practitioner’ is described, when taken from a Craft perspective and from an Art perspective, reflects a lineage of debate surrounding a hierarchy within the arts where the elevation of the Fine Arts over the Decorative Arts (of which craft was a part), was favoured and which became part of the debate of the 19th century arts and crafts movement (Crook, 2009; Risatti, 2004). I consider this debate to be defunct in the context of Designer-Maker markets but from a historic point of view it forms a backdrop where the latter part of the 20th century and in the early 21st century focusing on (re)-elevating the status of craft has been hotly debated. Academics such as Adamson in the UK (2007, 2013), Alfoldy in Canada (2007) and Risatti in the USA (2004) explored these debates about the merits or otherwise of these historic divisions.

From a purely functional point of view, like the challenge of being able to satisfactorily define just who a Designer-Maker is, it is more helpful to consider what is actually happening on the ground. Designer-Makers are in fact taking their best from all disciplines in an endeavour to express their ideas in various forms. Many happily borrow from all disciplines to achieve the desired aesthetically driven (Art), well-designed (Design) and well-crafted (Craft) objects that they offer for sale in Designer-Maker market environments. In a sense Designer-Maker markets represent the abandonment of the old silos of art, design and craft. Instead the concerns of this generation of Designer-Makers along with their customers, is an increasing interest in a sharing mentality, a growing phenomenon, which can also be taken to mean a sharing of disciplinary skills. While van Tuinen (2014) uses the term ‘artisan’ to discuss this point, it is the expressed attitude that is relevant. As she states; “No longer a professional but a transdisciplinary maker and researcher, today’s artisan’s gentle unruliness and experimentations tend toward a new unity of the arts” (p.3).

Evidence of the looseness of and slippages between these historic boundaries was seen in a questionnaire that I administered to 25 market participants in 2011 (see Appendix I) where
they rarely relied on one title or self-description, preferring to describe themselves for instance as Maker and Designer, Artist, Artisan and Maker, Craftsperson and Designer. 17 out of 25 included the term Designer in their self-descriptions and 12 out of the 25 included Maker in their self-descriptions. This reflects the blurring of divisions between the disciplines of Art, Design and Craft and also aligns with the practices within the Designer-Maker space. This attitude was also in evidence in 2013, when research that I and colleague Kylie Budge conducted. We examined the values expressed by stallholders participating in the Big Design Market held in 2012 by utilizing the Gazette that was published at the time to advertise the event (See Appendix II) in which 160 stallholders provided a small biography profile for the Directory in this Gazette (2012, pp 26-30). Most did not self-describe in relation to their professional status but many used descriptors that related to Art, Design, Making and Craft, along with specialized skills such as Jewellery, Fashion and Ceramics. Here Designer-Makers used multiple descriptors to define themselves and their activities demonstrating this same lack of adherence to previous divisions of practice.

Central to understanding who Designer-Makers are and something I know from my own practice and through my observations of other Designer-Makers, is that Designer-Makers are engaged with conceiving and creating something new which is of their own making using a variety of ideas, aesthetics, skills and tools. Designer-Makers declare whether they are Designer-Makers or not for themselves. This not a quantifiable fact, rather it is a qualitative self-assessment of skills, aesthetics and the intention to design and make.

In Summary

When I first began participating in Designer-Maker markets I was already using digital design methods, along with all of the analogue tools associated with the practice of a Textile Designer. This was at a time however when discussions were being held about whether digital tools could be considered an act of hand making. In fact, it was the use of digital tools that led me to thinking about what it means to make by hand. Was there a boundary? How did I make at the commencement of my career and how do I make now?

Ultimately hand making is all about power and knowledge and this Designer-Maker movement espouses these values responding to our temporal conditions. Designer-Makers engage in the practice of making and irrespective of the title they assign to themselves, it is
the ‘handmade’ that unifies them in this space. As this marketplace continues to re-invent itself, as it continually does, it reaffirms ideas about the signifying nature of the term ‘handmade’. It carries the ideas of Fuchs et al’s (2015) imposition of love and Luckman’s (2015) imbueement of touch and even more, which is that knowing how to make is important.
In this chapter, I discuss the rise of Designer-Maker markets in Melbourne, Australia. This research does not focus on the international Designer-Maker market movement however I acknowledge the groundswell of the movement worldwide. As an example the ‘Make’ magazine (Make:, n.d., para.1) first published in 2005 reflects the scope and range of making values and activities in the US and it has grown to become an international network. Maker Faires connected to this online community are found in the United States, Canada, Europe, Saudi Arabia and extend to Korea, Japan, Philippines and Taiwan. (Make:, n.d., Map). Online communities have also proliferated which connect to face-to-face markets and to online selling platforms. Etsy (2019, Homepage) sells an online version of handmade internationally. In the UK UKCraftFairs (Homepage, 2019), established in 2004 seeks to work as a country wide hub for markets. Similarly, the Finders Keepers markets operate from a range of locations in Scandinavia (Finders Keepers, n.d. para. 1.). Databases such as Vancouver’s Got Craft which commenced in 2007 (Got Craft, n.d., Para.1) take a more focused approach.
connecting to the local activities of their communities. The Melbourne, Australia research that I offer here sits within this broader context.

My research outlines the growth of Designer-Maker markets, focusing on Melbourne, Australia between 2005 and 2018. I explain the different ‘segments’ within the sector, what they typically contain, what they look like, how they feel and how Designer-Maker’s participate in them. When considering who Designer-Makers are, I define them through the identification of what they make, their creative and practical methods and how they describe and present themselves along with their products. Within this chapter I draw on interviews with market participants and organisers, the results of questionnaires I conducted in 2011 and 2017, and a study of the Big Design Market conducted in 2013, along with my own personal observations and reflections on the marketplace.

Opening statements

Designer-Maker markets are where innovators are thriving and experimenting not only through the presentation of new products but also in the methodologies used to arrive at new products. It is a gestational place, the results of which leak into the broader mainstream community. It also strongly aligns itself the term ‘handmade’ which has come to signify values such as locally made, authentically considered, socially engaged, digitally present, sustainably produced, rejecting of mass-production, at times nostalgic and experience based in nature. The reality is that many of the products now offered for sale at Designer-Maker markets are in fact not handmade and in some cases not even made in Australia, but it is the idea of handmade/artisan/bespoke/designed/ethical that counts. Here, ‘handmade’ is a term that holds enormous symbolic agency and, that has been utilised because of its desirable value-laden reputation. (Phillips & Steiner, 1999)

As Margetts (2011) states, “Making is [therefore not only] a fulfillment of needs, [but] … of desires - a process where mind, body and imagination are integrated in the practice of thought through action” (p. 39). If we add the term hand to her making, this makes for a heady combination.

There is a vast array of Designer-Maker markets in Melbourne and in the broader Australian landscape but the focus for this research is on those Designer-Maker markets that I have
either taken part in or have reviewed, so what I examine reflects my personal experience. In particular they are or have been located in Melbourne and some regional Victorian centres. These Designer-Maker markets have particular characteristics, which relate to ideological positioning, presentation, skill sets, activities and methodologies.

The Designer-Maker Market Sector

The term ‘Market’ itself is variously described. As an example, the Oxford Dictionary defines it as “A regular gathering of people for the purchase and sale of provisions, livestock, and other commodities”, “An open space or covered building where vendors convene to sell their goods” and “An area or arena in which commercial dealings are conducted” (Oxford Dictionaries, Definition of market in English). The essential message is that of gathering and trade.

Designer-Maker markets are a part of the broader retail landscape, with particular characteristics that means they can be called a niche category of retail. Designer-Maker markets operate in environments that can be indoors or outdoors and in general they are located in areas that are separate from mainstream retail locations. This sector is only loosely defined, often on a market-by-market basis and I argue, is made up of different segments, related to their philosophy, curation and design quality. In order to group the characteristics and personalities of the different types of Designer-Maker markets, I have imposed the notion of ‘segments’. According to ‘A Dictionary of Marketing’ (2011) the idea of ‘segmenting’ the marketplace came about in response to recognizing, that in an age of mass marketing “there were different groupings of customers with wants and needs who required different products” (A Dictionary of Marketing, 2011, Market segmentation). Market segmentation has grown to include categories such as Geographical, Demographic, Brand Loyalty, Usage Level, Product, Benefit, Lifestyle, Market Niche and Psychographic (2011, A Dictionary of Marketing). These large segments are justified and underpinned by strategic statistical research, coupled with data gathering (Pridmore & Hamalainen, 2017). I am interested in creating segment distinctions because they attest to the decisions that are made by Designer-Makers about where they fit within the sector and about the stratification that has developed as the sector has matured.
Overall statistical data relating to Designer-Maker markets is limited (I consider this to be an opportunity for future research) and there is even less that relates to the distinctions between Designer-Maker markets although this is understood by participants and organisers. As the ABS states “Collecting information on those who sell art and craft items is (also) difficult. Those involved in the sale of arts and crafts are generally counted with retailers of a range of other items and business listings. Sales also regularly bypass formal retail channels with producers selling directly or selling through markets or fairs. (Australian Bureau of Statistics 4172.0, 2014)” Commercial reports such as those compiled by Wise Guy Reports (2018) seek to define the Arts and Crafts sector by analysing product sales of art and craft materials with some consideration of stakeholder use, but this is not what I am trying to capture. Some data can be found from particular markets. For instance, The Finders Keepers Market states that they attract “tens of thousands of visitors to each event” (The Finders Keepers Market, Our Story nd.) and according to media reportage of The Big Design Market (Weekend Notes, n.d, para. 3) it “has attracted over 57,000 visitors annually”. I assume that a lot of markets do keep records of attendance, but this information is not easily obtained in the public domain. For smaller markets, which can be run by volunteers, this data is not necessarily collected at all. Overall this style of data is not particularly helpful when trying to distinguish between market segments other than perhaps to ascertain differences of scale.

Given this limitation it challenges my ability to justify any claims I make in relation to the distinctions between Designer-Maker markets quantitatively and as a result I declare the subjective nature of the categories that I have created for this research. Being mindful of the paucity of available information, I have developed a series of sub-headings that endeavour to describe the characteristics of the segments typical of these different Designer-Maker markets as understood by myself, other Designer-Makers and Market Organisers. The approach I have taken is to use the rationale that lies behind each market. This includes factors such as where the market is located, whether the market is motivated by community access, sustainability principles, a strict adherence to a policy of ‘handmade’ or to broader retail motivations. Additionally, I have considered the design aesthetics attached to the look of the different markets and price point for stall fees. These aspects all help to reflect the variety of market offerings. My involvement and personal experience lies within segment 2, which I have called ‘Local and values-driven’ (see below for definitions).
What do Designer-Maker-Markets look like? What are the segments?

Through attending and participating in markets I have been able to see first-hand what the differences between the various types of markets are and this helps to define what the Designer-Maker market experiences and offerings are like. Designer-Makers also have a sense of where they fit within the strata of the sector. I have created segments that attempt to describe the nuanced distinctions between markets without favouring one over the other, of which there are three categories.

They are:

1. Large-sized and design-driven
2. Local and values-driven
3. Community and art and craft

1. Large-sized and design-driven

I have named this first segment of the Designer-Maker market sector ‘large sized and design driven’. These markets focus on broad consumer reach and take a curatorial approach to the presentation and location of their markets along with offering additional services to customers in the form of workshops, prizes etc. Within this segment there is an expectation that the Designer-Makers must offer high quality products and present their work in a manner that aligns with the curatorial approach of the market concerned. These markets typically run over 3 - 4 day blocks and draw significant crowds. They are located in large-scale buildings with facilities that support the Designer-Makers and consumers in the form of food, drinks and entertainment. The have evolved into ‘events’ and they are the ‘uber’ Designer-Maker markets that most closely mimic a mainstream retail experience. While they still seek to differentiate themselves from mainstream retail, increasingly the differences appear subtle in nature. Examples of these markets are The Big Design Market and The Finders Keepers Market.

The Big Design Market operates on an annual basis in Melbourne and Sydney. Advertising in the lead up to the 2017 Melbourne market focused on the idea of original and authentic design work. Held at the Royal Exhibition Building, it offered lighting and furniture; jewellery; textiles and linen; ceramics; handmade toys; art and more. As they stated, “we’ve selected designers from all over the country, as well as from New Zealand and Japan,” (Mazzotta, 2017, para 2) This markets view is to provide a competitive alternative to mainstream
retailing. Actual hand making of products by the Designer-Maker is not prioritized so much, rather quality of product is of utmost importance. Similarly, location of making or manufacturing was not so important however the Designer-Maker needs to be in control of the key decisions of design and production. (Respondent 7, pers. comm., 21 September 2017, p.9)

The Finders Keepers Market holds Autumn/Winter and Spring/Summer markets each year in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide. As they state “The Finders Keepers is a design market, that features the work of independent makers and designers from across Australia… More of a festival than a market, the events combine design, art, good food, live music and a fun community spirit under one awesome roof in major city locations. … We have always sought out beautiful venues with historical significance to host our events, further reinforcing the sense of wonder to shoppers and stallholders alike.” (The Finders Keepers Market, 2018 paras. 1-2)

Both of these large-sized design-driven markets have a strong design ethos and competition is high when it comes to obtaining a stall with applicants outweighing the number of available spaces. All large-sized design-driven markets have an application process that generally involves the applicant describing themselves, their location, their products and their philosophy which needs to be supported by a Website, Instagram, Facebook or other online profile. Designer-Makers who participate in these markets are seen as up and coming market leaders in design and can be the ones to watch in terms of future design trends. As Mazzotta (2017) said when promoting the Big Design Market for Sydney in 2017, it will feature “more than 230 designers and tastemakers” (para.1).

Designer-Maker stallholders in this segment have to pay significant sums for the privilege of inclusion, which can equate to significant financial risk, particularly for those who are relatively new to practice. As an example, Finders Keepers Fees for 2017 were Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide - Debut Design Stall 1.5m x 1.5m: $495* (first time applicants only), Design 2m x 2m: $990, Design 4m x 2m: $1650, Design 3m x 3m: $1650, Design 6m x 2m: $2530, Design 4m x 4m: $3300, Design 6m x 3m: $3300. (The Finders Keepers Market, 2018, Apply for a Stall) The Big Design Market does not publicly reveal stallholder fees but anecdotally I know that their fees are of an equivalent amount.
2. Local and Values Driven

I describe this segment as one that captures those Designer-Maker markets that are ‘local and values driven’. They are often located in suburban Town Halls, are small to mid-sized in scale, they invariably have a strong community emphasis which can be coupled with statements of values around sustainability and handmade and they don’t always describe themselves as Designer-Maker markets, rather they may choose monikers such ‘Makers’ ‘Artist’ or ‘Artisan’. They represent the largest segment of the broader Designer-Maker sector by virtue of their number and frequency. These Designer-Maker markets are more accessible for Designer-Makers from a price point of view and it is often here that new Designer-Makers begin the market experience and where they can start to get a sense of whether what they have to sell is going to work commercially. Predominantly female, Designer-Makers in this segment are participating in Designer-Maker markets for work. (In my 2011 questionnaire 80% of respondents described their participation as work) and as such it is important not to underestimate the challenges of this marketplace.

As one respondent said;

“It’s been a roller coaster ride since I began 5 years ago! The market scene in Melbourne has grown enormously, which has provided great opportunities for selling. It’s a difficult way to make a living, as I am not sure that any of us properly price our labour, and it’s a very competitive market. We are all also competing with goods that are mass produced, and much cheaper. I am constantly saddened by the number of copies of original designs I see around the place, and nearly everyone I know working in the handmade community for any period of time has been a victim to a copycat. I love the sense of community I get from working in this field, and the supportive and caring attitude of other practitioners. I do sometimes think that its only other makers who properly ‘get’ what we do! But I wouldn’t choose to be working at anything else and am constantly grateful that I can make an income from something I love doing so much, even if it is hard work! (Respondent 13, pers. comm. p.11)”.

Curatorial decisions are largely self-determined however there will still be an expectation that presentation is considered by the Designer-Maker in order to maximize their appeal. There can still be tough competition for inclusion. Some of these markets will also provide additional activities in the form of bars, music and entertainment for children. This depends
somewhat on who is running the event; if it is council sponsored vs. privately run as budgets can impact on these kinds of services.

Examples of these markets are ‘The Rose Street Market’, The Northcote Town Hall ‘Kris Kringle Night Market’ and the ‘Seddon Makers Market’. In particular it is common to find ‘values’ statements that underpin their operating rationale. The Rose Street Market has been operating since 2003. As they state “you’ll find Melbourne’s best art and design talent here each Saturday and Sunday. In fact, we showcase the work of up to 120 creatives, so expect to feast your eyes on plenty of unique gems and one-off wonders that you won’t get anywhere else! … So, if you’re a lover of all things handmade then look no further. Come along and experience it for yourself” (The Rose Street Market, 2018, About, paras. 1-2). Notably this market is interested in originality, creativity and the handmade. A sense of ‘inner-city community’ is celebrated and the idea of family is invoked in much of what they say and do. I think that this is in part to do with the fact that it is a family operated business that has long links to the Fitzroy community.

Northcote Town Hall’s Kris Kringle Night Markets take place annually over four Thursday evenings leading up to Christmas. As they state on their website “The markets focus on local designs and handcrafts, featuring hand-made items such as designer fashion, accessories, giftware, jewellery, ceramics, woodcrafts, textiles, toys, plants, and other similar items.” (Northcote Town Hall, 2018, Markets) The community nature of this event is emphasized and that the provision of a market space run through the Town Hall is conceived to support local artists in the region. Localism is a strong feature as is supporting the arts in general (Respondent 4, pers. comm. p.1).

The Seddon Makers Market takes place seasonally in Winter, Spring, Summer and in December has a twilight market. As they state they are “a not for profit, community-based arts and craft market run by a volunteer group … the market celebrates and showcases local makers and beyond” (Seddon Makers Market, 2018 para.1).

These examples have a guiding ethos that is connected to community, localism and to values related to creativity and the individuality of the Designer-Maker. Local and values-driven markets actively pursue the offering of unique shopping experiences in surroundings (either
indoor or outdoor) that are not like retail spaces. They emphasize the handmade nature of objects (or those that are infused with ‘handmade’ ideals) and that actively encourage relationships with the Designer-Makers and customer. The consequence of this can mean that sometimes there are compromises of aesthetics and quality, but this is a more forgiving environment that can often nurture improvement in these areas, or simply accept the variance. Here the concept of ‘handmade’ is strongly in evidence.

This is the segment I participate in and to some extent because of the emphasis on ‘values’ it is perhaps a kinder environment compared with Large-Sized and Design Driven markets described above. There is a strong focus on the mercantile in both market segments, however I am conscious that my very positive experiences in the Local and Values Driven have been impacted by this and I am aware that this is not necessarily true for all Designer-Makers. For Designer-Makers who derive a substantial portion of their income from Designer-Maker markets the stakes are high and competitive.

3. Community and art and craft

My final segment is described as ‘community art and craft’. While, in the main they do not promote themselves as Designer-Maker markets, Designer-Makers do participate in them. These markets have mixed offerings that can include second hand goods, home grown plants and imported goods. They are not curated and there is an unevenness of design and aesthetic evident in some of the made objects on offer. I make this assessment on the basis of my professional status as a lecturer in Textile Design, where it is necessary for me to determine the success or otherwise, of work that is submitted by my students. Creating a unified object that brings together design concept, aesthetics and quality of making are the fundamentals of strong design outcomes. This is not meant to dismiss the strength and viability of these markets, nor their appeal to customers. One Designer-Maker I interviewed pointed out that these larger craft markets have appeal to ‘ordinary people’ who are not necessarily seeking something different (Respondent 8, pers. comm. p.11) rather they are enjoying a day out that might just involve browsing. (Respondent 8, pers. comm. p. 15) Irrespective of my aesthetic judgement these markets still express strong values around the ‘handmade’ concept. Examples of these markets such as The Red Hill Community Market and the St Kilda Foreshore Market both have substantial histories (Red Hill since 1974 and St Kilda Foreshore since 1970) and continue to attract large crowds.
St Kilda Foreshore Market’s website states “Each and every stallholder has a hand in making the products being sold. Take the time to ask how the products are made, and you will soon see the love and passion that is poured into each of our one-of-a-kind pieces of work. From gifts and souvenirs to furniture and jewellery - you will leave with confidence knowing that you will take home something that is truly one of a kind.” (St Kilda Esplanade Market, About, para. 1)

The Red Hill Community Market website states “Red Hill is the ‘grand dame’ of Victoria’s craft markets. …Dedicated commitment to quality [this market] brings together over 300 talented stallholders who regularly demonstrate enormous pride in their work by producing original creations of the highest quality. It’s a proven feast for the mind, body and soul, a fascinating eclectic mix of textures, materials and colours that make up the vast range of individually designed products” (Craft Markets Australia, About Red Hill Community Market, para. 2).

The foregrounding of community, open access for all and that all goods will be considered for inclusion is ultimately what distinguishes this segment from the others.

These three broad segments represent the Designer-Maker market landscape as it appears now, although it has been a particularly volatile environment too. When I first started this research in 2010, there were strong leading markets that have since ceased to operate. Notable departures are The Melbourne Design Market in Melbourne CBD, The Shirts & Skirts Market in Abbotsford, Thread Den in North Melbourne, Magnolia Square in Malvern and The Substation in Newport. However, this has not so far challenged the Designer-Maker market sector as a whole because where one closes, another opens. Dominant markets like the Big Design Market and Finders Keepers have risen since then along with more recent additions such as The Makers and Shakers market which launched in 2016. They are an example of a new Designer-Maker market that sits in the ‘local and values driven’ segment. As they state they are a “…fiercely independent event powered by the goals and values of the handmade movement. We strive to play our little part in creating the shift from the consumption of mass-produced products, to the mass-consumption of locally and authentically produced products.” (The Makers and Shakers market, 2018, para. 1).
Curating the Message - Authentic Making and Trading

Designer-Maker markets actively promote themselves through online websites and directories, paper media, social media such as Instagram and Facebook, the social networks of participating Designer-Makers and through word of mouth. Communication is key to attracting consumers supporting the ongoing viability of this market sector. Designer-Maker markets advertise themselves through the expression of their values and this has been a feature that is distinct from mainstream retail. There is a culture that has emerged that aligns itself with uniqueness, quality and values such as sustainability which, when combined create a narrative of authenticity and the concept of ‘handmade’ reinforces this.

A quick survey of Designer-Maker markets reveals some of the values-based words that are used when advertising the markets reinforcing this notion are: Handmade, Design, Art, Craft, Artisan, Maker, Sustainable, Ethical, Community, Creative, Independent, Original, Exclusive, Friendly, Unique experience, Local, Mindful, Fun, Passion, Genuine, One-off, Direct from maker to you, Atmosphere, Contemporary, Iconic, Intimate, Relaxed, Storytelling. While this is not an exhaustive list it does provide an example of how this market sector is advertising itself with a focus on value in the ‘intrinsic’ sense where the handmade object is esteemed and prized in itself, (Dewey, 1966, p.238-9) and while ‘instrumental’ (financial) value is present, this is not the emphasis.

Referring back to the research that I along with colleague Kylie Budge conducted where we examined the values expressed by stallholders participating in the Big Design Market held in 2012, the following are the key word groupings we found that Designer-Makers expressed:

- **Hand statements like Hand-screen printing, Hand make, Handmade, drawn by hand, Hand thrown, By hand, Hand crafted.**
- **Location, mostly Local, Melbourne, specified Australian states or Australian. There were some overseas locations too.**
- **Sustainability statements related to process, materials and method including Eco-materials, Organic and Natural, Responsible, Recycled, Reclaimed.**
- **Sustainability statements relating to state of affairs like environmental awareness, eco-loving, sweatshop free.**
• Nostalgia statements like story and identity, memories of another era, vintage, charming, thoughtful, traditions.

• Emotional statements like fun, quirky, lovingly designed, simplicity, beauty, family business, funky, romantic, delicious, healing.

• Utility statements like simplicity done well, comfortable, large, decorative, innovative, affordable, efficient, durable, art and function, wearable.

• Status statements like unique, original, cool, fashionable, timeless, stylish, quality, niche, iconic, limited edition, luxury, bespoke.

• Size statements like little, small range, team, creative team, small production runs.

• Design inspiration statements like nature, imagination, history, Scandinavian, Japanese, Bauhaus, folk art, retro, modern, vintage, geometric, decorative, minimalism, story, landscape.

For me these are powerful and evocative statements that express a point of view where Designer-Makers are engaged with message giving and this positioning can be connected to the notion of authenticity which is often interwoven with statements related to ‘handmade’ and which builds the signifying nature of the Designer-Maker market landscape. I contend that customers attending Designer-Maker markets are interested in these messages. An example that focuses on the view of the consumer is found in a study conducted by Littrell, Anderson and Brown (1993) who wanted to understand how tourists defined authenticity in relation to craft souvenirs. Eight themes emerged from their research in relation to what constituted authenticity for the tourists. They were Uniqueness and Originality, Mode of Production, Workmanship, Cultural and Historical integrity, Aesthetics, Function and Use, Shopping Experience and Genuineness. These sentiments bear a striking relationship to those that we found in our research. While the consumer perspective has not been the focus of my research, it is possible to see that the narratives and values expressed by Designer-Makers does align with what the consumer is seeking.

These values statements can be connected to the concept of an authentic experience. As Beverland & Farrelly (2009) state, “consumers actively seek authenticity to find meaning in their lives, and in line with associated personal goals… prefer brands and experiences that reinforce their identity (or identities)” (p. 839). As to the means of making Doyle, Fraser & Robbins (2018) assert that authenticity is established through the relationship of making and the maker irrespective of process. It is “an implicit reflexive process of fluid design and manufacture by re invention or copy, made real and made material” (p. 215). Through values
seeking and relationship making, Designer-Maker markets offer authentic experiences which are found in the narratives of presentation and product where the consumer can form an allegiance to authentic ideals. From my observations as a Designer-Maker stallholder, visitors come for a variety of reasons. Many appreciate the opportunity to see work that is original and to converse with the Designer-Maker. They are often curious about how something is made, and they are keen to learn about the values underpinning the objects for sale such as whether recycled paper or organic cotton is used. This signals an interest in ideals and personal goals related to what they buy and how brand loyalty can be formed with the individual Designer-Maker or the market itself. By choosing to attend Designer-Maker markets, consumers tacitly or overtly align themselves with the values of this community that offers authentic experiences and products.

**Curating the Message – The Look**

Designer-Maker markets reinforce the message of authenticity through how physically present themselves and this is expressed differently by each Designer-Maker market segment. As I have indicated earlier, ‘large-sized design-driven markets have a strong, designed aesthetic expressed through the choice of venue, the addition of artwork, the colour palette and style of infrastructure such as signage and furniture and the expectations imposed on stallholders to present in a manner that is to the standard of the particular market. The Big Design Market and Finders Keepers both choose to use Melbourne’s Royal Exhibition Buildings in Carlton. This 19th century building is known for its beauty and it embodies architectural history with grand arches and decorative walls, a fitting stage for market participants. Incidentally (or perhaps intentionally) it evokes an atmosphere redolent of the ideas of 19th century arts and crafts movement. These markets also feature food, wine/beer, music and workshops, which focus on design and making. There is a strong fairtrade message in the food and drinks on sale and they reinforce the ‘event’ nature of the market.

Notes that I made after attending the Big Design Market on 2 December 2016 are as follows:  
There was a grand artwork display suspended from the ceiling in the centre of the building created by paper artist Benja Harney of Paperform (The Big Design Market Project Installation, 2016) signalling that this is a creative space. The Designer-Maker stall displays focused on ethical and handmade. So many stalls had signage that reinforced these ideas by revealing process and materials. Many utilised wooden materials for display along with plants.
Predominant colours were black, white and brown, along with other natural colours. Some did use bright colours.

One standout experience related to buying a coffee. The coffee vendor, St Ali, offered choices of chilled drinks that could be bought from the “Sensory Lab” which had varieties of coffee in bottles or hot coffee. It was an entertaining and performative system of serving. While standing in the queue a person gave me a cup and wrote my order on it with my name. Then I paid at the cash register and handed over my cup to this person. Then the barista pulled my coffee and then finally another poured the milk and handed it to me. In all, 4 staff handled my coffee order! I think this was meant to be a system that facilitated efficiency, although I am not sure that this was achieved but the personal upbeat interaction with all staff made it a pleasant experience. It was very performance-like and hands on.

Other market add-ons included show bags which had sold out in the first half hour, and competitions for prizes made up of goods contributed by some of the Designer-Makers (if you signed up for emails). Creative workshops were being offered, including stamp-making with Beci Orpin (a well-known Melbourne Designer) and cooking classes run by ‘LuxBite’, making lemon meringue tarts. There was also a play area for kids.

In the ‘local and values-driven’ market while the expectations are not as high for stallholders in terms of ‘curated ‘display, expectations do exist when it comes to aligning with specific market values which are considered important by participants and organisers alike.

Notes that I made after participating in the Kris Kringle Market, Northcote in December 2015 are as follows:

We are back again this year and there is a bustle of activity while people construct their stalls in preparation for the market. Some of the stall displays are quite sophisticated. One regular has a wonderful Malibu style bar surrounded by cool hats, swimwear and BBQ wear; she is ready to go early. Another’s stand is very complex. The construction takes a good 30 minutes to build. Another long-term participant has a seamless construction of boxes to showcase creams and unguents while clothing vendors bring in portable racks of clothing – all of us sweating in the summer heat. This market business takes emotional and physical dedication.
I am early, watching and sitting – reflecting on the mix of people here and how this particular market has changed since I started to participate back in 2008. Certainly, the sophistication of display has sharpened and people are better at curating the way they present their work. Consideration of lighting, surfaces and engagement and purchasing devices that allow for cashless buys are much more developed. It is a more unified experience rather than the rawness of a market environment that we might once have expected.

These markets have distinct personalities that are made up of a combination of the Market’s physical environment and its philosophy and the Designer-Makers’ individual aesthetics. They produce a personality infused space with the commonality found in the fruits of their design and making labour on show.

Curating the Message – The Culture

While the ‘look’ of Designer-Maker community signifies an authentic message so too is the type and nature of communication that occurs in this space. The fact that Designer-Makers are closely contained within a limited space and for a limited time facilitates communication between each other, something that is not a strong feature of the broader retail landscape. Communication also occurs between Designer-Makers and consumers and casual conversations based around ideas and products are common. For Designer-Makers, there is an openness and shared purpose underpinned by the positive energy attached to the pride of presenting what has been created along with the excitement attached to wondering how your products will be received. The following text offers a reflection on one of the markets I participated in.

Notes that I made after participating the Kris Kringle Market, Northcote in December 2014 are as follows:

It runs from 5 – 10pm. We like to arrive early, so we can take our time setting up our stall so that it looks the best it can. The white cloth on the table - getting it even and low enough at the front to disguise the mess under the table. We consider who our direct neighbours are - have they jewellery or cards which we are selling? We will arrange our products accordingly so there are no clashes. Table set - time to chat, get a coffee or a wine. Say hi to other
stallholders - only once they are set up. How have other markets they have done been going?
Conversations more recently are about the downturn in markets - people aren’t spending as
much - perhaps the GFC has finally started to impact Australia in this once buoyant and
seemingly exempt market world? For a time, Designer-Maker markets seemed to be immune
to the greater challenges of world economics.
Immersion and camaraderie are at the heart. People want to sell and there is a frisson that is
present in the environment because of this, but there is also a great sense of community –
despite the fact we are all vying for the same dollar from people who walk through the door.
5pm is here and people start to arrive - the business of selling gets underway. Lots of browsing
- we recognize return customers from the last few years - they seem to enjoy returning each
year. Some stay for a chat - others are faces you simply recognize. Some customers are timid
and don’t want any interaction from you - others want to spend time poring over the product
- and others inquire about the materials, making method etc. Others simply just pass by giving
the work a cursory glance; they are there on a social outing with friends and the market is not
the central focus.
The night passes - we take it in turns to look out for each other’s stalls as we step away for
toilet and food breaks, to stretch our legs and as the night progresses, the chance to wander
around and have a proper look at the other wares on offer. We chat to stallholders further
afield - take mental notes on product and display - keep an eye out for products that are similar
to our own - how are they travelling? Are they doing better than us? Why? And then the night
begins to draw to a close. If you have done well, you might pop over to the stallholder who
has something you can’t resist - there is a lot of money that is exchanged between stallholders.
But there are also swaps. So if someone admires something on your stall they might offer to
do a trade with something that is on their stall of commensurate value. This is good if both
stallholders admire each other’s work - a little bit more tricky if the love doesn’t go both ways.
But underneath it all there is great politeness and an overriding sense of good will.
The night ends - 10pm - and instantly it is action-all-stations. People pack up like magic - it is
all so quick. Some have partners, friends or family waiting to spirit them away - others might
pop out for a drink. But the hall empties fast and another amazing community is gone until
next time.

This is a very positive view, which is largely true for me. But I have heard stories, directly and
via gossip that the good will is not always there. Newcomers to markets - particularly the very
large ones have described bullying tactics, where long-term stallholders have pushed into
the newbies space. The physical location and space of a stall can strongly impact on the
performance of a stall. If other stallholders bring tall display stands they can block you out,
so market goers can miss you - and if your space is taken over by others, it can be a challenge to display all of your work effectively. Prime positioning is also an issue. How do market goers travel throughout the market? Where is the entrance? Who is seen first? Is there a back room or odd space that newcomers in the pecking order are assigned to that customers might miss altogether? It is often like the old share-house arrangement. The longer/more loyal you have been to a market (including attending off season markets) the more likely you are to get the better positions. Newcomers do go to the back of the queue.

As my reflections demonstrate, there are the prosaic aspects of participating in a Designer-Maker markets that relate to trade. Competition is at the base of these markets and there are both the warm aspects of this theatre along with the not so warm. But for me, the culture of the community, connected by authentic making and trading is still a strong feature of this environment and it is one of the reasons why there is often a return of particular customers along with Designer-Makers who choose to participate in this sphere. This has been the reason why I have continued to participate. I feel like my efforts are valued in this environment, I communicate my values to others and I receive direct feedback in words and in monetary returns.

**What do Designer-Makers stand for and how does what they make express their values?**

Values expression is a strong feature of Designer-Maker markets and the dominance of how products are made in addition to broader ethical considerations is an underlying and distinguishing theme particularly for the large-sized and local and values driven market segments. There is an expectation that if something is found in a Designer-Maker market it is not mass-produced. The exclamation ‘did you make this?’ is a common utterance made by many consumers, which is expressed with a mixture of surprise and admiration. Many Designer-Makers highlight this in the way that they present their work although this is shown in different ways in the three segments. In the ‘large-sized, design-driven’ segment it is common to see signage that attests to handmade production, ethical considerations and those that reveal process and materials. Many stalls utilise wood for display and incorporate plants and use natural colour palettes, but this is not consistent throughout; rather stylistic curation is the take home impression. The image below is taken from the Big Design Market in 2017 and communicates the scale and feel of the marketplace.
In the ‘local and values driven’ market segment the idea of handmade is strongly featured and often linked with social issues. For example, in late 2017 commentary relating to the equal marriage vote appeared on the Seddon Makers Market website and they often feature local Western suburbs causes (The Seddon Makers Market, 2017, Homepage).

At the ‘Northcote Town Hall Kris Kringle’ night markets, local traders in nearby High Street Northcote also open their doors in complementary cross trade support for the local
community. As an expression of the value of ‘handmade’ it is also common to see Designer-Makers continuing to work on their products while at the market. Stall displays in this segment are often constructed out of found materials in contrast to the slicker presentations to the large-sized design-driven-segment. Again, signage is used to communicate aspects of the ‘handmade’, the materials used often attest to organic materials, locally sourced and so on. Commonly Designer-Makers’ stalls are placed together in a crowded fashion – which builds an overall picture of a community of Designer-Makers coming together with a common purpose.

While the ‘community art and craft’ segment is the least likely to make declarations about ‘handmade’ and values statements related chain of production, some participants still align with this. Individual stalls may advertise themselves in this manner but there is generally no requirement for product offerings to be designed and or made by the stallholder as criteria for inclusion in the market. The image below of the Red Hill Community market which is an outdoor market captures the feel of the environment.

Designer-Makers’ products generally fall into two broad categories: Fashion and accessories and homewares and lifestyle products. For those that design fashion and accessories there is a strong emphasis on female fashion and jewellery. This might be because the majority of designers and makers are female (as referred to earlier) and many people start making for a client they understand (themselves).

After attending the Big Design Market in 2017 I collated a list of the product offerings that combined my own observations with their website catalogue (The Big Design Market, 2017, Designers). It featured Jewellers, Accessory makers that included shoes, bags and purses, scarves, hats, socks and tights, men’s underwear, fashion mostly for women, homewares in the form of bed-linen, towels, kitchen goods, pot plants and general decorative objects. Ceramics was an especially large sub-category that was and still is trending. There was also children’s wear and toys, pet products, paper products such as gift cards, kitchen products such as knives, cutlery, chopping boards, specialist teas/chocolates/olive oil, bathroom products, technology and outdoor accessories such as key and cord organisers and docking stations.

The novel, inventive and unique is valued and encouraged in this environment and the setting of trends that ultimately move beyond the Designer-Market marketplace into the mainstream retail sector occurs relatively frequently. Emily Green’s (Emily Green, 2018, Homepage) jewellery and accessories is an example of one such a product range that set a trend for jewellery in the broader community. Showcasing her vibrant necklaces handmade from polymer clay in markets such as Finders Keepers and the Big Design Market, in combination with a robust online presence which includes Etsy and Facebook and her own website, she has garnered a following that has led to a new genre of jewellery in which copyists now abound. Introduced as one of “the recent darlings of Australia’s handcrafted jewellery-making scene” (Bidinost, 2013, para. 6), Green described the value of the Designer-Maker market sector as a vehicle for selling her work. Stating “The bigger annual or biannual design markets have been the most worthwhile. Although the stall hire fees are much higher than regular weekend markets, they are well promoted and pull massive crowds of shoppers who are usually there to buy not just browse. Your product receives exposure to a much larger audience and that often leads to future online sales.” She goes on to say, “selling online and at markets is equally profitable as she receives the full retail price at both (retailers pay a
wholesale fee)” (Bidinost, 2013, Para. 7). An image of her current range of necklaces is pictured below.

![Image of necklaces](https://www.emilygreen.net/)

Image 23: “Magnolia” by Emily Green, https://www.emilygreen.net/

Designer-Maker markets representing the ‘local and values driven’ market segment also offer similar products that include fashion, jewellery and other accessories, homewares, toys, artwork, paper products and food and plants. A stronger representation of children focused products or things that would appeal to younger families that are most closely connected to their communities can also be found.

An example of one of the success stories that has grown through the ‘local and values driven’ driven segment is Able and Game who are a stationery label, run by husband and wife team Anna Blandford and Gareth Meney. One of the markets that they participate in is the Rose Street Market in Fitzroy and I remember them there from as early as 2007 when I was participating. Their cards contain images and words offering “humour and real sentiment to convey messages that are quirky, poignant and personal” (Able and Game, 2018, About) which often refer to recognizable locations and lifestyle trends. The narrative of their business in combination with the appeal of their designs communicates their values and the values of this segment of the marketplace. Below are some examples.
The St Kilda Esplanade Market representing the ‘community art and craft’ segment offers a mix of fashion, jewellery and other accessories, indigenous design and artwork, wooden and metal products, children’s products, pet products, body products, food and plants and contains a souvenir focus. Some products are assembled rather than original in their design and making. This is also a market that will often attract tourists so Australian themes can be found in some of the design and product approaches taken by the Designer-Makers.

Contemporary Trading

I conclude this chapter, by considering what trading shifts and behaviours have occurred in the Designer-Maker market context. Ideas such as collaboration, business networking, shared skillsets and forms of exchange other than money, like trades between makers, shared market spaces and complementary skills marketing will be explored. Information gathered from Interviews with market participants is also referenced.

The rise of the Designer-Maker market sector that I have participated in is set against the backdrop of the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-2008. One of Australia’s initial responses to the crisis at the time was the provision of economic stimulus packages (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009) offered as a financial confidence booster, and for a time this seemed to work. The Designer-Maker market economy was in a growth phase with new markets popping up seemingly monthly and growing in size. This was an entrepreneurial space both for smart new organisers and participants. Spending was brisk, small businesses were developing and
As economic confidence and traditional ways of earning a living have become less certain the Designer-Maker market space is attractive. The casualization of the workforce, the growth of part time work and the collapse of once guaranteed local jobs through the loss of manufacturing, means that prospects for a young person entering the workforce for the first time, particularly within the arts is challenging. Now, Designer-Makers participating in Designer-Maker markets have co-created a bridge to an interested marketplace made up of people looking for new products that are not mass-produced. As the World Economic Forum (2018) states “Consumers are increasingly turning away from mass-produced goods to those rooted with a strong sense of place” (Artisinal Production Summary, Retail Consumer Goods and Lifestyle), so this reflects broader global issues. In this marketplace, Designer-Makers can build skills and reputations along with generating an income. In this space it is not necessary to go to a 3rd party to sell your wares and it is great for the consumer who is interested in engaging with Designer-Makers, particularly those who subscribe to value systems such as handmade, local, unique, fairtrade and sustainable. It is arguable that this is a new sector of the retail marketplace, where the aspects of peer-to-peer economies are expressed.

The following terms; Co-labs, Crowd funding, Open Source, Peer-to-peer, Pop-Up, Ride Sharing, Couch Surfing are lexicons representing new approaches to economic exchange that have grown in the last 10 years. (Von Busch, 2010) They reflect a shift away from 20th Century economic models dominated by corporations towards other modes of trade that have been enabled by technology and that are underpinned by a growing interest in sharing (Davis, 2016). Schor (2016) reports that “Many organisations have been eager to position themselves under the ‘big tent’ of the sharing economy because of the positive symbolic meaning of sharing, the magnetism of innovative digital technologies, and the rapidly growing volume of sharing activity” (p.8). According to Schor (2016) sharing economy activities fall into 4 broad categories “recirculation of goods [ie. EBAY], increased utilization of durable assets [ie. Airbnb], exchange of services [ie. Airtasker] and sharing of productive assets [ie Co-worker spaces]” (p.9). While she goes on to debate the successes and risks associated with such modes of exchange, there is little doubt that the Designer-Maker market sector has grown out of this broader sociological shift. Finding a good fit under her 4
categories is slightly more problematic. On first look ‘the sharing of productive assets’ seems right however she defines this as place where production is enabled by shared spaces and connectivity between makers such as “hackerspaces” and “communal offices” (p.11) emphasizing that that they facilitate production rather than consumption. As Designer-Maker spaces are about consumption as well as offering the results of making, it is the conceptual framing of the notion of sharing that is of most relevance. Sharing selling spaces, sharing stories and sharing values all underpin the Designer-Maker milieu.

From an outside perspective this is a peer-to-peer environment where people irrespective of circumstance can elevate themselves to achieve better lives without some of the formal social structures such as costly education or barriers faced when seeking employment. Peer-to-peer businesses like ‘Uber’ and ‘Airbnb’ have grown rapidly, charged with an entrepreneurial spirit and although they are not without their problems, such as un-regulated working conditions and taxation contributions (Martin, C. J, 2015; Habibi, Davidson & Laroche, 2016), they demonstrate the accessibility of such methods of trade. It is possible to view this as being consistent with the rise of Designer-Maker market sector that connects and fosters relationships that ultimately lead to self-determination and control. Making is extremely difficult particularly if you want to do it well, but anyone can have a go. Not only do Designer-Makers experiment with making, re-making, proto-typing and modes of production and engage in a direct interface with their customers, they also form part of a community that is testing this larger peer-to-peer economic model. In addition, they utilise technology to enable sharing, where their vested interest in the broader goals of the movement which encompasses “economic, environmental and social factors” (Schor, 2016, p. 13) extends their reach to large audiences.

Another aspect of today’s Designer-Maker markets is that making partnerships, that were in their nascent stages in 2011 are now common along with economic exchange that is not necessarily always based on money. In interviews I conducted in 2017 with market participants there were references made to the community of makers, collaborative events being organised by small groups of friendship-based Designer-Makers and of the sharing of kindred skillsets between Designer-Makers such as graphic design and photography. Here they self-promote together in collaborative communities using social media such as Instagram. (Respondent 5, 2017, pers. comm. p.5)
The idea of a Designer-Maker market is now seen as a contemporary business model as opposed to hangover views that once considered markets to be old fashioned and crafty (in the denigrated use of the word). Design is an important business adjunct, becoming integral to the practice of many Designer-Makers. And bound up in this approach, thinking about what, why and how we consume has also become a mainstream concern. It is still a little early to tell what the long view will be in terms of how peer-to-peer economies will perform and as Schor (2016) states, broader forces are also at work. “The goals of [sharing activists] eco-accountability, value distribution, and social solidarity are dependent on “the political and social context in which they are employed” (pp.19-20). As stated before, new Designer-Maker markets continue to open. They are responding to ongoing shifts in the marketplace while keeping an eye on authentic value systems. In the world of pop-up business ventures, this seems entirely normal.

But while the Designer-Maker Market environment itself represents broader community debates and narratives about how the future of material engagement might play out using aspects of peer-to-peer trade, the pragmatics of this marketplace should not be ignored. While this concept of peer-to-peer is valid, it should not be forgotten that these environments are strongly curated and controlled by the organisers. Organisers establish core values for their markets and determine whether applicants can participate (or not) in their markets and from my experience this is rarely a negotiable thing. The quality of products, style and other broader criteria such as product specialization, social media/online presence and novelty will determine if you are acceptable for inclusion. This is at odds with an idealized world.

In Summary

In this chapter my research reveals that this is a vibrant and fast-moving sector, which has seen the rise and cessation of individual markets over the last decade. Artefacts, people and the place come together to create compelling narratives and experiences to connect us. It is also part of a broader Pop-Up style form of retailing which is associated with the 21st century, one that embraces relatively short-term lengths of stay.

Irrespective of some of the more contentious issues Designer-Makers might have in relation to gaining access to this marketplace, it’s public face is very attractive. What Designer-Maker
markets do well is to provide the consumer with the opportunity to engage face-to-face with a Designer-Maker. Goods that are made with aspirational values such as by hand, locally made, authentically considered, socially engaged, sustainably produced, and rejecting of mass-production are offered for sale. Coupled with a novel environment that provides a friendly community feel offering food, drinks, activities for kids, workshops and experiences facilitates authentic engagement. Irrespective of the segment, the overriding commonality that is found across all of the markets is that the products are largely pitched at domestic life. What we wear, how we decorate ourselves, what we surround ourselves with in our homes, what we eat and how we play are all the subject of interest in these marketplaces. And perhaps because modern products are so ubiquitous and the making of them is so concealed we have grown curious to learn how things are made again.

If this is so, it is little wonder that this relatively small marketplace has grown to pack such a punch because of the intimate nature of products for sale, the good design values and sustainable thinking and making that underpins them.
This chapter explores how I find and make knowledge through my practice and how the notion of ‘handmade’ as a signifier has emerged. I ask, how is the concept of ‘handmade’ be understood through my practice? To do this I examine two exhibitions and my card making processes.

Firstly, 1) I discuss ‘Microtopia’ which was an exhibition I participated in looking where I explored the practice of contemporary Textile design. Secondly, 2) I discuss an exhibition I held, ‘The First Hypothesis’ which entailed exhibiting my gift cards, paintings of the cards, a film tracking my making process and subsequent reflections taken from a focus group discussion to understand ascribed value and context. Thirdly, 3) I provide examples of the evolution of my designs referencing aesthetic choices along with skills and tools used. Fourthly 4) and finally, I juxtapose the ideas I have developed, with the views expressed by other participants and organisers from Designer-Maker markets, using my insider knowledge to reveal aspects of working within this marketplace.

Returning to Niedderer’s (2009) proposition that artefacts can reveal procedural knowledge, through displaying their method of making, I use my gift cards as the site for research. Applying one of her suggested research approaches where design of an artefact can be employed to better “understand a theoretical concept such as emotion, function etc.” (2013,p.13), I utilise the progression of my design and gift card practice to unpack ideas of
value and authenticity signified through the concept of ‘handmade’. The gift cards reveal aesthetic goals and processes and the Designer-Maker marketplace is the context into which they are placed where handmade is communicated to broader audiences. Different projects as well as my market participation have allowed me to reflect on how ‘handmade’ is revealed.

1) Microtopia

I participated in a group exhibition ‘Microtopia’ in 2013, which showcased the interrogative nature of textile design. (RMIT’s Design Research Institute (DRI) ‘Convergence: Transforming our Future’ exhibition, 2013). My work ‘Symbols of belonging and happiness in urban life’ explored contemporary textile design practice combining methods of patterning, colour work and digital design technology. I created a ‘paper mobile’, which displayed different patterns on the front and reverse of recognizable paper cut forms representing symbols of inner-city urban Melbourne culture. Each of the textile designs motifs represented my ideas about my locale. On the front face I created hand rendered sketches of ‘pretty’ organic inspired patterning to represent aspirational life values about living in inner urban Melbourne and on the reverse, I created patterns using photographs of local graffiti representing the creative and (sometimes negative) aspects of inner urban life.

I also wanted to show that the practice of textile design is often conversational in nature, can be art-based and uses substrates that are not necessarily tied to fabric outcomes. Mixing handmade processes such as drawing for motif creation and paper cutting, the designed patterns were then developed further using the digital design tools of Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator. Old notions of the textile designer as adjunct rather than a central focus of the presentation was also behind the thinking in this work. Some of these ideas were provoked by my teaching practice, but they also came from my Designer-Maker marketplace experiences where it is common to see textile design placed as a centrepiece in itself. What I was presenting was not a painstakingly hand-painted design to be incorporated into a fashion garment or to be used as a soft furnishing, instead it was a narrative designed to provoke a conversation about modern Textile Design practice and modern living.
Image 26: Adams L. ‘Symbols of belonging and happiness in urban life’, Front View, designed 2013

Image 27: Adams L. ‘Symbols of belonging and happiness in urban life’, Reverse View, designed 2013
For me this was also a reflective act, where the creation of the work allowed me to actively break down the elements of my practice. I paid attention to the tools I used. I captured what my skillsets entailed, and I noticed how these had shifted over time. The total array of tools used to create this work consisted of pencil sketching, gouache painting, photography, digital manipulation, scissors for cutting and a needle and thread for assemblage. To identify and reflect on the skills and tools I used at this time (2013) was surprising because I had not realized just how fully my digital design skills and tools were integrated with my overall array of analogue skills and tools. Extending beyond the narrative intentions of my designs, I also came to understand that the skills and tools I brought to the task offered a chronicle of how handmaking could be construed. As Ingold (2011) asserts “To name a tool is to invoke the story.” “…the functions of things are not attributes but narratives” (p.56). This recognition provoked questions for me about exactly what the term ‘handmade’ might be assumed to contain. It also aligned with the now contemporary recognition that today’s Designer-Maker is one who moves between design and actual making and avails themselves of a full gamut of analogue and digital design and fabrication tools. (Shiner, 2012, p.235)

Creating this work also reinforced the ‘local’ aspect of my research and how it is strongly situated in the inner urban context of Melbourne. This awareness is important and one that I use to qualify broader generalizations in this research. My ‘Microtopia’ mobile is a visual representation of both design values and procedural knowledge.

2) The First Hypothesis Exhibition

As indicated earlier I have been making gift cards for a long time. The earliest versions I made were in the mid 1990’s not long after I graduated with my Textile Design degree and I only really gave them to friends and family. At this time, I used a combination of linocut and hand painting techniques. Choosing gouache as the medium, which is the traditional paint used by textile designers I focused on imagery that was pattern based. I was conscious at the time, that I wanted to make more than ‘one-off’ art pieces in order to commercialize them at some point in the future, so I chose the linocut technique that would allow for multiple prints. At this stage I did not design with a computer, so making multiple prints using a linocut offered a good solution for small production runs of cards. While outsourcing to a bureau was an option, I did not pursue this because I wanted to create objects that were special and valued because of
their ‘handmade’ aesthetic. Even at this stage, the ‘handmade’ idea was something that I wanted to communicate through what I made.

When I eventually started to sell my gift cards, knowing whether or not they were valued by others because they were handmade as opposed to being chosen for their basic function was unclear. While some friends did subsequently frame their cards and kept them as art pieces, I could not assume that a broader audience would value this handmade aspect at all. Perhaps the concept of ‘handmade’ was irrelevant and it might instead have been the appeal of the subject as opposed to the technique? Perhaps they were not valued at all? Perhaps it was not understood that they were indeed handmade? As referred to in the introduction, gift cards are most often thrown away. It is only rarely that they are kept and then mostly because of the content or messages contained within, where the relationship of giver and receiver is special. Occasionally it may be the case that they are kept because of the artwork depicted on them.

I decided to hold an exhibition in an art gallery where I would place both my gift cards and painted versions of them to get a better sense of how they were valued. The rationale for this
comes from Bourriaud’s (2002) concept of artwork as being a “living model of action” [as opposed to] “an imaginary and utopian reality” (p.13). I have also drawn upon social anthropology studies which examine forms of exchange and contend ‘things’ “have social lives” (Appadurai, 1986, p.3) and that these ‘things’ can move from the ordinary to the special, when they are “pulled out of their usual commodity sphere” (Kopytoff,1986, p. 74). As Kopytoff (1986) states “In contemporary Western thought, we take it more or less for granted that things - physical objects and rights to them - represent the natural universe of commodities. At the opposite pole we place people, who represent the natural universe of individuation and singularization...[a] conceptual polarity of individualized persons and commoditized things” (p.64). The act of ‘singularization’ elevates the commodity, in this instance the card, from ordinary to extraordinary and consequently frees it from its expected instrumental ($) value and confers a biography to it. Epp and Price (2009) extend upon this idea to explore ‘recommodification’ arguing an object when ‘singularized’ in one instance, may be relegated from this status depending on the network of connected stories and context in which it is situated. This offers a way of understanding the commercial performance of objects depending on the environment in which they are set and how they interact with other objects thus determining value and status. Placing the gift cards into an art gallery space was a way to consider the inherent value ascribed to the cards when extracted from the commodity grounded marketplace; to singularize them and also to invoke the associated notions of handmade (or at least original) status that is accorded to art gallery settings.

Choosing the title ‘The First Hypothesis’ to demonstrate that this exhibition would be testing out an idea, the body of work I exhibited consisted of my gift cards along with framed, painted versions of the same gift cards. To showcase the cards, I installed a large frame, which contained them in their plastic protective pockets. The gouache paintings of the cards were depicted at the same scale and I endeavoured to make them as close as possible to the original card. Each painting was professionally framed. Through working across analogue and digital processes for the individual cards and their subsequent painted versions, I was blurring and questioning the boundaries of the handmade and digital, of mass and bespoke, along with what might be called high and low art. I was also creating the artworks in a kind of back to front way. The painted artwork is normally the feature of an exhibition that is then subsequently commercialized in the form of gift cards. This deliberately ironic sequencing was intended to
challenge the idea of what we assign value and how this differs depending on the context in which we find it.


What I know, which is not necessarily known by those who buy my gift cards, is that the investment of skill, energy and aesthetics for making them is complex. The various processes to make my gift cards range from hand drawn sketches and paintings, to digital manipulation and subsequent handmade construction capturing a range of handmade steps. There were more incremental steps in the creation of my gift cards than there were in the creation of my paintings of them.

To reinforce the rationale for the exhibition, I screened a film (link below), showcasing my card making methods along with discussing the complexity of the thinking, design and making that goes into the creation of a gift card. (The First Hypothesis Film, 2013). This was on a repeating loop on a screen in the gallery enabling visitors to see it as well as see the resultant works. Many people took the time to watch the film and on the opening night of the exhibition many visitors approached me and were curious about the processes I used and why both cards and paintings were being offered in the space. It demonstrated to me, that people were and are curious about how things are made and how context can determine interpretation.

Image 32: ‘The First Hypothesis’, Exhibition Film, directed by J. Waddell, 2013

Luise Adams - The First Hypothesis

At the completion of the exhibition I conducted a focus group conversation, inviting a small group of artists and practitioners who had viewed the exhibition and who understand the language of art, design and craft to discuss my propositions. (For a detailed list of
propositions and questions see Appendix I). The distinctions between methods used to create the artwork in the exhibition were the catalyst for the conversations. Three key ideas emerged.

1. Even for this art/design aware group most found that my paintings were so close to the original cards that they were not sure if I had painted them. To some extent my exactitude in painting interfered with the questions I wanted to explore about my making methods. Discussing this further the group felt ‘process’ is of more interest to other artists rather than to a more generalized audience, although as indicated above, visitors to the exhibition had also been interested.

2. Attempting to anticipate what an audience may or may not like or value was regarded as contentious by the group to the extent that this is often a fruitless exercise. Following your own path as an artist was seen by the group as the preferred and often a more successful approach to take. In addition, commercial success was seen as extremely difficult to predict.

3. The group agreed that context impacts on the way that artwork will be read and that the act of framing assigns value. Most importantly, framing both my cards as a group and the individual paintings was making a statement of value.

By exploring the ‘handmade’ notion through placing these works in a gallery space which signals the idea of art, I challenged what is deemed valuable by offering my cards as ‘singularized’ objects. While we might delight in receiving a card, one that is a carrier of love and good will, we mostly let it slip from our hands. It only has momentary intrinsic value. Investing in ‘artwork’ is seen as a larger and longer-term contract, something that has both intrinsic value and is deemed to be extrinsically valuable. (Dewey 1966) Placing the gift cards into the gallery freed them from their usually prescribed roles.

What I learned from this exhibition was that even artistically literate readers of artwork found it difficult to discern the handmade process in my paintings of cards. For me therefore to assume this ability of broader audiences is ambitious. I also learned, perhaps unsurprisingly that the context in which artwork is found adds weight to the assignation of value. Qualifying this further, the focus group participants felt that felt the act of framing was of particular importance. Given that I consider the Designer-Maker market sector to be one where the
concept of ‘handmade’ is strongly in evidence as an idea, it is possible to extrapolate that attendees at Designer-Maker markets may have an expectation that offerings will be handmade without necessarily being able to tell if this is in fact the case. The Designer-Maker market context acts as the frame which recommodifies my gift cards. The act of handmaking is embedded with authenticity that this context reaffirms.

3) Evolution of Card Designs – transformation through insight of practice
How my gift cards look now as opposed to when I started making them is significantly different. These shifts represent my evolving aesthetic interests and abilities along with my skills growth in the use of different design tools. (see Appendix III for a visual chronology of practice). The dominance of digital design tools is now embedded in my gift card outcomes. While sketching and hand mark making are still initial go to points for my design thinking and planning, in the last few years I have increasingly incorporated photography. The advent of the smart phone has enabled me to quickly record something I am interested in and easily download it to my computer. I can then use Adobe Photoshop or Adobe Illustrator to manipulate form, colour, placement and patterning and quickly and easily produce a gift card. I can also see if people like what I am doing by posting images of the work on Instagram. My handmade practice is not only enabled by digital tools for making but also for communicating about making which reflects modern design practice. Contrary to some still persisting views that digital technologies “may limit, restrict or exclude creative spontaneity in terms of materials and production due to the “distance” that technology creates between the maker and the designed artefact” (Nimkulrat, Kane & Walton 2016, p.2) it is an enabler for me and adds depth and excitement to my designing and making process and the resultant artefacts.

The Crown vs. The Heart
One of the earliest challenges that I faced was how to keep my creative freedom in the foreground while meeting the demands of my potential customers. What I liked was not necessarily what performed well commercially but I was determined to impose some of my will in this aesthetic arena. My most favourite design in 2006 was ‘The Crown’ (see below). I had created a linocut for this and had experimented with printing onto different surfaces including onto soft aluminium, which resulted in both an embossed and decorated finish. I was able to scan it for use on the computer and keep some of its hand rendered nature intact.
For me the symbol of the crown represented my own mastery in a rudimentary sense; I was in control of my domain. For me the motif also had a connection as a concept for gift giving - you are my king/queen! I had also deliberately kept the crown non-gendered to increase its appeal.


Around the same time, I had been asked to create some ‘heart’ based designs by one of the shops that I was supplying because Valentines Day was approaching. I quickly created ‘The Heart’ (See above) design by using Photoshop to digitally collage together some of my textile designs in the background, finishing it off by imposing the basic overlay of a heart shape. I did not love this design at all. To me it demonstrated my still average Photoshop skills, particularly in relation to the management of the colour and the heart had not been hand drawn, rather it had been quickly drawn with my mouse. The irony was that this became my best seller! My reading of this, is that the design was performing because of its obvious cultural and symbolic function and perhaps because the aesthetics were prettier. Here I was beginning to interrogate the interface of artefact with culture and how its commercial performance was informing my practice. To reaffirm Andrew’s (2008) position on the semiotic nature of textiles, which in this case is applied to paper, it is possible to see the power of
storytelling through the nature of the motifs. As Cross (2006) contends, “‘the world of doing and making is usually ahead of the world of understanding” (p.9). In this instance the card had shown me what was working from a commercial design point of view. I needed to respond to the commercial performance of the cards so that my design activities remained viable.

‘Angel’ (see below) is another example of an early card design that illustrates my design approach from a technique and narrative point of view. It is very decorative, features pattern, my colours were bright and cheerful and while it was developed using digital software, the majority of design elements still started life as handmade sketches. At this point in time I preferred working with Adobe Illustrator, so this resulted in a graphic stylized look in the final design. Working substantially with one software program also meant that I learnt a lot about its potentials and I spent a lot of time ‘playing’.

From a motif point of view the imagery contained local and international cultural references. ‘Angel’ was designed with a view to becoming a Christmas card and was loosely aesthetically inspired by ‘Japanese Anime’, which had become popular in in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s. At the time I remember being particularly aware of the release of the film ‘Howl’s Moving Castle’ (2004) so I was responding to this. Smith (2006) also discusses the impact that Anime was having on Western animation production during this time. My card in this instance became not only a reflection of the tools I was using but also a commentary on contemporary influences. Cross (2006) says “Designers have the ability to both ‘read’ and ‘write’ in this [design] culture: they understand what messages objects communicate, and they can create new objects which embody new messages (p.9)”.
In 2010 I also started to create different types and sizes of cards (see examples below). I had demand for smaller gift cards and tags and for the larger cards and as indicated earlier, I introduced collaged and sewn elements creating a greater sense of both value and communicating the handmade message more obviously. As Treadaway (2016) observes “Our human desire to add cultural and economic value or to personalize the things we make has resulted in a rich heritage of embellishment, evident in the construction techniques used and the surface decoration of these artefacts” (p.18). The embellished cards are the premium products I offer. I charge a higher price for them and they are often better received than those cards that are printed without embellishment.
Image 36: Adams, L. variety of cards, Kris Kringle Market, designed 2013

Photographic Transformation

The next stage of my design evolution was in late 2014 to early 2015 when I started to incorporate photography into my gift cards. At the time I was less drawn to the conversational motifs such as birds and hearts that I had been using and was moving more strongly towards botanical themes. I had been using Adobe Photoshop a lot more and along with being able to quickly capture images with my iPhone this led to a series of designs that blended photography and Photoshop play.


Image 39: Adams, L. ‘Roses on Bark’ and ‘Crab-apple Shadows’, gift cards, designed 2015
Blended Designs

The image for ‘Tree of Life’ (see above) was originally created with a lino cut that I subsequently blended with pattern. ‘Collage Trees and ‘Dodo’ cards (see above) capture a blend of hand drawn (the Dodo), my photographs, which I digitally collaged that were then placed onto pattern backgrounds. ‘Roses on Bark’ and ‘Crabapple Shadows’ (see above) are examples of designs I created that blended different photographs I had taken and where I experimented with super-real colour and digitally collaged placement of imagery. These did not use pattern. Following this stage where I had not included more obvious hand drawn elements and had not used patterning, I found I missed this aspect. Eventually in the next design phases I reintroduced both patterning and hand-rendered work.

Image 40: Adams, L. ‘Buddleja’ and ‘Waratah’, designed 2017
For me all of these more obvious manifestations of the digital manipulation form part of my practice and don’t detract from the concept of ‘handmade’. I have photographed the individual motifs; the designs are combined in unique ways and they are only available in limited editions. As is evident in all of these works, there is a significant shift in the imagery from 2006 to the present which represents a growing artistic maturation and reveals an interplay of hand rendered artwork, creation with photographic artwork and digital tools use. Throughout I have kept a strong allegiance to handmaking but have also availed myself of increasingly sophisticated and accessible digital tools. In response to the commercial interface of my gift cards I have also made the ‘handmade’ aesthetic more obvious, embedding such devices as painterly looks and physical embellishment.

4) The Inside Knowledge of Designer-Makers about making by hand

The idea of playful experimentation through design and making is a strong motivating factor for me in my practice and it also makes me extremely happy and well. I am always interested in pushing personal boundaries and of commentating on the social milieu in which I live. If I don’t practice I don’t feel good. And the more I interrogate what is going on in the Designer-
Maker market space the more I realize that other Designer-Makers experience this too. As one of my interview subjects commented, “it makes me feel happy and feel successful” (2017, Respondent 5, pers. comm. p. 6).

But there are challenges. When it comes to the actual act of making this interview subject, who still predominantly makes their product by hand, wondered when a product ceases to be handmade. Is it when their individual involvement with the sewing of garments they have conceived, designed and printed is handed over to a seamstress? As they said, “I still would hope to think that even if I’m not physically sewing every item it could still be considered handmade because it’s still small quantities, it’s outsourced to one other person that I’ve met and that I know and am building a relationship with … and they’re sewing it for me.” (2017, Respondent 5, pers. comm., p.6) This is a challenging question for many Designer-Makers who can be confronted with the realities of scaling up production to meet demand. After all they want to be financially successful and this can invariably mean that they need to trouble shoot how to balance this need with values that are important to them.

As referred to earlier, many Designer-Makers need to develop multi-channel businesses to minimise risk. Another participant sees their wholesale customer base as the “more established or secure” source of income as opposed to the more “volatile” nature of Designer-Maker markets. However, despite the challenges of determining stock quantities and the financial risk associated with stall costs, for them the markets are still worthwhile as they offer “brand awareness” and access to a “different audience”. They need to blend wholesale, online and Designer-Maker markets to make their business more viable (2017, Respondent 6, pers. comm., p.1-2). While they are not convinced that everyone understands just what ‘handmade’ means, they also see the personal benefit of social connection and support with other Designer-Makers (because much of their work is created in isolation) and of the community of the marketplace itself, where face-to-face connections are made with their customers (2017, Respondent 6, pers. comm., p.6).

Likewise, Designer-Maker organisers need to consider how to keep the relevance of their ‘handmade’ genesis foregrounded without misrepresenting what is actually happening, as this is the basis upon which they have grown. The goals for instance for one of the local and values-driven markets has been to provide a space for local Designers and Makers where
they are supported to launch their products and to forge creative and financially viable relationships. ‘Handmade’ for them is where the “stallholder is the maker who is sourcing the components, piecing them together and designing the finished product themselves.” (2017, Respondent 4, pers. comm., p.5) The idea of ‘handmade’ is still an important aspect of their rationale and is used as a selection criteria for inclusion in the markets.

Designer-Maker markets, particularly in the large-sized design-driven segment, spend a lot of time making sure that the idea of ‘handmade’ is communicated to the consumer even if not all things or all elements are actually handmade by the Designer-Maker. Designer-maker markets are creating a context where the customer is able to participate in an ‘authentic’ experience and can assume originality and value and where ‘handmade’ is connected to these concepts. In the absence of actually being handmade, the idea of storytelling and the relationship forged between customer, product and maker acts as a signifier for this. (2017, Respondent 7 pers. comm., p.9). Organisers understand the power of relationship making, where an authentic connection is forged by the customer to the products they buy, their makers and to the market environment itself where it becomes an alternative retail relationship and a symbol for a potential “backlash” against mainstream consumerism. (2017, Respondent 7 pers. comm., p.10)

According to Littrell, Anderson and Brown (1993) authenticity is personally constructed and shifts depending on the context where we are “active creators” [rather than] “passive receivers” (p.199) in the making of authentic experiences. Not only do we understand value based on the conditions in which we find objects, but if the objects themselves are believed to be authentic, this also heightens the idea of value. As Grayson & Martinec (2004) assert “an object is authentic when it is believed to be ‘the original’ or ‘real thing’” (p.297). They refer to this as ‘Indexical Authenticity’ where something is considered to be the original rather than a copy or where someone is behaving in a genuine rather than false way leading to a sense that something or the behaviour is “particularly valued”. They also explore the idea of ‘Iconic Authenticity’ which relates to the idea of “authentic reproduction” (p. 298), where comparisons are made between what is considered to be an original and a copy. A close approximation to the original would also be assessed as authentic. Authentic engagement with an object is seen as offering “perceived evidence” and a “perceived connection with the past” (p. 302). Both of these types of authenticity form a backdrop to the Designer-Maker
marketplace. People understand that they are buying either one-off products or those that are created in limited edition.

**In Summary**

My designing and making practice has altered dramatically in response to my aesthetic shifts and skills growth along with its engagement with contemporary technologies and tools. The communication of ‘handmade’ and the knowledge that is captured is revealed through my practice. I have used the ‘Microtopia’ and ‘The First Hypothesis’ exhibitions to explore readings of message giving and context and I have noted the evolution of my gift cards to reflect shifts over time. This has deepened my understanding of how my artefacts (gift cards) operate in the setting of Designer-Maker marketplace, where it acts as a reinforcing frame for the idea of ‘handmade’. Designer-Makers make artefacts that reveal the complex continuum of creative conception through production and the eventual reception and sale of the artefact, and in the Designer-Maker marketplace context these processes are not hidden, rather they are deliberately revealed and celebrated. This equates to declaring the knowledge, control and empowerment that arises when we understand how to make something. Designer-Makers are interested in all aspects of the design and making process which is intimately bound together by innovation, creativity, play, technique, manual and digital skills. They love doing it, that is why they are there, and they love sharing their ideas, goals and skills face-to-face with their customers. This is something that we as Designer-Makers know through our participation in this environment and we express it through the artefacts that we offer for sale. For myself, and other Designer-Makers it reinforces the power of the message that knowing how to make is good.

The conceptual and cultural aspects of the Designer-Maker marketplace are where the idea of ‘handmade’ is understood. The conceptual signifier is the constellation of ideas associated with definitions of ‘handmade’. The cultural signifier is the Designer-Maker marketplace which is the locus under which these ideas come together and are played out.
Conclusion

This PhD research set out to explore and critically examine the concept of ‘handmade’ and how ‘handmade’ is practiced in the contemporary Designer-Maker marketplaces of Melbourne, Australia.

I have done this through a blended practice-based methodology. I have examined my practice (how I make), my creative outputs (what I make) and have used the auto-ethnographic methods of personal reflection (autobiography - why I make) and cultural observation (ethnography - the context in which I and others make), the latter using qualitative methods in the form of interviews with participants and organisers of Designer-Maker markets. The knowledge that is imparted through my gift cards reveals my shifts in aesthetics, the convergence of my analogue and digital skills and my material choices and values which have responded to my temporal, social, cultural and political landscape. Set in the Designer-Maker marketplace I have also had the immersive pleasure of watching the growth of individuals on their particular design and making journeys.
Contemporary understandings of ‘handmade’ recognises and accepts that ‘handmade’ does not necessarily mean made by hand. We know that ‘handmade’ is more about the signifying nature of ‘handmade’, rather than actually being ‘handmade’, as asserted by the work of Fuchs et al’s (2015) imposition of love and Luckman’s (2015) imbuement of touch and enchantment. In this research I have focused on how the signifying nature of ‘handmade’ plays out in practice and have considered the implications of this for Designer-Makers, market attendees, market organisers and the marketplace itself.

In summary, my contribution to the discourse of ‘handmade’ is threefold. Through my practice I provide insight into:

(1) How ‘handmade’ as a conceptual and cultural signifier for values of the marketplace has evolved and the implication of this.

Being ‘handmade’ is more than the sum of its ‘making’ parts. What matters is the performance between artefact, people and place.

(2) How contemporary design-led making practices within the Designer-Maker market scene have evolved and the implication of this.
The collapsing of digital analogue divide is writ large and post specialization practices play out here.

(3) How the Designer-Maker marketplace of Melbourne, Australia is evolving and the implication of this.

The Design-maker marketplace is a place for innovation and incubation of ideas and products. It is also a place that reflects broader social and cultural shifts of the sharing economy and contingent work practices.

My practice started at a time when the concept of ‘handmade’ was a given rather than an ideological statement or standpoint. Through my PhD, my gift cards have acted as provocateurs enabling me to ask questions about the nature of contemporary making and of the need to foreground the idea of ‘handmade’ in particular. As both values embedded and physically realised, my ‘handmade’ gift cards are keeping my hand skills and digital skills engaged in parallel and they are commentating on contemporary debates about why understanding how to make is significant. Set in the Designer-Maker marketplace beyond the studio allows my artefacts to both portray these debates as well as respond and contribute to them.

Design-led making practices innovate, they adopt new materials and they engage with technologies and techniques reflecting the world around them (Fariello & Owen, 2004). I trained as Textile Designer at a time when there was a clear binary of hand and digital. In this research I demonstrate how my practice has transitioned from being largely analogue in nature to one that now seamlessly integrates analogue and digital processes for design creation and making where digital technologies are integrated as opposed to being seen as add-on’s to hand making skills. Through the course of my PhD, my practice has changed, representing the new and altered meanings of ‘handmade’ that have evolved where binaries of this nature are irrelevant. Through deep engagement with my practice, the examination of my artefacts (gift cards) has been the site through which I have been able to evaluate key creative and practical skills and processes which form the foundational aspects of my design practice. Increasingly embedded values such as local, authentic, socially aware, digitally present, experience based, sustainable and a rejection of mass-production have become part of my making process responding to broader societal ideas and attitudes and it is in my
I have explored how my gift cards perform within the Designer-Maker marketplace to signify ‘handmade’. Once, when making gift cards I always started with hand painted artwork and the subsequent digital manipulation was focused on adding to and enhancing this work. Over time I have increasingly used digital skills for initial artwork creation and my gift cards reflect this. Today I am less concerned about having all drawn or hand painted artwork, although this has not disappeared altogether. And while at times I add elements to reinforce the ‘handmade’ nature of my work, I now reveal the digital more and my audience who are more digitally literate do not see this as being in conflict with the idea of something that is handmade. What they see is a gift card that connects with them on some level. My gift cards must first and foremost be culturally relevant for their intended audience.

Describing an artefact as ‘handmade’ in this marketplace is recognition of a holistic approach that represents the knowledge of making that may incorporate many tools and processes that sit on a spectrum of analogue to digital and hand to automated. I have also observed how my contemporaries and other design-led makers in Designer-Maker markets share similar experiences describing their practices as ‘handmade’. It is the bringing together of all artefacts that I have expressed this. Indeed, over time I have been able to identify that ‘hand-making’ has become transformed from a mere act into a values statement in itself.
elements in direct and personal ways that results in an original idea which leads to the signification of ‘handmade’. What customers are interested in, is the originality of the artefact and the potential for face-to-face engagement with the Designer-Maker.

Image 45: Adams, L. ‘Mixed Small Cards’ 2018

Drawing on my own experiences and the views of other Designer-Makers and market organisers to interpret this landscape, I have described segments of the Designer-Maker marketplace that reflect its size and impact and while each segment caters for different communities, there is still an emphasis on the ‘handmade’ message which is a unifying signature statement for all. Building on the research of Luckman, I show that the notion and ‘aura’ (2013, 2015) of handmade is amplified in this context. My research also shows how the work of Kopytoff (1996) and Epp & Price (2009) can be used to interpret objects in the Design-Maker marketplace where they become singularized things (Kopytoff, 1996) elevating their value. Further, it is the Designer-Maker marketplace, one that is authentically framed (Doyle, Fraser & Robbins, 2018) which adds weight to the signifying concept where ‘handmade’ is read as culturally important. At its simplest level I, for instance place a document on my table that describes how my gift cards are made for the customer to read.
At its most significative level, in the large-sized design-led market segment for instance, art, colour palettes, services and experiences come together to form a designerly, values-laden atmosphere of the ‘handmade’ message.

I have also considered the cultural aspects of the Designer-Maker marketplace revealing how Designer-Makers can engage and connect with consumers, to tell their stories, communicate what they value and to test if their ideas (artefacts) have traction in the marketplace. For consumers, the nature of this marketplace provides a sense of security where they can expect originality, quality and uniqueness. They are brought closer to the act of making through the exchange of artefacts and they can seek like values if they want to along with forging connections with the Designer-Makers. For the uncertain consumer they can also be reassured that what is offered in this space will not make them look foolish. Promotion and engagement with the heritage of hand-making along with considering appropriate contemporary material choices in combination with a vast array of digital and technological tools is strongly featured and communicated in the Designer-Maker marketplace. The message is, that if you come to this place you will participate in a community of aligned values; a tribe of good conscience.

As a marketplace that is focused on considered consumption, I have also shown that Designer-Makers and the markets are testing and trialling new methods of selling most notably in the areas of forging peer-to-peer relationships and in the form of sharing. Sharing selling spaces, sharing stories and sharing values all underpin the Designer-Maker milieu which is reflective of broader societal shifts. Returning to Schor’s (2016) idea that “organisations have been eager to position themselves under the ‘big tent’ of the sharing economy because of the positive symbolic meaning of sharing” (p.8), it is possible to see that Designer-Maker markets support this concept and are a flexible space in which variations of the model can be explored.

The paradox of course is that despite their sharing ‘nature’ within, strong controls still exist in relation to access which is determined by the organisers. Market organisers set a standard and decide who’s in and who’s out. While they establish core values based on notions of ‘handmade’ which align with the goals of Designer-Makers they can still arbitrarily rule people in or out based on more ordinary aspects. Product duplication, quality of presentation of
online profiles and more vaguely defined concepts such as a perceived ‘fit’ or not can impact inclusion. While the Designer-Maker markets are presented as egalitarian spaces in reality they are also commercial business platforms.

All of these considerations represent broader community debates and narratives about how the future of material engagement might play out using aspects of peer-to-peer trade. Designer-Makers are participating in a Pop-Up style environment and are demonstrating how multiple sites of trade and ways of making are developing and they are also facing the harsher realities of commercial access and viability. Having multiple roles and using multi-channel communication to minimize risk they are representing models for future professional work-life scenarios. Having a social media or online presence also empowers Designer-Makers to communicate and sell directly to their customer base effectively being in a position to bypass the Design-Maker markets if they wish. As one interviewee stated they saw their wholesale customer base as the “more established or secure” source of income as opposed to the more “volatile” nature of Designer-Maker markets. (2017, Respondent 6, pers. comm., p.1-2)

Notwithstanding these challenges, the Designer-Maker marketplace can be seen as a robust subset of the increasingly threatened bricks-and-mortar retail marketplace, providing lessons that can be learned for planning future models of consumption. Designer-Maker markets encompass individuals who are engaged in sharing, multi-skilling, multi-working and who are digitally sophisticated. They are testing out material choices and modes of production and in this environment, experimentation is supported. Designer-Makers here, are preserving and deepening the knowledge of making that is so vital for the broader community who have become distanced from understanding just how things are made. Many Designer-Maker market offerings and attitudes go on to be adopted in the mainstream retail landscape signalling that they are offering desirable products and services. The Designer-Maker marketplace has created a perceived egalitarian personality that aligns with the Australian identity. And while it can at times be chaotic and messy, there is a strong motivating desire where rolling up your sleeves and making something is celebrated and applauded.

But will it remain so? What of the future of Designer-Maker markets?
The Designer-Maker Market environment remains important and relevant, for it provides a space where the performance of artefact, people and place come together face-to-face. It
supports a nimbleness of making and trading and as economic confidence and traditional ways of earning a living have become less certain the Designer-Maker market space is still attractive. Market organiser discretion aside, access to Designer-Maker markets is relatively flat to the extent that it ignores gender and age and while it can be a great place for a young person entering the workforce for the first time, equally seasoned (and not so seasoned) Designers and Makers operate here. The constantly moving nature of the marketplace allows for the introduction of new Designer-Makers who can participate in and co-create a bridge with an interested marketplace made up of people looking for new products that are not mass-produced.

At present, many markets still have traction and attract large crowds, but all things do change and a number of markets have closed since this research commenced. Recently the ‘Melbourne Design Market’ closed its doors after running for 13 years. It was one of the earlier large-sized, design-focused markets held at Federation Square in Melbourne. Their website states “Having started Australia’s very first design market over a decade ago, we feel it’s time to respond to the evolving needs of the design community with new projects” (Melbourne Design Market, 2017). At the same time The Big Design Trade, an ‘industry only’ event, was launched for the first time in August 2018 signalling the potential for yet another new segment which is mimicking the traditional trade fair, but with a difference (The Big Design Trade, 2018). It will be interesting to see where this leads. While volatility in the sector could be read as instability it can also be seen as part of a broader landscape of Pop-Up style retailing which has arisen in the last decade. The temporary nature of Pop-Up retailing is not viewed as negative instead it offers opportunities to trial products for short periods of time and broadens market reach (Bradley K & Pargman D, 2017; Jones P & Comfort D, 2017).

This is in sync with the fluidity of shifts in design-led making practices and how practice is played out. My research has revealed that Designer-Makers use multiple descriptors to define themselves and their activities demonstrating a lack of adherence to previous divisions of practice. For myself, my foundation knowledge lies with Textile Design and while I remain connected to the discipline, my own practice has evolved to be more open and flexible. I am not constrained by specialization or by artificial borders that can come with specialization. I see my peers as design-led makers rather than discipline specific practitioners. This provides me with greater creative freedom to express ideas and to develop original concepts. The
closely bound signifying message of ‘handmade’ allows for performance and interconnection between artefact, person and place to imagine future scenarios for making and consumption. This research offers other practitioners a way of reflecting on their own practice, to appraise their positioning in the broader marketplace and to consider the implications of reflexive and responsive engagement with the concept of ‘handmade’.

I am also aware of the limitations of this research. The role that Designer-Maker markets play in macro-economic terms is used as a backdrop only to this dissertation and has potential for further scrutiny. So too does the heavily female gendered nature of this marketplace, it’s ‘middle to upper class reach and the predominantly narrow ‘white’ ethnic positioning. In addition, I am conscious that I participate in only one segment of the Designer-Maker marketplace; Local and values driven. This means that interviews and observations are more strongly relied upon when discussing The Large-sized and design driven segment and Community and art and craft segment. In addition, I am also mindful that this research focuses more strongly on my practice and its interface with the Designer-Maker marketplace. This omits a large portion of the evolution of my practice as it pertains to the development of my design aesthetics in response to the digital design technologies I now employ. All areas present opportunities for further research.

My practice will continue to evolve and how it evolves is an exciting prospect! I am keen to incorporate my ongoing skills development into my work and to take on the challenges of more complex technologies and material outcomes, keeping the ‘how to’ (knowledge) of hand making foregrounded at the same time as keeping the spirit of ‘handmade’ alive.
References


Burdick, A, Drucker, J, Lunefeld, P, Presner, T, Schnapp, J 2012, Digital Humanities


Chapman, J 2015, Emotionally durable design: Objects, experiences and empathy, 2nd edn, Routledge, ProQuest EBook Central database.


Etsy.com, If it’s handcrafted, vintage, custom or unique, it’s on Etsy, viewed 24 March 2019, <https://www.etsy.com/au/?ref=lg0>


Fletcher, K 2008 Sustainable Fashion and Textiles: Design Journeys, Earthscan, UK.


Got Craft, About Us, viewed 24 March 2019, <https://gotcraft.com/about>


Niinimaki, K & Hassi, L 2011, ‘Emerging design strategies in sustainable production and consumption of textiles and clothing’, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, pp. 1876-1883.


Quibell, R 2016, The Promise of Things, Melbourne University Press, Australia


Roberts, CW 1989, ‘Other than counting words: a linguistic approach to content analysis’ Social Forces vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 147-177.


Shaw, K 2014, ‘Melbourne’s Creative Spaces program: Reclaiming the ‘creative city’ (if not quite the rest of it)’, City, Culture and Society, Vol. 5., pp. 139-147.


The Big Design Market, 2017, *Designers*, viewed 5 January 2018
<https://www.weekendnotes.com/big-design-market-melbourne/>

The Big Design Market, 2017, *Designers*, viewed 5 January and 27 August 2018


The Big Design Trade, 2018, *About Us*, viewed 23 September 2018,  
<http://trade.thebigdesignmarket.com/about-us/>  


Image References

All images, unless otherwise stated below are the work of the author.


List of Images

Preface


Chapter 1


Chapter 2


Chapter 3

Image 6: Adams, L. ‘Heart and Leaf’ motif and pattern and ‘Koi Fish’ design elements, designed between 2006 and 2012.

Chapter 4

Chapter 5


Chapter 6


Appendix III

Images 46-52: Adams, L. ‘Chronology of card designs from 2006 to 2018
Appendix I

Questionnaires, Conversations and Interviews

Over the course of my research I conducted (i) 2 questionnaires of market participants in 2011 and 2017, (ii) a focus group conversation 2013, and (iii) a series of interviews with participants and organizers of Designer-Makers in 2016 and 2017. Ethics Applications were applied for in relation to each of these activities, the details of which are included here.

At the beginning of my research I was interested to learn more about the Designer-Maker community of which I was a part. I developed a questionnaire which I administered at the Northcote Town Hall Kris Kringle market.

---

Questionnaire administered 2011

Application to conduct Questionnaires at Designer-Maker markets. Ethics approval received 22/10/10. Collection period from 2010 to 2013. Approval No: CHEAN-A-2000393-08/10

---

The Questionnaire

Date:

Questionnaire Project Title: 21st Century Bespoke Design: The Resurgence of the Hand

Your Personal Details:

Name:

Name of Business: (if relevant)

Contact Phone:

Contact Email:

1. How would you describe what you do? (Please Tick the Relevant Box)

Are you a:

☐ Craftsperson

☐ Artist

☐ Artisan

☐ Maker
□ Designer – Please specify what type of designer
□ Other – Please describe

2. What is the motivation for your practise? To make or generate: (Please Tick the Relevant Box)
□ Art
□ Craft
□ Design
□ Product for Income
□ Design recognition
□ Entry into mainstream commercial art & design world
□ Other – Please describe

3. How long have you been practiseing?

4. Does design drive your practise?

5. Are craft skills important to your practise?

6. Where do you see art fitting in relation to your practise?

7. Do you use Computer Aided Design in your practise? (Please Tick the Relevant Box)
□ Yes
□ No
If yes, please briefly describe how.
If no, please briefly describe why.

8. Is your practise a: (Please Tick the Relevant Box)
□ Career
□ Full Time Job
□ Part Time Job
□ Casual
□ Hobby
□ Other? – Please describe

9. If you sell your products on line, do you do this via: (Please Tick the Relevant Box)
□ Your own Blog
□ A Community Blog such as Etsy
□ Your own Website
□ A Community Website
10. If you don’t sell your products on line, would you like to? (Please Tick the Relevant Box)
   □ Yes
   □ No
   Please briefly describe why.

11. Are there any particular designers/makers you admire? Please list.

12. Please briefly describe why you admire them.

General comments you would like to make about how you see the Independent Art and Design Market world.

Thankyou for your time.

---

Focus Group Conversation 2013

At the completion of “The First Hypothesis” exhibition I conducted I held a Focus Group conversation, inviting a small group of artists/practitioners who understand the language of art, design and craft and who had viewed the exhibition to discuss my propositions. The distinctions between methodologies used to create the artwork in the exhibition were the catalyst for the conversations.

Application to conduct The First Hypothesis Focus Group Conversation. Ethics approval received for 8th November 2013 to 1 December 2013 Approval No: CHEAN A 0000015706-9/13

Focus Group Outline of Questions

“The First Hypothesis” presents hand painted gouache’s on paper that are reinterpretations of my digital gift card designs.

The inspiration for the work

I am interested in storytelling and memory and this is a primary driver for the motifs I develop. “My School Bag” for instance is taken from memories of 1970’s floral stickers that we would stick to our school bags. These were joyously irreverent and an outgrowth of the flower power movement. “Wallpaper Ducks” is a nod to the 1960’s lounge rooms I remember as a child.
Examples of the flying duck motif can now be seen in the contemporary design and have been re-embraced as fondly remembered kitsch-retro objects of domesticity.

At the commercial end of my practice, the cards also need to function as commercial objects; gift cards that serve the purpose of message giving, often driven by special occasions. So motifs in this instance must do some work towards serving this end. “Angel” serves as a Christmas card and “Lovebirds” as a Valentines Day card.

The narrative that drives the work in this exhibition

I am considering the nature of ephemera. The creation and dissemination of ephemera (gift cards) has been a part of my design practice for a number of years. Ephemera is ever present in our lives and is seen as expendable and fleeting. Metaphorically ephemera points to the transient nature of life; that we all become dust and have limited time.

What am I inviting you to view /consider…

In this exhibition, the act of elevating a card design to a fine art piece offers an opportunity to give the image (and perhaps us) a longer life – a valued thing that will be kept, rather than discarded.

The materiality of a digitally made gift card compared to a hand painted and framed image is a literal take on the idea of shifting from transient to long lasting and also starts to blur the boundaries between digital and handmade.

The imagery also draws on patterning methodology derived from my formal training as a textile designer. Historically textile design, which incorporates patterning methodology is considered to be a craft. Here the ‘craft’ of patterning has been embedded into the ‘art piece.

Broad Profile Questions

- Do you go to exhibitions at galleries - Rarely, Occasionally, Regularly
- Do you buy artwork from other environments? No, - Why, Yes - Where – Shops, Markets, Direct from artist, Other
- What is the most favourite piece of artwork you own. Please describe it and explain why it is your favourite.

Exhibition Specific Questions

In this exhibition there are two images represented of the same subject. One is a gift card and the other is a painted interpretation of this.
• Is it possible to tell how each version is created? Please describe.
• How interested are you in the methods used in each version?
• Do you attach greater value to one version over the other? Can you explain what those elements are? Can you describe what value you mean – monetary/intrinsic for instance.
• Would you think differently about these images depending on where they were sold? What difference would it make?
• Do you consider the context in which you find artwork represented important?
• Would you expect to pay a different price depending on where the artwork or creative product resides?
• Where would you typically buy creative products?
• Do you consciously and systematically collect creative pieces and artworks?
• Is function – i.e. gift or use purpose a prime driver in buying art and creative pieces?
• What impact does the type of space or vendor have upon your experience of looking at creative objects?
• How does the formality of the gallery environment impact upon your reaction – ambience, architecture, price, behaviour expectations, staff, versus other spaces where one may encounter creative artworks – studio sales, markets, online sites – etsy, ebay etc.
• Is original work an important factor when buying artwork? Why?
• What do you mean by ‘original’?
• Is the handmade an important factor when buying artwork? Why?
• Is your knowledge or friendship with the maker important?
• Is your relationship to the dealer or space/gallery/shop important?
• How important is the exclusivity of the handmade as opposed to the mass produced for you when buying art objects and creative items?
• Is price an issue/impact when selecting to buy?
• What media - Paper, Photographic, Video, Ceramics, Textiles, Jewellery Sculpture do you regard as particularly appealing and why.
• Do you consider all of these mediums mentioned to be “artwork”?
• In your area of expertise have you noticed a growth in the last 10 years in the blurring between what is considered fine art, design and craft?
• Have you any comments to make in relation to the statements that I have made about this exhibition?
• Is there anything further you would like to add?
Designer-Maker Interviews

I was exploring the idea of authenticity as a concept which was connected to the notion of handmade and was keen to ask participants and organisers of Designer-Maker markets to tease this out further.

Application to conduct interviews. Approval Number HREC/CHEAN 0000019336-04/15
Project commencement date 01/01/2015. Approved project conclusion date 01/01/2018

Questions for Kris Kringle Designer-Maker markets December – 30/11/16

- How is authenticity communicated in the market?
- What words are used to communicate hand made to the customers?
- What other visual signals are used?
- Is handmade akin to authentic? Is there anything in the Designer-Maker market that signals this?
- How can we/do we differentiate between hand made in the Designer-Market and non-handmade?
- Millennials want authentic experiences. Self-conscious and intentional representation of handmade has shifted which now incorporates the notion of experience and therefore, by association authenticity. How does this play out at the Designer-Maker market?
- The now ubiquitous smart phone enables proof of hand made. Through apps such as Instagram the documentation of making is recorded as much as the final product. Is this in evidence in the Designer-Maker market?
- Outsourcing your work leaves you potentially freer to be creative but this equally means you need to confront your creativity and to be careful that you understand your materials well enough to design creatively for them. Does this outsourcing compromise the handmade characteristics of the product?
- The meditative nature of making frees up the creative gestation and problem-solving process. When does something stop being handmade?
• What is the difference between buying a handmade object from a designer maker market and a retail outlet? What are the differences between these two retail environments?

• Do designer maker markets attract particular types of people? Describe their characteristics.
Appendix II

Research conducted into The Big Design Market Gazette 2012. Conducted in 2013, this led to a paper (unpublished) entitled “Considered – the values of designer-makers”.

160 stallholders provided a small biography profile for the Directory in this Gazette (2012) where they described their practice and products. Most did not self-describe in relation to their professional status but many used descriptors that related to Art, Design, Making and Craft, along with specialized skills such as Jewellery, Fashion and Ceramics. (pp. 26–30). The Table below surname.

Table 1: Top six statements by number and typical words used in descriptions as reported by stallholders in the BDM magazine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of statement</th>
<th>Number of statements (n = 160)</th>
<th>Typical words used in descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>status-related</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>unique; one-of-a-kind; original; limited edition; best quality; awarded; luxury; custom made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local location</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>Australian; Designed in Australia; Melbourne; Melbourne based; Melbourne studio; local; locally made; home studio; Adelaide; Hobart; Made in Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>design inspiration</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>nature; forms found in nature; globally inspired; Bauhaus inspired; Japanese aesthetic; folk art; geek; times gone by; childhood rhymes; retro; modern; vintage; 1960s and 70s modernist shapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>hand</strong></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>handmade; hand crafted; made by hand; hand drawn; hand painted; hand stamped; decorated by hand; hand finished; hand drawn patterns; hand printed; hand cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>atmosphere</strong> (nostalgia + emotion)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>nostalgic imagery; bygone days; good old days; keepsake pieces; memories of grandma’s house; fun; quirky; romantic; joyful; lovingly; treasured objects; whimsical; playful; simple pleasures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sustainability</strong> (process, materials and methods + state of affairs)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>sustainable process; reclaimed; eco-materials; sustainable timbers; organic and natural materials; natural fabrics; recycled objects; eco-friendly; social responsibility; sweatshop free; ethical; eco-loving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of statements refers to the number of instances that the key words were made, rather than the number of stallholders who made the statements.
Appendix III

Chronology of Practice (Cards)


2007-2008 - experimenting with digital methods - deepening knowledge of the software. Still heavily patterned using a combination of hand rendered > Adobe Illustrator but starting to introduce representational motifs connected to occasions such as Christmas. Seasonal colours with market in mind.
2009-2010 - ongoing experimentation with digital methods - deepening knowledge of the software. Still heavily patterned using a combination of hand rendered > Adobe Illustrator. The beginning of different sized cards and cut collage to communicate the idea of handmade...


2010-2012 - ongoing experimentation with digital methods - deepening knowledge of the software. Representational motifs taking over from patterning. Hand rendered illustrations and silhouettes in combination with Adobe Illustrator Cut collage used more often to communicate the idea of handmade. Gift tags also feature in response to customer demand.

2013-2014 - ongoing experimenting with digital methods - deepening knowledge of the software. Representational motifs always used with patterns using a combination of hand rendered > Adobe Illustrator. Online investigations started - establishment of blog and the Exhibition work that was actively exploring message giving through symbolic meanings in the cards and context where the cards were offered for sale.

2015-2015 - photographic methods responding to new technologies such as the smart phone introduced. An understanding that originality and handmade would still be understood by an increasingly digitally literate audience. Using Adobe Photoshop and incorporating real and digital collage. Mastery of software to produce richer and more coherent artwork. Hand generated imagery more painterly in nature.
2017-2018 - integrated use of hand generated and digitally manipulated artwork where circularity of process is fundamental to practice. Hand-generated art gets scanned, re-worked with software, printed, physically collaged, re-scanned re-manipulated to create new design outcomes.

Image 52: Adams, L. ‘Card Designs’ 2017-2018
Appendix IV

Selected images from PhD Presentation on 4th February 2019

Image 53: Adams, L. ‘Elephant elements, prompting research proposition’ 2018, Photographed by Kim McKechnie

Image 54: Adams, L. ‘Exhibitions content’ 2018, Photographed by Kim McKechnie
