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Crafting Audience Encounters

This paper documents a current research project, *In the Frame** that investigates the potential to add value to craftwork through the availability of short videos of makers talking about their practice shown alongside exhibited work. QR codes and smart phone technology are used to deliver this footage and the codes are digitally manipulated and laser engraved in wood to give them a new visual aesthetic, a 'phygital' aspect - crafted physical objects with digital content. *In the Frame* is a pilot study for Supercrafted, a two year research project (October 2012- September 2014) within the Autonomic Research Group at Falmouth University, exploring and developing innovative digital technology applications that facilitate new forms of online interaction between craft practitioners and other stakeholders in the craft value chain, including audiences, customers, makers and suppliers.

The literature review for Supercrafted has identified four *themes* where digital technology applications have a potential transformative impact on the relationships within craft value chains:

Personalisation: *Digital interaction e.g. websites that allow customer design input, co-creation, ways of engaging audiences in digitally making bespoke and unique objects.*

Community: *Digital engagement with, and for, the wider craft community- enabling access to markets. e.g. networked distributed making and marketing platforms; offering craft engagement, knowledge, networking, manufacturing and selling opportunities; community-based digital making facilities, such as fablabs.*

Dialogue: *Practitioners' use of social media, personal websites and marketing platforms to connect to audiences, build interest and provide peer endorsement.*

Narrative: *Digital content used to tell a back story or integrate content within craft objects and digital information accessed at point-of-sale.*

Within this narrative theme, the literature highlighted an increase in consumer interest in the provenance of an object: where it comes from, who made it and how it was made. One significant motivation for buying can be the sense of having made a connection to the maker, underpinning the object's authenticity and individual authorship.

In the Frame explores the narrative potential provided by the availability of video about makers at the point-of-sale, or in exhibition settings, specifically in the context of Falmouth University's Contemporary Crafts 2013 Degree Show. The project aim is to enhance public engagement with the student work by providing a novel and playful alternative to reading a text based artist's statement, in the form of a short professional video clip accessed via a QR code. When scanned using a smartphone or other digitally networked device the code provides access to individual videos which are hosted on the *In The Frame* website. This website provides a digital channel for feedback, audience comments and wider dissemination of the maker's voice, effectively extending the boundaries of audience engagement within a traditionally time-limited exhibition context.

This paper discusses the background, practicalities and evaluation of this application of new technology, highlighting benefits and issues arising in this educational context. The paper concludes with a summary of the lessons learnt from this pilot study and an exploration of the potential to apply research findings within the context of professional craft practice.

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