

An Aesthetics of Everything Else: Craft and Flat Ontologies

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ABSTRACT:

This article considers everyday experience as a defining condition of craft, which has largely escaped scholarly attention. Responding to a discursive moment in craft history in which its theoretical stance as the ‘other’ of art and industry has been thoroughly explored, I turn to philosophical sources of aesthetic theory that encompass the experience of ordinary making. I argue that the flat ontologies put forth by New Materialism, which can be related to older ideas in John Dewey and Indigenous thought, offer a return to a less fragmented creative landscape in which craft is the ground for all creative practice. Drawing on art historical examinations of the counterculture and neo-avant garde movement Fluxus, I show how flattened aesthetic frameworks, what I call *flat aesthetics*, recognize the ordinary experience of making in relational terms, as part of a dynamic network of agential forces. I conclude by speculating that understanding everyday craft in this way holds potential to renew its relevance and pertinence to the ethical pursuit of “the good life.”