

Parallel practices

Innovation Case Study

Arts & Health

What was the question?

Can we drive innovation in research and making by connecting scholars who research through making with makers in the creative arts and crafts?

Who were the collaborators?

Book artist Les Bicknell, ceramicist Tamsin van Essen, jeweller Naomi McIntosh, textile artist Celia Pym, and academics Dr Matthew Howard from the Department of Informatics, Dr Thrishantha Nanayakkara from the Department of Informatics and Dr Richard Wingate from the MRC Centre for Developmental Neurobiology.



What did we do?

Parallel practices was a pilot programme led by the Crafts Council and the Cultural Institute which partnered scientists from across King's with arts and crafts makers and enabled four residencies during which crafts makers worked in the academics' research environment. Celia Pym and Tamsin van Essen worked with Dr Richard Wingate: Celia by mending garments alongside students carrying out dissections, Tamsin by interpreting in clay the processes and changes that occur in anatomy. Karina Thompson and Dr Matthew Howard stimulated debate on stitch in the 21st century and showed its potential application in robotics. Les Bicknell and Naomi McIntosh, alongside Dr Thrishantha Nanayakkara, explored extending current soft robotics through model-making and looked at ways of controlling movement and the articulation of objects in order to build new structures.

What was the outcome?

The project stimulated learning and innovation through a focus on the body, materials and processes that informed clinical outcomes and artistic practice. The makers contributed to a blog (craftscouncil.org.uk/articles/craft-and-healthcare), in which they discussed the projects' progress and identified learning points, both for themselves and for the students and academics involved. A further set of *Parallel practices* collaborations will build on the pilot, with the aim of driving innovation in health care settings and enhancing research and teaching approaches in the health faculties at King's. A short film about the project can be found at vimeo.com/118822823.