



SMALLUST.COM  
CRAFT IV

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If this year's abrupt summer-to-winter season change was anything to go by, there's a good chance that seasonal variation – or at least autumn and spring – could be a think of the past, or at least in Melbourne. Had Small Lust told its readers two months ago that crafting was the pastime de rigueur for trendsetters and people in-the-know, it might have fallen on deaf ears. Wardrobe refashioning and DIY projects just don't have that same appeal in the midst of a long, hot summer.

But now that winter has arrived in all its grey and gloomy glory, it's the perfect time for rugging up, staying inside and making things. We've been particularly inspired this month by the Melbourne Scarf Festival, put on by the lovely people at Craft Victoria, which is a gem of a gallery and retail shop just near our office in Flinders Lane. Besides the footy, and a local pub with a roaring open fire, nothing says "Hello Melbourne winter" like resurrecting a couple of scarves from your cupboard for daily rotation. If your wool-crafting credentials are limited to finger knitting in primary school, then all the better. Knitters who are still on their L-plates can take inspiration from any winter fashion spread and see that uneven, skinny scarves are just as stylish as neat and thick cable-knitted scarves.

*Knit it yourself:  
2007 Melbourne  
Scarf Festival*

# Melbourne



If the idea of making your own neck warmer leaves you cold, come along to Craft Victoria's scarf festival to gain inspiration, hone your knitting skills in workshops, or purchase a homemade entry from a festival participant. The festival runs from Thursday, June 28, to Saturday, July 7, 2007. Craft Victoria's Julianna Green said knitters and textile designers had submitted entries which would go on sale at the festival's Scarf Market on June 28.

"The highlight of the festival is always the Scarf Market," she said. Scarf makers who have submitted scarves to the festival will vie for a range of awards, many of which are sponsored by some of Melbourne's boutique craft makers. These include "best scarf to hold an electrical gadget", sponsored by custom bag makers Crumpler, and "most beautiful scarf", sponsored by textile designers Vixen. Julianna said some of the sponsors, like Melbourne designer Nicola Cerini, supported the festival because they were part of "the Craft Victoria family". Nicola's products used to be stocked in our store," Julianna said.

The Melbourne Scarf Festival gives scarf makers the opportunity to get their creations into a gallery space and even profit from their handiwork. Scarves not sold in the at the scarf market are often donated to Knitters for Melbourne's Needy, which distributes knitwear to the unprivileged and homeless. Knitters, and in particular scarf makers, have an impressive reputation for banding together for charity. According to the Guinness World Records, the longest scarf in the world measured more than 33 miles long after more than 2,000 knitters put their needles to work to raise money for a children's hospice in Wales.

Link

[craftvic.asn.au](http://craftvic.asn.au)

Find out about upcoming exhibitions and events at Craft Victoria



INTERVIEW  
WITH

Julia  
Bourke



film maker.



*a labour of love:  
interview with Julia Bourke,  
stop-motion  
animation filmmaker*

"I like making things, especially because I work on a computer everyday. I've just got a real thing for stop motion, it's got a whole craft element to it."



*machines*



Each puppet in Julia's film requires at least a dozen different mouths to lip-sync the dialogue



*Angel Food* (2000), shows the adventures of a runaway strawberry on the loose in a kitchen



“You start out wanting everything perfect and you have to find exactly the right moulding for something, and then you realise it doesn't matter – you've got the general look”

When you're still doing pre-production for a short film after three years, people might be right in questioning your time management skills. But when the project involves creating a world of miniature puppets from scratch, then preparing and shooting 12 scene changes for every second of the 15 minutes of film, it redefines the term, 'a labour of love'.

Part time graphic designer and 'spare time' stop-motion animator Julia Bourke has been working on her short film for so long, she's already anticipating her life and career coming to a "cross roads" when it's completed at the end of 2008. It's normal for an artist to refer to their project like it's their baby, but when there's a whole cast of puppets living in your backyard studio soon to be animated in a flurry of singing and dancing, you start to imagine how attached Julia could become to her film. It's the one project she's been working on since graduating from a Victorian College of the Arts animation course in 2000, but it's already her magnum opus. A \$50,000 grant from the Australian Film Commission has assisted the film's budget, but she estimates a commercial production company would spend four times that sum to make a film of the same scale.

Most people's first experience with stop motion, or frame-by-frame animation comes for those Christmas specials like *Frosty the Snowman* which have been rolled out every Christmas since the mid-1960s. *Harvey Crumpet's* Oscar win raised the profile of the medium, as did Tim Burton's *Nightmare Before Christmas* and *The Corpse Bride*, but it's the retro and cheesy older forms that really appealed to Julia.

“What got me into it was the yearning to make things, and also it was probably an untapped thing from my childhood – watching all those Rankin and Bass Christmas movies!” she said. “I remember every year they were on – *The Little Drummer Boy*, *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, and there was also *The Magic Roundabout* – I remember the cellophane water coming out of the taps. I loved that it was really awkward,” she said.

After working for many years in television art production and graphic design, Julia went back to uni in 2000 and chose stop motion, probably the most hands-on and laborious of the animation techniques, as her major in the course. “I like making things, especially because I work on a computer everyday. I've just got a real thing for stop motion, I love the fact that it's been made.

“Just plain design – I'm not really passionate about that – it doesn't have the whole craft element to it,” she said. For Julia, stop-motion animation allows the filmmaker to create a whole world stamped with their personal style. It's not just about scriptwriting and editing, but making at dozen or so interchangeable mouths, pairs of eyes and hands to give each puppet a full set of expressions. It's about improvising with props and considering how they can incorporate metal wiring inside so they can bend and hold shape for different poses. So what sort of character traits would be drawn to this style? “I think it's people who are into tactile stuff,” Julia said.

“You have to be slightly mad, and very imaginative – a mad genius maybe! – to be able to put together all the bits of the jigsaw puzzle,” she said.

This love of making things has not only influenced the type of animation she pursued, but also her films' subject matter. Julia loves the kitsch and colourful visions of domestic bliss, and 1950s-era pop culture. “I'm very obsessed with the whole domestic thing in the female world, those sorts of intimate spaces.

“It doesn't all have to be super girly, the stuff that happens in these spaces, but that interests me,” Julia said.

She collects vintage sewing magazines and patterns, and while she values their aesthetic qualities, they've come to the rescue on many occasions when Julia has had to make her own props. “I make everything! I thank my mother for teaching me how to sew!” she said.

Both *Angel Food* and *Sonata in Tea*, the short films she made at VCA, involve culinary themes, and claymation fruit, cakes and finger food coming to life in kitsch kitchen settings. *Angel Food*, which won Julia the best film award for her graduating class, screened at film festivals around the world. Julia said she couldn't reveal too much about her current project and it didn't have a confirmed title, but viewers would see the connection to her earlier films.

“I guess *Angel Food* was playing with the idea of directing, the craft, and the whole filmmaking aspect, whereas this one I'm going further and playing with actual characters and dialogue.”

“It's got dialogue and songs and lyrics – it's like the next step,” Julia said. Aside from recruiting a producer and production manager – “I'd get too overwhelmed with the admin, it's just too much to organise” – Julia has done almost every aspect of the film's pre-production by herself, in her backyard studio in West Brunswick. Working as a freelance post-production designer enables her to dedicate three weekdays to her film. She said she'd come to appreciate the skills she amassed from years working behind the scenes in television.

“They'd been using digital graphics for six months in Australia when I started in the Channel Nine art department. They still did the weather with stickers to stick the clouds on with a card.

“We all had to be able to draw, because at any moment we might have to go to court to draw someone for the news. In those days you had to have those essential skills as an artist,” she said.

Filming will start in July in her backyard studio, and stretch for nine months. Julia said she had to film scenes out of sequence, on one set at a time. “I can't really do two [sets] at a time – I haven't really got a space big enough,” she said.

Shooting these types of films are so time-consuming because for every frame of motion – of which there are 12 per second – each puppet has to be individually manipulated and fitted with appropriate mouths, eyes and hands to match the script and music. But, on the other hand, some of the most time-consuming elements in live action filmmaking are a relative breeze for stop-motion animators. Editing and post-production create much fewer headaches than the earlier stages of pre-production and filming, so Julia said she would be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel once filming began.

“You start out wanting everything perfect and you have to find exactly the right moulding for something, and then you realise it doesn't matter – you've got the general look,” Julia said. “It's good when you get to that point – which I'm at now – you've got this ridiculous detail, now it can all come together.”

Despite the five years Julia has already invested in her film, she said she wasn't envious of other part-time artists or musicians who might dedicate a fraction of that time to the one project or exhibition. “I don't know if I'm cut out for that anymore, it's just too draining – to invest so much into a project and then go, 'alright, back to my day job',” she said.

While she agreed that the scale of the film had blown out beyond her initial estimations, she said she had come to rely on it as a creative outlet much more than she'd anticipated.

“What comes out of this, I don't exactly know,” Julia said. “It's like, you just do it, you know you have to do it, you don't know why, but you've got to express yourself and explore these ideas.”





Ch-ch-ch-chia!

## TOP 5 OLD-SCHOOL GADGETS

Megan Gannon reviews the best crafting equipment from the 1980s...



Knitting Nancy –  
chews up yarn,  
spits out rope



Who said rhinestones  
ever went out of fashion?



Polymer modelling clay –  
shape and bake!

### Chia Pet

I first heard about this on *Wayne's World* along with The Clapper sound-activated light switch (go on, sing the jingle) and not long after there they were on the shelves in Target. Bringing primary school horticulture to a new, and overly commodified level, the theory behind Chia Pets isn't too far removed from the old 'alfalfa seeds and wet cotton wool on a saucer on the window sill' school holiday experiment.

Chia Pets are either firmly imbedded in the cultural psyche or they're getting a new lease of life in the contemporary arts. Last month British artists Heather Ackroyd and Dan Harvey covered the exterior of the National Theatre on London's South Bank with clay and grass seeds, to comment on the wrath of global warming. Critics are holding their breath for the lush green turf to wither and yellow over its six-week tenure. Stand by for a Chia revival.

### Knitting Nancy

Like a hollow skipping rope handle with little nails around one end, you're meant to thread the wool around in complex figure eights and then a hardcore braided rope emerges from the bottom. The end result looked like supped-up finger knitting. Not a bad gadget, but surely there's only so many metres of woollen tubing that one household can take...

### Embossing Labelmaker

Those raised-type vinyl labels were the epitome of 1980s domestic organisation. The Dymo Embossing Labelmaker has become a trendy font in its own right, even if the original vinyl-punching gadgets are as rare as hen's teeth. If these labelmakers weren't indulging a Stepford wife's Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, or teaching a foreign language student the names for household items, they ensured your mum's Tupperware container returned in one piece from the primary school shared lunch.

### BeDazzler

Apparently these first appeared in the 1970s but they were Dental faithfuls from the late 1980s onwards – which directly correlated with the start of my obsession with rhinestone-embellished clothes and accessories... Imagine the ordeal jazz ballet and callisthenics mothers would have suffered before the mass production of this glorified stapler with the extendable arm. Proof that this gadget still has (sparkly) legs: the official website, [mybedazzler.com](http://mybedazzler.com), states "the BeDazzler is back again and it's the fashion craze of the season." Can't argue with that!

### Fimo

The name of the best-known brand of polymer modelling clay, these small blocks of coloured clay can be mixed, sculpted and then baked (at 110°C for 30 minutes) to make garish and utterly unwearable jewellery and trinkets. It's what kids make when they've grown out of macaroni jewellery but haven't graduated to semi-precious stones and beads. I'm sure there was a Christmas where all the ladies in my family received some one-off beads, baked and threaded on a chain ("Wow! Are those gorgeous speckled green beads real turquoise? What?! I can't believe they're Fimo!")

This craft material has legs beyond the after-school-care craft cupboard. We've learnt that polymer modelling clay is a fundamental part of a stop motion animator's tool kit because it's used to make the interchangeable lips and features that stick on their puppets.

Next week's column

Is carbon neutral  
the new organic?



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