Abstract

This thesis developed out of an attempt to fuse my hobby of tying fishing flies with my academic pursuits in art history. I have made fishing flies based on the especially fancy patterns from the Victorian period for a number of years and was always left wondering why it was they were so fancy. With this as a starting point this thesis seeks to place these objects within the world of craft, in an art historical discourse. Beyond this simple goal however, I also use these objects as a way to discuss issues around how craft, particularly handicraft, is treated in an academic context. Craft is positioned as a category of art proper, in order that it might be pushed to the margins of artistic production. Further, craft itself is broken down into categories that are considered along hierarchical lines of legitimacy. In the Victorian period handicraft (also known as domestic craft) is typically cast as the domain of women and does not have the same level of legitimacy as the production of the Arts and Crafts movement, for example. Victorian Salmon flies, despite not yet figuring in an academic discourse, share marked similarities with handicrafts of the Victorian period. And here, even though both women and men made flies, men were the predominant consumers of these flies and we can consider that perhaps our view of handicraft as an exclusively gendered space might be slightly misplaced. Though salmon flies have a place next to handicraft, I also argue through this thesis that salmon flies - and by extension handicraft - have much in common with object of the Arts and Craft movement, as well as those made by industrial production. These similarities are indicative of larger social concerns that apply to all manner of crafted objects. I propose an alternative reading of these salmon flies that is not dependent on adherence to preexisting craft categories. Rather I propose a phenomenologically-influenced reading of these flies that treats pleasure as an integral component of their function. In this, I draw on the writings of Martin Heidegger to discuss how these flies can allow the user to come to experience their place in the world. Finally, I suggest that this line of inquiry into these objects can be applied to other types of neglected handicrafts.
During the Victorian era, many people died of consumption (tuberculosis) and the society had a creepy fascination with death. In The Ugly-Girl Papers by S.D. Powers, she declared that the clearest, most beautiful complexions were seen on people in the earliest stages of consumption. Women with consumption were constantly vomiting blood, and Powers claimed that this was actually purging the impurities from their body, which made their skin clear and white. Max Flies | Salmon Flies, Music & Books Check out this wonderful photo of my "Heavenly Lady" and read about the exotic feathers that go into her. There's also some general knowledge on the Victorian Era in Great Britain when salmon flies evolved and flourished. My "Heavenly Lady". This is my "Heavenly Lady" in all her splendid attire. | Source. Here's Another Pretty Lady. I dressed this "Lady Amherst" salmon fly for my 'Welcome To Maxflies' website about ten years ago. One of the prettiest flies I've dressed in 32 years of pr