

IN TEXTASIS:

MATRIXIAL NARRATIVES OF TEXTILE DESIGN

ELAINE IGOE

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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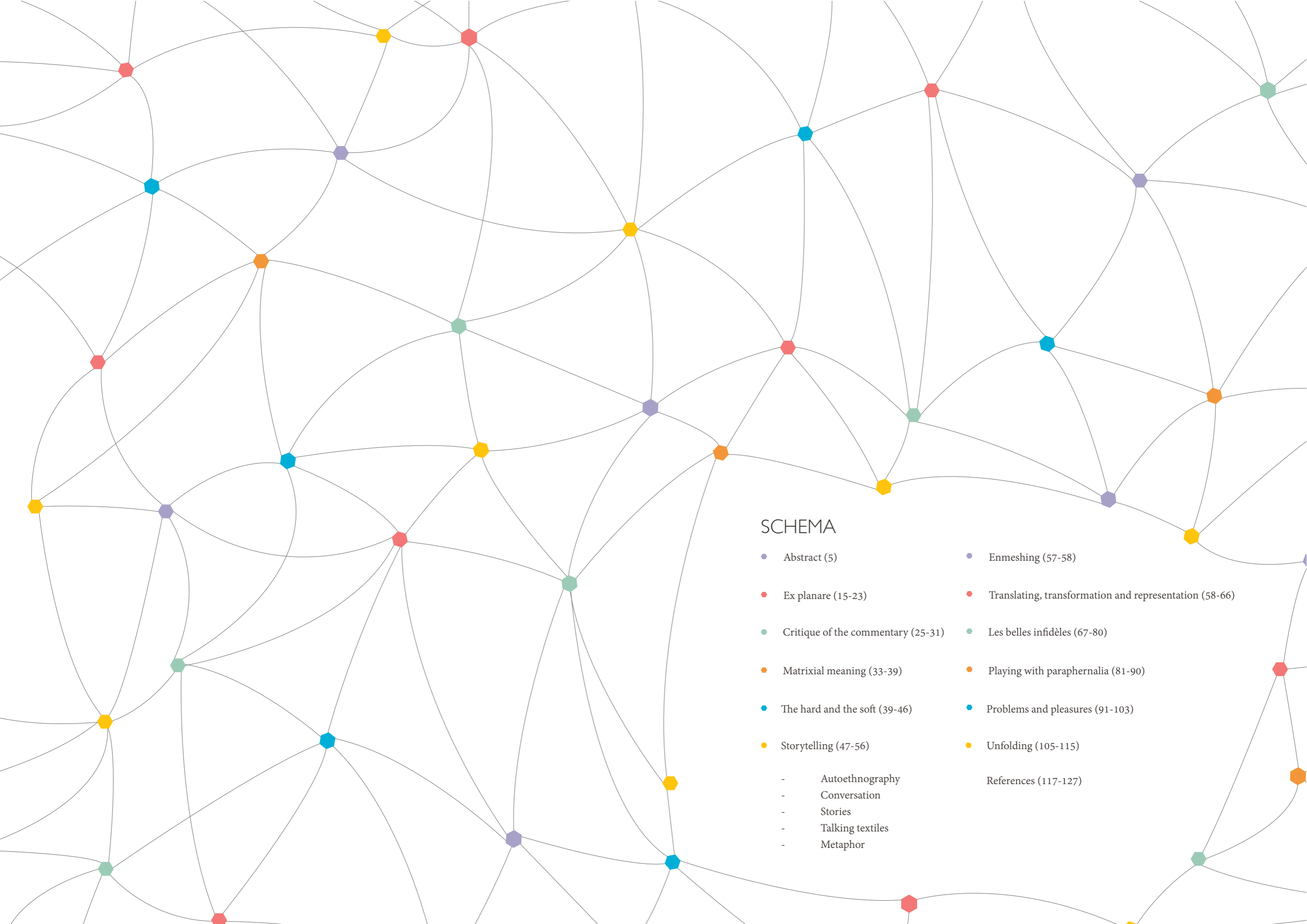
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ABSTRACT

Since its inception in the late 1970s, the academic field of design research has lacked significant input from textile design. Textile design inhabits a liminal space that spans art, design, craft; the decorative and functional; from handiwork to industrial manufacture. This PhD by thesis, although recognizing this particularity, asserts textile design as a design discipline and seeks to address key questions that define a design discipline (Archer 1979). Specific factors have prevented the participation of textile design in the development of design theory: the universalism of the Modernist age decried many of the innate characteristics of textiles despite the fact that the versatility of textiles has made it one of the most appropriate mediums for its message. This suppression points to the femininely gendered nature of textiles and how this affected the participation of textile designers in the development of design research. Addressing this historical and cultural context necessitated the utilization of feminist qualitative research methods in a methodology that references matrixial theory (Ettinger 2006) and relationality. Encounters, conversations, stories, drawings, metaphor, meshing and restorying are all key research methods used in this study. In its autoethnographic approach, my position as a textile designer and as the researcher is frequently foregrounded, and is also blended with the experiences of other textile designers. The study unfolds and expands in a non-linear way, structure and outcome co-evolving through my contingent thinking and activity.

Theory and texts are montaged from anthropology, philosophy, literature, cognitive psychology and psychoanalysis to define key characteristics of textile design and its associated thinking, both tacit and explicit. These characteristics are then placed into the context of the design research agenda, with particular reference to design thinking and problem-solving. This both strengthens the position of textiles as a design discipline and highlights its anomalies. Through analysing the articulation of textile design practice and thinking, this study proposes an alternative perspective on design thinking and problem-solving in design which contrasts with the notions of divergence followed by convergence which are predominant in design research literature. It suggests that textile design thinking is fundamentally dimensionally expansive yet set in tense relation to external forces of folding and rhizomatic breakage (Deleuze 1993/1999, Deleuze & Guattari 1987/2008). This paradigm of design thinking rests upon the significance of long-established textile metaphors for the embodied and interconnected activities of cognition and action, and is indicative of particular views of post-Postmodernist thought. Based on this, as well as on other key characteristics of textile design process and thinking that have been defined, pedagogic implications are discussed and specific areas of current design research discourse which would benefit from greater involvement from textile designers and theorists are explored.



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To the textile designers who welcomed me into their homes, workplaces, workspaces and stories, giving freely of their time, I am indebted. Off-the-record comments and conversation with these individuals has been as essential to this study as those compiled in the appendices.

The support my fellow research students in fashion and textiles at the Royal College of Art have offered, despite my geographical location and part-time status, has been indispensable. I have been fortunate to develop good friendships with several members of the group and I am particularly grateful to Dr Rachel Philpott, her partner Michael (and their futon) for playing host to me on more than a few occasions.

Graphic designer Marie Cleaver, from hellomarie, who has designed the thesis, has been a pleasure to work with, responding to its theoretical content and concepts with creativity, sensitivity and utmost professionalism. Cathy Johns and her swift and meticulous work proof-reading this document is also to be thanked, although any errors that remain are all my own work.

During the span of my enrolment period at the Royal College of Art, a number of individuals have tutored me and have therefore left some imprint on the work I have produced. However, my supervisors, Dr Claire Pajaczkowska and Dr Prue Bramwell-Davis, have left a lasting impact on my thinking and my knowledge in a great many ways. At a crisis point, they foresaw that I had more to offer and gently revealed it to me, allowing me to take ownership and authorship. Both have been extremely generous with their knowledge, guidance and encouragement. I thank Claire in particular for putting me forward for research presentations, book reviews and other research opportunities, and Prue for her focus on research skills, methods and methodology, an aspect I initially shied away from.

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The birth of my daughter Nara confirmed my tendency to question norms and her vibrant and joyful personality enhances my life immeasurably. Becoming her mother has given my life new focus and drive.

Lastly, to husband Simon Peter Mobbs. My rock. A man who now knows far more about flocking and textile design than he ever dreamt he would. Simply put, this research could not have happened without him. I only hope that I can offer back to him what he has provided me.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Elaine Igoe
September 2013

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EX PLANARE

I'm going to tell you my research story, and how it has manifested itself in the thesis that I am so feverishly writing up at the moment, in and around working as a lecturer and family life. This is not an introduction, preface or preamble; it explains (*ex planare*) the unfolding narrative of my lived experience.

As you read, you will note marked differences in the style of writing and research approach throughout this thesis. This is intentional and communicates a very real shift that I experienced from an objective research style to one where my subjectivity became vital to the research. This shift occurred in response to several contingent factors in both the personal and academic realms of my life.

“The individual is both site and subject of these discursive struggles for identity and for remaking memory. Because individuals are subject to multiple and competing discourses in many realms, their subjectivity is shifting and contradictory, not stable, fixed, rigid.” (Richardson 2000:929)

I wanted to make my own discursive struggle evident across the pages of this document and its appendices, to use my writing, as Richardson suggests, as a method (and as such, record) of qualitative inquiry. As my story will describe, a sequence of realizations have characterised and shaped my research journey. I came to a point where I needed to find a way to reconcile what I had, and was, experiencing. I found the only way I could work through these realizations and make sense of them was through informal, reflective writing.

Ronald Pelias (2011:660) describes how writing might function as both a realization and record. He cites M.L Rosenthal's quote from 1987 suggesting that writing is “the unfolding of a realization, the satisfying of a need to bring to the surface the inner realities of the psyche”, and remarks on the difference of ‘writing up’ and ‘writing into’. For me, this recent period of writing up has certainly been more a case of writing into. I have been using words to help me discover what I wanted to say. The structure and content has emerged through this period of writing into. Pelias goes on to explain how realizations recorded and brought about through writing can be felt with confidence or some level of doubt, but that these realizations importantly “...unfold on a continuum from the personal to the public”, supporting feminist ideology; he then quickly cautions on separating the personal and the public/political. Although my writing and research approach have taken an overall shift toward subjective, embodied, feminist research methodologies, the writing I have chosen to include in this thesis moves between and conjoins both objective and subjective writing styles as required, recognising that both have their place and that all my writing is a record. Each section is made up of pieces of text written over a period spanning almost eight years: older pieces have been cut and spliced with very recent writing and reconfigured. Personal narratives sit alongside conventional literature reviews; reviews of literature are incorporated into analysis; the sections do not flow directly into one another but largely rely on the heuristics of the reader to establish the connections.

And so to begin the story...forgive the initial autobiographic detail: it might seem irrelevant, but it is very important. What I'm going to speak about here is something that has needed a voice for sometime.

In 2001, at the age of 20, I graduated from Loughborough University with a First class degree in Multi Media Textile Design. I exhibited my work at the New Designers graduate show and I was awarded the Breaking New Ground Prize at Texprint, a national, industry-sponsored body supporting graduate textile design talent, which allowed me to show my work at trade shows in Paris and Hong Kong. I then started directly onto the well-respected MA Fashion course at Central St Martins, specialising in textiles, in which I gained a Distinction and showed a collection of menswear featuring my textile designs at

London Fashion Week in 2003. So, back then, I was generally considered a bit of a bright young thing in the textiles world...

Except that once these halcyon days were over, I was left with a portfolio of work that everyone marvelled at, but no one wanted to buy. My textile designs had always been 'experimental': some would say, politely, 'challenging'. I never employed conventional processes in expected ways. For example, during my degree I used paper-making techniques to affect the surfaces of knits, weaves and animal skins; I designed three-dimensional embroidered photographic transfers for skin, and on my MA, I utilised the principles of magnetism to create shifting and erasable textures on cloth with iron filings that mimicked astrakhan and needlecord, and developed piled surfaces, flocking with blends of rayon and yak, pig and horse hair.

My textiles were fragile, unreliable, unwashable, unrealistic, dirty, hairy, shifting, grotesque, and quite often, not even textiles....

My techniques were mysterious, sensitive, experimental, playful; sometimes they obliterated and tricked.

My tutors had always told me that people would buy my 'textile design concepts' as inspiration and send them off to a factory to be interpreted as something a bit more commercially viable. But that never really happened. I didn't know where I fitted in to 'textile design'. I got a job at the University of Portsmouth as a lecturer in Textile Design, with remission and funding for doctoral research. I envisaged that doctoral studies would allow me space, time and structure to realise radical, innovative designs that actually worked as viable textiles. I told myself to stay away from the weird stuff. It was time to make some proper textiles.

In 2005, I enrolled at the Royal College of Art for part-time MPhil study. My proposal was focused on exploring the potential for innovation in electrostatic flocking, a technique I had experimented with towards the end of my Masters course. Earnestly I set to work as a pseudo-scientist, trying diligently to create small test samples, forcing myself to record the variable factors of each, resisting the use of colour or pattern and consulting scientists and manufacturers in the hope of accessing their knowledge and equipment. It was a struggle, and this way of working did not suit me. I was being led by my own insecurities and the encouragement of the research supervisor I had at the time, as well as the specialists I was working with. I struggled on for quite a while, even though my practice was moving very slowly and ineffectively. At the beginning of each year, the Fashion and Textiles programmes hold a 'Work in Progress' exhibition. I was expected to contribute, so I had to deliver something that satisfied the conventions of the gallery space, but that also represented the aims of the research. Each contribution was hurriedly produced, and I relied upon my 'old' way of working and thinking about textile design. The various textile-esque curios (see Figures 1, 2, 3 - an ode to Meret Oppenheim, a vision of medical flocking, flocking as biomimetic surface), I hoped would serve as a symbol of the more considered, technological work I was slowly aiming towards.



Figure 1: Teacup and saucer flocked with yak and pig hair and rayon fibre (2005).

Figure 2: 'Labflock'. Bioadhesive flocked with rayon fibre in Petri dish (2007).

Figure 3: Cactus flocked with rayon fibre (2008).

They helped me to avoid my failure in making proper textiles. I had been working with biochemists at Imperial College and consulting flock trade associations in the United States, but, due to a variety of reasons, these relationships were becoming one-sided and my research focus was being skewed by their influence. I felt that all my good intentions for my research were falling apart. These pieces, ones which I had felt forced into making for the sake of the exhibitions, using methods I was trying to turn away from, became important metaphors that spurred on my writing and thinking. I began to use the terminology and imagery associated with electrostatic flocking as metaphors for my thinking and my research process. I began scanning and drawing flock fibres (see Figure 4 & 5). I made short animations and produced pieces of creative writing about the flocking process.



Figure 4: Scanned flock fibre (2008).
'future'

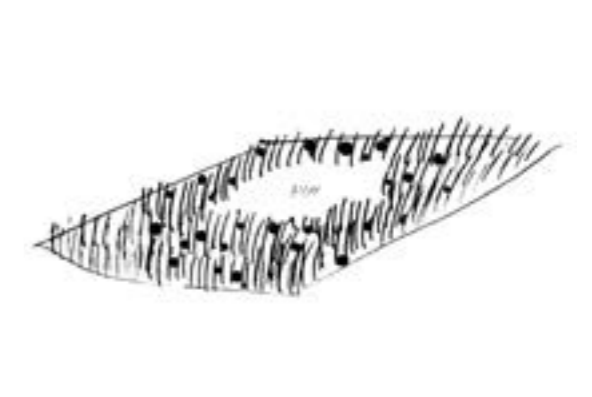


Figure 5: Drawing and conceptualisations of flock applications. Envisaging particles trapped in a flocked surface (2008).

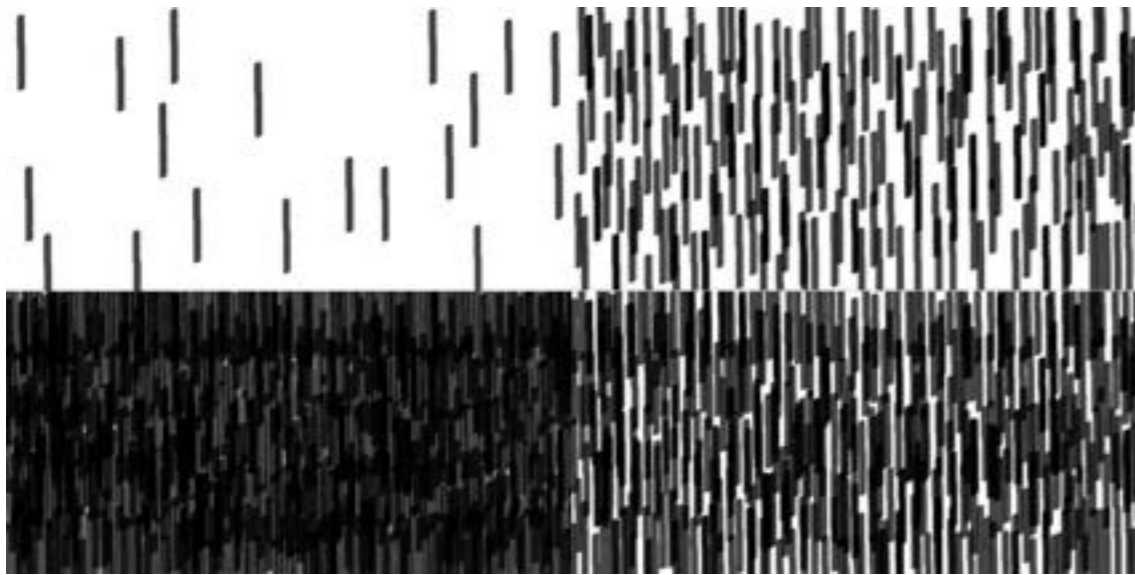


Figure 6: Four screen shots (clockwise) from an animation depicting the way that flock fibres gradually and randomly inhabit and obliterate a surface (2008).

15th January 2008

If I was flock...

If I was a flock fibre in a flocked surface I would feel anchored down and restricted. There's nowhere to move and everyone is exactly the same as me. My end is totally encased in something solid that I can't get out of. I'm bright red and so is everyone else. The only way I can move is if someone touches me or presses into me or the whole lot of us is formed around something else. Sometimes a liquid will flow around me and get caught up amongst me and the others. Every way I look another one is right there next to me. Some might find that reassuring but when I compare it to the freedom I had before I got stuck down, I just don't feel that way. I used to be free to mingle and blend and become completely electrified. I got charged several times before getting stuck in. The experience was unimaginable. I was flying through the air, being propelled by this energy and an unexplained attraction towards something. I don't know what it was but this overwhelming feeling made me flow towards it along with all the others. It was great to feel that way – attracted, charged, energetic, motivated. I didn't know where I would end up.

Figure 7: *I Am Flock*. A short piece of creative writing using flocked surfaces and processes as a metaphor for my relationship with my research project and process (2008).

These activities, as well as a new research supervision team in 2008, marked a watershed in the journey of my research. Trying to understand my research position using flock metaphors opened up a far bigger set of questions about textile design generally. To understand my position, these questions needed attention first. At this point I moved away from flocking and artifactual textile design. My writing began to take over as my primary means for expression.

I began to try and understand the situation I was in by asking myself some questions; Why wasn't I very good at designing 'proper' textiles? Am I even a textile designer at all? Why had I been driven to try and think in a different way about designing textiles? Why did I let myself be so heavily influenced by the scientists and technologists I had become connected with? Why were these people even interested in working with me in the first place? What will my research project look like now?

I have never, ever identified with the notion of being a craftsperson or a maker. I could never call myself a printer, a weaver or a knitter; I don't have those skills at a professional level. But I know I am part of the textile design discipline; I was taught how to do textile design, I understand the lingo, my work has been recognised and judged as textile design. What I am specifically interested in is the appropriation of materials, the subversion of processes and the application of big ideas onto small rectangular pieces of cloth.

But I needed to understand my compulsion to create these unconventional textile designs in this way and where I fitted into textile design. I began reading about the design process and came across so many 'models' (Dubberley 2005), which usually begat some version of the notion that the design process and its associated 'thinking' is about problem-solving and finding solutions. This language all felt very alien to me. I had never considered textile design in this way, and did not feel that these concepts represented my practice at all. What problems was I solving? What problems was I supposed to be solving?

Questions about the nature of design began to emerge in the late 1950s as a result of research into creativity, decision-making and management as well as advances in computer technology and artificial intelligence for problem solving. The academic discipline of 'Design Research' developed as it became accepted that design involved a very specific and distinctive type of knowledge. Bruce Archer was a leading exponent of this view and was fundamental in the inception of the *Design Studies Journal* and academic design research in general. In the debut issue of the journal, published in July 1979, Archer presented a paper entitled '*Design as Discipline*', and put forward these questions:

"Can design be a discipline in its own right? If so, what are its distinguishing features? (What are the kinds of features that distinguish any discipline?) To what questions should the discipline address itself — in both research and teaching? What methodology does it use? What results — what applications — should it be trying to achieve?" (Archer 1979:17)

Archer's questions were devised to encourage a rationalisation of the design process, and focused on industrial design. On reading these questions, it occurred to me that if I were to add 'textiles' in front of the word design I would find it very difficult to find answers to them in the existing literature on design. But not only that, I wondered how the discourses of design research may have been altered over the course of these 34 years if these questions had been addressed to the discipline of textile design.

"If textile design is to be studied in an attempt to understand its peculiarities, then researchers should aim to systematically identify the nature of textile design and the behaviour of textile designers." (Moxey 1999: 176)

In reference to this, my original questions, deeply rooted in me and my experience, evolved into broader lines of inquiry. I began to ask:

How can the notion of textile design be understood? What defines textile design?

How does a textile designer design, think, act? What are the relationships between textile design and other types of design thinking and other types of knowledge? How and why are these questions relevant to the textile design discipline and to design research in general?

Arriving at these more fundamental questions had required me to be deeply reflexive and begin to try to articulate the tacit aspects of my textile design knowledge and experience. At last I had found a way that my distinctive approach to textile design could be useful: useful to me in locating my place in textile design, but useful also in helping to identify textile design's place within broader definitions of design.

I started to set up conversations with fifteen other textile designers, both novices and experts, to help me find a way to describe what it is that we do and why. Whilst I was talking to the designers and since analysing the transcripts, what struck me was their frustration. They felt marginalized within the design hierarchy, but were resigned to this state of affairs. I was clearly dealing with a group (largely populated by women), which felt suppressed within the design industry and misrepresented in design research discourse. What was emerging from my evaluation of my personal experience was that my research project must necessarily address feminist issues in regards to research methods. A feminist critique of design research and design thinking is required. Judy Attfield and Cheryl Buckley's historical and cultural studies on women designers, identifying the patriarchal societal push towards designing 'soft' things in that safely grey area between applied arts and crafts, provide a context. However, I am specifically interested in textiles as a design discipline, and so to reaffirm this stance I have chosen not to investigate these grey areas, but rather to confidently assert textiles into the design research arena.

Over the course of my research project, the research aims evolved, becoming more and more clearly aligned to Archer's questions. As my enrolment period is coming to an end, my research objectives can be seen as:

What are some of the distinguishing features of textile design – process and thinking?

What methodology does textile design use?

What is it trying to achieve?

What questions does the discipline address itself to? – Through research, practice and teaching?

Jessica Hemmings (2010) advocates the scholarly application of fiction, narrative and populist writings to develop an academic canon for textiles. My research methodology is a montage of qualitative methods, using autoethnography, storytelling, drawing and conversation to support textile designers in describing their own process and thinking. My aim is to situate these different stories in relation to the established context of design research. My challenge is both to contextualize, and to challenge, the context.

And this starts with, and returns to, me understanding my own position in textile design.

Learning more about design research and new methodologies in design, I am now able to clearly identify areas within which my type of textile design works. My own work was misplaced in the commercial trade show context, but I had no idea that there was any others open to me. Tony Dunne and Fiona Raby have developed the field of 'critical design'. They say that:

“Critical design uses speculative design proposals to challenge narrow assumptions, preconceptions and givens about the role products play in everyday life. Naming it critical design is simply a useful way of making this activity more visible and subject to discussion and debate. One of critical design's roles is to question the limited range of emotional and psychological experiences offered through designed products. Design is assumed to only make things nice, it's as though all designers have taken an unspoken Hippocratic oath, this limits and prevents us from fully engaging with and designing for the complexities of human nature which of course is not always nice.” (Dunne & Raby 201-)

Perhaps the bristly, rough, dirty, fragile, unusable textiles I designed would fit here?

Applying the definition of critical design to textiles, I can identify many textile designers who are

working in this way, yet they have no academic engagement with the concept and almost certainly no idea of how situating their work in this field positions them in the broader field of design research and its agendas. In light of critical design, I can now read my textiles designs as challenging, ambiguous, propositions of what textiles could be. Ten years ago I was tackling innovation, design theory and poetics in my approach to designing textiles. Except I had no clue that I was, or that any of these discussions existed, and why they might be important.

And before my contemporaries, and me, were textile designers like Reiko Sudo. Sudo's textiles for the Nuno Corporation subscribe to most of the aspects described by Dunne and Raby. They play with notions of function in textiles, they are poetic in appearance and name, eliciting, as Catherine Harper has described (2005:29-30), a range of 'somatic' sensations. Not only that, but their making involves 'rough handling' and 'cruel and unusual treatment'. Sudo damages weave structures, marks and etches surfaces. Harper describes Sudo's textiles as seductive and dangerous, describing power games where Sudo is dominant over the material, process and meanings held within her fabric and the viewer. Sudo's work is all these things and yet she still operates successfully in the commercial design world, principally because her company, Nuno, produces meterage of printed or treated woven cloth. It doesn't stray from the conventional notion of textile design. Despite attracting worldwide acclaim and success, as well as academic critique, the contribution that Sudo's designs make to developing fields of design research, such as 'critical design', is tacit and unarticulated.

This story describes how my visual practice was subsumed by my textual practice. I worried about this initially, fearing that this would deny my skills as a textile designer and fretting about my ability to express myself in words alone. But now I see it as some small and necessary act of design activism, significant because it is words and commentary that have been missing from textile design, not the thinking and making. Having no visual practice within which to display the tacit knowledge of my discipline forces me to communicate it in a textual way that represents its specificities and character and its personnel, not by simply aligning with the concerns and research methods of the canons of design research, but by using feminist research methods to expose assumptions and provide alternative ways of *thinking-speaking-writing* about design, through textiles and the metaphors they afford (Maharaj 2000:7).

The Buddhist philosophy of Indra's net has captured my imagination since the moment I was introduced to it by a fellow research student.

'Far away in the heavenly abode of the great god Indra, there is a wonderful net which has been hung by some cunning artificer in such a manner that it stretches out infinitely in all directions. In accordance with the extravagant tastes of deities, the artificer has hung a single glittering jewel in each "eye" of the net, and since the net itself is infinite in dimension, the jewels are infinite in number. There hang the jewels, glittering "like" stars in the first magnitude, a wonderful sight to behold. If we now arbitrarily select one of these jewels for inspection and look closely at it, we will discover that in its polished surface there are reflected all the other jewels in the net, infinite in number. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that there is an infinite reflecting process occurring.' (Cook 1973:2)

Indra's net is an infinite mesh, matrix, grid, lattice, cat's cradle, weave, knit, cloth, fabric: but not only that, it is decorated and decorative, ornamental, glittery, bejewelled, draped so as to please the Gods. But the clever maker of this dazzling matrix remains unnamed.

I have responded to the metaphor of Indra's net in both forming and representing the epistemology and methodology that evolved in the structure and design of this thesis. But rather than conceal the

identity of the maker, through methods of autoethnography, the significance of my identity is not only allowed to surface, but is embodied by the infinite mesh I am adding to. In terms of structure this thesis is non-linear, borrowing and referencing the notion of an expanding matrix, studded with my writings: texts that I hope capture the reflexivity of the research process as they project and reflect onto and into one another in a recursive way. Each text is interstitial. The content does cover the conventional requirements for a doctoral thesis in that the sections are bound together in a way that makes sensible reading, but I have avoided thinking of them or referring to them as sequential chapters.

The bibliography included in this thesis (Appendix A) very clearly evidences my research journey. It is a list of materials that I have consulted in addition to the references given, retaining those I used during my investigations into electrostatic flocking since 2005. I felt it was important to find some way to illustrate exactly how the thinking behind this project has evolved, and so it spans scientific papers on scaffolds for tissue engineering and books on feminist psychoanalysis.

“There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel nor the world as its object nor one or several authors as its subject.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1980/2008:25)

‘Schema’ is a visual representation that functions as the map of the thesis, each coloured hexagon representing a text. Schema takes the place of the conventional linear ‘contents list’ and is instead, a mesh, a matrix, a net: it is soft, porous and spatial, running beyond the limits of the page. Marie Cleaver, the graphic designer who devised it in response to my concepts, uses her own professional design terminology, ‘full-bleed’ to describe the edge-to-edge printing method we have used. When I learnt printed textile design, ensuring that you trim your sample so that it appears as if it is cut from a roll of fabric was one of the first presentation conventions we encountered. This ‘full-bleed’ schema represents the fact that the context of this thesis extends out and beyond itself into the past and future. It connects up with my previous work, thoughts not yet explored as well as my future activity. It bleeds into and reflects onto the written and visual work of others, some of which I have consciously referenced and some I have not. Incorporated into the design of the thesis are ideas of layering, transparency, folding, motif, pattern, connection, multiplicity and narrative. The importance of representing these aspects visually, in addition to my exploration of them within the content, reinforces the methodological approach I have taken.

Metaphors of textiles for thinking, making and writing are of course numerous and entrenched in our language (Mitchell 1997, Showalter 1986). You might say that right now I am spinning you a yarn and piecing things together. This document offers an insight into my methods of perceptually and conceptually visualising and evaluating these metaphors. Deleuzian concepts of the fold, via Pennina Barnett, (1999) had me folding and unfolding paper ‘fortune-tellers’ to ascertain whether they were a useful visual metaphor for my research process, my design thinking and for the structure of my thesis. Unfolding the fortune-tellers left me with a neat tessellation of thirty-two triangles, a complete piece of paper, yet dissected by the unfolded folds. I then saw parallels with patchworking (Showalter 1986), lattices, meshes, cats’ cradles and string figures in the folds of the piece of paper. I noted how fortune-tellers and cats’ cradles required interaction and play amongst more than one person, and how they changed form due to this. At the same time, all and none of these notions satisfactorily captured the complexity of what I have/am experiencing as a textile design researcher in my thinking and my textile/textual practice. But, of course, developing a deeper conceptualisation and understanding of textile design thinking and its methodology is one of the significant objectives of this project. As you continue you will see how this emerges from observations made through the contextualisation of the textile design discipline within Modernism, re-appropriation and re-signification of textile metaphors, conversation, storytelling and restorying as analysis and bricolaged theory, often subsequently blended

and meshed. You will notice that each of these research methods involves a dynamic: something is in something, something is in relation to something else, something combines with something else; notions of relationality, in inevitable partnership with tension, permeate the epistemology of this thesis at every level. This dynamic is captured in the term ‘*textasis*’, which I discovered in a 2009 essay from Maria Damon. She recounts her residency in Riga in 2008 for the E-text and Textiles Project. Damon hoped to “meld an active poetics with the textile practices of weaving and cross-stitching” and produced small cross-stitched textile works that she sent to friends and colleagues, inviting a ‘back and forth’, requesting their interaction and response on the pieces’ textuality in reference to the aim of the project. One piece, ‘*B: Tiny Arkhive*’, was sent to Jewish-Canadian poet Adeena Karasick. Karasick’s (Damon 2011) poetic explanation of the Hebrew letter BET or *b*, which Damon had embroidered for her, connects ideas of the feminine, matrixial, textuality, representation, symbolism and the quantum, key concepts at various points in this thesis. BET is the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and in this position is considered as female. Its numeric value is 2, which Karasick sees as signifying a doubling or a multiplicity. It represents a house, an archive – closed on three sides and open on one.

“You are an ‘Open House’, which is at once *in* place, while deprived of any *one* place. In its place and in place of; re-placed in hyperspatial interplays, you, my tiny archive, displaced *en plaisir*.”

“Little archive cross-stitched and emanating, I read you as an embroidered network of socio-linguistic and hermeneutic relations.” (Damon 2009)

Karasick manages to elevate and resignify textile metaphors, giving value to both the actual stitchery and the significance of using stitch (and textile practice) to communicate. Karasick describes the piece as; “An inscription of *textasis*...” This simple term is derived from the ancient Greek *tasis*, meaning stretching, tension or intensity. Although Karasick uses the term to describe the tension of BET represented in stitch, as “an intertextile, text in exile”, the condition of *textasis* succinctly describes the enmeshed nature of the research issues I address, my methodology and my lived research experience.

(Developed from a presentation given to MA History of Design students at the Royal College of Art, May 2013)

CRITIQUE OF THE COMMENTARY

In its infancy, design research was required to justify itself by finding ways to define design and defend the notion that through its processes it represented a distinctive type of knowledge. Over the decades, Bruce Archer's questions have been studied from the perspective of different sectors of design, most prominently in architecture, industrial design and engineering, the results of which have formed the basis of design research knowledge and still lead academic discourses. *Design Studies* remains one of the leading journals on design thinking and process, but is heavily biased towards industrial and engineering design, as are the more recent publications. The *Design Journal*, published since 1998, and the *Journal of Design Research*, published since 2001. The *International Journal of Design*, published since 2007, has a broader scope with more submissions focusing on design as a social process, while *Design Issues*, published since 2000, combines design history, theory, and criticism. Today, the field of 'design research' incorporates studies into design methods and methodology, the design process, designed objects, designers and design thinking. A field of study inevitably broadens, but some scholars have had specific influence on this. In particular, Donald Schön's notions of design as 'conversations' with materials and situations that 'talk back', as well as Klaus Krippendorf's 'semantic turn' (Galle 2011) towards a more human-centred theory of design, have helped to identify design as a complex, social process beyond purely the cognitive science of design. 'Design thinking' is a term that was introduced by Peter Rowe in his 1987 book *Design Thinking*: he proposes that designers work on hunches and hypotheses and that the problem-solving action of the design process itself shapes the emergent solution (Kimbell 2011). Design thinking, as a means of creative problem-solving, has been widely adopted in other fields, particularly business and innovation management and strategy, and popularised (and heroicized) by global companies such as IDEO. The application of the term 'design thinking' in these fields lent it an inappropriately faddish quality; it was the next 'big' thing. In 2011, this led to Bruce Nussbaum (who straddles the fields of innovation, design and business in his various positions) announcing that design thinking was a 'failed experiment' (Nussbaum 2011), asking and proposing 'what's next?'. What's next, apparently, is 'creative intelligence', the topic of his next book.

Those actually active in the field of design research have not been so quick to denounce it. In fact, it would be impossible to denounce it, because in its original sense, 'design thinking' is simply design cognition, the thinking associated with designing, and has been a subject of study since the 1960s. There is, however, some agreement that the definition of 'design thinking' is not clear, and is not necessarily the most apt label for such a complex phenomenon. Lucy Kimbell (2011) gives a very useful synopsis of the development and understanding of the term in her paper 'Rethinking design thinking: Part I'.

Other design researchers propose a broken-down definition of design thinking, which captures design in different contexts. Elizabeth Pastor and GK Van Patter at NextD have set out what they call 'Design Geographies' and 'Sensemaking Frameworks' (2011). This includes four interrelated and connected fields of design, all with different challenges. Design 1.0 is traditional, artifactual design, Design 2.0 is product/service design, Design 3.0 is 'organisational transformation' and Design 4.0 is 'social transformation'. They say "...what design thinking is and does differs significantly depending on challenge geography. Design thinking in Design 1 is very different from design thinking in Design 3." (Pastor & Van Patter 2011)

NextD's categorisation of design thinking is helpful in ideologically aligning the design thinking of fashion design with that of social policy. All the four types of design are mutually reliant on one another. This strengthens the case for persisting in the application of design thinking in a broad way, while recognising that it takes on different forms in each scenario.

Textile design, in both educational and industrial contexts, is almost entirely focused on traditional, artifactual design (D1.0). There are clusters of research-led textile designers who are working in the field of D2.0 – for example, Jenny Tillotson’s work in ‘scentsory’ design – with very few working in D3.0; Rebecca (Becky) Earley’s work in sustainable design processes and business strategy is one of a limited number of examples. The field of D4.0 (social transformation) is a difficult one to define for textile design, due to its relationship with textile crafts. Examples might include women of different ages coming together to create a patchwork quilt – a textile design scenario that has social effects, and that has happened for centuries. Women have made and sold textiles and textile products as a means of personal income generation in socially mediated situations and gendered societies for even longer. Kirsten Scott’s work in developing plaited grass and straw materials with Ugandan women in the Eyesiga Mukama Craft Group has helped to improve their social capital and increased their income (Scott n.d.).

But are these scenarios examples of *textile design*? Asserting that textile design is design is one of the foundational premises of this thesis.

In this thesis, I use the term ‘design thinking’ to cover the embodied, cognitive activities of (textile) designers that are set in relation to their design process, focusing on artifactual design and product development. Working towards a conceptualisation of textile design thinking in these areas, due to the interrelated nature of different types of design thinking, will undoubtedly open up new applications of textile thinking in regard to other types of design challenges, and give further credence to textile designers pioneering in the areas of organisational and social transformation.

“... the absence of a significant interest from the chattier academic disciplines, the task of establishing such a discourse rests quite clearly with the textile community itself.” (Gale & Kaur 2002)

Colin Gale and Jasbir Kaur’s 2002 publication *The Textile Book* offers a well-rounded knowledge of textiles as material culture and designed and crafted object. The authors explore the range of personnel involved in textiles as designers, craftspeople and designer-makers, as well as outlining the industrial, historical and global contexts for textiles in such a way that they allow me to progress, unencumbered by the requirement to define these titles, towards an exploration of the activities and cognitive processes of textile design. Gale and Kaur put forward an impassioned argument in support of textiles and its associated industries as a worthy subject and ‘profession’. Gale and Kaur’s ‘call to arms’ cited above has not been particularly keenly heeded, despite the encouragement it provides. In their choice of words they indicate particular characteristics, and therefore differences, between design disciplines, and in doing so label textile design as quiet and unwitting.

Rachel Studd’s paper ‘The textile design process’ (Studd 2002) sets out the methods and activities textile designers carry out as they design. The paper provides different accounts of the textile design process from the viewpoint of a freelance textile designer to teams working within large corporations. Her account, and the various ‘summary of design processes’ she develops, give due regard to the variable factors that alter the experience for textile designers within different industrial contexts. She also puts forward a diagram of the basic structure of the textile industry and process.

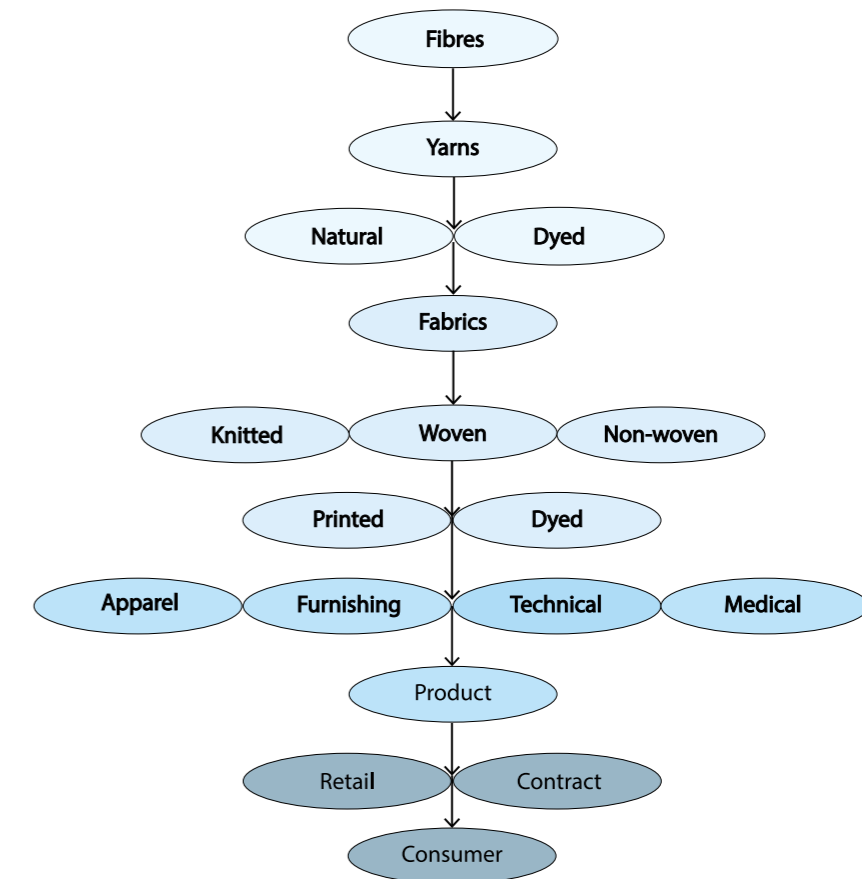


Figure 8: The basic structure of the textile design industry and process. Redrafted from Studd (2002).

The essential structure of this diagram (see Figure 8) is simple and essentially correct, yet several aspects of the activity of textile design have been omitted: in particular, the significance of embroidery and other constructed textile and surface embellishment techniques within textile design. Since the publication of Studd’s diagram in 2002, an even wider range of technical skills has become part of the repertoire of the textile design discipline. Laser-cutting and digital fabric printing methods began to be applied in creative textile design in the late 1990s. Since the early 2000s there has been a growth in interest in techniques such as rapid prototyping and 3D printing in the design and development of three-dimensional textile surfaces. Military and automotive applications could be considered under Studd’s label of ‘technical’ textiles; however, I feel they demand some consideration for their aesthetics as well their properties. Smart textiles have also been excluded. This field covers wearable, haptic and ambient technological textiles, and contrasts with the technical textiles engineered by chemists, material scientists and industrial engineers. While this diagram clearly requires an update, I appreciate that in its simplicity it covers all aspects of textile design, from designer-makers’ work to engineered textiles.

Figure 9 is my own adaptation of Studd’s diagram. I have presented it in a non-prioritised list-based format, avoiding the ‘flow diagram’ style that Studd has used. This allows for the tracing of multiple paths through the textile design and making process. The context of this thesis, focusing on the creation of haptic and visual aesthetics in artifactual textile design, is indicated in the shaded areas. This table serves to illustrate the basic shape of textile design activity today.

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|--------------------------|
| | Fibres Yarns | | | |
| | Natural Dyed | | | |
| Textile design students Textile swatching studios Freelance textile designers In-house textile designers Designer-makers Craftspeople Own-label designers Hobbyists Research-led designers | Knitted Woven Non-woven Rapid-prototyping (including 3D printing) Engineered | | | |
| Material scientists Chemists Engineers | Fabrics Materials | | | |
| | Printed (digital & manual) Dyed Embroidery & embellishment Constructed & mixed media Laser-cut & etched Surface treatments (e.g. Washing, distressing) Smart technologies Surface pattern design | Apparel Furnishing Architectural & Interior Automotive | Product for Retail Product for Contract | Consumer |
| | | Technical & Industrial Medical & Biomedical Military | | |
| | | First level consumption | | Second level consumption |

Figure 9: Table illustrating contemporary textile design activity (2013). Adapted from Studd (2002)

Previous studies of textile design thinking have mainly been pedagogical, involving students of textile design in higher education. Alison Shreeve opens up the conversation about knowledge in textiles in 'Material girls: Tacit knowledge in textile crafts' (Shreeve 1997) and in doing so emphasises the need for more extended research in this area. Shreeve directly and consistently labels textiles as 'craft' rather than as a design discipline, and closely aligns it to fashion. These labels and associations are clearly derived from the context of the research, based at the London College of Fashion and published by The Crafts Council. It may also be a legacy of the progression of the art-craft-design dialectic since 1997, when then the paper was written. Shreeve utilises Michael Polanyi's work on the tacit and supports her theoretical writing with evidence from video studies of interactions between staff and students at the London College of Fashion. The aim of Shreeve's paper is to emphasise the pedagogical requirement to understand and value the visual, perceptual and tacit knowledge that is intrinsic in learning how to craft textiles. Shreeve's research methods differentiate her writing from, but also align it with, that of James Moxey.

In 'The representation of concepts in textile design' (Moxey 2000) Moxey also studied textile design students. His study focuses on describing the outcomes of the textile design process, such as mood boards and samples. Moxey uses his descriptions of these methods of 'representing concepts', and attempts to match the design process he has been observing with the design process model as outlined in the work of writers on design. The outcome of this is unconvincing, as Moxey describes an iterative, free-form process where some students are encouraged to depart from the original design brief by developing their own briefs, but then proceeds in depicting a linear design process model. Both Shreeve and Moxey seek to gain an understanding of textile knowledge and textile design by studying the actions and outcomes of students of textile design. This is clearly an important and valid aspect of the experience of being/becoming a textile designer. However, it does highlight the requirement to extend the study of textile design to incorporate the variety of experiences and outcomes of professional textile designers at different stages in their careers.

Dorst (2008) provides us with a seven-level model of expertise in the design profession. Within this model he specifies anomalies between approaches to design across the levels that helps us to question the one-dimensional definition of the design process which has become so prevalent. Studd's work in 2002 gives some explanation of textile design in industrial contexts, but does not deal with the cognitive aspects of textile design. Where Shreeve and Moxey differ most widely is in their choice of research methods. Shreeve acknowledges the innate problems associated with accessing tacit knowledge and so chooses to visually and audibly record the research participants as they communicate with each other in tutorial and assessment contexts. In contrast Moxey describes how, after initially envisaging using interviews to collect data, a decision was made, based on research from fields such as mathematics and chemistry, that personal accounts are 'untrustworthy data sources'. Moxey then decides to focus his investigations on the visual work produced by the students and provides us with no indication of how the students personally articulated their textile design process and design thinking. Shreeve's method is relational, adopting an ethnographic methodology, whilst Moxey adopts a scientific model, describing, analysing and classifying the tangible outcomes of the textile design process. Shreeve's study uses the (student) designer and their personal experience of the design process as the object of research whilst Moxey's study removes the designer from the research project, focusing solely on the outcome.

Studies by Rachel Studd and James Moxey, both developed at UMIST, Manchester, give a thorough description of the systematic design process for textiles, covering both students and professionals. However, systematic models of the design process have routinely been challenged by certain academics who emphasise the 'opportunistic' behaviour of designers in practice. Cross summarises a range of studies that explore both systematic and opportunistic approaches to designing (Cross 2007:109 – 112), highlighting the fact that the process of designing is difficult to define even though there are clear signifiers of the concept of a specific type of knowledge that design utilises. He warns that "The 'cognitive cost' of apparently more principled, structured behaviour may actually be higher than can be reasonably sustained, or can be justified by the quality of the outcome." (Cross 2007:116)

There are very few examples of research that has explored the phenomenon of the ill-defined problem for textile design. Moxey (2000:53) states that in textile design "Concepts are initially nurtured and developed at a cognitive level by searching the problem space, gathering information and stimulating the senses." He describes the fact that the ill-defined nature of the design problem requires designers to "...import information into the problem space." Moxey hints at how textile designers deal with ill-defined design problems when he describes concept generation for textiles as a combination of informed intuition, tacit knowledge and overt, market-rich data.

Studd (2002) provides an example of a design brief as used by a large UK-based textile company. It outlines the aims and objectives that the proposed collection must attain, including stipulations about the colours and fabrics to be utilised and the product dimensions to influence the repeat size, as well as the targeted consumer. Are these aspects merely technical and market requirements, rather than the articulation of an ill-defined design problem? Are they just setting the boundaries of the ‘problem space’? Moxey and Studd focus on concept finding/generation and representation in response to a ‘trigger’ (Studd 2002:43): can this trigger be seen as the design problem? Is it a more appropriate term than ‘problem’? These studies do not yet fully interrogate the notion of the ill-defined design problem for textile design. They invite further investigation into the ‘trigger’ for textile design and initiate an articulation of the nature of the ill-defined problems textile designers deal with.

The lack of studies relating to textile design thinking and process, and the date of those cited here, expose the void of consideration given to the subject. There is, however, no lack of academic interest in textiles as a cultural object. Two anthologies of textile texts were published in 2012; *The Textile Reader*, edited by Jessica Hemmings (Igoe 2013), and *Textiles: Primary and Critical Sources*, edited by Catherine Harper. These two key volumes have for the first time gathered the most important texts on the subject of textiles, and in doing so are facilitating growth in new academic writing in the field. However, neither of these two collections offers an exploration of the design process for textiles and its associated thinking. This study aims to find a location between the types of fictional, poetic, social, cultural, political, historical writing found within these volumes and the academic discourse of design thinking.

Efforts to begin an ongoing academic debate on the subject of textile design, thinking and practice have of course been evident in the individual projects of research students and academics across the UK and beyond. In 2010, researchers at Loughborough University founded the *DUCK Journal for Research in Textiles and Textile Design* in an attempt to publish online material of this nature, and to which I contributed a paper (Igoe 2010). In 2013 it was relaunched, published by Bloomsbury, as the *Journal of Textile Design Research and Practice*.

The requirement for textile educators to keep abreast of innovations in industry and technology, as well as new pedagogical research and changing student profiles, to maintain or improve currency and relevance in the delivery of their programmes has been a key driver for research into textile design. In two studies exploring the relationship between textiles, engineering and technology, (Kavanagh, Matthews & Tyrer 2008:708 and Kavanagh 2004:3) the writers outline how education promotes three aspects of textile design: ‘Discourse, Context and Process’, simplified as “*What one wants to say, and to whom, and by what means.*” They describe how education has become better at preparing students of textile design for working in textiles (the context) as a reaction to the criticism that discourse and process has long been emphasised. They go on to describe how, with greater contextual knowledge, their technical understanding of manufacturing processes has waned. In this example, ‘discourse’ can be read as the internal and external rhetoric as experienced by the (student) designer, the ‘*context*’ as the customer or intended market for the design, and ‘process’ as the technical methods required for production. Kavanagh’s (2004:3) questions are directed to the textile designer and the textile design discipline for a specifically pedagogical application. This study asks similar questions but aims to engage with the entity of textile design in the context of design research theory. The textile entity includes the textile designer and the discipline (Actor); the textile design object, the objective/design problem of textile design (Object); the manual and cognitive processes of textile design (Process) and the industrial, historical, political, cultural context of textile design (Context). These labels are an application of Kees Dorst’s (2008:5) argument that a focus on the process of design ignores the impact of the object, the actor and the context. I have added ‘process’ to this list to suggest that process is not the frame for these other aspects, but rather is set in a complex relationship with them. This nexus describes the textile ‘entity’ that I am addressing in this study. Using the Textiles-as-entity metaphor correlates with a new

approach to the development of design thinking as ‘sketched’ out by Lucy Kimbell in her 2012 paper ‘Rethinking design thinking: Part II’. Kimbell wishes to facilitate a ‘practice-centred’ approach to design research. She suggests that: “Practice theories see the locus of the social not at the level of individuals and their minds, or in organizations and groups and their norms but as a nexus of minds, bodies, things, institutions, knowledge and processes, structure and agency.” (Kimbell 2012)

And so, in asking the entity of textiles *what it wants to say, to whom and by what means*, the questions have a broader remit, requiring answers of a suitably epistemological slant.

In summary, the aims of this study can be captured as follows;

- To explore notions of the textile designer and the discipline (Actor); the textile design object and the objective/design problem of textile design (Object); the association of the manual and cognitive processes of textile design (Process) the industrial, historical, political, cultural context of textile design (Context), and how they act on design thinking in the nexus of textile design.
- To facilitate an articulation of textile design thinking and knowledge.
- To contextualize textile design thinking within the broader design research discourse.

“If textile design is to be studied in an attempt to understand its peculiarities, then researchers should aim to systematically identify the nature of textile design and the behaviour of textile designers.” (Moxey 1999:176)

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MATRIXIAL MEANING

Its architect, Hiroshi Hara, called it ‘The Matrix’. The complex curving network of steel beams of the roof of Kyoto Railway Station is evident from the main concourse. You only achieve the real sense of it when emerging up through the vast building on its seemingly endless escalators that transport you past floors and floors of retail outlets, restaurants and hotels and platforms.

The heat of the August afternoon was getting to me. My husband was off elsewhere, characteristically taking in every sight, sound, shop and shot. It was just too hot for me. The architecture of the place was compelling, although dated, I thought. I reached the humid air of the open rooftop and stopped to take in the view of the Kyoto skyline, familiar as a metropolis but hemmed in by mountainous hills on all sides.

At that point I had already been considering the notion of nets and meshes metaphorically in relation to textiles, and the term ‘matrix’ struck a chord with this way of thinking. The information plaques dotted around the roof garden explained the etymological basis of the word as ‘womb’ or a ‘place or medium where something is developed’. The building’s roof utilises a literal matrix in its mesh-like qualities, and is womb-like in the sense that it does not entirely enclose the building. It creates a space that is at once open and closed, allowing the architectural experience to change and alter in respect to the interplay of natural and artificial light, the weather and inside/outside occurrences. I was excited by the rich seam this definition allowed me to mine in respect to exploring aspects of the textile and textile thinking.

On returning home, I wanted to express the matrix-like nature of textiles in my writing, clumsily using ‘matrixial’ (a non-existent word of my own creation that my spell check did not like); however, some web searching soon unearthed for me the term ‘matrixial’ and the theories developed by artist, theoretician, clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger. Ettinger’s theory of the matrixial and associated concepts have been in development over at least the past two decades and have been recognised as a significant contribution to psychoanalytic theoretical discourse. Ettinger’s texts are linguistically creative and thereby challenging for a reader, such as myself, with no experience in psychoanalytical texts. However, with some perseverance an understanding began to emerge that revealed many resonances with myself and my work.

Thankfully, Griselda Pollock and Judith Butler provide us with several critical explorations of Ettinger’s written and artistic works. In her article ‘Mother trouble: the maternal-feminine in phallic and feminist theory in relation to Bracha Ettinger’s elaboration of matrixial ethics’ (2009) Pollock begins with an excerpt from Sylvia Plath’s poem Love Letter, written in 1960, six months after the birth of her daughter. Pollock draws our attention to its opening line: “Not easy to state the change you made”. She suggests that the poem is a commentary on both prenatal and postnatal maternity and an exemplar of the trans-subjectivity and co-emergence that Ettinger advocates in her theory.

“I took the intrauterine meeting as a model for human situations and processes in which non-I is not an intruder, but a partner in difference. The Matrix reflects multiple and/or partial joint strata of subjectivity whose elements recognize each other without knowing each other”. Ettinger (1993) cited in Pollock (2009:5)

Pollock explains how Ettinger chooses to use the word ‘matrix’ for both its literal Latin definition of ‘womb’ but similarly for its alternative definitions as a complex, generating structure.

Just a few weeks after our visit to Japan, I learnt that I was pregnant. The coincidence of happening upon matrixial theory during my very early and as yet unknown pregnancy of course meant that I had

a certain filter through which to read Ettinger's theories that helped me to understand more deeply her metaphorical use of the term.

Ettinger clearly states how the matrixial, feminine maternal is not an alternative to phallic-centric theoretical models, but resides and exists beyond/ alongside it. It is feminine but not in opposition to the masculine. This very notion challenges several aspects of established psychoanalytical theory. Pollock explains that it

"...is not about cosy mothers and babies, symbiosis and fusion, not fantasies of return to oceanic self-loss which are so common in phallic invocations of the maternal body as subjectless otherness and origin from which the subject must be separated to be a subject at all. It invokes a dimension of subjectivity co-existing with but shifting the phallic, in which the subject is fragile, susceptible and compassionate to the unknown other who is, nonetheless, a partner in the situation but a partner-in-difference."

Pollock (2009:5)

"Subjectivity may be, also and at the same time, for different ends and effects, encounter."

Pollock (2009:14)

The application of matrixial theory seems to support a research approach that promotes the inclusivity of the researcher in the research project and would deny the notion that the two could be separated. In my own experience, it is undeniable that I am going through a transsubjective 'encounter' with my research project. Looking back over the twists and turns of my research project, I can see how my life has shaped the developments of my learning, thinking, making and writing in both explicit and implicit terms. And now as I return to work after my maternity leave, how the necessary completion of this project has impacted on the choices my family has made in the organisation of our lives to help me achieve my goals.

I have been enrolled as a research student for seven years, and during this time I have (at the very least!) travelled, taught and been taught, got married, been pregnant, given birth and become a working parent. This very piece of writing, in its content, form and how and when it was written, has been inescapably affected by all those factors, plus many more. I have always found it very difficult to find a title for my research project: of course it is tricky to capture the essence of an extended piece of writing in one or two sentences, but when viewed as a developing entity in itself in the way that matrixial theory proposes, how can it be named before it exists in its own right? Its subjectivity is 'fragile and susceptible'. Educational establishments and research councils require clear proposals, outlines, milestones and projected costings when embarking on a research project, but these schemata can never be anything more than fictions. This approach supports a binary approach to thinking with the researcher cloven of involvement in it. Taking the notion of co-emergence and the transsubjective matrixial encounter further and exploring it in the context of the trimesters of pregnancy, my pregnancy, helps me to make sense of my actual, as opposed to proposed, research process. An experience that, as previously mentioned, is nuanced by complex personal, social and cultural issues:

Hmm...It's vague. Very vague. It's nothing. Let's wait and see what happens. The signs are there. Or are they? Am I just imagining all this? I need some proof.

OK. It's for real. There's something there. I wonder when exactly it happened? What is it going to feel like? The signs I thought were signs I am now doubting. I thought I'd notice some other signs by now. I'm worried.

I thought they'd give me some definite corroboration, but no! They just accepted what I had to say, but what if I'm wrong! I just have to keep going.

There's something transformative going on but at the moment but I still feel the same.

Everything looks the same. I'm the only person who really knows this is going on. I can't really accept it or talk about it, it might all go wrong, my state is vulnerable and it's out of my hands.

Doing everything I should to help it progress well, but not allowing myself to think about it too much.

Oh my god – its there. I can see it. I AM OVERCOME. My head rushes with all the thoughts I had been suppressing for years. It is within me after all! Is it ok? Is it alright?

I'm expanding and changing in response to it. I'm organising my life in response to it. But it could all still go wrong. I feel more vulnerable than ever. I feel a strange mixture of pride, enjoyment, excitement, anticipation and vulnerability. I am proactive. I try to ensure its survival by adapting my practices. My views are changing unexpectedly. I didn't know I could be that type of person.

I look at it intently and frequently in the hope of seeing some discernable features, but as yet, I can't make out anything distinct. It looks like any other, but it's not, it's like NO other, it can't be like any other!

Well you're definitely growing, that's obvious. And the stuff you have accumulated!

There – there it is!! Hello again. How you've changed. So much energy now, you're hard to get a reading of. Hold still for a second, slow down, I need to know more about you. Now I can see you. Your shape is emerging. And you are definitely mine.

Phew, everything's seems to be OK. But we won't know for sure until it's delivered.

Is that what I'm supposed to feel? No, I don't think it is. Or that? I hope everything is still OK.

Pow! Punch! That's it! That was definitely it! Now it feels real. What's there on paper now feels tangible and it feels so good!

We'll give you a name, but it won't be your real name. We'll think long and hard about our options and wait till we see who emerges.

I sit and breathe and try to connect with you. My husband tries too but he's not living with you. He can only see the big changes, he has no idea about what's really going on, as much as he tries to support me, understand and read around the subject. Only people who have experienced this know how it feels.

I try not to get stressed out. It's not going to help you develop well. All other things don't seem quite so important now anyway. I find it hard to think or talk about anything else.

Who are you? What will you look like? What will you become? What will I become? I think and wonder.

I can see you, feel you, hear you. You are more real every day. You are created within me but I have no conscious choice or at best an arbitrary influence over what you are to become. Yet, unavoidably, who I am and what I do leaves traces in your makeup that will remain indelibly. Oh my god – am I good enough? Am I doing the right things?

The time is coming. This finite period is coming to an end. Your gestation is almost done. Soon it'll be time

to introduce you to the world. But how am I going to get you out? I have all these plans – but things don't always go to plan. I need to focus on my intention, reiterate it, don't stray from it, don't let doubt in. I can do it and I can do it in the way I want. The way that's best for you and for me. Focus, focus, focus.

Now, it's happening now. With so much power, I'm overtaken. Its just happening. Surge after surge moves you closer to emerging. My own self goes within and closes out the world every time you move out, I go in. My husband is my advocate. He maintains objectivity when all I feel is primal; a powerful challenge, one that unequivocally requires total mind body interconnectivity to achieve.

Stop. A lucid moment. There's a storm outside... When I review my life, my feeling is that the most favourable things that have happened to me occurred with no purposeful intervention from myself. So my preparation for this moment was to choose the path that felt most natural, unengineered, instinctive. One might say the path of least resistance. To follow this path actually meant opposing the accepted norms, striking out and in doing so putting in many hours of practice to ensure an environment, a moment, that would allow you to emerge as you must, as you should.

So far it's working. I'm getting used to it. I can do it. Here we go again. Goodbye. A drink please! Again, I go inside.

A walk. Inside, outside. Surges racing but moving, slowly, ever so slowly.

We are so connected now; I can no longer feel you.

I'm so close to seeing you now, its getting harder though. The methods I was using aren't working so well now.

By persisting, I'm just delaying matters.

I'm advised to stop, walk, try something different.

Oh! A sudden shift! Now it feels right. THIS is the right direction you've been looking for. Things move quickly now.

I go back inside and soon with my last vestiges of effort, you are here.

Your appearance is imperfect, puffed up and misshapen, a week or two will help that, but in that moment I am overjoyed. Now you and I have different work to do, a different relationship. I see you now and inspect you to see what you have become. But we know each other so well already. You know what to do, but how? No-one has taught you.

Our previous ties are cut but new bonds develop and we are forever attached. What will you and I become?

“The stone is beautifully rubbed: it is continuous as an enlarging snowball on the run; yet part of the matrix is detached as a subtly flattened pebble. This is the child which the mother owns with all her weight, a child that is of the block yet separate, beyond her womb, yet of her being [...] Miss Hepworth's stone is a mother, her huge pebble its child.” Stokes (1933)

Adrian Stokes' commentary on the tension of the matrixial, co-emergence evident in Barbara Hepworth's *Mother and Child* serves as a foreword to Ettinger's development of the concept.

“This multiple diachronous as well as synchronous transitivity is asymmetrical, regressive, remembering and at the same time, anticipatory and projective into living futures to come.” Pollock (2009:9)

Stokes' and Pollock's statements summarise the generative aspect of the matrixial theory, the severality that Ettinger emphasises. This facet is crucial in my application of the matrixial as a framework for both my research approach and methodology and textile thinking, as shall be explored further in this thesis.

Pollock refers to the contrasts evident between Ettinger's view on creativity, femininity and the maternal and those of Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray.

“Thus Ettinger opens up a new field that radically introduces the concept of the pre- natal/pre-maternal situation of primordial encounter as a basis for recognising another dimension of subjectivity, fantasy and thought that is not all about organs. It concerns **structures, logics and affects**, as well as **garnered or remembered sensations**, retroactively (*nachträglich*) caught up as the basis for both thinking **ethics (relations to the other) and aesthetics (transmitted affects and transformations of/in/between the other(s))**.” Pollock (2009:7)

I added the emphasis on these words in this quotation from Pollock as it so clearly outlines how useful the theory of the matrixial is for understanding textiles. Textiles, as designed, made objects (of material culture) are all about structure, logic (/function) and so richly concerned with affect, aesthetics, sensation, communication and relationality. What then can be said about the design (and making) process through the framework of the matrixial? How can Ettinger's textile metaphors be mirrored back to help us understand textiles thinking? Catherine De Zegher briefly connects the work of textile artist Cecilia Vicuna and Bracha Ettinger in her essay of 1997, espousing Pollock's support of the matrixial paradigm and encouraging the application of it. Catherine Dormor's recent doctoral thesis 'Matrixial Matrices: Haptic, Scopic and Textile' (2012), along with its accompanying practice, also refers to Ettinger's theories of the matrixial encounter. Dormor applied Ettinger's theories of border-linking, co-emergence and the matrixial to her art textiles. Dormor describes herself as an artist. Her textiles are artworks about textiles and textile making; meta-textiles. In her 1997 essay 'Textiles, text and techne' Victoria Mitchell describes a 'textility of thought and matter' (1997:6). Dormor explores and exposes the essence of textility through her textile art practice and she identifies and supports this with philosophical and psychoanalytical concepts. I seek to expand this concept by developing an understanding of how 'everyday' textiles are designed in connection with the thinking process that correlates with the act of designing. In designed, commercial textiles, the actual making is sometimes entirely divorced from the thinking, the designer emailing instructions to manufacturers.

Ettinger continues where others have started by using textile terms as metaphors in her theories. She describes vibrating 'strings', 'threads' and 'weaving' to describe her version of co-poiesis.

“She is weaving and being woven. She bears witness in the woven textile and texture of psychic transsubjectivity.” Ettinger (2006:196)

“Each psyche is a continuity of the psyche of the other in the matrixial borderspace. We thus metabolize mental imprints and traces for one another in each matrixial web whose psychic grains, virtual and affective strings and unconscious threads participate in other matrixial webs and transform them by borderlinking in metramorphosis.” Ettinger (2005:704-705)

She describes 'metramorphosis' as a; “...a process of interpsychic communication and transformation that transgresses the borders of the individual subject and takes place between several entities.” Ettinger (2006:181-182) “Through this process the limits, borderlines, and thresholds conceived are continually transgressed or dissolved, thus allowing the creation of new ones.” Ettinger (1992) cited in Pollock (2009:3)

Thus, the matrixial sits as the epistemological framework for this study, unveiling the requirement for the use of a feminist, post-structuralist research approach for this investigation of textile design process and thinking; reflexivity, storytelling and metaphor becoming key elements in my methodology.

THE HARD AND THE SOFT

Pennina Barnett provides an alternative understanding of the phenomenon of metamorphosis as developed by Ettinger. She describes 'soft logics' in reference to Michel Serres' concept of 'sack thinking' (Barnett 1999:26). For Barnett, this paradigm sits beside the binary ideology (Serres' hard, box thinking) of "either/or" and invites multiple possibilities, encouraging "and/and", permitting "the opportunity to be oneself in a new way." Serres (1985) talks about the liminal threshold between hardness and softness, how one gives way to another. Soft logics and their significance to an understanding of textile design thinking require considered analysis, which I will certainly address, but for now I wish to use Serres' concept of a relationality between hard and soft to explore a narrative providing a metaphor for the socio-historical context of this study.

I am going to take Paul Scheerbart's 1914 novel *The Gray Cloth* (Scheerbart 1914) as a reflection of the contradiction between textiles design as the ideal medium/tool for the Modernist message and how its associated thinking was marginalised within the universalism of the movement. This is inextricably paralleled with the prevailing position of the feminine and feminism in Modernist thought (Sparke 1995).

I first came across Scheerbart's name in Richard Weston's introduction to the fourth edition of Niklaus Pevsner's *Pioneers of Modern Design* (Pevsner 2005:9). Weston critiques Pevsner's original text, commenting that no account of early Modernist architecture would now ignore the Expressionist circle of Bruno Taut and Paul Scheerbart. A few internet searches later unearthed a review of Scheerbart's novel by prominent design historian Victor Margolin (2003). Margolin's review describes the plot in detail, and I quickly became intrigued by its narrative of the relationship between coloured glass and grey fabric; architecture and clothing; male and female; hard and soft.

Conceived and written as an Expressionist novel, at the dawn of theoretical Modernism, the novel is set forty years later, at the watershed of what would become popular Modernism. It begins by introducing the hero-architect and coloured glass enthusiast, Edgar Krug, seemingly loosely based on Scheerbart's friend and collaborator, Bruno Taut. We meet Edgar, and his impulsive and immovable opinions, at a showcase of silver sculpture, in an exhibition hall of coloured glass and iron near Chicago which he had designed. The characterization of Edgar is accompanied by the sound of the organ, expertly and passionately played by his future wife, Clara Weber. Edgar is annoyed by the fashions of the women attending the event, feeling that their clothing choices showed a lack of respect for his coloured glass walls. When he eventually meets Clara, the talented musician who had created the phonic atmosphere that had amplified the effect of his architecture, Edgar notices that she is wearing an outfit of grey fabric (with ten per cent white), which he feels is the most complementary clothing to be worn within his colourful glass buildings. Almost immediately he proposes marriage, with a clause that Clara should only ever wear this combination of grey and white. She instantly accepts, and they are married that night. The novel then travels with Edgar and Clara on their glass airship as they visit his various architectural projects around the globe. Throughout the novel, Clara is encouraged by other women to break the marriage terms or at the very least subvert them in some way. Whilst the novel focuses on Clara's clothing, it is not her clothing style that Edgar is concerned with, but the cloth from which it is made; its colouration, patterning and textures. Edgar Krug not only stipulates that Clara must wear grey cloth with ten per cent white, but that her clothing should not be made from velvet or silk (Scheerbart 1914:10)

The Gray Cloth was the first of Scheerbart's novels to be translated into English, in 2001. Reiterating Weston's comment (Pevsner 2005:9), John Stuart (Stuart 1999:61) describes how architectural historian and theoretician Reyner Banham lamented Scheerbart's exclusion from the canon of literature

on Modernist architecture, despite being a key influence in the avant-garde art and architectural correspondence circle The Crystal Chain, active in 1920, which included Walter Gropius and Taut (Stuart 1999). Walter Benjamin expressed his esteem for Scheerbart's writing, and Scheerbart's 1913 novel *Lesabéndio* directly influenced Benjamin's *The Arcades Project 1927 – 1940* (Morse 2011, Morse 2013, Stuart 1999:68). Stuart (1999:61) groups Scheerbart's work with the writing of Jean-François De Bastide, William Morris, George Bernard Shaw, Ayn Rand and Umberto Eco for its influence on architectural design.

Written within the German Expressionist oeuvre, Scheerbart's fantastical, science-fiction-based story about modern architecture was characteristic of the utopian thinking associated with the movement and typified in the glass architecture of Bruno Taut. The onset of World War I and its economic and psychological impact on the German people, and also the wider global population, provided the backdrop of disillusionment that saw the utopian emphasis on self within Expressionism evolve into the concept of universal truth of Modernism.

The novel's influence on architectural theory is certain, although arguably understated; however, its treatment of clothing, fabric and colour has certainly been ignored. Reading this story as a textile designer, it elicited frustration in me. The textiles were being denied their decorative, pleasure-giving role by virtue of the dominating concepts of architecture. In any case, in my opinion, architecture doesn't 'do' colour very well: why waste colour on architecture when textiles can 'do it' so well? At play is Scheerbart's humorous and ironic tone, often rejected or overlooked by many (including Benjamin) (Stuart 1999). As John Stuart states, in his introduction to his translation of *The Gray Cloth*, Scheerbart courts the discussion about the relationship between architecture and textiles initiated by Gottfried Semper some sixty years earlier.

"He was, moreover, able to relish the rich irony of these antagonistic positions by proposing in *The Gray Cloth* that contemporary women's outfits be fixed and unchanging – and thereby modern – while architecture was colourful, vibrant, and expressive – and thereby fashionable." (Scheerbart 1914:xxxvi)

Interestingly, in his paper 'Unweaving Narrative Fabric: Bruno Taut, Walter Benjamin, and Paul Scheerbart's *The Gray Cloth*', Stuart uses textile metaphors to describe his own analysis of the novel and likens Scheerbart, as storyteller and thinker, to a weaver:

"Rather, I would argue, Scheerbart wove a narrative fabric Moreover, in the process of unweaving this fabric, we gain knowledge not only of the culture that produced it, but through its interpretation, of the architecture culture of which we are a part today." (Stuart 1999:69).

He also notes Scheerbart's interest, at the time of writing *The Gray Cloth*, in "interactions and negotiations between fantasy and reality". Statements such as these invite comparisons between the means of conception and creation of *The Gray Cloth* as a text (specifically as narrative) and that of cloth itself.

John Stuart deftly summarises the relevance of *The Gray Cloth* to this thesis in terms of its topic, context and storytelling methodology: "Scheerbart's *The Gray Cloth* provides ample evidence of the importance of narrative as a mediator between utopian ideals and the constructed realities of gender, fashion, materials, human interaction, and architectural experience at the basis of twentieth-century modernity." (Stuart 1999:69).

And so as I explore the literal story, considering how soft materials (textiles) are suppressed in favour of the hard (glass architecture) in this imagined version of the Modernist world, I shall also apply it

as a metaphor. This allows me to explore the inter-relationship of Clara and Edgar, focusing on Clara as a symbol of the feminine, both as a stand-in for textiles as feminine/matrixial and for feminism in the Modernist context. Edgar represents the masculine, the domination of the Modernist notion of universalism and the metaphorical patriarchal guardian of the hierarchy of the arts.

The Gray Cloth illustrates perfectly how the aesthetics and design of textiles and female clothing were subjugated to architecture within the Modernist movement. Stuart states that by the time the novel was written, several leading Germanic architects (Van de Velde, Hoffmann and Behrens) were designing women's garments as part of a complete design environment (Scheerbart 1914:xxxv), or '*Gesamtkunstwerk*'. *Gesamtkunstwerk* can be understood as meaning 'the total work of art': it is a term that was used prominently by composer Richard Wagner and applied to Modernist architectural theory in the teachings of the Bauhaus. Textile design was considered to be an ideal medium for developing the concept, due to its ability to be mechanized and its versatility as a creative medium.

"Modernist textiles – because they functioned on so many levels...were inherently engaged in modern life, they occupied actual space in the gallery, home and showroom, they transformed the human body, and they changed the face of industry. As such they constituted a vital element in developing conceptions of the total work of art." Gardner Troy (2006:16)

TD6: I think we design textiles because textiles underpins everything that we have around us, that we use, that we sit on, that we wear, that we kind of experience in our environment, in our lives. So, you know, I think it's the... for me it's the most... it's one of the most important kind of design disciplines, really, textiles, **because it's so universal**. That's why we design textiles...

TD1: Okay.

TD6: ...to change the world.
(Conversation with TD6 in Appendix C)

Gardner Troy (2006:13) describes how the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* permeated all aspects of textiles – its design, theory, production, marketing and consumption – which situated textiles at the heart of the Modernist movement, allowing artists, designers and theoreticians to explore gender roles, primitivism, abstraction, Constructivism, new technologies and materials and consumerism. Some might say that the very permeation of the ideology of *Gesamtkunstwerk* into textile design both highlighted and subjugated some of the defining characteristics of the discipline. Its functional characteristics – adaptability, transferability and versatility – were exploited, whilst the typical aesthetic concerns of textiles – colour, motif, decoration and haptics – were marginalised in favour of the unified style. Gardner Troy (2006:15) describes textiles as an 'object of neglect' within Modernist theory, and attributes this to two main reasons. The long association of textiles with the work of women in the domestic sphere, societal gender roles and a lack of access to education for women has seriously impacted on the inclusion of textiles in historical and theoretical inquiries. Gardner Troy also explains how the ambiguity of the textile medium itself has been detrimental to the development of an understanding of its significance in the history of art, design and craft. Textile design employs so many varied techniques and skills and is so commonly given a auxiliary role, surreptitiously used to form other designed objects, that it is difficult to categorise and easy to overlook. In *The Gray Cloth*, Clara experiences or exhibits both of these phenomena, and so can be read as a symbol of the textile.

"I came to the Bauhaus at its 'period of saints.' Many around me, a lost and bewildered newcomer, were oddly enough, in white – not a professional white or the white of summer – here it was the vestal white. But far from being awesome, the baggy white dresses and saggy white suits had a rather familiar

homemade touch. Clearly this was a place of groping and fumbling, of experimenting and taking chances.” Anni Albers in 1947 (Albers 1962:36)

Albers’ description of the chaste ‘uniform’ of the Bauhaus relates well to Clara’s grey garb. Both examples implicate that too much colour, pattern and texture in clothing is sullyng and immodest, an obstacle for the eye and mind in its search for the Modernist ‘truth’. Albers remarks that she found this scene initially odd but accepted and welcomed this laboratory-like atmosphere. Clara, through her modest clothing, serves as a vehicle for her husband’s version of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Rather ironically, it is the lack of colour in her dress, its rejection of ‘fashion’, that encourages her husband’s clients to accept more colours in their building. Edgar is adamant that his architectural concepts should not be overshadowed by the immediacy and sensuality of the textiles of fashionable clothing.

“The clothing must step aside for the architecture. Under no condition is it to compete with the architecture. Only gray fabric is allowed.” (Scheerbart 1914:9)

Clara asks her friend Amanda Schmidt:

“Do you think he just wants to possess me as an aesthetic contrast?” (Scheerbart 1914:17)

Stuart states that; “The dichotomy between fashion and architecture in *The Gray Cloth* may be seen, though, as opposed to the ideology of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.” (Scheerbart 1914:xxxvi)

Clara’s acceptance of Edgar’s marriage terms can be read as a metaphor for the acceptance by the textiles discipline of the hierarchical nature of the Modernist movement, favouring architecture over textiles, with architecture governing the design and application of textiles in clothing and interiors. Ironically, Edgar’s beloved glass is in fact strengthened by a textile structure: a strong mesh reinforces some of his buildings:

“Between the two sheets of glass lies a thick wire mesh and the whole thing is melted together.” (Scheerbart 1914:24)

An expression of Semper’s theory of the textile origins of building in Scheerbart’s notably ironic style, perhaps? Rebecca Houze (2006) argues that it is precisely Gottfried Semper’s theory of cloth as a symbolic building material, and principally his concept of ‘*Bekleidungsprinzip*’ – the notion that a building’s significance depends on its ‘dressing’ – which influenced this move to consider cloth and clothing as essential to a complete and modern architectural space, or *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Mallgrave (Semper 1851:1) suggests that Semper’s vision of *Gesamtkunstwerk* was one where “architectural masses became enlivened and shaped, as it were, by ornament, color, and a host of painted and plastic forms.” Houze (2006) identifies the architectural designer and cultural commentator Adolf Loos as another follower of Semper’s theories. His critiques of ‘ladies’ fashion’ and ornament can be read as an expression of his personal interpretation of ‘*Bekleidungsprinzip*’.

In her essay ‘The Textile as a Structural Framework’, Houze takes Semper’s concept of textiles as architecturally structurally ‘significatory’ (Houze 2006:298), and uses textiles as a conceptual structural framework to develop an understanding of the cultural life of Vienna in 1900. Here, I am examining *The Gray Cloth* by considering textiles as primarily significant to both the architectural narrative of the story as well as its conceptual framework in the Expressionist roots of Modernism.

It is revealed later that Edgar’s own work-rooms at his home at Isola Grande were not walled by glass, but by reinforced concrete, lit from above and applied with all manner of textiles, decoration and natural

materials. Clara’s friend Käte Bandel remarks:

“I find the wall covering of the darker room very interesting. Especially the dark linoleum with niello-like painted ornament on the walls. I also like the embroidered silk on the walls. Fur I like less on the walls. The colorful hummingbird feathers are also interesting on the solid wall.” (Scheerbart 1914:107)

This information aligns Edgar Krug with that of modernist architect Adolf Loos. Loos’ ascetic exteriors belied the interior spaces, which were ‘dressed’ with various textile and material surfaces. (Houze 2006)

“It is better to have a colorful house than colorful clothing. The former makes all of life colorful, while the latter only serves vanity and makes away with money that should be for building houses. Edgar was right about the gray cloth.” Clara Krug, in *The Gray Cloth* (Scheerbart 1914:86)

This excerpt emphasizes the notion of textiles and clothing as commercial, trivial items, while architecture aspires to higher objectives. Andreas Huyssen (1986) states that modernity classified high culture as masculine and popular or mass culture as feminine. Clara’s acceptance can be seen as metaphorical of both the submission of textiles to the modernist tenet and, more broadly, of textiles as the feminine, submitting to the patriarchal structure of the design world. It appears that it was the very practitioners of textile design, being predominantly female, who prevented textiles from being the ideal Modernist design practice.

If we consider the female characters in the book, we can see that Scheerbart generally develops them as talented and artistic. One of the focuses of Scheerbart’s novel is on Clara’s communicative skills, both discursive and musical. A large proportion of the text is given over to Clara’s telegrams to and from her friends. Her organ playing ‘roars with stormy rhythm’ (Scheerbart 1914:4) and she is able to subtly influence Edgar’s clients’ design choices. She is venerated wherever she goes and makes friends easily, eventually becoming famous in her own right. The points at which Clara subverts the marriage contract correspond with her playing music and her meetings with groups of other women, specifically in the painters’ colony of Makartland, briefly in Japan and in the animal park in India. In India, a colossal towering organ is constructed especially for Clara.

“And she played such that the wild animals stopped their roaring and looked in astonishment at the sky above.” (Scheerbart 1914:53)

At that moment, Clara’s excitement is increased with the news of the arrival of colourful silks from Japan. Clara allows herself to dress in these fabrics and feverishly plays music almost throughout the night “- often it sounded suddenly like wild, waltz music.” (Scheerbart 1914:53)

It is at this point that the tables are turned for just a moment, the soft usurping the hard. Clara becomes world famous for her concerts in India, while Edgar comes to know rejection and compromise. Textiles, cloth, frivolity and sensuality momentarily take over the novel, represented by Clara’s expressive music, the sumptuous Japanese silks and the 85-strong female entourage sent to dress her. Simultaneously, Edgar is wrangling with engineers in Ceylon, who suggest that he consider using a textile, a wire mesh structure spread with coloured glues, in his construction to better achieve his aims. He does not accept this as a viable substitute for coloured glass. Embittered, Edgar sends a rather cynical congratulatory note, warning Clara of the uncomfortable ‘curse of fame’ (Scheerbart 1914:56). Almost immediately, Clara rejects coloured clothing, rejects the possibility of equality and starts to shy away from invitations to play large concerts, setting out to find her husband and support him more fully in his architectural projects, committed to wearing grey cloth with ten per cent white. Conceptually, this moment in the novel serves as a brief foray into Semper’s theories, with feminine, relational textiles

(represented by Clara) as the symbolic and structural essence of architecture. However, the power balance is quickly and tacitly redressed in favour of the status quo of patriarchy.

Ideological adaptability is a thread throughout the novel. Clara is perplexed by Edgar's seemingly inappropriate yet fixed vision for glass architecture in the polar setting of Makartland. Her clothing adapts to the conditions, thanks to a skilful seamstress who interprets the ten per cent white to commonly include fur, suitable for the climate. Käte Bandel, a female painter and close companion of Clara, takes up this topic again. She talks about how the wooden architecture that already exists in Makartland supplies both the qualities of functionalism and sensualism – noise reduction and 'coziness' (Scheerbart 1914:33) The culturally indiscriminate nature of the principles of Modernism are particularly evident during their visits to fictional locations in Japan, India and Arabia, where Clara's grey clothing is heavily criticised and subverted. In Japan, the Marquise Fi-Boh challenges Edgar about his wife's grey cloth, branding it repugnant (Scheerbart 1914:41).

"As he entered the cabin, Herr Krug wondered more than just slightly how his wife could adjust so well to each situation." (Scheerbart 1914:27)

Clara's behaviour throughout the novel is symbolically textile-like in its relational, matrixial qualities. She adapts well to the customs and conditions of each location, forging relationships quickly and easily. Creatively, she is expressive and instinctual. She can be both questioning and seductive. Throughout, Clara's interactions with others shape both her and her experiences: she responds to situations, whereas Edgar largely remains firm.

The dynamic between Clara and Edgar is echoed in the relationships of Modernists such as Sonia and Robert Delaunay and Anni and Josef Albers. The female is no less of a creative genius, but societally bound to the quieter, 'softer' design fields of textiles, clothing and costume. Gardner Troy (2006:15) comments on how many of the leading textile designers of the era adopted textiles as their primary discipline through necessity, as a means of developing a sense of autonomy in their relationships with their famous husbands.

"Sonia Delaunay... is noted by historians for her 'instinctive' feeling for color, whereas her husband, Robert, is attributed as having formulated a color theory. Robert Delaunay embodies the male stereotype as logical and intellectual, Sonia embodies the female stereotype as instinctive and emotional." (Buckley 1986:238)

Whitney Chadwick, in her commentary on the Delaunays' relationship, describes how much of art history is happy to portray this relationship as "untroubled (by) relations of dominance and subordination." (Chadwick 1993:32) She outlines the standard depiction of their characters within the literature, where Sonia is painted as:

"... a Russian Jewish expatriate, all warmth and generosity, quietly adjusted herself to his needs, setting aside her own career as a painter and instead devoting herself to applying his esthetic theories to the decorative arts, and the creation of a welcoming environment for the couple's many friends." (Chadwick 1993: 32)

However, Chadwick proceeds to delve deeper into an understanding of the synergy of their marriage, focusing on the concept of 'simultaneity' (a theory of colour, abstraction and expression), traditionally attributed to Robert, but which seemingly was developed in tandem and with mutable emphasis in the work of both Robert and Sonia. At the same time that Scheerbart was writing *The Gray Cloth*, Sonia Delaunay began making 'simultaneous' dresses and fabrics, arguably a key development in their joint concept which freed colour and form from the static canvas to the physical body. Chadwick quotes a

poem by Blaise Cendrars written about Sonia's new work: "colors undress you through contrast; On her dress she wears her body".

This powerful statement hints at the continuing legacy of Sonia's ideas in their impact on textiles, clothing, style and identity. In relation to *The Gray Cloth*, it points to the power of colour within the Expressionist origins of Modernism and the notion that Clara's femininity and individuality is literally hidden behind the fabric of her clothes.

Buckley's paper (1986), which encourages a feminist analysis of the history of women in design, explains many of the reasons for the gendering of design disciplines, as well as the marginalization of those associated with the feminine. Andreas Huyssen (1986) takes the concept further, positioning and exposing the feminization of mass culture and its resulting denigration quite specifically at the dawn of Modernist thought. David Brett (2005:184 - 214) provides a detailed exploration of the subjugation of the decorative in Modernist ideology and its implications to consumption and gender.

Thinking about the place of textiles in the Modernist movement highlights several points of discussion. The idealism of Modernism opened up the design discipline of textiles to a wider range of creative practitioners, with many artists and architects working in or with textiles, or with 'truthful' materiality in mind. However, it was still women who largely populated the discipline. If we proceed to consider the feminine aligned to the postmodern paradigm due to its relational, matrixial characteristics, and textiles as gendered in femininity, this reveals the contradiction of textiles as the ideal medium of Modernism. Textiles had been appropriated by the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* and was paradoxically marginalised by it: the feminine cloaked in the masculine.

"If Liberal feminism were a shirt, it would probably be pinstriped and have shoulder-pads. It dresses for success." (Beasley 2005:34)

Beasley describes the position of feminism in the context of Modernism, and concludes that liberal feminism is the most typically associated with its thinking. Beasley outlines the position of Mary Wollstonecraft as a key figure in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century liberal feminism in relation to the prevailing social discourse:

"In other words, she did not question the model of a universal humanity based in rationality, or the universal notion of 'the individual' within mainstream Liberalism, but rather advocated women's simple inclusion/assimilation into its protocols." (Beasley 2005: 31)

This version of liberal feminism is illustrated when Clara commits herself to further the acceptance of colourful glass architecture and gleefully remarks how her voluntary appearance in grey, with ten per cent white, helped her husband close a deal with a client in Cyprus (Scheerbart 1914:77). She disregards her persona to become more 'equal' in partnership with her husband and 'works' to develop his business.

The notion that women should aspire to adopt the characteristics of masculinity in order to attain equality is outlined in Adolf Loos' essay of 1898, 'Ladies fashion':

"But we are approaching a new and greater time. No longer an appeal to sensuality, but rather by economic independence earned through work will the woman bring about her equal status with the man. The woman's value or lack of value will no longer fall or rise according to the fluctuations of sensuality. Then velvet and silk, flower and ribbons, feathers and paints will fail to have their effect. They will disappear." (Loos 1898:103)

“The male, after all, can easily deny his own subjectivity for the benefit of a higher aesthetic goal, as long as he can take it for granted on an experiential level in everyday life.” (Huyssen 1986:2)

At a later point in the story, Edgar explains his love of colour and describes in detail his interest in numerical mysticism, ancient history and symbolism when he reveals his background as an archaeologist whilst discussing his collection of ornaments with Clara (Scheerbart 1914:117), showing Edgar to be perhaps slightly less technocentric than he is originally cast.

In his review of the book, Victor Margolin decides that Clara’s voluntary donning of the grey cloth does not come about by patriarchal coercion, and that in doing so she does not compromise her artistic power (Margolin 2003:94). I disagree. Although it is unclear from the novel why exactly Clara makes this decision, I believe this act symbolises societal suppression and her fear of her own power. The argument of whether women’s clothing detracted from architectural design was never her own. She is ‘assimilated into its protocols’ and ultimately becomes its scapegoat as she negotiates the notoriety and fame her grey clothing generates. There is a clear correlation between the point at which Clara begins to voluntarily accept her grey clothing, the rejection of her own fame and her yearning for domestic life, pleading with Edgar for their extended air-bound honeymoon to come to an end. Edgar tells her that he plans to build an extension to his house at Isola Grande especially for her:

“...the room is not that large and there is a harmonium in it. When you play, one hears it best in the large dining room. While playing you cannot be seen at all from the deep-set room. You can also read and write there. You will like it.”

She expresses her desire for it to be coloured in grey tones.

“‘Oh’ shouted Frau Clara, ‘that is indeed wonderful.’” (Scheerbart 1914:96)

“You cannot imagine...how much I long for quiet domesticity and how happy I am about my gray room in which my harmonium is placed. Yes!” (Scheerbart 1914:100)

Here again, we can draw parallels between Sonia Delaunay’s real life and Clara’s fictional one. At the height of Sonia’s commercial success and Robert’s downturn, Sonia talks of how “...success literally assailed me,”... “I was capable of being a woman manager, but I had other purposes in life.” (Delaunay n.d in Chadwick 1993:47) It was at the point when the worldwide recession affected sales of her work that the tables turned again and it was once again Robert’s moment in the light.

I feel that Clara decides to adopt the grey cloth voluntarily as a way of settling rumours, negating speculation and to show acceptance of her marital status, situation and domestic life. Scheerbart tells us quite directly that Clara starts to turn away from her music. Once installed in Isola Grande, Clara is compelled to spend her time not in the grey room but in an emerald room, shining with amethyst ornament, housing orchids which she meticulously cares for under the supervision of the gardener, abandoning her organ-playing in favour of their cultivation (Scheerbart 1914:118). She literally becomes quiet. She is hidden away from view. Cloaked in grey. No longer on view. This notion is addressed by Iris Marion Young in her interpretation of the writing of Luce Irigaray and Simone de Beauvoir:

“To fix and keep hold of his identity, man makes a house, put things in it, and confines there his woman who reflects his identity to him. The price she pays for supporting his subjectivity, however, is dereliction, having no self of her own.” (Young 1990:124)

I propose that *The Gray Cloth* provides a metaphor for the paradox of the feminine power and vulnerability of textiles in the Modernist design context. Clara’s narrative epitomises the subjugation of textile thinking into Modernist ideology. She/Textiles yearns for anonymity and becomes preoccupied by nurture and nature in the safe and soft sphere of domesticity.

STORYTELLING

There are two stories to tell about the research journey that led to the development of the thesis you are currently reading. Both are true.

The first might be considered a tragedy (Booker 2004). The protagonist embarks on a quest, only to find that the quest takes her into unpredictable territories, ones she is unfamiliar with and unprepared for. She finds that the decisions she makes are naïve and ungrounded and she realises that she cannot go back. Only the guidance of her elders can lead her back to safety.

The second, a tale of rebirth (Booker 2004). Our main character is captivated by a dream of a new reality and works doggedly to achieve the status she so desires. The voices and actions of others reinforce her fascination. Only those who know her best realise that she is looking in the wrong places to fulfil her dreams. The story builds to a crescendo that results in a moment of clarity for the protagonist, who comes to recognise that she already possesses the knowledge and material required to manifest a new reality of greater worth and meaning than she could have ever dreamt of.

Of course, the main character in both tales is myself. In the context of a research thesis, I am ‘researcher as subject’ and the narratives of these stories become the various plots for the inquiry. The use of narrative as a qualitative research methodology has been keenly mapped out for some time but yet is still in many senses a ‘field in the making’. Chase (2011:421) describes narrative as

“...meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one’s own or other’s actions, of organising events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing consequences of actions and events over time.”

In the recent development of my research project, I have found it more appropriate – indeed, necessary – for me to approach the subject of research as a narrative inquiry. The story plots sketched out above hint at the drama played out over the duration of the project. They beg to be fleshed out with detail and point at interesting characterisations and relationships. What I thought would be an investigation into an industrial process became a study of myself as a textile designer and researcher and an inquiry into the types of knowledge and thinking I experienced and encountered whilst undertaking my research, through reading, drawing, making and talking to others. This led to bigger questions about the context and nature of this knowledge. Aside from the vagaries of the project itself, there have been changes in supervision and in my personal life that have dictated and impacted on it too.

The ontological paradigm or ‘worldview’ of this study can be considered to oscillate between the constructivist and participatory/postmodern, as outlined by Lincoln, Lynham & Guba (2011:102), and its connected epistemology is well illustrated by Ettinger’s matrixial, inter-subjective encounter. Holding this ‘worldview’ means that for me, of the two tales, I must select the second as my plot. It’s a story that emphasises the socially constructed nature of knowledge, and also that

“Realities are taken to exist in the form of multiple mental constructions that are socially and experientially based, local and specific, and dependent on their form and content on the persons who hold them,” (Guba 1990 in Lincoln, Lynham & Guba 2011:107)

The ‘multiple mental constructions’ that I hope to gain insight into are stories of what it is to design textiles: my own story and those of others. The aim of gathering and thinking around these stories is to prompt a deeper understanding and articulation of the knowledge and thinking crucial to textile design in others and myself.

The contrasting foci of the two stories has required me to be adaptive and reflexive in my research approach, meaning that I have utilised a range of qualitative research methods, primarily the recorded conversation but also drawing, metaphor and creative and reflective writing. The selection of these methods has been influenced by direct and indirect factors. The outcomes gathered from employing these methods are varied in their date, location, participants (including myself) and content, and thereby can be interpreted in a multitude of ways. This mixed-method approach to research has been described as *bricolage* or montage, analogous to quilt-making or jazz improvisation (Denzin & Lincoln 2011:5). For the purposes of this study, I prefer the term montage, as I feel that the time-based aspect of the filmic definition of the term lends itself better to the narrative approach I am taking. Denzin and Lincoln, quoting David Cook's *A History of Narrative Film* from 1981, explain that a filmic montage should be viewed simultaneously, not sequentially. I intend that the stories, gathered in different ways and at different times and hermeneutically told through my research process, should create a layered cacophony/harmony, not one singular uniform voice. Denzin and Lincoln compare montage with *pentimento*, where something painted out of a picture becomes visible once again, creating a new element. "What is new is what had been obscured by the previous image." (Denzin & Lincoln 2011:4). There are parallels here with Ettinger's series of artworks entitled Eurydice, where her 'disrupted' photocopies are then painted into in an attempt to capture what was lost in the process (metramorphosis). In the attempted 'mending' of the image, it is altered further, resulting in a multi-layered image.

"If one is to see Eurydice...One must find the history of what she cannot narrate, the history of her muteness, if one is to recognise her. This is not to supply the key, to fill the gap, to fill in the story, but to find the relevant remnants that form the broken landscape that she is." (Butler 2006:xi)

Ettinger's Eurydice series, the parable itself and Butler's description above provide an illustration of the aim of this research project. If Eurydice is the tacit knowledge of textile design and its associated thinking, I must accept that I will not be able to capture it conclusively but merely attempt to identify and retrieve fragments of this knowledge and thinking. Retrieving these fragments of textile design knowledge and thinking require an 'archaeology of the invisible' (Naylor & Ball 2005). The knowledge is in the main tacit, evident and embodied through the design and making of textiles, but is difficult to communicate by other means. This is key to why the notion of telling stories, articulation and communication is absolutely central to this study, which takes the form of a written thesis rather than a blend of practice and writing. The preclusion of my own textile design practice as a research method emerged some time ago in 2008, a product of my personal situation and a preceding watershed event. I completed some reflective writing at the time that divulges the shock followed by the surprising sense of relief I felt when I was advised to move the focus of my research and use my writing as my practice. Prior to this event, my 'practical' research practice had been prompted by external deadlines – departmental exhibitions for example – simply to illustrate my research project, and was not its driving force. Most of this work took the form of models or curious objects, text or images. These items could not be considered textile designs. They were a means of visual communication, of expressing myself and my thinking, and myself and my thinking were no longer a textile sample. My approach to designing textiles has always focused on process-led, poetic, experimental surfaces. In hindsight, the success of my textile design work relied on the tacit knowledge I/it shared with my fellow students, tutors and other viewers. I felt no requirement to find a way to explicitly situate it in the wider world of design or culture. Thankfully, this is an activity that some of today's most innovative textile designers are more adept at. The approach that these designers take to the world of materials is visionary but still, like the more conventional forms of textile design, remains unspoken in regard to its version of design thinking. So the selection of methods of eliciting personal stories from the participants, and using methods to encourage written, verbal and non-verbal communication rather than through documenting my own

or other making, is intentional. It is spurred on by own inability to design and make authentically 'for the sake of it'. I always had a contextual driver for my work, be it a competition brief, exhibiting or presenting with my peer group or to attain a degree. My life, in my role as a lecturer, is concerned with communication and people now. Designing and making in this way seemed to come more easily to my fellow research students at the Royal College of Art, fastidiously documenting their symbiotic research and design process and thinking however they could. Noticing this difference, for me, served to further question my identity as a textile designer (and thinker) and once again I threw myself into the foreground of the research project. Perhaps the difference is that they are learning and knowing through designing and making, whereas I wish to learn about the knowledge they are learning.

'Textility' is derived from common etymological root of the Latin *texere*, meaning 'to weave' and the ancient Greek *techne*; to make, and as such offers a model of making that is concerned with the 'slicing and binding of fibrous material' (Mitchell 1997:7 and Ingold 2010:92). Mitchell goes on to highlight the further connection with 'text', offering textility as inference to a very particular way of making, speaking and writing, but also states: "It is clear that textiles are not words and the differences between them benefit the conceptual apparatus of thought at the expense of its sensory equivalent." (Mitchell 1997:8). Webster (1996:99) explains theories of textuality and writerly texts via Roland Barthes' 'S/Z', in which he frequently uses textile and network metaphors to discuss the structure of texts, and describes them as "... a surface over which the reader can range in any number of ways that the text permits." The tension between the textuality of this thesis and its relation to the concept of textility is consistent and apparent throughout this text: evident in my real research journey and laid bare here. Negotiating the tension of this relationship, this textasis, has become my text-ile practice.

Returning once again to my narrative research methods, it is important to explain the specific approach I have developed. And indeed it was 'developed': a slow, shady, mistake-laden, emergent process, not unlike working in a photographic dark room. In any case, the shape-shifting nature of the topic of this research process rendered any good intentions meaningless. It was important that I was reflexive, selecting methods that suited the moment, informed both by research and personal circumstance (and sometimes personal favour too). Using Denzin and Lincoln's metaphor of *pentimento* to describe my own research journey is particularly useful, for several reasons.

Definitions of *pentimento* cover the act of 'painting out' certain aspects in an artwork and the subsequent traces of those original marks and their alterations, but also describe these marks once they have been revealed. It describes emergence represented simultaneously through layering and revelation. It implicates the involvement of different individuals and their subjectivity over time, in making marks, adapting them, reading/viewing them and revealing them. Those marks, dismissed and erased, once revealed can shed new light on a subject, telling new stories, inviting alternative understandings of knowledge and meaning. *Pentimento* also covers the description of an act of remorse and repentance, and in this delivers an accompanying narrative that begs exploration.

The *pentimento* of this thesis is the hypothesis of alternative understandings of design thinking and process. The feminization of textile design as process and object has contributed to its invisibility in the pages of design research, allowing a hegemony to develop within the academic design research community. Like Judith Butler's summary of the parable of Eurydice, I am not filling in gaps in a story but developing one by uncovering existing traces, on top of which I can find correspondence with my own experience of textile design and my research findings. Through this act of layering, a new narrative emerges. To support this I have selected methods aligned with feminist qualitative methodologies, which emphasise the significance of narratives, linguistics, representation of multiple voices and the researcher-as-subject.

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Ellis and Bochner's paper 'Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity; Researcher as Subject' (2000) tells us a story about what it is to be an autoethnographer, what it is to learn about autoethnography, how the approach developed within the broader field of narrative enquiry. Its storied style makes it easy to read and accessible, even though its content is complex. I came across this chapter in May 2012, when I was returning to my research after maternity leave. Delving into files that were some years old, and finding my place in research again after such a life-change, was proving impossible. Reading Ellis and Bochner's work inspired me to not to try and find myself back into my research, but to do quite the opposite; to write large the changes that had happened throughout the project, accepting that edges of my various bits of writing are ragged and frayed, not smooth and sharp. They overlay, enmesh and entangle, they don't tessellate. And I won't try to make them, either.

"...the researcher's personal experience becomes important primarily in how it illuminates the culture under study. Reflexive ethnographies range along a continuum from starting research from one's own experience to ethnographies where the researcher's experience is actually studied alongside with other participants, to confessional tales where the researcher's experience of doing the study becomes the focus of investigation." (Ellis & Bochner 2000)

Through reflective writing, through co-creating stories with other textile designers, through the structuring and presentation of this thesis, I am expressing an autoethnography. I am expressing my life, my character, my constraints, my relationships, and my position on textile design in the postmodern, post-industrialised world. The structure of this thesis can be seen as evidence of the story of its development. In some ways I wish I could be braver, dating each piece of writing, placing it firmly at the point at which it was thought and written, resisting polishing and tessellation. However, I do also consider this textual document to resemble my textile thinking, and so it could not remain un-affected, un-designed. My textile design aesthetic is experimental, conceptual, revolving around processes, drawn to texture and nature. My research approach is drawn to equivalent qualities within research methods and methodological design.

Notions of bricolage/montage/patchworking are seen as 'emancipatory' research constructs in the qualitative research field (Kincheloe, McLaren & Steinberg 2011:167), allowing a multidisciplinary mixing of methods, as and when required, within the developing research. They stress that this freedom brings with it a duty of self-awareness; the researcher-as-bricoleur must recognise and respect that what they are doing is pushing for clarification on a position within a complex world.

"The task of the bricoleur is to attack this complexity, uncovering the invisible artifacts of power and culture and documenting the nature of their influence not only on their own works, but on scholarship in general." (Kincheloe, McLaren & Steinberg 2011:168)

"...bricoleurs make use of the suspicion of universalism in combination with global knowledges to understand how they have been positioned in the world." (Kincheloe, McLaren & Steinberg 2011:172)

The bricolage resulting from the bricoleur's activities is an emergent construction.

CONVERSATION

The key tool I have used to retrieve the 'fragments' of experience is the recorded conversation. These were initially set up as unstructured/semi-structured interviews, but most played out as conversations. At the time, I berated myself-as-researcher for jumping in and talking, but it was too difficult not to. I was talking to textile designers. I am a textile designer. I teach textile designers. Most of the so-called 'interviews' had been arranged through mutual contacts, or we were fellow alumni. I was inextricably connected to the people I was talking with. I felt at ease and let myself seep into the talking. The fifteen conversations took place between February 2009 and March 2011. The individuals I spoke to were students of textile design, world-famous textile designers, textile studio owners, designer-makers, textile innovators, commercial textile designers, textile design lecturers, embroidery designers, print designers and weave designers. Some I was in awe to be speaking to, others were literally old friends. They took place in my research space, in cafes, in their studios; I spoke to friends over the phone whilst they were at work and strangers invited me into their kitchens to talk over homemade soup. Each scenario was inter-personal: trans-subjective encounters, to use Ettinger's terminology.

For the first set of conversations in 2009, I arrived with a list of specific questions that I hoped to pop when the moment arised. They covered these main areas: working and thinking methods for textile design, communicating design ideas and outcomes for textiles, self awareness and identification with the concept of textile design.

Reading the transcripts from these conversations show how this list of questions stifled the conversation as it began to emerge. The talk would begin to loosen and I would steer it ridiculously back to my questions, the dialogue jumping about wildly. One particular question proved problematic; *why do we design textiles?* The designers found this question difficult, both to understand and to answer. This question later morphed into me asking about the 'role of textile design'. I wanted to know how the textile designers see the significance of their work.

For the ensuing conversations from 2010 and 2011, I had prepared a tabularised set of areas (see Appendix B) I wished to cover, which allowed a more natural flow of conversation. At this stage I was more comfortable with open-endedness and had set down some of the specificities I was targeting in the initial conversations.

My personality, my relationships, my research expertise (or lack of it) and my textile knowledge were all brought to bear on each conversation. This is evident as the textile designers talked to me about tutors we had had in common, the 'College' (Royal College of Art) and 'PV' (Première Vision, a annual textile trade show). In *Living Narrative*, Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps champion the conversation, specifically personal narratives and everyday storytelling, as a means of exploring narrative for three key reasons. It affords an inherent open-endedness, is a medium for airing unresolved events and it elicits familiarity (2001:6). They describe how conversational narratives reveal the vernacular and a way of ordering, explaining and establishing a position on experience (2001:57).

Some of the mutual connections we held were unknown at the outset, only coming to light precisely through conversation, in turn simultaneously building and altering the nuance of the talk. The familiarity that was often established at times turned the direction of the conversation back to myself, the textile designers asking me about my design work and research. Other times, I do this for myself, offering up thoughts and comments for debate that are unique to that specific conversation. This dialogue meant that although I was always the initiator of the talk, I did not hold all the control over it. It became a conversation rather than interview because of its dialogical content. The active participation from both parties changed and altered the direction and content of the talk (Ochs & Capps

2001:55)

STORIES

The outcomes of these conversations can be read as narratives, or ‘everyday stories’, as Ochs and Capps put it, about the lives of these textile designers. These stories include elements of delight, regret, humour, anger, nostalgia, mundanity and reflection. Some aspects have been well rehearsed in prior conversations, others show new ideas and perspectives surfacing within that moment. Due to my various connections with the textile designers, I can tell when certain things have been said to push an agenda ‘for the record’, even when the reality maybe somewhat different. The notion of extracting ‘truth’ from these stories is nonsensical. Each textile designer has told me a story about their experience of being a textile designer. Walter Benjamin parallels everyday storytelling with the physicality and materiality of making.

“[A story] does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel.” Benjamin (1936:91)

And the structure and content of the stories told by the textile designers’ stories at that time, were affected by me: my own story and my own questions.

“For it is granted to him to reach back to a whole lifetime (a life, incidentally, that comprises not only his own experience but no little of the experience of others; what the storyteller knows from hearsay is added to his own. His gift is the ability to relate his life; his distinction, to be able to tell his entire life.” Benjamin (1936:107)

These stories do not hold truths, but commonalities of experience that might develop new knowledge and understanding, “openly or covertly, something useful.” (1936:86)

“ In fact, one can go on and ask oneself whether the relationship of the storyteller to his material, human life, is not in itself a craftsman’s relationship, whether it is not his very task to fashion the raw material of experience, his own and that of others, in a solid, useful, and unique way”. Benjamin (1936:107)

In ‘*Talking Textiles*’, a piece of creative writing completed in January 2013 (see opposite), I used a process recommended by Ellis and Bochner (2000:752). They suggest using a process of emotional recall where the writer revisits a scene emotionally and physically. In this piece, I blended two conversation scenarios (from 2010) together to help indicate the trans-subjective encounter that took place, focusing on motifs of inter-connectedness and reflexivity. Ellis and Bochner highlight the advantage of recalling these emotions as close to the experience as possible; however, for me, it was what I experienced in the years between that allowed me to reflect and connect the two scenarios, offering an perspective on my research methodology and methods.

Considering the thesis in totality, I might better describe the writing method as a combination of conventional academic writing interspersed with examples of creative non-fiction (Tedlock 2011:336). Tedlock characterizes creative non-fiction as factually accurate, polyphonic and scenical, and centrally positions the researcher/author as character. The various pieces of creative non-fiction that punctuate this thesis were written at different stages of the research journey: they are independent, but are connected through my experience as textile designer and researcher.

TALKING TEXTILES

I’ve made sure that I look right, wearing something colourful; hair big and frizzy. I knock at the door of the terraced townhouse. After some time, a woman in her late forties answers the door with a welcoming smile and I recognize her. Her sweet, bright, flat shoes and patterned tights make me like her instantly. She’s wearing a vivid turquoise angora cardigan, so fluffy its difficult to make out her silhouette. Visually, her top half appears to diffuse into her surroundings. She invites me into the house and we go into the kitchen. Oh the kitchen! – a view onto the garden, a repainted dresser proudly displaying dozens of apothecary jars and other glass vases each holding some or other lovely flower. Her black crinkled skirt is full and reaches just below her knee. It moves and sways merrily as she walks. A beautiful short haired grey cat slopes in through the door as she offers me a hot drink and weaves itself though her legs to its bowl. Fresh ginger tea? (Just what I need with this cold) Mug in hand I follow her down the narrow staircase, past bolts of fabrics semi-wrapped in ripped brown paper, to the studio basement. There is music playing, a radio station.

The studio is so full of stuff I don’t know where to look first. I am aware that I need to take in every detail, record it somehow in my head or on paper...somehow? Let me try and recall it now. The décor is pretty crumby in comparison to upstairs, its definitely a workshop. There are threads, beads and dust collecting in the corners of the skirting board. The lighting is difficult on this grey day, difficult anyway in a basement I imagine. In the far corner there are floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, filled with large, heavy books on such an unimaginable range of topics – a quick scan showing flowers to be by far the most prominent. Pinned to the walls and in amongst the books, in fact, anywhere and everywhere were ‘bits and pieces’. I’m not sure how else to describe them – ‘objets’ might be too grand a term to use to describe this collection of a dusty taxidermy monkey, samples of some kind of flooring, faded silk flowers, a bundle of old ladies headscarves, a cheap beaded coin purse emblazoned with ‘Las Vegas’, bones, fir cones and countless other such random paraphernalia. Paraphernalia seems much more appropriate a word to use, its meaning evolved from the phrase paraphernalia bona (“paraphernal goods) from the Latin parapherna “a woman’s property besides her dowry,” Articles of personal property, especially clothing and ornaments, which did not automatically transfer from the property of the wife to the husband by virtue of the marriage. (Oxford English Dictionary 2013 and Harper 2013) Paraphernalia of course also means the pieces of equipment or products associated with or necessary for an activity. These items, collected by this woman, I know only too well are absolutely necessary to the process of designing textiles.

She’s already coming out with great stuff that I should be recording! I’m trying to take it all in whilst responding to her comments. I shall just have to try and write it all down on the Tube later. As she shows me around the studio she briefly introduces me to the three or four young women who are working hunched over tables, laptops and ironing boards, whom I have just noticed. I’m unsure as to who actually works there and which ones are on work placements. She asks me where I studied. Loughborough, I said. Oh she said, Lucy went there didn’t you Lucy. Lucy and I did not know one other, she was clearly much younger than me, but we gave each other a gentle smile, enough to recognize some level of sorority that seemed to please the woman I’d come to speak to about textile design. I sip my ginger tea as I walk. She begins to point out pieces of work that were framed and/or hung on the wall. She tells me that pieces like that used to be sold as designs for textiles. They were collages, craft pieces, textile doodlings, paintings onto wood. They were so far from what Lucy and the others were working on; sublimation prints, screen prints and embroideries, most of which were shaped into scaled-down garment fronts. The studio ‘tour’ is soon complete and we take a seat at her desk or ‘area’, as there isn’t really a desk to speak of, more a ‘clearing’ in the undergrowth of ‘paraphernalia’. The conversation flows seamlessly as she asks me what I want to know. (I want to know that I’m right and not imagining all this, emperor’s new clothes style – of course I don’t say this, I come out with something suitably general and academic...) She starts to talk again and

I have to ask her to pause briefly while I set up the digital voice recorder. She begins to speak again. But what is it, now the recorder's on, something has changed in the way she and I are speaking. It's so strange. It's become more formal within seconds. I wish I'd had the recorder on from the moment she opened the front door. But I'm not supposed to do that, am I, that's not what good researchers do. We diligently work through my questions. I try not to talk too much myself, sipping my now cool ginger tea, leaning away so as not to record my slurps. Just remembered, I should be taking notes, I start to scrawl. She starts to talk about something that I'm not that interested in and inwardly I get a little irritated, knowing that my time with her is limited. I interject, trying to steer the conversation back towards my line of questioning. She takes the lead and the conversation starts to cover some really fertile ground. I'm too drawn in to take notes at this stage; this interview has started to become a conversation. I then glance down at the recorder – no red light. No red light! Oh crap – for how long?! I'm thrown. I vocalize my observations and apologise to the textile designer, but ask her to keep talking. I get the damned thing going again and I frantically scrawl down all the fascinating aspects that I think I may have missed, whilst also trying to take in what she's now saying. She comes to the end of her reply and there is a short pause while I just catch up..... Done. Ok, what's my next question again, oh yes. We're back on track now but I am so annoyed. I can now not take my eyes of the recorder and have just noticed a 'low battery' warning. Oh that's just brilliant! I will it to keep going till the end. In my distraction, I initially miss that she has asked me a question. She notices and reforms the question. A question about my job. So I reply;

....I got a job as a lecturer, which I'm still doing, because I've always wanted to go into research. I was always more experimental, nothing I ever did was very commercial... I was always into the processes so... I got obsessed with paper making, I got obsessed by... I started off my PhD in flocking, I wanted to create some innovative surfaces, flocking with metals and you, know, sort of smart textiles. But along the path, my interest in the textile process, has sort of moved toward understanding the textile design process itself.

I suppose it's come round to this for me to understand myself, really, and my own place in the textiles industry. Why do I still call myself a textile designer when I don't sell anything? I feel there is a way of thinking I know I share with people like you who do sell internationally, and designing for a commercial market, and that's what I'm trying to, sort of, get at.

She has noticed that the topic of the conversation has switched sides and begins talking about herself again, but I can't get off my train of thought and continue speaking;

So, yeah. I was originally trained as a textiles designer but I'm not quite sure if...

Textile designer. You're not sure if you're still going down that road.

Or, kind of, which sort of position I'm in. Yeah, I just...

The battery dies. And I sense from her eyes that she feels that our conversation is coming to an end also. So I attempt some humour saying that even the recorder doesn't want to hear about me and she seems amused and slightly relieved that she's also no longer on the record. I ask her to complete the permission forms, as she does she says that she really hopes that I got what I needed. As most interviewees seem to do, she then starts to talk more candidly about her viewpoints, and again I try to make mental notes for the journey home. She signs the forms and with an intake of breath, she looks at my rounded stomach and wishes me luck with the birth and the baby. I gather up my belongings, thank her for her time and the tea and we go back up the stairs and towards the front door, her husband comes into view from the kitchen and she quickly introduces me before he heads upstairs. As I say goodbye she tells me to pass on her best to our mutual contact and tells me to contact her again if I need to. She closes the door. I head back towards the station and feel totally incompetent of course – I'm such a rubbish researcher – I will always carry

spare batteries from now on! On the other hand, however flawed the interview was, I feel that there were elements of what was said, by both of us, that offers both confirmation and further questions, and isn't that the point?

Almost two and a half years later, I re-read the transcript (parts one and two!), dig out those scrappy notes I made at the back of my notebook, and remember.

METAPHOR

“Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. The concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor.” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980/2003:3)

Lakoff and Johnson's classic text describes the unavoidable significance of metaphor to thinking, knowing and being: as their title points out, we 'live by' metaphors. And indeed they are fundamental to this thesis: abundant in the texts I have read and responded to; latent in my conversations with supervisors and textile designers, and essential to my thinking, writing and analytical processes. Andrew Ortony's revised compilation *Metaphor and Thought* (1993) provides key texts on the significance of metaphor, not only within language, but also cognition. The very premise for the epistemological foundation of this thesis is set; relationality is represented by the metaphorical content of the concept of the matrixial. (Ettinger 2006) My methodology, in its feminist slant, is also influenced by metaphor. Laurel Richardson describes feminist researchers' introduction of the 'theory is story' metaphor, recognizing the importance of narrating their lived experience and how these individual and shared stories are a mode of theorizing. (Richardson 2000:927)

Developed from this is an ontological metaphor: '*textile design as feminine entity*', informed by the metaphorical content of my personal story of textile design thinking and practice, as well as the stories and texts of other textile designers.

These metaphors infiltrate my research process and methodology. This forced me to question my research approach and align to feminist qualitative research methods. In analysing the information gathered through research, the original metaphor is adapted, affected and nuanced, providing additional modes for understanding.

Donald Schön (1978:137) focuses on 'generative metaphors', which he describes a "... 'carrying over' of frames of perspective from one domain of experience to another" and sets this in the contemporary context that metaphor is crucial to how people account for their personal worldview; how they make sense of reality, how they set and solve problems, how they think. He asserts that metaphor can be considered as simultaneously a product, (like a frame), as well as a generative process. Schön alludes to the fact that what is viewed, framed or set through a metaphor, (in his example, the problematics of social policy), are also processed by it, generating new perspectives. This notion of 'framing' allows the influence of viewpoints and subjectivity on a problematic situation. Schön recognises how storytelling invites varying viewpoints, shaping, setting or framing a problem, using metaphors as interpretive devices that invite critical analysis.

“In short, we can spell out the metaphor, elaborate the assumptions which flow from it, and examine their appropriateness in the present situation.” (Schön 1978:138)

Schön goes on to emphasise his use of the term ‘problem setting’ over ‘problem solving’ believing that the way in which an objective is framed is more important than selecting specific methods to achieve them. He says that stories have “problem-setting potency” (Schön 1978:150) which is sometimes derived from their underlying generative metaphor. Schön’s comments set up the connection between metaphor and narrative that has become so pervasive in my research. The development and exploration of the ‘textile design as feminine entity’ involves the interaction of ‘entailments’ and ‘reverberations’ (Lakoff & Johnson 1983/2003:140), not least the paradigm of *‘design as feminine’*. These entailments and reverberations act to specify the metaphor and how it may be used and understood. Metaphors can have wildly different meanings for different people based on their culture and lived experience. If we do ‘live by’ metaphor, I must explore the assumptions held within the generative metaphor I use in this thesis, whilst challenging those embodied within the established understanding of design thinking and the metaphors involved.

Returning to Schön’s terminology of framing, this sets up an example of “frame awareness, frame conflict and frame restructuring” (Schön 1978:150). In this research, the frame of understanding textile design thinking is identified, challenged and reformed to allow a feminist critique of design thinking through textiles.

ENMESHING

As an analysis method I have elected to ‘re-story’ the stories (Craig & Huber 2007) offered up in the conversations I held with textile designers. Using transcripts from the conversations I have developed a number of montaged texts that interweave my experience and understanding of textile design with that of the textile designers I spoke with. The resultant ‘meshes’, as I have called them, resemble a ‘fusion of horizons’ (Gadamer 1960:306) that offer perspectives on textile design thinking.

Ochs & Capps (2001:6) discuss the ‘polyphonic and indeterminate quality of human events and non-events’ as captured by writers such as Dostoevsky and Tolstoy: although they can be hard to describe in the way that they oscillate between often conflicting perspectives in a non-linear fashion, they better resemble human experience. They encourage an understanding of narrative as ‘fuzzy’ and as a means for imagining possibilities, shifting mind-sets and for acting from a place of uncertainty.

The way I have written the ‘meshes’ intentionally retains the idiosyncrasies of the speech patterns and vocabulary of the original speakers but are intersected and interwoven to emphasise specific commonalities and themes that arose from the fifteen conversations that took place. The effect is polyphonic: it is clear that the texts did not originate from an individual, but it is still difficult to identify individual voices and narratives.

They are called meshes in order to highlight this interwoven character and for the metaphor it affords. Meshes filter and refine. These texts have been created to enable me to sift through the discussions and extract key concepts. Creating the meshes required iterative close reading of each of the conversation transcripts. As I did so, I noted down key words and concepts that arose from each one, creating simplified versions of the transcriptions by extracting significant passages and phrases. From this list I identified areas of commonality, for example notions of translation and interpretation (See Appendix D). Using the lists of keywords and concepts, I then re-read each of the simplified transcripts and began to integrate them, creating new documents where I pasted in phrases and excerpts from the original transcripts based around the common themes I had discovered. This activity required me to re-read each simplified transcript a large number of times; each time it forced me to reconsider the groupings of commonalities. Some of the phrases from the original conversations are used in several of the meshes. The complexity of the information communicated in the conversations became more and more apparent with each re-reading. I noted that I was developing different ways of understanding what they told me. I noticed new meaning in the text as I began grouping and splicing excerpts and phrases.

The meshes are devised as a means of defining important characteristics of textile design. They are of course innately connected through myself and the other textile designers whose stories they are founded on. I like to consider the meshes as transparent, pliable ‘supple fabrications’ (Mitchell 1997), woven together (Bateson 2000) and layered up in their re-telling of the narrative of textile design, piling up to become something more substantive, as described by Walter Benjamin in ‘The Storyteller’ (1936:92);

“That slow piling one on top of the other of thin, transparent layers which constitutes the most appropriate picture of the way in which the perfect narrative is revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings.”

Appended (See Appendix C) are the full transcriptions of the conversations, but the four meshes are interspersed with the conceptual outcomes of this ‘restorying’ analysis technique. Each ‘mesh’ is graphically presented in a second font and with denser spacing to emphasise the spoken, conversational quality of the words. Alongside the four meshes derived from my conversations with textile designers and included in various sections of the thesis are pieces of my own reflective and creative writing.

These varying forms of information invite further interpretations, beyond those I have involved myself with at this stage. As I write, frequently dipping in to refer to the full transcripts, I see new things in what was said, new ways of understanding what was conveyed. The significance and importance of re-evaluating transcripts and other collected research material is discussed by Margery Wolf in *A Thrice Told Tale*, in which she publishes three depictions of an event that took place whilst she was conducting anthropological field research in Taiwan in 1960. They include a piece of fiction, field notes and records of conversations and observations and an academic paper, some written at the time, others more recently: all written by her. She also provides a brief rationalized summary and commentary on each depiction. Wolf adopts a feminist critique of ethnography and asserts that the retelling of the original story in different styles to different audiences yielded different outcomes and conclusions. In this book she recognizes the requirement to be reflexive, questioning methodology and process. She states how important it was to return to her field notes when re-evaluating the fictional piece she wrote, and yet these only provide a summary, ‘a partial and incomplete version of reality’ (Wolf 1992:87) They are in themselves un-selfconscious fictions.

“ Stories of individuals and their relationships through time offer another way of looking, but we need ways to tell stories that are interwoven and recursive, that escape from the linearity of print to incite new metaphors.” (Bateson 2000:247)

The close readings of the conversations I held with textile designers, my own experiences and the application of narrative restorying methods are enmeshed in a complex way to reiterate one another and encourage a holistic view of the design process, recognising the nexus of object, actor, context and process of design (Kimbell 2012).

TRANSLATING, TRANSFORMATION AND REPRESENTATION

mesh.

“Right - I want you to imagine it's the 1940s, it's a damp smoky dark railway station, this soldier's going off to war; the girl's standing on the platform with a bedraggled bunch of flowers, waving goodbye tearfully to her ...” She wanted those flowers, you see?

It was about responding to those sort of poetic feelings, quite chaotically at the beginning. There must be a certain amount of interpretation on my part. I must understand and interpret that poetry and make it visible - realise it, in fabric; know which colours to pull out, how would they go; translate it into textiles; make it believable.

I accumulate information related to... whatever... and then there's the process of ‘tidying up’ and then responding to all that and very often all those three stages merge into one so you're looking at things as well as organising them at the same time as making something. ‘*In synthesis*’, that would be the best explanation. I tend to consume masses of information of all sorts and sources, mostly of visual but also text-based and initially it doesn't have any particular order. I might take inspiration for colour straight from photographs or an exhibition. So being inspired by a painting and seeing how that could be a design or being inspired by the new design by BMW and how that could affect the shape of a print or swimwear. I might then make patterns almost straight from visual research. Although what we're kind of taught is really to try not to just interpret your visual research, to try and actually do a stage further; that specific way of researching primary research, secondary research, then you pick out bits and put them together to create the design, although it's still quite organic. Somehow I always talk about it as a process of osmosis. You've looked at something so long, or worked with it for so long, that suddenly it's coming out through your fingertips. I suppose I also think it's all about looking. Because I think that the biggest tool you've got in anything is your personal way of looking at something. Working in a design team, we'd kind of build up these little kind of stories and themes and moods and ideas. Sometimes we didn't have very much that was visual to back it up, but reading notes and things that we'd kind of written when we are PV (Premiere Vision) or something. We'll be like, you know, I really, really feel good about indigo dyeing or about tropical florals or about whatever it might be. Then I just need to translate them into the computer as a design or colourway. Alternatively, sometimes my process starts with a material; I take it apart, like a kid, and then find my own way of putting it back together again. I find it's a good way to get to know the material and understand what it wants to be. I like getting people to understand the technology that is available, and how it can be used. The materials research development company I once worked for needed somebody, really, that could transfer that kind of way of talking much more easily; I suppose it's that kind of link; being able to speak to certain people in a way that kind of enables them to gain enough information and to understand what it's all about but without kind of coming across in a too much of a technological way.

Now, working for the fashion brand, much of the time, the head designer brings in books or stuff that he thinks are interesting and he'll give it to me saying ‘Okay, this is the one I want to use for this season.’ So I then come back here with their fabrics and colours and themes and play for a couple of days. I'm very much about feeding off another person's requirement and twisting it around in my head. Although, it just can be a terrible, terrible experience because you don't know whether you're seeing things the same way or not. And sometimes you get clients that just even when you've done it to the colours that they've given you the swatches for, it doesn't look like the colour they want. It can be very, very difficult. Although, I won't ever work with somebody who says, “I want this here.”

An example of when it gets really interesting is when I was once working for two designers the same season, and they both gave me the same picture of a little boy with a tattoo on. And so I had to find two totally different collections from this one photograph, which was exciting. And also if you are working for say, seven different designers a season, then you've also got to have seven different styles. Different designers are known for their handwriting. So I will often be asked to do things that are specific to my handwriting. You have to bend your taste to theirs without losing your integrity. Often when the design is done, I realise it is really communicating visually what I wanted to say; although I didn't realise it would have looked that way. All of a sudden, all that research was pulled into one thing, even though I didn't consciously do it, that's when I realise it's good. I realise that I have created a feeling or a sense of it being romantic; or a feeling of being jazzy; or a feeling of taking you to the fifties; or taking you to some place. I know people might not always get my work, but if they are attracted to it for some reason – they like the imagery or something –as long as they feel something towards it, I'm happy at the end of the day. If they don't get the concept behind it, it doesn't matter.

To allow me to legitimately explore the emphasis on the linguistic terms of this mesh in relation to the objectivity of textile design thinking, I refer to the concept developed by Victoria Mitchell in her 1997 essay ‘Textiles, text and techne’; “Text and textile share common association through the Latin *texere*, to weave. These fragile references suggest for textiles a kind of speaking and for language a kind of making.” (Mitchell 1997:7). This notion of textiles ‘speaking’ is clearly an important role for the textile object, as conveyed in the mesh. The textile designers describe how the textile design must speak of a story, a feeling, and a history. To ‘speak’ is “to express one’s thoughts by words” (Oxford English Dictionary 2013) Textiles do not have words; they speak instead through a complex synergy of visual and haptic language. Nigel Cross (2007:25) cites the work of Hillier and Leaman from 1976 in which they described designing as “learning an artificial ‘language’; a kind of code which transforms ‘thoughts’ into ‘words’”, and state that “They (designers) use ‘codes’ that translate abstract requirements into concrete objects. They use these codes to both ‘read’ and ‘write’ in ‘object languages’” (Cross 2007:29). Tacit knowledge is embodied in these languages or codes, the details of which vary across the design disciplines, feasibly offering researchers the possibilities of exploring non-verbal ‘dialects’ of design object language in the pursuit of the tacit knowledge of design.

But let me not digress into the agency and nature of the textile object and its materiality. What I want to explore is how the textile designer creates this communicative cloth. Commonly, they told me that they respond, translate and interpret and tidy images, words, stories, feelings, memories and objects in the development of their textile designs.

“The qualification of a translator worth reading must be a mastery of the language he translates out of, and that he translates into; but if a deficiency be [*sic*] to be allowed in either, it is to be in the original, since if he be but master enough of the tongue of his author as to be master of his sense, it is possible for him to express that sense with eloquence in his own, if he have a thorough command of that.” John Dryden (Dryden 1680:30)

Seventeenth-century playwright John Dryden emphasises two key aspects that I wish to explore in more depth: mastery of language and expression of sense. If I proceed now to develop the argument of textile designer as translator, I must consider what language they are translating ‘out of’ and ‘into’? He encourages good translators to be a master of both. The mesh describes how textile designers, when designing, respond to a varied range of visual, textual, auditory, sensory materials: a rich multi-modal language. Taking Dryden’s statement, the textile designer need not be a master of this multi-modal language, but must have a thorough command of the language of textiles in order to effectively convey what is being ‘spoken of’. The mesh describes how masses of information are collected, collated and ‘consumed’, some of it given to them by others and/or quickly ‘vacuumed up’ from visits to trade shows, exhibitions or online, for example. For the textile designer, the form of the original information has little significance; its inclusion is arbitrary.

“If they don’t get the concept behind it, it doesn’t matter”, “...as long as they feel something towards it, I’m happy at the end of the day.” (See conversation with TD2, Appendix C)

Direct and explicit communication is not the concern of textile design; it is precisely the expression of the ‘sense’, as Dryden puts it, within the language of textiles that is key.

The premise of emphasising sensibility over content by no means belittles the textile designer as translator. The acts of vacuuming up, picking through and tidying which are part of the textile design process may not encourage deep and narrow expertise, but rather a breadth of interconnected social knowledge.

“The solutions to many of the translator’s dilemmas are not to be found in dictionaries, but rather in an understanding of the way language is tied to social realities, to literary forms and to changing identities. Translators must constantly make decisions about the cultural meanings which language carries, and evaluate the degree to which the two different worlds they inhabit are ‘the same’. These are not technical difficulties, they are not the domain of specialists in obscure or quaint vocabularies. They demand the exercise of a range of intelligences. In fact the process of meaning transfer has less to do with finding the cultural inscription of a term than in reconstructing its value.” Sherry Simon (1996:138).

Hugo Friedrich’s 1965 speech ‘On the art of translation’ traces the history of this approach to translation to the ancient Rome of Quintilian and Pliny, and describes its dominance during the European Renaissance. Friedrich also says: “...the purpose of translation is to go beyond the appropriation of content to a releasing of those linguistic and aesthetic energies that heretofore had existed only as pure possibility in one’s own language and had never been materialized before.... Its most striking hallmark is its effort to ‘enrich’” (Friedrich 1965:13)

Friedrich’s speech is itself a translation by Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet, but the words used here are richly metaphorical, describing this form of translation as an act of ‘releasing energies and pure possibility through materialization in the effort to enrich’ an art form. This summation of translation could equally be used to describe the process of textile design. I enjoy the ‘magical’ qualities of this phrase, as if something ethereal has been given a form (through words or textile). What qualities does this attribute to the textile designer as translator? The use of metaphor by the translators here is also significant to the comparison between translation and textile designing. What were Friedrich’s original words? Does it matter? The translators saw fit to imbue the translation with metaphor, words loaded with alternative meaning.

As the mesh describes, the textile designer doesn’t just translate, she responds. The verb ‘to respond’ has a number of definitions and etymological historical origins (Oxford English Dictionary 2013 and Harper 2013), leading to nuanced understandings of the term. The most widely understood is ‘to answer’, but a more interesting one, and one which fits well with the idea of translating as ‘enriching’, is responding as ‘to pledge back’ (derived from the Latin re- “back” and *spondere* “to pledge”). If we consider that textile designers are pledging back to this multi-modal language as they translate it and enrich it, a necessary level of trust is implicated.

Clive Dilnot, in his essay ‘The gift’, recognises this ‘pledging back’ in design as a form of gift-giving, but one outside of commerce, stating; “... it is the quantum of the designer’s creative apperception of the conditions of human subjectivity, together with his or her ability to translate and embody this apperception into the form of the object and to offer it again to the potential user, that marks the designer/maker’s ‘gift’ to the user.” (Dilnot 1995:154)

Dilnot skilfully triangulates the act of designing, with design as an agent of commodity and design as a subjective object. He highlights the relational properties of the act of designing as he uses the metaphor of giving gifts to explore the dynamics of design. He mentions the conative impulse designers feel – their implicit desire to make transformations in the world – and relates this to Adorno’s description of gift-giving; “Real giving had its joy in imagining the joy of the receiver. It means choosing, expending time, going out of one’s way, thinking of the other as a subject: the opposite of distraction.” (Adorno 1944:42)

Dilnot is interested in how designed objects work between two people: the designer and the other. The designer takes the role of the gift-giver and the other (or consumer, first or second level – see Figure 9) is the recipient. He encourages us to momentarily rethink the connections that have been made

between design and commodity. He reflects on the notion of the object as a commodity, where the gift-giver (designer) and recipient are disconnected through the capitalist structure. He argues that this de-personalised scenario removes the sense of obligation from gift-giving and sets up an alternative notion of consumption.

Dilnot's concept of design as a relational act of gift-giving emphasises the experience of pleasure as experienced by the designer and the recipient. This definition of the purpose of design is in closer alignment to Brett's (2005) definition of the pleasure-giving decorative arts and is a useful concept in distinguishing textile design from its close relatives in craft and applied arts, yet simultaneously maintains and recognises the connection.

The notion of 'pledging back' that is developed through comparing design with translation is neatly captured in Dilnot's citation of Marx:

"I would know myself to be confirmed in your thought as well as in your love. I would know that I had created through my life expression immediately yours as well. Thus in my individual activity I would know my true essence, my human, common essence is contained and realised. Our production would be so many mirrors, in which our essence would be mutually illuminated." (Marx 1844 cited originally by Benhabib (1986) in *Critique, Norm and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press)

This evocative passage offers a view into the pleasure, intellectual passion (Polanyi 1958) and relational mutuality involved in the design process: a process that deeply interconnects the designer with the object and user/consumer. It also allows a different reading of the innate impetus of designers – a passionate impulsion to communicate, translate and relate. 'The gift' poses an alternative definition of the character of design and the design process; one that involves the conative, cognitive and affective. This area offers much scope for further research, as there are so many contradictions to explore with reference to the way in which textile designers experience design processes.

In Dilnot's explanation, the gift is not the object itself but the latency of the object; a 'moment within' the object bestowed by the designer/maker. In support of this statement, he notes that most mundane objects contain this gift 'moment'. He adds that the moment is more perceptual than material. Textiles contribute to, and become embedded in, designed objects.

In this scenario the gift-like moment of the textile is even more latent, as it does not constitute the gift-object in itself but contributes an essential element to it.

Dilnot (1995) differentiates between complex designed objects like computers and 'mundane' ones like 'clothes to keep us warm'. It can be understood that textiles would be categorised as 'mundane' in this context. Whilst separating the two he also notes that mundane designed objects are no less significant than those he categorises as complex. Interestingly, and in contrast, material culture scholar Judy Attfield (2000) called these mundane, everyday objects 'wild things'.

Dilnot affirms that the giver moves from a desire to give to an apprehension of the other's needs and desires.

"To put it in subject terms: as I anticipate the other's enjoyment and use of my object, and as I concretize those anticipated in an object that I choose/create, then I get the immediate pleasure and consciousness of having satisfied a real human need through this creative work." (Dilnot 1995:155)

Dilnot cites Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain* (1985) as he describes how designed objects help to make us and 'making and designing are moments of making and designing ourselves.' He says that objects provide us "artificially with what nature has neglected to bestow on us." To work in this way, objects must be a convincing projection of our awareness of human existence, possibilities and limitations. Textiles, as designed objects, combining the tactile with the visual, can readily be understood as a projection of our base requirements of haptic, sensual, visual and perceptual stimulation. The designed object is a gift-like recognition of each other's base and complex needs and desires. The designer, or gift-giver, "knows, and has understood, recognised, affirmed and sought to concretely meet our most intimate and human needs and desires." (Dilnot 1995:155)

The concepts of textile design as gift-giving and as translation connect through the notion of responding and pledging back. Both these scenarios illustrate a relational communicative act. The textile designer must, through their translation, pledge back to the original information an essence of its sense. They must also provide to the recipient a translation into cloth that meets their complex needs and desires. As we discussed in reference to Dryden's comments on mastery of language, this again implies that textile designers need highly developed skills in expressing emotion and multi-modal language.

To express emotion and sense requires trust. George Steiner described 'the hermeneutic motion' ("the act of elicitation and appropriative transfer of meaning" Steiner 1975:312) in four stages, beginning with trust. "This confiding will, ordinarily, be instantaneous and unexamined, but it has a complex base. It is an operative convention which derives from a sequence of phenomenological assumptions about the coherence of the world, about the presence of meaning in very different, perhaps formally antithetical semantic systems, about the validity of analogy and parallel." (Steiner 1975:312)

Claire Lerpiniere (2009) applied theories of hermeneutics to the 'inspiration' board, used widely by textile designers in the process of designing, describing how in practice these boards are used heuristically and have lacked academic and pedagogic investigation.

"There is initiative trust, an investment of belief, underwritten by previous experience but epistemologically exposed and psychologically hazardous, in the meaningfulness, in the "seriousness" of the facing or, strictly speaking, adverse text. We venture a leap: we grant ab initio that there is "something there" to be understood, that the transfer will not be void." Steiner (1975:312)

This initial stage relates to the notion of the 'creative' leap, the conative impulse toward making a change; this will be discussed in other sections of this thesis.

The other three stages of Steiner's hermeneutic model for translation are focused on aggression/penetration, incorporation/embodiment and reciprocity/restitution in the 'target' language. The hermeneutic approach was applied to design by Donald Schön in 1983 when he framed it as a 'conversation with the situation.' (Schön 1983:79)

If I am aligning translation with designing (textiles), it is apparent that there are parallels in the key theoretical texts of translation and established concepts of design. In my application of the matrixial and relationality, I am attempting to locate an alternative site of knowledge and meaning that better reflects the act of textile designing. In *Gender in Translation* (1996), Sherry Simon outlines a feminist discourse on the theory of translation which considers Steiner's model, which, although beginning with trust, enacts itself through the perspective of masculine sexuality (Simon 1996:29). I might add that even the venerated Donald Schön's application of hermeneutics utilises interventionist metaphors, describing the designer's 'strategies' and his 'moves', likening designing to a game of chess (Schön 1983:104). Simon adds that feminist theory highlights and recognises the active agency of the translator and the

participatory relationship between the translator, the text and the creation of meaning. She refers to the work of Gayatri Spivak. Spivak writes purposefully and beautifully about translation. In contrast to Steiner's 'penetration' and 'entry' into the text, Spivak describes an act of 'surrender' to the text. "Hers is less a hermeneutical voyage into the intentionality of the text than an engagement with the sensual texture of expression." (Simon 1996:144)

Spivak goes on to describe translation as 'surrendering' and 'sensing' in the context of subjectivity, which correlates it with an understanding of tacit knowledge using textile metaphors to help explain the scenario.

Spivak describes how, in translation, meaning "hops into the spacy emptiness" between two languages and how the translator must attend to "juggling the disruptive rhetoricity that breaks the surface [of the text] in not necessarily connected ways, we feel the selvages of the language-textile give way, fray into frayages or facilitations." (Spivak, 1993:180)

"The task of the translator is to facilitate this love between the original and its shadow, a love that permits fraying, holds the agency of the translator and the demands of her imagined or actual audience at bay." (Spivak, 1993:181)

If we consider textile design as translation, Spivak's feminist reading of the process of translation allows for an alternative subjective, relational understanding of design which contrasts with the notion of interventionist problem-solving. Her description of her method of translation is reminiscent of one of the methods used by the textile designers I spoke with: surrendering to the material through play, trying to decide what the materials want to be. Spivak's mention of the love of the translator for the original text and its 'shadow' (the translation) acknowledges the subjectivity and the presence of the translator and connects with the notion of responding as pledging back (love, nurture, understanding). Spivak's use of Freud's term 'frayage' or 'facilitation' invites an understanding of unravelling, disruption, entanglement as a positive and facilitative step in the creation of understanding or knowledge.

Spivak's 'surrendering' is not to be misconstrued as a submission, but rather as the necessity and willingness to be vulnerable to, and offer oneself up for, change and alteration in this co-emergent encounter. Michael Polanyi, in his writing on the creation of personal or tacit knowledge, captures the way in which Steiner's hermeneutics and Spivak's fraying and surrendering unite, in his concept of 'self-disposal':

"The satisfaction of gaining intellectual control over the external world is linked to a satisfaction of gaining control over ourselves. This urge towards this dual satisfaction is persistent; yet it operates by phases of self-destruction. This endeavour must occasionally operate by demolishing a hitherto accepted structure, or parts of it, in order to establish an even more rigorous and comprehensive one in its place." (Polanyi 1958:196)

"Yeah that's the nice thing about fabric, you can keep doing things to it." (See conversation with TD13 in Appendix C)

Aspects of Polanyi's theories on the tacit have been interpreted and popularised by Csíkszentmihályi as the notion of achieving 'flow' (1990). To gain control, you must lose control. In the frame of reference of this thesis, I prefer to consider the collaboration of these ideas as self-initiated suspension of self, rather than a complete demolition or surrender under duress. Returning to Spivak, it is a willingness to be located in the uncertain liminal spacy emptiness between. Friedrich's notion of translation as 'releasing', Spivak's use of 'fraying' as facilitation, the translator's 'love'

and the notion of tidying up expressed by the textile designers all echo Walter Benjamin's thinking in his 1923 essay 'The translator's task'. Benjamin emphasises the justification of freedom (over fidelity) in translation to 'unbind' meaning from language, speech and sense and to 'liberate' and 'recuperate' it (Benjamin 1923:82).

Design thinking currently lacks such a feminist discourse; other related areas have been developed over the past few decades: feminist design history (Buckley 1986, Attfield 1989), women designers (Buckley 1986, Sparke 1995, Clark 2005) and feminist material culture studies (Attfield 2000) but in the meantime the instrumentalist, problem-solving paradigm of design thinking and process prevails.

Translations and translators have often been conceptualized as female and inferior in their relationship with the original text and author: the original is seen as generative, the translation as merely derivative (Simon 1996:1). The expression '*les belles infidèles*' has long been used to describe translations as either faithful or beautiful, but not both (Chamberlain 1988:455). Simon describes how feminist translation theory takes the traditionalist notion of fidelity or faithfulness to the text, author or reader in translation and redirects it to the process of writing itself. Applying questions of fidelity to an original in the process of translation towards the context of design relates to notions of unconscious and conscious variation. Philip Steadman (1979/2008) refers to Pitt-Rivers' 1884 experiments in successive copying, as well as Henry Balfour's utilisation of the activity as a research tool for *The Evolution of Decorative Arts* from 1893. He says:

"The origins or at least precursors of particular decorative forms were to be discovered by tracing them back through continuous series of always slightly differing copies. And as such chains of 'genetically' connected designs might begin and end with examples so widely different, that unless the intermediate links were known, it would not be imagined that they were in any way related." (Steadman 1979/2008:99)

Based on anthropological studies, it is understood that decoration has evolved through iterations of natural motifs and markings. Certain motifs have been successively copied and in doing so have changed form. Steadman sets up this copying as 'variation', which can be unconscious or conscious: either an attempt to reproduce the original as faithfully as possible or with some intent to alter or improve it. These concepts relate to the different approaches to translation, conscious variation corresponding to the feminist paradigm. Conscious variation recognises the subjectivity of the translator/designer in this creative act: their intention and expression are key to the outcome, embodied in the mark, the stitch, the texture and the structure. A textile designer perhaps might rework or recolour a design from an archive; this is not derivation. It contrasts newness with the comfort of familiarity involving conscious variation. Decoration as '*les belles infidèles*'.

"In terms of pattern, individual motifs are totally transformed within the pattern as a whole, by the chance swaying of a dress or curtain. Pattern eludes, evades and troubles our gaze." (Graves 2002:52)

A feminist reading of translation invites an exploration into the translator herself. Bogusia Temple describes how translators "...are often women paid for discrete pieces of work where they are not even acknowledged or named in the final written text. Their structural/social position informs their translation in the words that they choose to convey concepts but their influence on the text is marginalized and often ignored." (Temple 2005:5.4)

Lawrence Venuti wrote about the invisibility of the translator in 1994. This situation is also synonymous with the role of the textile designer, often female, paid for the rights to one-off samples that go on to be incorporated into another design product, the input seldom credited and the impact often ignored.

The correlation between the female translator and the female textile designer is significant in the development of a new understanding of textile design. The translator is further characterised by José Ortega y Gasset in his 1937 essay ‘The misery and splendour of translation’ (Ortega y Gasset 1937:94), which views translation as a Utopian endeavour;

“To write well is to make continual excursions into grammar, into established usage, and into accepted linguistic norms. It is an act of permanent rebellion against the social environs, a subversion. To write well is to employ a certain radical courage. Fine, but the translator is usually a shy character. Because of his humility, he has chosen such an insignificant occupation. He finds himself facing an enormous controlling apparatus, composed of grammar and common usage. What will he do with the rebellious text? Isn’t it too much to ask that he also be rebellious, particularly since the text is someone else’s. He will be ruled by cowardice, so instead of resisting grammatical restraints he will do just the opposite: he will place the translated author in the prison of normal expression; that is, he will betray him.

Traduttore, traditore”

Ortega y Gasset’s depiction portrays a shy, humble person (as translator) full of courage, intention and aspiration yet ‘marching toward failure’ and betrayal (Ortega y Gasset 1937:94). This characterisation only holds true if fidelity in translation is held as its defining role. If the translator adopts the sense of freedom encouraged by writers such as Benjamin, Ortega y Gasset’s character can be re-written as a quietly courageous pioneer, a rebellious bricoleur, a humble subversive...a feminist? Simon (1996:83) provides several historical examples of how translation has been used by female writers to find a voice, socially, politically and artistically. In regard to this, she describes translation as an “intensely relational act, one which establishes connections between text and culture, between author and reader.”

In the integration of the metaphor of design as translation, notions of suspension and surrender to liminality in translation/design and the translator/designer as rebellious bricoleur is the concept of a simultaneous movement towards and beckoning forth to the possibility of transformation. Often cited in this context is Herbert Simon’s definition of (the science) of design from 1982, as devising an action that transforms existing situations into preferred ones (Friedman 2003: 508). Simon’s definition is process- and designer-focused, and the discourse has inevitably evolved since his day, but the essence of his definition helps to understand the cognitive activities associated with the process of designing. It requires the designer to imagine, embody and translate new possibilities, each of these activities involving the adoption of relational liminality: being between and at once in two situations.

LES BELLES INFIDÈLES

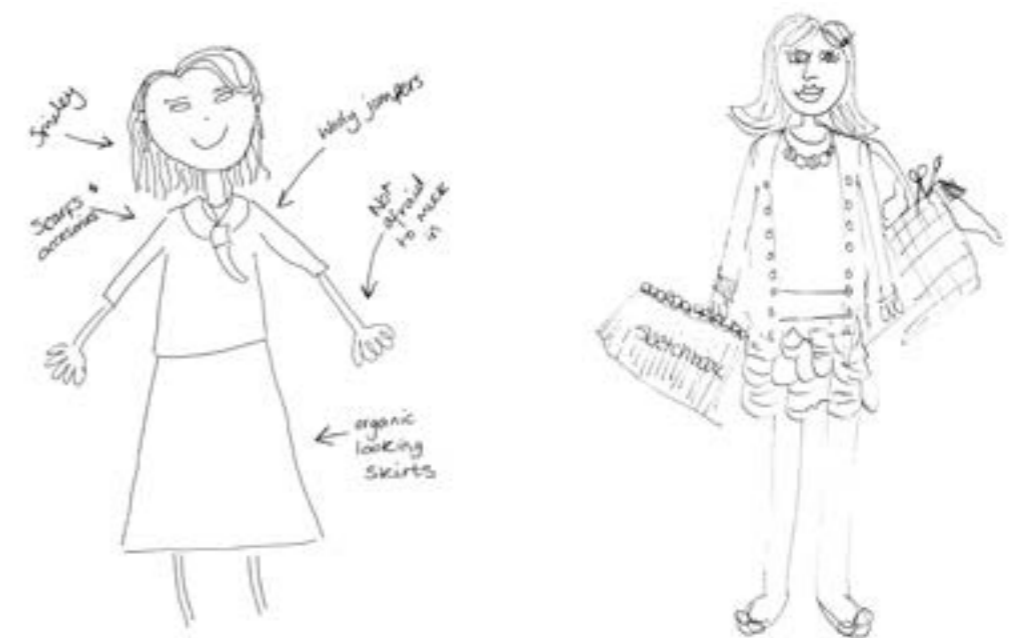
In his well-known 2008 STIR lecture, Christopher Frayling traced the development of the popular image of the British engineer: in his words, from Brunel to Wallace and Gromit. He refers to two research investigations from the USA and Canada in the 1960s that investigated the public image of the scientist by asking school children to simply ‘draw a scientist’. Frayling re-enacted the activity on two occasions, more recently asking children to ‘draw an engineer’. He admits that the notion of an engineer to primary school children is complicated and unclear and invites stereotypes, although it is the stereotypes that he rather wants to expose.

I am similarly interested in the perceptions of textile designers. Finding out more about the stereotypes, about their public persona, may help in the elucidation of their design thinking.

In November 2009, I undertook Frayling’s simple activity with two different groups. Initially I asked a group of second-year students, whom I taught on the BA (Hons) Fashion Textiles Enterprise at the University of Portsmouth, to ‘draw a textile designer’. These were students who had opted to study the textile design pathway of the course, and so were beginning to identify themselves with the notion of ‘being’ a textile designer (See Figures 10 and 11 and Appendix E).

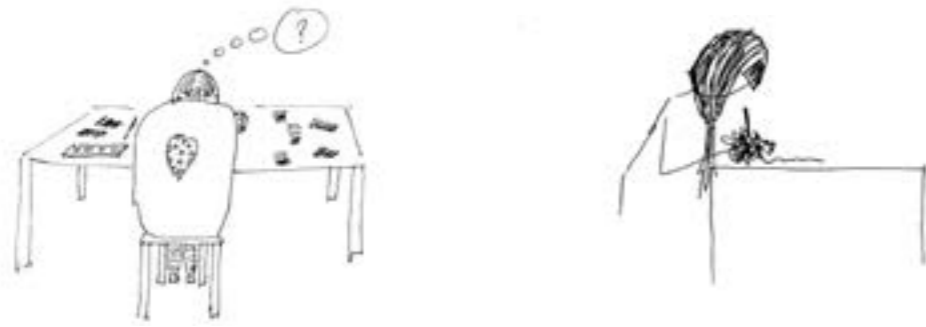
In January 2010, I asked a different group to ‘draw a textile designer’. This group was composed of my fellow research students and research tutors in the School of Fashion and Textiles at the Royal College of Art. Some of these were textile designers, and others not.(See Figures 12 and 13 and Appendix F).

This activity, using drawing as an elicitation tool, and the way that both Frayling and I conducted it, can only provide anecdotal evidence. In the first group, my students were clearly influenced by each other’s drawings in progress as they were all completed simultaneously. Although anecdotal, what is portrayed is nonetheless a compelling indication of the gendered role of the textile designer, the invisibility and anonymity of the textile designer, the textile design process and a commentary on textile design education. The undergraduate students mainly drew naïve versions of themselves in the role of textile designer. They all drew ‘smiley’ young women, wearing colourful ‘organic-looking’ clothing and prominent jewellery, carrying sketchbooks, sewing equipment and bags of ‘stuff’.



Figures 10 and 11: Drawings of textile designers by University of Portsmouth students (2009).

My fellow research students' drawings were completely different. Some of them, those who are not textile designers, seemed to find it difficult to visualise any notion of who or what a textile designer is – two participants didn't get any further than drawing an ambiguous head. One person (again, not a textile designer) drew a man at a loom. When asked to explain his drawing he said that he was thinking of a traditional notion of Scottish weavers, who are mainly male. Only one other drawing featured a textile designer printing onto a piece of fabric. Apart from these two drawings, the drawings of textile designers are dissociated from a making process but show them as surrounded by the accoutrements of designing, such as books and materials. More can be read from the poses of some of the drawings: in those completed at the Royal College of Art, the textile designers are hunched over desks, utterly involved in the task at hand, although their activity is unclear.



Figures 12 and 13: Drawings of textile designers by members of the fashion and textiles research group at the Royal College of Art (2010).

These pictures reflected the environment of the textiles studio at the Royal College of Art, where each student in the largely female cohort has a personal workspace (See Figures 14 and 15).



Figure 14: Royal College of Art MA Textiles student in their workspace (2009).



Figure 15: Royal College of Art MA Textiles student in their workspace (2009).

The undergraduate students do not have personal workspaces, and so must carry their equipment around with them. Their 'textile designers' are open and naively confident, but the content of the sketchbooks is still hidden from view, their work stuffed into their overflowing tote-bags.

I do not wish to place much emphasis on these drawings but instead to see them simply as illustration of some of the points raised in my recorded conversations with textile designers, as well as other representations of textile designers such as those compiled by Leah Armstrong in 2012 for her exhibition 'Portraits of Women Designers' at the University of Brighton. Eight out of the thirteen women designers featured in Armstrong's collection were textile designers working in post-war Britain. The images gathered by Armstrong from the photographic library of the Council of Industrial Design are products of their time, and I do not wish to become too heavily involved in visual analysis here, but rather to use them as an illustration of the problematic of the gendered role of the textile designer and its affect on the status and knowledge of textile design. Lucienne Day is depicted seemingly working at the kitchen table at home, wearing a neat cricket jumper with rolled-up sleeves. Marianne Straub is casually dressed, leaning forward as if listening, whilst fondling some fabric swatches. Shirley Craven appears to be naked in a model-like profile shot, sitting in front of her designs. Althea McNish seems to be just a stylish young woman selecting patterns for her interior decoration from a swatch book. These highly successful, prolific and pioneering designers are depicted primarily as women, with their role as a designer hidden from view, simplistically represented or intentionally misrepresented, emphasising their femininity and/or domesticity rather than their profession.

Misrepresentation is not a crime that I wish to commit, and so I must draw attention to the cultural considerations of this study. The field of this research is the creative textile design community and discipline in the United Kingdom. Three of the textile designers I spoke with were foreign nationals; one was Spanish, one Portuguese and one Indian. All three had obtained either or both of their undergraduate or postgraduate degrees in London. The Spanish (see conversation with TD13 in Appendix C) and Portuguese (see conversation with TD12 in Appendix C) designers stated that they had to study in the UK as, at the time, textile design education provision was extremely limited to the point of non-existence in their home countries. The Indian designer, (see conversation with TD3 in Appendix C) in particular, offered an alternative view on textile design thinking, specifically in comparisons she made between her studies in India and Europe.

She stresses her experience of the importance of individual expression within the design process in both the UK and Sweden (where she had also studied), compared to India's emphasis on designing with manufacturing and production in mind, as well as the textile's impact on the end user. She felt that the geographical proximity between design, crafting and manufacturing bases in India has left her more aware of the large-scale impact textile design can make in a commercial, social and ecological way, something that is not consistently considered in the education of textile designers in the UK.

At the time I commented to her that she rarely referred to herself as a *textile* designer, but talked about the design and development of products. Indeed, some her previous work had been in developing colour for manufacturers of electrical goods. She expressed an outlook and experience of design that appeared comfortably aligned with the accepted models of generalised design knowledge, yet she was also aware of the alternative approach to design that she was experiencing in her postgraduate textile design studies at the time.

Exploring the cultural dimension of textile design thinking will be an important avenue, beyond the scope of this thesis, that should be followed if qualitative feminist research methods are to be ideologically adopted. Other types of stories represent other facets. Concepts of textile design as a discipline in its own right may be problematic, or in fact clearer, in other countries due to their unique industrial histories and textile cultures. This digresses into the never-ending discussion about the place of textiles within art, design, craft and applied arts in cultural contexts. The experience of the Indian textile designer with whom I spoke provides an actual example of how two differing approaches to design thinking can co-exist in the practice of one designer, dependent on locality and culture.

mesh.

People respond to textiles quite badly, I think. Even at college it seemed to be quite a 'low down' course. I say to people I do textiles – oh what do you sew, do you make clothes, and it's like, no... actually explain to people textiles is really broad and quite sculptural and it's quite 3D and you can use, you know... doesn't have to be fabric, it can be metal, plastic and what have you. People just don't get it. I remember a few of the experiences where you're presenting work to an audience that the majority of them are engineers, textile engineers and it goes completely over their heads, they're looking at you like you do pretty things. They see us as people who make things look pretty. And all just because it seems like a fluffy subject.

Once you say textiles people get all these different stereotypical images in their mind and it's hard to get them to understand what you're about. "Yeah, you've got big beads on, you must be a textile designer." But you can't really define a textile designer.

Textiles is moving to technology to try and rid that idea, which I applaud. It makes an awful lot of sense, obviously. But the whole making of beautiful fabrics isn't a fluffy thing. It's really not. And it's that that we've got to sell. It's the whole male/female thing, it's like textiles is predominantly female and then, generally, like product design is mostly male and they'll design something like a textile, big panels that kind of fit together, and they're like look, they're textiles and I looked at it and think, god, it's a bit crap, and we could have done it millions of years ago, kind of thing, and yet it's in a magazine under 'best use of textiles' and it's just... shocking. It really drives me up the wall. People don't seem to, kind of, seek out textiles. If it's done by some male designer who's, you know, great or whatever then it's fantastic. Textiles is not thought of that highly. Textiles isn't obviously completely forgotten but I do think it is up to us a textile people to really push forward our ideas and our techniques and really kind of get ourselves out there, I think. We all know what textiles is whereas most of the other disciplines, it seems to me, are constantly evolving, whereas textiles seems to be, kind of, stuck. It's like, we're textiles... shitty textiles... which doesn't really help.

It's the making that I like. I like the whole process. A lot of my decisions are made on the loom, although I design, but things change on the loom and I don't think I could ever get to the point where I could ask somebody else to take on what I'm doing. I like the process. I think I like the structure of weaving because it takes some of the variables away. Like painting is pretty scary on a blank canvas. I like to push that structure, work within a structure like that. I don't think I'm an artist. I'm a designer and I'm a designer craftsman and designer maker. I don't know, I just love fabric.

And when you've been working with something for so long it becomes less deliberate and somehow the work for me takes on more of a life and I know when to stop something too, because I know then it's just becoming... I can't sort of describe the process but I seem to be thinking something in my head but what I'm doing I kind of later realise that, oh, it's kind of linked but it's not purpose.

I didn't really appreciate, maybe... didn't appreciate my creativity until you come into an environment like this. I realised that the way that I think is completely different to how they think.

Actually my input is very important in terms of that.

Dealing with people who probably know little about textile designing – they're mainly fashion designers so

they don't know what's feasible to print, particularly – they'll buy something that fits in with their look, their style, their direction. There's an appreciation of the beauty of it but no understanding of what's the work involved. Textile design in the textile studios, in the way it's working now, is the most daft situation – you do the stuff in the way that a fine artist does stuff, and then you go out and you say: "What do you think – do you want to buy it? Is it right for you or is it not?" So it's a very bizarre situation...

I don't particularly like going to trade fairs. I hate it, it's reactive. I like to ring someone up and make an appointment and go and see them. It's a private thing. As a studio we generally just don't do particularly well in the trade fairs but you have to go because you have to show your face and get new customers. I'm not a hard-sell salesman. I'm not a salesman, you know. I'll try and persuade people that they want things but basically if it's right, it's right and if it isn't, it isn't – they'll come and buy it. I hadn't realised how good you had to be at selling as a designer in that scenario, that was a new one on me. Maybe that's related again to the idea that we're behind everything and that we need to sell ourselves to these other fields of design in order for our work to go anywhere. Textile designers are shy people, they don't like to be on stage, they prefer to stay behind the scenes. But you have to be utterly convinced that what you're doing is great and right. But that whole thing of convincing people to kind of place their budgets on something that you feel is the right thing is ... quite an interesting twist on events.

You're always working on two seasons because somebody is always looking for something different... and you're trying to show them new designs all the time or a new enough look that convinces them. I show this scrapbook because textiles has so many techniques. It's a vast, fantastic subject, goes on and on and on. It's so exciting. It's just lots of different feelings, different scraps basically. I enjoy working with other people especially with fashion because we don't have that stimulation here, and it's good to put your work in different contexts. It's just like working for a client really, I suppose.

Really early on, I worked with a German designer, so often I'd do fashion shows and the whole of the finale is my embroideries making the character of this thing. And I haven't even got a seat, I'm standing at the back. And on the piece of paper on the chair it often says, "Thanks to so and so and so and so for the hair. Thanks to so and so for the tie." And at the bottom it says, if I'm lucky, "Thanks to me for the embroidery or textile." But never my full name. 'Cause they don't want somebody else to come along and use you. I did challenge it with the company. They said, "They want to buy this label, I'd be a fool to diffuse it with your name and you'd be a fool to diffuse your name with my name, because they would buy less, because they want me, you know?" And at the time I had two little kids and I was the breadwinner, so yeah, fine. Let's carry on, because you can't buck it, you can't fight it. Because that was it. But I would really love textiles to have in the way that illustrators and photographers have the Illustrators Association, or people like that backing them to say, "No, your name must be on it."

And I think that when you get people like Alice Temperley and Orla Kiely and Julien MacDonald and textile designers who've actually done well, whose names are really well known, they are people with either fantastic business backing or have that character that is that showmanship. I often think that textile designers work like this, and fashion designers work like that. We all get off on that little mark, and we're really happy if we've done that nice mark, we'll go to bed really happy. Still, there are some people that say, "Oh, don't you think it's a shame that you're not the name?" Sometimes yes of course I feel like that, but often I'd hate to be that name and I'm happy with what I do and where I am.

I think us textile designers tend to be, I don't know whether it's we're the type of people or whether it's the kind of, the history of it, but we tend not to be nearly as confident about what we do as other design disciplines. There's that whole kind of side of fashion which is about showing off and about being, you know, a bit more theatrical or a bit more, you know, kind of, look at me, I suppose. I feel that we're quieter people, it's not all about me, me, me, working with fashion people, they are a bit pushy, more pushy. Textile's kind of quietly working away, kind of, coming up with these things. There's a very different... it's a different characteristic, it's a different kind of person that wants to do that. It's a different kind of person that wants to, you know... My students describe how when collaborating with individuals from other design fields they kind of feel that they're producing cloth for them and that it's an unequal partnership, if you like, and that... they seemed to be kind of resigned to that; that's kind of just how it is. But that doesn't surprise me, somehow. I think historically I think textiles, as a subject area, has always been seen as a bit of an underdog and I think it's because it's, kind of, it's almost because it's so related to the every-day that we're kind of so used to it and it almost, you know, stems back to lots of domestic practice and people hand-knitting and those sorts of things. And because it is, in a sense, a supplier to other industries. It is, you know, the stuff they use so because it's not the ultimate end result, you know, there isn't the same starriness or star designer sort of thing associated with the textile designer because it always then gets developed or moved on into the product or into another kind of area. I think it is seen by others as a service industry, especially the fashion industry - shouldn't say that at all. With my career this is one of the real bugbears. It shouldn't really be like that but it is, because fashion's demands are so much different to ours and the hierarchy and the politics behind it are so complicated, you know. Its incredible. We're a service provider for all of those different design disciplines, and so it, you know, it effects how all of those different areas work. You do end up being the slightly lower down one. You have to just be prepared for that.

For me, here, it's all about... it's not about trying to surprise so much, it's about trying to fit in with what someone else's idea is. It's trying to give her what she feels. You must recognize what's needed for who you're working for. I'm closely informed about what they need in the collection and what's going on in the collection so I can fit with their themes. I don't as such have my own range. I work across all teams.

It's quite unique but it also means I don't actually get involved in kind of the selection process. That's what the garment designer does. So at the end of the day they are kind of more accountable for the range as such. I'm just kind of a tool for them really to put it together, like a resource.

A frustrated, anonymous tool, resigned to being a resource to serve others. A productive woman, supplying to others what they need; what they want. A quiet female, graciously trading on her much practised repertoire of skill and knowledge for joy and entertainment. The misunderstood girl at the back of the room. Who are these women, and why are they housed together in this design discipline of textiles?

A 'discipline', in the religious rather than academic sense, is a phenomenon that is simultaneously a collective and a dispersion. A 'discipline' requires disciples; individuals who feel drawn to a particular set of teachings, tacitly learn and adopt the rules and rituals associated with the discipline allowing them to guide their thoughts and behaviours. Disciples follow and embrace the teachings, which may be explicit and written down or implicitly communicated. They will take comfort in knowing they share their fundamental beliefs, thoughts, and behaviours with others. Essentially the disciple has a tacit relationship with the discipline, which is both internal and personal and external in relation to other disciples across time and location:

"...a heuristic vision which is accepted for the sake of its unresolvable tension. It is like an obsession with a problem known to be insoluble, which yet, unswervingly, the heuristic commands; 'Look at the unknown!' Christianity sedulously fosters, and in a sense permanently satisfies, man's craving for mental dissatisfaction by offering him the comfort of a crucified God." (Polanyi 1958:212)

Using Polanyi's religious analogy for man's craving for mental dissatisfaction and applying it to the shared knowledge and purpose of designers allows us to reconsider the notion of the design 'discipline'. It helps to explain and describes the collective and permanent mental dissatisfaction that drives individuals who call themselves 'designers'. There is a shared vision of an all-encompassing unsolvable problem: a compelling intellectual passion, easily triggered.

The 2008 Design Research Society Conference, entitled '*Undisciplined!*' featured several papers that explore the topic of the discipline; the quasi-religious definition of the term, which relates to the quote from Polanyi above, was not given much attention. Amongst them is Salustri and Rogers' (2008) paper which offers several definitions of the term and considers its various meanings in reference to design. Salustri and Rogers (2008:299/7) state that

"Once we have learned to do something in a certain way, we will tend to do that thing the same way forever, or until a "better" way presents itself (and sometimes, not even then). In this way, we will tend to not try other ways to do a thing because we have learned one way of doing it."

Design has been traditionally categorised into disciplines, which include many sub-disciplines that become specialisms for specific designers: for instance, fashion design includes specialists in knitwear, tailoring and underwear, amongst others. The boundaries between disciplines are becoming less clear, with many polymath designers producing a range of successful design outcomes. For example, Hella Jongerius' signature style has been incorporated into designs for furniture, ceramics, lighting, and footwear. This approach supports the notion that the design process is a consistent and transferable practice or procedure, which can be applied with relevance and success in all fields of design.

Any 'model' of the design process, with no specificity in regard to specialism, separates the design process from the particular making, manufacturing processes and techniques that are integral to designing. It assumes that the specialist knowledge required to design different kinds of objects effectively has little or no bearing on how a designer might approach designing in the first place. When making is removed from the process for the sake of constructing a generalised model it may not adequately cover the range of versions of the design process that will be experienced by designers

working in all sectors of the field. For an area such as textile design, one that reaches into craft and applied arts, such a model is problematic. If, however, we accept that the procedures associated with designing are transferable and universally intrinsic, then we must also ask why most designers specialise within one area or sub-discipline of design.

Wang and Ilhan (2009:5) "propose a *sociological* distinctiveness to the design professions which is really their key distinguishing signature." They oppose the notion that individual design professions hold specific knowledge and that there are social, historical and market-led reasons for this concept being maintained in academic writing. They describe a 'sociological wrapping' around the 'creative act', and proceed in their investigation by questioning what a profession *is*; they do not assume that different design professions possess a specific knowledge, but rather that they are all centred round the creative act. They present this as a circular diagram with the centre of the shape taken up by the 'creative act' (design process) with two concentric circles encompassing it. The concentric areas represent firstly the non-domain-specific knowledge they propose and secondly the sociological wrapping of disciplines or professions. Wang and Ilhan advise that in order to define a design profession one must decipher what it does "(with any general knowledge that assists in the creative act) in a sociological process of defining itself to the larger culture." (Wang & Ilhan 2009:7) The authors use architecture, interior design and industrial design as examples of three professions at different stages of defining a professional identity. They consider that, of the three, industrial design is the 'least professionalized by sociological standards'. This statement seems to be based on the number of US designers subscribing to membership of professional organisations. They argue that although all three professions vary in regard to organised and structured professional standards, what they share is the fact that the knowledge they possess is not 'domain-specific'. Wang and Ilhan conclude by questioning the difference between 'discipline' and 'profession', referencing an online discussion topic started by Ken Friedman on the subject in 2007. Wang and Ilhan state regularly in their paper that the ideas they propose are counter to the common discourse, and that they challenge concepts developed by leading academics in the field of design research.

The discipline or profession of textiles has not been as rigorously professionalised as areas such as architecture,

"Membership of The Textile Institute is open to all individuals and companies. The only requirement is an interest in the industry. Membership grades are available to those that seek professional qualification, but it is not necessary to be qualified to become a member." Textile Institute (2013)

but there are several accounts exploring and purporting to explore the specificities of textile knowledge, in both design literature and material culture studies. As such, it remains a worthwhile activity to find a location for textiles knowledge in the wider field of design precisely because it may yield new insights into the creative act for textile designers and/or designers in general. The notion of 'sociological wrapping' will be of great importance and is one which, whether in agreement with Wang and Ilhan's proposals against domain-specific knowledge or not, is something that many in the field of design may readily recognise.

Textile design appears to attract a broad range of 'disciples'. As shown in Figure 9, the term 'textile practitioner' can at once describe students, artists, craftspeople, hobbyists and designers of various levels of expertise, approaches and experience, all with markedly different approaches to following and embracing the 'teachings' of the discipline. Textile design encompasses teachings from the broader disciplines of design, art and craft, indicating that textile design disciples have formed a tacit understanding of a specific blend of design knowledge (although contested by Wang & Ilhan). This knowledge is considered to be embodied in the designed outcomes of textile design and exhibited

in the textile designer's approach to design thinking and the behaviours and activities they undertake within their design process. The textile design discipline has particular protocols for presenting design ideas (Moxey 2000) that are not shared with any other sub-discipline of design, whilst even commonly used systems for recording design thinking and process, such as sketchbooks, will be used in subtly differing ways. It would be extraneous for me here to provide a potted history of the development of the textile design discipline or the textile design industry, and in any case this has been the concern of many design and industrial historians. This study focuses on the idiosyncrasies of the textile design discipline and the specific characteristics of textile designers, asking what behaviours or methods they share which combine to define textile knowledge and the textile design discipline? What Wang and Ilhan propose invites me to consider the sociological wrapping of textile design. How has the discipline developed, and how is it perceived? How does it operate and present itself? The generative metaphor of this study is 'textile design as female entity'. This implies a concurrence with the notion of sociological wrapping; textile design is sociologically gendered (Buckley 1986). The feminine wrapping of textile design and its delay in professionalizing itself has affected its ability to have an impact on the non-domain-specific knowledge that Wang and Ilhan propose.

The comments from the textile designers represented in the mesh, as well as the drawings and photographs discussed earlier, assert a range of characterisations of the textile designer. This is emphasised in the way I have used the persona of Clara Krug in Paul Scheerbart's novel *The Gray Cloth* as a representation of textiles as an entity, incorporating yet shifting between the nexus of the textile designer, the textile discipline, the textile design process and the textile design as embodied outcome. I shall call this entity Textiles (with a capital T). I wish to push these characterisations into conceptualisations of textile design.

The comments of the textile designers in the mesh remind me of a moment in my own experience: a fresh graduate and prize winner, sitting in my own stand, one of hundreds, at Indigo trade fair in Paris in 2001. I was surrounded by the varied textile design samples I had produced as a student, pinned to the wall behind me and laid out on the table in front, my name emblazoned across the top of the stand. Trade show visitors nonchalantly walked past, or came for an idle rifle through the mounted samples: I could only find out who they were if I caught a glimpse of their name badge. Some people came and spoke with me, introducing themselves as fashion designers, and I enthusiastically explained my work. Often, it quickly became clear that all they wanted to know was whether the textile sample could be mass-produced and how much it would cost to buy. I had carefully prepared for that moment in my life, cataloguing and labelling each piece of work, fully expecting to sell my work. I did sell a few pieces, and many people seemed interested in my work, but soon realised that what I was offering in terms of textile design was not appropriate for that forum. I felt quite exposed, misled and misunderstood after this experience. Why had I been invited to show and sell my work there? Had I not sold it well enough? Should I have done something differently? How could I do better next time? I realised that I would be nothing if I did not please these people.

I embodied my textile designs; they were full of my creativity. At the time of designing and making them I did not think about whom I would sell them to. I was concerned with the process and developing creative outcomes, but my design discipline required me to 'put it on show'.

There is an interesting dynamic between the role of the textile designer as artistic, creative and skilled and their requirement to produce work that others will enjoy and pay for. They have independency and licence in their creative endeavours, but the outcomes of their activity are destined for a supporting role in another designed product.

Seeing Textiles as a very specifically female entity, although encompassing textile designers of both genders, the notion of feminine attributes, skills and persona as a commodity prompts parallels in my mind with the life of a geisha. Emblems that arose from the comments made by the (female) textile designers were those of a quiet female, highly skilled and committed to the cultivation of those skills, but regarded more simply for the pleasure and beauty their skills provided and resigned to her requirement to trade on her skills. The process by which the textile design for sale was created was of little importance, but it should be viable and must always be 'beautiful'. One of the textile designers I spoke to said this of textile design;

"Even if it's all singing all dancing and it does amazing, has amazing, kind of, properties and it forms in all sorts of extraordinary ways, if it doesn't look good, if it doesn't look like somebody wants to buy it or wear it or sit on it or surround themselves by it, then what's the point?" (See conversation with TD6 in Appendix C)

Textiles is decorative and female. Textiles must use all its performative, and sublimely seductive characteristics in order to communicate possible applications to potential partners and patrons in a world which is hidden. Partners and patrons are courted, flattered and pleased, ritually and continuously. Textiles enigmatically seduces the senses with its artistry, in a modest and submissive way. Textiles surrenders itself, allowing the partner or patron to momentarily own it.

Textiles is a geisha.

The role of the geisha is commonly misunderstood due to the secrecy of the community itself and its unique cultural and historical significance to Japan. Comparing the textile entity to a geisha highlights the dichotomy experienced by the textile designer, and echoes the position it holds between art, craft and design. A geisha must master several artistic practices such as dance or music, and develop her ability to a high level, but the development of these skills is just an element of her entity that must ultimately express modesty and stylised traditional/historicised/cultural notions of beauty. The development of her skill is boundaried by the transaction that occurs which commissions their performance. The appearance of a geisha is highly ornate and decorated, excessively feminine, using motifs and symbols in hair and makeup to highlight this. The vast quantity of rich fabrics that their bodies are swaddled in is all part of the performance. Lesley Downer describes Koito, a geisha, as she dresses for work:

"She had become a compilation of markers of femininity – woman embodied. As she put on her make-up, her persona too began to change. She was stepping into the role, like an actor does, whereas she had been down to earth and straightforward, she became coquettish, speaking in a coy girly voice... A geisha has to be expert at choosing the right kimono for the right season and the occasion." Downer (2006:236)

Viewing Textiles-as-entity-as-geisha, based on the quote above, illustrates the acceptance of a subjugated (female) role as described by the textile designers. Some of the textile designers felt that they needed to be more skilled at promoting their work and skills as a design discipline; others felt they couldn't fight the established system and so continued to adopt the prescribed secondary role that had been developed for textile design. A geisha's persona is consumed by the textiles and the makeup it is swathed in, yet is indelibly marked by it. Textile designers are anonymous, yet have a distinct handwriting they are valued for, and their ability to produce designs that are just 'right' for the season marks their commercial success.

Once hired by a patron, a geisha's primary role is to flatter, cosset, listen, entertain and amuse them, all against an implicit backdrop of a sexual encounter: the promise of pleasure. She serves drinks, performs dances and promises the potential of pleasure. She surrenders her subjectivity to her encounter with the patron in return for his enjoyment and fulfilment. Her interior world is concealed and unspoken. Each geisha develops her own approach to this given role, which she must adapt for each patron, but the goal of providing a promise of pleasure for financial return is the overarching goal. The notion of textile design as a service industry is specifically commented upon by many of the textile designers I spoke with. They recognised that they must provide what is needed. When the brief is known in advance, they must design something that speaks of that sensation. When it is unknown, they must be able to make judgements on global aesthetic concerns and translate this into textiles, trying to capture a 'feeling'. A textile designer often must surrender their subjective aesthetic in order to serve up what is needed at that point. A textile studio must serve her patrons and encourage them to make a transaction if she is to continue in the commercial sector. It is the textile design as object that sells itself, it shares all those feminine characteristics embodied by the geisha; modesty, sensuality, decoration and beauty. Catherine Harper (Harper 2005:28) notes the erotic potency of textiles in her poetic review of the work of textile designer Reiko Sudo as she describes her own somatic, desirous reaction to her work.

If you visit a textile trade show, you are likely to see the typical scenario of a textile designer's sales pitch (– the 'daft situation' as one of the textile designers called it. See conversation with TD9 in Appendix C). The textile designer (or studio agent) is standing up behind a table in the studio's stand. Two or three people (fashion designers, interior designers, buyers, perhaps) are seated on the other side. The textile designer slowly but swiftly presents sample after sample to the seated people whose gaze is fixed steadily on the numerous beautiful and skilful designs that are moving quickly in front of their eyes. Occasionally one of the pair reaches out to touch a sample or puts it to one side for further consideration. They know what they are looking for (they think), or at least they will know when they find it. They might make a purchase or they might walk away. The seated trio comment amongst themselves; the textile designer usually maintains silence whilst they look.



Figure 16: A textile designer selling 'garment front' textile swatches at Indigo Paris 12th -14th February 2013 (2013)

In this situation, Textiles-as-entity is rendered mute. Judged solely on appearance, how it elicits sensation. This state is curiously liminal. The textile swatch/sample is a designed object, but it has not yet fulfilled its role. It seeks a transformation into something else, assimilation into something else, beyond *just* being a textile. The seated pair in the scenario above might purchase one or two samples to be developed into their fashion range. At the point of sale, most often there will be no indication of how the textile will be applied. Even if purchased or commissioned, a textile design may go no further than the boardroom table. And what of the textile samples that are dismissed, those that are never purchased? These fully worked examples of design, these 'samples', do not achieve any transformation. They are consigned to the archive, perhaps to be retrieved and reworked when the moment 'feels' right again.

Textiles is considered simple and uncomplicated not forthcoming or interested in articulating what makes it special or unique. Its muteness has impeded its relationship with other areas of design. Textiles may be specifically chosen or even commissioned but equally may never be sold or be put into production, leaving its potential unrealised. Textiles is on the shelf. Textiles needs a suitor.

Textiles is a maiden aunt.

The notion that a designer will produce a large quantity of fully worked designs for an unknown brief, only for a fraction of them to be purchased or put into production, is unique to textile design. It occurs for both textile design studios as well as designers working 'in house' for large company, and was expressed by the textile designers during our conversations. While commenting on this 'daft situation', there is a sense it also often affords them the creative autonomy that they mention. Textile designers are accepting of this status quo: perhaps it allows them the opportunity to explore a wide range of designs and processes. Some of the textile designers, particularly those who were students, said that they thought textiles as samples are overlooked and misunderstood and felt that they preferred to see their work incorporated into a product. Friedman (2003:513-514) offers a viewpoint which contextualizes this situation in design theory;

"On occasion, the intuitive practice of design produces unpredictable desirable results that can be seized retrospectively as the useable result of muddling through. Far more often, however, muddling through produces failures of two kinds. The first kind of failure involves proposals that fail in the early stages of conception or development. This is a good time for failure, since failure in conception or development eliminates potentially wasteful efforts. The second kind of failure involves completed attempts at solutions in which the designers believe that they have solved the problem even though they have not done so. This is far more costly in every sense. One of the central aspects of this kind of failure is the fact that some designers never learn that they have actually failed to meet client needs, customer needs, or end-user needs. This is because designers often end their involvement with the project before the failures arise and the clients of most failures do not return to the original designer for repair work."

Friedman's observations illustrate several things. The first to note at the outset is Friedman's derogatory tone in relation to more intuitive design practices, those aligned with the applied arts, such as textiles; they 'muddle' through producing 'failures', which certainly frames this viewpoint. Nonetheless, the second thing it highlights is the very nature of the 'daft situation'; the production of all these 'possible' design solutions is costly in terms of time and money for the designer or company. The third point it captures is the sheltered position this situation creates for the designer. For textile designers, selling designs to other designers, their position is quite unique, their relationship with the ultimate end user is distant, yet the impact of their work is crucial. What Friedman and the textile designers expose is a seemingly irrational system and uneconomical trading model.

Over the past 15 years, there has been a distinct increase in the number of textile studios showing scaled down ‘garment fronts’ rather than the traditional sample length. These garment fronts (see Figure 16) are a visualisation, a mock-up, of a garment using a number of the studio’s textile designs or embellishment ideas. Creating these garment fronts indicate explicitly how the textile designs might be used, therefore helping to sell more. This trend toward garment fronts hints that the unequal relationship discussed by the textile designers continues, textiles having to do ‘more of the work’ to sustain the relationship. In relating Textiles to the stereotypical maiden aunt, it exposes the taciturn nature of the textile design discipline, uninterested in participating in the wider discourse of design research and naïve to what it might contribute. Textiles is the quiet girl sitting in the back row. ‘Maiden aunt’ is a somewhat quaint and kinder label for a woman who could equally be called a ‘spinster’. A spinster; a female spinner of thread or a female who remains unmarried beyond the normal age, emphasises the often negative feminine gendering of textile practice. The maiden aunt/spinster metaphor also speaks of the unfulfilled textile design sample/swatch, complete and beautiful but consigned to the shelf and never put into production. These forgotten ‘virgins’ of textile design practice invite a closer investigation into the historical, social and economic factors that affected the development of trading and other business systems in commercial textile design and other related industries. In other words, how did the ‘daft situation’ described above come to be common practice, when models of commissioning, pitching or licensing for design work might be a more appropriate system?

The textile design that is put into production and applied to a garment or a sofa – how can this scenario be conceptualised? In a sense it undergoes an adverse state change from designed object to component or raw material for the purposes of being applied within a subsequent designed product. It allows a new product to come into being. The presence of the textile design may be obvious and integral to the new product.

Textiles enables other designed products to come into existence. It is a fertile ground allowing others potential to be realised. Textiles (and materials) are adaptable and giving to the cause of design. Textiles provides. Textiles offers. Textiles supports. Textiles soak up sweat, tears, blood. Textiles’ role as the ‘giver of life’ in the chain of design always requires a partner.

Textiles is a mother.

It is no new concept to find parallels with material and motherhood, they are etymologically linked. What I seek to do in coming to this metaphor is to consider how it affects our conception of the design process. Textile designs become raw materials or components for other types of designers, putting a level between textiles and wood, plastic, animal skin (all of which can be surface-designed in the manner of a textile, too, but nonetheless are natural or engineered substances.) It reminds me of a quote from William Morris, discussing decoration and ornamentation:

“...in many or most cases we have got so used to this ornament that we look upon it as if [*sic*] had grown of itself, and note it of no more than mosses on the dry sticks with which we light our fires.” Morris (1877)

This state change places textiles in the peculiar position of being a designed object that comes first, allowing others to come into being but marginalised. The feminine entity of ‘textiles’ brings other designed objects into existence by communicating potential and translating pleasure at the same time as being marginalised and ignored. The perception of textile design as a raw material, seen as natural, may actually speak of the cultural significance and sensorial power of textiles. Textiles are surrendered to the subsequent product. But what if we were to envisage this situation as a version of Ettinger’s metramorphosis, in a trans-subjective matrixial encounter, with Textiles-as-mother where each participant are partners-in-difference, their experiences changed and linked? This places textiles in a

synergistic relationship, unlike the experiences described by the textile designers.

By characterising Textiles as a feminine entity, I have incited three contentious metaphors. Metaphor, of course, is often used a key device for the marginalisation, subjugation, trivialisation of women and their lives, and feminists have both challenged and utilised metaphor as a means of emphasising their argument.

Translations

You show me the poems of some woman my age, or younger,
translated from your language
Certain words occur: enemy, oven, sorrow
enough to let me know she’s a woman of my time

obsessed

with Love, our subject: we’ve trained it like ivy to our walls
baked it like bread in our ovens
worn it like lead on our ankles
watched it through binoculars as if
it were a helicopter
bringing food to our famine
or the satellite of a hostile power

I begin to see that woman doing things:
stirring rice
ironing a skirt
typing a manuscript till dawn

trying to make a call
from a phonebooth

The phone rings endlessly
in a man’s bedroom
she hears him telling someone else
Never mind. She’ll get tired.
hears him telling her story to her sister

who becomes her enemy
and will in her own way
light her own way to sorrow
ignorant of the fact this way of grief
is shared, unnecessary
and political

In its first few lines, *Translations*, by feminist poet Adrienne Rich (1972), indicates the endurance of metaphors in shaping and limiting female lives. The line I find particularly powerful is ‘...hears him telling her story to her sister’. In the context of this thesis, it captures the importance of feminist qualitative research methodologies as well as the requirement of a feminist critique of design research. Rich’s metaphors of the female obsession with love as gardening and baking initially seem steeped in the domestic, but this is quickly countered by the inference of a military context: women’s passions held hostage. This sudden reframing of the metaphor at this point in the poem positions women not as cosy

housewives but as political prisoners.

Metaphor as “frame restructuring” is what Lakoff labels “a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system.” (Lakoff,1993:203) He goes on to emphasise that metaphors are not propositional, but rather that they are mappings, “sets of conceptual correspondences.” (Lakoff 1993:207) In the way that I have utilised metaphor, I have conceptually mapped the characteristics of textiles and femininity onto one another, identifying those ‘correspondences,’ within the context of design thinking.

In using the archetypes of geisha, spinster and mother, I am not communicating a reciprocation of these patriarchal labels but pointing to how the Textiles entity has both tacitly subscribed and been held hostage to these roles. The labels of geisha, mother and maiden aunt or spinster have some correlation with notions of the neo-paganist concept of the ‘triple goddess’ of maiden, mother and crone, as well as Jungian archetypes, however I do not want to present them in this way. The specificity of the labels chosen enact the feminist activity of ‘naming’ and in reclaiming terms previously used to denigrate women so that alternative scenarios are provided. Delving into the geisha, spinster and mother metaphors for Textiles allows a feminist reading of its position in the design hierarchy and how its character as an entity, embodied in the nexus of the textile design, the textile design process, the textile industry and the textile designer, has contributed to its taciturnity in relation to design thinking.

PLAYING WITH PARAPHERNALIA

mesh.

I like to inlay the idea of the story or a memory in a fabric. So there’s quite a narrative that runs through my work, by collecting old things and looking at imagery of old lace and things that kind of hold some kind of history. I go to car boots all the time, so I have so many sources of inspiration here buying things like these; I collect old ladies’ headscarves. ‘Cause the colours are so fantastic. I just collect images I like or collect photos, buttons for colours, I don’t know. I collect feathers, things for my own pleasure that I like. Just things that catch your eye; everyday, really simple, simple things, quite random really. Just lots of different feelings, different scraps basically. Rusty and cracked, just scraps of different things. The scraps of embroidery and things I pick up at car boots and things, they are valuable to me. The process is very spontaneous, I keep collecting. And I tend to notice that whatever’s around you sort of develops your work without you even realising it. So at that moment whatever’s present around me, I keep picking from that and putting it together.

As a team we might kind of go through, drawers and drawers and drawers of vintage things, sort of old swatches that we have to see whether there is anything there that we could kind of reuse, re-colour or develop something from, use as inspiration. Or we would go out. Maybe we’d have like half a day... so little time to do anything, but maybe we’d have half a day to go to some local kind of vintage shops to go and have a look at stuff.

Textile designers like stuff. At college, the big thing we all had in common was that we collected weird things and I thought that was just me then I realised it was a textile thing. I don’t know other people, like my friends, who are interaction designers or moving image designers or even fashion– they don’t collect things like we do.

I used to just make things, like, I just used to have lots of fabric and needles and things on my table and I just used to make objects and just play with materials and sew materials together and stitch into materials. Studying textiles was really freeing because there was no outcome so it was just about playing with materials. When I started my MA they pulled me apart completely. It was very painful. So I started playing with material, I had been thinking too much before. I’m sort of fascinated by characteristics of materials within textiles and normally what I do is take a material, take it apart, like a kid, and then find my own way of putting it back together again. I’m kind of just looking at what I can do with them. It’s all very ‘Blue Peter’. The nice thing about fabric, is you can keep doing things to it. I do also just love pattern which is odd because I don’t wear any pattern or really have any, or surround myself with pattern in my home. But there’s something about creating it that I really love. It was literally in my final A level year when I started textiles when I just loved it. I can’t really, I can’t describe it; nothing has kind of had that effect on me before or since. And I don’t really know how I chose textiles but that was the area that I went into and then really enjoyed it. I think it was a lot of the, just constructing, playing with little things, making stuff, and colour and loads of different materials. Just experimenting that I really liked. So I think it is all about the playing with materials and wanting to use different materials and work with different techniques and having lots of little things on the go, I think.

I draw on all sorts of influences; theatre, film, you name it; paintings, ceramics, sculpture, nature; the senses and music. I take a lot of pictures and then try to sort of play with it, a bit like a pick and mix. Simply, whatever I did in my end process was something that I pulled together as a textile; as a textile design as such, but to me it was a series of forms which fitted together or flowed to make a rhythmic pattern over a surface which would then appear as if it was going to be part of a continuum. My work relates to how I’m feeling at that moment in time and if it feels like it’s an important shape even if it’s just like, you know, a crappy little heart or something... it’s kind of more how I’m feeling and how the shape relates to my mindset at that time.

I’m a bit childish. As soon I know something’s supposed to be a trend I kind of lose interest a little bit or I feel like I’m not really... or I haven’t got much ownership over my work so I just sort of follow my own gut instinct. I’m just the kind of person that works so much, likes doing lots of different things, I’m very just kind get straight into it and not kind of take a step back and reflect on what I’m doing.

I think all textile designers are very playful. When you look at a textile designers looking at a product or a garment, we’re very childlike. There is an understanding of materiality and we all tend to be extremely tactile, so very often it’s not so much a material but the potential of that material that makes us excited. That wonderful thing about warp and weft crossing and creating that third colour. That’s what excites me! And if we like something it’s not only visual. We put a finger into it! And we all get off on that little mark, we’re really happy if we’ve done that nice mark, we’ll go to bed really happy.

For me, a lot of the attraction to textiles, working with textiles, is that you’re kind of making things for yourself. It does seem very self-indulgent that you do stuff and you don’t really know what it’s for.

I'm not sure if I'm too worried about what other people think but I have to feel in tune with it. I never feel I have to accommodate something that is not of my liking. I just need to find it fulfilling.

I guess when you're actually designing for a company, the biggest thing is you stop being a designer for yourself. So what you actually create no longer really is your own. Although it continues to be very personal there's a kind of, a little bit of a cut-off, I suppose and you have to be prepared to kind of do things you may not choose to do necessarily.

I'm feeling quite sad after that – 'cause I'm not making any more.

No, I'm fine with it. I shall go back to it at some point, but –

When talking with the textile designers, and from visiting their studios and workspaces, the notion of collecting 'stuff' for the purposes of inspiration and as objects to inspire through colour, material and form arose strongly. Kimbell (2012) describes how most designers are 'entangled' with the objects they use and create, and explains how designers 'reconfigure the socio-material world' in different ways.

The textile designers commonly used the word 'collecting' to describe this activity of accumulation, but philosophical explorations of collecting such as Baudrillard's (1968) pose further questions about the nature of this type of activity and its place within the context of designing.

Firstly, I wish to address the type of objects the textile designers 'collect'; buttons, old headscarves, bags, stuffed animals, feathers, scraps, car booty. These are everyday objects, and it appears that the criteria for inclusion into a textile designer's collection are hugely broad. These textile designers do not talk of collecting multiple versions of a particular item (although from visiting them I could see that some of them did possess collections of that kind) these 'collections' were described as random, or selected because of their colouration. These objects are not carefully or proudly conserved, classified or displayed, they are items of use, of purpose. They are things, stuff, trappings, bits and pieces, accoutrements, paraphernalia. I like the term paraphernalia most of all in describing the nature of these 'collected' items, because it at once gives an explanation of the collective worth of these disparate items and provides an understanding of them as items of use.

Steven Connor (2011:11) explains the etymology of the word 'paraphernalia' as a woman's personal property exempt from the marriage dowry, typically clothing and jewellery, and as such is bestowed a sense of triviality, but is simultaneously used to denote equipment and apparatus in certain professions. He describes how paraphernalia constitutes the items and equipment one might need for a specific occupation. The historical, gendered definition of the term is important in my application of 'paraphernalia' within the occupational process of designing textiles. In Connor's exploration of the term, paraphernalia is at once unnecessary and indispensable. So, by calling the items gathered by the textile designers 'paraphernalia', we can begin to understand their complex nature and roles: often decorative and assumed to be of no exchange value (explained by their exclusion from the dowry) but yet recognised by law as important personal property. This statement does beg a delving into the purpose and value of decoration, but for now, I will refrain. Although it is interesting to note that Mauss explains the culture of masculine and feminine property in the matriarchal, hierarchical social structure in Polynesia, in which tonga is considered feminine property and as such represents all possessions that actually confer value. These are largely decorative, magical or religious items including emblems, charms, mats and sacred idols. (Mauss 1925/1950).

These items can be legitimately recognised as the necessary equipment for a textile designer to carry out her occupation and professional activities. However, the gendered slant of the word will always carry with it this idea of excessive equipment, almost as if too much 'stuff' has been packed, insinuating that the task at hand is unknown and therefore the person must equip themselves with a variety of things 'just in case' – *Aha – I have just the thing!* – that the person is clueless about what might arise in the

situation or activity they must engage in. For me this notion very neatly helps to explain the absolute necessity of these items to textile designers as they design. The historically female-gendered definition of the term helps to explain why these items aren't given a level of value and recognised purpose in design research literature.

After identifying these items as paraphernalia, can we continue to see the gathering of these items as an act of 'collecting'? Baudrillard describes collected items as 'loved objects' (Baudrillard 1968:48), whereas Connor talks of 'magical things' that seem to say 'play with me: try to make out what I might be good for'. Connor's 'magical things', or paraphernalia, are very much everyday items, and this type of item is not excluded by Baudrillard from his concept of 'loved objects'. Also, Baudrillard defines collecting as "qualitative in its essence and quantitative in its practice", and suggests that collecting centres on both the feeling of possession and on the activities of "searching, ordering, playing and assembling." (Baudrillard 1968:50)

I find the textiles designers' 'collecting' and 'collections' do not sit easily within Baudrillard's concept of collecting. Baudrillard's version involves the type of avid fanatic who creates an "intimate series" with which they experience "serial intimacy". The textile designer's definition of collecting does seem more like an accumulation or a gathering of equipment and materials, principally because the aim of gathering these objects is purposeful.

For me a textile designer's paraphernalia is gathered with the rationale of providing for and nourishing an ongoing activity. Now, I don't wish here to make any facile connections to the archetypal pre-historic female gatherer, but considering this type of collecting as some form of 'foraging' does help to explain its nature. The act of foraging originates from a need to deal with immediate requirements but also to cater for future needs and minimize the potential for deprivation. It connects with the notion of purposeful accumulation and hoarding. Foraging is adaptive. It takes place in rainforests and rubbish dumps, and requires an understanding of the given environment, planning and timing, and often great skill, tenacity and courage. Foragers take and use only what they need from what is available in the act of satisfying essential needs. Foraging can be a singular or collective activity. Foraged items are often not enough in themselves but require some level of processing in order to make them useful: disassembly, and/or re-assembly in combination with other items (like cooking).

The difficulty in extrapolating some definition of the act of gathering stuff for the purpose of textile design is that it seems to sit somewhere between Baudrillard's notion of collecting and that of foraging. Baudrillard makes the distinction between collecting and accumulating, saying that accumulation is an inferior stage of collecting and that collecting only starts when the collector discerns and discriminates between objects, in recognition of the objects' cultural meaning (Baudrillard 1968:58). He also says that at some point a collection is called upon to take part in some form of exigency whereby it exerts its meaning, its message. Baudrillard asks "...can man ever use objects to set up a language that is more than a discourse addressed to himself?" (Baudrillard 1968:60)

It is this last question that for me explains the connection between collecting and foraging through the notion of paraphernalia. Collecting is a personal activity, and yet collections may hold other types and levels of meaning and value in a wider discourse and context. Foraged objects are by definition essential items with clear meaning and value. The term paraphernalia allows objects to inhabit both of these scenarios. The exigency Baudrillard speaks of could be seen as the assemblage, processing or use of collected or foraged paraphernalia within the textile design process.

The textile designers described how they play with materials, objects, paraphernalia in the act of designing. Playing is a well-known and well-discussed aspect of creativity and has consequently been

subsumed into the design thinking discourse. Tim Brown, CEO of IDEO, consistently promotes the importance of playfulness to encourage innovation in his company. I wish to go beyond the common understanding of play to explore deeper definitions and then reconnect this with the ideas of gathering paraphernalia for textile design.

Johan Huizinga's 1938 (translated 1949) book *Homo Ludens* is the classic study of the play instinct and Huizinga's perceptions and definitions of play go some way in developing alternative understandings of playing as designing. Huizinga characterizes play as an activity which "...lies outside the reasonableness of practical life; has nothing to do with necessity or utility, duty or truth" (Huizinga 1949:158), and yet it takes place within set boundaries and rules, intensely and utterly absorbing the player. (Huizinga 1949:32)

In 2008, I created a piece of work whose aim was to express the playful, interconnectivity of my creative thinking and my research process (See Figure 17). It references the House of Cards, a game designed for children by the Eames Office in 1952. The game is constituted of a number of slotted cards, each featuring imagery "from the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms" (Eames Gallery n.d.) The player can build a range of different structures by interlocking the cards, as well as responding to the visual imagery on each card.



Figure 17: *House of cards*. Exhibited at Royal College of Art Fashion and Textiles Work in Progress show (2008)

This combination of the visual and dimensional through play helps to visualize and make tangible the connection-making that is so much a part of the design thinking. The cards can be repositioned, forming different relationships and utilizing varying amounts of space. Often, the player will choose their favourite card first and subsequently that card goes on to become the foundation for the burgeoning structure.

In my version of the House of Cards, each card featured visual material that had been pivotal at different stages within my research process so far. The house of cards was intentionally presented on a trestle table not unlike those used in a design studio or workshop. It served as a method for me to draw together, in a visual way, the different conceptual strands I had followed, and also for me to visualize the various types

and areas of knowledge I had covered whilst researching flock technology. The house of cards displays the heuristics of my research process in a simple, visual way and is representative of the methodological bricolage approach I am utilising. What are the benefits of using a game, something you play with, as a metaphor for cognitive structures formed during the process of design research and thinking? My house of cards, this interconnected matrix, stands as a three-dimensional model of my experience of matrixial thinking.

It is fragile, relies on interaction, and requires the player to think in three dimensions. The way the printed cards interlock and splice enmeshes the concepts in whichever way the player or viewer chooses. Presenting my own version of this game allows others to literally play with my ideas, to build new structures from them and to make alternative meaning from them. By producing this model, I referred to my own experience of play in design and research and reflected this opportunity and encouraged it in others. The pleasure and success of building a house of cards is something that you can experience over and over again, although differently each time. Build it up, knock it down, build it up, knock it down.

"The satisfaction of gaining intellectual control over the external world is linked to a satisfaction of gaining control over ourselves. This urge towards this dual satisfaction is persistent; yet it operates by phases of self-destruction. This endeavour must occasionally operate by demolishing a hitherto accepted structure, or parts of it, in order to establish an even more rigorous and comprehensive one in its place." (Polanyi 1958:196)

In the same sense that Huizinga describes play as something beyond necessity, Michael Polanyi, in his seminal text *Personal Knowledge* (1958), talks about 'bursting the bounds of disciplined thought' (Polanyi 1958: 196) and relates this to seeking excitement through playfulness. He mentions a 'craving for mental dissatisfaction' (Polanyi 1958: 196) as a component of creativity, correlating with Huizinga's notion of tension in play. "Baby reaching for a toy... to achieve something difficult, to end a tension" (Huizinga 1949:29) Combining Polanyi's explanation of the compulsion towards playing for creative purposes and Huizinga's definition of play as characteristically voluntary and free, outside of and disinterested in ordinary life but simultaneously and necessarily limited and orderly (Huizinga 1949:26-29), conjures up an image of an emotive, tacit, absorbing yet episodic activity that closely resembles the act of designing.

In the process of design, designers routinely manage an internal dialogue between their inner instinctual playfulness (the affective) and their disciplined thoughts; their understanding of the context for design encompassing technical, economic and other boundaries (the cognitive) is all driven by the conative.

The quote above connects Polanyi's work with Schumpeter's theory of creative destruction. In his 1942 book *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, economist Joseph Schumpeter famously described the phenomenon of 'the perennial gale of creative destruction' to define the dynamics of industrial change and the transformation that often follows innovation. He depicts capitalism as an evolutionary and organic process that continuously reforms its own structure, "...incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one". (Schumpeter 1942:83) He also describes the agents of this creative destruction in the original text as '*Unternehmergeist*' which refers to 'fiery souls' or 'spirits'. Creative destruction is a useful concept when exploring design thinking, as it places intellectual passions into a social, economic and industrial context, and for this study it gives me the opportunity to explore textiles as design with some separation of textile as craft. It describes the creative individual (as agent of capitalism) as one who craves newness and achieves it through destructive behaviour. It could be seen to reinforce theories of the unsystematic and opportunistic nature of the design process.

Baudrillard makes the connection between playing and collecting, describing how for children collecting is like a passionate game, a way of mastering the world, of arranging, classifying and manipulating. (Baudrillard 1968:48) Huizinga expands this notion of mastery by defining the function of play in two related ways. He describes it as a contest for something or a representation of something. “These two functions can unite in such a way that the game ‘represents’ a contest, or else becomes a contest for the best representation of something.” (Huizinga 1949:32)

If play is an essential aspect of creative design thinking, Huizinga’s unified definition of play allows the existence of two versions of the design process. One of these is playing as contest, representative of the masculine transactional paradigm oriented towards design as solving problems; a second version focuses on representing, understanding and communicating in the most effective way: this would represent a feminine relational concept. Both design ‘contests’ are judged internally and externally to the designer, but in the first design contest the emphasis is on internal judgement. *I feel that this design provides the best solution to the problem, I will offer this idea to the client.* The second design contest places more emphasis on external judgement. *All these designs could provide what is required. The client can select which of these designs works best for their needs.* This second scenario is more closely aligned with the textile design process. Textiles seek to represent narratives, memories, emotion. Huizinga describes a child using representation as play:

“The child is making an image of something different, something more beautiful, or more sublime, or more dangerous than what he usually is...His representation is not so much a sham-reality as a realization in appearance: ‘imagination’ in the original sense of the word.” (Huizinga 1949:32-33)

I feel this connects to Polanyi’s description of ‘dwelling in and breaking out’ as a means of working with intellectual passions (Polanyi 1958:196) as well as the notion of play as a contest of representation. There are two aspects of this relationship which, in this study, are significant: the cognitive processes that compel a designer to design and subsequently their approach to, and individual experience of, their design process.

It is established that there are three mental states: the cognitive, affective and conative (Huitt 1999, Gerdes & Stromwall 2008, Heylighen, Cavallin & Bianchin 2009). The conative can be described as volitional, the act of exercising will or desire. The etymology of conation is from the Latin conari (to try) (Gerdes & Stromwall 2008). In regard to the design process, this concept appears as a useful addition to our understanding of the goal of design, as the will or desire to try or attempt a transformation. Gerdes and Stromwall (2008) provides a history of the development of the conative, including the writings of William McDougall, who “categorized the mind’s components as cognition (a knowing, a thing), affective sensation (feeling something about that thing), and conation (a striving towards or away from the object).” (Gerdes & Stromwall 2008:235) Lundholm (1934 cited in Gerdes & Stromwall 2008) pointed out that a conative process is best understood as one that impels action (drives it from within) while cognition and other outside forces compel action (drive it from external force or action).

Academic research into the conative tends to be discussed or applied in specific academic fields, such as child development and social work. Despite this, some academics have sought to highlight the importance of the ‘tripartite’ mind, drawing attention to the need to understand how the cognitive, affective and conative integrate and function, although academics and neuropsychologists have not yet been able to provide a sufficient definition of the conative, or a model for the integrated tri-functioning mind they see as vital to human behaviour.

Design thinking cannot be described as solely cognitive but rather as an activity that in varying degrees or phases requires all three mental states. Heylighen, Cavallin and Bianchin (2009) explain that the cognitive and conative can be seen as asymmetrical: the cognitive state aims at truth in order to fulfil beliefs, whilst the conative state aims to satisfy desire or will.

Heylighen, Cavallin and Bianchin (2009:97) include a useful analogy that explains the phenomenon particularly well;

“If you believe that tomorrow will be a rainy day, you are ready to abandon the belief in case it turns out to be sunny. However, if you desire that tomorrow will be rainy, you are not necessarily ready to abandon the desire in case it turns out to be sunny: you might, but you are not irrational if you do not.”

The conative is a search for a belief and the cognitive a search for truth. When considered in this way it would be easy to conclude that designing is heavily conative: as we survey and analyse existing objects, we imagine something new and set about making it, all the while involved in a chaotic and looping process of reflecting and perfecting. The designer believes there is an alternative and strives to bring about that change. This helps to understand the imperative of designers as well as describing the nature or experience of the design process as a desirous striving, not easily sated. Conative thought provides an explanation for the motivation, the attempt, but cognition and affection (personal feeling and emotion) are applied throughout the design process and themselves give some context for the rational and objective thinking (i.e. cost implications, choice of fabrication, suitability for customer or client) as well as those more connected to the subjective (i.e. haptic, aesthetic and intuitive choices) undertaken during the design process. At all times the three mental states are considered to be integrated and functioning. Thus the notion of the tripartite brain provides us with some broader, scientific (although as yet undefined) context for understanding how tacit knowledge and creativity engage during the design process towards the creation of designed objects.

One of the experiential elements of the design process that designers often relate to is the so-called ‘creative leap’. It is often compared to the ‘eureka moment’: an unexplained sensation bestowed as a reward for grappling with ideas. Dorst & Cross (2001) investigate creativity in the design process using quantitative research methods in the attempt to understand what is described as the ‘creative leap’. They conclude by suggesting ‘bridge building’ as an alternative label for the leap. The analogy of ‘bridge building’ transforms the creative experience into an intentional and slower negotiated activity, perhaps involving a group of differently skilled people. However, in *Designerly Ways of Knowing* (2007), Cross describes it in a less structured way: “throwing a bridge across the chasm between problem and solution.” (Cross 2007:78), an action more akin to building a rope bridge:

“Find a way to get your two main ropes over to the other side of the crossing. You can make a lasso and throw them across. Just make sure they catch on something. You will need to cross over the rope hand-over-hand. Go over to the other side. Secure each of the main ropes to the main supports on that side. Check to make sure all the ropes are firmly in place before beginning to lay the roadway of your rope bridge.... Rope Bridges can be a little unstable. Double-check the strength of all ropes. Be careful when crossing. Do not look down. Concentrate on maintaining your balance. Double-check the strength of all ropes.” (Adler n.d.)

The instructions given above identify the ‘creative leap’ as an opportunistic event that involves risk and complexity. Building a rope bridge requires tacit knowledge, embodied in intuition and a good aim, so that the ‘ropes’ catch onto something on the other side. The initial ‘throw’ represents the conative aspects of the design process: once the first effort has been exerted it becomes an iterative process – the structure must be firmed up; the bridge-builder has to keep going over to each side to check strength.

All the while a rope bridge remains a temporary structure, prone to instability that makes the act of traversing it thrilling.

“I have crossed a gap, the heuristic gap which lies between problem and discovery.....We have to cross the logical gap between a problem and its solution by relying on the unspecifiable impulse of our heuristic passion, and must undergo as we do so a change of our intellectual personality. Like all ventures in which we comprehensively dispose of ourselves, such an intentional change of our personality requires a passionate motive to accomplish it. Originality must be passionate.” (Polanyi 1958: 143)

The propulsion across a gap, as part of the bridge-building analogy for the creative leap, can be related to the concept of ‘intellectual passion’ as described by Polanyi. Intellectual passion provide an idea of the energy that propels designers across the heuristic gap described above. It is the personal passion to attain personal (tacit) knowledge towards intellectual beauty, whilst taking the risk that this passion may be misguided. Stefania Ruzsits Jha (2002:130) clarifies Polanyi’s intentions thus: “Intellectual beauty is both that which is found by traversing the heuristic gap and the conative act.”

The creation of a more beautiful and enhanced representation of aspects of life and the world is the key aim of textile design. To create a visual and/or tactile representation of, say, a hyper-real floral display, that rhythmically repeats unlimitedly, allowing the viewer and wearer to be consumed, is one of the pleasures of designing and wearing a printed fabric. In the designer it exercises the tripartite cognitive function discussed earlier. The sense of enhancing an effect, experience or memory through cloth was often mentioned by the textile designers I spoke with, and in my own textile practice, the creation of a sensorial experience was the aim.

Huizinga uses the term ‘methetic’ in contrast to the mimetic as he describes the sacred, ritualistic nature of playing (Huizinga 1949:34). In considering methexis in play, those participating are a fundamental aspect of the playing, and the object of play is situated in a larger context or entity, which is collectively shared. The notion of methexis underlines play (and therefore design thinking) as inter- and trans-subjective, as described in matrixial, relational knowledge-making. Huizinga uses the metaphor of woven cloth to describe the interconnectedness of particular aspects of play:

“In nearly all the higher forms of play the elements of repetition and alternation (as in the refrain), are like the warp and woof of a fabric.” (Huizinga 1949:10)

Huizinga also suggests the social aspect of play, saying that it “...promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means.” “This is for us, not for the ‘others’. What the ‘others’ do ‘outside’ is no concern of ours at the moment.....We are different and we do things differently.” (Huizinga 1949:12)

Playing as an enhanced, methetic representation of ordinary life, made up of elements of repetition and alternation, casts it, as Huizinga describes, as a form of poetics. He says that poiesis is a function of play which exists “in the region of dream, enchantment, ecstasy, laughter.” (Huizinga 1949:141) This ancient Greek term, deriving from the verb ‘to make’, is the etymological foundation of ‘poetry’ (Oxford English Dictionary, Harper 2013). Ettinger uses the term ‘co-poiesis’ to describe the trans-subjective matrixial encounter. By suggesting that textile design resembles a matrixial encounter, and therefore co-poiesis – a ‘making-in-partnership’ (with the viewer or user) – in the secretive, poetic realm of pleasure that Huizinga describes both permits a recognition of the tacit relational knowledge and the subjective pleasure involved in the process of textile design.

However textile designers see playfulness as a key characteristic of their design activity, Huizinga flatly refuted the notion of play in the context of the plastic arts, in contrast to music and poetry, which require performance. He grants that although the point of conceiving of a piece of art or design may feel free, the act of making it renders no scope for play.

“The man who is commissioned to make something is faced with a serious and responsible task: any idea of play is out of place...he has to make a vessel, a garment, an image, each of which may have to correspond to the idea it renders symbolically or in imitation.” (Huizinga 1949:191).

It appears that Huizinga here is referring only to the act of making to order, almost as manufacturing, and the activity of playful making within a subjective design process is not considered. He does later accept that designing or making art (specifically show-pieces or masterpieces) does involve the element of contest, as discussed earlier. He does this by outlining a semantic link between ritual, art and play in the ancient Greek word *agalma*. Its primary meaning derives from the word *agallein*, ‘to adorn’ or ‘to delight in’, and refers to an ornament, show-piece, a precious object (Huizinga 1949:192). He later says that a ‘play sense’ is involved in producing all forms of decoration; “where the mind and hand move most freely.” (Huizinga 1949:227), referring to the innate urge to doodle and decorate a surface, but still minimises the notion of play as a means to explain this activity.

However by using the term *agalma* he puts emphasis on the use of decorative items for the purpose of play, even suggesting that these items are imbued with magical power and symbolic value. This returns me to Connor’s explanation of paraphernalia as magical objects. The headscarves, the buttons, the old photographs, the scraps of embroidery gathered by textile designers; these can be considered the *agalma*, the magical objects, the paraphernalia of textile design as play.

The connection between poiesis as making and poetry is one that Huizinga clearly understands. “In fact, the definition we have just given to play might serve as a definition of poetry. The rhythmical or symmetrical arrangement of language, the hitting of the mark by rhyme or assonance, the deliberate disguising of the sense, the artificial and artful construction of phrases – all might be so many utterances of the play spirit.... The affinity between poetry and play is not external only; it is also apparent in the structure of the creative imagination itself. In the turning of a poetic phrase, the development of a motif, the expression of a mood, there is always a play-element at work...the writer’s aim, conscious or unconscious, is to create a tension that will ‘enchant’ the reader and hold him spellbound.” (Huizinga 1949:154 – 155)

Reading this excerpt as a textile designer, I can relate to so many of the activities he mentions as hallmarks of poetry, as do the textile designers when they talk of the narratives and memories inlaid in their work. The correlation between textiles, writing and making (Mitchell 1997) and the notion of textile design as a form of translating/transforming that I establish in this thesis also supports this.

In my reading of *Homo Ludens*, the only aspect of textile design that disavows a definition of play is that it is functional, and the act of designing and making textiles exists in an industrial and/or commercial sphere, meaning that it does not operate in a truly free sphere of play. However, Huizinga himself says that play must always come to an end and becomes interrupted by ordinary life.

“The play-mood is labile in its very nature. At any moment ‘ordinary life’ may reassert its rights either by an impact from without, which interrupts the game, or by an offence against the rules, or else from within, by a collapse of the play spirit, a sobering, a disenchantment.” (Huizinga 1949:21)

Could this interruption of ordinary life in the context of play in design not take the form of a deadline, a technical issue, a bad decision or budgetary requirements?

What I wish to suggest here is that the purpose of the act of foraging/collecting paraphernalia for a textile designer is in preparation for play: to gather magical objects to nourish and be ‘used up’ in play as a methectic, representational contestable act that can be incited at any time by the designer themselves, or a given brief or commission and stopped any time by external factors.

The ideas developed here through Baudrillard, Huizinga, Ettinger and Polanyi propose that textile design could be an activity in which the designer purposefully gathers and absorbedly plays with magical objects or paraphernalia in the pursuit of pleasure, the expression of a mood, the representation of beauty or to end a tension, and is erotic, particularly when coupled with the notion of relationality and co-poiesis. No wonder we have kept quiet about it.

On the other hand, the more common understanding and use of the concepts of ‘paraphernalia’ and ‘playing’ in one fell swoop trivialise them by rendering them feminine and childish, particularly when used in the context of the already maligned textile design.

PROBLEMS AND PLEASURES

mesh.

I wanted to just use textiles to translate things like optical effects, like we have on paper or paintings, and I wanted to do it in textile. I never really went in the direction of trying to find solutions for anything or solving a problem. Textiles draws on questions rather than trying to answer problems. Following the gaps rather than a strategic line, I guess. But you are having to respond to a brief, as open as the brief may be. I wouldn't say that I solve a problem, only my own problems. I wish in a way we did... I wish problem-solving was more relevant in textile design. It's intriguing and I love the idea that we're capable of solving problems, even now, while technology is so advanced we're still finding problems to solve, but I don't think in textiles it's the same kind of thing, but I don't know who for. I have really no idea...

I suppose in, like, product design you're thinking about a need for something which isn't mean, I suppose right now we're thinking much more about kind of the future and things like sustainability obviously is, you know, kind of huge, and... finding ways of... harnessing energy or solar energy through textiles... I think potentially the kind of next five to ten years could be incredibly important for the textiles because of the all those possibilities. Does that answer the question – no?

So I guess in my situation the problem for me is that I like certain materials and they act in a certain way and everyone expects them to act in a certain way – how can I challenge that and make it act in a completely different way? I've got my own problem in my own mind with this material. I guess it's searching for a problem rather than encountering an actual problem. I guess a lot of the attraction to textiles, working for textiles, is that you're kind of making things for yourself.

My old tutor was very 'everything is textiles' - it's the whole question of what is textiles? Because I'm stitching on wood that's a textiles process and therefore it doesn't matter that it's on wood, it's seen as textiles but laser cutting into metal, that's not seen as textiles to some people because it's not a traditional textiles technique. I can see anything as textiles..

I think textile designers tend to see things much more from the aesthetic and what it looks like and maybe not beyond that. I think that maybe that's where some of my work originates from the RCA was because I wanted to look at textiles in a completely different form and by looking at it in a different form and a different function it can be applied to, you know, big huge structures, looking at it on a completely different scale, as well. And how that could potentially kind of add to an environment or solve an issue of some sort that ... yeah, I think... but I think that maybe more kind of studio-based designers would probably never see themselves as that, as there just to solve particular problems through their design, I don't know.

There are no ten steps that get you from one position to the other. Because you think of design, okay somebody's asked me to make a blanket for a baby's cot and it has to be five... fifty centimetres wide by... and it has to have some... that's... okay, that's the pragmatic design. Sometimes when I'm weaving I do have a certain... I do have an image of somebody that I could see wearing it. Somebody I might know, or somebody hypothetical... but I'm not doing it specifically for them.

We think about colour and pattern from the beginning but everybody else doesn't. It's something they stick on afterwards and it shouldn't be that, it should be an integrated... you know, if you go back to tribal ways of adorning themselves they built their buildings in a pattern and it was all part of the same thing. When you think about, you know, the notion of pattern and of decoration, also surface texture if you're thinking about weave and knit, that's part of the pleasure, isn't it, the sensorial kind of concept... to build into a chair, to clothing or whatever. My understanding of textile design it's not just cloth, the surface, and it can be graphic, it can be textural, you can concentrate on the actual engineering behind it but to me it's always quite important that the outcome (I'm going to say beautiful and it might not be the right word) but the article has to be visually appealing. I just feel that within the process you're not thinking that much about beauty, necessarily. But if it doesn't emerge at the end, something has gone wrong. I mean, the thing is that in the end, the textile designer, designer being the operative word, brings, you know... the aesthetic that they're kind of developing is so, so important, you know. Even if it's all-singing, all-dancing and it does amazing, has amazing, kind of, properties and it forms in all sorts of extraordinary ways, if it doesn't look good, if it doesn't look like somebody wants to buy it or wear it or sit on it or surround themselves by it then what's the point?

I need to find it fulfilling, I'm not sure if I'm too worried about what other people think but I have to feel in tune with it. I want to focus on the actual technique and the piece and what that is, rather than, like, what's it going to go into. It does seem very self-indulgent that you do stuff and you don't really know what it's for. It's not necessarily a product or it's not functional in the sense that you can do things with it – you can put it on the wall but... I don't know. It's slightly different in textiles, you see, we're not given a brief. It's the only industry, in design, where we're actually not given a brief by a customer and we interpret that brief. So yes, of course we're thinking differently. We must be approaching things differently because we're not coming

at this from an angle of which new product do we need to develop, it's more about possibilities – it's more open-ended, isn't it, starting with textiles. Most industries, you know, if it's graphics you're told what they want you to design for, or an architect you want a building for, or a ceramicist, you want a set of china for. But as textile designers in the textile industry in the way it's working now is the most daft situation – you do the stuff in the way that a fine artist does stuff, and then you go out and you say: "What do you think – do you want to buy it? Is it right for you or is it not?" If something's not right then it tends to be just discarded and we normally would design more than we need. I'd say probably almost at least double what we need.

So it's a very bizarre situation...although I think I would probably never have pursued the notion of designing on paper very far had it not been for the extension of the idea into fabric and then the things that you could do having done that. It made you feel like you were a whole rather than just a part which then whatever you were producing went out into this industry and then you never saw it again, or maybe you did, but rarely. Although, I think I'd find it very, very difficult to just have a lovely, beautiful pile of fabrics - I would need to see what they looked like – resolved. It's a sad thing about textiles; the general public don't have the imagination to understand it without the product. If you just have flat fabrics people can so easily just walk past it or just ignore it just because people don't understand what it's for. By definition textiles needs something else. I think you just need to find a way to... find either the people or, yeah, I think you need to find the people who can look at your idea and find a use for it. I don't think that we need to necessarily know what to do.

So whether that means working with somebody else – either working with a, you know, someone in product design or in fashion, or just, you know, trying to sort of do that bit myself. It can be difficult though, often designers of clothing have their own ideas as to what fabrics they want to use and I very much had my own ideas as to what prints I wanted to put onto fabrics and the colours. Although, I'm not very good at applying my ideas to a useable thing.

I do think textiles is so fabulous. To be able to make things that are so beautiful. I mean art that you are wearing, or you are looking at as your curtains or whatever. So you can often, say, for me in fashion, somebody can give me a kimono shape or an A-line dress or something really, really bog standard, normal pattern and your job is to make that into something that is fantastic and worth a fortune. Finding new ways of doing things. You have to keep giving yourself problems to find ways to move it on. And I think it's magic that you can sit there for a couple of hours and do something and it becomes worth something. It's changed totally.

It's funny, isn't it, because I think in the high-street scenario in a sense you're a problem solver in that you've got a kind of gap to fill. 'Okay we need a print for this story so you produce to order and I think that's wrong. That kind of goes against my grain in that sense, in that you're just filling in a box. Paint by numbers. Everything has to be fast, but look expensive. In that scenario, it's so completely different to that in other disciplines but in that high-street setting I think it's like that. At least, I suppose you're getting to see it develop from concept through to finished thing; you're getting the kind of feedback from the sales and you're kind of seeing the bigger picture. I think that's what textiles designers are able to... I don't know, I think it's interesting because they're... they're very often creating their own brief aren't they and they're kind of setting out the series of question or problems for themselves, instead of that being imposed on them. I don't know, it's... it's a slightly different kind of way of approaching it. I think the other areas are more about problem-solving than we are. We just make things a bit more visual and you can kind of really make a statement with it or it can be hardly noticeable. I quite like working out different drops and that kind of thing. Yeah and I guess it's a slight challenge sometimes to kind of fit things together as a repeat and so I do quite enjoy that process. Definitely on some level it solves problems, even if the problem is just to make something superficially nicer that's solving it in itself. I think this engaging with the person that's seeing it is important. But I definitely think they can be kind of mood-enhancing as well, a beautiful print can kind of change the way you feel so I suppose that's why we have so much kind of print in our homes, yeah, it can give you almost a feel good factor, I suppose.

But the whole making of beautiful fabrics isn't a fluffy thing. It's really not. I think we're more about discovery and innovation – not that the other areas aren't – but I think we're more about that and more about coming up with new... And it's that that we've got to sell. Often my process, it's not structured or pretty-looking, it's not a pretty sketch book, it's very messy and it's... you get a product at the end of it but the process is lost while doing it. It doesn't matter.

I wouldn't have thought of dripping resin down a silk blouse had that fashion designer not wanted raindrops. But there was no way she would have thought of doing that, she was thinking of beading, because that's her knowledge. So that's a good example of textile design thinking. But there's been hundreds. An engineer or a scientist will, kind of, reflect a lot on their work and spend a lot of time, kind of, looking and thinking about things before doing things. Because I'm very much a doer; very practical and hands-on, which comes from my creative side, I kind of, use design-speak and transfer the engineering knowledge, to maybe people who were more likely to use it, as in maybe areas in the textile industry and that will go right down to people who are actually designing the products. When people are making, say, a printing ink that will change colour on a hospital spot when someone's ill, or their temperature goes up or something. I can't help but think, well what is that to us, is that spot or stripe, where is our role in that? And so that whole research side,

I find it on ground that's not terribly solid. When people say, "This is what I'm researching, these inks that will do this." I want to say, "Well surely that's the scientist who's doing that?" We are the person who's just going to decide whether it's spots or stripes. All of sudden it's interesting because it's made out of something amazing but the print is horrible and that's what we're here for. Which is bizarre, and it doesn't help the fluffy case at all. So it is a conundrum, really. In a way, textiles don't need to be designed. Because textiles... it's a default. And organising that default is something we are doing here, yes.

I think what's happening now is that in a way I think we are starting to... rather than just producing stuff, which I think, you know, can happen in textiles, has happened in textiles, I think there is much more reasoning and consideration in there and I think you know, if that's problem-solving then I think there is more of that now and it's important to have much more awareness of context and how the work is going to be used, how the textile is going to be used, what's is for: In a kind of really broad, broad way so that it challenges the scale of it, the colour of it, the texture of it, you know, and it kind of enables the designer to be more ambitious about what it is that they're doing. Because the danger is that if you don't think about the problem-solving bit, the ultimate kind of goal, then you know just kind of produce things and it doesn't get pushed and pulled and challenged in ways that it is challenged if you're thinking about applying it to the side of the building or you know or applying it to soft furnishings or all those different kind of diverse possibilities, so... I suppose the textile designer is setting those problems for themselves, it's not like somebody's coming along and saying: okay design a new kettle that does has these kind of... fits these functions. So yes, so it is still a very kind of broad thing but they are setting themselves some challenges I think, more than problems, maybe. Maybe it's not so much about kind of problem-solving but it's about you know challenging and by putting it in those different contexts it kind of challenges what the textile is and where it goes and how it lives on and doesn't kind of end up as a little swatch in a portfolio. Another bit of stuff.

Almost perfectly described by the textile designers is the complexity of the notion of the design problem. They contradict themselves in saying that textile design is not about solving problems, and yet they wish it was more important. They say that they create problems for themselves, for their own satisfaction, and don't consider the application of their work – and yet they worry about their textile samples remaining 'unresolved'. When I spoke with the textile designers, it was very clear that they hadn't really given much thought to the contextualization of the activity of designing textiles, aside from creating something visually beautiful and decorative. But is this 'aside' not actually the fundamental, overarching design 'problem' for textiles?

The notion of the 'design problem' is in some cases, and in particular fields of design, interchangeable with the 'design brief'. In equal measure, providing 'solutions' is often seen as the purpose, or goal, of design, which then becomes the tangible designed outcome of design thinking and process. One of the key principles of design research is that design thinking deals with, and in, ill-defined problems (Newell & Simon 1972).

Cross states that designing is not normal problem-solving but that it involves 'finding', 'structuring' and 'formulating' problems, as well as solving them. He states that designers deal with 'ill-defined' problems and, in reality, designers usually begin the design process without fully defining the problem. He cites Thomas and Carroll's 1979 study which concludes that even when well-defined design problems are delivered to them, designers would treat them as if they are ill-defined and take liberty in transforming those given problems (Cross 2007:100), remarking that designers behave as designers, even when they could be problem-solvers. If this is so, I question the persistence of these terms of 'problem' and 'solution' within design research?

Kauffman (1991:45) distinguishes different qualities of ill-defined problems for design thinkers. He notes that there may be aspects of 'novelty, complexity and ambiguity' involved in the problem, and that problems can also be 'deceptive'. He states that "...the difficulties observed in these tasks may often be aptly described as related to a too narrow problem space, where the problem solver has to enlarge the space and see new possibilities in order to succeed in solving the problem."

He goes on to explain that ambiguous ill-defined problems require the problem-solver (design thinker) to choose between "different kinds of problem spaces that are conflicting alternatives," and the 'deceptive problem' presents the problem-solver with a wrong or false problem space, one that could not

yield a solution. Kauffman reiterates the notion that when dealing with ill-defined problems it is often necessary to rethink or reform the problem by ‘adding, removing or rearranging stimuli’ from the problem space.

There are very few examples of research that has explored the phenomenon of the ill-defined problem for textile design: Moxey (2000:53) states that “Concepts are initially nurtured and developed at a cognitive level by searching the problem space, gathering information and stimulating the senses.” He describes the fact that the ill-defined nature of the design problem requires designers to “...import information into the problem space.”

Moxey hints at the complex way that textile designers deal with ill-defined design problems when he describes concept generation for textiles as a combination of informed intuition, tacit knowledge and overt, market-rich data. Studd (2002) provides an example of a design brief as used by a large UK-based textile company. It outlines the aims and objectives that the proposed collection must attain, including stipulations on the colours and fabrics to be utilised and product dimensions to influence repeat size, as well as the targeted consumer, although these aspects are technical and market requirements rather than the articulation of an ill-defined design problem. They are just setting the boundaries of the ‘problem space’. Moxey and Studd focus on concept finding/generation and representation in response to a ‘trigger’ (Studd 2002:43); can this trigger be seen as the design problem? Is it a more appropriate term for textile design than ‘problem’? These studies do not yet fully interrogate the notion of the ill-defined design problem for textile design.

“...the designers got fidgeting after trivial novelties; change for the sake of change; they must needs [*sic*] strive to make their woven flowers look as if they were painted with a brush, or even sometimes as if they were drawn by the engravers burin. This gave them plenty of trouble and exercised their ingenuity in the tormenting of their web with spots and stripes and ribs and the rest of it...” (Morris 1882)

As William Morris describes, technical restrictions certainly provide specific design problems, and often frame the scope of the outcomes of textile design, forcing compromises and innovation, but these are merely technological problems that are different from the design problems that are discussed at length in academic design research (Cross 2007:99), and that I wish to pursue here.

The concepts of design problems and solutions have been well explored within design research, supporting the idea that designers operate in particularly uncertain situations, relying on their skills of ‘abductive’ reasoning. Cross (2011:27) cites C. S Peirce when he describes abduction as hypothesizing what may be – an act of proposing and conjecture – and draws on work from Lionel March, developed from C. S Peirce, which defines this as a “...particular logic of design that provides the means to shift and transfer thought between the required purpose or function of some activity and appropriate forms for an object to satisfy that purpose.” (Cross 2011:10)

Alternative ways of considering problem-solving in design have been put forward that attempt to better represent how the nexus of the ill-defined design problem, the subjectivity of designers and the uncertain context operate together within the design process. Clive Dilnot proposes ‘positing’ as an alternative description for the act of designing (Dilnot 2008). Kauffman argues that creative thinking is more closely related with constructing problems than problem-solving. Kauffman, writing on creativity, introduces the idea of the ‘constructed problem’ (Kauffman 1991:59). Where there may be ‘consistently reinforcing’ conditions maintaining a status quo, constructed problems can form. In creative thinking, an individual compares the existing conditions with a hypothetical future scenario that offers improvements on a current situation.

Beginning to understand a designer’s approach to dealing with design problems may also elucidate an understanding of the designer’s relationship with the outcomes of their design thinking and process. If we believe that designing involves constructing problems and positing hypothetical solutions in the way outlined above then both the approach to the design problem and the designed outcome embody the designer’s personal impetus for designing: their conation, with the emphasis constantly shifting in a dialectic, chicken-and-egg-type scenario.

When I first began to read into design research literature I experienced real difficulty in relating to the idea of a design problem, to which, as a designer, I should develop a solution. These terms had never been used within my design education or in professional work contexts. I reflected that either the discourse was overlooking my experience as a textile designer or that textile design was rejecting the invitation to take part in it. Design problems for textile designs are not just ill defined but unknown, at best entirely tacit. The enmeshed voices of the textile designers show that I am not alone in my difficulty with the language of problem-solving in textile design. Concepts of human problem-solving were developed within psychology and the cognitive sciences, and have historically varied between the principles of behaviourism (with a focus on changes in external behaviour to solve problems) and gestaltism (focusing on whole-form perception of problems). Newell and Simon (1972) famously classified well-defined and ill-defined problems differentiating between the types of cognitive processes required to deal with each category. Research into human problem-solving emphasises the fact that it is an innate human cognitive activity, traceable to prehistoric people. My difficulty is not with the concept of problem-solving but with the mechanistic, transactional language that often surrounds it within the design research field. The persistence of this language, coupled with the various representations of the design process as an enclosed cycle (Dubberly 2005), means there is little space to explore alternative languages and concepts of design thinking.

Studd’s use of the term ‘trigger’ (Studd 2002:43), which in her terms stands in for the design problem for textiles, is interesting, but, I feel, flawed. Triggering could provide some coverage of both behaviourist conditioning and Gestaltist perceptual views of problem-solving. I envisage an athlete at the starting-blocks. They have mentally and physically prepared for this moment. They are conditioned to physically react to the sound of the gun firing, but mentally they focus on holding a visualization of the race, rather than first getting off the blocks and then taking each stride. The idea of one kind of behaviour being transformed by a trigger connects to notions of collecting and foraging for paraphernalia, the designer preparing himself or herself for the inevitable moment when the trigger initiates. Triggers can initiate generic linear and automatic responses – a bullet emerging from a gun, or the start of a race – but triggers can be highly personalized, causing unexpected subjective results, like allergic or emotional reactions. However the separation between the trigger and the reaction or behaviour it initiates is problematic. Triggers cannot be affected by what follows them. They do not provide the means to illustrate the notion of a problem-space and how the designer or the context can affect the problem. Triggers stimulate a reaction rather than a response, which is the case in problem-solving. I have explored notions of ‘responding’ in regard to the comparison of textile design to feminist translation theory which arose from talking to textile designers. In this context, design problem-solving becomes a responsive dialogue, not a transactional activity.

Supporting this view, in both his 2007 and 2011 books Cross describes the complex co-evolution of problems and solutions in design (Cross 2007:102, Cross 2011:123). Ettinger’s concept of the matrixial provides a framework and understanding for this co-evolution. Griselda Pollock discusses Ettinger’s theories in a way that could easily express the dialogic relationship of problem and solution within the process of designing:

“...the boundaries between subject/object (subjects and their objects), or presence/absence, are not absolute. They are borderlines that become borderspaces which we begin to sense when aesthetically confronted with their workings.” (Pollock 2008:486)

This quotation can be used to propose some new terminology for design research that avoids positivism and recognizes the intuitive, subjective behaviour and cognition that designers use. If ‘problems’ and ‘solutions’ co-evolve their boundaries are unclear, which renders their existence shifting and indistinct – (border)lines which expand into (border)spaces, once processed (through design thinking).

Considering the problem and solution not as a pairing but as a dynamic collaboration represented as lines expanding and evolving into space, exposing ‘their workings’, for me relates in some ways to the sequence of hand-spinning fibre into yarn which is then used for weaving. Fuzzy fibres, are gradually pulled, twisted and spun into a line, which may or may not then be plied to create a yarn. The yarn (the line) is then woven or knitted (expanded into space). Tim Ingold’s exploration of weaving as the foundation of making (and design) (Ingold 2000:346 -347) refers to the concept of ‘world-weaving’ from the Yekuana tribe of southern Venezuela. Through this Ingold sets up a relationship between weaving and making knowledge. Ingold’s metaphorical ‘weaving’ weaves a world of experience that is “continually and endlessly coming into being as we weave.” (Ingold 2000:348) In Ettinger’s words, it is co-emergent. Viewing the co-evolving design problem and solution (and additionally, through Ingold’s lens, making) as the process of spinning and weaving, lines expanding into space, represents design as a continuously divergent activity.

Metaphors of textile processes and objects, with their adaptive tendencies and abilities to systematically expand beyond previous framing and limits, are an excellent metaphor for this. Fibre becomes a thread or yarn through the orifice of the spinning wheel, a yarn is knitted or woven into cloth on the loom as ‘portal’ or ‘aperture’ (Pajackowska 2005), then pieces of cloth are sewn together with thread or yarn through the focus of a frame or hoop, offering unlimited potentiality. The concept of continuously and endlessly expanding lines, that I suggest here as a metaphor for design thinking, the activity which co-evolves design problems and solutions, renders any closed, looping or cyclical model of the design process inappropriate. This paradigmatic patchwork quilt-in-progress is like an interconnected Deleuzian plateau, “...a continuous self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation towards a culmination point or external end.” (Deleuze & Guattari 1980:24)

An infinite, soft, matrixial material represents the expansive, divergent nature of design thinking; but how does this relate to the process of designing?

Ingold, by observing the development of natural forms, highlights three key insights into the activity of making, and weaving as the foundation for making. Firstly, that making has a narrative quality, with each action, movement and line building on the previous. Secondly, that making does not only come about through the exertion of external force on a material but requires care, judgment and dexterity. And thirdly, that making is predicated by the ‘field of forces’ set up by the relationship between the maker and his or her engagement with the material.

Applying Ingold’s essay on making to design, in the first case reiterates what has just been discussed here, the dialogical, narrative and expansive characteristics of design thinking. His second point recognizes the impact of the subjectivity of the designer, their expertise and specific, general and tacit knowledge they hold. His third point illustrates the complexity of the context of designing, with forces impacting on design thinking and making. The divergent nature of design thinking can be seen to operate within a field of forces. What I also enjoy about Ingold’s three points is that they allow scope not only to understand how designers think and work with and through actual materials in the co-evolution of the problem and solution, but to see the problem/solution pairing as a meta-material that the designer

must cognitively grapple with. They must carefully, judiciously and dextrously, yet subjectively and narratively, engage with it in the context of the field of forces. This scenario reminds me of Gaston Bachelard’s concept of ‘the ideal paste’; a putty, a dough, a clay, which Steven Connor references as an ultimate plaything. Connor describes how we play with an ideal paste to get a sense of its give, stretch and variability, ‘to see how much play it possesses’, potentially to the point of destruction (Connor 2011:5).

“A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature (the laws of combination therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows)...It might be objected that its multiplicity resides in the person of the actor, who projects it into the text...An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections.” (Deleuze & Guattari 1980:9)

A paste is a multiplicity, its very materiality poses the ‘problem’ and yet also possesses immeasurable ‘solutions’, through its sticky malleability. Intangible pastes invite interaction and playing that correlates with the textile designer’s articulation of their experience of the design process represented in the meshes. So perhaps designers could be said to deal with intangible pastes that contain problems and solutions? What occurs within design is, then, a transformative playful encounter over time between problem and solution, involving the context, designer and any other external factors. Its imperceptible surface is delicately but irredeemably imprinted with the subjectivity of the designer. What is done with the intangible paste can improve on what already exists (like putty or adhesive) or create new things (like dough or clay). What is problematic in this scenario, for the purposes of design research, is that the cognitive processing associated with design becomes very hard to trace, because playing with the intangible paste is instinctual and tacit, involving poesis and praxis. Its conceptual form, as is the case for any thought, naturally shifts continuously and can never return exactly to its original state. They are ‘soft logics’.

Pennina Barnett, in her paper ‘Folds, fragments, surfaces: towards a poetics of cloth’ (1999), relates, through the work of Michel Serres and others, the principles of ‘soft logics’ to Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of smooth (a felted surface) and striated (a woven surface) space, as well as pleating and folding. Barnett’s essay has been fundamental in drawing these theories together to expand our understanding of textile thinking, but in regard to textile design thinking it requires further evaluation. Serres’ notion of box-thinking versus sack-thinking in his definition of soft logics immediately defines textiles, ‘the soft’, as an object, a product, a sack. A textile has been woven, cut, then stitched together. Yes, it is still soft, foldable and recursive, but it has been processed or, as the textile designers I spoke with would say, ‘resolved’. In soft logics such as sack-thinking, what is woven suddenly becomes a series of manageable bags – not the infinite soft matrix previously discussed. It implicates Deleuzian theories of folding and unfolding as cognitive mechanisms, but does not support the continuity of ‘world-weaving’, an infinite matrix or multiplicities of plateaus as a metaphor for design thinking. How can you fold something that is continuously evolving?

“Folding-unfolding no longer means tension-release, contraction-dilation, but enveloping-developing, involution-evolution... The simplest way of stating the point is by saying that to unfold is to increase, to grow; whereas to fold is to diminish, to reduce, “to withdraw into the recesses of a world.” (Deleuze 1988:8)

Deleuze states that folding and unfolding work not in opposition but in unity: his definition calls to mind the folding and unfolding of a narrative. With the comparison between narrative and textile weaving already set up by Mitchell and Ingold, we can see this as the expansion of a textile-in-the-making. Folding as thinking is a provoked, experimental and space-giving activity occurring within an encounter: new concepts unfold in the process. (Barnett 1999)

Barnett uses an example of a baker kneading dough, and I wish to continue it to explore the relationship between design thinking and the design process. Here, the dough is the intangible paste of the design problem/solution; the soft matrixial material. Through the activity of kneading, punctuated by stretching and proving (folding and unfolding), the dough processes and expands the matrix. Eventually this procedure is truncated by the ‘field of forces’, the requirement for this dough to become something else: either it dries out or it must be baked. The smooth gives rise to the striated (Deleuze & Guattari 1980:546)

Folding and unfolding. Smooth and striated. I am suddenly reminded of my antenatal classes and descriptions of the uterine muscles in pregnancy and birth. I was encouraged to trust that my body knows what to do. The experts explained how the various layers of muscles worked in contrasting ways but ultimately in unison. I was warned that being fearful of birth (they did not call it ‘labour’) would prevent my biological system from working in its natural and innate way. They said I would experience ‘surges’, not contractions. With each surge, I was directed to breathe into my body, to expand it, to give my body more room and space. Pushing the baby out was not advised, and, in fact, deemed unnecessary. Uterine muscles exemplify smooth and striated space. The striated, skeletal muscles grow and contract rapidly to expel the baby – they become smooth. The smooth muscles, the bundles of criss-crossed, felt-like muscles, reorganize themselves, in a slower and more sustained manner, into a porous mesh – they become striated. (Stables 1999)

Enveloping/developing Deleuzian folding and unfolding, as well as the shifting nature of smooth and striated space, correspond with notions of the matrixial when seen through the metaphor of birth. Smoothing and striation facilitate folding and unfolding.

The shape-shifting muscle movements are like kneading. Birthing is an experience of folding and unfolding. The existence of the child and its developing subjectivity represent expansion. The uterine muscles pause while the child develops and grows. But there are more to be born.

Stories of baking and birthing all require some state change, the unborn being born, the dough becoming bread. The folding and unfolding design process requires an outcome. This activity is rhizomatic:

“A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines.” (Deleuze & Guattari 1980:10)

A rhizome is a multiplicity: rhizomes consist of plateaus.

“A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The rhizome is the conjunction “and...and...and” ...Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions.” (Deleuze & Guattari 1980:27)

In baking, birthing, and designing, something is required to momentarily break off the rhizomatic activity (so that it may continue on a old or new line). But when and how should this change occur? In a natural birth, the baby and the female body instigate this. Modern science still can only suggest a due date but of course, many births are also artificially, medically induced. In baking, there is

general knowledge of how long to knead a dough. Internet searches uncover a great number of forum conversations trying to find the explicit answer of when enough is enough. (Incidentally, most say when the dough has become ‘smooth’ and elastic.) Eventually a baker develops a tacit understanding of when to stop kneading and start baking. In designing, either the designer reaches a point where they feel they may have a suitable solution or time, budget or technical restrictions call for a breakage. The sketches, samples, prototypes and the magical paraphernalia must be transformed, smooth becoming striated, a design decision must be made. It is this concept that allows expansive metaphors of design thinking to coexist with conventional ideas of divergence within the design process, except that it is a shattering or a breaking that occurs. To shatter or to break is simultaneously folding and unfolding, closing down and opening up: they are forms of creative destruction. In the narrative, linguistic sense, these moments are the punctuation. The story continues. Play is stopped by the imposition of normal life, but can start again at any given moment. The knowledge gained both explicitly and tacitly from (design) thinking fuels connected and subsequent design processes and other cognitive activities.

“My ideas are never static. I don’t just design a print or a dress, produce it, and then drop it. The theme keeps worrying me to be developed and the original idea becomes linked to something new and is regenerated.” Zandra Rhodes, textiles and fashion designer. (Rhodes 2012)

The ‘auxetic’ metaphors (derived from the Greek, meaning ‘that which tends to increase’) of the design problem/solution pairing as expansive lines, spun yarn, woven cloth, patchwork quilts, intangible pastes that I have discussed here provide a recursive idiom for design thinking that contrasts with the transactional language of problem-solving. The notion that design thinking is a recursive activity is at odds with the accepted notions of iterative divergence followed by convergence. Dubberly (2005) has collated a compendium of design process models that track the developments in design research from linear flow diagrams to circles, loops, diamonds, cogs and spirals. What is common in all these models is that although initial divergent design thinking is represented as essential to the solving design problems, it then is represented as converging, returning or focusing on the delivery of a solution.

The ‘designers’ of these models are trying to capture the complex *co-evolution* of the design problem and solution. Interrogating Cross’s use of the phrase ‘*co-evolution*’ in this context may shed some light when referenced to Ingold’s work on the growth of artefacts. Ingold compares the making of artefacts (a coiled basket) with the growth of natural objects (a gastropod shell), calling both examples of *autopoiesis*, a self-transformational process. Ingold says; “The artifact in short, is the crystallization of activity within a relational field, its regularities of form embodying the regularities of movement that gave rise to it.” (Ingold 2000:345) *Autopoiesis* is a term originally devised by biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela in 1972 to describe the self-maintaining qualities of biological cells. Varela, with Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, took this idea further, transferring it into the realm of cognitive science and philosophy in their book *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Varela, Thompson & Rosch 1991).

Evolution, after all, is defined in biological terms as the growth, development and expansion of the species. And so if we accept that working with a design problem/solution pairing, through design thinking, as an activity of making and growing, the representation of convergence in design process models is giving too much emphasis on the mundane, external factors of design. Of course, budgets run dry and deadlines loom, so design decisions are made to provide a ‘jumping off point’ within this recursive activity, perhaps seen as a deposit, a birthing or a rhizomatic off-shoot or dendrite. The activity continues transformed. Thinking in this way shifts the focus of the design process from the problem/solution, as is the case in most design process models, to the subjectivity and experience of the designer, each design experience building on the last. Ingold’s depiction of making as ‘crystallization’ in ‘relational’ fields, material form representing material engagement, emphasizes the notion of a co-emergent, trans-subjective spatially expansive activity.

The rhizomatic metaphors for designing are ultimately concepts of creation and making, emphasizing the varying influence of subjectivity and external forces. They align with theories of embodiment and autopoiesis developed in the field of enactive cognitive sciences (Varela, Thompson & Rosch 1991). In the same way that Ingold describes the connection between making, thinking and material in a field of forces based on biological evolution, enactive cognition is seen as an ongoing interaction with the medium, situated inseparably in the mind and world (Whitaker 2001). Varela, Thompson and Rosch say that cognition is functioning, or in this hypothesis the outcomes of design thinking are effective

“...when it becomes part of an on-going existing world (as the young of every species do) or shapes a new one (as happens in evolutionary history).” (Varela, Thompson & Rosch 1991:206)

In their terms, cognition is seen to bring forth the world (reflecting the productive metaphors of baking and birthing). Within this view, human problem-solving is active and relational in its production.

These concepts reconcile the experience of the textile designers communicated in the mesh with the language of problem-solving in design research, but the question of the nature of design problems for textile designers still persists. The textile designers state that the fundamental requirement of textile design (its problem) is to create beauty and elicit pleasure. They perceive a textile design's function as engaging and enhancing: by definition, its purpose is to decorate.

“ I begin to see what decoration is for. It completes. It brings buildings, objects and artefacts to completion in and for perception, by making them easier to see, more finished, more easily focussed upon. It completes in and for social use by making them into signs and symbols for our endeavours and beliefs. It completes in and for pleasure by inviting the eye to dwell and the hand to caress. It completes in and for thought by making objects memorable. Decoration, by completing our world, completes those who live in it...”

Brett (2005:264)

“...in many or most cases we have got so used to this ornament that we look upon it as if [*sic*] had grown of itself, and note it of no more than mosses on the dry sticks with which we light our fires.” Morris (1877)

The quotations from David Brett and William Morris illustrate the importance and insignificance attributed to the decorative. Brett's explanation of decoration identifies and legitimises it as transformative, alluding to its visual and tactile qualities and its role in sensory perception and social function. He continuously talks of the role of decoration for providing pleasure. Textiles are, of course, integral to Brett's remit of decoration; however, textiles can be the opposite of decorative – functional and earnest – and still fill us with pleasure. Textiles can be forgotten, unspoken and unseen. It is the omnipotence and ambience of textiles, as well as their shape-shifting qualities, that make them at once all-encompassing and yet often imperceptible.

Jane Graves extends Brett's and Morris's inclusion of textiles as a form/mode of decoration by aligning textiles with pattern. She gives a psychoanalytical account of pattern (Graves 2002:45) in which she describes how decoration is converted through repetition into pattern and suggests that textile is pattern, whether or not pattern is woven in as a design, as the natural texture resulting from weaving or knitting, or is printed onto a textile surface. The significance of pattern in the growth and development of universal natural structures is widely recognized, largely due to the seminal work of D'Arcy Thompson's *On Growth and Form*, published in 1917. Similarly to Brett and Morris, Graves correlates textiles (pattern as textiles) with decoration. However, Graves focuses on the connection between textiles' innate patterns with the stimulation of pleasure, and uses Freudian concepts to describe how the

unconscious is drawn to pattern for its addictive and disorientating qualities. As Graves states, pattern in textiles is either integral to the structure of the material or applied to its surface. By suggesting that textiles is pattern a case is made that textiles are a material interpretation of natural laws such as fractals and algorithms. Indeed, in their repetition, they often mimic algorithmic and binary patterns in their production: knitting and weave patterns, for instance. Textiles are a visual and tactile connection to nature. To cover our chairs, floors, bodies and even phones with textile as pattern is to give these objects a surface which applies a visual and tactile translation of natural principles to enhance the way in which we interact with it. In this way, textile designs are conducive to a mind-body-world encounter. Jane Graves discusses the development of meaning and symbolism involved in the development of motif in pattern within textile design;

“Imagine, however, that the motif is transformed in such a way that it conveys the experience of the place without actual representation. In other words, convert the motif into a symbol. Symbols convey meaning, not information. They are a valid mode of shared thinking, part conscious, part unconscious, which act like a stone thrown into a still pond. The ripples continue to reverberate long after the stone has disappeared.” (Graves 2002:49)

However these encounters play out initially, almost entirely within our senses, they are somatic. Being so heavily sensory, what is experienced within the encounter is difficult to describe and our perception of the experience is personal. It seems this is the crux of the difficulty in defining design problems for textiles design. The problem and solution are so very dialogically close. So close that their dialogue is but a whisper, almost silent, yet so densely layered. This intimate proximity leaves a short path for abductive reasoning, so short it is difficult to trace and therefore to articulate. When discussing the pleasure of decoration and the experience and knowledge it offers, Brett aligns with Polanyi's notion of personal/tacit knowledge and finds contentment in knowing that we will always know more than we can tell. Brett advises against inquiring into the nature of pleasure for the fear of losing pleasure itself. It is easy to understand the trepidation of those who feel that beginning to expose and scrutinise design thinking (or behaviour) is akin to a magician revealing her methods; the worry that when you see the trick again, you'll always be looking for the sleight of hand. This analogy works both ways. A magician is capable of explaining her tricks; her intentions and the practical means by which she achieves those intentions. Once she does explain her methods, we become interested in the trick from a different perspective. We no longer just look at the trick but look at the magician. We can marvel at the skill and dexterity she displays. We might want to try the trick out for ourselves, but we are not so swift of hand for any magic to be conjured up, which at once serves to underline the extent of skill required to achieve such a spectacle. The magical quality returns, not in a supernatural form but in the recognition of the connection between thought, expertise and practice that the magician has developed. After revealing her trick, the knowledge she possesses allows her to continue to design many more wondrous tricks that will again give unfathomable pleasure and surprise. The magician can show and explain her tools, she can describe her intentions and she can show and describe to us how she uses the tools to perform and realise her intentions. The elements of magic laid bare: yet the magic only happens when one practises as a magician. Attempting to articulate textile design thinking need not remove the magic from the tacit, but may provide some recognition for the possessors of that knowledge.

In textile design as decoration, the problem/solution 'dough' is substantially constituted from the combination of notions of beauty and pleasure, two concepts that are both indefinable and indivisible. In *The Sense of Beauty; Being the Outline of Aesthetic Theory* (1896) George Santayana uses Shakespeare's 54th Sonnet to explain the connection between decoration, beauty and pleasure:

O, how much more doth beauty beauteous seem
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give.

The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
 For that sweet odour which doth in it live.
 The canker-blooms have full as deep a dye
 As the perfumed tincture of the roses,
 Hang on such thorns and play as wantonly
 When summer's breath their masked buds discloses:
 But, for their virtue only is their show,
 They live unwood'd and unrespected fade,
 Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so;
 Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made.

Santayana uses the sonnet to explain how "...beauty is the co-operation of pleasures." and that sensorial pleasures require a visual, tangible objectification, an ornament, to create beauty
 "...beauty is constituted by the objectification of pleasure. It is pleasure objectified." (Santayana 1896:52)

Santayana's words manage to capture the activity of textile design as expressed by the textile designers. To design textiles is to organise a co-operation of pleasures, both as sensation and perception, objectified through decoration, to constitute beauty.

"The passage from sensation to perception is gradual, and the path may be sometimes retraced: so it is with beauty and the pleasures of sensation. There is no sharp line between them, but it depends upon the degree of objectivity my feeling has attained at the moment whether I say 'It pleases me,' or 'It is beautiful.'" (Santayana 1896:51)

This definition of textile design illustrates an activity operating as a complex translation, in a deeply subjective field with no clear criteria. Textile designers use beauty, sensation and perception as the raw materials for the objectification of pleasure, yet simultaneously rely on their own sensation, perception and pleasure to create something beautiful. It explains why the textile designers talked of being drawn to things they liked, paraphernalia, as inspirational objects for their design process, and why they consider that they design for themselves and do not really work to briefs. They both feed and navigate from their own experience of pleasure and beauty to fuel and direct their design process. It explains why textile designers must create double the number of designs needed, because they must allow for many designs not to be considered pleasing or beautiful by others. And textile designs must express all this within the boundaries of a single swatch of fabric, or at best a collection.

Several of the textile designers talked about the importance of seeing their work 'resolved': that is to say, incorporated into the design of an object. Without wishing to return to the problem/solution terminology, this does bring to light the problematic of the object of textile design. Without being applied to or in another design, a garment, an upholstered chair, or processes in some other way, textile design is merely an exercise in aesthetics. However, as Jane Graves highlights, the functional form of textiles is significant to its decorative qualities: its weave structure and yarn type are both the basis for its function and its decorative qualities. Santayana (1896:164) describes this quality: "...ornament is distributed so as to emphasise the aesthetic essence of the form; to idealize it even more, by adding adventitious interests harmoniously to the intrinsic interest of the lines of the structure." This statement applies to decoration added to a textile, as well as a textile applied to another designed object. Even within printed textiles the relationship between the structure and decoration is innate: for example, the fabric structure determines the dyes used, the thickness of the printed mark permissible for a good finish and the density of colour achievable. The finished textile design, embodying the unified qualities of function and decoration, is then applied within fashion, or perhaps interior design, to another object. "Historically [ornament] is applied to a form as merely useful. But the very presence of ornament attracts contemplation; the attention lavished on the object helps to fix its form in the mind."

(Santayana 1896:164)

Santayana's words support David Brett's statement about the importance of decoration in completing the world: transforming, defining and fixing meanings of other objects.

The textile designers I spoke with confirmed this for textiles, relishing in the task of transforming a simple kimono into something fabulous.

But we must remember that textiles' role within another designed object goes further than this. They provide more than a surface decorative effect: they are decoration and substance. Without the material substance and structure of cloth, there would be no dress to wear. This notion requires me to reflect on the differentiation between applied arts and design and where textiles is located: this is an enormous area of historical and theoretical debate which I shall not enter into, but it does seem important to highlight some pertinent aspects of the textile design process.

The purpose of textiles is implicated and unquestioned in the way they are made or manufactured. They are destined for application into another designed product: this is precisely why cloth is woven to specific widths, suitable for the layout plans of pattern cutting for garments or upholsterers. The direction, size and nature of the motif and pattern repeat is determined, again to suit various applications. As was mentioned within my conversations with textile designers, they often won't know how, where or why their textile designs are applied, and unless they do know in advance, do not give it conscious consideration. This is because the ultimate fate of textiles is the assimilation into something else. Textiles-as-entity engages with others, its purpose is to make itself available for use, offering the potential of pleasure, beauty through physical matter, flagrantly yet silently.

Think Tank is a group of leading European academics whose focus is to theorise and give critical attention to the field of applied arts. 'The Gift' was the theme adopted by the group for their annual symposium in 2007. Edmund de Waal's essay for the theme entitled 'Sticky/Smooth' (De Waal 2007) provides an understanding of the differentiation between commodities (designed objects) and applied arts objects as gifts. He describes the smooth, liquid characteristics of the designed commodity, the ease with which they transfer between people and places, and contrasts it with the sticky qualities of the gift: the sense that the recipient is stuck to the gift-giver via the gift object. He also connects the metaphoric terms 'sticky' and 'smooth' with the materiality of the object, stating that

"These smooth objects are the objects in which the object contains enough - but not excessive materialization as objects to keep away the risk of their corruption by any hint of sensuous presence. Their smoothness keeps away metaphysical presence, the magic by which objects become values, fetishes, idols, and totems." (De Waal 2007:48)

Typically, textile design is placed in a liminal position between design and applied art. Textiles are designed commodities that gain a metaphysical presence through application in another designed commodity. They are smooth things that stick. The notion of the application of textiles in a designed object once more begs a reflection on design thinking as folding and unfolding through kneading the 'intangible paste or dough'. What is the relationship here? A dress cannot exist without a textile. A textile has no animation without being folded, cut and sewn to make into a dress. What change occurs if the textile is different, or what if the shape of the dress is changed? What if a different fashion designer uses that textile? These qualities epitomize shifting Deleuzian smoothness and striation, and are represented in Ettinger's theory of metamorphosis. However, this quality of relationality, the relationship between the design subject and design object, is not widely recognized in design research. The unique quality of textile design means that the discipline is well positioned as a field in which to explore this.

BLANK

UNFOLDING

Deleuze defines ‘unfolding’ as expansion. I have deliberately chosen to avoid concepts of concluding or ending this text, but instead see the last pages of this thesis as an interruption of play, a breakage of the rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari 1980:10), a point of inflection in the Deleuzian fold or a jewel in the (Indra’s) net of my textile thinking.

I shall begin this unfolding by exposing some of the ‘entailments’ and ‘reverberations’ toward concepts (Lakoff & Johnson 1980/2003: 140) of the metaphors I have used and constructed within this thesis. Some of these entailments and reverberations become metaphoric pronouncements in themselves; others are key notes from the authors I have studied. They overlap, criss-cross, conflict and interconnect, pointing to concepts developed within this thesis as well as opportunities for further exploration

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Metaphors make meaning. | Translation can be feminine. | Paraphernalia is important in design. |
| Textiles is a geisha | Design can be feminine. | |
| Textiles is a maiden aunt. | Translation is response. | Creativity is the tension of mental dissatisfaction. |
| Textiles is a mother. | A textile designer is a translator/transformer. Textiles are pattern. | Playing is tense. |
| Stories theorize experience. | Pattern is universal. | Playing is part of design. |
| Poetry is playing. | Pattern is pleasure. | Design problems and solutions are co-emergent. |
| Playing represents. | Beauty is the cooperation of pleasures. | Decoration perceptually fixes objects. |
| Stories represent. | Beauty is the representation of my pleasures. | Decorative objects are magical. |
| Design is representation. | | Design thinking is expansive... |
| Representation is one of two contests. | | |
| Playing ends tension. | | |
| Translation is transformation. | | |

The generative metaphor behind this thesis; ‘*textiles is a feminine entity*’, has served its purpose and in doing so it has itself evolved. Established textile metaphors used in everyday speech referring to linguistic and cognitive mechanisms of storytelling and problem-solving, or physical actions or attributes, clearly themselves have entailments and reverberations, but it often feels as though the significance of these textile metaphors have become so tacit that the reverberations have lost their piquancy. Harper (2012: Vol 2 ix) compares Brett’s opinion of the diminishing of the meaning and significance of the ‘cosmic metaphor of weaving’ (Brett 2005:229) and f.marquespenteado’s plea for theoreticians to develop alternative metaphors and examples of textile thinking: he suggests tooth floss might be suited to the task.

Brett develops a ‘semantic chain’ for the metaphor of weaving that covers three aspects: useful activity, a means for structuring private feelings and social relations and our cosmos. (Brett 2005:229) Indeed the metaphor of weaving textiles has found new meaning in new contexts, albeit as meshes and networks in the fields of communication technologies and the Internet. What these mesh and net metaphors lack, though, is a visualisation of their *making* and growth in relation to human emotion, relations and activity. What is required is Brett’s evolutionary semantic chain for weaving, as well as f.marquespenteado’s plea for alternative metaphors for textiles. After all, textile practice is far more than weaving, knotting and stitching. In order to do this a new paradigm of textile thinking must establish, in tandem and in unison with the innovative and conceptual textile design practice that exists today, to assert new value for old textile metaphors and new significance for textiles in concepts developing today.

Discussing poet Jorie Graham's consistent use of textile metaphor in her work, Stoddard mentions how Graham manages to "represent textile work/art, domestic/intellectual, feminine/masculine simply by blending these disparate worlds as if they were natural partners (and why not?) ... she never abandons their reality, never suggests that metaphoric weaving is somehow superior to actual weaving. The textile metaphors are never simply used as vehicle for "abstract, male" ideas; they are themselves extended into the process of mental weaving, and eventually reclaimed as powerful in their own domestic reality." (Stoddard 1990:125)

The 'extension' and 'reclamation' of textile metaphors for thinking, making, doing and being is required, but must be done with real understanding of textiles.

The metaphorical concept of textiles (thinking and making) as matrixial broadens the weaving imagery in response to Brett and f. marquespenteado's concerns. In reference to her art textiles, Catherine Dormor refers to the 'material-conceptual matrix'. Dormor uses Ettinger's concept of 'borderswerving' to explain the negotiated boundaries between explicit and tacit knowledge, and explores this concept through folding, fraying and seaming (as textile making and thinking methods) as metaphors for the interrelationship of text, textile and techne. Dormor's interdependent activities of making and writing interrogate in an embodied way the scope and suitability of these established philosophical and psychoanalytical textile metaphors for thinking. The nature of my research has allowed me to take a liminal position, with a subjective past, present and future practice in textile design, education and research. This position allows me to move the concept of the 'material-conceptual matrix' into a broader context with real world relevance. Dormor's handling of the folding, fraying and seaming metaphors are rich and clear, helping to visualize and articulate the interconnection of the tacit and explicit knowledge of textile making. Where I have addressed ideas of folding and fraying, they are set within broader concepts of problem-solving and translation and transformation in design, contextualised in the field of cognitive science and other academic fields. This activity has again been driven by theories of generative metaphors and frame analysis and restructuring in the development of new metaphors for textile thinking from other domains.

"Metaphors external to a piece of research prefigure the analysis with a 'truth-value' code belonging to another domain." (Jameson 1981 cited in Richardson 2000:927)

In this thesis, the matrixial is expanded into relationality, and, in turn, its influence on the current social and cultural condition, suggesting ways in which matrixial textile thinking is permeating other practices. For example, in the world of communications, 'mesh-networking' is a practice that has grown over the past ten years. In that field it describes a network "...where each node must not only capture and disseminate its own data, but also serve as a relay for other nodes, that is, it must collaborate to propagate the data in the network." (Mesh-networking 2013)

Mesh-networking relies on concepts of relationality as employed through matrixial structures, exemplifying notions of Indra's net.

The action of frame restructuring using metaphor as an aspect of my research methodology, along with the feminist slant of my research approach, as well as the narrative research methods I have used, could be seen to correspond with the post-postmodern condition. For at least two decades it has been considered that the postmodern era has been in decline, and scholars such as Vermeulen and Akker (2009) have posited that we are entering what they call 'metamodernism'. They define this era by an oscillation between modern enthusiasm and postmodern irony, emphasizing an alternative condition of tension. Vermeulen and Akker (quoting the eighteenth-century German Romantic philosopher Novalis) describe the metamodern:

"Metamodern neoromanticism should not merely be understood as re-appropriation; it should be interpreted as re-signification: it is the re-signification of 'the commonplace with significance, the ordinary with mystery, the familiar with the seamliness of the unfamiliar, and the finite with the semblance of the infinite'. Indeed, it should be interpreted as Novalis, as the opening up of new lands in situ of the old one". (Vermeulen & Akker 2009:12)

The very idea of resignifying textile and feminine matrixial metaphors for thinking and making as seen in this thesis, as well as Dormor's, and through work by Ingold, appears to be distinctly metamodern.

"For us, the prefix meta indicates that a person can believe in one thing one day and believe in its opposite the next. Or maybe even at the same time. Indeed, if anything, meta intimates a constant repositioning: not a compromise, not a balance, but an at times vehemently moving back and forth, left and right. ... without ever seeming reducible to any one of them." (Vermeulen 2012:215)

It is tempting here to point out the clear connections between this definition of metamodernity and the act and object of weaving, another link in Brett's semantic chain. Here Vermeulen also describes the oscillating nature of metamodern thought which supports Ettinger's statement that the feminine matrixial does not usurp the masculine but sits alongside it, allowing two ways of knowing to co-exist.

The relevance of metamodernism to the ideas developed in this thesis extends to the conceptualisations of expansive and conative design thinking. Vermeulen and Akker, citing Kant, describe it as 'as-if' thinking (Vermeulen & Akker 2009:5), which itself sounds metaphorical in action.

"Metamodernism displaces the parameters of the present with those of a future presence that is futureless; and it displaces the boundaries of our place with those of a surreal place that is placeless. For indeed, that is the "destiny" of the metamodern wo/man: to pursue a horizon that is forever receding." (Vermeulen & Akker 2009:12)

The metamodern discourse describes a condition that is highly conative, striving towards an impossible possibility, much like the way in which Polanyi describes intellectual passions as "...a heuristic vision which is accepted for the sake of its unresolvable tension." (Polanyi 1958:212)

By its nature, metamodernist thought, being one thing one day, another the next or more than one thing at any one time, is clearly governed by principles of relationality and subjectivity, and Vermeulen and Akker talk continuously of the tension of this oscillating position. They talk about metamodernism as expressing an atopic metaxis, and define this in relation to their proposal of metamodernism:

"We could say thus that atopos is, impossibly, at once a place and not a place, a territory without boundaries, a position without parameters." (Vermeulen & Akker 2009:12)

The atopic condition could be seen as indicative of textile design's liminal position in so many contexts. It is design, art, craft and applied art. We respond to textiles, yet they are ignored. They surround our bodies for almost every second of the day, and yet we rarely mention them. Can Brett's semantic chain be increased further? Can textile design thinking provide a visual metaphor for the metamodern? A dimensional, entangled, matrix-multiplicity, pursuing a 'horizon that is forever receding' (or expanding?)

What Vermeulen and Akker are describing is already recognized in the field of quantum physics and mechanics through theories of quantum nonlocality and entanglement. My feeble attempts at trying to understand this theory has only allowed me to comprehend its most basic theories, principally that two

particles interact and then are connected, despite any arbitrary distance between them.

The connection is innate and not based on the sending or receiving of information. The tension between the modern naivety and postmodern scepticism in metamodernism is evident here in universal laws of the quantum. Werner Heisenberg, one of the founders of quantum mechanics, described the phenomenon (1974/1990:227), capturing his own position as well as Wolfgang Pauli's:

“...Pauli once spoke of two limiting conceptions, both of which have been extraordinarily fruitful in the history of human thought, although no genuine reality corresponds to them. At one extreme is the idea of an objective world, pursuing its regular course in space and time, independently of any kind of observing subject; this has been the guiding image of modern science. At the other extreme is the idea of a subject, mystically experiencing the unity of the world and no longer confronted by an object or by any objective world; this has been the guiding image of Asian mysticism. Our thinking moves somewhere in the middle, between these two limiting conceptions; we should maintain the tension resulting from these two opposites.”

If we accept Vermeulen and Akker's proposal of metamodernism as the condition of this era (and the authors clearly state that it is as yet a proposal, not a theory), then the tension of relationality will govern thinking and being in this age.

Design research is beginning to recognize the need to develop a position of oscillation, as evidenced in Lucy Kimbell's promotion of practice theories for design research that recognize its “messy contingent combination of minds, things, bodies, structures, processes and agencies.” (Kimbell 2012)

Ken Friedman also cautions that design thinking is not a useful or precise term to describe phenomena that are genuine but that we have not yet described well enough. He says that “... I think the time may have arrived where we are indeed moving beyond the problematic conceptions of design thinking that she (Kimbell) critiques to a broader range of insights.” (Friedman 2013)

Academic design research has proposed a multitude of diagrams in an attempt to model the design process and its associated thinking (Dubberly 2005). Circles, diamonds (Design Council 2005), loops and even ‘squiggles’ (Newman 2006) have all been used to symbolise this complex process. Modelling the design process and associated thinking in this way, despite the various geometries used to represent it, emphasises a linearity of thought; a binary epistemology. It disregards the subjectivity of the designer(s) and the time, place and context of the design experience. Visual representations certainly help us to understand abstract ideas, but perhaps a better option is to utilise metaphors, allowing multiple ways of reading for different people and in different contexts, in the mode of the metamodern (and quantum), allowing design process and thinking to be several things at any one time.

Kimbell (2012:143) explains that “design is understood as relational”. She expands on this, saying: “Design thinking can thus be rethought as a set of contingent, embodied routines that reconfigure the socio-material world, which are institutionalized in different ways.” (Kimbell 2012:141)

The concepts I have explored in the meshes I developed from ‘re-storying’ my experience as a textile designer, and the narratives that emerged from talking to other textile designers, provide a visualization and metaphor for Kimbell's definition of design thinking. Kneading and folding the dough of the problem-solution, being a metaphor, offers a deeper, truer understanding of the phenomenon, inviting in notions of tension in the ‘socio-material world’-dough that metamodernism alludes to. As Kimbell and Wang and Ilhan (2008) recognize, design thinking is institutionalized and sociologically wrapped in different ways.

And so what I propose in this thesis as design thinking is intrinsically derived from stories of *textile* designing. **Textile design thinking involves a tripartite but highly conative, expansive process, which, through playful folding and unfolding in the Deleuzian sense, develops a multi-dimensional conceptual matrix-multiplicity, evolving rhizomatically. Its rhizomatic expansion is set in a co-emergent encounter with more tangible aspects of the design thinking nexus, the tension of which will at times force breakages, and at others, continuation.**

Because the definition above is derived from textile design, I feel I can be confident in exploring terms that further capture the phenomenon from a textile perspective.

Textasis, as a text-ile in tension, recognizes etymological and metaphorical connection between text and textile, thinking, speaking, writing and making. It represents the definition of textile design thinking that I proposed earlier in its interconnection of the material and immaterial in *tasis*, and as such addresses ideas being developed through metamodernism. *Textasis* suggests a movement between *stasis/enstasis*, that which is unmoving, immobilised, subordinated, standing firmly within oneself, to *exstasis / ekstasis*, flow, excess, ecstasy, joy, insubordination, to be outside of oneself, the transgression of boundaries (Pajaczkowska 2013).

A thinking, speaking, writing and making in tension, *textasis* represents both the conceptual ill-defined design problem and the cognitive and concrete actions required to deal with it. As Huizinga suggests, to end a tension you can play, and play is characterized by being outside of ordinary life yet limited and ordered by it (Huizinga 1949:26-29).

Developing definitions of textile design thinking, as I have done, serve to contribute to fields of textile theory and design research. My research methods involved me in conversing with textile designers in a variety of textile specialisms and sectors, and at different stages of their careers, but these people are not the ‘audience’ or ‘users’ of my research or of theory in general (although some are also educators). In the industrial context, there is little time to read and integrate theory into practice. Theory trickles through to practice via education. The concepts I am developing are practice-focused and written for the readership of design research academics and textile theoreticians. Academics, by nature, populate the educational establishment, either working as (or previously as) designers or alongside those who teach design, design research or textile design. As a lecturer myself, it is not only considered best practice but is also a contractual agreement to conduct scholarly research, which informs my teaching. Indeed, in the UK today, stricken universities are all too aware of the outcomes of the Research Excellence Framework looming large in access to precious funding opportunities and judgement of reputation. Identifying clear applications for the outcomes of this thesis is important not only to my own academic career but also to help open up new avenues of research for other textile academics concerned with theory and pedagogy.

Kavanagh (2008:708 and Kavanagh, Matthews & Tyrer 2004:3) talks about how textile design education now better prepares new designers for the industrial context by emphasising “What one wants to say, and to whom, and by what means.” These tenets are of course important to any design discipline. Precisely what is lacking for textiles is developed theory to support these activities in ways specific to the discipline. In her 2010 paper “Textile theory; do we need it?” Jessica Hemmings reflects on the process of editing *The Textile Reader* and the impact of such a publication on the textile discipline:

“Perhaps the vitality of a discipline relies on the uncertainty of its values? A discipline without a canon may in fact be lucky rather than lacking. ...For textiles to establish its critical footing, publications such as these may help. But the critical footing publishing projects such as these establish must remain negotiable if the discipline is to be protected from lapses in complacency.” (Hemmings 2010)

My work sits at the interstice of the texts included in Hemmings' anthology and those of the design research community, combining and exploring one with the other and responding (and pledging back) to both. This ground certainly isn't fertile, and because of this the industrial context of Kavanagh's textile pedagogy does lack a canon. Despite this dearth, the discipline is in no doubt vital in terms of thinking and practice, but this lacking does mean that the scope, understanding and significance of the discipline in wider contexts is curtailed. The metaphorical concept of the expansive rhizomatic matrix of design thinking lends itself well to the critical literary, philosophical and cultural slant of the type of texts included in Hemmings' volume, which, as she notes, do indeed tend toward the Deleuzian. However, what I explore in this concept also proposes an alternative conception of what is considered as convergence in design thinking and process, as depicted in the various models that have been drawn up (Dubberly 2005). Convergence is re-visioned as breakages in the rhizome. Defining a concept that speaks to both sectors opens up new opportunities for their mutual development. In this study I have deliberately avoided entering into the discussion about the position textiles occupies as applied art, design and craft, instead taking a clear stance that textile design *is* a design discipline. Doing this has meant that I have had to confront particular questions and assumptions about design and textiles head-on, rather than retreating to some of the texts on craft such as those by Pye (1968) Dormer (1994 & 1997) Adamson (2007 & 2010), and Sennett (2008), which have a more established, and in some cases direct, application to textile practice.

Firmly situating textiles as a design discipline makes it accountable to the discussions within the design research community on the future of design education. Ken Friedman (2012:148 – 150) outlines ten challenges for design education (see Figure 18):

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Performance challenges | Act on the physical world |
| | Address human needs. |
| | Generate the built environment. |
| Substantive challenges | Increasingly ambiguous boundaries between artifacts, structures and processes. |
| | Increasingly large-scale social, economic and industrial frames. |
| | An increasingly complex environment of needs, requirements and constraints. |
| | Information content that often exceeds the value of physical substance. |
| Contextual challenges | A complex environment in which many projects or products cross the boundaries of several organizations, stakeholder, producer and user groups. |
| | Projects or products that must meet the expectations of many organizations, stakeholders, producers and users. |
| | Demands at every level of production, distribution, reception and control. |

Figure 18: Ten challenges for design education. Adapted from Friedman (2012)

Friedman presents the challenges as a numbered list, but I prefer to avoid any connotation of hierarchy, and instead focus on the groupings he proposes.

Friedman states that the first three challenges require “frameworks of theory and research to address contemporary professional problems and solve individual cases.” The grouping of substantive challenges focuses on these challenges. It appears that the textile design discipline (along with others) has routinely focused on the groupings of ‘performance’ and a rather limited scope of ‘contextual challenges’. In bypassing the theoretical questions, the ‘contextual’ challenges remain somewhat fixed and limited. This is not to say that there are not examples where textile designers, educators and researchers are already tracing a line through aspects of all the three categories. However, it could be said that, even in the most forward-thinking and innovative textile practice, there is a tendency toward certain of these challenges. This thesis, as my textile design practice, aims to begin to address the ‘substantive’ challenges listed above, specifically addressing the ambiguous boundaries between designed objects, structures and processes and by highlighting the significance and value of textile design beyond the physical artifact and into cognition and to the design processes of other design disciplines.

My point is that by becoming an active participant in the discourse of design thinking and research, textile design must start to articulate and develop a position for itself in response to all these challenges. Particularly by confronting the substantive challenges, the types of organisations, stakeholders, producers and user groups that textile design is currently involved with could be massively altered and expanded. Effects would also be felt in the way that the textile design discipline relates to and interacts with these groups. Friedman's challenges for design education correlate and layer with Kimbell's notion of the messy ‘design thinking’ nexus. Layered up, Friedman's challenges provide the striation, Kimbell's nexus the smooth: this combination would truly represent the challenges of future design education.

The liminal research position I have taken in this thesis forces me to feel the tension of the oscillation between the tacit knowledge of textile design thinking and the clear articulation of design thinking from the design research community. I am contributing to the development of textile design thinking, and so this necessarily connects to and impacts on theories of design thinking in general, but, only if I assert one in the other and vice versa.

“No doubt there are good reasons to differentiate the various design professions, but there are good reasons, too, for clearly conceptualizing and addressing what they have in common: in Margolin's words, ‘to define new points of contiguity and to facilitate greater collaboration between different types of designers while making it possible for individual designers to address a greater range of problems than most now do.’ (Galle 2011:94 citing Margolin 1991)

Victor Margolin's statement supports the requirement for textile design to participate more fully in the discourse of design research, for the benefit of both its own discipline and associated ones. It is prudent to note that Margolin remarked on this over twenty years ago, and it is still an ongoing concern.

“What textile designers have to say is an important part of our future. They have yet to explore further the use of pattern as a tool for thought in the context of pleasure and dreams – bad dreams as well as good.” (Graves 2005:53)

Jane Graves points to just one aspect of future design on which textile design thinking can have a major impact. As I have explored, the overarching design problem for textiles can be seen as the cooperation of pleasures toward beauty. Graves sees all textiles as pattern, whether pattern is present through the woven texture alone or as print on cloth: exploring and articulating textiles' action and agency in relation to human experience and emotion will of course be important in future design practice and theory across all disciplines.

In her distinctive style, Harper manages to give a poetic synopsis of some of the most innovative practices and processes within textiles (Harper 2012: Vol 2 xiv – xv), and the impact of textiles on human experience. She follows it with a statement from textile innovator Carole Collet about how the future of textiles is not in responding to nature, but with nature as its role model and mentor, working with biology and biomimicry to create sustainable textiles. Although I also believe this to be true, it again exposes textile design's inefficacy in recognising and articulating its significance to the history of design process, thinking and objects in general. The assumption that textile design has *not* so far been involved in mimicking nature overlooks the historical and archaic evolution of textiles (and the role that conscious variation has had in that). How was the idea of felt developed if not to mimic the matted fur and hair of humans and animals? How have the classic motifs of spots and stripes developed if not to imitate the natural markings of flora and fauna, for both aesthetic, spiritual, communicative and other functional purposes? Yet another long established metaphor for cloth, textiles as a 'second skin', suggests that some form of biomimicry has implicitly and, in archaic terms, variously always been an aim of textile (design).

Innovation in textile design is strongly driven by developments in technology, fibre and materials, providing more explicit, defined design problems for textile designers. Some of the textile designers who spoke with me expressed an interest in focusing more on tangible 'social' problems than on aesthetic concerns. This approach does show that textile design is beginning to address some of Friedman's 'substantive challenges', at least within higher education establishments and research and development labs. In the leading providers of textile design education in the UK, establishments such as the University of the Arts London and The Royal College of Art, this approach is encouraged. Moving in this direction offers a wider range of opportunities for funding to a field that must justify its existence by its research outputs. However, one of the textile designers I spoke with (See conversation with TD11 in Appendix C), an experienced designer and educator, was cautious about this evolving situation;

"When people are making, say, a printing ink that will change colour on a hospital gown when someone's ill, or their temperature goes up or something. I can't help but think, well what is that to us, is that spot or stripe, where is our role in that? And so that whole research side, I find it on ground that's not terribly solid. But it might be because I'm an embellisher through and through, but when people say, "This is what I'm researching, these inks that will do this." I want to say, "Well surely that's the scientist who's doing that?" We are the person who's just going to decide whether it's spots or stripes. Which is bizarre, and it doesn't help the fluffy case at all. So it is a conundrum, really."

Her concerns justify the requirement for a clearer articulation of design thinking for textiles and for textile designers to develop a 'canon' within the design research field. With a real understanding of textile design thinking, it is clear that the choice of spots or stripes is far from a fluffy or arbitrary decision. Not only will the textile designer in this scenario decide on the motif, but the size and composition of the repeat. They will have influence on the colouration and the surface effect of the finished textile. They will advise on whether the design should be printed, applied, woven or knitted into the gown and why. Spots and stripes, alongside other motifs, are of course, part of the highly complex semiotics of visual language, which textiles-as-pattern uses (and connects to evolved archaic cultural modes of decoration) in conjunction with haptic values to communicate phenomena to and for those using, wearing or viewing the hospital gown.

The activities of the material scientist/textile chemist and the textile designer in this situation (plus any fashion designer who might also be involved in designing the shape and fabrication of the hospital gown) are resolutely co-emergent. It is just that historically the input of the textile designer has not been as highly valued, or explicit.

The hypothetical 'hospital gown' brief is to design a textile that communicates the onset of increased body temperature. As long as the 'mechanism' for detecting and exhibiting heat sensitivity works, and there is appropriate consideration for the ethics of the scenario, the surface design could be anything at all: it could be text-based and graphical. Having a textile designer involved introduces beauty and pleasure as the overarching problem, functionality is in *taxis* with it. Immediately, so many more aspects become important: the 'oscillating tension' between pragmatic technical and ethical considerations and the subjective and emotive are addressed through textile design.

Design for emotion is a developing field in both design research practice and theory. Sanders and Stappers (2008) outline four main areas in design research; critical design, participatory design, user-centred design and design and emotion. (See Figure 19)

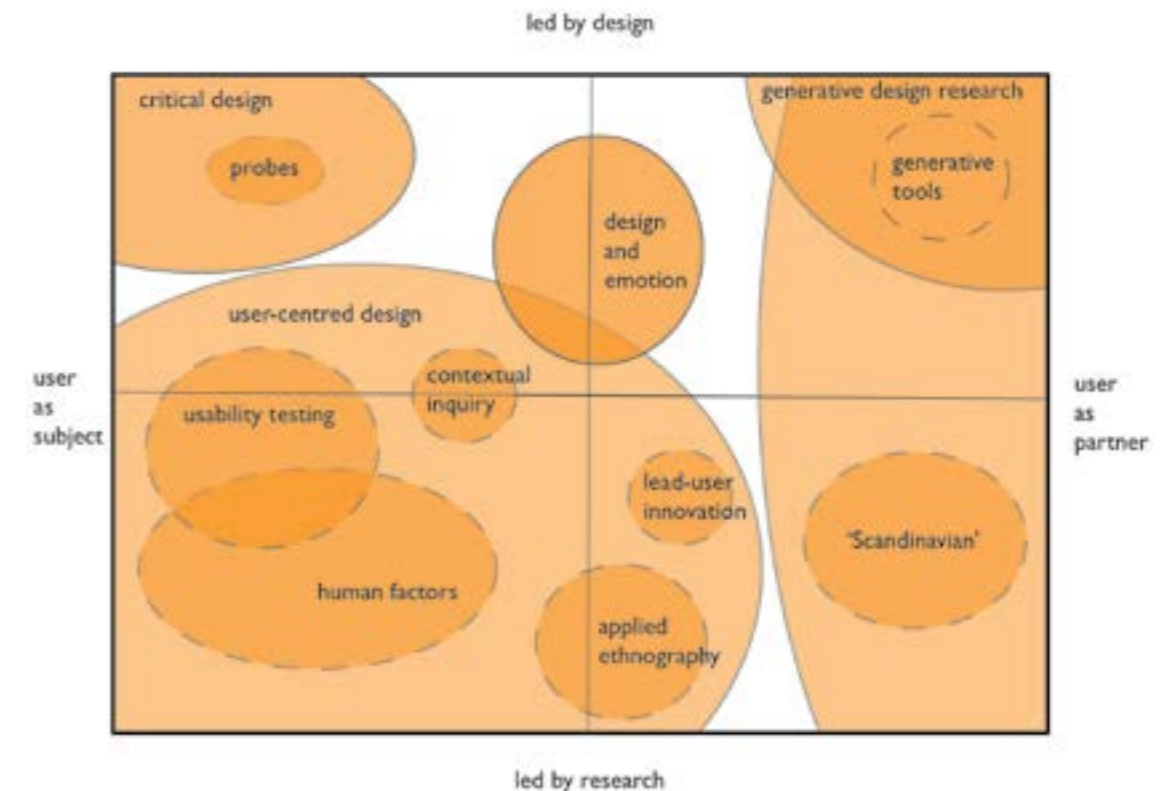


Figure 19: Topography of design research in 2006. Redrafted from Sanders & Stappers (2008).

The field of 'design and emotion' is represented as the smallest field within this 'topography of design research' (Sanders 2006:4). It has been charted but is yet unmapped; it does not feature any distinctive research methods, tools or smaller fields of research within it. Yet this seemingly small and under-explored area of design research is placed almost at the central axis of design thinking: it is led by design and led by research, with the user as subject and / or partner. It may well be that it is precisely this positioning within the field that makes it difficult to explore this area. We can also observe that it is only the area of 'design and emotion' that overlaps with any of the other fields. Currently, the overlap with 'user-centred design' describes the role of industrial design, including interaction design and product design, within 'design and emotion' as promoted by the international Design and Emotion Society and the group for Designing Pleasurable Products and Interfaces at Northumbria University. The Design and Emotion Society was set up in 1999 to initiate the integration of pertinent themes of emotional experience to practitioners, researchers and industry. Its remit is broad, and yet research in this area is still driven by these particular areas of design. Simon J Williams (2001:13) argues that "Emotions... are embodied modes of being in the world, and the sine qua non of sociality and selfhood, conceived in intercorporeal, intersubjective, communicative terms." He also sets up a social condition of eroticism

as he explores the embodied gesture through the tension of the irrational and rational, focusing on the sociology of emotions of Marx, Simmel, Durkheim and Weber (Williams 2001:6). Once again, we see scholars pointing to a social condition of oscillation; here its tension is eroticised by the context of emotion and sociality. Sui and Ho (2012) have proposed a new model for research in this area that connects the three areas of ‘emotion design, emotional design and emotionalize design’. Instead I wish to borrow (and corrupt!) Frayling’s (1993:5) adage for art and design research; I propose that design *for* emotion, design *into* emotion and design *through* emotion will become key drivers for innovative textile practice and the development of textile design theory. Recognising that emotion is not simply an outcome of the design process but part of it aligns again with Kimbell’s messy, contingent nexus. Williams (2001:58) notes that Sartre (1962/1971) claims that “Emotions... at one and the same time, involve both an imaginative mode of being-in-the-world and an imaginary ‘escape’ from it. Confronted with a difficulty or impasse of some sort, for example, emotion ‘transforms’ the situation, making it somehow more ‘tolerable’, ‘liveable’ or ‘bearable.’”

Herbert Simon’s ‘science of design’ recognises that designers “...devise(s) courses of action aiming at changing existing situations into preferred ones.” (Simon 1969:111) The correlation between Sartre’s statement and established broad definitions of design is uncanny, and begs for many more qualitative studies of design thinking and process, in particular those from the feminist research approach of seeking to represent multiple subjectivities.

In ‘*On Understanding Emotion*’, Denzin (1984/2007:88) talks about ‘emotional-interpretive practices’ and goes on to offer several different kinds. Interpretive practices include those that are ‘embodied’, ‘situated’, ‘personal’, ‘embedded’ and ‘accomplished’, and he explains that these interpretive practices must be considered with regard to how the “emotionality of the person attaches to these interpretive practices”. He then outlines ‘emotional practices’ as a complex coalition of these numerous interpretive practices, and says that “Any practice may become emotional, for all that is required is a transformation in the consciousness of the person out of the taken-for-granted into the world of emotional consciousness... To criticize and evaluate a practice is to criticize and evaluate the person who lies behind the practice.” (1984/2007:89)

This last statement resonates with me. Firstly, as a lecturer I recall many years of the unenviable task of feeding back assessment grades to students. The range in the emotional response is wild, sometimes instantaneous, sometimes brewing, and dependent on the person. We have judged their personal design work. They feel we have judged them. Secondly, it summarises my own research experience, in particular my change of direction into the autoethnographic, a more personal, emotional self-conscious realm, and it reminds me of the vulnerability of my position as I prepare this thesis for academic judgement. It is my textile design practice. It is an emotional practice.

Considering design as an emotional practice, not only as a means of producing ‘pleasurable products and interfaces’, may result in more effective pleasurable products. Friedman’s ‘conceptual challenges’ stress the complexity of design problems where there are a number of ‘organisations, stakeholders, producers and users’ – understanding the emotionality of design activity may be important in ensuring success.

“In the possibles of the practice, a world of doing that haunts and eludes the person is grasped and molded into concrete doing and accomplishments. The person claims ownership of these doings. The world becomes the person to the extent that practices produce actions that can be reflected on and claimed. The practices of the person produce things that are extensions of the person. In these practices the person is disclosed and revealed... We give ourselves over to our practices, and in these practices we find ourselves” (Denzin 1984/2007: 89 – 90)

Design as an emotional practice is well defined here, and reflects several aspects I have developed in this thesis: the conative qualities of the ‘possible’, giving over oneself in the act of translation/transformation, design thinking as an ever-increasing, expansive matrix requiring physical and conceptual folding and playing, grasping and moulding emblematic of the rhizomatic breakage. Applying Denzin’s idea of ‘emotional practices’ to design does somewhat privilege the role of the designer, and this is a criticism of much established design research; however, if we return to seeing this as part of a triad of design for, through and in emotion, we can see how studies in this area could address and produce insights into the nexus of design thinking.

When we consider the activities of textile design as transformative translation/response, or as giving and expressing pleasure, it is immediately clear that textile design has much to offer the field of ‘design and emotion’. This is not to say that many textile designers have not already impressed upon this field within their practice, but very little critical commentary accompanies it. Some textile designers feel the need to rebrand themselves as ‘sensory’ or ‘material’ designers, burying their textile credentials deep into their curriculum vitae.

Despite its aptitude for it, within the current incarnation of ‘design and emotion’ textile design, is quiet. In the Design and Emotion Society’s conference paper archive, spanning thirteen years, only seven papers were searchable under the key term of ‘textiles’. What textile design currently lacks is a catchy ‘label’ for the processes it uses. Instead I propose this very long-winded proposal (in the tradition of Buckminster Fuller’s wordy predictions).

Pleasure-giving aspects of natural and artificial decoration, ornament and texture (themselves recursively evolved from natural and archaic markings, pattern and surfaces) are co-operated with and activated as transformations and expressions of phenomena, emotion and sensations by the subjective designer, who uses repetition and composition in the creation of a visual and haptic multi-dimensional matrix to carry and communicate sensory and emotional information and messages of beauty in a multitude of commodified corporeal scenarios.

This statement says much about the activities and cognition of the textile designer and the historical and universal significance of textiles, as well as its specifically liminal position as a designed object. It aims to define the textile design process in reference to concepts raised in conversation with the textile designers, and it layers with my earlier hypothesis of textile design thinking.

And so, I continue to unfold, in *textasis*.

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CONTENTS

Appendix A

Materials consulted in addition to references given. (3-10)

Appendix B

Table of questions used in conversation with textile designers from 2010 – 2011 (11-12)

Appendix C

Transcripts of conversations from 2009 – 2011. (13-141)

TD2 (13-28)

TD3 (29-37)

TD4 (38-44)

TD5 (45-50)

TD6 (51-63)

TD7 (64-70)

TD8 (71-76)

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Appendix D

Conversation transcripts: Topics arising (143-144)

Appendix E

Drawings of textile designers by University of Portsmouth students (2009). (145-152)

Appendix F

Drawings of textile designers by members of the fashion and textiles research group at the Royal College of Art (2010). (153-157)

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APPENDIX B

Table of questions used in conversation with textile designers from 2010 - 2011

| For conversations | Relationship to materials, colour & pattern (textiles) | Description of their practice | Understanding of what textile design is/does | Perception of textile designers (self & others) | Textiles' position in regards to other fields of design |
|---|--|--|--|---|--|
| First interest in textile design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouraged by female family member. - Playing with 'stuff' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describe first experiences of stitching etc | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inexplicable intuitive attraction to fabric, colour, drawing, stitch etc. Pleasure from the object inspired interest in the thinking and process. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making things / craft orientated | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Art, drawing could be applied onto a functional object made it attractive. |
| Education / Training (School, College, University, Domestic) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Art, drawing, painting - Perhaps studied another art & design subject before textiles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describe specialising in print, weave, stitch etc - Learning the process and thinking of textile design - Enjoyable and experimental | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With hindsight may describe naivety in regards to textiles' role in industry – a lack of an understanding gained only through professional experience. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Female, style of dress, similar interests. - Others perception of textiles is unclear often regarded in a deprecating manner, as craft, stitch, decorative arts - not as a design discipline | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Misunderstood and belittled. - Textiles 'services' other fields of design such as fashion |
| Professional Practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design choices more informed by market requirements or technical limitations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Separation of design from making - Pace set by market/client. | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Comments:</p> | <p><i>I expect a description of an interest in art or craft and an innate attraction to colour and pattern (possibly clothing or interior object) which endures and at a professional level has been honed but is compromised by the market and manufacturing processes.</i></p> <p><i>I hope to gain a greater understanding of textile designer's reconciliation of art, design and craft.</i></p> | <p><i>I expect varied responses that describe their working methods and thinking. Most will include approaches to research (travel, art, photography),</i></p> | <p><i>I do not expect questions on this theme to be answered clearly as I am identifying this as a problem with the taciturn nature of the textile design discipline.</i></p> <p><i>I am unsure what responses will be gathered from the professional designers as they are working in different contexts.</i></p> | <p><i>I expect that they will initially describe a stereotype which they suspect is held by others. However, is this in fact an archetype – what makes it true (if it is)?</i></p> <p><i>I hope that they will try to explain how they recognise themselves (and others) as textile designers, in doing so highlighting specific skills or characteristics of textile designers.</i></p> | <p><i>I expect that they will express some frustrations with the low value given to the role of textile designers in industry. I plan to ask for specific examples when appropriate.</i></p> |
| <p>Framework Questions:</p> | <p><i>How did you first become aware of your interest in textile design?</i></p> <p><i>In your education or career, why did you choose to pursue textile design (over other art and design disciplines)?</i></p> | <p><i>What were your first experiences of designing/ making textiles?</i></p> <p><i>How did you learn the textile design process?</i></p> <p><i>Please describe your design methods and thought processes.</i></p> <p><i>Have your design methods or processes altered over the years? If so, how and why?</i></p> | <p><i>What was your initial understanding of what textile design is all about?</i></p> <p><i>While studying textile design, what consideration did you give to the purpose of textile design?</i></p> <p><i>What do you now understand to be the role of textile design?</i></p> | <p><i>(Please draw a textile designer.)</i></p> <p><i>How did you first identify yourself as a textile designer?</i></p> <p><i>What makes a textile designer?</i></p> <p><i>In your opinion, how do other designers identify a textile designer?</i></p> <p><i>In your opinion, how do clients or other non-designers perceive textile design?</i></p> | <p><i>Please describe in as much detail as possible any experiences you may have of working with designers from other disciplines.</i></p> <p><i>Can you describe how you present, market and sell your designs?</i></p> |

APPENDIX C

Transcripts of conversations from 2009 - 2011

Key

Textile Designer (TD1) : Elaine Igoe

Textile Designer (TD 2 - 16) : Anonymised textile designers in conversation

The conversations have been compiled in chronological order.

F : Female Speaker

6th February 2009

TD1: Okay this is Friday 6th February and I'm in conversation with [REDACTED], MA student at [REDACTED]

The first thing I'd quite like to ask you about it your current working methods. If you want to you can use the project you are working on at the moment as an example. Start wherever you want to start.

TD2: Okay, shall I just start this year or beyond this year?

TD1: It's up to you. If you've got, kind of, methods that you always use that might be interesting to talk about or if you've tried new things this time.

TD2: Generally my works very repetitive. I kind of look at a lot of really simple shapes and tend to repeat those. Previously I looked at lots of kind of cutting out the same shape and then sticking them back together to make a surface, whereas now I'm more kind of using stitch and using driftwood and wood. Originally my research was looking at graffiti, looking at colour and kind of looking at grids and text and, just kind of, that sort of concept and kind of moving it into my own work, to taking it away from, kind of, the street art and then making it my own using, kind of, more textile mediums.

TD1: So how do you, kind of, go about getting ideas. So you've talked about, kind of, the way you use those shapes. Where is it, how is it, is it on the loo, is it...?

TD2: Generally it's day to day, like if I'm walking around. Most of my research previously, like, even on my BA, was everyday shapes, everyday objects, look at, like, the shape of a doorhandle or the shape of a crate of the floor, or... and obviously graffiti is quite an everyday thing. So just, from like, it's nothing kind of massive. I don't go into the library and research or like, you know, something really kind of intense, it's just everyday, really simple, simple things.

TD1: And it comes back down to shape, for you mainly.

TD2: Yeah, a lot... a lot of shape. A bit of colour. And maybe like layering and things, the composition of what I'm looking at and the way it sits within the landscape. And then I do, like, a bit of research around that. I don't... I guess I don't really research that much. I take my own photographs, like, I like to use my own research and then look at other artists and what they are doing around that area, but... it's nothing kind of massively complex.

- TD1: So, when you... I don't know if your tutors says or not, but when they are asking you about your research, what do you call your research then? Is it your photographs and...
- TD2: Yeah, generally it's my photographs or what I see, what I... generally I don't really record stuff but it is, my research is, just day to day.
- TD1: So do you draw it or...
- TD2: A little. I do a little bit of sketching, I don't do a lot of drawing. I prefer to just record stuff with photographs. And then like a bit of research in, like, magazines, on the internet, and interesting things. I don't draw that much. I kind of work through my ideas by using the materials rather than drawing it and then going... I like to kind of work with the materials and see where that goes rather than transferring it from somewhere else.
That's the way I've always worked, really.
- TD1: Do you use sketch books at all?
- TD2: Yeah.
- TD1: At what stage do you start to use those or put stuff into them or...
- TD2: Initially I start with... on this project I started with my sketch book. I did lots of, like, tracings of my photographs that I'd blown up. I used to work a lot in sketch books but I don't work in them so much anymore. I prefer to work with, like, little bits of fabric or 3D stuff that you can't stick in a sketch book. So it's kind of like little... my sketch book is like little samples of things rather than, like, an actual thing you can flick through. And then I really didn't like my sketch books so I kind of stay away from that.
- TD1: I remember at the critique the way you presented your work. You'd very consciously present it in a way to, sort of, show what was going on inside your brain, the connections that you'd made.
- TD2: I did kind of want to show that it was very work in progress and kind of... I've come from here and used a bit of that and now it's like this but I don't know where it's going to go. I wanted it to be clearly, kind of, a work in progress – not something that's finalised or it's going to stay as it is, or what have you.
- TD1: So, the shelf that you had the kind of small bits of drift wood that you put, you'd wrapped yarn around... that's kind of your sketch book pages on that shelf.
- TD2: Yeah, that's my sketch book.
- TD1: I want to ask you about whether you use trend forecasting imagery or materials.
- TD2: Not at all.
- TD1: Not at all?

- TD2: No.
- TD1: Is that a conscious decision to kind of not use them?
- TD2: I think... A I've never been encouraged to use them because of... I did multimedia previously and now obviously mixed media, and I never was really introduced to them, whereas I think the printers a lot were working towards the trends or looking at the colours.
- TD1: So did you do multi media at Loughborough?
- TD2: Yeah.
- TD1: That's the course I did.
- TD2: Did you really? Did you have [REDACTED]
- TD1: Yes, I had [REDACTED]
- TD2: How many years ago did you do that?
- TD1: Longer than... no, I finished in 2001, so it's not that long ago.
- TD2: Yeah, I finished in 2006, so that's not too long ago. Oh, that's crazy. So Val was never like, you know, look at the trends or... I never really even know about them apart from a little bit from the printers.
- TD1: When I was doing my degree, the one.. it's not majorly more... have you seen this before, view on colour?
- TD2: I think so, yeah. I don't think I've seen that particular issue.
- TD1: I got just so into it and it was quite fashionable when I was doing my degree to look at this. And it has... it has quite sort of evocative imagery and samples and colour and things like this. And from what you might know of my previous work, kind of using flocking and stuff, kind of probably vaguely heard of it. This was like the spread which first, sort of, made me think about using, kind of, texture and fibre and things like that. And I was just sort of wondering if you looked at the imagery that you take, at the photographs that you take, in a very similar way, because these images are designed to be read for colour and texture and shape. So, yeah, I was just wondering if you made any connection with this at all?
- TD2: I don't know.
- TD1: If you've never really looked at it then you've not looked at it.
- TD2: I mean, I do look at magazines and imagery, and it does influence me and like... I do like a lot of photographs within magazines and things. I don't really know... Sometimes my photographs are really important, and like magazines... load of magazines and images, like, wow wow...

- TD1: What sort of magazines do you look at?
- TD2: A broad range, like the embroidery magazines or the arty, generally the arty magazines like 'Dazed and Confused'... or, what's that other... massive textiles one... is it Viewpoint or ... or Textile View or something...
- TD1: Yeah, Textile View. It's very kind of, same company.
- TD2: But generally I just look at anything that's on the shelf and have a flick through and see if it's suitable.
- TD1: And do you... sound like I'm really picking on you this time but, do you kind read much around... or is it literally just the images. Are you looking for something which is just catching your eye.
- TD2: Generally just what catches my eye. I might have a look around and see... like search... kind of text behind what I'm look at but generally it's just imagery imagery imagery.
- TD1: So for example, the project you are working on at the moment, where you said the original sort of inspiration came from looking at graffiti. The other imagery that you've been looking at, these magazines, is it all still kind of sort of connected to text and graphic or can it be anything?
- TD2: No... anything.
- TD1: So what are the connections that you make in your brain? Can you describe them to me, between the things that could be anything and the things that related to the initial inspiration?
- TD2: I don't know, because I've moved away from the text now. When I was looking at magazines the other day I was looking at particularly embroidery magazines because I wanted to see what's, kind of, in the sphere of embroidery and I don't normally look at those magazines so much.
- TD1: That's because you're using the threading...
- TD2: Yeah, looking at stitch and things, yeah. So I didn't actually find any imagery this time that I found interesting. But sometimes I can go and I'll find absolutely loads of stuff. Just even if it's just like really basic shapes or some colour or something... So at the moment I'm kind of really stuck on imagery and I'm kind of just picking... generally around on journeys I'll see things and I'll use that imagery and I'll translate it into my own drawing, and that's kind of my imagery at the moment – just really random, like, on the little pieces of wood there's like a diamond and a heart and there's like two arrows squashing something and they're not... they're just things that I've thought of... it's not from anywhere or... it's kind of my.. how I'm feeling and like, kind of, that shape relates to how I'm feeling at that moment in time and it feels like it's an important shape even if it's just like, you know, a crappy little heart or something. So it's kind of, it's weird the way that I'm using imagery at the moment because it's not from my own photographs or from research or.. it's kind of more how I'm feeling and how the shape relates to my mindset at that time.

- TD1: So it's all quite intuitive really.
- TD2: Yeah, in a way.
- TD1: That's interesting.
- TD2: It's quite unusual for me to be working like this because I'm not... I don't normally work like that... it's not about how I feel it's about just shape and...
- TD1: Okay. What I want to sort of ask you about now is: the project you are working on at the moment – what kind of design outcomes or final pieces are you thinking you might produce?
- TD2: I've got no idea. Because obviously when we were doing the work in progress I was saying, you know, these are pieces in themselves but where do I take them? Do I make them into a product... and I really don't know where they're going to go. I mean, am I, in like, in a few weeks I might completely leave that and do something else, but at the moment I'd like to still go with the stitching on wood and take it to a lot larger scale, so maybe it's applied to surfaces. When I was talking with Kate yesterday we were talking about kind of stumps on beaches and maybe I'd stitch into those and maybe you'd come across them and it would make a nice surprise in the environment. So that would, kind of, be the product but obviously it's not a product that you can transfer anywhere. It just stays where it is and its like a surprise thing.
- TD1: Like public art.
- TD2: Yeah. So I would like to them back into their, into the living environment, whether it could be urban or rural or both... beach... I start thinking about, like, I'll make it into a chair or I'll make it into a box, sort of... it just got too consuming and I can't... I want to focus on the actual technique and the piece and what that is, rather than, being like, what's it going to go into. So maybe there will be products, maybe there will be, like, pieces that people could buy and have in their homes and maybe there's bits that are outside. I don't know, I don't have a...
- TD1: It's as if you are going to be tagging things...
- TD2: Yeah. I really don't know.
- TD1: Like graffiti.
- TD2: Yeah, because I've always kept, in my head from last year – we did a project about putting stuff back into the environment and public art and making people, you know, smile and be interested. I really enjoy people being interested in my work – like how did you do that, and isn't that interesting, and kind of drawing people's attentions and if I could do that in the outside world I'd be, quite, you know, happy to do that. But then, I don't know, there's the whole thing about do you work towards the show or do you work and then you make a show?
- TD1: Yes. So you're in your second year.

- TD2: Yeah.
- TD1: So obviously that's kind of looming, isn't it.
- TD2: Yeah.
- TD2: You've just had the show, obviously, the work in progress as well, I mean, how do you feel... does it kind of worry you how people are going to respond to these final outcomes, whatever they might be?
- TD2: Yeah. I mean in an ideal world everyone would love my work – that would be fantastic. People respond to textiles quite badly, I think, anyway, and there's a lot of, as we discussed before, what is it? Even stuff that, to me, it's obvious what it is, a lot of people don't get it. And in sense I know people might not get my work but if they are attracted to it for some reason – they like the imagery or something –as long as they feel something towards it, I'm happy at the end of the day. If they don't get it completely, if they don't get the concept behind it, or something, you know, it's not a massive concept or anything, but...
- TD1: Is it important for you that people who might come across one of your stitched pieces of driftwood on the beach know that you are a textile designer?
- TD2: No. Particularly being from mixed media textiles... I don't know. ■ at Loughborough was very 'everything is textiles' whereas here they seem to be a lot more... it's got to be textiles for it to be textiles, which I find really quite confusing because I've come from a background... it's the whole question of what is textiles and what is, what have you. Because I'm stitching on wood that's textiles process and therefore it doesn't matter that it's on wood, it's seen as textiles but ■ who's laser cutting into metal, that's not seen as textiles to some people because it's not a traditional textiles technique. So I, you know, I can see anything as textiles.
- TD1: So you feel quite comfortable in that viewpoint.
- TD2: Yeah.
- TD1: I think that does, kind of, shine a big torch on it, doesn't it, with the work in progress shows and final show as well. As obviously we share an experience of being at Loughborough and I totally feel that way as well and that's kind of what's behind my research, if you like... is that you can be encouraged and you can be as conceptual with the idea of textiles as you want to be, but it's always going to be judged in a very specific way, which is still quite narrow, which is...
- TD2: ...I say to people I do textiles – oh what do you sew, do you make clothes, and it's like, no... actually explain to people textiles is really broad and quite sculptural and it's quite 3D and you can use, you know... doesn't have to be fabric, it can be metal, plastic and what have you. People just don't get it.
- TD1: How have you felt kind of... have you worked in collaboration or have friends or anything in other departments?

- TD2: I tried....
- TD1: Oh sorry... I could see you afterwards maybe, is that alright? Okay, thank you.
- TD1: What I was asked was: do you have friends in other departments, or have you...
- TD2: Oh yeah. I've tried to be, like... because I had my idea of the text and the stitching and the grids, and I did meet up with a few different people. There was a guy from IDE and a guy from communications. But I don't think they got it and they kind of... they could have applied it to different things, because I was after a kind of product at that time and trying to get people to say what they thought it could be or how it could work with their work. They were enthusiastic towards it but there was no kind of... we didn't click and there was no kind of, you could do this, you could do that, it was... and they are so busy. I don't know. I have a friend who always says... she doesn't want to work with other people, she want to do her own thing. And in a way I'm quite the same. But if I found someone and we had, like, a similar interest, theme, I'd love to work with someone like that. But it just doesn't seem to have come.
- TD1: This might be a slightly leading question, but do you think that those students from other departments were maybe expecting something different from someone from textiles, and what you presented them with was a bit too difficult? Or...
- TD2: Yeah, possibly. I was very open in, kind of, how I described my work in the cross college email, saying that I was working with grids and that it was colourful and maybe outdoor. I think I said, like, outdoor furniture or something. But, I think people are surprised, like we had a cross college day with vehicle design, and they had, like, their snazzy sketch books and this and that and I was like... woven washing line through metal grids and think they were a bit like, you know, wow, it's really cool, like, I think they really liked it but it's... A it's majorly labour intensive and you couldn't really put it into production unless you kind of changed it around. But, yeah, it's not the traditional... it's not a fabric you could apply to anything in a way.
- TD1: Yes, I wonder sometimes whether in a situation like that there's a sudden, kind of, disappointment that we're not necessarily coming up with the goods in terms of the conventions of fashions... of textiles, I should say. Yeah, it's not that piece of fabric...
- TD2: No, it's not like I'm going to give you a fabric and you can apply it to other things. It's like, I want to work with you, to help, you know, make something that we've both been equal... it's not like I going to do my fabric for your chair, and I think maybe it would be a lot easier if it was just...
- TD1: Yeah, so it's ways of working that you're wanting to present to them rather than the outcomes, isn't it?
- TD2: Yeah.
- TD1: Okay. I just want to ask you, kind of, generally a question. Textiles design's often presented as, kind of, these mounted samples. Or it's put into a product. Do you think that in a place like [REDACTED] where it is supposed to be quite creative and quite open, that we could start to, kind of, overcome those conventions, and what

sort of outcomes are other people working on that you might know of.

TD2: There's a question. I think that considering I'm at [REDACTED] I don't know if I can even say this, I think it's very, kind of, honed down. I would think that the textiles would be, kind of, mental and you'd come to the show and it would be like – crazy crazy things that you'd never even thought of. And it's actually very, kind of, textiley, and to hear my tutor saying: "I don't think that your work is textiley enough"... kind of, really shocked me. I don't know if I'm answering the question or... but it's, like... I would think that it would be, really, you know, crazy, and like [REDACTED] always said, you know: "You're setting the trends, you're not following them," kind of. All that stuff. I would hope that it would be more, you know, than mounted samples and... there's a whole, like, textile art thing as well, which obviously [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were part of last year, and that was kind of seemed to be lost amongst the... they were embraced for who they were but it wasn't, kind of... doesn't seem to be such a feature of the, kind of, first year. There doesn't seem to be... you're not, kind of, encouraged to do that, in a way... it's very, you know, got a [REDACTED] you've got [REDACTED] projects, it's very kind of basic textiles in a way.

So I would, kind of, encourage, and I would like to be encouraged, to do more unusual things. But obviously the size of the studio, your desk spaces, restricts what you can do and...

TD1: Yeah, okay. The last sort of group of questions I want to ask you, really, are more about you and sort of how you got into textiles in the first place. And what aspects about yourself do you think or did you think when you were applying for you degrees, whatever, suited the role of the designer, specifically for textile design. Why were you drawn to it?

TD2: You see, the role of designer... I never even thought of being a designer. To me a textile designer is someone who does like little samples of fabric and then sells them and they get made into what have you.
Basically I went and lived at Loughborough... oh I did my foundation to begin with. After knowing that I wanted to do art but I didn't really know what sort of area I wanted to go into. And I don't really know how I chose textiles but that was the area that I went into and then really enjoyed. I think it was a lot of the, just constructing, playing with little things, making stuff, and colour and load of different materials. Just experimenting that I really liked. You could do... like I said I'm not a drawer. I was a bit of a painter but not really, so it was really the construction that makes you think about textiles.

And then I went to the Loughborough open day and just loved the way that they'd used so many different materials and different techniques, and just thought that it was really, kind of... inspiring and could really see myself doing that.

So I think it is all about the playing with materials and wanting to use different materials and work with different techniques and having lots of little things on the go, I think.

I mean, I don't really know why textiles so much.

TD1: Okay. This is again quite a big question. Why do textiles need to be designed? Why are we all here in a department of textiles?

TD2: It's the question I ask myself. Textiles – textile design as I think of it: you've got the

fabric samples for clothes and for interiors, and other things. And then all the other textiles, the kind of stuff that I do, and what a lot of other people do... I don't know. It's something... I guess it's quite arty. It does seem very self-indulgent that you do stuff and you don't really know what it's for. It's not necessarily a product or it's not functional in the sense that you can do things with it – you can put it on the wall but... I don't know. Textiles is a massive confusion to me, really. The course as a whole and kind of, it's very... and the fact that it's, within the college it seems to be quite a low down course; we don't get a lot of funding, we don't get... not many people apply – it's actually quite an easy course to get on to. I do... quite a lot of us question textiles.

I don't have an answer.

TD1: I'm sure you don't. I don't have answer either.

TD2: I don't know.

TD1: It's interesting to, sort of, to hear you say that, because, you know, students are sort of bound up with designing, doing things they love and doing all the things that you describe that got you into textiles in the first place: exploring materials, and although the application might be unclear it's still a really... do you still find it enjoyable?

TD2: Yeah.

TD1: It obviously hasn't, kind of, stopped you or made you change course.

TD2: It's the whole, kind of, do I do something that makes me happy or do I do something that's going to make me money, and maybe... and I'm always, like, I want to do stuff that I enjoy. I could have done lots of different things but I just stuck with arty textiles because that's what I like to do. I don't know. Textiles is such a... strange area, such a strange subject, and maybe in a way if you didn't have the tutors that, like, you know, there is a need to textiles and textiles is amazing then there wouldn't be... you wouldn't... I don't know. It's just such a strange course, it's... maybe it's because I'm caught up in the whole, you know, the product, the designers that do... that cover problems, solve the problem, make it look attractive and it's fantastic. I don't know – textiles is a very strange one.

TD1: Leading on from your last comment, I was just going to ask you about problem solving, because in a lot of theory the process of design is talked about as a problem solver. And I was just wondering how you identify with that idea, or not, whatever?

TD2: I wouldn't say that I solve a problem, only my own problems. I wish in a way we did... I don't know... it's the whole male/female thing, it's like textiles is predominantly female and then, generally, like design products is mostly male and... there's this, like a textiles, big panels that kind of fit together and I think they loop with plastic bands and like, look, there' textiles and looked at it and like, god, it's a bit crap, and we could have done it millions of years ago, kind of thing, and yet it's in a magazine under 'best use of textiles' and it' just... shocking. It really drives me up the wall. People don't seem to, kind of, seek out textiles. If it's done by some male designer who's, you know, great or whatever then it's fantastic. Textiles is not thought of that highly.

- TD1: Do you think that the problem that you've just, sort of, talked about is a problem that us who are within the discipline of textiles need to deal with? Or do you think that the profile, the image of textiles needs to be more... don't know what the word would be... welcomed more or investigated more by other disciplines. How do you think that it could work, or...
- TD2: I don't know. Ideally I'd love people to embrace textiles and start to see it as, you know... why would this piece in a magazine, you know... they've got a category 'best use of textiles' yet it's not... it doesn't seem to be that they've really explored textiles, in a way.
- TD1: I mean, some the things you were saying, it's really interesting to me because it makes me think that within textiles we've kind of been caught up in a loop with satisfying the need for those bits of fabric, like you were saying... perhaps the tutors encourage you to do whilst all these other people are kind of... we're missing the trick slightly. People are actually looking at what textiles is doing and taking the bits that are interesting and using it in a different discipline, labelling it as textiles.
- TD2: Textiles isn't obviously completely forgotten but I do think it is up to us a textile people to really push forward our ideas and our techniques and really kind of get ourselves out there, I think. I don't know how we'd... people would react to that. I don't see why it would be... I don't know, it's just the whole textiles thing has been like really traditional, you know. Textiles – well we all know what textiles is whereas most of the other disciplines, it seems to me, are constantly evolving, whereas textiles seems to be, kind of, stuck. You look at the tutors and they are obviously of a particular age and it's kind of, are we getting fresh, kind of, you know we should be constantly moving and having all these different things. It's like, you're in textiles so you get lectures about fibres and bits and pieces that you don't get a lecture about, you know, the use of wood or plastic or metals within textiles; it's still taught as a very, kind of, traditional textiles course. So in a way it's not really helpful that we're being taught in that way; it's not really pushing us, it's not pushing textiles by being told you can't really do that because it's not textiles. It's... I don't know... it's quite confusing to be a textiles student.
- TD1: With the competitions that you talked about, were you actually, sort of, told to produce some fabric samples for those or could you decide on your own outcomes, and if you wanted to, kind of, go off the brief you could.
- TD2: Yeah, I mean, you could. The projects were really hard because you had the outside companies and you had the tutors and we met up with the outside companies for the tutorials and you'd have their input saying, you know, we want you to stick bang on to the brief, and you'd have your tutors saying do whatever you want, it's your own work, kind of experiment. So there was the confliction between that, of like, what should I be doing. You could do whatever you wanted. I think it was only really... maybe [REDACTED] as well... but there was, you know, it was basically fabric. You could have done whatever you wanted, but they wanted fabric and it proper – like there was a weaver and a printer that won the John Lewis thing, so that was what they were looking for.
- So most, I guess, most of the outside projects are about fabric. Maybe that's why I didn't really like them that much. I mean, for [REDACTED] did, I didn't do just fabric, I did like a few fabric bits and then some of my own stuff. Never really thought of it

like that. But, the end... fabric, you know, you can reproduce fabric, you can make it in massive reams and it's fairly cheap and you can put it on anything and it'll sell, whereas a lot of other stuff is too labour intensive, you can't use those materials, it's just not going to work. It would be like a one off thing or... and that's it. Unless they, like digitally printed it.

TD1: What's always fascinated me with the classic A3 sample mounted on an A2: piece of card...

TD2: Which is just Loughborough through and through...

TD1: Yeah, at Loughborough I was doing that, but my sample would be the... you know... you could never stitch it into anything, you wouldn't be able to wash it because things would drop off of it, and it... had paper in it, bits of old fur, and, you know, it just, it was a... a meditation on textiles, I would say, rather than a piece of working fabric that could be reproduced. But the way it's presented like that, as if it has been cut off a roll, and it could be, you know, you could buy rolls of this, and it's totally commercial and it's actually a bit of a misnomer that I'd... I was just kind of conditioned to show my work that way.

TD2: We were always told at Loughborough... don't make a product. When it's as it is, people can see it as anything, you know, it's fantastic, it can be whatever you want it to be. And in actual fact they see it as a bit of something and they don't know what to do with it. So it's like, the confusion as well between how you're taught textiles and, like you say, how you're conditioned really does affect what you think about textiles. I don't know, it's very confusing as a subject. And to be told one thing and then to go somewhere else and to be told completely the other, and... I don't know, is it really helpful to teach people to do stuff like that and then... because [REDACTED] would always say to me, because I had to Texprint and people would always say: "Well what is it?" How would I make it into something; [REDACTED] was always like: "You just do it as a digital print." They'd just print it and that would be it – that's how they translate it and at the time I thought that was perfectly acceptable. Now I don't think it's acceptable at all.

TD1: It is quite amazing, kind of, when you get to the trade fair, isn't it, and, you know, you're producing your stuff which is highly creative and you're, you know, you're pleased with it because you know you've really been exploring something genuinely but it is, when it comes down to it... like you said, it has to be on a plate – there's no space for that, kind of, imagining of what it could be. It needs to be ready to go as it is, and...

TD2: But like, to be taught that way for like three years and to not think about product; now, when I have to think about product, I can't do it. I'm really confused as to, like, how... how do I fit textiles and product together, it's like, you know, textiles and fashion – how do they combine to make a garment that is successful in both areas. I don't know about product.

TD1: Thank you, [REDACTED] That's been really interesting. No, it's like so familiar, everything that you're saying is so familiar to me, it really is. It's just so weird because, yeah, it's just kind of exactly what I had when I was at Loughborough, and I did Texprint as well...

- TD2: Did you? Ace! Cool!
- TD1: And, got the breaking new ground prize; it was all that kind of... yeah, you know, this is all great – what you're doing is really kind of [...] and...
- TD2: Have you got stuff on the internet? Can I Google and see what you did before?
- TD1: Oh, there's not really a lot. You might get the odd bit of Texprint coming up, but... yeah, it's like kind of... yeah, what she's doing is... and I got along really well with [REDACTED] and then I did my MA at St Martin's and they were kind of...
- TD2: What did you do?
- TD1: I did the MA Fashion, and I did textiles pathway, which was a fantastic experience but I should not have done textiles at St Martins. It is not a textile design college.
- TD2: So did you have [...]
- TD1: Yes, I did. And [REDACTED] was really, kind of, pushed me towards that, pushed me onto that course. I really enjoyed... I met good friends and it was definitely something I glad I did, but again there, I mean, I... my final collection was a menswear's collection which had, like, horsehair flocking and a big coat which I put magnets inside of and then put iron filings on top of, so it looked like...
- TD2: I think I might of seen that. I don't know if [REDACTED] actually showed us it – I've definitely seen it in my past.
- TD1: So again, completely like unwearable, unwashable, but still very much textiles for me. And [REDACTED] loved it, you know, and I've always kind of then questioned... I'm teaching textile design now and I'm teaching students who, kind of, aren't the best ability students, so it is very much about that A3 sample, you know. Screen printing it, digital printing, it's hand embellishment, make something pretty, if you like, that's going to sell. And it's kind of not where I'm coming from at all, so it's always been weird to try and think, okay, so what is my position then amongst all of this, because I'm not art, I'd never call myself textile art, but I'm not this kind of commercial designer either, but I still am textiles – so it's like, where do I go? And that's kind of behind what I'm doing now, really. It's really interesting because it's just... you said some great things.
- TD2: That's good. But honestly I am baffled by textiles. But like [REDACTED], I don't know if you know [REDACTED] – Scottish lady, we're like, what the hell is textiles? What is, like, why are we here? What are we doing? What are we going to do when we finish? And like, I don't know, it's just.
- TD1: I'm thinking of, well... I mentioned it to [REDACTED] and now she's like: "Yes, you've got to do it." Try and set up maybe like a little symposium, basically, asking what that is and just getting maybe some of you lot, if you're interested, some commercial designers, getting some of the tutors or maybe not, if it makes it difficult. And just actually starting to ask this question about what it is, where's it going, kind of, what are we not talking about because, you know, like I was saying, other people seem to be hitting on the things that we just do naturally. What are we not talking about enough?

- TD2: Yeah. People are interested in textiles, that's the thing, there is interest. It's just, I don't know, there seems to be some sort of lock or some sort of: we can't quite get out of the textiles... I don't know. Because people do like it, it is interesting but it's, kind of, maybe, you know, where does it fit and how does it function and then there is the whole craft aspect to it, of course, which is... oh, it's just craft, and whole, you know, art craft design...
- TD1: It's girls playing around with things, with stitching and... I think the feminine thing, definitely, as you said as well, has a big role to play.
- TD2: Massively.
- TD1: That, kind of, stay in your place kind of thing.
- TD2: And in a way I'd love it, like, everyone next door was doing massive sculptures and being like, manly about it, and then there's me, like, doing a little stitching thing. I like the fact that it's so broad and you can do whatever you want. We had some people looking around on the open day they were like, oh we hear it kind of really stitch focused, is that true? I was like, no, although the tutors want you to do traditional stuff but you don't have to – you can do whatever you want, it's fine...
- TD1: Even in a traditional sense it's not particularly stitch focused, is it?
- TD2: No. I don't know where... because I think the tutors had said that to them in like the opening thing in the senior common room and I was like – not really. When I was in the first year I seemed to be pushed towards kind of, you know, the skills – it's the skills gets me – it's like, you know, do your digital embroidery and do your crotchet and it's kind of like, no I don't want to do that. That's really not what I'm interested in. I've not come here to do...
- TD1: It takes a lot of guts to kind of keep going with that because it's... I've got all sorts of random skills like paper making, you know, know how magnets work, just because I've gone off on these tangents, but actually screen printing I'm shit at because I didn't really do very much of it, and it is... it does really take guts to say kind of just say no, I'm quite happy in this sort of way I'm working...
- TD2: But in a way I know that I am kind of... I know that it would be so much better for me to leave with all these skills but at the moment I'm kind of no, I just want to do what I'm doing; I don't want to get these skills that don't relate to my work. And maybe when I leave I might pick up the skills and do things with them. But if it doesn't relate, if I'm not interested in it I don't see why I should be... have these skills to put on my CV or what have you. At the end of the day if I don't want to do it now I won't want to do it when I leave.
- TD1: I think there is, for somebody like you, who's kind of going to leave next year, who works in this way, I think there does have to be some other kind of place to fit which I think, kind of, does exist, and I think probably, if more of what you're talking about happens then that will grow, but I don't think there is really an understanding of that yet, or... yeah, I don't know...

- TD2: There's the whole question of, you know, what are we going to do when we leave? It's like, do I tailor my work to make me more employable when I leave? Or do I do something that I like and maybe someone will pick up and give me a, you know, offer me a job or offer me something that I've never even heard of before, and that, just by doing what I enjoy doing, that's got me...
- TD1: You'll probably end up doing research.
- TD2: Someone was talking about it today. [REDACTED] was saying that she might do, you know, an MPhil or a PhD or... however they work. I was like: my god.
- TD1: It's very different, but, I think, kind of, if you're question about stuff then, yeah, it is a good route.
- TD2: I didn't realise it could be so, kind of, practise as well.
- TD1: [REDACTED] is kind of a great example of that because she just makes, makes, makes and obviously she writes as well, but... yes, she's kind of never lost that thread of being that textiles person, and... yeah, so it can be very makerly, if that's the right word.
- TD2: And then there's a lot of talk about, you know, is research maybe where textiles falls down, that there's not enough research students and there's not enough feeding to us about research, because [REDACTED] was saying that apparently after the third year of MA you can go on and do MPhil.
- TD1: Right. Oh, I see.
- TD2: We never knew that.
- TD1: No, I'd never heard of that.
- TD2: It's never discussed... and it's like, you guys are in the little room and we don't know much about research, apart from work in progress, and...
- TD1: When we rear our ugly heads, Yeah, it's.. I think there is, to be quite honest, a bit of a lack of understanding. I mean we've got [REDACTED] now, who's really, really good. She's really like... she's going to kind of build something, you get a sense she's really going to build something here. I know that she's quite critical of...[long pause] what I was going to say was she's quite critical of... [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. it's textiles, textiles, textiles as in fabric.
- TD2: And yes, she is from a print background, she's... worked at Liberty's, what have you. She will be very much into that. And also textiles is kind of second to fashion as well and they constantly compare, like, you know, when we have our student meetings and whatever, why don't you combine with fashion and we have a walk round work in progress: why don't we have more fashion and it's like, not all of us are fashion.

- TD1: Yeah, I have problem with that, thinking why is fashion and textiles always put together. Actually they work in completely different ways?
- TD2: Yeah, because to me I'm nothing to do with fashion at all, like, not even slightly, and yet, we're in the same department, which I can accept, that's fine, but, you know. I don't even work in a similar way to how they work.
- TD1: You could just as easily be with product design.
- TD2: Exactly.
- TD1: Or ceramics, even.
- TD2: Yeah, any department, you know.
- TD1: Any department.
- TD2: Literally any department would be a better match, probably. I don't know, it's the constant, you know, it's like we cling on to fashion. We have to do projects for them and...
- TD1: Because they have to make something out of what you do, you know, what you make, to make it make sense of it, I suppose.
- TD2: Part of me thinks is it because fashion get the money, get the funding, and therefore we have to tag on with their projects and we can get a bit of the funding. Like, I don't know how it works, but it always seems like... we'll do their projects and we'll work with them. I know they try and help us to work with other departments but it is always fashion and textiles.
- TD1: It was easier when it was in your own school, wasn't it, but... yeah, I think that's something that could be... I mean, it's so ingrained, isn't it? It's such an old tradition now of fashion and textiles are together, even in the Royal College of Art. It's... yeah, it's kind of a difficult subject to broach.
- TD2: I appreciate that fashion and textiles are very similar, and like my work could go into fashion, but it's not always... that way. It's not a given.
- TD1: It's not like, kind of, goldsmithing, silversmithing, jewellery, where you're kind of using similar methods because actually fashion designers design process and textile designers design process are completely different. To start off with you're thinking about form without colour necessarily, without... it's three dimensional, always three dimensional. And, yes, I just think it's completely different.
- TD2: It's like, we're textiles... shitty textiles... which doesn't really help. I don't care because I'm nothing to do with fashion.
- TD1: There is definitely, kind of, I think people have this stereotype of what a textile designer looks like, even.

TD2: Yeah, you've got big beads, you must be a textile designer.

TD1: Yeah, yeah.

TD2: Bloody hell, where did this come from?

TD1: Even I say that, like, my friends – that's textile teacher jewellery – big chunky beads, and a scarf.

TD2: How did that even become? I don't know many people who have big beads and stuff. People can pick you out. It is very strange.

6th February 2009

- TD3: I did my grad studies in [] in India. I think the grad studies there, especially in design, are very different from studies anywhere else in an art school. This is my experience. It was more sort of craft driven and [] driven. We were always geared towards serving the industry or serving a purpose. The craft purpose or the industry. It was very purpose driven, much less an expression of yourself as it is here in art. And I think the three years that I did in the textile department and one year on secondment ... talk about design process as a methodology to solve a problem so design were kind of given to us in a very different format and I think I followed that through my work. And the four years between my grad studies and coming here I've been working with two different kinds of organisations one working in a craft organisations trying to look at whatever the constraints they are working with, depending on economic constraints, physical constraints and sometimes even language and sort of exposure that they.. implementation and trying to create products that work within, that can be created sustainably within the context, and at the same time have a purpose beyond what they are capable of creating, so kind of connecting the two dots. And the second type of work that I've been doing was more commercial just trying to balance, because of course financially it has to balance out, when you're feeding your personal finances into a project craft related you have to kind of balance it out, and a lot of them were very commercial design projects for design companies in India or around in Europe who wanted design work done for like short term. So it was very driven about their own collections. And the third is I've been researching on colour, in India, and a lot of white goods companies which are larger than, you know, they don't work on one country they work on a large scale the CDs are almost common design common for a different context. The colour is what distinguishes. And in India, funnily enough, there is more colour in white goods than there is in any other country. They sell more colour than white whereas internationally it's always stainless steel or white. So for me it was exciting to apply something of a textile knowledge to be able to apply it to something that stays longer, which is very interesting in the context of sustainability, that you are not throwing this out. This product is going to be there for longer, so how to you relate to something that...
- TD1: So it was the colour, you were coming up with new colours, were you, or...?
- TD3: Colours and materials and looking at essentially the... It's all good on a drawing board when it actually goes to the application there are a lot of constraints that come in, in terms of the feasibility of the colour in terms of production, how many lines are running, the different components, how do they work, the different materials, so sort of looking not only at the colour as it is but also in the context of how it actually gets produced. To the last point where it is actually sent into production. The whole cycle of two years that it goes through.
- TD1: That's really interesting that you, as a textile designer, were asked to participate in that product design, basically, weren't you. How did that come about and how did it work when you were working with other kinds of designers?
- TD3: I was a bit cheeky, I think, because as soon as I got out of, um, the common path way that in [], that's the school I went to, follow, is that you sort of intern with a company and sort of work your way up. Then when you feel confident enough, you kind of, if

you want to, strike out on your own. I did a scholarship in Stockholm for a while, which kind of was very different. Much like here, it was very much about your own personal approach and you driving your work versus somebody else giving you a brief and you following it or creating something out of it. Which sort of triggered me to thinking about colour, realising that most of my work was way more colourful than what I look personally, so it was very much about the other and not about myself – it didn't look like me, yet it was serving a purpose and I started looking into what other – how do you work around these constraints, and that's what triggered my work.

Which made me look at what I want to do versus what is available and I figured that when I look around a house – Indian houses are very different from international homes in the sense that there is much more colour going in – and very odd surfaces put together, which are not driven by choice but more by need and availability. And which was interesting because what was available was very odd, and I tried to look at, you know, the other surfaces that in the interior. And that's how I just approached the white good company and said “who's doing your colour – can I help?”

TD1: Okay, and they took that on board were interested and...

TD3: It was a risk, just approaching someone like that, but I think that it was a crucial time in Indian design, sort of, the industry at large. Because in the last five years a lot has changed. Since 2000's especially, when the market was opened to international brands there was a turning point, I think. And then coming out as a grad student at that time has been very lucky for me because you've seen a lot of change in a very short span of time, which kind of matures you in the context of what is the impact that you're making. You suddenly make a small change and there's a big impact. You see it in large quantities. It has a very different effect as to creating a small piece of work in your own personal space and having someone react to it. I was more excited about the large scale impact that a designer can make versus my own personal statement. So it was very much driven about making a difference in large numbers at that time. And this change has been kind of drastic for me personally because it's not at all about the other, it's about finding myself, which I think needs to balance at some point, for me.

TD1: Okay. So you're a second year, are you?

TD3: I'm a first year.

TD1: A first year. So you've got a year to go before you finish. Okay. I just wanted to ask you: as you're now on this course how do you go about kind of getting ideas? What do you do to get ideas for new work?

TD3: It has been a real struggle, to be honest. Because the first semester here was all about doing your own project for nine weeks which I found completely impossible because I'm very much about feeding off another person's requirement and twisting it around in my head. So I almost... my work so far has been driven by what is already there and modifying it. When you start from nothing it's almost like there are too many options so it was a little off. But now there a lot of client projects coming in my work is very much again gone back to, you know, picking something, playing with it, trying it out, and the recent project that I did with.. for.. [REDACTED] was very much about... just work

started off with my own personal ideals which was about recycling – I’m very excited about how there is so much waste in India and how it’s managed. And it’s very manual as compared to a lot of developed countries where you are not so attached to the idea of... you’re not present there and it doesn’t impact – the concept of recycling or reuse doesn’t impact us too much – you just put it in a recycle bin and it goes off – it’s shipped off somewhere else. And in India it’s very transparent – you see that being done at an everyday level. It has a very different impact on you.

And you see how handling of these waste is very different from it being, you know, put in a box and sent away. I think that was what triggered that project.

TD1: So your ideas for design really come about from what you’re seeing in the world around you, and you’re responding to social situations and environmental issues. Is that right?

TD3: Yes. I don’t know if it’s a direct, sort of, linear build up. I can’t sort of describe the process but I seem to be thinking something in my head but what I’m doing I kind of later realise that, oh, it’s kind of linked but it’s not purpose. In fact I disconnect the two – I tend to get very, you know, product driven and it’s very progressive, my way of doing it but it’s not... in this case I’m trying to break that. Which is interesting – it’s still getting me the same result but in a very different, sort of, way.

TD1: I suppose that comes back to what you were saying: it’s trying to find the balance isn’t it, for you. Kind of, what is right for you in the end. So, I hear you’ve got an idea to start a project or a collection. How do you go and compile research and at what stage do you start to maybe use a computer or sketch book to start putting this together?

TD3: I’d almost do a dash to my computer. I’m very much about quickly putting things together. I’m not very diligent, if I may say so, not very labourious, I don’t draw a lot. So a lot of my research, the way I put things together, is about cut and paste. I’m very quick about... I like the intuitive side of things, I’m not someone who thinks through something a lot. If it’s a first idea there must be something right about it – it’s spontaneous. And that’s what sort of triggers the rest of the work. So whether I’m working for a client or whether I’m working for myself I notice myself grabbing on to the first thing and building on that versus, you know, jotting down a lot of ideas and picking the tenth – that has never happened. Or if I tried that it’s often, almost failed. So it’s almost... I can say... The process is very spontaneous, I keep collecting. And I tend to notice that whatever’s around you sort of develops your work without you even realising it. So at that moment whatever’s present around me I keep picking from that and putting it together, that’s how...

TD1: Okay. So you don’t necessarily use sketch books that much then?

TD3: No. It’s a new habit that I’m trying to generate, but like in Delhi I had a big studio and the whole studio had become my sketch book. It was full of objects that kind of drive whatever, or people coming in, leaving things, their work, my work, just images, magazines. So it was not so... the idea of working in a smaller space, in a contained space of a sketch book is new to me.

TD1: So you start making, you start sampling, do you? Quite early on.

TD3: Very early. I’m very much about just getting on. And I tend to reject things a lot, in

the sense that if it's not working I just leave it because that's how it works in the craft. Like when you are working in a village you don't necessarily have the organised space of a sketch book for drawing. You don't have your time, you just work with the person when they are there. And if you see something failing you don't waste their time or your time or the resources on that – you just keep trying, keep trying, keep trying on small, small things. So it's not structured or pretty-looking, it's not a pretty sketch book, it's very messy and it's... you get a product at the end of it but the process is lost while doing it. It doesn't matter.

TD1: Do you always use fabric straight away in your sampling?

TD3: Depends. Whatever material is available, whatever's around.

TD1: Okay. Have you ever used trend forecasting imagery or material?

TD3: A lot, especially working with the white goods company. It was very much about linking their constraints with what their international counterparts are doing, especially being a big organisation which strives to have the same... so it's not divided from the outside – it's [REDACTED]. To connect with that it is imperative that one looks at different countries and different forecasts and just be driven by say, textile or fashion but also other forecasts, material forecasts and so I have, a lot.

TD1: How would you describe the material that you've used in the past? What does it actually physically look like in the websites and the magazines?

TD3: I didn't get your point.

TD1: I'm just kind of wanting you to describe in your own words, really, how this material is presented to you as a designer, either on a website or in a magazine.

TD3: For me it is so far removed from reality, I mean, it's been a clue to what they're trying to give to other people as reference but sometimes a lot... especially the references of a European or American nature, they're very removed from the reality. They keep trying to imitate it but it makes no sense so you are almost abstracting what they're saying, because it is abstract in a sense. It's very far removed from reality in Asia, I felt. Maybe here, being still here in London, I can still relate to it because, sort of, life is structured in a similar fashion. But in India your environment is so different from what is there – it's very disconnected. And when you're actually looking at how it's produced there is absolutely... or even how it is designed... there is absolutely no overlap. That was kind of abstract in terms of material references, colour references.

TD1: What are the names of the trend forecasting material that you have used in the past?

TD3: [REDACTED] was an old... I don't know how they are doing, but a lot of their old work was very interesting. Pantone comes up with their own. A lot of small interior companies, I'm not looking at just official forecasts but, sort of, what interior companies are doing because that very much links to how... what the average person is looking at. Then [REDACTED] – they have their own, they are the producers of the materials, the [REDACTED] chem and other Chinese companies and companies in Hong

Kong. They do their own forecasts for material so it's not a trend forecast as much as a material forecast. So the producers forecasts – individually they send us.

- TD1: Okay. What I want to ask you about now, really, is thinking about the work you are doing at the moment, what sort of design outcomes or final pieces do you envisage making?
- TD3: Like I said I'm very product driven so I have to almost haul myself back from looking at the product because that's the first thing that comes to my mind – what is it going to look like on a person or is the final product going to look like in a space. So before I even get to the point of getting my hands going to make a material I'm already excited about how it's going to eventually show up – the final image of it. I think I'm very much about interiors and spaces and the actual practicality of things, the feasibility and how... the longevity of things. I think I like the idea of making things people use and cherish. It could be clothing or interior objects, and that's where I see it. But at the same time I've been so removed in working with colour for home appliances that I can also see it not only in textile form but somebody else interpreting it totally differently.
- TD1: Okay. So the application is everything for you. You wouldn't imagine to present your work just as samples or lengths.
- TD3: No, no. I have no idea, but my work here at the [REDACTED], I think, I'm trying to contain into something I can produce myself instead of... also I want to do something that is sort of very me and very personal versus just working with a large scale company and having them take over. For this duration of time I want to keep it personal.
- TD1: For somebody who's had the experience of working very commercially, also with crafts and now here at [REDACTED], producing, kind of, your very own personal creative work, how do you feel that those different roles of a designer actually, kind of, work in reality, in the industry of textile design or surface design. Why have you here to this kind of experience now after you've worked quite commercially. What are you trying to get out of finding this personal approach to textile design?
- TD3: Being here is, I see, very humbling and I think I was looking for that because... I don't know... I think there are two different roles, being creative as a creative artist is very different from being creative in producing something. They are two different roles and I don't see less or more. But there is a snobbery about art. There is a snobbery about, oh, we're thinkers. But then how far your thinking actually makes a difference is another question. So having looked at the other side of it, I, for me, I find myself looking at artists and saying "Wow, they are so creative, so talented and they are so hard working." And I have looked at the application of it, but yes, I would want to see what the thinkers think and be a part of that, sort of... sometimes look at where my thinking or where my role as a provider or as intermediary. Where did that overlap with someone who is actually thinking these things because a lot of times I see artists – various art schools or artists themselves – never connecting with large... never making a large scale difference, yet they are big names and they are people who drive us – in our art work.
- TD1: Have you got an example of that?

- TD3: Even if you look at the fashion companies, yes, they are big as brands and big as companies; they hire a lot of people and they create a lot of exciting work but...
- TD1: Products come and go, is that...
- TD3: Products come and go and they are legends as names. They are not legends as people who made a difference or who turned the world round. So, they've turned round the fashion world, yes, or turned around the design world, but what about the common man: how do you... where does that change? So, for me those two roles are very different. Those two worlds are very different, and I have come from the other world into this world, so I'm very humbled by it. What is great here has no context where I come from. So, for me this is... I feel nobody here, but that's exciting because you are judging it from a completely different viewpoint. So that's where I am.
- TD1: This is, kind of, quite a strange question. Just wondering, kind of, how you became interested in pursuing textile design in the first place? I don't know if you had different choices you could have gone down in terms of roles as a designer. Was there anything kind of specific to you, any aspects of you that meant that you felt suitable for textile design?
- TD3: It's a really funny story... strange that you ask. I had no interest in design. I wanted to be a dancer. My father asked me... in India it's very much about when you are finishing school you have to know what you are doing; it's very structured and you have to work hard and so on. But my father just asked me "What do you want to do?". And I said I want to be a dancer and he said "Well, you know, you need to earn, you have to do something. What do you want to do after that?". I said "I want to party" and he said "Who do you want to party with?" And I said "I don't know, why are you asking me that?". He said "Well, obviously people you work with or you're around will be people you are partying with so you need to know who are those people you want around you." That kind of triggered me into thinking: what kind of people inspire me and what do they do that inspires me? And then I started looking at art, artists, and I found this photographer and I started looking at his colleagues and his friends and I noticed that I am drawn to people who think and create and I applied to a design school and got in. And then the next question was what am I creating if I am around these creators and in the world of creation? Then I started looking at what excites me and I think the interaction with people is what excited me most. The reality of life and how people live their lives excited me and I wanted to chose a stream. In [] I had four years – the first year was common, just looking at design and then three years of specialisation and I looked at – which is a discipline that interacts most with people outside. It was my only reason for taking textiles, because I... because the textile course at [] was very people driven, was very much about the craft person, the industry, the interactions of craft and the outside worlds, so to speak. And that's what triggered me off. I wanted to find out more about India, about people, and travel and see how a person spends their entire life in a little workshop in a village in the middle of nowhere, and they're satisfied and that was what was curious.
- TD1: What were the other options you could have taken?

- TD3: I was excited about graphics. Very excited about marketing, advertising, and graphics – that’s what my father does, he’s... so I think it was home ground for me and I was very excited about that, and photography. This was a completely different stream – I just jumped in.
- TD1: Okay. Again, I’ve got a couple more questions that are really quite big. Why do textiles need to be designed? Why are all these people here being trained to design textiles?
- TD3: I actually disagree – textiles don’t need to be designed. Because textiles...it’s a default. I don’t know how you define design. If it’s about creation then we create without even thinking so many times. So, yes, we are designing, maybe subconsciously, we are designed whatever we do. So by that definition I don’t think it has to be done, it’s a natural process – it’s a default. And organising that default is something we are doing here, yes. I don’t think it needs to be done but it’s exciting when you look at something carefully and see what is the process of it.
So people outside us are, outside the space of art and design, they design as well without thinking; we just look at what we are doing and talk about it. I don’t know if that’s different.
- TD1: I think you said something really interesting. What’s interesting for me is, obviously there are 40-50 of you sitting in this room, all under the umbrella of textile design, creating what is labelled textile design in very different ways. Designer is often sort of talked about as a problem solver, actually you have talked to that earlier, and I was just kind of wondering how you identify with that and how you imagine that the other people in this room might identify with the notion of design as a problem solver – thinking about textiles.
As a textile designer do you identify with the notion of design as a problem solver?
- TD3: I totally relate to design as a problem solving. Of course there are different aspects to see. I strongly differentiate between art and design. Art is very much about self and what you are trying to say to the world as a voice, and design is about, for me, personally, very clearly about problem solving. And I don’t think design is the only sort of problem solving activity – even being in banking, you know, a banking solution is a problem solving activity. You have a problem and you solve it via banking or as an accountant you are solving an accountancy problem.
So, for me, design also plays a similar role, only it’s in the realm of creative field in a visual context or a material context. So the context is different but the idea is still the same for me. And it is, of course, closely attached to... you have an added opportunity of making a personal statement because you are very close to the world of art. So I think they overlap but they also have two distinct functions.
- TD1: So the work you are doing at the moment – what problems do you see that it’s solving?
- TD3: That is a valid question I ask myself, so I’m letting myself go and doing what I like and often it’s something... a statement I’m making. At the same time I’m looking at where does this... there are two different things that I’m tackling at the same time: how am I saying something by what I’m doing or what does it speak to me, and what does it contribute to the world – yes – I’m looking at both. And the textiles that I’m looking at – sometimes I design something which is very frivolous and very... just because

I like it or just it inspired me at that moment. But often I find myself questioning – oh really, is it practical, is it feasible, is it going to make someone actually want it not just because they fancy it and they can afford it, or is it actually going to make a difference in the long term. What is it going to give to the person who takes it?

- TD1: You are sort of talking about it actually sort of working in a certain way or being pleasurable to use or pleasurable to look at? Is that enough of a kind of problem to solve or it actually have to some kind of functionality which means it's solving.
- TD3: It could be an emotional purpose. It could be a physical purpose. But in some way I want it to not just be a fanciful notion. I'm not demeaning objects that are just, you know, fanciful, but I'm saying that in my.. my personal draw, you know, I'm inspired by things that are not only fanciful, not just like big [] and a great dress. What do they leave behind, where are they produced, who is interacting with it other than the wearer? What impact does it have to people viewing it? So questions of that nature are exciting to me right now.
- Having been brought up in India and having been so close to the production of textiles I'm very much driven by what a product leaves behind by its creation, without even reaching the final user. What has it already left behind? Has it left behind a sea of dye stuff that was wasted on it? Has it left behind a person, you know, a person who spent three days on a low wage? What is it leaving behind? So that sort of story is what is exciting to me.
- TD1: Okay. Do you feel that the notion of design as problem solver in textile design is encouraged here? Or do you think that most designers within this course are perhaps of different outlook to you?
- TD3: That was the first striking thing, that here everybody is very much about their personal voice and very much about their personal artwork or their expression. And that is... I admire it and of course I crave to be able to have that sort of freedom in my head, but maybe the way you are taught in the beginning also drives who you become. I'm not saying... I can see the difference, clearly; they are very much about the work they do and how that work is very close, you know, to their own personal identities; it's in that capsule. But when you are outside of that capsule or you don't have a capsule yourself you see your world outside of it, and I question a lot of times how much... where that interaction lies, and what impact does it make, because I see the galleries here in England and the works of different artists and, yes, it makes in me a phenomenal impact when I see it; it asks a lot of questions, but how far does it reach my home is my question, because I belong to another world and I want to also make a difference there. So, who am I creating for and who am I reaching out to, how many people, and to what effect?
- Of course somebody can be temporarily impacted, oh yeah, wow, I saw something and can think about something for a day. But in the long term how am I... I mean, often it is said that a good design is something that you don't have to work hard to use. If you have to spend too much time or energy figuring it out it's not worth it, in my head.
- So if my design is... it's not by design, by default if it's like that for somebody else to use, if I make it simpler for somebody to do something that's actually great in terms of impact, then why not. Why is that not better than somebody having to think and work really hard to be a better person or to make, you know, a bigger difference.

TD1: I think what's really interesting about the way you talk about your work is that you don't often mention the word 'textile', it's generally the word 'design' that you seem to use quite a lot. You see yourself as a designer rather than as specifically as a textile designer. You talk a lot about, kind of, the use and the person, and like you said that's what drew you to textiles in the first place, and I think that's really fascinating because you're right, there's a lot of people, as they are being taught textile design in the UK, are very rarely encouraged to think like that, and it is very personal and we don't often talk about how it's going to be used in the home or by a wearer. Often an application will be, kind of, put on to it and tagged on to the end in order to present it, so people understand it, but not necessarily to kind of work in that way that you sort of talk about. I think that's really interesting. Thank you.

6th February 2009

- TD1: Okay, this is a conversation and interview with [REDACTED] is it? MA Student and second year on Friday 6th February. The first question I'd like to ask you really [REDACTED] is, as a textiles designer how to do you go about getting ideas to start off new work?
- TD4: I mostly go to exhibitions and I go travelling. I love travelling, so whenever I go travelling I take photos and those photos normally start off a new collection. So it's really very external, very hands on, very, kind of outside, rather than just books. And then I'll go to books afterwards and look at more art deco, architecture or whatever it is. That's how I normally start projects.
- TD1: The initial snapshots of imagery and from those snapshots what is it you take from those? Is it. . .
- TD4: Sometimes it's just colour, sometimes it's texture or sometimes it's just the idea. Like, 3D or just the initial...
- TD1: And how does your use of those images relate to some of the trend material? Do you use trend materials at all?
- TD4: No, I don't. Because I'm very conscious of fitting into a tribe, as you like, or a trend, I try and not look at them at all until I'm quite far into my project and then someone will say - oh! You're part of the [T...] kind of, print movement. So I'm like, hang on a sec, oh yes I am but not on purpose. I try not exposing myself too much to them because I want my work to be as original as possible. If that makes sense.
- TD1: So you purposely don't use them, but you obviously have looked at them in the past.
- TD4: You absorb them subconsciously anyway.
- TD1: Yeah. I was just wondering, as a textiles designer, how to you read the images they present to you? Do you read them in the same way you would look at your own photographs?
- TD4: You mean the trend ones?
- TD1: Yeah
- TD4: Yeah I guess. It's all about textures or colours; it's just the feeling of something. So, yes I guess I would read them the same.
- TD1: Okay. You talked about going travelling and look at exhibitions to get ideas and then you talked about later re-visiting books to kind of enhance that. At what stage do you start to solidify it and compile it and start working?
- TD4: As soon as I have my photos and I've drawn from them I start working and then as I need more things I'll go to books and collect more things. But normally, I'm so inspired by the initial images I just want to get drawing and then after that I'll go and look for more things.

- TD1: So drawing is key for you? It's key research method? Okay. And you draw from photographs rather than drawing out in the world?
- TD4: Yes. So I find that really hard. I would love to but I can't do it.
- TD1: Do you ever experience that kind of creative leap moment, briefly? You kind of just get something.
- TD4: Yeah, but it doesn't happen often. And I think it's hard because that happened to me with work in progress, that print that I had out and I was like - wow, yes, yes that's good. That's the direction I want it to be in. Then afterwards I've been a bit depressed, "Well, what am I going to do now?" because that was good and I liked it a lot, which doesn't happen often for me. And then, now what? It's like, the expectations get raised. Your own expectations I guess.
- TD1: Going back to that little moment, that leap where you're - yes, I've got something there. You probably won't be able to articulate it, but maybe you will, what happened? Could you kind of trace it back and explain it now, or not?
- TD4: Well, put it this way. When I had it I realised this is really communicating visually what I wanted to say although I didn't realise it would have looked that way. When I had that dress against all my research and my visual imagery that I had before, all of a sudden all that research was pulled into one even though I didn't consciously do it. Subconsciously it all went into one thing so I guess that's what made me realise that it was good.
- TD1: Yeah, okay. Great. Through your work in progress you obviously had your dress and other garments and things like that. Is that the design outcome that you envisaged for those textiles or anything else?
- TD4: I will have garments for my final show.
- TD1: Do you usually create garment...
- TD4: I didn't used to, but I've always been [...] so I've always drawn them but I've never made them, so now is the first time that I'll be making them, in college.
- TD1: Okay. Is it important that the textiles are made into something?
- TD4: Yes, I think so. I think you can lie to yourself and in textiles we do this, this big argument about having flat textiles for people to look at or having a product, and basically if you have product you'll get attention and I've tried and tested and I've seen that people have garments or bags or something, a product, they get attention, they get press and people understand the context of their work. If you have just have flat fabrics people can so easily just walk past it or just ignore it just because people don't understand what it's for. It's a sad thing about textiles, the general public don't have the imagination to understand it without the product.
- TD1: I wonder if that's kind of down to the fact that people don't buy fabric to make stuff at

home anymore. They don't have that relationship with flat cloth as you say, and it does need to be in a context, readymade.

TD4: That's probably what I...

TD1: Going on from that. A question that I've always wondered about. The kind of conventions for showing samples, the kind of A3 or bigger either on a board or on a hanger, I just wonder if you have any experience of showing your work like that and how you feel about it?

TD4: I did. We had an exhibition for our BA where I hung loads of samples... the headers. It was nice, nice to see all your work together, but then it's not half as satisfying as seeing something made up because people don't walk past. Because there was so many hangers full of fabric they just kind of disregard them.

TD1: It's a big limitation.

TD4: I think so, yes.

TD1: Okay. What I want to ask you about now really is sort of your background as a textile designer, how you got into it and why you sort of identified yourself with textiles as a design discipline?

TD4: I started off... I was doing fine art when I was little, I used to enter competitions. I was very arty, drawing, painting and making things, sculptures, so very mixed media really, all my life until A level I did art as well. I never did textiles even though I liked fashion but it's only when I did...

TD1: I think textiles at A level is a different kind of animal, isn't it?

TD4: Yes, it is. Then when I did my Foundation I actually specialised in graphics because I enjoyed that and I enjoyed the collage and image making and then I did a year of graphic design degree and then I moved to fashion. So I actually realised, after year and years, the whole fine art, the graphics, the in between is textiles. It took me all those years to realise that. So then I did my fashion textiles degree, so that's kind of how I realised.

TD1: It's interesting that you've kind of positioned textiles within fine art and design. You see textiles as a two-dimensional discipline like graphic design. Fine art obviously can be many dimensions, but you see it as two dimensional?

TD4: Almost. Well, now my work's becoming more 3D but, you know, it's definitely in between those two things for me.

TD1: Okay. Another question I want to ask, which is a big question, we're on an MA for textile design in one of the leading colleges in the world, why do we still need to design textiles?

TD4: I think we're still here designing textiles because what we're doing here and what's reflected in the shops are two completely different things. There's a massive amount

that goes missing between those of our stage and design studios. I think a lot of them lag behind or they're just designing floral after floral or using old prints and archives. I think there's a massive leap between the two. It's not reflected on the high-street and peoples tastes, I guess what sells, is still not changing so maybe that's why people are still producing the same old, same old.

TD1: How do you think that might be resolved, that problem that you've highlighted?

TD4: I guess it's only by the high end people really pushing things all the time, haute couture, like pushing fabrics and innovation that it will filter down within years and years. Then taste, you know, florals have always sold. You think, in sixty years time they will still have disgusting rose florals, you know, in Marks and Spencers or wherever. It's just time I guess.

TD1: It goes back to people's relationship with the conventions of fabric isn't it and again, it's just what you are used to. I want to go back to that mismatch that you talked about between you as an MA student here and what's actually out there in the shops. Why do you think, then, you are encouraged to be more creative than producing florals, if there's kind of nowhere for it?

TD4: I guess it's so that we aim high and then you can do anything. If you can do amazing prints then making a floral is so easy, I guess in a job. You'd be bored though. That's the only problem, because you're used to this level of work you would be bored, depending where you work, most of places I know... I guess just trying to push the innovation factor in our heads so that when we do go out maybe we can try and fight the cause.

TD1: Do you see innovation as coming from the way the fabric is constructed or the look of the print or... where's the innovation coming for you?

TD4: I guess it's a combination of things. It could be many things but for me I'm trying to do it through the print rather than the actual construction of the... I'm trying to combine both. I'm trying for the print to be the most important because what I've noticed is that people get really caught up with technology and the construction of the fabric. They spend so much time on that, for instance using recycled fabrics, whatever... you spend so much time on that or on the process that you lose the kind of design aspect of it. All of sudden it's interesting because it's made out of something amazing but the print is horrible and that's what we're here for.

TD1: Something I've always kind of thought is that often it's when people from different disciplines try to do something which would be better dealt with by a textile designer is often when you get what you've just described.

TD4: Even in textiles it happens.

TD1: Yeah, that's true. That's true.

TD4: Scary.

TD1: Obviously on the MA you have experience of different kinds of industry competitions. Would you be able to talk about that and how you responded to the constraints from

the industry?

TD4: Our first project was Oasis, so that was collaborative project with fashion. I really enjoyed it – everyone else hated it. I enjoyed it and I worked with fashion students. I enjoyed it because I got put in with someone I got along with, we had things in common. It was a really nice way for me to build my confidence to start the MA. I'm thinking, oh well, maybe I could do this as a job, you know.

I really enjoyed that and then we had [REDACTED] which was difficult. The constraints they gave us, those boards, that was the end for me. I should of really just continued with my own work and then looked at their boards and incorporated that afterwards into my designs like the colours and things. I felt really restrained by that. I kind of think [REDACTED] – if I'd done that the same time this year I would have really enjoyed it because I was already into my own work. It was project after project last year... we didn't get the initial start on our own work.

TD1: So [REDACTED] gave you a mood board, did they, to look at and then you had to work from that?

TD4: Colours, and we had to pick colours from their board.

TD1: Okay. So, yeah, there's kind of been highs and lows for that. Have you in your experience of being an MA student worked with any students from other departments?

TD4: Yeah. Obviously woman's wear, and I'm doing a collaboration with men's wear now doing a print collection for... And I've also printed things for [...] research but that's practical printing stuff. I enjoy working with other people especially with fashion because we don't have that stimulation here, and it's good to put your work in different contexts. It's just like working for a client really, I suppose.

TD1: Do you see it as that - kind of working for them, when you're working for the fashion students?

TD4: Well really, yes. It shouldn't really be like that but it is, because fashion's demands are so much different to ours and the hierarchy and the politics behind it are so complicated, you know. You do end up being the slightly lower down one. You have to just be prepared for that. And if you have a nice fashion student then it's a whole different experience.

TD1: How do they respond to your fabrics when you arrive with them, when you meet with them for the first time, or does it not really work like that?

TD4: They get really excited because they obviously they don't have time to do things like that. The luxury we have is literally spending all our efforts on the fabric and they don't have that so in that respect they're really, really interested. On the other hand they have no idea of the amount of time that goes into that. If someone working on fashion for the first time I think often they find that, they think, oh yeah, if you could just make a couple of these prints today and I turn tomorrow and it'll be perfect.

TD1: Yeah. There isn't a total understanding.

- TD4: There's an appreciation of the beauty of it but no understanding of what's the work involved.
- TD1: So there's a mutual respect, but a misunderstanding at the same time. Yeah, I can understand that. Another thing I want to ask you about is in design theory often design is talked about as problem solving. I was wondering kind of how you identify with that notion?
- TD4: Yeah, I guess the best design is when you're solving some kind of problem, whether it's big or small, whether you're doing it intentionally or not. Yeah, definitely.
- TD1: Are there any instances in your work that you could say that that's been something that you have either consciously or unconsciously been doing?
- TD4: Yeah. I was trying to create structure with my print and obviously I tried blister printing, I tried puff printing on the back of fabrics and all kinds of things but nothing was overly successful and then I started printing on organza, cutting it up and folding, kind of origami and working it back into it and all of sudden it was printed fabric with a strong shell. So by solving that problem I found something completely new for me.
- TD1: So it's problem solving along the way but the actual product at the end, does that solve any problems? The textile product...
- TD4: It solves problems for me, in that I didn't want flat printed fabric, so it solves that problem for me. Yeah, but it might not be a big problem. I guess the more universal problems you can find, like in the work in progress there were those IDE students with the potato covers and those things. Those are problems everyone has, for their [...] If you can find a problem like that... sure.
- TD1: Do you think that kind of idea of problem solving is relevant within textile design?
- TD4: I wish it was but I don't think it is. It's intriguing and I love the idea that we're capable of solving problems, even now, while technology is so advanced we're still finding problems to solve, but I don't think in textiles it's the same kind of thing.
- TD1: Who do you design your textiles for?
- TD4: That's a difficult question. At the moment it's a couture collection, so it's really high end, but I don't know who for. I have really no idea. I'm really rubbish at marketing... that's the truth.
- TD1: It's interesting to sort of think, when I've asked other people this question they'll say – for myself. It's interesting that kind of straight away you are thinking of a customer for your textiles, and problem solving along the way but not necessarily the outcome solving any universal problems, as you put it. Do you think that's kind of characteristic of textile design?
- TD4: Yes, I guess.

- TD1: That process that you described.
- TD4: That process of problem solving along the way, yes, definitely. It's just the nature of print and textiles in general, it's trial and error. You can't predict what will happen and even if you do predict, it always goes differently.
- TD1: What you start to actually sample. At that stage you've got your photographs, you've got drawings, and that's what you need to be armed with, is it, before you start to buy fabrics and start to explore.
- TD4: I buy fabrics all the time anyway so I have this archive of crazy fabrics that I use anyway. But yes that's how I start, just from a couple of drawings.
- TD1: Is there any particular characteristics to a textile designer as opposed to a different kind of designer, do you think?
- TD4: I think textile designers are collectors and I think that's really interesting. When we did that first Who am I thing on our first day of being here in our first year, I realised that the big thing we all had in common was that we collected weird things and I thought that was just me then I realised it was a textile thing. I don't know other people, like my friends, who are interaction designers or moving image designers or even fashion- they don't collect things like we do.
- TD1: Okay.
- TD4: That's definitely, definitely one.
- TD1: Collect kind of, and what's the criteria for collecting that stuff, do you know?
- TD4: I don't know.
- TD1: Why's it for you?
- TD4: I just collect images I like or collect photos, collect buttons, for colours, I don't know. Collect feathers, collect things for my own [...] that I like. Just things that catch your eye.
- TD1: Material stuff. Good stuff.
- TD4: Textile designers like stuff.
- TD1: Okay, right. Well, I think that's about it, really. Thank you very much. I've talked with three of you today. Three completely different approaches which is really interesting. Lots to think about, so yeah, thank you very much.

26th February 2009

- TD1: It's Thursday 26th February, in conversation with [REDACTED]
So, yeah, if you could start talking about, generally, the work that you showed at the work in progress show in January.
- TD5: So work in progress came as a result of last term's work and really, kind of, finding my feet at the college, I suppose. I came from quite a fine art based background, sort of textiles fine art. I was sort quite determined to come here and work more as the designer. I spent last term struggling with that process and producing the work that was, sort of, related to what I making before. It was nice and it was pleasing to the eye and it was aesthetic, but it didn't seem to go anywhere. I think I realised that I was playing it quite safe, I was experimenting a little bit with print and stitch, but working with imagery, that, kind of, I felt quite comfortable with so the work in progress show came as a result of the work that I'd done last term and then we'd also started a project for [REDACTED] which was just about predicting trends and fabrics and cloths.
- TD1: How did you get along with that project?
- TD5: Really enjoyed it, yeah. It was really freeing because there was no outcome so it just about playing with materials. It wasn't even meant to be, like, a fabric that could be used so I started producing casting and glassworks and wax and setting fabrics in those. And then I kind of thought about the idea of using what I'd done last term and really putting an end to it or destroying it by actually using that work set inside glass and to physically break it. Also at the show I asked people, to sort ,of partake in that by breaking my work up for me.
- TD1: How do you feel that now that's sort of a month or two ago?
- TD5: Really glad I did it. I don't feel remotely, sort of, bothered that I've, kind of, destroyed two big pieces of work. I think it was really important for me to move on. I think it was quite cathartic and, yeah, and a valuable experience.
- TD1: What I want to start talking about now really is, just generally, about how you go about coming up with ideas for design.
- TD5: I think it varies from project to project. My own personal practice ...talk about what I've made before, that might be easier, because I'm still sort of finding my feet here. I've got quite a lot of history of textiles in my family and I've got these objects, actually, that I always have on my desk that are from my great-great grandfather. He was a knitter. I was just talking to Amy about it, actually, because he used to make stockings for Queen Victoria.
- TD1: Oh really?
- TD5: He used to make with John Smedley. I think you can probably, kind of, John Smedley-esque, the kind of knits, really fine knits.
- TD1: They feel fantastic.

- TD5: Yeah, they're beautiful, aren't they? So I...
- TD1: Why's that so tiny...
- TD5: I don't know. I don't think it's even for a child, either.
- TD1: Oh, right.
- TD5: Which is kind of more weird. I think it's perhaps that women's feet... you know, they can't ever have been that small.
- TD1: Bound feet in China, or something.
- TD5: It must have been for a child, but that's got the... yeah. So my work, kind of... is still now, actually, revolves around, kind of, memories and trying to set or emboss or inlay the idea of the story or a memory in a fabric. So my... there's quite a narrative that runs through the work, and it's by collecting old things and looking at imagery of old lace and things that kind of hold some kind of history. Whether that's through, kind of, staining or marking on things that, kind of, that might suggest a story behind something or whether it's something more literal. By actually physically using stories and narratives and also the kind of, the history of, kind of, making and the domestic nature of it, like samplers or something like that. I really like looking at samplers and that kind of thing, that women just did for fun and also to pass the time or to show skills. I think that, sort of, comes through, and also the colours as well that, sort of, everything's kind of got this quite aged, kind of, feel to it. Don't tend to work with a very strong palette. The palette sort of suggests age or aged or something like that.
- TD1: So in order to gain ideas for design you've got these collected materials, some of which are personal, others of which aren't.
- TD5: Yes.
- TD1: Looking around your desk I can also, sort of, see photographs that you've taken. How do you use those in design? How do you, kind of, respond to those?
- TD5: Usually in the colour, I use the colour. I also... I like the... I've started looking more recently at the idea of something very ordered. Something like a grid or a [...] or a pinstripe, juxtaposed with something quite, sort of, feminine or delicate, like lace and so just trying to explore that idea in my own work. And consequently I'm trying to, kind of, look at the... also the material's; very delicate materials and very hard, masculine materials. So I tend to take photos to... just of things that kind of, excite me to look at and... colour and textures and, kind of, patterns, I think.
- TD1: Some of those photographs are very similar to the sorts of images you'd see within trend information. You mentioned about the [REDACTED] project that you'd done. Have you ever, kind of, used trend information as part of your design process, or...
- TD5: No. I have to be really honest and say I was completely ignorant to all that before I was here, because my prior practice and course was not remotely about trends and colour.

It was very fine art based so we didn't... we weren't even exposed to that, so I haven't... it's quite a revolution seeing all that happens, like... I sort of vaguely knew about it but I didn't know to what extent it went on. I'd heard of things like Premier Vision and stuff, but, no...

- TD1: Is it something you're not, kind of, going to start incorporating into your working process?
- TD5: I wouldn't look to them to tell me what to... I mean, maybe to an extent, I mean, we were looking at the colours the other day and there was a palette that really... that I loved, that was quite, kind of, worn and [.ext], very kind of dark, kind of, really lovely worn greys.. next to little bits of colour and then pale colour. That's because that's what I use anyway. So I think I would rather, kind of, use my own sources. I can't see myself using them.
- TD1: One other question about the way you work. After, kind of, using the material that you've got, the artefacts that you've got, and the images; what stage do you start, kind of, collating it into a sketch book or sampling or...
- TD5: I collect things quite immediately. I take lots of photographs. But very early on in the process, and that I usually do lots of drawings. And then the drawings I, kind of, work inside the embroidery or mixed media or print or whatever it is I'm using. But the sketch book is quite...
I didn't used to work in quite such a sort of methodical way. I used to just make things, like, I just used to have lots of fabric and needles and things on my desk and I just used to make objects and just play with materials and sow materials together and stitch into materials, and it was much more spontaneous but I sort of started more recently collecting images as a kind of precursor to doing any of that.
- TD1: Has that happened because you're now on this course, or...
- TD5: Yes, also because I...
- TD1: ...or happened naturally?
- TD5: Sort of naturally. Also I've... in between my last degree and here I've been teaching and that's the process that we do when I teach the students – that's what I tell them to do. We have quite a methodical way of working through things and I think that's, kind of, fed into what I do. And also I've had a few... I've had some commissions in between which have been very, sort of, quite strict briefs. For wall pieces but, you know, that I've had to go and, you know, work with people or find imagery. So that, I think, working in that kind of.. rather than working just for myself has forced me into, kind of, working in that way. But I think it's... I do both, but I think...
- TD1: A sketch book for you a kind of place for scrap-booking?
- TD5: Yeah. I don't do an awful lot of drawing in them. The drawing... I tend to draw on separate pieces of paper, so it's just usually for images.
- TD1: At the end of your design process – what sorts of resolutions do you usually come out with? Outcomes?

- TD5: That's really hard to say because I
- TD1: Maybe there isn't any for you
- TD5: At the moment that's where I'm struggling because I was always working towards exhibiting work previously, so it didn't have to be anything that was functional, it needed to be something that said what I needed it to say, that I could put it up on the wall. But now, I'm trying to think about things that I... for the home or for using in fashion. I'm hitting a little bit of a stumbling block, which is something that I'm trying to, sort of, get over at the moment. But previously it was obvious to me when something was right, whether one piece of work worked or another didn't. I did a lot of installation pieces and I'd think about... I'd start by thinking about what I wanted that to be and then I'd work towards it. So if I had a certain space to fill or... so, it was a really different process.
- TD1: The project you're doing at the moment – future textiles – you were just talking about how a resolution is not required necessarily, not a tangible resolution anyway, a concept, and that appeals to you?
- TD5: I think because I've also, sort of... I'm not doing anything fabricy, it's just drawing and I'm doing animations and I've kind of already visualised what they're going to look like, so I'm just trying, sort of, to fill in that gap. I suppose this is actually a little bit more like what I was doing before because I sort of thought I really like this idea of children's environments being really, kind of, you know, aesthetically pleasing but also something they can interact with perhaps even, have adults as well. I keep thinking just about children's work... I think I've already decided what I want it to be so I'm just sort of filling in the gaps and getting through it. So it's been probably easier and because it's not my personal work, this is what I keep I keep saying: it's not my personal work, but it's not my personal project – there is a brief which always makes things a little bit easier.
- TD1: Textile design – often the outcomes are a pile of samples. A3 piece of fabric mounted on a card or on hanger. How do you respond to that? Have you ever showed your work in that...
- TD5: No, I haven't before and I doubt I will. I can't see myself producing just a lot of samples so I think when... this time next year I really hope to... whatever it is I'm hoping to make... whether that's furnishings or for garments I think I would have to at least see it as a resolved piece. For me it's really important.
- TD1: As a product.
- TD5: As a product, yeah. I think I'd find it very, very difficult to have finished and to have a lovely, beautiful pile of fabrics that I would need to see what they looked like – resolved. So whether that means working with somebody else – either working with a, you know, someone in product design or in fashion, or just, you know, trying to sort of do that myself. I don't think it would be for me.

- TD1: Have you experienced that sort of collaboration before? Working with someone in another field of design?
- TD5: Not design, I don't think. I've collaborated with other artists before, but not designers. So that's something that, yeah...
- TD1: Do you see yourself as a textile designer?
- TD5: Yes, I think so.
- TD1: Why is that?
- TD5: Well I guess because I work with fabrics and I work with thing that are touchable and, you know, and tactile, and they're about surface. I think I see myself as an artist as well, though. Not that they are not... you know, can't be the same, but... I don't think I see myself, you know, in a very traditional, sort of, sense – a textile artist, you know, like who designs prints or weaves and you know, like you say... I don't see myself in that sense.
- TD1: So you made the decision to, kind of, move from fine art education to textiles education. Were there any triggers for that? Any reasons that made you want to make that change?
- TD5: I think just because of the... on a really practical level, because of the difficulty of pursuing a practice, and it not making any money and it being really difficult. And also because I love design as much as I love, you know, as I love art, and gallery pieces. So I think I wanted to sort of education myself in that way as well. I don't feel like my brain works in that way so I really wanted to be able to... to be somewhere where someone could, sort of, help me to, sort of, get my brain into that sort of gear. I think maybe people think, they kind of, it's easier to do one and the other but I think that your brain works in a really different way so I just think I needed that training but I, you know, I love design, I love clothes, I love furniture, I love, you know, interiors and I kind of really like the idea of combining the [...].
- TD1: So there's no conflict personally for you with that, the transition from fine art to design. Have you found any challenges coming from that background and working with people who have been trained in design throughout their degrees?
- TD5: Being on the mixed media course [...] is a bit different because... there's a lot of, sort of, likeminded people who are working in a very similar way. I think if I was in one of the other disciplines, perhaps metal or weave, I think I would feel differently, but no I think there's a lot of people that are not quite sure what they're making pieces for, whether they're making them for fashion or [...] or to be exhibited. I think within this media it's a lot easier to make the transition.
- TD1: A couple of really very general questions now. Obviously on a course of textile design at one of the leading colleges in the world: why do we need to design textiles?
- TD5: That is a hard one. I think it gets a bit taken for granted. I think people assume that clothes just, you know, come out of... you forget about the in-between bit, between the

designer and the mill or whatever that is... or even in furnishings. I think there is always the difficulty in explaining what you do to people. Because they don't understand what that is, that bit that bridges the gap, and I think it's really important that it carries on because actually I think a lot of things wouldn't exist and it's the same with [...]. It's difficult to say. It's all kind of... yeah, I don't know, I can't explain properly. But, yeah, I think it's incredibly important. I think it applies to so many other design areas and you need people that are specialists in that to... yeah... I'm not making much sense.

TD1: Last question. It's about the notion of design. In theory, quite often, design is all creativity, it's talked about as a problem solver, and I was wondering how you identified with that notion?

TD5: As a problem solver? It's not really the same, I suppose, is it in textiles because you've not got... I suppose in like product design you're thinking about a need for something which isn't already there, so you're thinking about something whereas in textiles it doesn't exist, although I mean, I suppose the nature of this project that we've had now... we're thinking much more about kind of the future and things like sustainability obvious is, you know, kind of huge, and... finding ways of... like harnessing energy or solar energy through textiles so I think potentially the kind of next five to ten years could be incredibly important for the textiles because of the all those possibilities. Does that answer the question – no?

TD1: I suppose, are you saying that you think problem solving is going to become more important within textile design?

TD5: Yeah, I think so because I think there's a lot of, sort of, research being done now into fabrics that can be, you know, will revolutionise, kind of, possibly, the world in what they can do, in terms of, you know, collecting solar power and energy, so I think we'll realise actually to what extent it can be. So I suppose, yeah.

TD1: I think the interesting thing will be, as that evolves, and it's obviously becoming more and more important as you say, how that continues to sit alongside the floral print or the upholstery fabric. I think that kind of relationship is going to be interesting, whether there's actually splits occurring.

TD5: People still want, you know, still very much want their environments to be, you know... they don't to just have an amazing eco-house, they also want things to still look beautiful and lovely and comfortable, however that might be for them.

TD1: That's all the questions I've got.

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TD6: I suppose in a way, it's probably a terrible way of putting it, but we're kind of a service provider for all of those different design disciplines, and so it, you know, it effects how all of those different areas work.

So yes, of course we're thinking differently. We must be approaching things differently because we're not coming at this from an angle of which new product do we need to develop, it's more about possibilities – it's more open ended, isn't it, starting with textiles.

TD1: I've been thinking about, recently, going back to the idea of trends, I wanted to ask you how you use that in your job as well. I was trying to, kind of, think about... because I asked the MA students as well if they use trend... and they said no...

TD6: Liars.

TD1: That's interesting you say because they said they don't. And I was thinking: okay, maybe the trend stuff I'm thinking about isn't really for us. I was thinking about the trend areas in like, PV, and the other trade shows, and actually I kind of looked at some photographs online. It obviously had the colour palettes and then it would have, like, samples of fabrics.

Is that actually supposed to be speaking to textile designers or fashion designers? And so, although the people who are there selling their work are textile designers, where do they go, then, to kind of get that information? Like actually is there anywhere or is it the textile designers who have to do that level of research in order to make the textiles, produce the colour palettes which are then used in those trend salons?

TD6: I think there are different kind of timings going on here, aren't there. There are the people who are going to PV to buy their fabric are working on the next immediate season. They're looking at, for example, spring-summer trends at PV and the people who are selling the textiles are selling spring-summer textile ideas, so they've already had to think, kind of, well ahead of the people who are doing the fashion.

You know, because it's obviously the sequence of events; the fabric comes first and then, you know, the fashion kind of follows on from that. So I think that the... what happens with the trend prediction companies is that they have to, to an extent, have to consider the textile people and predict two, three or four seasons ahead depending on how long their lead times are.

So I think textile people can still source that information if they want to. I think there is information out there for them – [REDACTED] for example... you know, they're looking at... actually, having said that, they haven't actually put much up about autumn-winter 10-11. I don't think they've got anything there. The latest, kind of, trend information on there is more about spring-summer which is what this last PV show was. Not that...

So, people like the car industry and the people who are doing trend predictions for them are thinking way ahead because they've got obviously a longer development

time, so, you know, they're going off in say, 10, 15 years.

TD1: Say [REDACTED]... the kind of information... you know they kind of put their early colour or their think tank stuff, that is... Do you think that it's different, kind of, information because I find that early stuff is... kind of very general, it's just kind of a mood image or it's actually literally collected from exhibitions that are going on or artwork or books that have been published at the time or...

TD6: I think that's refined because I think they're... [REDACTED] are responding to the times and to the changing mood of things and they're absorbing some of the same kind of information. Maybe they're reaching deeper into the information and the ideas that are available because they've kind of got a broad research team. But they're, you know... they're having to kind of respond to day to day changes as well and so I guess what they're doing, they're painting, kind of, with a broader brush, you know, more general ideas and it's getting a bit more specific.

In any case I think they're meant, I think, not... they're not meant to be a dictation of what people produce... they're supposed to be sparking off ideas. They're supposed to be inspirational, really, although I'm sure there are people who use them in a much more rigid way, much more direct way.

TD1: I was kind of wondering whether... the kind of broadness of broad brush strokes, as you kind of said... could be considered as a way that a textile designer needs to work like the students here might, in order to come with something that was original. What I'm trying to sort of work out is whether that's... whether that kind of broad visual cultural kind of tapping into the zeitgeist is something which is... is something that we as textile designers are actually very good at but is maybe not articulated very well at the moment whereas it might be quite well articulated through product design or something like that.

So that's kind of what I'm interested in.

TD6: I wonder. I don't know... I haven't kind of worked with product designers, say, perse, but I know that... I think what's happening in this particular textile department now is... there's a real kind of drive for getting the students to really think. It sounds silly, because of course they're all thinking, but there's much more of a kind of push for that and we're kind of setting projects which are, for example the one that I've just seen the crit for this afternoon which is the future textiles project. We're really pushing them, you know, to kind of think and dream about you know what's going to happen in ten years time with textiles.

So what they're tending to do is they're saying what are the current future developments. So, you know, where is technology, for example, going now? What are the kind of big cultural shifts, what are the big social shifts that are happening now and how is that going to affect our future?

So they're doing that broad research, you know, and some of them, in their presentations are presenting all of those things that are going on, you know, and have a hundred different things that are going on, you know, and then they're kind of focusing and saying, you know, I think the newness is here or the, you know, or they're

responding against that and kind of going completely the opposite way round and saying: I'm done with all of that stuff. I want to do something that's kind of, you know, in response to that.

I think they are doing more now than ever before and more than I ever did as a student because the course has changed a lot, and maybe that's education generally, I don't know. Particularly here, I think, there is much more of an awareness and... they're being forced to really look and really think about those bigger, kind of, ideas and those bigger influences.

- TD1: Do you think that might be because there's a... well, some people might disagree with me... there's like a greater understanding of, like, our relationship with fabric and textiles, kind of, conceptually and theoretically... and importance of cloth and fabric and materials in our lives.
- TD6: I think within a college it's really easy... I think historically I think textiles, as a subject area, has always been seen as a bit of an underdog and I think it's because it's, kind of, it's almost because it's so related to the every-day that we're kind of so used to it and it almost, you know, stems back to lots of domestic practice and people hand-knitting and those sorts of things. And because it is, in a sense, a supplier to other industries. It is, you know, the stuff they use so because it's not the ultimate end result, you know, there isn't the same starriness or star designer sort of thing associated with the textile designer because it always then gets developed or moved on into the product or into another kind of area.
- TD1: Something I've been kind of writing about recently is... I kind of saw textiles as like the big sister. You know when you're the oldest sibling, you've kind of got to make your own way, you've got to kind of find your own identity and find new ground and the siblings after you can, kind of, it's all a little bit easier because you've kind of...
- TD6: Except the middle child...
- TD1: I wondered whether actually there was something interesting in that, that we are thing that comes before rather than being this kind of lowly, kind of, denigrated...
- TD6: I think there is that sense. I think there was that sense, I think the more kind of historical sense of textiles being underneath everything and kind of ... and now in a way it feels more like there's a kind of shift for it to be the leader of everything. It's kind of imperceptible, I don't know why that kind of change has happened. I would imagine its... within this department it's got to be down to the leadership and you know the idea that's being kind of discussed you know within this academic...
- TD1: How do the students... you've mentioned that some of them have loads of ideas and the way that they worked, but how did they react to it when they first got the project? Do you know?
- TD6: Well, no, because I didn't set the brief but [REDACTED] was mentioning just now that when the brief was handed over there was kind of silence. And I think it's that difference between degree and MA where there's, you know, they're in their first year so they're kind of adjusting to all sorts of new ways of thinking and looking at things, but it's

a real challenge, I think, you know, to sit down and say to somebody: what do you think the future of textiles is? I'd find that a really challenging question.

And so they've gone away and they've kind of, you know, worked really hard I think, it was really interesting, all of these different sort of different diverse and exciting kind of ideas they came up with. But I think they were just very challenged by that brief. And I think challenging them in that way is really good and affects they kind of work they produce.

Some of them it won't, and it shouldn't, all of them you know and in a kind of... for some of them it was too much of a challenge and it just wasn't the way they think.

TD1: Yes, it's going to be in the end finding a place where it feels totally comfortable just to do some great floral fabrics, or design a folding roof.

TD6: I mean, the thing is that in the end, and this is one of the things that we were talking about when we were kind of going through the crits this afternoon, in the end the textile designer, designer being the operative word, brings, you know... the aesthetic that they're kind of developing is so, so important, you know. Even if it's all singing all dancing and it does amazing, has amazing, kind of, properties and it form in all sorts of extraordinary ways, if it doesn't look good, if it doesn't look like somebody wants to buy it or wear it or sit on it or surround themselves by it then what's the point?

TD1: Maybe that's related again to the idea that we're behind everything and that we need to sell ourselves to these other fields of design in order for our work to go anywhere. I mean the students I talked to again all sort of said I need to make a product; they need to make it into something.

TD6: Making it believable, so that people understand what it is that they're doing.

TD1: So that people understand, that's what they say. So we always constantly have to sell ourselves, if you like, or sell our work.

TD6: I think we tend to be, I don't know whether it's we're the type of people or whether it's the kind of, the history of it, but we tend not to be nearly as confident about what we do as other design disciplines. I could probably say in most colleges you would find that fashion students are going to be more confident than textile students.

I would imagine, but then there's that whole kind of side of fashion which is about showing off and about being, you know, a bit more theatrical or a bit more, you know, kind of, look at me, I suppose. Textile's kind of quietly working away, kind of, coming up with these things. There's a very different... it's a different characteristic, it's a different kind of person that wants to do that. It's a different kind of person that wants to, you know...

TD1: A couple of the MA students did talk about also having worked with fashion students on some of the projects and although they is a kind of understanding, they do understand the work that's gone into the textiles, there is a kind of feeling that they're producing cloth for them and that it's an unequal partnership, if you like, and that... but they seemed to be kind of resigned to that; that's kind of just how it is.

TD6: I would say that it's very healthy if does feel like an equal partnership because it is. I mean, my kind of experience with [REDACTED] with the label is that, it's very much about textile designer coming together with a fashion designer and the result of that collaboration, you know, and that was an equal partnership in terms of design. That was very much about both of us. I think it's quite healthy if they are saying it's an equal partnership.

TD1: They said unequal.

TD6: Oh, they said it was unequal. That's why I was quite surprised by that. That doesn't surprise me, somehow.

TD1: So when you had your company how... did you produce samples and then show your partner?

TD6: How did that creative process work? It tended to be, I think, at the beginning of, you know, the season, when we first sort of sat down with ideas, we would both bring things to the table and both literally look at whether they were tears or some new research that we found interesting or some vintage something or you know, whatever it was we would bring them to the table and discuss them and start to talk about ideas. Just collaborate with ideas and then we would both go off and I would, kind of, start working on some textile idea, whether they were printed or some stitch manipulated things and [REDACTED] would work on silhouettes and shapes and we would do this, kind of, back and forth back and forth, kind of, process where we would... we were working in the same space anyway, you know. I guess sometimes we'd take it off and he would work at home or whatever, but most of the time we were kind of fairly close to one another and sometimes a sample...

I would quite often just make samples or draw something or... making the samples very often was a useful thing for [REDACTED] because he could take that and place it on the stand, in different places and think about how it might be different parts of the garment, and then start to build a drawing around it. So, you know, either kind of photographing it on the mannequin or starting to draw over that or you know which ever way was easier...

So that was very much as an inspiration for a garment and sometimes the garment would be all about how that textile had made the shape behave or suggested the shape might be. Other times it was, you know, it was his shape, you know, that I kind of printed on to.

I think there was certainly some things whose shapes were as a reponse to the textile, very definitely, and I don't know that I kind of necessarily responded to his shapes by designing the textiles around them but the prints would be kind of applied to things. But sometimes, not new shapes, shapes that we know would be kind of sellable shapes. We already had patterns for them, we knew that they would fit well and you know that kind of thing so it wasn't all about new...

TD1: So your textiles would be giving it a new angle.

- TD6: Absolutely.
- TD1: A freshening up of it or...
- TD6: Nobody would kind of say: oh, we saw that shape last season because it was the textile that was, kind of, you know. Equally there were things that didn't have anything to do with textiles except that they were of cloth, but didn't have anything to do with textile design but maybe it was a colour thing and very definitely a kind of new shape.
- TD1: In your job at the moment, how do you...
- TD6: My ex-job.
- TD1: Oh, right.
- TD6: You don't know this, do you? I was made redundant from [REDACTED] They asked me to go full-time. It was a tough decision in a way because it was like, you have a job or you don't. But with the commuting and the fact that I work late there every night and I want to do other things as well, I didn't want just to be doing that and getting home at 9 o'clock every night. There's that life-work balance thing and also kind of leaving room in my week to be, and teaching which is, you know, important to me and doing other kind of design work as well.
- So I'm no longer there.
- TD1: Oh right. So you've got plans, have you?
- TD6: I've kind of got plans. I've got kind of... I've got a studio in Brighton which is lovely, it's kind of all set up. It's a little bit alien, it's weird, it's like starting all over again, you know, really clean slate at the beginning of this year, no [REDACTED] no contract here. Just coming in as VL person and VLing at Brighton as well, and so you know, really in that kind of place where kind of I'm kind of starting over again so it's a weird creative time for me.
- It's quite daunting because I've been in the High Street and doing High Street stuff for a while now and what I want to do is do something which is more creative than that, which doesn't... I mean that speed of the High Street and the volume of work that you have to do in a very very small space of time means that you're not able to develop anything in any depth at all, and it becomes a kind of exercise in how can you cleverly, quickly put collections together with really kind of short cut routes and make things happen with minimal resources in terms of time or manpower. And I don't want to work like that anymore.
- So, the consequence is that I suppose you look to the kind of higher end, ultimately you kind of spend more money developing things and spend more money making things, you charge higher prices and so you're able to do more than you can in that kind of High Street area. I'm looking at possibly collaborating with a couple of embroidery people; [REDACTED] who is here and [REDACTED]. She's now... is she a visiting professor?

- TD1: Research fellow?
- TD6: She was a research fellow. I think that bit's done now and she's been made visiting professor. Could have really got that wrong, you'd better check. So she's still associated with the college and she's still comes in and is around and you know kind of works with the students, not that much. So with her, and with somebody called [REDACTED] who was here and I taught her. Karen taught me. Karen taught her as well, I think; Karen was here for a long time. So it's like the generation game.
- TD1: So it's like studio is it or is it going to be...
- TD6: I don't know. It's really early days. We need to... we've sat down and discussed it once. We've gone away and thought about things. We need to come back together again and originally it wasn't going to be collaborative and I don't really see the point in that. Showing together and supporting each other and that sort of moral support is a nice idea but I think you can get a lot more from a meeting of three different minds that just what contacts can we pool and which, you know, we can share the budget something, you know, that kind of thing is all very well and good but I don't think it's enough and it could be a lot more. So we'll see.
- TD1: What I was going to ask you...
- TD6: [REDACTED] You can ask me about that anyway.
- TD1: When you were working at [REDACTED] because you talked about having such a short time in order to develop things, kind of, what you would do when you started to design a particular season's collections.
- TD6: I'll talk you through the process of how...
- TD1: Particular with reference to sort of trends and...
- TD6: So, in the design team at [REDACTED] you have got... let me tell you how many people. You've got [counts] maybe about twelve, thirteen designers in the design team. For the section I was involved in, well it was kind of everything in a sense, it was print, embellishment and colour. So those things affected all of the different areas obviously. Again, we're a kind of service provider corner – shouldn't say that at all.
- The way that it would work was that in my team there were three of us, two assistants designers and me as a senior designer, and we would... the way we would work really is, as a whole design team we'd have design week, which was probably about three days where, as a team, we would come together and you know with research, that was a mixture of mostly tears from magazines...
- TD1: From fashion magazines?
- TD6: From fashion magazines, almost exclusively fashion magazines, not very far beyond that. Boards of cat walk shows, with every single show printed out and pasted onto a board. Students did that. Maybe some vintage bits of inspiration and you know some WGSN research and some you know... I suppose normally it would be time, design

week would be time, just after something like PV as well, so the research from PV and all of those kind of forums and stuff that we had there.

And we would sit down and we would start talking about trends and ideas. So each of us in turn we'd just kind of throw ideas into the mix and you know what we were feeling for, that sort of intuitive thing as well was really important, and obviously that intuition is partly about you know what you've kind of absorbed as somebody who's looking at things all of the time and partly just intuition, that maybe isn't kind of from anything. But a lot of it I think about absorbing ideas and some could be from exhibitions or all sorts of things.

So we'd throw the ideas into the mix and start to collate pile of ideas. Literally physically on the table in front of us, you know, somebody would be talking about maybe graphic kind of versions of broderie anglais, for example. Don't know why that kind of came to mind... something that I've absorbed. And somebody else might have some sort of tear of petticoats and layers of cotton and you know, maybe.

So you'd start to kind of build up these little kind of stories and themes and moods and ideas. Sometimes we didn't have very much that was visual to back it up, but reading notes and things that we'd kind of written when we are PV or something. We'll be like, you know, I really, really feel good about indigo dyeing or about tropical florals or about whatever it might be.

So we'd need to go and find things that kind of fit that idea as well, so we wouldn't just use what we had in the room. We'd then go away...

TD1: Why would you need to go away and find more stuff? If you had that intuition that you kind of shared the gut feeling...

TD6: Because the next stage, really, is to put boards together. The thing about designing in a company like that is communication really. And it's how can the team work as a team and yet all come up with their own individual, kind of, input from their department. Because there they're split into soft wovens, casual, knitwear, tailoring, leather and denim, shoes, accessories, you know, the designer is responsible for a department.

In order for us to be all kind of singing from the same hymn sheet we needed to make the hymn sheet, which was the mood board for that particular kind of trend or idea so we'd all always keep referring back to that and there'd be things on there which were inspirational, be fabric swatches and I would put a colour way on it, a colour palette, on the board. We'd have talked about what the key items... we basically would start with that kind of brain storm and then start putting these boards together and then get a little bit kind of deeper into it – talk about what the key items were. In other words, the key shapes, the tulip skirt, the kind of frilly blouse or the... you know, whatever it was, the kind of padded shouldered 80's nipped in jacket, you know. Quite specific - what those main ideas had to be.

Then thinking about which department was going to design into that idea. And then for the print team we were then really kind of going beyond... with the research we were then starting to kind of go through, draws and draws and draws of vintage things,

sort of old swatches that had to see whether there was anything there that we could kind of reuse, re-colour or develop something from, use as inspiration. Or we would go out. Maybe we'd have like half a day... so little time to do anything, but maybe we'd have half a day to go to some local kind of vintage shops to go and have a look at stuff or we'd go and shop visit – go and have a look at Selfridges and see if we could kind of pick up on, you know, ways of doing things that we thought would be appropriate for the season that we were kind of working ahead to.

Because obviously at the High Street level you're not leading, in lots of ways. And so the designer collections, you know, the kind of high end collections, are beyond where you're going to be at and so you can kind of draw inspiration from those things to kind of feed into the following season. So I think it's very different, obviously, if you're being a leader in fashion and you're the ones that are coming up with, kind of, completely... I say completely new ideas, again it's, you know, it is about this kind of absorbing of ideas and information but maybe there's... for sure there's more... I think there's more kind of freedom to push the ideas further, there's more time, a little bit more time, to develop something that's more unique and innovative. And that's what you're wanting to be doing at that kind of end of the market. But you're still kind of absorbing the same things that everybody else is absorbing, you're just pushing them a lot further. And you're kind of making sure that you're not producing something that somebody else has already done, so it's kind of, you know... that's another, kind of, motivation for moving it forward.

TD1: So the mood board is just literally a method of communication?

TD6: Yes, and it's used by the buyers... sorry, by the designers, to sell the idea to the buyers. That's really key in that kind of scenario where you've got a team of designers, a team of buyers and merchandisers. But the main thing is to sell those ideas into the buyers to convince the buyers that this is what they need to be buying. Then there's, after design week and after we've kind of started to work into things, we put a pack together for the ICM – which is the Initial Concept Meeting, and that's a meeting where the designers and the buyers come together. The designers present their key trends, their key kind of thoughts for the season, whatever season it is they're working on, kind of, ahead of time, and they're really having to be sales people.

It's like you were saying before about the textile designers being the sales people. At that point they're having to convince the people with the money that that's where they should take their risks, that's where they should kind of place their biggest bet. This is a really key look for you know next season.

I hadn't realised how good you had to be at selling as a designer in that scenario, that was a new one on me. I think you have to be anyway in interviews and when you're kind of trying to put yourself forward for jobs and in that freelance situation – you have to be utterly convinced that what you're doing is great and right. But that whole thing of convincing people to kind of place their budgets on something that you feel is the right thing is... quite an interesting twist on events.

TD1: Apart from the mood board, how else do you kind of compile that information? You didn't use sketch books?

TD6: We used the sketch books for our own kind of use really, those weren't a tool for working together with other people. You'd often sit there and sketch and you know speak to your... your designer being the person you were producing the print for, so you would know... I suppose the next stage on, just to kind of fill you in on that in between bit, the next stage on from having the mood boards together is... For the design team, for the print team, they're going out researching and pulling together kind of inspirations and vintage and things that they're getting out of books, whatever resources they've got. And then we're... we kind of put a rail of those ideas together, in sections, so for the kind of summer festival theme or whatever it was, we'd have maybe seven or eight hangers with either printouts, photocopies, vintage, or you know, clear ideas for print direction, print and embellishment, hanging up. And we would present those at ICM as well.

So there would be a mood board, then they'd be all the general kind of sense of the print direction hanging up with it. That had to come before all of the kind of shapes and silhouettes and the kind of garment stuff, but in a really condensed kind of amount of time so you're kind of very quickly working through those ideas and you know very soon after the, at the same time, the shapes are being developed. They can work on plain shapes and then those that need print applied to them, the designer of the department and the print department would sit together and we would discuss in small teams then, for soft wovens, these are the prints that we're proposing for the different themes, you know, the different kind of moods that we've got.

Then... quite quickly there'd be a negotiating process where a designer would say: I kind of feel that in this story we're going to need a border print or whatever they need; we're saying to them this is what we think you need and then there's kind of, you know, a conversation about that. And then we go away as print people and we either we're again we're developing some of those ideas, drawing quickly maybe how we kind of see them and then developing them on the computer. We're simply re-colouring things that we have already that fit, or we're perhaps for one or two, for a few, for a handful of designs, starting from scratch and looking for the kind of, you know... if it's all about leaves, for instance, you know we're actually kind of finding images, photographs whatever they are to actually generate drawings and then develop those into a you know a design in repeat to send off to the factory.

But I would say that probably 70% of what we did would have to already, you know, exist in some form. I suppose there was some evidence of an idea there already by about the stage for us to then kind of develop, rather than saying: right, we've got a gap here, we need to do something from scratch. That certainly happens but it's not by any means how the whole collection develops. A lot of it is based on something already...

TD1: I just wondered how much more time we've got?

TD6: Whenever we're done. I'd like to be gone by 7. Is that alright?

TD1: Yes, thank you. Because that experience sort of varies so much with how textile designers talk at degree level and A level, particularly here... would you be able to articulate how your training as a textile designer might have prepared you for that role, or did it all go out of the window?

TD6: It didn't. No it didn't all go out of the window. I think you kind of almost... I suppose there's a sense somewhere that you just have to get kind of very quick and you just have to make decisions like that, as opposed to, developing things over a longer period of time. I mean for me creatively it was really tough because you know I really find it hard to be very very creative under pressure. You've got twenty minutes to come with something, I find that really difficult, that you're not able to feed yourself with research and kind of ideas and experimentation. I find that really hard.

But my job there was so much more about managing the team and you know the colour palettes and the overall direction of how the print was going whereas the two girls I was working with who were fulltime, I was only there three days a week, they were working into the ideas much more than I was ever able to.

So, you know, they were sitting on computers and you know drawing and developing designs and you just... I think it is very different in a sense, it's like a kind condensed version of what you do here but you know kind of taking out loads of the research time. It's like you just have to be very, very quick and very able to kind of pick up an idea and just be convinced by it and just do it. It's weird. It was quite alien to me because it's not where I've, you know, really had my experience.

There are all sorts of ways in the industry, all sorts of areas of the industry, where the pressure to come up with new ideas and keep moving things on is a kind of daily pressure. I think the whole swatching side of textile design, you know, where people have the textile design studios and they've got, you know, maybe ten freelance people or inhouse people, whatever they are, and they're you know... there's a pressure to do a swatch a day.

That is a similar kind of thing to the kind of High Street sort of speed but you're only doing the textile whereas in the High Street at least you're getting to see it develop from concept through to finished thing; you're getting the kind of feedback from the sales and you're kind of seeing the bigger picture, whereas in a swatching kind of studio it feels to me very much like kind of churning process; a lot of people refer to it as being churning, don't they, where they become like machines and they're you know just producing idea upon idea...

TD1: Trying to come at it from every possible angle in order to sell.

TD6: Well, that's interesting because I think... seems to me what's starting to happen is that the studio, the textile studios who have a more specific clear and strong idea, and identity around their work, are doing much better in this climate than the ones who are trying to cover all bases. That's really interesting because I think people are still looking for newness and new ideas and I think... also I think when you cover all bases your... the design very often looks like a mishmash and everything kind of, it all gets kind of, one thing... all gets diluted and it all becomes a bit of a dog's dinner.

Whereas that kind of strong, again it's about selling though. If you've got that kind of really clear idea and you follow it through and it's a very convincing statement that you're making and somebody else who's looking... it's a bit like financial markets. If you're looking for something that seems very kind very sure of itself, it's very stable, it's very convincing, then you're going to buy into that I think because you'll be more

confident for it. It's a confident idea in the first place and you're confident as the buyer of that design idea.

TD1: I just want to ask you a question now about when you first, kind of, identified yourself with textiles so I guess you must have done foundation course or something.

TD6: Foundation course, yeah. It was on foundation.

TD1: What made you choose textiles?

TD6: It was purely about... I tell you what it was. The way that I saw textiles was that I saw it as a kind of a bigger playground than any other, I think. I thought you can do all sorts with textiles, there's so much kind of diversity, there's so much opportunity and I guess I wasn't at that stage, I wasn't one of those people who was really clear about – okay, I want to commit to this very specific sort of direction. Not that the other areas are necessarily like that but textiles I think gives you... there's so much opportunity, there's so much kind of breadth to it that I just felt that it would enable me to be more experimental and I could try all sorts and I really liked that idea of using different materials and different, you know, processes and techniques, and it wasn't just, you know, kind of... it wasn't a really linear thing, that it was much, kind of, broader than that.

TD1: Often kind of design is talked about as a problem solver. I was just wondering how you identify with that notion?

TD6: It's funny, isn't it, because I think in the High Street scenario in a sense you're a problem solver in that you've got a kind of gap to fill. Okay we need a print for this story so you produce to order and I think that's wrong. That kind of goes against my grain in that sense, in that you're just filling in a box. Paint by numbers. In that scenario.

It's so completely different to that in other disciplines but in that High Street setting I think it's like that. I think that what textiles designers are able to do... I don't know, I think it's interesting because they're... they're very often creating their own brief aren't they and they're kind of setting out the series of question or problems for themselves, instead of that being imposed on them. I don't know, it's... it's a slight different kind of way of approaching it. I think the other areas are more about problem-solving than we are. I think we're more about discovery and innovation – not that the other areas are n't – but I think we're more about that and more about coming up with new...

TD1: Do you think that, kind of, designing a new floral repeat is still like that and not problem-solving, or is that a different kind of textile design to the one you might familiarise yourself with or...

TD6: I think it's a really, kind of, challenging thing to have to come up with a new floral repeat simply because florals are the mainstay of textiles and probably always will be to some extent, you know, in the broadest kind of way. It's quite a challenging thing, that idea of coming up with a new floral, and it's probably quite an interesting one to set for the students in a way – how new can they make it? What can they really do with that that's different? I like that idea of starting off with tradition and you know kind of a very well understood idea and then making it new. So... what's the question?

- TD1: About if we sort of saying that textile design isn't about problem-solving, it's about the idea of discovery, whether kind of these new forms of textile design are actually more like problem-solving and the more traditional versions of textile design are more like, the one's we've been discussing, are kind of...are actually more for, I don't know, if it's actually more for ourselves or more for the service of others as you were saying.
- TD6: I think what's happening now is that in a way I think we are starting to... rather than just producing stuff, which I think, you know, can happen in textiles, has happened in textiles, I think there is much more reasoning and consideration in there and I think you know, if that's problem-solving then I think there is more of that now and I think that that's the kind of direction that this, that the MA course is taking, is to have much more awareness of context and how the work is going to be used, how the textile is going to be used, what's is for. In a kind of really broad, broad way so that it challenges the scale of it, the colour of it, the texture of it, you know, and it kind of enables the designer to be more ambitious about what it is that they're doing . Because the danger is that if you don't think about the problem-solving bit, the ultimate kind of goal, then you know just kind of produce things and it doesn't get pushed and pulled and challenged in ways that it is challenged if your're thinking about applying it to the side of the building or you know or applying it to soft furnishings or all those different kind of diverse possibilities, so...
- I suppose the textile designer is setting those problems for themselves, it's not like somebody's coming along and saying: okay design a new kettle that does has these kind of... fits these functions. So yes, so it is still a very kind of broad thing but they are setting themselves some challenges I think, more than problems, maybe. Maybe it's not so much about kind of problem-solving but it's about you know challenging and by putting it in those different contexts it kind of challenges what the textile is and where it goes and how it lives on and doesn't kind of end up as a little swatch in a portfolio. Another bit of stuff.
- TD1: Last question I'm going to ask you is why do we design textiles?
- TD6: I think we design textiles because textiles underpins everything that we have around us, that we use, that we sit on, that we wear, that we kind of experience in our environment, in our lives. So, you know, I think it's the... for me it's the most... it's one of the most important kind of design disciplines, really, textiles, because it's so universal. That's why we design textiles.
- TD1: Okay.
- TD6: To change the world.
- TD1: To change the world. What a thing to end on.
- TD6: Was that useful?
- TD1: Yes, thank you [REDACTED] that's really good. I think that thing about kind of selling ourselves, I hadn't thought of either until we started talking. Its kind of rather a provider... do you want to buy something? Buy my wares.

26th March 2009

TD1: Interview with [REDACTED] on 26th March 2009. First thing I want you to do, really, is just talk about your own process of textile design or your own experience of textile design.

TD7: Okay. I guess my process normally begins with the material and normally a material which you wouldn't normally associate with textiles because I'm sort of just fascinated by characteristics of non-conventional materials within textiles and normally what I do also is take a material, take it apart, like a kid, and then find my own way of putting it back together again. I find it's a good way to get to know the material and understand what it wants to be. And then sort of I guess I also at the same time will build a sketch book or a book of ideas which I sort of blend with my exploration into whatever material I happen to be interested in at the time.

TD1: So what's contained in those sketchbooks? Is it the material investigations or... .

TD7: I think it's a combination of that and just anything... I normally get inspired by my environment so if I see just lights, glass, I make take a lot of pictures, like playful imagery, photography of light or glass, and then try to sort of play with... at the moment I'm using cork. I'll try to use cork in a way which is different to the way that you'd normally look at cork. So I'm interested in glass or light at the same time I'll be using maybe reflective processes which sort of blends my interests, a bit like a pick and mix.

TD1: So you use imagery to guide your material investigations once you've explored the material for itself?

TD7: Yeah.

TD1: Okay. You talked about sketchbooks developing alongside but the material investigation definitely comes first for you?

TD7: Yeah.

TD1: At what point do you then move out of the sketchbook or does that not happen?

TD7: It depends. At the beginning I just collect ideas and I don't think about the sketchbook, and then I have to sit down and organise the ideas. That will go into the sketchbook and then I will come away from it completely and I try to work with my material or a product idea away from the book altogether. I guess I use the sketchbook as a way to organise my thoughts.

TD1: Okay. Another question I wanted to ask was do you ever use trend material?

TD7: No. No, not really. I find it boring, because I'm a bit childish. As soon I know something's supposed to be a trend I kind of lose interest a little bit or I feel like I'm not really... or I haven't got much ownership over my work so I just sort of follow my own gut instinct.

- TD1: So you see the output of your design process as something which is personal rather than something which exists in a context like a market context.
- TD7: Yeah.
- TD1: It's going to sound strange but, how's that worked out for you?
- TD7: It's hard to say because I haven't... I've always been in education. So I sort of not really been forced to try and make money from my ideas. It hasn't been a problem at the moment because I find, also with trends anyway, just the same sort of ideas come back again and again and again. There's always a way to... if I needed to fit within a trend you can do it, I think.
- TD1: Would you be able to describe in your own words what trend material looks like? How its presented to you?.
- TD7: I guess it would come in a form of magazines, journals. I guess, sort of, material libraries. Yeah.
- TD1: As a designer, you've already said that you don't sort of enjoy using it within your design process, but how does it speak to you? How do you read it? How do you make sense of that material?
- TD7: Of like the trend materials? I don't really pay much attention to it to be honest. I think that's the most honest answer.
- TD1: Okay. What kinds of design outcomes do you produce? Have you got any particular interests?
- TD7: I guess my interest is material for space, so I think the most natural way to progress for me would probably be interiors or working with someone else like a product designer because I'm not very good at applying my ideas to like a useable thing.
- TD1: Do you think that's important for textile designers to do that?
- TD7: I think it's important to... if you can't do it I think it's important to work with someone else to share the project, because I think by definition textiles needs something else. I think you just need to find a way to... find either the people or, yeah, I think you need to find the people who can look at your idea and find a use for it. I don't think that we need to necessarily know what to do. Otherwise you end up... what you might do is you might be too narrow-minded from the beginning. You could easily think to yourself – I'm going to design a collection of interior upholstery fabrics and then if I do that I'm going to look at upholstery fabrics and try to reproduce something which is already available. Which kind of goes against the way I work; my idea is to try to come up with something totally different so I think it's better just to leave... I think it's good to be open and not know what you're going to do sometimes, because there's a enough people to find a way to...
- TD1: But you are interested in interior fabrics, fabrics for interior spaces, you said.

- TD7: Yeah.
- TD1: For spaces.
- TD7: For spaces, yeah. So it could be architectural.
- TD1: That's reasonably broad still.
- TD7: Yeah.
- TD1: The convention within textile design often, particularly within education or trade fairs, is to show swatches or samples. What do you feel about that? How do you identify with that way of presenting work?
- TD7: Yeah, it doesn't suit me. I've tried it before. I've been to Indigo and it just... because I guess once you work in that way your ideas gone and you can't really do anything anymore and you can't really...
- TD1: Do you mean once it's been sold?
- TD7: Once it's been sold, yeah. Or you have to come up with so many different ideas, like maybe twenty different ideas, and I like to take one idea and develop it, make a project out of it rather than ...
- TD1: What do you think, kind of, the method of actually showing samples as opposed to showing textiles within a product? Do you have any opinions about that?
- TD7: I don't think there's anything wrong with it.
- TD1: With which one?
- TD7: With selling the swatches. Because they kind of... I guess they know what they want when they're... I mean from the buyers point of view they know exactly what they want. So they want a conventional material fabric which they can apply to a dress or something functional. I think it's just a different way of working from how I work. When I first went to... when I first started my BA that was the sort of world I was sort of introduced to it. I struggled a bit because its not something which fitted well with the way I work.
- TD1: So do you call yourself a textile designer?
- TD7: No, not really. Not any more. I work within textiles but I don't really... yeah, I guess it depends who I'm talking to. Sometimes I call myself a surface designer. Once you say textiles people get all these different stereotypical images in their mind and it's hard to get them to understand what you're about.
- TD1: So what is a textile designer in your head, then?
- TD7: I think a textile designer's so broad. This is the problem of textiles – people don't really understand what textile's is. Whereas say fashion you understand that you're making

garments for the body but textiles can go so many different ways, like textiles for vehicles, architecture, product, medical, the medical industry, it's broad. You can't really define a textile designer.

- TD1: I guess you did like a foundation course and you did your degree. At what stage did you start to identify with the design industry and textiles rather than going down any other paths in art and design?
- TD7: I've always been attracted to fabric and sort of yarn, like even back to when I was doing my A level I was doing A level art and thought I'd go down the fine art route and I'd work with fabric, I was always working with fabric. I guess it's always been there, I just didn't know, I dunno, I just found a way.
- TD1: A part from that kind of possible avenue of going into fine art you were always interested in textiles?
- TD7: Yeah.
- TD1: Having now worked within textile design for a while, within education anyway, how do you now identify yourself with other people who've trained as textile designers? Is there anything you feel you share with them?
- TD7: Yes. I think we've all, all textile designers are very playful and sort of interested in material and how it works. I think we're all very tactile people. I think that textile designers are very careful about how... when you look at a textile designers looking at a product or a garment or we're very childlike, we handle it delicately, while you find that product designers... my experience of product designers is the complete opposite. They want to, sort of, push. If they're working with material they want to push it to the extreme so that if it will break they'll break it. If it burns, they want to burn it. I don't know, I think that...
- TD1: What's your kind of evidence for this opinion? You talked about the experience of the product designer – that was somebody looking at your own samples and you talked to me about that before. But about them being playful and careful. Do you have any particular experience or... where does that knowledge come from, for you?
- TD7: I think it just comes from being around textiles designers, looking at how they present their work, how they sort of look at maybe share their work with other people or, I don't know, maybe the way that they ask questions about your own work and the way that they look at your work. There seems to be a respect there. Very sort of careful.
- TD1: Often design is described as problem-solving. As a textile designer do you identify with that idea?
- TD7: Sometimes, but sometimes there isn't a problem there. I find that sometimes I invent the problem. I've got my own problem in my own mind with this material. So I guess in my situation the problem for me is that I like certain materials and they act in a certain way and everyone expects them to act in a certain way – how can I challenge that and make it act in a completely different way? I guess it's searching for a problem rather than encountering an actual problem.

- TD1: Last question, really, is quite broad, which I know you're going to love this question. Why do you, we, us, design textiles?
- TD7: This is a difficult question. I don't know. Why do I design textiles? I guess I work in textiles because of the fact that it's so broad. In my mind it's a broad area so I feel very free to do a lot of different things. I guess that's why I work in textiles and plus I like to touch material, I like to create something with my hands.
- TD1: Why do textiles need to be designed?
- TD7: What do you mean? I don't understand.
- TD1: It's kind of a strange question, really. Why are all these students still on this MA here still learning how to design textiles?
- TD7: I think it's important to have courses where people know how to make things, like, I guess, if you look at the way the economy is built at the moment, manufacturing, all those sort of skills are disappearing and I think it's nice to try to keep the tradition around in some way, even it's being challenged and changed and evolving. I think it would be a shame to lose something like textiles.
- TD1: So you see it as a tradition?
- TD7: Yeah. Yeah.
- TD1: Because that's quite different to what I've seen of your work and what you were talking about earlier.
- TD7: I think it comes from a tradition but it's allowed to evolve – I think things should evolve. I guess skills can change over time but, I don't know, I just think people should know how to make things. I think it's a human instinct, I think... I couldn't actually imagine not having a course like textiles or courses like textiles where you learn how to make things.
- TD1: Sounds like I'm really prodding or poking but when you say things, make things, have you got any other kind of definition for that or is things just the right word?
- TD7: I think things is the right word. Yeah.
- TD1: So you make things. Excellent.
- TD7: Because textiles is just too broad. You can't say that a textile designer works in this way or does this because it's just too big a industry, there's too many of us.
- TD1: Have you got any other examples of when you've worked with designers from other disciplines that you could talk about?
- TD7: I don't know. I guess I've worked with industrial design engineers and... do you mean only within design?

- TD1: Yeah.
- TD7: I think that's my only experience of working with designers.
- TD1: How about within industry? You're working in industry now, aren't you?
- TD7: Not from a design point of view. Either scientists or business people.
- TD1: Okay. How's that worked?
- TD7: Sometimes it can be a little bit depressing.
- TD1: Why?
- TD7: ...working with business people, because you kind of feel like your soul's being torn out of you. Because I guess a lot of the attraction to textiles, working for textiles, is that you're kind of making things for yourself. It's a really nice feeling and when you present your ideas to maybe a business person they're not interested in the same things as you are, it's more about the bread and butter and money.
- TD1: When they first met you, as a textile designer, I guess you had work with you, the things you've made, there with you. Have you got any kind of reflections or observations about how they interacted with you?
- TD7: Yeah. They all thought I was a fashion designer as soon as I said textiles. What were they like? I guess... I don't know. I can't really remember anything, sorry.
- TD1: That's fine. Just kind of interested to know really if, what you said about them thinking you were a fashion designer, immediately.. obviously means there's something not right about the perception of what a textile designer is and does. Maybe that comes from it being so massively broad.
- TD7: It's just big, a big industry. It's hard to cater for everyone under one course.
- TD1: I know that you have a theory that textiles will have it's day.
- TD7: It will. It will come back, it's just people are obsessed with products at the moment and they understand products a lot better. They see the finished... like if you show them a chair they're not going to see the fabric first, they'll see the chair... the fabric second.
- TD1: Do you think the kind of current sort of climate for provenance in food and provenance in clothing and all of that might help a shift towards a stage where textile material becomes more important again, do you think?
- TD7: I guess maybe reasons such as waste, sustainability, waste management, maybe for other reasons, maybe not for appreciation of textiles but more because you have to.
- TD1: I suppose within kind of food, if you like, there is that, with farmers' markets and all that giving value to quality and artisanship and all of that which perhaps really hasn't

had its day within textile material design. I don't think it would be on such a small scale as that, it would be on a large scale. A better understanding of the constituent parts of how a product is made.

TD7: People, I guess... the public at the moment are not really interested in where things come from at the moment, like, you eat your food but you don't know where... how it's made. Everything's a bit artificial. Places like Primark at the moment, they can cater for so many people and you put like this disposal culture where you just buy and you know you're going to throw it away... you don't even think about appreciating where its come from or understanding the true cost of that material. It has to stop at some point and maybe that's when textiles will be appreciated a little bit more.

TD1: Maybe that goes back to the sort of carefulness you were talking about, of textile designers. Maybe there is that appreciation of the material element within a product, so maybe that kind of new era of textiles needs to come from within textiles, understanding what we know better, maybe.

TD7: Maybe.

18th September 2009

TD1: The first thing I just wanted to ask you, really, [REDACTED] was if you could sort of explain to me your personal story of how you came to textile design.

TD8: Oh my gosh. Well, initially I was at school and I really loved the idea of getting into fashion design, which I suppose a lot of textile or design... textile related designer people want to go into really. It's the area that they kind of think that's where I'd like to be and I suppose that was... I never really worked in that industry although I did do some work in it. When I kind of got to BA point, when I was working in textile design it was... I loved the process stage and that idea and I kind of worked within a couple of textile companies and I worked for [REDACTED] for a little bit as well, actually, in their design department, and it was at a time when a lot of the main designers had left for whatever reason, so it was quite good in the sense that I got to be quite involved in the process of, kind of, big fashion company and, you know, and what they do, kind of, on a seasonal basis.

But I also found it very constraining in the sense that you stick to a certain, kind of, process unless you are making a creative decision I didn't feel there was anything new coming out of it, and what I like at BA level, towards the end of my BA level, was the fact that I was, kind of, looking at new ways of approaching textile design in terms of materials as well. Materials is something that I'm really, kind of, excited about.

So at the end of my BA I was thinking I don't want to just want to go into a studio based job, whether it be fashion, interiors or whatever that might be, although textiles [...] I'm very passionate about it, it wasn't really kind of where I wanted to go and I thought, obviously, by doing an MA, by going straight into an MA at the Royal College of Art, I thought I could kind of find something else within that or take it in another direction that maybe hasn't been done before or just look at things differently and be a little bit more conceptual about how I approach textiles and so, I mean, the RCA was brilliant. Initially it was very difficult, a completely different environment to, kind of, BA level. I remember being really pushed and, kind of, not quite sure really what... initially what I was doing... is this the right thing to do? Really, looking back, they really, kind of, strip you back to kind of the base and build you back up really, and help direct you in a certain way. I particularly enjoyed the, kind of, aspect of collaboration work, working with different departments, people with different skills and people who draw things differently and just that, kind of, interaction between different disciplines. I absolutely loved that. And also I love fast-paced work lots... I like to be doing lots of different things at once, kind of, you know, colours, seeing how they feed into each other and that kind of thing.

So, yeah, I mean I got quite lucky really. I had my degree show at the Royal College and, because I've been doing some sampling in inflatables... I was looking at this integration of inflatables within textiles structures that I was creating for an architectural application and [REDACTED] had these connections with the KTN... knowledge transfer network... which brings lots of... again, kind of, lots of different industries and backgrounds, companies, together and just, kind of, get them talking about what they're doing and looking for any kind of connections in work or maybe research areas to take on, and [REDACTED] had met my old boss from [REDACTED] and said: "I've got a textile student into, kind of, doing... making inflatable shapes" and they said do you know you can actually weld textiles. We do a lot of research and developed various

things here at [REDACTED] that, you know, that can be welded, polymer based textiles, and also, kind of, mixed textiles with natural fibres and that kind of thing, and [REDACTED] said: “Okay, come to the show, come meet [REDACTED] our student,” and I just kind of got talking to [...] and I was asked to come to [REDACTED] not knowing really anything about it at all, and a bit unsure, really, in a sense.

I got here and saw some of the technology being used, and I suppose even at that stage I wasn't... it was very hard to, kind of, understand this type of environment and really what they were doing, but I could kind of see through that a little bit and see that there could be some great opportunities here, and so I ended up, kind of, working in the polymers section. So that was how I got here, really.

So... what I thought that I wanted to do, which was a kind traditional, kind of, job within textiles, I ended up, kind of, going a completely different way. But that's really kind of my passion, because I was looking at rapid prototyping also at the RCA, I was looking at knitted structures and how I could maybe create completely different structures by, you know, 3D, modelling, and a different approach of developing a constructed textile, and... engaging a material side with another big interest to me and looking at what could be developed rather than just what already exists. I always wanted to, kind of, push at things a little bit further, you know...

TD1: Was it you that made the knitted radiator?

TD8: It wasn't.

TD1: It wasn't? Oh.

TD8: It was... girl. I did meet her at a show. Is her name [REDACTED] something?

TD1: I don't know.

TD8: Yeah. I think I've got her contact somewhere. But, no, she did... I think because... I remember [REDACTED] from the RCA – I don't know if you've met her before...

TD1: Yeah, yeah.

TD8: ...And she was, I remember she was kind of tutoring me a little bit and I remember she always used to compare me to her in terms of, I kind of thought process and the background behind her work... but yes, she also did a... like a knitted... I think she did it out of stainless steel... she got these created... I think she ended up actually producing... for our show I think she did kind of pretend pieces but actually they went into production, I think. I've forgotten what her name was, though. Something Kelly or [REDACTED] something, I can't remember.

TD1: Yeah, I'm not sure. I thought it was you, for some reason. The next thing I wanted to ask you, really, was obviously [REDACTED] were connected to the Knowledge Transfer Network...

TD8: Yes.

TD1: So they were specifically looking for some other expertise, I guess. What do you feel they have gained from having you involved with their company, or what do you know that they have gained?

TD8: I think, really, in terms of textiles joining [.....]. There've been lots of developments within it but I think it was at a stage where they really wanted to expand on what they knew and obviously in applying it to their various industry areas is an important thing and getting the work out there, getting people to understand the technology that is here, and how it can be used. I think [redacted] because it really is a kind of... it's a base where people you know, are experts in certain fields, and very much, kind of, science based and academic based. They struggle to kind of connect with maybe people that don't know so much about it. I think they expect that other people or even other industries they might work with should, kind of, automatically understand what this technology's all about. But I think in a way, I think I was probably brought in to, kind of, use design speak and be able to transfer it to maybe people that were more likely to use it as in maybe areas in the textile industry and that will go right down to people that are actually designing the products or whatever that might be.

They needed somebody, really, that could transfer that kind of way of talking much more easily and... I think that was kind of one area. I think also to kind of look at a more kind of creative take on what they were doing and how that could be applied to certain applications. I mean, the first project that I worked on was designing a garment, like a protective garment, that was going to be made using a process here. Because it was made in a completely different way from sewing, I mean, in terms of designing some pattern pieces and constructing the garment was something that they couldn't really understand and I suppose it's also... I basically took that on and re-worked it and put my own kind of input into it and I think I just kind of... I didn't really appreciate, maybe... didn't appreciate my creativity until you come into an environment like this. You take what you know for granted and because maybe before I'd been surrounded by lots of creative people... but when I came here I didn't see it as necessarily as an important additive to whatever project I've been working on, but actually I realised that the way that I think is completely different to how a scientist or an engineer will think. Actually my input is very important in terms of that.

So having a... I've been here two years now so I've kind of got more of an in-depth knowledge of certain processes and technologies, which obviously helps me to kind of explain certain processes to people that are completely non-technology minded.

But, yeah, I suppose it's that kind of link and being able to speak to certain people in a way that kind of enables them to gain enough information and to understand what it's all about but without kind of coming across in a too much of a technology way of talking. So, yeah, I think that's what I give to the group. Since I've been here I've worked on... I've helped bring in a number of projects, kind of textile based work, even with some architectural companies, fashion based work, sportswear as well, its an area that I've been working quite a bit in. So, I think maybe if I wasn't here, I don't know how much further that would have got taken.

Also, generally an engineer or a scientist will, kind of, reflect a lot on their work and spend a lot of time, kind of, looking and thinking about things before doing things. Because I'm very much a doer, very practical and hands-on, which comes from my

creative side, I think that also adds a lot to projects when literally when getting things done and kind of pushing on with things and being a bit more, kind of, get up and go, is definitely something that I add to projects here that are going on here, and group work that's going on here.

TD1: Do you find that your creative process is any different now to when you were either working in sort of textiles or fashion industry, or when you were working at the Royal College? Would you work in the same way or...

TD8: To a point...

TD1: Do you still use sketch books and stuff, and samples?

TD8: Yeah, I mean, exactly. Again, kind of, you know, there's a starting point, I mean, I've been kind of trained in way, since I've been here, to kind of really log a lot of details. You must make sure, especially when it comes to looking at specific settings on a machine or, you know, because it is much more precise and I've kind of learnt to be a bit more, you know, detailed with the work that I'm producing and making sure that everything's... whereas, I'm just the kind of person that works so much, likes doing lots of different things, I'm very just kind get straight into it and not kind of take a step back and reflect what I'm doing. That's something that I've definitely found that I do since I've been here.

And thinking things through. I mean, really, the stages are very similar, I mean presenting ideas, again is something that was kind of ingrained into us as the RCA is communicating ideas and presenting and whether it's a group project or it's a project that I'm maybe working with one client, there's still an element of making sure that everybody knows what's going on, having regular meetings, and... When it comes to the machine or whatever I'm doing, I mean, generally that's where the creative process kind of happens. I mean, some work that I'm doing at the minute, I'm literally... I've got some materials and I'm kind of just looking at what I can do with them and that's, you know, that's basically very similar to certain projects that I made at the RCA in terms of, I know what I, kind of, want to do or what I've got, what can I do with them. So it's very much... it's very similar, I suppose, and I hadn't really thought of it like that. It is a very similar approach, actually, although there is this, kind of, part that is a bit more, I kind of, you know, I have to reflect a little bit more, I suppose, which is...

It offers other things. By doing that I found it helps to maybe be more creative in other areas, I don't know. I just, it's that kind of, it's interesting because that's something that I really have experienced since working in somewhere like this.

TD1: Do you still sort of define yourself as a textile designer, or something different?

TD8: You see, I really... I have problems with this. Sometimes it depends who I might be talking to, maybe a certain industry or something like that. I'll sometimes say I'm a textile designer or sometimes I... I'm not an engineer, but kind of engineering of textiles, I work with engineering textiles. Or I'd... or a textile joining specialist, sometimes I use. I mean I'm definitely a designer but I also feel I have, you know, this added kind of benefit as well, and this kind of additional value that I can offer as well,

which I think is, kind of, very much going to help me kind of ultimately in the future to do what I want to do, really. I think having a more than just the design background could offer me, could help me, kind of, get elsewhere, in a job... in a dream job of mine or something... I don't know. Kind of looking at... seeing what I've learnt here and hopefully some qualifications, some extra qualifications I could gain here, in terms of the more engineering, kind of, science side of technology. So, yeah, I'm not sure quite what I would describe myself as. I don't think I'd have one particular title.

TD1: Okay. One thing that I've been, sort of, reading about quite a lot, for my research, is the notion of the design process as problem solving. I just wanted to get your verdict, really, on that notion, based on your own experience as a textile designer both in kind of more traditional textile design roles, but also the role you're in now. Have you thought about that before, ever?

TD8: I suppose so. I'm trying to think of maybe an example I could use. Don't know what... In terms of maybe some work I've done here I've... I suppose in construction of a particular form... I've changed something quite simple and it would also look aesthetically quite different, but it also solved various problems in which this thing was causing problems. So, but I don't really know how to answer that properly. Is there anything else I could add?

TD1: It's interesting because talking to textile designers and, I suppose, to someone like an industrial designer or a product designer, often they kind of immediately see that kind of connection with problem solving. It's like you make a chair more comfortable or a fork easier to use or a kettle easier to use, or something. But I don't if whether in textile design it's something that designers connect to quite so easily. Or if they even think about it at all.

TD8: Yeah, I'd probably agree with that. I think textile designers tend to see things much more from the aesthetic and what it looks like and maybe not beyond that. I think that maybe that's where some of my work originates from the RCA was because I wanted to look at textiles in a completely different form and by looking at it in a different form and a different function it can be applied to, you know, big huge structures, looking at it on a completely different scale, as well. And how that could potentially kind of add to an environment or solve an issue of some sort that ... yeah, I think... but I think that maybe more kind of studio based designers would probably never see themselves as that, as there just to solve particular problems through their design, I don't know.

TD1: The last question I wanted to ask you, really, was just very generally, kind of, why do textiles need to be designed? It's a strange question and most people sort of go... I don't know, but... Why do we need textile designers? Why is it important?

TD8: In terms of the textile designer more of, kind of, the traditional textile designer or...

TD1: Either really.

TD8: That is very difficult.

TD1: I've spoken to quite a few students from the RCA and, you know, as you were saying

before, they're kind of surrounded by all this creativity, all these new textiles, both more commercial and also very innovative going on. But I just wanted to just really question about why they're there and why does the world need this new textile stuff, really. So that's really what's behind the question, I guess.

TD8: Yeah, I mean... I suppose I could... this is a really rubbish kind of explanation, but in terms of maybe looking at more kind of more polymer based textiles or textiles that can be engineered in a certain way can, you know, benefit products, manufacturing.

I mean, for example, I'm currently working with, like, beds and as part of the KTP programme, and I mean they really want to, kind of, look at... at the minute most bed manufacturers are looking at production and using traditional sewing and, you know, springs and, you know, very traditional way of, you know, glues, stapling and stuff. I think we're kind of looking at developing some new, kind of, materials that will work within that which then lends itself to a different way of processing them and by doing that you're automatically benefiting maybe something as simple as cost and time but automatically by, you know, looking at textiles in a different way or developing certain textiles with certain properties there's then this whole scope of applying them to different applications and, I mean, whether that's incorporating circuitry that makes you textiles, you know, electronic or can do certain things. It's going to benefit some area in the industry and I think that's kind of how I'd see it.

TD1: I think that's a really good example that... It would be interesting to know if you ever get to actually effect the actual aesthetics of it. Because I mean the piece that was in the Made magazine is both innovative but it also looks great, which is probably something that's completely innate in you which you can't help. I was just interested to see if you do try to push their buttons in also making these innovative mattresses but [...] something different with the look...

TD8: Yeah, I mean, an internally funded like that, obviously it was my project and I wasn't having to work to any brief or anything like that and generally in a project here there's certain... the specification's already set generally in a project and but there is always, I think, room for creativity within that, but sometimes it can be constrained to a point already, but... I forgot what I was going to say now... adding an aesthetic to a product, that was the question, wasn't it?

TD1: Yeah. I don't blame you; you've had meetings all day.

4th March 2010

TD9: What we do now and what I've always done is design fashion textiles, so it's textiles for the fashion industry and sell as... I used to be a freelance designer and now I run a small studio so it's producing a collection of designs, print designs, that we then take to customers and sell.

TD1: Can I ask you to sort of start, like, from the beginning and just explain...

TD9: What? When I left college?

TD1: Kind of, how did you first identify yourself with the subject of textiles? What was it about you and your skills that led you into textiles?

TD9: I've always wanted... it's really stupid, but I always wanted to do textiles from when I was very young. I had a brother who was much older than me and he had a friend that went to St Martin's and studied textiles and I think at school, I went to a school that had a very strong art department and you know we did all sorts of things and they'd always said, you know, the art teachers had always said, you know, textiles was fine art... so I did textiles at A level, although you didn't do a separate A level in those days, but I did an option of textiles.

So I don't know, for as long as I can remember I kind of looked at William Morris and... I used to spend hours when I was a child copying out William Morris patterns. William Morris – it's that kind of thing, that artisan, craftsman, producing cloth... I don't know.

TD1: What stage did you have an understanding of what textiles designers actually do or the process of textiles...

TD9: Well, I certainly didn't when I went to college because I went to [REDACTED] which, I've never moved very far, and it was a very fine art-based, craft-based college, so terms of its idea of what the industry was about was kind of miles away. It was called the arts and crafts, the [REDACTED] School of Arts and Crafts, and I did weave as a degree. I did woven textiles as my main degree, so that, you know, I went to foundation and then I went and did textiles after that and I never wanted to do fine art because I wanted something that had product at the end of it. I couldn't see myself just drawing and painting for the sake of just drawing and painting. I liked the idea of drawing and painting because it led on to something specific. So that's why I think I choose textiles, if you like, and 3D never really interested me.

So it was that, kind of, you know, it led... I think that making thing, that making something... I've always sewn, I always used to make dresses when I was ten years old, I remember smocking my first dress and... I smocked the top and made it into a shift dress. So it always that kind of making, design and making really, but that's not the direction I've gone in but that's what I always enjoyed.

TD1: I was really, kind of, be interested if you could say a bit more about that because you said that the college you went to was arts and crafts and design and making is not what you're going into, very much in the design industry. How do you define the difference

or why were you attracted to move into design rather than being a design...

[End of first file]

- TD9: Yes, we sell. When we go to Italy we still sell to converters, who are the people who covert the design to cloth and they sell on to the fashion industry. But in England and the United States we mainly see the fashion companies now. They will buy the design directly and get someone to print it for them. So, we're dealing with people who probably know less about textile designing – they're mainly fashion designers so they don't know what feasible to print, particularly – they'll buy something that fits in with their look, their style, their direction... [unclear]
- TD1: What is that situation actually like, when you're in those trade fairs and you've got the collection in front of you and the people are coming in. I've been there and they're, sort of, seated and usually the person who's standing up and showing them through...
- TD9: Yeah, they don't tend to... I mean, I don't particularly like going to trade fairs. I hate it, it's reactive. I like to ring someone up and make an appointment and go and see them. It's a private thing. As a studio we generally just don't do particularly well in the trade fairs but you have to go because you have to show your face and get new customers.
- TD1: Do you feel that you have to, kind of, physically sell them or is it literally just showing them and...
- TD9: I've never been someone who is... I'm not a hard-sell salesman. I'm not a salesman, you know. I'll try and persuade people that they want things but basically if it's right, it's right and if it isn't, it isn't – they'll come and buy it. Other than that, I go to Italy a lot and might take the collection and ring up the customers and make an appointment and go and see them.
- TD1: So it really is...
- TD9: I have agents in New York, I have an agent in LA and I have an agent in Japan and I've got an agent in Australia as well. So they're sales people and [REDACTED] who's working for me, is trying to get into the London market and sell more in the London because I can't do it all. She's going around with the collection to all the London customers.
- TD1: So it really does come back to the beginning of design process, making sure that you're working in the right directions for that particular season.
- TD9: Yes, although we always do make collections it's very big. Because some people... I mean, we've been seeing some people this week who was still looking for Winter 10-11. We're already working on Winter 11-12 for Italy because they're quite forward, because they work with the catwalk and the designers, and in America we're showing Summer 11... yes, we're showing Summer 11. So you're always, you know, the winter collection can either be the winter before or the new winter, the summer collection is for the one in between. You're always working on two seasons because somebody is always looking for something different... and you're trying to show them new designs all the time or a new enough look that convinces them it's not...

TD1: Okay. Part of my research is about trying to, sort of, situate textile design into this emerging field of design research which is talking about modelling the design process and trying to create theories about design thinking. A lot of it has been written from the point of view of architects and product designers and they often talk about the design problem which they start from.

TD9: It's slightly different because in textiles, you see, we're not given a brief. It's the only industry, in design, where we're actually not given a brief by a customer and we interpret that brief. Most industries, you know, if it's graphics you're told do you want a design for, or an architect you want a building for, or a ceramicist, you want a set of china for. But as textile designers in the textile industry in the way it's working now is the most daft situation – you do the stuff in the way that a fine artist does stuff, and then you go out and you say: "What do you think – do you want to buy it? Is it right of you or is it not?" So it's a very bizarre situation...

[End of second file]

TD9: I used to work... was very much about making 3D designers, interior designers actually think about the colour and patterns from the beginning and not just something they stuck on afterwards. Because, you know, we think about it from the beginning but everybody else doesn't/. It's something they stick on afterwards and it shouldn't be that, it should be an integrated... you know, if you go back to tribal ways of adorning themselves they built their buildings in a pattern and it was all part of the same thing.

TD1: When you think about, you know, the notion of pattern and of decoration, also surface texture if you're thinking about weave and knit, that's part of the pleasure, isn't it, the sensorial kind of concept... to build into a chair, to clothing or whatever.

TD9: Yes, materials are very sensual and sometimes.. everybody gets so dragged down that road. [unclear] form, the thing. We don't live in such an adorned world, now, I think. Textiles is, you know, fashion and interior textiles has got its place, but we've stripped it back a lot. You don't think of it... you don't think of putting it, you know, a big pattern on the outside of our houses, do you?

Some nationalities are more daring, aren't they, in terms of colour and pattern... our weather, as well, climate has a lot to do with it...

So where did you go to college?

TD1: I went to Loughborough and did multimedia.

TD9: When were you there because [unclear] was at Loughborough.

TD1: I finished in 2001.

TD9: No, she finished much later but I can't remember when, in about 2005, I think. So you were one of [redacted] students?

- TD1: Yes, one of [REDACTED] and then from there I went straight to St Martin's and the MA fashion textiles pathway there and then... then I got a job as a lecturer, which I'm still doing, because I've always wanted to go into research. I was always more experimental, nothing I ever did was very commercial...
- TD9: Fine art, basically. And art textiles, because a lot of multimedia is that.
- TD1: And also a bit, sort of, sciency. I was always into the processes so... I got obsessed with paper making, I got obsessed by... I started off my Phd in flocking, doing some stuff in flocking, I wanted to create some innovative surfaces, flocking with metals and you, know, all the sort of smart textiles. I've always been really interested in process, very much in textiles and, yeah, and now doing this really, really.
- I suppose it's come round to this as me understanding myself, really, and my own place in the textiles industry. Why do I still call myself a textile designer when [unclear] sell anything, but there is a way of thinking I know I share with people like you who do sell internationally, in a commercial sense, and that's what I'm trying to, sort of, get at.
- TD9: But you see, when I see myself retiring and stopping this I don't see myself stopping textiles, I just see myself maybe not quite so much on the commercial bandwagon, but I don't see myself... I don't know. I'd like to do something... I don't know what. But still something textiley. [unclear].
- TD1: Talking to different people, as I have been, I know that some of the other people at the RCA. Although they trained as textile designers, they did a degree in textile design, they find it really difficult to associate with the label of textile designer. They're much more comfortable with 'maker'. Or they might say well, I'm an ex-textile designer. I used to...
- TD9: I suppose designer means the commercial world and if you're not in the commercial world then you're not seeing yourself as a designer. Do you see what I mean? You're not flogging it to that commercial product then, I suppose.. . It's like saying someone who designs fantasy buildings but never builds them, I don't know if they'd call themselves an architect. I'm not sure.
- TD1: I suppose there's also that thing of craft as well, isn't there. Because there's a certain way of being a craft person and maybe, kind of, there's something in between that.
- TD9: But you've got to physically produce it if you're a craftsperson. You physically produce that end product that involves textile know-how, don't you? In limited edition or whatever... whatever. But you're using those techniques though, that expertise you've gleaned and learned.
- TD1: So, yeah. I was already trained as a textiles designer but I'm not quite sure if
- TD9: You're not sure if you're still going down that road.
- TD1: Or, kind of, which sort of position I'm in. Yeah, I just...

10th November 2010

- TD1: 10th November 2010 interview with [REDACTED]
- TD1: That's correct is it? [Over speaking]. Okay, I wonder if you could start [REDACTED] by just briefly describing your professional background as a textile designer.
- TD10: Professional background as in where I came from before I reached here?
- TD1: Yes, please.
- TD10: Okay. Well, my degree was at Chelsea, and then I went on to do an MA at the RCA in Mixed Media and always specialised in embroidery. Straight from the RCA I went to...I got a job at [REDACTED] as the embroidery designer there and stayed there for three years and then, desperate to come back to London, and joined [REDACTED] stayed there for a year doing her embroideries too, always embroidery, and then I've been at [REDACTED] for three years.
- TD1: Yeah, that's fine; and you worked closely with fashion designers –
- TD10: Always –
- TD1: that work there and employees of the company as well?
- TD10: Of course, like it's part of the collection, so I'm closely informed about what they need in the collection and what's going on in the collection so I can fit with their themes.
- TD1: Could you give me an example, if you like, of how you start off at the beginning of the season. Where do you fit into it and –
- TD10: Okay, so we...less so here 'cause it's slightly different, but always, I'd say, in general, we're all given an outline and a brief about what perhaps we might do for next season or what the design team is looking at for next season, the design team being...they are the people who do the designing of the clothes. And so, me, as a textile designer and being in embroidery, and the shoe people and the bag people and everyone else... the knitwear are involved, we're all maybe starting a meeting with the head designer and we're sat down with the team. We have lots of photocopies maybe from them and they're sifting through stuff. It's a very casual chat about what possibly could be for next season and we're sat round the table and then we've made notes and try to go off to the libraries or to exhibitions to see what else we can come up with as in photocopies and we take photographs with books and we have another meeting, sit round the table, bring our ideas to the table to, my ideas too, and, yeah, that's how we work. What was the question again? I –
- TD1: Yes, it's really the kind of thing.
- TD10: How do I carry on?
- TD1: How you work with the fashion design team in –

TD10: Part of it? Here, I mean it could be that some seasons...it varies each season. Some seasons it's really quite integral to the design. Other seasons it isn't because that's the way the themes are. They always need something of embroidery in the collection, whether it is important or not, it depends on the season and whether it goes on the catwalk or not, it depends on the season. They always need something commercial because, in the showroom they always need something with a bit of bling or a bit of shine that people like to use so there's always something in the collection for it, but whether that's really integral to the design process or not, it depends.

TD1: So, just to clarify then, the actual themes for the season are given to you, or – ?

TD10: Do you know what, the more I think about it, yes, possibly it could be like that. But, if I bring a really nice embroidery to someone, be it not part of the theme or not, they love it. [Laughter] So if I thought of a lovely idea or someone else, that's another side issue, but if someone else has brought to me an idea and I show someone, they can bring it into the collection just because it's very nice. It might be that I brought something with diamonds in and it's really not a diamond season, so they go, "Tasha, no, it's really not, but let's keep that one for another time."

On another side issue, I have a lot of people who are coming from India who own companies that do my swatching. I haven't talked about my swatching process yet. I use a lot of companies that are set up, mostly in Bombay, but a lot of it in India, to do my ideas for me. So I would write 'write'. I don't sew or stitch any more, I write out instructions for them to provide me with my ideas and they will do all the sewing and all the bead sourcing and put it into a swatch which is a small piece of embroidery and they come to me, the people that I use, my suppliers come to me, and also many other people come to me and they come with suitcases full of beaded or thread swatches or fabric manipulation swatches and I can sift through those and sometimes come out with one little bead that is really beautiful or one little idea that could be turned into our collection. So I have a lot, not just from the team but from other people that come into my life through wanting to work with us.

TD1: Okay. So you have these swatches which are made up to your specification if you like. Before that stage actually happens, as well as the written instructions, do you provide drawings and other visual media to direct the factories?

TD10: Direct the factories?

TD1: Or the swatch people making the swatches?

TD10: Yeah, no, I'm very...they always have...it's either when we've gone off to go and get some library research or gone to the market and bought some more little things or something...gone to someone's archive and got some stuff. I will actually send real pieces of embroidery to them to copy or I will give them written instructions, not so much drawn, but like diagrams in a way, it's really abstract. I feel like my design process has completely changed [laughter] from what it was at college. I'm not making any more, which is a strange...sometimes I feel like it's a sad part of my life but I don't stitch at all. Maybe I should because it might make my embroideries better, but I don't work like that. When I go home, I don't want to see embroidery in my life [laughter]. I'm more like...I'm not going to do...that's the way they work. I could sew and they

could copy. When I used to go to India I did a lot of that; I don't need to go any more and at [REDACTED] I went twice a year, so I would sit with the guys who would make things for me and I would place the bead or do a little piece and they'd copy on. That was the only physical creative thing that I could say that I did.

TD1: Do you think you've just become more confident in that process now and don't feel that you need to be there next to them?

TD10: Yeah, definitely. I do think they're missing out on a trick here about not sending me home. They don't...they're not...it's different, each design place is different and I don't need to 'cause I know all the...I don't know all the beads, but I know a lot of materials that come from India and people keep on bringing me things so I'm always updated. So, yeah, I don't need to go and I don't need to sit there, but, when you're physically there and you're doing stuff, things become much better, yeah.

TD1: Yeah, okay. It's funny that you were talking about how different your design process is, because that's one of my questions. Has it altered and how? So it's literally the lack of stitching, it's using, I guess, the knowledge you've built up over your –

TD10: Oh yeah.

TD1: – professional career.

TD10: Like I say I don't want a stitch this long; I'll have it .1mm. I can be that specific. I want this kind of stitching on that sequin. I want you to use this needle on that embroidery because I know there's two different kinds of needles in India and I want you to use this shiny thread or this cotton thread. It's like that so it's not me doing it. Not visually, maybe in my head, that I know a lot.

TD1: Going back to when you were learning textile design, how did you experience or how were you taught the actual design process for textiles?

TD10: How was I taught the design process? I think, by physically doing it, it taught you a lot and I did make a lot. How was I taught...? The design process is about research and then putting it all into some kind of organisation where you were trying it all out, so you were actually physically printing something or physically making something. So it was always...for the RCA it was always about challenging your ideas of the design by adding something, a spot with a stripe, where you never would have thought that that would have gone together, or a colour that wouldn't have. For me, here, it's all about...it's not about trying to surprise so much, it's about trying to fit in with what someone else's idea is. For example, I worked at [REDACTED] who's got a very specific feel and so has [REDACTED] and so has [REDACTED]. So I'm always thinking what would they like? Yellow, that [REDACTED] likes, off colours and muted pinks and something that's quite all over, nothing too full-on. I know that [REDACTED] is a different feel, so it's about thinking what someone else wants, more about thinking what I try to challenge the idea; it's not trying to challenge her, it's trying to give her what she feels. I think she'll try and challenge me by saying, "Look, why don't you look at this or look at that?" But I'm trying to do what she wants, so that's different.

TD1: Okay, as a professional designer, what do you understand as the role of textile design?

- TD10: It's funny, you say textile designer, but I'm so specific to embroidery, so –
- TD1: Okay.
- TD10: What's my role?
- TD1: Your portion of textile design in the industry?
- TD10: What's my role in my industry in what I play?
- TD1: Well, yeah, we'll start with that.
- TD10: For embroidery it is to add value and people...it's to add evening wear, it's to add... people love beads and something that's beautiful, I think they always have and if it's just a t-shirt with nothing on, then that is also beautiful. But if you want to go out in the evening you would want something more special. I guess some embroidery can be something that's more special and beautiful if you add it on to a garment. Not always, sometimes it make it look awful [laughter], but in general people will buy embroidery to...for evening wear and for an added value, definitely create something of a hand-finished feel or something that's beautiful.
- TD1: And then, more generally, obviously you know a lot about textile design generally, as you come...your background anyway, how about your ideas on print and weave and things?
- TD10: I sit next to the girl upstairs who is looking after all of the fabrics and has to choose the fabrics and source the fabrics and stuff. It's integral to the design process. It's integral to the design process how important is it that she gets the right fabric for the right garment and she's a massive key...you could take away embroidery, you could take away print, but someone who knows about fabric is absolutely important and integral. You can't make a garment without fabric, but you can make it without embroidery or print. It's a luxury in a way. So, in the world of weaving, which I never realised at college, the weavers and their knowledge of a double-woven whatever it is [laughter], I don't know what they're called! [Over-speaking] They, you know, I realised how, and I do know how, if you fall into this job of finding out about fabrics, you're very, very, important to the team and that's...everything else is embellishment apart from knit. Knit can be very commercial and I think they can make quite alot of money in the world in the knit department. Your jersey and your knitwear can do very well commercially and they design to the garments. I'd say embroidery's not so important [laughter].
- TD1: In the understanding of the job of embroidery, if you like, did you always understand it to be that way when you were studying or earlier on in your career?
- TD10: No, I guess, I never...no, it was the first job that I ever had was an absolute shock. I never realised how you could send off instructions to someone else to do something. It was absolutely impossible for me to even imagine that that was...it was so alien to me. What was the question again?

- TD1: As you were saying that embroidery adds value and you were an extra –
- TD10: Did I realise that?
- TD1: Is that something you thought about when you were a student, when you were doing ?
- TD10: Do you know, I just...no, I think me learning embroidery it was just following my passion, follow what I've always loved. So, I'm really surprised when I look back on it, how I've managed to be able to get a job and do what I do, 'cause there's not very many of me that have managed to, so I'm very lucky...but no, I would never...my faith was if you follow what you do, work really hard, you'll get...you'll do something. Not always the case, but that's the way I would do and I wouldn't have done any other specialisation, it was always embroidery and I didn't know where it was going to take me.
- TD1: How did you know that? Was it early on in life? How did you come to be interested in textiles and embroidery?
- TD10: When I try to remember looking back on what I used to do when I was six with my Mum, I guess I did, I always used to love, doing little swatches and samples of sewing. It wasn't the biggest thing in my life but I think it's always been about clothes and fashion and sewing, definitely. I think I dropped the embroidery a little bit but then I would always do a bit of patchwork or a bit of this or a bit of that. So it's always been in my life and so has fashion, but as soon as I got to college I knew that that sewing machine was the best thing rather than on a knitting machine or a...it's the process of sewing or doing something that was the right, that interested me. I don't think I would ever have done a weave, I would never have been weaving or knitting, or printing. It was always that, they could not...that was the only project that I really, really enjoyed.
- TD1: Were you ever drawn to any of the other kinds of fields of art and design or was it just always, specifically fashion textile – ?
- TD10: Yeah, always.
- TD1: Okay. Let me just find the next question to ask [laughter]. [Pause] Thinking about having your background in sewing and making, and now the fact that you're not making any more, do you see embroidery as a craft or do you definitely see it as a design process? I'd be interested to see what your thoughts are.
- TD10: Well, I use people who are highly skilled and they do own a craft. They are craftsmen, they're all men in India who've trained since they were very small and they're amazing. My quality, or input, is that I'm western, and I've had a training in quality and a certain aesthetic, which is why I fit into my job. They're the craftsmen, but I'm a guider, I guess, of the craft, I think, maybe. So, I wouldn't consider myself a craftsman unless I get my machine back and do all that back. I work with craftsmen, but I don't feel very craftsman-like when I've on my desk and computer.
- TD1: Again, do you feel perhaps the way you learnt was more craft-orientated? Or do you feel you were learning it as a design process then or – ?

- TD10: They were definitely craft-orientated. I couldn't have done anything that I did without physically doing it myself. If you hadn't made a swatch then what could you take to your tutorial? You have to have done...and the better you were at making your embroidery and the more challenging you were with it, that was better.
- TD1: Were they evaluating your swatches in terms of the neatness of your stitches or the creative input that you had?
- TD10: Creative input but you have to be a bit of a master of your craft too. I couldn't have...I used the Irish machine a lot and that was my love and I pushed that machine to do many different things, so through metal, cut the threads and back it on the back and stick over stitching and be creative with it, but really, if I didn't know how to use that machine, I wouldn't have been able to push it, because there was a massive skill involved but also, trying to challenge those craft skills.
- TD1: Yeah, okay. Thinking back to my research, a lot of what's been written about design thinking, the design process, is that design is about solving problems. I was just wondering what you make to that statement really in regards to your daily life as a designer.
- TD10: I don't think it's a problem. It's a weird word, problem. I don't think that it's necessarily that I've got a problem to solve during the day. In a way, you could say, 'cause I've got a problem that I've got to make beautiful embroideries that go on clothes. But I don't see that as a problem; I see it more as not solving...am I solving problems? I might be. For example, I've got a swatch upstairs that's not looking right and what should I change about it? Or shall I give up on it? Shall I make it more antique-looking? Shall I change the colour? Shall I...? Is it the right person that I'm working with? That is a...I guess they're problems, day-to-day things, but –
- TD1: The actual piece of design itself is not solving any problems? That you may have solved problems along the way to have created it?
- TD10: Yeah, I guess so and making it better.
- TD1: Now I just want to ask you about...have you had any experiences of people who've perhaps had perceptions of what a textile designer does and what a textile designer is? That would be interesting...throughout your professional life.
- TD10: There's some people that say, "Oh, don't you think it's a shame that you're not the name?" There is that sort of concept and I've never thought that a shame. [Laughter] I'd hate to be that name and I'm really happy with what I do and where I am. So that's one side that people think about textile designers working in fashion. It's not I want the name 'designer' and I might not get to do other things but I'm very happy not being that person. Some people probably crave that, but I don't at all. Then other perceptions of embroidery. When you say an embroidery designer, people do go, "Wow!" especially when you say I work for whoever I work for, and they're really interested, but I guess if you were a random embroidery designer, not random but an embroidery designer that wasn't working in fashion and you made art, I don't know if someone would get you so much as they do with what I do. Yeah, they might not understand that. But they understand what I do and it's perceived to be very

glamorous and so I guess it makes people want to talk about it.

TD1: Do you have a student here come and work with you?

TD10: Yeah.

TD1: What's your perception of them now you're working professionally? And the things they're bringing with the skills they're bringing?

TD10: Right, here, I don't work with anyone specifically, but we always have a few of people who work. I've used a lot in my time and we rely on them and I do think it's an important part of their education to come and look. There are some people that excel, and show amazing abilities and stick-ability, I don't know what you'd call that, but they really do somehow if they stick through it and see that they've got to photocopy first and go through that barrier and then people realise, oh, they've got a skill and they can do something, then they suddenly become more integral to our collection and can be almost the most important person during the moment, during the collection, because they've worked on something and they're working on it and it's really important. I do think it's a shame that they're not paid, and I just think that the whole situation of that is just taking it to crazy, it really is...anyway, I'm not in control of all that...

TD1: Are they coming with the skills and abilities that are required to make headway?

TD10: It's really hard. [Over speaking] When you see people, because I've interviewed quite a few people, not in this job, but mentor. It's really hard to see that person having... not only do they need, sometimes they need a skill, for example, to sit down here and sew and make a beautiful edge for a jacket, or make a little manipulated thing or place stones for me. They could be...from their portfolio you think, "Well, they could, they're alright, they [unclear speech] okay." But, actually, when they come, when you're here, there's a lot of personality that is very important. They've got to be able to say, "Yes," and do it and come back for more and do more again and sit there and do it again. And some people don't want to and some people find it hard and some people are really good at it and inspire. Different projects, if they're lucky then they...and we're doing the right thing for them that season then they're okay. It's chance, it's chance, but you do get to know, eventually, the person, and you think, "Oh, they are quite good," and in the team we'll say, "Oh, you know, this guy's doing really well with this thing," and you'll get to know that they're quite good. They will excel and people do get asked back and people are employed, not in very many instances, but they do.

TD1: Last question really is an open one. What makes a textile designer? What are the characteristics of a textile designer? Be that embroidery, or print or weave?

TD10: Well, characteristics? When I was at college I worked a lot...all my whole projects were at the same...I did at the same time work with someone from the fashion department and I could really compare a fashion person to a textile person in a major way. It was very much difference. For example, and it's here too, sometimes I feel I'm not fashion, I wonder where you come from, but I am not fashion. I am textiles and I'm not, I don't value, I don't know, maybe I'm wrong, maybe it's me. I feel like a lot of fashion people want to buy, buy, buy and the next thing, and the next thing, there's a lot of people who

want things and more things. For me as a textile designer I don't feel that I want to...it's just me maybe, I don't feel I want, I need to buy the next jacket from Balenciaga or wear the next latest thing. I feel like I'm much more not interested in...not so much, I do, I love to see their shows and what they do and see someone else wearing it, but I'm not, it's not so important to me in my life what style that jacket is or wearing it or having it.

I do think that 'having it' thing is very fashion and not so textiles maybe. But then it might be personal. I feel that we're quieter people, it's not all about me, me, me, which I definitely think there's some element of that at college, when I was working with the fashion people, that it is a bit more like pushy, a bit pushy, more pushy. I don't know about other specialisations, I think that, yeah, maybe working with print makers and meeting other artists and stuff it's more of a quiet, more of a quiet, quieter skill, whereas fashion's more... yeah, okay, fashion is definitely loud. Upstairs you get the stylist and the head designer and they, the loudest person and the, it's full on. They can be full on. I'm sorry, that is the case. For me as a textile...I'm bitching about fashion people. I should be talking about textile people. I don't feel...the knitwear designer, and any knitwear designers that I've worked with, and embroidery and print are much more reserved and less full on. I don't know, that's it, that's my opinion [laughter].

TD1: Are there any other behaviours or things perhaps that textile designers, embroidery, weavers are interested in that you think that is specific to that group of people?

TD10: Anything that what we're interested in?

TD1: It might be certain types of behaviours. You talk about being quiet. Anything else? Is there any activities that they do that you think is specific to textile – ?

TD10: Maybe it is that repetition of repeating something, but I don't do that, so I'm not that person. I think, if you were going into fashion, and I've spoken to a few people who were at St Martin's, then you've got to get your voice heard because you want your opinion and if you're sat round a table with lots of people who want to push their idea, then your idea's got to be quite loud. You've got to be quite persuasive in pushing that. You've got...they've trained that.. [redacted] trains them at [redacted] to be, like, full. [Laughter] Yeah, okay, so she, from what I know, which I never went, she is training you to be very sure about yourself and very, "This is what I want." We had a conversation the other day in quite a full-on way and people who come from there can present their ideas in a quite confident way if you succeed.

TD1: Are you talking about fashion designers?

TD10: Yeah, yeah and I think that...we don't have to do that, I don't have to do that. I don't think so anyway. I don't know where...I've trailed again away, bitching about fashion designers [laughter from interviewer], but what quality we have –

TD1: Your release outlet.

TD10: Yeah, [laughter] work with them all day, so, I don't know. What do we do, what do – ? I don't know about this repetitiveness 'cause I'm not doing it, nor is the knitwear making any more, or nor is the weaver making any more in what we do. So, we're not making, we don't do that craft any more here.

TD1: Okay, thank you.

TD10: Alright.

TD1: Yeah, that's great.

TD10: It's quite a sad, I'm feeling quite sad after that interview –

TD1: Oh, no!

TD10: – 'cause I'm not making any more. [Laughter] No, I'm fine with it. It's, I shall go back to it at some point, but –

TD1: Yeah. Have you ever gone back to the RCA and done any sessions, or teaching?

TD10: Yeah, I've taught sometimes, yeah, yeah, I do actually, yeah.

TD1: Yeah.

TD10: Every now and again. Not at the moment 'cause I have a little child so my day's off are with him, but I did before.

TD1: Ahh, yeah. Oh, well, thank you.

24th November 2010

TD1: It's the 24th of November and conversation with [REDACTED] I was wondering, to start off with, [REDACTED] if you could just briefly describe your professional background, how you got to where you are? Obviously you're an embroidery designer, but just generally your background in textiles.

TD11: I went to Manchester and did embroidery BA and then I went to Royal College where they didn't have embroidery so I did knit. Then decided I wanted to make a business out of it and decided I wanted to do fashion. So I left college with a collection of embroidered knitwear. Put it in a suitcase and just went off to Paris and went into shops. And got an order and sent it to the shop and that was bought by a German woman who flew over to see me, which was fantastic. And I worked for her for the next ten years. Just freelance doing, at first, knitwear and embroidery and then just dropping the knit and just doing embroidery. On fashion basically. So it got to the point where we were doing about a thousand garments a season, not, you know. And then it was reunification and the whole thing collapsed. Women didn't want to wear fancy clothes anymore. So it just stopped. Which was brilliant, because I came back here and I just started faxing people. And started to work with lots of different designers here. So I worked with loads and loads of fashion designers. I don't do so much fashion now, but I used work on a regular basis with people like [REDACTED] [REDACTED], loads and loads of people. You can see it on my website. And projects with people like [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and people like that. And I've always been freelance and what I've always tried to do was to do the production on the designs as well. So I had a team of people working here doing that. Then I started to diversify and started to do interiors. I still carry on doing fashion, but not as much, because things go up and down and back in fashion. I do my own range for [REDACTED] and one for [REDACTED] [REDACTED].

So I started doing interiors as well. I do my own label collection for [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I sell designs at Heimtex occasionally, now and again. But mostly I work with interior designers. But a lot of this doesn't have my name on, so about five years ago I decided that I'd try and change the balance a little bit. And I had a gallery show at the [REDACTED] which was great. But keeping with the fashion thing that I love so much, I did wall skirts, skirts that opened out. You could wear them so it was kind of fashion art kind of thing. Which was great and it got my name, and then I got some fantastic commissions from that like one for [REDACTED] where I did a big piece for a conference in [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I did a big triptych and things like that. But this September I've just had another exhibition there, which was far better because now I actually forced myself, I don't like embroidery behind glass, and I don't like embroidery as art often. It's not something which works for me very well, with my work. But anyway I started to do animals wearing couture, basically. Well not couture clothes but in skins that were couture fabric skins basically. And they were in Perspex boxes. And it was a sell-out, so it was great. And I also do accessories and I do a range of bags. So that's it, in a nutshell.

TD1: Okay. I really now want to take it back to the actual design process. Could you describe to me the sort of methods and processes that you use?

- TD11: Yeah. I suppose it depends on which area. On the fashion side I tend to go and see the fashion designer, or they come here. Because I go to car boots all the time, so I have so many sources of inspiration here. So often they come here, but if not I go to them. And this is at the stage where they're just on their themes, and their basic silhouettes, and their fabrics. So we talk embellishment basically. Some have fantastic ideas. I won't ever work where somebody says, "I want this here." So I have to have a part, the more the merrier, of the design process. But I do adore the collaboration. It makes me a lot stronger and I think it makes them a lot stronger, because they want things that aren't possible. It's great, a two way thing which gets me out of my box and them out of their box. So I love that two way collaboration. So I then come back here with their fabrics and colours and themes and play for a couple of days. Develop designs for a couple of days. And then take them back and they choose what they want to use and we photocopy them, change the scale, and things like that. And then I put them on the garments for the shows. Which is a frantic, frantic time. Wonderful. And then they get orders and we do the production. Or they go to China or India or wherever. So that's basically the design process.
- TD1: So it's a combination of talking to the designers, their themes, their ideas, plus what you're bringing to the table in terms of things you've collected, other fabrics.
- TD11: And also ...
- TD1: Drawing?
- TD11: Yeah.
- TD1: Or photography, or?
- TD11: Not so much drawing and photography, that comes later. But it's experience really. And I'll show you. I show them [unclear 8:28.9] for the first time, I want to show designs I show. I show this scrapbook because embroidery has so many techniques. It's a vast, fantastic subject, goes on and on and on. It's so exciting. [unclear 9:00.0] Just lots of different feelings, different scraps basically. Rusty and cracked but it's just scraps of different things. So that then they just look through and say, "Oh I really like that," or "I like that." And then I go away with their themes, which can be something like Frida Kahlo meets Singapore Whorehouse. And so I play with a knowledge of what they'd liked. But also you take it on board all the time of what kind of pictures they have up, even the art in their offices or whatever. What kind of taste they have, because you have to bend your taste to theirs without losing your integrity. And also if you are working for say, seven different designers a season, then you've also got to have seven different styles. 'Cause it can't look like [redacted] stuff. Which usually works. Things like this was a [redacted] thing, she's so poetic, she's wonderful. She said, "Right [redacted] I want you to imagine it's the 1940s, it's a damp smoky dark railway station, this soldier's going off to war, the girl's standing on the platform with a bedraggled bunch of flowers, waving good bye tearfully to her ..." She wanted those flowers you see?
- TD1: I can see it.
- TD11: So I come here with these fantastic stories and it's fabulous, it's really good fun.

That was more of wedding dress kind of thing. And the huge thing, especially with embroidery is price. Because sometimes the cost of the embroidery is multiplied by seven on a garment. So everything has to be fast, but look expensive. So it's a real battle all the time. So things like we were doing Mexican skirts on here, and I found I could machine sequins, 'cause obviously [unclear 11:54.3]. So always you're looking for a fast, fast way. This is a [redacted] thing where she just gave me a picture of raindrops. And beads were just too old fashioned, too boring, too horrid. So I found...

TD1: What is that, it's amazing?

TD11: It's resin.

TD1: Oh, wow.

TD11: Which actually ... fishing hook as well. And it's also about materials as well. 'Cause it's fashion you have to try and keep moving on, so we're messing about with materials and like sewing those sequins down. You tend to develop, so this is just like sequin ribbon which you can form just with a knife. It's all very Blue Peter. And things like these, I collect old ladies' heascarves. 'Cause the colours are so fantastic.

TD1: So painterly, isn't it?

TD11: But you can see you can do so much with embroidery.

TD1: So this is what you take to go and see the designers?

TD11: Yes.

TD1: When you show at places at Heimtex, I guess the inspiration for that work comes only from you and your own ideas. I guess you probably don't look for trends and things like that, do you?

TD11: I think that's just an on-going thing, isn't it? I sometimes do. I sometimes do with something like Heimtex. But I think it is an on-going thing where you are looking, whether it's for interiors or fashion, you're looking at street style, you're looking at magazines, you're looking at the different shows that are on. It's a case of you just take it in. And I keep notebooks and take millions of photographs where I just record things that I like, that have appealed to me for any reason, not for what I'm doing at the time. But for any reason, 'cause you never know what you're going to be doing next. But Heimtex [unclear 14:52.4] so they're much more design ... [unclear 15:00.0 onwards]

TD1: More like the typical sample that you get at the trade fairs.

TD11: Yeah. And encouraging people to ...

TD1: This is a kind of later question, I was going to ask. But you bought out those samples, why is it that as a textile designer we show our work in that way, in those rectangles often, and in those swatches and samples.

- TD11: Although so many print people make them into garment shapes.
- TD1: More now, yeah.
- TD11: But they don't get paid any more. I mean they have to design the garment, and I think it's incredible. I think that's just fantastic. Yeah, I do think that's an incredible thing. But I don't know why we do it in that format. I suppose your choice is a length or a square. I don't know.
- TD1: Thinking again about the textile design process, how were you taught it? How did you learn the textile design process, and how have your processes changed over the years?
- TD11: What do you mean by process? The process of design, or the process of embroidery?
- TD1: The process of design.
- TD11: When I went to college I was at [REDACTED]. It's really interesting that. I mean then it was actually quite straight forward. Because the way you were taught in those days, was visual research, and there was a real [REDACTED] style, which is still there. I know an external examiner there, and he's still there. But yeah, it was lots of visual research, and then making patterns almost from your visual research. And trying not to just interpret your visual research, to try and actually do a stage further. That's what we were kind of taught. And I suppose I still think it's all about looking. Because I think that the biggest tool you've got in anything is your personal way of looking at something. And I don't think you look as well if you don't draw. Although I hardly do any drawing now.
- TD1: So hope [unclear 17:59.3] say that though? It just doesn't happen.
- TD11: No.
- TD1: When you become professional.
- TD1: Yeah. I think you do get better at looking. I think you learn to look in a different way, like you would when you are drawing. You know when you're at first year in college or whatever, you would draw and be taught to really look at the shape of a leaf, say. Whereas, when you get 20 years down the line, you have to embroider or think of a leaf and you look at that shape automatically. You're still looking, I think you still need the information, all the time. But you don't have to do that with a line as much.
- TD11: I was just wondering now whether you could describe, in as much detail as you can, experiences of working with fashion designers and interior designers. And you talked about the fact that you loved the collaboration because of how it takes you out of your comfort zone and them theirs. Have you got any particular examples that come to mind, or interesting moments when you've worked with fashion designers or interior designers?
- TD11: Erm, interior designers less, actually. Really, it's so much slower, and it may be just the ones that I've come across, but it is a totally different design process. They don't

want to take risks, everything that fashion is about, which is breaking new ground, taking risks. Finding new ways of looking at something, interiors just don't seem to be like that at all. They like it tried and tested and to go nicely in this beige or ... But basically much safer, much, much safer. And also the time difference is so vast. I can do a sample and then after 18 months think, "Oh well that can't have happened," And then two years down the line getting a phone call saying, "We're ready for that band." And I'm used to something happening the next weekend. So that's very different. On the fashion thing, I think the Betty Jackson thing with the resin was a great thing, because I wouldn't have thought of doing that had she not wanted raindrops. But there was no way she would have thought of dripping resin down the front of a blouse. And she was thinking of beading, because that's her knowledge. So that's a good example. But there's been hundreds. When it gets really interesting is when I was once working for two designers the same season, and they both gave me the same picture of a little boy with a tattoo on. And so I had to find two totally different collections from this one photograph, which was exciting. And then you really have to weigh up. One was [REDACTED] so it was all fitted and seamed all the rest of it and the others was [REDACTED] I think. So he was totally different.

TD1: 'Cause you also mentioned about how perhaps they don't necessarily understand the cost involved. The labour involved in the embroidery, or the fabric treatments that you do. How do you kind of broach that subject?

TD11: I don't think it's a case of broaching the subject. I think they do understand it, I think they don't want to comprehend it. It's not really a case of broaching it, it's a case of you being realistic enough to realise that if your stuff is going to price the garment out the market, then a) you're not going to get any production; and b) you're not going to be asked next time. Because they will have spent all that forward cost on your designs, on you playing around and then if they sell two pieces, they've not even covered that. So it's a really uncomfortable situation. But it's one that is just absolute sense. It doesn't make any sense to spend a week on something, if it's not going to sell.

TD1: So just as much as a very, very commercial textile designer would have to, you have to balance commerciality and cost of the piece, as you're creatively designing?

TD11: Yeah. And as I said before, the by word is fast to do but to look expensive. That's the magic bullet.

TD1: As a design discipline, what do you understand the role of textile design to be, or if you prefer more specifically embroidery, if you prefer to see it that way?

TD11: No textile design I'm happy with. The part that I suppose my career has gone down is, I suppose, embellishment. Obviously what is so fantastic about textiles now is that it's broadening so vastly technologically and into other fields, architecture and all the rest of it. But that's a side that other people can talk about better than me. I love that side. But for my side, it's the fascination. I think textile is so fabulous. To be able to make things that are so beautiful. I mean art that you are wearing, or you are looking at as your curtains or whatever. So you can often, say, for me in fashion, somebody can give me a kimono shape or an A-line dress or something really, really bog standard, normal pattern and your job is to make that into something that is fantastic and worth a fortune. Well relatively speaking, even if it's on the cheap end

of the market, it's still got to make it look really, really special. Because the fashion designers who use pattern cutting and silhouette as their means of notice, a lot of them do it but some of the time, and a lot of the bread and butter. But the good bread and butter, the fancy stuff as well is from the embellishment or the textiles and how it's used. How the textile is used. So it is vastly important.

TD1: Do you see it as a kind of almost a design discipline that services others? Or does it stand on its own right as a design discipline?

TD11: Obviously with my career this is one of the real bugbears. Because I think it's seen by others as a service industry, especially the fashion industry. And interiors as well. That's why I went to Gallery. But really early on when I worked with a German designer, so often I'd do fashion shows and the whole of the finale is my embroideries making the character of this thing. And I haven't even got a seat, I'm standing at the back. And on the piece of paper on the chair it often says, "Thanks to so and so and so and so for the hair. Thanks to so and so for the tie." And at the bottom it says, if I'm lucky, "Thanks to [REDACTED] for the embroidery or textile." But not [REDACTED] 'Cause they don't want somebody else to come along and use you. So it drives you to distraction. But as I was saying, when I was in Germany, when I was working at first, and I first started broaching this subject, "Excuse me, I'm doing an awful lot of work here. Don't you think it would be great if I had some recognition?" And she just turned to me and said, "Look people want to buy [REDACTED] clothes, that's why they spend more than they would just going to Top Shop. They want to buy this label, I'd be a fool to diffuse it with your name. You'd be a fool to diffuse your name with my name, because they would buy less, because they want me you know?" And at the time I had two little kids and I was the breadwinner, so yeah, fine. Let's carry on, because you can't buck it, you can't fight it. Because that was it.

TD1: So we need them?

TD11: We need them. Yeah, I think so. But I would really love textiles to have in the way that illustrators and photographers had the Illustrators Association, or people like that backing them to say, "No your name must be on it." The photographer's name has to be on it. And if not, then you have some kind of institution which will back you to take them to court. And you only need that to happen for a few years. Illustrators, they all have their name on it, and if it's used again, then often they are contacted and they're paid more money for that same design, if it's used in a different context. But they had to be backed by the Association of Illustrators, financially, because a designer can't afford to do that. I went to the House of Lords, the week before last with the Textile Association and all these very lovely little men. No way, and design wasn't mentioned once in all the speeches and everything. So it comes from all those factories and the whole industry. And I think that when you get people like Alice Temperley and Orla Kiely and Julien MacDonald and textile designers who've actually done well, whose names are really well known, they are people with either fantastic business backing or have that character that is that showmanship. I often think that textile designers work like that, and fashion designers work like that. We all get off on that [unclear 30:44.9] little mark, and we're really happy if we've done that nice mark, we'll go to bed really happy.

TD1: I think we do find so much pleasure in just doing it, that's enough, that's the fulfilment

in it, isn't it?

TD11: Yes. But then why doesn't it work as textile art? It does work, there are some really successful, I love [REDACTED] work. There's some fantastic textile artists. Japanese textile artists I adore. But nobody believes in it in this country. Because wall hanging raises its ugly head.

TD1: Just the name "wall hanging".

TD11: Yes. And if you embroider a boat and put it in a frame, that's an embroidered picture that's foul, if you put it on a skirt then it's cool. But I don't know why textile seems to ... and yet people like me, after donkey's years, are still so passionate about it.

TD1: A lot of design research, design thinking research, talks about the design process as solving problems. How do you relate to that kind of notion?

TD11: Totally. I think that's absolutely. Because you have to keep moving on, which is what excites me most. Finding new ways of doing things. You have to keep giving yourself problems to find ways to move it on.

TD1: So do you mean the actual processes you use, solving problems or creating a particular type of stitch or an effect?

TD11: Yes, the physical processes. Yes I suppose so.

TD1: And what about the finished designed piece of textile? You talked earlier about it adding value and adding beauty to a garment, although it's not a problem, do you see that as the purpose of textile designs more broadly as adding value?

TD11: Yeah, I suppose yeah. I never really think of it like that, but yes definitely. The scraps of embroidery and things I pick up at car boots and things, they are certainly valuable to me because of that time. And I think it's magic that you can sit there for a couple of hours and do something and it becomes worth something. It's changed totally.

TD1: Why did you become interested in textiles in the first place? Is it in your background, is there a moment you can trace it back to?

TD11: Yeah, my mother and sister are embroiderers. Were. So I didn't want to do it so I went to college to do fine art, 'cause I wanted to have something with more street cred. Just the thought of embroidery was just awful. But when you do your first projects, foundation and things like that I was just hooked, it was the thing that I could express myself best in. And they are both painters now, my mother and my sister.

TD1: So your first experiences of making, were they in the home, or were they when you got to university, or with the foundation course?

TD11: At home. When my sister and I were 13, my mum made us a pattern block. Made our own pattern block and took us to the market and said she'd buy us whatever cheap fabric we wanted, but she wouldn't buy us any more clothes. So we just made our own clothes. And we stapled them and sellotaped them, just anything. We loved it, it was

great fun, it really was. So it was a brilliant thing to happen, really.

- TD1: I think that's kind of the end of the set questions that I had. But have you got anything else that you'd like to express whilst I'm here?
- TD11: I've ranted enough.
- TD1: About your experience of being a textile designer, the other design disciplines you've run into, the way you think. I can see around your studio, all these amazing things. I'm not sure which bits you've made, which bits you've collected. Surrounded by beautiful stuff. So if there's anything you think you might want to say that would be useful to me.
- TD11: I don't know. Maybe I'll give that some thought and email you, if I think of anything. Because it is a strange discipline. This whole service industry is incredible. I know that at college fashion and textile are very different, but my husband, who was an illustrator, is now a fine artist. So illustration was a service industry and the way he's treated now, is so different. Unbelievable how you can see the reaction and when you say textile designer and an artist when we're introduced, you can see that. It's phenomenal, it's so interesting.
- TD1: Do you definitely see what you do as design, or craft, or a combination of both?
- TD11: Design, really much. Yeah. Design fed by craft. Obviously I'm really process driven. But it is design, totally, I think anyway.
- TD1: How come you are so sure, because it's such a grey area, isn't it?
- TD11: Yeah, and that's my prejudice. Totally my prejudice. Because I do different things all the time. My archives are just vast, I work in so many different ways, in so many different materials, so many different fields. But using the craft as a means to express all these different things, whereas, I think, a crafts person is somebody who exalts in their craft, in their process and refines it and refines it and refines. But doesn't move very far away from that initial concept. Whereas my whole thing is to throw the concept out all the time. That's why the whole solving problems is so important to me, because it feeds that need to move things on. I have a very short attention span.
- TD1: I'm trying to wrack my brains now to think of anything else.
- TD11: You can always email me, anytime.
- TD1: It's really interesting, because I've interviewed a few of the students at the RCA before as well, and some of them are really frustrated at the position of textiles at the college, and particularly how it's bundled in with fashion, and always has to provide for it. But it's not seen in the same light as fashion within the college, that's the students' perception of it.
- TD11: Yeah.
- TD1: There's definitely a frustration thing with people coming up now that they're not as

recognised as they could be.

TD11: Yeah. And just because it seems a fluffy subject. And they're going to technology to try and rid that idea, which I applaud, I think that's very sensible that kind of research. It makes an awful lot of sense, obviously. But the whole making of beautiful fabrics isn't a fluffy thing. It's really not. And it's that that we've got to sell. When people are making, say, a printing ink that will change colour on a hospital spot when someone's ill, or their temperature goes up or something. I can't help but think, well what is that to us, is that spot or stripe, where is our role in that? And so that whole research side, I find it on ground that's not terribly solid. But it might be because I'm an embellisher through and through, but when people say, "This is what I'm researching, these inks that will do this." I want to say, "Well surely that's the scientist who's doing that?" We are the person who's just going to decide whether it's spots or stripes. Which is bizarre, and it doesn't help the fluffy case at all. So it is a conundrum, really.

TD1: Another thing that's always interested me is that idea, you know you were saying that we get real pleasure from working on the stuff that we do, yet we sell it off and we have no control over how it's used. If it goes to production somewhere else how it's then translated. And this thing that we've been so precious about just let it go. Which I think is again something which is specific to textile design, I can't necessarily think of any other design discipline that does that.

TD11: No.

TD1: That just lets go, lets it be used whichever way.

TD11: And it's only because we're used to that, we've all been brought up in that. The sweaters I do for [REDACTED] with my label in, I've nearly withdrawn them so many times because I don't see them until they are in the shops. But I'll have used, say, an inch wide cotton braid that is matt and dry, and it's replaced by a quarter inch satin ribbon. Which to me is a million miles apart. Totally, totally different. And I'm horrified that that's happened. And yet the thing is you just think, "Oh well I've loads more ideas."

TD1: Maybe that's why we don't have our name on things, we lose that control, don't we?

TD11: Yes, unless you're like Alice who will actually go and make sure. But you can't get away from the machine along with that.

8th December 2010

- TD1: [REDACTED] on the 8th of December. I wonder [REDACTED] if you could just start off by describing your professional experience and how you've got to -
- TD12: - work.
- TD1: Yeah.
- TD12: Well, it was straight after college at the Exhibition I was approached by people from the Print Design at [REDACTED] and they wanted to see my work and to buy some samples they've seen at the Exhibition. So they invite me for an interview, which was my first interview straight after the Exhibition. And straight after the interview they asked me whether I had a job and, of course, I didn't and they offered me a position. So it was the first time they were having a woven textile designer in the team, which was like an experience for both of us. For them as a company to have a woven designer, and for me as my first job ever as a textile designer as well.
- TD1: And what was it about your work specifically that made them want to choose you as the first one?
- TD12: I think it was colour, because most of my work is all to do, most to do with colour and that's how I describe myself really. My work is really colourful and of course I have loads of stripes and that's what I am now, a stripe designer, rather than a textile designer, I would say. Or a combination of both.
- TD1: And where were you before the RCA?
- TD12: I was studying at Chelsea College, I did my BA at Chelsea College. I came from Portugal and I studied fashion there.
- TD1: Funnily, I was speaking to a Spanish designer this morning, she said that there weren't specifically any textile design courses in Spain.
- TD12: Same in Portugal, that's why I came here.
- TD1: Why do you think that is?
- TD12: It's really weird, because Portugal was one of the biggest textile industry in Europe, for some reason they didn't have, I have no idea how come. Even when I was studying fashion there was only one school which would have a fashion as a [unclear 2:13.9] course, they didn't have any degree for textile or fashion before '92. So no idea, I should start a textile course in Portugal.
- TD1: I was wondering if you could describe to me in your professional life, your design process.
- TD12: Well at [REDACTED] for example I would start by the colour palette. I'm quite lucky again at [REDACTED] because they give me full liberty to do my work almost on my own. Because I would be aware of the theme and the colour palette they've got, but usually I can

just start by using some images. Or if I go to an exhibition and think the colours are nice from the work, either buy the book or take some pictures. And then bring it all to the office and then from those pictures and from the colours I start building the colour palette and also doing some windings. You probably know and you've seen some students doing the wrappings for the warp, and that's how I design the stripes for the collections. So taking the colours straight from inspiration either pictures, actually most of the time it's [REDACTED] that brings some books that he thinks is interesting and he gives it to me and says, "Okay, this is the one I want to use for this season," and then I start using the colours and the other colour palette and inspiration from the books and ideas that he gives to us. And then from the windings then the strips are almost done straight away, so I just need to translate them into the computer. And again we prefer to do it by hand and by the wrappings than just designing on the computer, because the colour combinations with the thread are much nicer than just looking at the computer onto a flat screen. So that's how I usually design the stripes. And then colour wise that's how I use illustrations to do the set-up of the stripes, and then just the colour wise on the computer.

TD1: Who has final say on.

TD12: [REDACTED]

TD1: He does?

TD12: He does, yeah. He has a word in every single thing that is done in the company, overseas, everything. So yeah, then we decide the colours and we send it to the factory, they send some samples and then they show it to [REDACTED]. And then sometimes they select the colours or we select the colours, reduce the colours. Then just bring four, five for him to decide. It depends on the collection, for the scarves for example, when they do scarves we design the collection, then we just bring it to him for his approval and see if there is anything he doesn't like. If it is okay then we just carry on.

TD1: The next question was how were you taught, how did you learn the design process for textiles?

TD12: I saw the textiles for the first time in Portugal, I went to a technical school when I was fifteen. And the idea after the course you would be able to work in the textile industry straight away. So that's where I learnt the textile process of thinking and designing. So again it would be the same process just analysing, we select a theme and then some object and then just try to translate. And most of the times we are simplifying ideas so we can translate it easily to textiles. And again I was [unclear 5:50.0] in Portugal so I was a woven designer.

TD1: Have your methods changed over the years as you've become professional.

TD12: It did change slightly because in Portugal I didn't really use a sketch book. We still would have to draw a lot but it wasn't everything in a book, it was just pieces of paper. And since I came to London I got used to building up a sketch book and keeping all ideas together in one place rather than having different ones.

TD1: So we were talking about how your processes have changed and about using a sketchbook.

- TD12: Then I tried to keep the same way of designing I just learnt in Portugal and I think it would be the same process.
- TD1: You talked about how you do your windings first and then they will be sent off to the factory to do samples. And I guess because you were picked up so early, you never had to go and sell your samples or have an agent or anything like that?
- TD12: No, never had anything like that so I don't have that experience.
- TD1: Would you be able to describe, in as much detail as you can, the experience of working with perhaps the fashion designers at Paul Smith and the interactions with them. What are their perceptions of what you do?
- TD12: They weren't aware that it would be someone that could [unclear 10:08.9] specific the textile designer theme. But it's been quite interesting to work with the designers. For example with the colour palettes, suggesting if there's any colours that we should change or are missing. And also they always come to me to see if there's any colour I think that should be changed, and what I think would be nicer instead of something else. Or if they've got too many colours in the palette then we should reduce them again. We work together.
- TD1: So you are the authority on colour?
- TD12: Yeah.
- TD1: Okay. And do they understand what you add to the design?
- TD12: I think, they say they do. But I'm not sure to what extent that goes. But sometimes I find it a little bit frustrating that they give more credit to print design than weave design. And that's the only frustrating thing about my work. And again because it was my first job, I didn't have any other experience, and for them also I was the first one. So it's been a learning process for both of us. So I'm not really sure if that would be the way other companies are working, or not. But I think we just learnt together how to work.
- TD1: And I guess [REDACTED] is so much known for its patterns -
- TD12: Colours.
- TD1: Print colour.
- TD12: Stripes.
- TD1: So, yeah. You would expect that print designers and woven designers would be given quite a lot of credit.
- TD12: They do give for the print design, because again it's well known for the prints. They are quite exquisite. But for some reason weave it wouldn't be in the same level as print, in their eyes. Which I think is something which is not fair because it is as important as print design. So I'm trying to convince them that there's space for weave design, or a

woven designer as much as for the print designer.

- TD1: You talked about having that kind of eye for the colour and stripes, are they also interested in the actual finished handle of the fabric?
- TD12: Oh, yes. That's all important. Definitely. Yeah.
- TD1: But when they are seeing the windings it's purely just on the visual look of it, and then when the samples come back that's when the handle is assessed?
- TD12: Yes, and again because what I do it can be adapted to all different departments. They use us for example for scarves which will be one finish and then for socks which will be a different yarn. And it can be used for ties or jumpers, so the same stripe can be used in lots of different departments across the company. And at the end of the day it's going to look different, because they are different products, the scale is going to be different and the handle is going to be different. So that's to do with either the fashion designer or the accessories designer or shoe designer for example or bag designer to decide which material they want for the fabric. For now I just really care about the colour then the stripes.
- TD1: So really the fact that its stripes and its [REDACTED] it's about giving the product a visual identity, isn't it? That's what you are doing.
- TD12: Yeah. So that was something I had to learn actually, to make the stripes and the colours related to the company because as I said I like really bright colours and sometimes it can be too much for what they are. So I really need to think according to the line because it has different lines, and make sure I do different stripes for the PS line or different stripes for the men line, which would be more conservative than jeans or PS lines. You need to think about different ways of designing for the different lines and again adapting to the company.
- TD1: When you were studying textile design, what consideration did you give to textile design's role in the designed object? So, it's a surface, it's a visual identity in the case of how you are working now, did you really think about that when you were studying, about what textile design is for?
- TD12: I was working in the way of doing one off pieces so I was looking at it a different way. So for me it would be instead of like a painter uses paints and a brush, probably would just use different media to translate my visual interest and just a different media of doing things using the yarn and a loom to build something.
- TD1: So it's quite different really from the work you were doing on your Masters?
- TD12: It's completely different. Well the final work at Masters was more commercial, I would say, so that's why I was picked up at the end by [REDACTED] But again I would see it in a different way. Because I would start again from pictures and then translate the pictures into colour, that was my main thing and my main way of seeing and doing textiles. It's just a different way of translating things we see every day into a different media.

- TD1: And now it's across millions of units rather than one off. So when you were studying design it was really just your own inspiration, not thinking about a customer specifically, it was just a one off personal piece that you were working on?
- TD12: Yeah. We did have some projects, of course, with companies where you would have to think about the customer, and they were good exercises of having an idea of what I could do after finishing college. So again it helped when I went to Paul Smith, you need to think about customers and be a bit more commercial. But then my final year again was more in the commercial way, so I was doing some scarves and some samples so I could have a portfolio that would cover more areas and just open more doors in that way.
- TD1: You mentioned that you did a textile course in Portugal, before coming over here. When did you first identify yourself with textiles, was it earlier in your life?
- TD12: Yes. Always I think. Not really textiles but fashion. I always wanted to do something with fashion and I remember since I was a child always wanted fashion. And again because there was no real fashion course. When I was 15, when I applied for the textile course, the school where I applied they said, "The only thing we've got in fashion is the textiles, are you interested?" I said, "Okay, yeah, of course, why not?" And that's how I was introduced to textiles, just randomly because they didn't have a fashion option. So I wasn't aware of -
- TD1: There wasn't any particular kind of interest in textiles or embroidery in your family or anything earlier?
- TD12: My grandfather was a tailor, so that's why, and my mother did a textile course in the school where I applied for the fashion. So my mother also she wanted to be a textile designer but she was already the mother of three kids, and she was doing the studies during the night. So she found it really hard to finish it so she gave up. So I grew up with it in the family. My grandfather first and then my mother being into textile.
- TD1: And why weave?
- TD12: I think it just happened again because we would have weave, prints, textile and mixed media options. But in Portugal we would do a bit of everything. And it was only when I came to London that we would have to decide only for one direction. And that was at ██████ College so the tutors would guide us to which area we think we would be strong. And with me it was weave, so that's how it happened. So I did weave from ██████ College and just carried on.
- TD1: Do you think there are any characteristics which textile designers share or maybe even specifically weavers?
- TD12: Patience. Especially when you are doing the loom. To set up is the most boring thing.
- TD1: That's why I never do weave.
- TD12: I'm still wondering why I decided to go for weaving.

- TD1: At least you don't have to do it now.
- TD12: But some people love it. And they think it's really therapeutic. But for me it's really boring. The most boring part of it. I love weave, the process of weaving and again I like being on the loom and just doing experimental things and see what's going to happen, try different yarns and colours and the reaction to them. That's what I love about it.
- TD1: Is there anything that you think we share in the way that we think and approach design?
- TD12: As a textile designer? No, it's the softness of fabric, well sometimes it doesn't really need to be soft, but I don't know what is really a connection between all different medias of textile.
- TD1: One other thing I wanted to ask is going back to thinking about how design is written about, a lot of design is quite a linear process and it talks about solving problems, I was just wondering how you relate to that idea.
- TD12: Well, it wasn't about solving problems, but my idea or when I applied to the RCA what I wanted to do with textiles was develop 3D fabrics, the same way of doing the red and green to do the optical effects. And that's what I wanted to achieve in fabrics, where they could have some surfaces with optical effects. But there wasn't enough time to figure out a way of doing it, two years was a bit short, so I had to find another way of doing my final project. I wanted again to just use textiles to translate a different thing, like optical effects we have on paper or paintings and I wanted to do it in textile.
- TD1: I guess that's in a way almost setting yourself a puzzle rather than solving a problem.
- TD12: It was. But solving a problem, I never really went in that direction, trying to find solutions for anything.
- TD1: The [REDACTED] customer, when they are buying the products that you've contributed to, what do you feel is your contribution to that designed object?
- TD12: Well it's direct, because in the accessories I design the scarves for example and then most of the people they buy accessories and they buy it because there are stripes and it's [REDACTED]. So I think it's straight away, straight forward.
- TD1: It just wouldn't be [REDACTED] without your work?
- TD12: Without the stripes. Well they did have it before me, I just feel privileged to be able to design those things.
- TD1: It's specifically your eye for colour that makes you do it.
- TD12: Yes.
- TD1: Rather than I do it?

- TD12: Yeah, in the colour ways. Sometimes I don't really have to decide, but then I would be doing the colour ways. In the selected kinds of colours.
- TD1: I'm just interested about what you were saying about it adding a visual identity to that huge international brand. It comes down to you, not just you, but you as a textile designer and the way you put colours together, but also the way you put yarns together, is not only the thing that visually attracts a customer to the product but when they pick it up and feel it, that's the extra thing that you offer. Not just flat prints that a graphic designer would do. So it's that extra dimension of the fabrication of it that you offer, that a graphic designer couldn't offer by just creating some stripes.
- TD12: Yeah. It's the combination yeah.

8th December 2010

TD1: [REDACTED] and it's the 8th December. Okay I'll put that there is that okay?

TD13: It's fine!

TD1: Please [REDACTED] if you could just describe your professional background in textile design?

TD13: Well I think the best if I tell you a little bit chronologically where I come from, how I got here, would be the easiest way as I was saying I did a degree in fine art back home in Spain and then I came to do my MA in textiles in this country. The reason for that is because textile design as such doesn't exist as a degree in Spain, which I thought was quite interesting, or it didn't at the time. Now there are some studies but they are always fashion related not textile as such.

TD1: Do you know why that might be?

TD13: I don't know. It's understood as engineering but not as design for some reason, or within applied arts. But not as a degree on its own and I remember at the time I was into print making and I just knew I wanted to print but not only on paper, onto cloth, but that's all I knew and there were very few tutors in the college that with the little knowledge that they may have had could guide me. So the work I developed at [REDACTED] in the two years of the MA set the foundation of what I've done since that which is an exploration of textiles or the intersections between art, fine art and design approaches. So I produce work, or my most personal work which is quite research led in terms of very slow development of things that I'm interested in, both concept as technical. There is just found [unclear 2:37] through a gallery in Spain that's representing me, but I was very interested in setting up a studio there, working in lots of different ways and with lots of different people in the same way that somehow I identified all those different intersections during my MA. If you have a chance of looking at the website within the research section starts with a map, one of the very early tube maps of London which we altered has been pin pointed all those different places like addition work, work that draws on questions rather than trying to answer problems. Place in the work within retail contexts, even if it has a more arty approach if you would. So I've done window displays for boutiques or show cases for companies. So it's those kinds of areas and it's been quite interesting in that sense this year because I've started working, in a way I think we all do, somehow quite organically, you start meeting people or approaching people or places not really knowing, following the gaps rather than a strategic line I guess, and it is taking the shape that original intuition that I had and at the beginning of this year I was interviewed by the Crafts Council because we're doing a research title making value under, how do you say it, what the benefits of makers into different industries and the influence of makers into different industries. So that we're looking at portfolio based makers but we don't develop one product but have different services, if you would, that can benefit other industries. So I work with the film industry, with costume designers and I've done a little bit with fashion although personally I'm not as interested as with costume, and with companies and I do trend research for an organisation in Spain. And then that new avenue of my most personal little wall that will be showcased in a gallery. That's the answer your?

- TD1: Yeah. Do you, it's coming from a more fine art background, do you see what you do as design or something in-between design and art or?
- TD13: Someone in-between and it really depends on the project. Because if I'm working with another designer, what I'm interested in is the material and the development of the material. And when I work with a costume designer, even if it's very collaborative I've been lucky enough to fit into the projects because they buy into what I do. You have to work within certain parameters that are not set by yourself but are set by a script.
- TD1: The costume designers you said approach you because they like the personal work you do and then you said there's direction given by the script, but how does it actually work with the costume designer, do you really have free rein, they just want what you do or do they prescribe to you anything?
- TD13: It's extremely complex to articulate the process, they initially approach me, I'm just going to go back to the very first project and what they saw was a piece of my MA so then the sharing point was actually my very own work and the portfolio had developed in them. So in that sense they were commissioning me because I was fitting into what they needed. But then you're having to produce something practical and be like a piece for a coat and it's the coat of a particular character. I'm not given drawings but I'm literally told what this character is and I'm usually quite interested in reading if not the script, the novel where the script comes from. So how the freedom in terms of, we always do a little bit of research before, developed a sample and then develop a piece and the replicas. So I never feel I have to accommodate something that is not of my liking, because it also tends to be stories that feed into my imaginary space but you're having to respond to a brief, as open as the brief may be, I can give you an example that for the phantom, it was all about water, that was my brief, which was very open but still that's the effects that we are after.
- TD1: So you learnt the textile design process on your MA or was it more of a project based Masters where you could just explore free textiles in whichever way you wanted, were you actually taught how to design textiles?
- TD13: No it was project based I think. Funnily enough in those two years I wasn't following any recipe that anyone was telling me to follow and somehow I had to learn it afterwards and it was quite interesting because we do teach a methodology quite in a specific way of researching primary research, secondary research, you pick out bits and put them together to create the design, which somehow has come into my development now but it's still quite organic.
- TD1: Could you describe in any more detail your design methods and thought processes so when you're given a brief like the water one for example, what do you go out and do? It might sound like a trick question but I really just want you to describe what you do.
- TD13: I tend to consume masses of information of all sorts and sources mostly of visual but also text based and initially it doesn't have any particular order, quite chaotic at the beginning because I accumulate information related to whatever and then there's always the process of tidying up I suppose and responding to all that and very often all

those three stages merge into one so you're looking at things as well as organising them at the same time as making something. In synthesis that would be the best explanation.

TD1: Do have your design methods or processes altered as you've become a more experienced designer?

TD13: Yeah. In terms of amount and thoroughness and organisation, classification, all that tidying up I was talking about. I don't really want to say classify, tidying up.

TD1: So you're more organised and you do more now?

TD13: Yeah. But also I've learnt to be more practical because you've learnt to understand that there are times where you don't have the time to keep pursuing certain things and you have to make decisions when there is a project commission like a costume. The pace is really fast and there are times that if something is not working you just have to move onto the next idea. It's pointless to keep pursuing it because you have to deliver.

TD1: So why is it that you think you do more now than you used to, you've explained why you do more organised with it, more practical, but why do you feel that you tend to do more now, more research?

TD13: Because the more you know, the less you know! [Laughs]. That's the answer!

TD1: Making it better and better. Could you describe to me how you go about presenting, marketing, selling your designs, your work as a designer to either the costume industry, the fashion industry?

TD13: The usual pattern to now is through exhibiting or promoting the work, most of the time it's that personal work that I've been developing for a while that I just feel I come to a point where I need to show it but then I've approached boutiques to do windows, it's always something that has come from that experience whether as a collector or a costume designer commissioning something, or going to conferences, all the projects have come from showing work at conference and then working and you're actually working when you're not officially networking if you see what I mean, very often it comes from a casual conversation that you have with someone that you meet, like the Italian company I work with, I just met them through other people and it was quite by chance.

TD1: And so the people who are giving you new opportunities are seeing finished work aren't they, rather than a textile studio would be producing samples, it doesn't work like that for you, they see your actual finished pieces, either finished costumes, finished artworks and so on?

TD13: Yeah.

TD1: We've talked a little bit already about how you've worked with costume designers. I was just wondering if you have any other experiences of working with designers from other disciplines whether it was costumer or fashion and what are their perceptions or what textile design is and how it works?

- TD13: With fashion I have done some experiences, but at first not many that time and second with fashion designers I have a strong textile approach, really close friends, in fact one of them, we train together and she has a very strong textile input into her fashion. So there's a very clear understanding there. There's never been conflicts. Just because she understands, she's not only interested in the silhouette or the cut, but the material and the materiality and I think she has that strong textile approach within her when it comes to fashion. With costume, and I'm gonna, because I've worked more with costumer than with other kinds of designers and I have projects pending from pure designers to product, I haven't really flourished yet, I can't tell you as much as with costumer people, but it's been really interesting with the different people I've worked who were at very different stages in their career, their understanding of what I could offer to them or what I could do with them when in fact the more established they've been, the more freedom they've given me and they see me, they take me on board not just because of technical knowledge, whereas when I work with really young designers, it's more because they lack a knowledge that I can offer by dying fabrics. I did a very short project with an interesting set designer, for a dance company [REDACTED] and he wanted to make these knitted costumes, he has no idea how to knit and we just did the project together but it was, I found it at the time extremely difficult because I was being seen as a technician and he was making choices that then had to discuss with the choreographer and very often, I'm going to put my modest insight, but often the choices that the choreographer was doing were closer to my opinions than what he was initially suggesting.
- TD1: So you're saying you didn't have quite so much artistic licence over it, it was just the technicality of how to construct this. What do you feel is the purpose of textile design; it's quite a big question.
- TD13: A scary question. [Laughs].
- TD1: Textiles are always working with other designers and their work is applied in different situations, what's the role of textile design in most applications?
- TD13: It's huge, I think it's a field that we are very lucky to be in because it's so ample and you can really take it into the direction that you feel or keep lots of different avenues open. My understanding of textile design it's not just cloth, the surface, and it can be graphic, it can be textural, you can concentrate into the actual engineering behind it but to me it's always quite important that the outcome, I'm going to say beautiful and it might not be the right word but the article has to be visually appealing, I just feel that within the process you're not thinking that much about beauty necessarily. But if it doesn't emerge at the end, something has gone wrong.
- TD1: That's ultimately how it's judged, do you feel?
- TD13: Or how I judge it, I just need to find it fulfilling, I'm not sure if I'm too worried about what other people think but I have to feel in tune with it. It happens sometimes and I'm sure you find it the same that you are in a project and you have samples and I can show you later if you want but I have one print that I've been working on for more than a year now and I've got all the samples and I produced large pieces. The project is not sold yet and people see it and if I don't tell them what my concerns are, they could just see it as resolved. Not for me. So does that answer your-

- TD1: I suppose you've described how you judge your own work and the success of it, but whether you feel that one of your projects is successful or not, eventually it's out there I guess. How do you feel, what's textile's role in the costume or the garment or shoe or whatever it may be?
- TD13: I'm going to say the material, whether it's cloth or surface, but it's an integral part of what that product is so without it it wouldn't exist or it wouldn't be what it is.
- TD1: Do you think that other designers or even just consumers really think about that when they see a design?
- TD13: I really think that that depends on the sensitivities and backgrounds because I don't really want to generalise. But generally for those people who don't come from a design background, not only a creative background but a design background, they are completely unaware and I just now recalling a conversation with fine artists at some point last year when there was no understanding whatsoever of what textiles and fashion designers and I just saw it as really they were not considering the difference between a textile designer, a fashion designer or a costume designer. Consider it as one, they play with fabric and they make pretty things.
- TD1: Yeah that's perceptions are very difficult aren't they often.
- TD13: I just found it maybe interesting that it was coming from people that were supposed to be creative people.
- TD1: Just find the question. So going back to the first thing you mentioned, it was after your fine art degree and it was during that that you decided that you wanted to start printing onto textiles. Is there anything earlier in your life that perhaps signalled an affinity to surface texture etc?
- TD13: Yeah. Just clothes. Cloth and I like cloth. Big amounts of cloth and when I was little we used to go camping and setting up the tent to me as a three year old was putting the cloths up.
- TD1: Oh wow yeah. So and actually it wasn't surface at that point it was literally-
- TD13: Cloth.
- TD1: Materially just being completely surrounded by fabrics. That's a really nice story. Could you just describe lastly some of your first experience in designing or making textiles and at what point was that on your MA. Was it earlier?
- TD13: I did very little work on textiles before the MA. I was using for my prints textile surfaces to print with for the plates. And I did some screen printing onto those paper and fabrics. I was quite intrigued at the time, visually some sort of textile structures. It was all quite geometric. It was responding to those sort of poetic feelings and somehow when I started the MA they pulled me apart completely. It was very painful and I started playing with material, I was thinking too much at that time and before I was putting a pencil on the paper, it was taking for hours.

- TD1: I was told in the first year or my MA that this is the washing machine phase; you've got to wash away everything you learnt before and start again.
- TD13: Yeah same thing and it is quite painful initially and I remember some of the first things in the MA and they are literally pulling apart materials and putting them back together and started assembling all the materials, they were still fibre based but they weren't traditional fibres. There was knitting with grass, baking and freezing and burning things. In a way I guess now looking back it was quite interesting, I just went really quickly into the actual material and I wasn't thinking in a linear way.
- TD1: So the actual course you did was MA [REDACTED] isn't it? And that's obviously known to encourage innovation and textiles and test the boundaries of what textiles is commonly known as and so you talk about some knitting so you're using traditional technique but in unconventional ways. What was promoted on the course, what was encouraged and what have you taken with you into your professional career?
- TD13: It's that understanding that textiles can be anything, can be taken in any direction then the real trick with a statement with that is that to keep an integrity that can be coherent. I find, the course was in the very early years at the time and the resources weren't the same as what they have now so we were more encouraged to innovate through thinking. We didn't have access to all those technology workshops they do now. So most of us were developing poetic narratives if you want.
- TD1: Were there particular teaching methods that encouraged that or it was just an ethos which was laid out that you had to subscribe to and find your own way into? Were there ways of drawing you into this way of working?
- TD13: Yeah there were just from how the structure was laid out and the kind of activities that we did together. We were only, well we started 16 and we finished only six at the time. Problem students really. But so it was literally during the second year that we were only six people who got on really well, we spent a lot of time together in the studio and we had the luxury because we were only six, we were having weekly tutorials at times of getting together when we were talking about our projects and everybody had something to say. But also was through the tutorials and I remember one particular teacher that you probably have heard of [REDACTED] but it was very inspiring, a fine art background. [REDACTED] has some ample understanding of what the field should be and that's how they should be and that's her vision for the course but I just found [REDACTED] extremely precise or succinct. Picking the most important bits to help you to keep developing.
- TD1: So it's more the one on one and also the conversation with the students rather than any particular activities or workshops that you remember.
- TD13: Well we had things that I don't think they have now and they don't have the same one to one because there's a lot more of them. But we used to gather on Thursday mornings to talk about our inspirational sources. And we were always encouraged to look at everything, not only within the textiles world but cinema and books and exhibitions and food, experiences, memory.

- TD1: How did you record this research, did you use sketchbooks or artefacts and objects to trigger this process?
- TD13: Yeah, within the process I tend to put things on walls. I don't really like sketchbooks. They do carry some; it really depends for what but yeah. It's gathering of 3D as well as visual material that I just found myself with and it's quite important to have a thick wall where I can stick things. And when it happens sometimes I put them into sketchbooks or folders just for practical reasons so that I can carry them with me but they tend to be quite flexible so they might be just plastic, I move things around or they're never a stack on the pages they might be pinned, so keep moving them. Still the wall is always important!
- TD1: And I guess you changed, is there stuff that's always up there or does it completely come down every new project that you have or are there just things that always stay there?
- TD13: When it comes down but all that information has been put into some kind of container on the shelf and there are times when you're onto a new project but there is something that would be useful, go to that.
- TD1: Oh right and this wall pinned up with these 3D and 2D artefacts, I guess you look at that in the early stages when you're sampling trying out new ideas, but do you still refer to it later on in the process as well?
- TD13: Yeah.
- TD1: You talked about everything being synthesised.
- TD13: Yeah, what happens often is that all that information is being put on the wall without any order whatsoever and then as I go on, I start moving things around the wall. Or I take things out and put new things. And I keep everything on the wall till the end.
- TD1: Do you find that that's a good way of communicating to someone in costume design because I guess if they're visiting you in your studio, a way of describing, the way you're approaching the project?
- TD13: It has been very useful yeah. Not only with costume designers, also when having someone working with me, it's the easiest way. Because you're having a conversation or discussion and something may recall whatever you need.
- TD1: Okay the last question is quite an interesting one, are there any characteristics that you feel are common to people who work in the textile field, textile designers in your experience?
- TD13: To all of us, so that we feel that we have in common?
- TD1: Yeah, any skills or qualities or characteristics?
- TD13: There is an understanding of materiality and we all tend to be extremely tactile and playful, so very often it's not so much a material but the potential of that material that

makes us excited. As well as the level of detail. We have a tendency to look really glazed at things and then draw back! If we like something it's not only visual. We put a finger into it!

TD1: Okay. I think that's all my questions now. Thank you.

TD13: Right, well it's been really interesting, really interesting, some sort of over analysis of, very, very interesting. I think these are the types of conversations that you have casually with friends and colleagues but they are never recorded.

TD1: Yes, well that's the thing. I think within textiles we understand it completely but we don't write it up, we don't put it in this academic field to be compared with other processes of design and hopefully that's where I'm gonna come in.

TD13: Well I don't know if it will help you at all, I remember a few of the experiences where you're presenting work to an audience that the majority of them are engineers, textile engineers and it goes completely over their heads, they're looking at you like you do pretty things. And I know that generally that somehow conflict that designers always have with engineers, that they see us people who make things look pretty. Because architects quite often find the same. But I live with a friend who is an architect and I've been pleating in the oven and when he sees me working sometimes twice he says "Can you do it again on the same material" and then I say "Yeah that's the nice thing about fabric, you can keep doing things to it."

TD1: And if it burns it doesn't matter, do it again! Yeah.

TD13: That's it, it's just about time.

TD1: But I think particularly at this point where you've got the textile stuff you just call [REDACTED] where you have got even more crossover, like you said more of the new technologies, working with scientists, working with engineers, there is this kind of crossover being promoted but I think at this point it's really important, textile design is really clarifying what it is they bring to the table because there's a sense that it could get subsumed into science, we've got to remember what it is that we do and value that whilst we're working with these engineers and yeah, I think at the same time.

TD13: Have you met [REDACTED]

TD1: I haven't no, I've never met her.

TD13: Because you should approach her I think. She's very interesting to do stuff with, but I could help you. Have you talked to anyone from that course?

TD1: No you're the first person actually I've spoken to that's been on that course. Yeah, it's something I should do actually, think about it.

TD13: Well if you need there is two people that I could quite easily, I mean I know quite a lot of, I'm doing all sorts of different things and I'm just thinking that I teach some courses at central, the girl that was working with me till the summer is just started a PhD, where is she now, Loughborough?

- TD1: Oh right so [REDACTED] could be her supervisor!
- TD13: I can't remember. I'll find out. [REDACTED] Because she's fantastic, she's extremely articulate, she's a printer and she's also part of the textile research group so she could help you to liaise with other people within that group if you wanted. Probably easier than, I mean I could try but she's got more contacts
- TD1: Thank you that would be really useful, yeah. I think one of the really interesting things is going to be talking to people like yourself or others who perhaps are working more on the cutting edge of textiles as well as someone working for Next to see if although their day to day working life can be completely different, there's still whole the same qualities and characteristics and processes, I think that's going to be really interesting in comparison to make as well. I think that's again something that hasn't really been looked at. I think it feels like there's quite a big separation between textiles designers that work at those end of the fields so yeah. Got a lot of conversations to have I think but thanks so much for your time, it's really helpful. I'll turn this off.

21st February 2011

- TD1: 21st of February 2011. Interview with [REDACTED] I'm just wondering if you could start off first of all just describing your professional background and experience in textile design.
- TD14: Okay. Well after graduating from Loughborough I headed through to textiles I then had a year where I kind of free-lanced and tried to follow up any leads that I had from kind of end-of year shows and I also kind of worked part-time back at the university in the print studio. That was, it was a fine year really but I didn't enjoy the experience of kind of starting on my own. I really wanted to be able to be in a studio again, kind of be round other designers and kind of feed off them. So after a year I decided I wanted to get a permanent role kind of in-house. So I started applying for some jobs and I ended up at [REDACTED] designing boys wear. I actually stayed at [REDACTED] for six years and I've worked between boys wear and then onto men's wear and in very specialised in print and graphics whereas previously I'd done garment design as well on boys. So, yeah, I headed up the kind of print and graphics team in the men's wear department. So it was concentrating on jersey products, mainly prints and graphics for t-shirts but also all over from swimwear, jackets, shorts and also some branding. Then I really felt that I wanted to have experience working for a brand because although I had really enjoyed by time at [REDACTED] I wanted, yeah, to work for a brand that had its own identity really. [REDACTED] has such a massive customer base we try and kind of do bits for everyone on lots of different customer profiles. I really wanted to work for a brand that had a really strong kind of core identity. So I moved to Speedo for my prints and graphics and that was for men's and women's wear and for children's wear as well. I looked after the fashion range but fashion bikinis. So all-over prints for bikinis and then also fashion water shorts; so all-over prints and then water shorts and boys' water shorts. That was a good role. It was very different. I found the pace of work very slow actually. Because it was a sportswear brand we worked two years ahead of season whereas my experience at Next for the kind of High Street market was you would work very close to season. Sometimes you'd do a design that was in-store six weeks later. I actually really missed that fast pace and turnaround. So I ended up back at [REDACTED] where I've been for about a year. So I'm back on the children's wear department and I design print and graphics. I'm the only kind of permanent member of staff designing print and graphics. I also look after the trend side of things, kind of looking at trends for print and graphics. Then there's a big team of freelancers who also design. For children's wear we have a massive amount of options and print is really important for children's wear clothing. So there's an awful lot of print. That's where I'm actually now.
- TD1: Okay. Brilliant. My next question really is about how you learnt the textile design process? What you know to be the textile design process and if or how you use the design process now in your current job?
- TD14: Okay. I actually felt that the printed textiles course at Loughborough was a reasonable indication actually of what kind of industry textiles needs to be in a sense. I've felt I was pushed to kind of use computers in the design process which my experience of industry so far is an absolute essential and anyone that can't use them doesn't really get on. So that was a real benefit from kind of being taught like [unclear] I've taught the kind of techniques that I needed and then obviously when you actually start a role in

a company there's a big learning curve then. I guess the biggest thing is you stop being a designer for yourself and you're actually designing for a company. So what you actually create no longer really is your own. Although it continues to be very personal there's a kind of, a little bit of a cut off I suppose and you have to be prepared to kind of do things you may not choose to do necessarily. They might not be your taste level of what you'd kind of choose to work on. But you recognise that that's what's needed for who you're working for. I guess practical things I was taught how to design and repeat which is essential now.

But I probably wasn't taught things like screen sizes for industry and restrictions on screens. 'Cause when you design for a kind of mass market you need to kind of, numbers of colours of screens needs to be really considered. So there's these considerations and that was also quite different from being at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was much more strict on kind of screen requirements and also the kind of how the image looked. Because the minimums were really small because it was swimwear you had to get everything spot on first time whereas at [REDACTED] it's slightly more free because it's a bigger company I suppose. I don't know there's just a bit more freedom to kind of trial things and see if they work; whereas [REDACTED] had to be right before they were even sampled. Does that make sense?

- TD1: Yeah, yeah. I just wanted to kind of pick up on a couple of things you mentioned really. First of all kind of you said that it's still quite personal though you're designing for someone else.
- TD14: Yeah.
- TD1: Can you kind of explain that a bit more. What's the kind of personal aspect that you feel that you maintain?
- TD14: I think probably particularly at [REDACTED] we talk about a certain handwriting and different designers within the business are known for their handwriting. So I will often be asked to do things which are specific to my handwriting. So for example I've got a slightly edgy kind of boy, slightly older boys handwriting rather than a soft girly handwriting although I do have to also design for baby girls and newborn girls, where I'm more natural is older boys and a kind of I suppose slightly more men's wear edge. So in that sense I'm kind of known for that so it is my personal style. We try and kind of use that to everyone's advantage I suppose. Yeah I mean, there's still certain things I get really excited about when I design and some things I don't. Does that answer it at all?
- TD1: Yeah absolutely. My next thing really is kind of about, you mentioned about the processes you use as in the kind of the computer design and repeat and the kind of technical requirements.
- TD14: Yeah.
- TD1: Just kind of thinking back to your sort of training in textile design and the kind of idea sort of part of it really, the bit that would have been related to sketch books, how does that come into play now or does it?
- TD14: What in terms of kind of concept?

- TD1: Yeah, the sort of primary sort of visual research that comes into play.
- TD14: Yeah, I would say it almost doesn't currently at [REDACTED] I mean we do do kind of sketch book ideas and we pull together design kind of themes and trends but they tend to be based on what other brands are already doing. So it's not like you kind of come up with some arbitrary concept or something that is really personal to you and just kind of design from that because I guess it's just not how it works. The buying team want to see things that they've kind of seen other brands do because [REDACTED] is a High Street brand and I guess that's what our customers want as well. It was slightly different at [REDACTED] Because we worked two years ahead there wasn't actually that kind of information actually available so we used trend forecasters and we actually when we were pulling together the inspiration for the next season we travelled globally and look at, very much concentrated on looking at art galleries. That was quite exciting and a slightly more similar way to how I may have worked as a student. So being inspired by a painting and seeing how that could be a design or being inspired by a BMW, the new design by BMW and how that could affect the shape of a print or swimwear. That was slightly more I guess traditional in terms of what I was used to. But Next the concept doesn't really come into it. It's just does it look nice, is it commercial, is it gonna sell?
- TD1: So basically kind of due to the companies that you've been working for your design processes and methods have kind of changed and altered based on the requirements of that company and the needs of the customer profile of that company?
- TD14: Yeah, definitely.
- TD1: Okay. My next question really is about how you kind of present your ideas if you like, your designs and what sort of set-up there is. So once you've created some designs for maybe an all-over repeat or embroidery who are you presenting it to and how do you go about that?
- TD14: Okay. Well initially before I do design like I present a graphics theme and they are presented to the whole design team. So I'll do kind of a print and graphic trend presentation and then after that we have a full design presentation where we have stories for the season. We'll normally have about five for boys and five for girls. Within those stories they then kind of represent the different themes. So I will then go off and work on those themes but very closely with the garment designer. So if I was working on swimwear I'd work closely with the swimwear designer and we'd kind of pull together some ideas and I'd go and work on those and then I would share those with the designer. So I present them back to them. But it's not a formal presentation at all. It's literally showing them a printout and then kind of bounding ideas off each other. They would then kind of run them by their buying team and if the buying team like them they then go to sampling. Once they're sampled they go through a selection process so the buying, this is the buying team kind of presents the selection meetings to the director and the management and merchandisers are involved as well. Then designs are selected basically, well the kind of range is put together so looking back at what was presented at the design presentation, so sticking to that kind of core identity of the story; then making sure that the colours are going to sell well from a

merchandise point of view and making sure that the range is commercial basically but and also looks new. So you've got to kind of get the balance of repeating what sold really well before and making it look fresh and new for the new season.

TD1: Yeah. And so at that stage once the director and management have seen it, does it come back to you then for adjustments?

TD14: Eventually yeah it can do yeah but often I don't know we tend not to rework things. If something's not right then it tends to be just discarded and we normally would design more than we need. I'd say probably almost at least double what we need. So it tends to be –

TD1: That's the print and graphic and garment?

TD14: Yeah. The changes that normally would be made would be like a colour change or a scale change and there's assistant designers who do those kind of things. So I tend not to get involved in that.

TD1: Yeah, okay. Just I'm just kind of interested in the relationship between you and the garment designers. Could you give a bit more detail about how you work together?. Is it definitely on a sort of even playing field or is there kind of perhaps one side which has more of an emphasis I suppose?

TD14: Yeah. In terms of kind of level it is an even playing field. But in terms of the actual kind of range it's not really because you have a jersey designer who'd have their own jersey range and then you'd have a woven designer who'd have their own woven range. Me as a print and graphic designer I don't as such have my own range. I work cross all teams. It's quite unique but it also means yeah, I don't actually get involved in kind of the selection process. That's what the garment designer does. So at the end of the day they are kind of more accountable for the range as such. I'm just kind of a tool for them really to put it together and like a resource.

TD1: Yeah. Sorry I'm just making notes as you talk as well.

TD14: Okay. *[Laughter]*.

TD1: Okay. Just looking at my list of questions. What do you feel it is about you and your skills, abilities, qualities do you think that identifies you as a textile designer?

TD14: What an interesting question. *[Laughter]*. I don't know really. I think here at [REDACTED] the identity would be, the perception is slightly that it's a more creative role. You're creating something from nothing in a sense whereas a t-shirt you've already got a t-shirt and you're doing a new one in a different colour. There's is definitely new design work to be done. I don't know. It's a difficult one to answer.

TD1: When you compare to, you said you've done garment design as well, kind of the feeling or pleasure you get from textile design as opposed to the garment design you've done in the past? Is there anything you can get from that?

TD14: I'm much happier designing textiles and prints but I guess that's just what I wanted to

do otherwise I suppose I would have done fashion. But yeah I suppose a slightly more visual. It's hard to kind of distinguish but I think textiles and graphics can be inspired by so many different things, kind of photography and graphic art and graphic communication and that kind of thing and nature. I don't know. You can almost turn anything into kind of a flat print so it's sort of like the world's your oyster really. Yeah.

TD1: Okay.

TD14: Is that okay?

TD1: Yeah, that's fine. I just again sort of thinking about your professional experience but what do you understand to be the role of textile design? What does it bring to a designed object?

TD14: I think it's interest, isn't it, it's detail. So something printed is automatically, well I personally find, more interesting and engaging than something that's not. So like a floral dress could draw you in potentially more than a plain dress. I don't know. Yeah I guess it's to add kind of diversity and yeah another level to the design process. Yeah, I would just say it's kind of detail and interest. I just think about wallpapers as well. I don't know just textiles –

TD1: - more pleasure?

TD14: - wallpapers.

TD1: More pleasure I said. *[Laughter]*.

TD14: Oh. What did you say.

TD1: It adds more pleasure to the object.

TD14: It does. It kind of enriches things. Yeah, definitely. It just makes things a bit more visual and you can kind of really make a statement with it or it can be hardly noticeable.

TD1: I guess as well as you're designing embroideries and probably flocking and all sorts as well it adds a textural?

TD14: Yeah, definitely. Texture is really important actually and very rarely will we have a print, currently, with the current trends, that doesn't have some kind of extra on it. So we often add distress to any of our product that looks, that we want to look, what we call, authentic, something kind of lifestyle; even all-overs we add distress to. You know it's definitely all about texture.

TD1: When you were sort of learning how to do textile design, when you were a student did you consider that, did you consider textiles as adding this interest and detail?

TD14: I don't know really. I don't think I did. I think I just enjoyed it. I've never been someone that particularly is interested in the concept handling which I guess is why I'm happy designing kind of for High Street and in a kind of fast pace fashion environment. I generally just like things that look nice and look pretty and I guess that

was kind of as far as I went with it really. I didn't really consider, yeah, I certainly didn't consider what textiles could bring. I just knew I liked doing it and kind of did it.

TD1: Again on the [unclear – 19:30], when you're on foundation you just almost couldn't help yourself but create patterns? Can you trace that back at all? Do you remember kind of when you started being interested in pattern?

TD14: I do know that I really, the first time I saw Sir William Morris prints I found those just really amazing. I really liked the symmetry I think. It was when I did A level textiles that I did a repeat project and I really loved doing repeats. I still do now. That is definitely the favourite part of my role is to do the all-over prints which is partly why I went to Speedo 'cause that was predominantly what they do. But yeah, I don't know, I do just love pattern which is odd because I don't wear any pattern or really have any, or surround myself with pattern in my home. But there's something about creating it that I really love. I don't know if it's slightly mathematical side. I quite like working out different drops and that kind of thing. Yeah and I guess it's a slight challenge sometimes to kind of fit things together as a repeat and so I do quite enjoy that process.

TD1: I mean in your education were there any other fields of design that you considered going into or was it always textiles?

TD14: It kind of happened at sort of [...] really I wanted to specialise in etching at my A level. But I was told my [...] and stuff wasn't good enough so I had to choose ceramics or textiles and I couldn't bear the thought of doing ceramics; so textiles was my only option. At that point I decided to kind of do anthropology at university and I was going to go off on a different path. It was literally in my final A level year when I started textiles when I just loved it. I can't really, I can't describe it to anything else; nothing has kind of had that effect on me before or since. I think at a parents evening I think my teachers said why am I not kind of carrying on. Yeah I just haven't looked back since then really. Then I specialised in textiles at foundation and there was a time actually when I first got into work when I regretted not doing graphic design 'cause I felt I would know... I think I was possibly slightly frustrated that I didn't know all the kind of computer techniques and that kind of thing when I first started out at work. But recently I'm definitely glad that I chose textiles. I just think there's amazing history in textiles as well. So I find that really inspiring where they've kind of come from and where they're going.

TD1: Yeah and I'm sure there are some people who've been trained in graphic design who are doing jobs similar to you.

TD14: Yeah, definitely.

TD1: I mean what do you feel you have gained over them?

TD14: I definitely have an understanding of repeats and patterns and also just actually doing a print course you understand the pressures of screen printing, even though it's slightly different when you do it by hand to industry I've put in a few people that have come from a graphics background and often I'll say, "oh, how would you kind of get that

print down to so many colours?” ‘cause they came designed quite differently. That’s beneficial just understanding the kind of processes that are used in everyday kind of production.

- TD1: Yeah. Did you have any earlier kind of experiences of designing or making textiles before kind of the A level time when it first kind of grew on you.
- TD14: I was always, my mum had always encouraged me and my sister to do kind of craft based things and we’d do after school arts and crafts activities. But I think I never really enjoyed art as such. I don’t particularly like making anything 3D. I quite like the constraints of something flat and that’s probably why I quite like textiles as well because when you, you kind of, certainly with screen printing you have a pretty good idea of what you’re gonna end up with before you’ve done it so I quite like that control. I think it was when I made this distinction between design and maybe art that I kind of realised that was what I wanted to do. So I’ve always been creative but yeah it certainly wasn’t until textiles that I thought I could pursue it as a career choice.
- TD1: So did the textiles seem more of a career than art just because of the difference between art and design?
- TD14: I think yeah, I think in kind of industry it seems like design is a choice, design is a career option but art is more of a luxury I suppose or something that’s for the few. But yeah.
- TD1: Just a couple more questions.
- TD14: Yeah.
- TD1: Really coming back to what makes a textile designer. I guess you’ve worked with quite a few and as you’ve said you’ve interviewed some before as well I mean what do you recognise as being the characteristics of textile designers, if anything? *[Laughter]*.
- TD14: Well I don’t know. It’s difficult because I haven’t, that’s kind of basically the only people that I’ve come into contact with I would say, apart from fashion designers obviously. Yeah I guess just kind of raw creativity and just the desire to produce visual things. Some textile people that I’ve met have got a real kind of passion for actual fabric and kind of how the print kind of feels and the different techniques. Then some are completely just about the flat image and less bothered about the three-dimensional kind of technical qualities. I don’t what would make them stand out from different designers. I guess it is something that’s different is that we are surrounded by textiles and everyone comes into contact with textiles which you wouldn’t say necessarily kind of about fine art or I suppose you would really or ceramics but no.
- TD1: Not quite in the same way as textiles is it?
- TD14: No but that doesn’t really distinguish a textile designer. I haven’t answered that very well, sorry.
- TD1: That’s okay. I think often that’s probably one of the most difficult questions I’ve asked anyone because that’s really what my research is aiming to do. You know it’s trying

to actually get to the bottom of what specific ways of thinking or working textile designers have which makes it a distinctive design process.

- TD14: Yeah. The only thing I can think of that is really distinctive is the kind of repeat process 'cause I'm not really aware of that anywhere else. Yeah.
- TD1: I mean some things I've read about pattern that just basically say just how it's about disorientating us because it plays with our kind of, our kind of vision if you like, so it can make kind of surfaces seem bigger, smaller, it can change the way we kind of spatially react to things. So you know there's a very specific skill in that and there's a skill in sort of, if you like, envisaging how that's actually gonna work in either, you know, say it's wallpaper or around a body.
- TD14: Yeah and I wonder actually as well if it's a little bit of kind of science and maths meet kind of art 'cause it is quite kind of methodic they way you kind of produce it. Definitely when you look at, I'm really inspired by scientific drawings and if you think about kind of a shell kind of cut in half or a flower or something there's a very kind of, there's a lot of structure within nature that you kind of see repeated through the kind of pattern process and design.
- TD1: Yeah, definitely. I think it's something that textile designers just don't, we're not really aware of but that it's the whole... I mean you're married to a scientist and engineer. Everything's based on pattern basically, mathematical pattern and structure. But I think it's something that we deal with visually, texturally rather than with formulas.
- TD14: Definitely. Like you say we're not really aware of it 'cause I think it, I guess it just kind of comes naturally. That's a distinction as well for a textile designer. You probably wouldn't pursue it if it didn't kind of come naturally to you and kind of feel right.
- TD1: The other question I've got really again is perhaps a little bit difficult to answer but in design thinking literature which is what I'm sort of reading a lot about for my research they talk about the process of design as sort of the goal being to solve problems. So for example a product designer wants to redesign a kettle to make it easier to use.
- TD14: Yeah.
- TD1: I was just wondering how you thought, you know, if you thought that applied to textile design, the idea of solving problems in our world?
- TD14: Yeah, definitely on some level it does even if the problem is just to make something superficially nicer that's solving it in itself. I think this engaging with the person that's seeing it and I would be inspired by kind of textiles that you look at quickly and when you look closely there's more going on; like the wallpapers by Timorous Beasties I think are really nice whereas, do you know those ones?
- TD1: Yeah.
- TD14: I just think the way they kind of draw you in and you see something different on second glance is really nice and yeah. What was the original question again sorry?

- TD1: About kind of solving problems in our world.
- TD14: Yeah. I don't know. Solving problems in the world; that sounds quite.
- TD1: Well I mean it doesn't have to be kind of you know creating a new drinking water supply or something like that [laughter] but yeah anything really, like you say it could be more of a superficial problem as in you just want to make something, like you said earlier, basically the same as before but make it look fresh and new so people would buy it.
- TD1: Yeah, definitely.
- TD14: If you like.
- TD1: Or just more engaging. But I definitely think they can be kind of mood enhancing as well. like a beautiful print can kind of change the way you feel so I suppose that's why we have so much kind of print in our homes I suppose and you find them in remote places and that's why print's so important I suppose. In like a children's bedroom you'd probably always find prints and it can, yeah, it is just kind of, it can give you almost a feel good factor I suppose.
- TD1: Yeah, excellent. That's kind of the end of my questions really. [Laughter]. So thank you.
- TD14: That's okay.
- TD1: It's been really good I think.
- TD14: I wouldn't want to listen to that back.
- TD1: What's that?
- TD14: I wouldn't ever want to listen to that back. [Laughter].
- TD1: I'll send you the transcript.
- TD14: Dreading the transcript.
- TD1: And you can have a read of that.
- TD14: Yeah, I'll see what [microphone moves and cannot hear – 32:23]. [Laughter].

7th March 2011

TD1: It's the 7th of March and interview with [REDACTED] The first thing I'd like for you to do [REDACTED] you've had a long and illustrious career but if you could briefly just summarise how you became a textile designer and how you set up your company?

TD15: Right, well becoming a textile designer was actually quite incidental given that when I finished doing my two lots of foundation, I was prepared to do almost anything. I thought I was going to be a fine artist and was going to go into painting. I had always been a painter and I then decided that I wanted to be continuing in design and in art education, using facilities that were available to me in the college and I thought to myself, 'Well, with painting, yes I'll have the benefit of visiting lecturers and so on, but actually, where will I get the opportunities to use the facilities for design that the art college could provide me.' And so that's why in the end, having gone to a number of different colleges thinking I was going to do any number of different areas of design, after thinking, 'No, I'm not going to do painting, I'm going to do design,' I decided to stay at [REDACTED] which seemed to have a very interesting approach to researching for design ideas and drawing in from many different areas of the art world to finely produce something within a textile context. I liked that approach. I felt that it suited me and at the same time, I would be learning how to understand about dyes, understanding the effects on fabrics, understanding the fabrics and understanding the applications of things and in a sense, learn the trade.

I'd always been very interested in textiles, particularly vintage textiles and I'd travelled a lot picking up textiles that... I suppose I've always loved colour and I was brought up in [REDACTED] and had a lot of textiles around me. It wasn't; when I look back on it, perhaps it was an obvious move to go into textiles but at the time, it seemed like I was weighing up a lot of different possibilities but started then with the textile course at Camberwell which I thought was extremely good. It was an extremely good course: it was very practical and at the same time, allowed you to roam into areas of creative and imaginative thinking to use as the substance for your work; the direction that you were going to take and the processes of the textile discipline through.

So that's how I started in that and the reason why I then developed [REDACTED] [REDACTED] which was a company comprising of three people, actually, in its origination although just before that started, I worked on my own, was because I had... Originally, myself and these two other people both who had been to art school: one was called [REDACTED] and the other [REDACTED] we had all decided that we wanted to be a design house and that we wanted to go into lots of different areas of design. We felt very capable of applying ourselves in any number of different directions but it was clear from the start that in order to be able to get funding, i.e. in the form of grants from the Crafts Council and so on, that we would have to focus on an area. So because I had worked building up a portfolio of designs on paper to see within the textiles industry and not having sold them, other than I think to Liberty; I think I sold about ten designs to Liberty and then that was it. The extent of my success selling designs on paper was quite limited but we had an idea that once we got these designs onto fabrics, we would take them to designers of clothing and get commissions to produce meterage of materials which would then be printed up within the textile industry.

That turned out to be not quite how it worked for two reasons: one because designers of clothing have their own ideas as to what fabrics they want to use and we very much

had our own ideas as to what prints we wanted to put onto fabrics and the colours. So you had to find someone who was going to work with you in that way and the other reason was because within the industry, it was very difficult to find the flexibility of people to do the lengths of material and the types of fabric that we wanted to experiment with, which were chiffons and organzas, and all sorts of materials that perhaps, needed a specialist approach. So we set up designing and producing our own fabrics and that's how that began. We decided that we would go into accessories initially; scarves and ties, and from then, we added home wear; dressing gowns, pyjamas, things that you could wear almost out in the street but they were called sort of loungewear and so on. From then, we developed all sorts of ranges of menswear, women's wear, interiors; we did shoes, we did hats, we did gloves, we did belts. We basically went into all sorts of different areas but the core were the accessories and that was a continuum that kept going season after season and that was 25 years of work. Sorry, I've probably rambled on.

- TD1: Not too much. A couple of questions really came up from what you just said; you talked about [REDACTED] and the practicality of the course and how that encouraged you to creatively grow, if you like. Could you describe in a bit more detail about how you were taught textile design?
- TD15: Well, it's an interesting question and a difficult one to answer because I could see that when I went to other colleges, there was a very distinctive, very clear structured form of the teaching of textile designs. I remember visiting Central School of Art and people were encouraged to take an idea and reproduce it in six different ways. For example, I saw when I was there, people drawing a pile of fir cones and from those fircones, they would then put it within a structure, take that structure, divide it up into a repeat form with different kinds of repeat, and it was very much a taught technique in terms of textile design. We were not taught in that manner. We were really encouraged to explore different avenues of source material to then bring together ideas that would produce a textile design. Interestingly, in my very last year, just before the degree show; about four or five weeks before the degree show, one of the tutors, a lovely woman arrived looking at a lot of the work and at the portfolios and she said, "Alright everybody, now where are your textile designs?" And everybody looked very blank and it was basically that having done a textile course, we were going to be assessed as well on our textile designs, which were a very defined area and of course, a lot of us hadn't worked in that way. I certainly hadn't and I'd drawn on all sorts of influences; theatre, film, you name it; paintings, ceramics, sculpture, nature; the senses and music. Those had been my influences and it was wonderful to have those influences and encouragement but I never for a moment thought that I had to put them into some sort of constructed form. Simply, whatever I did in my end process was something that I pulled together as a textile; as a textile design as such, but to me it was a series of forms which fitted together or flowed to make a rhythmic pattern over a surface which would then appear as if it was going to be part of a continuum. It certainly wasn't a series of sort of visible repeats and so that was my approach. Now, other people might have approached it in a different way. Funnily enough, [REDACTED] was on the same course as me and I think that he was slightly taken aback at the thought of what a textile design is in that very formal way that it might be, but then maybe at the time, the technicians, if you talked to them they'd say, [REDACTED] was very kind of... She approached it in a different way and therefore, she didn't take on board that we were teaching textile design." But for me, it was a

fascinating course because it allowed you to explore the idea of textiles outside the boundaries of that very tight structure which I think has got its merits; absolutely, but to me, it didn't have life. It didn't have a life to it. That's what I felt about it.

TD1: Do you think that the way you approached textile design then was the thing that prevented you from selling lots of the designs when you first wanted to set up your label? That you had more of a sort of a personal path in your relationship with textiles?

TD15: Yes. Yeah, definitely. I think –

TD1: And your own way, really?

TD15: Yeah. I ploughed my own furrow and I knew that people who were producing designs on paper for the industry and then designs going to folios and then going all over the world. I knew that they were looking at trends and focusing their design work on florals; extrapolations of florals, stripes, cheques, animal prints and all the usual kinds of things that come around again and again, and again within the industry. It's like, "Oh it's that again." Looking at magazines it's making me laugh and I suppose I kind of said, "Okay, I can do florals," but I did florals in my own way and I suppose I was quite stubborn in that sense, and my work did go into design portfolios and it was taken around the world but I think it acted very much as a sort of... I used to think and in fact, I joked with one of the agents that my work acted as a reaction so that someone would buy the one that was beside it. You know? Because they were like, "Oh my God! But that looks great," and so it served a purpose but yeah, I didn't go down that route and I'm not in any way undermining that route but what I'm saying is it just wasn't my choice to do that.

TD1: And the way you approach design, has it changed or altered along the way? So thinking about the way that you actually set up your workshop / studio to have the facilities to actually make next to your drawing board, if you like; did that have a kind of influence on the way that you design?

TD15: I think it was an unexpected and hugely positive thing to have a combination of designing and producing; unexpected in that originally, as I said, we were going to produce the samples and then work within the industry to create what we wanted. Actually, having our own facility meant that there were, within the process, there were things that happened that were, perhaps, in some cases unintentional but then turned into a way of producing or enhancing the design or the use of colour or the use of texture that were unforeseen. So therefore, yeah, I think it added a huge amount and I think it was incredibly satisfying for me. I think I would probably never have pursued the notion of designing on paper very far had it not been for the extension of the idea into fabric and then the things that you could do having done that. It made you feel like you were a whole rather than just a part which then whatever you were producing went out into this industry and then you never saw it again, or maybe you did, but rarely.

I think I enjoyed enormously, being part of a big endeavour and then when we worked with; we did finally... well, not that far into the process, we actually did find someone to work with, who came to work with us initially and her name was [REDACTED] and you've probably come across her. We had a very fruitful partnership with her because she was very; she was one of the very few people I've met within the industry who

is actually really game and interested, and determined to push forward techniques. So you'd come up with something and say, "We really want to try this. Is there any chance that you could experiment with this?" And you'd find a bit of material, maybe you'd find it in a vintage shop or something and you'd say, "This is the kind of element I'd really like to explore. Would you try it?" And that was just a joy. It was a wonderful collaboration because we were able to experiment ourselves and then we were also able to take it to her and she was able to do things that we, perhaps, wouldn't be set up to do; but to take that process, start it and move it on. So it was very creative. Yeah.

- TD1: Something else you mentioned when you were talking about your career was when you came up against trying to sell your designs to fashion designers and clothing designers, you said that you had different ideas about they would be used in comparison to them. I'm just wondering if you could say a little bit more about your experiences working with other types of designers.
- TD15: Well, I would say it was always... I've always been very keen on collaboration and I love collaboration but at the beginning when we set out, there was an issue of money and finances. We were only able to produce a very small range of designs, but what we did was with each design; say we had two designs, they'd have... I think the first two designs we did had sort of eight different screens per design so what we were able to do was to take out the colours and do a two screen print design out of that same design and then do that in 20 different colour combinations. So that's what we were taking round to designers and I think what it really means is that the collaboration process has to be that you and the person who you're showing that work to have to have synergy. So the moment that you turn up with your designs that you've done and within your limited capacity to produce them because of financial things, that it strikes a chord, it rings a bell and there is some element of, "Oh yeah, that would work with what I'm doing."
- With some designers, that did happen but of course, it wasn't with everyone and there were limited possibilities but we did sell our work, for example, to ██████████ ██████████ in the early days and ██████████ We worked a little bit, a tiny bit with ██████████ and then in terms of collaboration, we did things with; we did a very nice project with ██████████ but that was him wanting to use something that we'd already done but for us to colour it to suit his collections and so on. There were a number of people that... I can't remember now, of course, all the people that we did work with but I think that we would have been very happy to collaborate more. I think what's difficult is to try and get it so that you're functioning at the same rhythm and I think that that's; in the end, I think that's what makes it more difficult and so in the end, you then find yourself producing; you're producing the dresses, you're producing the tops and jackets and all that kind of thing because it's hard to walk hand in hand unless a designer commissions you to do a print.
- In the very, very earliest day, ██████████ we worked with him but it was his print that we did and his colour combination. So in many ways, we were just like a kind of commissioned printer and that wasn't very; that didn't feel very fruitful but our main, chief collaborations in the beginning were with people who were doing small runs of things. They wanted small runs of things and so for example, there was a designer who was used a lot by people like royalty and so on and so forth, called ██████████ ██████████ and we did meterage for him and he'd have sort of 30 metres in crepe de chine, or 25 metres in wool and all this kind of thing and those were the things that we

were doing for much smaller individual designers and so on.

The collaborations also came later with people like [REDACTED] where we did off-cuts of fabric and she made them up into bags and so on. You probably know her work and things. I'm just trying to think if there's anyone. We worked a lot with [REDACTED] but I don't think that we ever did a particular design for him. We did something for [REDACTED] I'm just trying to think, but mostly that's the reason why it's a bit more tricky. I think it's got to be something you dream up together.

TD1: Talking generally, what fulfils an understanding of your role or your partner's role as a textile designer? What are they trying to buy in your work, if you like?

TD15: Well, I think it was; most people, when they saw the materials there was a sort of instant response and that was one of the things that would happen without question. It was an instant response and usually a really positive one. There was a beauty in the material and, "I love the colour," and a kind of response to the flow and the rhythm of the forms and I think it was; on the whole it was really positive. What I think was a little bit more tricky was to have a vision of how best to use it in its entirety as opposed to in a sole piece.

TD1: Because your influences have been so broad, are they interested to know the influence of that or is it literally just the beauty of the look of the design of it?

TD15: I don't think there was necessarily a huge interest in discussing the influences but more like a sense that the fabrics, the colours and the designs gave to them, so there was a feeling that it had a sense or a feeling of being romantic; or a feeling of being jazzy; or a feeling of taking you to the fifties; or taking you to some place. I don't think that there was ever much of a discussion about where the actual ideas came from but more a response of, "Oh, that makes me feel like..." or, "That would instantly would work as a kind of tea dress," or, "That would instantly work as a fantastic tuxedo," or, "That would make a great lining for a coat when you took it off." It was more that sort of thing and I think in some ways, I don't think we ever found absolutely the right and the best combination for us with a designer. There were certainly a lot of things that we did which I thought worked really, really well and we did collections with a number of different designers who came to work with us and those; some of those worked very well. Now, when I look at them, I realise that they've got really terrific elements but they probably needed to be put together in a slightly different way, or rather cut down rather than doing a whole collection; you'd do just an element. You'd just do dresses or you'd just do coats, or you'd just do... You don't try and tackle the whole thing because sometimes when you think about it, you don't necessarily want a whole thing.

This, for example, which is a 1959 crimplene trouser suit, when I've got it on together

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TD1: It could be Prada.

TD15: - it is stunning. What?

TD1: It could be Prada.

TD15: It could be Prada. It totally could be Prada and just totally kind of light the blue torch

paper and ignite. As a total outfit, it's absolutely brilliant but there are not that many people that would wear it. I wear it as a total outfit because I love print and you need to remember the amount of people that would wear that top to toe are less than the ones who are going to put like a little bit of print round the neck or a little bit of a T-shirt or whatever. But yeah, I don't think that with fashion designers and textile designers, unless you have... It would be interesting to talk to someone like Dries Van Noten because I think he uses textiles and he's always been a lover of print and texture, and weave, and interesting knits and all that sort of thing, and that kind of designer I absolutely love; Missoni, lovely. That's what we were, I suppose, aiming to be; someone who was producing things that could be worn together but didn't have to be worn together; could be like an accessories. Why can't a T-shirt be an accessory? Why can't a jacket be an accessory? Etc, and that's how in the end we approached it all, that we were selling pieces but those pieces were like an accessory and that you teamed them together but within the fashion industry there's always been that element that you've got to have a collection, and in some ways you think, 'Well why? Because actually do we want to do the black trousers?' No, actually.

In our shops, in the end what we were doing was we would buy in sort of like a serving suggestion and we'd say, "Look, this looks great with that," and then we'd research other shops and say, "Okay, if you go to Top Shop, you can get a great pair to go with that, or if you go..." you know? So it would be like a serving suggestion because in some ways, I think... I loved; when I was working in a shop, I would love to talk to people about what they had in their cupboards and say, "What have you got? Let's think about what you've got. Okay, you've got that so this would work with that," and, "If you put that with that, that would work with that." So it was helping to put it together, a bit like a kind of menu but I would very much have liked to, in the course of our history to have worked consistently with a designer but we didn't. We worked a bit, and a bit, and a bit, and a bit and all of those collaborations were very enjoyable but we never worked consistently with someone.

- TD1: A bit of a diversion now in terms of the questions, but I'm just wondering is there anything that you feel identifies a textile designer? Is there any specific characteristic that textile designers share?
- TD15: I think probably all textile designers share a love of colour and a love of texture. Yeah, I would say probably –
- F: Is this yours?
- TD15: Ooh, sorry. Yeah, sorry. I would say colour and texture would be the uniting thing. I'm just thinking about all the textile designers that I've come across and are an RDI. Do you know what those are? Do you know what an RDI is?
- TD1: No.
- TD15: Nobody knows anyway but it's tragic; nobody knows it but an RDI is a Royal Designer for Industry and it's a sort of... That's an 'I' actually, RDI. Yeah, It's a sort of award that you get from your peers in design right across the board and I was thinking about all of the RDIs within the textile and fashion group and what it was that they shared. I think it's more; I think it's an appreciation colour and texture, I think, that would be the uniting thing. Form is a different matter because people use all sorts of different forms to express their interest and love of colour and texture, don't they? I think that's probably what would unite them.

- TD1: And in being an RDI, are there many in textile design? Is it something that it within the design industry or is it in the fashion and textiles industry. How well are they crediting our textile design?
- TD15: Well, I can tell you that being in it, we do our level best to bring textile designers, excellent textile designers within the fold. That's the idea and fashion and textiles come under one umbrella so there are people who do fashion, so that's Betty Jackson, Margaret Howell, John Galliano, Vivienne Westwood and Paul Smith... and then in textiles, there are people like Jenny Frean, Eileen... I can never remember her last name but Eileen; she's such a lovely woman; Eileen, Eileen... We had Kay Cosserrat who recently died, we've got –
- TD1: Will I be able to look up a list ?
- TD15: Yes, you will. Absolutely, yeah. Sorry, I'm rambling on, but yeah, there's a desire to put recognition to textile designers, definitely. Most definitely.
- TD1: Are you meeting someone here?
- TD15: Just up the road, yeah.
- TD1: Just to say, we've got a couple more questions.
- TD15: Okay, great. What's the time?
- TD1: It's about twenty past one now.
- TD15: Great, okay.
- TD1: I was just wondering what your consideration of the purpose of textile design is? It's a very open ended question, but what does it do?
- TD15: What does it do?
- TD1: Yeah, textile design.
- TD15: Well it's an absolutely elemental enhancement, quite apart from anything else it does as a function. It's a huge enhancement to our lives, both in terms of visual enhancement; it's a sensory enhancement; how it feels. It's a kind of... I'm just thinking how, if I talk about what I think our stuff did or do you want me to talk about it generally?
- TD1: Whatever, if there's an example, yeah?
- TD15: In any way, alright. I think it's the kind of foundation of so much of what we take for granted and yet, the people who respond to it and identify with it then elevate it to a position where it has huge importance. So if it's textile design, they'll be wearing it or they want it in their house; they want somehow to be identified with it. It; they feel that the textile design or the textile is an enhancement and an identification for themselves. It speaks about the person in that way and it can make people feel

enormously better, actually, and people have talked about that in terms of some of the textiles that we've done. I remember seeing an article about an actress and she said, "When I put this one, when I put this particular thing on," and it was one of our things, "When I put this on, it just kind of lifts my mood and makes me feel better." Or other people have said, "Well, I know when I've got these things on, it makes me feel like I'm dressed; I'm ready and I'm dressed." I think, so it spans so many areas. It's fundamental and yet it's also... and fundamental can also mean it's sort of the soil but it's right there as the sort of root of everything and yet it's also right; it's also something that's a joy and has many other elements to it.

TD1: I read a quote from William Morris, actually, and he was talking about decoration and he was saying, "It can be like the dry moss on the sticks." It's just that it's so unnoticed but it's there and it's applied. So yeah, I think that's kind of what he was saying.

TD15: Yeah, yeah. The thing is it's very funny because if you; yesterday I was with my friend on the tube on the Bakerloo line and I said to him, "Have you noticed the covers on the seats?" And he said, "You know, I've never really noticed them and actually, I don't really like them because there's too much going on." I don't know if you've seen the Bakerloo line seat covers. Actually you probably have, but they're really; it's kind of like pattern upon pattern but not a nice pattern upon a pattern. It's kind of all a bit too much, and yet, the poles where you hang on; they've picked out the colour and it's all very nicely done and design is absolutely everywhere you look and I said, "Isn't it that..." With him as well, I've been encouraging him to wear things of ours and he said, "It's really funny. I'd never realised how important and what a change it has in the way you look and how you feel about the way you look." He said, "When I look at myself now in the mirror, I see a difference. I see something much more pulled together, much more kind of cool and much more sassy," and we all respond to it innately without really knowing that it's there. And yet it's all around us. It's very, very fascinating. I've probably rambled on with a very un-succinct way of putting it but somehow in there, you'll find something, I'm sure you will.

TD1: That's great. Thank you.

TD15: Thank you. If there's anything else you need, give me a call.

TD1: I will, thank you. It's been lovely to meet you.

14th March 2011

- TD1: Okay, 14th of March. Yeah that's on now.
- TD16: So anyway, then I did this textile certificate and then got another loom, a bigger loom [unclear 00:16] eight shaft counter large. In fact I could go up to 12 shafts on it but I'm not that interested in pattern, as I am in colour interaction. That's what interests me about weave. And it's just gone from there. I set up a studio with a friend after doing the textile certificate but unfortunately she died a couple of years later and I just moved everything back home and worked from home ever since. Which did work well, with having small children. And then I started producing work to sell. Started by weaving jackets for children, the One O'clock Club was a great place to sell them because -
- TD1: What's the One O'clock Club?
- TD16: Oh, you'll find out about the One O'clock Club. The One O'clock Club is a place where mothers and small children would gather and it was a lifesaver for meeting other mothers. In fact I met... I've got some very good friends and friends that are in the arts, and I have a very good jeweller friend who teaches at Central St Martins, who I met at the One O'clock Club when her daughter was the same age as my older daughter. But, so it just started building like that and then I did Chelsea craft fair shortly after I finished my textile certificate, for the first time, so I've done it over the years. But, it's really... it's really evolved and I now teach. I teach weaving two days a week in adult education and I do arts and crafts for the elderly one day a week, mental health. So I do... sometimes I do weaving with them, but more or less it's more broad based. And I continue to... well it is colour. I run courses on colour now too. I do dyeing courses and colour theory courses for weavers.
- And it's the making that I like. I like the whole process. The reason I teach, although I really enjoy the teaching too, but the reason I teach is because I could never delegate. And I would get to the point where because a lot of my decisions are made on the loom, although I design, but things change on the loom and I don't think I could ever get to the point where I could ask somebody else to take on what I'm doing. I like the process.
- TD1: So, definitely the kind of... like you say, handling the materials and the equipment is... helps you to design?
- TD16: Exactly. And when I'm making warps I sometimes feel as though I'm painting with my threads because, although I'll have written down in my notes how wide I want to make it, what my set is, the length, that sort of thing, and the colours that I'm going to use, yet I'll change colours quite often and I'll do it as I'm making the warp because I'll see how it's progressing. So I feel like I'm painting with the threads.
- TD1: So, do you... for the sake of the interview, when you're thinking about design, will that come from painting, will that come from drawing, will it come from a photograph or...?
- TD16: It usually comes from sketchbook work and it comes from... a lot of it comes from

my... from travelling. Places I've been. So it might start off as photographs but...

- TD1: And then I suppose, once you've got the schematic design in your head, or on paper, then you technical set up don't you?
- TD16: Yes, yes. Except you see, because I'm more interested in colour, my weave structure hasn't changed that much over the years. I've found a weave structure... or several weave structures that I like because I weave wearables. I'm weaving scarves, shawls and... well and fabric for men's ties I make up the ties. I'm just stopping doing that now, I've come to the end of that. But I'm taking that on in a different way. I... no I don't change the structure so much, as I change the colour ways. And it is... it's that wonderful thing about warp and weft crossing and creating that third colour. That's what excites me.
- TD1: So what was it... that effect that you've just described, you mixing the two colours, that you can do that in painting. So why with yarn, why through weaving?
- TD16: I think I like the structure of weaving because it takes some of the variables away. Like painting is pretty scary on a blank canvas. I like to push that structure, work within a structure like that. I don't think I'm an artist. I'm a designer and I'm a designer craftsman and designer maker. I don't know, I just love fabric, and I've always made things and started making my own clothes at a very early age, have done stitch, knit, things like that. But there's just something about weave that I really like.
- TD1: Is it the fact that, again you say then, you weave wearables, that actually there's a function to the outcome as well?
- TD16: Yes, probably. I think that. Yes, I'm a very practical person.
- TD1: How do you select your yarns? What are your criteria other than colour?
- TD16: Well I work mainly in silk and so it's fine knit, fine yarns. Usually... mainly in silk, but silk and combinations. I do collapse weaves so I use a lot of high twist wool, yarns that... the high twisted wool, sometimes silk. So, I like fine threads, I like natural threads. I've got this overly irrational dislike of manmade fibres, and I think it's just because I haven't... well I don't know, there's just something and maybe it's limiting... again limiting the variables by not using manmade fibres. And I have tried different ones at various times, but I always come back to the natural ones.
- TD1: And, just thinking about the customer, the people who buy your pieces. Do you have a sense of designing for a particular person, or... how does it work? Do they buy your work because they appreciate your particular style or...?
- TD16: Yes, I think... I do, do some commission, but I'm never happy doing commissions. I have customers that come back to me again and again, which is very rewarding and very lucky. So I've built up a clientele and I think it's colour that they like, my colours they are obviously attracted. And when I'm... and sometimes when I'm weaving I do have a certain... I do have an image of somebody that I could see wearing it, so the colour works that way too. Somebody I might know, or somebody that... but I'm not doing it specifically for them.

- TD1: Is it their physical colouring that you're trying to work to?
- TD16: Yes.
- TD1: I'm just going to pause it a second. I'm just wondering if you could explain what drove you to work in tapestry from having originally done a degree in English.
- TD16: Oh, yes I can. I... after I graduated from university, a long time ago, I went out west in Canada. I was at university in Ottawa and I went out west and up north to a mining town and I just thought, I want to see something of... it's ridiculous actually, looking back on it, something of real life, and I ended up washing dishes in a single men's camp. And everybody worked so hard that there was just... there was never, there was no conversation, the people were just tired in the evening, there was just... and I just wanted something else to do. And I went into the nearest village which was 60 miles away. I thought I've got to find something to do, I was reading and stuff like that, but I went into a shop and there was a carousel of books on craft and I picked the one off the carousel that was tapestry. Weave your own tapestries.
- TD1: So as arbitrary as that?
- TD16: As arbitrary as that. It could have been anything to do with using my hands, but... and that's how it started.
- TD1: And was it very low tech hand weaving skills or...?
- TD16: Very low tech. I made myself a frame and just hammered four pieces of wood together, tied a warp on it and used whatever yarns I could get hold of. So they were knitting yarns and they weren't really suitable and I started weaving tapestries. And I think I wove two before I left. I then came back east and met my... actually I knew my husband to be already because we'd met at university, but we decided... so we got together and we decided that we'd come to Europe and we ended up spending the winter in Tunisia and because we were in one place I made another frame and wove another tapestry there. And then we travelled for about eight months and ended up here and I just went on with tapestry at that point. And I went to... do you Handweavers, where it used to be in Walthamstow, I went to and I did a course with Mike Halsey, tapestry weaving. So it moved me on a bit and... but then, as I said, I came to an end of what I thought I was going to do with tapestry. And then I did a loom weaving course at Handweavers and bought my first table loom and that's it.
- TD1: Never looked back.
- TD16: Never looked back, no. Looms just got bigger.
- TD1: Was there a... when you were doing the courses, that adult ed courses, was there a tangible process or design process that you were taught as part of the course?
- TD16: No, it was more technique actually. Yes, no we didn't... it was all technique based at that point. As I remember... yes, design... design is always that question and my students ask me that. How do you design? And I'd say, well I'd like to tell you there are

ten easy steps to follow and... because if... because I do a lot of design exercises with them and I said, but these are only exercises, and I always feel that... we talk about design in terms of working out a pattern, a very technical design. You can talk about it like that. But inspiration, that kind of design, where does it come from? And when teaching in adult education you're teaching... and I was in adult education, so I know this feeling that you think... they often think, well I can do it, I know the technique, I can do it and I don't need to do any work beforehand. And so I really encourage the designing and I say, well you take an idea and you investigate it and it doesn't mean that there are going to be these steps that lead you there, but somehow I always talk about it as a process of osmosis. You've looked at something so long, or worked with it for so long, that suddenly it's coming out through your fingertips. And this is what I like when I'm doing my warps, because if I've been working from a design source, I can paint with my threads. I couldn't do it if I hadn't that process beforehand, because I'd be standing there and thinking, well what colour do I use next? And it would all be much more... it becomes less deliberate when you've been working with something for so long.

- TD1: So there's a slightly indescribable, intangible connection between the two, between making the final thing and the inspiration source and research, the idea if you like.
- TD16: Yes. There is an intangible connection, that's true. Yes.
- TD1: So what's the response from the students when you describe this as a frustration?
- TD16: Because I've been teaching this one class for so long, I'm thrilled that so many more of them are doing the design, have picked up on it. And some of them that don't do it, I don't force them to do it because it is adult education, but I see that they're more interested. And a number of them said to me that they... because I also say that it's about looking and it helps you to look, by putting your pencil on a paper and following a line, you're actually looking more closely and you'll just appreciate things more. And students have said to me, well I do find that I look more and they see colours... well they see, you can't help the more you know about something, the more you see. So, it is very encouraging. There are always going to be ones that just take the yarn that they have in their cupboard and don't think so much about it, but not so much anymore. They're more...
- TD1: I'd be interested from your point of view as well, particularly because you teach adult ed, whether there's... this is going to sound awful, but is there a distinction between some people who can just do it, have a certain ability or a skill, and other people who can learn the technique but what they produce is never quite a design?
- TD16: Yes. There definitely is, yes. Yes, and it's... almost recipe weavers, and some people have an intuitive sense of colour. Everybody has a sense of colour but it doesn't always work. Even if you don't like their colour sense but it can work. Yes, but I think that... yes I think there will always be some that will be really... can be really skilful, can be taught the skills and be... have the techniques and be really skilful and still not take it that next. But I think there are some that can... you can teach them to... and they find the ways of looking and it can...
- TD1: They can learn how to?

TD16: Yes.

TD1: But... and what sort of... feel free to eat for a bit.

TD16: Yes. You too.

TD1: I'll ask you the question and you can have a little time to think about it. What are the characteristics of the people who can do textile design, or can learn how to do textile design?

TD16: That is a hard question. Well, they have to have a certain sense of creativity I guess and... Thinking of one student, who I think is really coming on leaps and bounds, and I've had her over the years and she's now done the Bradford certificate and she's selling her work. But I've seen the work develop from being very measured and careful, to becoming more... her colours have completely changed. She's much bolder and she takes risks with them now. She doesn't... she's not so careful with it. So I think she's somebody that has moved from being a careful technical weaver into... her work is still... it's very beautiful and I have really seen it develop.

And I have another student who is incredibly good at all the technical stuff and she's just light years ahead of me on the computer and being able to design on the computer. I find that your computer has changed weave so much because... but I think it's like digital and computer in everything, it's almost got to the point where, well it's actually not got to the point, it's at the point where the technique of being able to use a computer is almost more important than the creativity and the design. But I think that will change because I think once people have got familiar with it and at ease with it, then they'll use it as a tool that it should be.

But I do have this one student who's very, very good at working out patterns and things on the computer, and very complex weave structure, and she's now got a computerised loom and she just talks circles around me to be honest, because I understand structure but I'm just too many numbers and things. But I have to say that her... it just doesn't quite... sometimes it does, but quite often it doesn't quite make it. I think she's got too caught up and she hasn't got a natural aesthetic. And even when she does take part in the design, she does it on the side, take part in the design, it's turned to how she wants it. She doesn't go with it, she's too controlling, I think. I'm probably being unfair to her.

TD1: I'm going to have some bread I think.

TD16: Please do. I'll get some butter.

TD1: Thank you. This is lovely soup by the way.

TD16: Hmm?

TD1: Lovely soup by the way.

TD16: Oh, thank you.

- TD1: The next question really leads on from that. What is it that... are there any characteristics that textile designers share do you think, beyond weave, beyond print, beyond embroidery? Because it's lots of various skills, but this umbrella term of textile design.
- TD16: But you know, I don't know that I can either answer that. I don't know. Is it because it's decorative, or...? Beyond materials that you're using, yes. You know what...
- TD1: It's fine if you don't have an answer.
- TD16: Yes, I don't have an answer for that. I just don't know.
- TD1: Is there a difference between... or what do you feel is the difference between a textile designer and a craftsperson?
- TD16: In the... I don't know whether in the original definition of a craftsman it was somebody that was skilled at what they were making and maybe somebody else gave them the design and then they made it to a high degree? Well I think if you're a designer, you're doing that process... the process that you're giving to the craftsman. So if you're a designer maker you're doing the whole process, I think. And so you're combining the creative part with the technical part, I think. Although, I'm not so sure about that completely, because if you think of craftsmen in terms of master craftsmen, they've been throwing the same bowl for 20 years but are trying to perfect.
- TD1: And there's a beauty and aesthetic in that isn't there?
- TD16: Exactly.
- TD1: It's a really difficult grey area and I think the student you were just talking about, who's very skilful technically and using this new process at the computer and... is it a she?
- TD16: Mm-hmm.
- TD1: Is she more of a craftsperson, than a designer, or has that become too grand a term to...?
- TD16: I think maybe it becomes too grand a term, yes. I think... I like being described as a craftsman. I don't object to it, and I don't like craftsperson. I just... craftsman has a... I think has a... it's a venerated term really isn't it? It can be, it can also mean homemade. There is that area. Yes, I guess I think of the craftsman as being the one with the skills and the designer as being the one with the creativity but they can be combined, definitely combined. And you can have a craftsman that works in a studio and with a lot of other people who are throwing pots for someone, or you can have the craftsman who works in his studio and is the one that is making this beautiful.
- TD1: And I think for some designers, craft is part of the process of design isn't it? Even if it does get sent off to a factory somewhere in the Far East, in order to create a sample, or prototype, they need those making skills don't they?
- TD16: Yes, they do, yes. They have to understand them yes.

- TD1: One of the other people I've been interviewing, she's an embroidery designer for Stella McCartney, and she is very knowledgeable and skilful with stitch, but yet she doesn't have to stitch any more. But that knowledge she has to apply when she's reviewing the samples that come back from the factory.
- TD16: Exactly, yes.
- TD1: So it's... I think it's something very particular in textiles because of its association with the applied arts and crafts, that kind of grey area is something that I'm trying to pick at a little bit to work out perhaps how textiles fits into the world of design, the literature, the academic research into design thinking. And whether this interesting kind of position of textiles, with the crossover into crafts, can give us a bit more knowledge about actually the creative process, because it's a bit different from graphic design or architecture. So that's where I'm coming from really. Do you ever work with any other types of designers, have you ever produced cloth for... to be applied in perhaps an interior or in an architectural setting or working with a fashion designer?
- TD16: I have worked with a... I have sold... I have worked with a fashion designer, but then I was weaving accessories for her, but to go with the collection. So she commissioned me, giving me samples of the fabrics that were going to be in that collection and asking if I could weave things that would complement. So I have done that, yes. And that was interesting. That was actually quite exciting.
- TD1: Is there any... can you elaborate on that relationship a bit?
- TD16: Well, I went to her studio.
- TD1: Did she know about you? She approached you?
- TD16: Yes, she saw me at Chelsea craft fair and that's how she got in touch with me. And I went to the studio and she showed me what they were doing and she obviously liked the kind of thing that I was making. So it was colours that we... in fact, yes, she focused on particular weave structures I was using and saying that she'd like a series of shawls in this weave structure, could I come and we'd look at the fabrics and so that we could talk about which ones would go... which structures would go with which line, and then she ordered them and I came up with the colours that would go with it and it went well. She was very pleased.
- TD1: So the colours that you had to use, if you like, because it worked for the collection, having those constraints, how did that work with your design process, which is much more... it sounds much more artistic, creative, doesn't usually have those restraints to it?
- TD16: Yes. I had to dye the colours. But I suppose there was a certain amount of interpretation on my part, which colours I was pulling out, how would they go? So that was quite creative actually, although she was asking for dark ones or lighter ones. I had the samples and I had to look and think what's going to work with these samples. So I found that quite creative. I found... other times I find weaving to commission just can be a terrible, terrible experience because you don't know whether you're

seeing things the same way or not. And sometimes you get clients that just even when you've done it to the colours that they've given you the swatches for, it doesn't look like the colour they want. It can be very, very difficult.

But, yes I haven't done a great deal of collaborating. I do, every year I have an open studio with a part of Hammersmith and Chiswick and Shepherds Bush open studios. We have a weekend, and I now show with a painter at her place, and we often feel that we're collaborating but I think it's just that our work is synergetic. And perhaps we do subconsciously feed each other.

TD1: I'll let you get some soup down for a second. I've only got one or two more questions.

TD16: I think that's interesting about is there something that in textiles that makes us different from other disciplines. I don't know. Have you had some interesting answers for that or...?

TD1: Well, trying not to speculate too much just yet, but I definitely think that the way that the design process is written about, is this linear process. Often the language that's used around it is designers about problem solving, finding solutions, and when I was reading all of this I thought, that just doesn't ring true for me, that's not how I design. I don't think of a problem and find a solution for it. Although I could apply those terms if I thought about them more broadly and the problem is we need a... I don't know, a new floral print for this summer. But I just felt that the whole language and the diagrams that were being drawn up at this process, didn't fit with my experience, and so I felt that there must be something in the way that we design which is perhaps a little bit more... I don't know, actually to please ourselves a bit more actually. And I think that's something I've come across actually is that you do... it's the pleasure that we find in things, then applied in something which is usually a functional, or which has the capability to be applied in a functional way, but yet has this pull to other people. It's almost like you're actually weaving in or printing in things that give you pleasure and then others are attracted to that. And it's almost like a... I think it's definitely a feminine relational quality to these objects.

And it's going to be very hard to pin down, but it's... yes something which is more... it's sensory, obviously textiles are sensory. But that's the little things I've been eking out so far, but trying to write that up in a way that people are going to take seriously academically, and also gathering some kind of evidence, although it's very difficult to actually pin down in words that are going to support my hypothesis really. Without it just sounding, textiles we make things that people like to touch or look at, without making it sound too fluffy because actually it's something which is so innate in all of us, isn't it, that we don't even notice it anymore, and that's I think the problem, that's why it's been so forgotten and marginalised and...

TD16: I blame the industrial revolution. When it became the rag trade.

TD1: So, I'm just trying to capture how textile designers and makers talk about their process and trying to pull out some of the things that maybe they can't consciously talk about. But I'll try and make sense of it, that's what I'm trying to do. And hopefully show all those design thinking academics that there's... that it doesn't have to be linear and doesn't have to be [over-speaking] a very male...

TD16: That is... well design, I suppose it's the way you're defining the word design, because design is... I think that somehow goes back to that when I say there are no ten steps that get you from one position to the other. Because you think of design, okay somebody's asked me to make a blanket for a baby's cot and it has to be five... fifty centimetres wide by... and it has to have some... that's... okay, that's the pragmatic design. But there is so much more that goes into it and I know that when I'm happiest with my designing, what's coming out, I know that's when I'm most enthusiastic about what I'm doing.

And then somehow the work for me takes on more of a life and I know when to stop something too, because I know then it's just becoming... like I used to, when I started selling my work, and it's hard to change once you start selling something because people... you've got a client base and people expect it. And I just got to the point where one day I thought no I'm just doing this now. I'm no longer feeling that it doesn't have edge, it doesn't have the edge that I want it to have. And my husband said, oh don't be silly, you're making money at it, you've got to do it again and I found... and then somebody... and so I went on to something else and found myself happy doing that. But somebody had lost one of their scarves and his wife commissioned me to do another one. I said, well I don't really want to do... and she said, oh please because he does... and I did it and I put a warp on, because I always put a warp on for more than one piece because of the length of time it takes. And I did the one for him really with a great deal of difficulty, and then I cut the warp off. I couldn't weave any more, I really couldn't. I felt I've come to the end of this, it's not going... I'm not going to like them. It's just lost something and it's lost that tension that you feel in your work if you're happy... if you've got that creative bit going with it.

TD1: I think with textiles as well it's... you know how someone's going to use a scarf, but if you're just sampling, it's literally that, it's a sample of cloth which could be cut from a vast yardage and for a textile designer they've got... well that fabric could be used in so many different ways. So, I think that that also puts a mirror back to us about, well you have to please yourself to a certain extent because the application isn't always clear. So you can't pinpoint who's going to use it all the time, and so you've got to use your own criteria, I think, your own judgement for what's successful and what's going to be pleasing. So, yes that's another aspect I'm trying to get my head around.

My last question really is about what's... what do you understand textiles to be for?
What's the purpose of textile design?

TD16: It's the fabric of life. Do you want to help yourself to some salad. I'll take your bowl if you like.

I don't know, we're... it's so much how we identify ourselves, by what we wear and what we put in our homes and our soft furnishings and all those things. I think it's... I think it's a very basic need in our lives, not only for warmth and the practical side, but I think it's for the aesthetic side. I think it is really important. Otherwise we wouldn't put so much thought into what we put on ourselves or... would we? Different cultures it defines where they come from and what was most important... not most important, but every woman had a dowry with all of the things that she'd made to take... her hope chest.

- TD1: And as you say, that's things she's made but also things to dress the home, surround yourself in and nurture your family with, isn't it?
- TD16: Yes.
- TD1: I think, again coming back to what you were saying about colour, it's a way of wearing and surrounding ourselves with colours that have an effect on us as well.
- TD16: Oh, definitely.
- TD1: So it's... I don't know what the word would be really. Yes, a way of actually expressing ourselves, not just through the handle of the fabric, the colour and then the actual design. There's so many dimensions to it.
- TD16: There are, yes.
- TD1: I'm looking at the moment for swaddling clothes, swaddling blanket for my soon-to-be arrival. And again I just keep thinking, well this is going to be one of the first things that it's wrapped in and the idea of swaddling as well, to wrap them so closely and the fabric against their skin, that's going to be then it for the rest of their life. They'll be dressed in fabrics and textiles and... yes, from day one.
- TD16: Yes, I think... I did weave two blankets for my granddaughter and I wove them in colours that I knew my daughter would like and in fact she does use them all the time, which is lovely. But it's not one that she swaddles her in at night because she has a special blanket or special... I'm not... I haven't actually seen it, but I think it actually has a Velcro that goes right around it. Do you know? And she said that it was once they started using that, it was brilliant and now they've stopped, because she's three months and there's... she has to be able to move her arms and legs. They only used it at night, but she slept so well, it just quietened her right down and the last three nights they haven't used it because they're trying to get her out of the habit of using it, and they've had terribly broken nights.
- TD1: Oh dear. I know, that's the thing isn't it? It's got to come off at some point. Part of this hypo birthing course

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APPENDIX D

Conversation transcripts: Topics arising

Please note that the names of the textile designers have been removed.

■■■■■ – translation, individual ownership but working with others – a semblance of working toward the teams identified themes but the actuality of drawing on own inspiration

■■■■■ – art background, response, organization, classification, tidying up, visual appeal, tactility and material, playfulness,

■■■■■ – process, painting/art, reflexivity, improvising, interpretation, structure removes variables, making clothes at early age, prefers individual ownership of work, osmosis, pleasure, hands/fingertips

■■■ – Injustice / lack of understanding and credit given to textiles, a sense of irritation with the status quo. Shared background between myself and ■■■■ Playing / materials / 'strange' / confusion / stereotypes - 'textiley' / doesn't work like a fashion designer

■■■■■ - art, fine art, painting / draw on influences (translate/interpret) / unforeseen, unintentional / feeling, sense of / enhancement

■■■■■ – fine art / collecting/looking / playing with materials / colour / spontaneous / 'fabricy', tactile / the fabrics should be 'resolved' in a product context / when designing textiles there is no need for the idea to be fulfilled

■■■■■ – fine art/textiles (but prefers having something specific at the end – something useful), colour, how fashion designers can't visualize it so producing garment fronts to help sell the designs (form of translation as well as selling) / reluctance towards trade show selling, prefers private meetings – must get new customers / paradox of how textile designers work not to a brief – then someone else decides what works – textile designer behind the scenes (like a subservient wife?) colour and pattern integrated at the start of the design process / familiar contacts (Interview ends with me questioning myself and my direction)

■■■■■ – textile design still unknown / the prevailing tide of 'material design' – (a new harder term for textile design – hide behind engineers now rather than fashion designers?) / playing intuitively with materials / process / transfer-connect-link-talk were key words – make it understandable / Collaboration, interaction / Lack of knowing of her own creativity and its worth/importance – taken for granted / Has become more analytical/reflective in her working methods but still likes to play with a material.

■■■■■ – collecting, paraphernalia / collaboration / playing as designing / lack of value given to textiles (she calls her own work scraps) / the hidden persona of the textile designer but need to maintain integrity or protected from view? / Making something, realizing it in fabric, responding to mood, imagery – responding / market constraints in textile design, cheap to make / playing, messing about, Blue Peter / making do / looking / adding value, transforming / subservience / need for an industry association / textile designers fulfilment of the creative process / fine art / fluffy subject / conundrum of textile design as material design / satisfied/reconciled with the lack of control over design work

■ – service provider /possibilities, discovery / selling, convincing – fortune telling, forecasting/ the move into materials, understanding new applications, textiles becoming the leader/ underdog, often unequal relationship with textiles / everyday, stuff / textiles as quieter, lacking in confidence next to other design disciplines / the importance of aesthetic, over and above the function, properties / make it believable, make people understand / textiles adding value / feeling, intuition, absorption, paraphernalia in the design process / materials, processes, techniques / textiles setting their own briefs, not problem solving, but perhaps going in that direction / conventional textiles as ‘stuff’ – snobbishness in textiles? / Universalism of textiles – to change the world.

■ – textile designer (embroidery designer) fits in with the fashion designers themes, service provider / text

■ – DESIGNER – NOT TEXTILE DESIGNER / serving industry or serving a purpose / cultural differences in regards to approach to design as well as design process, more craft driven in India – less self-expressive/ textile knowledge integrated into product design / approaches design about the other, not herself / excited by large scale impact by working with the large companies / difficulty in developing own ideas as used to looking at another person’s requirements, enjoys better set briefs / product-driven / intuitive, spontaneous / inspired by objects, images, people – workshop as sketchbook / trend material disconnected from life in India / creativity is about making a difference – differentiates between creativity in art and in producing something (art and design) / interaction with people as key to choosing textiles / craftsperson as satisfied / textiles as default / design as problem solving / internal dialog about aesthetic and function or value to others / Indian background forces her to question what else textiles leaves behind / self-expression of UK design in a capsule – where is the interaction / *Often an application will be, kind of, put on to it and tagged on to the end in order to present it, so people understand it, but not necessarily to kind of work in that way that you sort of talk about.*

■ – feeling, colour, texture / a product context / textiles as unnoticed, undervalued / fine art / textiles as between graphics and fine art / potential problems in material design when too much focus is on the construction / ownership, disregarding trend info / service industry, hierarchy of design / No conception on who she is designing for over the fashion context / collecting. Paraphernalia, stuff

■ – recognition that design is for yourself but context alters this (imagining yourself as another?) / handwriting, personal expression, interpretation (like playing a piano?) / *I’m just kind of a tool for them really to put it together and like a resource.* Service provider, bigger remit, must communicate with broader range of people / textile design is creating something from nothing / textile adds interests, detail, enriches / pattern, repeats, science and maths meets art, pattern in nature, methodical process of designing a repeat / engaging with the visual perception of the viewer

■ – Playfulness, childlike, childish, delicate, like a kid, take apart and put back together / ownership, gut instinct, making for yourself / textiles needs something else, it must be applied / nature of designing and selling swatches / lack of wider understanding of what textile designer is and does / breadth of textiles / art / search for a design problem / product designers push, break and burn /

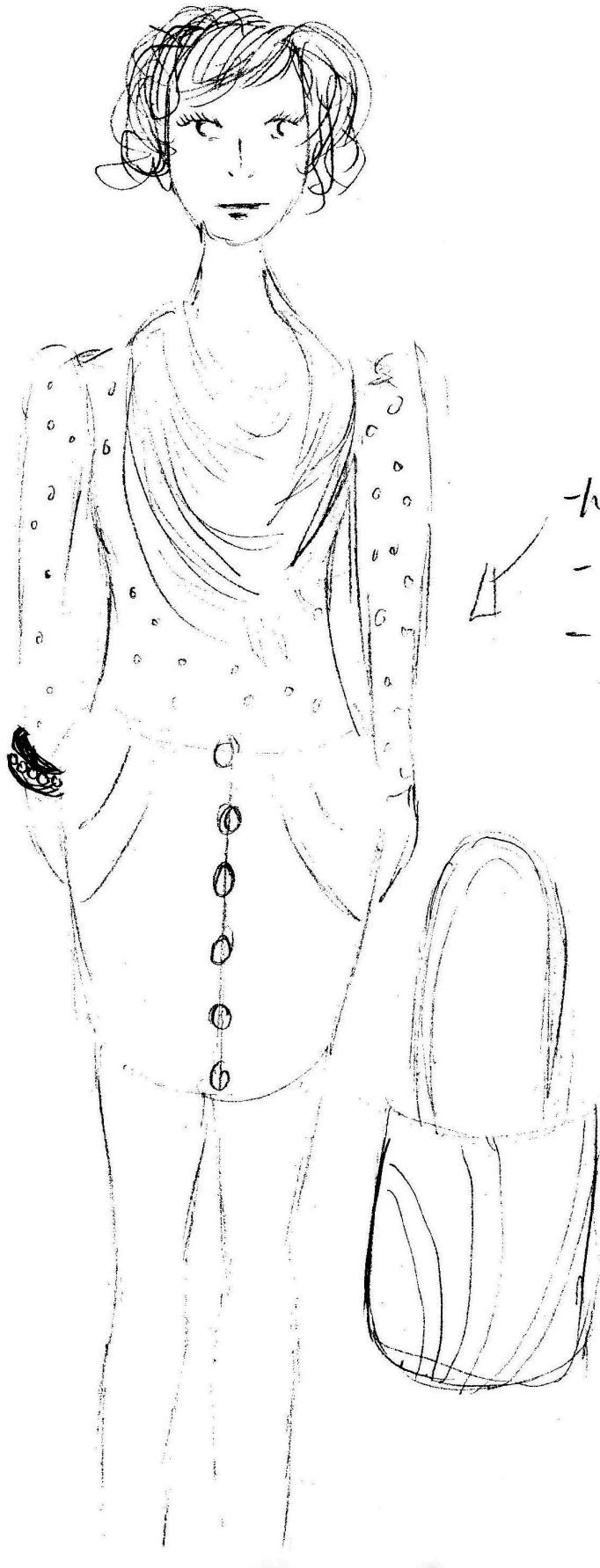
APPENDIX E

Drawings of textile designers by University of Portsmouth students (2009)

Textile designer



Fashionable
Colour co-ordinated



- Well dressed
- Unique clothes
- Colourful clothes

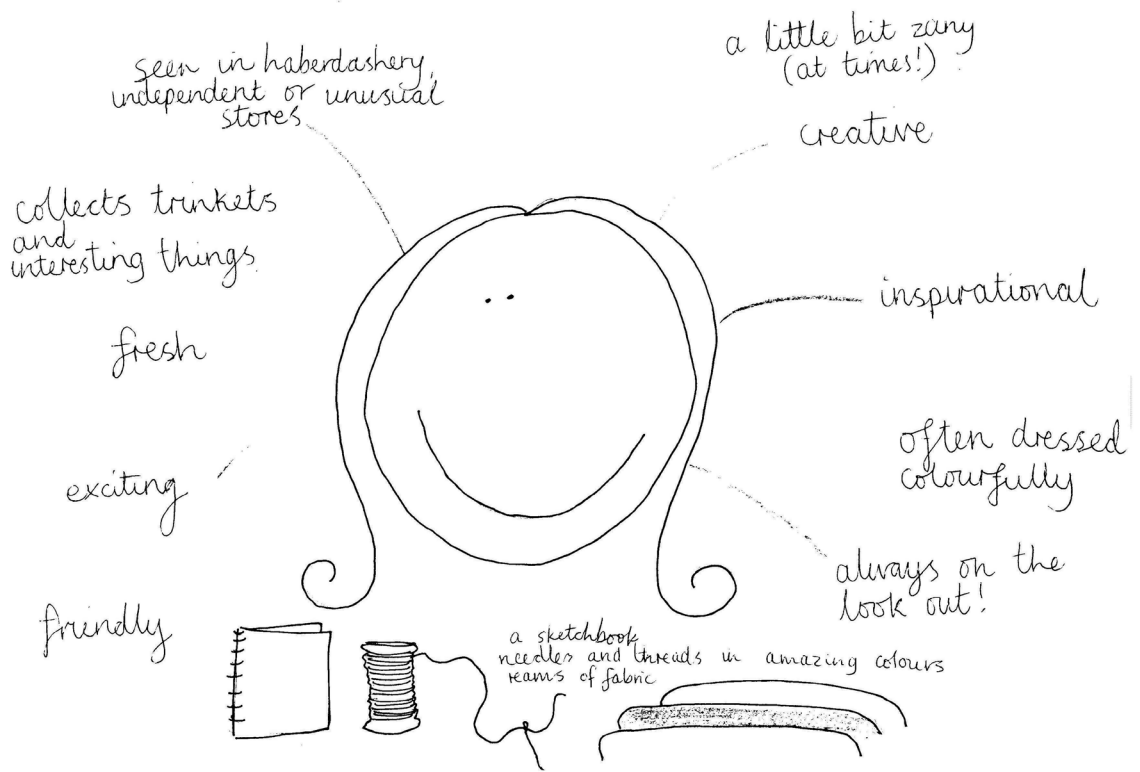
- bag full
of
materials
- o camera
 - o sketchbook
 - o fabric

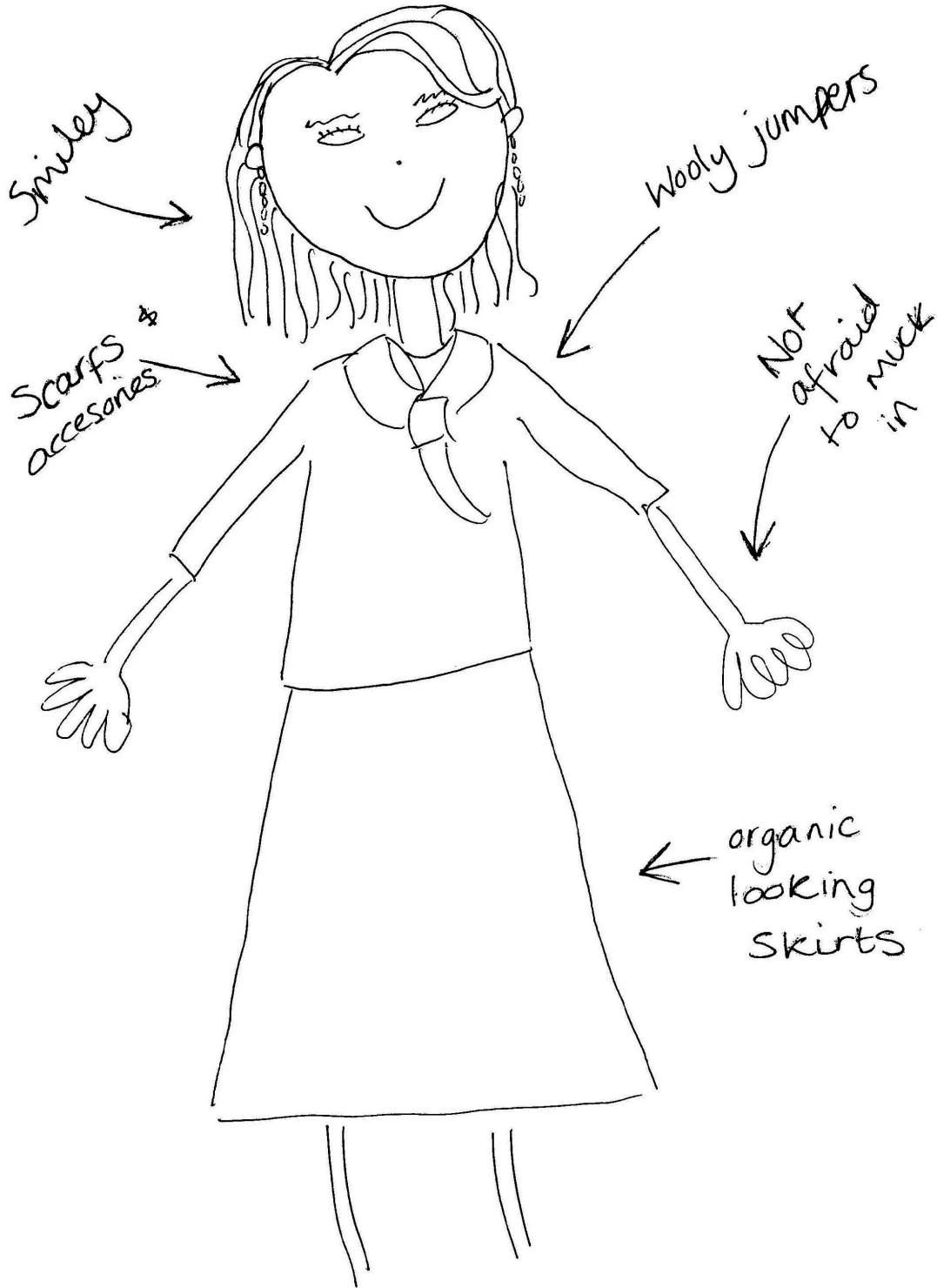


cotton
cardigan

pencil





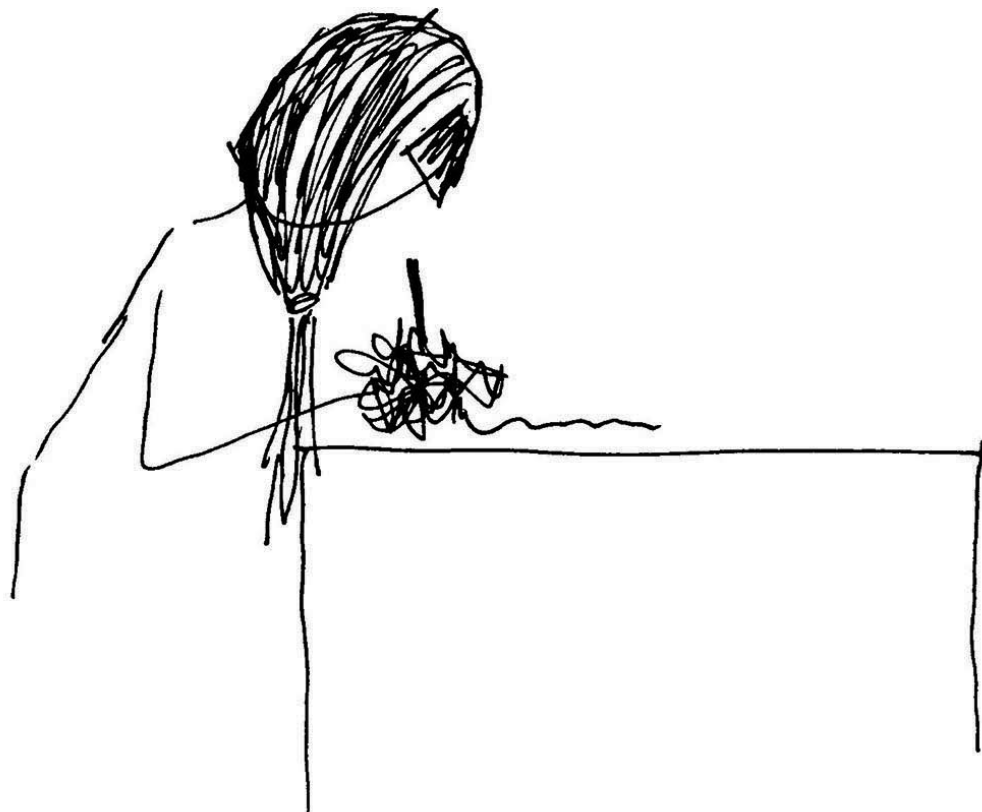


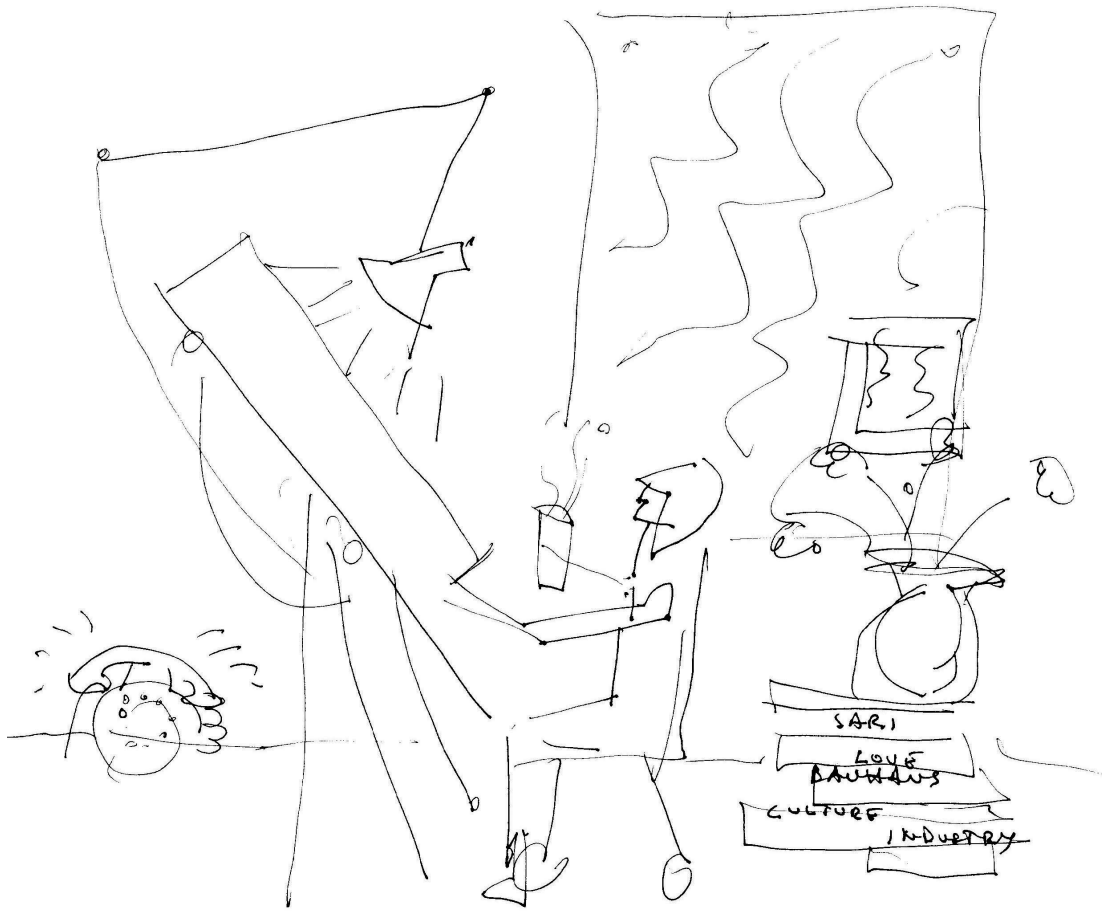




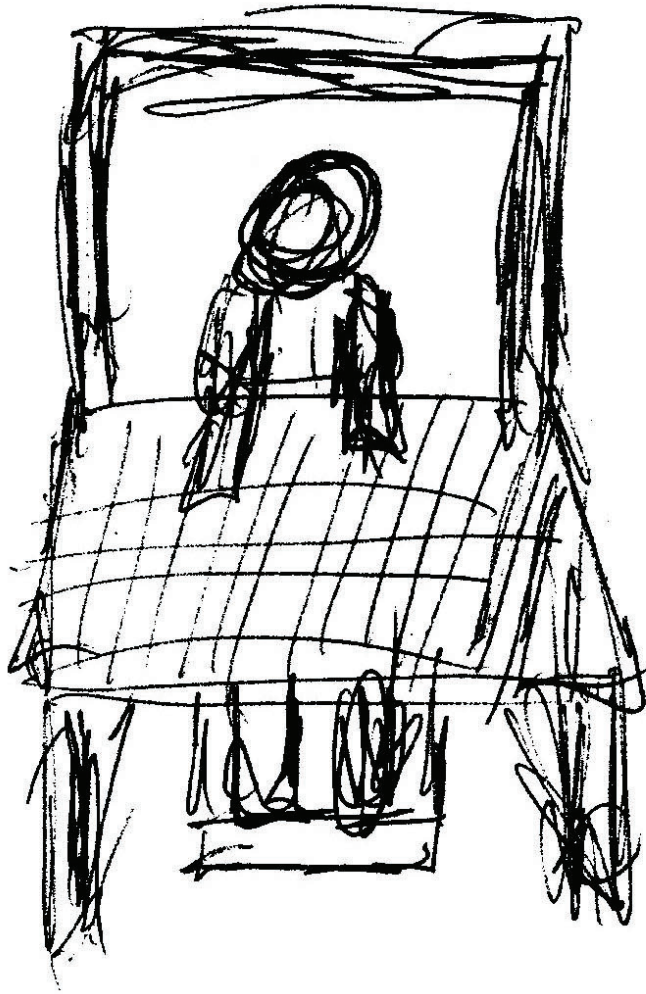
APPENDIX F

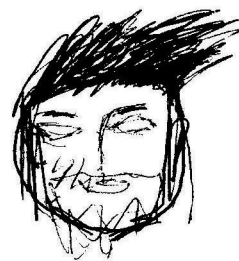
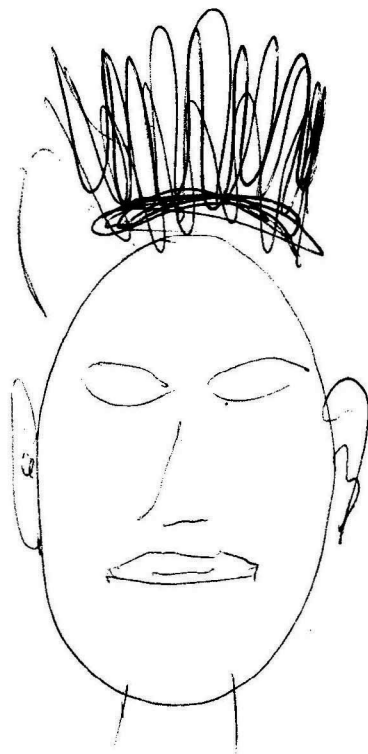
Drawings of textile designers by members of the fashion and textiles research group at the Royal College of Art (2010).











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