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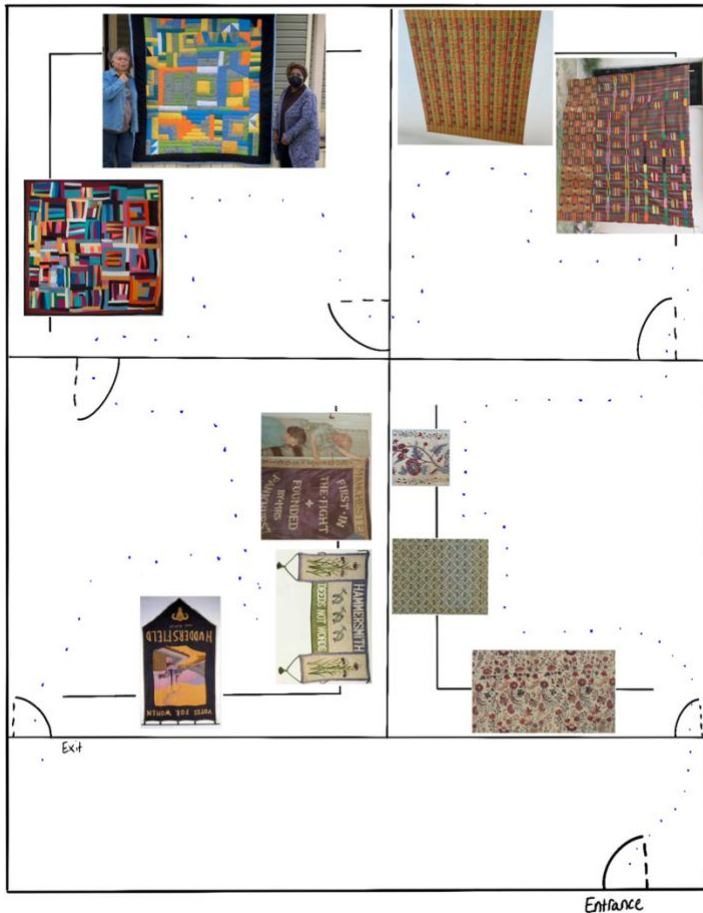
Surface pattern & textiles

Module: Ways of Perceiving (ADDA4023/C)

Curation of an imagined essay

Word count: 1,182

Exhibition map



Entitled, 'The Fabric of imagination' I plan to curate an exhibition featuring a collection of different textiles in collaboration with four different revolutionary creators and communities. Textile pieces that embody centuries of culture, art and innovation. I intend to focus on exploring textiles through telling four stories throughout time within my exhibition. While the first two rooms are named 'Global threads' meaning, they are about textile culture and global goods, while the last two are named 'Protest and power', expressing two movements that also uses textiles. Drawing inspiration from various literary sources, this exhibition will showcase how textiles connect to art, function and identity.

I intend to renovate a warehouse which is historically linked to the production and storage of textiles, especially during the industrial revolution. The raw, unfinished aesthetic of a warehouse, concrete floors and wide-open spaces provide a distinct contrast to the intricate beauty of the textiles inside. The reworked industrial space becomes more than just a venue; it transforms into a signifier of the historical, social and cultural narratives tied to textiles. "The whole of France is steeped in this anonymous ideology: our entire landscape is customised, signified adapted to the consumption of 'meaning'." (Barthes', 1957, p.140) The juxtaposition of raw, industrial architecture with intricate textiles highlights Barthes' concept of how meaning is constructed through context and associations.

Fig 1



Fig 2



As you first walk into my exhibition the room on your right labelled 'Global threads' sets the right tone for the entire exhibition as seen in fig 1, Indian Chintz is a powerful symbol of the global textile trade. Connecting textiles to a large historical and global narrative, letting the audience consider how fabrics transcend borders and cultures. The spectators will be captured by the bold, detailed designs drawing them into the exhibition. Indian Chintz patterns showcase advanced craftsmanship including; resist dyeing to create intricate patterns and vibrant colours that resisted fading, see fig 2. In terms of cultural influence, Indian chintz contributed to the development of European fashion and interior design, a hand painted or block printed cotton textile featuring floral patterns, introduced Europeans to vibrant, colourfast dyes such as indigo, and resist dyeing techniques. The rich hues and pattern weren't previously available in domestic fabrics.

Fig 3

Some of William Morris' pattern forms were inspired by the structures of Indian chintz patterns including, 'Indian Diaper' (1876) seen in fig 3, Pomegranate (1877) and Little Chintz (1889). He adopted natural dyeing techniques for his designs, including the use of plant-based dyes. This information will also be showcased within my exhibition with the history behind it too.

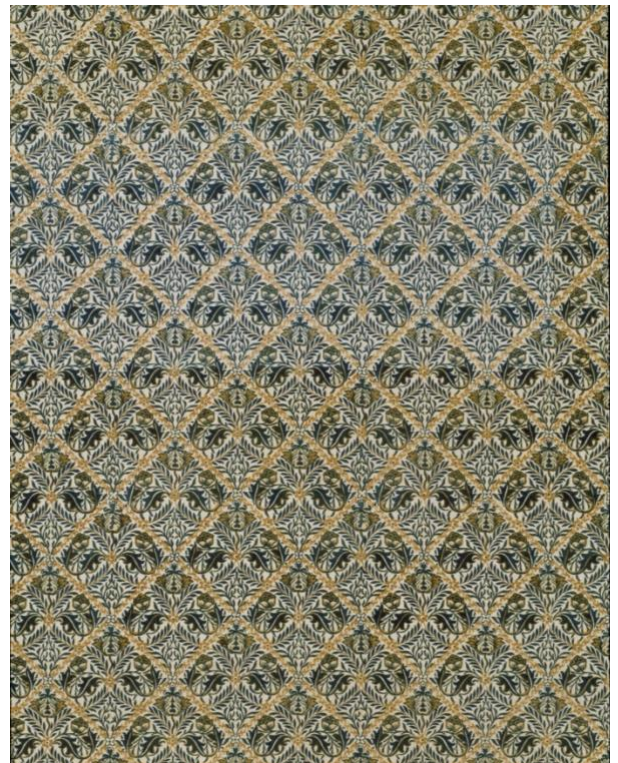


Fig 4



Following on from Indian Chintz into the next room there will be two big woven hanging pieces, see fig 4 and 5, these are Kente cloths from Ghana, woven by the asnte and ewe people serving a profound symbol of African heritage, craftsmanship and cultural significance. While Indian Chintz highlights the role of global trade and European colonial desires for exotic goods, Kente cloth offers insight into the rich textile traditions of Africa and its culture. Kente, made from silk or cotton and woven with vibrant patterns and colours, is deeply tied with symbolism. Each design and colour tells a story or represent a particular value, such as leadership, wisdom or unity. Visitors to my exhibition can appreciate how Kente has evolved, both as a symbol of African identity and as a product of global exchange. This will enrich their understanding of the interconnectedness of global cultures. Indian Chintz and Kente cloth are connected by their shared significance in the history of textiles and their roles in cultural identity. They share similarities in how they have influenced and been shaped by global interactions, artistry and meaning.

Fig 5



Fig 6



Entering the next room, labelled 'Protest power' where two large Gee's Bend quilts hang, seen in fig 6 and 7, creating a link between historical themes of trade while also highlighting the themes of resilience, creativity and community. The Gee Bend quilts originated from Alabama, when enslaved woman started to make quilts from repurposing fabric scraps to make practical and decorative items, such as quilts to keep warm. This shows the resourcefulness and innovation of the artists. They used quilting as a form of expression, resistance and survival. The techniques and patterns used in the quilts have been passed down through generations, shaped by West African traditions of quilting, weaving and patchwork. The quilts were made by hand and represent a collective effort with intricate, abstract patterns that reflected the unique creativity of each quilter, they also stitched their own real stories within the quilts.

Fig 7



Fig 8



As you enter the last room banners from the suffragette movement will be on all four walls, see fig 8 and 9. This offers a direct link to themes of resistance, identity and cultural change. The embroidered banners used in the woman's suffrage movement combine powerful slogans with craftsmanship, see fig 9. The banners are an example of how textiles have been utilized as a tool for political expression as well as stitched banners were intended to prove that woman could have the vote and still maintain feminine characteristics like pursuing needlework. The banners were mostly made from silk and velvet which are rich fabrics which drew attention to the banners and gave them a sense of grandeur. Using banners and sashes as key symbols of their cause were not just practical items but active, visual elements of political campaigns. In my exhibition, the suffragette banners link to other textiles by showing how fabric can be employed to communicate values, ideologies and social movements. These banners serve as powerful visual artifacts of the fight for woman's rights and in the context of my exhibition, they deepen the narrative of how textiles, whether through quilts, fabrics like chintz and Kente, or even banners have been used to express political, social, and cultural movements.

Fig 9

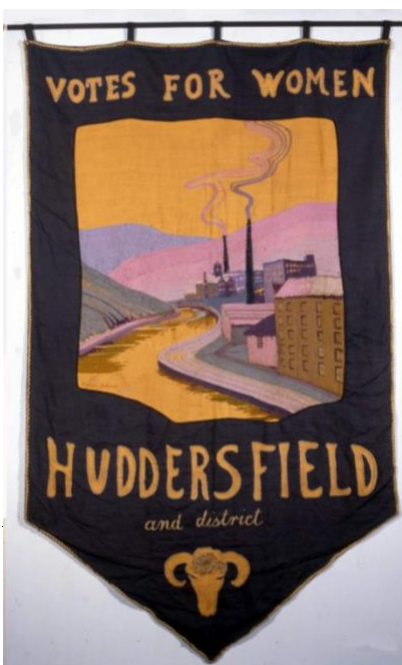


Fig 10



Fig 1: Antique Vintage European textiles, n.d.

Coromandel Hand-painted Indian Chintz 18th century painted resist and mordant. [online] eBay. Available at: <https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/176254682044>

[accessed 20 January 2025]

Fig 2: Selvedge Magazine, n.d. World-changing Chintz.

Available at: <https://www.selvedge.org/blogs/selvedge/celebrating-chintz?srsId=AfmBOopZ4AguqX6xeo9yCxzGMZWv3wJnTlQMeJSmnpus4lGNKnkepn6o>

[accessed 20 January 2025]

Fig 3: Victoria and Albert museum, n.d. Indian Diaper by William Morris.

Available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O266122/indian-diaper-furnishing-fabric-morris-william/>

[accessed 20 January 2025]

Fig 4: United Nations (n.d.) Kente Wall Hanging with the theme: One Head Cannot Go Into Council. Available at:

<https://www.un.org/ungifts/kente-wall-hanging-theme-one-head-cannot-go-council>

[Accessed: 20 January 2025]

Fig 5: Etsy, 1970's vintage Ewe Kente cloth from Ghana, tribal woven textile, multi-coloured wall hanging (online image)

Available at: https://www.etsy.com/uk/listing/180451212/?ref=share_ios_native_control

[accessed 20 January 2025]

Fig 6: VAWAA, Keeping traditions alive with Gee's Bend (online image)

Available at: <https://vawaa.com/blog/keeping-traditions-alive-with-gees-bend>

[accessed 20 January 2025]

Fig 7: LSU Museum of Art, Gee's Bend quilts (online image)

Available at: <https://www.lsumoa.org/inside-lsu-moa/geesbendquilts>

[accessed 20 January 2025]

Fig 8: People's History Museum, The Manchester suffragette banner. (Online image)

Available at: <https://phm.org.uk/blogposts/the-manchester-suffragette-banner-mancunian-pride-mystery-and-celebrity/>
[accessed 20 January 2025]

Fig 9: Kirklees Museum and Galleries, Huddersfield Suffragette Banner: Votes for Women (online image)

Available at: <https://womanandhersphere.com/2014/11/26/suffrage-stories-an-army-of-banners-designed-for-the-nuwss-suffrage-procession-13-june-1908/>
[accessed 20 January 2025]

Fig 10: Museum of London, Hammersmith Suffragette Banner: Deeds Not Words (online image)

Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/herstories-campaign-launched/>
[accessed 20 January 2025]

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