

Evaluation Report

by Naomi Melisa Mercedes France

FILE	15575_NAOMI_MELISA_MERCEDES_FRANCE_EVALUATION_REPORT_79301_1088400190.PDF (1.87M)		
TIME SUBMITTED	05-MAY-2016 01:28PM	WORD COUNT	4757
SUBMISSION ID	57255799	CHARACTER COUNT	23764

**Naomi France
Evaluation Report
MDes Surface Pattern Design
P130009
Word count : 4146**

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to look back and reflect on the journey undertaken over the duration of the MDes year. Reflecting on the initial aims at outcomes set at the beginning on the journey. This report shows the research, findings and outcome over the period of the course.

The intentions for this MDes year stemmed from the third year practice. The aim to research the effect, textile had on the sensory system and how best display the work in a way that would encourage audience interaction was the core theme throughout. With the aim to produce bespoke, dynamic, tactile textiles of which were suitable for the interior space, both domestic and commercial alongside cutting edge, hand rendered wallpapers.

It was important to use this year as a chance to really research the field of interest. Taking risks through material exploration. This report is a reflections of how successful this has been. Focusing in on the research methods, creative enterprise as well as the future trajectories.

A range of methods and processes have been carried out on a both hard and soft materials to discover ways of creating texture. A combination of traditional and digital processes have been carried out such as screen printing, dyeing, and laser cutting and engraving. The purpose of this research was to explore ways in which textiles can be used to engage the audience. This report contextualizes this research.

Review of research methodology and methods

“Textiles are not words, the difference between them benefit conceptual apparatus of thought at the expense of its sensory equivalent. Textiles as an activity is not substance but a material of thought” (Hemming [in the power of touch], 2012: 8). It is important for textiles to tell a story. This can be achieved in an abstracted way through imagery. The design process is a journey with a start, middle and end. It is important for the audience to not only see the finished outcome but to understand the process a whole. Works where you can see the hand crafted often have an invaluable beauty. The faults and imperfections should be made a focus. It is what makes that design work a unique, one off. Hand-rendered work suggests an engagement on a more personal level between the designer and their work. Something hand crafted, using traditional techniques that tend to be more time consuming suggests that the piece is bespoke, a one off.

The handcrafted element is imperative to all the work produced, it is vital to use creativity, to be playful when experimenting with techniques and not let the fear of making mistakes limit ones (or the designs) full potential. Working with traditional techniques is both temperamental and time consuming. By being proactive and utilizing time wisely, making plans and adhering to them, it was possible to produce a wide range of experiments and material samples that used a combination of traditional; and hybrid techniques. Displaying a breadth of skills with innovative outcomes and an individual cutting edge style.

Proactive planning:

Figure 1 and 2 illustrates two different planning approaches to ensure effective research (material exploration) is undertaken in the development stages. By setting mini deadlines throughout the design process enabled to keep a clear mindset throughout. This made sure the work developed continuously during the project, reaching its full potential. Figure 1 shows a more literal, written and diaristic style of planning. Outlining aims for each day and actively highlighting task undertaken, ensuring goals were achieved and progress monitored continuously. Figure 2 in comparison is a visual plan. By drawing out display plans allowed for the visualizing and realizing of scale and composition of the collection as whole, rather than individual pieces. It also formed a means of communicating ideas, plans and propositions.



Fig 1, Diaristic Planning, Naomi France, 2016



Fig 2, Visual Planning, Naomi France, 2016

Method for Imagery

To be design led, it is essential that drawing is the starting point to create truly original designs. It is important to continuously generate drawing throughout the design process to develop a good bank of imagery. Drawing is used to record and document observations through primary and secondary research as well as taking photographs. Inspiration derives from urban landscapes. To ensure imagery is constant and fresh it was vital to undertake research trips throughout the project. The imagery created for this collection was gathered from Barcelona, Swansea and other European countries that were visited recently. Samples of the collected imagery can be seen in figure 3 and 4.



Fig 3, Bridge in Budapest, Naomi France, 2016



Fig 4, Industrial Vienna, Naomi France, 2016

Developing a less literal approach to drawing has enabled a working methodology that is truly individual in style. The core theme of this project was 'Urban Landscape'. Extracting pattern and texture from architecture and its surroundings. Often the focus was on strong geometric structures and form. By responding loosely to them, quick sketches were made usually with a black fine liner, resulting in clean lines and bold geometric shapes. Back in the studio these are later cut out as stencils as shown in figure 5; usually by hand. If the image was more intricate the laser cutter was used to give more precision and a quicker way of producing a more intricate design. Using open mesh screen-printing the original images were reworked in the print room, until the composition was working, this can be seen in figure 6.

The unsuccessful samples are kept to show the development. These can also be used to make interesting designs further down the line. Working in a serendipitous way, allowed the designs to develop organically in an abstract manner. "Almost all of us can make. It is one of the strongest human impulses and one of the most significant means of human expression." (Charny, 2011:7). This method of working is unique, as it is the core process in the early stages of the practice generating the initial imagery. The results were quick and allowed risks to be taken. By pushing the boundaries and being daring with the compositions put together, meant the results were often unexpected. It was these 'accidents' that were the starting point to the designs. The accidents aren't seen as wasted mistakes but as experimentations, trial and error. As the concept of the work is about tactility, it is satisfaction itself making the imagery

in a process lead way with a hands on approach that's makes the outcome so rewarding.



Fig 5, Creating Stencils, Naomi France, 2016



Fig 6, Printing with Stencils, Naomi France, 2016

Material Exploration

Using a combination of soft and hard materials by combining the unexpected, through material exploration and process brought texture and depth to the work. It was the combination of digital and traditional process that really strengthened the work.

The main objective of the major project was to create a bespoke interior collection that engaged the audience, encouraging interactions with the work through the use of texture and magnetic paint. The collection includes textured wallpapers. These were created by painting up solid grounds of colour with printing pigment and binder. Then with the use of illustrator a pattern was drawn and then later engraved with the graphiscan. A subtle textured pattern was created. As the power and speed could be adjusted, the intensity of the engraved line was altered making it suitable for a range of surfaces. Examples of this can be seen in figure 7, on paper, velvet, veneer and acrylic. Through active research and experimentation, for the production of a clear and crisp engrave suitable for the wallpapers shown in figure 8, the machine was set up to 80% power and 15% speed

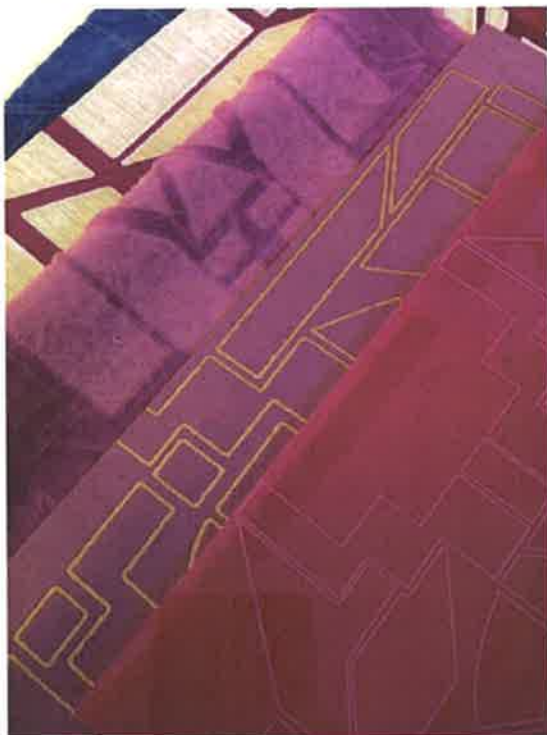


Fig 7, Material Exploration, Naomi France, 2016



Fig 8, Engrave Wallpaper, Naomi France, 2016

The collection of work was all about creating texture through surface manipulation. Taking away and adding to a surface is what was exciting. The sense of touch was so important throughout the work; therefore it was important to have that close connection with the range of materials that have been used. Using hand rendered techniques allowed for this to be achieved. Exploring processes that question your senses; pairing puff next to flush wallpaper, soft velvets next to woods. "My signature style is to combine elements that you would not expect. Velvet becomes more luxurious when placed next to metal, clear glass appears more brilliant when placed next to opaque" (Hoppen, 2006:8) Using material in a clever way to enhance the outcome is something that was trying to be achieved with a hands on approach.

The original plan was to design and create large scaled fabric panels that were extremely tactile in hope of engaging the audience, incising them to touch. However, these aims altered slightly, through researching and sampling, the paper work was considered stronger and a more exciting route to pursue. Whilst the outcomes still consist of fabrics alongside other materials, the core focus has shifted to the interactive wallpapers.

The method in which the wallpapers have been produced is unique and innovative. Grounds were painted up in solid colours providing a flat layer to manipulate shown in figure 9. Then with the use of illustrator, original drawings were translated into vectors so that the engraver could read the files. Producing the files was the most

time consuming element within this process. Each vector had to be a closed shape so that it worked. It was important to take time when producing the files to ensure success so time wasn't wasted redoing this process. Vector files can be used for both the laser cutter and engraver, however, saving the formats are slightly different. Figure 9 shows the outcome of the engraver. Here you are able to see the different effects the line and block engrave can give. The block engrave is strong and effective. It looks like wood and there is a real depth and textural look to it.



Fig 9, Painted Grounds, Naomi France, 2016



Fig 10, Line/Block Engraved, Naomi France, 2016

Review of creative/enterprise and strategy

Creative enterprise is a key element in becoming a successful designer. The ability to engage an audience is vital in promoting your work. In an industry that can be seen as extremely competitive, it is important to increase your online presence as it is a way of showcasing your breadth of skills and abilities to a large field of potential employers or clients. Creating an online presence that could be reached by a variety of people, was a key goal in the support of promoting myself as a designer through a website and Instagram page. Alongside side a strong supporting portfolio. These outlets have been successfully created as well as a successful completed application onto a PGCE course starting in September.

Online Presence

It is incredibly important to promote yourself, showcasing your full potential in order to increase your chance of employability. Engaging an audience in an eye-catching and innovative way. To achieve this, a website and instagram page was created. Social media has become pivotal in the way people discover things in today's society. Not only is it a way to uncover new opportunities within the design industry but also a way to increase the audience that stumble across and engage with the work. The internet is the very core to motivating opportunities and information.

As a designer, working within the design industry that is based on the visual, it is vital to present yourself online. Building a professional and inspiring website was an aim within the creative enterprise module. Wix.com was chosen in order to create a visually beautiful website that was easy to navigate your way round. This company was perfect for selecting a template suitable for the purpose. In this case, a clean and creative template was selected, ideal for designers who wanted to showcase their work. By keeping the website uncomplicated, clean and crisp allowed people to find their way through the site easily. The white, plain background helped to make the imagery of the work pop and allowed for people to read the text at ease. Demonstrated in figure 11 and 12. Creating a domain that was simple was vital to allow people to find it easily. (www.naomifrancedesign.co.uk). This also coincided with the Instagram page so the audience were able to link the two profiles together. On the website there was tab with a direct link to the profile, automatically encouraging people to stumble upon another online portfolio. It is important to regularly update the website to keep the work current and the audience update on your creative journey.

Similarly to the website, an Instagram page was set up for self-promotion. In order of keeping the Instagram page interesting it was updated regularly this can be seen in figure 13 and 14. Everyday a photograph was uploaded to sum up the progress made that day. Often short clips of film were also posted as way of showcasing different processes in an innovative and fun way, this was extremely successful for the graphiscan (laser engrave) as it enabled people to see the machine at work. Through posting regularly, this seemed to gain more likes and followers. This also enabled time to reflect on the work produced each day. The combination of keeping

an up to date website, portfolio and contacting companies regularly will widen the chances of future interviews and employment opportunities as well as representing a passionate, organised designer.

A strong portfolio is a crucial element when promoting yourself in future interviews. It is important to show diversity alongside a breath of skills. Selecting the strongest work from a number of projects should make this achievable. Like the website and Instagram page each portfolio page should be neat and organised. Using white A2 cartridge paper to keep it sturdy and uniformed. From the participation of live projects brought diversity to the portfolio.

Website Profile:

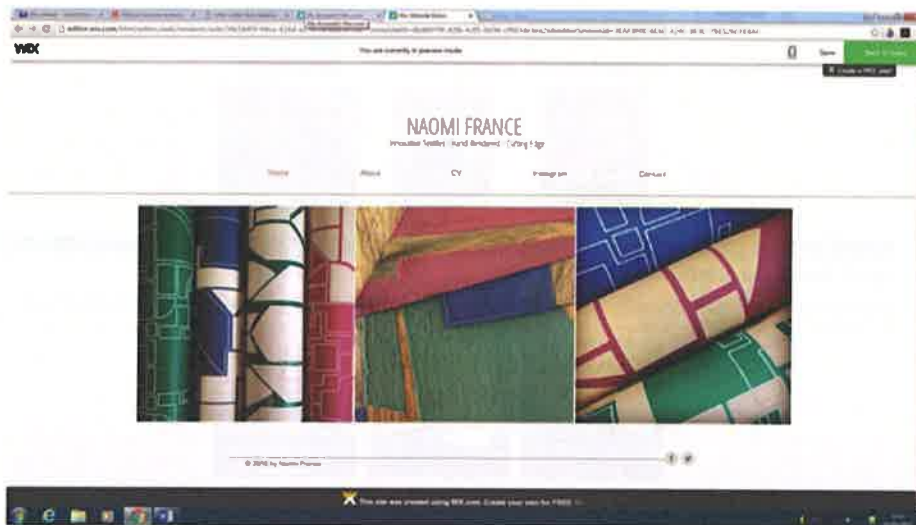


Fig 11, Website homepage, Naomi France, 2016



Fig 12, Website 'about' page, Naomi France, 2016

Instagram Profile:

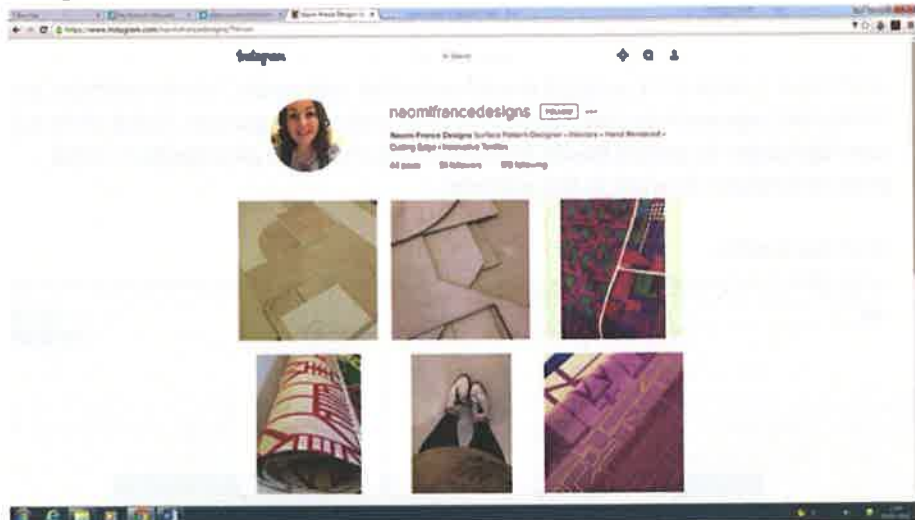


Fig 13, Instagram Profile, Naomi France, 2016



Fig 14, Instagram Page, Naomi France, 2016

Live Projects

To build up a designer profile as well as potential relationships, live projects were undertaken. This was good practice to arise to the challenge of the restraints of a set brief. This also contributed to creating a good portfolio of work, demonstrating a breath of skills and the ability to keep to a brief as well as showing individuality and personality through the work. This also gave the opportunity to work on a collaboration project with a designer from a different disciplinary.

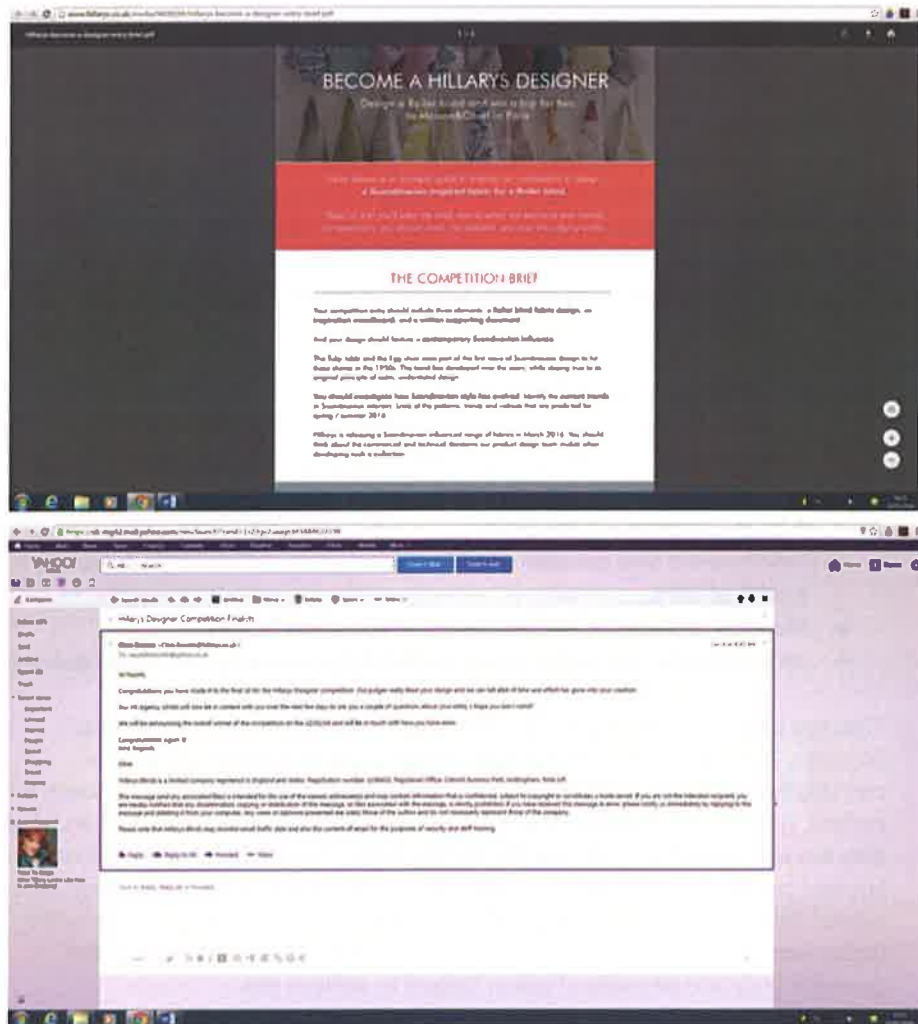


Fig 15, Live Brief and Outcome, Naomi France, 2016

Critical Appraisal of the Final proposition

The aim of my MDes year was to expand on my third year practice. To take the combination of processes and to run with them. To create a strong brand identity and unique style of working, bringing newness to the bespoke interior market. It was important to me to develop the skills I had learned on my BAhons, generating a body of work so that when I graduate I would be in a strong position when approaching possible employment opportunities.

My initial aims and intentions:

- To produce a collection that was designed for a site-specific space.
- A collection of bespoke interior fabric panels, which were large in scale and displayed texture.
- Screen printed wallpapers that would complement the fabrics produced.
- Overall, to be innovative in approaching the interior market.
- Creating an online presence and strong portfolio that would document the whole journey.
- Expand on my third year practice and techniques. (Engraving, foiling, puff and screen-printing.)

My actual outcomes for my MDes practice:

- A collection that is site specific. (Stairwell in the Alex building)
- A collection of innovative wallpapers. That display tactility in a cutting edge way. With the use of the graphiscan (laser engraver)
- A large interactive installation.
- Fabric panels that complement the collection as a whole and showcases a breath of skills.
- Material exploration. (Wood, Acrylic, Papers and Fabric)
- An online presence and a strong portfolio documenting the whole journey.

"The eye takes as much satisfaction from combinations as our tactile sense." (Hoppen, 2006: 41) I intended to really exaggerate the surface, exploring a combination of processes that consumes the audience, enticing them to touch the surface. It is this combination of vision and touch that I find interesting, does what they are seeing match up to how the surface feels. "Touch here refers not only to physical contact with a surface but also to the ways in which we are touched, and moved, by our world" (Hemmings, 2012: 3) I wanted my textiles to have a lasting impression; a statement, not only physically but emotionally also. I think the dramatic scale and intensity of colour helped to achieve this.

I achieved my aim of working site specific. Before completing my exhibition plan I sourced a space in Alex. I knew I wanted somewhere that was light and had dramatically high ceilings. The stairwell to the top floor was a perfect location. As I was planning on producing a space that was interactive and bespoke. I was able to alter my collection and design my installation piece specifically for this space. Producing wooden blocks that worked around the light fittings that existed there already help to make the outcome look professional and not out of place. Producing

wallpapers that were the fall drop of the wall, just over 3m in length utilized the space to its full. The space was large so I decided to focus on a corner space and build out from that. The overall outcome was a great success. The white walls of the space really helped to make the work stand out. The natural lighting from the windows brings a light an airy space that is inviting for viewers. The combination of engraved wallpapers, wood blocks and acrylic seemed to really work and complement one another. By putting together unexpected combinations really paid off.

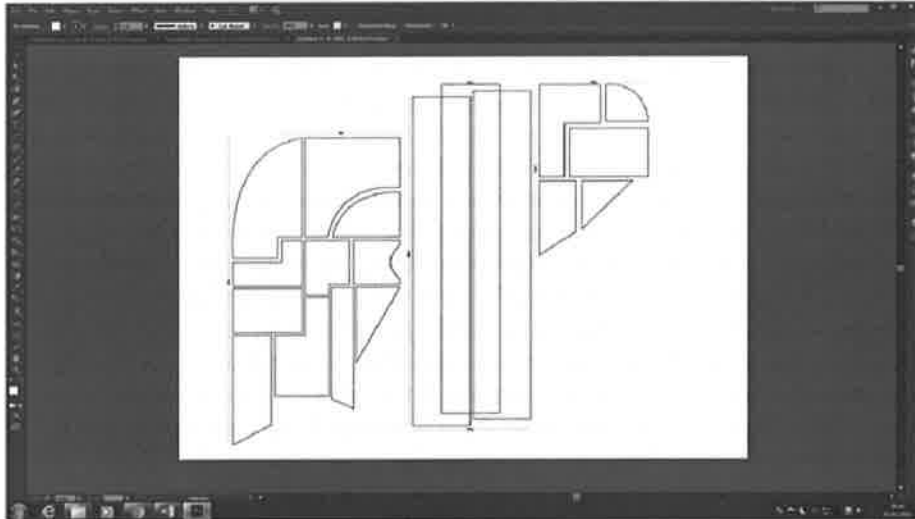


Fig 16, Show outcome, Naomi France, 2016

Due to the restraints of displaying the work in Alex I faced a few problems. Firstly, I was originally going to paint the magnetic paint directly onto the wall. This would have meant that the scale wouldn't have been an issue, however as the walls were in a bad condition I had to come up with an alternative solution. This was to work on MDF boards. This meant that I was limited to the size of the board, 8x4 ft as I didn't want to piece boards together as I wanted the finished look to be plush. However a positive to this meant that I was able to work on it in the studio.

Another problem I was face with was how I was actually going to fix the wallpapers to the wall as it is concrete. Before I was aware of this my original plan was to push pins into the walls and with bulldog clips simply attach the wallpaper to them, this would have been subtle and understated. However, as this was not possible the alternative I came up with was to use wooden broom sticks (in keeping with the materials used within the collection) to roll the wallpaper around at the top and bottom and with the use of plumbing clips attach this to the wall. This also worked in my favor as it meant the wallpapers were weighted at the bottom. Stopping them from rolling up in the heat.

My intentions of producing a collection that was interactive was always the aim. However, I was uncertain of how I was going to achieve this. Through the journey of

my MDes year, experimentation and the participation of live projects all helped contribute to the materialization of the final outcome. The idea of using magnetic paint to enable the consumers to use the sense of touch to connect with the work expanded from this. Specifically the Rolls Royce project, as it was the idea of being able to customize the product to suit your individual requirements that really stuck with me. The use of magnetic paint meant there were no limitations for the design. As long as the surface was magnetic the wooden block could be moved around and placed wherever they wanted. This idea of building your own pattern is a concept I would like to push future. For this collection the use of magnetic paint has been very successfully and utilizes the space really well.

As a designer where the tactility element is important to all the work produced, fabric is so important. Due to the time restraints I haven't been able to push the use of fabric as far as I would have like to. Although there isn't any fabric displayed in my exhibition collection, I do however have elements of this in my portfolio. Panels of velvet that I have dyed and manipulated and digital printed samples which have also been worked into. I selected velvet as a core fabric to use as it has its own connotations. "Velvet is one of the most tactile of fabrics. Constantly inviting you to stroke it" (Hoppen, 2006: 61). It is luxurious and tactile in its original state, making it a great canvas to build on. Engraving the velvet has been really successful. It is still robust. Making it a great material to use to upholster interior products. Making it commercially pliable. I was also selective about the fabric I chose for my digital prints. Chapa bleached silk, unlike most digitally printed fabrics has a grain that is visual. An element that I liked, as it adds a subtle texture to the surface.

Looking at my final collection I feel I have really found my identity as a designer and that the work produced to date would fit in perfectly with the market I am targeting. This is also reflected from my website, Instagram page and portfolio. My final show reflects me as a designer and the way in which I approach my work. It is a fun and innovative space that successfully engages the audience. The dramatic use of scale and intensity of colour speak for itself. The decision of not including my fabric panels has only strengthened the final aesthetics. As there is a crisp professional finish to the overall collection. The audience are able to truly engage with the work displayed. If the fabrics were also displayed I think it would have become slightly chaotic and disorganized which would resonate with the strong geometric imagery.

Future Trajectories

The creative enterprise module helped to identify the actions that needed to take place in order of achieving my future goals and aspirations. Teaching Textiles at secondary level, as a vocation has always been an aspiration of mine. I have successfully been accepted to enroll on a schools direct program introduced through the United Teaching to undergo my PGCE, subject to passing my skills tests in Numeracy and Literacy. However, through the journey of my MDes year my ambitions have altered slightly and the decision of whether to teach or follow a career within the design industry is still up in the air.

While my decision is still uncertain, I intend to follow the journey of both. With a successful UCAS application in hand I aim to successfully promote my MDes collection to the design industry. To achieve this, my aim for the near future is to exhibit at New Designers. Making the most of the opportunity by talking first hand to potential employees about my work and making contacts in hope of finding placements. Delivering press packs to potential employers that show an interest in my work will help keep me fresh in their mind. This could potentially lead to placements, collaborations or even employment.

My intentions for the immediate action after my MDes year is to undergo a PGCE in Design and Technology at secondary level. However, until I have passed my skills tests I intend to keep my options fairly open. Creating a strong portfolio that broadcasts my breath of skills will be essential for job interviews. By constantly looking at job boards such as Print and Pattern, Indeed and LinkedIn will encourage me to stay proactive in keeping my options open. I aim to continue to keep my online profile live keeping people engaged with my progress as well as encouraging me to keep designing. If I successfully enroll onto the PGCE I understand how demanding the course will be, however I intend to try and keep my creative journey going on the sideline. Through participating in live projects when possible, to ensure I do not lose the skills gained over the past 4 years. As well as attending design shows like Tent London and Exhibitions to keep my creative knowledge up-to-date and current.

If my choice of vocation does alter from teaching, then I intend to set up a small studio space in my garden where I will be able to continue designing prints suitable for the interior market. I understand that creating hand rendered prints may be slightly difficult out of the university environment so I will experiment with others ways to do so as well as researching into local open access screen printing facilities. It is important that the work I produce after university still has a sense of tactility. My overall goal would be to work under my own brand but for a larger company. This way of working has interested me since a lecture I attended from Linda Florence a few years ago. Both Linda Florence and Christie Van Der Haak work in this way. However, for this to be achievable I will have to increase my brand awareness. The ways in which I intend to attain this is through a hands on approach, by participating in a range of projects. Community engagement projects; similar to the ones I've taken part in with the creative bubble are a great way of meeting people. A way to

personally promote your own personal work in an engaging and fun way. As well as actively seeking out potential collaborations through researching job boards. I may undergo placements whilst searching for employment to decrease the chances of the 'post graduate blues' that many returning students have warned us about on recent visits. Placements are always beneficial in broadening ones CV.

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