

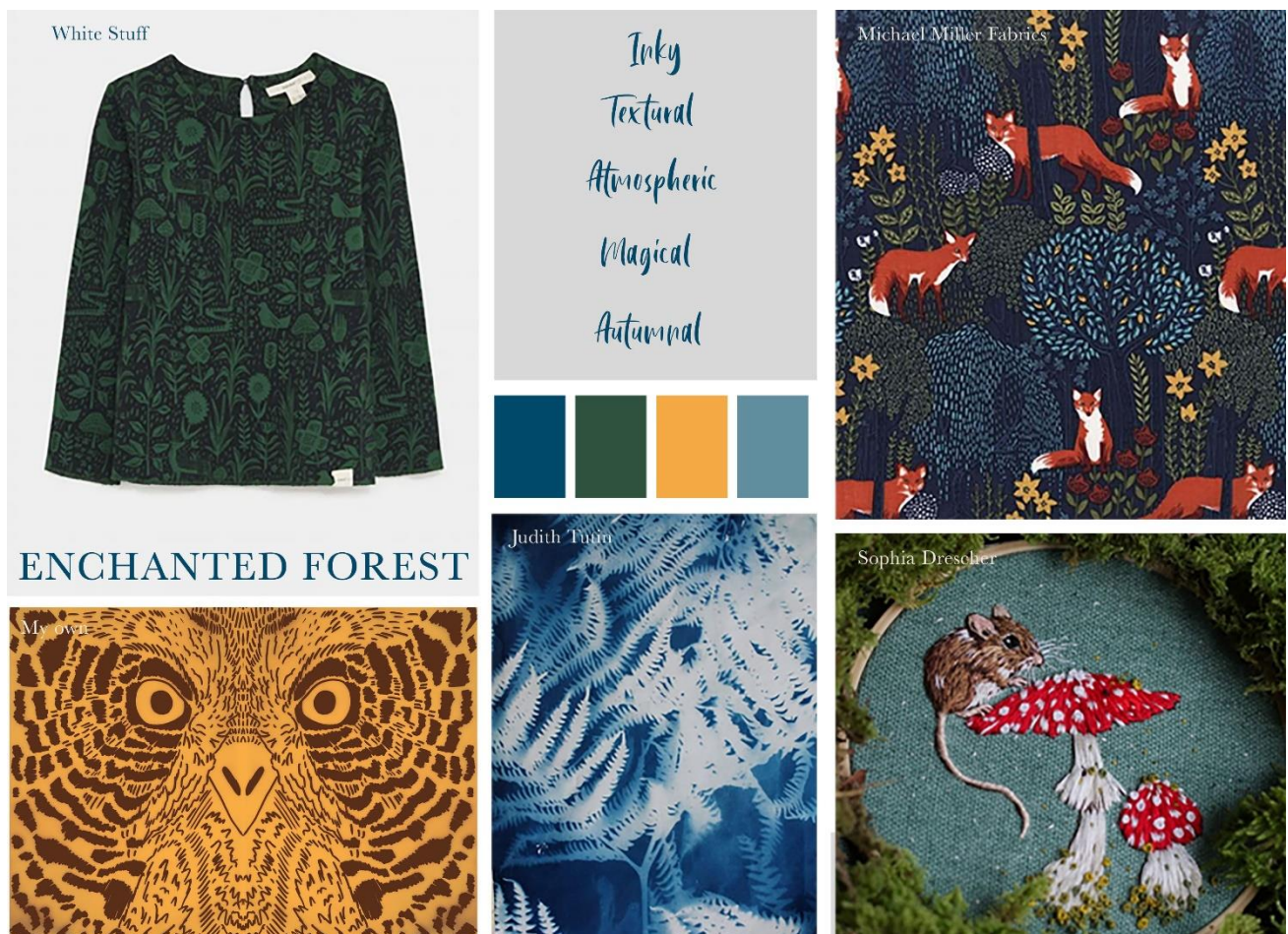
Creative Venture Evaluative Report

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4312 words



Cover image- Project mood board, 2021.



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Executive Summery

This report outlines my creative venture from inspiration to my final outcomes. It outlines my values as a creative practitioner and designer through the project's extensive research and sampling of techniques used in materiality. Highlighting the importance of these values through a growing confidence in designing for zero waste/ multifunctional/ adaptable wear to aid limiting industry waste and for the customer to get the most use from the product as possible. This is exercised through pattern cutting, embroidery and lino print to showcase my ability to the audience. This consists of a fashion collection consisting of six interchangeable garments for the high-street using print and stitch accompanied with corresponding accessories inspired by the theme of Enchanted Forest. The surface pattern should be a form of immersive escapism for the viewer featuring varied illustrations of desirable woodland animals accompanied with additional autumnal foliage to guide the narrative for a collection Autumn/Winter 2022. My initial goal of having a small independent once I graduate has changed this past year. This is now a short-term endeavour. This report outlines the steps taken to develop my personal journey that supports sustainable employment and how it has become integrated in my research for Creative Venture.

Review of Research Methodologies and Methods

Within my creative venture project, Enchanted Forest I expanded my interests featured within my Research Methods Report. Creative practise in a research context can contribute to generating or enhancing the knowledge which is embedded in the practise and embodied by the practitioner. As a designer it is important to be constantly developing my ideas through theoretical research. Without inspiration from other practitioners' ideas can become stagnant. Trends and technologies are always moving forward. Creativity is a lot like a muscle. If you never use it, it never develops. What grouped my research was the elements that benefited either the customer or the planet in terms of function or materiality. One always informing the other in the process, to 'pay it forward'.

I have undertaken a range research approaches in my initial proposal through informal and formal mediums. These methods include academic papers, journal articles, books and online resources such as webinars, podcasts and museum archives. Retrieving and consolidating from a

variety of credible sources demonstrates a coherent framework to build my project around. However, having an extensive array of resources to draw from can dilute the links to my practice. As I enjoy researching the context behind work, I found my process unravelling in a downward spiral. In hindsight, I should have included and condensed much more of this detailed research within my portfolio and final proposition to prevent vast amounts being cut from my submissions. To take advantage of this temporary discarded material, I have ready-made articles to be created for the next issue of the Enchanted Forest catalogue. It can easily be transferred over to future directions in my practice.



Figure 1 - Alternative Catalogue pages.

Listening to writer and futurist, James Wallman, he is finding out what makes us happy, to 'remove the veil of perfection' (Chatterjee, 2019). Everyone can relate to stories of failure which evokes empathy. Empathy connects people, builds relationships. Relationships are opportunities to bring joy into your life. After the self-help industry has applauded success for years. Now the right to fail is demanding some attention. The more lenient you can be with yourself, the better you will be able to cope with mistakes. Elizabeth Day started a podcast, *How to Fail*, based on the idea that she

grew more from the things that went wrong compared to those that went 'right' (PodBean Development, 2021). Mistakes are seen as opportunities to learn from that can make you even more successful. However, by only seeing failure as something you are supposed to learn from, you only make it harder for yourself. By living under the prospect of always trying to benefit from every little bad design decision you are creating a pressure to perform. "[The] comfort zone can be as useful and productive [...] excellence come not from overcoming limitations but from embracing them" (Daum, 2016, p.192). Expanding my horizons, accepting challenges and being proud of achievements that you did not know you had in me to achieve, these are components that makes me exceptional. "Stay in safe waters but plunge as deeply into them as possible" (Daum, 2016, p.195), comfort zones are no less fruitful grounds for achievement and fulfilment than new explorations. When you have an uninhibited outlook on life, curiosity often wins out over fear of failure when it comes to trying new things and developing your work. I am quick to be very critical over failures which is not always very helpful. The more lenient I can be with myself, the better I was able to cope with these mistakes.

Time management and concentration proved difficult to juggle alongside homelife challenges. Following this, I took several strategies in an attempt to enable myself to overcome project stagnation. I have included these strategies within my final proposition in the hope it will help others in their overly stimulated, stressful lives. The pomodoro technique proved really effective for me at times when I was competing with a lot of challenges. Invented by Francesco Cirillo, this method lets you focus on a single task for 25 minutes and then take a break for 5 minutes. Another step I took to improve my work ethic was to take sufficient breaks. It is only an effective break when you are not processing new information. Your brain can not tell the difference between work emails and personal emails. You can only recharge you let your mind wonder and do not need to focus.

Neuropsychologist Mark Tigchelaar states that the number of stimuli we are faced with daily has increased five times over since the 1980s and is now equal to reading 174 newspaper a day. We are busier then ever, but much less productive than we once were. The moments when we are truly focussed is becoming increasingly rare. "It is no coincidence that, in recent years, our concentration levels have dropped, and our stress levels are rising" (Kwant, 2020, p.110). Our brain loves stimuli, we think we are focused one thing, but our brain is still continuously processing all the signals around us. This explains why we notice our name when it is called in a crowded room or phone buzzing from across the room. "This overactive brain can be quite problematic when you're trying to concentrate... And if things are happening even just a little bit too slowly for your brain, it automatically goes in

search for new stimuli” (Kwant, 2020, p.110). Completing a series of little tasks in a short time may be more satisfying but uses more energy which causes a direct increase in stress levels. You can keep an overactive brain suitably preoccupied by doing a second task that requires little brainpower; listening to repetitive background music, for example, walking while you have a conversation, or thoughtlessly doodling on paper. We are now so addicted to the short dopamine hits that you feel when you find new information, that we keep looking for it. But it is unnatural to always be on the lookout. Because of the stress, we enter into a kind of survival mode, which creates an enormous me-orientation” (Kwant, 2020, p.111). This is the reason so many people now check their phones in the middle of a conversation, they are addicted to the dopamine. People say that time is gold, but really it is concentration. Because real attention is scarce, it has become more valuable. Everything needs time, attention and connection. Due to the speed of the digital world we forget things take time, time for a conversation to get going, time to get used to living somewhere new, time to get ‘into’ your work zone.

I attempted to organise my workload by using daily and monthly planners to negotiate time frames and estimations to complete my submissions before the deadline. Despite these outlines, drastic changes had to be made to allow for unforeseen circumstances that were beyond my control. At times whole weeks of planned tasks shifted a week behind to be able to cope with the workload I set for myself.

May 2021					1	2
3 Steam and wash prints, scan embroidery, illustrations for flats.	4 Wash and dry digital prints. Trace pattern pieces.	5 Embroidery pocket of trousers.	6 10:30- Catherine Dormer- A love letter to stitch. Sew, photograph Trousers.	7 Print new samples Digital illustrations.	8 Sew up dresses.	9 Finish dresses, sew in labels. Embroider into samples.
10 Test foil by hand printing. Jacket label. Purple and blue collars.	11 Red, orange, yellow woodland digital print designs.	12 Red, orange, yellow fern digital print designs.	13 Foil tests on screen, USB files, digital samples printed.	14 Clear desk, steam wash and dry pattern pieces.	15 Edit sampling, embroider into chosen pieces, finish toiles.	16 Photoshoot, finish illustrations, logos.
17 Finalise portfolio and presentation	18 Project portfolio and final proposition deadline	19 Presentation 2pm	20	21	22	23 Logo design, Business cards, Post cards.
24 Donate art supplies, order/print cards, postcards.	25 Report deadline	26 New Designers Awards edits	27 New Designers Awards edits	28 New Designers Awards Deadline	29 Online showcase selection	30 Online showcase edits
31 Online showcase bio						

Figure 2 - Snapshot of calendar.

Review of Creative Strategy

“Throughout a practice-led research process, art and design artefacts can serve as inputs into knowledge production and as outputs for knowledge communication” (Nimkulrat, 2012, p. 1). This knowledge can only be gained through physically testing and taking an exploratory approach. By understanding materials and processes it allows me to understand the boundaries of the that material. But also, the understanding of how designs and patterns are produced meaning I can design a product from beginning to end. Which ultimately will support my future trajectories for working in the design industry.

In my surface pattern designs I refined the animal illustrations in my artwork in the Woodland print by deselecting the drawings that were either seen as too playful or too serious. They would not support the complementary imagery. Two of these, shown below, are the hanging squirrel and wolf. The squirrel does not align with the collective as it is too cartoonish. The wolf appears too angry and would have added a predatory element that I do not want to promote in this project. I also tried to select one of each animal in the repeat to allow for as much variation of species as possible.

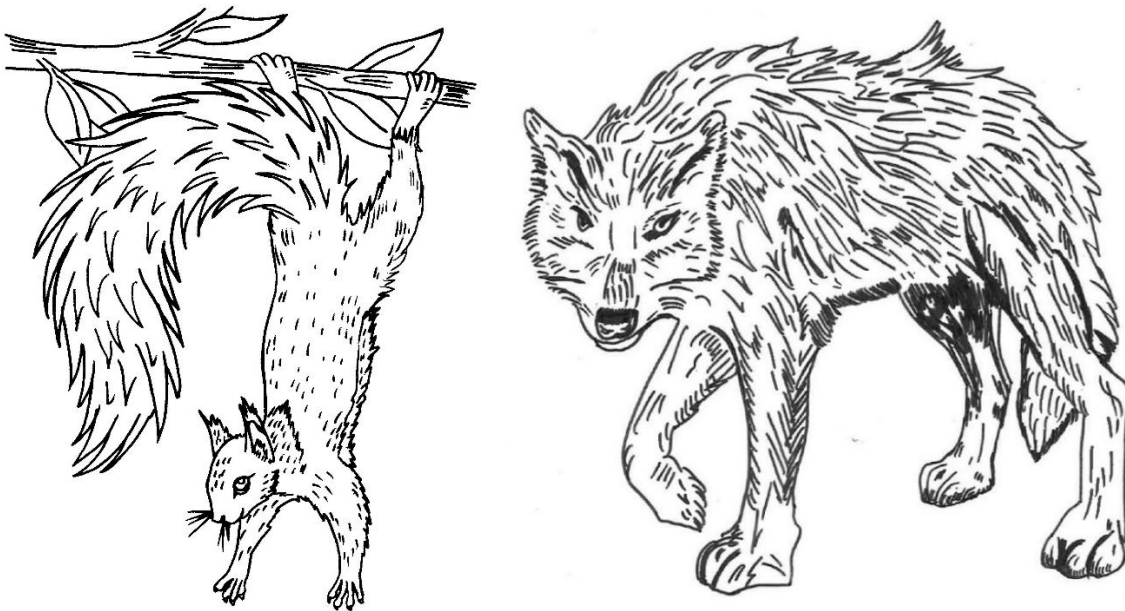


Figure 3 - Line drawing of squirrel and wolf.

Sampling embroidery was a challenge. The detail I desired was hard to maintain as hand embroidery is a very time-consuming activity. An eight-inch hoop was taking on average 6-8 hours depending on the density of the beadwork and size of stitches. This led me to develop Repetitive Strain Injury in me

hand and wrist. Further exploration of this technique seized to encourage recovery. But I could have explored machine embroidery to combat the challenge. Another technique that was a little underdeveloped were my ink drawings and collages. My intention was for these to be scanned and digitally enhanced to be used as backgrounds for repeat patterns. However, these were put aside as my visions for these were overly ambitious when it came to arranging these digitally as I had limited software access. Similarly, my lino explorations did not come to fruition. I had difficulty carving due to my hand. I could not apply even pressure. Eventually, I accepted this. I aim is to fulfil my ambition after submission as I want to improve my lino technique to possibly produce a selection of prints inspired by UK wildlife. These setbacks lead me to reevaluate what I could physically produce within my limitations. Acting autonomously, I identified that appliqué was an appropriate technique to continue with. I already had an abundance of screen printed, discharged, and digitally printed samples to work on through this method. After practising this technique on a handful of samples, I was satisfied with the outcome. The appliquéd patches worked as a springboard for working out fashion outcomes in my final collection of garments and accessories. Implementing environmental and commercial applications like visible mending options that can be promoted to customers.



Figure 4 - Ink drawing



Figure 5 - Side of the Path, Hennie Haworth, 2020.

I formulated a colour scheme from the tonal range in my initial dyeing inspired by the colours by nature collaboration by Farrow and Ball x Natural History Muesum, sampling most of the colours from my indigo dyed cotton. The palette was taken from colours in nature, “our eyes have evolved to see green in shades of colour because we evolved around nature, it is a hugely primitive thing” (Joseph et al.,2021). We are naturally attracted to natural colours to calm us. It is built into our instincts as humans. “All of our senses come alive with colour [and] conjure memories like smell” (Joseph et al.,2021). A clear example of this is the yellow lanterns in the windows of Sir John Soane’s Muesum and Dulwich Picture Gallery that adds a sunny Mediterian atmosphere to the London daylight. A warm glow cascades over exhibited items breathing life into collective (Mineyama et al., 2021). From this, an alternative scheme was also produced to test for seasonal changes in warmer tones. To experiment onto dark grounds from pre-consumer waste I tested discharge to bleach colour away from the surface as well as screen printing with pigment and binder. This was inspired by the layered artwork of Henrick Simonsen and Lisa Goesling whom both work on dark backgrounds to add impact to their work. To test the scale and colouration of my garment outcomes, digital print was the most efficient and environmentally considered to create engineered patterns for cloth kits. However, one batch of prints seemed to have the colour bleached out in the washing process. The cause of this was unknown. But the bleached samples had potential to provide the base for foiling. However, the

foiling process did not align with the vision I had for my final outcomes. There are some environmental factors that contradict the brand's manifesto that I do not want to promote.



Figure 6 - Yellow Lanterns, Sir John Soane's Museum, 1837.

When planning and constructing patterns for my garments I could have focused my efforts on adapting the pattern pieces for disability and older customers. This development would have given the collection a more desirable niche that would have raised awareness in the market as these groups are not commonly considered. I have been commissioned since the launch of my New Designers Profile to construct a jacket and pair of trousers for this very purpose. The enquiry asked if I could alter the neckline and hems slightly to allow for restrictive movement when dressing. This is something that I can easily adjust for this customer. However, more advanced requests, like detachable elements is a lengthier process that will need to be tested in practice.

To actively include customers with the brand, cloth kits are a great aid for customers to try out new skills that align with the brand's values. A free make-your-own collar pattern is dispatched with every purchase. This introduction into pattern construction could lead the customer to produce a full digitally printed cloth kit to construct a garment from the collection themselves. Through the exercise they experience first-hand the process of slow fashion with the hope that it encourages a

growing appreciation for slow clothing production. Co-ordinating the kits with 'Stick and Stitch' packs also gives the customer an opportunity to personalise and repair garments through hand-embroidery. Each pack contains imagery from the pattern library printed onto self-adhesive water-soluble paper. These motifs can be placed where desired on the garment, embroidered into and washed away leaving the user to admire their beautifully crafted stitch-work.



Figure 7 - Enchanted Forest Collection Display

Taking good quality photography of my samples and products was very important to me. As we are not going to have a physical degree show this year I had to rely on my photography and visualisations to promote the standard of my work to employers. I broke my product shots down into two different sections, pack shots and lifestyle. Pack shots are functional imagery that shows the viewer the subject in detail on neutral backgrounds, brand packaging and detailed close-up shots of the product features (Karczewska, 2020). Whereas lifestyle photography focuses on how the product will complement and enhance the life of my customers. These shots are thoughtfully produced with complementary props within the set-ups to provide a suggestive 'real life' element.

Critical Appraisal of the Final Proposition

When it came to producing work for my final proposition, I wanted to achieve the best I could. I wanted to create something that encapsulated the project as a whole and shared to the viewer my

values as a designer. Initially this representation was going to take the form of a sample book showcasing prints from the collection embellished with applique and hand embroidery. However, this proved to be a very time-consuming task in order to get the standard I desired. Due to prior a injury to my right hand from earlier in the project, when it came to producing this work, I was not able to continue with this due to the Repetitive Strain Injury. Therefore, I decided to make a transition to a less strenuous output.

In order to produce a final proposition that could be dispatched to potential employers I designed a conceptual catalogue to showcase my project including the fashion collection, sample work, contextual research and conceptual practise. This is because I feel as though the viewer needs access to my full process and this includes the extensive research that goes on in the background. Often, an employer requires a portfolio of work however, this heavily consists of imagery, it is hard to communicate all of my knowledge and understanding within a portfolio. My aim is that these potential gaps can be filled in this catalogue. This resource can be sent digitally and physically along with my CV, cover letter and portfolio as part of a press pack. Another aim would be to send physical copies to customers when they order products online. Customers are more likely to repeat buy if they understand the brand's values. I feel that this resource would be more useful as a springboard for the future rather than a physical sample book. Once a layout and aesthetic are established, edits in content can be made to align for future projects post-graduation and submissions for competitions. This transition from physical to digital production could also have its pitfalls. It is hard to communicate quality, accurate colour and texture but as this proposal takes the form of a catalogue there will not be too much variation.

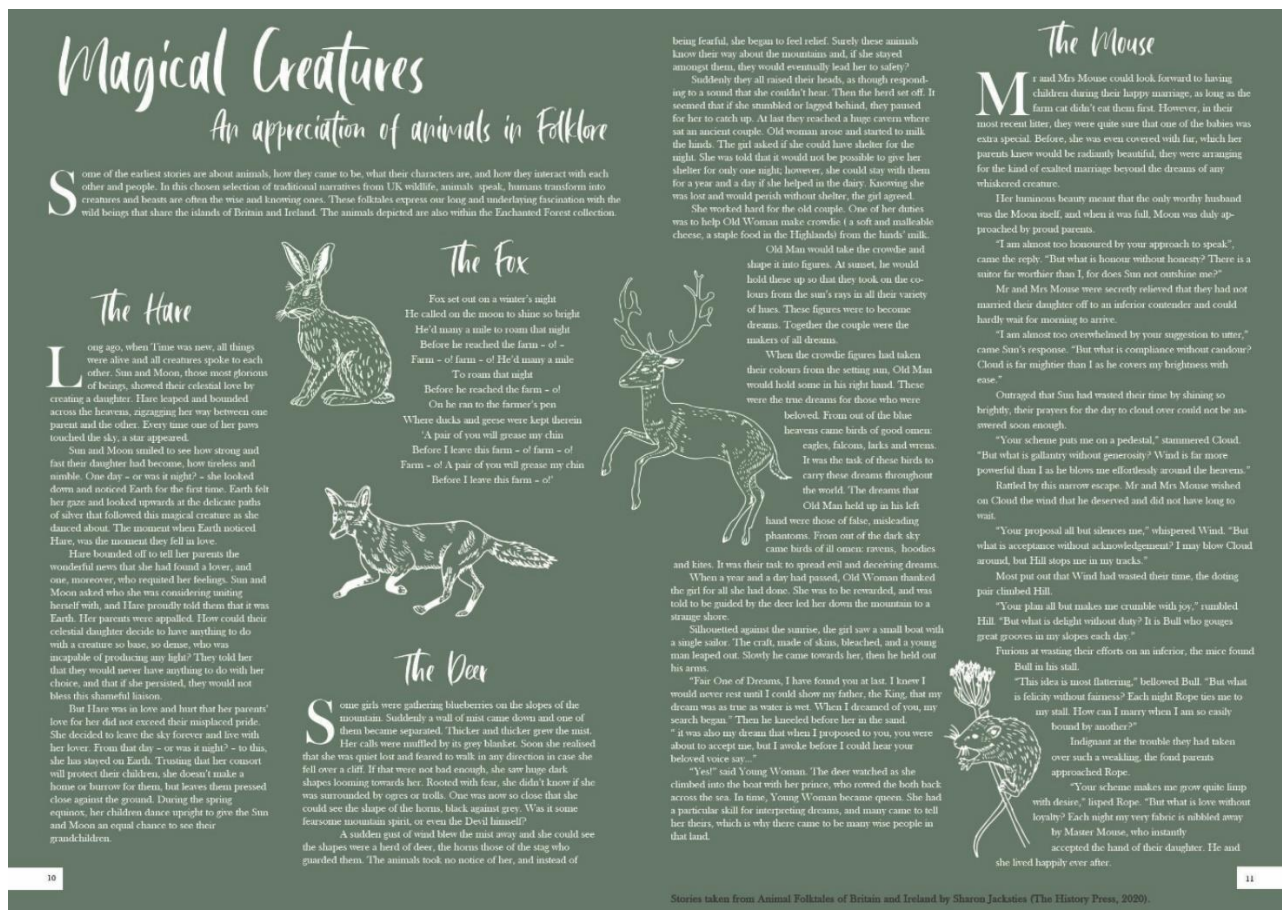


Figure 8 - Catalogue pages 10 and 11

As previously stated, in hindsight, having articles in the catalogue that feature more of my contextual research as this will make the catalogue more appropriate and will showcase my understanding of subjects that align with the brand. Although, I enjoyed including some stories from Folklore that aligned with my brand's aesthetic, including contextual research would have made the most of the space.

Future trajectories

To achieve my goal of establishing my own small independent business there are five key topics to research. These are brand concept, pricing for profit, where to sell, social media advertisement and financial admin. I need to familiarise myself with my values and goals for my business. This also includes setting a price point early in order to advertise effectively through online marketing. Being a small business mean I can be flexible and choose exactly how I want to portray myself to potential customers. It is common to aim for financial success but equally I desire to see it

as a tool for personal vocation and fulfilment. My brand may be a short-term solution to get some financial gain over the summer before getting employment elsewhere. However, it is hard to forecast for the future, so I may be married to my chosen branding for a while. My current brand name JET Designs, is not very descriptive of what I am offering the market. But that leaves me open to expand my products how I like. Most importantly I aim to have a job I want to wake up and get paid fairly for, earning enough to live comfortably. When I work under someone else I want them to share my values. From the perspective of my work from my studies I consider my values to be customer-focused with a strong emphasis on ethical materials and transparency. My brand will align with my personal values but also have joyful feel-good pattern designs. These values will add to my unique selling point, my business will be an extension of myself. It is what makes my brand identifiable and recognisable.

My brand identity has two parts; the personality and the visuals. The personality of my brand is shaped by vocabulary, tone and customer service style. The visuals of my brand are the fonts, product photography, colour palette and logo. The vital visual of my brand is the logo. It is most identifiable feature. If my products are brightly coloured and full of energy, I require a palette that reflects that. Picking subtler colours would lead my concept to be disjointed and possibly not as memorable. Similar choices were taken with the font. As long as it is clear, legible and consistently used then most fonts will be clear and aesthetically pleasing.



Figure 9 - Enchanted Forest Business card front

The correct pricing can be the difference between success and failure. It comes down to what it represents. The prices you advertise to your audience communicates the value you put on your own work. While it is primarily about money, the impact of pricing often reaches beyond you and your customers in other ways too (Aicheler et al., 2021). There are different factors to consider.

Essentially, pricing is calculated by adding costs and profit. Sustainable pricing factors in enough profit to move beyond breaking even, aiming to find the right balance. Under-pricing your work can be problematic. Customers need a level of trust to make a purchase, a product and service with a very low price is likely to be perceived to be cheaply made, of low quality and therefore less desirable. Another responsibility to consider is that the prices you set also contributes to the industry standard, so if prices are repeatedly set too low for handmade products it becomes the expected, making it difficult for creatives to charge fair prices (Aicheler et al., 2021). Over-pricing products also has pitfalls as it could mean you are actually excluding the audience you are aiming for. This audience would then be persuaded to shop with your nearest competitors.

Guide to Pricing

Generally a good formula to work with when starting out is:

Baseline cost x 2 = wholesale price
Wholesale price x 2.4 = retail price

Or an alternative formula is:

Baseline cost + your hourly rate = wholesale price
Wholesale price x 2.4 = retail price

1. Work out your material costs:

- Materials (take into account any waste)
- Packaging materials
- Productions costs (electricity costs for sewing machine)

2. Calculate fixed overhead costs

- Equipment, tools, stationery
- Studio rent
- App and software charges
- Public liability insurance
- Marketing/ promotional costs – adverts, business cards, etc.
- Fees – broadband, phone, website, bank charges, etc.

Work out a monthly figure for these, then divide that by the number of products you make in an average month. This gives a fixed overheads figure you can add to each product.

3. Material costs + fixed overhead costs = baseline cost

This is your bottom line. If you sell at the price you will be breaking even. Any lower and you will be making a loss. It is important to know this if you are running any discounts.

4. Add your profit

To make it simple, many independent businesses use a x2 mark-up. Or charge for their labour costs by working out how many hours it takes to make the product and multiply this by their hourly rate.

For example:

(Baseline cost £7) x 2 = £14 wholesale price

Or

(Baseline cost £7) + £15 salary (1.5 hours x £10 an hour) = £22 wholesale price

Don't forget to add card/ Paypal/ Etsy fees when selling online. Or commission/ table fees if selling at events or fairs.

5. Mark it up

If I want to sell in shops, I will need to apply their mark-up to my pricing. Bigger shops that are VAT registered usually work on a 2.4 mark-up.

Wholesale price x 2.4 = retail price

6. Sense check

Once you've calculated your costs, think about how this price compares to similar products. Is it in line with your price point? Is it what you would expect your customers to pay? Could you reduce costs if its too expensive? Increase your profit if its too cheap?

Figure 10 - Guide to Pricing sheet

After accessing online workshops and seminars from New designers, Crafts Council and Summer Start-up Week Festival I have compiled and simplified a calculation for generating my pricing when I'm ready to start compiling a business plan and product strategy. Pricing should be fluid and

updated often to grow with the business (Dicker et al., 2021). Some costs, for example, postage, will increase over time. So I'll need to be prepared to adapt and readjust figures accordingly. I could create work in batches to save on time, hopefully the process will speed up as I continue to develop my skills. Creating my own promotional materials instead of outsourcing could also save on costs.

There's never been a broader variety of ways to get my products out there, so the real challenge is deciding what platforms are right for my customers and my business. I will weigh up the products themselves and my profit margins, taking into account what makes the most practical and financial sense for where I am in my career path. It may seem obvious to prioritise online marketplaces such as Etsy as they are global platforms. However, I have found that I inadvertently have a small older audience that do not trust online platforms with their personal information, do not have email addresses or access to the technology to view products on. As I have some interest and enquires from simply word-of-mouth this creates a challenge for me to overcome. How do I include this growing audience? This is a chance for the catalogue to come into play. This can be individually posted to them in beautifully decorated packaging. I have found that more mature customers of between the ages of 65 – 85 appreciate handcrafted items more than my younger customer so far. One customer has recalled her school days to me when she commissioned me to make a patchwork tote bag for a friend's birthday. She reminisced about her sewing lessons at school when she was 14. And how long it took her and her friend to make a pair of patchwork blankets for their parents, on the school looms each lesson, as they were desperate to finish them before they left school in the summer. The patches she had requested were of similar colours to those blankets and was therefore willing to pay a reasonable but affordable amount for the commission. Nearly 70 years later, both women still have a deep connection with handcrafted gifts due to their shared experiences when they were younger. Gift giving is very personal ritual. For this reason, I feel that it is important to not exclude these customers from the brand's shopping experience, as they may not get many interactions in their day-to-day lives. Social factors are important to consider. Receiving postcards, catalogues and gifts through the post may be the only connection to someone they get that day. Through this kindness they will be loyal customers and share their thoughts verbally with their family and friends.

As well as this platforms like Etsy are so vast it is difficult to get noticed solely through the site alone. I have started to build a marketing plan to advertise my products through social media

platforms, on my professional Instagram and Facebook profiles. This is going to be down to experimentation to see the effectiveness of these methods. Trial and error is vital, especially when deciding on SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) aids such as tags and hashtags (Dicker et al., 2021). Currently, I am considering having some stockists meaning a wider audience will see my products. I may get some free advertising from that stockist if they purchase wholesale, this is less likely on a sale-or-return basis. Now that life is opening up again after the pandemic, I am also planning to have some in-person selling opportunities at events and markets, but I cannot rely on this method right now. A lot of organisers I have contacted have replied saying that they are at full capacity with already established businesses. Alternatively, selling through eBay or Depop will establish a slightly different audience if Etsy alone does not bring in enough sells. This could be an excellent opportunity to sell old stock that does not fit the current quality and aesthetic, damaged items and equipment to recover back some losses. By selling these items on a different platform I will not risk the representation and perception of the brand. This seems to work well for brands like Lucy and Yak who regularly sell their seconds at a reduced price on Depop.

Outside of this, I have set-up profiles on job searching sites such as LinkedIn and The Dots, to look for a more permanent full-time position. The financial impacts of the pandemic had dissuaded me from pursuing a full-time independent career for job security. There is peace of mind in job security which in turn is mentally positive. My job satisfaction may come from a part-time venture but that may be an appropriate sacrifice for my mental health. Creating tailored portfolios for each job application, applying for positions and the interview process can be a lengthy undertaking. Therefore, having a side hustle is the most efficient way of receiving income while searching as I could be searching for some time.

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