

Research Methods and Communication

M7X02233

THE FOUND

The Found

Stitching textiles has always been prominent throughout history, whether it is for the construction or decoration of clothing and interior pieces. For my Creative Venture, I plan to explore stitch, more specifically embroidery, as well as other textile processes and other methods of applying colour and pattern, such as cyanotype and dyeing as a contrast and as a complement to the stitch. I may also apply some of the theories I cover within this piece of writing when completing my own practical work, such as considering the Value of Design, the Slow Movement and the ability to Create Art from Anything.

My imagery will be created from found objects; second hand objects found in charity shops and around the home which are no longer used, which are not perceived to be as valuable as they once were. This is an idea which originated from the found vintage embroideries used in the Mission Gallery's 'Heirloom for the Future' project as well as using some found objects when creating cyanotypes in the Design Experiment. I found that when using cyanotype, the most interesting imagery was created when I used double exposure and found fabrics as they created a uniqueness as it cannot be replicated; not only are the found fabrics themselves unique, the result of the double exposure is too.



Figure 1 Writer's own, Double Exposed Napkin, 2017

I would like to further this technique during my Creative Venture, where I plan to use the found objects in creating cyanotypes. I would like my work to be colourful as I believe that colour can greatly change the perception of a design and can be a useful tool for creating an impression. I will most likely abstract the colours of the original objects when I use them within my work to make them work more harmoniously and to also make them more reflective of my style.

There is also the potential of using only found textiles for my project to pertain to the theme of the 'found'. The idea of the 'slow movement' is also of interest to me – the idea of taking time to create work and stepping away from the fast-paced, fast fashion world. There are many textiles artists who use found materials within their work, such as Abigail Doan, so I will refer to their practice when creating my own work.

Since visiting the Biennale in Venice, I have realised just how crucial it is to consider the space artwork is displayed in. Even though the exhibition was filled with many different artist's work, each piece has its own complementary lighting and some even had unique backdrops, which really helped each piece stand out. Therefore, this aspect of my exhibition will be taken into great consideration. Another key component of creating a good exhibition is the method of displaying the work itself; how it is hung and arranged can greatly influence the overall outcome of the exhibit. As I plan to use found objects as the main influence of my work, I think it would give the exhibition a much greater context if they were also displayed amongst the work. These pieces could possibly be hung amongst embroidery hoops containing my work; a method of displaying work which I used within The Design Experiment which I thought worked effectively. Within my Creative Venture, I am going to experiment with a variety of different methods of displaying my work. In the graduate show, I want to have my work exhibited in a space which creates an atmosphere very reflective of the work within it.

Values of Design

In an article on the Design Society's website they talk about their exhibition called 'Values of Design,' where the role and the value of design is discussed through the pieces themselves and how they are displayed in the exhibition. Covering the areas of fashion, photography, furniture, product and graphic design, theatre and performance, this exhibition 'is an

exploration of our values, and how our values are reflected in the objects we choose to surround ourselves with.’(Design Society, 2017, web) The themes within the exhibition each represent ‘broad value statements that have been made in the past about design: performance, cost, problem solving, materials, identity, communication and wonder.’(Design Society, 2017, web) The items which are featured show the progression of design within certain areas, which highlights how quickly things can change when something new, such as a material or production method, is introduced.

This exhibition’s context is particularly interesting to me as the theme of the value of design could potentially be seen within my work. The items I plan to use are ones which people no longer want in their homes; the design of them is no longer of much value. The idea of bringing value back into these objects may be reflective of what we perceive as of value today. The article also goes into further detail about how the work is displayed, that the exhibitions ‘are complemented by strips of audio-visual ‘moving wallpaper’ ...[and] two major audio-visual installations as well as an interactive section which engages users to consider what it is they value in design.’ (Design Society, 2017, web) I would like to have my work accompanied by a form of video or projection, to enhance the exhibition and create something with greater impact. Having something that visitors can interact with is an interesting concept and something I would like to consider. As my project is based on objects which all likely once served a purpose, it would seem like a missed opportunity to have them remade and renewed but no longer interacted with.

Slow Movement – Slow Stitch

In the book *Slow Stitch*, Claire Wellesley-Smith explains the notion of the ‘Slow Movement’ where she explains that it has ‘been applied to many things, but all look at slowing the pace of life and making a deliberate decision to do so.’ (Wellesley-Smith, 2015:6) It doesn’t mean that the work produced is completed at the slowest rate possible, this idea simply means that the work has had more careful consideration and perhaps makes more use of techniques done by hand. It is a stand against the increasingly fast-paced world, where companies want to produce their products at the fastest possible rate. Through this method they have the potential to lose high quality craftsmanship in their products, as well as potentially creating a stressful environment for those producing the products due to the pressure to get the items completed in such a short period of time. Therefore, within my

work I'd like to consider methods which will allow me to produce pieces efficiently yet to a high standard.



Figure 2 Doan, Abigail. *Toolshedding*, Brooklyn, 2015

Abigail Doan's work is featured in *Slow Stitch* as she uses 'recycled textiles, old clothes, hand spun and dyed wool, and what she described as 'fibre flotsam' from her life' (Wellesley-Smith, 2015:20) to create her pieces. Doan also uses natural elements within her work 'be it plant material or other botanical specimens.' (Wellesley-Smith, 2015:20) This idea of using only found objects to create her work is something that I'd like to bring into my own, however I think using just found objects may not be entirely feasible for the body of work I plan to accomplish within the time constraints, for example using just found threads for all

of my stitch work and my plans for using textiles printing and dyeing processes means that I can't use entirely found pieces. However, I would like to have this idea of using found objects featured in my work, as a source of inspiration for my designs as well as when I work into found fabrics.

By Hand

By Hand (2007), edited by Shu Hung and Joseph Magliaro, features a variety of artists which all use craft techniques within their work, which are 'historically associated with feminine conventions' (Hung & Magliaro, 2007:7) but use them in ways which distances their work from the stereotype. The artists within this book 'abandon efficiency to pursue completion in their work, with the results often landing far away from the original design.' (Hung & Magliaro, 2007:7) They also use their work as an 'emphasis on personal experience rather than on a collective social message.' (Hung & Magliaro, 2007:7) Even though I am very interested in the notion of stepping away from the fast-paced world, I am much more interested in using my work as a way of renewing objects and thinking of the stories possibly associated with them when working into them. I would like to once again renew the personality of the discarded object, rather than focusing entirely on making a statement.

One topic which is often raised when talking about hand-made or crafted pieces is the issue of technology. In *By Hand*, Hung and Magliaro speak about computers and the internet, stating that 'while this new globalism celebrated the possibilities of the computer age, it also threatened a "loss of individuality, of the characteristics that distinguish people, ethnic groups, and even nations."' (Hung & Magliaro, 2007:11) Quoting Lisa Phillips, Hung and Magliaro suggest that technology has had a negative impact on the creative world. While this may be true, I still believe that technology can be very useful in helping us learn about new things and accomplish tasks. Therefore, even though I plan to use a lot of 'craft' or hand techniques within my work, I also plan to use technology to create designs and to help produce my work – I think it's a far too valuable resource to completely disregard.

Creating Art from Anything

In the book *Creating Art from Anything* (1968), Dona Z Meilach speaks about how artists have 'employed non-traditional materials in their work since the early 1900s' (Meilach, 1968:3). Covering a range of materials, Meilach discusses how artists have used various objects and how you, the reader, may use them to create your own work. 'In the past art was something separated from life' (Meilach, 1968:3), in more recent times people choose to surround their daily lives with art, so the use of everyday, familiar objects within art has the potential to create something different yet somewhat familiar. When artists choose to use objects within their work, there is likely a personal connection with the object. The object may be chosen due to emotional connections or because of its original purpose. The chosen object may also just be interesting subject matter, the artist 'wonders what will happen to it when he puts it into a new context' (Meilach, 1968:3).

'...today's materials often stubbornly insist they were once something else – something useful, maybe something loved and cherished. The artist does not necessarily wish to change the identity of the object; rather he is trying to change its relationship and the way the viewer reacts to it.'

(Meilach, 1968:15)

The concept of changing the relationship of the object rather than changing its identity is something that I would like to communicate in my work. It is important that the objects are renewed rather than completely distorted from their original state. There will likely be a degree of abstraction from the original object within my work, however I would like the objects to still be recognised. A large aspect of my work will include the use of found textiles. Meilach writes that textiles have an 'infinite range as an expressive material for the artist' (1968:31). Not only is there a vast array of decorative techniques applicable to textiles, the way they are constructed can also vary greatly too. The way textiles are responded to may be influenced by the texture or any memories which arise when it is interacted with. '[The artist] may respond to the pattern or recognise that a certain fabric can be manipulated...for the message he wishes to convey.' (Meilach, 1968:31)

What is Luxury?

The exhibition *What is Luxury?* (2015) was a V&A and Crafts Council exhibition focusing on how luxury is made and understood. An article on the V&A website explains the exhibition, discussing how luxury may be achieved; through a lot of time investment in learning techniques and about materials. It states that luxury 'is not concerned with the practical solutions but with the extraordinary, non-essential and exclusive.' (V&A, 2015, web). The level of craftsmanship and expertise when creating something is shown through the precision, detail and finish of the product. 'Such quality is achieved by challenging and broadening established standards of craftsmanship and accepted categories of design.' (V&A, 2015, web) There is also the topic of the relationship between luxury and value when considering what luxury is. Value can be perceived differently by everyone, 'rather than being constant and predictable, perceptions of value vary.' (V&A, 2015, web). The market can greatly influence people's perception of luxury, as it has control over material worth. The value of materials changes if they are perceived as precious and rare, therefore can change whether something is perceived as luxurious, regardless of the level of craftsmanship involved. The concept of value is a definite theme which will arise in my work; the found objects that I will use may or may not have a high level of craftsmanship, but the question of their value still stands. The objects have been discarded, so if they were once luxurious and valuable, they may not be perceived as that any more.

Man Ray

Man Ray was predominantly a filmmaker, painter and photographer who also produced pieces of art using objects. Many of his early objects were lost, so a majority of his work has been replicated. The photograph below shows a piece called *L'Enigme d'Isidore Ducasse*, which is a sewing machine that has been wrapped in a blanket and tied with string. This object was originally produced in 1920 and remade in 1929. Man Ray's wrapping of the object creates mystery, it distorts the sewing machine and turns it into 'some utterly undefined, and therefore potentially more disturbing, presence.' (Mundy, 2003, web) His use of the sewing machine in this way completely changes how the object is used and of course perceived. When a photograph of the object was published in the surrealist periodical *La Révolution surréaliste* in 1924, 'the accompanying text was a manifesto statement about the importance of dreams within surrealism.' (Mundy, 2003, web)



Figure 3 Man Ray Trust/ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2017

The idea of wrapping an object and completely distorting it could be an interesting way to renew it. It would once again bring interest back into the item; what is hidden beneath the fabric? Whether I choose to extract elements from the object and applying them to a piece of fabric before wrapping the object, or if I use just a plain piece of fabric could drastically change how that object is now perceived. Perhaps it would be interesting to use semi-transparent fabric, so you can see just a glimpse of the object beneath, rather than completely covering up the object. Therefore, I will be exploring the use of not only found fabrics, but also a variety of natural and man-made fabrics.

In contrast, Christo and Jeanne-Claude wrap objects at a much larger scale. Their projects may take years of planning, for example, the idea of the wrapped trees, as seen in figures 4 and 5, 'originated in the 1960s' and after 32 years they finally wrapped the trees in Berower Park, Riehen, Switzerland in 1997/98 (Christo, 2017, web). The beauty of the wrapped trees lies in the fabric used, a 'woven polyester fabric (used every winter in Japan to protect trees from frost and heavy snow)' (Christo, 2017, web). In certain lights, the shape of the trees is

distorted so that they have an almost cloud-like appearance. When the sun shines through the fabric, you can see the tree branches which are usually hidden. Whether the role of the changing light was a main factor in their design of this project or not, the use of varying lighting is an interesting aspect. Often the way objects appear can be influenced greatly by the lighting, therefore in my work I would like to explore various fabrics when wrapping objects, to see how the light interacts with and changes them.



Figure 4 Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Wrapped Trees, Fondation Beyeler and Berower Park, Riehen, Switzerland, 1997-98, Photo: Wolfgang Volz



Figure 5 Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Wrapped Trees, Fondation Beyeler and Berower Park, Riehen, Switzerland, 1997-98, Photo: Wolfgang Volz

Another example of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's work, pictured below, involved wrapping cliffs in 'erosion-control fabric' (Christo, 2017, web). The project *Wrapped Coast* included 'one million square feet (92,900 square meters) of fabric and 35 miles (56.3 kilometres) of rope shrouding a 1.5 mile (2.4 kilometre) long section of the Australian coastline.' (Christo, 2017, web). Although I believe the main purpose behind this project was to be impressive due to its scale, there is still much more achieved from wrapping a piece of land of this size. Whilst the wrapping doesn't distort the shape of what lies beneath, it still hides most of the features, such as the colour and texture of the cliff face. As I plan to experiment with using a variety of fabrics, referring to the work discussed and considering what fabric could be used, I may find a fabric that has a closer relation to the wrapped object.



Figure 6 Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Wrapped Coast, One Million Square Feet, Little Bay, Sydney, Australia, 1968-69, Photo: Shunk-Kender



Figure 7 Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Wrapped Coast, One Million Square Feet, Little Bay, Sydney, Australia, 1968-69, Photo: Shunk-Kender

The outcome of my work is likely to be textiles pieces, whether they are for interiors or fashion depends entirely on the found objects themselves. These pieces are unique within themselves, and I plan to make use of their unique characteristics when working into them. Through using techniques such as embroidery and cyanotypes to work into and create imagery of the found objects, I hope to bring value back into the found pieces once again. I will also be drawing the objects and extracting aspects of them, possibly using my drawings to create stitch designs as well as creating repeat and placement designs to be printed onto textiles. I will also experiment with the use other methods of creating stitch, such as digital embroidery and machine stitch, not just hand embroidery, so I can explore the qualities which can be achieved by stitch in much greater depth. Although I would like my work to be very reflective of the original objects, it also needs to work together as a collection. Therefore, to make it more harmonious, I plan to use a set colour palette when designing and working with the imagery from the objects. This colour palette will develop as I create my work, but I plan to use purple in conjunction with other colours as Ultra Violet is the Pantone colour of the year 2018 which will help my work be more relevant to today.

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