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For my individual inquiry proposal, it will explore the meaning behind the keywords: colour, material, and handicraft within my practice of surface pattern and textiles. These words have become an interest to me as colour and materials are the starting points to my projects, through this you can put different colours together and use contrasting materials within art, which can attract viewers to look at your work. I will look at how artists and designers have used colour, materials, and the use of handicraft in their work. I will look at theorists such as John Berger 'Ways of seeing', to see how art is perceived differently to everyone through the use of imagery, Paul Carter 'Material Thinking', the creative research behind art and Jessica Hemmings 'The Textile Reader', to see how artists use handicraft as their practice. Throughout this, I will explore how these keywords are perceived through my discipline.

Colour goes back many years where philosophers have different theories and ways to look at colour that has since been developed further, over the coming years. One of these is Empedocles, a Greek philosopher that separated colour in to the four elements of nature: fire, earth, air, and water, he believed that these elements were how all living things were created (Haller, 2019, p.27 ). More philosophers like Hippocrates and Aristotle also believed that the four elements of nature were associated with colour, Hippocrates made the connection of colour to his knowledge of medicine by referring to the elements as the four fluids to which he believed we are all born with a mixture of these four humours (Haller, 2019, p.28). Aristotle had a different type of theory where he believed that colour was sent as a celestial ray of light by God from heaven that all colours came as black and white rays of light, this became the first known theory regarding colour. He was the first philosopher to come up with a colour system which made the colours range from white at midday to black

at midnight (Haller, 2019, p.29). This theory was soon developed further by Isaac Newton who has helped us all understand what we know about colour today and how artists/designers use the colour wheel to produce their work. To understand colour, Isaac Newton shone a light through a glass prism where he was able to split colour into seven colour spectrums: the colours of the rainbow. Through his discovery of this Isaac Newton was the first person to develop a colour wheel where the primary colours: red, green, and blue are opposite their complementary colours (Haller, 2019, p.30). Johann Van Goethe was a philosopher that challenged the way Isaac Newton looked at colour by seeing all colours as an emotional experience and how we all perceive it differently, he discovered the laws of colour harmony, how colour can cause an emotional reaction to people by combining different ones together (Haller, 2019, p.31). Although this is some of the philosophers that have touched upon colour, there have been many more that have had their theories and ways to look at colour such as Carl Jung, and the Bauhaus where Wassily Kandinsky, Johannes Itten, and Josef Albers taught their students about the colour theory.

In the Oxford Dictionary of English, colour is defined as “the property possessed by an object of producing different sensations on the eye as a result of the way it reflects or emits light” (Stevenson, 2010, p.896), when we are looking at objects that have colours on them, we are seeing these colours because there is a light being reflected on it or light being bounced off it into our eyes. This is because every single colour has its own individual wavelength of light, these wavelengths are what we perceive as colour. In our eyes, we have two types of photoreceptors called the rods and the cones, this is where we are able to detect and pick up colours in lower and higher levels of light. The rods provide us with our night vision in low light and the

cones provide us with detecting the higher levels of light, one of which being our colour vision. In our eyes we have millions of rods and cones that work together so that we are able to see colours in our everyday lives, there is three specific types of cones which helps us to see different things, these are: red, blue, and green.



*Figure.1. 'Colour Narratives'*



*Figure.2. 'Colour Narratives'*

Through our vision, we each perceive colour differently. Although, colours may all be same there is a possibility that colour to everyone appears differently. Colour is something that is around us all the time influencing the way we do things, it is in what

we wear, to what we eat, to our home interiors. According to John Berger, 'Ways of Seeing', he states that "it is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world"(Berger, 1972, p.7), from the moment we came into the world we are able to see before we learn how to walk or talk. This gives us a way to connect to the world before we can communicate. A way to look at colour is through CMF design, that focuses on the industrial side that takes tactile and decorative approaches in their collaboration with brands. One of who is Laura Perryman, in one her projects called 'Colour Narratives' with Graphenstone Paint, she created a whole colour palette range using paint, every colour told a story about mental health showing support of those who suffer. In Figure 1, it has reference to the colours in the colour wheel. Figure 2, is where she is matching the hand painted colour blue to these things in the surrounding world. This blue colour palette can represent a calmness as blue is usually connected to the sky or ocean. Using this imagery, the colours can be perceived differently to each person even though it is the same colour. In 'Ways of Seeing', John Berger mentions that "yet, although every image embodies a way of seeing, our perception or appreciation of an image depends upon our own way of seeing" (Berger, 1972, p.10), each image that we look at means something to every individual and we see these images differently based on the knowledge of how we each see.

The second keyword is handicraft, the act of making things by hand. In the oxford dictionary of English, handicraft is defined as an "activity involving the making of decorative domestic or other objects by hand"(Stevenson, 2010, p.2022,), the act of being able to make something with your hands for an interior or exterior setting or other uses. These can be made through the use of paper, glass, ceramics and

jewellery, and pottery. In textiles, there are many ways in which handicrafts can fit in to this, with hand embroidery, knitting, crocheting, weaving, and tapestry. Handicraft is something that is rooted in many cultures, where they use their own handicrafts to create pieces that represent their nations. With this people are learning more about their cultures while participating in the craft. These handicrafts in cultures show the heritage and history through the way they make work. For example in Welsh culture, we have Welsh quilts that have been around for many years and are very popular within the communities. These quilts are often made with wool that give them some texture and makes the quilting soft. In these quilts makers are able to showcase the heritage and history in Wales by featuring things like patterns, towns, and valleys on them. Most quilts in Welsh culture are usually made with Welsh patterns or better known as Welsh tapestry.

As discussed above that handicraft is a way of making things by hand, as the maker it gives you the opportunity to feel what the materials are like. The sense of touch is an important part when it comes to making an art piece as you get a feel of the material that the artist is working with. In the textile reader, it states that, "textile practice remains, however rooted in the material, and for the textile practice which identifies with craft for the role of making and of handling materials" (Hemmings, 2012, p.11), textiles is the craft of working with materials and the need for them to be touched to understand the product. Textiles is all about the materials that you are working with. Through touch, it can give the audience an understanding of how hard or easy the materials are to work with and from there they can imagine what it would be like to make a piece similar or think about the process behind the designer creating it. However, it is known that if you go to an art exhibition, there will be signs

around prohibiting everyone from touching the artworks. As stated in 'The Textile Reader', "exhibitions tend to marginalise the technical, artisanal aspects of practice, and they do not, in general allow the involvement of touch" (Hemmings, 2012, p.9), these art exhibitions take away the audience's ability to touch the materials.

As no one is allowed to touch items in exhibitions, there is another way in which the artists use handicraft, that being in the form of writing. Using this method of handicraft, it helps the artists express their work through written words. From this viewer can gain knowledge on what the artist wanted to get across in the written statement, as suggested in 'The Textile Reader', "writing becomes a form of making – making words – and an aspect of seeing"(Hemmings, 2012 p.10), the writing part becomes a part of the making process because it explains everything that the viewer need to know.

*Figure.3. 'Interweaved' An interior gallery for Rolls-Royce Phantom*





*Figure.4. 'Interweaved' An interior gallery for Rolls-Royce Phantom*

In figure 1 and 2, it was a collection of three components within a car interior, where it had to be future craftsmanship and contrasting materials. This is consisted of leather, painted gold and uv printed wood veneer hand woven together, that was telling the story of the metaphor of how the world is woven together and we are woven into it. This piece was made so that people would want to touch it and be able to know or imagine what it felt like, as there was two contrasting materials together that have different textured feelings. To know what it felt like you had to use your sense of imagination and sight, in 'Ways of Seeing' John Berger, explains that to feel you need to understand what it is like through our senses, "(close your eyes, move around the room and notice how the faculty of touch is like a static, limited form of

sight)” (Berger, 1972, p.8-9), using your imagination to see what it would feel like, touch is another form of seeing.

My last keyword is material, another important aspect as to how art is created and seen. In the Oxford dictionary of English material is described as “the matter from which a thing is or can be made” (Stevenson, 2010, p.2823), making things from substances such as gold and silver or the use of making things out of recycled materials like paper and plastics. Another way in which material can be defined is “cloth or fabric” (Stevenson, 2010, p.2823), this is a term that relates to the use of materials in textiles, one is called dress materials that refers to the various fabrics that can be used and made into clothing, bedding, curtains and other fabric made items. Through the use of materials, they can be manipulated changing the way that materials appear, in ‘The Textile Reader’ it states that “In addition to the analogy with the textuality of language and the intertextuality of signs, textile practices may also knowledge this contiguity with the physical forms of bodies and of things, a kind of textuality of operating through and in between forms of space” (Hemmings, 2012, p.11), through the use of materials we are able to create different shapes, natural forms as well as using language as a way to express the makings of the forms. Which expands on how materials can be used to manipulate the way we ourselves as artists connect to the world around us, creating new opportunities for not only the viewers but the artists to delve deeper within their work. As John Berger states in ‘Ways of Seeing’, “we never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves” (Berger, 1972, p.9), as artists we always look at things that relate to us for us to be inspired.



*Figure.5. 'Margate Knot'*



*Figure.6. 'Margate Knot'*



*Figure.7. 'Rosette'*



*Figure.8. 'Rosette'*

Looking into how materials can be used within textiles, fibre artist Anna Ray who works with many materials through handicraft explores visual texture and structures from the surrounding world to inspire her work. Through her use of working with materials, she manipulates them so that they fall into their natural shape and form.

Recently she had an exhibition called 'Fibre and Form', that focused on her large sculptural wall hangings. In figure 5 and 6, 'Margate Knot', it is consisted of multicoloured sewn elements of material bunched up together, some elements of this design are tied. This is one where it shows the elements of natural form, the pieces are falling on to each other. Figure 7 and 8, this was also featured in her exhibition called 'Rosette', a slightly smaller sculpture, consisting of hand painted materials that have been looped around and tied to the other pieces. In this exhibition, Anna Ray has worked with bright colours which people would perceive as different. She has used handicraft within these pieces as well by sewing all the materials together as seen in figure 5, as touched upon on my second keyword, how the audience would not be able to touch these, they would read the statement next to it to understand what it is about, in 'The Textile Reader', it states that "writing establishes the involvement of the viewer in forming relationship between seeing and making, potentially guiding the viewer away from the flatness of a static object to the activity and ideas which it embodies"(Hemmings, 2012, p.10), through writing, viewers are able to understand what the artists is portraying in the piece, giving viewers insight to how it was made.

Behind every piece of art there is a process of creative thinking, in this context material is a way of thinking about your creative research in a different way. In the book 'Material Thinking' by Paul Carter says, "material thinking occurs in the making of works of art" (Carter, 2004, p.12), to make these types of art you are questioning why something matters, why you are doing it. Though this process, it allows the artist to look at their individual experiences that leads to artist creation is often easier to create if it is something passionate to the artist. However, material thinking goes

beyond this knowledge and pushes further so that artists understand more about why they are doing something, in 'Material Thinking', it states "the language of creative research is related to the goal of material thinking, and both look beyond the making process to the local reinvention of social relations" (Carter, 2004, p.26) the source of material thinking enables to think and approach our work differently.

Throughout this, it has explored the meaning behind the three keywords: colour. It looked the history, discussing the philosophers that came up with theories about colour: the colour wheel. It looked at Laure Perryman talking about how she works with colour and investigating how people perceive colour differently referencing John Berger in 'Ways of Seeing'. Handicraft is rooted in culture and heritage of a country which is somewhere handicraft comes from. For this artist, I explored how I used handicraft for one of my pieces exploring how textiles need to be touched in order for viewers to understand more about it. The reference for this was 'The Textile Reader'. Material, looking at how it is used in textiles, how you can manipulate it. I looked at the fibre artist Anna Ray who manipulates her materials and lets them fall into their natural shape and form. For references I looked at John Berger and Jessica Hemmings for seeing and touch, I also referenced Paul Carter in 'Material Thinking' as a way of creative research. After doing the research for this I have come up with the question '*How analysing the processes of art can be interpreted by the viewer?*'

## Bibliography

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Available at: <https://lauraperryman.co/sustainable-colour-graphenstone-paints>

Accessed at: 29<sup>th</sup> April 2022

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Available at: <https://lauraperryman.co/sustainable-colour-graphenstone-paints>

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Available at: <http://www.annaray.co.uk/assemblage/8.html>

Accessed at: 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2022

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Accessed at: 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2022