

Title: How do Surface Pattern designers go with their gut to create fashion textiles for the future?

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How do Surface Pattern designers go with their gut to create fashion textiles for the future?

In this extended essay I will be exploring how Surface Pattern designers use their gut and intuition when designing fashion focused textiles and how this relates to me and my studio practice. Throughout the essay I will investigate how our intuition plays a significant role when creating artwork and how this can be translated into future fashion through collaboration. I will research artists and designers whose work is supportive of this and demonstrate how they have gone with their gut. I will look at works by Lee Krasner, Laura Slater and Vicky Barranguet. I will also explore how through collaboration Surface Pattern Designers are being presented with opportunities to have their work celebrated on environmentally conscious clothing which is vital as it is known that the fashion industry is contributing to the overall climate crisis. I will consider how Sustainable fashion is growing and look at clothing brands that work with artists and textile designers such as Roake Studio, Kolston, Advait and Bethany Williams. In relation to sustainability, I will look at concepts that aim to reduce textile waste such as Closed Loop design systems and creating a circular economy which sets out ways for textiles to be reused and prolonged instead of ending up in landfill. I will then explore how non designers can fuel their intuition as well as contributing to environmentally conscious practices such as upcycling and mending to make individualistic clothing. Ultimately, in this independent project I want to highlight how Surface Pattern designers use their gut and can celebrate their work on sustainable clothing with the aim to make future textiles that are meaningful.

A gut feeling is essentially our intuition; it is “the ability to know something by using your feelings rather than considering the facts” (Oxford Learners Dictionary, 2023). This definition states that intuition is sensed, often without even realising it. An instinct that can often be found within artists and designers.

Lee Krasner is an example of an artist who created artwork through her intuitive choices. Krasner was an American abstract artist; often overlooked and referred to as ‘Mrs Pollock’ in a time when few female Abstract Expressionists practiced. Krasner did not let this disadvantage her and she was confident in her ability as a painter, which has led her to be remembered as more than just Jackson Pollock’s wife and an artist in her own right (Cooke, R, 2019). The large-scale abstract style of Krasner, as shown in figure 1 (*Bird Talk*, 1955), could suggest that she used her ‘gut’ as an influence on how the paintings turned out. According to the book ‘*Lee Krasner*’ when Lee was creating her work she leaned into her intuition “to trust her unconscious...true feelings” which were not “socially conditioned responses” (Hobbs, 1993, p.11). Implying that her paintings were a reaction driven by her instincts and not necessarily a process

that she has been taught or something she has learnt. This is the same as tacit knowledge, which is an intuitive “‘know how’ as opposed to codified knowledge” (Busch, 2008, p.38). It is apparent that the way in which Krasner worked relates to tacit knowledge and working this way allows the freedom to be less reliant on conscious thoughts, Krasner created through feelings. This is important for me as an emerging designer as this intuitive way of working encourages the creation of work that is strongly an outcome of the designer's feelings and responses rather than anyone else's. This makes work more personal and meaningful to the designer.



(Figure, 1. *Bird Talk*, 1955)

In my studio practice I often take inspiration from artists like Krasner by allowing myself to be playful; I do not set expectations on how I want the outcome to look. I do this by trusting the process and being experimental in various ways such as with the choice of media I use. I do not limit myself to one medium or process and I enjoy exploring different ways of working which encourages me to focus on the technique and process rather than the outcome, allowing me to embrace making mistakes. This gut-driven way of creating work allows me not to overthink each step when I am painting or collaging; I am more reliant on my intuition and subconscious responses than I am of my conscious thoughts. This relates to how Krasner worked and much like how she put trust in her “unconscious” (Hobbs, 1993, p.11).

Krasner was not afraid of turning mistakes into something new and when she created something that she didn't like she repurposed it and created collages. Krasner started experimenting with collage when she walked into her studio one day and "tore everything" up, leaving the floor covered in torn drawings which later interested her and she began to collage pieces together (Hobbs, 1993, p.51). This impulsive response is interesting and affirms that collaging as a technique is an intuitive and spontaneous process as it involves being playful and changing the composition until instinctively the layout feels right. I work in a similar way and find that being creative is about experimenting with new exciting techniques, not being afraid about making mistakes as unexpected and spontaneous results can lead to positive outcomes. When exploring the composition of my work I often use collaging as a technique to create quick responses. This allows me the freedom to be experimental and not over analyse the process by working in the moment and instinctively. In relation to this, Lee Krasner aimed for her work to be intuitive and she "searched for ways to plumb her unconscious" (Hobbs, 1993 p.35). Perhaps collaging opened a way for Lee Krasner to experiment with new spontaneous processes other than painting, and by looking at images of her work it seems that she sometimes merged both painting and collaging to create her outcomes. Figure 1 is an example of a collage painting by Lee Krasner which shows the 'torn' layered pieces. The combination of collaging as a technique alongside painting allowed Lee Krasner to produce unpredictable results and according to the book *'Lee Krasner'* her work was "genuinely a new creation rather than merely the illustration of an idea" (Hobbs, 1993, p.41). This implies that Lee Krasner did not visualise the outcome, and the intuitive process of her work is what made results original and personal.



(Figure, 2. *Lee Krasner, 1981*)



(Figure, 3. *Landlines, 2021*)

Surface Pattern designers often tap into their own intuition and ‘gut feeling’ when creating work by using intuitive techniques and processes which can be translated onto textiles. Laura Slater, a British based Textile Designer is a good example of this. Slater is similar to Lee Krasner in the way that she creates imagery, and she could be considered a painter like Krasner. Her work is more abstract in style with strong brush marks. Figures 2 and 3 show both Krasner and Slater in the studio using collaging and painting as a technique to create imagery. The images show the similarity between the processes of both artists and the spontaneous movement of collaged paper across the page. The technique of collaging is, therefore, reliant on the individual being playful and trusting their own gut instincts.



(Figure, 4. *Jean Hans Arp*, 2020)



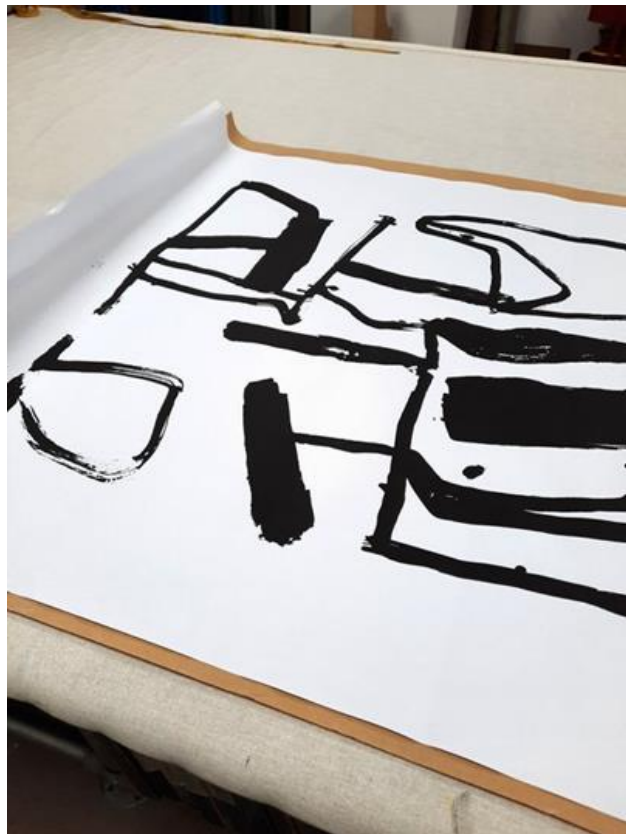
(Figure, 5. *Desert Moon*, 1955)

Figures 4 and 5 are examples of work by Laura Slater and Lee Krasner which further highlight the similarities in both work styles and aesthetics. The placement of the collaged pieces is fragmented and layered over each other. The palette is limited to four colours. This could suggest that both Laura Slater and Lee Krasner are a good example of an artist and textile designer going with their 'gut', compositionally, when creating imagery.

Slater's focus is on how drawings can be translated onto surfaces through the consideration of hand printed processes, and she is interested in how pattern can be used to connect us with our environment (Laura Slater, 2023). The clothing brand Roake Studio collaborated with Slater to create a sustainable collection, representative of their personal surroundings. The collection 'Landlines' is inspired by landmarks in the Isle of Wight and Yorkshire which is where Laura Slater and Roake Studio are based, highlighting the importance of connection even when there is physical distance such as the pandemic, which disconnected people and limited the ability to work with others (Roake Studio, 2021). This collaboration explores where they are from, the significance and importance of their personal surroundings, possibly as a way to escape the uncertainty we all experienced during the pandemic.



(Figure, 6. *Laura Slater x Roake Studio*, 2021)



(Figure 7. *Landlines*, 2021)

The way in which Laura Slater has represented these landmarks of the Isle of White and Yorkshire is very abstract and loose; at first glance it is driven by mark making and bold shapes much like Lee Krasner. Figure 7 is an image of the process Laura Slater took to create artwork which was eventually screen printed onto the clothing garments (see Figure 6). The image suggests that Slater draws in an expressive way as the lines are more gestural and non-representative, meaning the subject matter can therefore be interpreted in different ways. In relation to this, according to the book *'World of Art: Abstract Art'*, abstract art can be influenced from anything, but some artists use forms of nature and the surrounding world to inspire them; the artist "selects a form and then simplifies it until the image bears only stylized similarities to the original" (Moszynska, 2020, p.7). This quote is interesting as it illustrates how Laura Slater uses landscapes and her environment to produce abstract interpretations, fueled by her own creative intuition to create bold and gestural marks.

I can relate to the way in which Laura Slater works as I enjoy analogue processes executed by hand. I also consider working with different media such as paints, inks and oil pastels which allow me to be expressive and it can result in a variety of textures and marks which appeal to me aesthetically. I often look to the world around me for inspiration such as my locality as this is important to me in terms of my identity and who I am as an emerging designer. Taking inspiration from my local area and history makes me feel more connected to my home and creates an inner feeling of nostalgia and belonging. The Welsh word 'hiraeth' describes this feeling of home as it is "a deep longing for a person or thing" (Oxford Learners Dictionary, 2023). I think that providing a narrative to designs such as the story behind the 'Landlines' collection creates more meaning which is encouraged in my studio practice. Therefore, the collaboration between Laura Slater and womenswear clothing brand Roake Studio illustrates how through collaboration, pattern can be used to reflect an artist's response to their environment in their own personal and meaningful way.

Sustainability is important to both Laura Slater and Roake Studio as the clothing produced by this brand is heavily motivated by acknowledging our social responsibility when it comes to fashion and encouraging consumers to keep items for longer. In relation to being more environmentally conscious, collaging as a technique demonstrated by Krasner and Slater is a good way to use up unwanted pieces of paper instead of throwing it away and increasing waste, which can contribute to environmental issues. Roake Studio ensures that they are making conscious decisions which are less harmful to the environment; noting that "our studio is completely zero waste" (Roake Studio, (no date)). It is evident that the fashion industry has contributed to the rising issue of overconsumption and waste as too often

consumers buy cheap “throwaway outfits” which are often “worn once” for specific occasions (Chapman, 2021, p. 15). When thinking about the future and how Surface Pattern and Textile designers can create future fashion textiles, working with sustainable brands may be a way forward. Textile designers can create future fashion textiles with sustainable credentials, much like Laura Slater collaborating with Roake Studio. This allows opportunity and space to express not only their creativity but also their social consciousness on clothing made to last, “fashion is forever” (Roake Studio, (no date)). Keen to make meaningful garments that last a lifetime, in stark contrast to disposable fast fashion, could this be the future for Surface Pattern designers to celebrate and display their art on environmentally and socially conscious clothing?

Advait launched in 2020 and is a clothing brand that connects art and fashion with sustainable values at its core. Advait clothing uses a variety of techniques and analogue processes such as “hand painting” and “surface manipulation” (Advait India, 2023).



(Figure, 8. *Doodle Trouser*. Advait)

(Figure, 9. *Doodle Blazer*. Advait)

Figures 8 and 9 are images of the ‘Doodle’ matching blazer and trouser set which show the combined processes and layers of medium used. It almost looks like a mixed media collage has been created

straight onto the garment. The name of the blazer is also interesting as the definition of 'doodle' is something that is drawn when "bored or thinking of something else" (Oxford Learners Dictionary, 2023). It can be interpreted that the imagery on the blazer has not been overthought and has been composed intuitively, much like Laura Slater and Lee Krasner. The result of the hand processes such as 'hand painting' is one of a kind and has created an outcome that is special which may appeal more to consumers. According to WGSN, consumers are "seeking unique products from value-driven brands" (Barnes, O, et al, 2022). It is inspiring to see how a relatively young brand has become established within the marketplace utilising handmade approaches and the celebration of art as a focus.

A collaboration between the brand Kolston and Vicky Barranguet also demonstrates the celebration of art on sustainable clothing. Kolston is a luxury clothing brand that celebrates the fusion between art and fashion, with strong sustainable values, "A common thread between art and fashion" (Koltson, 2023). To celebrate art, Kolston worked with abstract expressionist Barranguet whose "painterly patterns" are a fast-growing trend, as stated by WGSN (Hudson, R, 2023). This trend takes into consideration a spontaneous, intuitive approach to painting, and I think it is important for consumers to be made more aware of how art can be celebrated in a different way such as being worn. By allowing artists to have their work displayed on clothing it helps to form connections between our surrounding world and each other. Therefore, collaborations between clothing brands and artists/ textile designers are important as it provides a way for emerging designers to gain recognition and have their art celebrated.



(Figure, 10. *Out Of The Blue*, 2018)

Figure 10, *Out Of The Blue*, is an example of one of Barranguet's paintings and demonstrates a more gestural and expressive style of painting, relating to that 'gut' reaction. The bold movement of lines is like how Laura Slater worked to create imagery for the 'Landlines' collection with Roake Studio.



(Figure, 11. SS24, Kolston)

Kolston collaborating with artists makes each clothing garment more meaningful and special as it is a unique one-of-a-kind piece that has been carefully thought about; through the design of the garment, its construction and the unique print that adorns and celebrates it. Figure 11 is a garment from the 'SS24' collection and illustrates how work by Barranguet has been transformed into a large placement on an evening dress. It is clear the style of Barranguet's art has been considered in the making of the garment as the shape and material of the dress reflects the elegance and flow of Barranguet's painting. The materials used by Kolston are environmentally conscious, "certified and natural" with the silk they use having "biodegradable properties" (Kolston, 2023). Sustainable approaches such as this choice of materials are important as consumers are seeking ways to be more environmentally conscious when it comes to clothing, "current generations are more careful about our planet...they care about what they wear and how and where their clothes are made" (Vezzoli, et al, 2022, p.11). Collaborations are a way to encourage meaningful and sustainable fashion which encourages consumers to keep items for longer.

Collaborations between clothing brands and artists acknowledge the importance of forming connections and working together to create meaningful garments. By "sharing profiles of people involved in its

creation...wearer presented with a narrative that provides meaning" (Gwilt, 2020, p.52). Connecting consumers with items that have a story, purposely sharing its provenance and information about the creators involved in its construction to form connections and a deeper meaning. It acknowledges and celebrates the people involved, providing the consumer with a narrative which encourages more thoughtful purchases with the aim for clothing to be kept for a lifetime.

Sustainable values demonstrated by Roake Studio and Kolston, who create clothing that is made to last, directly connects to closed loop design systems and circular fashion. According to the book *'Circular Economy and Re-commerce in the Fashion Industry'*, in the UK "people use 1.5 to 2 million tons of textile, while 1.2 million tons of them go to landfills" (Shrivastava, 2020, p.32). This startling statistic shows that the textile industry is contributing to the increasing global environmental crisis, with textiles ending up in landfill which leads to further pollution and more waste. With the current crisis surrounding Climate Change, it is important for Surface Pattern designers and emerging designers like me, to acknowledge how the textile industry is damaging the environment and how we consider more sustainable approaches going forward.

Action is being implemented within the fashion industry to meet certain goals with work being done "to drive the fashion industry to net-zero Greenhouse Gas emissions by no later than 2050" in order to level global warming and reduce the increase (Fashion for Climate, 2023). One way in which the fashion industry can significantly improve is through closed loop systems and circular economy.

Closed loop design systems offer a chance to "reuse materials of a product that has come to the end of its useful life" through recycling and creating new fibers that can be used again (Gwilt, 2020, p.49). This is the same as a circular economy and Ellen Macarthur states that a circular economy prevents materials becoming waste by regenerating and keeping materials in constant circulation through processes such as "Maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacture, recycling and composting" (Ellen Macarthur Foundation, 2023). Roake studio is a good example of a smaller clothing brand that is applying these values such as 'remanufacturing' clothing from "end-of-line fabrics that would have otherwise gone to waste" (Roake Studio, (no date)). By using 'off cuts' of fabric, it is minimizing the number of unused textiles going to landfill and highlights how clothing brands can be more resourceful and sustainable when sourcing materials. Using the initiative of working with 'end of the line' and scraps of fabric also links back to collaging as a technique, by working with left over materials that will most likely end up being thrown away. As stated by Mandy Pattullo, if you have unwanted scraps of fabric lying around "cut them up and use them to create works of art, which bring together your own hand and those of

past generations” (Pattullo, 2016, p. 12). In my studio practice I often keep aside scraps of paper and reuse it to create collages and quick responses which not only fuels my intuition but reduces waste and encourages me to be more environmentally conscious.

‘Reuse’ and ‘refurbishment’ are an important part of the circular economy model in relation to fashion as consumers should be keeping garments for longer. Techniques such as repairing and upcycling not only prolong the life of an item, but it also allows the individual to be expressive and creative when doing so. Upcycled clothing “tap into Gen Z’s growing desire for individuality and sustainable consumption” (Barnes, O, et al, 2022). By encouraging individuals to upcycle clothing they can intuitively express their creativity to make clothing unique to themselves, while extending the life of a garment/ reducing waste. The book *‘Meaningful Stuff: Design that Lasts’*, notes that the customization of items initiates reconnection of “everyday people with the process of creation” (Chapman, 2021, p.144). Upcycling is not only encouraging individuals to be more environmentally conscious, but it is introducing ways for non-designers to explore their creativity intuitively.

Designers and clothing brands are putting their own input on this rise in upcycling and repairing to offer “Amplified craft”, which involves “purposeful patchwork and repair” to create “wearable art pieces that tap into consumer desire for individualism” (Hudson, R, 2023). Designer Bethany Williams explores the concept of “wearable art” (Hudson, R, 2023), with sustainable motives. *The Hands that Heal Us 2022* was created to emphasize how many hands the clothing has passed and touched during the process of making the garments, a visual display of gratitude to the makers who helped create the pieces (Bethany Williams, 2023). This goes against the concept of fast fashion, and it is suggestive to a slower approach. Slow fashion focuses on creating a more “sustainable process” and provides each garment with a story, allowing consumers to “have more appreciation” and connection to clothing (Pookulangara, S. Shephard, A, (2013). The word ‘heal’ is interesting and reflects the slow fashion approach designers such as Bethany Williams are adopting by using sustainable approaches to improve the impact that fashion has on the environment and contribute to ‘healing’ the planet.



(Figure, 12. *The Hands That Heal Us*, 2022)

(Figure, 13. *The Hands That Heal Us*, 2022)

The clothing in the collection has been created using “artisanal and hand-crafted elements... weaving, knitting, printing, patchworking and embroidery” (Bethany Williams, 2023). This traditional way of working and elements of hand processes such as ‘printing’ links back to work by Laura Slater and clothing brand Advait, which is what interests me in relation to my studio practice. When carrying out processes done by hand, it makes me feel more connected to the work I am producing as I am actively using my hands and focusing on movement and touch. For example, when I screen print, I am reliant on the feeling and motion of the process and often the outcomes of screen printing are different from one another, which is reflective of an analogue way of working. This links back to previous thoughts by WGSN on upcycling and how it is encouraging people to be expressive and create one-of-a-kind pieces that are individual to them. Figures 12 and 13 are images from the collection ‘*The Hands That Heal Us*’ which show the hand-crafted elements such as patchworking and printing onto the clothing. Emphasis on hand processes both through designing and upcycling allows designers and non-creatives to be experimental and go with their ‘gut’ as well as being more sustainable and reducing waste which is helping to create textiles ‘for the future’. It also highlights the time and effort makers put into producing garments which is often overlooked.

The work by Tom of Holland and visible mending relates to taking more action in creating a circular economy as repairing and reusing clothes reduces waste and increases the lifespan of a garment, making it last longer. It also highlights the craftsmanship that goes into making a clothing garment which encourages individuals to gain an understanding of the work that goes into making an item of clothing. By learning about hand processes this can create a deeper connection with consumers and clothing, to increase the lifespan of a garment. According to Tom of Holland, mending clothing has allowed him to “gain a deep understanding of material qualities and the traditional techniques used for making and mending” (Gray, P, 2019). This links back to designer Bethany Williams and her *‘The Hands that Heal Us’* collection and suggests that maybe as a society we have become less aware of the skills and processes involved in making garments and we have adhered to “fashions throwaway culture” (Gray, P, 2019) which is contributing to the amount of textiles ending up in landfill. With the aim of making our clothing last for longer and reducing waste, Tom of Holland previously introduced a ‘Visible Mending Programme’ which was an event that happened once a month that taught people how to repair clothing (Gray, P, 2019). By teaching people how to mend clothing it raised awareness on the time it takes to hand repair which helps build a connection and “reinforces relationships between wearer and garment” which consequently encourages the individual to wear “existing clothes for longer” (Gray, P, 2019). This idea of ‘connection’ is interesting as not only did the Visible Mending Programme allow an individual to connect to their item of clothing, but it also encouraged connection with other people as the event brought people together. According to Jonathan Chapman in his book *‘Meaningful stuff: Design that Lasts’*, “using together, and making together, provides a vital context for collaboration” and groups that programmes such as the Visible Mending created reduced waste and “increase social cohesion” (Chapman, 2021, p. 148). Perhaps how Surface Pattern designers can create ‘future textiles’ is through more collaborations and working together to make environmentally conscious and meaningful clothing that consumers can connect with and will want to keep for longer.

The word ‘meaningful’ is interesting in relation to consumers making sustainable choices as we often know in our gut that we need to be more conscious about our actions and their effect on the environment. Many of us understand that fashion is having a negative impact on our environment but still the media promotes “throwaway fast fashion” (Denisova, 2021, p.4). Our inner awareness of this issue can be described by one definition of the word ‘meaningful’; “intended to communicate or express something to somebody, without any words being spoken” (Oxford Learners Dictionary, 2023). We know in our gut that we must make more conscious decisions to help improve the climate crisis and by

being more selective and choosing 'meaningful' sustainable clothing, it can improve efforts to being more environmentally conscious and responsible.

To conclude, it has been shown through the work of Lee Krasner and Laura Slater how the role of our intuition and 'gut' allows artists and designers to be expressive and trusting of their own feelings when it comes to creating imagery. Collaging is a good technique for this as shown by both artists as it encourages spontaneous reactions and unexpected outcomes that are not predisposed or thought about. Throughout this essay I have also emphasised the importance of process as opposed to the outcome. The analogue way of working and the significance of working by hand can be used to make connections between makers and artists, as a way to provide more meaning to clothing, demonstrated by *'The Hands That Heal Us'* collection by Bethany Williams. By celebrating the makers and artists involved in clothing collaborations it highlights the significance of working by hand and using analogue techniques that encourage connection and a slower approach to fashion.

To achieve 'future textiles' it will be vital for Surface Pattern designers to make conscious choices surrounding sustainability. This can be achieved by collaborating with sustainable clothing brands as demonstrated by Advait and Kolston. By encouraging more collaborations between artists/ textile designers with environmentally conscious clothing brands, it creates more meaning to clothing garments as each garment has been carefully considered and is reflective of work produced by artists. Meaningful clothing such as the collections made by Advait, Kolston and Bethany Williams go against fast fashion and the damaging consequences that 'throwaway' (Denisova, 2021, p.4) clothing has on our environment. A rise in meaningful clothing items responds to making clothing that lasts for longer, which is important in terms of our environmental consciousness and following a more circular economy. Upcycling techniques also highlight ways to increase the lifespan of clothing and it also allows non-creative individuals to tap into their creativity and work intuitively to make meaningful connections and unique outcomes, representative of themselves.

As an emerging Surface Pattern designer, this research has shown me that the way textile designers and artists go with their gut is complex, and more than just working intuitively to produce imagery. Working intuitively and creating work that is expressive of an individual can form deeper connection, but perhaps the way textile designers go with their gut is through meaningful collaborations to encourage a collective consciousness within consumers and the fashion industry to make textiles suitable for the future.

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Figure 7- Roake Studio (2021a) *Laura Slater X roake studio 'landlines' collaboration, Roake Studio*. Available at: <https://roake.studio/journal/2021/9/21/swxak9crswuc05qjj1wzp5pvn16oeo> (Accessed: 11 December 2023).

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