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Three Keywords: Drawing, Nature, Colour

For my independent enquiry proposal I am going to explore three key words that reflect my intentions and values within my practice. These key words are *Drawing*, *Nature* and *Colour*. Through research into these words I will be able to start to link them together to construct a research question for my independent project. I am going to research these words into a deeper insight that relate to Surface Pattern Design, through key theories; Colour Psychology, Biophilia and Semiotics.

Drawing is defined as “the art or skill of making pictures” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, 2022). There are a variety of definitions that each person holds: “For the artist drawing is discovery” (Berger and Savage, 2005, p. 3), as the opening line of his book, is very powerful. Drawing is a journey, it is about discovering the contents of your own mind and expressing that on paper. Or, if observing from an object it forces the artist to connect with that object, dissect it in his mind and put it together again. “A drawing is an autobiographical record of one’s discovery of an event- seen, remembered or imagined” (Berger and Savage, 2005, p. 3), Berger says that there are three ways of drawing; by seeing, by memory and by imagination.

In Chapter 2 of Juhani Pallasmaa’s *The Thinking Hand* he talks about the hand of the craftsman and his materials. “The work of a craftsman implies collaboration with his material” (Pallasmaa, 2009, p. 55), instead of having a preconceived idea, one needs to listen to their material. It is not about making what you want to make, but what the material allows you to make. For example, you cannot make out of wood what you would want to make with marble.

This approach to craft applies to drawing as well. Instead of having a preconceived idea before beginning a drawing, one needs to connect and collaborate with their tool. (Pallasmaa, 2009, p. 55) says “Each material as its own life”. Different mediums within art each have their own purpose, and within that their own texture, scale, finish, consistency, dry or wet and what it allows you to do with them. What you can do with watercolour you cannot do with oil pastel. You create very different outcomes with each tool and that’s the beauty of art and communication within art.

The emotionalism theory states that art should evoke mood and feeling (Ingram, 2019). As an artist, the communication between the artwork and view

is essential in conveying the feelings you want to convey. To me, drawing is a way of storytelling, self-expression and becoming involved in the visual world. I see drawing as an act for communication. The emotionalism theory explains why people use the act of drawing to communicate and express their feelings.

Gombrich's *The Uses of Images* (1999) provides a strong explanation of the creator's purpose, and what the creator of an image wanted the public to see. He notes the idea that art comes with a meaning, or a story. Gombrich emphasizes the maker's intent throughout the text.

“Art too, belongs to the necessary expressions of mankind; indeed one may say that the genius of mankind expresses itself more completely and more characteristically in art than religion.” (Gombrich, 1999, p. 264)

(Edwards, 2001, p.6) further emphasizes the use of art for self-expression, “I see you as an individual with creative potential for expressing yourself through drawing”. Drawing is a way of visual communication, to create meaning and convey a message. But how do people derive meaning from a piece of art? Colour as a means of symbolism is a major factor within art to portray meaning. Every colour has a meaning, and every colour will have an emotion attached to it when the observer sees it. Semiotics help us derive meaning from anything through the study of signs.

In Roland Barthes' *Image, Music, Text* (1977), Barthes notes the importance of analysing images, as imagery conveys hidden meanings that can be interpreted and deconstructed. The idea of visual communication is explored in the text, the term “Rhetoric of the Image” refers to how an image can create meaning and also the messages that it contains. In Barthes *Elements of Semiology* (1997) states that there are two different types of message within an image; the denoted message, which is the literal meaning and the connoted message is the implied meaning.

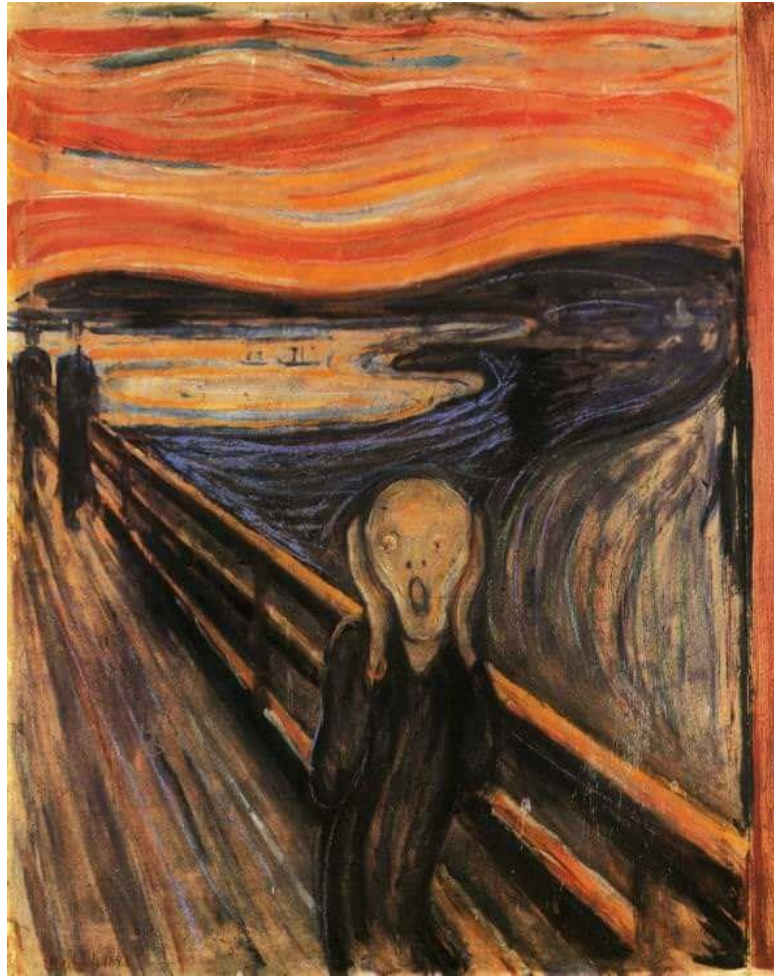


Figure 1. *The Scream*, 1893

The Scream was a way of Edvard Munch expressing himself and his feelings, and is full of symbolism. The denotation of this painting is an abstracted landscape with two figures in the background and a solo figure in the foreground. The connotated message, with the help of facial expressions depict shock and stress. The abstracted, wavy lines induce a feeling of busyness, overwhelmed and anxiety, the opposite of calmness. The colours play an important role in eliciting emotion. The main colours being red and orange indicate stress, anger and alertness.

The second keyword I will explore is *nature*. The definition of nature can vary from person to person. Nature is defined as 'all the plants, animals and things that exist in the universe that are not made by people' (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2022). The word biophilia was introduced by the social psychologist

Enrich Fromm in 1964, from the word *bio* meaning life and *philia*, to love (Ryan and Browning, 2020).

Furthering from this, the biophilia hypothesis was introduced in Edward O. Wilson's *Biophilia* (1984) providing an explanation for his own response to the natural world and the relationships between humankind and other forms of life, based on his own experiences of nature and the impact it had on his life and thinking. He defines biophilia as "the urge to affiliate with other forms of life" (Wilson, 1984).

A text that further supports the idea of biophilia is Edward O. Wilson and Stephen R. Kellert's *The Biophilia Hypothesis* (1993). This takes a multidisciplinary approach combining many views around biophilia each attempting to boost the concept. (Kellert, 1993) raises the idea that the inherent human need to affiliate with life suggests that human identity and personal fulfilment may rely on our relationships with nature. He suggests that our need for nature is not just for the materiality but also how the natural world will influence our emotional, cognitive, aesthetic and spiritual development.

The aesthetic essence of nature is one of the features that drive us toward it, "The physical beauty of nature is certainly among its most powerful appeals to the human animal" (Kellert, 1993, p. 49). As humans we are drawn to the beautiful scenes that naturally occur, such as the complexity of the contours of a mountainous landscape or the striking colours of a blooming flower. He says that each of these exert a strong impact on people and are usually accompanied by feelings of appeal and attachment to the natural world, feelings of awe.

In Stephen Kellert's *Kinship to Mastery: Biophilia in Human Evolution and Development* (1997) he states the importance of the natural world on our development and mental well-being. Supporting this, the aesthetic experiences that you would encounter would be associated with feelings of peace and tranquility that contributes to mental well-being and mindfulness. (Kellert 1993, p. 50)

Building on the concept on Biophilia, I want to explore Biophilic design as a way of combining my research into my keyword nature within my own

practice. As we know, being within nature provides many benefits and we know that as humans we are naturally drawn to being within the natural world. introducing the outdoors in will prolong these benefits.

Design that reconnects us with nature is essential for providing home and work spaces that are healthy and stress free. Biophilic design can be categorized into three areas – Nature in the Space, Natural Analogues, and Nature of the Space.

Nature in the Space is concerned with the direct and physical presence of nature within the place or space. Including plant life, animals and water features, including sounds, scents and breezes to achieve direct connections with the natural elements. Natural Analogues addresses nature manifesting as artwork. Colours, form, shapes, materials and patterns found in nature can be taken as inspiration for décor, furniture, sculpture and art pieces that indirectly connect us with nature. Nature of the Space refers to the design of the world built around us and how we look at it, and to see beyond our immediate surroundings (Hartley, 2014).



Figure 2. *Held In Ways of Suspension*

The BETA project is a biophilic art programme that stands for Biophilia Enhanced through Art. It is located at the Centre for Sustainable Landscapes located at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens in Pittsburgh. The project utilizes artwork to represent the beauty of nature, and it aims to celebrate the connections between humans and natural processes and to promote both human and ecological health and well-being (Phipps Conservatory, 2014). The BETA project includes artwork from over 20 artists meaning that the project falls under the Natural Analogues category of Biophilic Design. Referring the figure. 1, one of the pieces of artwork installed is *Held in Waves of Suspension* by Drew Hine. The artwork fits under the category of 'Natural Analogues' meaning that it portrays nature in the form of art, using form, shape and colour to represent blooming flowers as mounted glass sculptures. These portray feelings of energy, growth and beauty (Phipps Conservatory, 2014).

This leads me on to my final word *Colour*, which the Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2022) defines as "the appearance that things have that results from the way in which they reflect light."

In her text *The Little Book of Colour: How to Use the Psychology of Colour to Transform Your Life*, Karen Haller emphasizes the importance of colour in our everyday lives, and the fact that we do not even realise it. Even though colour influences everything that we do and are constantly basing our decisions off of colour, such as what we wear, eat and buy, we are actually on 20 per cent conscious of the colour decisions that we make.

The research into Colour Psychology helps explain why colour is such a powerful influence in our lives, what effects it has on our minds and how it influences our mental well-being. While some perceptions of colour can be subjective, there are some colours that hold universal meaning. Colours in the red area of the spectrum (red, orange and yellow) are warm colours and can evoke feelings of warmth and comfort but on the other hand, evoke feelings of anger or danger. Whereas, colours on the blue side of the spectrum (blue, purple and green) are cool colours and can be associated with calmness, but then also sadness (Cherry, 2020).

Adams (2017) takes this designer's approach of dividing colours into warm, cool, neutral and speciality colours. Rather than the traditional approach of

primary colours, secondary colours and tertiary colours. He sees this separation as being more connected to a designer's creative process rather than the academic principles of a colour wheel. As designers, we typically choose a colour palette that will evoke the emotions that we want the customer or viewer to feel when they engage with our product, artwork or design.

Lets take one of the examples in the book, the colour 'Butter' that is made by adding white to a pure primary yellow. Associations with the colour butter include a sense of happiness, without the risk of being too garish or intrusive like a bright yellow could be. Additionally, due to its more neutral tone it evokes a less extreme emotion, considered to be more pleasant and gentle.



Figure 3. *Larkspur* wallpaper by William Morris

Larkspur is one of William Morris' most reproduced wallpapers and has been re-invented several times since the initial design, completed in 1874. This design full of foliage intended to incorporate the outside into the interior of a home as a response to the Industrial Revolution (The History of Art, 2022). This variation of the design uses the 'butter' shade as the main colour. It proves how designers cleverly but carefully use and decide on colours, and once decided on a colour, picking the correct shade. After discovering the

connotations of the 'butter' yellow it is clear to see why Morris has used it. With the intention of adding happiness and positivity within the home, he has succeeded in conveying these emotions, but being careful not to use a bright yellow because he wanted to keep the atmosphere calm and gentle which is a must in a home.

To conclude, the research into the three words drawing, nature and colour has allowed me to gain a deeper understanding for what each word means for me in my area of work within surface pattern design. The importance of drawing as a tool for self-expression and an acts for visual communication is fundamental within my design. Through Semiotics, we know how we are able to reads these symbolised messages. I have discovered that drawing and nature link as within my work, my drawing inspiration is driven from nature. The theory of biophilia has allowed me to realise why myself and others are drawn to the natural world. Within nature, colour is a very strong asset to why humans are attracted to it. The symbolism that colour holds affects us as humans positively and negatively and that is the reason why colour is so crucial in my designs. My artistic intentions are to impact people with the colour palletes that I choose within my work. It was interesting to see how when focusing on the colour elements of Morris' Larkspur wallpaper, that it also links with nature. William Morris intended to bring the outdoors indoors through his floral wallpaper. Designers are and continue to be influenced by the natural world, whether or not they are aware of the positive feelings humans gain from nature. We see it a lot that nature is a popular theme within fashion and interior design. From this, I have conducted a research question in preparation for my Independent Project.

Question: What influence does biophilia have on the way that artists and designers work, consciously or subconsciously. Within that, what importance does colour symbolism have on the way that artists/designers self-express and communicate meaning?

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