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This report aims to reflect on the themes and processes I have explored during my academic year as a Mdes level student. For each project I have kept a focus on designing outcomes for home and lifestyle interiors as this is the pathway I feel more aligned to. I will outline how I have learnt from the process of the professional Live brief project with Hacer and Biophilic living in Swansea. Where from the professional feedback I have received throughout my education at UWTSD, I have been able to continue building on and expanding my skills to work more in line with client ideas and weave them into my work. There will also be a reflective narrative towards my research and innovation module which is where I have delved into the processes of applique and embroidery, which I have happily integrated into textile practice. Both modules have helped me to develop an engaging textile portfolio where I have pursued personal innovations in my way of working and designing. Giving me a much stronger sense of my identity as a print and pattern designer that loves to interpret stories. Designing for interiors and lifestyle contexts allows me to tell stories that consist of a mix of heritage culture and more importantly history. This truly brings together a space and allows one to become fully immersed in rich narrative. My creative journey continuously begins through intuitive research, finding unique stories within the environment. Growing from feedback whether positive or constructive from the Live brief and the research and innovation project I was able to cultivate a new story to tell through textiles for my advanced project. Using techniques such as screen printing, digital print, dyed cloth, embroidery, and needle felting I have harnessed how to portray and colourful and engaging project that is unique to my personal style. The advanced project 'Earthly Delights' was born from previous experimentation into techniques for bespoke and commercial surface pattern design. Inspired by the collection of esoteric florals as told by the beautiful mind of Sheherazade in the epic tale of the 1001 Arabian Nights. Whilst also being reminiscent of the organic feminine beauty of the Art Nouveau period with added layers of romanticism by poetry of the Sufis who speak beautifully of concepts of nature, the beloved and the lover. The collection is diverse and stimulating backed by plentiful research. I aim to take the portfolio forward with me into the design industry by applying for the Bespoke Design Internship with Rolls Royce as well as connecting back to the design industry links, I made at new designers in 2023.

Reflecting on the different stages of the MDES semester one modules, I have found that my artistic identity in practical based work relies on a passion of exploring and interpreting a narrative or story which has been inspired by history, heritage, or culture. I find working with these themes in mind gives me more scope to create a collection that has interesting motifs or imagery where the designs I work towards have a story to express. The semester one modules showcased this identity in very different ways, where the Hacer project was more muted and toned down and the research and innovation work being colourful and multidisciplinary in technique. With the brief set out by Hacer, I found that the encouragement in researching my locality in Swansea, led to finding a story that is relevant to the client's expectations of celebrating the culture of Swansea. I started my research to find the story for my project by looking at the Glynn Vivian's archival collections online. This is where I came across Will Evans' paintings of the Three Nights Blitz as seen in figure 1. Will Evans's captured the aftermath of the blitz where local buildings stood defiant surrounded by rubble. From here I was inspired to explore the architectural ornamentation in Swansea, trying to see if this rich history is still present 80 years later. Using inspiration directly from Swansea's history felt relevant to me when starting this project as the clients at Hacer wanted a strong sense of culture and sustainability at the core of the project. To gain relevant research I went for walks around the city, trying to find interesting details in the buildings, such as the stone ornamentation which decorates the frontage of the buildings. During the research stage of the project, having a conversation at my desk with the Hacer clients I was able to present my working mood boards and gain valuable experience in working 1-1 with the client, I learnt that the client wanted to encourage the story of Swansea's history in the copper industry in my project as well as bringing forward the sense of Welsh resilience in times of turmoil such as during the three nights blitz. I also learnt that the company was eager for students to share how they view and experience Swansea, it was important to them to give local artists the opportunity to showcase their personal narratives and experience of the city. Which allowed for me to feel more at ease that although I was working towards a professional industry brief, I was still able to explore the project personally to my own design choices.

On taking forward the feedback from the client and understanding how important community is to the project I researched further for artists to inspire the project. The 'Come home again' installation work as seen in figure 3 by Es Devlin became a starting point for my drawings, Devlin used architectural forms paired with drawings of endangered species. "Devlin ties in a dome to one's home, a sanctuary that safeguards inhabitants from the external environment. It becomes a refuge one seeks to linger in when there is nowhere else to go to quiet themselves" Burgoeus, M (2022) This sense that a building is a sanctuary felt poignant to the project. With the modern world rapidly changing to meet the needs of society building design is changing stone ornamentation found on the outside of the building can be lost to time. With Hacer being a new development for urban environments they have a brief of "enabling humans to reconnect with nature and creating a cohesive community to address the increasing issues relating to social exclusion and loneliness" Biophilic living in Swansea (2024). With using elements of Swansea's history in the designs it

adds to that layer of community, where the city dwellers of the present can share in the art of the city dwellers of the past.



Figure 1: Will Evans (1941) , 'Entrance to Swansea Market 1941' [oil on panel painting]
Swansea, Glynn Vivian Archives

Inspired by the heritage of stone ornamentation and nature found across the city, this project aims to preserve the heritage of swansea's architecture. Integrating the historical culture of Swansea into contemporary spaces.

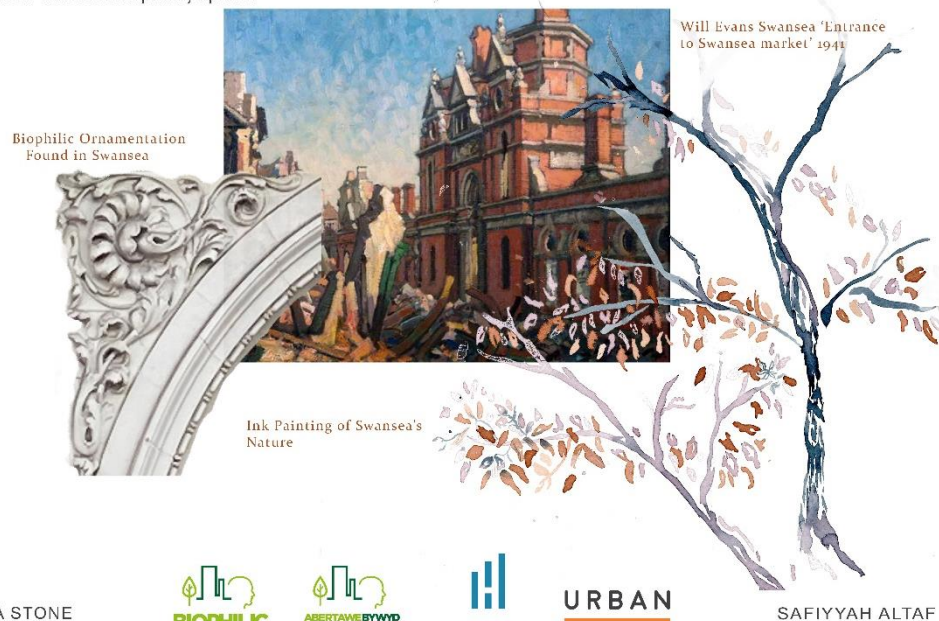


Figure 2 : Figure 2: Safiyyah Altaf 'Narrative moodboard'. [Digital Portfolio]

Figure3 : Es Devlin (2022) 'Come home again' Installation [photograph by Matt Alexander] UK



In the style of Es Devlin, I used graphite, pencils and water colours to capture the stone ornamentation fully ensuring that I was paying homage to the architecture. This helped me to decide that I wanted to use a more muted and toned-down approach to colour for the Project. Muted and tones of greys, mauves and rustic browns were quite opposite to previous briefs I have worked on. I felt it was appropriate at the time to try and create more breadth of styles in my portfolio, which will become more relevant when I show my portfolio to companies or clients in the future. At the final presentation of the portfolio during the exhibition I felt the work was well received, it was important that I was able to fully engage with the clients to share the story of the project in a familiar setting, giving me more confidence in the full stages of a design project.

With Research and Innovation, I wanted to explore this concept of 'Meta-spirituality' which was listed on WGSN as an emerging trend in the industry. The concept outlines how spirituality is expanding into non-religious spaces through rituals, which in turn allows brands to market products that help consumers connect to spiritual experiences. As Sagesse (2023) outlines in the article "Meta-spirituality follows each individual on their personal faith journey with the idea that spirituality can come from the internal self" This concept intrigued me, as I felt it implied that personal identities can be reinforced, reinvented, rediscovered in a way that can be commercially accessible through products. For each project I like to work towards home-interiors and lifestyle products as I see the home as being an important part of an individual's identity as it is where we hold our collective memories and truly be ourselves. I wanted to explore soft furnishings, wallpapers, and interior fabrics for the project, pushing how colour, textile surfaces and motifs can be holistically fused with this idea of meta spirituality. The idea of meta spirituality is linked to this concept of being multidisciplinary in theme by exploring techniques and surfaces with

research and innovation I was able to cultivate a more colourful and textured collection that represent the multidisciplinary ideas that I was exploring. I was heavily inspired by the artist Ahmad Sadali (1924-1987) who used bright and intriguing colour in his piece Abstrak Pink as seen in figure 4.



Figure 4 : AHMAD SADALI (1966) , 'Abstrak Pink' [oil on canvas] Indonesia

Sadali viewed his way of painting as a spiritual act, his designs encourage a sense of mystical contemplation which is what I wanted to channel for my own work. Reflecting on my ideas for the research and innovation project, I was trying to create a unique language of symbols through using different techniques available to me, like laser cutting, embroidery and screen printing. I was taking in knowledge from niche concepts of Sufism which is the spiritual dimension of Islam where poetical concepts encourage meditation on higher powers. I wanted the textile pieces I made to be able to integrate into the home for example in a cushion, so that pockets of enrichment can be created in a space.

Elements which enrich a space through clothing a room in colour, narrative and sensory textiles.

Celestial and organic symbolic imagery inspired by the essence of Sufism and spiritual motifs in Persian carpets.



2024

The Garden of Mystery

Safiyyah Altaf

Figure 5: Safiyyah Altaf (2024) 'The Garden of Mystery'. [Digital Portfolio] UK

With the rework brief I had the opportunity to close the gaps in the context and methods I was exploring so that my narrative and interiors context was integrated into the samples I was making. By having a second chance at the portfolio as seen in figure 5, the project benefitted from having a clearer direction and a more professional presentation. I was also able to develop further the mixed textile aspect of my samples. It felt quite holistic to mix different techniques together. I dyed wools and silks myself to create interesting grounds which I needle embellished and worked further into using stitch and appliqué. Using diverse techniques in one place spoke more appropriately to this concept of 'meta spirituality' where the dynamic fabrics expanded this idea to rediscover and reinvent your identity in contemporary times.

For the research and innovation project I believe the innovation came through pushing the pieces beyond just one motif or technique. I was creating a new material-based culture bringing together everything I had in terms of imagery and techniques to create intriguing designs. I would like to keep this energetic and holistic way of working, where I can use the techniques and skills in the research and innovation project to push the narrative of the Advanced project forward. The identity of the project became a project that explored the concepts of meta spirituality and Sufism where the intricacies of flora, fauna and geometry intertwined through interior textiles allowing the space for emerging spiritual identities to blossom titled the garden of mystery a diverse and rich textile culture for myself was born which I am excited to take forward in my final portfolio.

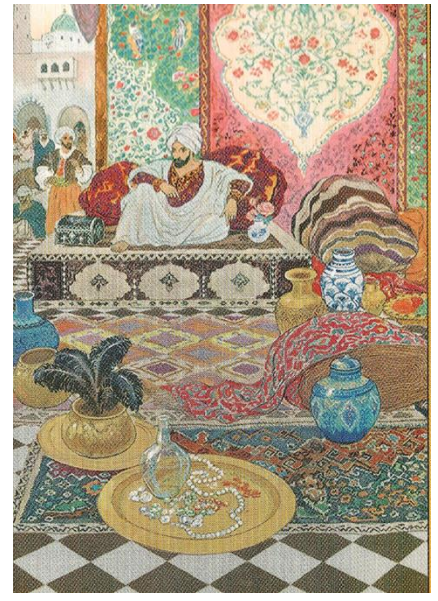
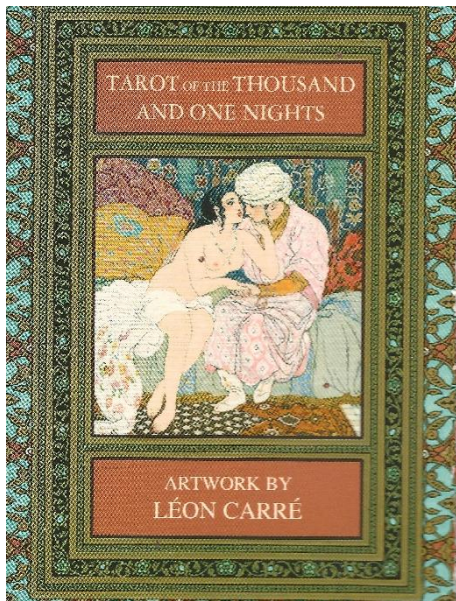


Figure 6,7,8 : Leon Carre 'Tarot of the thousand and one nights. [Scanned imagery] UK

For the advanced project I wanted to explore a narrative that allowed me to share stories of cultures and heritages rich in imagery to be inspired by. The 1001 Arabian nights is a composite collection of stories from different cultures and traditions across the Middle East, Arabia, and India. These stories are framed together with the main tale of Shahrazad, a young woman who shares epic tales of magic, fate, mystery, heroism, and philosophy to an unforgiving king every night to save herself from execution. "From the 1700 to the 1920s the highly colored stories recounted by Scheherazade in the Arabian nights enjoyed considerable success in the west. Although the tales have a strong spirituality, it was themes of sexuality, love, humor, and guile that left an undeniable impression of the eastern world as being poetical." Thornton, (1994, p.4) I can understand why the stories left such an impression on the eastern world at the time of its blossoming fame. Despite the looming threat of execution each night Shahrazad brings all her wisdom, beauty, and intelligence to visualise a colourful and abundant world through story telling captivating the king and changing his cruel perspectives. I think that it is an inspiring tale of the beauty of a feminine mind and the creativity of the character of Shahrazad become a role model to me during this project. Through reading the Arabian Nights Volume 1 translated by Malcolm Lyons I was instantly captivated by the botanical abundance described on each page. The pages in the book are filled with such wonderful world building that I wanted to create a sense of escapism through bringing the luscious imagery out of the pages of an epic tale into the world of textiles. An example of this inexhaustible fountain of motifs, fragrance, colour, and mood to be inspired by is on page 103...

"I opened the door to the first chamber and went in. there I found a virtual paradise. A garden with green trees, ripe fruits, tuneful birds, and gushing waters. I felt at rest as I walked amongst the trees, smelling sweet, scented flowers, and listening to the song of the birds as they glorified the omnipotent."

In this scene of the story the character finds himself in absolute delightful bliss from the experience of being surrounded by nature. I found a lot of value in this scene as it represents how I want my audience to view and experience my work, as a garden of paradise which invokes a sense of natural wonder and odes to a further spiritual narrative as such in my Research and innovation work.

“Aside from their decorative beauty, Plants are vital mediators in the relationship between Earth, the sun and humankind” Coccia, E (2019, p.129) this quote resonated with me as the florals I am exploring in this collection will help to disseminate the spiritual philosophies found in the 1001 Arabian nights in an accessible way. Flowers and plants are a gift to us in our environment, living by the generosity of the sun, drinking clear waters, fragrance our air, sharing sweet dewy pollen and ultimately beautifying our space. They are the epitome of ‘Earthly Delights’ and are central to my advanced project.



Figure 9: Safiyyah Altaf (2024) ‘Earthly Delights Colour Pallet.’ [Digital image] UK

My mother owns a copy of the tarot deck ‘A thousand and one Arabian Nights’ which used the story illustration artwork by Leon Carre (1878) for the tarot cards. There is a beautiful visual appeal to the paintings and cards, where there are drapes of patterned cloth and floral motifs enveloping the scenes. The colours and shapes drew out my senses, what would these cloths feel to hold in my hands or how would it feel to be enshrouded by such beautiful motifs in real life. I based my colour palette on the figures 7 and 8 as the ripe colours depicted in these scenes are fresh, and dreamy. These dewy and blushing tones are reflective of the poetics in the story. “Nature has combined two shades the beloved’s cheek and the complexion of the timorous lover. “ -1001 Arabian Nights. Pairing the imagery described in the book with the paintings of Leon Carre helped me to visualise the softly spirited mood of the project where a story telling culture, nature and romanticism join to create an enriching interiors and lifestyle collection. Having my digital colours set, I had to try, and colour match my screen printing inks and dyed cloth to the same palette. I kept my screen-printing recipes recorded in my notes so that I could consistently try to recreate the colours that I needed. I had a lot of trial and error with my colours, with the design ‘rosy cheeks’ I wanted to use pearl and translucent binders to keep a dreamy and dewy effect. I spent the first week of the easter half term utilizing the workshops as best I can to get my colours mixed and tested. When I originally mixed my colours, I found that the green translucent shade was very light compared to the greyish background and the pearl pinks

undercompensated too. I spent a day just trying to colour match the right shades against the wallpaper background so that the design could be seen fully. As you can see in figures 10 and 11 the colour compositions are more vivid and bright after being remedied. I also had some problem solving to do with my screen printing colours on my design 'Ripe fruits'. This was a four-layer screen print and so I wanted to ensure that my effort was put into printing this correctly. I used mixes of pearl, opaque and translucent binders on a silk painted wallpaper background. With the green layer I wanted to use the same translucent binder that I had used in the 'rosy cheeks' design as I felt it would blend the collection together harmoniously. However, during my test printing the screen-printing binder kept settling with a bubbly texture as seen in figure 12, Though in some areas I appreciated the texture as giving the leaves a more organic surface, it gave the overall quality a messy look. I tried varying amounts of pressure during screen printing as well as making a new batch of pigment to see if this problem could be overcome. In the end I decided the best thing to do was to swap out the translucent binder with a strong opaque binder which immediately remedied the issue of the texture. This was vital testing as I wanted to ensure that the screenprints I was making, were of a good standard to fully represent the beauty and delight floral imagery can bring.



Figures 10, 11 and 12 : Safiyyah Altaf (2024) 'Earthly Delights. [photograph of Screen prints] UK

Referring to my research and how I produced the imagery for the project I was inspired by ideas of Art Nouveau where during the period of the 19th century the creative activity of France produced beautiful decorative art defined by curving floral lines and the use of natural forms. "The whole Art Nouveau movement was directly involved with this mixture of pleasure, tragedies and scandals which rocked the country" Battersby (1969, p.11) there is this sense of mirroring with the art Nouveau movement being tied to pleasure and tragedy and the story of Shahrazad creating wonderful stories to avoid her own tragedy. With Art

Nouveau the “style is one in which women and flowers as being typical of all that is freshest and daintiest provide the principal motifs of decoration” Battersby (1969, page.11) The designs consistently harmonize with this sense of idealized feminine beauty and intelligence. I had the opportunity to visit the Pressing Images exhibition in the royal Albert memorial museum in Exeter on the 10th of February 2024. There I came across the Art Nouveau print in Figure 13 titled ‘Two girls at the printing press’ by Art Nouveau artist Paul Emile Berthon. The honey mustard shade of the yellow fabrics inspired my background shade for the ‘ripe delights wallpaper’. The description that came with the painting explained how it was interesting for a depiction of women to be seen with printing presses due to the printmaking field being predominately dominated by men. With the introduction of the 20th century print revolution coming forward the description notes on how women would play a central role of disseminating powerful images and texts. I think this idea of female empowerment and creativity became a vital message in my work for this collection. Through being inspired by these ideas when creating my organic motifs There is a sense of femininity to the art works as well as asymmetry that give it a more natural quality. Art Nouveau work is defined by its curving sensuous lines, its winding plant forms, and its idealized feminine beauty. I wanted the designs for my Earthly Delights collection to flow and move delighting the eye and senses due to the harmony and diversity of the floral imagery.



Figure 13: Paul Emile Berthon (1900) ‘Two girls at the printing press’ [Colour Lithograph on paper]
Royal Albert Memorial Museum



Figure 14: Safiyyah Altaf (2024) 'Nightingale Moon' [Laser Cut wool, Needle felted, Applique and embroidery] Uk

From my research an innovation project I wanted to continue this multidisciplinary textile technique inspired by the Poetry of Sufism. I think having this unique spiritual perspective to my work is quite innovative as it gives the designs created a further narrative. Kranz (2017, p195) speaks on the language of flowers where there is "an esoteric undercurrent that emerges in which flowers convey a surplus of meaning that cannot be contained. They become signs of affection, supposedly transmitting secret messages of intense emotions" From my research and understanding of Sufi poetry I have found that the floral metaphors and emotional language Sufi poets use, transmit these intense emotions of being in awe of the beauty that is found in nature. "Paradise is described as a garden and the rose is the secular manifestation of the Divine Beauty. Love, as a path, leads the lover to seek for the Paradise where the Beloved has been hidden in." Zhou, C., & Guo, L. (2020, p.7) They use their words to employ messages and in turn this is inspiring me to use similar metaphorical motifs in textiles to express these concepts. The concept of a garden for the Sufi poets reflected divine order and cosmic beauty, it is a place filled with the virtue of knowledge, a school of learning the wonders of our delightful environment. The Sufi and Persian poets of the past made constant reference to adoring nature through the concepts of the lover and the beloved, particularly using the image of the rose and the nightingale to express this. I wanted to convey these poems in figure... where I have used needle felted and laser cut wools as a base for applique and embroidery. The motifs I used were of a moon to represent cosmic beauty and a nightingale and rose to pay homage to the Sufi poets.

*Now that the rose holds a cup of clear wine in hand,
 nightingale sings the rose's praise in a thousand tongues. (Hafiz,p.9)*

The nightingale and the rose are motifs of this idea of a lover and a beloved, in the sense that there is something beautiful that exists and then there is someone to admire this beauty. “as soon as the nightingale breathes the rose's scent, it will hurry back to the eternal garden, leaving the dark, earthly birds behind.” Schimmel (1992, p.181) I think this is a beautiful concept to express in my work as it represents the message of flowers being an ‘earthly delight’ that can instantly seduce a strayed mind back to remembering the beauty of nature. As a interior and lifestyle collection enshrouding a space with my wallpapers and fabrics will allow a consumer to live with an ephemeral qualities of nature where flowers hold esoteric messages , being earthly manifestations of a divine beauty, blooming in certain seasons and being sustained by light from the sky and having roots bedded in the earth, they are the mediators for humans to understand the beauty of our existence and live in harmony.

Continuing forward in my textiles practice I used dyed cloths and silks to create a unique bespoke stitched wallpaper which I titled ‘Shahrazad’ since it brings together all my culminated knowledge from the modules I undertook. I brought together my stock of dyed cloths, my colour palletted the notions of celestial splendour and earthly delights and the winding forms of Art Nouveau and brought them all into one place. The word reverie meaning to be pleasantly lost in one’s thoughts is how I felt when creating this wallpaper, it took me approximately 13 hours to cut my fabrics and stitch them into the wallpaper. The way Shahrazad brought together all her stories inspired me as I wanted to bring together all my talents as a designer to represent botanical abundance and the beauty in nature. WGSN outlined an emerging trend future terrains Key Icons which include, Fantastical botanical motifs, celestial influence, enriching textiles, stylised icons, and unusual flower varieties all which should appeal to consumers who seek an enhanced meaning to their products. I feel this piece touches on all these concepts in such a way that represents who I have become as a designer.



Figure 15: Safiyyah Altaf (2024) ‘Shahrazad’ [Digital Print on paper with textile collage] UK

I believe that that there was still so much imagery that I could have brought forward for this project, exploring more of the meaning behind flowers and expressing these in wallpapers and fabrics. I found a new practice to take forward with using the needle embellisher and free hand embroidery together on fabrics. This newfound love for mixed textiles has led me to purchasing my own embellisher which I hope to use to expand on my project further after leaving the university. I have learnt a lot about myself as an artist and have also realised where my shortfalls come in terms of project management. At the start of the project, I had created a timetable which was meant to keep me on track to ensure my energy was being harnessed in the right ways. However, I did not strictly follow this timetable and it led me to finding myself struggling to keep up with the demands of the project and fulfilling my ideas properly. Despite this I am proud of the collection I have created, and I am eager to share it with the design industry. If I had the option to go back to New Designers, I think I would take this newfound confidence in my work as I know I have built on the observations that I made there when I attended in 2023. I observed how colour and narrative were important aspects that designers were looking for as well as setting myself apart with bespoke textiles and colour separated screenprints. I also intend to pursue the Rolls Royce internship fully as I think it would be an amazing opportunity for me to gain valuable knowledge into the design industry and put my skills to the test in a professional manner. I would also like to research more into reputable design companies and keep updated on jobs that are posted on websites such as Texintel. Where I have found that Go design studio is currently looking for a design intern/ pattern curator to join their team. This might also be a valuable internship to me as the internship offers training in trend forecasting, concept development, colour story development, and print design. I would like to be able to understand the industry better and I think the way to do this is through an internship so that I can find out what part of the industry works best for me. Ultimately, I want to work within an established company that values the sense of heritage and culture that I do when creating patterns. Ensuring that my identity does not become dissolved but rather enhances a company's ethics and creativity.

List of figures

Figure 1: Will Evans (1941) , 'Entrance to Swansea Market 1941' [oil on panel painting]
Swansea, Glynn Vivian Archives
(Available at: ['Entrance to Swansea Market 1941' by Will Evans \(glynnvivian.co.uk\)](https://glynnvivian.co.uk))
[Accessed: 09/05/2024]

Figure 2 : Figure 2: Safiyyah Altaf 'Narrative moodboard'. [Digital Portfolio]

Figure 3: Figure3 : Es Devlin (2022) 'Come home again' Installation [photograph by Matt Alexander] UK
(Available at: [es devlin draws 243 endangered species for her illuminated dome 'come home again' \(designboom.com\)](https://designboom.com))

Figure 4: AHMAD SADALI (1966) , 'Abstrak Pink' [oil on canvas] Indonesia (Available at: AHMAD SADALI (INDONESIAN, 1924-1987) (christies.com)

Figure 5: Safiyyah Altaf (2024) 'The Garden of Mystery'. [Digital Portfolio] UK
Figure 6,7,8 : Leon Carre 'Tarot of the thousand and one nights. [Scanned imagery] UK

Figure 9: Safiyyah Altaf (2024) 'Earthly Delights Colour Pallet.' [Digital image] UK

Figures 10, 11 and 12 : Safiyyah Altaf (2024) 'Earthly Delights. [photograph of Screen prints] UK

Figure 13: Paul Emile Berthon (1900) 'Two girls at the printing press' [Colour Lithograph on paper] Royal Albert Memorial Museum

Figure 14: Safiyyah Altaf (2024) 'Nightingale Moon' [Laser Cut wool, Neddle felted, Applique and embroidery] Uk

Figure 15: Safiyyah Altaf (2024) 'Shahrazad' [Digital Print on paper with textile collage] UK

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