

Program of Study: BA Surface Pattern and Textiles

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Name: Esme Read (2501328)

Tutor: Menna Buss

'From Earth to industry: The transformation of nature in Textile Art

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Entitled 'From Earth to Industry: The Transformation of Nature in Textile Art, the exhibition will be set within the immersive environment of the Eden Project, which will explore the divide between the natural world and industrialisation through contemporary and modern textile artists. This exhibition will bring pieces together from Alice Fox, El Anatsui and Anni Albers. Each of these textile artists uses varied materials in ways that blur the boundaries between organic origin and industrial transformation. This approach aligns with Tim Ingold's view that materials are not passive substances but active participants in processes of making and meaning, which shape how humans perceive and understand the world through material engagement (Ingold, 2013). Albers work focuses on merging traditional hand-woven



Figure1: *Eden project* (2026)

techniques into modernist designs, Anatsui up-cycles discarded materialism, transforming them into intricate textile pieces and Fox's practice focuses strictly on the environment, using natural biodegradable materials. These artists together present various responses to the intersection of nature and industry. This exhibition encourages viewers to change their views on how they see the natural world. It is

highlighting world issues such as pollution and waste, with the intention of encouraging viewers to change to the care of the environment.

The location of the Eden Project becomes the perfect space, grounded in its own cultural and historical context. It demonstrates how materials carry meaning across time in a landscape once shaped by the china clay industry as bleak and horribly polluted, which regenerated using the natural world to both educate and enchant visitors from around the world (Trower, 2011). The pieces will portray different areas of similar pre-industrial traditions, modernist innovation, ecological and contemporary awareness. Exhibiting these artefacts at the Eden Project would be highly effective as it would reinforce the key concepts of the artists' work. Unlike traditional gallery spaces, it would encourage a more embodied way of seeing using textile textures creating a dialogue through their work surrounded by botanicals. Jane Bennett's Theory of Vital Materialism suggests that organic and industrial surroundings, has its own capacity to affect human perception (Bennett, 2010). This shows the Eden Project is a suitable location to capture textiles as living artefacts.



Figure2: *Threads of life* (Shiota 2026)

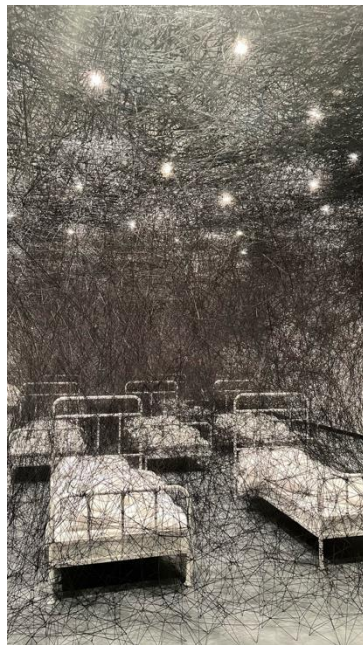


Figure3: *During Sleep* (Shiota 2026)



Figure4: *Letters of Thanks* (Shiota 2026)

Chihara Shiota's *Threads of Life* exhibition became an inspiration for this public display. The viewer walks through her pieces as a deeply interactive experience on a physical, sensory, and emotional level. "From Earth to Industry" will make use of the flow of visitors on walkways through the domes which becomes immersive with the surrounding flora bringing the artefacts to life.

Another concept of *Threads of Life* is the emotional and conceptual depth portrayed. Shiota is exploring themes of memory, identity, and human presence, which connotes links to personal experience of global environmental issues by incorporating human waste into the exhibition. This encourages participants to add discarded textiles and plastics, this exhibition reflects Bennett's argument that waste materials stay vibrant and politically charged, challenging dominant beliefs of disposability and consumption (Bennett, 2010).

Once past the artefacts, viewers will be encouraged to contribute to towards building a new piece of artwork by placing textiles and plastics to a plant structure symbolising the ecological impact of consumption and waste.

Textile art becomes a lens which examines natural materials and industrial processes. The chosen artefacts by Alice Fox, El Anatsui and Anni Albers reflect interconnected approaches to these themes through their social, political, and environmental contexts.



Figure 5: *Harvest Cloth* (Fox 2025)

Alice Fox is a British contemporary textile artist. Fox focuses on sustainability, using materials such as rusted metal, plant fibres, and natural dyes. Pieces such as 'Harvest Cloth and Rust Dyed Textiles are records of environmental processes shaped by time, weather, and decay. Her work is a response to climate change and overconsumption. Fox's practice reflects Ingold's concept of "making as correspondence" (Ingold, 2013), where materials respond over time to environmental conditions, this allows weather to become visible collaborators in the work.

Fox's style of work is focused on detail through texture of the surface that is manually worked. Fox often uses stitch to do this, working on interchangeable cloth and paper, treating the latter as a type of textile (Fox, 2024). In Fox's manifesto she highlights being experimental is important, through considering potential use of objects, materials, and substance, especially before discarding anything (Fox, 2024).

The artwork in Figure 5 has been selected for the exhibition by Fox due to its natural dyed fibres. The composition is small and designed for close viewing. She chooses to work with a clean and neutral background, allowing the materials themselves to take visual priority. Displayed in the grid of the artwork are a dyed fabric range in colours from pale beige and soft yellow to deep rust and burnt brown. Additionally, it incorporates tonal natural dye processes such as staining, soaking, or oxidation which highlights the process for this piece. The work creates a surface that appears almost time-worn, shaped gradually through environmental exposure, and therefore resists with industrial production, instead emphasising irregularity, fragility, and process.

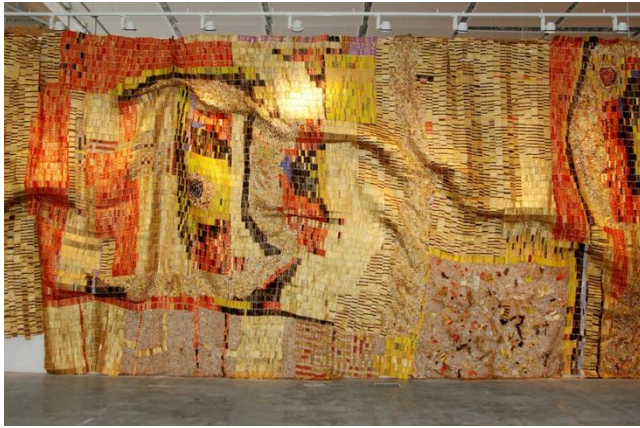


Figure 6: *Man's Cloth* (Anatsui, 2001)

In contrast, El Anatsui, born in Ghana, working in Nigeria, engages legacies of colonialism, global trade, and industrial waste. Two of his large-scale installations such as *Earth's skin* and *Man's Cloth* are made from rigid materials like bottle caps and aluminium fragments woven together with copper wire. They create soft and pliable cloth-like structures. Anatsui exposes what Bennett describes as “the latent vitality of industrial matter, showing that bottle caps and metal fragments as agents carrying histories of labour, consumption, and colonial exchange rather than inert waste” (Bennett, 2010). His work draws on African history and cultural idioms as well as western art practises. “The style resembles classic modern abstract painting, but in textile” (Anatsui, 2010) therefore, through his lens, Anatsui’s work shows how industrial materials are embedded with narratives of power, exchange, and transformation.

His large-scale installation has been chosen to exhibit which creates an immersive experience, surrounding the viewer and transforming the gallery environment.

Anatsui’s colour palette use seems rich and luminous, displaying golds, oranges, reds, and yellows, with darker shades of black and brown. These colours catch in the light, showing a reflective surface that appears to shift as the viewer walks through.

The surface is composed of flattened bottle caps and metals; this creates an uneven texture up-close. Standing far away, it becomes more fluid to look as its material behaves like fabric.



Figure 7: *Intersecting* (Albers, 1962)

Anni Albers was a key figure of the Bauhaus movement. Albers was from Berlin Germany and later in life moved to the United States after fleeing the Nazi regime. Her work provides a historical bridge between craft traditions and industrial modernity. Albers initially began weaving and then moved onto printmaking later into her life, ('Re-framing Anni Albers and Bauhaus', 2022) Albers often spoke about her slow physical realisation of her works, she describes herself as being led by thread, "an active process, ... a listening for the dictation of the material and a taking in of the laws of harmony" (Kettle, 2019). While industrialisation threatened the market for

handmade artefacts, Albers reasserted the value and material issues with a modern approach.

The artefact by Albers I have chosen to display (see Figure 6) has a very geometric style. The composition is dominated by vertical stripes in bold orange, contrasted with darker bands of black and deep blue. The texture is densely woven, appearing flat from a distance, but more three dimensional up close. This design sits between craft and industry, embodying the tension between handmade tradition and modern production.

In conclusion 'From Earth to Industry: The Transformation of Nature in Textile Art' demonstrates how textile practice can act as a powerful medium for rethinking the relationship between the natural world and industrialisation. From looking at Alice Fox, El Anatsui and Anni Albers work for the exhibition, it has shown why their work is cohesive within the chosen theme. Each artist display different pathways for example Fox shows the slow, responsive processes of nature. Anatsui transforms industrial waste into visually powerful and culturally loaded forms. Then Albers bridges traditional craft with modernist design, situating textile within both historical and industrial contexts.

By choosing the Eden project as the location for the exhibition, this shows that it was once a landscape damaged by industrial extraction and now stands as a symbol of ecological regeneration. This encourages the viewers to see the relation with the artwork and the surrounding environment. Overall, this exhibition proposes that the

divide between nature and industry is not fixed, but fluid and constantly negotiated through material practices. It asks viewers to reconsider their own relationship with materials, consumption, and waste, ultimately suggesting that change begins with a shift in daily life routines.

Reference list

Figures

Figure 1: Eden Project (n.d.) *Map of the Eden Project*. Available at:

<https://www.edenproject.com/visit/planning-your-visit/maps-of-the-eden-project>.

Figure 2: Shiota, C. (2026) *Threads of Life*. Photographed by E. Read (2026)

Figure 3: Shiota, C. (2026) *During Sleep*. Photographed by E. Read (2026)

Figure 4: Shiota, C. (2026) *Letters of Thanks*. Photographed by E. Read (2026)

Figure 5: Fox, A. (2025) *Harvest Cloth* [Textile Artwork] Available at: <https://alicefox.co.uk/>. (Accessed: 14 March 2026).

Figure 6: El Anatsui (n.d.) *Man's Cloth*. [Sculpture]. Available at: <https://elanatsui.art/>. (Accessed: 14 March 2026).

Figure 7: Albers, A. (1962) *Intersecting*. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/>. (Accessed: 14 March 2026).

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