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Title: Question 2: Define skill in the context of your own practice and the work of two artists/makers/designers from the lecture series.

This essay will include the skills within my own practice surface pattern and textiles using two designers to determine what skills are needed and used. The first designer is Anni Albers which will feature her work of a wall hanging that was made on a large loom and her pictorial weaving that she made on a small handloom. The second designer is Lucienne Day, which will feature her work of repeat botanical patterns that was produced through industrial production and her silk mosaics that was made by hand.

A skill is an ability that we all have and develop which is being able to do something well through what we have learnt and experienced. This can be in education and work “knowledge work jobs, of today and tomorrow...require complex skills, expertise and creativity” (Fadel and Trilling, 2009, p.10), jobs expect you to have certain skills already. Such skills can be communication and critical thinking, developing these as well as other learnt skills can help us gain more knowledge and insights to the world of work. Through learning skills it can give us advantages in our lives such as helping us to grow as individuals, “to know things you have to grow into them, and let them grow in you, so that they become a part of who you are” (Ingold, 2013, p.1), helping us to adapt to new challenges and changes that we may encounter in our lifetime. Understanding the way in which the world works so that these skills become part of who we are and our abilities. As designers, having skills is an important aspect because it can transform the way that they think using design thinking through strategies such as ideation, prototypes and testing. In surface pattern and textiles using the skills of design thinking it can help us to achieve our outcomes better by using ideation and testing. For example, if you were digital printing you would do a test run of your design first so that you can see if there is any mishaps. If there is using the ideation skill the designer would come up with solutions to solve how they can fix the issues that have occurred within the test run.

Anni Albers was a textile artist and printmaker that took inspiration from the traditional and ancient form of art and craft in hand weaving. Hand weaving is a traditional form of craft that is referred to as ‘handicraft’, which is making something by hand – you can make a woven fabric with a loom or handloom. Anni describes weavings as “a method of forming a pliable plane of threads by interlacing them rectangularly” (Albers, 1965, p.19), by interweaving fibres together it will produce a woven fabric or cloth. To create a woven fabric or cloth, it is weaving threads together explained by Anni as “one system of threads, the warp, crosses another one, the weft, at right angles and the manner of intersecting forms of different weaves” (Albers, 1965, p.19), meaning that you interlace materials threads or yarns together going both horizontal and vertical that meet each other. Through the use of hand weaving it would take someone of skilled hands as the yarns need to be carefully threaded in to the loom making sure that the yarns are in correctly. In surface pattern and textiles having the use of skilled hand is important when hand stitching and machine stitching. For example, making sure that you are stitching in to the whole material with a needle and thread or going in a straight line to stitch the fabric together on the sewing machine.



Fig.1 'Black White Yellow'

Anni Albers was a textile artist of the modernist movement in the twentieth century with her bold abstract colours and geometric patterns. In her wall hanging 'Black White Yellow' she has experimented with lines, blocks and geometric shapes positioning them next to each other with yellow stripes going through some of the blocks. This piece consists of a triple weave of cream silk and black and yellow rayon fabric. The silk and grey threads which are the warps and weft, with the rectangles being made by a tabby weave (Tate Modern, 2018). Through her wall hangings, Anni has experimented with many processes, techniques and materials "Anni has experimented with new materials for weaving and became a bold abstract artist. She used straight lines and solid colours to make works on paper and wall hangings" (The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, N/A), she created patterns adding neutral and contrasting colours within her pieces that are based on repeating stripes and blocks on the loom.

While producing these pieces she was able to study the materiality of fibres that she was using and the different ways that she could work with them. As explained on the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation "she experimented with metallic thread and horsehair as well as traditional yarns, and utilised raw materials and components of structure as the source of design and beauty" (The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, N/A), transforming the craft of weaving by the composition of fabric to understand the materials through the use of a grid, which a motif tool based on the design – helping any weavers to construct their fabric or cloth. In surface pattern and textiles understanding materials helps to figure out the durability, thickness and function of the fabric before use. It can also develop the designers knowledge on the textures of materials that they work with. This is beneficial for screen printing and digital printing as there are various fabrics to work with.



Fig. 2 'Development In Rose II'

As well as her wall hangings Anni made smaller woven fabrics that was produced on a handloom, one of which was her 'Development In Rose II'. This is not one of her abstract style pieces instead using a more darker tone using colours of red and brown, weaving horizontally. She created this one using a linen fabric, a warp stripe and weft bonded plain weave that had open work where the gaps are in this piece and patterned wefts that are intersecting the warps using a gauze weave (Tate Modern, 2018). Anni had both creative and pioneering skills within the textiles industry changing the way she worked with and constructed her materials, one way being through the senses "drawings by bricks by hand, tedious though the process is, prompts the designer to think structurally about their materiality" (Sennett, 2008, p.N/A), meaning that through the sense of touch and making you can get a feel to what fibres you are working with creating a knowledge of the different variations of materials. For example, if you work with linen you can feel the woven element to it, where as with a material like silk there is not a woven element to it, it just feels smooth.

Although, Anni was a textile artist working by hand and eventually moving on to the use of mass production for her later designs, she has the skills of craftsmanship shown in her artistry of handicraft designs. In the 'The Craftsman' by Richard Sennett, he describes craftsmanship as a "enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake. Craftsmanship cuts a far wider swath than skilled manual labour" (Sennett, 2008, p.N/A), that it involves more than just art based areas that work by hands. Anni has shown this through all of her textiles career by working with a loom to make her intricate, abstract modernist pieces suggesting that weaving is a form of craft. In surface pattern and textiles having the skills of craftsmanship is an important aspect as it helps you to think structurally when drawing and designing.

Another way to define skill is through the use of industrial production where designers used manufacturing companies to produce their designs. Where the use of machinery became a sudden change to the environment "this period of rapid change" (Singer, 1958, p.5), meaning that the use of technology became a major development moving on from the form of handicraft. Changing the way that people worked "profoundly affected the whole pattern of civilisation" (Sinclair, 1958, p.5), people had to adapt to the change within the production of machines and the way that they worked. In post-war Britain, textile designers were making more radical and bright designs that went through the use of manufactures to produce their designs on wallpapers, fabrics, furnishes and various other interior and garment products. One designer that produced her designs through manufacturing is

Lucienne Day who was a textile designer in the post-war Britain that took to the idea of industrial production as it was becoming more of a modern outlook on the world. She and her husband Robin Day took this opportunity as a way to make more inexpensive and attainable interior products available to everyone. For this Lucienne worked with companies such as Heals Fabrics, Liberty, John Lewis, Edinburgh Weavers, Crown, Rasch, Tomkinson and Wilton and many others creating designs for their ceramics, fabrics and wallpapers which is something she did throughout her career (V&A Museum, N/A). One design of hers in particular that lead her to the forefront of design was her calyx fabrics which was seen to have a more contemporary style. According to the Robin and Lucienne Day Foundation, Lucienne had “spent the rest of the decade exploring and developing the potential of this aesthetic” (Robin and Lucienne Day Foundation, N/A), as she was doing most of her designs for dress fabrics. This was a way she could produce patterned designs for other products working with companies to do so and styles that also relates to the work of her husband Robin.



Fig. 3 Calyx

She took inspiration from the forms of botanical plants, the outer part of a flower; the calyx. This is where she got the name Calyx for her new furnishing fabrics. This calyx design is shown in two colour ways here that contrast each other out, one being yellow and the other being brown. She has created abstracted fabrics that reflect the world of modern art and living experimenting with the use of colour, line, texture, and composition. As the Robin and Lucienne Day Foundation has explained that “this bold, abstract floral marked the birth of a radical new aesthetic in pattern design” (Robin and Lucienne Day, N/A), she challenged the image of modern interior with her bold new patterns which were seen as radical that set new boundaries for textile design. In surface pattern and textiles using machinery is a major contributor to the outcome of produced designs. Knowing how these machines operate gives the designer the skills of working highly technical machinery giving them the knowledge of knowing how these work and the safety measures to take when they are in use. When using machines such as the laser cutter, digital printer and uv printer designers are developing their knowledge of using the design softwares to produce these and learning to use softwares like photoshop.

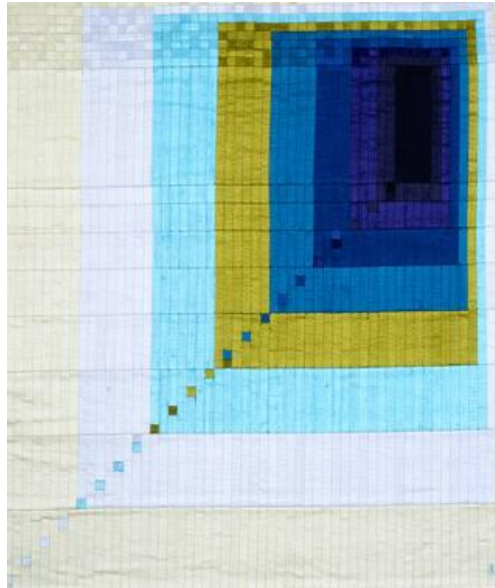


Fig. 4 'Black Window'

Throughout her design career, Lucienne was using the manufacturing industry to fabricate her motifs until there was a change within the production industry. It was at this time where she evolved her designs and adapted them to another way of thinking and making. This was through the use of hand-craft, although she did not like the idea of being associated with the forms of craft meaning that she did not stitch these pieces herself as she was more of an industrial designer rather than a designer by hand. She called these the 'Silk Mosaics' to steer away the idea of patchwork and hand-crafted pieces by "suggesting associations with architecture and the interior design" (V&A Museum, N/A), these designs were more suited to interiors.

With her new way of creative expression she continued to experiment with the use of colour, scale, composition and geometric shapes to create many different variations of these designs. This one is called 'Black Window' which she experimented with using dark and light tones setting them in to squares and stripes consisting of a composition of 1 cm, while having squares going diagonally across the silk fabric. Although this was her new way of working, these pieces still remain that of abstract creating blocks of colour and in some of these adding animals to them. Lucienne had skills of a creative designer that experimented with the use of colour, lines, textures, scale, composition and botanical forms and geometric shapes providing her with enough inspiration to create her textile pieces. She had to learn to adapt to the use of industrial production which has changed the course of history in the world and design as "modernisations are rapidly transforming and expanding contemporary making and research" (Griffith and Schneiderman, 2020), meaning that even today the use of technology is growing and new processes are being made. She also had to adapt to handicraft to make her silk mosaics where she had to think structurally and mathematically using 1 cm to construct the composition of the squares and stripes. In surface pattern and textiles being able to adapt to different processes from hand-crafts such as weaving, stitching and dyeing to the use of machines for digital printing, laser cutting and uv printing helps designers to develop their knowledge of how these work and how we can produce the designs digitally and physically.

The use of skills within surface pattern and textiles are those of creative and innovative where you are creating designs physically and digitally then developing these ideas further seeing what you can do with them. Thinking about the different ways in which you can make a design work for interior and exterior products, whether you want it to be private or public. Working in the industry you would need the innovative skills coming up with new design ideas, thinking about what your clients

wants and presenting these ideas and designs to them. Being a team player suggesting ideas for a design or exhibition and working together to make the design a product. The skills of working by hand provides a designer with patience and concentration that leaves them with a intricate design made by hand which would not be able to get such detail by a machine. The skills of using machinery provides a designer with the knowledge of how machines work and the use of software such as photoshop and illustrator and many more. The use of design thinking skills through ideation, thinking about what you could do, prototyping making the design through photoshop or making it a physical one where then you can test the idea out. Understanding the materials, techniques and processes so that you gain more knowledge to what works better for things and what does not. All of these skills are important to surface pattern and textiles which can be learnt by doing the processes yourself, watching someone else do it then you trying and being taught by someone through education and work.

Figures

Figure 1. The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation (N/A) *Black White Yellow*

Available at: <https://albersfoundation.org/art/anni-albers/wallhangings/index/>

(Accessed: 5th December 2021)

Figure 2. WikiArt (N/A) *Development In Rose II*

Available at: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/anni-albers/development-in-rose-ii-1952>

(Accessed: 5th December 2021)

Figure 3. Tate Modern (N/A) *Calyx*

Available at: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/lucienne-day-an-introduction>

(Accessed: 6th December 2021)

Figure 4. Tate Modern (N/A) *Black window*

Available at: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/lucienne-days-silk-mosaics>

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