

Frances Dixon MDes Evaluative Report

by Frances Dixon

FILE	15346_FRANCES_DIXON_FRANCES_DIXON_MDES_EVALUATIVE_REPORT_79301_940192603.PDF (1.08M)		
TIME SUBMITTED	05-MAY-2016 01:28AM	WORD COUNT	4438
SUBMISSION ID	57221748	CHARACTER COUNT	21969

Frances Dixon

MDes Surface Pattern Design

Evaluative Report

P128528

Contents

List of illustrations	pg. 2
Executive summary	pg. 3
Review of research methodology and methods	pg. 4
- Research Development Strategy	pg. 4
- Intentions	pg. 4
- Production methods - Hand rendered vs machine	pg. 6
- Material Combinations	pg. 7
Review of creative / enterprise strategy	pg. 12
- Live Briefs and Internships	pg. 12
- Business Set Up	pg. 17
- Developing Work for a Niche Market	pg. 17
- Create Brand Identity	pg. 17
- Documentation	pg. 22
- Sustainable Practice and Production Methods	pg. 23
Critical appraisal of the final proposition	pg. 24
Future Trajectories	pg. 28
Bibliography	pg. 31

List of illustrations

1. Photograph of the Sagrada Familia, pg.
2. Tiles at Parc Guelle, pg.
3. Knitted looped wool samples, pg.
4. Needle punched sample, pg.
5. Needle punched sample, pg.
6. Freshwest final piece, pg.
7. Hallmark live brief, pg.
8. Hallmark placement, pg.
9. Premiere Vision, pg.
10. Screenshot of website, pg.
11. Screenshot of website, pg.
12. Screenshot of website, pg.
13. Screenshot of website, pg.
14. French knot sampling, pg.
15. Laser cut leather embellishments, pg.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report was to show and reflect upon the research undertaken through the MDes year. It explains how the research was undertaken and provides the results and major findings.

The MDes year was a time for exploring and developing designs so that a collection could be put to get and used to set up a business.

The report shows what inspired the project, the choices of materials and experiments undertaken to decide which processes and combinations gave the best results.

As well as material explorations, the report shows the experiences of working on live briefs and placements and the lessons learned from taking part in these experiences.

A large section of the MDes year was taken up by writing a business plan and develop alternative production methods for after university. The report shows the process of developing brand identity, creating a website and working out how best to document the work created.

The critical appraisal shows personal opinions on how the year went and whether it was a success or not. Upon reflection of the appraisal, future trajectories were written up showing what actions can be taken on to develop as a designer and to help build a business.

Review of research methodology and methods

Intentions

The purpose of the major project was to create a collection of products that could be sold under a small business enterprise from home. The intention was to create products that were bold, strong pieces that could work as part of a collection and as individual pieces. The design of each product was reached through experimenting with different imagery and material combinations to achieve the strongest impact. The abstract imagery allows for a wider unisex market that will increase sales.

Research Development Strategy

Design influences

An important part of the research for the major project this year was creating a strong collection of imagery and developing a bold colour palette that complimented the designs. The Scandinavian mid-century modern period influenced the whole of the project. The major project was about designing interior products considering the Scandinavian style of white space and pops of colour, however the imagery created was not in a Scandinavian style. The bright colours and detailed patterns would stand out against the plain surroundings.

The projects that were undertaken this year have always been based on primary colours to give a bold impression. Mid-century modern colour schemes influenced the major project. These included bright reds, burnt oranges, navy and sky blues and lemon yellows. Experiments with colour combinations helped to develop and refine the final choice so that the collaboration with the patterns made a sophisticated collection.

The method of collecting research came by drawing inspiration from immediate surroundings. It was decided that a group trip to Barcelona for a week would begin the major project research as a change of scenery would be the best way to develop as a designer. Lots of photographs and drawings documented the discoveries. Inspiration came from everything; floral tiles on the floor, art exhibitions, Gaudi architecture (Parc Guelle and Casa Batlo) and the external natural environment. All of the documentation was scanned into the computer. It was then edited through Photoshop and AVA to create clean, crisp patterns that could be put into repeat.



Fig. 1, *Sagrada Família*, Frances Dixon, 2016.

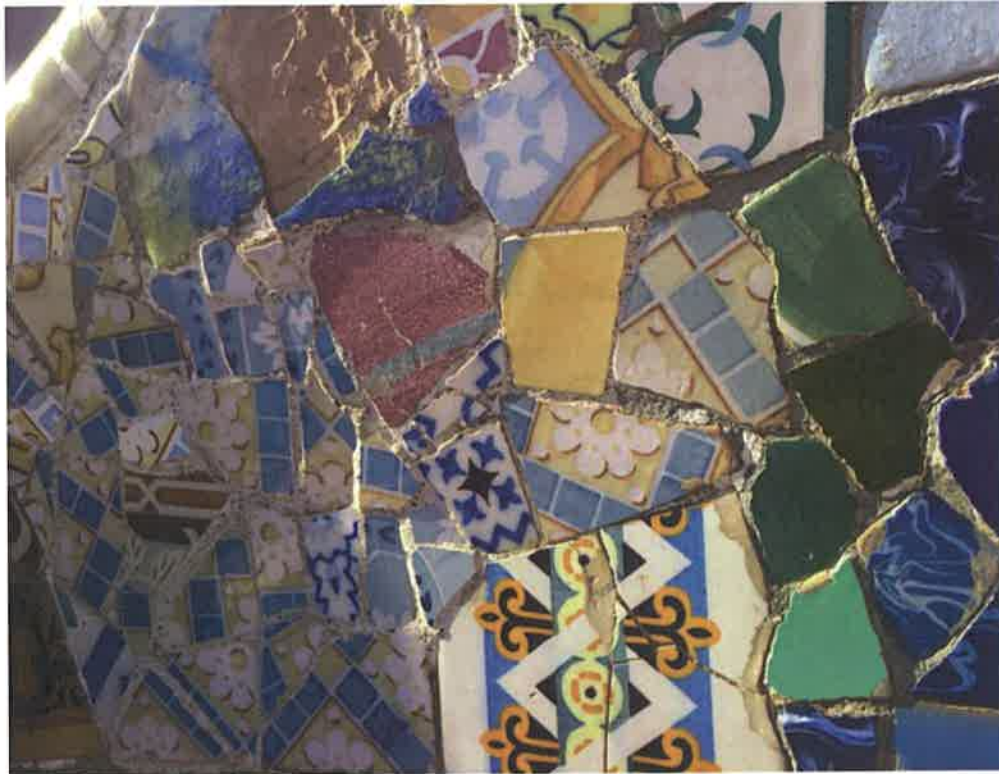


Fig.2, *Parc Guelle*, Frances Dixon, 2016.

Production methods - Hand rendered vs machine

At the start of the project, the design ethos was to develop the knowledge and skills required to create textile products by hand rather than by mechanised processes. The poem *All But A Piece* by Nandini Sahay resonated on a personal level.¹ It described the importance of keeping the hand craft traditions alive. This was primarily about traditional screen printing. Traditional processes give texture and add tactile elements to the surface of the fabric. Silk screen printing was used for acid printing, discharge printing and puff blinder. The layering of different pastes made similar effects to the Photoshop filters applied to digital designs. However, screen printing has limitations as it needs colour separations, with each

¹ Nandini Sahay, *Textile*, Volume 12, Issue 3, pg. 271

colour needing its own screen. This was a challenge to use fewer colours to greater effect. Throughout the year, different methods of creating the imagery for the screens were explored. The aim of research into printing methods was to find the most appropriate method to use when setting up a business from home. The most common method was with exposed emulsion. This is the best method for more detailed designs. It was discovered that using polyart paper and hand cutting out simple shapes meant that colour separations were possible. This would be the best possible method to continue using after university. Whilst a range of hand-rendered processes were explored, (screen printing, embroidery, knitting) it was decided that using digital processes alongside the hand-rendered techniques enhanced and benefitted the final outcomes. This collaboration of processes meant that, upon graduation, the production would be more efficient and cost effective. It is hard not to use technology when it benefits the practice and can speed production when working within a small business. Digitally printing the fabrics allowed for more complex imagery that could not be achieved with traditional silk screen printing, as well as creating varied colour ways to adapt designs for different clients.

Material Combinations

Wool continued to be the main material in the major project. It has associations with the contextual motivations behind the work created: the handmade; home; space and place; the woman. The wool was combined with with other natural fibres such as leather, cotton and linen.

The knitting and the looping of the woollen yarn was a new exploration for the year that experimented with the texture and the placement of the weave of wool to see how the

fabric changed when it wasn't flat. Knitting was used as embellishment and as a fabric to cover my products. Hand knitting was preferred to machine knitting because of the feelings generated growing the yarn into something special. Working with different types of yarns made many textures for the surface of the knitted fabric. Hand knitting the yarns was a way of "weaving" fabric into existence and dyeing the yarns by hand gave a more honest representation of my colour palette. However, dyeing the yarns after knitting caused the fibres to slightly fuse together and gave it a fuzzier appearance (fig.3). It would be best to dye the yarn before hand so that the fibres are separated and do not fuse together.



Fig.3, *knitted looped wool*, Frances Dixon, 2016.

Continuing with experimenting with the properties of wool, the needle punching machine fused different wools together to see how the physical appearance and structure changed. I

put together two types of digitally printed wool (wool delaine and wool worsted twill) with three types of plain undyed wool. The process of fusing the fibres together gave a lovely effect, but it was not possible to use this effect all over the cushions as the needle punching machine was not wide enough to fit all the fabric through.



Fig.4, needle punched wool twill and artlc wool gauze, Frances Dixon, 2016.



Fig.5, needle punched wool twill and natural cream wool, Frances Dixon, 2016.

The work created for the major project is very tactile. The combinations of materials (needle punched wool, leathers, knitting, embroidery, embellishment) created interesting textures.

The aim was to get people to engage with the work, to touch the fabrics and to feel the textures. The combination of colours, patterns and textures draw people in and made this happen. Texture is one of the most important things about touch. The products call for people to hold the materials between their hands, to glide their fingers over the detailed embroidery and embellishments. In an age of technology, it is easy for the audience to underappreciate the value of hand crafted products. Jessica Hemmings wrote about the instinctive connection between touch and textiles.² When it comes to materials, touch is the way people get to understand how they are made and how they works. Each experience with fabric will be completely different for each person. If there is no touch, we cannot fully appreciate or understand.

² Jessica Hemmings, *The Textile Reader*, Berg Publishers, 2012 pg. 3

Review of creative / enterprise strategy

Live Briefs and Internships

Throughout the MDes year, three live briefs were addressed: Freshwest, Hallmark and Premiere Vision. The Freshwest brief was to create a vessel to hold one single flower. At the end of the brief, all entries were exhibited at the National Botanical Gardens of Wales. This brief was very vague as to what was required, allowing for as much creativity as possible. It was decided that wool would be used with a combination of hard materials such as cement and ceramics. The wool was used to leave an imprint of the fibres inside the ceramics and as a cover for the ceramics. This material exploration showed that a combination of materials had a bigger impact than just one single fabric. It was a good project to be creative and work outside of the comfort zone and was an opportunity to create something that would not have been considered otherwise.

The second live brief that was addressed was with Hallmark. The brief was to design a collection of gift wraps and bags following a certain trend. The Hallmark project was about developing personal design styles, becoming more creative and working at quicker speeds similar to those required in industry. Following the trend Miss Dolly, the work created was a revisited sixties inspired collection of prints in a selection of the given colours. The feedback received indicated that they liked the interpretation of the brief. The designs placed first and resulted in a placement at the Hallmark studios in Bradford, where another brief in the same style was given to create a collection of greetings cards. It was very good experience to see how the designers at Hallmark design for certain companies. The staff at the ideation studio were responsible for following the trends to create as much imagery as possible and mock up the cards, envelopes and gift bags.



Fig.6, *Freshwest project*, Frances Dixon, 2016.



Fig.7, Hallmark live brief, Frances Dixon, 2016.



Fig.8, Hallmark project (confidential), Frances Dixon, 2016.

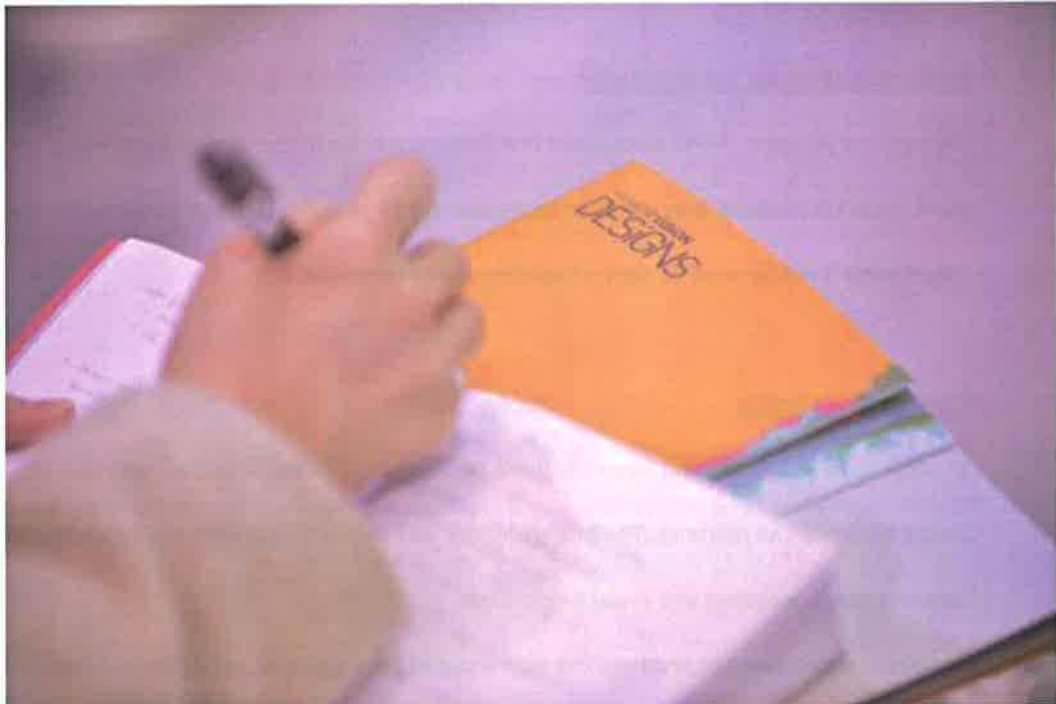


Fig. 9, http://www.premierevision.com/wp-content/gallery/fev16-designs-ambiance/thumbs/thumbs_DF27277.JPG,

As well as working on live briefs, there was an opportunity to work at Premiere Vision, Paris. The week at this event gave valuable experience in working at events of such a large size. It allowed for opportunities in talking to other people from various textile industries, create contacts and to understand how to promote yourself at similar events. By talking to software company AVA at the event, a free workshop and tutorial session was gained that proved very useful when continuing studies for the rest of the year.

Each brief and internship developed important key skills needed to become a better designer: how to interpret briefs, designing within timeframes, communication (with the companies, and also through the artwork), networking, increased externality with industry (working outside of university) and marketing.

Business Set Up

Developing Work for a Niche Market

Throughout the year, it was discovered that there is a niche in the market for printing on wool. It isn't something that has been explored on a large scale. The work created for the major project will be used to start a business upon graduation.

Create Brand Identity

In order to have a successful business, there needs to be a strong brand identity that the target audience can relate to. The brand identity was shown throughout the products, business cards, websites and social media sites.

A website was created to promote the business and have a way of selling the products online. The website was also created as a central point when customers would be directed from social media sites. The styling of the website is in keeping with the brand identity created - crisp, modern and bold.

The website will show the professional photographs of each product displaying the features and details of each product, the prices and a link to buy. It also has a section for a digital portfolio.

FRANCES DIXON

[Home](#) [About](#) [CV](#) [Shop](#) [Portfolio](#) [Contact](#)



Tel. +447772167297 | frandixon93@hotmail.com



Fig. 10, www.francesdixon.co.uk, Homepage

FRANCES DIXON

[Home](#) [About](#) [CV](#) [Shop](#) [Portfolio](#) [Contact](#)

f t in p



About

Frances is a surface pattern designer who creates limited edition textiles to be used as products for the domestic space. She has explored the feminine stereotype and the historical relationship between textiles and the domestic space throughout her third year. Conscious of these associations, Frances is passionate about producing work that is rendered using traditional methods such as hand dyeing, silk-screen printing and embroidery.

Inspired by Scandinavian minimalist aesthetic, she explores traditional processes to create textiles that have distinct, inventive colour combinations and textures. Her graduate collection is inspired by bringing the outdoors in, combining landscape with still life to create contemporary pieces for the home.

Tel. +447772167297 | frandixon93@hotmail.com



Fig. 11, www.francesdixon.co.uk/about, About

FRANCES DIXON

[Home](#) [About](#) [CV](#) [Shop](#) [Portfolio](#) [Contact](#)



[Pop Liqueur](#)

[Tigerprint Pink Pastel](#)

[Graduate Collection](#)

[Miss Dolly Hallmark](#)

[Held - Freshwest](#)



COMING SOON!

Tel: +447772167297 | francedixon93@hotmail.com



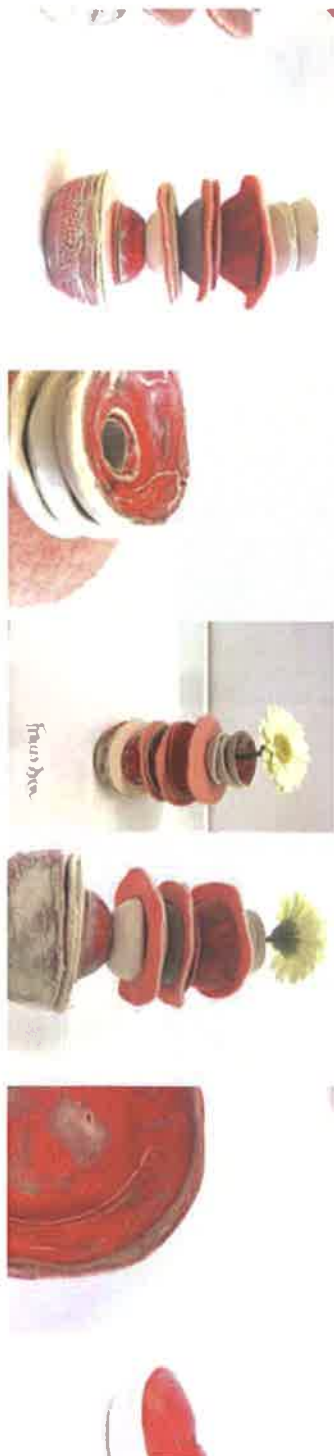
Fig. 12, www.francesdixon.co.uk/shop, Shop page under development

FRANCES DIXON

Home | About | CV | Shop | Portfolio | Contact

fr dixon

HELD - FRESHWEST



Held - Freshwest

Freshwest has found its answer to the long-standing problem of vessels to hold one large flower. Vase is a combination of hand porcelain, ceramic, concrete and hand wood.

01477742771 | frances@dixon.co.uk



Fig. 13, www.francesdixon.co.uk/portfolio , Held- Freshwest

Documentation

It is vital as a business to have a strong portfolio of designs and innovative samples. It is important to have both a physical and a digital portfolio. When the physical portfolio is no longer available for people to view they can still see the digital version. Photographs are how people will remember the work when it is no longer in front of them to touch. The better the quality, the better reputation it gives. The photographs that were taken



Fig. 14, *French knot sampling*, Frances Dixon, 2016.

throughout the major project shows the development of the products and detailed shots of the embellishments on the fabrics. However, another photoshoot will be required to show the products in a staged studio environment with props to give context.



Fig. 15, laser cut leather discs sewn on to wool twill, Frances Dixon, 2016.

It was difficult to fully show the properties of wool in photographs so macro shots of the weave and the embellishments give a better view of the fabrics. Photographs of people interacting with the products would communicate the playfulness and tactility of the materials.

Sustainable Practice and Production Methods

Throughout the MDes year, it has been important to think about how business will work after university. This has guided the decisions that were made when creating the work. The business had to be able to function from home. The fabrics had to be dyed, printed and turned into products at home. This influenced the choice in materials, production methods and the products chosen.

By using a combination of digital and traditional print methods, personal production is halved by outsourcing the digital printing to an external company. The company I have chosen to use is *Centre of Advanced Textiles*.³

To traditionally dye fabrics from home, a dye vat would be created by using a BURCO water boiler and a thermometer. It would be able to hold up to 1m of fabric and has grating at the bottom which means that fabric could be place inside the boiler and the small amount of water at the bottom would make enough steam to set any dyes and pastes printed onto the fabric. Screen printing facilities with an exposure unit would easily be set up in the garage using basic stencil designs.

The embellishments that used on the products are knitting, embroidery and laser cut leather. The only process that would have to be outsourced would be laser cutting the leather to a online company called *laserbean*.⁴

³ <http://www.catdigital.co.uk/pages/>

⁴ <http://www.laserbean.com>

Critical appraisal of the final proposition

The aim of my MDes year was to create strong foundations for starting a business upon graduation. At the beginning of the year, I asked myself three questions that would help with the directions of my projects.

1. What part of the industry am I targeting my work at and how do I create contacts?
2. What is(n't) available in my target industry?
3. How can I develop my skills and material choices to create innovative textile designs?

I decided that my work would be promoted as luxury hand crafted products to be sold in boutique/gallery shops and online. It was discovered that printed wool interior products were limited and became the niche that my work would fit into. I decided that the skills that I would develop would be my drawing and composition of designs as this a key element when creating a product, to keep designing on a large scale using AVA and Illustrator to help, and explore material combinations to see what give the greatest impact.

For my final project, I proposed to create a collection of luxury interior products using natural materials that addressed the three questions I asked at the beginning of the year. I wanted the collection to include blankets, rugs, cushions and lamps. They would be used to start up my business.

However, throughout the year I realised that this would be too much to take on for one project and that I should focus on items that would logistically work for a small business and

that could be produced with little cost to myself. Blankets and rugs involved too much time and effort to produce and would not be an easy seller for a small business starting up. Cushions and lampshades had a smaller cost to make and are easier to market and sell as they are more affordable.

During the year, it became clearer that if I was to start up a business selling my products and wanted to make a steady income from them, more affordable products would have to be available to purchase. This is clear in the range of products I produced. Cushions and lampshades ranged in size and also how much embellishment was included. They were made from wool, cotton and leather. These combinations worked well together as each material had a different quality that complimented the other materials. Cotton drill gave the most vibrant colours as it was a white fabric, however the wool twill was softer. The leather was used as a base for the cushions but also as embellishments. The leather was strong and durable so made a perfect fabric for the base of the floor cushions. I feel that including other fabrics with the wool only benefitted the appearance and durability of the cushions and lamps.

The choice to include digital printing and laser cutting in the production of the products was a business decision as it made sense to speed up production and improved some the designs created. I don't feel that I have lost the hand-crafted ethos that I started the project with as I have had total control of the production. Everything about the product has been made by hand, although this is abstracted when using the hand to control a machine. I feel that I did not do as much traditional printing and experimenting as I initially thought I would at the beginning of the year. This was partly because of a business decision to create

products that would be easy to produce when the facilities were no longer available and because the designs I created would not reach their full potential if they were screen printed.

The ways in which I said I would produce my work has changed but I feel that I have been able to create strong foundations for starting a business and am confident with the plans I have made.

I feel that I have definitely found my identity as a designer with a style that suits the market I am targeting. This has been displayed throughout my portfolio and my website. One of the difficulties I had when creating my portfolio and website was translating the tactile materials into digital images and keeping the message behind my work clear. The way that I solved this was to display samples and swatches in my physical portfolio and photographed in detail the embellishments and material combinations of each product for the digital portfolio. The audience wouldn't be able to touch a digital image but they could almost imagine how it would feel because the quality of the images showed the smallest details. The digital portfolio displayed on the website improves the experience the audience have when visiting my page as they can see in detail what the products are and can see the brand identity throughout.

In terms of exhibiting my work for the degree show, I feel that I have created two spaces that are exciting and attract an audience. The products are styled so they are almost 'collaged' on top of each other, mimicking the way the prints and patterns were created. I chose to separate the cushions and the lampshades so they did not overpower each other

and could be seen with clarity. Having the cushion display in the centre of the room meant that visitors could circle the display and see each cushion from many angles, if they felt they did not want to touch. However, I do encourage people to touch my products and engage with them as I do when I am making them. Choosing to have my lampshades in a large white space with high ceilings proved to be a good choice as there were opportunities to view from many different angles, coming up and down the staircases and directly underneath, and the blank canvas made the colours pop on the fabrics. I think that having the ten lampshades at different heights and spacing allowed for an exciting and fun display of an object that could potentially be considered uninteresting.

Future trajectories

Throughout the MDes year, I have undertaken many project and learnt many things. By exploring through these projects, I have discovered issues and ideas that will need further consideration as I continue with my practice and that they are link with each other.

The first issue that needs to be addressed is creating a shop on my website so I am able to sell my products online. If it proves too difficult to create the e-commerce section directly on the website, I will have to create a shop on etsy or a similar platform so that I am able to still sell. This will be reached through a link on my website.

Whatever I decide to do, the photos that I take of my products will be have to translate the tactility of the materials in digital photographs on my website. The products are made to be touched and enjoyed and there needs to be more research into ways of keeping this message clear and communicate this in my portfolio's and website. Initially I thought that close-up detailed shots would be enough. On further consideration, the products I created were made with the intention that people would be touching and interacting with them. It would seem a good way to properly communicate the materiality and tactility of the products by have a photo shoot of the products with people interacting in the environments they were meant for.

This leads to the next point for exploration - defining a clearer target audience. I currently feel that the products I have created can be for everyone. However, with a little more refining of processes and how they are used with certain materials, there could be room for developing different ranges that have alternative markets.

There is scope for specific products for different age groups. The products that I created for the major project have been made with the thought that they would be used for decoration in a home or in a commercial setting like an office or shop. They are visually pleasing products but do not serve a purpose as such.

There is much scope for developing a range of products that have a deeper meaning than it feels nice when it comes to interaction. This is an area of research that could really develop who I am as a designer and would be interesting to see what further routes the research could take me down.

I am interested in how the tactile elements of my fabrics could become a sensory tool for vulnerable people who perhaps find it hard to cope with reality or find it hard to focus. This could be for people with dementia or with learning and social difficulties. It could become a calming and engaging tool and has the potential to work for all age groups.

Another option could be using the materials I produce to create development toys/tools for children. The sensory experiences that children have when touching the fabrics and textures could encourage cognitive development and build on the skills needed to grow.

There could also be potential for bursaries to fund this type of research with health projects.

Next year I am going to do my PGCE in Design Technology for Secondary School. This career path is something I have always wanted to pursue. It will give me job security and a steady income so I have funds to support my design business. I also have the opportunities to work with children and to get an understanding of how they learn and how I could potentially bring my research into my job.

For all of these ideas and issues to become a reality, I would potentially need to draft in the help of a marketing agency that would advise which opportunities are out there and would promote my business to an audience that I perhaps might not have considered.

Bibliography

- Hemmings. J, *The Textile Reader*, Berg Publishers, 2012
- Sahay. N, *Textile*, Volume 12, Issue 3
- <http://www.catdigital.co.uk/pages/>
- <http://www.laserbean.com>
- http://www.premierevision.com/wp-content/gallery/fev16-designs-ambiance/thumbs/thumbs_DF27277.JPG

