

Project Proposal

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This piece of writing will explore a proposed design project that will result in an interior pattern collection that promotes feelings of peacefulness and calmness within the home. It will discuss narrative through process and materiality using the ideas of Duncombe and Lambert and Phillip Ball, while exploring work by JPR Stitch and Leonardo Da Vinci. Additionally, it will consider where this collection lies and compare its core values to those of brands such as Curate Space and Coordonne.

Keeping up with the demands of fast-paced work environments and constant use of technology removes us from the natural world, and it is evident that – particularly since the pandemic – people are becoming increasingly drawn to re-connecting with nature - “an intensified appreciation – and desire – for connecting with nature, while not unexpected, seems to have worked its way up the list of post-pandemic results” (Beuhler, 2025). This links to biophilic design, and the idea of bringing nature in through pattern and colour, and how this has a positive effect on the mind. This project aims to end as an interior collection that can be used in the home to create immersive spaces that evoke a sense of calmness or mindfulness by bringing natural themes inside; it will also be created through mindful artistic practices inspired by acts of being present in the natural world.

In the book *The Art of Activism* (2021, pg. 60), Duncombe and Lambert describe “creative people [as] observers”, and explore seemingly mundane tasks such as people-watching, staring at the clouds, wandering through shops and walking different ways home as new sources of inspiration (2021, pg. 62). Arguably, these such things cannot be appreciated without taking the time to really notice our surroundings, which can be considered an act of mindfulness that will lead to the imagery for this project. Grounding techniques are something used to relieve anxiety, however, can be used in the everyday to “enhance overall mental wellbeing” (Calm, 2023); an article about these techniques on ‘Calm’ describes them as reconnecting with your surroundings. Common tools included in the article are the 5,4,3,2,1 exercise - finding five things you can see, four you can touch, three you can hear, two you can smell, and one you can taste – and describing your surroundings, which help you to remain in the present moment. Clearly, noticing our surroundings is a good practice to remain grounded, and when connected to the desire to be in nature, can be connected to searching for colours, patterns and shapes in the natural world. An aspect of creating imagery for this project will be going on nature walks and searching for things around such as reoccurring mathematics and pattern in nature like the Fibonacci sequence, geometric shapes, concentric circles and more. By creating through being present, the collection can become something that was made in acts of mindfulness, to evoke feelings of peace.

These - alongside other acts of mindfulness such as painting to music, watching waves and listening to rain - are purposeful acts of being present that can be conveyed through a repetitive, habitual exploration of my own visual language. When breaking down the aspects of process, Duncombe and Lambert state that “Habit will sustain you whether you’re inspired or not ... Habit is persistence in practice” (2021, pg. 49), habit will play a big part in this exploration of imagery, as it will allow a full exploration into the different ways to visually represent certain feelings of calmness. Artist Dr. Jack Roberts used habit and repetition to create his recent piece: Daily stitch drawings (Figure 1).

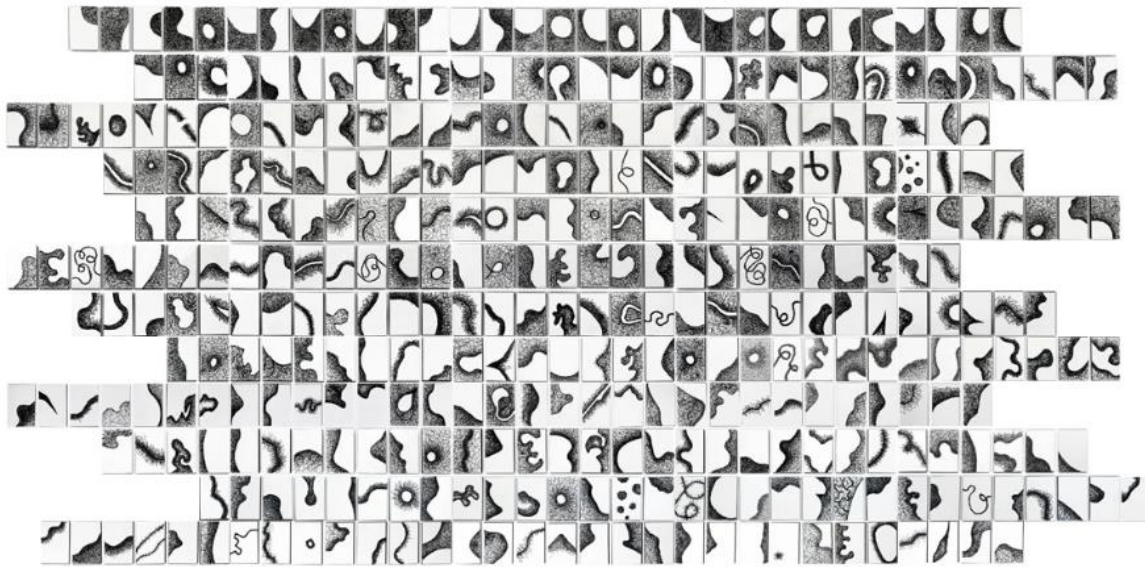


Figure 1: Daily Stitch Drawings – Year One (JPR Stitch, 2023-2024)

For one year, Roberts (JPR Stitch) used freehand machine embroidery to create a quick, small drawing to “capture [his] feelings, mood and the moment in time in which they [were] created” (JPR Stitch, 2024). He calls stitch his meditation and with his work aims to “convey emotion and a sense of calmness and balance” (JPR Stitch, 2025), while encouraging its viewers to slow down. Working in a way that explores his own serenity allows this to come through in his work, and his habitual structure of creating has led to him fully understanding his artistic language. Drawing through machine embroidery demands fast-paced movements which allow for intuition to take over, a good exercise when exploring art as an act of being present through allowing things to take their natural course.

Maths itself can be seen as a source of calm for some people, as many people thrive in predictability as it allows for a sense of control. In the book *Patterns in Nature: Why the Natural World Looks the Way it Does*, it is argued that “We look for similarity, predictability, regularity: those have always been the guiding principles behind the emergence of science. We try to break down the complex profusion of nature into simple rules, to find order among what at first might look like chaos” (Ball, 2016, pg. 6), supporting the idea that finding pattern within nature provides a sense of comfort for people by breaking down complexity into simplicity. It is an intention to explore sources of imagery such as pinecones, spiral shells, seed heads, beehives, tree rings, water ripples, fern leaves and mathematical diagrams and equations. The structure provided by maths alongside the natural forms that are represented by it will create contrast in the designs, representing this complexity and simplicity, that also allows for visual interest.



Figure 2: Drawing of water vortex (Leonardo Da Vinci, 1510-1513)

In the same book, Ball references Da Vinci's sketches of flowing water (Figure 2) that suggested a pattern of the movement of water. (2016, pg. 108) He describes them as 'too regular' and introduces the idea that Da Vinci had edited what he saw, to make sense of it. Art historian Martin Kemp called this 'structural intuitions' (Ball, 2016, pg. 108) which is: trying to make sense of the world we perceive. It is interesting that our intuition fills in the gaps of things that resemble pattern – the project has a focus on intuition and allowing the mind to go where it goes, which can be visually represented through drawing exercises such as timed drawing, blind contour drawing, continuous line drawing etc.

As mentioned earlier in the essay, artistic process will underpin the project through methods such as nature walks, habit and using intuition. Before the design process, a personal exploration will be undertaken into a visual language based off ideas discussed in this proposal. This will be made up of set daily and weekly tasks that involve drawing exercises, drawing at locations, painting to music, using different mediums and collecting subject matter and materials.

A blog entry on Milan Art Institute (2019) claims that training the right side of the brain can help with difficulty seeing beyond the literal – a skill needed for the development of imagery for this project. They describe the right hemisphere of the brain as "responsible for abstract thinking, emotional expression, visualisation, and being fully present in the moment" and suggest exercises to develop these skills such as doodling without plan, mirror writing/ drawing with both hands, blind contour drawing, daydreaming with intention etc. The article is ended with an encouragement to make these exercises "part

of your daily practice” (Milan Art Institute, 2019), linking habit to the growth of artistic instinct.

Another drawing exercise that can be used is introduced by the Pallant House Gallery (2019) when discussing *The Art of Mindfulness*; ‘Slow Looking’ is taking a certain amount of time, 5 minutes is suggested, to hold any object and “take it in” as if “you have never seen it before” (Pallant House Gallery, 2019), going on to invite the reader to consider whether their perception has changed and “notice colours, patterns, shapes, textures etc.”. This exercise can be used as a starting point to drawing objects related to the theme like pinecones, spiral shells, petals and leaves in the Fibonacci sequence. Comparatively, it can also be done alongside drawing from an immediate initial response to an object, a more intuitive approach, and observing how this can change the drawing.

There is an interest in this idea of slowing down, and this is something that will be useful to explore in the visual enquiry section of the project through processes like cyanotyping in the sunlight where things are allowed to take their natural course, natural dyeing or hand embroidery, which links closely to repetition found in nature. Similarly, weaving is a slow process of repetitive movements that creates structure within a piece. The use of other mediums can resemble the themes of the collection for example: painting with inks and watercolours to convey a softness that ties in with mindfulness or collaging and layering to represent the complexities of nature and found patterns.

With biophilia and the idea that we are affected by what surrounds us as underlying themes of the project, the fabrics and resources used will be purposeful choices to bring nature in and evoke feelings of calmness and softness within the home. A WGSN report on Gentle Living (2025) highlights a consumer focus on “embracing slow living” and need for products that “promote meaningful moments of pause and reflection”. One strategy discussed is titled ‘The Healing Home’ which suggests creating “harmony with nature to turn the home into a healing space” through embracing raw textures, creating items with a “pillowy look” and using smooth forms. These raw textures can be achieved through using playdough or clay and an ink pad to take impressions of natural forms, likewise, taking rubbings using oil pastel or chalk. A similar strategy ‘Sleep matters’ introduces certain fibres that can contribute to calming environments in the home such as linen and bamboo due to their breathability and suggests a colour palette of ‘calming neutrals’. Softness is an important factor in fabric choice, as coarse fabrics will not easily allow for feelings of comfort, and so cottons and silks will be used alongside other fabrics chosen due to tactile qualities.

The report (WGSN, 2025) also mentions home fragrances and scents that are good for creating a refreshing atmosphere like rain and linen. Particular scents that are calming in the home are detailed in an article by Aery Living (2024): Lavender - “the classic relaxer”, chamomile, sandalwood, ylang ylang, bergamot, patchouli, eucalyptus and frankincense. An interesting approach to the creative process is to use these natural elements - commonly used for feelings of calmness though scent - as subjects for drawing matter and natural dyeing, allowing the scents to build the colour palette.

Choice of colour is going to be an integral part of this project, as psychology and natural reactions to colour as well as colours that can be achieved through natural dyeing processes will be considered. Parsons (1921, pg. 14) analyses the use of colour to

express personality through describing the qualities expressed by different colours in the home and how people can be affected by them within the book *The Art of Home Furnishing and Decoration*. He discusses colours individually, beginning with yellow, stating that it “expresses the quality that the sun seems to give out” (Parsons, 1921, pg. 14) and using this comparison to infer that yellow should produce feelings of cheer, light-heartedness and new life. This effect of positivity can be useful in this collection, when creating a space that evokes feelings of peace, and according to All Natural Dyeing, can be achieved using turmeric, brown onion, bay leaves and marigold (n.d.) or from experience buddleia. He then moves on to correlate the colour blue to “restraint, coolness, repose and distance”, and physically imagines it through a “clear blue sky and the cool breezes from the blue waters of the ocean” (Parsons, 1921, pg. 15). Within the imagery gathering part of the project, an idea has been to draw from subjects such as cloud and wave watching, which closely link to Parsons’s interpretation of the colour blue, yet the feelings of coolness and repose suggest a calmness derived from these things. Blue can be quite difficult to achieve through natural dyeing, All Natural Dyeing suggests using Indigo, Woad, various berries or cornflower (n.d.), however these might give more purple tones. Parsons then argues that green, the amalgamation of yellow and blue, achieves the same synthesis in its qualities – “nothing could be more restful, soothing and agreeable than the cheering and cooling effects of a seat in the shade upon the green grass under luxuriant green trees” (Parsons, 1921, pg. 15). Arguably the most commonly occurring colour in nature, the colour green can be predicted to be a strong colour in the palette, but also can be difficult to achieve through natural dyeing yet might be interesting to experiment with overdyeing with yellow and blue pigments.

It is clear that people are affected by what surrounds them, and biophilia is something that improves wellbeing through bringing nature into living spaces, whether that through physical things, colour, pattern or materiality. Earlier in his book, Parsons states that “man is exactly what he lives in, for environment is the strongest possible factor in man’s development” (1921, pg. 5), going on to argue that colour and pattern are just as important as durability and comfort when it comes to choosing the things we fill our homes with (1921, pg. 6). Obviously materiality is integral as well, with Parsons himself later describing texture as “the quality of an object which seems to convey the idea of how it feels”; a feeling of softness is important to creating the feelings of peacefulness this collection aims to achieve, and when paired with colour and pattern taken directly from nature, will create a tranquil environment for living.

Parsons further investigates the different rooms within a home and how their uses relate to their design – “from whatever standpoint the room is viewed, the question of *use* comes first” (Parsons, 1921, pg. 13). Each room of a house has a different purpose, and it should be considered which of these it is appropriate to build as a mindful space: “if it is a living room, it is to live in and should have a quiet, refined and otherwise pleasant atmosphere. If it is a bedroom, it is to rest and sleep in” (Parsons, 1921, pg. 13). The ideas of this collection acting as a source of peacefulness links most directly to these two rooms, where it can be manifested as wall coverings, curtains/ blinds, bed sheets and decorative items whose purpose is joy, relating to William Morris’s famous instruction to “have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful” (Medium, 2023).

Home décor brand Curate Space holds similar values, describing their products as bringing a “unique depth, warmth and personality” (2025) to create inspiring spaces. They produce sustainable and ethically sourced wallpapers, priding themselves on being environmentally conscious, which this collection requires. From looking at their designs, it is clear to see that they are also largely inspired by nature and create wallpapers that surround their customers with natural forms.



Figure 3: Eva Wallpaper (Curate Space, 2025), Figure 4: Florence Wallpaper (Curate Space 2025)

Figure 3 shows their wallpaper ‘Eva’ which encapsulates a painterly floral that brings nature to the wall in an abstract style that inspires the imagery for this project while the Florence design in figure 4 pairs leaf motifs with geometric design, mirroring the symmetry and pattern found in nature.

The brand Coordonne also closely aligns with the ideals of this collection, particularly with their own collection, *Central Saint Martins – Rest Time* (2025). The collection consists of patterns inspired by moments the designer has lived in which brought feelings of peace or fascination. For example, *Leaves Reflection* (2025), which depicts “the simplicity of observing the effect of light in nature and the magical shapes that appear at different times of the day”, is similar to maths and science in nature as a source of inspiration as well as the act of slowing down through the process of cyanotype – using the sunlight. *Rest Time* also contains patterns depicting watching the sunset in a familiar place, or *Timeless stones*, which is inspired by the “mechanical” act of collecting stones and described as “connect[ing] with the organic and with [them]self” (2025). Having looked at the entire collection, the idea of places and acts of comfort is best represented by the design *My Cave* shown in figure 5. It is described as a

source of comfort where the designer feels most at home surrounded by familiar things. The narrative of *Rest Time* resembles aspects of my own and provides inspiration of ways to visually represent some of the ideas, it also consists of a very earthy colour palette, highlighting its connection to nature.



Figure 5: *My Cave Emerald* (Coordonne, 2025)

Coordonne aspires to “bring emotion and life” to spaces (2025) while also respecting the environment by using 100% natural raw fibres and leaving “the smallest environmental footprint” (2025). Admirably, they also provide local employment, by sourcing and working with nearby fabric mills and artists, which they describe as fundamental to their brand philosophy. The brands I aspire to and research in projects, including Curate Space and Coordonne, create a range of interesting designs and styles while holding themselves to high standards of moral and environmental consciousness, which is evident in their about sections. It is an objective of this collection to reflect these ideals through conscious design and production, so it can be a useful addition to a portfolio that can lead to an internship or placement with a brand with similar values where experience can be built. An ideal would be an in-house or freelance designer working with these kinds of brands, where creativity and community can thrive – working in a studio with other people is valuable to my practice, as it allows for other points of view and knowledge.

By the end of this project, my understanding of natural dyeing will have grown, as well as how to stay environmentally conscious in design and production. The beginning sector of the project – the exploration into a visual language – will consist of habitually immersing myself in nature, collecting subject matter for observation and dyeing, drawing exercises, and repetitive artistic practice using a range of materials and media such as inks, watercolour, stitch, soft and oil pastels, collage and cyanotype. This will lead to a better understanding of my own artistic practice while also providing rich starting points for pattern designing. The design process will involve developing a colour palette through natural dyeing and new knowledge of colour psychology explored by

Parsons, and utilizing the imagery collected from the earlier exploration to create a collection – titled ‘Biophilic serenity’ – that reflects values of appreciation of nature, mindfulness and a passion for art. As discussed previously, this – alongside the rest of my portfolio – can lead to a place in a brand with similar values.

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Figures

Figure 1: Roberts, J. (2023-2024) *Daily Stitch Drawings – Year One*. Available at: <https://www.jprstitch.com/artworks/categories/12/9769-year-one/> (Accessed: 20 November 2025)

Figure 2: Da Vinci, L. (1510-1513) *Drawing of Water Vortex*. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Drawing-of-water-vortex-by-Leonardo-Da-Vinci-ca-1510-1513_fig1_337037148 (Accessed: 18 November 2025)

Figure 3: Curate Space. (2025) *Eva Wallpaper*. Available at: <https://curatespace.com/product/eva-wallpaper/> (Accessed: 6 December 2025)

Figure 4: Curate Space. (2025) *Florence Wallpaper*. Available at: <https://curatespace.com/product/florence-wallpaper/> (Accessed: 6 December 2025)

Figure 5: Coordonne. (2025) *My Cave Emerald*. Available at: <https://coordonne.com/shop/wallpapers/murals/my-cave-emerald/> (Accessed: 6 December 2025)