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Creative Venture Report
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Executive summary

This project is a love letter to myself. This report is a conversation into my depth of understanding regarding object attachment and nostalgia in relation to my project. The body of work I chose to undertake within my creative venture is an unfolding narrative celebrating my childhood memories and the places and spaces which shaped me, using a weave of designs to drift in and amongst these stories.

I have created an immersive interior collection which aims to tell a story through layers of design. I have chosen to portray an open narrative, consisting of deliberately fewer specific designs which are able to allow the customer or viewer to create their own links and tune into their own memories or relatable feelings based on what is in front of them. The project topic is deeply personal and complex to me and therefore challenging to get across a clear and precise story which can be widely interpreted and understood.

In order to research this project, I am lucky enough to have access to these places right on my doorstep and have been able to visit them several times thanks to them being open air spaces. I feel so fortunate that I have been able to go and situate myself in the spaces which I have chosen to represent as it allowed me to feel a deeper connection within my project, and touch on and investigate emotions which would be more challenging to convey through photographs alone.

The outcome of the project is a collection suitable for a wide range of interior uses, designed to be implicated across a large variety of surfaces from wallcovering to soft furnishings. Designed, but not limited, to suit the quirky modern homeowner from London penthouse to chic countryside residence. These designs will also be suitable and appropriate for use in situations such as restaurants and cafes due to the soft colours and natural motifs.

This body of work is a love letter to myself. A celebration of the objects and experiences which have formed the person which I am today. I hope to create an immersive interior space which creates a relatable open narrative, which allows a customer or viewer to feel like they can take their own stories away from my designs, whilst ensuring that the feelings that they get from doing so are the ones which I intend to portray. I want to ensure there is a fluidity and sense of unity between the collections and stories which allows the various prints which I go on to create to work together harmoniously. I have created one larger collection with multiple facets which will allow for multiple designs to be used in one space. I wanted to ensure that I invite an open narrative because this body of work is so rich in personal value and nostalgia that it would be impossible to convey this to a client or someone viewing my work to the level of depth, understanding and connectivity which I have to the designs.

A large amount of the inspiration which I have chosen to incorporate into this project come from first-hand places and spaces, specifically within my family home, alongside Castle Ashby and Canons Ashby gardens in Northamptonshire, both of which have strong links to my childhood memories and a rich variety of design inspiration for me. I have chosen these spaces because of the value which I realise they hold in the growth of my artistic handwriting and have had frequent impressions on my life. I also find a lot of enjoyment in museum spaces such as the V&A, and the MOMA which has a wonderful online archive which has been so helpful to me not only as a great source of research throughout lockdown, but also allowing me to access archives elsewhere in the world which would be very difficult for me to access in my day-to-day life. I find museums a great way to gel the links between my dreamed-up ideas and a way of solidifying those ideas, it is where the weird and wonderful can be explored and whilst in our current circumstance scouring a museum isn't possible, online archives kindly provided by various museums, and even online garden tours, mean that these treasures are still very much a present and accessible resource for my research requirements. These archives allow me to access a much more unique range of beautiful objects and artifacts the likes of which just cannot be found on Pinterest and Google.



Figure 1

Narrative is so important to the overall emotive communication of my projects because of how I choose to form my patterns. I am a keen illustrator and I think a big part of that for me, is telling a story through drawing as opposed to words. I feel accomplished by establishing a narrative for a collection to not only take a viewer on an adventure but allow me to structure and formulate my thoughts in a way which can be processed through design. Therefore, I knew that I wanted this body of work to have an interpretive, dreamlike aura which allows freedom of storytelling for each new individual studying my work (fig 1). As I create my drawings, I often find that I am daydreaming, about what I am drawing, what I might draw next, or something which inspires me. To be honest, not a lot of my work comes from looking at the work of other designers but rather childhood stories and other various novels, and I find that most of my illustrations start almost as flower buds, and blossom as my daydreams become more and more detailed and vivid. Like a flower, they are often imperfect, unique, and sometimes unexpected. The time, delicacy and sensitivity which I carefully invest in each of my individual drawings mean that my work is very suited to a luxury interior environment. Beyond the time which I spend creating each of my designs, I appreciate that they are quite often of a more unique taste and never designed to suit trends or mass market. I like to think that my pieces are quite timeless, and this is something that runs in line with my personal ethics as a human being. I am extremely environmentally conscious in my day-to-day life and have made a lot of lifestyle choices to live more sustainably, whilst the production of my work isn't currently as environmentally friendly as I'd like for it to be

in terms of methods and materials, chopping out the ‘fast interiors’ trend is a step in the right direction for me at this stage in my journey. Luxury interiors have a much higher price point and for me the aim is to encourage a buyer to consider their purchase more carefully, and in turn hopefully the product will live a much longer, more utilised life. I hope to enrich my project with the vibrancy of colour which I choose to surround myself with in my everyday life, as well as fitting sympathetically alongside my other previous work which has a signature tone and feel.



Figure 2

I chose to create one large collection within this body of work as opposed to a few smaller separate ones because I invest myself so heavily in a concept that it would be simply impossible for me to flick between various design topics and ideas. I knew that I wanted to be able to create an immersive space within the project, the likes of that of Emma Shipley (fig 2) which allowed for a multitude of designs to work cohesively in one space. I love the ability to utilise pattern on pattern as I feel that this way of designing allows you to be able to create a layered narrative which goes beyond the realms of just one design. In order to better understand this design process and to be able to make sure that I could achieve something effective, I made sure to do some research and attended a talk by Nathalie Farman-Farma of Decors Barbares (Farman-Farma, 2021) who is an expert in the field of pattern clashing and layers, she discussed the importance of continuity through the designs which you choose to

use and how the age / style, colour and motifs play an integral part as to whether a collection of designs sit in unison or begin to fight each other for top spot. Nathalie also talked about the importance of similar pattern flow and motion so that the different designs are able to weave into each other. Almost as though they might be different chapters of the same story, as oppose to a whole different book.

Narrative is the life and soul of the work which I produce. I am a storyteller; it is how my brain works and forms my inner monologue. It is a chance for me to create something intricate and personal, whilst also being able to create a rich story for my hands to work to. I often think of my hands as a brain printer and am often in awe of the fact that I am able to replicate my daydreams and fleeting visions into a physical form. Often my designs suggest a narrative between all of the illustrations I produce, however within this body of work I have chosen to include objects which have rich narratives of their own. Whilst I am not looking to tell the individual narratives of these objects, for a lot of them I only know the tip of the iceberg, this interlacing and intertwining of stories and the relationship between the individual narratives and the one which I have created for them is one which I am interested to explore.

None of the items I have chosen to feature in this project actually belong to me, which in itself I find interesting to think about. Why have I chosen things that belong to others and not my own belongings which also mean something to me and also play integral roles in my daily life? My conclusion is that these objects bridge the gap between being an object that I love, and an object which holds sentiment. It is quite common for someone's most valued possessions to be ones given to them by someone they love, I know for certain that mine are, and so I have come to realise and adore the fact that these objects not only have nostalgic value and fond memories to me, but also that they harbour human love, and that is why I gravitated towards those items more than the things which I just like to own.

This project is ultimately a 'love letter to myself'. When I initially formulated my ideas and thoughts and feelings for this project, I found it difficult to formulate a cohesive way to explain what I was trying to produce. I came to that conclusion without much thought of why or how it was a love letter to myself or even what that meant to me. I know that this project is a reflection of myself, the objects, places and spaces which have shaped me, the techniques

which I have developed through synergies between the hand and digital and have grounded my practice, and a celebration of the person I have become. An amalgamation of joyful nostalgia and moments of difficulty the likes of the current global pandemic and its limitations on my abilities to work and visit places of inspiration freely, and what their relationship looks like to me in the form of pattern. My chosen form of communication.

Something that my previous report lacked was records of academic research and evidence of where my thoughts and feelings had come from. Ultimately, this is something I do in spades without even realising it, I think through research but often do not explicitly evidence this. I am constantly reading and learning and conversing and watching to understand the creative world, and my own creative practice in a better light. Most importantly of all, I am in constant search of a way to pinpoint the foundations of my beliefs, my design thinking, and to find ways to link all of the weird and wonderful things which I dream up for my designs.

One of the talks which I attended throughout the semester was hosted by the Royal College of Art on the subject of nostalgia. At this point, I had already created my project synopsis and had not considered the sheer depth of what it was I am trying to convey in my work. Nostalgia is at the very heart of this and is not something I had even given a moment's thought to prior to this talk. The conversation saw lots of the students have an open discussion about what nostalgia means to them, and each and every person had a completely different experience, and emotion towards it. I had always thought of nostalgia as a positive emotion, a way of connecting to and keeping alive the memories of things which no longer exist or a way of life which I cannot return to. But I had never considered that actually, many people consider nostalgia to be a negative feeling or experience relating to sadness, longing or absence. The origins of the notion of nostalgia were associated with being a 'neurological disease' by Johannes Hofer, a seventeenth century physician (Beck, 2021) and it was classed as a psychological disorder for much of the 20th century (Beck, 2021). However, Fred Davis carried out numerous interviews and surveys across his own university students and wider afield, asking them each for their experiences of nostalgia, and was most regularly frequented with feelings of happiness and joy, concluding that actually, nostalgia as a phenomenon in itself, is ultimately, a pleasant experience. 'The nostalgic feeling is infused with imputations of past beauty, pleasure, joy, satisfaction, goodness, happiness, love, and the like, in sum, any or several of the *positive* affects of being.' (1979, p.14) Hence, Davis concludes that the feeling of nostalgia is always one of positive origin, but it is the later

interpretation of that feeling which may become one of sad and negative nature. Thus, my project is a representation of a series of moments, my personal fleeting happy memories, which I hope can be interpreted by the audience too.

Throughout this project I have also been fortunate enough to be able to have collaborative conversation and mutual exchange of ideas with two other students to converse and generate new ideas and ways of thinking. It is very easy to get stuck in your own thoughts and not to be able to see other obvious alleyways or where there might be potential pockets of beauty, sometimes it requires another brain to be able to see things differently which might not be glaring obvious to you. Therefore, these students have been so valuable to the types of research which I have chosen to undertake, provoking discussions and topics which would have otherwise remained unexplored. Working within a team and social environment is something which I have undoubtedly craved throughout the pandemic where I often found myself working alone or in the absence of other likeminded people. I find that being able to discuss work, being able to see the work of others and their process is a great way to feel motivated and enriched with inspiration.

The studio environment is something which I really took for granted prior to the pandemic and I feel that I noticed my work and creativity was potentially struggling when that environment was taken away from me, I found that I became less experimental without the process of those around me being an influence. I have found the experience of being able to have peers to converse with and discuss my ideas with to be invaluable in the way it has aided my development as a designer throughout the year. The layout of my life has potentially been more similar to that which graduate life might be like, in terms of not having access to a studio with a large volume of creatives. I will never work in an environment again where I will be in a room working alongside 100 other likeminded designers and so I have had to find ways to adapt and stimulate my mind and find new sources of creativity. I think that this has been a positive way of easing me into graduate life as I feel I have been able to develop a new skillset and methods of working which I otherwise would have found overwhelming to comprehend beyond my university journey.

During my second year at university, I was able to attend a talk by Angela Maddock. Angela works with thread to piece together beautifully intricate works of art, laced with narrative and

personal stories from her life. During the talk, we were encouraged us to create narratives and context for the objects which Angela had collected on a hike across the UK, from the Oriel Myrddin to her hometown in the north of England. I found this fascinating because all of these items which she had collected on her travels had such personal meaning to her and yet she was asking us to find our own personal attachments to these objects. This is something I have chosen to emulate within my project and got me to think about objects and personal attachment in a whole new way which I had never considered previously. Angela really encouraged us to think in great depth about the origins and personality of the objects she had collected, and I feel that this completely flipped my way of thinking about these things too. Ultimately, the narrative and story within my designs is one which is so personal and so in depth it would be almost impossible to communicate this to a customer or viewer of my work, exactly as it is and feels to me, because I will never be able to transplant my memories and emotions into the minds of others. Therefore, I have chosen to present this as an open narrative, a way for the viewer to create their own story, ask their own questions and dream up their own visions for the way these things interact.

Something which I am particularly interested in is the relationship between heart, head and hand, and I have actively considered this throughout the duration of my project in relation to how this affects me and my practice. The relationship between head and heart in particular is something which I think I have always struggled to find the gaps between in terms of academia and the way in which I work. Ultimately what I mean by this is that outwardly when asked I would say I am headstrong and lead with my head, but that deep down really, I am totally ruled by my heart. I find this constant battle something challenging to find the balance between, especially when it comes to remembering to use my academic avenues to support my hearts decisions. I am a logical yet chaotic creative, and that is something which is almost impossible to harbour. More and more over time, I have learnt how to let my head and my heart work as a harmonious duo, the way I'd describe it is as though they are a super team, both with different skillsets and both with different ideas to bring to the table but now also able to listen to each other and take things onboard. My hands are quite often the messenger between them, experimenting with all sorts of ideas coming from each, until a happy merged medium is formed.

Something which I have introduced to the synergy between head, heart and hand over the past year or so, has been the introduction of digital technologies. Digitally generating my final designs is something which has always been common practice for me, and this is how I have always brought my ideas from paper to form a design. There are no difficulties establishing my boundaries here as I have truly been able to work out how each element of my process fits into this routine. However, more recently I have introduced digital drawing to my practice. It has been difficult for me to find the perfect balance between head, heart, hand, and now digital as I often found that I became desensitised by my digital drawings. Whilst my hand works in the exact same way whether I choose to draw with a traditional pencil or digital pen, my hand acting purely as a messenger, I found the lack of physicality difficult to connect with.

A traditional pencil and paper invites texture, the smell of paper and the sounds of pencil gently scratching at a surface is something which I had become so in tune with. To me it always felt like physical poetry or as though I was weaving an intricate cloth, I was always able to get into a rhythm and really feel what it was I was drawing. Taking away the physical feeling of paper, the smell of graphite, the smudging of pencil on the side of my hand, somehow made me feel less connected to what I was drawing for a long time. I didn't feel as though I was involved in the process and was rather watching my hand do the work, rather than feeling really immersed in the process. The mind-numbing process of drawing over the same pixels again and again in perplexed silence was something which I struggled to really invest myself in. I knew that I really wanted to persevere with the digital drawing process as it opens doors for me in terms of my pattern potential which I struggled to achieve prior. The quality of detail which I am able to achieve with this process is something which I really value within my designs and is also something which I feel incredibly accomplished and proud of, and it is that excitement and anticipation of the final result which has allowed me to better merge this way of working into my process and allow myself to feel more connected to the journey of getting to the final results.

Within my Creative Enterprise and Practice report, I touched on how much my confidence as a designer had blossomed over the past year. I have been lucky enough to gain some exciting new opportunities and with those opportunities comes unexplored ventures and knowledge. I was able to talk to designers in industry with decades of experience who have been kind enough to take me under their wing and help me get my foot in the door. I have been able to

learn so much more about how things such as trade, licencing and designing for product actually works and this insight is something which I have found myself to instinctively take on board and consider whilst I am designing. Things like practicality, physicality, and colour are all things which I have started to adapt my way of thinking to consider more in my process. I am able to ask myself questions like 'where will this go next?', 'what kind of space will this design be suitable for?' and 'how overwhelming or underwhelming will the scale of this design be when printed at actual size?'. All of these things I would say have generally been afterthoughts for me in previous projects and designs and I feel that I am beginning to think more like a designer who would fit into the industry. This being said, I think I really lack industry experience. I am very keen to work as a designer in my own brand, and have always undertaken experience, which is tailored to this, for example, The princes trust business course, alongside my personal business ventures and working alongside stockists. However, I feel that it would be really invaluable for me to be able to understand the ins and outs of the industry as a whole, and that I might be missing out on a role which would be perfect for me. Therefore, at this stage in my budding career as a young designer, I feel that my next steps absolutely need to be studio experience in order for me to be able to progress and project myself in a professional manner which can be universally appreciated across the design world. This decision has been solidified by the pandemic where I have found myself working at home alone quite often, exactly as I would be as a freelance designer, and I found that I struggled quite a lot in the absence of the buzz of a studio environment and the ability to bounce off other designers.

I now feel that I have an extremely solid and strong idea of the designer which I am, and which I want to become. My creative handwriting is one which is so uniquely special to me, and I have loved being able to develop and nurture this throughout the course of my degree. I now feel that I am able to fly the nest knowing that I feel confident in my skillset and attributes. As I have become more and more sure of who I am as a designer, I feel that many of my projects have tendencies to blur into one. In the best possible way, I feel the need to constantly revisit old designs and drawings and keep moving with them or weaving them into more current illustrations, nothing ever feels like it has been and gone anymore, only waiting to be revisited. Going into the future, I hope to be able to take all these drawings and designs as really beautiful and integral building blocks in my design career as I move forward in my brand identity and style. Earlier in my report I touched on the importance of studio experience for my own learning and industry understanding, but my end goal will always be

to have my own brand. Specifically designs owned by me and sold by me or select stockists. Licensing is absolutely not something I am interested in doing as I feel so personally attached to each of my designs, I couldn't possibly let them free to the hands of others. Not to mention that this would make having my own design brand slightly more complicated if some of my designs are owned by other people. My target market and ultimate goal will be to have my designs stocked in Liberty London. In order to get to that end goal, I have started putting my practice in place by establishing partnerships with stockists, learning about business, and gaining new contacts. I hope that this will be something that continues to flourish now that I have more time and love to feed it.

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Fig 1 – Authors own image, section of collection

Fig 2 – Emma J. Shipley, Clark & Clark

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