

# Course sample

Please note that due to copyright reasons, some images may be greyed out in this course sample.

Open College of the Arts

0800 731 2116

[enquiries@oca-uk.com](mailto:enquiries@oca-uk.com)



Textiles 1

# A Creative Approach



## Level HE4 – 40 CATS

This course has been written by Pat Moloney, Sue Black and Sue Michaelson

Open College of the Arts  
Michael Young Arts Centre  
Redbrook Business Park  
Wilthorpe Road  
Barnsley S75 1JN

Telephone: 0800 731 2116  
E-mail: [enquiries@oca-uk.com](mailto:enquiries@oca-uk.com)  
[www.oca-uk.com](http://www.oca-uk.com)

Registered charity number: 327446  
OCA is a company limited by guarantee and registered in England under number  
2125674.

Copyright OCA 1989; revised 1991; 1992; 1994; 2003; 2010

Document control number: t1aca040111

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise – without prior permission of the publisher

Front cover: A sample of Soumak weaving

# Contents

Before you start

## Part one **Building a visual vocabulary: Drawing, mark-making and stitches**

Introduction

**Project 1** Making marks

**Project 2** Developing your marks

**Assignment one**

## Part two **Building a visual vocabulary: Colour, design, printing and painting**

Introduction

**Project 3** Colour

**Project 4** Developing design ideas

Experiments with printing and painting

**Project 5** Painting and printing

**Assignment two**

## Part three **Creating shapes and three-dimensional forms**

Introduction

**Project 6** Manipulating fabrics

**Project 7** Your theme book

**Assignment three**

## Part four **Textile structures**

Introduction

Analysing colour, texture and proportion

**Project 8** Yarns

**Project 9** Woven structures

**Assignment four**

## Part five **A piece of your own**

Introduction

**Project 10:** A design project

**Assignment five**

## Appendices

Appendix 1: Yarns and fibres

Appendix 2: Suppliers of materials and yarns

Appendix 3: Reading and resources

Guidelines for submission for formal assessment

# Before you start

Welcome to *Textiles 1: A Creative Approach*. Your OCA Student handbook should be able to answer most questions about this and all other OCA courses, so keep it to hand as you work through this course.

## Course aims

*Textiles 1: A Creative Approach* will enable you to develop your visual ideas through drawing and exploring a range of different media and textile techniques. You'll develop an individual approach to designing and creating images using the tactile qualities of textiles. The course will also introduce you to the historical and cultural origins of textiles design.

The course concentrates on design and self-expression through the use of textile media rather than on acquiring specific textile techniques. It does however provide information on techniques and gives you more sources of information if there are specific techniques that you want to explore further.

## Course outcomes

On successful completion of the module, you will be able to:

- use a wide range of textile media and techniques to develop a number of design ideas
- produce visual ideas from a wide range of sources and extend these ideas to show personal and individual development

- show knowledge of the diversity of textiles both in practice and in historical and cultural contexts
- provide a reflective commentary on your own learning experience.

## **Your tutor**

Your tutor is your main point of contact with OCA. Before you start work, make sure that you're clear about your tuition arrangements. The OCA system is explained in some detail in your **Student handbook**.

If you haven't already done so, please write a paragraph or two about your experience to date. Add background information about anything that you think may be relevant for your tutor to know about you (your profile) – for example your experience of working with textiles so far, your reasons for starting this course and what you hope to achieve from it.

Email or post your profile to your tutor as soon as possible. This will help him or her to understand how best to support you during the course.

**If you've chosen distance tuition**, arrange with your tutor how you'll deal with any queries that arise between assignments. This will usually be by email or phone.

It will be helpful for your tutor to see some of the work that you produce in between assignments. For example, you could scan pages of your learning log and email them to your tutor. Or you could post your learning log as an online blog in the OCA website so that your tutor can see how your work is developing. It's particularly important

that your tutor sees regular evidence of your development if you're planning to have your work on this course formally assessed.

Make sure that you label any work that you send to your tutor with your name, student number and the assignment number. Your tutor will get back to you as soon as possible after receiving your assignment but this may take a little time. Continue with the course while you're waiting.

**If you've chosen face-to-face tuition**, your tutor will make arrangements with you for dealing with queries, reviewing progress, meeting up and submitting assignments.

## **Formal assessment**

Read the section on assessment in your **Student handbook** at an early stage in the course. Your **Assessment and how to get qualified** study guide gives more detailed information about assessment and accreditation. For assessment you'll need to submit a cross-section of the work you've done on the course:

- the final four assignments of the course
- your preparatory work including notes, samples and sketchbooks
- your learning log or blog url.

Only work done during the course should be submitted to your tutor or for formal assessment.

## Your learning log

Your learning log is an integral part of this and every other OCA course. If you're new to OCA courses, read your **Keeping sketchbooks and learning logs** study guide for further information.

Use your learning log to record your progress through the course.

Your learning log should contain:

- drawings, photos, postcards, scanned images, press cuttings, material from visits to trade shows, museums and exhibitions, and notes on why each of these intrigue you
- draft design ideas
- your thoughts on the work you produce for each exercise
- your ideas and observations as you work through the course
- notes or summaries of the reading you do and any research you carry out
- notes from tutorials if you have face-to-face tuition
- your tutor's reports on assignments and your reactions to these.

Consider whether you want to post your learning log as an online blog on the OCA website.

## Planning ahead

This Level 1 course represents 400 hours of learning time. Allow around 20% of this time for reflection and learning log development. The course should take about a year to complete if you spend around 8 hours each week on it.

As with all OCA courses, these course materials are intended to be used flexibly but keep your tutor fully informed about your progress.

You'll need to allow extra time if you decide to have your work formally assessed.

***Textiles 1: A Creative Approach*** is divided into five parts which build towards the five course assignments. Each part of the course addresses a different issue or topic and is separated into projects designed to tackle the topic in bite-sized chunks. As well as information and advice, each project is broken into stages and exercises to develop your creative thinking and practice. The exercises slowly build up and feed into the assignments that you'll send to your tutor.

Each assignment will ask you for a representative collection of practical work from your study so far. You'll also submit a short reflective commentary (up to 500 words) on the design and making process and your experience of that part of the course, along with extracts from your learning log and sketchbooks. You'll be asked to submit your theme book and a finished textile piece as part of your final assignment.

The first assignment is a diagnostic assignment that will allow your tutor to get a feel for your work and help him or her to decide how best to support you. This assignment is not submitted for formal assessment.

## **Managing your time**

Each part of the course should take between 60 to 70 hours to complete. You'll need to decide how to divide this time in a way that works effectively for you.

The time you spend on each part of the course will depend on how quickly you work, the time available to you, how easy or hard you find each exercise, and how quickly you want to complete the course. Don't worry if you take more or less time than suggested provided that you're not getting too bogged down in a particular part of the course and that your tutor is happy with the work you're producing. If it helps, draft a rough study plan and revisit this at the end of each part. The course structure is intended to be flexible, but it's always useful to bear deadlines in mind.

## **Reading and research**

You'll find specific reading suggestions for each part of the course, along with further reading and resources, at the end of this course guide and on the OCA website. The version on the OCA website is updated periodically so check this for recently added recommendations.

Visit as many exhibitions, museums and galleries as you can, or look up their websites (see Appendix 3). Gather postcards or take photos (when allowed) of works that particularly interest you to add to your collection of visual source material.

## **Referencing your reading and other research**

Whenever you read something that you might want to refer to in your projects and assignments, get into the habit of taking down the full reference to the book, article or website straight away. The same applies to textile pieces, paintings and other images that you may see in museums, galleries or exhibitions. You must fully reference any other work that you draw on if you plan to go for formal assessment. To do this you should use the Harvard system of referencing – there is a guide to the Harvard referencing system on the OCA website. Getting

down the full reference at the time will save you the frustration of having to hunt for the details of a half-remembered reference long after the event – and ensure that you don't inadvertently plagiarise someone else's work.

## **Course structure**

The course is in three sections:

- Parts One and Two will develop and strengthen your visual awareness: how and where to look for stimulation, and alternative approaches to recording information about colour, texture and shape. You'll explore the potential for combining these elements as you develop your own design ideas into textile samples using stitching, printing and painting. You'll build a visual vocabulary — a basic requirement of all artists and designers — and learn to relate this vocabulary to textile ideas.
- Parts Three and Four will help you translate some of your visual work into textile techniques and materials, focusing on the qualities of ideas and the nature of materials, rather than on skills and techniques.
- In Part Five, you'll explore the process of designing and making as a continuous creative activity. This final part of the course pulls together the experiences of the earlier parts, encouraging you to make your own decisions at each stage of a design project and to conceive and make a textile piece of your own.

There are 10 projects. A guide time is suggested for each to help you plan ahead but you'll need to work at your own pace.



*'The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved'* (appliqué, batik and machine embroidery) by textile artist Maeve Edwards

## **Understanding the textile world – research points**

Alongside your practical work, it's important to develop an understanding of the role of art, design and craft in the production of textiles. There is a great diversity of practice in the field of textiles, with many different approaches aimed at different markets. Sometimes the outcomes are very distinctive and at other times they may seem to overlap. To help you gain a better understanding of how the textile world operates, and to put some of these issues into the context of the society and environment that we live in, the course includes a series of five investigations or 'Research points'.

View this work as part of your creative development, a journey of discovery that will help you to put your own work into context and, possibly, help you define the next stage of your own development when you've completed the course.

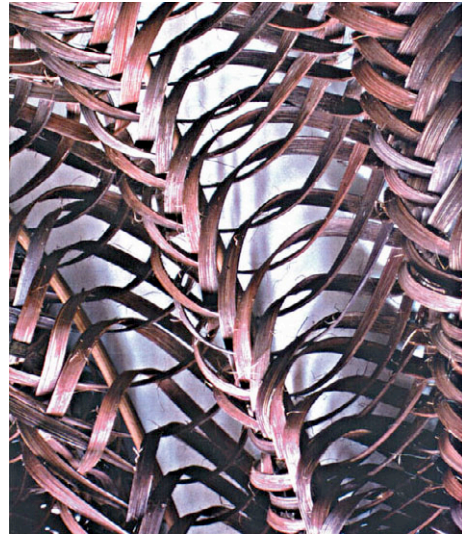
# Part four Textile Structures

## Introduction

All the projects so far have involved working with existing surfaces: drawing on paper, printing on fabric or stitching into the fabric. Now you'll explore constructing the surface itself, or creating the fabric. In this part of the course, you'll express your visual ideas not so much through the development of imagery, as with printing or stitching, but through the combination of fibres, colours and textures with simple structures to create a tactile surface, one which evokes a particular response to sight and touch.

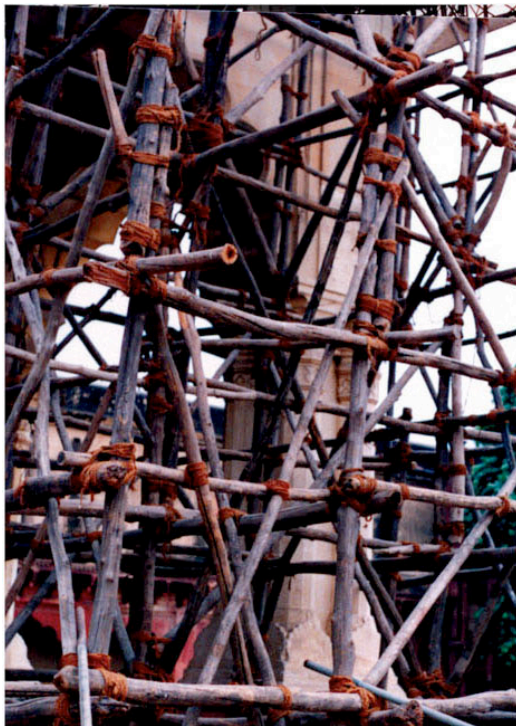
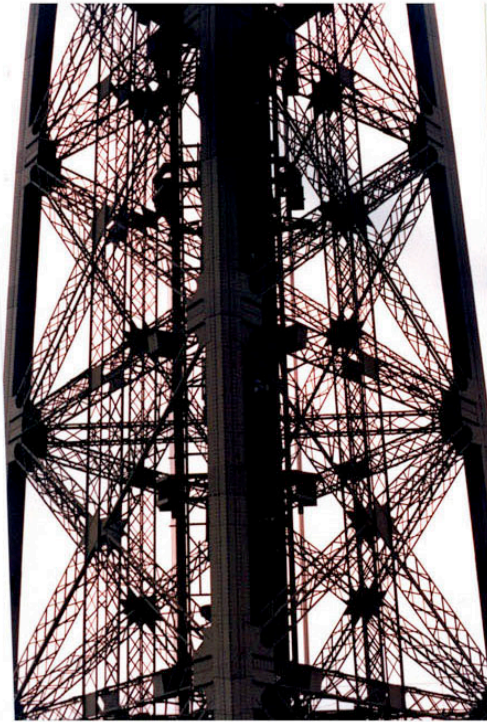
You'll explore constructing a textile in an experimental way – looking at the process of interlacing, which includes weaving, plaiting and some forms of knotting. The basic process, whatever the technique, is about converting line into area. Line represents materials like knitting wool, ribbon, torn strips of fabric, dried grass, plant fibre, animal hair, pliable strips of wood, wire and so on. On their own or in combination, these materials can be manipulated into constructions that will hold together by themselves and form flat two-dimensional fabrics or three-dimensional structures.

There are many techniques you can use to achieve this, using elaborate equipment, simple tools or none at all. The apparent complexity in a textile structure does not necessarily depend on complex equipment.



Spine, and detail, by textile artist Shuna Rendel. Three-dimensional sculptural forms using textile techniques.

Look around your home and try to identify how furnishings, household articles and clothing have been constructed. Your experience of handling fabrics in earlier projects will have made you familiar with different types and weights of cloth from your fabric collection. Many of today's new developments in textiles relate to the innovative use of raw materials and processes, but the basic constructions are centuries old. New technology has enabled these processes to be speeded up. Craft processes and 'ethnic' designs have had a profound influence on the design of fabric in recent years. Contemporary work offers possibilities for textile structures from the past to be re-discovered - this results in ideas which can be both futuristic and nostalgic. Further reading and research will enable you to extend your knowledge and understanding of the great diversity of textile structures. This will help you think about how you might form your own textile structures.



Structures may provide you with ideas

Until now, you may only have constructed textiles by following patterns for knitting, crochet or rug making. You now need to keep an open mind and develop an imaginative approach to the exercises and sample making. You'll be asked to develop your own ideas from the

materials themselves, by using traditional techniques, by inventing structures and from visual source material. Everything you've learned so far is basic to all textile design – that is, your growing understanding of colour, texture, scale, proportion and composition.

Many constructed techniques need some skill so you may need to practise in order to improve your technical abilities, but keep in mind that the *effect* of what you are doing is paramount. Don't let the technique of how something is made overwhelm your creative judgment. The skills are there as a vehicle for your ideas, giving form to your thoughts and feelings.

Since the techniques tend not to be image-based, it is sometimes difficult to associate them with working from a visual source. Textile structures give scope for exploring colour relationships in a very particular way. As one colour crosses another in either a weave or plait it is often quite difficult to predict the resulting effects and you'll find that your sensitivity to the use of colour is often heightened by this experience. Similarly, the tactile quality becomes more evident as a result of making a structure from the basic elements. Through the physical handling of materials you will become more sensitive to feel and to texture.

Some people will be stimulated by the inherent qualities of the basic materials. The colour and feel of some yarns are enough to excite an imaginative response: the sheer sensual appeal of fibres like mohair, silk, cashmere or alpaca can motivate some people very strongly. As you've discovered already, combinations of yarns and threads can express different moods and atmospheres.

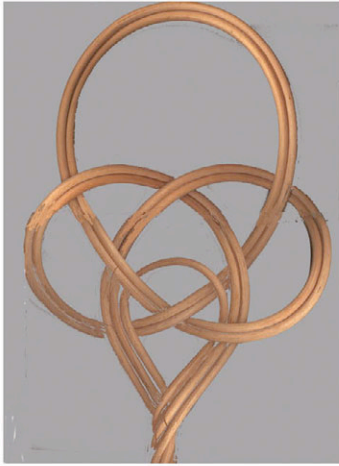


Examples of traditional objects showing the use of textile techniques.

However 'hands on' this process may seem, you'll still need source material to stimulate ideas for colour, contrasts of texture, proportion and shapes.

Good sources of inspiration come from images that are rich in colour and texture. Some people are inspired by looking at structures which already exist, such as those found in architecture, iron work, the roots and branches of plants and trees or bone structures.

Working with structure is essentially an interplay between working with visual source material to analyse colour, texture, proportion and composition and allowing an instinctive response to this in your selection of the raw materials.



Examples of traditional objects showing the use of textile techniques.

## Research point

Your final investigation is into the work of the textile artist.

Textile art is a relatively newcomer to the art scene. It emerged in the 1960s and has been dominated by women, who have mostly trained in Fine Art and then moved into textiles. Use the internet and any of the recommended books and write some notes in your learning log on how you think the work of the textile artist differs from that of the designer, the designer-maker or the craftsperson. Is there any crossover in terms of approach or the way in which each uses ideas or textile processes?

Choose two internationally-known textile artists whose work you find particularly inspiring.

- Describe their work, in terms of materials, scale, colour, technique, and imagery.
- Consider how the artist has used any of the elements listed above to express the concepts behind their work.

How do you view textile art? Do you think about it in the same way that you would look at a painting or a piece of sculpture? How far do

you feel it has become accepted as a medium for fine art by the art establishment?

Again, the reading list in Appendix 3 will help with your research.

Before you start Project 8, here's an exercise that will help you get the best out of your visual resources.

## **Analysing colour, texture and proportion**

[5 hours]

A way of developing ideas for structures, and one which you've explored earlier, is to work directly from visual sources, using anything that sparks your imagination with ideas about structure, texture, colour or pattern.

Analyse how colour and texture have been composed in a painting or any other image of your choice taken from your collection of visual resources. Choose an image which you admire for its colour and texture.

Using paints or crayons, try to reproduce accurately all the colours you can see. There may be tones of any one colour as well as different colours. Make small squares or patches of colour and fit all of them on to one page or one double page of your A3 sketchbook so that you can refer to them as a whole.

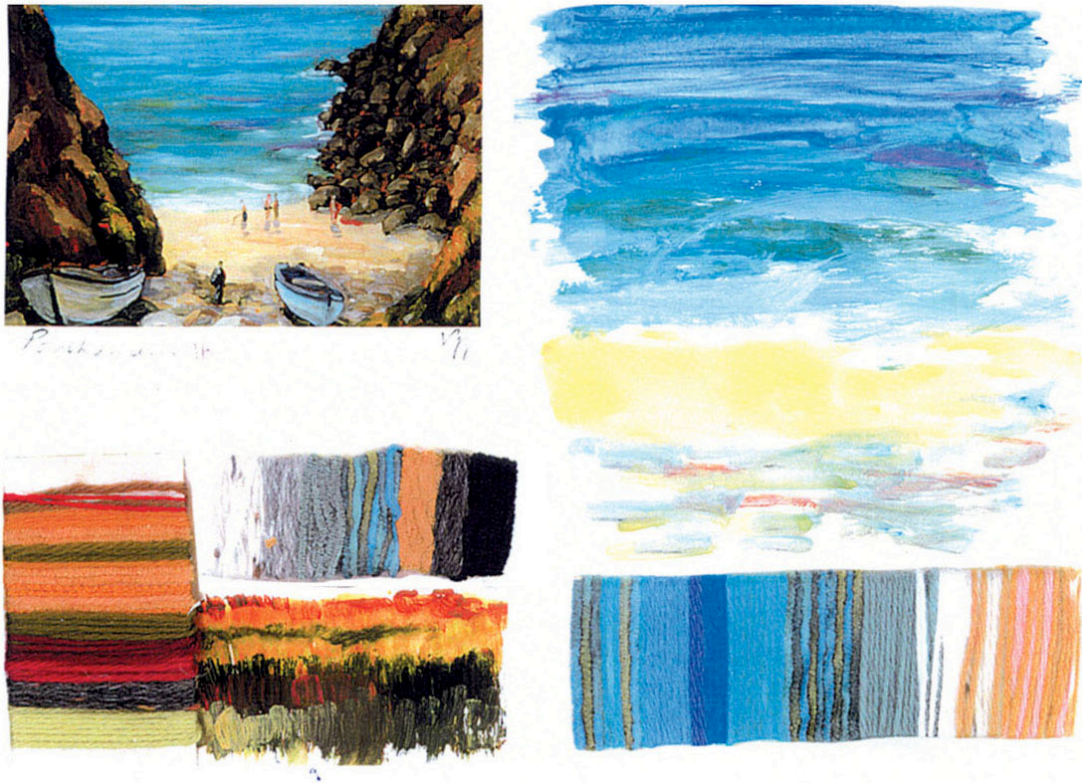
Concentrate on matching the colours accurately. If you can, do this exercise in good daylight as colours are less easily distinguished – and may even be altered – by artificial light.

From your collection of yarns, try to match as accurately as possible all the colours you've made in your sketchbook. Double check your colours against the image. Look for yarns that interpret the texture and surface qualities of your source material, as well as colour.

Take one of your card strips and, starting at one end, wind the yarns on to the card in blocks of colour that are proportionate to those on the image. Judge which colours go next to each other and whether you need to repeat some colours along the length of the card, depending on the design or image. Wind the yarns so that they don't overlap or make more than one layer but are butted-up to each other. The surface of the card should not show through. Use a little Pritt Stick to anchor the ends of your yarns to the back of the card only.

Make at least two more windings on to cards. You can use other sources for inspiration, a plant or a stone for example, or work intuitively, putting colours and textures together in your own way. If you have more time, make accurate colour analyses from other source material of your own choice, interpreting those colours and textures with yarns. Keep all your windings together in a plastic folder or a box.

This is a useful exercise to develop into sketchbook work.



Analysing colour, texture and proportion

## Project 8 Yarns

Central to the study of textile structures is an understanding of the use and qualities of the raw materials, fibre and yarn, and their interaction with the textile-making process. Raw materials affect the performance, the function, the aesthetic appearance and ultimately, of course, the cost. Textiles can be required to drape, fold, wrap, stretch, cover or hang and the success of any one of these functions relies upon both the designer and the maker's knowledge of construction and fibre content. Obviously at this stage there isn't the time to deal with all of these different aspects, but it's worth noting the different qualities and properties of fibres and thinking about them in relation to your ideas. This project starts with making a yarn collection and analysing yarn qualities. You'll then go on to experiment with your own invented structures using various yarn-like materials.