

# Course sample

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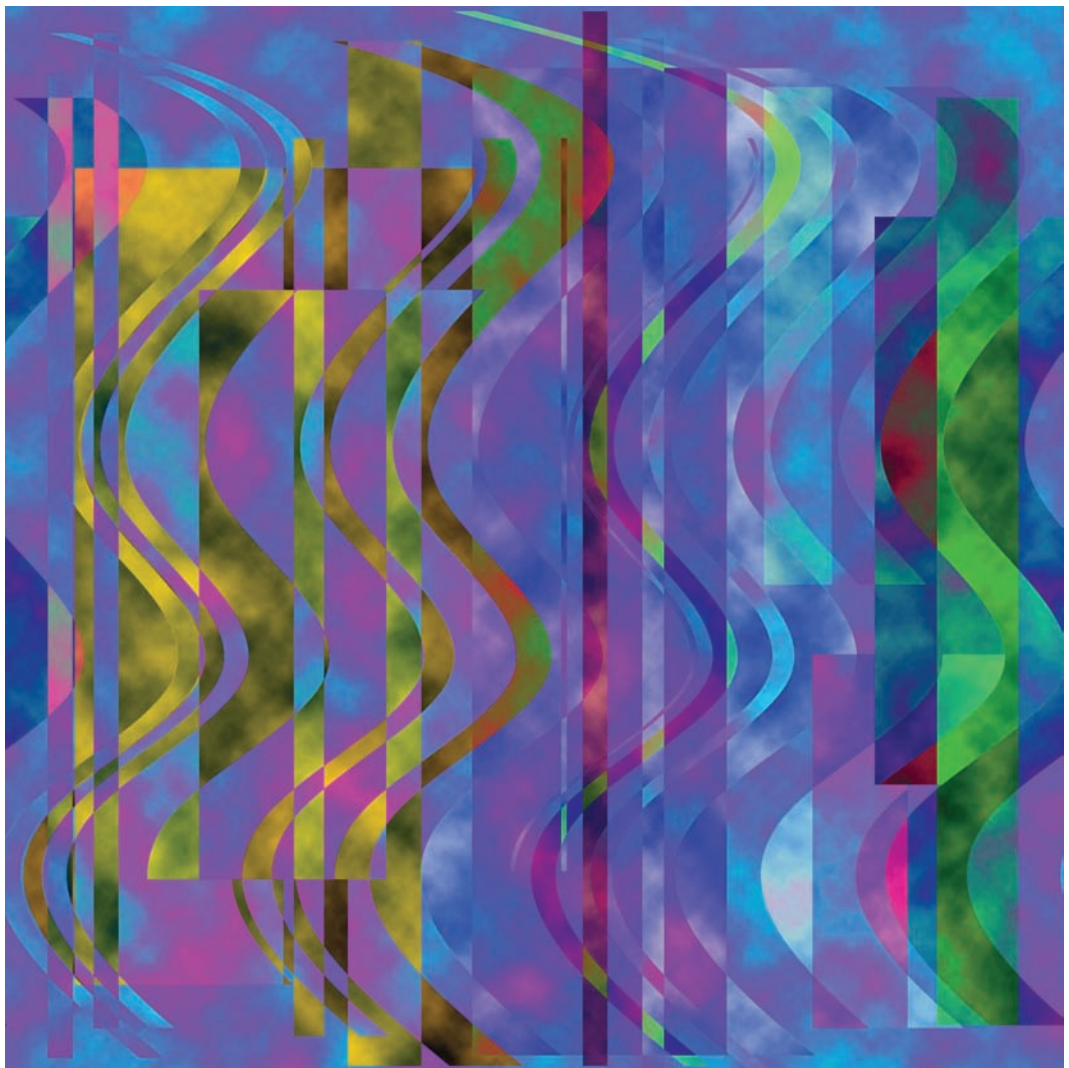
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Textiles 2

# Contemporary Practice



## Level HE5 – 60 CATS

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Front cover  
Karen Broude, OCA student

# Contents

Times suggested here are only a guideline: you may want to spend a lot more. Research and writing time, time for reflecting and logging your learning are included.

	Approximate time in hours	Page
<b>Before you start</b>		5
<b>Part one Exploring materials</b>	110	11
<b>Projects</b>		
Traditional materials		14
New and future materials		17
Found materials		22
Transforming material		26
<b>Assignment one</b>		28
<b>Part Two Sustainable textiles</b>	110	29
<b>Projects</b>		
Lifecycle assessment		32
Reuse and recycling		35
Craft and hand textiles		38
Biomimicry		42
<b>Assignment two</b>		47
<b>Part Three Working from museums</b>	110	49
<b>Projects</b>		
Creating a personal archive		55
A portfolio of visual resources		58
Experimenting with imagery		59
Storytelling with imagery and text		62
Messages and meanings		65
<b>Assignment three</b>		70

<b>Part Four</b>	<b>Digital textiles</b>	110	71
<b>Projects</b>	Exploring the digital world		74
	Putting a design into repeat		77
	Visualisation		81
	Digital craft		84
<b>Assignment four</b>			87

<b>Part Five</b>	<b>Personal project</b>	160	89
<b>Projects</b>	Option 1 A product for the market		92
	Option 2 A site-specific piece		96
<b>Assignment five</b>			99

<b>Part Six</b>	<b>Preparing for formal assessment</b>		101
	Submission guidelines and assessment criteria		102
	Selecting work for assessment		102
	Organising your submission		104
<b>Assignment six</b>	Sending your work for tutor review		108

## Appendices

	References		109
	Reading and resources		110
	Guidelines for submission for final assessment		113
	Pre-assessment review		114

# Before you start

Welcome to *Textiles 2: Contemporary Practice*. 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 2: Contemporary Practice* assumes that you have successfully completed Level 1 study in textiles and that you now wish to take your textile practice to a higher level and prepare for professional involvement in the art and design world.

Whether you prefer to work in a design-based or conceptual way, *Textiles 2: Contemporary Practice* offers a choice of media, methods and concepts and encourages you to develop your own tactile and visual design ideas through a broad range of processes and materials. It aims to challenge ideas and preconceptions and explore some important issues in contemporary textiles – new materials and processes, sustainability, basic digital technology as a tool for developing creative ideas, and markets for contemporary textiles.

But textiles can also be the bearers of heritage and of cultural identity and it's important not to lose sight of this in the search for the new. For this reason, the course also looks at the meanings and messages that museum artefacts and art works reveal in relation to the time in which they were made.

Individual interpretation is encouraged throughout the course. At the end of the course, you'll undertake a personal project: you'll write your own brief and explore some of the issues that the previous four assignments have highlighted.

This Level 2 course takes a more investigative approach than at Level 1, with more time allocated for reading and reflection. You'll be expected to direct your own learning to a greater extent than you did at Level 1. You'll work more independently and develop a more critical approach to your own work and to the work of other practitioners. This is your opportunity to develop both your practical and research skills. Pushing at your own personal boundaries and keeping a detailed record of what you think and do will enable you to succeed at Level 2 and prepare you for advanced study at Level 3.

On successful completion of the course you'll be able to:

- select and evaluate a range of textile media and techniques to develop innovative solutions to set projects and self-generated projects
- research visual ideas from a wide range of sources and critique and develop these ideas
- demonstrate a critical awareness of environmental concerns, new materials and market

forces and understand the diversity of textiles both in practice and in historical and cultural contexts

- participate in the direction and design of your own learning experience
- critically review the environmental context of the work of a contemporary textile artist.

The critical review accounts for 10% of your final mark if you decide to have your work on this course formally assessed.

## 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 textiles and other fine arts 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 them to understand how best to support you during the course.

Your tutor will make arrangements with you for dealing with queries, reviewing progress, meeting up and submitting assignments. You'll also need to arrange with your tutor how you'll deal with any queries that arise between assignments. This will usually be by email or phone. Please note that tutors can only deal with the occasional email between assignments.

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 on the OCA website so that your tutor can see how your work is developing. Or you may agree to scan or photograph sketchbook images and upload them to the OCA website or a free website such as Flickr or Picassa if you need your tutor to comment on something in particular or if you have a problem that you need help with. 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.

## Textiles 2

# Part one Exploring materials



Irises Judith Reece  
mixed media (layered, stitched and dyed fabrics, papers and printed light-sensitised cloth)

Part One explores the materials which make up our world.

In this first part of the course, you'll extend your knowledge and do some research into the vast range of potential and actual textile materials, paying particular attention to fresh interpretations of traditional techniques and innovative or unusual use of materials in contemporary practice. You'll look at new uses of traditional textile materials, commercial fibre development and smart materials – materials that sense and react to outside stimuli or environmental conditions and have been developed with particular properties and functions in mind, such as UV protection, phosphorescence or impact resistance. This first assignment requires an engaged and hands-on approach. You'll source materials and conduct your own experiments. You won't be told which materials to explore; you can focus on any materials that you can get hold of and choose to look at one material or many. Your choice of materials doesn't have to be limited to those that are traditionally used in textiles – the wider your range, the better.

Whatever materials you use, your experiments should show curiosity about the qualities of the medium you're working with – for instance, how different finishing techniques affect the material – and you should evaluate the things that worked less well alongside your successes.

Record your exploration with materials in whatever way seems most appropriate – for instance, a journal or a container filled with thoughts, inspiration, samples, drawings or photographs. Include evidence of your initial research, original material samples and details of your experiments.

Remember, this assignment is about material qualities and not about the production of a perfect artefact. Adopt a considered approach to it – but don't be scared to take risks.

The amount of time you spend on each exercise is up to you, but try to allocate around 110 hours for the assignment as a whole, bearing in mind that a large part of that time will be needed for completion of your larger pieces/final outcomes.

Read through the four projects and then work through the exercises to produce sketchbook work and samples.

At the end of each practical exercise, develop your research and create at least one fully-resolved larger piece or final outcome. You'll present your final piece and your written evaluation of it as part of your assignment submission.

Use your learning log to reflect on what you've achieved and the materials and processes you've used. Consider the problems you've encountered as well as any areas that you feel have been particularly successful.

## What you'll need

At the start of each part of the course, read carefully through the various projects and note down what you'll need so that you can order materials or equipment in advance. In this way, you'll avoid having to stop mid-way through a project while you wait for supplies.

For Part One, for example, you'll probably need:

**Supports:** Sketchbook/s, thick paper or card for larger work.

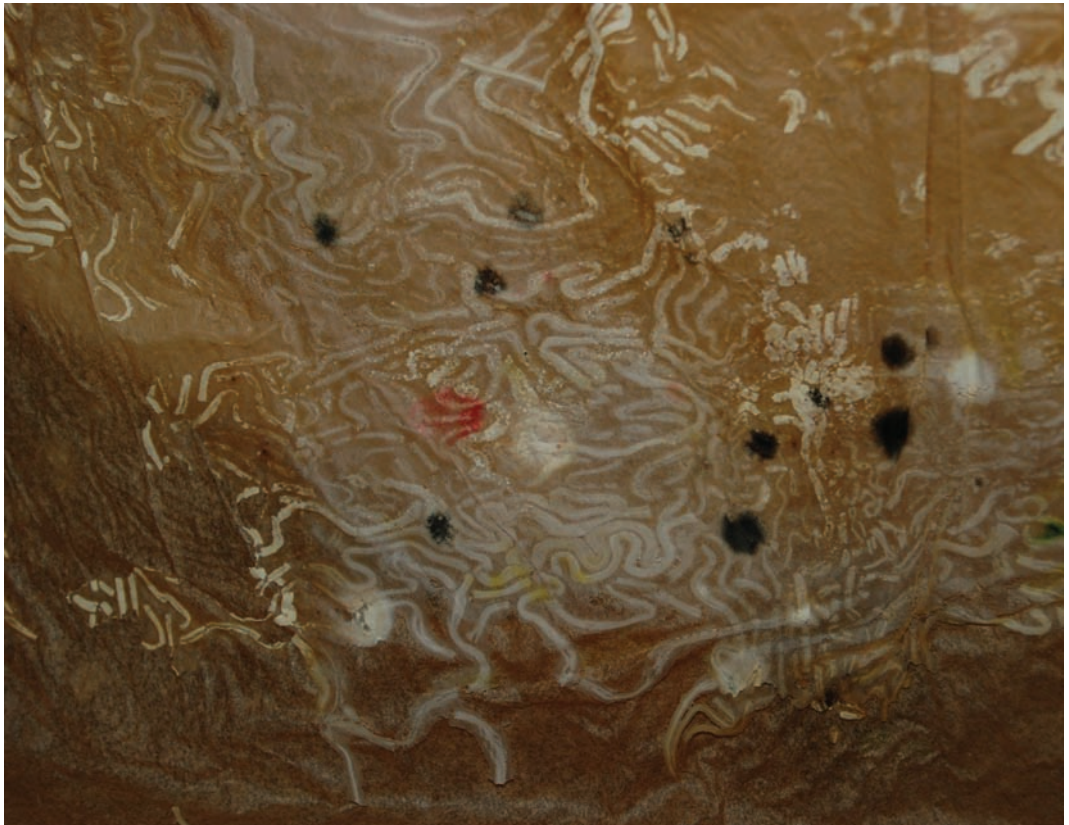
**Materials:** A selection of materials both from natural sources and man-made, found materials.

**Media:** Your choice of paints, glues, drawing media, threads, etc.

**Tools and equipment** appropriate to your chosen techniques.

You might find the following website useful for getting hold of smart materials:

*Mindsets* [www.mindsetonline.co.uk/index.php?cPath=418\\_627](http://www.mindsetonline.co.uk/index.php?cPath=418_627)



Material exploration OCA tutor *mixed media*

# Project Traditional materials

Traditionally, many different fibres, both natural and man-made, have been used to make textiles.

Natural fibres can be divided into those originating from animal protein, such as wool, silk and hair, and those originating from plants. The plant fibres fall into three main groups – seed fibres, of which cotton is the most well-known; leaf fibres, such as sisal and raffia; and bast fibres, which come from the stem of a plant. Familiar bast fibres include jute, hemp and flax (which is known as linen after it has been processed).

Since the end of the nineteenth century, man-made cellulosic fibres, such as viscose and lyocell, have been produced industrially from naturally-occurring cellulosic resources like wood pulp. Man-made synthetic polymer fibres, such as polyester and polyamide, which are produced from oil or coal, were initially developed in the 1930s to imitate natural fibres, but are now designed to meet specific requirements and lie at the forefront of textile innovation.

## Exercise: Defining 'traditional' materials

In this exercise, you'll look at the materials that are available in the marketplace and consider what's meant by the word 'traditional' within a textile context.

Start by noting down some thoughts in response to the following questions:

- What do you think is meant by the word 'traditional'? Write down a list of words that you associate with 'traditional'.
- What materials do you consider to be traditional?
- Are traditional textiles always made of natural fibres?
- Does the use of traditional material imply traditional processes or design?

Think carefully about this and use specific examples to illustrate your answers.

## Research point

*Start your research for this course by doing some market research*

*Look at either natural or man-made textile materials and research how two or three of these materials are marketed. Where are they marketed – and for whom? How does this affect pricing?*

*Reflect on your research in your learning log.*