

Course sample

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

Open College of the Arts

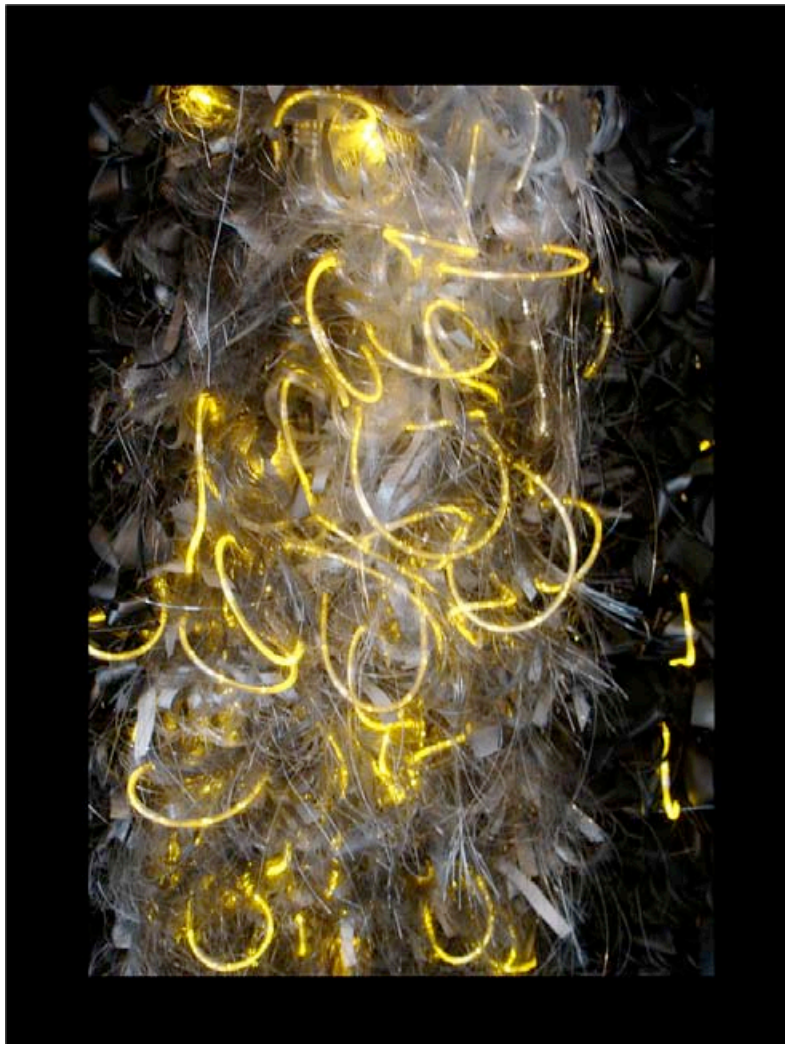
0800 731 2116

enquiries@oca-uk.com



Textiles 3: Your Own Exhibition

Written by
Pat Moloney



Level HE6 - 60 CATS

This course has been written by Pat Moloney.

Open College of the Arts
Unit 1B, Redbrook Business Park
Wilthorpe Road
Barnsley
S75 1JN

Telephone: 0800 731 2116

Fax: 01226 730 838

E - mail: enquiries@oca-uk.com

www.oca-uk.com

Registered charity number: 327446

OCA is a company limited by guarantee and
registered in England under number 2125674

Copyright OCA 2008

Document control number: Document1

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
(Open College of the Arts)

About the author



Pat Moloney is a senior tutor for the Open College of the Arts and has developed and written distance learning material for all of the Textile courses.

Originally studying woven textiles and ceramics at Birmingham College of Art and Crafts, she has an MA in the History of Textiles and Dress (Winchester 1997) and is a freelance lecturer, journalist and external examiner.

Her research interests are concerned with the meeting of traditional craft and design technology with digital technology. Inspired by the tactile presence of structured textiles, she has researched the role that light can play in affecting our health and well being and her work shows how textile structures can be enhanced both by the use of light technology, optical fibres and lasers, and by the reflective qualities of the materials themselves.

Her professional textile interests reflect the breadth of her experience in designing for industry, teaching, historical research and textile related travel documented through photography.

Contents

Introduction

Textile education: an overview

Course outcomes

Starting the course

Visiting Museums and Galleries

Annotating

Theoretical studies

Reading and books for the course

Using photography

Health & Safety considerations

Project and assignment plan

1: The importance of sketchbook work and visual research

Introduction

Project 1: creating a personalised sketchbook

2: Major Influences and developments in Twentieth Century Textiles

Introduction

1890 – 1930

1940 - 1970

3: Planning a collection of Textiles (your major project)

Introduction

Assignment 1

A note about the next four sections

4: Colour

Introduction

Project 2: creating atmosphere, emotional and psychological use of colour

Project 3: use of colour to denote symbolism and meaning

Useful books

5: Materials

Project 4: investigating new materials

Project 5: recycling: giving something old, new life

6: Telling the tale

Project 6: myths and legends

Project 7: personal identity

7: A question of scale

Project 8: a small scale project

Project 9: working with a given space

Assignment 2

8: Analysing process

Introduction

Assignment 3

Assignment 4

Assignment 5

**Appendix A: if you plan to submit your work for formal
assessment**

Appendix B: suggested reading

Introduction



Textiles 3: Your Own Exhibition helps you to develop your personal practice either as a textile artist or as a designer maker through a series of projects which may ultimately lead to a creative and cohesive collection of practical work. At the same time it aims to make you more aware of contemporary art markets and give you an understanding of the diverse ways in which textile practitioners' network and find suitable outlets for their work.

At a personal level, communication skills such as presentation of ideas and finished work, an artist's statement and a collection of images of your own work either as photographs, slides or a CD will form part of the major project work.

As with any course at this level there will be an element of theoretical studies.

Art history and contextual studies give an awareness of the theoretical issues which inform contemporary art and give a critical context in which to place your own practice. Although there will always be exceptions, it is theoretical studies which perhaps more than anything else separate the professional practitioner from the amateur.

Textile education: an overview

As a distance learning student you may well be curious as to how your course relates to the mainstream sector of higher education so before we start the course it is perhaps worth pausing for a few moments to take an overview of textiles and look at how textile education has changed over the past four decades and examine some of the issues involved.

An ever diminishing textile industry in Britain has instead of closing doors opened up the need for new approaches and a greater diversity of practice. No other country in Europe has as many opportunities for the study of Textiles as we have in Britain, nowhere will you find so many specialist museums, societies, guilds and study groups and such a large number of teachers and variety of practitioners.

Over the last forty years textiles have emerged from the more traditionally based roots to an art form capable of sitting alongside mainstream contemporary art. The range of practice now covers not only designing for industry but designer makers concerned with the small production runs ranging from beautiful cloth, to artefacts for the home, clothing and fashion accessories and a large number of textile artists who seek to express their ideas and concepts through the media of

textile materials and techniques. Whereas some years ago these might be seen as very separate activities the boundaries are becoming more blurred.

This development has evolved through a change of approach to the teaching of textiles in the universities and colleges where a more intellectualised programme has encouraged popular subject matter such as gender, memory, identity and the human body to be explored through project work alongside the more conventional themes such as nature, ethnology and multiculturalism. No doubt a reflection on a higher theoretical and contextual studies content of the degree courses, but an approach which gives the student more opportunity for personal research and to develop work which shows both individuality and flexibility.

As art and design was absorbed into the new universities there became a growing emphasis on research and this has forced both staff and students to be involved not only the new technology but in working in a more cross disciplinary way, hence we are seeing textile techniques evident in jewellery, and in furniture and metal and plastics used in textiles.

Many of the conventions surrounding technical expertise have been eroded; some might attribute this to the fact the number of student staff teaching contact hours has been radically cut over the years and the student/staff ratio numbers increased to bring art and design teaching more in line with that of academic subjects added to which the development of computer aided design, digital imaging and printing, laser cutting etc have diminished the need for traditional skill based teaching. Others would argue the move towards mixed media has meant that the role of materials and technique has become subservient to the concepts and ideas involved.

There has been an intensive interest in the use of new and unusual materials which has given textiles a new life. Nowhere is this more apparent in the use of stitch techniques which transformed the established view of embroidery to a mixed media approach with surfaces that are manipulated, distressed, melted and moulded.

Environmental concerns have been issues which have concerned researchers in the universities. There is also a growing awareness as to the amount of damage caused by textile production to the environment and the industry is having to address the pollution caused by the processes involved in the production of textiles. These problems are not only the concern of the producers of raw material and the manufacturers but they need to be considered at the design stage and there are many misconceptions as to what is environmentally friendly. It is generally assumed that natural fibres and dyestuffs are more environmentally friendly than the chemically produced fibres and dyes. They originate from renewable sources and are biodegradable. However this is not necessarily the case, take for example cotton is generally perceived as a natural plant fibre, it is estimated that 300 million kg of pesticides are used in the third world countries, half of which is used to produce cotton. The amount of land given over to cotton production has changed very little since the 1930s but the overall production of cotton has increased by up to three times and this only be accounted for in terms of the pesticides and fertilisers used.

The availability of ethnological sources of textiles both for study and as personal collections together with the ease of travel to foreign parts and a more multi cultural society has enriched our knowledge of textiles from other cultures.

In recent years much attention has been focused on the Japanese who have both used and seemingly reinvented traditional ways of constructing and manipulating cloth and dye techniques to address the issues of modern technology in a highly innovative, skilful and sophisticated ways. Qualities which they seem to be able to perpetuate whether the outcome is a functional cloth or a monumental art work.

Fine artists too over the years have used textiles as media to communicate their ideas, breaking down some of the barriers that existed in the past. Fine Art is now no longer exclusively about painting and we see artists such as Tracy Emin and Grayson Perry featured in Textile Magazines.

This then raises questions about the future of exhibiting art textiles. Most textiles are shown in categorised exhibitions and most textile artists are women, yet there are some outstanding textile artists whose work deserves to be shown in the prestigious spaces afforded to their contemporaries in fine art.

It could be argued that this categorisation does little to promote textiles outside its own following of other textile practitioners and other women. Should we not then make serious attempts to integrate into the world of contemporary art and therefore benefit from a wider public acknowledgement, access to the prestigious galleries and the price tags which go with this?

But let us not discount some of the benefits which this separated textile identity has produced to support the textile designer, maker and artist and the academic. There are international exhibitions, conferences, a profusion of books on every aspect of the subject, and magazines which cover everything from, art, techniques, history, to the latest trends and numerous short courses to inspire and update the enthusiast. National museums and galleries have begun to acknowledge the strength of this identity, as historians uncover new evidence of the importance of textiles to our cultural heritage. for example Matisse and his Textiles at the Royal Academy. Networking through societies whether the focus is on exhibiting or to further academic research create opportunities for a wide range of textile interests.

While the availability of textile materials and yarns may have disappeared from the high street shops which could signify a decline of interest, this has been more than matched by the increase in specialist mail order suppliers and opportunities for internet shopping.

Textile work in its many forms hold a unique position in our cultural heritage and through exhibitions and writing the discussion can be continued to ensure that lively and fascinating developments are maintained for generations to come.

5: Materials



Project 4: new materials

Before you start this project, you might find it useful to read at least the first chapter '*The Future of Fibres and Fabrics*' in *Techno Textiles 2* by Sarah E. Braddock Clark and Marie O'Mahony. Sarah Braddock Clark is an OCA Tutor and has international recognition for her specialist knowledge on new textile innovations.



Techno Textiles

To be aware of new developments in Textiles even if you can't necessarily achieve them yourself (some of the materials and the technology are not easily available at present) is not only fascinating but can stimulate new ways of thinking and ideas for future projects.

In the last chapter of the book Sarah defines two approaches to the use of materials, she says:

“There is a key difference between the textile artist and the artist who uses textiles. With the former, materials and techniques chosen are fundamental to the expression of their ideas and a vital component. The essence of the art work cannot be translated into any other medium without changing its meaning and context. Contemporary practice is incredibly diverse and the ways in which individual expression is achieved is as many and as various as the textile artists themselves.

..... One approach is where creative experimentation is through the physicality and intimacy of the textile medium itself with the material' formal and sensual qualities frequently providing a starting point. The potential of the textile is fully engaged with and subsequent end results demonstrate visual and tactile effects made possible with such free experimentation.”

By now you will already have a supply of materials and threads that you enjoy working with. However, keeping up with new materials and yarns, understanding what they so, both aesthetically and practically is not only fascinating but can open up a new interests and enable you extend your work in other directions. Experimenting with new or different materials and processes involved will keep your imagination and ideas fresh, it is all too easy to keep going with what you know will work for you but eventually you run the risk of your work becoming dulled through repetition.

The difficulty is that the number of shops selling specialist materials seem to have declined in recent years and we have to rely more and more on mail order companies and internet suppliers.

Many suppliers do have extensive websites from which you can order directly, for others a quick phone call and your credit card number is all that is needed to get your supplies posted to you directly.

If you have not already started a file of suppliers' addresses and samples, then now is the time to start.

Keeping up to date records of suppliers is a vital part of your working practice, particularly if you are a designer maker and need to repeat work, in the same materials and colours etc.

Where possible make sure that you are on suppliers mailing lists so that you receive up to date information. Look out for advertisements in magazines, and consider subscribing to the *Textile Directory* either by post or on line.

Looking for alternatives such as recycled materials or using over-dye techniques to revitalise old stock are also possibilities and there are a number of artists and makers who are concerned with environmental issues producing some very exciting work.

Look out for materials in unusual places for example DIY and garden shops for interesting twines and fastenings, electrical and fishing shops for nylon lines and plastic coatings and fixings.

The Knitting and Stitching Show is a wonderful showcase for suppliers, taking place in the autumn, there are now shows in London, Birmingham, Harrogate and Dublin.