



## **FLUX: Design Education in a Changing World**

### ***DEFSA International Design Education Conference 2007***

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# The Future of Written Text in Art and Design Education

## Abstract

*The predominant focus of contemporary Art and Design education is visual, rather than written, communication. This paper explores recent shifts in Art and Design curricula, which have brought students' engagement with the written word to a bare minimum. Drawing on my recent experience teaching at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design (CSM), Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton (WSA) and the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), I will discuss how the written word may begin to take up a more productive place in Art and Design teaching. Changes to dissertation requirements at CSM at the MA level and WSA at the BA level, provide examples of alternative approaches to the use of writing in studio-based studies. While both institutions have reduced the word count of their dissertation requirements, they are also encouraging students to use the written word specifically to explore their own studio practice. Similarly, courses such as "Writing and Making", which I have taught at RISD and WSA, ask students to question the relevance of language to their practice and suggest that words can be understood as yet another material. When students can see that writing is yet another creative act, we will be able to transfer the confidence many visual arts students have in their ability to communicate through visual means into written language. This written language may be something entirely different from what we know today, but it will be language that is both purposeful and useful to visual arts students.*

**Key Words:** *curriculum development, written communication, practice vs. theory*

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## Introduction

Education has long engaged with written assessment, in keeping with the text-based learning of many academic subjects. The visual arts do not have as simple a relationship with written language. In recent years, several institutions have shortened or removed dissertations at the BA and MA levels. To begin to understand the implications of these changes, it is useful first to consider the relationship between the written word and studio practice. This paper will focus on the text and textile in the course work of three institutions where I have recently taught: Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design (CSM), Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton (WSA) and the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). I will discuss "Writing on Making", a course I have recently taught at RISD and WSA that asks students to consider the relationship of written language to studio practice. I will then consider two examples of institutions that have recently reduced or eliminated the dissertation as a requirement for BA and MA studies. In 2006 MA dissertations at CSM were shortened to 4000 words and no longer require students to use a standard academic format. Similarly, in 2008 BA dissertations at WSA will be replaced by a Reflective Journal unit.

Before going any further, let me briefly explain my interest in this particular area of education. I graduated from RISD's Textile Design Department with a BFA in 1999. As an undergraduate student at RISD I began to see that my studio course work informed an unconventional type of textual reading in my Liberal Arts courses. I noticed the vital role textiles play in many texts and began to see the text as organised in ways similar to that of a textile structure. These ideas led to an MA in Comparative Literature and PhD, which examined the role of textiles in the fiction of Zimbabwean author Yvonne Vera. My response to Vera's fiction is informed, to a large extent, by my interdisciplinary education. Textiles, in my mind, must be understood not only from the perspective of an academic, but also a designer and maker.

My subsequent teaching responsibilities at RISD, CSM and WSA have brought to my attention the tenuous position written language plays in contemporary art and design education. In my opinion, reading and writing need to be introduced during studio practice. More crucially, students must be taught to approach written language as yet another creative material. Words can be shaped and defined through creative processes that are not dissimilar from the decisions students successfully make in the studio. Taught in this way, students can be encouraged to transfer the confidence gained in the studio to writing. This, in turn, will improve not only their ability to communicate through words, but also provide a further tool for critical reflection in the studio.

## Writing on making

“Writing on Making: The Literature and Theory of Contemporary Craft” is a course I have taught at RISD and, more recently, at WSA. Both institutions offered the course as an elective, rather than required, unit. In the course handbook, I describe the course content to prospective students as follows:

Since the industrial revolution, the crafts have been entrenched in a battle for legitimacy. “Writing on Making: The Literature and Theory of Contemporary Craft” explores depictions of the craftsperson in fiction and contemporary craft theory. The identity of the craftsperson, the value and place of the handmade in today’s society and literature’s relationship to craft production will be examined. What is the role of written language in relation to the crafts today? And what is the relationship of the maker, who necessarily becomes conversant in a visual language, to the written word?

My intention when writing this course was to encourage visual arts students to consider how words describe designing and making. Taught as a seminar to facilitate group discussion, the course asks students to consider if the “crafting” of words can be understood as similar to the crafting of materials. Are there moments when language fails or betrays us and an object records the truth? Does hand production in particular convey a type of narrative that can be compared to written or oral story telling? Students seek the answers to these questions through two distinct types of literature. The first is contemporary craft theory. The second is fiction that includes characters that could be understood as craftspeople, albeit often in the broadest sense. Crucially, students should see their own studio practice as central to the discussion.

## Theory

The majority of contemporary craft theory written in the English language in the past decade has been published in Britain and Australia. Two consistent strands of thought appear in these writings. The first is that language and craft are “oil and water” as the British critic Peter Dormer put it (Dormer, 1997: 219). That is to say that language does little to explain craft because craft needs no linguistic explanation. Objects speak for themselves. In the aptly named “Why the Crafts need more than literary criticism” Dormer questions “the ease with which theory parts company with practice. Practice is another country, one that some theorists refuse to visit or if they visit they do so in the way in which the worst colonists visit other lands – they stay in compounds with their own values and sneer at those who go native” (Dormer, 1995: 20). Elsewhere Dormer proposes that “there can be no general theory covering the craft disciplines, and that consequently whatever clarification of motives and values the craftsperson achieves can be inferred from the work and what he or she does but cannot, with any depth be put into words . . . almost nothing that is important about craft can be put into words and propositions” (Dormer, 1997: 219). Observations such as Dormer’s throw into stark question the relationship of writing to design and making.

Dormer’s opinions are not isolated. The Australian critic Rosemary Hill voices a similar concern when she writes, “criticism that looks at the crafts from a theoretical point of view such as Marxism or deconstructionism has important insights to offer but it annexes the crafts to an existing intellectual system” (Hill, 1997: 191). The crafts, Hill suggests, have experienced more than enough annexation. It would be ironic if those of us committing our careers to the research and publications on the crafts contribute to what elsewhere is coined the “ghetto’ consciousness” in the crafts through analysis entirely inappropriate and unhelpful to the objects at hand (Rowley, 1992: 167). Amongst these readings which suggest, with good cause, that craft is a system operating outside language, there appears a second strand of thought. This second strand suggests that objects, in particular the handmade objects that occupy our daily lives, narrate in a way that may not be as dissimilar to a piece of literature as we think. The difference between the two is a general illiteracy or ignorance on our part when it comes to hearing or seeing the narration objects offer.

Mexican Nobel Laureate Octavio Paz in “Seeing and Using: Art and Craftsmanship” celebrates the beauty that can be found in usefulness. But he too relates this usefulness to a voice of sorts:

In its rightful place. Not fallen from above, but emerged from below. Ocher, the color of burnt honey. Sun color buried a thousand years ago and dug up yesterday. Fresh green and orange stripes cross its still-warm body. Circles, frets: remains of a scattered alphabet? Pregnant woman’s belly, bird’s neck. If the palm of your hand covers and uncovers its mouth, it answers you in a low murmur, a bubble of gushing water; if you rap its haunch with your knuckles, it gives a laugh of little silver coins falling on stones. It can speak in many tongues, the language of clay and matter, that of air flowing down between the walls of the ravine, that of the

washerwomen as they do their laundry, that of the sky when it grows angry, that of rain. (Paz, 1987: 50) [italics added]

The murmurs, laughs and tongues Paz hears emanating from craft objects require us to develop a new form of literacy. I believe this literacy comes – in part – through a studio practice that encourages students to use writing, like Paz, to document and reflect upon the objects they create.

While critics such as Dormer question the role of the written word in relation to craft, others such as Paz simply ask for the object to be heard. Other critics simply ask for more effective words to be put to the service of craft. American Janet Koplos in “What’s Crafts Criticism Anyway?” suggests that “If crafts has its own character, why shouldn’t it have its own form of response, perhaps not even “criticism” at all? If crafts meet the expectations of art criticism, is it still crafts? If it’s not, why are we here together under this label?” (Koplos, 2002: 86). Koplos concludes:

If I were looking for a “better” crafts criticism, I would not be looking for theorizing borrowed from literature or other fields. I would be wishing not for more jargon but for the right ordinary language to do the trick. I would not be hoping for critical infallibility. I would simply want better writing, showing thought and care. I would wish for an intense concentration on the work, what’s there, the actual stuff and what it makes you think and how it makes you feel...the best writing would be like the best work, enlightening and from the heart (Koplos, 2002: 89).

Koplos call is an inspiring one that asks, not for a more complex use of language, but for a more passionate use of the written word. In the institutions where I have taught, many students arrive firmly believing that they cannot write. If words can become yet another material, students can begin to approach writing with some of the curiosity, passion and creativity that they bring to their studio studies.

## Teaching haptic knowledge

Malcom McCullough writes that hands “act as conduits through which we extend our will to the world. They serve also as conduits in the other direction: hands bring us knowledge of the world” (McCullough, 1998: 1). While it is well known that hands bring us a wealth of information, McCullough also notes that “for working hands, taking may be as important as giving: hands get shaped. They may get callused or stained. They pick up experience” (ibid., 2). This image of give and take, an imprint left on both the maker and the material, is not the reality of the academic classroom. In fact, the central challenge of teaching a course such as this one is that haptic rather than intellectual knowledge is at the core of craft production, but is discussed in an academic setting. By haptic knowledge I mean, to borrow from Dormer again, “tacit knowledge – that is, it is learned through experience” (Dormer, 1997: 225). The puppet maker of Japanese author Uno Chiyo’s short story captures the challenge of haptic teaching when he writes:

Whenever I get set to teach someone a thing or two about carving, I tell him right from the start that I’m not going to sit there and explain every little thing. I show him one of the puppet heads I’ve carved and tell him to try and carve one like it. Then, as he goes along, I tell him ‘that looks fine,’ or ‘that’s no good.’ But what I can’t ever tell him is how he should make the final strokes, the finishing touches . . . I think on them so hard I become completely swallowed up in my thoughts, and then I proceed to carve. But even if I can’t come right out and explain to my students all they should do, I show them with my hands. I guess it amounts to the same thing (Chiyo, 1992: 128).

Ideally, “Writing on Making” should be taught alongside studio practice. The changes institutions such as CSM and WSA have recently made to their dissertation requirements, as discussed in the following section, are beginning to bridge this gap.

## Crafting a dissertation

The MA: Textile Futures at CSM introduced new dissertation requirements in 2006. The course now requires students to undertake a short written assignment of 4,000 words with an emphasis on discussion of their own practice. The dissertation guidelines I wrote for the course state that writing must show:

- 1) Evidence of a written voice that establishes a tone and makes use of vocabulary appropriate to the practice led work under discussion
- 2) Ability to reflect critically and professionally on your own creative process, acknowledging both strengths and weaknesses of the practice led portfolio you have created
- 3) Awareness and consideration of the context in which you are designing and articulation of how this context informs and/or challenges your practice

4) Critical discussion of the contribution your practice led work makes to the future of design, with particular reference to issues (both positive and negative) of sustainability

The length and tone of the dissertation is described to the students as akin to a formal conference paper or feature length magazine/journal article. Students are discouraged from dwelling on the conventions of formal academic writing and instead are encouraged to approach the dissertation as an opportunity to articulate, through written language, the research that underpins their design work.

Acknowledging the importance of design for these students, the dissertations can take on any format the student is inclined to create. Choice of paper, font size and the layout of images are all determined by the student. The only firm requirements are that their research includes a bibliography, uses an appropriate referencing system and that the paper is illustrated with examples of their own work. During tutorials, each student is asked to explore the tone and style of their writing in relation to the style of their design work. In some cases poetics are dominant, elsewhere the tone is clipped and minimal. The most successful show a continuation from the development of an increasingly mature design aesthetic, into a written voice that captures a similar style and thus effectively communicates the concerns and priorities of their studio work.

Course Director Carole Collet believes that "generally speaking this system works a lot better. Less and less students arrive on the course trained to write academically. Talented designers who can orally explain their ideas and communicate visually were experiencing terrible creative blocks when they had to write a formal dissertation." The shortened dissertation that is now required allows students to create a piece of writing that is relevant to the design work they have created in the studio. As a result, Carole and I have observed that students find the dissertation more relevant to the core of their studies. Furthermore they begin to understand that writing can play an important role in the process of clarifying design ideas. Thus confidence gained in the studio is transferred, at least partially, to the written word. I believe this is because students are encouraged to approach the dissertation as another project that needs to be designed, crafted and constructed, just as an object would be. Acceptable outcomes are as individual and original as those celebrated in the studio.

## **Conclusion: encouraging critical reflection**

In 2006 the Winchester School of Art introduced a Reflective Journal unit for level 2 BA students. For the 2007-8 academic year this required unit is now part of level 2 and level 3 BA studies. At level 3 the Reflective Journal will now replace the required dissertation for those completing BA studies in 2008. In theory, the unit is designed to allow students to compile and record a rigorous body of independent research through a means of their own choosing. A short written statement of 1000 words must accompany the research journal, but otherwise the unit has an open-ended format. Films, photographs or poems, for example, are not beyond the boundaries of the assessment criteria.

This shift away from a traditional written dissertation was driven by two main concerns. The first was the separation of research from practice, which in previous years allowed students to write dissertations on topics that had no relationship to their studio work. The second was the perception, by some students and tutors, that the dissertation was a 'distraction' from the development of studio work during a semester when students needed to be completing their final degree projects. Because the separation of theory and practice had become so great, the dissertation was seen to be taking vital time away from the real point of their studies: the development of a visual rather than written vocabulary. Like CSM, students also perceived there to be a division between their written work and their studio work. In both cases, changes to the dissertation requirements were driven by a desire to mend this gap. Time will tell if the changes WSA have implemented bring about as positive a response at the BA level as the MA: Textile Futures at CSM have experienced. It seems, for the time being, to be a step in the right direction.

When written assignments move away from academic conventions, interpretations regarding the definition of research and the relationship of theory to practice can become ambiguous. I believe it is here that the challenge for written language within art and design education lies. Before dissertations of any style can be a positive element of art and design curricula, students must be taught how critical reflection about their practice can take place not only through making, but also through writing. When students can see that writing a dissertation is yet another creative act, we will be able to transfer the confidence many visual arts students have in their ability to communicate through visual means into written language. This written language may be something entirely different from what we know today, but it will be language that is both purposeful and useful to the visual artist.

## **Bibliographic Citation**

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**DR JESSICA HEMMINGS**

### **Employment**

Programme Leader of BA (Hons) Textiles, Fashion & Fibre, Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton (April 2006-present)

MA Design for Textiles Futures dissertation supervisor

Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design (May 2006 & 2007)

Lecturer Theory and Practice of Textiles, Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton (Jan. – March 2006)

Contributing Editor Modern Carpets and Textiles & Future Materials Magazines: regular contributor and content advisor (Jan. 2006-present)

Contributing Editor Selvedge Magazine: regular contributor and content advisor (October 2003-present)

Freelance writer Fiberarts, The Surface Design Journal, Craft Arts International, Embroidery: regular contributor of articles/exhibition reviews on contemporary textiles and craft (January 2002-present)

Adjunct Faculty Rhode Island School of Design, Liberal Arts Department: developed & taught courses entitled Writing on Making: The Literature and Theory of Contemporary Craft, Contemporary British Literature and Composition and Literature (September 2003-December 2004)

### **Education**

Ph.D. Modern Literature “The Voice of Cloth: Fiction of Yvonne Vera”

University of Edinburgh (October 2001-February 2006)

MA (Distinction) Comparative Literature (Africa/Asia)

School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (Sept. 1999-Sept. 2000)

BFA (Honors) Textile Design

Rhode Island School of Design (Sept. 1995-June 1999)

# The Future of Written Text in Art & Design Education

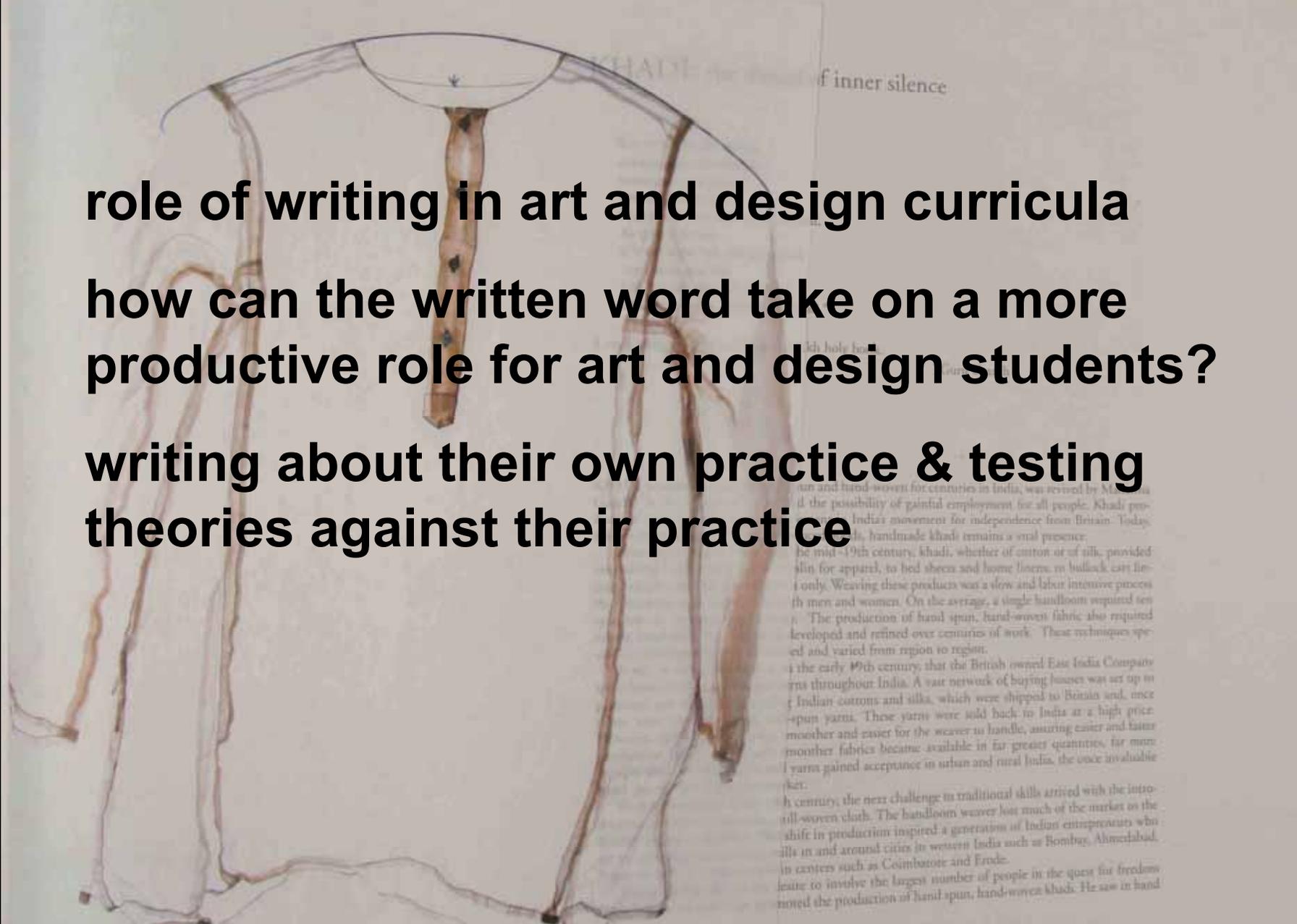
Dr Jessica Hemmings

Winchester School of Art,  
University of Southampton









**role of writing in art and design curricula**  
**how can the written word take on a more**  
**productive role for art and design students?**  
**writing about their own practice & testing**  
**theories against their practice**

...of inner silence

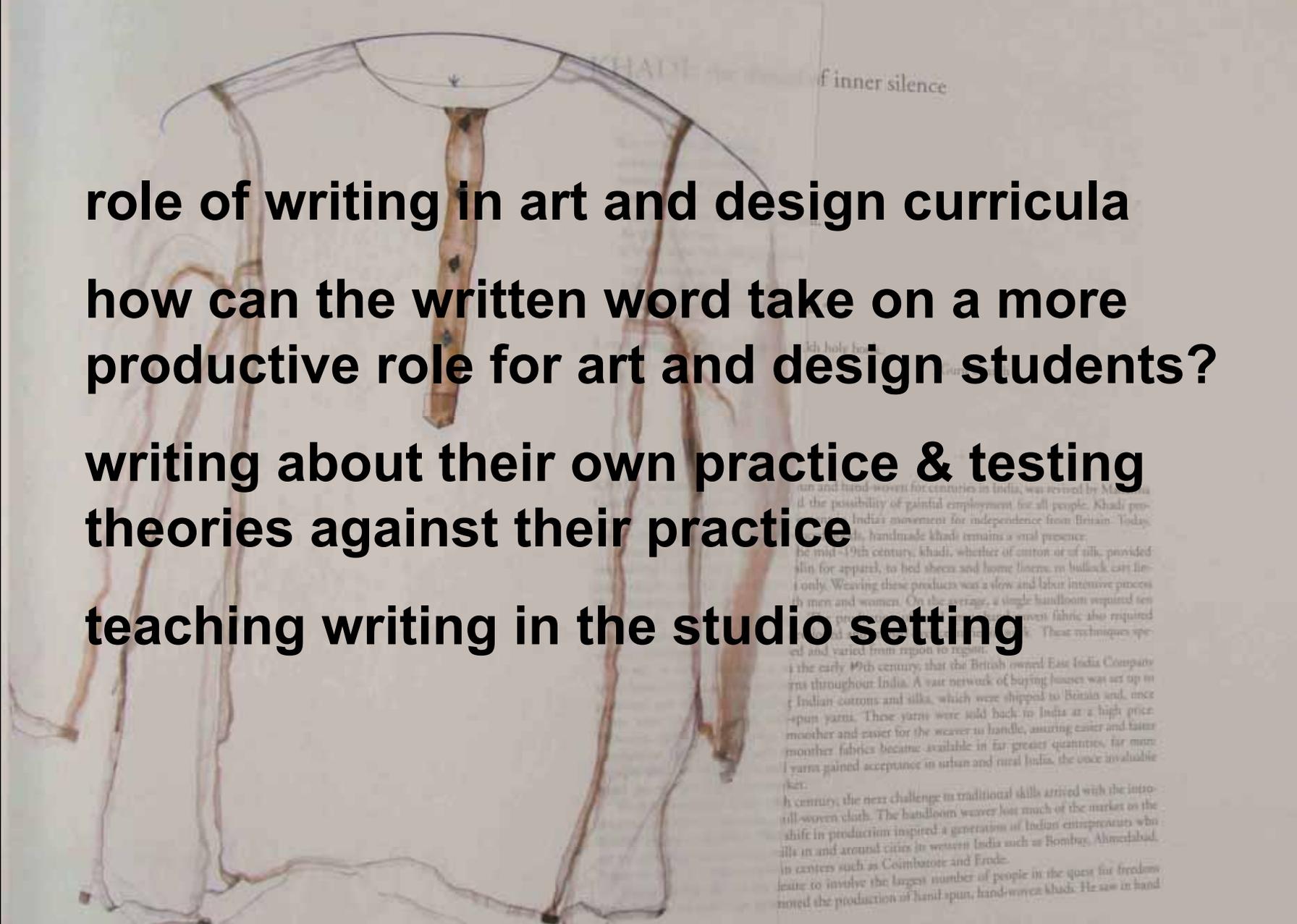
...hand-spun and hand-woven for centuries in India, was revived by Mahatma Gandhi in the early 20th century. He saw in hand-spun and hand-woven fabric the possibility of gainful employment for all people. Khadi production was a key part of the Indian movement for independence from Britain. Today, handmade khadi remains a vital presence.

In the mid-19th century, khadi, whether of cotton or of silk, provided fabric for apparel, to bed sheets and home linens, to bullock cart linings, and more. Weaving these products was a slow and labor-intensive process, often done by men and women. On the average, a single handloom required ten to fifteen people to operate. The production of hand-spun, hand-woven fabric also required developed and refined over centuries of work. These techniques spread and varied from region to region.

In the early 19th century, that the British-owned East India Company operated throughout India. A vast network of buying houses was set up to purchase Indian cottons and silks, which were shipped to Britain and, once there, re-spun yarns. These yarns were sold back to India at a high price, making it much easier for the weaver to handle, assuring easier and faster production. Finer fabrics became available in far greater quantities, far more so than before. Yarns gained acceptance in urban and rural India, the once invaluable skill.

In the 19th century, the next challenge to traditional skills arrived with the introduction of mill-woven cloth. The handloom weaver lost much of the market as the shift in production inspired a generation of Indian entrepreneurs who set up mills in and around cities in western India such as Bombay, Ahmedabad, and in centers such as Coimbatore and Erande.

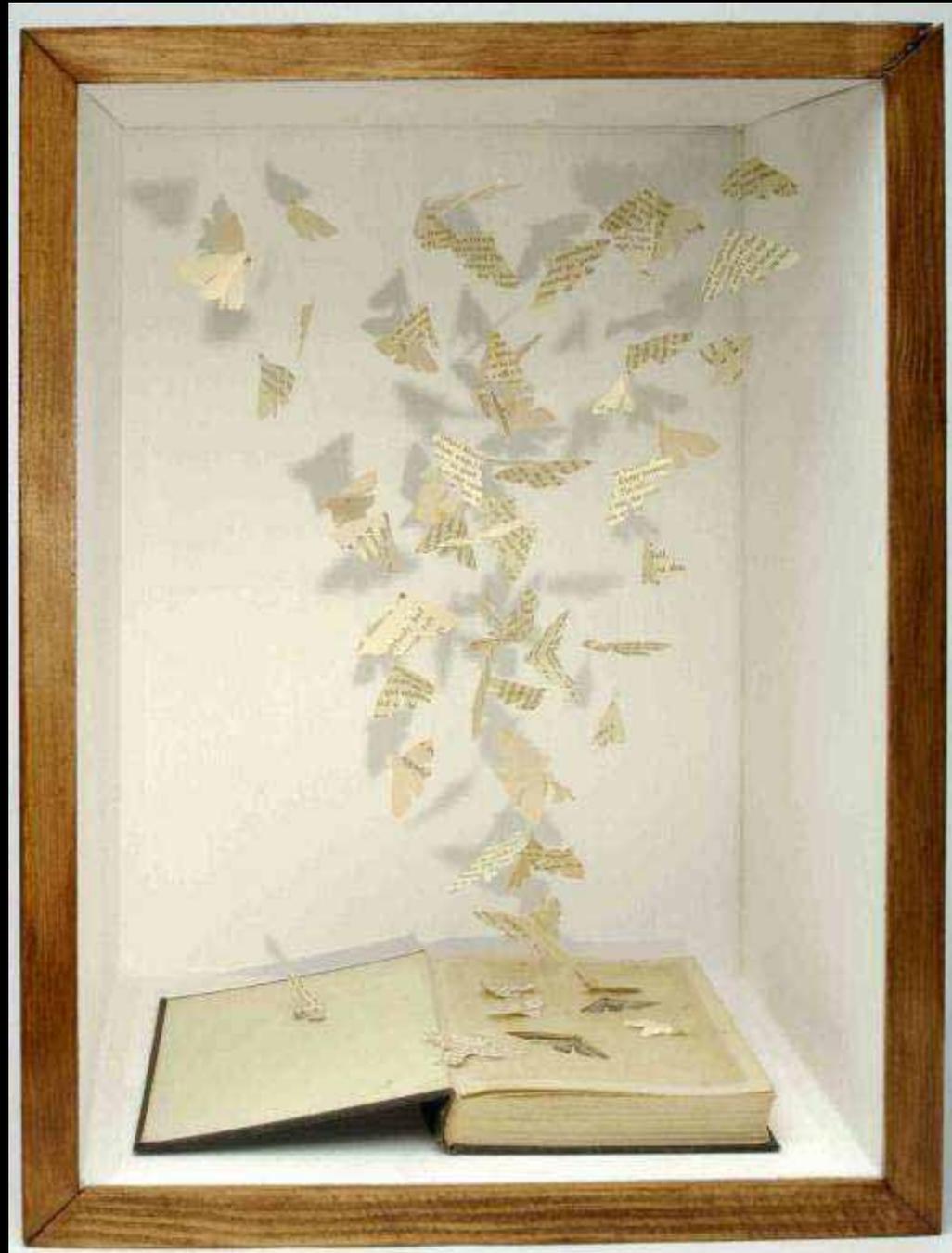
...to involve the largest number of people in the quest for freedom. He saw in hand-spun and hand-woven fabric the possibility of gainful employment for all people. He saw in hand-spun and hand-woven fabric the possibility of gainful employment for all people.



**role of writing in art and design curricula**  
**how can the written word take on a more productive role for art and design students?**  
**writing about their own practice & testing theories against their practice**  
**teaching writing in the studio setting**



Linda Hutchin



Su Blackwell

School	200405 (1st Aug 04 - 31 Jul 05)			200506 (1st Aug 05 - 31 Jul 06)		
	Total with Dyslexia	Total Students	% with Dyslexia	Total with Dyslexia	Total Students	% with Dyslexia
Faculty of Engineering, Science and Mathematics	8	91	8.8%	6	91	6.6%
Health Care Innovation Unit	School did not exist in 0405			9	91	9.9%
Institute of Sound and Vibration Research	8	303	2.6%	8	340	2.4%
Optoelectronics Research Centre	1	74	1.4%	1	74	1.4%
School of Art	81	803	10.1%	87	819	10.6%
School of Biological Sciences	43	893	4.8%	51	899	5.7%
School of Chemistry	12	403	3.0%	14	401	3.5%
School of Civil Engineering and the Environment	38	683	5.6%	40	758	5.3%
School of Education	51	1877	2.7%	60	1737	3.5%
School of Electronics and Computer Science	47	1317	3.6%	45	1315	3.4%
School of Engineering Sciences	55	883	6.2%	58	884	6.6%
School of Geography	23	471	4.9%	29	539	5.4%

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	Total with Dyslexia	Total Students	% with Dyslexia	Total with Dyslexia	Total Students	% with Dyslexia
School of Health Professions and Rehabilitation Sciences	67	806	8.3%	55	746	7.4%
School of Humanities	93	3747	2.5%	119	3625	3.3%
School of Law	16	758	2.1%	19	735	2.6%
School of Management	27	1328	2.0%	26	1280	2.0%
School of Mathematics	7	569	1.2%	9	556	1.6%
School of Medicine	41	1457	2.8%	50	1539	3.2%
School of Nursing and Midwifery	238	3004	7.9%	255	3029	8.4%
School of Ocean and Earth Science	40	780	5.1%	45	791	5.7%
School of Physics and Astronomy	16	264	6.1%	17	283	6.0%
School of Psychology	29	836	3.5%	26	818	3.2%
School of Social Sciences	76	2155	3.5%	88	2141	4.1%

Winchester School of Art

Reflective Journal Level 3 (ARTD 3028)

You will produce a reflective account of your learning experiences that recognises the importance of some ideas over others in your discipline, and draws links between thoughts and information particularly with regard to honing your work into more sophisticated finished pieces. In this way, the Reflective Journal will also provide a method for tracking the development of your work in the final phase of your degree programme. It can take different forms, appropriate to your discipline, but will normally be a file containing visual references, annotations of practice and a written 1000-word summary of how the work produced in Specialist Practice 3A developed into the work undertaken in the Final Major Project.

Winchester School of Art

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Winchester School of Art

Reflective Journal Level 2 (ARTD 2034)

The Reflective Journal constitutes a reflective account of your learning experiences at this stage of your programme of study, including any professional experience you have gained, and the practical and conceptual development of your self-designed project. It will contain notes, map ideas, record examples of experimentation, comments by yourself on your work as it progresses and your reflection on the contemporary context of your project. It can take different forms, as appropriate to your discipline....The Reflective Journal is the equivalent of a 3000-word essay.

Winchester School of Art

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Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design  
BA (Hons) Fashion, Textile and Jewellery Design  
Dissertation

A dissertation is a major research essay and represents the culmination of your Cultural Studies work for your degree. The dissertation must be between **5,000-7,000 words** in length and forms approximately 20% of your final degree mark.

Extended Option: 60/40 Option

Exceptionally, a design pathway student may wish to place a greater emphasis on cultural studies and make an application to the examination board for a 60% main study, 40% Cultural Studies weighting. Normally the longer dissertation will be between **10,000 - 15,000 words**.

## Brown/RISD Dual Degree Program

The Dual Degree Program draws on the complementary strengths of Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) to provide students with a range of opportunities to develop and integrate academic and artistic work. Students may combine, for example, disciplines such as philosophy with sculpture, or art and design with math or anthropology. Brown offers comprehensive concentrations in the physical and biological sciences, social sciences, mathematics, and the humanities. RISD offers intensive, specialized education in all categories of visual media, architecture, and design.

The program is five years in length. Students may receive a Bachelor of Arts (A.B.) degree from Brown and a Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.) degree from RISD. Prospective students must apply and be accepted to both institutions, and then be approved by a separate Brown/RISD admissions committee.

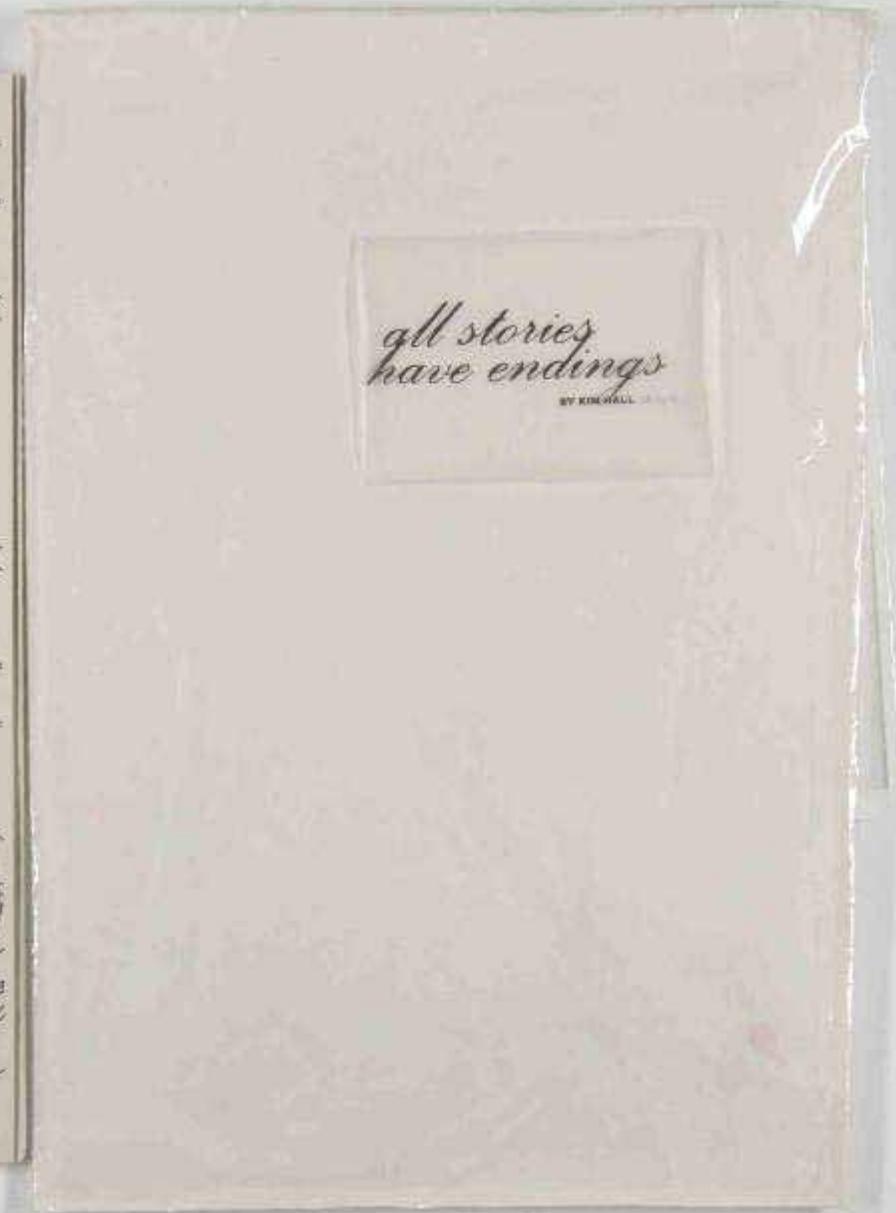
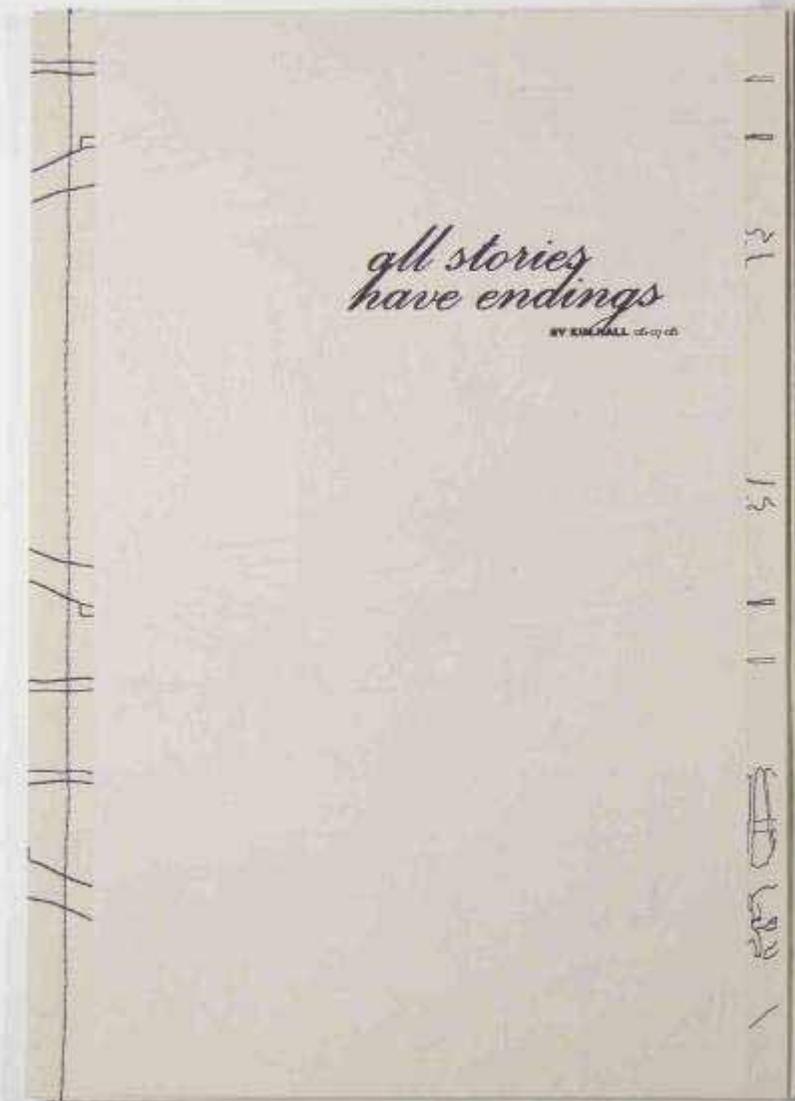




FIGURE 9. "DIE DEATH  
BY UNLAMP (LEFT) BY  
BARBARA SHIP" (LEFT)  
DIE, RIGHT  
KANSASVILLE, MISSOURI  
AFTER A VISIT TO  
CONTINENTAL PEARL

chogeographers" ... protest  
against the blandification of the  
organic urban landscape by  
transnational corporations.  
They also seek to record, cele-  
brate and reclaim the forgotten,  
neglected and overlooked envi-  
ronments of the city." (Anthony  
& Henry, 2005, p. 23) I started  
from these viewpoints to explore  
the way we wear clothes, specifi-  
cally exploring personal signifi-  
cance, the forgotten, neglected

and overlooked elements in dress. I began with a series of ques-  
tionnaires exploring attitudes about dress, followed by performances/  
experiments that included wearing a shirt "till death do us part" (figure  
9) and wardrobe swaps. I found that garments existences through time  
is essential to their meaning even though it is often a buried element  
not immediately recognized by the wearer. This idea influenced my  
approach to deconstructing fashion—*not* revealing the architecture of  
the garments, like Martin Margiela, but in revealing the passage of  
time through print and dye techniques.

I also investigated fashion therapy. In a project at a California mas-  
sachusetts hospital in 1975, the California Fashion Group helped each young woman  
in the mental health ward design and make a dress for herself to renew her  
pride in herself and improve her self-esteem. (Hornik-Gureli, 1981, p. 141)  
The artist Ann Chamberlain used corsets in a similar vein (figure 4). In  
both laboratory and hospital work she encouraged people to write their



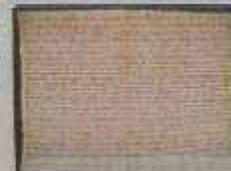
FIGURE 6. TOP  
SUSPENDED BY  
BARBARA SHIP  
AND CHAMBERLAIN  
BOTTOM: E. COURT,  
KANSASVILLE,  
MISSOURI

hopes, dreams and fears onto  
pieces of poetry which they then  
smashed to pieces and put back  
together again. (Pottiger &  
Purinton, 1998, p. 22)

Going back to 1814, an  
excellent example of textiles used  
as therapy is object T6-1958  
from the collections at the  
Victoria and Albert Museum,  
commonly referred to as  
Elizabeth Parker's Sampler (fig-  
ure 5). Nigel Llewellyn says,

The use of T6 is of major  
cultural and representational in-  
terest for the work and  
end of her stitching.

Elizabeth Parker gives us epito-  
mal insight as the fashion's  
narrative about her workmate-  
ry. Through its representational ac-  
tion a constant reminder to  
herself of her own, the tex-  
tile releases the effusive  
yearning of necessity to help  
shape the future and support a  
vision of ignorance and parti-



colored above. (Llewellyn, 1997, p. 65)

The process of embroidery, and the intense amount of time it takes  
to embroider, allows Elizabeth Parker to change herself. The idea that  
textiles are such a powerful tool, especially through the use of narra-  
tive, connected my ideas across several of the concepts above.

In an early attempt to bring several of my conceptual ideas together  
I developed a set of wool gloves that the wearer felt on her own hands  
and then gives as a gift. I hoped to encourage an emotional connection  
between people through the object, as well as the possibility of creating  
narrative in an object that changes over time in the hands of the user.

Another idea that helped shape my collection is the develop-  
ment and improvement in the chemistry and materials of textiles.

In textiles, could it be the case that technology marries to the  
efforts from the mid-nineteenth century to invent an automa-  
tized synthesis that did not fade when exposed to sunlight,  
that did not bleed when moved or heated in water, that held their  
colors for years after years? Later textiles were made synthetically,  
crease-proof, tear-proof, defying time's passage, the wear and  
tear of movement—though never so much that they become  
invisible! (Levin, 2002, p. 171)

That textiles in the past would have had  
more visible markers of the passage of  
time due to the ingredients and science  
available at the time made me consider  
that using "bad" or discarded techniques  
might be useful in bringing hidden  
narratives to the surface (figure 2). This  
is what led me to work with natural  
dyeing. I found red cabbage and sumac  
to be excellent fading dyes and match-  
ing them with the long-lasting digital  
printing techniques allowed my prints  
to emerge with wear.

I also looked at traditional con-  
struction techniques to see what they  
might contribute to the narratives locked inside garments. For exam-  
ple, Western women's clothes are traditionally buttoned right over left  
because women were buttoned into their clothes by someone else,  
while men's were left over right because they buttoned themselves into  
their own clothes, and people are generally right-handed. (Hornik &  
Gureli, 1981, p. 85) Mixing this up would probably only be noticed by  
the wearer, but I hoped it would become a subtle symbol in my dress-  
es that recognizes one of the changes to modern life (figure 6).

Christopher Broward says that the next wave of fashion claims to  
be "a rejection of the consumerist ethos and an exploration of the  
potential of the environmental or the formal limits of clothing." He  
says that while this may not help the economic base of the fashion  
industry, it does continue the notion of "spectacle" that has dominated  
fashion since the 1950s. (Broward, 1994, 237) My collection fits this  
prophecy in its attempt to put the needs of the wearer ahead of com-  
posing my collection based on marketing or selling an image. I hope  
the wearer finds herself an integral part of the narrative in my gar-  
ments, so much so that the collection is not complete without her.



FIGURE 5. T6-1958  
BY THE SEPTON  
COLLECTED FROM ALL  
KINDS OF  
COLLECTORS

## *The Evolution of Pattern in Architecture and the Influences of Nature.*

Heather Smith

Human civilisation has always been surrounded by nature, everywhere we turn we are reminded that it has something great to offer. Wherever we go, the natural elements are already there and have constantly left their mark. Throughout time man has turned to nature for inspiration, for what it offers visually and scientifically. We simply cannot escape nature and why should we want to?

However, man and nature are forever fighting for their respective place in this world. As a designer it is my quest to see the ways in which we can push design forward and co-exist harmoniously with the natural world.

Inspiration for the 'Come Rain or Shine' project arose from the fingerprints of evidence that nature leaves in our urban spaces. For example, the traces of a decaying fallen leaf lying on a concrete pavement, a building cloaked in moss (Fig 1), or the rust marks on walls exposed to the weather (Fig 2). From an aesthetic point of view, these natural fingerprints seemed somewhat random and incomplete, I was intrigued as to why they appeared in the first place, and this set a question in motion; *how could these markings hold the potential to be controlled, or intervened with, in a stylised way?*



Fig 1 Nature's graffiti: moss covering the stone walls of a church.



Fig 2 A brick wall marked by vertical rust lines down the metal fence that sits above.

An investigation followed, I made an enquiry into various outdoor materials and their current applications.

Using wood, copper, concrete, felt and plaster, I began to explore how these materials could be affected by various natural elements, i.e. fire, wind, rain, organic growth, decay and animal infiltration. I looked at various applications for example if the surfaces were to be walls, how would they be affected by another natural force, that of gravity?

Whilst looking at how nature was affecting exterior walls of buildings, I started considering how other designers were using them as a surface to express pattern and texture. In recent years we have seen the revival of interior wallpapers displaying

bold individuality of colour and pattern, some with the added dimension of time and consumer interaction. This allows for the accumulated input of additional visual expressions. These statements were pasted on the walls of anyone with a sense of adventure, for those seeking to liven up the blank walls of the minimalist trend that took place in the 1990s. Textures and patterns became popular again in recent years, but I wondered, how this was being reflected outdoors.

Throughout this paper I use the term 'ornament' and 'decoration'. Brent C. Brolins writing on the subject states that, "...ornament is intentional; it is created on purpose, not to be confused with 'for a purpose'. It also embellishes something." (Brolin, 1996, p.228)

In agreement with Brolin, I would like to illustrate that the work I produce deals with ornament in exactly this way, decoration without any other purpose other than embellishment to a surface or a form.

There were two drivers behind my design practice. Firstly a desire to bring pattern and decoration to exterior facades, and secondly the drive to incorporate the powers of the natural elements as a means to embellish them. I will discuss both of these aspects separately as these were the two issues concerning me throughout the development of my project.

**The evolution of pattern and ornament: The Arts and Crafts movement making way for Modernism.**

Pattern and ornament adorned the hand-crafted surfaces of architecture and interiors during the arts and crafts movement of the late 19th century. Architectural construction displayed the ornate and intricate creations of specialist craftsmen working in stone, wood or metalwork. The rise of the industrial revolution and political upheavals of the two world wars led to Modernism, a rejection of traditions and a simplification of form. Values in the ornamental and the decorative arts were discarded and replaced with clean edges and unadorned surfaces, as envisaged by Alfred Loos who condemned all forms of ornamentation as a "symptom of backwardness" and that "...ornament can no longer be produced by someone living on the cultural level of today" (Loos, 1999, p.173).

He embraced industrialisation as the ultimate gateway to progression. In his theories tradition and new industrial technologies could not go hand-in-hand. However as advances in industrial methods took place, ornamentation did not disappear entirely. Architecture reconsidered pattern and took it to another level. It was now the careful selection of materials that brought texture and decoration to buildings, rather than the lavishly hand carved buildings solely constructed of stone in the late 1800's. As commented by Brolin, he reinforces this point.

"Ironically, modernists proved no more resistant to the infectious urge to embellish than preceding generations. From its roots aside, modernists smothered their own ornament - based on the natural colours and textures of materials, on structural exhibitionism, and on the vague notion of "expressing" a function. Modernists moved away from the "fussy," small-scale details of the traditional style, and toward buildings whose forms became so fussy that they themselves became ornamental." (Brolin, 1995, p12)

Van Der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion (Fig 3) is one example of this development that came out of the Modernist movement in the 1930's continuing into architecture today. Luxuriously spatial in design, he clearly chose his materials with great consideration.



Fig 3. Mies Van Der Rohe, Barcelona Pavilion, built in 1929. Naturally patterned marble partition wall.

He juxtaposed the rich qualities of natural materials - marble, travertine, glass by well-considered placement. These materials were given the freedom to express their organic patterns. By using simple lines and the spacial form of the building, the striking pattern of the interior marble façade is then able to present its natural decoration.

Many contemporary architects today have held on to the forms developed from the Modernist and Bauhaus movement of the early 20th century. Forms continue to be angular and free from historical association leaving the lines clean and unbusy. However architects now show a willingness to experiment with a range of materials and use of colour to create elements of surprise (Fig 4).



Fig 4. Herzog and De Meuron, Signal Box. On close proximity to the building the surface appears to have a fluidity to it, as one moves from one side of the building to the other the construction of the facade plays with optical illusion effects.

The Signal Box of Herzog and De Meuron represents an exploration into pattern and texture on a large scale. In this building the outer shell is constructed with one carefully chosen material which has been twisted to create a dynamic texture with a translucent effect.

## NARRATIVE OF A TEXTILE

You might remember the ad-crued sewing machine and the Italian pergola I mentioned in the section *tradition and urban culture*. I believe it is equally possible to explore new beautiful, desirable and appealing ways of decorating and disguising technology in our garments and accessories. Therefore for this project, I have elaborated a more organic, decorated and delicate look for integrating solar cells into fashion, where technology meets tradition.

I have achieved this by investigating lace and embroidery techniques, trying to engage the user in a more emotional awareness of the fragile state of our environment and nature.

Organic prints and embroidered silhouettes of endangered birds decorate the textile and emphasis is put on the use of the Latin names of the species to highlight each one's uniqueness and importance. The bright colours and crafted look of the pieces, resembling antique embellishment techniques and lace, is an attempt to convey the emotion, memory and beauty of the things we forget are disappearing.



Figure 12: Left - Digitized illustrations for textile embroidery. Right - Printed silk

It is sometimes hard to balance my love for tradition with my passion for technology. Hand embroidery and detailed crafted work has been needed for many parts of my pieces, but when not essential, I embraced digitally mediated design and construction methods. I believe in compromise between the efficiency of the machine and the skill of the craftsman. And I am fascinated by how technology today not only allows us to reproduce the process of the hand, but even more, we can realise incredibly complex and accurate designs that could not exist otherwise. I have used computerized embroidery for creating the lace, and laser cutting technologies for the wooden elements. As in any other craft, it took time to learn the skills to master those tools to realise the designs I had envisioned.

In my search for more organic, ornamented and embellished technology, I also needed to design my own circuit boards. The challenge was here to master and ultimately "trick" the circuit design software in order to incorporate curved and shaped tracks which are perfectly functional but complement the entire look and feel of the pieces.



Figure 13: Left - Custom board. Right - Detail of custom board on a piece

From all current solar cell technologies, I chose to integrate the thinner, lighter and flexible *organic* solar cells available in the market today<sup>10</sup>. Although their efficiency is still yet to be improved, I felt it was a wise step

<sup>10</sup> *Wacker* - *Thin in the design by Peter Dinkler, about organic solar cells*. "Carbon based materials to build next generation thin film conventional photovoltaic cells". *Photovoltaic Research and Development*. Archived from the original on 2012-03-23. Retrieved 2014-07-06. <http://www.technologyreview.com/2012/03/23/25252>. <https://www.technologyreview.com/2012/03/23/25252>, page 1.

comes into play and we must not ignore, fashion: "an aesthetic vehicle for experiments in taste and a political means of expression for dissent, rebellion and social reform" (Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, p. 8).

In my opinion whilst fashion expresses political and social messages, technology actually has political and social consequences. And that is what I wanted to combine in my pieces. This is where the story begins.

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### FORGETTING WHAT WE HAVE LOST

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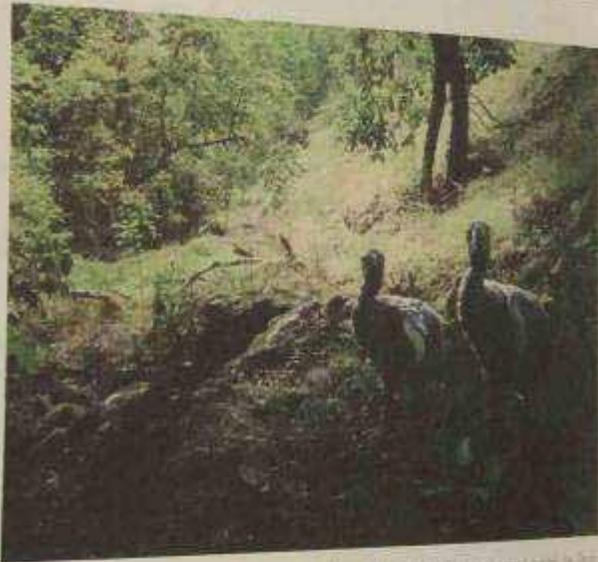


Figure 4: Two turkeys looking at a forest walk in Dorset

Global warming is disrupting millions of delicately balanced ecological relationships among species. ... In fact, we are facing what biologists are beginning to describe as a mass extinction crisis. ... I do believe that our civilization has come perilously close to forgetting what we've lost and then forgetting that we've lost it. This is caused in part by never having the chance to commune with nature.

Al Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth* p. 153/160/163

As the chorus of the song says "we will become silhouettes when our body finally goes", this project is inspired by endangered species and nature, but also technology, not the one we can blame for our situation, but instead the one that could eventually improve it.

Non-renewable fossil fuels and the conversion processes involved release emissions that are harmful to the environment. ... Rational application and efficient use of energy worldwide have become primary political and social aims. A responsible approach to the environment and the use of renewable energies such as solar power<sup>2</sup> must also become a primary consideration when creating the built environment.

Ingrid Hermannsdorfer & Christian Rabi, *Solar Design*, p. 7

This is exactly the technology I am interested in exploring: photovoltaics<sup>3</sup>, and its integrations into the built environment. You might be wondering at this stage, how do solar cells and the built environment relate to textiles.

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### TECHNOLOGY FROM ARCHITECTURE TO WEARABLE

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Look up, notice Big Ben, the tower, the clock. How important it has always been to count and calculate the time. From solar to mechanical, from quartz to digital. Technology has been keen in maturing the clock

<sup>2</sup> The amount of solar radiation in some parts is higher than the annual amount of oil. (Al Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth*, p. 117)  
<sup>3</sup> Solar cells have been employed since the end of the 1950s to provide electrical power to space ships and satellites and have been widely developed further. (Ingrid Hermannsdorfer & Christian Rabi, *Solar Design*, p. 117)

<sup>4</sup> "Photovoltaics: technology that turns solar cells ... to convert light from the sun into electricity" (Ingrid Hermannsdorfer & Christian Rabi, 2017)

<http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-39464221>

true to their principles. It doesn't help that so-called wearable technology products on the market today are screaming "technology", are often crudely designed and have a male-oriented sport focus. Because of this, fashion-oriented people, particularly women, may not choose to wear the typical solar jacket or backpack.

Thinking of decorative accessories, I found another opportunity to explore and convey the importance of looking at our past and things we have lost. I was interested in the essentials of a woman during 18th and 19th century and found the fan and the parasol most inspiring, not only for the historical reference, but also as a way of questioning if they would be more appropriate for a time in which climate change and the effects of heat and the sun are so serious.



Figure 11: "The parasol" by Spanish painter Diego Velázquez, illustrates the essential accessories of the time.

For all these reasons I call my pieces "a collection of solar powered decorative accessories for the eco-fashion-minded".

I wanted my collection to tell a story, through the textiles, through the objects, through the technology and if possible through how it behaves and relates to the final user.



Figure 12: Some pieces of the collection, the Parasol, Fan, and a necklace, being the part of the artwork.

#### WE WILL BECOME SILHOUETTES REFLEXIONS AND REFLECTIONS

*We will become silhouettes* has built on my interest as an artist/artisan<sup>11</sup> and my skills in combining materials and technologies to create something I consider poetic, emotional and touching enough to share my belief in and search for technologies that can make us more human.

My pieces won't use the energy captured from the sun to tell you the time, allow you to make a noisy call on the streets, or isolate you while playing your favourite music tracks. My pieces instead simply illuminate. They do so in the form of a gentle pulsing light, in the evening, when placed around the home.

<sup>11</sup> "The link to fashion artists, such as Velázquez, is in the final group of paragraphs with practical technology, fan, and parasol. In the second world, calling on Velázquez "the art" earned the kind of prestige that calling something "a novel" does today (Lara Blasco, *The aesthetics of art*, p=25).

While Serrano's hanger lamp allow shirts to have a spirit, in my pieces it is the textile itself that illuminates through the intricate embroidered circuitry that incorporates LEDs. This is all entirely powered by the energy stored in a small battery either while being worn outdoors in the sun as decorative fashion accessories.



Figure 10: Piece of the artwork 'Embroidered circuitry that integrates photovoltaic LEDs'

These objects, decorating the most singular and lonely places of the home with their gently breathing light, represent life. The life of birds, trees and rivers that we as designers could save by embracing a more environmentally-conscious philosophy in our work.



Figure 11: Piece, 'Sofa, Side Table and Porcelain Figurines (with glowing body) as part of the home'

"A pulse is a sign of life. All of nature answers to a beat. A pulse is also a seedbed, carrier of the design for a new generation."

Robert Freeray, *Pulse* p.37

This phrase, and indeed the entire book, reinforces my belief that technology should no longer ignore the messages of nature.

For me this project allows us both to look at ourselves in the mirror pursuing beauty, and also to reflect on the fact that it is in the hands of each of us to make a difference.

Our new technologies, combined with our number, have made us, collectively, a force of nature.

Al Gore, *The Inconvenient Truth*, P.249



Figure 12: 'Map of the UK with glowing points, August 2007'

Mana Elena Corchero Martin  
 MA Design for Textile Futures Year 2005/07  
 Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design  
 Date: 30<sup>th</sup> of May of 2007 - Total word count: 3.292

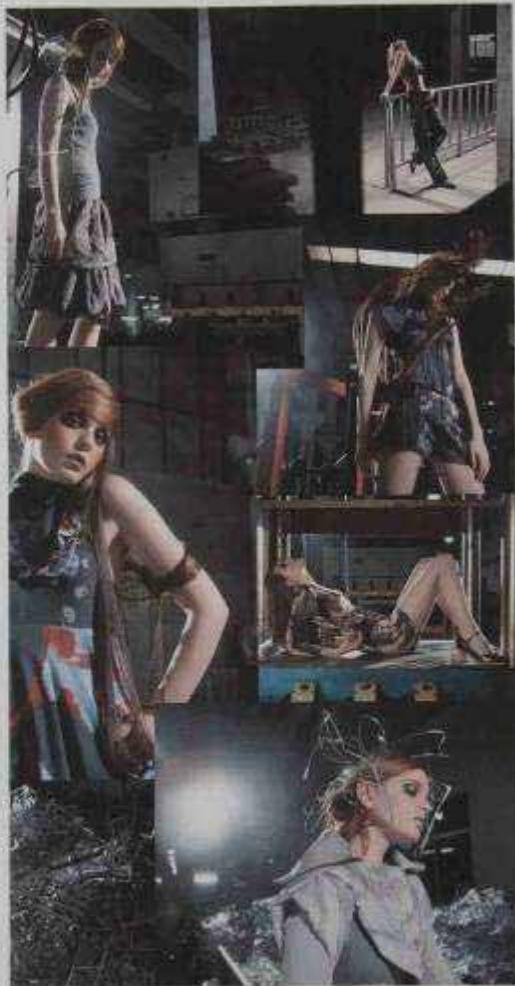
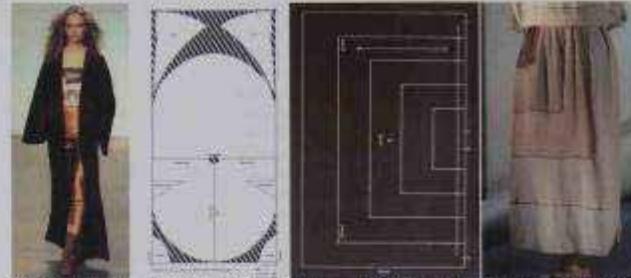


Figure 13: Styling photos of *Genetic Fashion* collection, Clockwise from top left: Jacerp03, Suibra02, Suibra01, Jacerp02, Jacerp01, Suibra03



A Yeohlee Teng jacket from Fall 1997 "Urban Nomad". This design still looks like a kimono and has not really pushed the boundaries of no-waste design.<sup>16</sup>

According to Rissanen in some of Yeohlee Teng's design still roughly waste 10% of material. In this image, the shaded area shows the surplus of material waste.<sup>17</sup>

This image is the pattern for a no-waste skirt by Mulgrave. However, it is constructed into the image to the right.<sup>18</sup>

This image is a no-waste skirt designed by Mulgrave. Vivanat.<sup>19</sup>

#### So how does engineering textile design into pattern cutting create innovations in fashion design?

When I first started this project I was fortunate to have training as a fashion designer, pattern maker, mark maker and textile designer. These different disciplines give me greater control in fashion design, but I did not know that this would be the key to innovation in no-waste design. Rissanen suggests<sup>20</sup> that "Hierarchical divisions of labour within the fashion industry can create limitations for innovation in sustainable fashion design strategies." He describes how "In most fashion design companies, the fashion design process occurs through a fixed and rigid hierarchy. The fashion designer is at the top of hierarchy, followed by the patternmaker, cutter and machinist."<sup>21</sup> Issey Miyake, Yeohlee Teng and Zandra Rhodes have been successful in their adoption of a 'Jigsaw Puzzle' by reorganizing their hierarchy into a horizontal differentiation where all disciplines have to work together.<sup>22</sup> The key difficulty in 'Jigsaw Puzzle' is the simultaneous consideration of technical patternmaking skills combined with the aesthetic instincts of a fashion designer.

<sup>16</sup> Image from Mulgrave (2003:174) (2005:5)

<sup>17</sup> Image from Mulgrave (2003:155) It has been edited to show the percentage of wastage in the pattern.

<sup>18</sup> Image from Kivik (1998:66)

<sup>19</sup> Image from Kivik (1998:67)

<sup>20</sup> (2005:6)

<sup>21</sup> Rissanen refers to Jones as cited in Jones 2004: 102 suggesting that<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Rissanen (2005:6) suggests

dosa

SEP 07 2007

#### MAKING THE INVITATION

The initial idea for this invitation came from old, cloth-mounted folding maps I have found in flea markets in France. Then I came across the image of the bicycling recycler in a magazine on a flight to India. The photograph seemed to illustrate many ideas I have had about designing and making; rethinking the way we produce things, revisiting each step in a process.

Our goals for the new line are to make use of remnants, past and current; emphasize handwork and approach design informed by collaboration and spontaneous interaction with craftspeople. In this sense, this invitation is the first product of the new spring line.

Each invitation was handmade in Ahmedabad, India during this summer's all time record heat followed by record monsoon rain. Mona Shah is designer and an instructor at the National Institute of Design; directed the production, actually doing much of the detail handwork herself.

The cotton cloth is from a khadi shop near the Gandhi Ashram. The handmade paper is from a khadi paper workshop that was established by Gandhi in 1940. After cutting, each piece was marked, cut, folded and ironed. The pieces had to be re-ironed at each subsequent stage—five times in all.



The cotton branch (symbolizing "organic") is a wood block print; the cotton flowers were hand painted. A rubber stamp was used to print the treadle sewing machine ("off the grid"). "Recycled" was hand applied with khadi scraps from the 2001 line.

The image of the bicycling recycler was printed on a digital offset. Attempts to print on a four-color offset machine were unsuccessful because the thickness of the handmade paper varied too much.

After failing to convince numerous typists to take on the project, including the typewriter working outside the Pakistani Embassy in New Delhi, we finally found a typing school, the Washington Institute of Commerce, to do the typing (three pages on each invitation, hand marked and hand set).

With all the pieces complete, each invitation was hand scored and each panel was hand pasted; then, of course, everything was given a final ironing.

Lorraine Wild provided help with the graphic design and layout. (Kudos to Rosalite Wild, Lorraine's niece and our summer intern!)

Many, many thanks to Karen Spurgin, Mona, Ananda, Carla, Jennifer & Caroline; Ullas Saraiya; Honest Printers, Raju, Archana, Piroz Haif and his son, Yogesh and his family, and, of course, Aratrik. Their hard work made realization of this invitation possible.



organic

dosa spring summer 2008

dosa explores the ideas of organic, recycled and off the grid production. materials and time are treated as valuable resources by maximizing efficiency and minimizing waste. most importantly, the labor of each person is valued.



recycled

september 27-29 2007

laboratorio awallone

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20141 milano

by appointment: 39 335 606 7256

lorenzamalatesta@locali.it



off the grid

october 26-30 2007

dosa

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