

Hazel Bruce Textile Art, Design and Fashion

Leading by example: the risks, rewards and results

The Envelope Project



The context

The Envelope Project emerged from work undertaken as part of What Works? Student retention and success change programme, funded by the HEA.

Cloth, Colour and Communities of Practice was 3 year project designed to embed co curricular learning, build confidence and encourage belonging in first year students.



The next stage was inspired by positive student feedback, a desire to keep the spirit of the project alive and to continue our action research approach to curriculum development:

- A need encourage the development of good ideas and diverse approaches to practice
- Staff team building
- A focus pedagogy of Art and Design
- Maintaining our textile fashion community of practice

The Envelope Project, now in its 7th cycle focuses on the pedagogy of art and design, specifically how to foster confident, diverse and experimental approaches to practice

- As 'expert' tutors we ask students to embrace a culture of ambiguity, change, risk taking and experimentation.
- We wondered if we were asking students to work in a way we were reluctant to, so began to develop an approach to teaching which tested that thought and would if successful reinforce our community of practice.
- We routinely show students our work but usually the finished work, the highlights, the successes, but does this actually help them to get started or is it overwhelming.



The first test gave the project its name.

Colleagues were given an envelope containing the left over papers from a dye workshop, a fairly mundane collection of muddy, flat colour.

I invited all academic staff, technicians and our artists in residence to take part.



There was no brief, just a week to make something with the contents of the envelope and be willing to share the results with a year group

aims:

We wanted to challenge the tendency to wait for inspiration to strike versus just getting on with it.

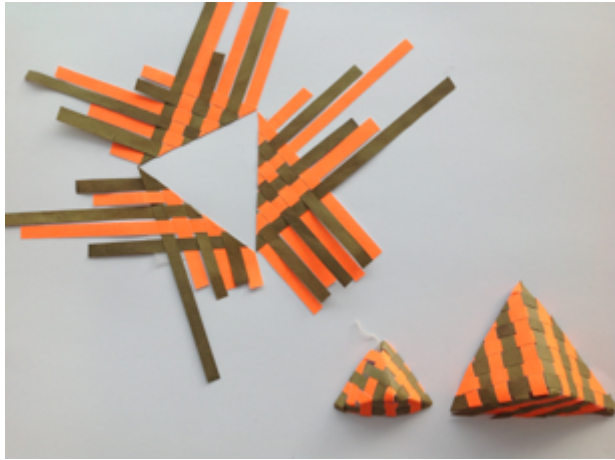
We wanted to reinforce the message that its possible to make interesting work from a mundane, uninspiring or imposed starting point. We were also keen to demonstrate how much work can be made in 20mins or an hour, while watching a Nordic drama on Saturday night.

That just getting going is important

Ten of the 15 invited colleagues took part in the first project





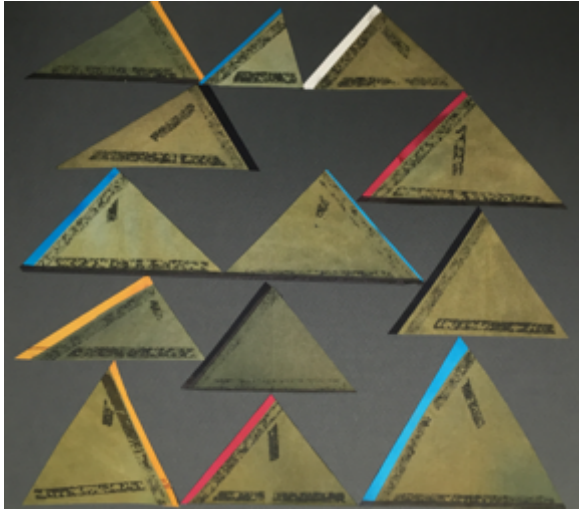


The Risks: Would enough people engage?

Would the work be any good?

During the first event we presented to around 100 students over 2 days/ with technicians, academics and residents talked about their approach to the project.

What emerged was that there is no right way, but being there, being willing to participate no matter what the starting point, is vital. We were able to demonstrate a diverse range of approaches to a common starting point.



Being honest, about commitment, time, enthusiasm, interest, motivation was key

The rewards

For colleagues

- Belonging
- Involvement
- Inclusion
- Sharing ideas and approaches
- The first project encouraged several of us to look at our own practice in a different way

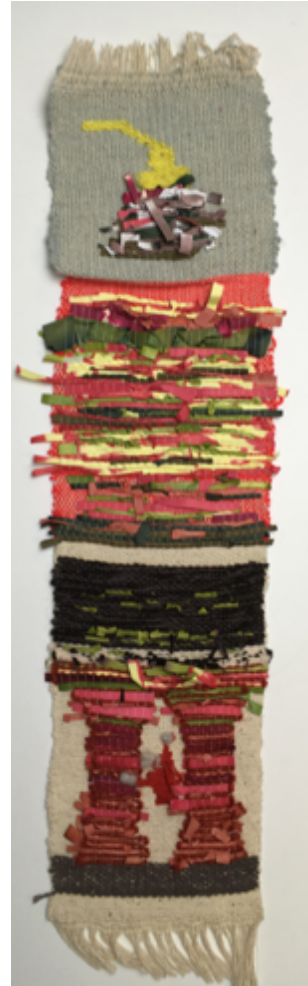
The Results: The student voice

'I really enjoyed last weeks lecture was great to hear the meaning behind the work and not just seeing the final pieces'

'Thought last Mondays session, was the MOST INSPIRING of all the Studio Practice lectures to date'

'It was really good to see how you as tutors work, and what you are expecting from us'

From online module feedback



Brilliant things

Kevin Burns, our
weave technician
told a story
about this piece,
and got a
spontaneous
round of
applause from
67 second year
student

'Initial discussion prior to the first project starting I thought here we go, another one of these half baked arty-farty ideas. I was completely wrong.

I truly enjoyed the project and observed the students reactions to mine and colleagues presentations and it was rewarding for me and significantly beneficial to students'

Kevin

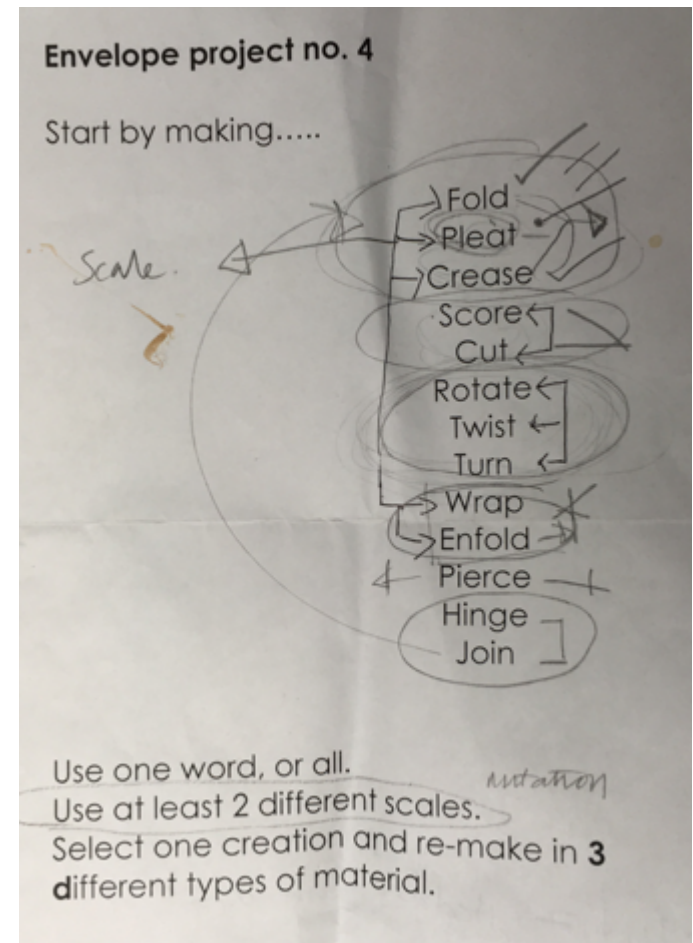
To date, 5 colleagues have set their own “Envelope Project”. Each is very different, the only rule is to engage and participate.

Project 2 walking, looking, finding using photographs

Project 3 layout. Design board, inspiration board dilemmas

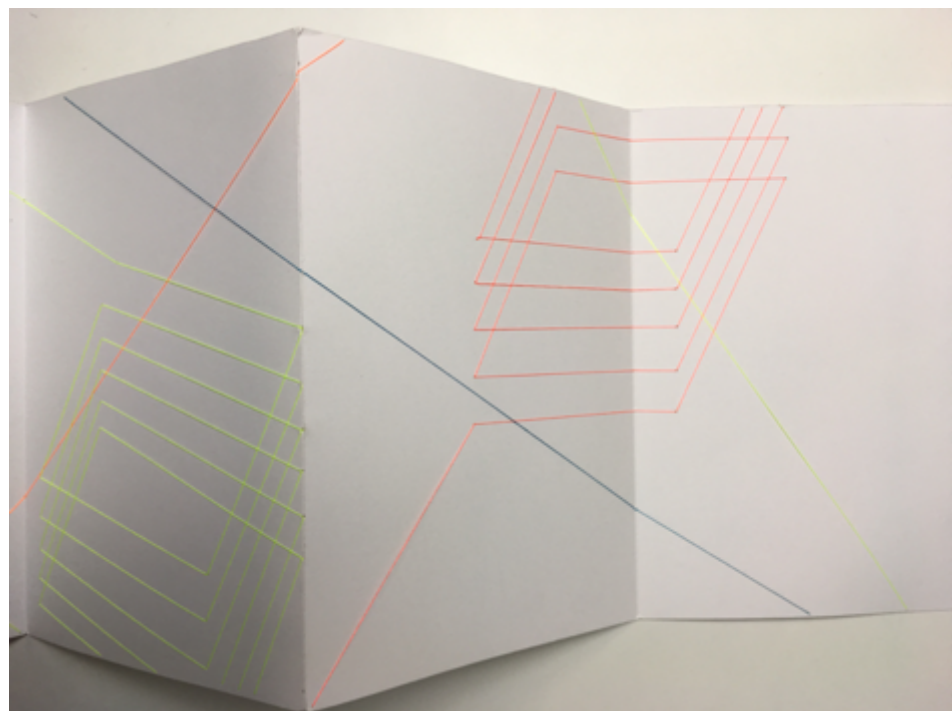
Project 4 – words from a weaver

Project 5 – What does sustainability mean to me?

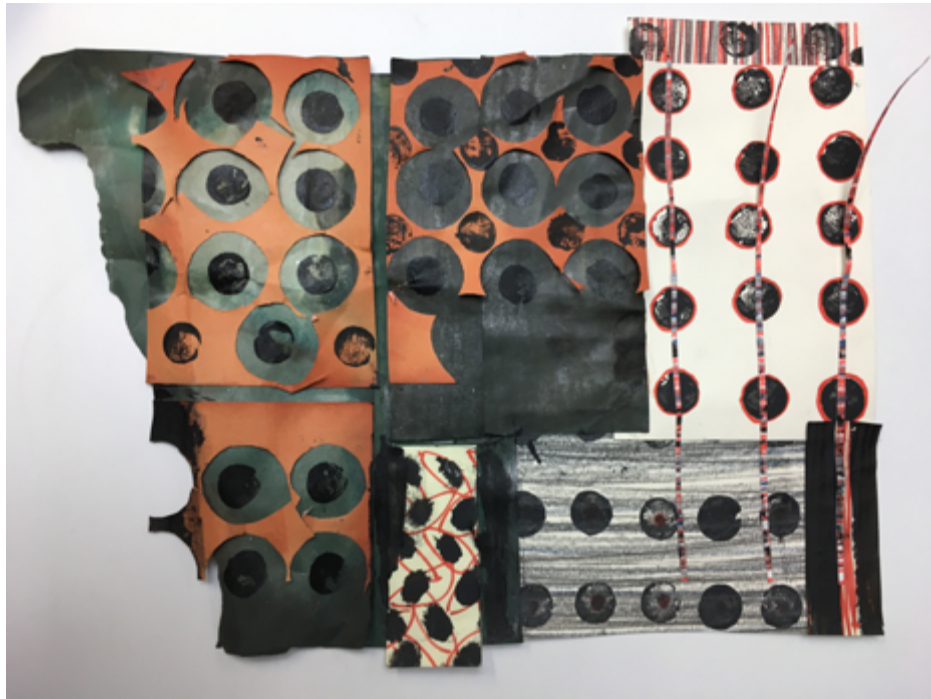




Fold, pleat, twist, crease..... 2 scales



Fold, pleat, twist, crease..... 2 scales



15 needles
T11.5
1600 rows
15 min walk
1600 steps.

The Walk



1. Footprint 1



2. Rope 1



3. Impression



4. Circle of life



5. Pillar 1



6. Pillar 2



7. Pillar 3



8. Pillar 4



9.



10.



11.



12.



13.



14.

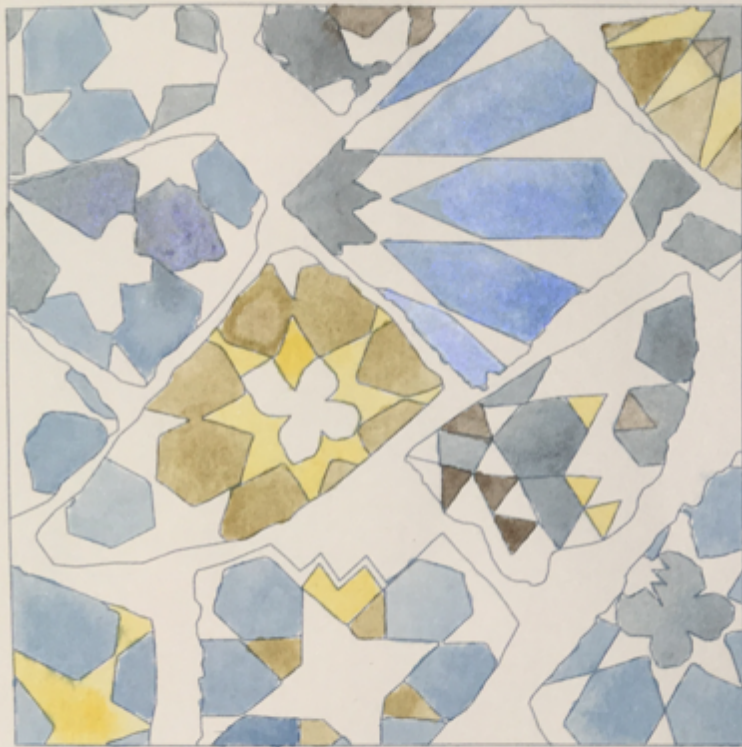


15. Footprint 2

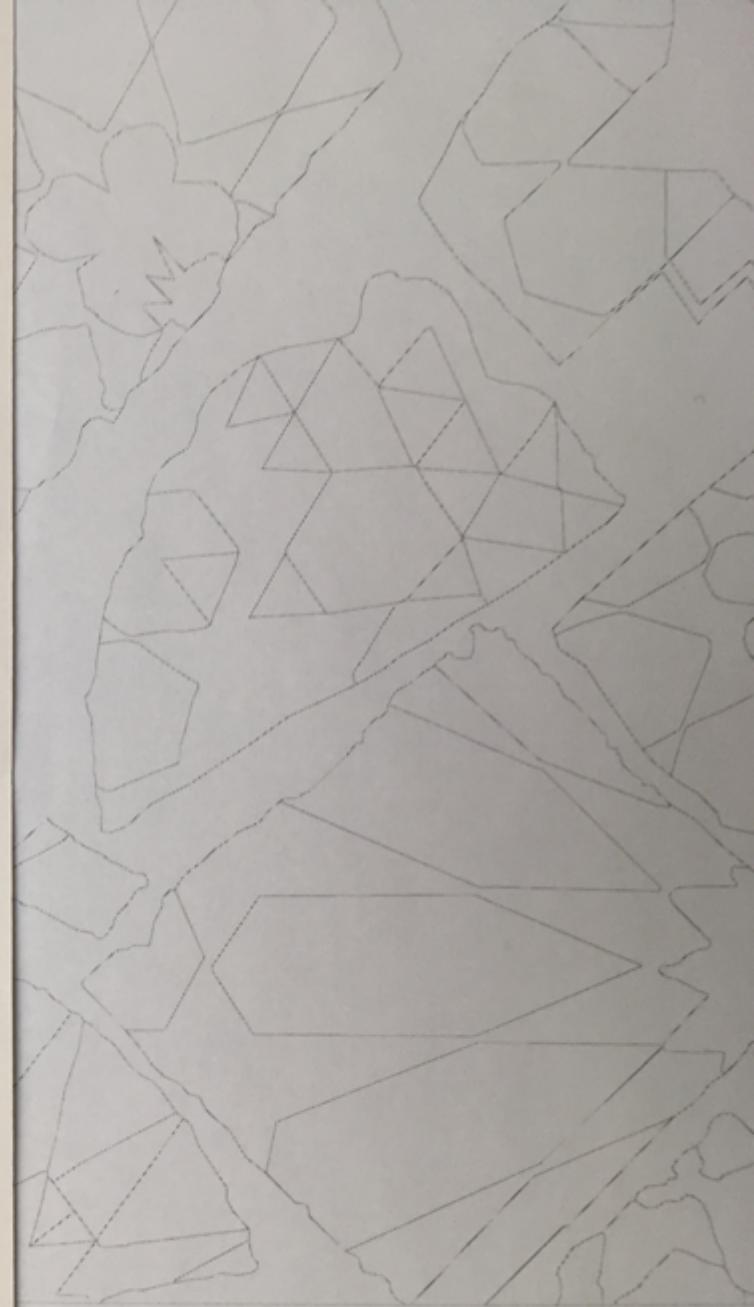


16. Footprint 3





The walk – New skills



Feedback

'I felt a little apprehensive that maybe my I would be seen as a complete amateur compared to others'

'Refreshing, taking part in a collective project, an opportunity to showcase our skills, knowledge and artistic practice with students'

'Daunted to begin with, but the engagement and interest from the students created a relaxing environment'

technicians

Impact...

‘The projects had a huge impact, they asked me to think beyond what I normally do and so sparked off new ideas and ways of approaching my own work. I looked at my own practice with fresh eyes and renewed enthusiasm’

Feedback from students

'It was interesting to see how differently the tutors approach a task, showing us that it's all about finding your own personal way of working'

'I think we saw the staff as individual creatives....seeing how they create, makes your feel like a career in the arts is more achievable because you can begin to understand the process and relate to them more when you hear their dilemmas'

*'It's important to see behind the scenes,
sometimes you just see the polished work of
designers and artists and its easy to feel like
that's unobtainable.'*

*Simple exercises like this where we get to see
inside the heads of creatives
And understand a bit more about their
processes and decision making can
Really benefit students who are lost or having
trouble with their own work.'*

‘they showed honesty in being asked to prepare and present a project that was experimental’

‘The projects showed the diversity that this course offers. Seeing how the tutors approach a project in a different way depending on how they think as a designer/maker/artist influenced the outcome of the brief ‘

Student feedback

‘Seeing us working and being challenged, just like they are, provides a good platform for them to engage’

‘Impact – huge impact, they asked me to think beyond what I normally do,. I looked at my practice with fresh eyes and renewed enthusiasm’

'Not only was this beneficial from a practical point of view but it also put the staff on our level. Not everyone is confident in speaking out in public but these projects help you to push your own boundaries and the more you do it, the better you become.'

'We were able to ask questions and it was very informal which made you feel more at ease. It felt to me like team work.'

students

This was the most difficult part, trying to find time in a very busy schedule, with all the demands on your time.

However, it was important to be a part of the group in some way even if this was less than I had hoped to be able to create for the discussion/presentation.

tutors

I enjoyed talking about my response to the projects with the students, I felt that it enhanced the teaching and that there was an opportunity to show the students my approach to work and how I try to 'problem solve' and make work that could be used in multiple ways. I think it was also an opportunity for the students to see us all together presenting and interacting.

They made me think about explaining my work to the students, and why I am working in a particular way. The first envelope project and the pattern challenge created a different way of illustrating garments.

This was a useful tool for the fashion area and showed how they could work quickly into 3 dimensions from the silhouettes that they could create from the shapes in their observational work

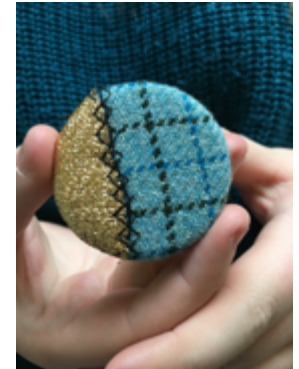
Tutors and technicians

'I think that they are very useful and should be continued. While we are time poor, I respond to a brief and feel that even though I might not be able to give lots of time to the projects they can be the catalyst for something in my own work, or help to explain visually how to work on a problem and implement design thinking to the students.'

tutors



Drowning in Plastic.
 IRISH. Maure
 Activism
 Helen Stanan } what mental
 Tony Ryan } health
 Precious } personal
 feelings
 buried Sunshine.
 Alison - Solving Problems.
 Working with Indu
 (Sel.
 Problems



What does sustainability mean to me?

A year long project launched by an envelope session. The team discussed personal responses to sustainability in textiles and fashion as a catalyst for a major student project.



Participation depends on moving forward with a community of the willing and not asking for too much work for each project.

Fear of missing out is a motivator

Wanting to represent your way of thinking, your approach is a motivator

Wanting to present and create exemplars is important

Demonstrating diverse approaches to one starting point

Helps to illustrate the diversity of our programme

Leading by example, being prepared to show early work, the stuff that isn't too good, isn't our best, isn't our kind of work, but we still did, for the project.

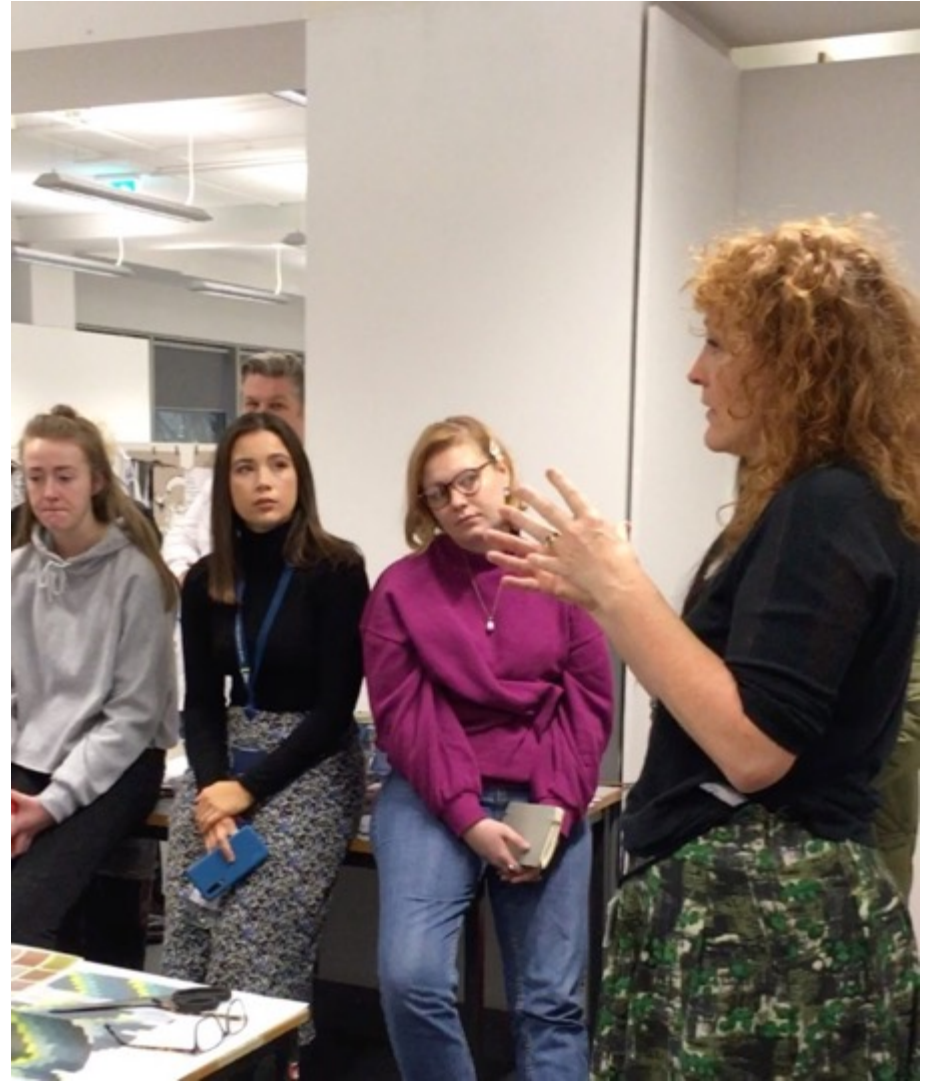
The latest project

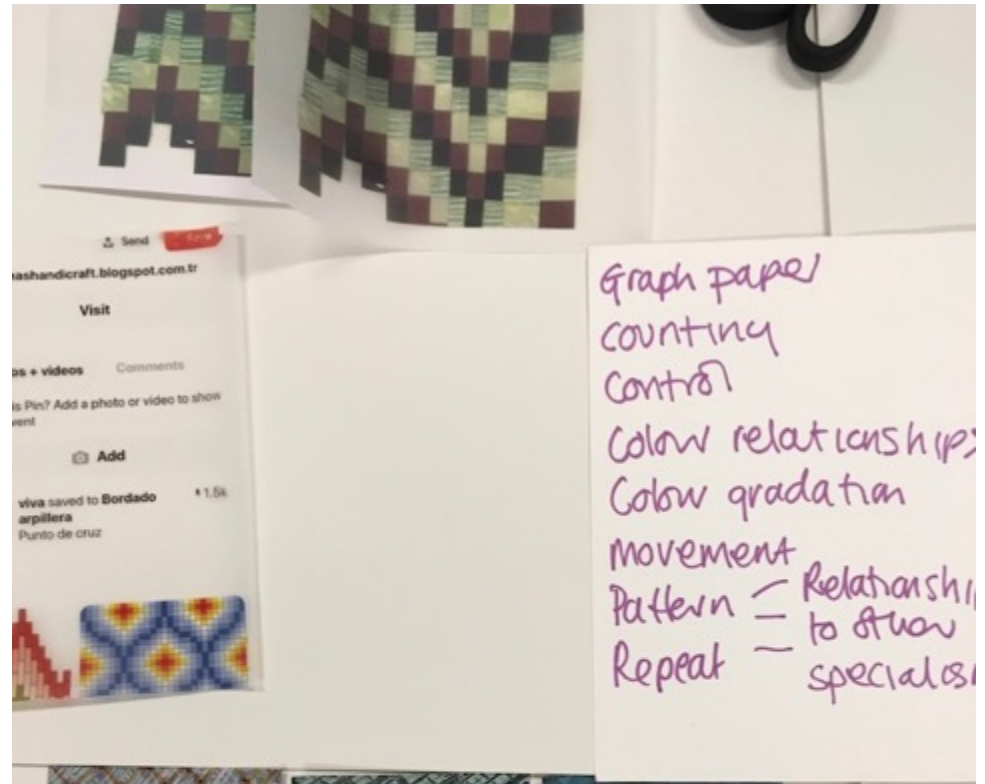
I bought a vintage book on canvas work on ebay. Everyone loved the book and could see possibilities for their own subjects, the colours, layout, techniques, patterns just chimed with us so this became the latest project, with responses in painting, design, cad, embroidery, print and laser cutting, sketchbooks, research, signs, symbols, codes, collage, shape, pattern.

53

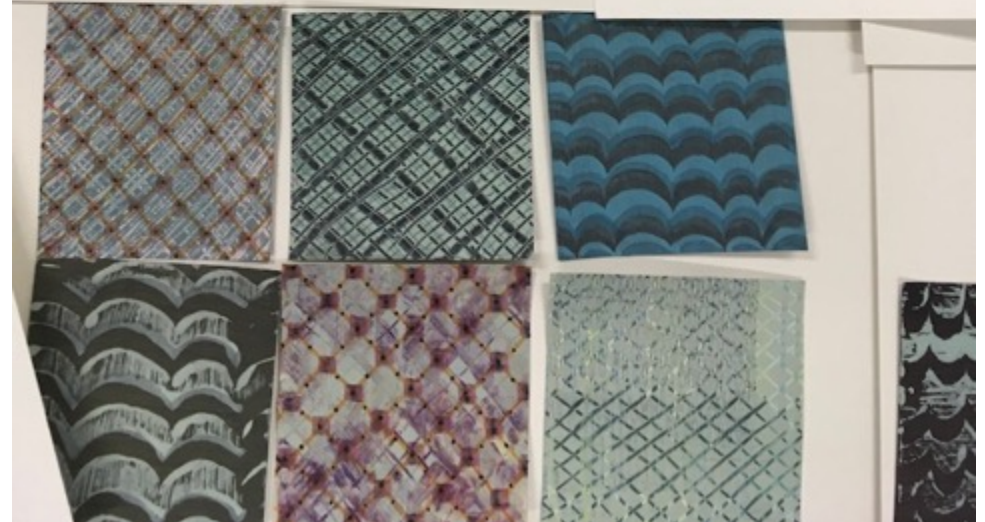


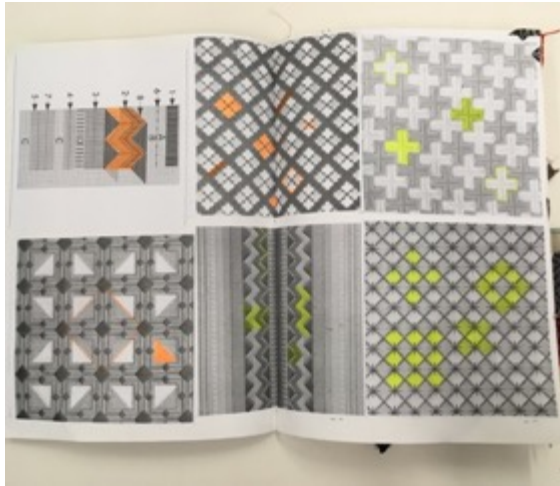
The vintage book



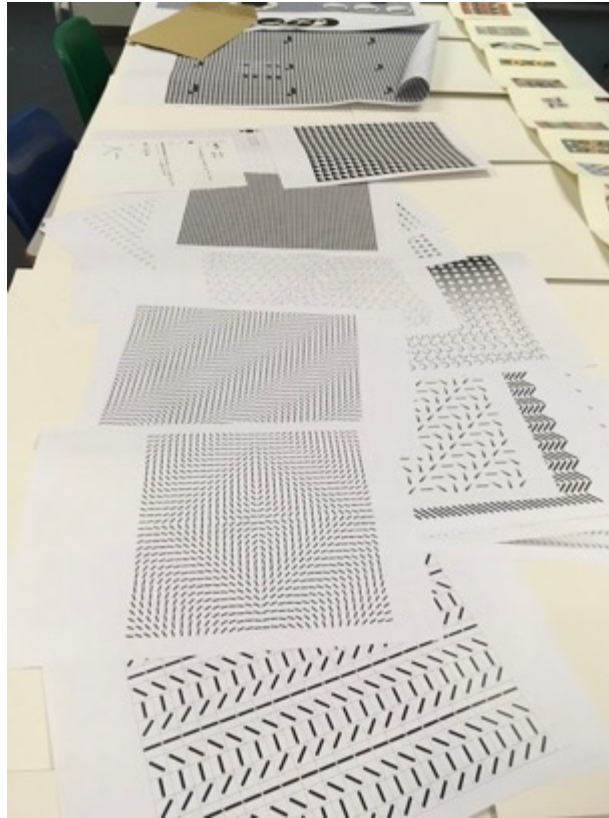
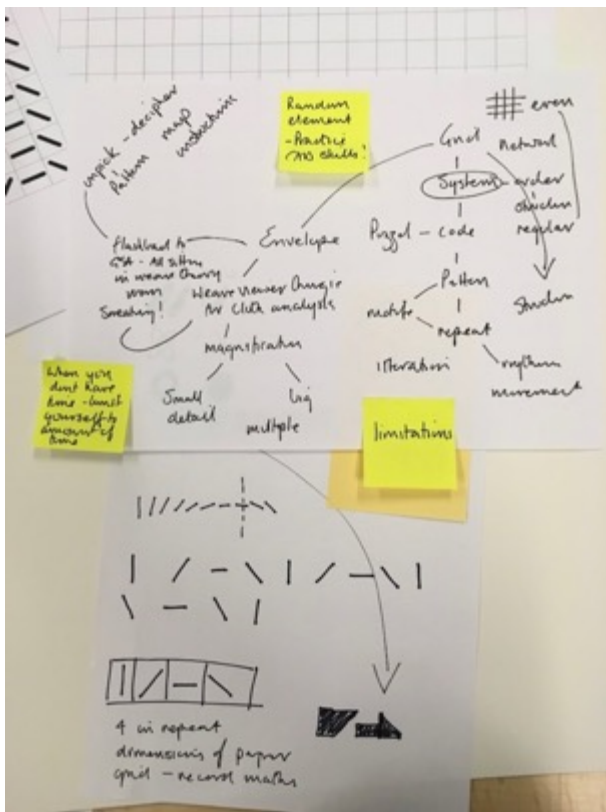


Colour, pattern, research,
experiments





Research sketchbook for knit



Digital pattern making



Laser cutting, print, pattern, paper



Digital embroidery, use of materials, fabric manipulation and product development



Research and idea development for fashion



Signs, symbols, codes, pattern, colour, collage,
composition sketchbook development

A remote project will happen this summer, set by our fashion technician Shonagh Galbraith (2020)