



# Collaborative Practice as a means to explore the Transformative Power of Pattern

Emma Hayward & Laura Slater  
BA(Hons) Printed Textiles & Surface Pattern Design  
Leeds Arts University

## Abstract:

This paper explores findings from an experimental workshop in which learners and practitioners worked collaboratively, a shared experience wherein participants investigate approaches to surface pattern design and application. We consider the transformative power of pattern, reconsider the tools we utilise and the potential for pattern to transform beyond the preconceived perception of print to product. From the perspective of a print & surface pattern design degree course, we consider the transposition of two- dimensional pattern to three-dimensional surface and object.

We consider the notional boundaries of the discipline whilst challenging and re-inventing process, approaches and potential outcomes, 'multi-disciplinary' practices emerge through a transformative pedagogic tool as participants explore their 'disciplines' through 'non-disciplinary' means. By utilising alternative materials and methodologies which reflect pre-determined practices and knowledge we present an alternative practical hands on approach to thinking through inherent process. [In addition to this we introduce risk-taking, reflection and the opportunity to learn from the unexpected.](#) Learning through experiential methods becomes a means to challenge creative design thinking and problem-solving whilst also encouraging exploration through making and experimentation and collaboration.

## Setting out the challenge:

We consider the transformative power of pattern, reconsider the tools we utilise and the potential for pattern to transform beyond the preconceived perception of print to product.



OH  
OK  
LTD.

“We were set the task of creating something out of offcuts of various different woods, linen and a material called Plastidip. The aim was to create something that had visual aesthetics as well as multiple functions”



## Working out of context / out of the studio:

“Joe Hartley and the OH OK studio are a great team with passion for community development. Having space which is an asset for the community, introducing design and craft into the city of Manchester, in a purely positive way.”



“There was a strong community ethos, having various opportunities for creatives and members of the public to get involved in this growing project. We were guided around the ‘pilcrow Pub’ which had been built by a collection of people (designed by OH OK) welcoming all to be part of the build”

## Re-considering the tools:

By utilising alternative materials and methodologies which reflect pre-determined practices and knowledge we present an alternative practical hands on approach to thinking through inherent process.



“We were given an array of different wood with different shapes to experiment with. We were permitted to use different saws and drills to create innovative surfaces and shapes to print with. I found this process exciting and loved the creative freedom we had with it. I appreciated how much I like to take a ‘hands on’ approach to creating work”



“Plastidip is an air-dry speciality rubber coating that is flexible and durable and is used for automotive customisation, however Joe experimented with the material by printing on the fabric and found that the coated fabric once cut along, seals the raw edge”.

**New findings / observations:**

In addition to this we introduce risk-taking, reflection and the opportunity to learn from the unexpected.

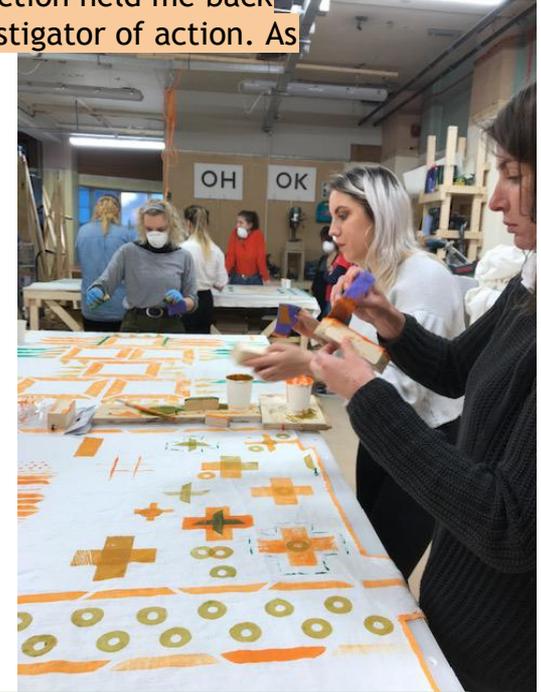


“Joe, spoke about the appreciation of textures from processes and fabrics having transformational qualities, two points I consider highly valuable. He talked about leaving visible process marks, how this fast practice approach has inspired his practice”

## Working together:

An experimental workshop in which learners and practitioners worked collaboratively, a shared experience wherein participants investigate approaches to surface pattern design and application.

“I found my ideas came easily and the team were happy to run with them. Fear of imperfection held me back as we were printing as a group on the same piece. I found I naturally take the role as an instigator of action. As a team we were happy with the end result”.



“Overall, throughout the day I learnt a lot. The importance of using collaboration to push your practice development, using peoples ideas to your advantage to stretch ambitions and imagery. Also I learnt new skills, designing for function rather than aesthetics produces very interesting outcomes. I also found that good communication of idea between a group allowed for imagery critique and subsequently good development of imagery”.

## Re-interpreting familiar skills:

We consider the notional boundaries of the discipline whilst challenging and re-inventing process, approaches and potential outcomes, 'multi-disciplinary' practices emerge through a transformative pedagogic tool as participants explore their 'disciplines' through 'non-disciplinary' means.



“Joe presented us with a medley of wood and tools to create our own printing blocks and drawing tools to apply to the fabric. We drilled holes and sawed into the wood to create textures that which would affect the block prints.....he encouraged to us to think of function for the piece which would leave no waste and be an intuitive assembly for the user”

**Deconstructing the outcome / using the pattern to construct:** Learning through experiential methods becomes a means to challenge creative design thinking and problem-solving whilst also encouraging exploration through making and experimentation and collaboration.



“Once the plasti-dip had dried we began cutting into the fabric. We had planned the design out so that wherever you cut on the fabric would determine what could be made. For this we cut into it so that it would end up being a large bag. We used scraps to create the straps of the bag as well as using the scraps to tie the bag together”

## Transforming pattern: 2D-3D

From the perspective of a print & surface pattern design degree course, we consider the transposition of two-dimensional pattern to three-dimensional surface and object.



“I think as print designers we can be quite removed from functionality as we are mainly concerned with the aesthetic and designing two dimensionally, this process required us to approach design from a different angle”

## Evaluating & Presenting:



“I feel that I left OH OK having learnt a lot and with the desire to approach my practice differently. Joe’s approach and acceptance to the nature of materials is something which has stuck with me, noticing the beauty of imperfection and to work ‘with’ the materials rather than forcing them to be something else. My eyes have also been opened to the possibility of using alternative materials and being more playful with my approach to creating. I want to push myself not to be afraid of failing as I think this is a vital approach to creating and how I will progress as a creative.”