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'HANDCRAFTED TEXTILES IN AN INDUSTRIAL WORLD'

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Professional printed textiles can be sub-divided into industrial and craft textiles. The phrase 'printed textiles' refers to block screen and roller printing but also includes painting directly on to fabric, batik and tie-dyeing, all of which are traditional methods. The printed textile trade is broad; at one end of the scale are the large companies using high technology equipment to make long runs of fabric for mass-production, at the other end of the range are the craft studios that design and produce limited lengths of printed cloth for specialist or private clients. The large companies tend to buy in designs from commercial design studios and freelance designers whereas the incentive for undertaking a craft orientated workshop is to design and produce.

The design studios which service industry are mostly staffed by graduates from art and design colleges. Traditionally, consistent with international practice, printed textile graduates work with cloth rather than paper. These paper designs are adapted and interpreted by the textile printing companies' own skilled artisans. These artisans are, thus, a vital link between the designer and the machine and their skill can enhance or destroy a designer's work.

The design and manufacture of textiles is one of our oldest industries. It caters for the fundamental human need for clothing, for protection, and



fulfils a basic demand for decoration. Textile making is an ancient activity but not necessarily a conventional one. Fabric is central to human culture, it is this centrality which ensures its importance technologically and artistically. Weaving was the first industry to be fully mechanized, indeed it was the catalyst to the Industrial Revolution which consequently created advances synthetics engineering, micro-electronics in and dyes, subsequently yielding the revelation of 'intelligent' fabrics. Yet, despite the technological and manufacturing changes in textile production, the industry remains diverse in production techniques and caters for a variety of tastes in terms of the designs, styles and patterns that make up the contemporary designer's modern vocabulary. Textiles are amongst the most hybrid of contemporary crafts, incorporating a broad variety of developments, effects and techniques. New fibres, fabric treatments and computer technology create a wide range of effects, so too do long established practices and the natural fibres from which all textiles were made prior to the twentieth century.

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This thesis examines the role of printed craft textiles and investigates its significance in an industrial society examining why people choose handcraft as opposed to the mass-produced item. To do this it is first necessary to trace its history from after the First World War when a group of women helped save a variety of craft skills, such as textile printing, and discover what craft has to offer society.



Chapter 2 focuses on industrial textiles, its significance and the development of using screens to print with, as well as the technology involved. Chapter 3 contains case studies which compares and contrasts Lorraine Bowen and Clendinnings textiles as respectively representative of the trends identified in Chapters 1 and 2.



Chapter 1

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The Role of Printed Craft Textiles



After the First World War crafted textiles in Britain began to diminish and would have been lost if not for a group of women working in the 1920's and 1930's. Ethel Mairet, Phyllis Barron and Dorothy Larcher helped save a variety of craft-orientated skills such as textile printing and dyeing. After the Second World War the crafts revival was based on an increased income level and a better quality of life. People were better educated and had more leisure time which in turn led them to creative hobbies. Evening classes were in popular demand and at the same time an emphasis was put on creative subjects in various educational institutions for which more teachers were required, all of which aided the crafts revival.

During the 1960's and 1970's increasing dissatisfaction with the urban industrial environment led to a search for alternative ways of life, which resulted in a development in the range and popularity of textile crafts. A number of the alternative and counter-cultural movements that spread from California in the 1960's such as hippies, back-to-naturalists and folk revivalists, identified with the idea of craft as a way of life. In this way the esoteric, art-school influenced, studio craft movement changed and crafts became increasingly popularized. But the negative outcome of such popularity was a huge decline in standards as the craft textile movement became pejoratively associated with macrame plant-pot holders. The hippy image of crafts was difficult to transcend to the extent that the younger generation of designer-makers in the 1980's had to strive to distance themselves from it.



In the 1960's and 1970's, textiles were conceptualized. In addition there was a widespread revival of interest in ancient textile-making techniques from pre-Columbian textiles to South-East Asian resist-dyeing techniques. The development of a fibre art movement in America and Europe, and the strengthening of an arts and crafts movement in Britain and Scandinavia created great opportunities for a new generation of designers to exploit. But the most important events was the establishment of the Crafts Council and the launching of <u>Crafts</u> magazine. The Crafts Council was launched in 1973 with an influential exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Previously, few people outside the craft world itself had any idea of the quality of work being produced around the country.

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By the early 1970's, there was evidence of a wide constituency for craft in Europe and the United States. Craft galleries began to emerge and in turn they influenced the status of the works themselves. Gallery owners carefully asserted the quality of craftwork by promoting the names of certain individual craftspeople who consequently began to produce more prestigious, one-off objects. From the late 1970's onwards the collecting of work became big business due to the rise and strength of the contemporary art market in America.

The contemporary arts and crafts did particularly well in America. The unique object fulfilled a growing need in people seeking a personal identity especially amongst the up-and-coming.



Influenced by post-modernism, the early 1980's saw the rapid rise of a new ideology in all aspects of design, concepts concerning pluralism, individuality and decoration were now exploited. In textiles, particularly in the young experimental design movements, a spirit of innovation, humour and rebellion led the textiles industry out of the static conservative spirit of the 1970's. Then in the late 1980's, it started adopting traditional techniques.

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Change in design in the 1980's was not simply a natural reaction against former styles and a demand for the new. The boom in information technology accelerated a flow of visual information around the world to such an extent that fashion too accelerated at an exponential rate. Design theorists realized that after decades of dictating what was good aesthetically, people only ever selected what they liked and ignored the rest. Designers stopped trying to work to a prescribed ideology and started to experiment with new styles. The boom in the availability of style choices coincided with changes of attitudes by the industry. It was realised, for example, that the answer to overseas competition was specialization, not automization. Industry then began to realize the potential of craft and the independent designer-makers as a means of channelling new ideas and revolutionizing design thereby making their products more sophisticated.

"For several decades now the major debate within the craft world has been to do with the status of the word itself. The crafts have not been well served by historians for much of the twentieth century. The lack of detailed historical analysis has



been a contributory factor to what is undoubtedly a contemporary crisis of confidence."

(Greenhalgh, 1997, p. 20)

Some makers and writers disapprove of the nomenclature of 'craft', as craft is not taken as seriously as fine art. Although craftspeople have many understanding patrons they have not found themselves admired as much as other artists. They have also found that the consumer is puzzled by the relative value of craft, of why, for example, crafts are so expensive. Awareness of craft is often based on exposure to it. Consequently, craftspeople especially at fairs are often confused with hobbyists. This confusion undermines their professional status and the prices they can command. For these reasons, many avoid the word 'craft' preferring to use terms such as 'artist' and 'designer' or more specific titles such as printer, weaver and potter.

Textile designer Mel Bradley maintains that

"We may not like the word, but we must accept its regular usage and make the most of it. We should sell on the handmade angle, the exclusivity of our trade. Then the word 'craft' can work to our advantage."

The same anxiety is expressed by the retailing sector. The more professional terms, such as gallery or design centre is now used to promote craft. The establishment of the Crafts Council as a separate body from the Arts Council, as well as the operation of different departments in museums and



art schools further emphasizes the difference between fine art and craft. In this way the differences are accentuated rather than diminished.

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"Ironically, craft is most valued by those who believe that the ability to create is itself 'a gift'. Rather than a produce of a marketable skill, some consumers express reverence towards handcrafted objects because they view them as products of inspiration. No amount of training, the consumer reasons, could enable them to create an equivalent object."

Hickey, 1997, p. 86.

Greenhalgh argues that the craft constituency consists of ideological and intellectual principles containing three main elements which are 'decorative art, the vernacular and the politics of work.' (Greenhalgh, 1997, p. 25).

Decorative art features in all civilizations but in this context it absorbed a particular set of meanings in Europe in the later eighteenth-century due to the consolidation of a hierarchical classification system within the European visual arts. Within this hierarchy the decorative arts were not accorded the same status as fine art, by extension, therefore, craft was also denied the status of art. The exact historical point at which fine art became a fullyformed grouping separated from other disciplines such as poetry, music, architecture and sculpture is unknown, but by the beginning of the nineteenth-century, the hierarchy and the separation of the disciplines was firmly in place. The development of European professional culture facilitated the rise of academics, professional thinkers and connoisseurs who further clarified a system of object manufacture. The decorative, industrial and



ornamental arts thus struggled for acceptance in the museums, academies and universities. This issue of status was intensively debated as the decorative arts were seen to be disenfranchised art by its supporters.

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During the second half of the nineteenth century the decorative arts enjoyed a healthy patronage, and significant critical literature began to emerge. Richard Redgrave, Christopher Dresser, John Ruskin, William Morris, Walter Crane, amongst others, wrote and spoke defensively, insisting that the decorative arts were worthy of consideration in comparison to other art forms.

The second category of craft, Greenhalgh refers to, is the vernacular. The vernacular conveys the 'cultural produce of a community, the things collectively made, spoken and performed, the unselfconscious and collective products of a social group, unpolluted by outside influence.' (Greenhalgh, 1997, p. 31).

People through the ages have unconsciously generated styles and techniques based on local values and economic necessity. The real significance of the vernacular in the present context, however, dates from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It was symbolically important to William Morris and the founders of the Arts and Crafts movement in an attempt to revive handicrafts, and return to nature. Its appeal lay in the fact that in concept it did not induce professionalism, specialization or



academicism. Work was a key area of political and economic debate during the nineteenth century, it was, therefore, inevitable that it would become an issue in the visual arts. William Morris was centrally responsible for bringing this issue to the craft movement. He expounded upon the importance of creative work in society arguing that creative work would improve the environment, lead to a more equal system of distributing wealth and generate psychologically fulfilled people. He channelled his vision of a better society through the engagement in creative work and rebelled against the constraints of machinery and the division of labour. British society, including the Trade Union movement and the Independent Labour Party, could identify with this ideal more readily than any previous ideological elements. This philosophy provided craft with its moral core. The Arts and Crafts movement brought the decorative arts, the vernacular and the politics of work together in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, thus formulating the concept of craft as understood throughout the twentieth century.

According to Greenhalgh

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"The Arts and Crafts movement, in retrospect, can be seen to be the most successful construction of a theory and practice of ethical art. The crafts were to be a politicized form of work which produced art objects to decorate society. The vernacular was the model, unalienated work was the means and art was the goal."

(Greenhalgh, 1997, p. 35)



The result of these developments was that the Arts and Crafts movement became a fully international movement. Europe, North America and nations within the British Empire fostered strong craft movements and indeed, it is from this time that craft was recognized as a phenomenon in itself.

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"The Bauhaus which was craft without the vernacular and the Women's Institutes, craft without its politics, are examples from the inter-war period of selective visions from within the meaning of craft as it had been earlier formulated. The signs of strain between the three elements had surfaced; the confused plurality of what it was to be a craftsperson began to grow." (Greenhalgh, 1997, p. 38).

The founders of the Bauhaus, like William Morris and the Art and Crafts movement, believed that there were no essential differences between the artist and the craftsperson. They recognized and attacked the status of fine art and sought to give new life to the disenfranchised art forms. They also used art as a weapon to advance human equality.

The Women's Institutes, for example, promoted craft on an amateur and semi-professional level, as a skilled pastime or form of financial resource. They promoted and preserved the world of rural and domestic crafts, excluding the 'politics of work'. Towards the end of the nineteenth century a rift developed between craft and large-scale manufacturing which became collectivized as design. The margin between design and craft was assessed for ideological and political reasons by Arts and Crafts thinkers. Design began to be categorized from the end of the nineteenth century, and the



term industrial design was occasionally used to refer to objects manufactured in long runs, such as textiles. But design did not operate as a constituency within the visual arts until the twentieth century, when the idea of a designer as a professional who overlooks an entire process of manufacture from drawing board to finished artefact became established. It was only then that 'design' became exclusively connected to industry and designers distinguished from artists and craftspeople. They are now strongly associated with mass-production or at least highly-mechanized production.

The philosophy regarding craft articulated by the Arts and Crafts pioneers argued that cognitive and manual activity were the same. But in 1917 a significant development occurred when Marcel Duchamp arrived at his concept of the artist, choosing an object (such as a urinal) signing it and then placing it on display. He stated that the object was art because the artists declared it to be so. The followers of Duchamp perceived the idea of 'artist-craftsman' a contradiction in terms.

The low status of craft is reinforced by the issue of function, the underlying expectation of which is fundamental to craft. This demand for function has accentuated the view that craft is a purely technical activity. In my view, the status of craft should outweigh art as craft not only has to be aesthetically appealing but also serve a function. To this effect, McNicoll argues that



"Things which are made to live in art galleries rather than in shops, sustain the viewers interest for a few minutes, whereas things made for the domestic context will be seen and used every day and must be sophisticated and complex enough to remain interesting, as well as being simple enough to be a pleasure to use."

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(McNicoll, 1997, p. 379).

The question of functional use is no longer always part of the criteria for defining craft. The role of the crafts is now open to wider interpretation because of its complementary, symbiotic relationship with painting and sculpture, as exemplified by textile and fibre art painting. Textile dyes or stitch can, for example, mimic the gestures and emotion of paint. What differentiates art textiles from other forms of visual art is the use of craft as a medium for creative meaning.

"Textile art is coming of age. Its overwhelming combination of line, colour and texture makes it a powerful art form whose importance is at last being acknowledged by curators and collectors worldwide."

(Koumis, 1996, p. 5).

Previously textile artists had difficulty in exhibiting their work as they wanted to present it in proper space and lighting and with professional presentation. These facilities are found mostly in fine art galleries and museums. Up until now curators generally did not welcome textiles but such distinctions are now becoming blurred. In this way textile art is raising the status of craft.


Textile art frees craftspeople from the constraints of serving a customer. Sally Greaves-Lord and Dawn Dupree apply dyes in the manner of paint. Their work invites comparison with colourful abstract painting. They, like artists, rely on the expressive qualities of colour and form.

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Sally Greaves-Lord did not train as a painter. She chose textile art because she wanted

"A discipline where the process and craft played a big part. My work is absolutely compulsive. It totally absorbs me. I've got all the shapes, patterns, textures in mind. I can feel the relationship of one to another. It's not always pleasurable, it's essential."

(Sally Greaves-Lord, 1996, p. 37).





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Fig. 1 - Silk Scarves (1996) - Handpainted on spun silk -74" x 16", 190 x 42 cm

These colourful scarves could also make effective wall-hangings.

"I try to keep the shapes I use simple, universal. Each element can be seen from different viewpoints: things approaching whole things and then breaking them up maybe destroying them maybe not. Some things stand solid and unbreakable, while other things are whizzing round them." (Sally Greaves-Lord, 1996, p. 33).





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Fig. 2 - Yellow Figure, 1996 Dyes printed and painted cotton drill 72" x 50" 184 cm x 127 cm

"I'm passionate about colour, about the effect it has on me. I'm also exploring the possibilities of expression in relationships, something which affects us all."

(Dawn Dupree, 1996, p. 14.)



"The studio crafts may be of marginal importance in a western or westernized national economy, but as Helen Rees points out, they constitute a cultural phenomenon which pursues a set of values. These values ought to be of some interest philosophically and socially: they include the freedom that comes through the possession of skill and the freedom that is attainable when one is in a position to direct the content, pace and quality of the way one earns one's living."

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(Dormer, 1997, p. 14).

A craft workshop operation does not have an intermediary between design and production and so the craftsman textile printer has the advantage of controlling the production of the design from the beginning to the end. Setting up a commercially independent small craft printed textile workshop is costly as the basic equipment is expensive to purchase, in addition, there is a problem of fixing the dyes economically. For this reason, many printers have to rely on pigment printing. It is, therefore, difficult to make a small operation commercially successful. In fact, most craft printers avail of someone else's facilities, perhaps a local art school, for the use of their equipment. But the reward is the freedom to innovate and choose the direction for one's own work. Financially the craft-based end of the printed textiles trade may be of small importance but it supports a wide range of businesses such as fabric suppliers, manufacturers of dyes and chemicals essential for printing, as well as the department stores or boutiques they supply. A typical example of such craft-based enterprises would include scarves from Lorraine Bowen, Mel Bradley and Andrew Dowling. Some of these scarves are produced for a gift ware market, ranging in price from £16.95 to £29.95, they are smaller in size than the more expensive ones



sold for a specific outfit or occasion which average in cost at around £120.

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Crafts' impact on design is of great importance. Craft could be regarded as a design powerhouse due to the flexible, innovative, hands-on immediacy of design and production.

"British mass-produced printed textiles with a few notable exceptions, such as the Liberty prints, are not especially regarded by European fashion and design houses. But these same Europeans show great interest in one-off craft designers. The industrial world of printed textiles has been moved by the work of small workshops such as Timney Fowler and Bodymap, making their mark through designer-collections." (Sutton, 1985, p. 9).

Fashion designers, interior designers and retailers are coming alive to new possibilities and links with the craft world,hence more organisations are considering the benefits of commissioning individually produced textiles. An important function of craft is to provide an alternative aesthetic to mass-produced goods. Sir Terence Conran, in talking about the Chelsea Crafts Fair stated that

"Designer-makers offer one-off or limited-edition pieces at admittedly highish prices, but people are willing to pay for the quality and the fact that you're not going to see these things all over the high street. There's also the tactile nature of handcrafted objects to consider. The way things feel is very important at the moment. I don't know why its happened -New Ageism maybe but people do want to enjoy touching the things they own. And then there's the familiarity of the craft world. We all made things at school. We're intimidated by fine art, but we understand craft more easily."

(Conran, October 1997, p. 25).



The Crafts Council of Ireland (CCOL) is the national design and economic development agency for the craft industry in the Republic of Ireland and it is funded by Forbairt (Ireland's industrial development authority) and by the European Union. It assists craft by advising government and other state agencies on issues affecting the industry. It also helps promote and market craft, and offers training in vocational craft and design. In addition to helping increase their income through the sale of their work, the CCOL helps people to find employment and protects the long term employed in the craft industry. The five main areas of activity concern business services, information services, marketing, training, the retail gallery and the exhibition gallery. These areas work simultaneously and symbiotically in helping the future of the craft industry. Crucial to the Council's objectives is product and market development.

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"Anyone studying the most successful craft people of the past decade will readily see that a critical part of their success is the timely introduction of new products and ranges, and the willingness to accept that marketing is now a vital part of the business of craft."

(Crafts Council of Ireland, Newsletter, No. 28).

Product and market development within the Council is achieved through projects in conjunction with the Enterprise Boards which helps CCOL offer a more effective service to the regional craftsperson in their own area. The Council is also developing further marketing links with ABT the Irish Trade Board and product development links with Forbairt. One of the Council's most important functions is to keep craftspeople informed of change in the



markets they serve, and of the services and supports available to them from the Council and all other state and regional agencies. The Council surveys purchase trends through the showcase order book and product or skills shortages. This information suggests options for Council initiatives in supporting the crafts industry. It also supports the Council's case with government and public agencies for providing adequate resources for the ongoing development of the craft industry. Information is provided for wholesale and retail buyers on the availability of craft products through a visual database and a Register of Professional Craftworkers. Also, an up-todate computerized information system is available concerning retail outlets, courses, grant-aid, craft workers and their craft products. One of the objectives of CCOL is to increase sales and make selling easier. This is achieved through Showcase. (A trade fair which occurs twice in the year.)

"The huge success of Showcase over the past decade has meant that many craft companies (and gift and fashion companies) do not need to take part in other wholesale fairs either in Ireland or abroad. Although attending a number of international fairs, in addition to Showcase, may well be a vital part of marketing. Participating in international initiatives is not due to lack of confidence in indigenous fairs, but a recognition that each Irish craft company faces increased competition from Europe and particularly from third-world/southern hemisphere producers."

(Crafts Council of Ireland, Newsletter, No. 28).

Other forms of marketing include a visual database or media store, which gives information about craftspeople and their work. The CCOL believes that



"Given current levels of technology, the emphasis over the next two years should be on computer-based marketing via interactive databases - 'virtual galleries' or 'virtual trade fairs' on CD-ROM's rather than the 'Net'. The visual database enables customers to view the work of approximately 200 makers, on computers based in the Crafts Council gallery. They can select images of work by media, price, function or makers' name in a wide variety of search combinations and with very quick response times. The database can also be used by architects and interior designers to source items for specific projects. The Council staff also use the database on lap-top computer to visit clients in their own offices to negotiate their clients requirements. The next phase of the databases's development within CCOL is its distribution on CD-ROM to the 35 international offices of the Irish Export Board, and to other locations within Ireland itself. The Council hopes to have a fully interactive version available by 1999. The most immediate commercial development, however, will be the creation of 'Virtual Showcase' which will allow the 700 craft, gift and fashion exhibitors at Showcase to rent space on a CD-ROM for distribution to retail buyers worldwide, just as they buy their stand at our trade fair."

(Crafts Council of Ireland, Newsletter, No. 28).

This is also an objective for 1999. The Council does not see technology as the only way of promoting craft, but wishes to implement a touring exhibition programme, which would encourage understanding and appreciation of the craft industry amongst the widest possible audience. Due to budget limitations this programme has not been implemented yet.



Chapter 2

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The Role of Industrial Textiles





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Fig. 3 - 'Shrubbery', the first hand-screen printed design by Warner & Sons, 1931.



"In December 1931 Warner & Sons produced their first handscreen printed textile - 'Shrubbery'. The design had been purchased from Miss V. Muller for £7. This apparently minor historical moment marks the beginning of a development in both the process of printing and the source of designs for textiles. These developments originated in a relatively small sector of the textile industry between 1931 and 1939, but had a wider application after the war. Warners decision to introduce a new process, with the design provided by a freelancer, is significant for the history of textiles. Hand-screen printing was introduced not by the industry as a whole but by a small number of firms who were actively interested in improving design as suggested by contemporary design reformers. These firms added hand-screen printing to the more established printing techniques and purchased an increasing number of designs from freelance designers during the 1930's."

(Journal of Design History, Vol.8, No. 1, 1995).

At the beginning of the century experimental forms of hand-screen printing were being developed but the process was not used commercially until 1926 when a number of textile companies adopted it in France. The hand-screen technique was the first major new development in textile printing at the end of the eighteenth century. Two other methods of printing were also used; hand-block and machine-roller printing. Hand-block printing was a slow and costly process. Manufacturers used it to print short runs or experimental designs. More commonly used was the mechanized roller printer. In this process the design was engraved on copper rollers, with one roller used for each colour in the design, in this way the full width of fabric could be printed. This method was ideal for producing large quantities of a particular design. The main disadvantage was the large yardage required to cover the cost of engraving the copper rollers, and large capital was needed to cover the initial expense of buying machinery.



Hand-screen printing, a development of stencilling had several advantages compared to the other techniques. It was much quicker than hand-block printing and compared to the machine roller technique, required little initial investment.Short lengths of fabric, therefore, could be produced more economically. It was also possible by this method to print on textured fabric and although fine lines could not be reproduced, as in other methods, the technique had the advantage of reproducing brushwork or dappled and etched effects.

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In Britain in the early 1930's a small number of firms began to produce fabric with designs applied by means of hand-screen printing. Generally, companies already using the other hand process - block printing - adapted this new technique. However it was not widely used until mechanized methods of screen printing were developed in the 1950's and 1960's. Initially hand-screen printing was limited to the production of short runs or experimental modern designs, and was considered to be an alternative method of hand-block printing.The early designs, however, differed little from those which were printed by block. The full potential of the technique could not be seen until the middle of the decade when a number of designs were produced by well-known firms such as Warners' and smaller companies like Allan Walton Textiles.

Hand-screen printing was developed by textile companies for a number of reasons. In addition to the technical and artistic advantages it held over



other processes, it provided the possibility of relatively low-priced experimentation. Due to low investment costs larger numbers of designs could be printed to cater for a variety of tastes thereby responding rapidly to calls for design reform. During this period hand-screen printing was not an industry-wide practice but

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"Its small-scale adoption by a number of firms is significant in the relationship this had to both stylistic developments in design and the changing practices of some companies in obtaining designs from outside their own studios." (Journal of Design History, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1995).

The combination of the economic depression and the desire by textile manufacturers to improve their products led to increased opportunities for artists. Many fine artists began to produce textile designs on a freelance basis using the hand-screen printing process as they were struggling to make a living as an artist. The Society of Industrial Artists was founded in 1930. Manufacturers also began to realize the benefits of selling textiles using the name of a designer and promoting the textile as analogous to fine art.

Mechanization of the process, at first with automated screen printing tables, and later with the introduction of rotary screen printing machines, has made the screen process one of the most versatile patterning techniques in the history of decorated fabrics. Superseding copper roller printing methods it is now the main method employed to pattern cloth.



Screen printing has changed attitudes towards both furnishing fabric and their manufacture especially since it became mechanized. Since the Second World War, prints have been the most common form of furnishing fabric. Printed fabrics are less durable than woven, but since they are cheaper to manufacture and replace, consumers soon started to change the appearance of their home interiors much more frequently than previously. Furnishing fabrics therefore became subject to the influence of rapid changes in fashion and design. From the industrial point of view, screen printing was a suitable method, compared with the expense of setting up a roller or loom, screen printing was cheap and offered a quick and flexible method of producing vast yardage of standard mass-produced cotton in the latest fashions.

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Designer makers also experimented with craft printing techniques and while it imposes certain restrictions, it also allows certain freedoms as well.

"Else Kallesoe's hand-printed geometric fabric uses basic geometric forms, but they are printed in a spectrum, of colours (something that manufacturers would be unlikely to permit) to great effect. The colour creates a pattern of shifting rhythms. Elsewhere, this new hybrid approach to fabric design fusing traditional craft techniques with geometric pattern has softened the familiar modernist look. The surface of Bitten Hegelund Sorensen's grid-printed banners, for example, is enlivened using batik, and Sharon Fisher softens the stark geometry of her designs with the ikat technique. The work of both these designers has attracted the attention of the leading Danish fabric manufacturer Kvadrat who has realized that these designers innovative approach to traditional craft techniques could be used to broaden their technical vocabulary."

(Chloe Colchester, 1991, p. 30).



This is an example of how craft aids industry and also indicates that industry and craftspeople have much to offer each other. According to Chloe Colchester it also indicates a

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"Shift in thinking by the industry. Instead of adapting patterns, or paintings, to commonly used production techniques, machines are now being adapted to re-create technical effects as well as the specified designs. This progression, from machine-made fabrics to craft, and from craft back to industry, was one of the most important developments in textile design in the 1980's."

(Chloe Colchester, 1991, p. 31).

The third industrial revolution based on computer and information technology has created opportunities for shared interactive innovation through CAD (computer-aided design) and technological manufacturing systems. Designs generated by CAD can be sold prior to production and can be used to create colour separations and drive laser engravers. This new technology facilitates exploration without restricting methods of production. Dorte Ostergaard Jacobsen's uses a computer to digitize photographs for silk-screen printing and Diann Parrott hand-printed repeat designs are created with a combination of computer-generated photostencils, repetitive body movements and string-grid systems.

"The rapid response required by mainstream fashion houses (which absorb close to half of all manufactured textiles) was the crucial factor behind the first installations of quick, flexible computer aids."

(Schoeser, 1995, p. 8).



This has resulted in an even greater pace of fashion change (concerning variation of the handle, weight and character of the cloth) as well as the desire for smaller production runs. Many textile designers now use working methods that suit both one-off or medium-output production so that fabrics once exclusive to couture collections are more widely accessible. This is now a widespread concept which in the past was mainly associated with the Japanese textile designer, Junichi Arai and his Nuno Corporation, which continues to evoke the aesthetics of hand-crafted cloths through innovative manipulation of both ancient and new fibres and technologies.



Chapter 3

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Case Studies on Clendinnings and Lorraine Bowen



Clendinnings

Having joined the company in 1982, John Gardiner is now head of the design department in Clendinnings Textiles, Lurgan, Co. Armagh. Established in 1950 by Mr. James Clendinning as manufacturers, bleachers and printers of linen, cambric (fine white linen fabric) and hemstitched and embroidered handkerchiefs, Clendinnings is now part of 'Arthur Johnston Holdings Limited', a family-owned flatbed Commission Printer. They concentrate on two main areas: furnishing textiles (curtains, upholstery for suites, co-ordinates, etc.) and household textiles (souvenir tea-towels, aprons, kitchen co-ordinates).

They provide a complete service for their customers, including technical advice and assistance on a range of designs. Other services include preparation of grey cloth for printing, colour separations, screen production and photography, alternative design colourways, chemical cloth finishes, as well as testing of fabric. Other companies subcontract some of these services which is an inherent disadvantage.

"There are always problems so it is more beneficial to have each area supervised under the one roof which results in a strict control of quality" according to Gardiner.

Their objective is to reproduce on cloth, the effect obtained by painting the original design artwork on anything from canvas to brown wrapping paper.

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Equipment and machinery is sourced from around the world to enable them to produce up to 18 colours in a design. They use natural fabrics such as cotton satin, voiles and linen union. The customer is offered a range of fabric finishes which meet industrial standards.

The printed fabric produced is technically of a high standard, it is hardwearing and involves easy after care. Clendinnings deal with designs, which are technically difficult to translate onto fabric for a mass-produced market. Their style of print is traditional ranging from flat colour florals to creating techniques that stimulate tones, weaves, embossed and stitch effects, checks and abstract designs. This process is all done by hand at Clendinnings without the aid of Cad Cam. Gardiner considers that much of their success is due to their craftsmanship:

"which gives our printed product a defined signature that sets us apart from our competitors. The boundaries of print capability are constantly being extended by our designers because colour separations are produced by hand. This degree of flexibility is not obtainable using only a Cad-Cam system. The development of such a system has been ongoing for several years and eventually a package will be available and obtained to aid design staff in their work".

This is a clear example of how technology replaces craft; CAD allows complex designs to be completed in a relatively short period of time producing a variety of colour schemes. At a click of a button alterations can be achieved. Speed is one of the great benefits of CAD but more complex instructions may have to be left overnight before they appear on screen.

Independent textile printers are using computers in innovative ways, exploring and manipulating the optical effect that the computer can create for printed textiles. Cad is commonly used in the design of surface pattern for fashion and furnishing fabrics. A whole new visual aesthetic is thus created.

The Design Studio, which houses up to 13 designers, is involved with all stages of development of a new design during its first bulk print. The first stage of development is separating the colours, and can take an average of between 2-8 weeks, depending on the degree of difficulty, the technique, number of colours, size and alterations required. The design then moves on to the mini studio, which has 3 main functions; to improve techniques used in making the colour separations; to create alternative design colourways; and to experiment with new dyes, cloth types and printing methods. The customer is consulted at all stages of print. The second stage of print development is to ensure perfect fit when colour separations are produced. There is one screen for each colour. The image from the separation is then photographed onto the screen. Refer to Fig.6. Samples of various colourways are produced and are then sent to the customer for final approval. Refer to Fig.7. At this stage the design is now ready for its first bulk print. Clendinnings uses Inchinose flat bed printers, developed to meet their standards by a manufacturer in Japan. The machines print the colours in the same order as the Design Studio produced them.





Fig. 4 - The Design Studio at Clendinnings



Fig. 5 - The Mini Studio





Fig. 6. – Screen Photography – Luscher (Switzerland)

The screen with attached colour separation is placed face down on a glass exposure unit. The unit is closed and a vacuum created to ensure a perfect contact between glass, colour separation and screen for approximately three minutes. The image is then photographed onto the screen.





Fig. 7. - Colour Prediction Office

The colour prediction office will fine tune colours before the 1st bulk print. A colourist chooses the best recipe for each colour with the aid of computer technology. Each individual colour is scanned and a maximum of 100 recipes are offered for each colour. This can give a choice of up to 1,800 recipes for an 18 colour design. Recipes are listed best to worst and dearest to cheapest.



When the last colour is printed, the cloth is lifted and passed through a dryer at the end of the machine. The dried printed cloth will then be ready to be transported to the subsequent processes, which include testing the finished printed product for abrasion, strength stability, colour fastness, shrinkage and the durability of various chemical finishes. If a flame retardent finish has been applied for example, this must meet strict legal guidelines. On completion of each roll, the individual customer "swing tickets" are attached. These identify the design, its colourway cloth quality, finishes and metres. Clendinnings in this way completes their commission.





Fig. 8. – Inchinose Flat Bed Printer

Fig. 8.1 -Inchinose Flat Bed Printer







Fig. 9 - The Laboratory

This department concentrates on the testing of both grey cloth and the finished printed product.





Fig. 10 – Parex 5000 MK V1 'Singer' (England)

After being tested in the laboratory, this is the first stage in the preparation of grey cloth for printing. The Singer will first remove any loose fibres or hairs by quickly passing the cloth through a series of flame jets to burn them off. It then removes starches present in the cloth which would react with printed dyes.





Fig. 11 – Brugman/Bianco Bleacher (Netherlands /Italy) Grey cloth is bleached white before it is suitable for printing.





Fig.12 – Montforts Montex Stenter (Switzerland)

The new Stenter provides several services for the customer.

- (A) (B) It straightens the warp and weft fibres of cloth that has been bleached.
- It also applies various finishes to printed cloth by passing the cloth through the required chemical bath. This could be Scotchguard, an anti-spill finish, resin to prevent shrinkage, or Clendinnings special chemicals to improve cloth handle.



Fig. 12.1





Fig. 13 – Brugman Merceriser (Netherlands)

To enhance the end product, some customers will request that before printing, certain designs should be mercerised after bleaching. Mercerisation improves the strength of cloth and improves affinity of the printed dyes. The machine can also be used to process bleached cloth to prevent any shrinkage at a later date.





Fig. 14 – Brugman Flashager (Netherlands)

After printing on the Inchinose, dyes must be processed and permanently bonded into the cloth fibres

Fig. 14.1 - Brugman Flashager (Netherlands)





Clendinnings serve the middle end of the market. Their world-wide customerbase includes Ireland and the UK, Europe, South Africa and America, in total, 250 customers. In turn, their customers export to other textile markets worldwide. They are required on average to print between 50 and 80,000 metres per customer. Some of their customers include Moygashel Fabrics (NI), Crowson Fabrics (one of the biggest fabric suppliers in the UK), Warwick Fabrics, Nouveau Fabrics (also UK), Fabric Library (S. African company) and Greff Fabrics (USA).

According to Gardiner, Clendinnings do not need to market themselves, their reputation speaks for itself. Clendinnings must carefully target their customers as there is a huge element of risk involved. Even if technically their fabric is of the highest standard, if the design is not part of the market trend it is likely to flop. A design needs to be printed repeatedly for a number of years (perhaps in different colourways) in order to recoup investment. The market leaders create the trends. Customer history is an important factor which conveys their knowledge of the market. For the designer involved, work at Clendinnings is technically laborious and repetitive lacking the creative freedom of a print studio.



Fig. 15



Fabrics printed at Clendinnings



Fig. 15.1



Fig. 15.2









Lorraine Bowen

Lorraine Bowen is a successful textile printer who has won several awards for her work. She graduated from NCAD in 1992 after completing her degree in printed textiles. Following a year of freelance work, she received training from the Kilkenny Design workshop (course run by the Crafts Council) concentrating on business skills and developing her work for the market place. This also gave her the opportunity to sell her work at Showcase, to which she still continues to subscribe. This experience helped her in starting up her own business or craft studio in September 1994 which she still occupies in Dublin's Tower Design Centre, Pearse Street which has the largest number of craftworkers in Europe working under the one roof. She also received grant aid from the IDA to help her get started.

Bowen chose a career in craft textiles because she prefers "a more hands-on approach to textiles, plus the challenge of managing a business and choosing and following the direction my work takes".

Bowen combines images from old books with a mixture of her own drawings of architecture and old Irish flowers. She also uses typography in her designs. "If I am doing a design based on old Irish flowers, I will look up old books on the subject and use those texts in the work". Her colour is determined by fashion trends. She uses traditional techniques and approaches, a combination of hand-printing and hand-painting including Devore which involves printing a caustic chemical onto cloth, then when heated will destroy

some of the fibres present. This technique is applied to mixed-fibre cloths where one or more of the fibre types are destroyed. Bowen likes to use this method on silk viscose velvet. This achieves excellent drape and tactile qualities for her scarf designs. Other methods include discharge printing, this enables the creation of a negative image by printing a chemical paste which removes dye colour. Steaming of the fabric is necessary to fix this process. Pigment printing is the simplest form of direct dyeing. This can be applied to all fabrics but may give the cloth a stiffer handle. Bowen uses this process primarily for interiors. Different techniques are chosen to suit different clients and budgets. She sometimes uses cotton and linen but most of her work is on silk of all types such as velvet organza and chiffon. Her main suppliers for fabric comes from the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom and Hong Kong. She purchases dyes and auxiliary chemicals from V/C. The eventual result is a fabric with good tactile qualities, and due to the materials employed is usually hand washable.

Bowen's work is functional and aesthetically beautiful. Her choice of rich fabrics, interesting design content and sensitive colour create a luxurious effect. She describes her products as hand-crafted fashion accessories, which sell in fashion outlets as opposed to craft shops. In a craft shop, scarves typically retail for under £39.95 which is a craft or gift price point. In a fashion outlet the price point can be £150 per unit. Bowen states that if somebody is paying £600 for a dress, a scarf that is "hand-designed" and costs £150 is reasonable. She is of the opinion that key selling points include


"made in Ireland", "designed by", "handpainted" and "100% silk". Quality packaging and manufacturing are essential, which, she claims, massproduced goods cannot offer". She wraps her scarves in tissue paper and presents them in a smart, simple black-box bearing the Lorraine Bowen logo. Bowen offers the customer a product which is of limited unique number, and so in a way, has rarity value. The customer knows that "by purchasing something made in Ireland, by hand, it will be unlikely that somebody else will have exactly the same item".

Bowen separates her products and sells different styles to different retailers. Exclusivity is an important factor for her work.

Bowen has worked with many architects, interior decorators and fashion designers such as Louise Kennedy, Mary Gregory, Gerry Brouder and Milo Fitzgerald. Her fabrics used for wall hangings, decorative screens and soft furnishings on cotton, cost between £25-£30 per metre. She also produces her own range of silk ties and scarves (the latter starts at £50 wholesale) and she is happy to work on a commission basis. She wholesales directly to high fashion outlets. Her range is geared predominantly towards women between twenty-five and fifty-five years. "Most purchase for themselves or either choose for themselves and get others to buy", she claims. Some of her outlets include the Crafts Council and the The Kilkenny Shop.

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She also exports to Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom, Europe, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. Bowen produces 8 collections of work a year inclusive of ranges for Mary Gregory and Louise Kennedy. Textile designers play an important role in the fashion industry, but seldom gain the recognition they deserve. Bowen exemplifies this. She is launching her own garment range this summer to retail through 3 chosen outlets in Ireland. She also hopes to show her work at trade fairs outside of Ireland.

When asked about the future market place for craft, she suggested that:

"with more disposable income available at the moment_to the craft buying sector in Ireland, the amount of craft purchased, plus the price, or quality of the product has increased. People will pay more but expect more for their money. In other words it is an ideal time for hand producers with larger budgets to experiment with better quality results."

"Bowen is a successful businesswoman and textile designer. She has a sharp eye for Design composition and a sound knowledge of her marketplace, but her design development is very limited. Criticism within the craft business, suggests that there is not enough time spent on design. This is due to the responsibilities at the business end. Bowen admits that she would like to spend more time on design. Generally a craft business is more successful when there is a partner directing the business side, leaving the craftsperson free to create and develop their work. We have now reached an exciting phase in fabric technology and innovative textiles are indispensable to creative fashion design. Contemporary textile designers in print studios use the available new technologies (i.e. heat bonding, and new fabric finishes that



totally alter the construction and characteristics of a fabric) alongside traditional techniques.

These processes reveal new qualities and aesthetics, and the finishing of a textile is becoming as important as its actual construction. Bowen's choice of print processes are traditional and limited. The marketplace for Irish handmade printed textiles, however, appears to be very traditional. Bowen is skilled at producing aesthetically beautiful fabrics for this market, and offers greater variation in processes than manufacturing textile companies such as Clendinnings.



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Fig. 16 - The Lorraine Bowen Craft Studio in Dublin's Tower Design Centre, Pearse Street.

Bowen intends to move to a larger premises in the near future as a separate production space, office and showroom has become a priority for her business.





Fig. 17 - Work from Degree Show, 1992, NCAD





Fig. 18 - Packaging and Men's Ties





Fig. 19 - Promotional Card



Fig. 20



Fig. 20.1

Mens Ties







Fig. 21 - Lorraine Bowen Scarves















Fig. 22 - Louise Kennedy - Autumn/Winter 1996





Fig. 23 – Mary Gregory

Long Coat £195 and long handpainted wrap dress £189 from the Mary Gregory Collection available at Brown Thomas and A-Wear Stores.





Fig. 24 – Project for the architect Gerry Brouder Bedroom Interior in Showhouse (Castlethorn Construction)



Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of printed craft textiles in an industrial world is a very complex one. Craft represents different concepts to different people. For people directly involved in the craft world it can serve as an alternative way of life. There is a small minority of craftspeople working within a traditional craft idiom who have made the deliberate and conscious decision to have nothing to do with industry. These generally come from an older generation. Their work is about personal integrity and is not market led. It involves huge sacrifices of wealth and self-investment as traditional methods are laborious As McNicoll asserts "Life as a craftsperson is and time consuming. economically non-viable". (McNicoll, 1997, p.379.) These sacrifices do not seem fundamental to a younger generation of students and craftspeople. There are also the environmentally conscious dyers and printers who attempt to achieve self-sufficiency in the practice of their craft using natural materials only. Stephanie Nuria Sabato and Christopher Leitch cultivate yeast, moulds and other fungi on cloth surfaces to develop pattern and colour therefore avoiding synthetic dyestuffs and treatment chemicals. The other extreme to this is the quest for innovation through experimentation of traditional craft methods with new industrial methods. Scales of production further vary the craft market ranging from one-off pieces to limited collections. For the majority of crafts people, craft has become business-like. Product development, market research and marketing now play a vital role. This is largely due to the influence of the Crafts Council. There is a commercial purpose for handmade items that goes beyond the aesthetic. The new generation of designers

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Fig. 25 - Christopher Leitch / Stephanie Sabato Hand-dyed blouse / waistcoat. One-off. Japanese silk, moulds.



understand commerce through training with places like the Crescent Workshop in Kilkenny. This is very different to the traditional philosophy which underpinned the Art and Craft movement. Financial viability seems to be the only means of determining the value of craft at the moment. The Irish hand-printed industry is a difficult one, governed by strict codes of quality, pricing, image and reputation. This can only improve craft quality and thereby raise the status. There is also competition from Europe, the Middle East, and manufacturing. The consumer must be educated as to the differences between mass-production and hand-crafted items so as to no longer confuse craft workers with hobbyists. The positive points of craft must be distinguished over cheaper, mass-produced fashion and interior products on sale everywhere.

Creatively, the work, of both designers and craftspeople do play an important role but whether someone is working in a craft studio or as a designer in a large printing factory similar decisions must be made regarding design, colour and fabric content. It can be argued that a craft printers work is more innovative and personal but ever improving technology is evidently beginning to mimic craft and craft has become market led as opposed to maker led. Industry and craftspeople have much to offer each other. This is only possible through technology. Textile Design today is influenced by the development of automation and flexible manufacturing systems and on the other hand the revival of craft techniques and traditional patterns.

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