

## EXHIBITION REVIEW

### **SAMPLE by Collect Scotland**

The Lighthouse, Glasgow, Scotland, UK

24<sup>th</sup> March – 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017

*Reviewed by Dr Helena Britt*

*The Glasgow School of Art*

*Department of Fashion & Textiles, 167 Renfrew Street, Glasgow G3 6RF*

*[h.britt@gsa.ac.uk](mailto:h.britt@gsa.ac.uk)*

*+44 (0)141 353 4733*

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In the United Kingdom (UK) textile creative practitioners operate in differing roles as artists, craftspeople, designer-makers, in-house designers and in a freelance capacity. Many textile designers are freelancers and generate income by selling designs through an agency, studio or directly to clients. Often agencies and design studios promote the work of a number of unnamed designers and once a design is sold the creator has minimal insight into its use (Briggs-Goode 2013). Agents liaise with “...industry, selling, managing financial negotiations and dealing with copyright issues.” (Briggs-Goode 2013: 154) Working for an agent can differ depending on the company, some “...employ designers and pay them a set wage, regardless of how many designs each individual designer sells”, others pay designers “....a percentage of the amount they sell that designer’s work for...”, whereas some “...operate somewhere between the two...A few agencies charge significantly less commission, but charge...a set fee for showing work to clients.” (Russell 2011: 28)

Generally, textile designs are sold through presentations direct to clients, specific client commissions and by showing collections of designs at trade fairs (Russell 2011). Trade fairs are held around the world throughout the year, one of the most established is *Première Vision* in Paris which focuses on fashion and apparel markets (Clarke 2011). Twice yearly fairs are held in September for spring/summer collections and February for autumn/winter collections (Clarke 2011). There are a number of ‘Salons’ within this trade fair, including *Première Vision Designs* (formally *Indigo*) where designers, design schools, design studios and agencies present and sell textile samples, garment components, vintage artifacts and designs on paper. Visitors and exhibitors also go to “Première Vision’s trend forums, which can take the form of small exhibitions, showcasing predicated colour and fabric trends 18 months in advance of an actual season.” (Clarke 2011: 187) Examples of other trade fairs through which textile designs are sold include *The London Print Design Fair* in the UK, *Comocrea* in Italy, *Munich Fabric Start* and *Heimtextil* in Germany, *Intertextile Shanghai* and shows such as *Surtex*, *Print Source* and *Blueprint* in the United States of America.

Textile designers often work from specific trends and trend forecasting can be another area of employment for designers. Examples of companies working in this area include *WGSN*, *Womenswear Daily*, *Trend Zoom*, *TrendStop*, *Stylus Trends* and *The Future Laboratory*. Trend publications include *Textile View*, *Mix Magazine* and *Collezioni*. In their broadest sense trends have been described by trend forecasting expert, Li Edelkoort as “...archaeology but to the future” (Dhillon 2015) and can be inspired by a wealth of information, from aesthetics and cultures, film and literature, technological and scientific advances, social interactions and current events. For textile designers trends tend to act as prompts that trigger information gathering and the generation of visual content including colour, which influences design creation.

*Collect Scotland* founded by Glasgow-based designers Yvonne Elliot-Kellighan, Mhairi McMullan, Marion Parola and Chloe Highmore was established in 2012. The ethos of this collective is “...to highlight and strengthen the talent of textile designers in Scotland”, and provide opportunities for development and promotion in the UK and overseas (Collect Scotland 2017). Previous activity has involved presenting and selling textile designs from Scottish-based designers at *Première Vision*. *Collect Scotland* functions differently from other agencies or studios as each designer contributes a flat fee to the cost of exhibiting, no commission is taken and all sales go directly back to the designer. After the trade fair, to allow for follow-up sales, designs are presented in the *Collect Scotland* password protected online portfolio for no additional charge.

*SAMPLE* was the first gallery-based exhibition by *Collect Scotland*, curated by the collective’s founders, which featured the work of fifteen current and former members. The exhibition held at The Lighthouse, Glasgow, sought to provide insight into the often anonymous role and creative outputs of textile designers. For *SAMPLE*, the curators developed a series of trends, taken from *Première Vision* but developed with further research and feedback from clients regarding future design directions and purchasing decision insights. In response to the developed trends ‘Chiaroscuro’, ‘Earthly Paradise’, ‘Cut and Paste’, ‘Emotional Landscape’ and ‘Remembered Dreams’ the *Collect Scotland* designers developed an array of impactful digitally printed fabric lengths and wallpapers which featured in the main gallery space (figure 1).



Figure 1. SAMPLE by Collect Scotland Exhibition, The Lighthouse, Glasgow.

Photographed by Susan Castillo.

A further section of the exhibition displayed visual content and key references indicating the inspirations behind the inspirational trends. Imagery forming the 'Chiaroscuro' trend included light created by architectural and other structural forms, textural shapes made by hand-created tools and materials, natural markings, grayscale graphic shadowed and overlaid shapes. 'Earthy Paradise' referenced layers of exotic foliage and botanical elements found in the depths of the rainforest, where creatures watch unusual flowers manoeuvre and grow towards the light. Drawing style suggestions varied from plant silhouettes intertwined with shadows and realistic photography, to intricate and illustrative sketches. The 'Cut and Paste' trend paid tribute to the collages of Henri Matisse and the paintings of Peter Joseph. Geometric and organic block shapes were arranged to create bold and playful landscapes, painted marks and textures featured. 'Emotional Landscape' turned to earth's weathered and desiccated environment for inspiration, highlighting natural evolution through tectonic collisions, seismic shifts and volcanic eruptions. Photographs of arid and snow covered tundra, worked with soft tonal variations of sunlight, clouds and waterscapes. The inspiration behind the trend 'Remembered Dreams' brought together a mixture of visual fictitious references including surreal Picasso-like compositions, constructivist-type costume, imaginary landscapes and blurred, ephemeral silhouettes.

Within the main section of the exhibition, in response to these trends, exhibits of particular note included the multi-coloured playful geometric pattern on wool delaine by Hazel Dunn (figure 2). Vanessa Hindshaw's expressive, textural half-drop design printed onto linen union sat in between the work of Marie O'Connor, which comprised a small-scale graphic dot and square pattern, made denser across the fabric to create impact, and another print

reminiscent of the art deco era, with muted colours providing the backdrop for an overlaid black graphic pattern (figure 3). Creating work for the exhibition provided the opportunity for the designers to work outside of industry constraints and product size restrictions in terms of the scale of designs. While some of the digitally printed fabric lengths and wallpapers showed repeating patterns, others used the full width and length of the base substrate to produce large-scale compositions. The elements of Chloe Highmore's wallpaper appeared to drift through space, with unreal affect, due to the play between three-dimensional and two-dimensional imagery (figure 4). Whereas the bold and colourful work of Lorna Brown combined drawn patterns with textures, collaged shapes and large expressive marks (figure 5).



Figure 2. Fabrics and wallpaper by (from left to right) Marion Parola, Hazel Dunn and Lyndsay Mackie. Photographed by Susan Castillo.

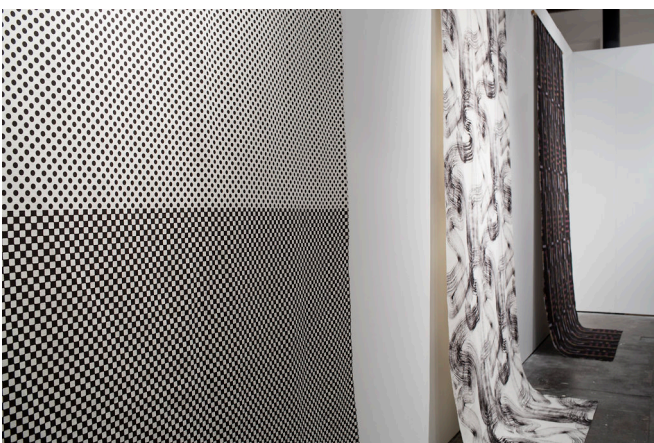


Figure 3. Fabric by (from left to right) Marie O'Connor, Vanessa Hindshaw and Marie O'Connor. Photographed by Susan Castillo.



Figure 4. Fabric and wallpapers by (from left to right) Vanessa Hindshaw, Chloe Highmore and Lorna Brown. Photographed by Susan Castillo.



Figure 5. Projection, wallpapers and fabrics by (from left to right) Vanessa Hindshaw, Chloe Highmore and Lorna Brown. Photographed by Susan Castillo.

Another part of the exhibition provided insight into the textile design process. This included a stop-frame animation, projected onto a large wall space, to take the viewer through some of the stages of design creation. Working drawings and open sketchbooks were displayed in a case showing the supporting work behind some of the designs created for the exhibition. Graphic illustrations and object layouts by Alice Dansey-Wright (figure 6) highlighted the importance of drawing to design creation, in this instance for the production of wallpaper, running horizontally, combining tribal markings and expressive silhouettes. Also on display was a selection of smaller samples as a retrospective to *Collect Scotland's* portfolio of commercial designs, previously presented at *Première Vision Designs*, Paris. With a diverse client list including *Nike*, *Whistles*, *IKEA*, *Converse* and *Paperchase*, the wall of samples communicated the visual diversity of the collectives' work (figure 7). In conjunction with the exhibition a series of workshops and talks engaged participants of all ages in design creation, trend prediction and digital printing.



Figure 6. Sketchbook and drawings by Alice Dansey-Wright. Photographed by Susan Castillo.

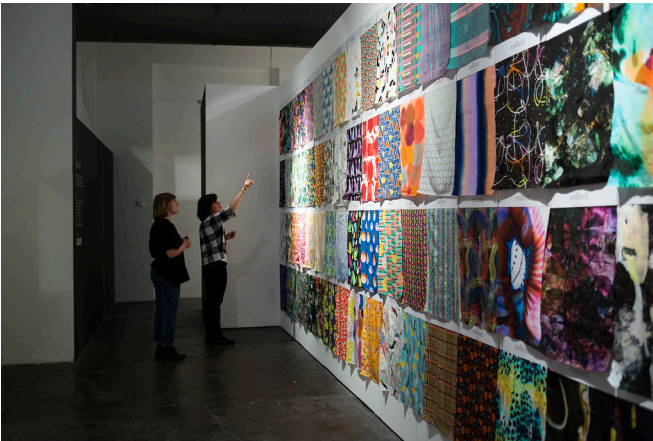


Figure 7. Fabric samples by Collect Scotland. Photographed by Susan Castillo.

This exhibition of contemporary textiles is bound to have achieved the curators ambitions as it certainly highlights and goes some way to represent the often-unnamed textile designer and the discipline of textile design, to the Scottish creative sector and wider public. It also signalled a change in activity from *Collect Scotland* as collective selling anonymous designs through commercial trade fairs, to a group of named designers each displaying individual aesthetic identities. This articulation of individual designers work will hopefully lead to further commissions for those represented. As a visitor to the exhibition, the sheer scale of the work on display was most impressive and it is encouraging to see an exhibition of this size, devoted solely to textile design. Opportunities for large-scale displays of textiles at trade fairs rather than just samples and swatches could entice buyers to see the future potential of designs in differing contexts and potentially result in increased sales. Also, further insights into the working processes behind design creation

could aid the further promotion of textile design to other creative fields. The work on display focused on printed textile and surface pattern. With Scotland's rich history and heritage of textile making and industry it would be fascinating to see a contemporary exhibition on such a scale, extending to other textile-based production processes.

*SAMPLE by Collect Scotland* featured the work of Lorna Brown, Susan Casillo, Alice Dansey-Wright, Rachel Duckhouse, Hazel Dunn, Yvonne Elliott-Kelligan, Chloe Highmore, Vanessa Hindshaw, Lyndsay Mackie, Mhari McMullan, Ruth Mitchell, Marie O'Connor, Marion Parola and Natasha Samasuwo.

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