Perspectives on Making and Viewing: Generating Meaning through the Textile Medium

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Abstract

This paper discusses the meaning of the textile medium from the perspectives of both maker and viewer. It considers the integration of hand and digital processes in the construction of textiles with specific communication content by the maker, and how these processes contribute to viewers' understanding of textiles in comparison to other media.

The paper draws on findings from two case studies carried out at six UK locations over a two year period using the practitioner’s own printed textile work. The paper discusses the process-based development of the textiles produced for the case studies, considering the necessary interaction of hand skills and new technology to create final artefacts appropriate for the research investigation. The paper then focuses on viewer perceptions of the textiles from the first case study, explaining how responses to the medium necessitated an increase in the hand-developed elements of the textiles produced for the second stage of the research.

The paper concludes by reviewing responses to the textiles in the second case study. Viewers’ perceptions of the textile medium are contrasted with their perceptions of other visual media (such as posters, stained glass and websites), revealing how viewers perceive textiles, the processes of textile making, and the cultural meanings they attach to the medium.