

Title: Cloth as pattern: the visual language of weave for print design.

Keywords: Cloth, pattern, visual language, imitation and reproduction, by hand, drawing processes, print design, visual language, weave

Abstract: Through the questioning activity of drawing this research offers a visual language exploring woven cloth for a new pattern to print. Drawing tools develop a dialogue for reflection and evaluation as the hand and eye communicate weave. The processes of observation and interpretation led by the drawing hand establish a challenge in relation to imitation, deception, reproduction and truth. The project confronts the abundance of digitally printed material surfaces (such as printed wood and stone) in the interiors market and develops a new pattern from cloth, for cloth.

Article:

Construct is a practice-led research project established to investigate cloth as subject matter. The process of image making develops an alternative language for material-inspired pattern. Drawing processes are explored with the aim of evoking the sense of constructed textiles without returning to the traditions of photo-realism or pure observational drawing. The research project challenge is to retain qualities of cloth while stating a new code and this article outlines this journey, the considerations and reflections. The rationale to build pattern as a visual language inspired by constructed cloth was established and a process of practical, drawing-based exploration was utilised.

Inspired by seeing the diagrammatic qualities contained within black and white historic photographs of bobbin lace-making, the project develops ways of seeing and drawing woven cloth as visual references. Textiles inspires pattern for textiles and is subversive in its commercial context; the project challenges current commercial material-inspired surface pattern design such as reproduced digital photographs of hard materials including stone and wood so abundant in interior surface markets such as for worktops and flooring, when textiles may be a more appropriate interior pattern reference. Through this 'truth to materials' approach in line with the thinking of Ruskin the project engages with a question of imitation and deception. 'Touching the false representation of material, the question is infinitely more simple, and the law more sweeping; all such imitations are utterly base and inadmissible.' (Ruskin 1849: 39). The collection is informed by and yet not duplication of the material; there is a new reading of the surface and structure of the cloth.

The impetus is to provide a printed pattern-making challenge to those hard materials, to explore and resolve repeats and rhythms that provide small-scale visual textures such as wood. Also to employ skilled language of drawing, rhythm building and compositional complexities, rather than digital reproductions of materials. Drawing and image manipulation is to drive the pattern-making investigation.

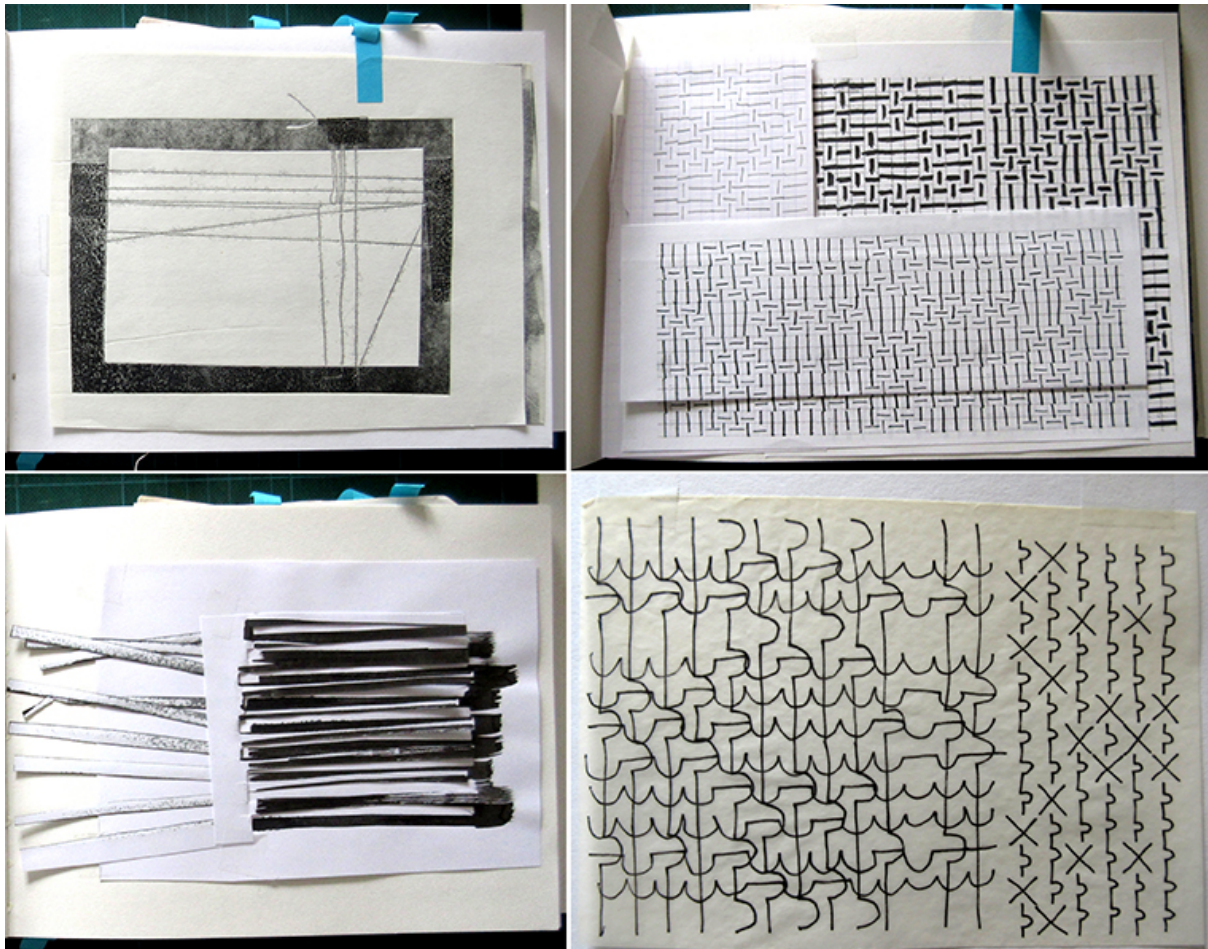


Figure 1: Kate Farley, *works in progress*, 2015. Ink on paper. Dimensions 20 x 20cm each approx. Birmingham. ©Kate Farley.

With the aim of detaching the research process from preconceptions of historic pattern where possible, and at least initially, the project is fuelled by the information gained by drawing, and by reflecting on the practice-based results. Knowledge gained is applied to the future doing, very much as Haseman suggests, that *practice-led* researchers “tend to ‘dive in’, to commence practising to see what emerges.” (Haseman 2006: 100). Drawing leads to a more informed drawing, with no guarantee but with the possibility that the proceeding drawing is ‘more’.

The research opens up the act of looking at something as an inspiration, as a compliment and appreciation of, but at the same time as something to learn from. The ambition, by looking and seeing, is to create a language of cloth as pattern. The notion of reproducing the subject matter through drawn studies, making direct references to the physical samples placed for observation is not the intention. The process of creating something like something else is driving the practical research and yet the spirit of new, of alternative language for cloth is required. Relying on existing tacit knowledge of drawing – but extending the discipline to build tools, to construct surfaces and question how the order of pattern composition adds tension and excitement. No expectation, with every expectation to meet.

Experimental mark-making as drawings build a dialogue in the sketchbook: pencil lines as diagrams, clusters of inky marks darn the page. One mark leads to another, resulting in patches of visual

motifs, leading to new strategies and a form of comprehension. As Pallasmaa states 'Drawing is a process of observation and expression, receiving and giving, at the same time.' (Pallasmaa 2009: 90).

Visually unpicking; the eyes attempting to undo the process of warp and weft intertwining and yet physically creating and reconstructing cloth with threads of pencil lines. These diagrammatic marks are not instructions or formal records of process, nor technical files or archival records, but individual statements of investigation and exploration of potential pattern language, through systems and order, evoking the yarns twisting, over and under, under and over. Small-scale visual diagrams investigate surface and structure of cloth, analysing and mapping the terrain to pick out clues and learn the landscape.

When the pencil falters on the page, and further interest becomes lazy then a new alternative is sought. Yarn becomes the new line as constructed drawings using card frames and twisted threads are created, inked and printed as printmaking plates, relating closely to the warp and weft. Is this weaving? Introducing materiality away from the sketchbook page to question the line quality of yarn, using yarn unfortunately, while aesthetically pleasing soon becomes too direct, too obvious and yet as the printing ink is rolled the resulting black surface offers a new page to draw upon. Ideas emerge from doing; even if the results of doing are not the imagined harvest. Keep doing, keep looking, keep drawing.

Unique mono-prints appear at pace, initially one after another as cloth and finger wipe away the warp and weft; across and up and down the plate, interspersed with the returning turning of the roller, refreshing the dense black ink. Ten, twenty, more snatches of paper-as-cloth cover the studio bench. Scale of motif, rhythms and sense of three dimensional cloth using the flat surface of the inked plate provide excitement for what is yet to materialise. There is a direction to grasp – a fabric being made ... but ... then, in pursuing the threads the pace slows. Results are analysed without the adrenaline and optimism of process momentum. Lacking finesse of the fine line and unsuccessful in portraying the multiple threads of cloth the project refocused attention on the multiple strands needed if cloth really is to be suggested as lengths and widths. What was the intention? Remind me, what was the reason?

The notion of mark-making, and the repetition of marks to build-up surface pattern as graphic language deserves greater attention. The first idea is often unformed, with little context to withstand the pressure of expectation, but there is excitement in this uncertainty. One moves from these drawings easily, eager with the new, the undiscovered lines still to be mapped. Revisiting the sketchbook, now a library of marks, patches of pattern, chaos in the detail but clarity in the pages, the initial marks can be seen afresh, with the eye of experience viewing new value in this journey. The forks leading the threads of ink hold their own and ask for more time, please. Pouring the ink, cutting the forks with wisdom feels so different, and yet a conclusion is not the concern for now. More sheets, more pages of patterns, of parts of patterns are drawn, as the hand and tools learn to work together with the ink. It is time to change gear, to add the new ingredient, the new expectation. Pattern repeat. Drawings are marked up, sketches are voiced, trials are made and the computer joins the list of tools now required.

A magnifying glass aids the interrogation of a number of woven samples, formally identifying dashes of warp and weft, and recorded as code on squared paper and tracing paper. A reminder of the mid-twentieth century use of microscopes to inspire a new language of pattern all those decades ago and yet striving for new, not reproductions of any kind so innate pattern knowledge acts as a boundary to be mindful of.



Figure 2: Kate Farley, *work in progress - Construct*, 2015. Woven cloth and drawing. Birmingham.
©Kate Farley.

Drawing forks are implements made to enable the recreation of the multiple lines of yarn. Forks of grey-board are dipped in Indian ink and dragged across pages, as if threads to untangle. Individual yarns appear and eventually fade before the fork is dipped again.

Geometry as a tool is bringing a sense of systems to the woven cloth. The relationship between small-scale marks, multiple motifs and resulting rhythms becomes key to paraphrasing woven textiles. Visual texture is explored by varying the weight of lines, breadth of negative space and scale of motif. Noise and rhythm are made and tempered, organised and scattered, defined and redefined. As the systems of repeat become clearer the individual notes of noise are pushed and pulled to challenge the rhythm; the eye will dance to.

Deep, dark black, with the intense smell of anticipated drawings, ink pours from the bottle in to the cup. Shadows, information, threads evolve in time; over and under. The qualities of the black lines imply the constructed cloth, the graphic patterns of individual motifs hold their own, and yet can be darned together to create a larger patchwork. Over and over again, getting better at dragging the black, pulling and extending the threads to add to the cloth, more lines, dots, dashes, loops and weave materialise.

Woven cloth of coarse and fine threads inspire patterns of drawings spreading across surfaces both hard and soft, evoking the sense of fabric imagined and reimagined, holding its own as new, confident pattern with uniform and creative chaos of thread as ambition for pattern.

The colour palette of this research practice is monochrome. This is to make colour invisible and non-confrontational as subject matter. Positive and negative shape and line qualities rather than colour become key to the visual analysis for the drawing processes as yarns are key information to drive pattern-making. But what about seeing colour as information when mapping? If the cloth contains colour that states and makes pattern how can that be translated? Should the colour of the yarn be singled out? Is there a dominant colour? What if the substrate supports the pattern, as if print on weave? This is altogether different terrain in the visual unpicking of cloth and yet the relationship to ink on paper could be colour in cloth. Back to the drawing board and the printed paper becomes colour through cloth, weaving over and under, paper as cloth; slicing through the surface as if a yarn, constructing, composing, building. A mini project with many strands, to be returned to, exciting with potential to be revisited at another time.

The question of success, of the question being asked and answered is refocused as drawings become plentiful, and drawn threads become motifs that ask to become pattern compositions. *Cloth as subject matter, as language for cloth.* Reviews ensue, reflections, groupings, pairings and ultimately rejection for some, but the chosen codes offer possible new directions. Sketches on the sketchbook page, the whirring of the scanner and the software come together to inform and enable the next step, the next thread in the cloth. A system to manage the yarn is defined for the question: warp and weft, horizontal and vertical codes. Grids are drawn, the set-square employed to keep order and uniform. Control and rationale, the unruly are tidied or rejected. The yarns are trimmed. The graphic rules are being set to establish the visual tone, but to break the role of observation, those rules are bent as the drawing tool in the hand thinks better. As Pallasmaa observes, 'The tool is an extension and specialisation of the hand that alters the hand's natural powers and capacities.' (Pallasmaa 2009: 47).

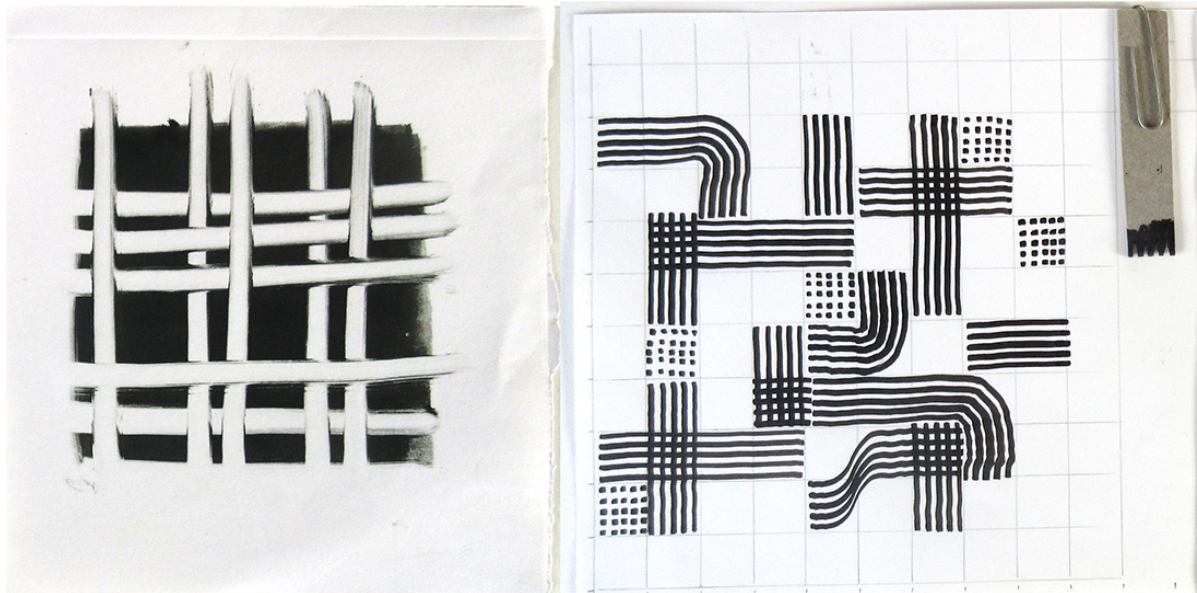


Figure 3: Kate Farley, *works in progress*, 2015. Ink on paper. Dimensions 20 x 21cm / 23 x 25cm. Birmingham. ©Kate Farley.

Scanned in language of black ink become interlocking threads of a cloth, building the order, the uniform in the new constructed surface. Neat blocks of pattern weave across the screen and page. The mark of a handmade line, the imperfect is perfect for this. The yarns twist and turn over and under, grids of ordered pattern are here. *Twist* is the first cloth of the loom.

There is tension. There is further intention to question the order versus the disorder. The surface pattern grows, reaching out to invite glitches. Time to turn back through lines in and of drawings, sheets of threads, not quite sample cards, but ingredients all the same. More digital scans are made and further potential is captured once again. This is not for replication, this is not for technical recording, but to evoke a sense of something, to show a belonging but not a reproduction. There is more place for variation and room for interruptions in the order, broken rules in the building of pattern. Creative problem solving. Looking at samples of cloth, a scarf inherited, there are shapes that can remain, that belong on this journey as visual language of interpretation, not duplication, and those sightings become markings of ink, as the space in between, the non-weave, the light peering around the yarn. Does it matter if it is warp or weft? Lines are interrupted, what is not there is as important as what is here. Motifs, like jigsaw pieces or scraps of cloth left over from the patchwork, are brought together and given meaning in the new patterns.

In pattern-making the motifs combine in anticipation of the larger scope. Ink drags lines that cross and weave, extending threads to create rhythms. This feels right, the fabric is implied but not imitating. Drawn lines provide unique interruptions that offer variation: hand-made, anti-digital, craft of making. Lines extend to pick up the thread above, while another journeys to the east reaching a wrap-around to provide hope of repeat. Sketches are made to plan the patterns, working out the rhythms that provide the visual texture that echoes the service the pattern of wood or stone will provide. The mass of threads are compiled, woven across the computer screen, with the warp and weft in mind. Horizontal and vertical, stripes and plaids are created and undone, over and under, black and white, until threads become cloth-like. The cloth does not shout its presence, it is understated in its voice, just as the digitally printed granite worktop moans in the kitchen. The scale of the patterns can turn the volume up if required, but it is not necessary.

How has the project and the drawing processes provided an answer? Is it aided or hindered by beginning without knowing, being prepared to test, to fail, to unpick and weave again that has assisted this project? Drawing with the aim of getting somewhere tangible, but not a given. The line quality and flow, the shapes and proportions are achieved when not set on an answer. The pattern language is formed in a way not anticipated and yet recognisable as the right way for the conclusion. The balance of imitation, of analysis and observation, the structure of order and yet freedom of rule-breaking fits the intention to explore and play. The collection of patterns provide the alternative all-over visual noise of the digitally printed stone as intended. The wavering lines of the handmade marks are contained within the design despite the introduction of the digital process of manipulation and print. Scale of the motifs and the overall patterns for commercially viable surfaces resolve the project and give little hint at the journey they have been a part of.

Pattern building of two dimensional language from three dimensional construction, and the diagrammatic qualities, the technical rules of weave have been from the outset the key driver. Truth to the cloth is balanced and considered in relation to the creative design challenge. Pattern making systems and processes, the establishment of visual variation using the drawing language rather than photo-realism and the creation of many outcomes to ensure the coherence of a commercial collection relies on repeat and invites order and uniformity and yet there is a place for invited interruptions to this order, rejecting the duplication, disobeying the technical notes for the sake of pattern. It is the balance of imitation, the denial of mimicry that has enabled the truth of woven cloth to be tested and challenged in order to create the new language. The drawn and designed questioning of deceit and untruth introduced and resolved in the final collection has developed from a landscape of rules, of over and under. Within the boundaries and order of warp and weft the new

patterns can be evocative of constructed cloth, to challenge the patterns of hard materials digitally printed on many surfaces across the interiors market.



Figure 4: Kate Farley, *patterns Construct:grid & Construct:check* 2015. Printed laminate / digital design. Birmingham. ©Kate Farley.

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