Visual Research Methods in Fashion

Julia Gaimster

visual

research

methods

in fashion

julia gaimster

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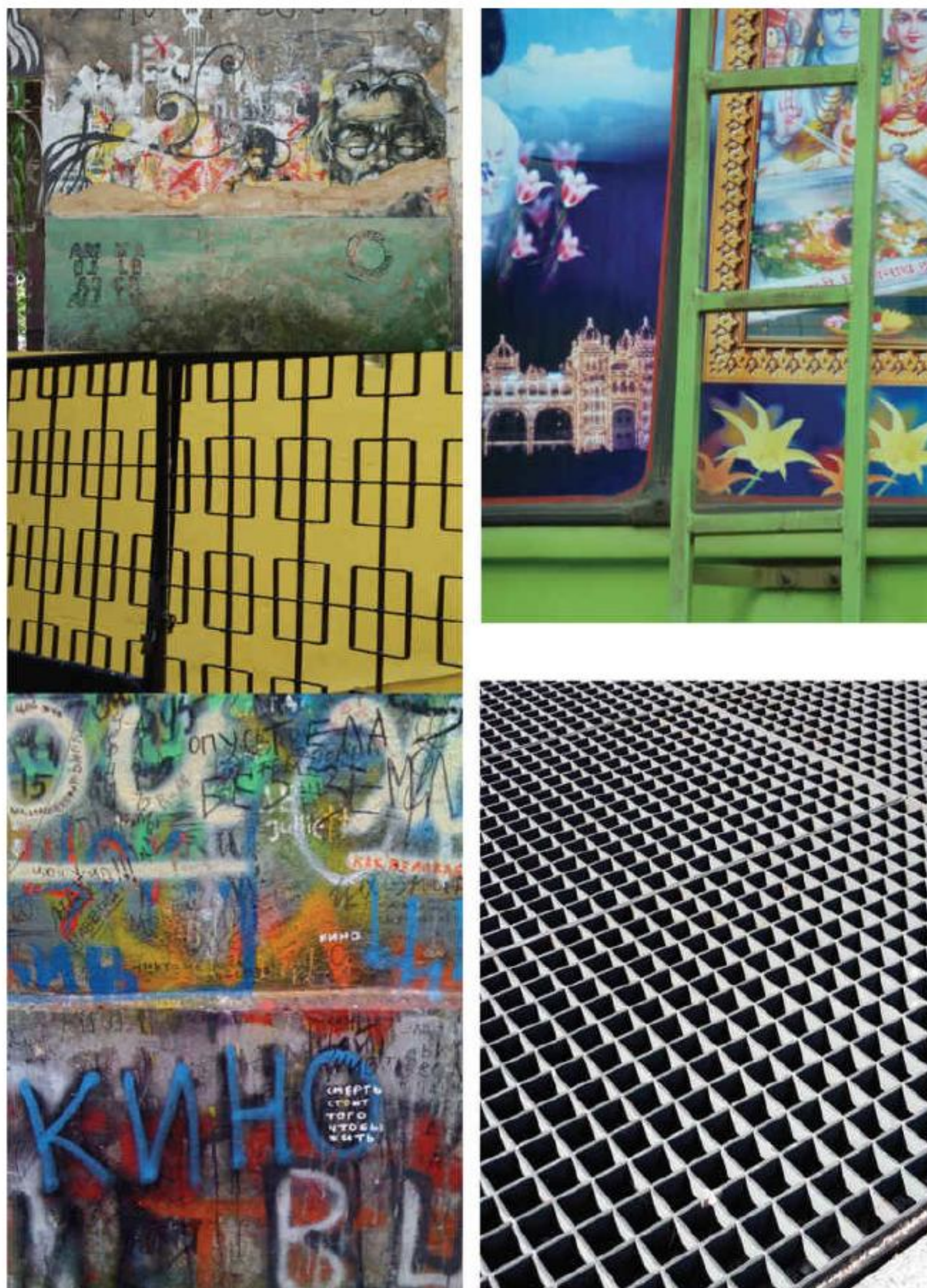
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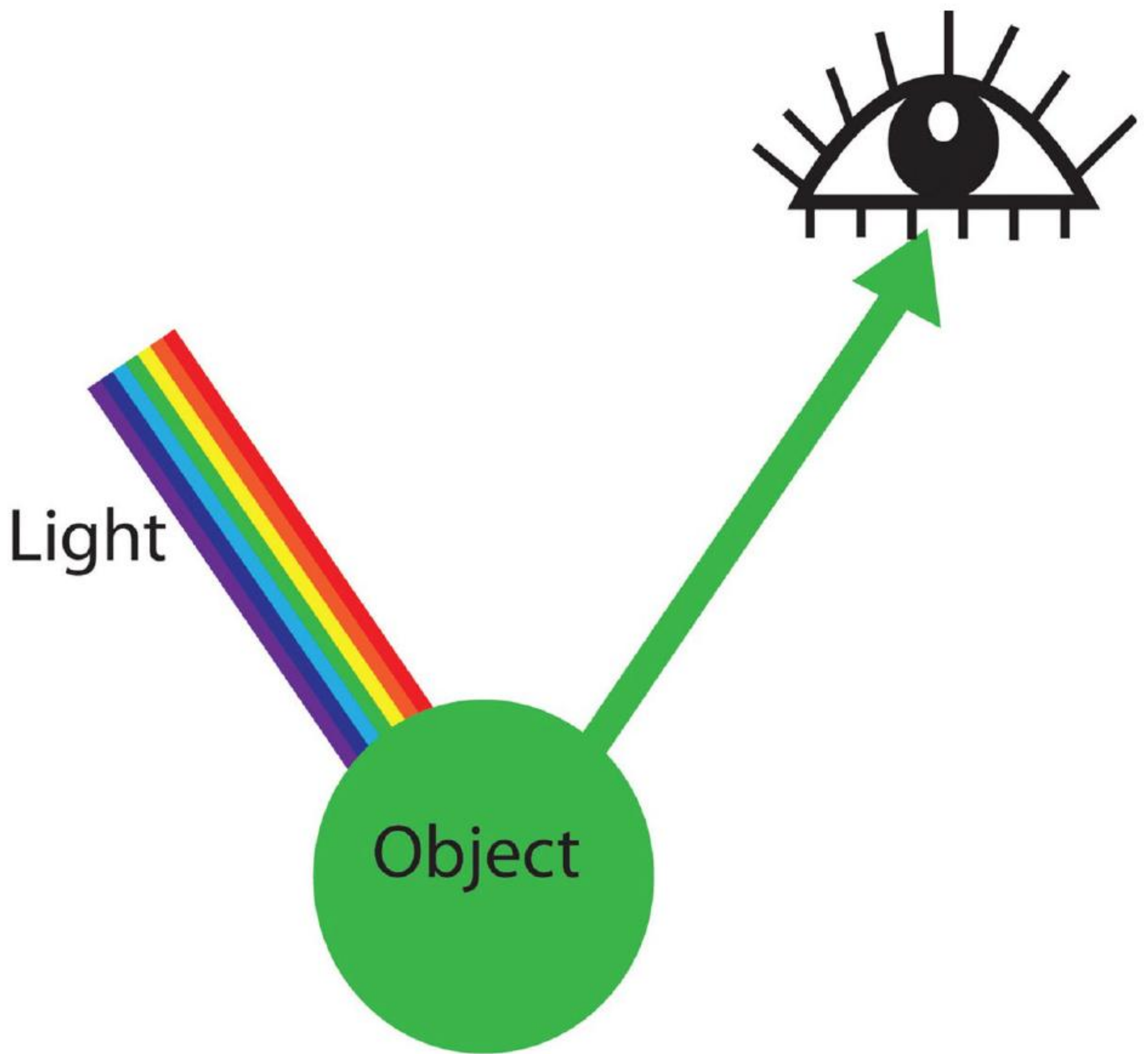
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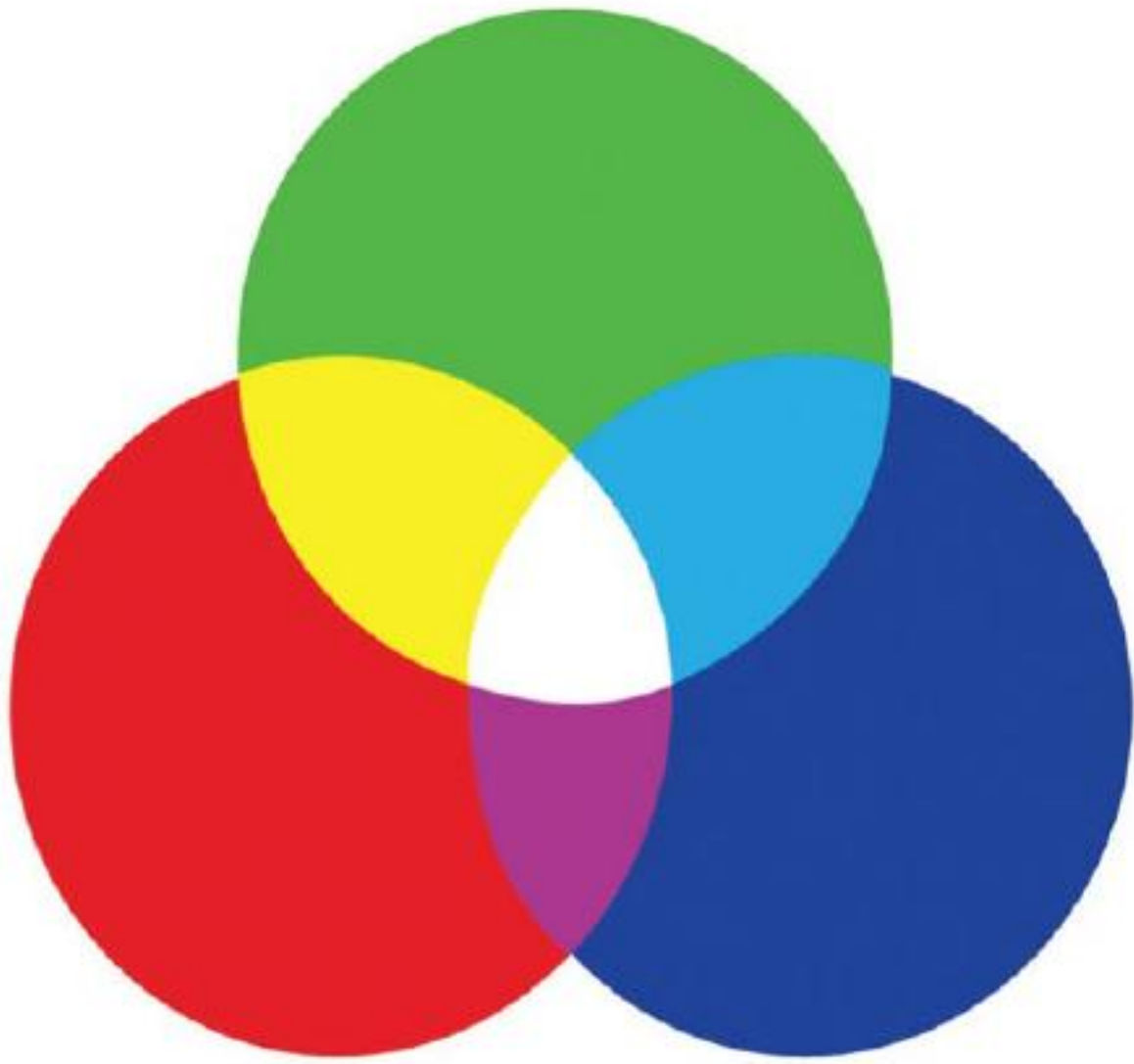
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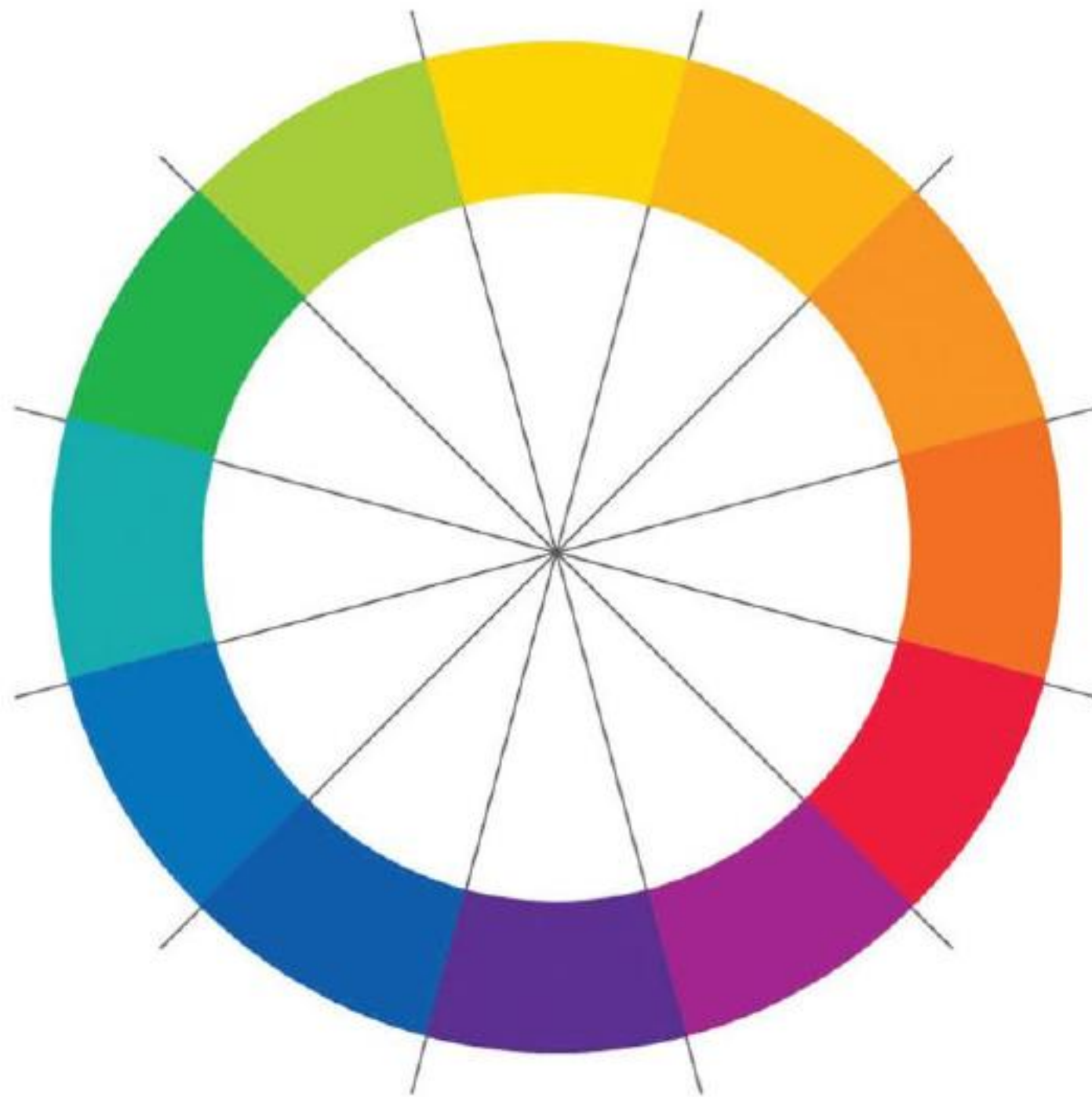
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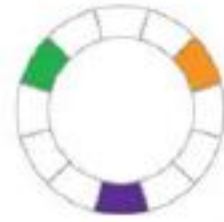
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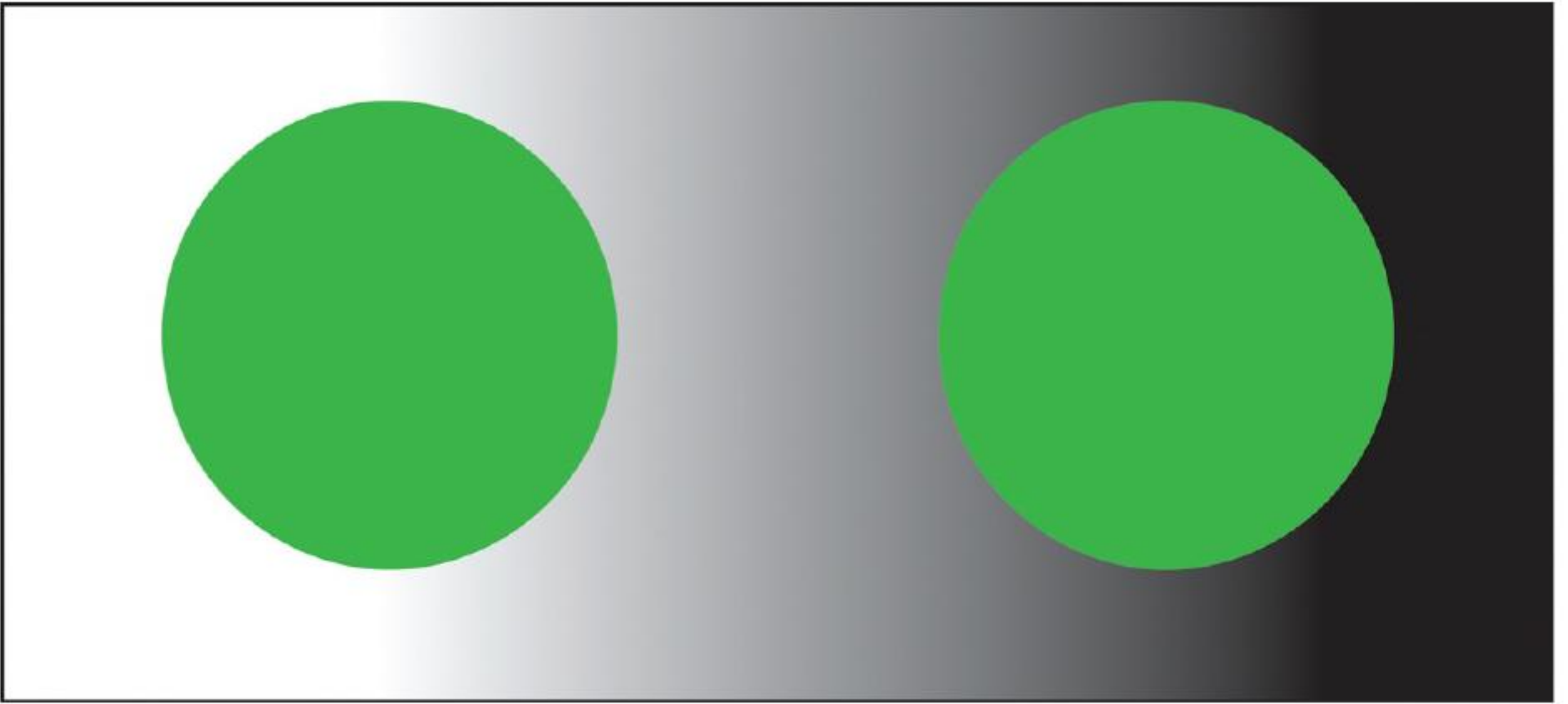
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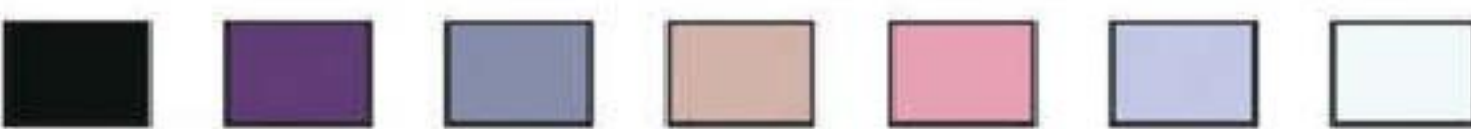
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Palette Stats:
Created: 7/15/2010
Views: 94
Favorited: 0 times
Downloaded by Members: 0

Rate this Palette:

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view member palette

[rename your palette]

beachdebris
Ranked: 5917 of 8106 Created by drjulia online now!

public member

Share

[color 2]

hex : 658F8C
r : 101
g : 143
b : 140

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Current Te

Edit Tags

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Snapz Pro X

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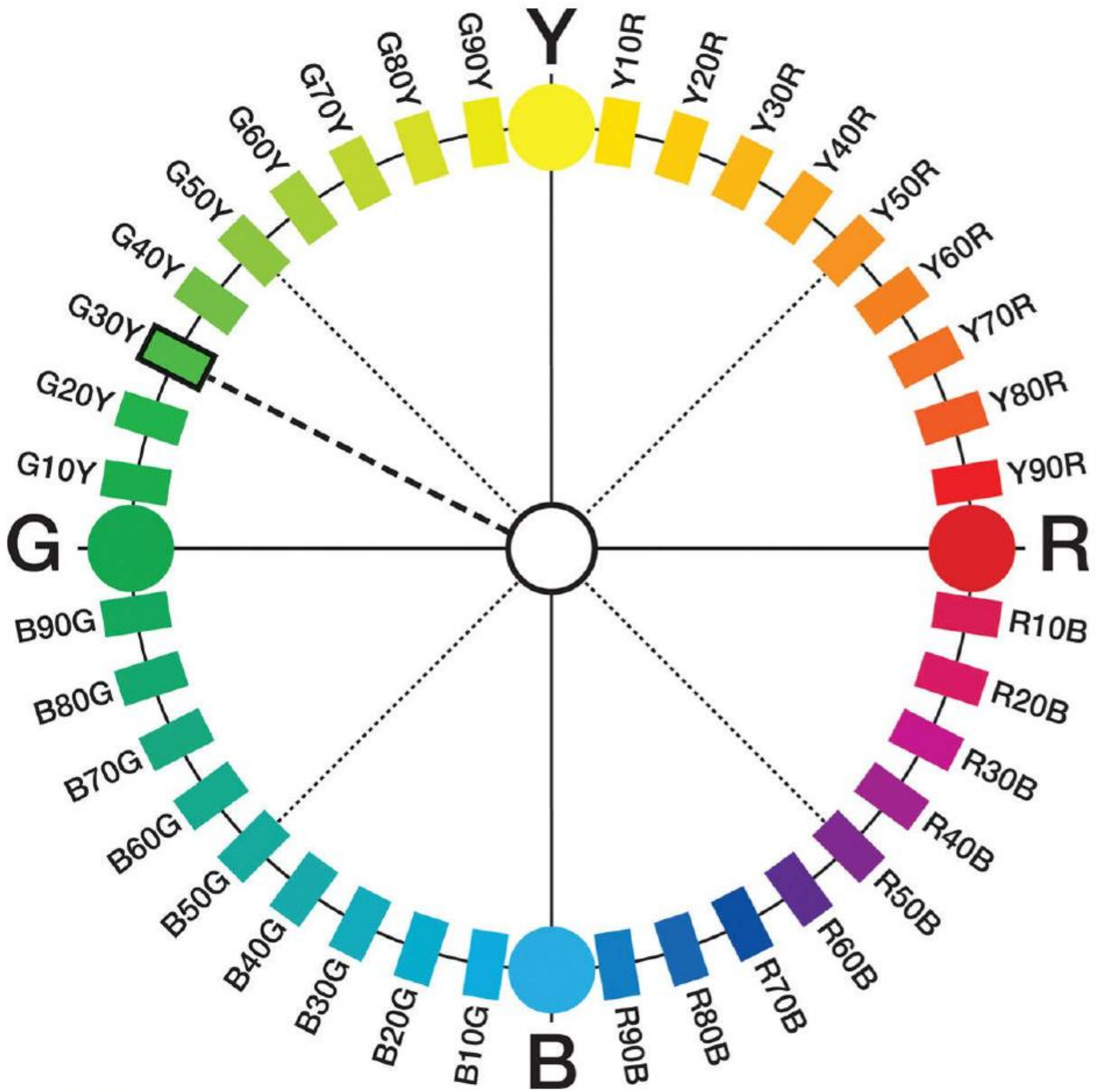
Plate 15 The NCS colour circle, Natural Color System®©. Property of NCS Colour AB, Stockholm 2010. References to NCS®© in this publication are used with permission from the NCS Colour AB. Reproduced with permission of NCS.
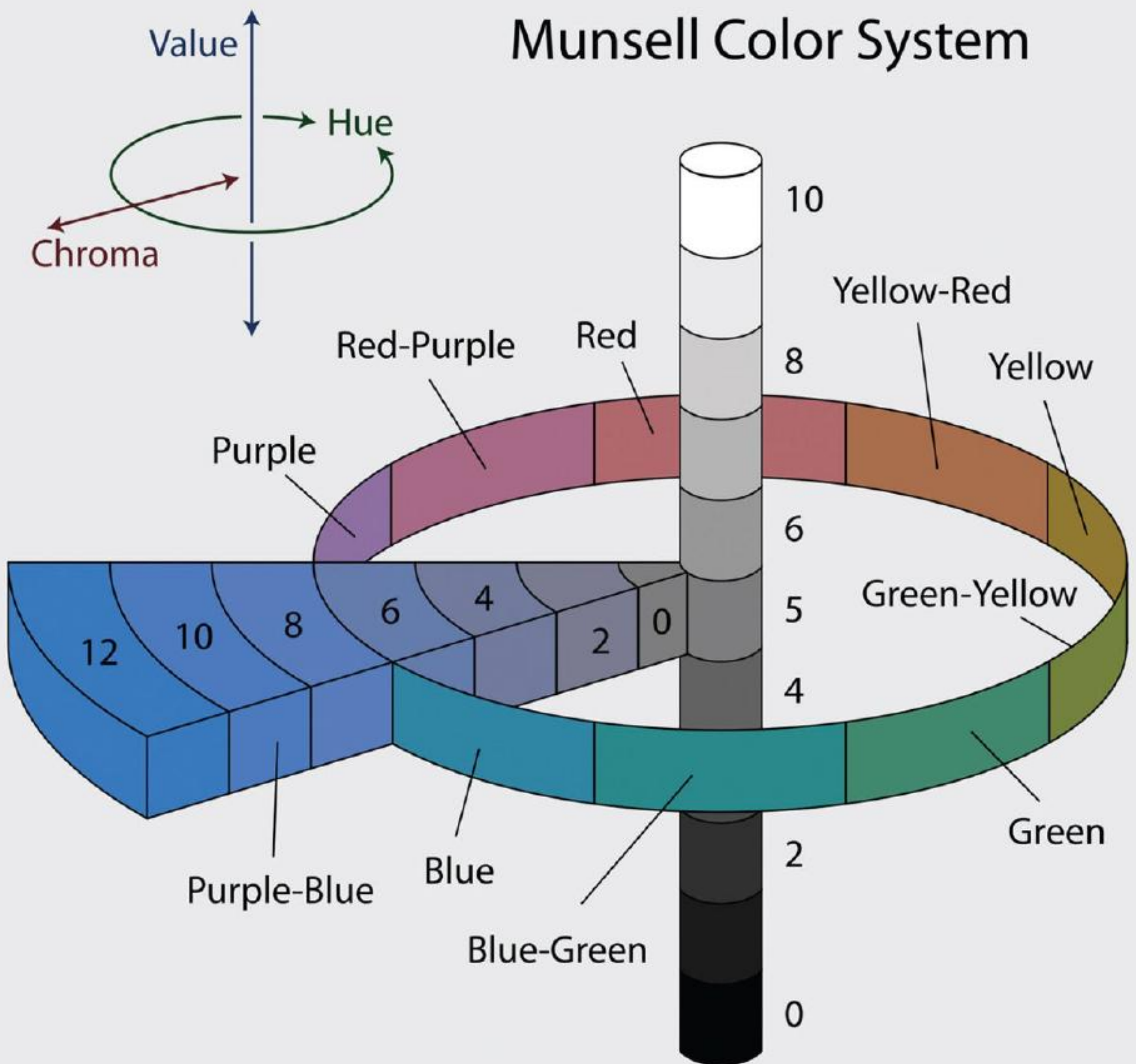
Plate 16 Munsell colour system. Licensed under Creative Commons by Jacobolus on Wikimedia. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. Reproduced with permission.
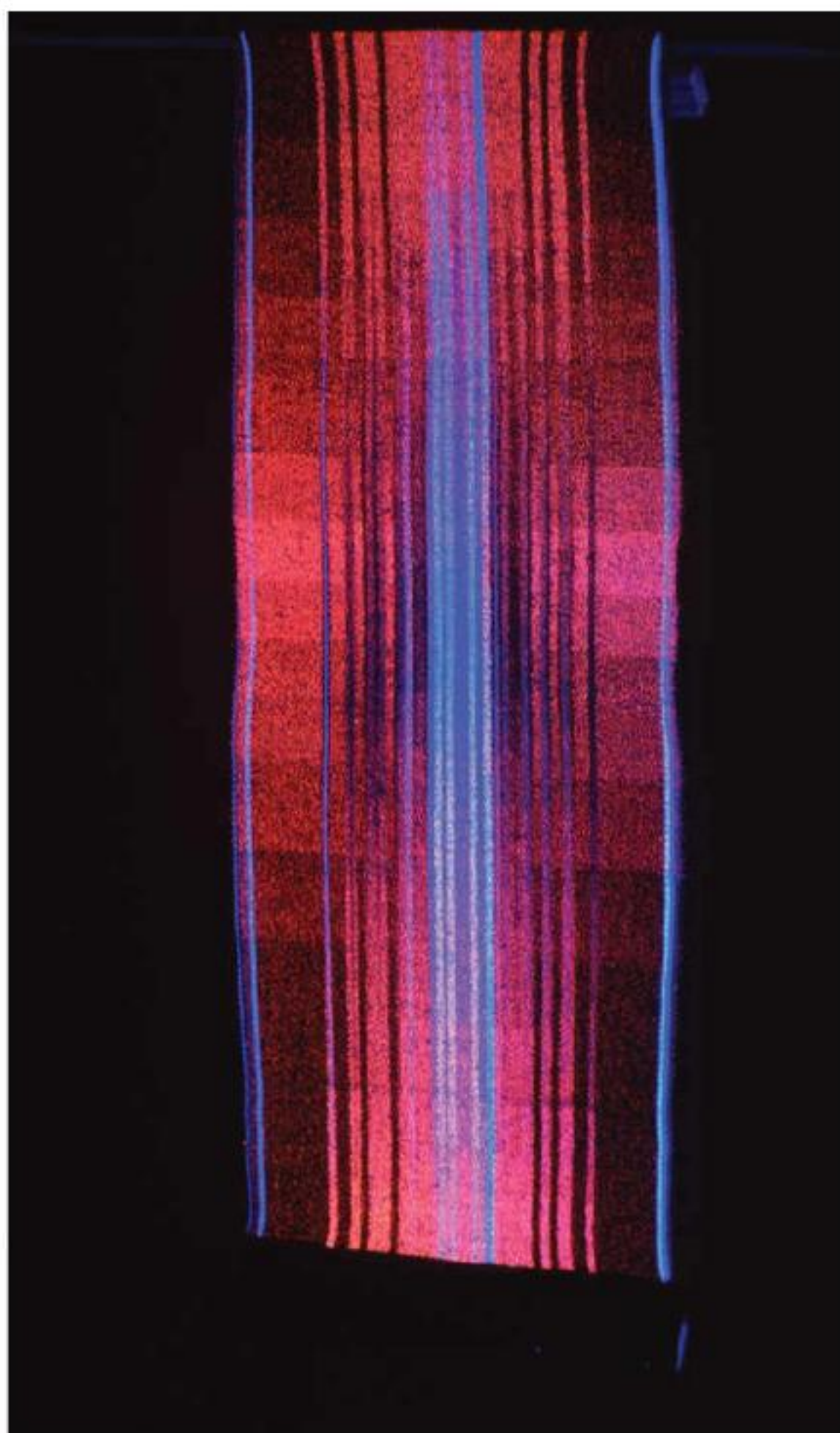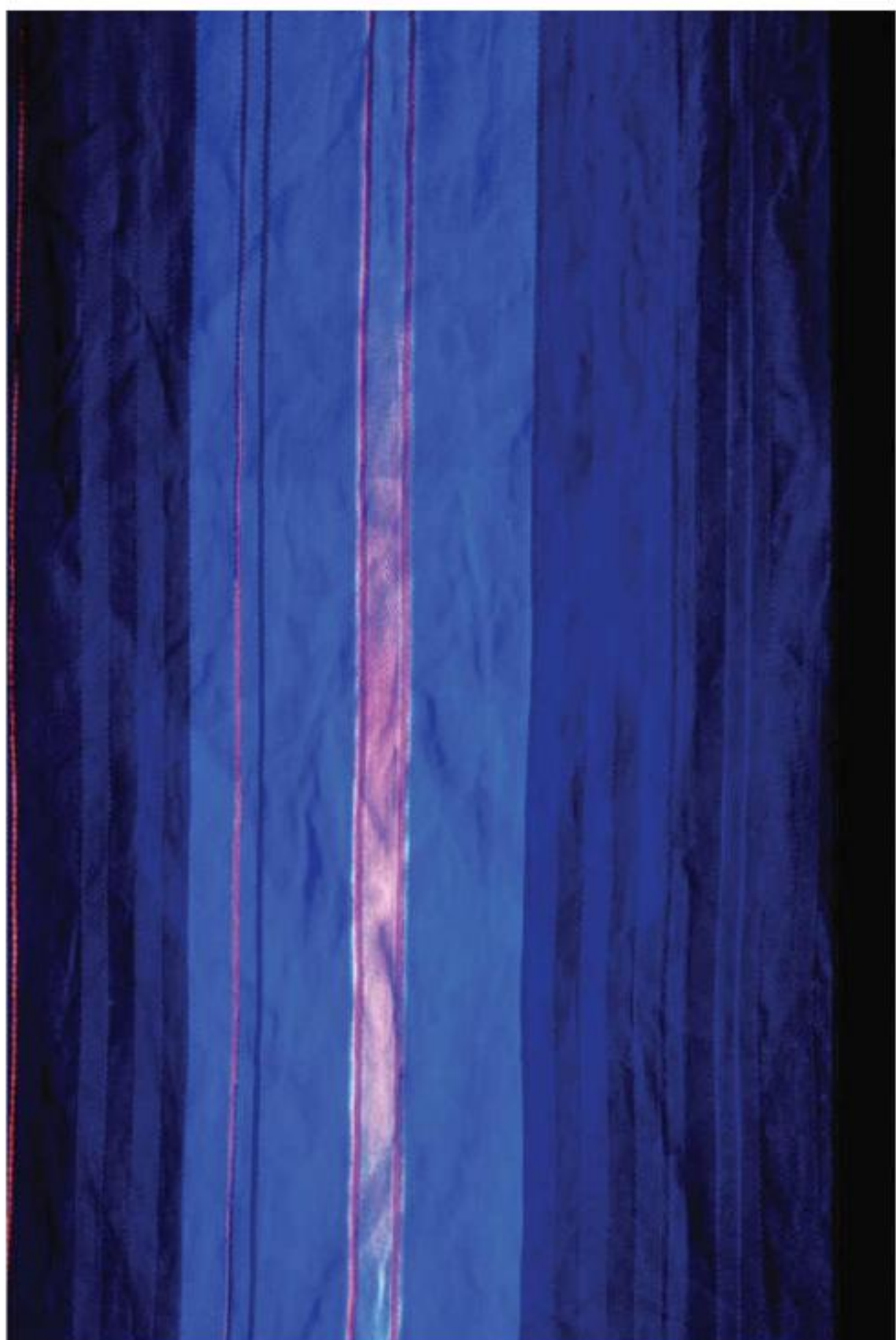
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PRIMAL PHASE 2
INSTINCT TREND SUMMARY & COLOURS

Instinct colours: This ethereal palette evokes the rawness of the fertile land and a fascination for ancestry cultures of bygone times. **Antique jade** and **delicate lilac** adds a sense of opulence to this earthen palette while sober tones of **barley, clay** and **stone** create nostalgia for more primitive times. A **rich cream** keeps the palette sumptuous, offering an optimistic feel to this instinct driven trend.

CORE COLOURS

PANTONE 18-0201   PANTONE 17-1417   PANTONE 16-1309

COMBINATIONS

ACCENT COLOURS

PANTONE 12-0804   PANTONE 15-5205   PANTONE 18-4711   PANTONE 15-1905   PANTONE 16-3802   PANTONE 18-3410
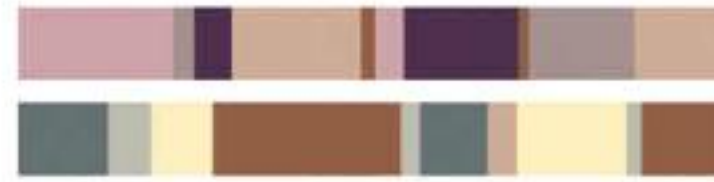
INFLUENCES
ancestry cultures and primitive practises
ancient ritual
authenticity
animalistic and earthen
natural materials
fossils and rock formations
flawed and primitive
nature's bounty
utilising the natural habitat

FASHION DIRECTION
raw, imperfect, distressed finishes
aged, eroded, torn effects
nature inspired textures
loose silhouettes, cloaks
contrast of textures
heavy suede and faux furs
open knits and hand dye effects
unfinished and external seams
spiderweb knits

COLOUR
antique jade
delicate lilac
rich cream

GRAPHICS
fossils of plants and animals
mysterious animals and natural phenomena

Plate 21 Colour trend information. Courtesy of Mudpie. Reproduced with permission.

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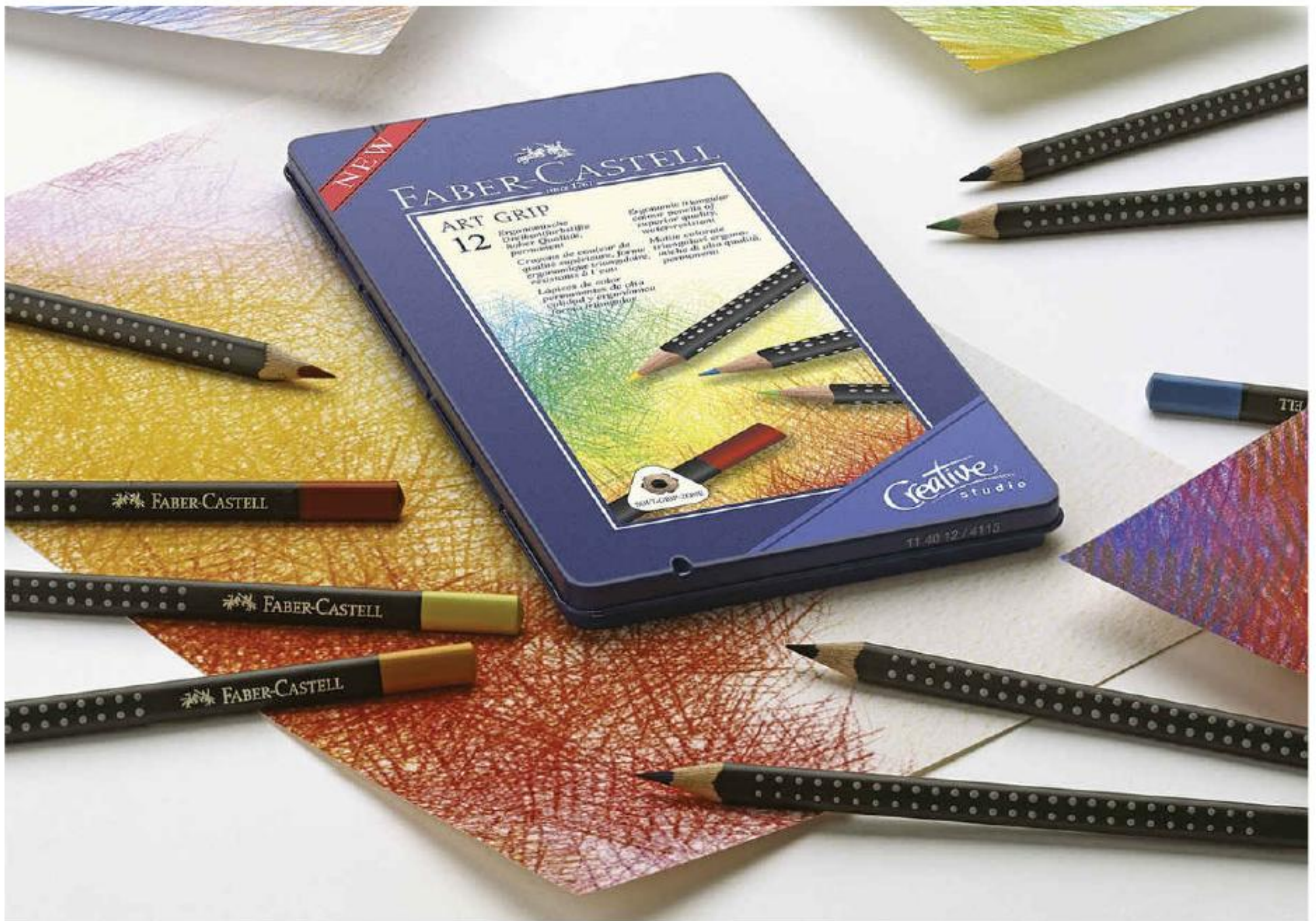
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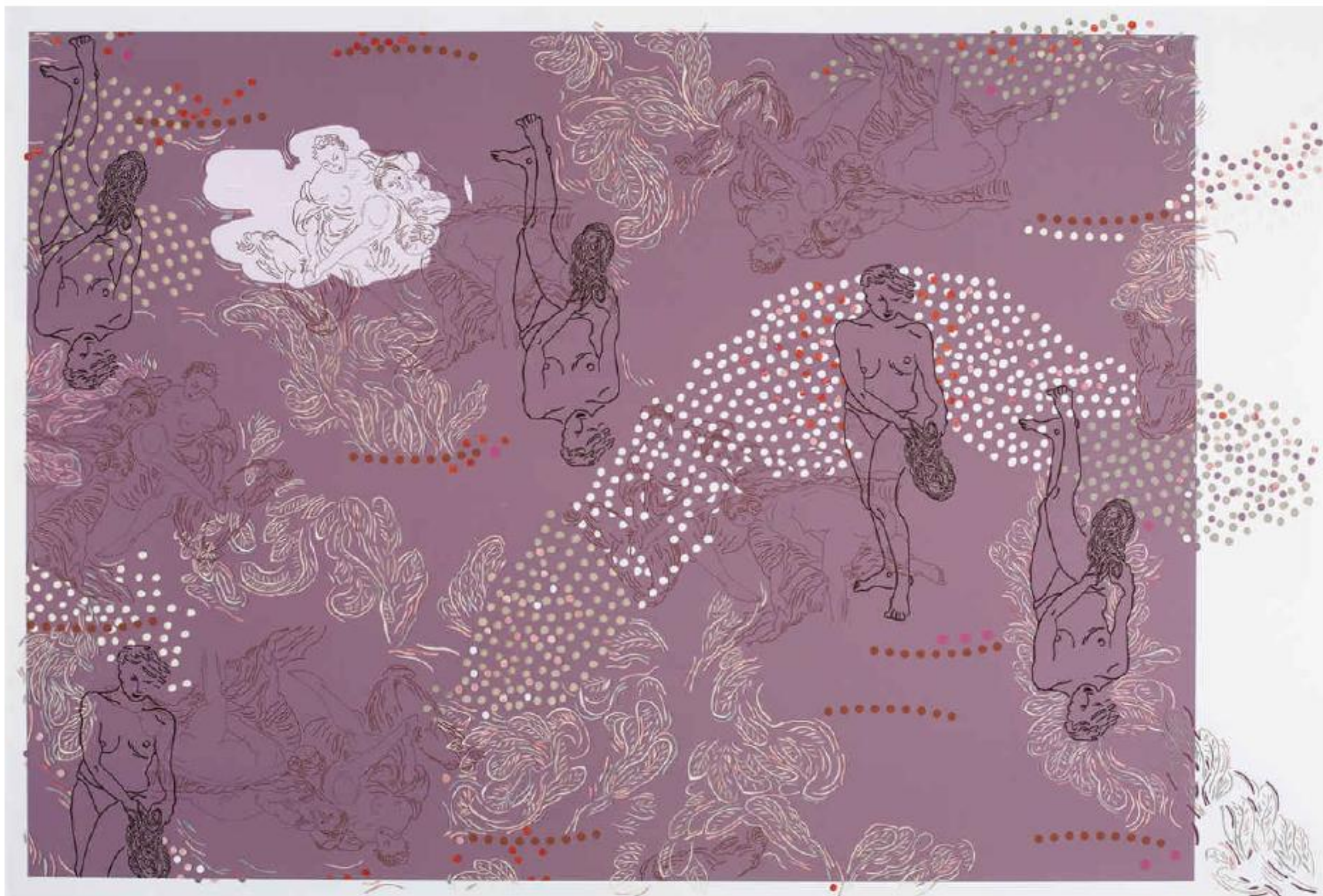
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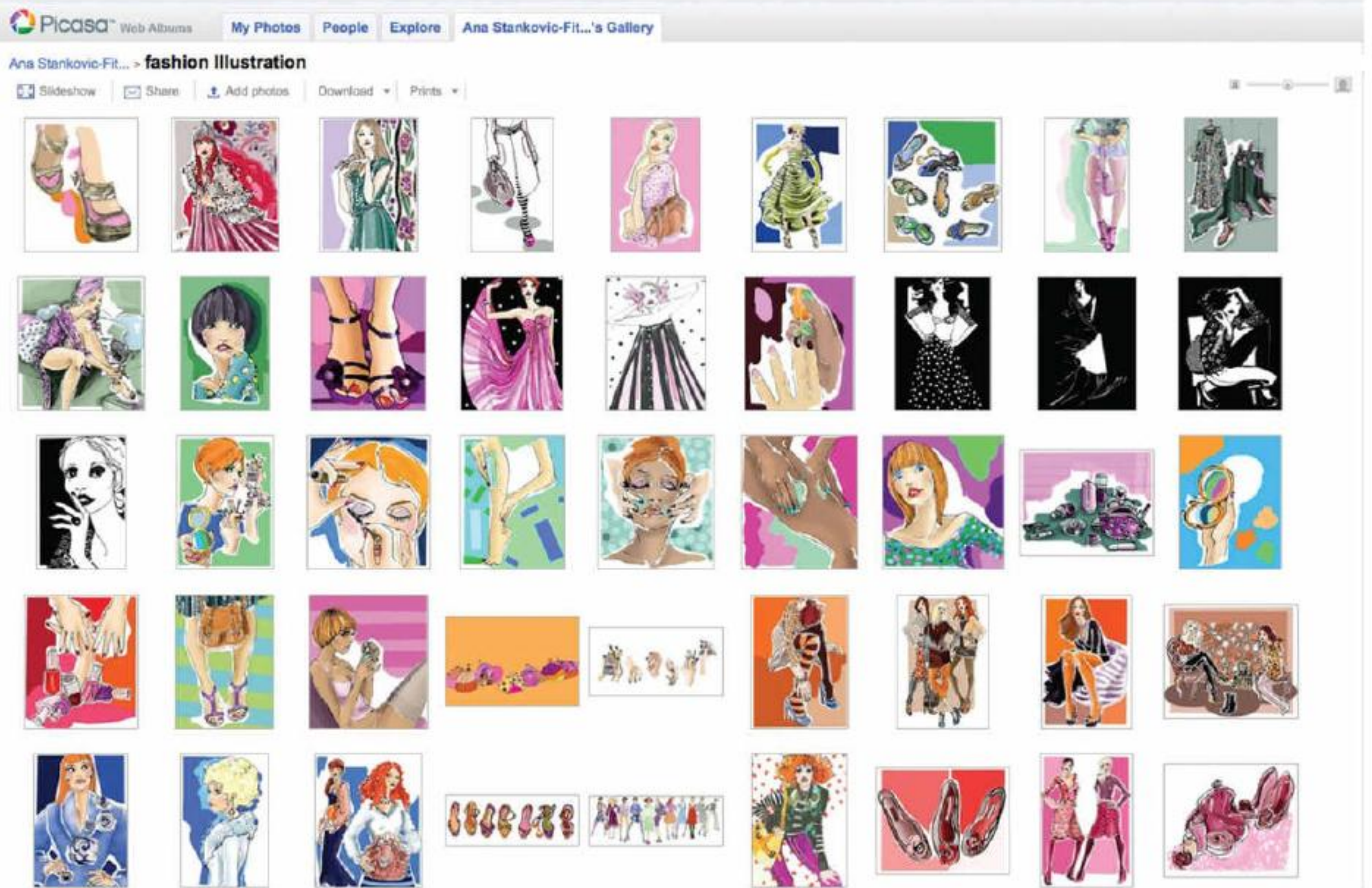
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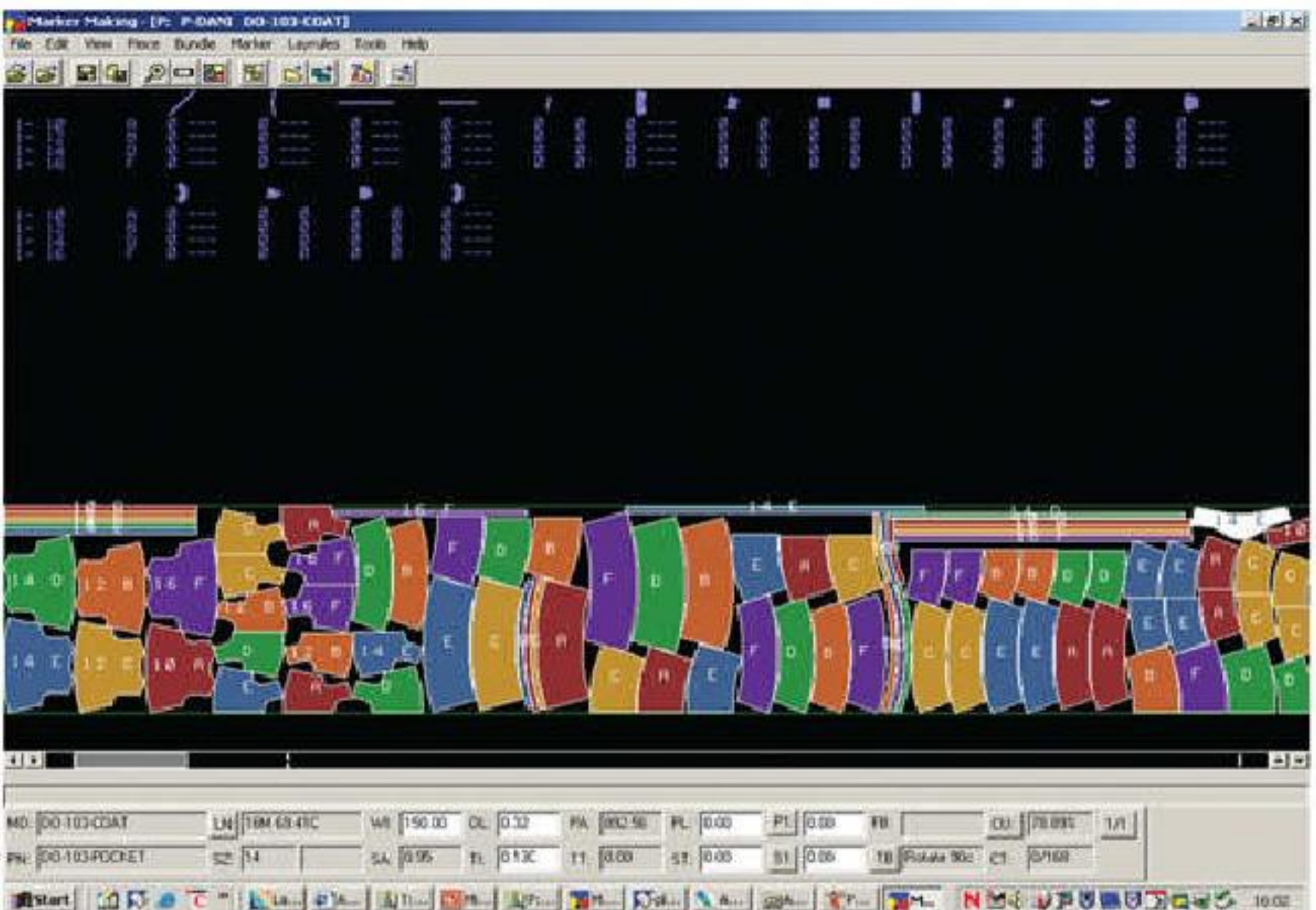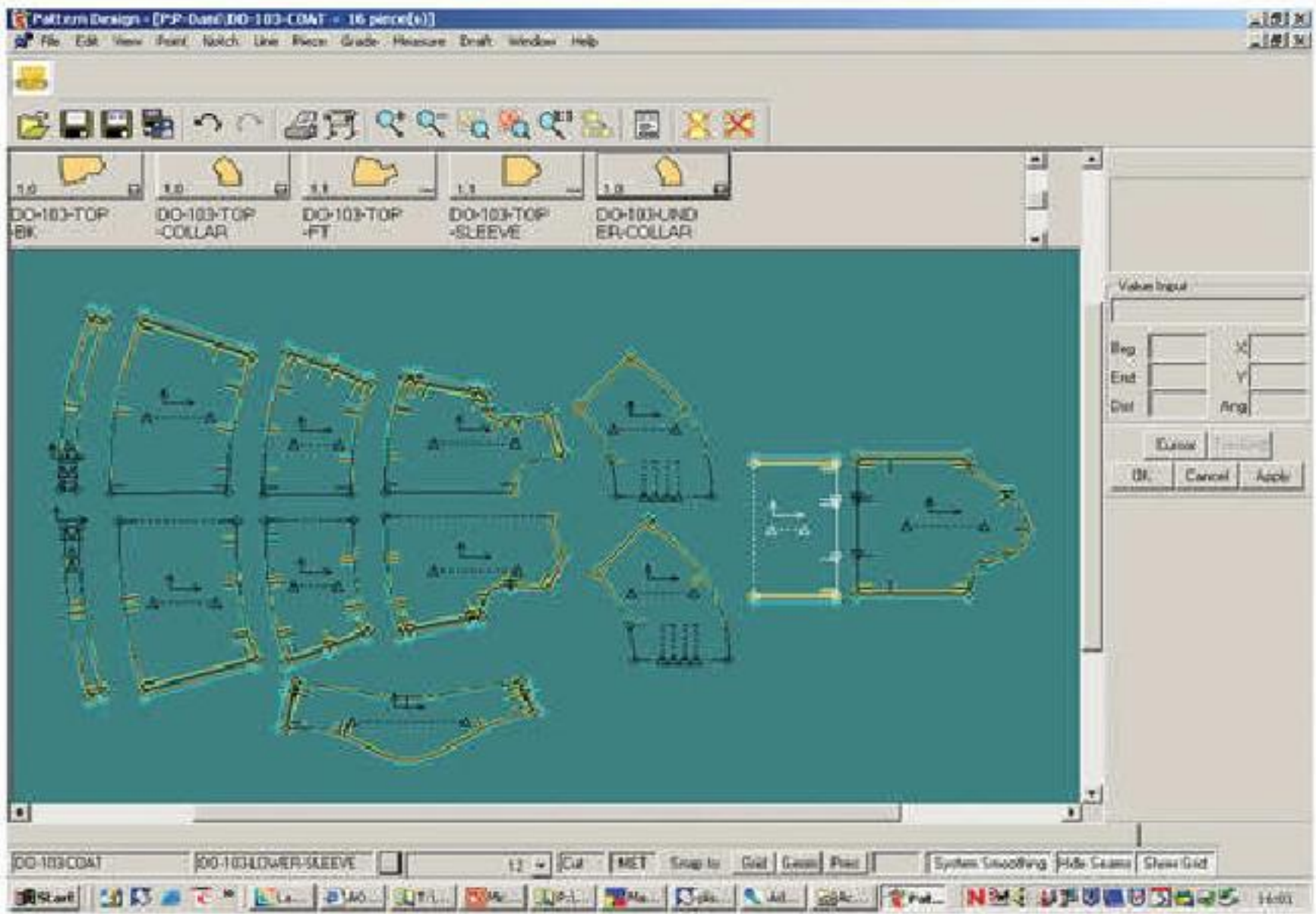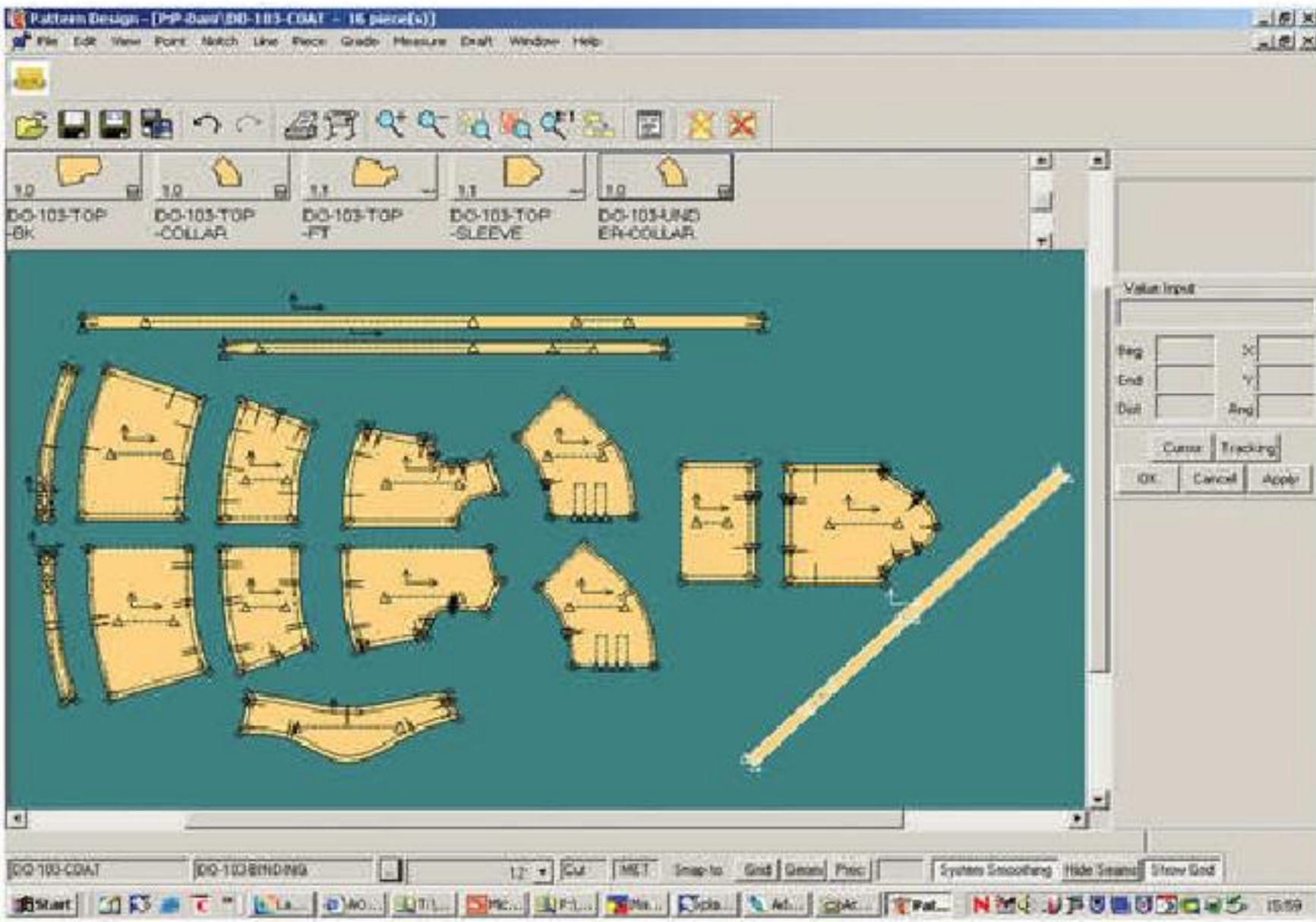
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Plate 32 Watercolour floral placement graphics designed to be compatible with standard screen-printing processes. Courtesy of Philippa Waite. Reproduced with permission.

introduction

purpose of the book

The inspiration for this book comes from many years of working in fashion education. During this time I have often encountered students who struggled with how to conduct visual research and how to analyse, interpret and use their research to develop their own ideas. As part of my doctoral research I observed students using the Internet to research fabrics. I came to understand that whilst they might feel fairly comfortable with using the Internet, they often lacked basic information-seeking skills. This book is intended to provide a guide to the research process for novice researchers and those who might want to be more strategic in their approach. It is focused on fashion, but many of the methods and principles apply to many areas of art and design.

In the course of researching this book, the message that came through from many of the contributors was that they do not look at fashion for inspiration, that it often comes from other sources. For this reason some of the contributions, references and case studies are from other creative fields that have a connection with fashion, such as graphic design and photography.

The interviews took place over a period of two years between 2008 and 2010. The fast-moving nature of the fashion industry means that some of the contributors have moved on from the posts that they held at the time they were interviewed. We have also sadly lost Alexander McQueen, an outstanding designer who is referred to in some of the interviews that were conducted prior to his death. I have no doubt that his exceptional legacy will live on and his contribution to the world of fashion will never be forgotten.

Several strong themes emerged from the interviews. These are worthy of highlighting here and bearing in mind as you work your way through the book. The need for research that extends beyond the boundaries of the catwalk has been highlighted by most of the contributors along with the necessity of using a wide range of resources and developing your own professional network.

The big issues affecting the fashion industry are those of ethical and sustainable development. The fashion industry has historically been accused of exploitation of both people and the environment. The consumer is now more aware of these issues, and fashion companies have to respond to their concerns. Ethical and sustainable trading practices are going to become more important, so it is vital that all those entering the fashion industry have an understanding of what this means to them in their role or context. This might mean ensuring that the factories you use comply with the current legislation or deciding that you are not going to use materials that are particularly harmful to the environment or cannot be recycled.

who is this book for?

The premise of this book is that all those who work in the fashion industry, regardless of their role, need to engage in visual research throughout their career. This is not a book just for designers; its intention is to inform anyone who is interested in working in fashion,

whether they are planning to be a buyer, a designer, a journalist or a visual merchandiser. You may already be working in the fashion industry and taking on a new role, or you might be about to start your first job. This book is intended to help you develop your research skills and apply them in a professional context. Contributions from professionals working in fashion ensure that the information provided is relevant to the current fashion industry.

how to use this book

The first chapter, 'Strategies for Information Seeking', illustrates techniques and methods that can make your research more effective. It is strongly recommended that you read this chapter first to provide a strong foundation of skills that can be applied throughout the rest of the book. Each chapter includes an overview of the topic; there are case studies and interviews with professionals as well as exercises and projects to develop your skills.

The language of fashion is visual, but it also requires an oral and written vocabulary to help us to communicate with each other. My experience as a tutor and researcher has clarified the need for students to understand the distinctive vocabulary that is integral to the fashion industry. Throughout the book key terms appear in bold font. These are explained in the glossary, and sources of written and numerical data to support your visual research are provided. Each section has references and suggestions for further research and reading. There are also links to Web sites that provide more detailed information. All links were functioning on the date accessed. Updated links and further information are available on the companion Web site for this book (http://www.juliagaimster.co.uk).

overview of chapters

Chapter 1 'Strategies for Information Seeking'

Professional researchers use a range of strategies to find the information they need quickly and efficiently. They know how to validate it and to catalogue it so that it can easily be retrieved when needed. This chapter gives you some key strategies and skills to make you a more effective researcher. It also provides you with some tools to help to develop your creative thinking skills.

Chapter 2 'Sources of Inspiration'

In this chapter we explore the range of sources of inspiration that are available to the fashion creative and discuss why they are useful, how they are relevant to a range of roles within the industry and how the type of visual resources you use may differ according to the market you are working in. It also suggests ideas for exercises and activities to do when inspiration fails to come.

Chapter 3 'Colour Theory and Practice'

Colour is at the very heart of the fashion industry; it drives trends and is the starting point for the development of new products. An understanding of colour—how it works in different media and how we react to it—is vital for anyone working in the fashion industry. This chapter covers the theory of how we see colour, the reproduction of colour

and the challenges of specifying and matching colours across product ranges and the supply chain.

Chapter 4 'Textiles and Trimmings'

An understanding of textiles is fundamental to operating within the fashion industry; they are the raw materials of the trade. This chapter introduces you to basic textile terminology, the ways textiles are sourced and used, and the ways trade shows operate.

Chapter 5 'Trends and Forecasting'

Without trends there would not be fashion, but trend forecasting and interpretation are areas that often mystify students and professionals alike. Where do trends come from? How do they develop? Who decides what they are going to be? This chapter explores fashion trends from a range of perspectives using interviews with people who are actively involved in this area of the industry. The chapter describes different approaches to trend forecasting and also explains how the information is used by companies to inform their decision-making processes.

Chapter 6 'Concept Development, Drawing and Creativity'

This chapter illustrates how you can use the inspirational images that you have sourced to further develop an idea or concept. It explains how to analyse and edit the images you have collected to build a coherent story that you can present to a client. It introduces some creative projects and talks about the role of drawing in concept development, including the use of sketchbooks and visual journals.

Chapter 7 'Traditional Research Tools and Techniques'

Not everyone has on-demand access to the Internet, and not every resource is available online. This chapter outlines the importance of traditional nondigital tools and techniques in the research process. It includes a discussion of different art materials as well as tips on how to use libraries and archives. It gives an overview of basic photographic techniques and explains the role of image agencies.

Chapter 8 'Web- and Technology-based Research Tools'

This chapter explores the potential of Web-based and technological tools for assisting you in the research process. It covers the use of image databases, bibliographic tools, visual search tools and computer-aided design and presentation. It also covers the important issue of copyright: how to protect your rights and avoid violating the rights of others.

Chapter 9 'Visual Research for Presentation'

An important part of the fashion industry is the presentation of your ideas, so the final chapter discusses and demonstrates effective ways of presenting your ideas using both traditional techniques and new technologies. It covers the basics of typography and layout design as well as sources of inspiration for presentation of your work.

Glossary

All the key terms used in the book are in the glossary.

Contributors and Useful Contacts

This section gives contact information for useful sources of further information.

chapter 1

strategies for information seeking

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Finding the right information quickly and efficiently is a skill, and it requires some forethought and planning. This is especially important in an age where we are bombarded with information and visual imagery. In this chapter you will learn some tips and tricks for efficient information seeking, organization, evaluation and retrieval. These methods will help you to be more efficient and productive when you are researching a project or just generally gathering information that may be useful to you in the future.

This chapter includes:

- Primary and secondary research

- Purposes of research

- Case study: Ruth Davis

- Planning your research strategy

- Being prepared

- Interview with Tony Glenville

- Interview with Eric Musgrave

- Creative thinking tools.

primary and secondary research

There are fundamentally two types of visual research, primary and secondary, or desk-based research. **Primary research** involves going out and engaging with people, places and objects; taking your own photographs or videos; and making your own sketches, drawings and three-dimensional pieces. Primary research engages all of the senses: it enables you to touch things, smell them, see them in situ and appreciate their scale and the intricacy of detail, finish and structure.

Secondary, or desk-based, research uses resources already created by other people: books, films, the Internet, magazines, newspapers or other media. When you use **secondary research,** it is important to acknowledge the source of your information by **referencing** it. This enables other people to refer to your research, and it also prevents you from being accused of plagiarism. For more on this topic see Chapter 8. Secondary research especially via the Internet enables you to access a lot of information very quickly and to cross-check facts and figures. The disadvantage of secondary research is that you cannot feel the texture or appreciate the scale of the object you are researching. One

disadvantage of using the Internet for visual research is that many of the images are **low resolution** so that they will download quickly. Some Web sites offer the opportunity to zoom in on an image or see a copy at a **higher resolution.** Some allow you to download images for your own research; others do not. Always check the terms and conditions. Images in books tend to be higher resolution but may not be representative of their true scale. Something that is 6 × 4 centimetres in a book may be 6 × 4 metres in reality, or it could be 6 × 4 millimetres. Good art books will always give you the original dimensions, but it can still be difficult to imagine what the real thing looks like. This is why primary research is also necessary. You cannot truly know a painting from a postcard reproduction.

For most projects or assignments you will need to conduct both primary and secondary research. Primary research brings a unique quality to your product or design; secondary research helps you to understand the context of a product, society, artistic movement or musical genre and extends the boundaries of your primary research.

purposes of research

There are also different reasons for carrying out visual research, and the **methodologies** that you employ will depend upon the purpose.

Background Research

The first kind of visual research is general background research, gathering information to build your own understanding of the world and your subject. This is a process of collecting, sifting and storing information that may be relevant to you in the future. It provides a context for current **trends** or issues that may affect you or your consumer. This kind of research is about being up to date on current affairs and issues that might influence fashion, and about gathering incidental images that inspire you and may be useful for a current or future project. This research process is continuous and not necessarily related to a particular project; it gives you an understanding of what is going on in the world and the general **zeitgeist.** This kind of research involves the following:

- Reading: newspapers, magazines, books (fiction and nonfiction)
- Checking: the business pages and trade magazines
- Watching or listening: to the news, current affairs and cultural programmes
- Visiting: the theatre, the cinema, interesting new stores, hotels, restaurants, nightclubs, music festivals/gigs
- Subscribing: to **blogs** and online newsletters, magazines and trade journals relevant to your subject/role
- Collecting: images, articles, photographs, objects.

A lot of people will carry a **sketchbook** or **visual journal** entirely for this purpose. They note down titles of books to read, places to visit and Web sites to look up, and they include articles torn out of newspapers or magazines, quick notes to themselves or sketches of things they have noticed around them.

CASE STUDY: **Ruth Davis**

Ruth is a textile designer, and for her graduate collection, which was shown at Texprint 2009 (http://www.texprint.org.uk), she created a range called 'Tin Can Alley'. The collection celebrates the quintessentially British charm of Scarborough and its market vaults, which are full of obscure, beautiful treasures. Ruth is passionate about screen-printing, and her designs are developed from her original paintings. She says, 'Everything must have a story behind it, even if it only makes sense to me, making my printed fabrics into a scrapbook of memories. "Tin Can Alley" is a reflection of times gone by, just some carefree fun fashions and fond memories.' Her sketchbooks are rich and colourful and packed with imagery that she finds inspiring.

Sketchbook pages. Courtesy of Ruth Davis. Reproduced with permission.

Sketchbook pages. Courtesy of Ruth Davis. Reproduced with permission.

Project-specific Research

This is the kind of research you need to do to answer an assignment brief or to produce a piece of work for a client. This kind of research is focused and specific to the problem you are trying to solve or the brief you have been given. You will probably be working to a deadline and will therefore have limited time to carry out your research, develop your ideas and present your concept or solution. This kind of research involves all of the activities required for background research, but you will have definite boundaries to the type of images and information you are seeking. Project research requires a strategy and some planning if you are going to be effective.

planning your research strategy

Many people undertake research without any planning and without a strategy. You may go straight to Google, Yahoo or another **search engine,** type in the first word that seems appropriate and follow a series of links until you happen upon the information that you needed; or you may give up in exasperation. Relying on the Internet is not always the easiest or quickest way to find the information you are looking for: you could spend several hours looking for an image that is easily accessible in the library. You may also be unaware of specialist **databases** and search engines that would make your mission easier. If you do not know which keywords to use and instead enter generic terms, this will throw up a lot of results that are not sufficiently specific. If you have not previously defined the parameters of your research, you will not know when to stop or which information is

really relevant. The following steps will help you to avoid many of these pitfalls and to develop an effective search strategy.

Step 1: Identify Your Search Parameters

Whether you are using a search engine, a library catalogue or even **microfiche,** you need to define the terms and the boundaries of your search. This helps you to ensure that you are covering all of the areas that you need but will not be overwhelmed with so much information that you don't know where to start.

If, for example, you are researching the 1960s, which aspects of the period are important to you: designers, photographers, interiors, economics? Are you interested in the early, mid or late 1960s? Being able to accurately refine the dates of a search will help you to find relevant information more easily.

Step 2: Set a Time Limit

Often the problem is to know when to stop researching and start developing your ideas. To help you plan, you need to work out how long you have to complete your project and create a project timeline. It can be useful to work backwards from the deadline. You need to list all elements of the activity—research, development, sourcing of materials, experimenting with finishes, presenting initial concepts and so on—and work out how much time to allow for each. Always try to build in some time for things to go wrong. You can then plot this information onto a timeline and keep track of your progress. The timeline will also indicate how much time you can afford to spend on your initial research.

The research process can continue right through the project; you may need to research a technique in order to realize your idea, or you may find that a particular process does not give you the effect you desired so that you have to go back and experiment with a new technique. The technique itself may inform the direction of the design; sometimes accidents can lead to new ideas. However, at some point you have to make a decision and stick to it; otherwise, you will have fabulous research and experimentation but no finished product to deliver to your client.

It is easy to get sidetracked and gather lots of information that is interesting or around the edges of your topic but not essential to what you need. You need to make quick decisions about whether or not a line of investigation is worth following. Is it going to add real value to your project? If not, discard it, or put it to one side if you think it may be useful later.

Step 3: Identify Your Keywords

If you are searching the Internet, a database or a catalogue, the information that you get back will be only as good as the **keywords** that you enter or the questions that you ask. If you don't know a lot about the topic, you may not enter the right keywords and therefore may not get all the information.

Write a list of the keywords you are going to use, then consult a **thesaurus** to see if there are any **synonyms** or related terms you could use. Use a professional glossary, dictionary or encyclopaedia to see if there are any technical terms you are unaware of that may be useful. For example, if you are looking for information about birds, you could also

look under ornithology, wildlife, natural sciences and so on, then drill down into specific species. It is always worth checking to see if different terminologies are used in different countries. In fashion there are quite a few differences in American and English terminology: apparel/clothing, **sloper/block** and so on.

When you use a search engine to search for documents using a keyword, it will look for instances of that keyword in the document or title of the document. When you search for images, it will look for the keywords that the person who produced an image has assigned to it. Unfortunately there is no agreed set of keywords for the classification of images. Image databases usually have some sort of **taxonomy** that they use, but if you are using Google images, there is no such thing. So a search for *cats* should bring back pictures of cats but may also include images from the musical *Cats* or a band called Cats or someone who has the nickname Cats. Generic image search engines may also produce images that are out of context: there is often no information about the source of the image, about who created it where or when or about who owns the copyright.

Step 4: Identify Your Resources

Identify and list the physical and virtual resources you are going to use. These could include library catalogues, online databases and professional organizations, museums and art galleries. If you don't know where to start or whether there are any specialist resources relating to your topic, it may be worth talking to a librarian or someone from a professional organization who may be able to point you in the right direction.

Step 5: Make a Checklist

To ensure that you have covered all the topics, keywords and resources, make a checklist and tick off each search as you complete it. Many online tools enable you to store search information or the images that you have retrieved automatically, but it can still be useful to have your own physical list. You can create this by hand or using a word processing or spreadsheet programme. It is very easy to forget what you have and haven't done; a list speeds things up.

Step 6: Use Advanced Options

Most online resources offer options and tools to refine your search by including or excluding words, formats or dates. This helps you by returning a more focused list of resources that should be more relevant. You can often use + or − to include or exclude words from your search, and quotation marks to indicate that you are looking for a phrase, 'British designer' for example, not two individual words. Without the quotation marks the search engine might bring back results about anything British or any designer.

Information on the Internet also comes in lots of formats: audio, video, documents, charts and maps. If you are looking only for images, then most search engines will allow you to select this option. There are some excellent image search tools that can speed up this process, such as Cooliris (http://www.cooliris.com).

Step 7: Evaluate Your Information

Not all information is good or accurate. It always pays to know something about the source of your information so that you can verify it. This is particularly relevant with

information that you find online. Books and journals have usually been through a rigorous process in which the publisher will have checked out the author's credentials. An article in an academic journal will have been **peer-reviewed.** You can't always assume that what you read in newspapers is completely neutral. Newspapers are in the business of selling; they may also have a particular political affiliation that may affect the emphasis they give to a story. The same applies with the Internet: sites may be sponsored by political or religious organizations, by companies trying to sell or promote a product, by individuals with a particular motivation or even by people who just like to mislead others. So how do you know what information to trust?
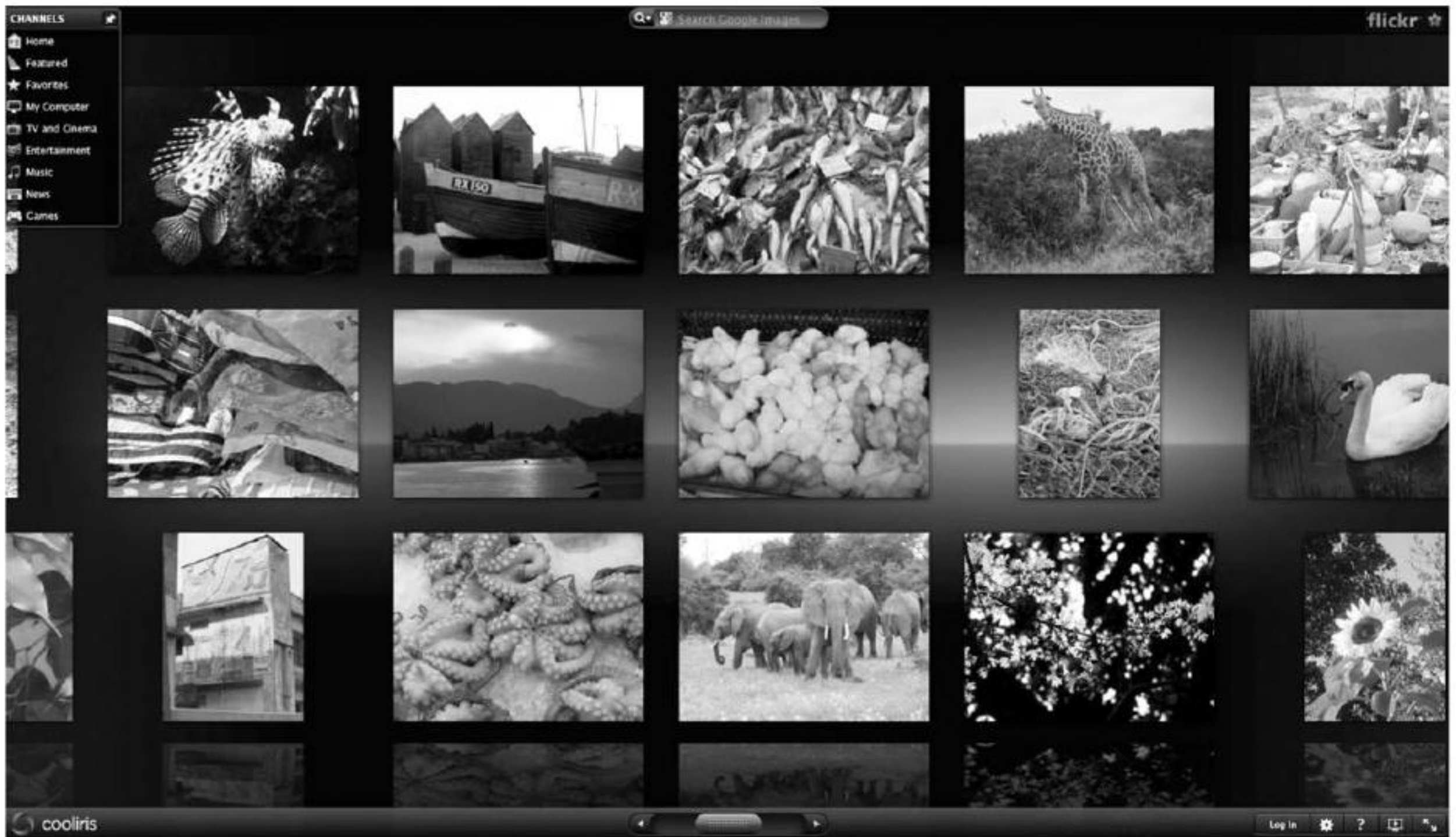
Screenshot of Cooliris search. Courtesy of the author. Reproduced with permission of Cooliris.

You should always try to check your information with more than one source, a process called **triangulation.** On the Internet there will be clues to the site's sponsor in the address of the site (otherwise known as the **URL**). The ending .org means it is an organization, URLs containing .ac. or .edu point to academic sites, and .com indicates a business. Also, look at the 'About us' section of the site. It should tell you a bit about who is behind it. The currency of the information is also important. When was the piece written, and has anyone written on the topic since? When was the site last updated?

Step 8: Record and Categorize Your References

Once you have found your information and have decided that it is useful, you need a way to quickly access or acknowledge the source. There is nothing more frustrating than having to repeat a search because you have forgotten to record where you found something. There are a lot of tools that will help you with this process; they are detailed in Chapter 8. The key is to have a system and stick to it, whether it is a card index, a computer programme or a set of box files. You need to decide how to categorize the information you find—whether to sort your information by theme, date, title, project, client, artist or designer and so on.

If you are using a database-type system, you may be able to store and retrieve your information in several ways depending upon the **fields** or **tags** that you use. At the very least you should record the name of the book or the Web site where you found the image, the name of the artist and the date the image was produced, if this is available. You may need this information for lots of reasons: to acknowledge the copyright holder, to retrieve the image again or to purchase an image to use in a project. If the image is in a book, note which library you borrowed it from.

It is just as important to have a systematic way of storing physical items and imagery: you may be collecting newspaper and magazine cuttings, postcards, sweet wrappers, swing tags and **point-of-sale** materials. Your collection can grow quickly and be difficult to organize. Here are some ideas for organizing your **paraphernalia.**

- Plastic wallets are more durable than cardboard and can easily be labelled with stickers. If they are transparent, you will easily be able to see what is in them.

- Box files are extremely versatile for storing fabric swatches, **yarn** samples, photos and cuttings.

- A filing cabinet is often the best option for a large number of printed documents. New ones can be expensive so look for a second-hand office supply store. You will need hanging files to fit the drawers.

- Scrapbooks can work in two ways: you can stick things in them as you collect them, or you can use them to collate imagery into themes once you have edited it. Creating scrapbooks has become somewhat of an art form, and you can even upload your images and do it online at Scrapblog (http://www.scrapblog.com).

- Shoeboxes are sturdy and very useful for storing three-dimensional objects. You can paint or cover them and add labels.

- Expanding wallets are good for collecting the research for a specific project. They usually have tabs and labels, and some have handles making them easy to carry.

- Photo albums come in a range of sizes and styles from traditional paper to self-adhesive.

Other useful storage containers include plastic crates, baskets and shoe tidies. You will possibly need a combination of some or all of the above. Whatever you choose, make sure you label everything and are systematic in your storage.

being prepared

Whether you are conducting primary or secondary research, you should always do some preliminary preparation. Complete your research plans as already described before setting out on a project-specific mission, and make sure you have everything you need with you.

You never know when you are going to come across something or someone that you want to record. Good researchers will always have a sketchbook or notebook to hand and carry a small digital camera (or camera phone) so that they can capture the unexpected. Your phone may also have a voice-recording facility; this can be useful for making quick reminders when you don't have a pen to hand or for carrying out **vox pop** interviews to

support your visual research.

Screenshot of Scrapblog. Courtesy of the author.

When carrying out primary research always check that it is OK to sketch or photograph. Some museums allow you to take pictures; some don't. Those that do often insist that you do not use flash, so make sure you know how to turn yours off. Most stores will not allow you to take photographs or make sketches of their stock; you need to develop a good visual memory so you can note things down when you leave the store.

Health and Safety

Before undertaking any primary research project you should always carry out a risk assessment. If you are interviewing people, make sure that you do it in a safe place and that someone knows where you are. If you are carrying expensive equipment, it may be a good idea to take someone with you. Do not put yourself in situations where you might be in danger.

Ethical Considerations

Depending upon the type of research you are undertaking, you may need to get permission from the ethics committee of your university or to consider if there are any ethical issues relating to your research. This is particularly important if you are planning to photograph or draw children or other vulnerable groups of people.

Fashion journalism is an area of the industry that demands a fast, efficient and accurate approach to research. In the following interviews two practitioners explain how they engage in the research process and what skills are required to work in this sector of the industry.

INTERVIEW WITH Tony Glenville

Tony is a trend forecaster and fashion journalist. He trained as a designer but then moved into forecasting and journalism. He has worked with many forecasting companies such as IM International, Nigel French and Design Direction and retailers such as Storehouse and the Conran group. He has worked as a freelance designer and in fashion education.

WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO?

I kind of re-invented myself as a journalist because I felt I'd done enough of full-time forecasting and consultancy but it's one of those bizarre things that never quite leave you. A lot of my journalistic work was doing things like the roundup of the trends for the season or helping to plan twelve month's issues of a glossy publication with the advertisers, so once a forecaster always a forecaster. I'm forecasting the whole time, I never stop, and I still work with some freelance clients and that can be anything. I've worked at all sorts of levels. I worked with Woolworths in Germany and I've worked with designer labels in New York.

WHO HAVE YOU WORKED FOR AS A JOURNALIST?

The Independent, The Evening Standard and *The Express on Sunday*. I ultimately went down to Australia and became fashion director for Asia Pacific so I've worked on *Vogue Korea, Vogue Taiwan, Vogue Japan* and *Vogue Australia*.

WHAT SKILS HAVE YOU NEEDED TO DO YOUR JOB?

One of the things that students need to learn is to be curious. When they Google a name and it comes up with 154,000 entries and it's sixty pages they often don't go far enough in and they don't become curious enough to dig. If you Google Dior and you get 285,000 Google entries you can't just pick up the first three entries, so curiosity is important. Sometimes I go to page sixteen, I don't always go much further than that but I certainly say that I often cursorily go through the extra pages because that's where sometimes the more interesting things are.

You need the ability to use more than one research method. If I'm looking for things I will use the Internet, online trend pages, reports, people's blogs, YouTube and Google, all those things. I still think books are vital and I still buy a lot of books and particularly monographs on less famous people. It really is the only fast quick way to get some information on them. I'm always telling students to talk to shop staff at designer shops. Interviewing people is great but so is talking to your friends and asking somebody else's opinion. The people whose opinions I really value are people like Sarah Mower (editor, Style.com) or Suzy Menkes (fashion editor, *International Herald Tribune*). If I get a chance and I'm really slightly unsure about something I'll ask those kinds of people. Ask people and use people that know more than you, or know different things.

Nobody knows it all so ask people. It's back to being curious but asking people and not being afraid to say, 'Never heard of them' or 'I know the name but I don't really know anything about them'.

I think the family tree of an artist is always interesting. Where did they train? Where was their first job? Everyone's been talking about Kinder Aggugini at London Fashion Week because of the fact that he's waited a long time to launch his own label and he has this amazing pedigree about him. He'd been at Paul Smith, Calvin Klein and Versace amongst other places; but what's interesting is he waited until that right moment. So, it's not just 'Oh here's a new designer', it's here's a new designer but where do they come from? How did they get there? What culture of education did they come from? Did they come from the Fashion Institute of Technology culture or did they come from the Central St Martins culture because they're very different kinds of fashion education.

Kinder Aggugini: Image from London Fashion Week, Spring/Summer 2010. Getty Images. Reproduced with permission.

Research, research, research and research; I think at whichever end of the business you are, knowing your business, is important for everyone. When you look at the big labels, the difference between the purpose of the catwalk show and the purpose of the product that's put into stores is very different. When students look at catwalk shows they think that's the company statement. There are a lot of other elements for the season. There are the beauty products, there are the new fragrances, there's the handbag, which is probably done by the accessories division in conjunction with John [Galliano] and whatever he might be doing. There's the Web site, you know Dior now work on how many hits they get all the time. You've got to go beyond one element of a company's profile.

I think also you need to look at big brands, what they're doing, who their associates are; Prada and Rem Koolhaas that is a wonderful partnership. The idea of one of the world's leading avant-garde architects and one of the world's leading avant-garde labels getting together.

HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHICH INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT?

It's all important and if it isn't important today it might be important next week; that's unfortunately what makes people like myself into terrible hoarders. We're also the mad people that sit on trains tearing bits out of newspapers. There was the most fabulous interview in the *Times* financial section a little while ago with François-Henri Pinault from PPR about the future of Gucci and all the companies under their umbrella, he was talking about green and you suddenly go 'If this guy with Gucci and all those subsidiary companies, if he's looking at green then that's really interesting'. It wasn't anywhere other than the financial page of one paper, in fact one interview, so you tear it out and put in your file under 'green', you may not use it the day you pull the piece out of the paper, you hoard and you put stuff under different categories and you keep things.

HOW DO YOU ORGANIZE YOUR INFORMATION?

Mine is always lined up in a set of things, I have a section, which is obituaries, I keep

up-to-date obituaries of anyone that's even remotely interesting. I've got an alphabetical filing system A–Z and that includes everyone from Yves Saint Laurent through to anyone that I can think of that might be stylish. Then I also have things to do with global, so interesting things to do with India, instant things about something that literally will be as dead as a dodo by the end of the week.

Also things like accessories, hair and make-up because make-up and hair now is so big. Luxury and then in luxury the things that students very rarely look at which are branded goods, watches, sunglasses, belts all those kinds of things. If you run a glossy magazine, at least once a year you have to do a very big watch shoot because they're major advertisers in the glossy. You certainly have to do sunglasses at least once a year. Dolce & Gabbana may not sell very many of the mainline ball gowns but my God they sell a lot of sunglasses. Students don't get interested and inspired enough by the financial side. They don't understand that it's really good detective work; it's great fun.

People don't just want to read flaky articles in the papers or the magazines. Readers want evidence and they also want to know why they should spend their money on something. If you're telling me to buy this £600 skirt not from a designer label but from a very top-end high street label, why should I buy it?

Also check your facts. It's the big thing checking your facts. Suzy Menkes is the archetypal example of someone who understands what gathering information is about. When you read one of Suzy's reviews she's found out what the reference points were for the designer, a special song that was used while the girls were walking up and down that relates to the collection, somebody who made a fabric; there'll always be that extra detail in what she writes, like there is with Sarah Mower. Those are really outstanding people who have always got that thing that sets them apart from people that write '… and there was a lot of red in the collection and I didn't like it, a lot of longer skirts…' they'll have gone way beyond a lot of red and the longer skirt, they'll have found out why there was a longer skirt or what particular red it was or discovered what the fabric was that all the red was in. They'd have found out why it was there.

Project: Six Degrees of Separation

An exercise that I've done with students is the clues trail. The one that we had the most fun with is we traced George Bernard Shaw to Alexander McQueen and the pointers on the way are *Pygmalion*, *My Fair Lady* and Givenchy. You have to get from George Bernard Shaw to Alexander McQueen. So if you do George Bernard Shaw and you do *Pygmalion*, the answer is of course he wrote *Pygmalion*, *Pygmalion* was a play which was adapted into *My Fair Lady*, *My Fair Lady* was the musical which was filmed with Audrey Hepburn, Audrey Hepburn was dressed by Givenchy and Givenchy once had Alexander McQueen as his in-house designer.

—Tony Glenville

For this project you have to find the connections between the Marchesa Casati and John Galliano. Create a visual board to illustrate your research.

Audrey Hepburn in *My Fair Lady*. Popperfoto/Getty Images. Reproduced with permission.

INTERVIEW WITH Eric Musgrave

Eric Musgrave was a fashion industry journalist for thirty years. He worked as the deputy editor or editor for *International Textiles*, *Fashion Weekly*, *Sportswear International*, *FHM Magazine* and *Drapers*.

WHAT SKILS DOES A JOURNALIST NEED?

The number-one skill a journalist needs is the ability to get on with all sorts of people because people give you the information you need. If you can speak to everyone from the shop floor worker to the chairman of a big PLC [public limited company], that is a real skill.

The ability to interpret a lot of information and present it in a digestible form for the audience is the key for any type of journalist, whether it is somebody writing news stories, producing a feature or working on a fashion desk. News journalists need an

ability to write concisely and quickly and get a lot of facts into a relatively small number of words in a short time.

It is essential that news people have lots of contacts, get on with people, win the trust of people and are respected and liked. Then people will tell them things that maybe they should not tell them or would not tell them; that is very important. It can be a difficult job, it is not nice to write critical stories, you need a hard skin and not everyone has that. It is just a question of personality. Some people have a romantic idea of being a reporter, but it is a demanding job.

I found plenty who wanted to write about fashion, but it was quite difficult to find people who had any real knowledge of textiles, **fibres,** manufacturing clothes and retailing them.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE EDITOR?

The editor is the hub around which the title, and everything to do with the title, revolves. The editor must look out at the industry and look in at his or her own team or company. I made it my business to be very commercially minded and to have an influence over the advertising department as well as the editorial. I soon learned that unless your publication is the *Exchange & Mart*, *Auto Trader* or a jobs-listing magazine, people will be buying it primarily for the editorial, so the editorial ought to set the tone, which then the advertising should complement.

There are a number of facets to the editor's job. It is difficult to say which are more important because they are all cogs in the same apparatus. You personally can be a great ambassador, have loads of contacts in the business, and be very well respected, but if your team is rubbish, the chances are you will produce a rubbish magazine. Conversely, you can have a fantastically motivated magazine of happy journalists, but if you are not leading them and taking the bird's-eye view of the industry, informing them and mentoring them on what they should be writing about, you are not going to be effective as you could be.

For me the most important part of a weekly magazine like *Drapers* is the news; that is why it is weekly. Without strong news pages, you might as well be a monthly or quarterly. The news team was always the most important element because they had most paper to fill; the news was why most people bought the magazine week after week to see what was going on.

WHAT ROLE DID IMAGES PLAY IN THE MAGAZINES YOU WORKED ON?

Because we didn't do any shoots of our own on *Drapers* you were dependent on getting visual information from other people, free pictures. That is another reason for having lots of contacts, so people do you a favour and get pictures to you early. I would say generally people who are OK at words usually are not good at visuals. You are very lucky if you find somebody who is good at both. You are lucky if you can find a journalist who works visually and can see the whole page or two pages that they are doing rather than just thinking about the words and leaving someone else to think about the illustrations.

There was a period around 2000 when lots of brands and retailers stopped providing

press shots. If you wanted to illustrate something, what could you do? We would go to one of the big shows in Europe, take twelve or thirteen rolls of film, bring them back, get them processed at a local Snappy Snaps, get 200 pictures, and half of them weren't usable! It was a hugely time-consuming, expensive and complicated business. Having our own digital cameras was a compromise as some people were better with the camera than others. But having a digital camera meant you could take a lot of photographs of the people you had spoken to. Part of the trade magazine's role is to act like a local newspaper for the industry. People like to see themselves, or people they know, and one of *Drapers*' best-read pages was the gossip page.

When I started my career in 1980 it was only once in a blue moon that we would have any colour pictures. We just did not have that facility but now the whole magazine is in colour. I believe rather than trying to explain what is being worn, or what that stripe looks like, or what shade of brown that colour is, show them a picture. It is much easier; we are in a visual industry.

The now-defunct *International Textiles* was different. It was more of a feature-driven, visual magazine with the difficulty of how to represent lots and lots of fabrics. We did it in a very formulaic way. There was some creativity but it was more like 'how many bits of fabric can we get on one page so you can still see them?' It was a different discipline; there was a template that we worked to.

My other European experience was with *Sportswear International*, a German-owned magazine based in Italy, covering the jeans and casual wear market; it was very visual. We did a lot of pictures of shops. If you are in the retail business you just love looking at shops. Additionally *Sportswear International* used very good photographers and models to create very lavish and creative fashion shoots. People loved it; it was vital reading.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO STUDENTS WHO WANT TO WORK IN JOURNALISM?

Young people often come in with a very idealistic view of what journalism is about. They forget it is a business and they usually have no knowledge or interest in the commercial side of magazine publishing. I was always very happy to speak to my advertisers but I would not compromise my editorial or write anything I did not believe in. Young people are very creative, artistic and idealistic but they very rarely give any thought to where the money comes from in magazine publishing.

Project: Analysing a Magazine

Take a magazine that you like, go through it and count how many pages are not editorial and analyse the flat plan (the running of a magazine). Why do you get thirty pages of advertising at the beginning of a glossy magazine before you get to any sort of editorial? If you were editing a magazine and had advertisers, how much editorial support would you give them?

creative thinking tools

It is easy to fall into a pattern of working that produces similar or unsurprising results. Creative people need to continually expand their minds and challenge their own thinking and processes. The following exercises are useful ways of opening your mind to new ways of considering a problem. It may be helpful to engage in them before you start a project as a means of ensuring that you are thinking laterally and not going for the obvious solution.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is often done in groups, but you can also do it yourself. Write down everything you can think of that is even remotely related to the subject you are researching. Think about contrasting ideas and themes. At this stage it doesn't matter how silly you think the idea is. Once you can't think of any more connections or solutions go back to the ideas you have written down. When you have eliminated any ideas that are illegal, immoral or impossible, everything else that is left may have potential and can be developed further. The key to the success of this technique is not to judge any of your initial ideas; however silly or outlandish they may seem, just write them down. For more information on the technique, go to http://www.brainstorming.co.uk.

Mind Mapping

Mind mapping is about creating links between one idea and a related idea. (Mind Map is a trademark of the Buzan Organization.) For example, if your theme is workwear, you write the word or draw something that represents this in the middle of the page, and then around this you add a **node** for each connected idea. So you may think about workwear in different professions like building, policing, medicine and business. Building might lead you to think about tools or safety helmets or hobnail boots; medical clothing might make you think about white, blue, masks, latex gloves. The aim is to follow every idea, creating branches until there is nowhere else to go. You can then see if there are any links between the branches and decide which areas to investigate in more detail.
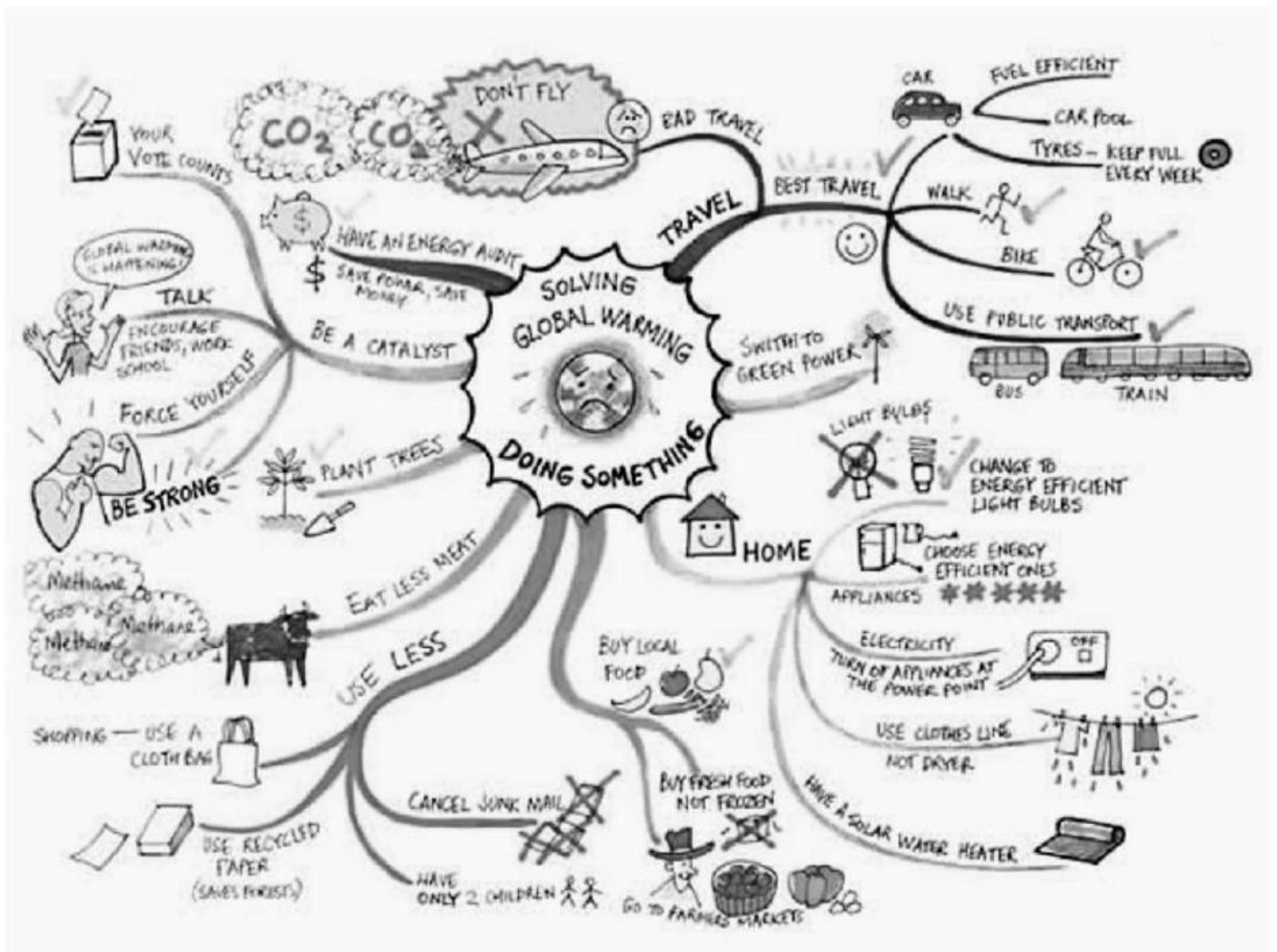
Mind map of global warming. Tony Buzan is the inventor of Mind Maps®. Permission to reproduce granted by The Buzan Organization, www.buzanworld.com.
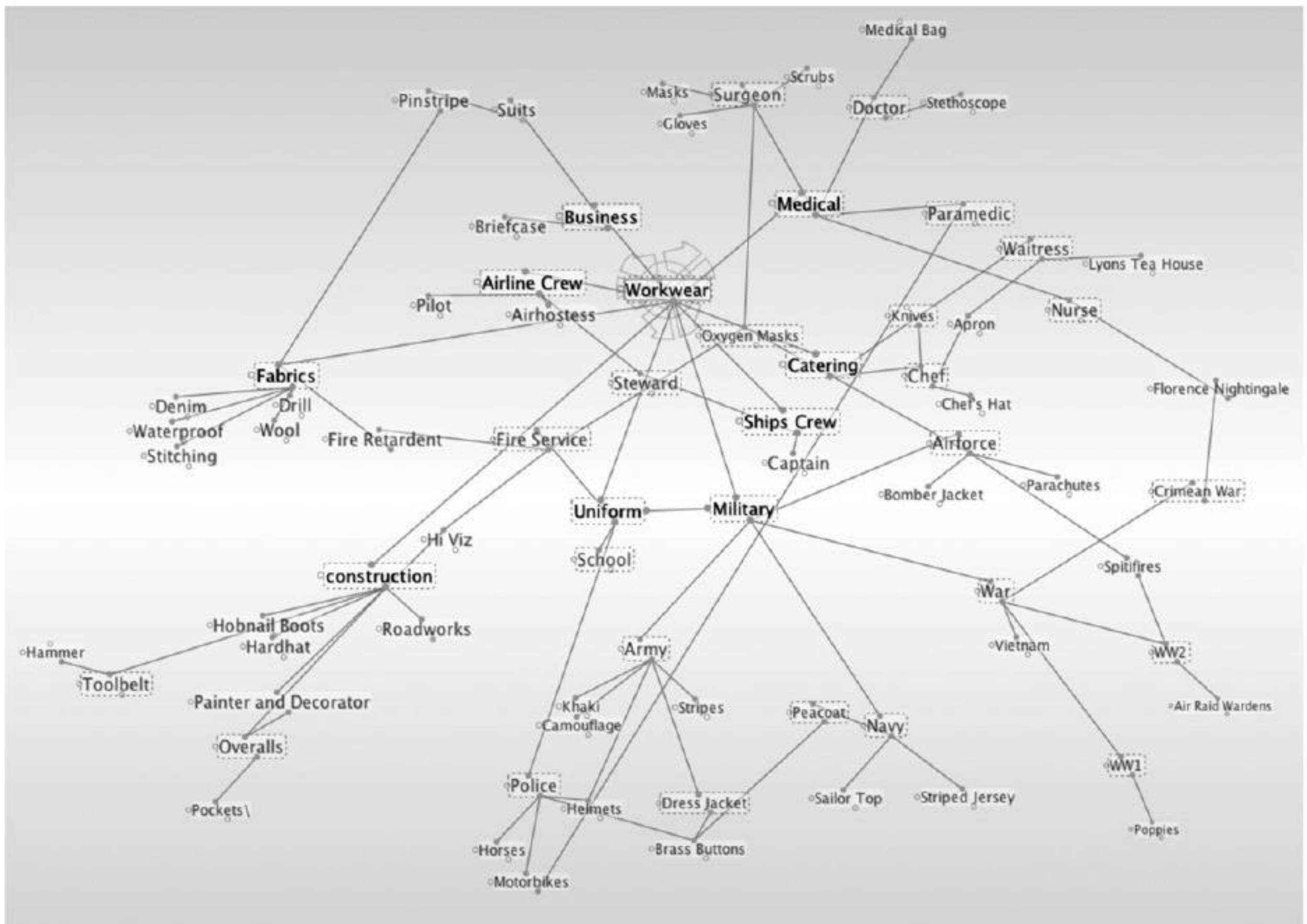
Mind map created using PersonalBrain software. Courtesy of the author.

You can create mind maps on paper with coloured pens or markers, or there are now software packages and Web-based tools that can help you to create them. The leading advocate of mind mapping is Tony Buzan, and you can find out more about the process and see some incredibly inventive maps here: http://www.thinkbuzan.com/uk/home.

There are many proprietary and free versions of mind mapping and concept mapping software available. Some suggestions are the following:

iMindMap http://www.thinkbuzan.com/uk/products/imindmap

FreeMind http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Main_Page

PersonalBrain http://www.thebrain.com/

Scamper

This is a process that was invented by Robert Eberle based on the ideas of Alex Osborn, who is also credited with inventing brainstorming. Scamper is a process by which you consider modifying your product using a series of different perspectives (Creating Minds 2010, Mindtools nd):

*S—Substitute—components, materials, people

*C—Combine—mix, combine with other assemblies or services, integrate

*A—Adapt—alter, change function, use part of another element

*M—Modify—increase or reduce in scale, change shape, modify attributes (e.g. colour)

*P—Put to another use

*E—Eliminate—remove elements, simplify, reduce to core functionality

*R—Reverse—turn inside out or upside down, also use of reversal.

SUMMARY

In this chapter you have learned that there are different approaches to research based on whether you are just trying to expand your general knowledge or are working on a specific project. You have discovered that effective researchers engage in planning and preparation before they start. This saves time and ensures that the information they retrieve is relevant and accurate. Once you have retrieved the information, you need a method for cataloguing and storing it so you can retrieve it easily. There are many tools that can assist you in finding and cataloguing information; these are covered in detail in Chapter 8.

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websites

CoutureLab http://couturelab.com/

International Herald Tribune (global edition of the *New York Times*) http://global.nytimes.com/?iht

Kinder Aggugini http://www.aggugini.com/

Office of Metropolitan Architecture (Rem Koolhaas) http://www.oma.eu

PPR http://www.ppr.com

Prada http://www.prada.com

Reiss http://www.reiss.co.uk/

Showstudio http://www.showstudio.com

ThinkBuzan—Official Mind Mapping Software by Tony Buzan http://www.imindmap.com/

chapter 2

sources of inspiration

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter concentrates on visual research as a means of gaining creative inspiration. However, this often needs to be followed by further research to inform yourself about the images or objects that have inspired you. There is often a crossover between inspirational and informational research, as one will usually inform the other. By undertaking a wide range of visual research, you will be creating a rich seam of information from which you can develop new ideas and concepts.

This chapter includes:

- Why do we need sources of inspiration?
- Sources of inspiration
- Interview with Amy de la Haye
- Interview with James Wright, vintage clothing retailer
- Case study: Miriam Sucis
- Case study: Fong Wong
- Interview with Basia Szkutnicka
- Things to do when you lack inspiration.

why do we need sources of inspiration?

Fashion is a creative industry that thrives on a constant flow of new ideas. The people working in fashion also need to be creative and to **innovate.** To do this you need to have a source from which to feed your creativity. This source comes in the form of visual research. To sit in front of a blank sheet of paper and be creative is virtually impossible. If we do so we soon start to repeat our ideas or to dry up completely. The creative mind needs a constant stream of information that can spark new ideas and help to develop new ways of looking at existing ideas and products. You also need to find ways in which you can bring your personal signature to a project or concept. In the research for this book, many of the professionals believed that nothing is ever completely new but that you can bring your own perspective, personality or technique to deliver a fresh take on an existing idea. To do this requires research. To start with, you at least need to know what has been done before and how it was achieved.

Using visual references to generate ideas is not the same as copying. It is important to take the information and to develop and transform it so that it becomes your own. It is necessary to draw your research from a range of resources and to be able to talk about

them; this is why it is important to also research the context and background of the products, artefacts or images you are working with.

It is useful to look at clothes and to know what is happening on the catwalk and in the stores, but if fashion and clothing are your only or primary visual resource, you may find yourself merely copying rather than creating and will soon run out of ideas. Many creative fashion ideas do not start with clothing but instead emerge from social or economic **trends,** from musical movements, from art and interior design or architectural design or from technical advances in materials or processes. Fashion creatives need to be aware of what is happening in a wide range of fields including the arts, theatre, music, cinema, politics, technology, economics, architecture and environmental and social trends. You need to be well read and well connected and also able to appreciate **aesthetics** and good design.

Creative people need to develop a visual vocabulary. This means absorbing and processing a wide range of cultural and practical information. You need to be able to engage in conversations with other professionals in your field, and that means knowing about different periods in fashion history and the influences that created them. It also requires an understanding of the basic materials of the trade—being able to talk about fabrics, influential people, current trends and hot issues. If you are a fashion photographer, you need to know who the creative stylists are, who is doing interesting make-up and which magazines are emerging and influential. In marketing you need to be aware of viral trends on the Internet, consumer **demographics** and lifestyle trends. Every role in the fashion industry relies to some extent on finding and using inspirational materials.

sources of inspiration

The following section lists possible sources of inspiration; they are not intended to be exhaustive but to act as starting points and catalysts for your imagination. Some may not be accessible to you because of your location, but the truly creative person learns to be observant and to find inspiration in everything around him or her. Visual research is about learning to look at the things around you, to analyse them and to constantly ask 'Why? How? Who? When? Where?'

Museums and Art Galleries

There are more museums and art galleries around the world than can possibly be catalogued in this chapter. You can find a museum for almost anything from toilet seats to typewriters; a quick search on the Internet will bring up an amazing array of the weird and wonderful as well as the more established museums and galleries. Most major galleries and museums have a Web site, and these can be very useful in helping you to decide whether they are worth a visit. Chapter 7 has more information about getting the most out of your visit.

Many museums have specialist collections of historical costume and textiles, and these are often used as inspiration for contemporary design and styling. Designers like Vivienne Westwood are extremely talented at taking historical research and reinventing it. The mini crinoline and the pirate shirt came directly from historical research. It is important to note that Westwood does not just copy the designs: she reworks them to give them a modern

feeling.

The biggest challenge when using costume as inspiration is that if you do not develop your ideas sufficiently, you end up with a pastiche of the original design that looks clichéd and too theatrical. Knowing how to combine history with modern trends is a skill that depends upon achieving the right balance between the two. Learning about the garment and the context in which it was created can help you to avoid this and to extract the essential elements from the garment that you want to use. An outfit inspired by the **farthingale** might make an exciting catwalk piece but would not be very relevant to a modern woman who has to get on a bus. You may, however, want to translate this shape into something more practicable. The knowledgeable consumer will recognize the influence, but the end product will still be fashionable and practicable.

If you are working in a field such as fashion **curation,** knowledge of the product and the period is essential. This will enable you to build a narrative around the object and create a more engaging display.

Historically inspired outfit by Vivienne Westwood from her 1996 Spring/Summer ready-to-wear collection. ©
Vauthey Pierre/Corbis Sygma. Reproduced with permission.

Example of a farthingale. Print of Henry III and Louise de Lorraine-Vaudémont. Image from Wikimedia; out of copyright.

Project: History of Costume Research

Visit a museum or the Web site of a museum with a costume collection (see the list of references) and select a historical garment that you like. Find out as much as you can about the garment. Who did it belong to, when was it worn and for what purpose was it worn? Make your own drawings of the garment; if you are researching online, see if the site allows you to zoom in on the garment and make sketches of the details. Analyse which elements of the garment attract you: is it the colour, the silhouette, a detail like a collar or pocket, the print? Take one aspect of the garment and consider how you could use it in a project. For example if you are a designer or pattern cutter, how could you develop a modern style based on this garment? If you are an illustrator, are there elements that you could include in a contemporary illustration? If you are a photographer, what kind of styling or setting does it suggest? If you are training to be a

journalist, write a short article about this piece.

INTERVIEW WITH Amy de la Haye

Amy is reader in material culture and fashion curation at the London College of Fashion. She is an established author and curator.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

Things inspire me, a love of things and the materiality of things. That does something to me on some level, it makes me want to explore and I delve into history and theory because it helps me understand the thing rather than perhaps starting with an idea and trying to fit things into that idea. Often it involves a commission for example I have just written a chapter for the V&A's **couture** exhibition Material Evidence.

I suppose I have a broad knowledge of the period so I am not looking at objects in isolation I am looking at them with a body of knowledge behind me. The first thing I do is go and look at the objects then I look at the story of those objects and think what do they tell me? What don't they tell me? If we only have one suit is it typical? Because that is what is representing the designer we need to know did it come from a client in which case there is a sizing issue? If it came from him presumably he felt it was typical of his work.

It affects how you look at history because if there is only one suit in the V&A the designer becomes inextricably entwined with that suit but that suit might not be representative of his work.

WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON AT THE MOMENT?

In the past I did a lot of work on the working class looking at ready-to-wear. I did a lot of work on **subculture** and then I guess I wanted to redress the balance because a lot of fashion history was looking at people who are at the edge of subculture or engages with gay history or black history and the traditional **haute couture** had become terribly old fashioned. I started looking at that again especially in London because a lot of people would say that London doesn't have a couture industry but it does. I did an exhibition about Catherine Walker's work at the V&A. It meant I could spend two years having complete access to her house and understanding how she worked and how her house worked looking at the spectrum of her outfits and talking to her constantly.

Having done all that I am now working on the women's land army which is something that I have been fascinated with for about twenty years and I knew I would do something at some point. I am looking at how you can access the women's history through their clothes. They were mass-produced so I am looking at all the special issues that come with that, especially in the context of a museum, it is OK to display a single couture garment but is it OK to display a single mass-produced garment?

Land workers harvesting the ripened sunflowers, September 1944. Getty Images Hulton Archive. Reproduced with permission.

When there is only one it gives you an impression that it is rare and precious whereas I think there should maybe be a stack of them to somehow represent that there were 80,000 women involved. I am doing an exhibition at Brighton Museum and I am thinking of having either 80,000 land army badges or little figures on the wall. A number doesn't mean a lot but visually if you see 80,000 of something you get an idea of what is involved distribution and all sorts of things.

WHERE DO YOU START?

I look at the things then look firstly at contemporary material. What the women wrote about themselves and official publications like the *Women's Land Army Journal*. There are lots of biographies. I look at what was written at the time and then what was written forty years later. There are lots of elderly **land girls** who have been engaging with their history but forty years on it is interesting to see what they choose to write about. Then I bring it all together, about the production and distribution of the clothes and how we interpret them in a museum and whether they are worn and also the modern history of the clothes. I buy them on eBay and see who else is buying them and why they are desirable now. A lot of it is for re-enactment so they have kind of got multiple histories.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A STUDENT WHO WANTED TO ENGAGE WITH MATERIAL CULTURE?

A practice-based student would necessarily have access to things because they are makers and perhaps they relate to things more than to words. They have got the language to discuss the things in their own work so I would think they would have the language to discuss an object perhaps more than a history student would. They might have more confidence to describe it they might have a better knowledge of materials or how to describe the scale. They need to have a love of materiality, a love of things.

Vita Sackville-West in breeches (1960). Getty Images. Reproduced with permission.

A project I do with postgraduate students is I get them to bring in three shoes each and then split them into little groups and I say I want you to make an exhibition of these shoes from the perspective of a shoe museum, from the perspective of working in a local history museum and from the perspective of working in a design museum. I want you to tell a story so that each of these shoes says something different, which adds to your story. They come up with some wonderful things. Because it was for children one student related each shoe to a child-like character like **Judy Garland.** I know I have had them thinking about where the shoes were made for instance then we can get into issues about globalization and how none of these shoes were made in Britain.

You can pick one object, like a pair of the breeches. I am looking at culture and history through this pair of breeches. You could look at the history of the fabric, you could look at trouser dress for women in the context a lesbian **iconic** style of dress

(**Vita Sackville-West** wore them) in terms of women's history, wartime history, agricultural history and just look at how one garment can be the central point form which you can construct all sorts of histories. It is about reflective practice.

Project: History of an Object

Select one thing that feels precious to you and make a history of it. It could be something like a family photograph of your grandmother or a shoe you bought in the high street. It doesn't need to be valuable. You can construct a history around it, and then the next step is to get a group of objects and try to make a story with them.

You can make anything into a story; you can focus for example on the colour red. It is about how we can make magical stories. You don't have to be working at the V and A with Balenciaga. You can construct histories around anything and see the magic in it. (Amy de la Haye)

Objects and Ephemera

Not all objects of interest are precious enough to be found in a museum. Flea markets, second-hand stores and car boot sales can also be a source of interesting items and ephemera. From bags of old buttons to war relics and ceramics, the range of items you can discover in this manner is endless. Interesting items can also be found in online auctions and on sites such as eBay.

Things you find in this way may also have an interesting history. If you are buying an object from a local store, the owner may know where it came from. You can of course invent your own history for an object and provide it with a story that can become your inspiration. Postcards with long-forgotten messages and photographs that have found their way from an unwanted family album can be a rich source for an invented narrative. Who wrote the postcard? Who received it? Where was it sent? What can you find out about the period and the place?

You can also find interesting items such as old pottery, ribbons, table linens, embroidered handkerchiefs, beads and bracelets, pictures and stuffed animals, medicine bottles, kitchen utensils, medals and badges. An item does not have to be beautiful to be interesting; it could be very gaudy or **kitsch** or extremely battered or worn.

Jacket by Galliano with vintage jewellery, Spring/Summer 2010. AFP/Getty Images. Reproduced with permission.

Fabric and Trimmings

Many students start by designing and then look for fabrics and trimmings that suit their design. It can be more successful to work the other way around and to find interesting fabrics and trimmings that will inspire you. You can find scraps of fabric, old buttons, **lace** and table linens in second-hand stores or search for inspiring contemporary fabrics and trimmings. Antique textiles from many different cultures can be found in museums, gallery collections and online collections. They can also be a valuable source of inspiration, as they often have interesting meanings or histories as well as employing techniques that may no longer be in general use.

Vintage jewellery stall in Portobello Market. Courtesy of the author.

There are a lot of creative young textile designers whom you could approach to work with you. Try Web sites like Etsy (http://www.etsy.com) or Eye Candey (http://www.candeystore.com). It is useful to know something about fabrics as it makes it easier for you to source them. Technical information about fabrics and sourcing is covered in Chapter 4.

Store Research

Store visits and inspirational shopping are a vital part of the working life of the fashion creative. Seeing what is in the stores can help you to know what direction fashion is moving in. Observing shoppers can help you to understand what is selling and why. You may come across a new fabric, an interesting construction detail or a unique way of **visual merchandising.** It is also important to know what your competitors are doing: they may have picked up on a trend you have missed, and you can also see how they are developing their collections across seasons. You can see what is on the sale rail (markdowns) and analyse why it hasn't sold. Visual merchandisers need to see how other stores are displaying their products and how the shop floor is laid out to encourage the shopper to purchase. Designers and **buyers** working in the mass market will often visit designer boutiques and buy samples that they then use for inspiration. Direct copying of course is illegal and not something you should engage in.

Many companies will send their designers on inspirational shopping trips around the country or internationally so that they can get a wider view of retail trends. This is not just about the stock but also about the shopping experience. What additional services are your competitors offering? What is the customer service like? What is the changing room experience? What are the **point-of-sale** materials? All of these elements contribute to attracting and retaining a customer, and they all have a visual element. Companies will spend a huge amount on architects and designers to create aspirational venues and an exciting shopping experience. The cutting-edge stores are often the **flagships** of the brand, and where they lead, other stores will follow.

Store windows are an essential element in attracting the consumer and can be an art form in their own right. You can see interesting store windows from around the world at FashionWindows (http://www.fashionwindows.com). Or find a list of interesting stores to visit at slowretail (http://slowretailen.wordpress.com/concept-stores/).

Project: Store Analysis
Visit a local fashion store and consider the visual impact of the environment. Does the window display look inviting and inspiring? Is the store layout easy to navigate? How is the stock displayed? How are the products **merchandised:** in colour blocks, in outfits? How attractive are the changing rooms? What is the service like? How are the shop assistants dressed? Who do you think their target customer is? Is this reflected in the people visiting the store? What is on the markdown rail? Why do you think those items did not sell at full price: poor hanger appeal, wrong colour and bad fit, not on trend? Write a short report of your findings.

Street Fashion

Some fashion trends start on the catwalk and work their way down to the street, but just as often it can work the other way around. Designers will visit trendy areas, nightclubs, festivals and youth events to see what styles are emerging. They then take these influences and develop them to fit their own style and consumer. **Punk** is an excellent example of a street style that then moved to the catwalk; it has been a recurring influence ever since it emerged in the mid 1970s.

Sometimes a trend will emerge in one city and then migrate to others, and sometimes it will be very localized. In a connected world trends can move around the globe at great speed. You need to know what is emerging on the street around you and also in influential cities like New York, London and Tokyo. There are a lot of Web sites like Street Fashion Worldwide (http://street-fashion.net/) and Streetpeeper (http://streetpeeper.com) which are dedicated to street fashion. These can help you keep up to date, but nothing beats getting out there and seeing things for yourself. If you live in or close to a major city, you should find out where the **trendsetters** are going and do some people watching, take some pictures and do some interviews.

Punks on the Kings Road (1979). Getty Images. Reproduced with permission.

Harajuku girls in Tokyo (2000). AFP/Getty Images. Reproduced with permission.

Project: Street-style Report

Take a camera into your nearest high street or shopping mall and look for people who you feel have an interesting dress style. Ask them politely if they would mind having a picture taken and talking to you about their personal style. Compile a report or create a **blog** based on your findings. Are you able to identify any links or emerging trends or influences?

Society, Economics and Politics

The more informed you are about what is going on in the world, the more likely it is that you will sense a trend before it happens or be able to create one based on your knowledge

of what people are interested in or care about. Fashion professionals often talk about the **zeitgeist.** In fashion terms this means knowing exactly what is right for the mood and feeling of the moment; fashion does not happen in isolation from the society that produces it. Fashion can be influenced by changes in the attitudes of society or the political or economic climate at that time. In the 1960s, for example, women in the West gained more freedom, and the contraceptive pill changed attitudes to sexuality, which were reflected in the fashions of the period. The big hit of the mid 1960s was the miniskirt made popular by Mary Quant and featured in many designer collections of the period (Cawthorne 2001).

The world economy also plays a role in fashion: when there is a recession people think more carefully about what they buy, and this can create an incredibly competitive retail environment. Consumers look for fashion brands that have a unique or extremely good-value product. When times are good, people spend more freely and take more risks.

Women in miniskirts and the Mini motor car (1966). Hulton Getty Picture Collection. Reproduced with permission.

People and Networking

In fashion you will always be working with other people and will need other people to help you realize your ideas. If you are a photographer you need to know good stylists, hair and make-up people and models. A buyer needs to maintain good relationships with suppliers and trend-information companies. Designers need a really wide network of people who can help them to realize their ideas, from pattern cutters and fabric suppliers

to trendsetters and journalists. Everyone in fashion should have a good address book. In order to network you also need to consider your personal brand. Fashion is about appearances and selling your ideas so you need to have a good public interface; whether this is your business card or your blog, it needs to reflect your style and professional persona.

In the digital age networking is much easier than it used to be. There are sites for social and professional networking: Facebook (http://www.facebook.com), LinkedIn (http://www.linkedin.com), IQONS (http://www.iqons.com), Twitter (http://www.twitter.com) and more. These sites make it easy to find and connect with people who are working in your field. However, maintaining professional contacts still requires some work, and the best networks are those where the members give as much as they take, so if you ask a professional favour be prepared to reciprocate.

Frida Kahlo and self-portraits. Betteman Corbis. Reproduced with permission.
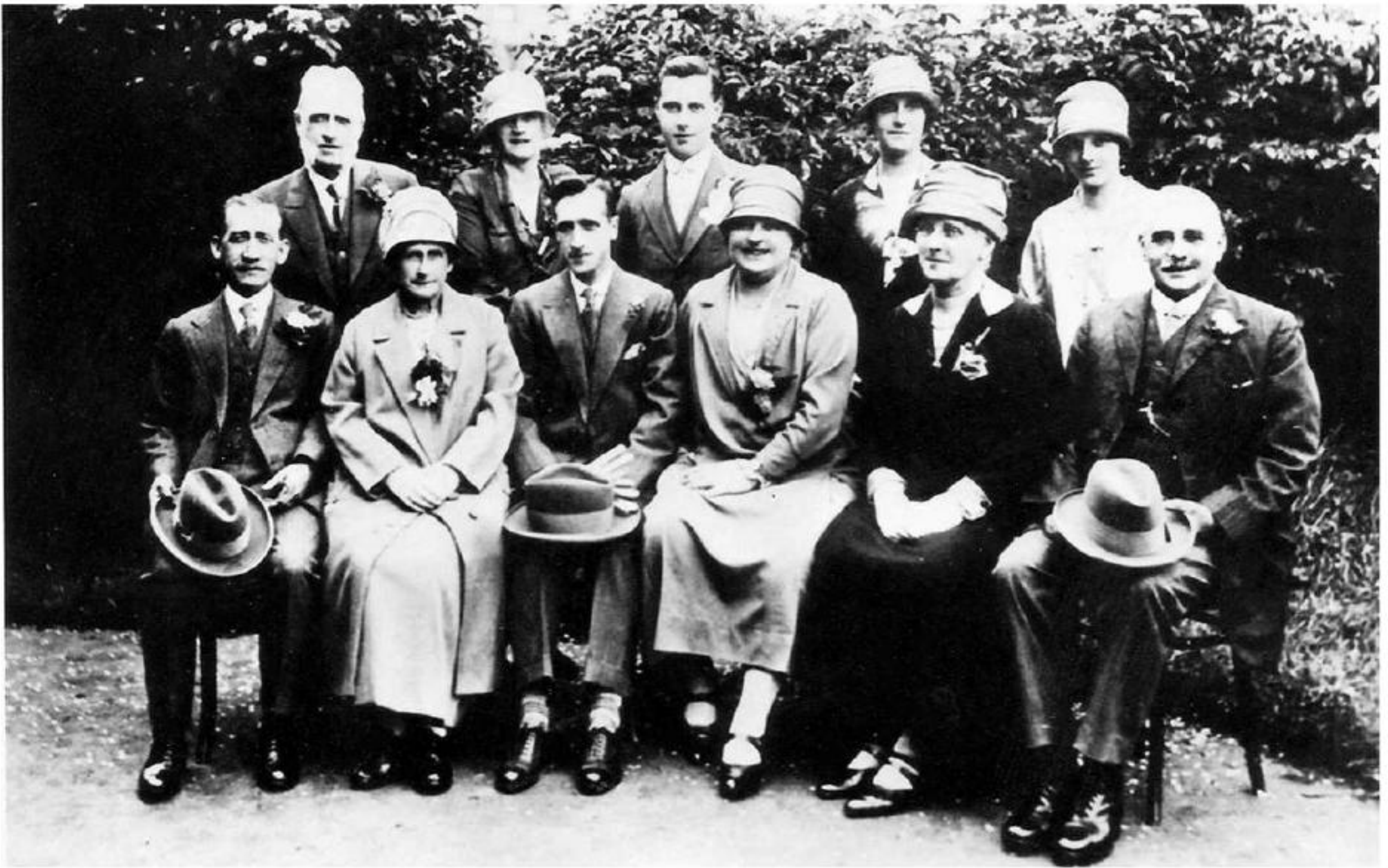
Grandparents' wedding photo (1927), from the author's family album. Courtesy of June Morgan.

Project: Networking

Find out if there is a fashion- or textile-related organization or network in your area and see if it is running any events that you can attend. If there is nothing near you, think about starting your own network through Facebook or joining an existing online network like IQONS or LinkedIn.

Start an address book of key contacts and people you meet. Get some business cards printed and always carry them with you; ask people you meet at events for their card. Always make a note on the back about where you met them, in what context and what kind of follow-up might be appropriate.

Style Icons

Many people throughout history have become style icons and have inspired designers, photographers and writers: Frida Kahlo, Jackie Onassis and Princess Diana; fictional characters such as Dracula, Robinson Crusoe and Scarlet O'Hara; and of course contemporary celebrities like Madonna, Kate Moss and David Beckham. Consider who your personal style icons are and analyse what it is about their style that appeals to you.

Your Personal History

Your own life experiences and those of your family and friends can also be a source of inspiration. Old family photo albums and memories from your childhood can be a good starting point, as can research into your family tree. Who were your ancestors, and what did they do? Where did they live? You may find some surprising and interesting characters you were unaware of. Old albums often illustrate how ordinary people interpreted

fashions, and they also show everyday items, cars, interiors and other details that may not be evident in formal fashion photographs.

Film and Theatre

There is an exceptionally strong link between fashion and film; characters such as Audrey Hepburn as Holly Golightly in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961), Liza Minnelli in *Cabaret* (1972) and Meryl Streep in *Out of Africa* (1985) have all created looks and iconic styles that continue to be used as inspiration for the catwalk. Jean Paul Gaultier is one designer who has been widely used in the theatre and film industry, with designs featured in Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, & Her Lover* (1989) and *The Fifth Element* (1997), for which he was nominated for an Oscar. It is not just the costumes that can be inspiring but also the set designs, the landscape and the cinematography. *Room with a View* (1985), *Casanova di Frederico Fellini* (1976), Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet* (1996) and *Moulin Rouge* (2001), *Blade Runner* (1982) and many other movies have strong visual references that translate into fashion through clothes, styling and photographic styles. Also look out for contemporary movies that might be influential like *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) by Tim Burton (http://www.imdb.com/).

A scene from *Cabaret* (1972). ABC via Getty Images. Reproduced with permission.

Project: Movie Inspiration Board

Watch one of the preceding films (they should all be available on DVD) or choose one of your favourite films that you find inspiring. Create an A1 board that visually captures the key elements of the film. Your board should clearly indicate the genre of the film (thriller, romance, science fiction) as well as the period, colours and location.

Vintage Clothing and Textiles

Vintage clothes deserve a close examination as a source of inspiration. In recent years there has been a lot of interest in vintage garments, in particular vintage designer garments, which celebrities have taken to wearing to red carpet events such as film premieres and awards ceremonies (Julia Roberts wore vintage Valentino to the Oscars in 2001, and Penelope Cruz wore vintage Balmain at the 2009 Oscars). Vintage garments and accessories can be an extremely useful source of inspiration for stylists, photographers, designers and visual merchandisers.

Vintage pieces often have interesting construction techniques, drape effects, fabrics, prints, embroideries or decorative details. Look for unusual fastenings, collars, cuff details or sleeve constructions. You can find vintage garments in specialist stores, flea markets and sometimes charity shops. Look inside the garment at the finishing details, and try to work out how it was constructed. Take a **sketchbook** with you so you can make quick notes of details that interest you. There is nothing quite like trying a garment on to understand how it fits and drapes. It is possible to find interesting vintage pieces that are not expensive; if you are able to afford to buy a piece, then you can spend more time inspecting and reinterpreting it. If it is not a precious piece, you can even take it apart to study the construction or to develop a pattern from it.

Universities, libraries and museums are also an excellent source of information about vintage clothing. Some have specialist **archives** that have original patterns and reconstructions of vintage clothing; for example North Carolina State University has a collection of patterns from the US Civil War period, and the London College of Fashion has a tailoring archive. There is an archive of vintage patterns along with scans of the pattern pieces at the University of Rhode Island (http://www.uri.edu/library/special_collections/COPA/index.php). Find out what your local university or library has to offer; you may be surprised. If there are no archives accessible to you, see if they have some images online.

Vintage accessories also have something to offer. Look at hats, gloves, handbags and jewellery, and remember that you don't have to take all the elements as inspiration: it could be something as simple as a strap detail or a clasp that fires your imagination.

Julia Roberts in vintage Valentino at the 2001 Oscars. Getty Images. Reproduced with permission.

If there are no vintage stores or flea markets near you, try your local museum. Museums often have education departments, and they may offer sessions where you can get close to vintage garments even if you cannot handle them. There are also auction houses that specialize in vintage clothing and textiles and hold regular sales. Some items will go for very high prices, while others will be more modestly priced, but you don't have to intend to buy in order to attend a preview or even the auction itself.

When you are using vintage clothes and accessories for inspiration, it is important that

you don't produce something so derivative that the end result looks like a period piece. If you are using a vintage print, then you may want to incorporate this into a contemporary silhouette; likewise, if it is the silhouette that you are using as inspiration, you may want to use a contemporary fabric. It is all about balance and reinterpretation, not wholesale copying. There are many classic vintage designs that reappear and are reinvented regularly including military dress jackets and items of workwear and sportswear.
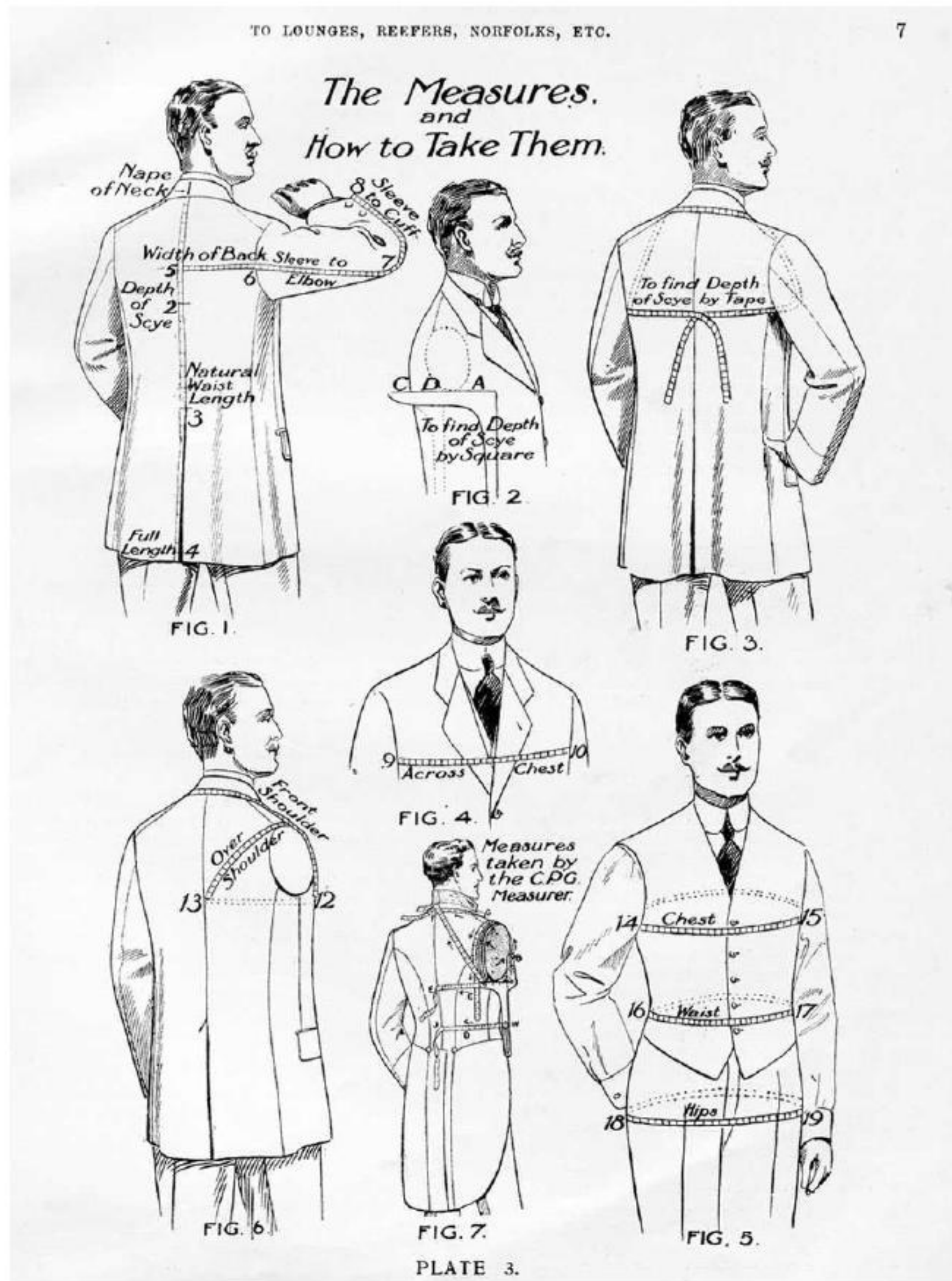
INTERVIEW WITH James Wright, Vintage Clothing Retailer

James is the owner of the Mint Vintage store in Earlham St Covent Garden. Mint specializes in formulating collections of vintage clothing based on trends.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT MINT?

From the shop in Covent Garden we no longer do anything by weight, we only pick by

the piece so we are able to formulate collections and create a look that has raised the bar on the edited vintage clothes shop. It is easier for people to shop because it is all hand picked. We grade six months in advance so if we want something we have it put to one side by the waste management places we go to. For example we have just got **harem pants** in and they have been saved over a six-month period for us so we can build up stock.

We don't see ourselves as a vintage shop we see ourselves as a fashion boutique it is almost a matter of fact that it is vintage. There are also staples. A good 1980s geometric **poly-cotton** dress or **polyester** dress will always sell because it sits well, it drapes well and they have got a little bit of give in them so they fit. They are as modern as the little black dress, as old as the little black dress; it's the same thing, it's a standard.

DO YOU SEL THE PIECES AS YOU FIND THEM OR DO YOU HAVE TO ALTER THEM?

We make them more commercially viable, hemlines have come up in the last twenty to thirty years, 1970s and 1980s dresses were usually on or slightly below the knee, we bring them above the knee. That is generally all we do. In the past we have made different varieties of customized clothing. We would keep a vintage dress as a vintage dress but we tweaked it a little bit, often the collars are wrong so we would make a strapless dress out of it. We don't do so much of that anymore, generally because we don't buy anything by weight so if something isn't the right style it doesn't hit the shop floor or we don't buy it. They may need the zip mending and they generally need shortening to make them more commercial; but that is changing, the discerning customer wants the piece as it was at the time.

WHAT ARE THE ICONIC PIECES THAT EVERYONE WANTS?

Everyone has done the **pea coat** from Gap to G-Star but once you have worn the original; once you know that is the one that Marlon Brando and Jack Nicholson wore, that is the one you want. This is a real pea coat, everything that you have had on over the last two years is not a pea coat, this is. You have to pay for that; boys are getting a bit more discerning about those pieces.

There is the Belstaff jacket, it was an English jacket made for riding motorbikes at 100 miles an hour, the original is synonymous with the biker industry, it is kit, and it is a hardy, fantastically engineered garment. Boys recognize that that is the case and they want the old one they don't want the new one. Boys having the job done, the belt with all the tools you need, your stuff around you.

ARE THERE ICONIC PIECES FOR WOMEN?

There is quite a following of women who like the land army girl look. A lot of women dress like that, in that late forties, fifties style now. There is a following of that and equally **Betty Boop** is the same period; they are not iconic pieces, but they are an iconic look. Also swimsuits are quite iconic and there are iconic images of women in certain swimsuits through the times, the Bond Girl, Debbie Harry and Madonna.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A VINTAGE PIECE AND AN ANTIQUE?

Antiques used to have be a hundred years old, that was the antique world's mark of an antique. There is a lot of talk about it but for me I would say about fifty years. Vintage is less than fifty years old and antique is more than fifty years old; people would beg to differ on that it is just my opinion. About mid 90s is the most recent thing in the store; if it's current in a way that fits, it's sellable.

Steve McQueen's Belstaff jacket. Courtesy of Bonhams & Butterfields Auctioneers. Reproduced with permission.

HOW DO YOU RESEARCH FOR THE STORE?

We watch the catwalks; we know that is our easiest and sure-fire way to see what is coming through, what direction the fashion industry is going in. Not all the ideas will come to fruition but you can pretty much guess the trends that will come through. The other side is that the street often pulls out a fashion that you have got to be on the street to find. The east end of London is great for that. For example the Barbour jacket came out of nowhere and everyone wants one now. A year ago I had a row of them in the shop and nobody wanted them; they grew to be a fashion and now I can't get them they have all been bought up. That fashion came from the street.

Jack Nicholson in a pea coat—scene from *The Last Detail* (1975). Cinemaphoto Corbis. Reproduced with permission.

MOST OF THE STUFF YOU ARE SELING IS WESTERN VINTAGE. IS THERE A MARKET FOR ETHNIC VINTAGE?

Well there are collectors of it now, things from the **Ottoman Empire** are very collectable, blankets from Navajo Indians they were called Hudson Bay blankets. They were white with different primary-coloured bands running down them red and green.

They were traded for pelts and they measured the pelts on the blanket and they would have been awarded blankets for the pelts. There are collectables with the ethnic world it just takes someone to push it forward. I think it has its place, it is just you have to have people with an interest in it, an interest in that history.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO STUDENTS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT MORE ABOUT VINTAGE CLOTHING?

You need to do background research, it builds the bigger picture. Everything gets revamped and reworked over the years whether it be tailoring or how things are fashioned, a zip, a button or a drawstring comes from somewhere. The more you know about something the more you can have a relationship with it.

CASE STUDY: Miriam Sucis

Miriam is a designer who has used vintage pieces as inspiration for her work. She collected antique and vintage pieces whilst backpacking around Europe. One of the pieces she found was a vintage U.S. sailor's jacket. Miriam says:

It has such an immense history and character behind it. There is a real sense of

who it belonged to and where it came from especially once it is turned inside out. At the back there is a beautifully, considered decorative embroidered panel by possibly the owner or one of his loved ones and interesting labels. Instead of just reproducing this I used the construction methods for example use of reinforced panels on the inside or bound seams to guide my design and manufacture process. This can be seen through my development to my final garments where I have reinforced stress points and then topstitched to draw attention and give more catwalk appeal, as there are also tiny details that can only be noticed upon close inspection.

Development page for a vintage sailor jacket, by Miriam Sucis. Reproduced with permission.

Architecture and the Built Environment

Architecture and the built environment provide a rich source of inspiration, from ancient buildings like the pyramids and the Taj Mahal to iconic contemporary buildings.

Contemporary architects are highly innovative in their use of materials and methods of construction as well as considering how their buildings fit into the environment.

There has long been an association between fashion and architecture. There are fashion designers who trained as architects (Gianfranco Ferre) and architects who work closely with fashion brands. There is, for example, an established relationship between Rem Koolhaas and Prada. It is not just the buildings that can be inspirational but also the urban environment: street furniture, graffiti, signage and all of the elements that go to create a city can also provide creative starting points.

Drawing from Life and Still Life

Whilst many of the inspirational sources in this book will require you to draw to record them, drawing can in itself be a source of inspiration. Many formal art and design programmes include life, figure and still life drawing as part of the curriculum. Drawing not only provides you with a tool to express your ideas but also helps to develop your ability to observe and to express yourself through mark making. You do not have to be an artist to gain something through the process of drawing, and not all drawings have to be exceptional to serve a purpose. Neither do you need to have a studio space. Many of the contributors to this book have talked about keeping a **visual journal** or notebook to record their ideas and things that they see. If your course does not offer classes in observational drawing, there are many evening classes and private courses available that you could turn to.

Sketches from life by Max Gaimster.

But you don't need to go to a class in order to draw; just pick up a pen, pencil, piece of charcoal or other medium and a piece of paper. You don't even have to set up a still life; just draw what you see around you. If you want to practice figure drawing, ask a friend or member of your family to pose for you. You can draw on the bus or the tube, in your garden or the park, in galleries or museums, on the street—in fact anywhere and anytime that you see something that inspires, try to draw it. The more you draw, the better you will get.

Print Resources

Libraries are also excellent sources of visual information, especially art books, and you will find detailed information about using them in Chapter 7. Images in printed material are often of higher quality than images that you might find on the Web. Libraries will also stock newspapers and some periodicals, and college and university libraries will have lots of specialist material. Consider starting your own library; over time it is possible to build a collection of books that are perhaps unrelated to fashion but inspire you. Look out for

bargains in second-hand shops and in the second-hand section on Amazon (http://www.amazon.com). Often, libraries will have a clearance where they offer books that are damaged or no longer in use for free; these books can be the source of some interesting images.

Although this book is about visual research, it is almost impossible to separate the visual from the written or oral. We use words to explain images and make sense of them. We can also use words as a source of visual inspiration. Novels, biographies and all kinds of literature including poetry require us to engage in some form of visualization in order to make sense of the text. We can use our visual responses to text to generate ideas and concepts or to create a visual narrative. How often when reading a book do you picture what the characters look like or the locations? When you read a poem does it suggest a colour, atmosphere and location?

Newspapers are good for current affairs and often have fashion news and style pages as well as financial information about fashion companies. There are also specialist trade publications such as *Womenswear Daily* (http://www.wwd.com) in the US and *Drapers* (http://www.draper-sonline.com) in the UK that have industry gossip and retail information. You can subscribe to these online.

Alongside the mainstream fashion titles such as *Vogue, Marie Claire* and *Elle,* there has been an explosion of style-focused magazines over the last few years. Titles like *Wallpaper, Tank, POP* and *Purple* feature the work of new and influential designers, stylists, photographers and journalists. They are often provocative and edgy in a way that mainstream titles aren't.

Project: Text as Visual Inspiration
You can use a book or poem as the starting point for a **moodboard.** Collect images that relate to the narrative, and ask yourself how these could be translated into a theme or concept. If the story is a dark thriller, this may suggest a slightly gothic theme with lots of black and heavy textured fabrics or a dark set for a photo shoot or a shop interior. On the other hand a romantic novel may suggest something much lighter with flowing fabrics, **chiffons** and pastel colours.

Kate Moss in Ugg boots (2003). Getty Images. Reproduced with permission.

Flower people's love-in (1967). Hulton Getty Picture Collection. Reproduced with permission.

Magazines such as *Hello, OK* and *Grazia* are good for celebrity tracking. In our celebrity-obsessed culture, what the latest starlet in Hollywood or supermodel in London is wearing can have a huge impact on the mass market. **Ugg boots** became extremely popular after celebrities like Jennifer Aniston and Kate Moss were photographed wearing them.

Music and Fashion

There has always been a synergy between fashion and popular music. In the 1950s rock and roll music was synonymous with teddy boys, brothel creepers and quiffs; the late 1960s brought us **Woodstock, hippies** and **flower power;** in the 1970s there were **glam rock** and punk; and the 1980s brought the **New Romantics.**

Each new genre of music that emerges has its own set of followers with their own particular style, which can filter down to mainstream fashion or up to the catwalks. Trendspotters will often go to music festivals and gigs to see what new styles are emerging. Pop stars and bands also employ stylists and designers to help them to create a unique look. A good example of this was the collaboration between Madonna and Jean Paul Gaultier that produced one of her most iconic looks.

There are cities around the world that have a history of producing influential popular music—Memphis, Nashville, Seattle, New York and Detroit in the US; Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow in the UK—and many of these cities have museums or venues with archives and Web sites charting their musical heritage, which are excellent sources of inspiration. Music magazines such as the *NME, Rolling Stone, The Wire, MOJO* and

Kerrang are also excellent sources of information about up-and-coming bands and festivals.

New Romantics in Cagney's club, off London Road, Liverpool (1981). Courtesy of Francesco Mellina. Reproduced with permission.

Science, Nature and Technology

An increasing number of designers and creatives are collaborating with scientists to find new ways of thinking about clothing and fashion. Scientists and designers are working together to develop exciting new textiles and garments that have the ability to deliver medication and have antibacterial properties. They may incorporate electronics and be smart enough to react to changes in the environment (O'Mahony and Braddock 2002). Manel Torres, for example, has worked to develop a fabric that you can spray on from a can (http://www.fabricanltd.com); this enables a whole new way of thinking about the nature of clothing and its longevity.

Humans have always used the natural world as inspiration; from the earliest cave paintings right through history, fauna and flora have featured heavily in every form of art and craft. It is also possible to use technology to investigate the structures that create the living things around us including our own bodies. Nature is full of patterns, from snowflakes to microbes, from sea life to animal skins: it is a store cupboard of ingenuity and inspiration.

A lot of fashion trends start in unusual areas such as space technology and **nano science,** so it is worth looking at publications and Web sites that deal with these areas. The magazines *New Scientist* (http://www.newscientist.com) and *Nature*

(http://www.nature.com) are useful starting points.

Madonna on her Blonde Ambition tour (1990) wearing an outfit designed by Jean Paul Gaultier. Neal Preston Corbis. Reproduced with permission.

Fabrican spray-on dress by Manel Torres. Photo: Gene Kiegel (http://www.genekiegel.com). Courtesy of Gene Kiegel. Reproduced with permission.

CASE STUDY: Fong Wong

Fong Wong is a designer who has successfully brought together influences from nature whilst taking a technological approach to realizing her designs. She completed her MA in Digital Fashion at London College of Fashion in 2007. For her MA project she looked at using three-dimensional pattern geometry for garment creation. This involved the development of new ways of creating patterns using geometric forms. Using snowflakes as inspiration Fong experimented with traditional techniques and a range of technologies including laser cutting, sublimation printing and digital printing. She has also used a mixture of software to illustrate her designs; in her image 'Six' which illustrates her collection, she used Daz Studio (http://www.daz3d.com) to create the figure and Photoshop to edit photographs of the garments, creating a multimedia collage.

Chiffon snowflakes created by Fong Wong using laser cutting techniques.

Fashion and Sport

Innovations in active sportswear have often crossed over into fashion, and fashions in health and fitness have led to fashion looks: the leg warmers worn by dancers in the studio found their way onto the streets in the 1980s, and trainers designed to enhance the performance of sportsmen and women have become high-fashion items. Fashionable brands have been built around sports personalities such as the tennis players Fred Perry and Rene Lacoste, and sports brands use fashion designers to bring cachet to their collections: Stella McCartney and Yohji Yamamoto for Adidas, and Y-3 and Alexander McQueen for Puma (Salazar 2008). A lot of the textiles that we find in fashionable clothing have crossed over from the active sportswear market where they were designed to improve performance or increase comfort (Lycra, Gore-Tex). By keeping an eye on developments in sportswear, you can often find inspiration in the form of new textiles, styles and details.

Adidas by Stella McCartney, London Fashion Week, September 2008. Getty Wireimage. Reproduced with permission.

INTERVIEW WITH Basia Szkutnicka

Basia Szkutnicka lectures in womenswear and footwear design in the UK and abroad. She also runs workshops and lectures on 'the creative design process' worldwide (US, Brazil, Japan, Russia, India). She is also the director of the study abroad programme at London College of Fashion.

WHAT DO YOU TEACH?

My area is forecasting and looking to the future, it is future design that I am interested in. When I lecture on inspiration I am interested in subliminal inspiration as well as the obvious iconic and important fashion/design/art exhibitions that take place in major cities like Paris, New York and London, they remind of things forgotten and inspire to create new directions and influences. Recently we had the Vionnet exhibition in Paris, there was an immediate response to this in the spring collections and the spirit of one of the world's greatest cutters will continue to flow through for a good few seasons. The Super Heroes exhibition in New York (2008), prior to that, threw colour and 'power' back into the mix, then there is an Yves Saint Laurent retrospective this summer in

Paris (2010) that will revive an interest in glamour and 'power' dressing and Margiela this summer in London will excite us to look at design through this unique genius's eyes … Exhibitions are a very important source of inspiration and it is because most people in fashion will go to New York, Paris and London and will view them. In a way it is forecasting that is creating trends.

In terms of inspiration you can be inspired or 'depressed' creatively by world events, political events, the economy. They can't be ignored because they are emotional influences, which make creative souls design in a particular way because it influences your mood and your output.

I think creative people are more sensitive than non-creative people and we don't even realize sometimes how our output is influenced by what's going on around us. A creative environment is key to a creative output.

A global event like the Olympics makes everyone think about fitness—therefore sportswear and casual wear. We all travel more and we want and need to be comfortable. Footwear as a product area is currently huge, along with accessories in general and is really going to be led by the whole issue of 'comfort and ergonomics'.

MBT were amongst the first to redesign and reinvent an orthopaedic shoe last. They created a sports shoe that 'trains' calves and legs, as well as improves posture (inspired by looking at the incredible posture of the African Masai and how it is achieved), they are a high price product, but holistic as well. They investigated the Masai people in Africa, how they walk in bare feet on sand and the fact that they have very good posture. They produced a shoe that mimics all these factors. The sole is shaped like a cradle and the shoe trains your calf muscles and aligns the body into a particular position. I have two pairs—and it works! Initially they were not very well publicized so few people knew about them, apart from professional sports people and fashion 'insiders' like myself. It didn't take long for this 'orthopaedic' craze to take off … and now many large sports shoe and casual footwear brands have produced their own versions of this concept. There are many 'pretenders' who have been 'inspired' by MBT's innovation … however they were one of the first to pioneer a new way of thinking about footwear.

Going back to inspiration—this is an example of a product inspired by a need—comfort. Secondary was the research carried out to identify how this may be achieved—this is where the Masai come in. Inspiration is not always visual—it may result from a requirement of the mind, soul and body, which is emotional and holistic.

MBTs are interesting as they have encountered criticism that the shoes are not as visually pleasing as their competitors in this field, but the company are working hard to make them more contemporary (boots and sandals have been added to the range), to fit within a highly competitive sports shoe market. I believe that their holistic function is a primary aspect, the challenge is to integrate aesthetics and fashion into what is essentially a serious 'beneficial' product, and to gently educate the consumer.

Form often follows function, the ergonomic and aesthetic need to work in synthesis because today's consumer is fickle—they seek 'the ultimate' in every product field …

It's not only about how things look, it's how they perform.

HOW DO YOU HELP YOUR STUDENTS TO FIND INSPIRATION?

What I do to inspire them is I limit them. I feel that creativity can evolve from limitation. For example I show them a slide of clouds and ask them to design a bag 'inspired' by the slide, using extreme limitation to produce initial design ideas. The resulting work may be simple or indeed complex … depending on how the designer is interpreting the image in front of them. When I say complex it does not mean a lot of detail but translating a non-object-related visual into an object, which, I feel, creates space for extreme creativity.

I use this exercise a lot in Japan when I lecture there; I show a paper clip and get them to develop ten versions of a dress based on a paperclip. It is not just the visual idea of a paper clip being one finite piece of wire bent in a specific way; it is the idea of 'form following function', simplicity, never ending, how things clip into it. You can have a seminar about a paper clip and its functions; it is developing the ability to extend your thinking and let your imagination take you forward.

I am adamant about pushing people into extending their minds and making them more imaginative. The students I now have are kids of the Internet age. They have played computer games since the age of four whereas I read books and created images in my mind. I had black-and-white TV as a child. I know people of a certain age say this but I really used my imagination because I had to and I liked doing that and I still do it.

I am trying to get students to unlearn, not just going to the Internet and getting stuff brought to them. I want to send them out to look for things instead of just being able to Google. Everyone is born being able to Google now and it is really dull, we all Google the same thing.

It devalues images, students do not look at the space around them they look to the Internet and they don't look around them.

Seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary, that is my paper clip.

At the end of my three-hour lecture on the creative design process after presenting them with images to work with, minimalist images, complex images, colour images, ethnic images, all those obvious things, the final slide is a grey box, a slide of grey. I say 'now design what you want' and it is the hardest thing for them to do because it is just a grey slide; it is saying now look inside yourself to create.

DO YOU THINK IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE TOTALY ORIGINAL?

Everything has been done, my first slide always says that there is nothing new but it is the personal interpretation that makes things new.

HOW CAN STUDENTS START TO UNDERSTAND THE VISUAL ASPECTS OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY?

They need to not just look at visual, they have to develop an awareness that whatever their crazy idea it needs to end up as a product that will sell. I believe in extreme creativity but I also believe in the commercial because there is no point designing things that won't sell unless you want to put it in a gallery and then that is fine art.

They need to look around, visit the stores, do their shop research, look at what people wear, or carry, and how they look day-to-day. They have to understand their consumer because that is the person who is going to receive their idea. As well as the creative side there is a business element. They have to look at the beginning and the end and work towards the middle that is how I like to explain it. There is no use designing madly if they don't know whom they are designing for. Then they can go to the right places to be inspired for the customer.

The way we think about customers, you have to become a customer yourself, take an

interest in shopping yourself. If you look at demographics they do influence things and you have to travel. If you come to the UK, the UK customer is not the one you find in London, people change when you go out of the city, suburban southern England, northern England, Scotland, it is all completely different. You have to understand the broader spectrum it is not just capital-based, it is not just London, Milan, Tokyo. If you are working fashion it is just going to get harder and harder, you have got to have global awareness.

Fashion students should get a job in retail and work at different market levels. In Primark people don't bother trying things on, they shove them in their basket and buy them and they don't bring them back if they don't fit. At the designer level people try things on and walk around and move and sometimes you will see that some of the designers even don't cut things to fit properly. Working in retail will teach you about colour and cloth and the sort of colours women go for and men go for.

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT IS GOING TO BE IN FASHION?

We are bombarded with information to the point of overload. I disregard things very quickly but that is based on my own historical knowledge, being forty-three years old I have forty-three years of references behind me. I can disregard things I have seen because by this time I have seen a lot of things before. The repetition in fashion is quite apparent to me.

When I did my first internship with older people they would say this has been around and is coming back. I would not understand the cycle of fashion because I had not seen it, whereas now I have library in my head. It is easy to say I have seen that, not interested. I will still stop and look to see how it differs to the reference I have in my mind but it will happen very quickly.

I change my mind everyday and that is one of the hardest things. When I tell people what I do they always say what's in fashion? I hate that question because I know that tomorrow I will answer it completely differently; it changes day by day. You watch the news and you feel something different and it changes. Today I can tell you it is lilac and tomorrow it might be orange. It is very hard to define. I really don't like to answer that in a specific way.

You have to know who you want to be. You have got to know where you fit but that is not copying.

All these people trying to be like a particular designer; I can spot them a mile off, they are really boring. What is the point in being inspired by Chalayan or Margiela or Demeulemeester or Dries Van Noten? It is pointless because what they have in the store now they thought of a year ago anyway, and it is really old, they are already well ahead.

Definitely research into it when it is on the catwalk but don't ever use those influences directly to inspire because that was designed six months ago, it is old.

You need to be aware of what is out there so you are not repeating it but not being influenced by it. Each season leads to the next so it is interesting to track a designer's progress so you can see how a design evolves. I know certain designers' collections so well I can see where they have used a jacket that was a bestseller and the evolution of a

concept taken on to the next season. That is true design, you can see movement and change. It is also because as a designer you want to push it forward, you are a draughtsperson and an engineer not just a person who draws pictures on a page, you are involved in your work and true designers love their own work.

I have to say that everything I have been talking about is very much in the realm of conceptual design. This does not necessarily apply if you end up working for Primark. That is a different ballpark altogether. I am talking about being free to work in conceptual field in an ideal world, utopia. It can be paired down to mainstream.

things to do when you lack inspiration

Everybody has a time when they worry that they have run out of ideas or don't know how to develop the research they have conducted. At these times there are some simple techniques you can use to get 'unstuck'. The one thing you should not do when you lack inspiration is to sit and stare at a blank sheet of paper.

Phone a Friend

Show your research to a friend and ask his or her opinion about it, what thoughts or ideas does it conjure up for him or her. Your friend may have a totally different perspective. If you ask several friends, you may come up with a whole set of ideas that you can use.

Change Your Environment

Many creative people travel extensively because a change in environment can help them to see things differently. You don't need to go to far-flung exotic locations. Often we take the place where we live for granted and don't bother to explore it. Select an area of your town or city that you have never visited, go to a different city, get out in the countryside or visit the coast, climb a hill or visit a stately home.

Create a Map

Decide on something that interests you and map its occurrence in your environment. It might be graffiti, litter, road signs, wildflowers or weeds, supermarket trolleys. Photograph and record your subject and think about what the similarities and differences are. Get a local map and mark its locations. Does this form a pattern in itself? Create a map of the people you know and how they are connected to each other. Do they have common features: how many of them wear glasses, have short hair, like to wear pink? It is amazing to see patterns form out of seemingly disconnected information, and these patterns can set off new ideas.

Observe

Sit in your local park, bus station and shopping mall, and watch the people. What are they wearing, carrying? Are they trying for a particular style? Who looks stylish? Who doesn't, and what is the difference? How many people are wearing blue shirts, carrying yellow bags? You will be surprised what you can learn. Make some notes, do some sketches and take some pictures.

Listen to Some Music

We have a strong emotional connection to music, and we can use this to help us to create images. Try drawing what a piece of music looks like to you—what colours and shapes does it suggest? What textures does it suggest: hard and brassy or soft and gentle? Does it have strong changes in tempo or flow methodically? The drawings you produce can become the starting point for a theme or a collection. Try listening to a genre of music you would not normally engage with. If you like classical music, try listening to some heavy metal; if you like drums and bass, try some jazz.

Read a Book

Find out which books are on the nonfiction best-sellers list. These usually give you an idea about the issues that are becoming important to people. Choose a book off the list and read it.

Stop and Think

Sometimes we are working so fast and trying to do so many things that we fail to take time to think. Set aside an hour or a day and do something relaxing; use the time to think about the things that are important to you. What are your goals, and how can you achieve them?

Write a List

Write a list of the things that you have always wanted to do but have never found the time for. Choose something off the list and do it.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have explored a wide range of sources of inspiration, from the historical to the contemporary. We have learned that inspiration for fashion comes from disparate fields including culture, science, politics and economics. As a fashion creative you need to have your finger on the pulse of popular culture and to use a wide range of resources and techniques. Keeping abreast of all the new developments in these areas is challenging and requires a strategic approach, a strong professional network and the ability to filter out what is not relevant to you. You will find further advice on organizing and managing your information and tools that can help you to do this in Chapter 8. The next chapter concentrates on the role of colour in fashion.

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British Council, 'Recommended Music Magazines' http://www.britishcouncil.org/arts-music-publications-music-magazines.htm

Drapers http://www.drapersonline.com/

Grazia http://www.graziadaily.co.uk

Hello http://www.hellomagazine.com

Kerrang http://www.kerrang.com

Marie Claire http://www.marieclaire.co.uk

MOJO http://www.mojo4music.com

NME http://www.nme.com

OK http://ok.co.uk/home/

POP http://thepop.com/

Purple http://www.purple.fr

R. D. Franks (fashion books and magazines) http://www.rdfranks.co.uk/

Rolling Stone http://www.rollingstone.com

Tank http://www.tankmagazine.com/

Vogue http://www.vogue.com

Wallpaper http://www.wallpaper-magazine.co.uk

The Wire http://www.thewire.co.uk

Museums, Libraries and Archives

American National WWII Museum http://www.nationalww2museum.org/

ARTstor http://www.artstor.org

Bath Costume Museum http://www.fashionmuseum.co.uk

British Library http://www.bl.uk/

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Imperial War Museum http://www.iwm.org.uk

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Library of Congress http://catalog.loc.gov/

Liverpool Museums http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/

Metropolitan Museum, 'Timeline of Art History' http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/?HomePageLink=toah_l

Museum of English Rural Life http://www.reading.ac.uk/merl/

Museum of Modern Art http://www.moma.org

National Gallery London http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame http://www.rockhall.com/

Smithsonian Museum Costume Collection http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/costume

Tate Galleries http://www.tate.org.uk

VADS http://www.vads.ac.uk

V&A Fashion V Sport http://www.vam.ac.uk/microsites/fashion-v-sport/

Victoria and Albert Museum http://www.vam.ac.uk

Vintage

LAVintage http://www.lavintage.com

Vintage Textile http://www.vintagetextile.com/

Wicked Lady Collectables (vintage patterns) http://www.wickedlady.com/collectables/clothes/patterns.php

chapter 3

colour theory and practice

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Colour is the first thing that attracts people and is one of if not the most important design feature of any product. The new iPod is a technological communication tool but its leading promotional feature is the extensive range of colours! Colour is the biggest, fastest, easiest way to influence the product and it's not just textiles it's everything.

—Janet Best, colour management consultant

Colour is important in driving fashion **trends** and sales; it is the starting point of every fashion product and is constantly referenced throughout the product development process. From basic colour theory to developing colour palettes, this chapter will help you to think creatively about colour. It discusses how we perceive colour and the meanings that different colours can convey. You will explore the various systems that are available for defining, communicating and matching colour to ensure consistency from the initial concept to the end product.

This chapter includes:

- Colour theory
- Case study: Lottie Smith
- Colour psychology, symbolism and meaning
- Interview with Angela Wright, colour psychologist
- Colour systems and colour matching
- Colour management
- Colour forecasting
- Interview with Jane Kellock.

colour theory

Anyone considering a career in fashion needs to understand the basics of colour theory. Fashion colours change each season, and you need to get the right colours into the store at the right time. If you are not a designer but are working in other areas of fashion, such as marketing, **visual merchandising,** buying or photography, colour is equally important. If the colour is wrong, your product will not sell. If you do not understand colour, you will find it difficult to work with printed media and fabrics. This section gives you an overview of colour theory: how we understand colour and how we perceive it.

What Is Colour?

In 1665 Sir Isaac Newton discovered that white light is composed of a spectrum of colours. The spectrum has seven colours: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet. Directing a ray of light at a solid glass prism can illustrate this. The prism splits the light beam into the colours of the spectrum, a process known as **refraction.** Light entering the eye comes into contact with the **retina.** The retina is formed of rods and cones. The rods distinguish between black and white, whereas the cones are able to recognize three colours: red, blue-violet and green. This information is then transmitted to the brain, which translates it into the colours that we see (Feisner 2001).

Objects appear to be different colours because they absorb different combinations of wavelengths. The colours we see are the wavelengths reflected by the object, while the other wavelengths are absorbed. So a strawberry will reflect red wavelengths and absorb the others.

People who suffer from colour deficiency lack one of the receptors. For example a lack of red receptors results in red-green colour deficiency. In extreme cases a lack of all receptors will result in black-and-white vision. If you are going to be working with colour as an important part of your role, you should have a colour vision test as it is possible to have a colour deficiency and not know it.

Colours behave differently depending upon a range of factors including media, light sources and other conditions, for example their juxtaposition with other colours and the proportions in which they are used. There are different ways of creating colour depending upon the media that you are working with.

Additive colour—When we are working on a computer screen, we are working with light, so mixing all the colours produces white light. This is called additive colour because the more colours you add, the lighter the effect.

Subtractive colour—If you are working with print on paper, the more colours you mix, the darker the colours appear. This is called subtractive colour because the more colours you mix, the more light is absorbed.

When you are working on a computer screen, the primary colours are red, green and blue, or **RGB;** however, a printer uses a different system because it is using subtractive colour. The colours used in colour printing are three primaries, cyan, magenta and yellow, and a fourth colour, black. This four-colour process is known as **CMYK.** You will often come across these terms when using computer programmes for image editing.

Colour Terminology

There are some terms that you need to become familiar with in order to understand colour theory and how colours are created. The main terms are listed in the following.

Primary colours—These are the colours that cannot be created by mixing other colours. They are red, blue and yellow. When all three primaries are mixed in subtractive colour, the result is black, while in additive colour, it is white.

Secondary colours—These are colours created by mixing two of the primary colours together. Mixing blue and yellow creates green, mixing red and yellow creates orange, and

mixing red and blue creates violet.

Tertiary colours—These colours lie between the primary and secondary colours and are yellow-orange, orange-red, red-violet, blue-violet, blue-green and yellow-green.

The colour wheel—The colour wheel illustrates the relationships between primary, secondary, complementary and tertiary colours. There are many different variations on the wheel; for example the colour wheel used for pigments has twelve segments, created by mixing two primaries to create a secondary colour and a primary with a secondary colour to create a tertiary. The process wheel, which is used in printing and photography, has different primaries (cyan, yellow and magenta) and tertiary colours to the pigment wheel. The Munsell colour wheel uses five principal colours (red, yellow, green, blue and purple), producing a wheel with twenty segments.

Complementary colours—These are opposite each other on the colour wheel, for example orange and blue, yellow and violet, or red and green. Placing complementary colours next to each other creates a dynamic effect.

Analogous colours—These are colours that are adjacent to each other on the colour wheel. Using analogous colours together creates a harmonious colour palette.

Harmonious colours—These are colours that are close to each other on the colour wheel, for example orange and yellow.

Pigment—This term has different meanings depending upon the context in which it is used. In biology it refers to the colouring of skin, plants and so on. In colour theory it relates to a powder used to create a colour in paints, inks and so on.

Hue—This is the name of the colour, e.g. red, green and blue.

Intensity, saturation or **chroma**—This relates to the purity of the hue present in a colour. The more saturated a colour is, the purer and more brilliant it will appear. Neutral colours are less saturated than vibrant colours.

Value—This indicates how light or dark the colour is.

Gamut—This refers to the area of a colour space that a device can accurately reproduce. The range of colours that we can see is far larger than the range that most devices can reproduce, and the range changes depending upon the device. For example some colours in RGB cannot be accurately represented in CMYK, and they are therefore said to be out of gamut. This is why the colours on the screen can differ from the colours printed out on paper.

Tint—A tint is achieved by mixing a colour with white.

Shade—A shade is achieved by mixing a colour with black.

Achromatic greys—These greys are achieved by mixing black and white.

Chromatic greys—These greys have a very low saturation of a hue.

Grayscale/greyscale—This is a gradation of achromatic greys. In computer terminology an image composed only of shades of grey is said to be greyscale.

Monochromatic—This is a colour scheme based upon the colours from one hue, for

example a range of blues.

Tone—A tone is achieved by mixing grey with a colour.

Colour palette—This is a selection of colours, for example within a painting or image; or in fashion terms, colours within a collection or range that have been selected to represent a particular mood or story.

Colour Interactions

Colours behave in different ways depending upon how you combine them. Albers (1975) produced the seminal work on colour interaction, and it is still a useful reference today. As we have already said, putting complementary colours like red and green together creates a vibrant effect, whilst using colours that are near each other on the colour wheel creates a more harmonious palette. Some combinations can make one colour appear to recede or advance. A bright green on a dark background will seem to be brighter and closer than the same green on a light background, as illustrated in Plate 10.

Project: Colour Palettes

Create two colour palettes that represent one of the pairs of **keywords** below. You should create one board for each keyword.

- Mystery, clarity
- Silence, excitement
- Fresh, decaying
- Arid, moist
- Luxurious, simple

Find an image to represent the keyword, and select a minimum of six colours for your palette. Remember that if you want a dynamic look, you may want to use contrasting colours, whereas if you want a harmonious look, you may want to use monochromatic or analogous colours.

CASE STUDY: Lottie Smith

Lottie Smith is a knitwear designer who uses colour to great effect in her work. She received an award from *Selvedge* magazine for Excellence in Textile Design. Lottie's inspiration for her collection came from a small paper-based exhibition at the V&A called Certain Trees: The Constructed Book, Poem and Object, 1964–2008. She liked the colours and textures of the paper and the idea of using text. Here, she explains her process.

I came up with the idea of using collage with textured papers, thick paints, stitch, old poem books, all based on trees; also **appliqué** visual pieces from initial knits and found pieces of fabrics.

The next step I took was to scan my original work in and start to design in Photoshop, making them into repetitions, multiples and patterns to get a feel for their translation into knitted and woven fabrics.

Alongside doing this I started to accumulate images for market and visual research in my **sketchbook** in the form of **moodboards,** also starting to consider colour. A trip to Premiere Vision in February this year played a strong part in helping me to develop my colour although I think mostly I developed it from my own thoughts and choices. I really enjoy putting together colour and feel it's something I can do well.

For some inspiration and guidance into the fashion side of things I looked mostly at Orla Kiely's Knits (http://www.orlakiely.com), Boden (http://www.boden.co.uk) and Oilily (http://www.oilily-world.com).

Within some of my samples there are areas of detail, some are so small that only the person wearing the garment would know they were there, this makes it that little bit more special. Adding details is in the form of buttons or tags made from snippets of French ribbons something that I strongly enjoy. I tend to use mostly second-hand and old buttons as I feel they give my work that little extra uniqueness they are not mass-produced (see Plate 11).

colour psychology, symbolism and meaning

The emotional factor is the most important point in your colour research; it is a language with which you can talk to the consumer. You can move people with the usage of colour, and get your message across. Red for example is always synonymous with romance and femininity but can also mean danger. You need to understand the power of colour.

—Richard Sardouk, trend forecaster

The meanings we attach to different colours are socially constructed; this means that across different cultures and societies the same colour can have a variety of meanings and symbolic representations. Some meanings are shared; others differ according to the culture and beliefs of different countries. We will look at some of the most common symbolic meanings that we attach to colours and discuss whether or not colour can also affect our behaviour or our physiology. We all see colour used symbolically in our everyday lives and barely stop to think about it: red for 'stop', green for 'go', white for weddings and so on. However, understanding the symbolic and cultural meanings of colours can be very useful for anyone working in the design-related industries. The list given here is by no means exhaustive, and if you are working on a project where the meaning attached to a colour is important, it would be worth doing some more extensive research. For example you would probably not want to produce a white wedding dress in a culture where the colour is associated with death and mourning.

Colour Symbolism

Red stands for danger, heat, passion, romance, importance (red carpet, red letter day) and anger (seeing red). In China it is considered to bring good luck and fortune, and in the Hindu religion it symbolizes joy and creativity.

White is associated with simplicity, purity and innocence. In the West it is almost universally the colour of wedding dresses, symbolizing purity and chastity; however, in

some other cultures it is the colour of mourning (China, parts of Africa). It is also the universal symbol for surrender (white flag).

Black is the colour of sophistication, mystery and power. It is the colour of mourning in the West. Generally considered to be slimming, black is never out of fashion. Historically black was often associated with negativity, tragedy and bad luck (black cats, black Friday).

Blue is considered to have a calming effect. In Mexico it is the colour of mourning, and in Greece it is used to ward off the evil eye. Blue is also related to depression (feeling blue) and to sexual innuendo (blue jokes). Pale blues are associated in the West with baby boys.

Green is associated with nature, trees and grass. It is also the universal symbol for safety (green traffic lights). It represents the colour of resurrection and is considered to be relaxing (green rooms in theatres). It recently has been associated with issues relating to ecology and the environment (the Green Party, the recycling symbol).

Purple is the colour of royalty in the West. It also has strong associations with creativity, and in Japan purple indicates power and wealth.

Orange is another happy colour. It is also an autumnal colour and in the West is often associated with Halloween. It is believed to stimulate the appetite and to be a social colour.

Yellow is considered to be a cheerful colour, signifying happiness, hope (yellow ribbons) and well-being, but it also has negative connotations of cowardice (yellow belly). In nature when combined with black, yellow is a warning colour (wasps).

Pink is associated with little girls (specifically pale pastel pinks); it is also associated with romance and femininity. Bright pinks are said to be stimulating, whilst pale pinks are considered to have a calming effect. In some cultures pink is also associated with the gay or homosexual community (pink pound).

Grey/gray is associated with intellect, conservatism and authority. As a neutral colour it is also a fashion staple, particularly in men's business suits. It can also be associated with pessimism (grey day, grey skies).

Warm and Cool Colours

Colours are also often described as being either warm or cool. It is possible that these associations are closely connected to nature and our environment. For example colours such as red, orange and yellow that are closely related with sunshine and fire are considered to be warm colours. Greys, whites and violets are indicative of the winter landscape and are considered to be cool colours. These associations appear to be universal across most cultures (http://www.sensationalcolor.com).

Colour Psychology

Many people argue that colours can affect the way we feel, making us calmer or more excited, affecting our appetites and our mood. As we have already stated, the meanings of colours vary according to our culture, and therefore it is possible that our **psychological**

responses to colours are also culturally situated. If we expect a certain colour to calm us down, perhaps that is the effect that it will have. It is generally accepted that people feel happier when the sun shines and less happy when the skies are grey and foreboding, but is this the impact of the colours around us or a **physiological** response to the temperature? Clearly nature uses colour to send out signals: bright flowers attract insects, whilst yellow and black are signs of danger and food is rarely blue. People have different responses to colours; not everyone likes the same colours or even the same colour combinations.

Some studies have shown that exposure to a particular colour can create a physical response; for example there is evidence that a certain shade of pink can have the effect of suppressing the desire for food (Schauss 1981) and have a calming effect. It was also found that being exposed to the colour red before taking a test can have a negative effect red and mistakes and failure, perhaps because red on your performance. This is thought to result from is traditionally used for marking errors on essays the strong association we have between the colour and schoolwork (University of Rochester 2007).

INTERVIEW WITH Angela Wright, Colour Psychologist

Angela Wright is a colour psychologist and the author of *The Beginner's Guide to Colour Psychology*. She studied **Freudian psychotherapy** before moving into the world of colour that had always fascinated her.

YOU IDENTIFY FOUR PERSONALITY TYPES THAT RELATE TO FOUR DIFFERENT COLOUR PALETTES; WHAT ARE THE PERSONALITY TYPES?

Basically the personality types are internally or externally motivated. Jung calls them introverts and extroverts.

The type ones are fairly light visually and quite delicate; they cover a lot of ground but they don't dig. They can be very clever but they really hate getting bogged down in academic debate. They're very practical, they like to get things done, they communicate magically, and they're just brilliant. They lift spirits, they're fun.

The type two personality has that same delicacy but it's all very contained, they're cool, calm, collected. They prefer to stay behind the scenes. They're wonderfully supportive and nurturing and they have this ability to very gently cut through all the hot air and emotion and sum up a situation in one line so they get things moving as well.

The second extrovert is the type three, again externally motivated but their energy is much more intense. They want to save the world. They're very caring but they're action-orientated so they'll do something about it. They'll go in to fight for the underdog, they'll protest.

The type four is again internally motivated but their energy is very intense and they're charismatic. Everybody aspires to be that person but they're not. They're very few and far between and they're usually to be found at the top because they have a great gift for delegation, for seeing the bigger picture and they don't go off down sentimental diversionary paths, they keep their eye on their objectives. Examples of that type would be somebody like Margaret Thatcher and, of course, each of these four

types has a potential for negative perceptions as well.

The type one can often be perceived as air-headed and frivolous; the type two can be seen as aloof, rather unfriendly. The type three can be seen as tedious and bossy and a pain in the bottom, and the type four can be seen as very cold and uncaring. They're not uncaring they're just not sentimental. Those are the four types.

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS AN ATTRACTIVE COLOUR?

There is no such thing as a universally attractive colour, there's no such thing as a good colour any-more than there's any such thing as a universally attractive person. There are universally attractive colour combinations. If you are on any kind of a design project you decide at the outset, which is the most appropriate colour group to capture and express characteristics of the project. That can apply to anything everything has a personality. So which colours will best capture the personality that you're trying to communicate?

For example, if you were trying to communicate a message of exuberance and being outgoing and fun then you would go for bright, lively colours—hot pinks, yellows.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR COLOUR GROUPS?

The group one colours are mainly chintz. They're very clear, quite bright. The hue is yellow-based so the hues have got yellow, the value is relatively high, in other words there's not much black in them, the chroma is not that high, it's kind of mid.

With the group two colours the hue contains blue so it's cool, the value is mid (not very light, not very dark) and the chroma is relatively low. These colours are very understated, subtle.

The group three colours again have yellow contained in the basic hue so they're warm, the value can be high or low, you can get light colours and dark colours but they're not clear, they've always got a bit of black in them even if they're quite light so it sort of takes the edge off them.

Then the four colours are either very light, very dark or very intense. The hues are blue, the value is one extreme or the other (very high or very low) and the chroma is high (see Plate 13).

TEL ME ABOUT YOUR COMPANY COLOUR AFFECTS, WHAT DO YOU DO?

I opened Colour Affects purely with the objective of testing my theories empirically. It's not my job to tell people what colours to use, it's my job to give them the information, to tell them what will happen if they use *these* colours and what will happen if they use *those* colours. It's all written. I give them a written rationale and I will give recommendations along the lines of if this is what you want to communicate then these are the colours that will communicate that.

YOU CARIED OUT SOME RESEARCH INTO YOUR THEORIES: WHAT DID YOU DISCOVER?

We discovered that there were mathematical correlations within the groups that don't

exist between colours in different groups, which suggests that objective colour harmony is scientific reality.

If you want to harmonize properly, the wheel isn't going to do it unless you've harmonized the wheel in the first place. You need four wheels.

The other great thing I discovered was that each individual has a kind of affinity with one of the colour groups and you can sort of see that, in their physical colouring as well. We are part of the grand design as well. If you're looking at a colour scheme that is in 'your' colour group/family you are likely to say, 'Oh wow, those are my kind of colours'. If you see a colour scheme that's been harmonized in line with the Colour Affects system you're likely to say, 'Oh wow, look at those colours, they're great'. It's a different reaction but they're both positive. So there are universally attractive colour combinations but one colour by itself, just the same as one musical note, isn't really going to do much. Each colour does have its universal properties and in that sense colour psychology is universal.

HOW WOULD YOU GO ABOUT CREATING A COLOUR PALETTE?

To me a palette is a group of colours within which every colour has a role to play and they all work together, synergistically, to underpin the message of the season for instance. So if someone says to me 'This season, OK we need bright, lively colours'. I would go to the Morninglight palette and recommend a group of colours from that. We've renamed the colour groups in terms of light so they're Morninglight, Dreamlight, Firelight and Starlight.

I would have a headline palette of the one that society is expressing and needs right now, then I would have three sub-palettes and I would never in a million years take a colour from one of the sub-palettes and put it with a colour from the head palette. You've got to keep them separate then everybody understands them, gets it.

What defines whether a colour is stimulating or calming is not the wavelength. People think red, yellow and orange are stimulating and blue, green and purple are calming. Not so. It's the intensity. So a very intense blue will stimulate the mind where a lovely, warm, soft, light blue will calm the mind. Equally, going over to the red, a very strong red will stimulate physically, but a tint of red, which is pink, soothes physically. But the red wavelength is all about the physical and the blue wavelength is all about the mental. The yellow wavelength is all about the emotions and the ego and self-confidence and the green provides the essential balance, it's in the centre of the spectrum so it requires no great effort to look at it but green is very reassuring and it provides the balance between the mind, the body and the emotions. Of course, when the world around us is green we instinctively know we're not going to starve; we're very reassured by it. For instance, I always recommend it round the cash desk in retailing because it reduces buyer's remorse while you're queuing to pay.

I suppose if you were to ask me what's the basis of my colour theories I would have to say nature, that's where I went first to look. Colour is nature's signalling system so we know when the world is grey and white and a bit colourless generally we do instinctively hibernate. The colours in our environment have a very profound physical and psychological and emotional effect on us and colour is energy. It's electromagnetic

energy. It's the same as microwaves and X-rays and we don't mess with them.

colour systems and colour matching

There are thousands of different names for colours and no exact science for this naming; paint companies, cosmetic companies or even car manufacturers have developed many names that we use to describe colours. Using a name to describe a colour is not accurate, and this causes issues when communicating. In fashion you may be producing a collection with a number of different manufacturers and you need the items to match. Asking them to produce the garment in navy blue will result in a mess of mismatched colour. The same principles apply to printed media. To ensure that we achieve the colours we want, classification systems are used to accurately convey the colour information. A range of systems are available for use across different media and product groups. Some of the most popular systems are outlined here.

PANTONE®

One of the best-known colour classification systems in fashion and graphics, the PANTONE color system was developed by Lawrence Herbert in 1963 (see Plate 14). The PANTONE MATCHING SYSTEM® is a book of standardized colour in a fan format. The colours are specified by a number; for example PANTONE 100 is a yellow, and PANTONE 253 is a purple. Pantone has different systems for digital technology, fashion and textiles, paint and so on. The system for fashion and textiles includes 1,925 colours that are available in paper or cotton format. Pantone also produces a biannual trend forecasting tool called the Pantone View Color Planner. Some specialist textile design programmes contain a PANTONE colour atlas within the system, allowing easy specification of colours. The Pantone Web site has a lot of information about colour theory and trends. You can join myPANTONE and download a very useful tool for creating and saving your own Pantone palettes that you can then use in your design software. There is also a Pantone application for the iPhone and many other useful resources. By using PANTONE colour codes you can ensure that your products will be the colour that you specified. For more information visit http://www.pantone.com.

The Natural Colour System

NCS—Natural Colour System®© is a logical colour notation system which builds on how the human being sees colour. A notation represents a specific colour percept and describes the colour visually, it is not depending on limitations caused by pigments, light rays or nerve signals that have given rise to this perception. (http://www.ncscolour.com)

In the NCS system there are six elementary colours that are perceived by humans as being 'pure'; for example the elementary red is a pure red with no yellow or blue. The four chromatic elementary colours are yellow (Y), red (R), blue (B) and green (G), and the two nonchromatic elementary colours are white (W) and black (S) (see Plate 15).

NCS colour notations are based on how much a given colour seems to resemble two or more of these six elementary colours. Colours are described using a notation system that indicates their hue, chromatic value and nuance. Pure grey colours have no hue and are

given nuance notations followed by -N, meaning neutral. The pure grey scale is a scale from white, which is 0300-N, to black, which is 9000-N.

The NCS notation system describes both the amount of whiteness or nuance that a colour has and the degree of resemblance a colour has to two of the elementary chromatic colours. Therefore the notation 1050-Y90R indicates a colour that has 10 per cent blackness and the maximum chromatic value of 50 per cent—the remaining 40 per cent indicates the whiteness but is not shown in the notation. Y90R indicates a yellow with 90 per cent redness. The benefits of the system are that sequences of colours can be made that balance exactly within a hue or between a number of hues, making this system unique and providing the designer with complete control of the specification process.

Munsell

The Munsell system is a perceptual system (based on how we see light), and it defines colour in terms of hue, value and chroma (intensity of the colour). The system is modelled on a globe around which a band of hues runs at the equator. Plate 16 illustrates how the system works. The ten hues (red, yellow-red, yellow, green-yellow, green, blue-green, blue, purple-blue, purple and red-purple) are arranged at equal distances around the central axis, and the points on the axis are numbered. Primary yellow is represented as 5Y, while a yellow that was closer to green would be represented as 2.5GY, and a yellow that was closer to red would be represented as 7.5YR. The axis of the orb, represented by a pole, represents a range of grey values from black (south) to white (north) and is divided into a gradient numbered 1–9 (1 being the darkest and 9 the lightest). N is used as a notation for the grey value; for example 1N is white and 9N is black (the system was later expanded to run from 0 for white to 10 for black).

The chroma is shown running from the centre of each hue outward, from neutral colours at the centre to stronger colours at the outer edge. For each hue, however, the chroma is not uniform. Hues reach full chroma at different points on the axis. For example reds, blues and purples have higher average chroma values at full saturation. The system uses the following notation: the hue is represented by a word or initial (e.g. Green or G), the values by the number on the value scale (e.g. 6/), and the chroma by the numbers 1–10 (the higher the number, the more intense the colour). So a bright red could be represented as 5R 6/10. In this, 5R indicates that the hue is red, 6 indicates a mid-light value, and 10 indicates a high chroma, or intense colour. For further information visit X-Rite's site (http://www.xrite.com/top_munsell.aspx).

Commission Internationale de l'Eclairage

The Commission Internationale de l'Eclairage (CIE, or International Commission on Illumination), founded in 1913, is an international organization that sets the standards for lighting and has a technical committee that deals with colour. Like the Munsell system the CIE system relates to our perception of colour and is device independent, based on standard sources of light. CIELAB is a colour system used by the CIE and is an opponent colour system based on the fact that a colour cannot, for example, be both red and green as these are opposites. It has similarities to the Munsell system in that there is a central vertical axis that represents the value, numbered from 0 (white) to 100 (black).