

**PRINTED TEXTILES // THE CLOTH // FRASER TAYLOR**

**Enhancing Access and Utilisation to The Glasgow School of Art Archives and Collections**

*Dr Helena Britt*

The Glasgow School of Art

Textiles, their design, production and study have been closely connected to The Glasgow School of Art (GSA) since its formation as a branch of the Government School of Design in 1845. Today, the School's Archives and Collections contain a wealth of artefacts and records related to its' activities, buildings, staff, students and related organisations. Users from GSA's Department of Fashion & Textiles access this resource for learning, teaching, scholarship and research. Examples include students analysing historical textile techniques in Needlework Development Scheme samples, the digital redesign and print of Sylvia Chalmers textiles by the Centre for Advanced Textiles<sup>1</sup>, staff projects exploring contemporary archive utilisation<sup>2</sup> and investigation surrounding Scottish textiles such as those by Stoddard Templeton<sup>3</sup>. Devastatingly, in May 2014, a fire engulfed GSA's Mackintosh Building, which housed the School's Archives and Collections. Prior to this, alumni Fraser Taylor had donated a collection of materials to the archive (figure 1). This comprised work from Taylor's time as a student, items by and related to the influential 1980s collective *The Cloth*. Due to the fire, parts of the newly accessioned collection suffered water damage; damp items were retrieved and laid out to dry (figure 2) while others were sent for freezing and require conservation. In March 2015, GSA was joint awardee of The Textile Society Special Award – The Audrey Archivist's Award, in memory of Audrey Duck MBE (1935-2013). Audrey's husband, Peter Duck presented the award at the *Textiles: New Research Strategies III Symposium*. The funding has permitted work to be undertaken with the *Fraser Taylor and The Cloth Collection*, which would not have otherwise been possible.

### **Fraser Taylor and *The Cloth***

Between 1977-1981, Fraser Taylor and fellow student David Band studied printed textiles at GSA. Initially, Taylor wanted to study painting but was drawn to the Printed Textiles Department due to the fine art and painterly approaches possible, influenced by tutor Jimmy Cosgrove. Both Taylor and Band graduated from GSA and went on to study at the Royal College of Art (1981-1983). For their graduate show, Taylor and Band, together with fellow students Helen Manning and Brian Bolgner formed a collective (figure 3), *The Cloth*. The ethos of this group was pioneering, it differed from design practice at the time as they decided to operate collectively rather than compete against each other for work. *The Cloth* was an instant success. Clients included Betty Jackson, Paul Smith, Fenn Wright & Mason, Yves Saint Laurent, Bill Blass and Calvin Klein. Under *The Cloth* label, the collective created clothing (figure 4), available through exclusive retail outlets such as Liberty of London, Corniche, Edinburgh and The Warehouse, Glasgow. *The Cloth* existed for four years. During this time the collective worked on projects for visual display, set design, interior textiles, packaging and book cover design. They had links with the music industry and record sleeve designs were created for many artists and bands including Altered Images, Spandau Ballet, Aztec Camera, The Bluebells, Joan Armatrading and Paul Brady. Differing from other textile designers, *The Cloth* '...expanded outside of their specialist area,

and...marked visual consistency of their outputs across a range of disciplines'; they were '...truly interdisciplinary, moving assuredly across, fashion, textiles, painting, illustration and graphic design.'<sup>4</sup>

### **The Audrey Archivist's Award – Project Update**

The project supported by the Audrey Archivist's Award aims to catalogue, digitise and provide access to items from the *Fraser Taylor and The Cloth Collection*, alongside investigation to develop options for research projects and funding proposals. Due to the Mackintosh Building fire, access to GSA's Archives and Collections has been restricted, with the online catalogue, which launched in December 2014, a key platform for users. Recently, Archives and Collections have relocated to The Whisky Bond, Glasgow, where offices and holdings will remain until 2018, when they will return to the restored Mackintosh Building. The move into new premises caused a delay to the start of the project. Carrie Skinner has been appointed to catalogue the archive, supervised by GSA Archivist, Susannah Waters. The *Fraser Taylor and The Cloth Collection* comprises approximately 50 textile items and 20 files of paperwork, including printed fabric lengths (figure 5), textile samples, garments, sketchbooks, drawings, paper designs, photographs, press items, promotional material, publications and magazines. To date, the material returned from storage has been reviewed, with the condition of items checked. Cataloguing including photographing and measuring items, has taken place for some of the collection. There has been correspondence with Taylor to finalise the acquisition and collect information about items to be used in catalogue listings. It is envisaged that by late February 2016, the cataloguing and digitisation of the collection will be complete.

Initial investigation has taken place to provide further contextual information and develop research themes. For example, *The Cloth* and its members featured in various publications of the day such as ID and Blitz Magazine. Garments by *The Cloth* featured in 'Club to Catwalk'<sup>5</sup> and in the book '1980s Fashion Print'<sup>6</sup>. Articles published in memory of David Band in 2011 and fanzine sites indicate the contemporary popularity of the collective. Taylor continues to work as a creative practitioner and educator, with new work presented through recent exhibitions, signalling continued interest and new appreciation. The *Fraser Taylor and The Cloth Collection* is of considerable interest to GSA, textiles, fashion and design history generally. The innovative working practices, creative and pedagogic contexts related to Fraser Taylor, David Band and *The Cloth* have never before been investigated. Explicating the collaborative and cross-disciplinary approaches fostered by the collective will be insightful and relevant to contemporary creative practice and education. Potential areas for project formulation surround textile design and printing processes, pedagogic influences and approaches, collaborative working and interdisciplinarity, textiles, fashion and music connections. The work to build further projects and funding proposals will continue to April 2016. It is intended that the project undertaken due to the support of The Textile Society's - The Audrey Archivist's Award and subsequent

projects will ensure the continued memory of Audrey Duck to future generations of archivists and users of textile archives.

### **Further Information**

#### The Glasgow School of Art - Archives & Collections

The Whisky Bond, 2 Dawson Road, Glasgow G4 9SS

[www.gsa.ac.uk/archives](http://www.gsa.ac.uk/archives)

The Glasgow School of Art Archives and Collections are open to all researchers including the School's staff and students, and external researchers including members of the general public, subject to proof of identification and acceptance of the Searchroom Rules. The Archives and Collections are open Monday to Friday 9.30 – 12.30 and 13.30 – 16.30. Users are advised to make an appointment in advance. Access to some material may be restricted for reasons of data protection or because of conservation considerations.

#### The Glasgow School of Art – Department of Fashion & Textiles

167 Renfrew Street, Glasgow G3 6RF

<http://www.gsa.ac.uk/study/undergraduate-degrees/textile-design/>

<http://www.gsa.ac.uk/study/graduate-degrees/fashion-plus-textiles/>



Figure 1: Items from the *Fraser Taylor and The Cloth Collection* in GSA's Archives and Collections Centre, Mackintosh Building, prior to the fire, 2014. Photograph, Susannah Waters.

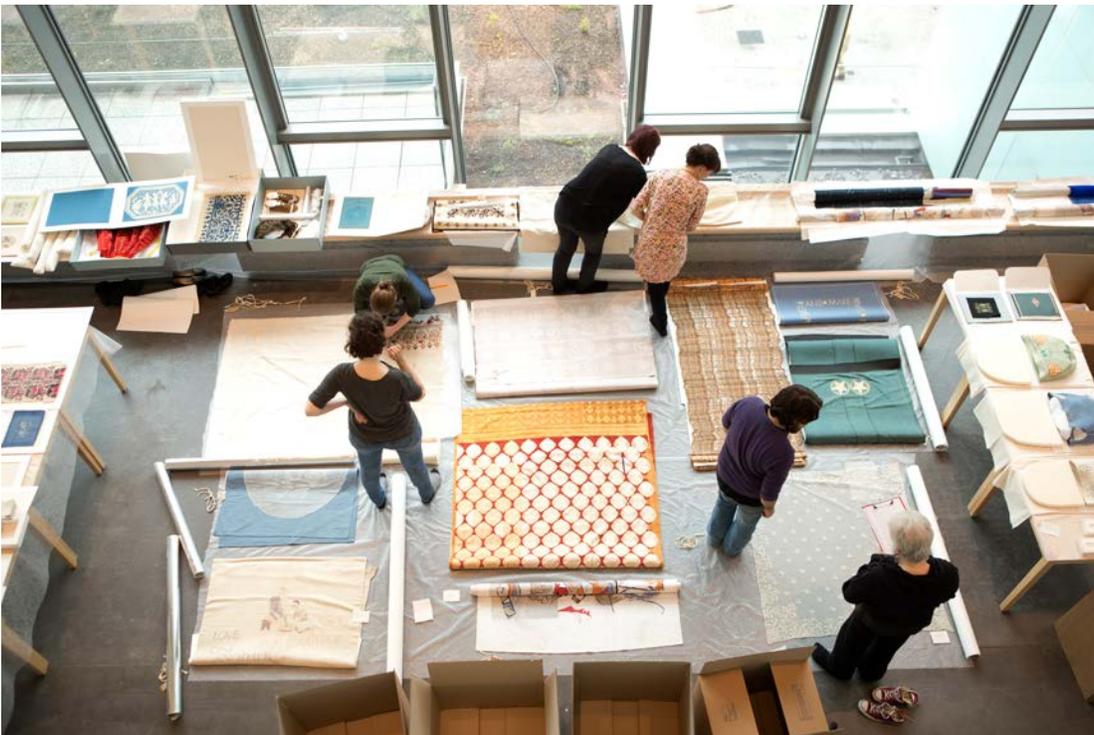


Figure 2: Archives and Collections textiles drying in GSA's Reid Building, post fire, 2014. Photography, macateer photograph, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowschoolart/>.



Figure 3: Helen Manning, Fraser Taylor, Brain Bolger and David Band, 1984. Photographer Peter Anderson. Copyright: The Cloth.



Figure 4: Summer Simmits Collection, The Cloth, Spring / Summer 1985. Photographer, Anita Corbin. Copyright: The Cloth.



Figure 5: Textile length by Fraser Taylor (photograph, Susannah Waters), GSA Archives and Collections.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.classictextiles.com>

<sup>2</sup> J. Stephen-Cran, *Awaken: New Textiles Inspired by the Archives and Collections at The Glasgow School of Art*. Mackintosh Museum, The Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, 24 January - 28 February 2009.

<sup>3</sup> H. Britt, *Interwoven Connections: The Stoddard Templeton Design Studio and Design Library, 1843-2005*. Mackintosh Museum, The Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow 9 November 2013 - 11 January 2014.

<sup>4</sup> I. Massey, 'New lessons from hard times: The Cloth'. *Varoom!*, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2014. Accessed from [http://andrewdineley.macmate.me/The\\_Cloth\\_\(UK\)\\_-\\_a\\_tribute\\_site/Articles/Entries/2011/10/15\\_New\\_lessons\\_from\\_hard\\_times\\_\\_The\\_Cloth.html](http://andrewdineley.macmate.me/The_Cloth_(UK)_-_a_tribute_site/Articles/Entries/2011/10/15_New_lessons_from_hard_times__The_Cloth.html) [09/11/15].

<sup>5</sup> W. Dagworthy, *Club to Catwalk*. Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 10 July 2013 - 16 February 2014.

<sup>6</sup> M. Fogg, *1980s Fashion Print*. Batsford, London, 2009.