

What precedents can I appeal to in framing my research process?

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Developing Methodologies for Creating a Textile Design Collection, based on Archive Material

My research is involved with working towards a methodology for developing textile designs from archive material and historical collections. This will focus on using the Parker Knoll collections, yet to be archived, as a case study.

I have found it essential to frame this research through a range of precedents to illuminate how researchers from various disciplines identify, interrogate and interpret archival material. These raise questions on how archive study can provide knowledge on hitherto undocumented areas of historical and sociological interest, as well as the industry and craft of design.

A range of studies by designers, academics and students taking very different approaches have led to the development of methodologies that give new insights into historical practices, and provide valuable precedents. Recent projects, for example the Awaken Project¹, and the Shadow Tissue study by Trish Belfield and Philip Sykas², show that there is the potential to produce new work that has power and resonance when based on in-depth absorption and interpretation of the archive material.

Despite these important projects, it has been noted that there are few research examples written by designers, particularly textile designers, on the methodology of the development process for using archive material for textile design collections. The existing precedents help to show where further investigation can be made, informing how methodologies can be developed to demonstrate that archive material supports a continual reframing of our understanding of the past, contributing to new knowledge of the area.

1 Britt, Helena, Stephen-Cran, James and Bremner, Elaine (2013) Awaken: Contemporary Fashion & Textile Interpretation of Archival Material. In: Futurescan 2: Collective Voices, 10-11 January 2012, Sheffield Hallam University, UK

2 Belfield, Patricia, & Sykas, Philip, The Rediscovery of Shadow Tissues, Turnball and Stockdale, Isle of Man, 2013