

INSTANT WHIP

Fraser Taylor
Textiles & Papers
1977–87

Revisited

Reid Gallery and Window on Heritage

16 March-20 April 2024

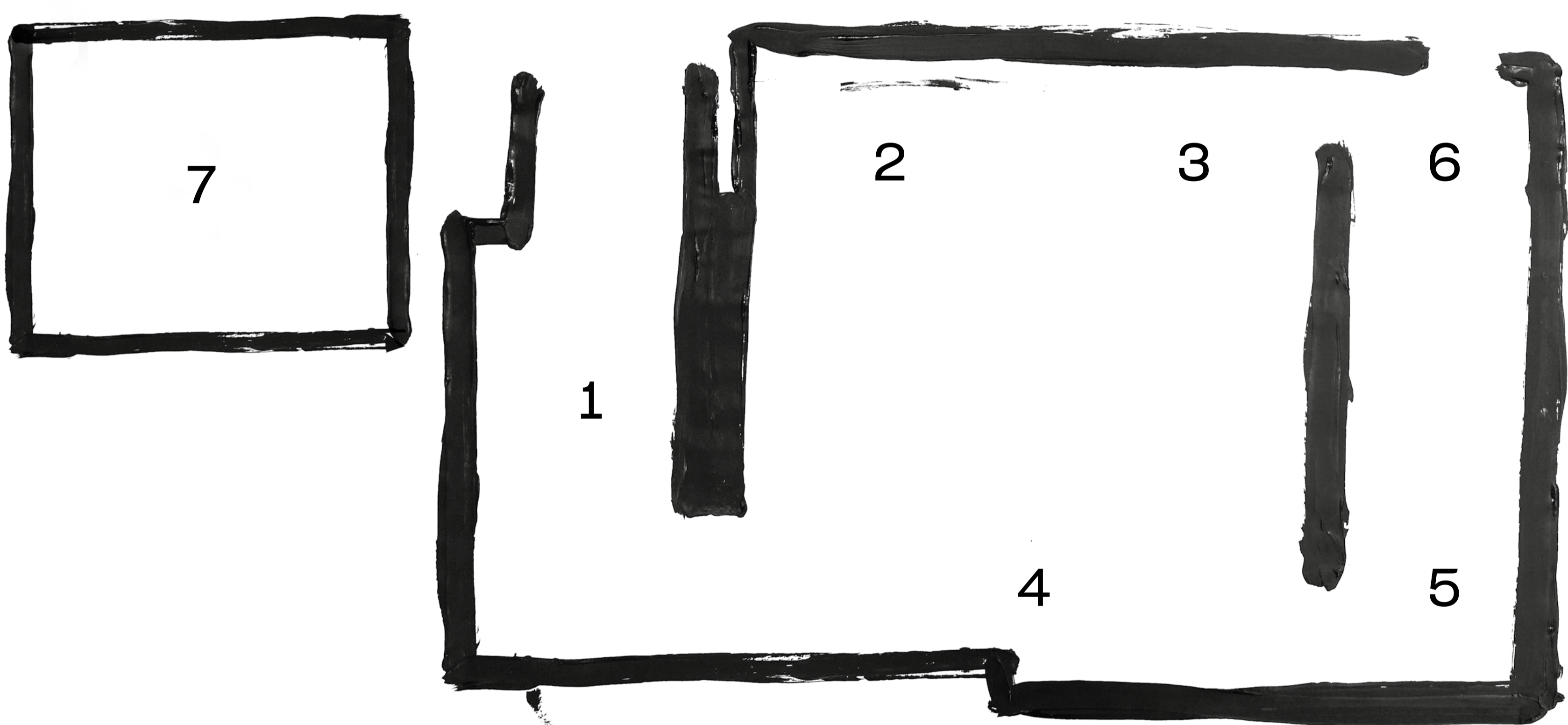
Open Monday to Saturday

10am – 4:30pm

Wall Texts

WINDOW
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INTRODUCTION

Instant Whip focuses on a unique collection of textiles and papers held by The Glasgow School of Art (GSA) Archives and Collections. Donated by interdisciplinary artist Fraser Taylor in 2014, and spanning the period 1977-87, the collection comprises sketchbooks, slides, drawings, designs, printed textile samples, fabric lengths, garments and ephemera from Taylor's undergraduate and postgraduate studies in Printed Textiles at GSA and the Royal College of Art (RCA) respectively. It also includes work produced by pioneering creative studio, The Cloth, which Taylor formed with David Band (d.2011), Brian Bolger and Helen Manning for their RCA Degree Show in 1983.

Instant Whip is a collaboration between Dr Helena Britt (GSA), curatorial practice Panel and Fraser Taylor, working in partnership with GSA Archives and Collections, Reid Gallery and open access screen-printing studio Print Clan. The exhibition centres upon Taylor's developing practice, highlighting, through selected material from the archive, how previous work has informed new ideas and collaborations. It also gives insight into personal networks, perspectives, and influences on Taylor's evolving career - with a distinct focus on Glasgow. Against the disruptive socio-political context and economic gloom of the time, homosexuality was legalised, access to art schools opened up, and there was youthful aspiration to be different from previous generations. Friendships, dressing up and going out defined Taylor's art school experiences and his regular haunts, the Vic Café, Nico's and the Rock Garden in Glasgow were important spaces for artists, designers, musicians, and hairdressers working in the city.

Exploring recurring links to Glasgow as a centre of creativity, *Instant Whip* borrows its title from an independent Scottish magazine published in 1981, featuring GSA's annual fashion show and 'the latest in art, fashion and music.' Drawing on such energy and newly flourishing sub-cultures, artefacts from the archive are arranged by theme and presented for the first time collectively alongside private loans and newly commissioned works. Revisiting ideas, images and methods of making, *Instant Whip* reveals more than an artist's practice; it tells stories about the explosion of style and subcultural expression in the 1980s, honouring and celebrating the crossover between textiles, fashion, art, design and music in popular culture that defined this decade.

DRAWING INTO TEXTILES

Joining GSA in 1977, Taylor studied the general first-year course and formed friendships with an inventive group of students, which included David Band. Initially interested in painting, Taylor was drawn to the vibrancy and interdisciplinarity offered by the Printed Textiles department, led by Jimmy Cosgrove. Taylor's sketchbooks from this period explode with visual content and evidence his prolific appetite for image-making through drawing, painting and mixed media. During second year, Taylor began transferring imagery to acetate for exposure onto screens for printing onto fabric, using sampling processes to test pigments and dyes. Extra-curricular GSA Fashion Shows encouraged collaboration between students and across departments. For Taylor, the shows provided opportunities to create garments, experimenting with textiles in three dimensions.

As a student, Taylor began to make work in series, in both paper and textiles, creating combinations of line, shape, mark and texture. In these works, layers are built up, masked off, and collaged using different materials to translate drawn, painted and textural qualities. Drawings from Taylor's final year at GSA, made during a student trip to Morvich, mark a significant breakthrough, capturing figurative forms projected onto landscapes and triggering concepts revisited for years to come. The Morvich drawings developed into repeating screen-printed textile lengths for Taylor's GSA degree show in 1981. David Band's equivalent exhibit presented textiles with artworks for the Scottish new wave post-punk band, Altered Images.

THE RECURRING FIGURE

In 1981, Taylor and David Band moved to London to study at the RCA on the Printed Textiles Masters course. In the first year, after being banished to the RCA conservatory by tutor Barbara Brown to improve his drawing, Taylor's work in figuration continued, and the scale and level of technical complexity in his printed textiles developed. During this time, Taylor sketched statues and friezes in the British Museum and produced studies of gravestones on the Isle of Iona during trips back to Scotland. These initial images informed paintings and collages with developments exploring varying levels of abstraction through colour, tone, and texture. Elements evolved into large-scale repeating and compositional screen-printed textile lengths, with designs also featuring on scarves and T-shirts.

In December 1982, the group show, *Beneath The Cloth* saw Taylor and Band exhibit drawings and paintings with other second-year RCA textile students including Brian Bolger and Helen Manning, which drew interest from London gallery owner, Jill George. Humour, energy, ambition and friendship, combined with the bold, painterly, and abstract qualities shared in their work led Band, Bolger, Manning and Taylor to form The Cloth for their RCA degree show in June 1983. Driven by the idea of collaborating rather than competing against one another, the quartet attracted high-profile attention from fashion industry visitors and became an overnight success.

TEXTILE DESIGNING

The Cloth regularly produced collections of textile designs, embarked on sales trips, and sold to companies in London, Milan, Paris, New York, and Japan. Connections, formed at GSA with Jeff Banks - founder of Warehouse, led to designing for this high-street fashion chain. Fashion designer Nicole Miller also regularly purchased work and, with business partner Bud Konheim, introduced The Cloth to the New York art scene.

Together, Band, Bolger, Manning and Taylor worked in The Cloth studio to create collections of 200+ designs, often produced in only a few days. Designs tended to be 'croquis' (suggesting repeating patterns) on paper. Here, experimentation with motifs and techniques was essential to ensure uniqueness. Reinterpreting and 'borrowing' from each other's work to create designs was commonplace.

Clients visiting The Cloth studio would view a portfolio of work; if they preferred one person's work, that individual would take on the client's brief; if the interest was broader, the outcome would be collaborative. In October 1984, Band cheekily wanted '...to rid the world of the Liberty print' (*Womenswear Daily*). The group ended up designing and collaborating for the company, creating windows and in-store displays. Liberty also connected The Cloth to other fashion brands, exclusively licensing designs. Other significant individual commissions include Bolger's work for Betty Jackson, which revolutionised print in British fashion and outlasted The Cloth.

STYLING THE 1980s

When The Cloth launched, there was anticipation and excitement surrounding who and what was coming out of UK art schools. Fashion brands, retailers, galleries, musicians, and music labels were looking for new imagery that represented the latest style and could give them an edge. The London fashion and textiles scene was evolving, gaining worldwide recognition and, with minimal funds, young designers could set up businesses. The new wave of style magazines, journalists, photographers, photoshoots, public relations consultants, and particularly for The Cloth, Lynne Franks PR, supported and promoted these creative start-ups.

The Cloth's distinctive style spanned textiles, fashion, interiors, set design, commercial branding, illustration, graphic design and painting. Throughout the collective's four-year existence, they worked on a multitude of commissions and exhibitions. The Cloth logo, designed by Band, features the profile of a man's head wearing a hat and thumbing his nose, a humorous nod to those who disagreed with the collaboration. It was used across letterheads, postcards, exhibition and party invitations, T-shirts and labels on clothing and accessories. The Cloth's clothing collections evolved from T-shirts to bold printed oversized garments and accessories in cotton and wool. As trends changed, styles became more fitted and knitwear was introduced. The Cloth disbanded in 1987 so each member could pursue their creative careers and for Taylor, this focused on painting.

THE ARCHIVE REVISITED

“In 2014 three unmarked boxes were delivered from my storage in London to my studio in Glasgow. Opening the boxes was astonishing and shocking. They contained work that I produced from 1977-87. I thought this work had been lost during one of many moves from one studio to another... Revisiting this archive has allowed me to make connections between my earlier interests and where I am creatively today.”

Fraser Taylor

Instant Whip presents new work by Taylor that revisits methods of making prominent in his practice between 1977-87, experimenting with forms of drawing into textiles through a collaboration with fashion designer Franz Maggs, filmmaker Alex James-Aylin, and makeup artist MV Brown.

Inspired by aspects of The Cloth's styling and photoshoots, the film *HAXTON* by Fraser Taylor features fashion garments produced under the label HAXTON, established by Taylor in 2020. Ideas surrounding figuration and abstraction are explored and reimaged through different media and materials. Scale and mark-making and their relationship to the body are fundamental to this work, investigating textile craft processes alongside experimental screen-printing and digital textile printing techniques.

The series of Morvich drawings that Taylor created as a student at GSA has informed new artworks in paint, pen and collage, reinterpreting figurative forms, overlaid marks and graphic shapes. These images are formed according to a subconscious organisation of line; the process is methodical and dependent on an innate aesthetic association.

ART SCHOOL ARCHIVE

Fraser Taylor enrolled at GSA in 1977 during a period of change for the institution, as it transitioned from diploma courses to the new Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Arts with Honours (BA Hons) awards, administered by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). This step-change introduced Liberal Studies and History of Art and impacted upon courses at GSA. In the newly established School of Design, the Printed Textiles course evolved from the legacy of its previous head, Bob Stewart. Under Jimmy Cosgrove, studio-based design principles ran alongside fine art practices to develop individual visual vocabularies, primarily achieved through drawing and photography. This process of image-making formed the core ethos of the course alongside the acquisition of technical screen-printing skills. Across parts of the art school, a cross-disciplinary culture existed and students regularly came together to socialise in spaces such as the newly established Vic Café. Activities Week, which was organised yearly by GSA staff and students, provided further opportunities to see, hear, share and experience cross-disciplinary perspectives.

Taylor donated his archive to GSA in 2014, just before the first Macintosh Building fire, when GSA Archives and Collections were located in its basement. The fire caused water damage to parts of the collection. Taylor has subsequently been involved in discussions about its conservation, including working with paper conservator Helen Creasey, of the Scottish Conservation Studio, to re-collage elements of his work. On storing the work, experts from the University of Glasgow Textile Conservation Masters course have advised on best practices with rolling textiles, covering in Melinex (clear film), so that they are protected but can still be seen. Students of the course also cleaned and steamed T-shirts and developed methods for mounting and packaging.

Funding from The Textile Society permitted cataloguing and some digitisation of Taylor's collection; GSA has since undertaken further digitisation work. Taylor's collection within the GSA archive has grown with further items accessioned. Dr Helena Britt's Leverhulme Trust research fellowship supported investigation in other archives, collections and libraries, conversations and interviews to form links and build further understanding.

BIOGRAPHIES

Fraser Taylor

Fraser Taylor studied Printed Textiles at The Glasgow School of Art and the Royal College of Art. He co-founded The Cloth in 1983 with David Band, Brian Bolger and Helen Manning, a creative studio focused on contemporary textile design and production. Since 1983 he has developed an interdisciplinary art practice and has exhibited his work internationally. Collaborative works include projects with visual artists, designers, and contemporary dance productions. From 2001 until 2017 Fraser was a Visiting Artist and Adjunct Full Professor in the Department of Fiber and Material Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He returned to Glasgow in 2017 and in 2020 launched a new body of printed textiles and garments under the label HAXTON.

→ haxtonstudio.com

Panel

Panel is a curatorial arts organisation led by Catriona Duffy and Lucy McEachan. Based in Glasgow, Panel promotes design in relation to particular histories, archives and collections through exhibitions, events and cultural projects. Their programme engages designers and public audiences and makes connections with practitioners and institutions whose work extends into visual arts, craft and other cultural contexts and frameworks.

→ wearepanel.co.uk

Helena Britt

Dr Helena Britt is the Programme Leader for BA (Hons) Textile Design at The Glasgow School of Art. Responsibilities include programme coordination and teaching printed textiles, supervision, assessment and research. Helena uses archive and practice-based methods, oral testimony and exhibition curation to investigate themes that intersect textile design processes and art school pedagogy. Ongoing research examines how designers and design groups appropriate and reinterpret design practices, motifs and techniques to generate new work. Recent projects include the Leverhulme Trust research fellowship, 'The Cloth: Exploring Creative Collaboration and Interdisciplinarity, 1977-87', 'The Glasgow School of Art Fashion Show, 1947-2017' and 'Interwoven Connections: The Stoddard Templeton Design Studio and Design Library, 1843-2005'.

→ @thecloth80s

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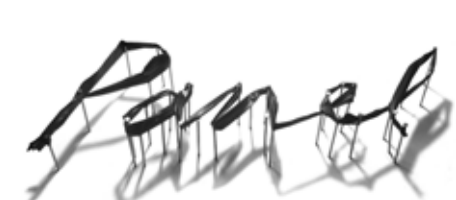
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The Glasgow School of Art Archives and Collections are open for research by appointment, contact archives@gsa.ac.uk and visit gsa.ac.uk/archives.

To view the Textiles and Papers of Fraser Taylor visit: gsaarchives.net/collections/fraser-taylor/

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