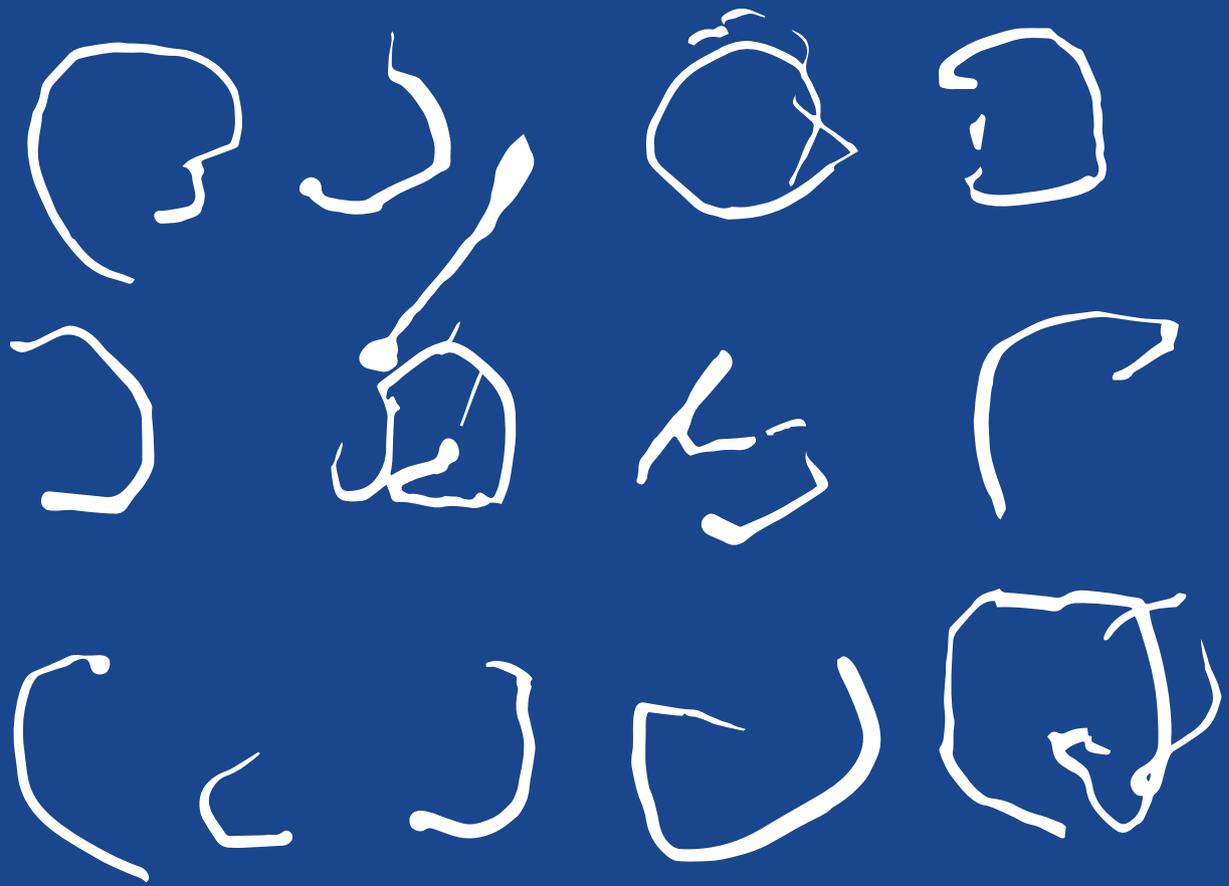


ON YOUR MARKS





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Foreword

It has been a tremendous honour for me to observe and document this extraordinary project. On Your Marks (OYM) has seen two groups of textile print makers in two different countries connect and develop both as individuals and as a unified collective.

Having been invited by the curators to witness and document the various stages of their journey, this publication tells their story, gathering reflections, quoted comments and images so as to leave a mark; a trace of that collective experience over these past months. My role as an observer has given the participants freedom to remain more fully in their personal processes, unburdened by the self-consciousness of considering their individual contributions to the whole.

My own practice as an applied artist explores the theme of work and tools: society's shift from production to consumption, away from the time taken to learn and execute hand skills. Exploring connections and memories, I follow similar themes to OYM, albeit in different materials, and this opportunity to observe others' processes has been enormously enriching.

Standing on the sidelines, I have witnessed individual journeys, struggles and achievements. Their commitment and focus have already produced an excellent exhibition in Ireland, and I look forward to seeing the final version in Sweden.

Sharon Adams

'The Linen Chest'

*Forgotten Memories,
The Linen chest held them safe,
Brought out,
On ritual occasion,
Christening robe,
Caressed memories,
Of love beginning,
Wedding dress,
Cherished on generations,
Tablecloth, napkin, tea towel,
Handkerchief, sheets and pillowcases,
Pressed daily,
Lace on linen embroidered heirlooms,
Protected in lavender,
Lost time and tradition,
Giving a language of touch,
All but gone,
Marking rites of passage,
A cultural shift,
Of wealth and status,
The Linen Chest.*

Robert Martin



Photo: public domain at The Lisburn Museum Collection www.lisburnmuseum.com



Photo: Gunnar Lundh/Nordiska Museet, Stockholm. Licence CC-BY-NC-ND

01 THE PROJECT

Introduction

An international collaboration between Ireland and Sweden on shared linen heritage informed by the past but not bound by it.

OYM united two established groups of textile print practitioners in an 18-month international exchange. Their shared heritage and mutual love of textiles presented an opportunity for Print Block, Dublin and Konstnärernas Kollektiv Verkstad, Textil, Malmö (KKV-Textiltryck Malmö) to embark on a joint exploration of the techniques and values associated with the production, processing and uses of linen, a rich history common to both countries, but now almost extinct.

Creating space for explorative collaboration, the project enabled thirteen participants to develop work outside their existing practices. Besides two international study visits and two exhibitions, the artists stayed in touch via Skype and email, enabling personal and technical connections to develop. Gathering to explore ideas, they shared techniques, inspirations and making as well as stories, songs, poetry and food; lending texture to the time given to experimentation and maturation of the project content.

Examining the historical and cultural landscape of linen in both countries, the group has compared and contrasted similarities and differences. Historical methods have been set alongside contemporary technologies; raw material, techniques, manufacturing, procedures, production, and social history have all been considered. The work is informed by the past, but not bound by it.

The interim exhibition at R-Space Gallery, Lisburn in September/October 2015 offered a window onto the project's development. Various stages of linen production and use were involved: flax had been grown in Sweden, linen bleached in Belfast; printing, dyeing, folding and stitching were shown in many forms. Presenting the work in public allowed the group to reflect on the process and take stock ahead of the conclusion in Sweden.

At time of writing, the artists are preparing for the final exhibition at Konstfrämjandet, Malmö. Continuing the theme of discussion and exchange, the opening weekend will see the Print Block group return to Sweden and meet with KKV-Textiltryck Malmö and other collective groups to share ideas and reflect on the overall collaboration.



01 THE PROJECT

Participants

From Print BlockLiz Nilsson ^(LN)Jennifer Phelan ^(JP)Caroline Ryan ^(CR)Olga Tiernan ^(OT)Ursula Celano ^(UC)Aoife Challis ^(AC)Trish Belford ^(TB)

Print Block is a studio collective based in Dublin, Ireland. Established in 2010 to provide affordable access to professional textile print facilities. Print Block also offers workshops, masterclasses, open access days and membership to a community of printed textiles practitioners in Ireland.
www.printblock.ie

From KKV-Textiltryck MalmöMargareta Bergstrand ^(MB)Kajsa Lindh ^(KL)Margareta Heijkenskjöld Holmgren ^(MHH)Pernille Holm ^(PH)Josabet Werkmäster ^(JW)Dyveke Zadig ^(DZ)

KKV-Textiltryck Malmö, is an artist-driven membership organization established in 1983 and is run with the support of the City of Malmö and Region Skåne. It offers professional artists, craftspeople and designers work facilities for the production of textile based artwork.
www.textiltryckmalmo.se

**Participants' feedback has been quoted throughout the text, indicated by their initials.*

Supporting artists

David Littler facilitated the opening workshop, and also recorded and constructed audio visual landscapes used in the exhibitions.

Sharon Adams gathered and produced written documentation.

Interim exhibition

R-Space Gallery, Lisburn, Northern Ireland
18 September to 10 October 2015
www.rspacelisburn.com

Final exhibition

Konstfrämjandet, Malmö, Sweden
19 March to 17 April 2016
www.konstframjandet.se

Exhibition venues:

R-Space Gallery is situated in Lisburn, once a thriving centre for the Irish linen industry. Directors Robert Martin and Anthea McWilliams have an extended interest in the history of linen and its impact on the region, making it an ideal location for the opening workshop and the interim exhibition. The Gallery is located just a few minutes' walk from The Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum.

Konstfrämjandet is a membership organization which operates across eight districts in Sweden. These are run partly by professional art historians, artists and intermediaries, and through volunteer work. Konstfrämjandet produces and provides art throughout Sweden through travelling exhibitions, production of new works, sale of graphic art and courses as well as other in-depth projects.



01 THE PROJECT

Curatorial Team

Liz Nilsson

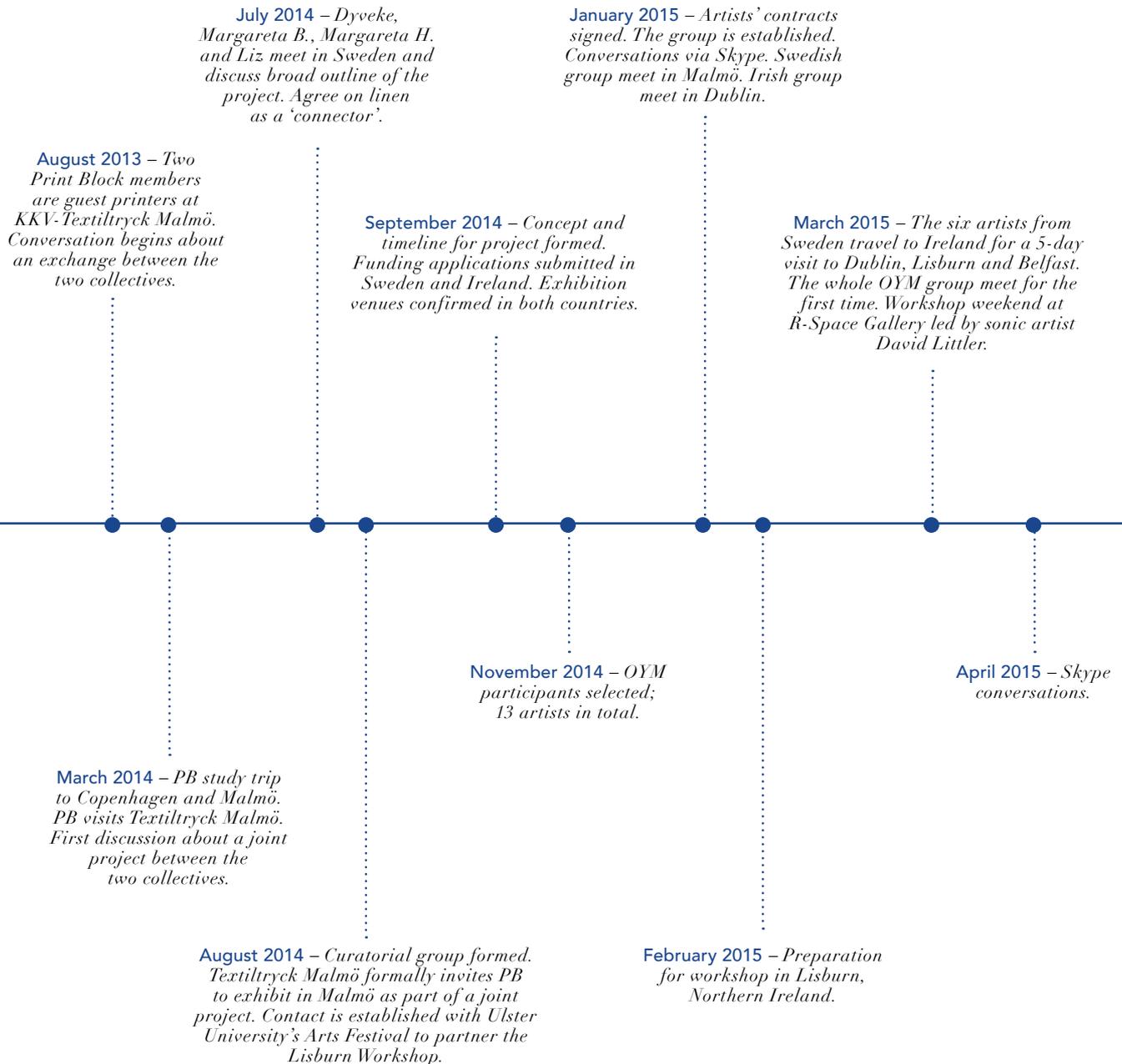
Dyveke Zadig

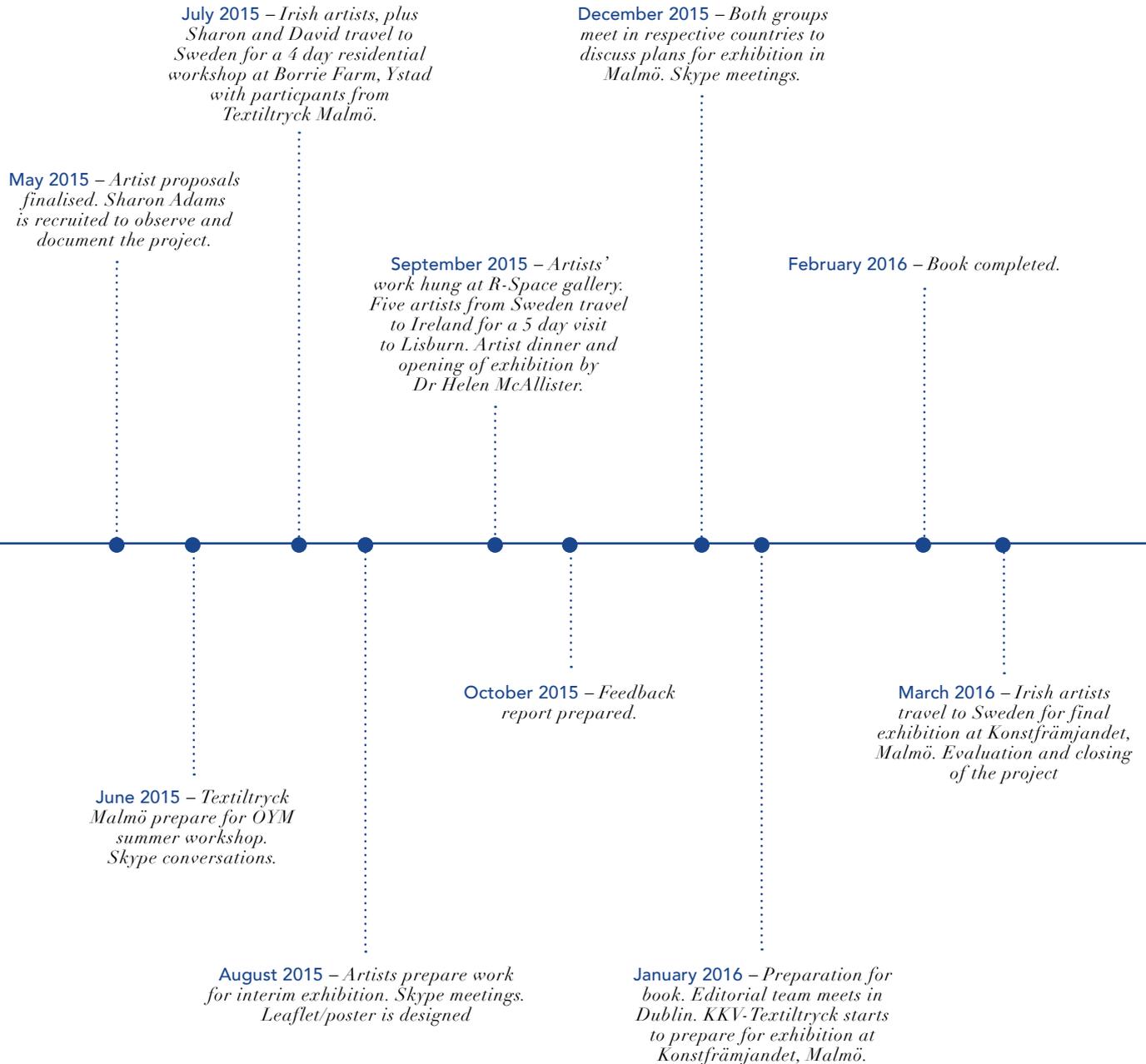
Trish Belford

[Liz Nilsson](#) is a visual artist, educator and curator, originally from Sweden but based in Dublin since 2000. Her areas of artistic research include memory and repetition, collaborative processes and social practice. Liz is a co-founder of Print Block studio collective, Dublin, where she has initiated several exhibition projects: *Crossroads and Journeys*, 2011, *Print Block Christmas Pop-Up Show*, 2012 and *Architectural Textiles*, 2013. Liz shares her textile screen printing knowledge and expertise with individuals and groups through ongoing classes, workshops and lectures. She exhibits internationally and is represented in Irish, UK and Swedish collections.

[Dyveke Zadig](#) is an artist working in textiles and glass. She is one of the founder members of KKV-Textiltryck Malmö and received Malmö City Culture Prize in 2014, for her valuable contributions over 30 years to Malmö's Cultural Life. Aside from her practice as an artist and educator, she has curated several exhibitions for the collective, among them *In Blanco* (which toured throughout Sweden) and the celebratory exhibition *Textil Manifest*. Dyveke is represented in many Swedish collections and has exhibited extensively.

[Trish Belford](#) is a Senior Research Fellow at Ulster University, and Honorary Fellow of The Royal College of Art. She has extensive experience within printing and hybrid textiles. Trish works collaboratively across architecture, science and fashion and is engaged in very different projects, subverting textiles for new uses and diverse audiences. She has, through her position as a research fellow, been responsible for several exhibition projects. In *Catalytic Clothing* and *Wonderland* with Professor Helen Storey (LCF) and Professor Tony Ryan (Sheffield University), textiles illustrate these two science based projects, which have been exhibited worldwide. Trish is an honorary member of Print Block.







02 THE PROCESS

Origins

OYM originated in 2013 when Liz Nilsson and Olga Tiernan were guest artists at KKV-Textiltryck Malmö's workshop; a visit that allowed them to observe the workings of an established collective at a time when Print Block was still in its infancy. A study trip by core Print Block members to Copenhagen and Malmö followed in 2014, funded by the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland. Time spent in the KKV-Textiltryck Malmö workshops, revealed a design, cultural and creative synergy, and the possibility of investigating these ideas via a collaborative exchange took hold.

The common denominator between both groups is a love of textiles and printing, along with their commitment to collective working and the exchange of ideas. Shared interest in the embedded culture of linen (which can be seen as a major motif of both countries) was identified and it became the starting point for this project.

Linen was used in Ireland before the 12th century Norman Invasions. In 1685 French Huguenots settled in Ireland. They had been engaged in the linen industry in France and brought their extended knowledge of production with them. In Sweden written documentation on linen can be traced back to 1200. Both countries have had a profound knowledge of linen production and its role in shaping society. Yet today, in both countries, that tradition is almost extinct.

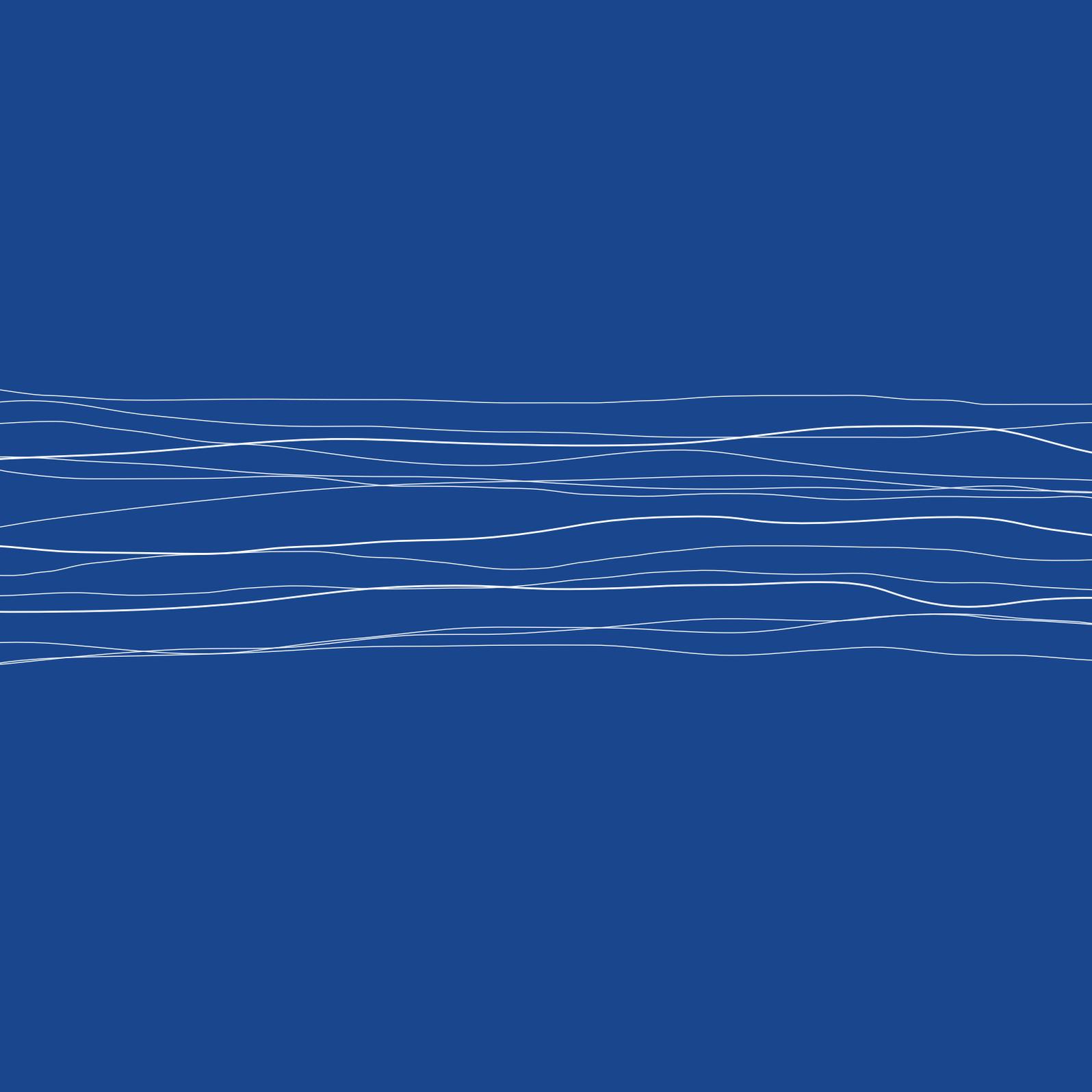
The title *On Your Marks* was chosen for its suggestion of a starting line, and the gathering of energy that precedes beginnings. By focusing on the moment of starting, and avoiding definitions of outcome, it allowed for openness in the process. Besides the very printerly act of mark marking, it also holds the promise of the project leaving a mark of its own. Liz Nilsson, Dyveke Zadig and Trish Belford agreed to share the curatorial function. Having three curators brought both strengths and challenges to the project, and required careful and regular communication. English was used as the

working language, with only certain parts being translated into Swedish. This publication being in English is a reflection of that.

OYM sought to build on both groups' existing experience of collective work. Print Block was founded in 2010 so the dynamic there was less established than in the case of KKV-Textiltryck Malmö which has been in existence for thirty years. Nevertheless, both were used to sharing workspace and managing group decisions. Within OYM, the participating artists could share skills, traditions and indigenous craft techniques to produce outcomes such as artefacts, prints, installations, performance. A balanced selection was made from the wider membership of both groups and these thirteen artists agreed to explore together.

Mapping the possibilities of the project, they set out to explore historical and cultural similarities and differences between the two traditions of linen making. Opening questions were posed: How has linen shaped our countries? What can we learn from one another's linen history? Is there a future for linen production? Can we, as artists and designers, encourage a future for linen? How do the threads of linen extend out into the world? Has earlier emigration, and later immigration, changed our views of linen? Are there alternative uses for linen in today's world? Research included folk heritage and tradition around linen from the two countries including music, poetry and dance.

The objective was to delve into each other's traditions of linen, reflecting on heritage, manufacturing and cultural associations. Not to mimic the other culture but rather to engage, merge and devise unknown creative outcomes. This 'compare and contrast' approach revealed ancient craft wisdom along with new synergies and possibilities. Cross-fertilization considered raw material, techniques, manufacturing, procedures, production, and social history. The developmental dialogue between the two creative cultures was pivotal. Having identified process as an intrinsic part of the artistic product, this has been documented throughout in text, image, sound and film.



02 PROCESS

Lisburn Masterclass

The practical proceedings of OYM began in February 2015 with the Swedish artists making a study visit to Ireland. Arriving in Dublin, they first spent two days visiting the Print Block studios and a selection of museums and galleries. Both groups then travelled to Northern Ireland for a masterclass weekend facilitated by David Littler and Trish Belford. This was devised as a series of collaborative sessions that would provide opportunity for the two groups to connect and share.

R-Space Gallery provided the first catalysing effect on the project. The contemporary exhibition space on the ground floor of the Linen Rooms, formerly the rectory to Lisburn Cathedral, contrasts with the first floor which remains un-renovated. Its faded Georgian grandeur offered a liminal space for the delivery of the opening workshop. David Littler is a sonic visual artist with a life-long passion for print, textiles and music, which he combines through the common word 'sampler'. His R-Space commissioned installation *Is She Blew?* celebrating the sounds of the local linen industry, coincided with the OYM group's visit.

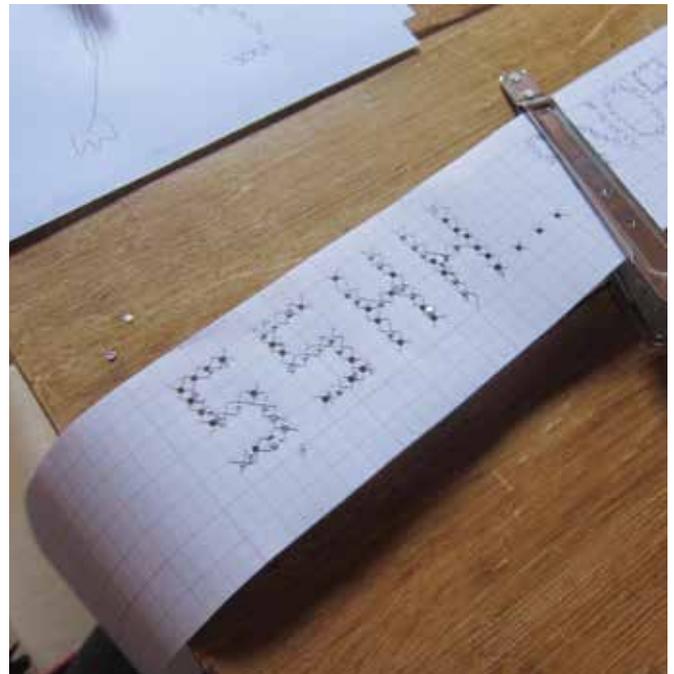
David encouraged response to linen through song, textile activity, rhythm, folk music and dance. Telling stories, interviewing one another, singing songs, the artists worked in different groups and pairs at different times. Many of the activities were unfamiliar, or at least not part of the participants' existing primary practice. Using them therefore opened up new lines of expression; a further catalysis. Barriers were broken down and fresh approaches became free to emerge. The location in Northern Ireland was unfamiliar to both the Dublin and Malmö groups. All but one of the participants were away from home, detached from the grounding of the domestic everyday.

Visiting the Irish Linen Centre gave the opportunity to witness vintage looms in action and observe the skill and dexterity of the museum staff. Demonstrations included spinning and jacquard weaving. In the historical environment of the museum workshop, the sound, feel and smell of early linen production were very much present.



The location at R-Space provided the first catalysing effect on the project.







02 PROCESS

Ulster University Workshop

In contrast, the second day included a demonstration of digital textile techniques at the Art & Design Research Institute at Belfast School of Art, Ulster University with Trish Belford. This included laser cutting, heat pressing, digital embroidery and print, and provided a modern-day counterpoint to the historical content of the museum. Although the starting place within the history and traditions of linen was relevant for some of the participants, this element of present/future methodologies was important too.

Group exercises continued to build rapport. Works were swapped and re-worked, and word play revealed the breadth of thinking that had begun to emerge. A practical starting point of dialogue and experimentation, the weekend had generated a body of ideas that set up numerous strands of enquiry.

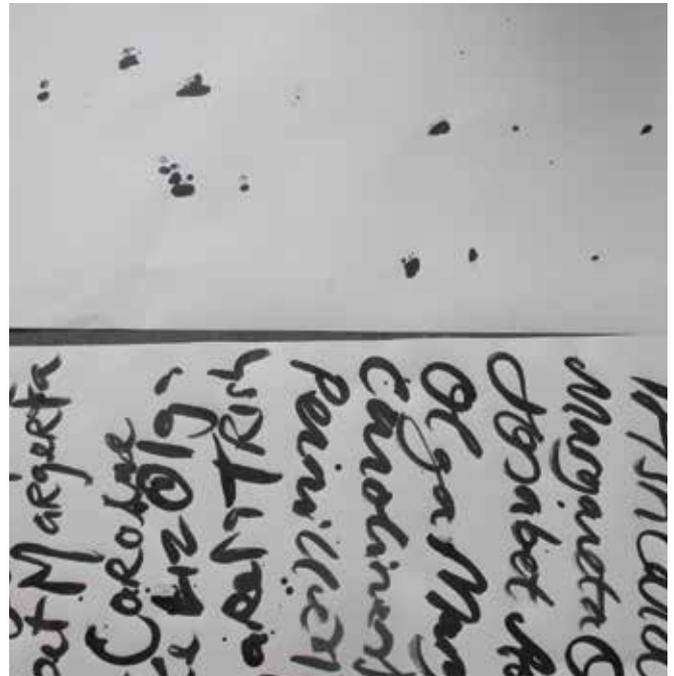
Despite the evident group synergy, as the artists began to discuss their plans for the project, they were reticent about the idea of pairings between the groups. After only a short time together, difficulties of unfamiliarity, distance and language seemed too substantial and 'made it difficult to get continuity in the developing of specific collaborations;' ^(DZ) these perceptions were much less evident by the end of the project.

Individuals had generated ideas they wished to develop solo, albeit within the wider context of the exchange. 'I tend to work independently and more easily within my own space. I think collaborations are things that emerge organically over time and with a shared understanding, trust and vision. The collective experience underpins the possibility of collaboration by breaking down social constraints.'^(OT)

The curators took the view that the defining context of a process-led collaboration did not explicitly require one-on-one exchanges, and accepted that the reality of the project was much more fluid. Individual proposals nonetheless revealed clusters of interest and these intersections later provided rich dialogue within the wider group.

Only one direct collaborative pair was sparked, which continued throughout the entire project. Additionally, Swedish curator Dyveke Zadig envisioned an artists' book which would unite the textile work of each participant in a single artwork. Each artist was invited to contribute a piece that would form a page in this linen-bound volume. Completed ahead of the interim exhibition, the artists are represented therein through print samples and embroidered monograms.





VAVNOTA

— Squares



Also relates to Punctures.

CIRCULES

- Punctures
- Holes with

- FAMILY HEIRLOOM
- HERITAGE

PROCESS

MEMORIES

REPETITION

DANCE

CONNECTING
 EXPLORING
 LISTENING
 WATCHING
 MAKING
 WRITING
 SINGING
 EATING
 BREATHING
 FEELING
 LOOKING
 DREAMING
 TOUCHING
 DREAMING
 WRITING
 FEELING
 VAIN
 CLOTH
 THREAD
 LINEN
 ROCK
 POETRY
 MUSIC
 TEXTURE

SOFT

STORY

MUSIC

SECRET

- Open Approach to exploring Sound/Project Name
- Creating a dialogue with a new person
- Element of surprise during game
- Observation - taking time to discuss sound!
- Sharing of feelings/connections
- Small sound of music box
- Another means to express our thoughts & words

'digital' — development of machinery to speed up hand work

MM — style

ER CUT IN THE ROUGH LIVEN + WOVEN

DUCTION

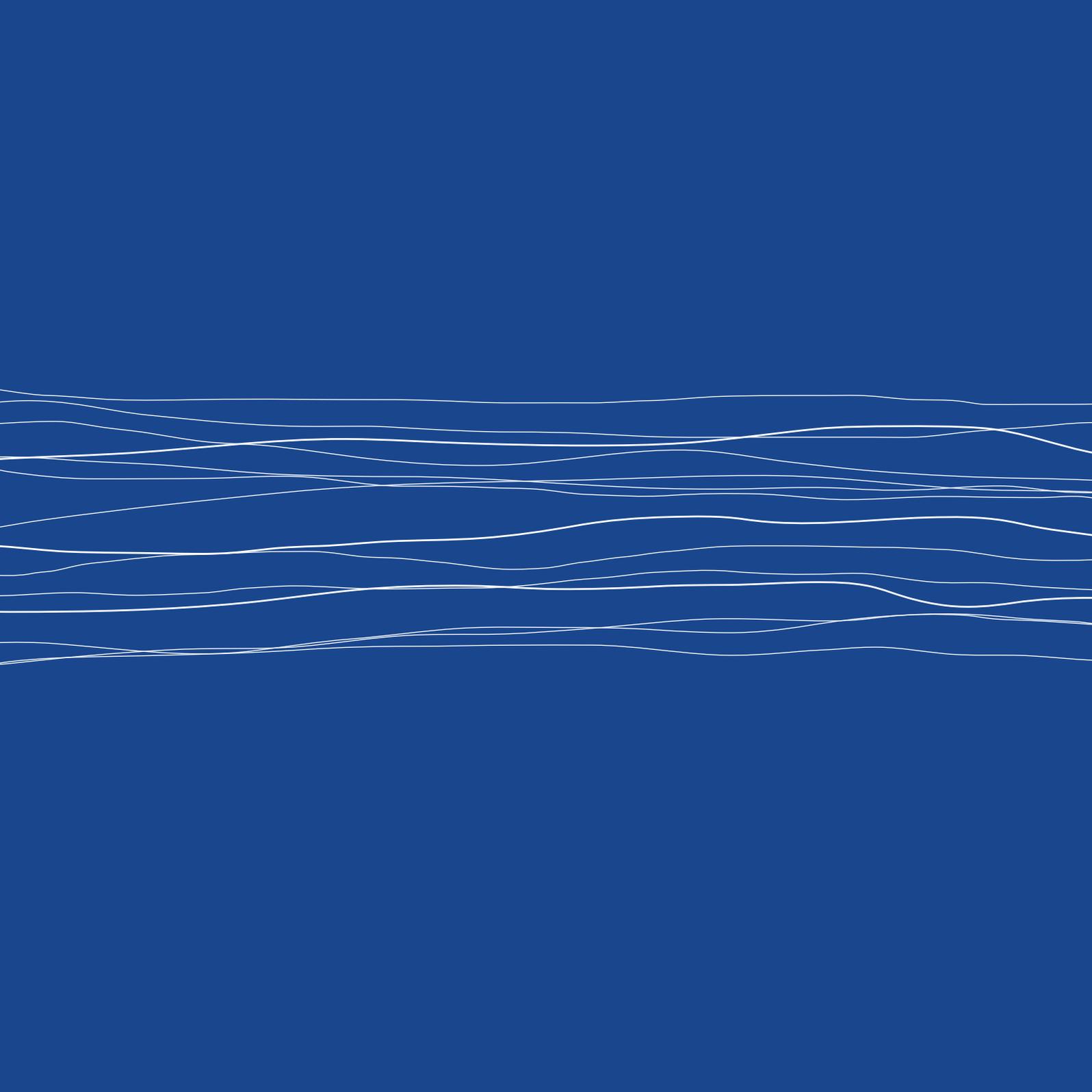
OLESS

PRINTING ON THE WARP BEFORE ITS SET UP

PRINTING ON THE ROUGH LIVEN BEFORE WOVING

Secret • Beetling • Damask glass plates • Print paste from the country - Ireland/Sweden • Not artwork
 • Sound in threads • Threads - warp/weft/connection/roots/heritage/ribbons • Repetition • Words and
 sounds of words • Rhythm as mark making • Fabric symbol as status • Flaw • Ancient methods • Rags
 and tatters • Dying/dyeing • Music/sound/dance/movements/visual movement • Physical movement
 • Abstract /concrete sounds • Multi-Dimensional • Printing • The collective mood (Swings?) • Process
 • Rhythm of words • Connections - Sweden/Ireland - Back in time/out into the world/present/future •
 • Changing • Going back and forth • Holes/punchcards/holes made with words/missing information
 • Rhythm of the group • Colour/science/math/need/want/vicious • Production/need/want/ desire •
 Production/process • People • Memories • Hand v Machine • Physical properties of linen • Bleaching
 as markmaking • Natural dyes • Commemorative v Contemporary • Buttermilk and cow dung • Printing
 on the warp before it is set up • Printing on the rough of linen before weaving • Creating a dialogue
 with a new person • Element of surprise/guessing game • Observation - taking time to observe sound
 • Sharing of cultural connection • Digital - development of machinery to speed up hand work • Cold •
 Connecting/exploring/listening/watching/dancing/writing/singing/breathing/eating/freezing/looking/
 laughing/touching/drinking/seed/yarn/cloth/sound/thread/linen/book/poetry/music/picture • Botanical
 - flax plant • Natural dyes/saffron • Cycles and rhythm • Agriculture/production/training • Male and
 female roles • Harvest/spinning/weaving • Time - Sunlight and moonlight to bleach linen
 • Beat/music/steps • Dance • Story • Factory • Soft.

Word play revealed the breadth of thinking that had begun to emerge.



02 PROCESS

Development

With four months till the next group meeting, participants returned to their respective homes and rhythms. The next step was to formally commit to ideas seeded during the masterclass weekend through written proposals which would conceptualise how each artist intended to approach their work.

These record the breadth of response, from specific details at the Linen Museum such as the swan wing used to dust the threads on the loom, or the use of differently coloured ribbons to denote the marital status of a (female) spinner, to more universal interests in the production and processing of linen fabric, and the domestic rituals associated with its storage and care. The Swedish use of a mangle for pressing emerged as a distinct cultural difference, as the Irish version was used primarily to extract water when washing.

The curatorial team was kept busy with plans for the next meeting - a working weekend hosted by Swedish participant Pernille Holm at her farmhouse studio in southern Sweden. Discussions and meetings within each collective kept the momentum moving forward, and Skype enabled conversations between the two. For some, the connection between meetings could have been stronger 'It's too easy to fall back into your own individual work routine,^(KL) but on the whole, technology helped enormously.

Investigations over these weeks approached every stage of linen production. Flax was grown from Swedish breakfast cereal, linen bleached by historical methods (i.e. cow's urine) in a Belfast garden and snow dyeing tested in Sweden. Printing, folding and stitching took many forms. The lives of those who produced, processed and cared for linen were also explored as each participant began to delve into their personal theme and the work began to take shape. At this time, the specific collaboration between Margareta

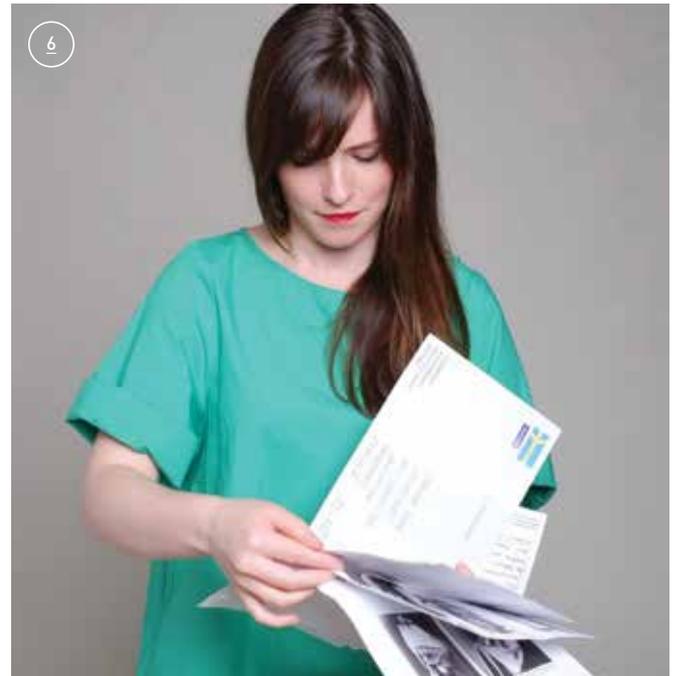
Bergstrand of KKV-Textiltryck Malmö and Caroline Ryan of Print Block began to unfold. Letters, emails, ideas and images were exchanged, setting up a working relationship that continued during the summer workshop in Sweden and beyond.

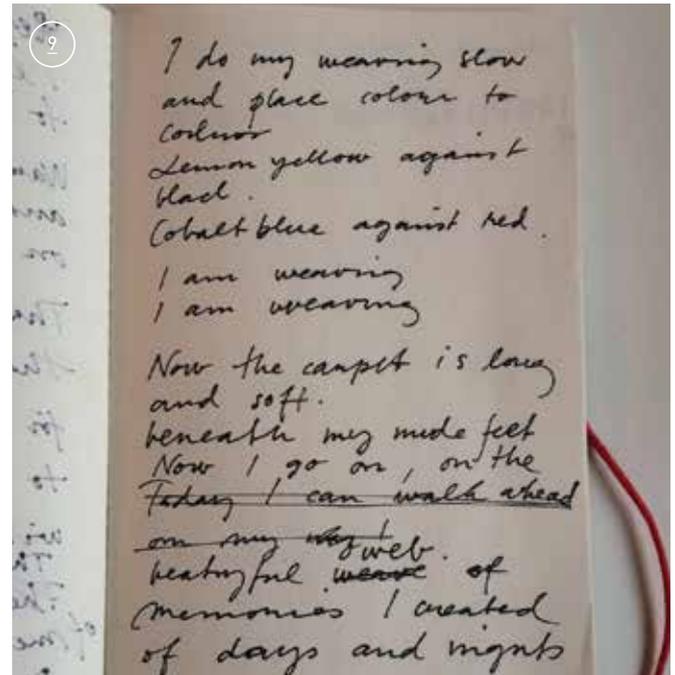
- 1 & 2. *Embroidery tests and notebook*, Kasja Lindh.
3. *Homegrown flax plan*, Dyveke Zadig.
4. *Alkali tests*, Trish Belford.
5. *Image research*, Margareta Bergstrand.
- 6 & 7. *Margareta's letter to Caroline*, Caroline Ryan.
- 8 & 9. *Notebook sketches*, Dyveke Zadig.
10. *Archive image*, Margareta H. Holmgrem.
11. *Ceramic tests*, Aoife Challis.
12. *Notebook sketches*, Liz Nilsson.
13. *Monogram book*, Liz Nilsson.
14. *Embroidery tests*, Jennifer Phelan.
15. *Image graphic*, Pernille Holm.
16. *Sketches*, Olga Tiernan.
17. *Notebook sketches*, Ursula Celano.
18. *Film tests*, Trish Belford.
19. *Mark*, Jennifer Phelan.
20. *Notebook sketches*, Josabet Werkmäster.
21. *Embroidery and folding*, Margareta H. Holmgrem.

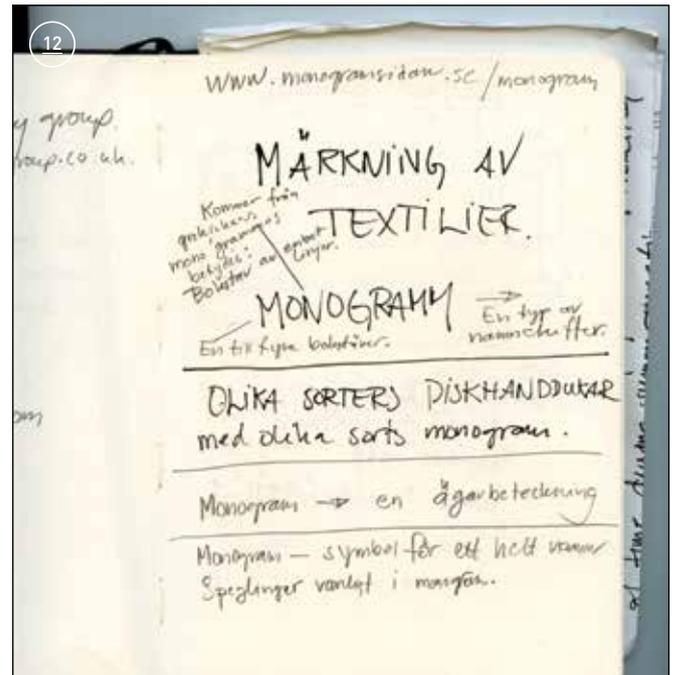


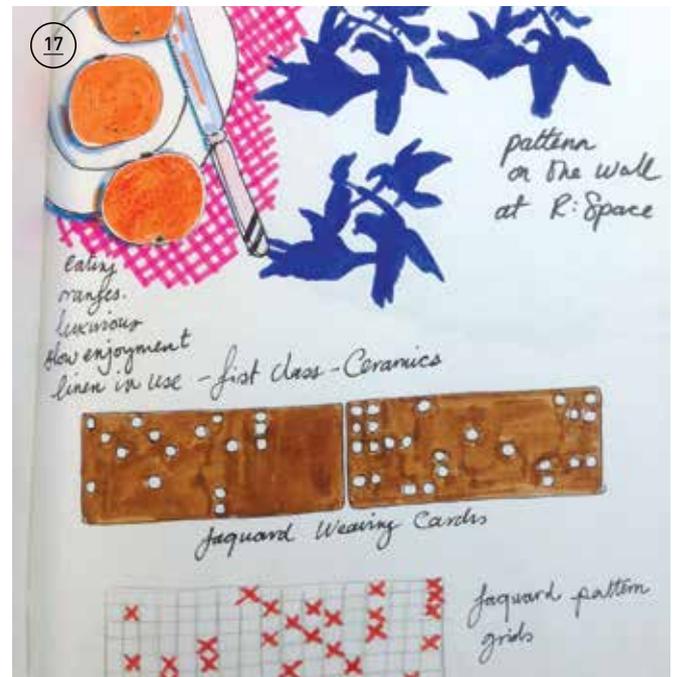


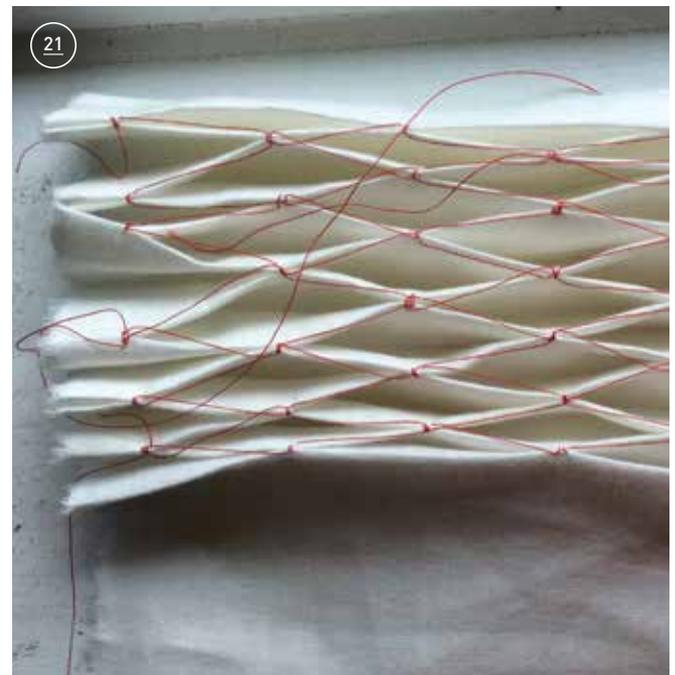
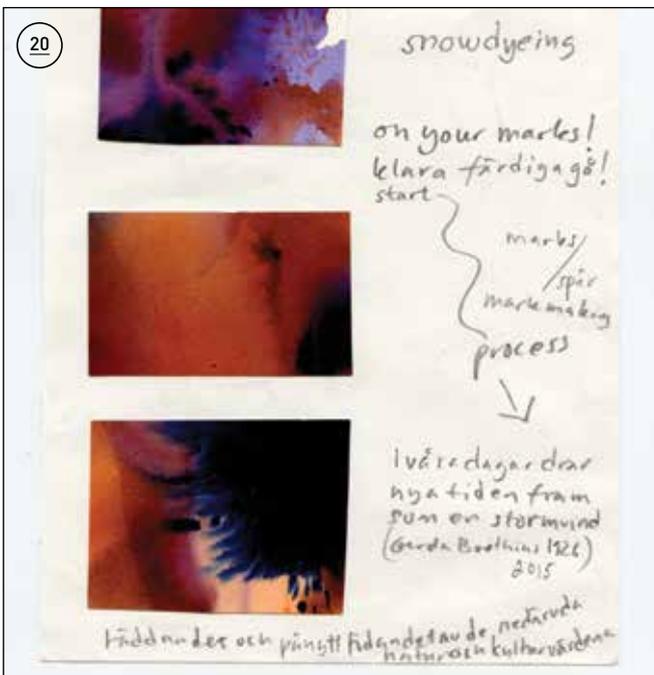
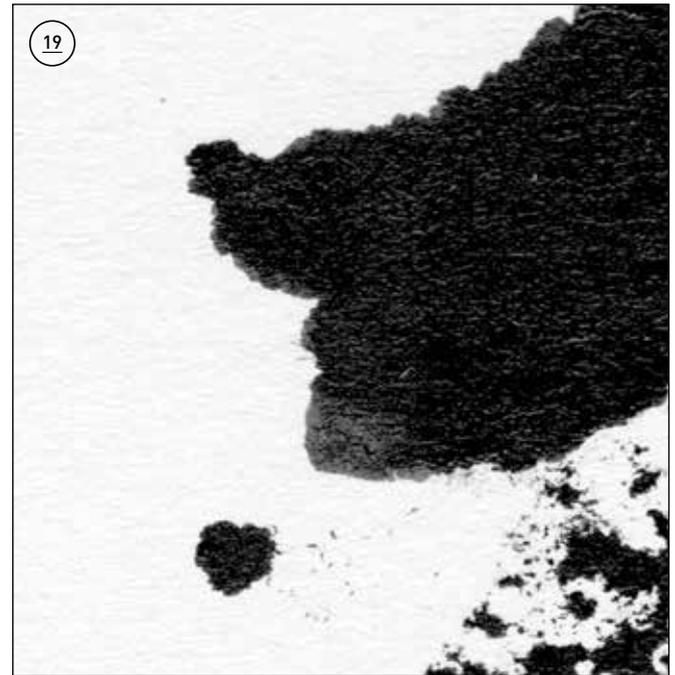
Photo: Elisabeth Eriksson/Nordiska Museet, Stockholm Licence CC-BY-NC-ND

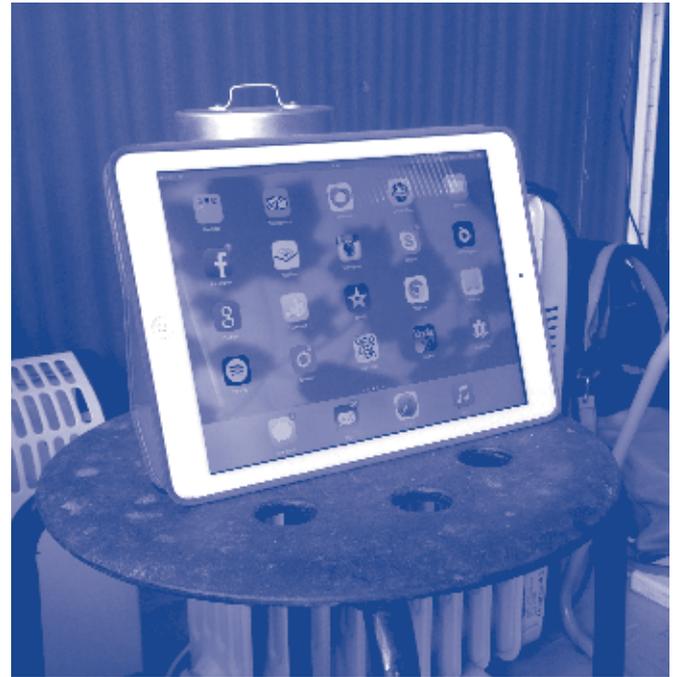




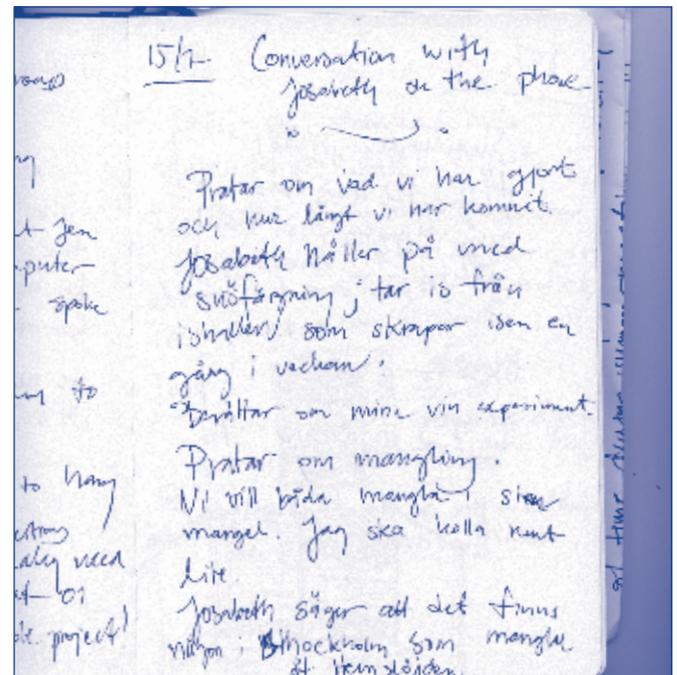


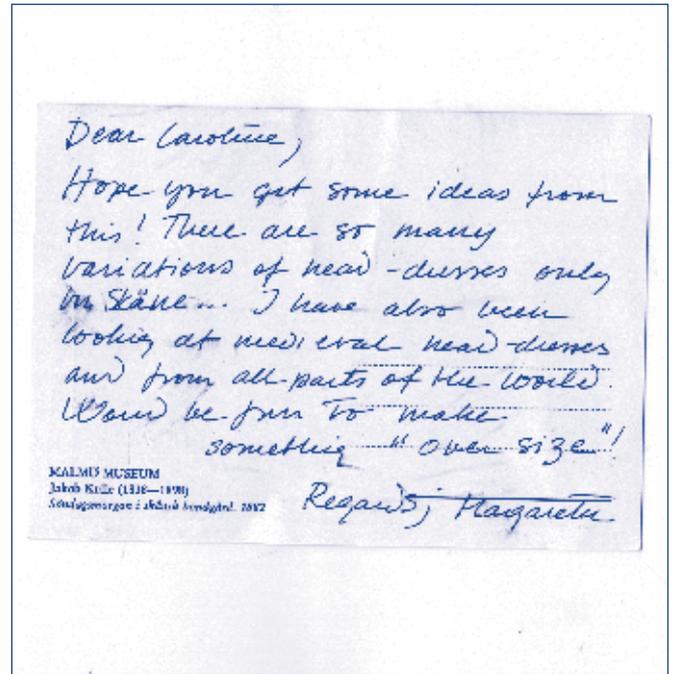
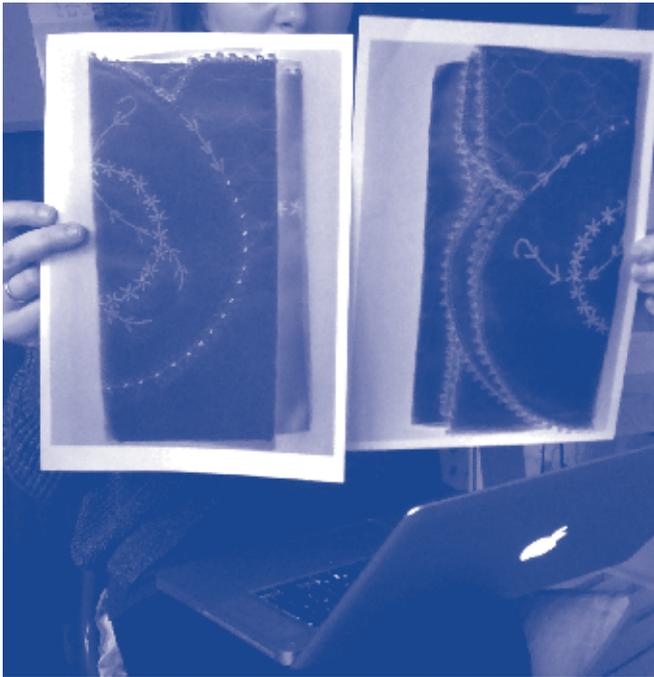






Discussions and meetings within each collective kept the momentum moving forward, and Skype enabled conversations between the two.







Borrie Farm textile studio

02 PROCESS

Sweden Workshop

In July 2015 both groups met again at Borrie Farm textile studio near Ystad. Set in rolling farmland and surrounded by dramatic agricultural outbuildings, the space again acted as a locational catalyst, lifting people out of their habitual responses and reactions. Curator Dyveke Zadig welcomed the Irish artists with a traditional tune on her accordion, setting the tone for the Swedish hospitality that was to follow.

This gathering was conceived as a self-facilitated workshop where each participant could use the time to move her ideas forward. Work began with sharing progress and intentions. Several spoke of the importance of time away from daily routine and the value of having space in which to create pieces for the upcoming exhibition. Taking on the qualities of a micro-residency, all but one participant was again away from home, detached from the habitual demands of everyday life.

David Littler's role was observational - collecting audio and visual documentation that became part of the later exhibitions. His presence also connected participants to the spirit of exploration that had prevailed in the shared experience at R-Space. Sharon Adams had been gathering documentation since joining the project in May. This was her first time of meeting the wider group and making first hand observations of the process.

Several outings sought to contextualise the group's experience within the cultural landscape of the region, both on the subject of textiles and beyond. The Österlen area of South East Sweden had a particularly rich tradition in specific weaving techniques, which were seen in an exhibition of textiles dating 1500 - 1900 at the Klostrret Museum, Ystad. In contrast, the workshop of independent damask weaver Gunnel Mårtensson, evidenced contemporary small scale production.

These and other local excursions provided an opportunity for the Irish artists to experience a flavour of this part of

Sweden, one of the Irish participants later commenting that 'the greatest learning and enrichment has come from travelling to the other country, experiencing the landscape with the locals, rather than as a tourist.'^(AC) Of course, it was also a contrast for those from the KKV-Textiltryck Malmö group who are city-based.

Focused on using the studio spaces at Borrie to work towards the September exhibition, time was divided between group discussions and individual working; coming together and moving away. Bathed in glorious sunshine, the space allowed for print making indoors and out, conversations in the sun, and meals at beautifully presented tables. Collective synergy flowed, and the social qualities of the collective strengthened. Everyone appreciated being able to 'get a sense of others' work processes and also to witness the organisational aspect of managing a group.'^(AC)

Mealtimes took on particular significance. The group table often signals a time for formality and restraint. Here it allowed for the 'conversation and exchange that forms the soul of the project.'^(LN) While this social aspect could be dismissed as an irrelevance, it was strongly valued by many who saw it as giving 'sustenance physically and creatively in the exchange of ideas, and the space for reflection and fun.'^(AC) The value of this has been noted by the hosts of formal artist residencies, for example the Tyrone Guthrie Centre in Ireland describes dinner as an 'important ritual' with 'good food and wine underpinning conversation, argument, song and declamation.'

Connections seeded in Ireland continued to develop and emerging ideas took shape. Whether dining outdoors at Borrie under the church bells, or in the atmospheric environment of Dyveke's Hagestad home, food was prepared and presented with great care. Sharing domestic spaces and chores gently eroded any remaining distance between people in either group. The timelessness of women cooking, washing up and making textile work was particularly appropriate. It was 'as though we were creating our own legacy by coming together and endeavouring to work side by side.'^(AC)



Several people spoke of the importance of time away from their daily routine and the value of having space in which to create pieces for the upcoming exhibition.





The main focus was to use the studio spaces at Borrie to progress the work towards the September exhibition.







David Littler undertook an observational role, collecting audio and visual documentation that became part of the later exhibitions.







Bathed in glorious sunshine, the space allowed for print making indoors and out.



Mealtimes took on a particular significance. The group table often signals a time for formality and restraint. Here it allowed for the 'conversation and exchange that forms the soul of the project.'^(LN)





02 PROCESS

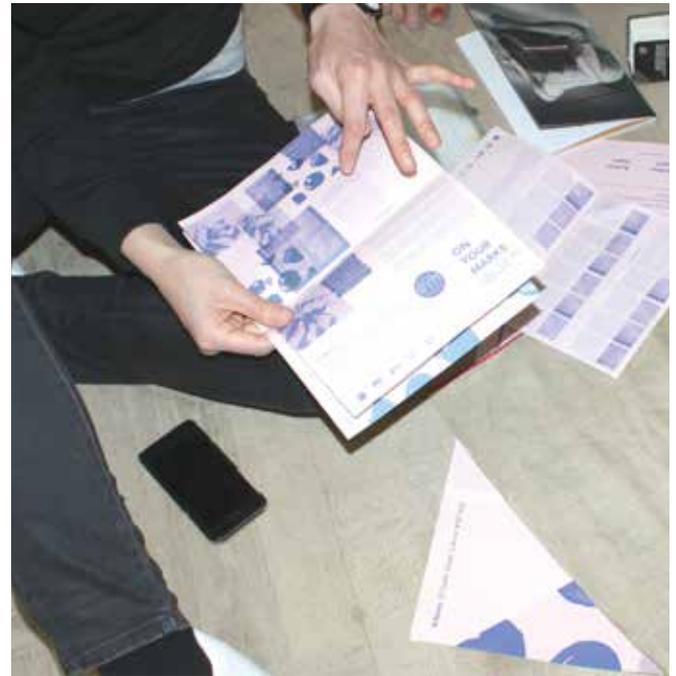
Interim Planning

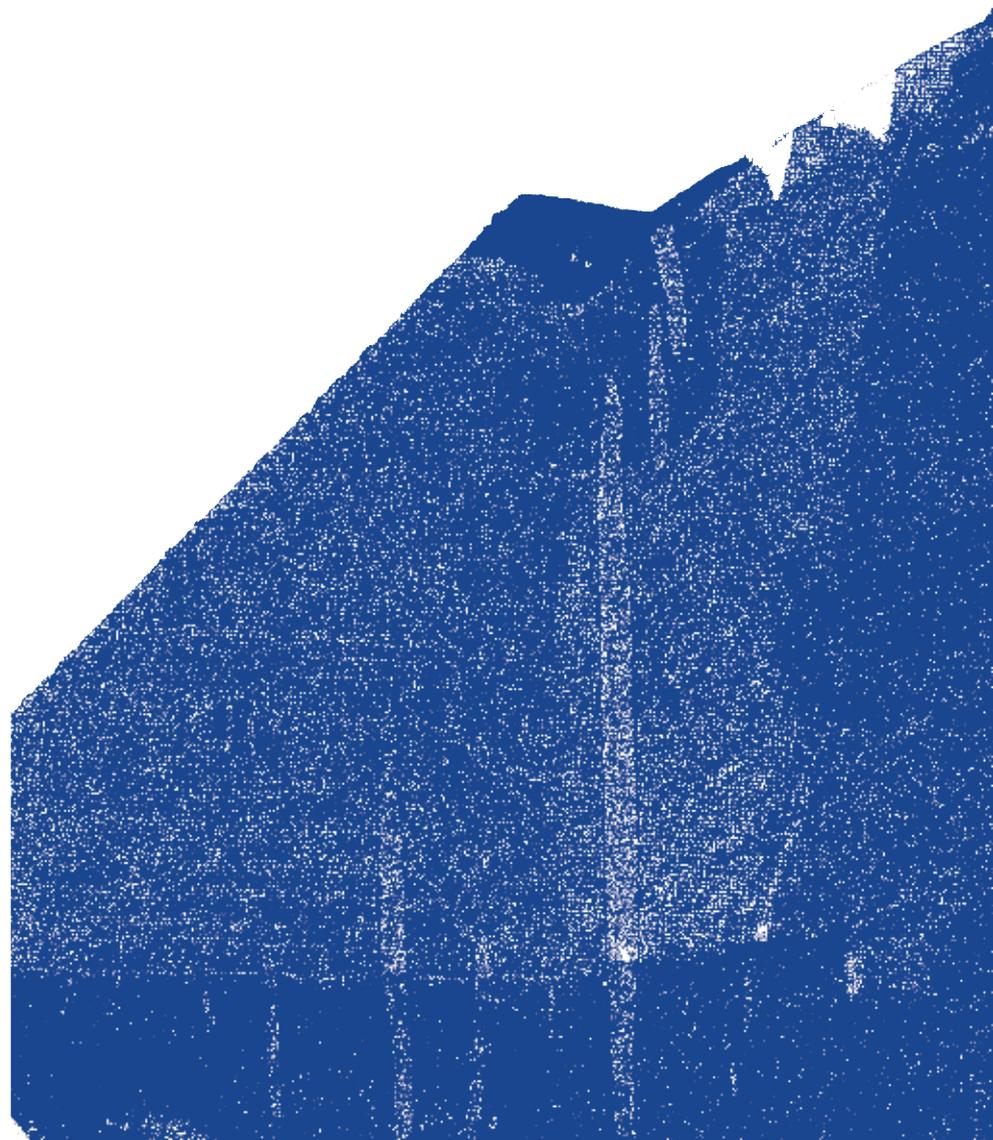
The workshop weekend drew to a close with discussions about the interim exhibition at R-Space, which was only a few weeks away. It was agreed that Liz Nilsson would hang the show, with the assistance of Olga Tiernan. Dyveke Zadig and the Swedish group would then take care of the Konstfrämjandet Skåne iteration in Malmö. Time was given to consider the design and layout of the promotional poster Olga had drafted to accompany the R-Space exhibition.

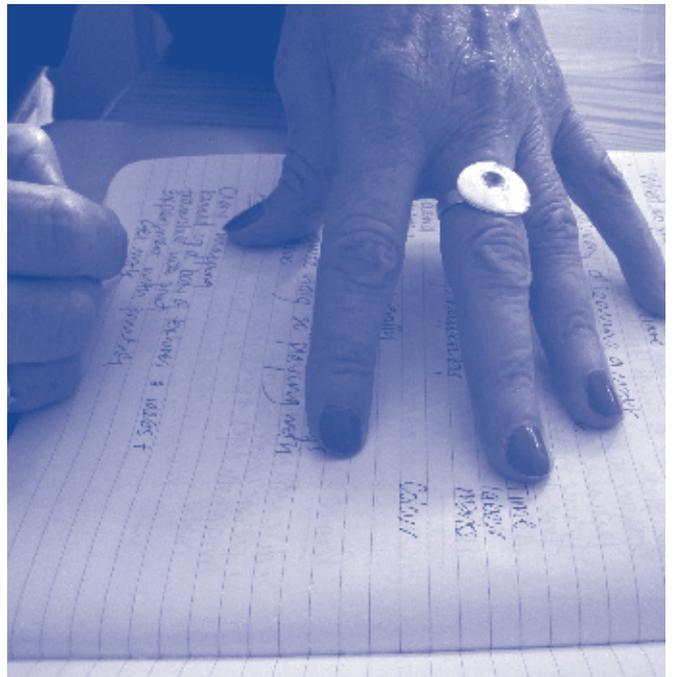
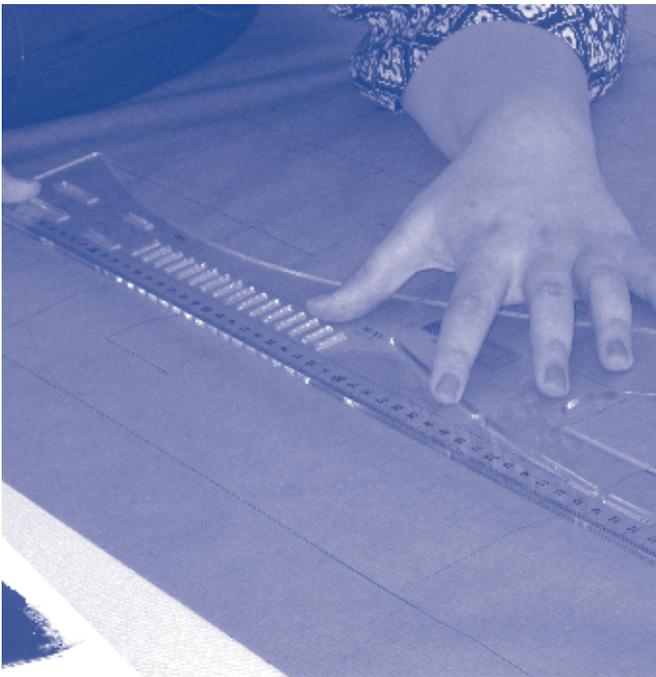
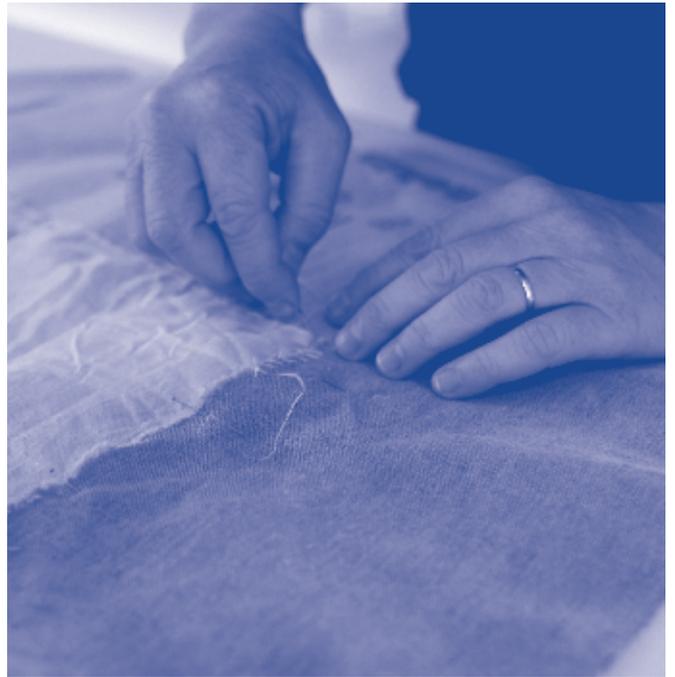
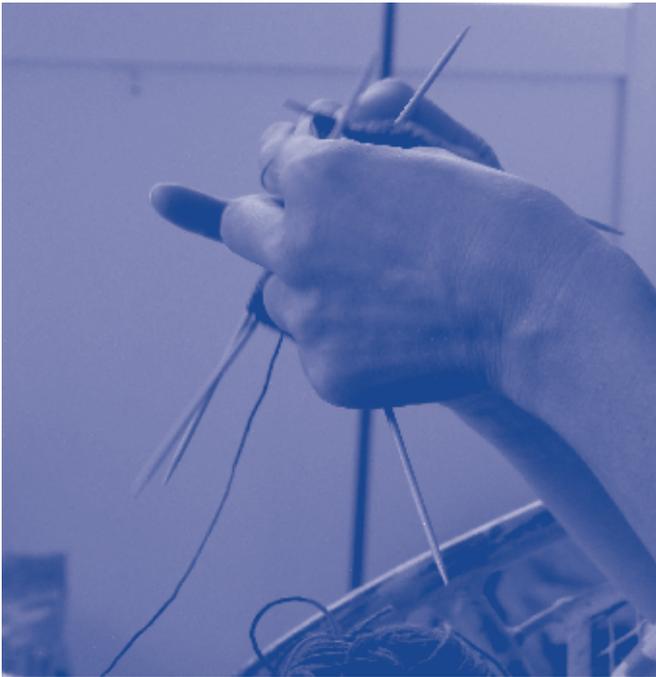
The idea of showing work in progress was beyond the parameters of everyone's usual practice and the source of some generalised discomfort, but geography required conversations about scale and position to take

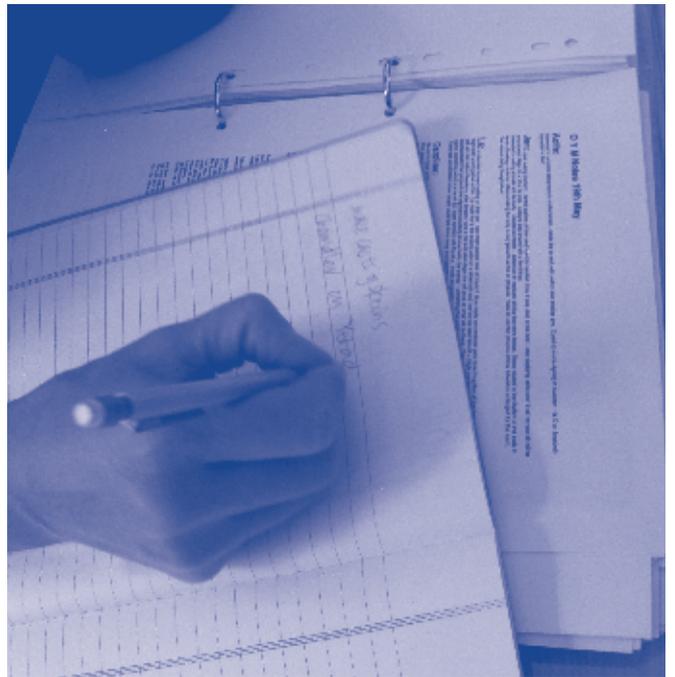
place at that time. David Littler provided technical advice for those who would be using sound in their work for the first time, and the general layout of the exhibition was collectively agreed.

The weekend had brought a wealth of colour and connection to the project. Singing became spontaneous, laughter frequent. Stories told while hands were busy strengthened connections in multiple directions. The time itself had left a mark of the collaboration on everyone; its energy and inspiration galvanizing the coming weeks of making.









02 PROCESS

Ireland, September 2015

In September, the Swedish artists returned to Dublin in preparation for the R-Space exhibition. Print Block member Caroline Ryan organised a visit to the National Craft Gallery in Kilkenny, Ireland's leading centre for contemporary craft and design. In the form of a 'Crafternoon Tea' this was an opportunity for the Swedish artists to meet other Irish practitioners and share ideas on collaboration and textile practice through pecha kucha presentations.

Caroline describes it:

'This social event was an opportunity to invite the OYM group to my home town and to exchange with local textile practitioners there. Together we gave a presentation on our project. Guest speakers also gave presentations about collaborative projects that had taken place in Kilkenny though the medium of textiles.

Similar to our OYM gatherings, people discussed their work over food, and some printing also took place. It was great to extend the findings of our project to a wider circle of practitioners and to also learn about their approaches when working collaboratively.^(CR)





Photography: Simon Mills

02 PROCESS

R-Space Opening

The exhibition at R-Space Gallery opened on Culture Night on 18th September 2015. Ahead of the public reception the participating artists came together once more around the dinner table, alongside the gallery staff and invited guests.

Speaking at the start of the evening, Dr. Helen McAllister gave the first critical comment on the project in her opening remarks (see over). Participating Swedish artist Margareta Bergstrand, a textile conservator, gave a presentation of her research into historical and contemporary uses of Swedish linen. Giving a flavour of how other artists in Sweden use linen, this extended and expanded the context of the work. The attentive audience actively appreciated both speakers.

The opening reception aligned with the wider programme of Culture Night, and R-Space had invited traditional musician Willie Drennan to play. Echoing back to the welcome received on arrival at Borrie Farm, the artists were delighted by his lively performance, which included a Swedish tune. Creating a tremendous atmosphere, his music and storytelling provided texture and merriment. Over the following days, the Swedish visitors took the opportunity to visit some of the landmarks of Northern Ireland and extend their experience of the region.



Photography: Paul Moore



02 PROCESS

R-Space Review

Collaboration is one of the hardest things to get right, often it can seem superficial and short lived, but after the wonderful inclusive welcome at the meal tonight, I realize there is something very unique and very special here that will last. Well done!

Not only do our practices overlap but also with our shared interest in linen, I like what your text says about being 'informed by the past and not bound by it'. Indeed the legacy of something so pervasive to a culture that no longer is evident has a sad weightiness. But your collaboration allows for enlightened responses to the linen as a cloth surface with processes of making through print, processes of re-thinking, processes of re-engaging through collaboration which is ultimately one of a collective dialogue.

My past PhD research was titled 'Binary Oppositions', which meant I saw and still see pairings and partnerships everywhere; collaboration is another way to create expedient partnerships. Finding commonality is important but I think it's in the finding differences that makes for the unexpected, unprescribed, that pushes expectations outside comfort zones.

There is a sense of the shared understanding that the process, the process to make and to engage with others can have more importance than the physical outcomes. The process is about dialogues, reciprocal dialogues between past practices with future making experiences. Dialogues inform the individual, dialogues forge a group, the dialogues between cultures, between generations, dialogues and relationships that have a certain democracy, that all can become part of the shaping; (which women do particularly well).

Dialogues and processes need time. Time to invest and be invested; Liz said to me 'we needed to talk, to tell stories and to play.' This thoughtful project fights knowing what should be the final result, this is liberating 'not be bound by it' instead lead by the process of the engagement. I love the name of this project: On Your Marks, it implies a starting point, concerted effort, movement, momentum and a journey.

On *your* marks implies ownership, forging identity, finding a voice, on your terms. On your *marks* implies mark making, a signature, a statement, it implies leaving a mark, a mark that matters, marks that have meaning, marks to last and not to fade, marking a legacy.

Le Feuvre said 'grammatically artwork is a comma not a full stop,' this could also be 'grammatically having a practice is a series of punctuated commas and not a full stop'.....or lastly 'grammatically your creative partnership is a comma and not a final mark of a definitive full stop.' I look forward to your next paragraphs as I have no knowing what they may reveal and say.

Today I read a lovely phrase that I thought was so appropriate for your project, 'acts of aesthetic witness which create a community of shared enjoyment.'¹

Dr. Helen McAllister

02 PROCESS

Interim Exhibition

The R-Space exhibition surpassed the participants' expectations in many ways. Although the presented works represented only a stage in the overall process, the act of displaying them in the gallery environment automatically amplified their status. In this context, pieces previously considered as incomplete or as samples were elevated in value, becoming artworks worthy of visitors' time and appreciation. For some, the fact of seeing the interim work professionally displayed was enough to move it forward and suggest that it might already be complete. For others, it provided exactly the focus needed to illuminate the next stage.

Liz Nilsson and Olga Tiernan applied curatorial precision and rigour to produce an exhibition that surpassed any concerns about showing work in progress, and has been described as 'intriguing' and 'truly beautiful in every way.' Care and detail were evident in each individual piece and many visitors took time both to review the accompanying materials and to listen to the audio pieces alongside, thereby delving into the artistic process behind the project. Visitors were of all ages, including some local school girls who enjoyed mimicking the Swedish speech on one of the audio works.

The usual output of the participants ranges from commercial textile design and production, through to fine art and installation, with varying degrees of batch production and hand making in between. For several

people the act of taking a less design-led approach than usual freed the presented work from preconceived ideas of completion. In other cases, it was a source of discomfort. The push to produce an outcome worthy of display had also consumed much of the remaining energy in the project. In hindsight it would seem that further group workshop time might have been helpful in maintaining the momentum and pushing the work forward again.

The work shown in Lisburn will now tour to Malmö and form the core of that exhibition, curated by the KKV-Textiltryck Malmö group. Some of the artists are developing their work further, while others are using this interim period to consider the process and produce reflective work, such as film and this publication. While the R-Space exhibition focused on the physicality of linen, at Konstfrämjandet the emphasis will be on process and collaboration.

The Print Block participants will return to Malmö and enjoy meeting the wider KKV-Textiltryck Malmö network. Through social gatherings and presentations, the artists will share and discuss their journey both with other invited collective groups and with members of the public, before formally bringing OYM to a close.



OYM collective bound book, collated by Dyveke Zadig



Dyveke Zadig



Photography and following photography by Simon Mills



Dyveke Zadig



Aoife Challis



Kajsa Lindh



Margareta Heijkskjöld Holmgren



Margareta Heijkskjöld Holmgren



Pernille Holm



Jennifer Phelan



Olga Tiernan



Caroline Ryan



Ursula Celano

02 PROCESS

Interim Exhibition

Dyveke Zadig | Title: **Heritage** | w: zadigart.se

I am telling a story about a young maid named Karna. Her linen dress is the link between then and now. How did she manage? To grow, reap, swingle, spin, and weave the flax, among all other duties at the farm. I wanted to grow flax myself, to get a feeling of the past, and to make it grow in a new context.

Kajsa Lindh | Title: **Exile Quilt**

My work began with an article about exile quilts, filled with memories from everything left behind. Inspired by that, I have made a symbolic quilt, to summarise this project so far. I have printed linen fabrics, then embroidered them together in reference to the time consuming aspect of making. Another aspect is that it is easy to travel with - a quilt in temporary exile.

Pernille Holm | Title: **Swan Wing**

w: pernilleholmstudio.com

My inspiration is the dried white swan wing used to wipe off the dust from the linen warp on the weave during the weaving process. The Swan wing is known as a highly spiritual element, used in songs, poems and literature through time to express spiritual ideas and dreams. A white swan wing was also used in the stone ages to lay a child to rest, beside its mother when buried. I was surprised to find this object in the Linen Museum in Belfast, laying on the warp of the weave as a practical tool, and at the same time a whisper of ancient times. I'm fascinated by the link between practicality and spirituality, and see it as a symbol for the work we do. The semi-transparency and layers in this piece represents layers of consciousness, knowledge and timespan.

Aoife Challis | Title: **Untitled** | w: aoifechallis.com

To grow the flax we must sow a seed, and it is the clay which catalyses the life of the plant. Using bleached linen yarn grown and processed in Ireland, and an unbleached linen yarn grown and processed in Sweden, the act of wrapping these simple ceramic forms brings our attention to the affinity of these materials in the outset of linen production.

Margareta H Holmgren | Title: **Through My Mind**

Marks, Colour, Red, Dye, Pleat, Smock, Stitch, Pattern, Print, Block, Women, Maria. These words have been with me as inspiration for my work continually through time. The linen has been coloured, patterned and sculpted in the same way for centuries throughout the world. Similarly, in Ireland and in Sweden.

Jennifer Phelan | Title: **Pause**

Jennifer Phelan's work explores the relationships between craft and labour, as well as the body and mark-making. In this work an ink splash is used as a motif to denote a momentary pause offering a reading of the body. Her work finds form through the exploration of embroidery techniques, detailing a splash through a network of stitch marks to consider the value systems of the handmade. Pattern, colour and texture are interwoven as visual tools and are used to compound the unique identity of each mark.

Trish Belford | Title: **Bleaching Time** | w: ulster.ac.uk

Initial research into traditional Irish bleaching methods revealed this was a lengthy process responding to the climate and continual processing. As Michael Longley describes in *The Linen Industry*, 'draped with material turning white in the sun.' Swedish linen found in a Loppis, (Swedish jumble sale) was printed and foiled from climate information from August 2015, during the time of the group workshop. Irish handwoven linen was printed with historic climate information from the 19th Century. Thank you to The British met office library and archive and the Swedish meteorological and hydrological institute for supplying the information.

Liz Nilsson | Title: **A Moment Embedded**

w: liznilsson.com

During our summer workshop in Sweden, I gave each OYM participant a linen napkin to use at every meal. The stains left behind are a testimony to our shared food, conversations and memories. In domestic textiles, these testimonies are usually washed away, but in doing so we remove the last embedded traces of a moment left behind.

Olga Tiernan | Title: **Composition In Blue**

w: olgatiernan.com

Composition in blue is a reflection on the accumulation, use and values of materials in our world. Easily acquired, easily discarded, in a cyclical continuum of fashion. It is often the discarded I find most interesting, the broken, the imperfect, the incomplete, coupled with a contrasting need for austere perfection.

Ursula Celano | Title: **Creases**

An embroidered tablecloth half finished. To be completed for Malmö exhibition. 'Creases' is an indulgent piece worked on by making time for sitting and stitching. Usually a pattern designer, here the natural creases in the fabric are traced in thread to decorate linen creating a tablecloth. The tablecloth represents tradition, celebration, entertainment and civility.

Josabet Werkmäster | Title: **Textile Talk**

w: josabetwerkmaster.se

100 years ago they saw the importance of keeping the old knowledge and culture and also the importance of making something new out of it. We have the same issues today. Are we afraid of new influences and cultures? On your marks, I think it's time to listen to the stories and read the old marks and make new ones. In the accompanying sound piece, listen to Raine Mickels, (a women from my home area, Dalarna) speak about old textiles. Also in the piece are my relatives and my great grandmother, Kerstin Werkmäster, who was an important person at that time concerning the knowledge of textile and traditions.

Margareta Bergstrand | Title: **A Thousand Stitches**

In Ingelstad | w: margaretabergstrand.se

The elaborate constructions of women's linen head-dresses from Ingelstad county in south-east Sweden and their rich embroideries in blue and white drawn stitches, inspired me to make large scale patterns printed on fine linen from Estonia. The patterns may be local but patterns also are a universal language.

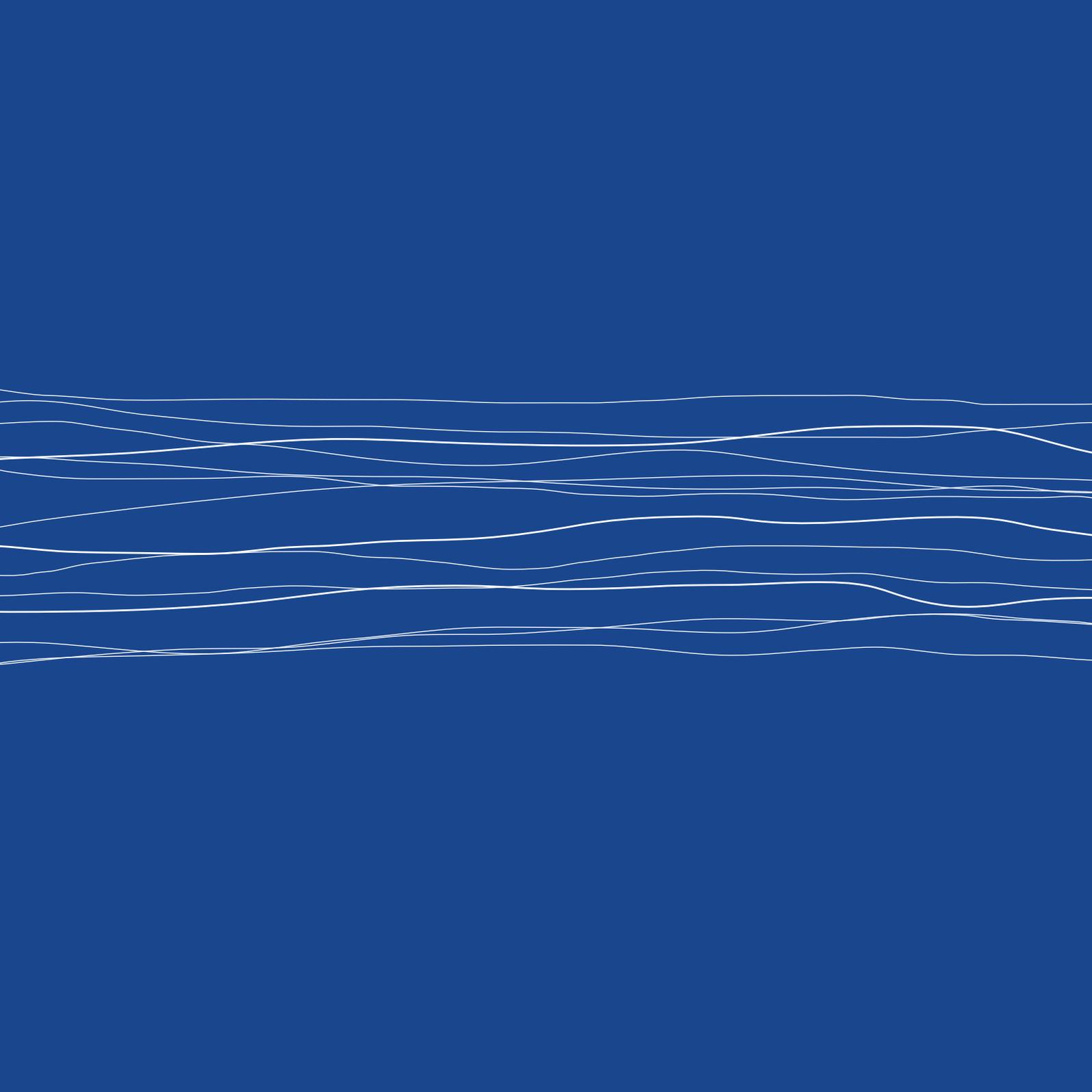
Caroline Ryan | Title: **From Sweden**

These images convey a dialogue of exchange, the learning of each others cultures and traditions through a focus on linen head-dress.

Image 1. Letter from Margarete to Caroline.

Image 2. Measurement of linen fabric used for traditional Swedish head-dress. This fabric has been exhibited in Sweden and Northern Ireland, and will travel back to Sweden for the final exhibition in Malmö. It has been stiffened using traditional starching techniques.

Image 3. Head-dress inspired by traditional Swedish head-dress design.



03 REFLECTIONS

Overview

OYM has been a process of critical enquiry and reflection. Using 'textiles as receptacles for individual marks both past and present,'^(JP) it operated as an explorative international exchange that allowed for playful experimentation. For the individual artists it enabled new connections and possibilities to emerge both within and alongside their practices. Alternative methods and mediums have been explored, and horizons extended both physically and emotionally.

At time of writing, the artists are preparing for the concluding exhibition at Konstfrämjandet Skåne, Malmö, which will shine a light on the process through additional documentary and reflective content, presented alongside the textile works.

Preparation of this written documentation has provoked specific reflection and critique, both by the individual

participants and by the three members of the curatorial team. Feedback from the individual artists has been quoted throughout the text, and essays by each of the curators follow. They address curation, international exchange and collaboration. In contemporary culture, the terms curation and collaboration in particular are open to a range of interpretations. These are discussed by Liz Nilsson and Trish Belford respectively. The element of international exchange is addressed by Dyveke Zadig.

From an external stand point, the project can be said to have achieved a great deal in terms of expanding the frame of reference for the participants. The exhibited outcomes will remain as point-in-time marks; conclusions in cloth, while it appears that the personal and interpersonal effects seem likely to continue beyond the project's formal conclusion in March 2016.

03 REFLECTIONS

Curation: Liz Nilsson

Curate, the word has exploded both inside and outside the art world. Curation has become a meme; a socio-cultural concept that duplicates itself. People now curate websites, blogs, social media pages, museums, television and radio shows, podcasts, plays, shows, exhibitions, installations, festivals, music events, cinema, photography. Kate Fowle believes the curator is having an 'identity crisis.' The traditional curator, as someone who looks after a museum collection or who hangs pictures for an exhibition, seems to have expanded to a much wider practice.²

In English 'curate' is both verb and noun. In the Catholic Church a 'curate' is a junior clergyman with direct pastoral responsibilities who works alongside the parish priest. In Swedish the word has two meanings. The old usage of 'kurator' means a social worker – one who gives advice and help in a social context. So a curator is a person who cares for others. The Swedish term 'utställnings producent' (exhibition maker) used to be the title to describe a person who practically organised an exhibition. That is now predominately described as the curator, the term borrowed from the modern English usage. *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines the verb form as 'Select, organize, and look after the items in (a collection or exhibition), and, select the performers or performances that will feature in (an arts event or programme).'

Let us look at curation through the key words provided by this standard definition – select, organise and look after. From this perspective the curator selects content, organises it and looks after every aspect of the process and every person involved in it.

Curation demands extensive technical and organisational skills as well as communication and delegation. In this respect the curator is the catalyst of other people's energies and contributions. Clarity, sensitivity, diplomacy, generosity, vision, patience and a sense of humour are essential requirements. Hans Ulrich Obrist suggests that curating today goes far beyond the traditional museum framework, with the term now expanded to include enabling, filtering, synthesising and framing a situation or project. He implies that the curator is a facilitator to the artist, someone that helps the artist to actualise his ideas.³

The curatorial team of Dyveke Zadig, Trish Belford and myself approached this project with enthusiasm and energy – and with some assumptions and prejudices that only came to light as the project developed. Curating across two languages, two traditions, two cultures and two countries brings a whole set of new difficulties. I am a Swedish artist who has worked most of her life in the UK and Ireland and therefore have a foot in both camps, and have the advantage of speaking both languages. For three people to shape and create a project from the start requires constant communication. We used English as our working language, with certain parts being translated into Swedish. Our ideas were shared and developed via email, telephone calls and Skype. We were blessed with today's technologies!

The project concept and timeline, funding applications, workshop and exhibition logistics – were just some of the issues that the curatorial team dealt with. On reflection I realised that the project idea and concept were formed while writing the funding applications to The Design and Craft Council of Ireland, Ulster University Arts Festival and Region Skåne, Konstfrämjandet and IASPIS in Sweden. Although dreaded, application forms have the advantage of forcing decisions and accuracy around an often intangible idea.

Collaboration adds a whole new assessment criterion and a whole new operational complexity to all of the above. It is a warm word for something which can be difficult in practice. When it works well the curator is like the conductor of a symphony orchestra. The OYM group negotiated departures from and returns to collaboration in a mature and respectful dialogue; collaboration is not an absolute term and it allows for shades of meaning and varieties of practice.

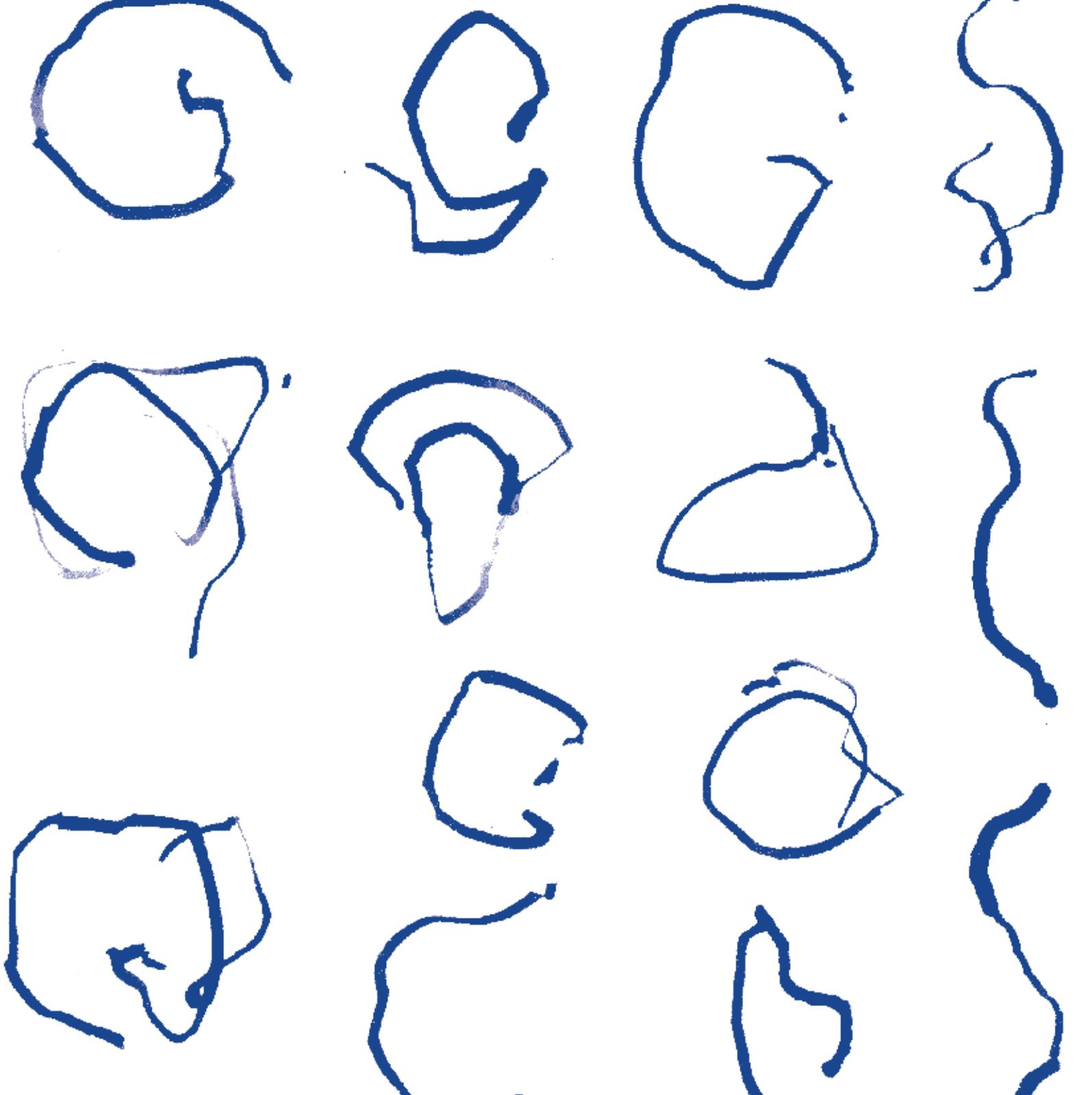
Even so, I feel ambivalent about the word curator. I have inherited a concept of the curator as a person who selects, someone who has the power to decide on what is suitable. It implies respect, top-down authority, a natural ability to decide the criteria for inclusion or exclusion. It seems to me to be a grandiose, abstract, mystical and inappropriate term for what we were doing in relation to the OYM project. Our role does not fit into the old school definition; but it does fit in with the new concept of the curator as facilitator, and the artist herself applying her skills to a curatorial role.

In presenting exhibitions, the artistic timeline is an essential element of curating; one must somehow show not just the end result but also the diverse processes involved in composition, selection, collation and display. Curation must tell the story behind the story in such a manner as to create multiple contexts for the work. One such context is the multiple relationships that evolved over the 18 months and four get-togethers of OYM. Group dynamics - both positive and negative - are vital to the energy of the project. Managing the dynamic is a group responsibility, which the curator merely facilitates.

At the end of the day I am confident that the core objectives of the project were fulfilled. New experiences and skills were gained from the cross-fertilisation of cultures, languages, traditions. New works were born. The project was about collaboration and collective process, so there were no outright leaders - rather a fluid constellation of thoughts and ideas created both the atmosphere and the outcome. The role of the curators was exactly how Hans Ulrich Obrist described it in his prologue to *Ways of Curating*, 'the task of the curator is to make junctions, to allow different elements to touch. You might describe it as the attempted pollination of culture, or a form of map-making that opens new routes.'⁴

The curatorial group served as catalysts, organisers, communicators, facilitators; but we were always 'inside' the process and at no stage 'above' it. Critique and care are often thought of as opposites rather than complements. The curator embodies both of these qualities simultaneously - and at all times. Critique drives the standards up and up, while care keeps the people focused and connected. Art and communication - communication and art. I found that I had to nurture both these aspects in myself as artist and as co-curator.

It would not be too much of a stretch to say I had to learn to 'curate' my own identities - Irish-Swedish, artist-curator, carer-critic, leader-follower, thinker-doer. Different stages of the process required me to be a different me. As artists we do not only curate projects and exhibitions, we also curate our own personalities on the way. In my view curation must remain open and expansive. It must be based on a humble approach to all the parties involved and to all the tasks at hand. It is, from first to last, relational.



03 REFLECTIONS

International exchange: Dyveke Zadig

For the past two years I've been working on and living with a textile project involving a cultural exchange between Sweden and Ireland called 'On Your Marks'. In both of our countries textile artists and designers have focused on the historical and cultural differences regarding the use of linen. The many studies, workshops and discussions as well as the exciting collaboration with new colleagues have enriched our lives and have given us new and valuable experiences along the way.

This magical journey has entailed goals filled with much joy and excitement, trials and tribulations, hopes and fears, new knowledge and set-backs, and last but not least, laughter and tears. The difficulties in achieving successful collaboration have been surpassed, hands down, by the sheer pleasure of creating new art forms and meeting new talented colleagues. Most of all I've appreciated learning about the differences between our two countries and understanding the Irish artists' way of observing and upholding traditions working with textile art and design. It has been fascinating to know that these traditions can be salvaged for future generations.

The efforts in making something beautiful and interesting from the history of linen in both countries, and building new bridges to cross, was this whole project's most important goal.

I also see the project as a way of developing peace and understanding over borders. Looking into each others' culture, artwork, experience and mind-set has made me see how important collaboration with other countries and cultures is when it comes to respecting and understanding different expressions and values.

I think that the effort we've put into this project is a treasure to be cherished, and it shows that sharing these experiences have made us act and think in ways we hadn't expected. Ways that may lead us further into creating art as a small step on the road to world peace and in the meantime learning about the importance of cooperation. Looking at society today, I think the importance of cultural exchange can open borders and bring understanding, instead of the fear of our differences.



03 REFLECTIONS

Collaboration/Collective through cultural exchange: Trish Belford

The basis for this collaboration was to work through an exchange of ideas, the key themes being centered around linen and cultural dialogue between the two countries and artists, informed by the past but not bound by it. This allowed for enlightened responses to linen as a cloth surface combined with the processes of making through print, processes of re-thinking, and processes of re-engaging through collaboration which ultimately became one of a collective dialogue. In simple terms OYM appears to be a straightforward practice-based exchange facilitated by workshops, museum visits, conversation and cuisine. Within the group there soon appeared to be synergies and testing discussion about what the group was trying to achieve. Each artist had her own agenda which was probably subconscious until a focus was sought.

The initial strategy was for each Irish participant to partner or collaborate with a Swedish artist, bringing one another's culture and creative energy together to produce a piece of work to be showcased at the work-in-progress exhibition at R-Space. After the opening workshop the general feeling was that each artist would work to their own plan, the exception being the direct collaboration between Caroline Ryan and Margareta Bergstrand. The curatorial group decided early on in the process not to force collaboration, hence straying away from the initial proposal. This was accepted as part of the discussion, and as a group we concentrated on the process of working in each others' company, between Ireland and Sweden. Does this still equate to collaboration? Group feedback most certainly suggests it does, but what if this definition of collaboration is taken literally?

...workmanship-like exchanges between individuals and across disciplinary boundaries that are freely entered into, and that through joint endeavour leave one or both sides significantly changed...⁵

Through planned cultural exchange participants experienced altered methods of thinking about their own practice, however this project in its outcome operated more as a collaborative collective, moving with the flow and energy of the artists. OYM created a body of work where a number of contributors worked independently but presented as a group. We operated as a very supportive and engaged group, ebbing and flowing between Sweden and Ireland engaging with linen museums, workshops, participants' houses and the dining table; ideas were freely discussed and future opportunities proposed. Respect gained allowed for a more free dialogue - we valued each other's traditions and those shy by nature were able to gain confidence with their opinions, the latter being an unforeseen value to come from the project. Initially we thought we would simply work with another artist and produce something new, maybe this is yet to happen and the time needed to develop and understand cultural differences and pace should not be underestimated.

Collaboration between artists is not a new phenomenon. In the early 1990s a previous collaboration between artists from Russia and Sweden began with a clear agenda of collaboration but ended with a frictional conclusion. Eric Troncy's *No Man's Time* evidences this reconfiguration of interest in the exhibition as an open-ended project, with emphasis on collaboration and showing work in progress. Twenty-two artists were invited to spend a month in residence to participate in a brain storming session prior to the exhibition, emphasizing the convivial methods of discussion: beer, barbecues and coming and going of different artists and transcripts of their conversations. One of the key ideas to emerge was that of an

exhibition as a film, the artists were then asked to meet in both Stockholm (1994) and Moscow (1995) over the three-year long planning process to formulate the exhibition as a collective.⁶

Research into this project demonstrated that the initial early ideas and coming together of two cultures was successful but the second three year long phase proved less prosperous, leading to conflict between artists.⁷ This disconnected final result suggests that the OYM method of a short project with a mid way point maintained a focus and freshness that is so important in collaborative working. There was no opportunity for conflict as the main aim of the project was to generate time away from the normal daily grind a creative artist has to often endure. The short amount of time was valued, respected and used well to build a new body of work and thought process within each participant. The open ended approach adopted by OYM allowed us to meet, understand and now reflect on each of the group and what we would like going forward. Perhaps it is collaboration in its finest sense, often to be confused with asking another to facilitate for you, but we have learnt during this initial process and know what we want and are capable of.

Dialogues and processes need time. Time to invest and be invested, the need to talk, to tell stories and most importantly to play, resisting the temptation to frame the final result, allowing for liberation, and not being bound by a final outcome, just allowing the process of engagement to take the lead.

1870

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03 REFLECTIONS

The role of collaboration

This question has turned out to be the greatest point of discussion in the overall process, the original plan having proposed direct one-on-one collaborations between artists from each of the two countries. Most of the participants have been quite fluid in making any distinction between 'collaboration' and 'collective working' and simply enjoyed the opportunity to connect and exchange ideas, one commenting that: 'as an artist you work alone most of the time. Just being able to discuss and share ideas was great – and it makes you think differently.'^(MB) Another adding that she 'dared to think and develop and express ideas in a new way i.e. through sound and photography.'^(DZ)

It has also been noted that 'collaboration of course means give and take - not going through with your own ideas all of the time. Something new and unexpected should be the outcome.'^(MB) Perhaps the eagerness with which people welcomed the residential 'time out' signals that an opportunity to indulge in a project is something to be guarded rather than shared.

There has been some degree of regret however, 'that direct one-on-one collaborations did not take place and a suggestion that this may have caused the resulting work to be introspective, focused on the past rather than looking to the future.'^(PH) It has already been noted that the participants normally work across both art and design and it is around this question of collaboration that these differences become most visible. While a designer expects to adhere to the terms of the starting brief, an artist is perhaps more detached, using it purely as a point of departure. For some, the opportunity to take a more open ended and conceptual approach to their work on this occasion was welcomed. If the 'process and journey that unfolded is more important than the final iteration of work,'^(JP) then this question will fade with time.

What was universally welcomed was the meeting of different cultures, ages and backgrounds, while united by common interests in fabric, design and pattern; and the 'opportunity to learn from and network with other practitioners ... who have varied levels of experience.'^(CR) But although the cultures met socially, creative evidence of the crossover of cultures and exchange could have been stronger with more direct partnerships.

The collaboration became more about spending time together. Eating, drinking, traveling, sharing accommodation, the participants entered a relatively intimate space in which social activities and work development informed each other. While it was sometimes felt that some of the social activities took time away from the work development it was also clear that in 'private discussion you may find a way to collaborate and develop new ideas.'^(DZ)

It was agreed that the collective process 'gives insight into one's own work and that of others, enabling you to develop more than you would on your own.'^(JW) Also, that it enabled participants to 'see the work within a larger context, to gain a greater sense of community as an artist and maker and allowed one to place that within a broader context.'^(AC)

03 REFLECTIONS

The importance of time

Taking place over an 18 month period, OYM allowed for ideas to incubate, develop and flourish. Meetings with the whole group in both countries allowed the artists to get to know each other in different settings. Thoughts matured in between and there has been ample time for reflection.

This has led some of the participants to engage in new types of work. Some who usually work within design have moved towards a more fine art approach, others have used sound, introduced stitching into printed work or combined ceramics with thread. 'Stitching is a time consuming technique (especially when compared to printing) which allows for thought to be intertwined with the movement of the hand.'^(LN)

One of the elements that has been most valued was the time that participants actually spent together, away from the everyday and able to focus on the work. This aspect of micro-residency and collective working proved to be of great significance across the entire group.

'I have not made art for exhibition for many years so it was great to get the opportunity to do so. I have

been thinking about linen and my own connection in some historic chain. Without the time away from my own practice I wouldn't be thinking about that context at all and I think it has improved my work.'^(UC)

Travel, and time with others takes people out of their comfort zone. This is stimulating to the creative process, and encourages detachment from habitual actions of both mind and hand. Some felt that more time could have been spent working together, and that the connections were swept away on returning to their own practice. Although additional workshops would have been impractical within the structure of this particular project, this desire underlines their value.

While this project has provided a point of departure and growth for its individual participants, exchange between the Nordic countries and Ireland is not new. Back in 1961, the report *Design in Ireland* provided a Scandinavian insight into Irish making, and numerous connections have been forged since.



03 REFLECTIONS

Potential future developments

OYM has achieved its intended outcomes, having produced two exhibitions and created a dynamic collective energy between the two participating groups. As the formal lifespan of the project draws to a close, there is a sense that the collaboration deserves to continue in one way or another, free from any particular expectations. With the foundations of these 18 months in place, it remains to be seen if the participants will now build professional collaborative relationships beyond friendship. It seems likely that the legacy of exchange and co-operation will continue, perhaps through on-going workshops, masterclasses or other exchanges.

In the words of the participants: 'It was liberating to be given the freedom to experiment in different environments with like-minded people and a privilege to access people's private work-spaces and homes.'^(JP)

'It has been wonderful to have such a long time in an artistic process. Even if I have done other things, this has been following me. I have appreciated being focused on such a specific subject, and have been able to see the world with linen-eyes.'^(JW) And simply: 'I think it has been important for us to have had this opportunity.'^(MH)

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Endnotes

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