Mediterranean threads: Interdisciplinary jewellery and textile design narratives between cultural craft heritage and artisan communities.

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Abstract

Stephen Bottomley and Sarah O’Hana present two collaborative research projects sharing a common thread of Mediterranean textile histories and contemporary jewellery design. The paper explores opportunities that working across disciplines can yield by honouring and advancing past cultural heritages and traditions through academic research and practice. Both jewellery projects unpick past and present narratives and analyse the circular economy of collaborative Craft and Design with diverse stakeholders through the questions:

- Can sharing diverse craft vocabularies be applied to expand the production range of an independent, bespoke industry or community through an intervention or international academic partnership?
- How do differing cultural perspectives and material knowledge constrain or expand design thinking?
- What strategies may emerge to promote communication and understanding between the designers and clients and collections, for heritage interdisciplinary practice-based research?
In 2006 Bottomley, as principal investigator of the Tech-tile project, studied the work in Venice of designer Mariano Fortuny (1871-1949). Taking inspiration from Fortuny’s textile qualities and arabesque designs, Bottomley developed a collection of jewellery that O’Hana later participated with, using her own research in laser-controlled oxide growth on titanium (O’Hana and Turner, 2012).

In 2019 O’Hana draws from the textile history of Mallorca, Spain, to conduct a design project with Teixits Viçens, an independent company uniquely still working with Ikat weaving. Students from the BA (Hons) Jewellery & Objects course at the Institute of Jewellery, Fashion and Textiles in Birmigham City University, UK, were engaged in this collaboration as new thinkers, researchers and designers. Heritage, material collections and production processes are observed in the designs to propose new products for Viçens as an independent industry through academic partnership across two countries.

Through a visual display of jewellery, developmental methodologies and winning designs, the paper illustrates the importance of cross-disciplinary collaboration to participate in current global debates and promote original thinking.

**Key words**
Heritage – Interdisciplinary – Narrative – Textiles - Jewellery – Craft

**Introduction**
The textile and fashion disciplines have historically shared much common ground with jewellery design, most clearly through their relationship with the human body and the empowerment that is offered to the wearer. This paper presents the results of two cross-cultural jewellery / textile projects: In 2006 Bottomley, principal investigator of the Tech-tile project, studied the work of nineteenth century Spanish-born textile designer Mariano Fortuny (1871-1949) in Venice, developing a collection
of jewellery for exhibitions in 2008 at Villa Fortuny, Venice (Italy) and the Hove Museum and Art Gallery, Brighton, (UK). He invited O’Hana to participate with a series of jewellery pieces in laser-marked titanium, a process she was investigating in her Ph.D. The common textile thread shared by the Tech-tile project is extended in 2019 with a design research project carried out by Birmingham School of Jewellery students on the BA (Hons) Jewellery & Objects course within the Institute of Jewellery, Fashion and Textiles at Birmingham City University and Teixits Viçens, a family-run artisan textile factory in Pollença in the island of Mallorca, Spain. The company specialises in the design and production of typical Mallorquí fabrics, traditionally known as Roba de Llengües, or Cloth of Tongues, known as the Mallorquí Ikat. These works offer the foundation upon which this paper analyses the circular economy of collaboration between Craft and Design with different stakeholders. Through a rich visual display of exhibited jewellery, methodologies and winning student designs, the paper presents the importance of crossing cultural boundaries in order to disrupt established patterns and promote innovative tendencies and original thinking.

**Background**

"The real voyages of discovery consist not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes. “

(Marcel Proust, in Coatts, 2007)

At the turn of the last century in Venice, Mariano Fortuny (1871-1949) manufactured seductive textiles of such beauty that he enchanted the fashion collectors of Europe. Fortuny’s work was a fusion of past and present thinking, a mixture of medieval and classically-inspired garment designs, embellished with patterns drawn from both natural form and Eastern geometry. These patterns were transferred through the application of new techniques emerging at the time in photography and printmaking, which ultimately extended the boundaries of Fortuny’s textile craft. From his workshops and library housed in a palace overlooking the Venetian Grand Canal, he created a rich fusion of styles; his ‘alchemist’s den’ was frequented by artists, celebrities and writers of the time, including Marcel
Proust. (Coatts, 2007). Bottomley’s response to the work of Fortuny is documented in a series of jewellery pieces entitled Tech-tile, where he also establishes his output in terms of “…jewellery as adornment or ornamentation for clothing and the body.” (Coatts, 2007). His designs mirror the arabesque geometric designs featured in Fortuny’s textiles as motifs and matrices. Bottomley transcribes these into jewellery designs via a range of current technologies including digital scanning, reverse engineering, rapid prototyping and laser cutting and engraving. An example of this can be seen in Figure 1, where patterns for both a bracelet and a brooch are programmed concentrically in one file for optimum material efficiency, and are cut by laser in various materials from steel to acrylic. Figure 2 shows an illustration of a larger neckpiece that would have formed a third design around the first two pieces.

![Figure 1. S. Bottomley. 2007. Designs for Drape series](image1.png)

![Figure 2. S. Bottomley. 2007. Neckpiece 1, Drape series](image2.png)
Bottomley sought to capture the anomalies and irregularities within the original Fortuny geometric textile motifs where possible, retaining them within the complex cut paths of the computer files and ensuring each circle or line remained unique and individual. The apparent symmetry and mathematical geometry were therefore not consistent, presenting an ultimately human legacy in the final objects. Perfection and precision, so commonly associated with computer-aided design, is intentionally avoided in this body of work to reflect a sense of ageing, brought on by steady wear and tear, evocative of both the relentless passage of time and the softer materials of the original inspiration. (Coatts, 2007)

O’Hana’s collaboration with Bottomley on the Tech-tile project was driven by her own Ph.D. research in laser processing at that time, which allowed her to create coloured oxides on the surface on titanium using different laser systems and parameters (O’Hana et al, 2008). O’Hana and Bottomley observed that the colours achievable on the titanium substrate closely matched the combinations used by Fortuny in his dyed silk-velvets. An example of Fortuny’s fabric is shown in the illustration below, sent by Bottomley for use in her research:

Figure 3 (a). Fabric designed by Mariano Fortuny (supplied by S. Bottomley); (b) S. O’Hana. Section of laser marked titanium bracelet.
O’Hana’s research on oxidising titanium for use in contemporary jewellery was grounded on an established system of heat delivery by laser to create visible oxides on the surface of the metal appearing as colour, attributed to light interference (Perez del Pino et al, 2004). Oxide growth was controlled by setting specific parameters to deliver varying beam scan velocity. By this process O’Hana created two bracelets for the Tech-tile series, using the images received from Bottomley of the original Fortuny fabric, seen in Figure 3(a). The titanium pieces aspired to replicate the dyed silk-velvet that Fortuny printed with a Japanese motif in gold and silver. The aim was to evoke a textile quality made rich by layers of printing on velvet, and to achieve the colours that had faded with time in the original. One drawing was created in Illustrator CS2 software in order to fill the available titanium canvas, so that the overall image is as busy as the original and no background is left blank. Five different laser parameters were used to create the colours for this piece seen in Figure 3(b).

**Live project with Teixits Viçens, Mallorca**

The following section presents the jewellery / textile project carried out between undergraduate students from the Institute of Jewellery, Fashion and Textiles at Birmingham City University (BCU), UK and Teixits Viçens, a family-run artisan textile factory in Pollença, Island of Mallorca, Spain. It is important, however, to first understand the cultural background of both parties.

The original School of Jewellery in Birmingham was founded in 1890 as a specialist training school for the jewellery making industry. Today it is the largest jewellery school in Europe offering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across the discipline spectrum. The BA (Hons) Jewellery & Objects programme is a three-year course that focuses on practical skills alongside intellectual engagement and critical thinking. Students are trained as creative problem solvers and are encouraged to develop an individual and questioning attitude through an experimental and disruptive approach to materials, perceptions, and established concepts.
In the second year of study students are offered the opportunity to work on a Live Project module. The module introduces students to working professionally within a client brief which is set externally. It is designed to develop employability skills by drawing on the students’ existing knowledge of materials, techniques and processes to design and create a piece of work within the supportive environment of the university. A total of 39 students opted to take the Live Project in 2019, 31 of which were Chinese. An increasing number of Chinese students have attended this programme in the last decade (Fei, 2017). This is the result of new international trade opportunities and increasing cultural relations, which sees alumni from the School setting up important jewellery businesses in China and becoming influential teachers in the field (Hunt, 1990, 2017). This is relevant because of the singular relationship that necessarily developed throughout the Live Project between the British, Chinese and Mallorquin cultures. It would be critical for the module leader in this project to maintain a constant translation and faithful transmission of dialogue between the parties involved. It was the first time that the School of Jewellery had run a live project with a company in Spain. It was also new to Teixits Viçens to collaborate with a British university. The decision to approach this company was due to O’Hana’s strong links with Mallorca, and her long-term observation of the company’s retail output, which is based essentially on their Ikat woven cloths, used for furnishings and accessories, but which excluded jewellery.

Teixits Viçens was founded in 1854, and is renowned for its family-run luxury textile production located in Pollença, Mallorca. It specialises in the design and production of typical Mallorquin fabrics, traditionally known as Roba de Llengües, or Cloth of Tongues: the Mallorquin Ikat, seen in Figure 4.
According to the company's history, the ancient technique of Ikat weaving was brought to Mallorca via the silk route in the sixteenth century. The authentic Mallorquin fabric is a very resistant material, characterised by having an identical pattern on both sides, so having no front and back. The technique is still a very manual process of preparing the white cotton warp threads and dyeing them with solid colours by tying in sections according to the pattern required. The design composition is created once the dyeing is complete. This is a highly complex, time-consuming manual process that can be seen in the regular workshop visits held at their base in Ca’n Berenguer in Pollença. After this, the warp is taken to the loom where it is woven with linen to create a flat weave. Viçens claim to be one of the last places in Europe to still use the Ikat process for production of their textiles (Viçens, 2019).

A collaboration between the students and Viçens was agreed and the project was drawn up. The main points, simplified for this paper are below:

- Design and make a wearable piece inspired by the fabrics and / or the dyeing and weaving process utilised by the company Teixits Viçens.
- Observe the cultural background relating to the patterns and designs of the cloth, and understand the inspirational elements that are used to make them: land and seascapes, light and colour, climate and lifestyle.
• Remain faithful to the materials that the company relate to. Do not use plastic materials.

• The piece should not be restricted to the notions of traditional jewellery but can be experimental, providing it is wearable.

Students were supplied with swatches of fabric with which to experiment and develop ideas. As the project brief indicates, they were free to add materials to their designs with the exception of plastic, which the company omits in its repertoire. Three winning designs would be chosen for a prize with a potential to put the most appropriate idea into production. The students’ name would thereafter be associated with the product.

To support this and introduce the culture of textile design to the jewellery students, whose central training is in the processing of base and precious metals, a bespoke workshop was organised by lecturers from the Textile Department at BCU. The workshop focused on colour mixing using yarns and weaving. Through the wrapping of yarns students were asked to explore different aspects of colour behaviour through the consideration of proportion, frequency, mixing, relationships and surface qualities. Four-shaft hand weaving looms were set out especially for the students to explore weaving using available yarns and the students’ own materials and fine wires.

How would the cultural perspectives and material knowledge from the student group constrain or expand design thinking for this project? The diversity of ideas presented by this mostly international group supplies us with many answers which are reviewed in this paper, but would the company receive and respond to them favourably from their intrinsically Mediterranean / Mallorquin perspective? More importantly, would Viçens find a design that they would wish to put into production?
In addition, the contrast in culture that students would have to manage between the typically resistant materials in the jewellery workshop and the pliable, colourful nature of the textile world, would be significant at this stage of their learning. Unlike the essentially clean environment of the textile studios, working with metals is, at some point, usually a dirty process, especially where polishing is concerned. Any intention to join the two materials together would also present its own technical problems. Could this cross-over of materials provoke a point of innovation for the company through the potential introduction of precious metals, or simply through the rethinking of pattern and colour from alternative material perspectives? Ultimately the expectation to present a commercially viable product was in itself a challenge and in contrast to the majority of their other course modules. Through the creation of a poster explaining their inspiration, proposed design and making process, students were able to order required fabrics and threads from the company to fabricate their work. Of the 39 submissions presented, Viçens shortlisted 17 finished pieces with a view to selecting three winners.

**Selected work**

The presented outcomes can be categorised in the following groups:

1. Direct use of company fabrics / threads
2. Use of specific company patterns and colour
3. Inspiration from technology or local environment
4. Winning designs

1  Direct use of company fabrics / threads

Given the singularly striking qualities of the fabric and the extensive palette of colour and pattern offered by Viçens, it is predictable that most designs would aim to celebrate this. In group 1, an imaginative solution seen in Figure 5 illustrates how the simplicity of a stylised metal landscape cut in profile can set off a choice of fabrics to suit the customer as a brooch with multiple background
variations. This effective design stems from a concern for waste from factory leftovers, but the student also points out that: “If somebody bought Teixits Vicens products before, but these products are timeworn now, he or she can buy a frame, then cut those timeworn products to the proper size and put them in the frame to get a brooch.” (J.F.) Furthermore, the designer suggests that the frame can be cut from different materials, for example silver, wood or silver.

![Figure 5. Student drawings for brooch using Teixits Viçens fabric. Photograph S. O’Hana](image)

Focusing on the selvedge of many joined fabrics, the piece in Figure 6(a) also presents the skill of anticlastic raising, done by hammering on specially formed stakes. The fabrics, sewn together, are added as a separate component and remain in place through pressure, showing off the edges, with the vibrancy of colour and hints of pattern appearing between the layers, seen in Figure 6(b). It is a good example of how students can be driven primarily by a specialist technique in their own field.

![Figure 6(a). Student design for bracelet, gilding metal; (b) finished bracelet with Teixits Viçens fabric. Photograph S. O’Hana](image)
Use of specific company patterns and colour

There are many processes that students have access to at the School of Jewellery beyond the traditional ones available to jewellers and silversmiths. One such example is dye sublimation, a technique that allows dyes to be transferred through heat onto other materials such as plastic, card and anodised aluminium. The bracelets in Figure 7 are an intriguing example of this, as they capture a wide collection of specific company patterns through a miniaturised interpretation of them. Feedback from the company questioned that this could be made, however, the reduced digitised image of their patterns was effectively transferred, giving their products a new window of opportunity in anodised aluminium, the method of production of which was recorded on the poster for the client. According to the designer, the deployment of such diverse patterns is a reference to the rich and colourful ikat weaving background of the company and the geographical position of Mallorca situated between different cultures in the Mediterranean.

![Figure 7. Student design for bracelets in aluminium using Teixits Viçens patterns. Photograph S. O’Hana](image)

The distinct shapes that Vicens are renowned in their Roba de Llengües or Mallorquin Ikat, are picked up in the bracelet illustrated in Figure 8(a). By first reducing one llengüa or tongue, to a stylised minimum of three steps, the design then relies on repetition and inversion of the individual elements
to create a pattern which in itself references the staggered structure of the original motif. Meticulous sewing applied to all edges of the fabric define each element, as shown in the illustration of Figure 8(b) and are sewn together to form the flexible bracelet. The addition of silver components and company logo are an enterprising decision by the designer, adding value to the fabric as jewellery.

![Figure 8](image1.png)

Figure 8 (a). Student design for bracelet using Teixits Viçens fabric; (b) Diagram to show composition of design element for bracelet. Photograph S. O'Hana

3 Inspiration from technology / local environment

Less predictable were the pieces submitted that took inspiration from the technology employed in the weaving process and the observation of how cloth is built through a process of intertwining thread. The image in Figure 9(a) shows a bracelet composed of identical elements extracted from the understanding how adding a warp to the weft requires alternating vertical movement of shafts. The piece presents cutting edge technology to represent the loom’s mechanical action, as is demonstrated in the diagrams in Figure 9(b) It is drawn using a CAD programme, 3D printed and cast into solid metal before plating. It is the only piece to concentrate entirely on articulation with no reference to colour.

![Figure 9](image2.png)

Figure 9 (a). Student design for articulated bracelet; (b) Diagrams to show articulated unit for bracelet. Photograph S. O'Hana
unlike the piece in Figure 10(a) where colour takes centre stage. At first glance it appears that the designer has dyed the threads in her brooch with solid colours by tying them in sections according to the pattern required, as in the Roba de Llengües method of tying explained earlier. However, the technique is an illusion of this, as it is composed of a fixed warp of silver metal across which individual coloured threads are woven to specific points on the warp. The enlarged image of the brooch, shown in Figure 10(b), illustrates the resourceful nature of this design that, by measured composition of white amongst coloured threads, achieves the effect of the original llengües in a scaled down version appropriate for wearing as jewellery. It is worth noting in Figure 10(b) the attention given to individual threads and how they are intentionally dovetailed with the neighbouring ones, creating the phasing in and out of colour across the weave.

![Figure 10(a). Student design for brooch using metal as warp and threads; (b) Close up to show detail of woven threads. Photograph S. O’Hana](image)

4 Winning designs

Viçens made two choices from the 17 shortlisted. A third submission was chosen by the author as module leader to acknowledge the diversity of responses delivered. This third design, a hair pin, is illustrated in Figure 11(a) and consciously brings the Chinese culture into play. The designer observes that the patterns in the company fabrics remind her of traditional Chinese accessories, and proceeds to deconstruct them into three-dimensional elements. Three different elements are cut in wood and wrapped in coloured threads, referencing the original Mallorquín fabrics, but the final composition,
with tassels and gold coloured hairpin, is a uniquely Chinese response. The graceful drawing in Figure 11(b) indicates the wearing suggestion and further illustrates the distinct cultural origins of this proposal.

![Hairpin Design](image1)

**Figure 11(a). Student design for hairpin; (b) Drawing to show hairpin in context.** Photograph S. O’Hana

In second place, and taking direct inspiration from the machinery employed in the Viçens factory, is the bracelet shown in Figure 12. The design is a sincere translation from the mechanical spinning equipment. Onto the gold coloured frame, the designer brings a thin strip of company fabric to replace the threads spun onto the machinery in recognition of the textile nature of the project, but otherwise offers a genuine, clean-lined translation of the company ethos, its contemporary aesthetic suitably fitting the luxury Mediterranean lifestyle Viçens are renowned for promoting.

![Bracelet Design](image2)

**Figure 12. Student design for bracelet using Teixits Viçens fabric on metal.** Photograph S. O’Hana
The first prize was awarded to a unique design idea that offered commercial potential for Teixits Viçens. As with other entries, its inspiration is taken from the iconic stepped patterns of the woven llengües, however the concept presents an innovative product that would especially appeal to a younger audience. Using a thoughtful, precise combination of separately created components, the designer has invented a DIY brooch kit, illustrated in Figure 13(A), complete with brooch elements and findings, colour coordinated threads for winding, instruction sheet and a bag for safe keeping, shown in Figure 13(b). The idea is appealing because it attracts, though not exclusively, a younger audience, but also, in unpicking the composition of the fabric and reducing it back to its original threads, presents individuals with the freedom to arrange their own colour variation to suit. The kit provides the customer with more ownership than usual in a piece of jewellery, as it allows them some authority in the making as a novice jeweller / weaver, thereby reinforcing the hand-made character of the company ethos.

Figure 13(a). Student design for DIY brooch using Teixits Viçens threads; (b) Components of DIY brooch kit. Photograph S. O’Hana

Conclusions

Through the selection of the few examples illustrated, the work has demonstrated the significance of cross-cultural projects whereby diverse craft vocabularies are shared in the interest of expanding the production range of an independent, bespoke industry. However, industry and academia are not
always reconciled and expectations across cultures can vary unknowingly. Whilst lecturers may see the potential of submitted designs, the project has not been concluded by the company or any discussion had with regard to developing the winning design into production, despite an enthusiastic and personable relationship maintained throughout. Was the work unappealing to the company? Did the designs not fit their aesthetic? Were they disappointed by the execution, perhaps confusing prototype with finished article? It is also conceivable that they could not resolve locally the commercial production of the designs. Responsibility by the School ensured the winners were awarded their due prize, however, putting to rest the uncertainty from the students and finally concluding the module.

It was important for Viçens in this project that students maintain the company ethos, to exclude plastics and observe the artisanal nature and provenance of the work. They were presented with differing cultural perspectives, exemplified by the Chinese / Malloquin inspired hairpin seen in Figure 11(a) and new material knowledge such as the dye sublimated bracelets illustrated in Figure 7. Both offered an expansion in design thinking for the company and, importantly, shared a common ground with them in demonstrating a love of materials and making technologies. Material knowledge and the understanding of how things are made have been heralded as increasingly important skills to nurture and maintain in our age of relentless technological advance. “...handmade, well-made things aren’t cheap but their value isn’t solely monetary. It’s political and social – to know how and where something came from into being makes us more invested in it, so much so (that) we become responsible consumers.” (Lloyd-Jones, 2011). Responsible consumerism, as quoted by Lloyd-Jones, is a singularly twenty-first century problem that makers are now faced with, and that can no longer be overlooked. Involving the customer in the act of creation, such as the DIY kit in Figure 13(a) is an important part of that proposal because it instils in the customer the investment mentioned by Lloyd-Jones of knowing where the object comes from, but better still, how the object is made. The design is also important because it informs a new and, crucially, younger audience about the hand-made and
of how something works, as Lloyd-Jones writes. Antony Gormley also explains “Making is thinking. It’s so important from an early age to encourage young people to make art and look at art, and the fact that we would privilege numeracy and literacy over visual awareness is a sad indication of an increasingly corporate value system. We must give young, curious, inquiring minds the ability to have the confidence in their own perception. Treat your own response with more value than something you read in a book.” (Gormley, 2016)

Making, of course, is not all about the hand made. It includes the intelligent use of innovation that technology apportions the crafts. Mariano Fortuny showed this in his textiles and was a clear advocate of the newly emerging techniques in photography and printmaking. In the Tech-tile project, Bottomley and O’Hana responded to Fortuny’s ouvre by exploring the technologies of their own era, with laser processing being used as innovation, but which was already becoming an established and regularly used tool for artists, especially in the fashion and textile cultures. Fortuny would most likely have made very effective use of a CO2 laser to engrave his rich velvets and replicate devoré amongst other specialist techniques. Many new technologies are presented in the Viçens project, mainly through the use of 3D printing which is now in regular use at the School of Jewellery, such as the bracelet in Figure 9(a).

What strategies can emerge to promote communication and understanding between the designers and clients and collections, for heritage interdisciplinary practice-based research? A different methodology to the Viçens project was used for the Tech-tile work, which allowed Bottomley to travel directly to the Fortuny Museum in Venice, visit and work in the museum and undertake research on site. This has great advantages in that it enables the researcher to build strong relationships with the museum staff and curators, absorb the original essence of the subject and culture involved and ultimately be able to contact personnel directly for information. By contrast, only O’Hana as module leader was in contact with the team in Mallorca, able to travel in person and represent the group of
39 students, most of which were international. It was all the more important to establish good lines of communication between herself, the staff at Viçens and the students for a successful collaboration, especially given the layers of cultural and language diversity. Beyond a client / maker relationship it was important to ensuring the project also became a partnership, and that future work might be developed here. In their feedback, Viçens point out that “… as we are not jewellers, the collaboration with students from Birmigham City University has been very useful to us because it has brought us close to the essence, the most primitive and innocent part of the creative process. Being linked only by craft is very exciting and experimental, because we speak the same language, without ever having met.” (Campomar, 2019). Despite the inconclusive ending of the project they also state an interest in carrying future work with the university, which is a valuable outcome for future partnerships.

From O’Hana’s perspective as a researcher, the project helped to re-ignite an emerging project that had been delayed for some time. An upbringing on the island accounts for the prior in-depth understanding and familiar knowledge of the Viçens textiles, and their linear patterns had been a source of interest for inclusion in a series of specifically themed brooches. It was informative and enriching to observe how the 39 submissions had resolved, successfully and unsuccessfully, different ways in which to attach fabric to metal and other materials, with all the long-term consequences that these mixed-material pieces might bring. There were also lessons to be gained from orchestrating the different cultures, bearing in mind that the original languages of the stakeholders involved was Mallorquín, Castellano (Spanish), Mandarin, with English in the minority and individual cases of Ukrainian, Farsi, Indonesian and Thai. Feedback for the students on their designs was handwritten by the company marketing director in Spanish on each of their posters, but the Viçens team used Mallorquín as a first language in conversation and in all their printed materials. It required clear translation into English, so that this mostly international cohort of students could effectively utilise the information to improve their designs prior to making. The feedback in itself was less critical than
observational. As Campomar states in the company feedback for the project, it was difficult for them as textile designers to see the designs through the lens of a jeweller (Campomar, 2019).

More importantly for O’Hana, however, was the wide-ranging characteristics of the collaboration which directly builds on previous work developed by her between the disciplines of contemporary jewellery and science, using her practice to create jewellery pieces as carriers of information. Treading the ground between extreme discipline areas can yield innovative results, not least because these can be presented to non-specialist audiences to deliver new and emerging research knowledge (O’Hana, 2012). In the project with Teixits Viçens, the author has manoeuvred a dialogue between the extreme cultures of China, one of the largest countries in the world, known for its mass commercial production and where plastics are used in vast quantities for its merchandise, and an individual, bespoke, family-run business on one the smallest islands in the Mediterranean, producing hand-made luxury products in one small factory using mostly natural materials. Concept and design, manufacture and retail all occur under one roof. On this local scale, it has bee the common thread of making and education of visual awareness that Gormley speaks about (Gormley, 2016) and that Campomar also emphasizes (Campomar, 2019) that has linked the conversation between the different contributing groups. The extreme nature of the project is important because it informs each party directly of real attributes thereby helping to dissolve established preconceptions from either culture. The dialogue is extended further by the opportunity to present the work in Jaipur, India, a city world-renowned for its jewellery and textile cultures.

The concept of engaging students in research is documented under the title of Student as Producer by Neary, where he explains “Student as Producer is a critical response to attempts by recent governments in the UK, and around the world, to create a consumerist culture among undergraduate students. The context for the new student as consumer is a system of higher education dominated by marketized and commercial imperatives involving the intensification of academic work as a key
economic priority.” (Neary, 2010). Student as Producer challenged academics to design research-engaged teaching and learning into the curriculum, thereby aiming to reinvent the role and purpose of higher education and not just the future of teaching and learning (Neary, 2010). It is clear, however, that research-engaged teaching and learning is central to the School of Jewellery, as has been illustrated by the results of this project and which will continue to be at the core of the next live project in 2020.

References


