Alison Willoughby – Artist Inspiration

Alison Willoughby is a British designer maker who has the perfect mixture of colour, texture and pattern. She uses a range of techniques that include reverse applique, cut and slash, embroidery and sewing on found items.
Her skirts are works of art but could still be worn.

When evaluating an Artist's work, consider the following things; What can you see? What techniques do you recognise? How could you recreate all or part of the work? What do you think the inspiration was?

Key Words

Applique	Shibori	Cut and Slash
Embroidery	Batik	Ruffles
Tie and Dye	Reverse Applique	Needle Felting

Textiles Decorative Techniques

You have learnt how to do a range of Textiles Decorative techniques in Textiles. Some you learnt in Year 7 and have improved on each year (Eg Applique), others you learnt for the first time in Year 9 (eg Batik). Learning the process of creating these techniques is important, to allow you to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the subject. Once you have learnt the basics, you are able to experiment with them. It is important to 'layer up' your techniques, no piece of work will be at its best with just one Decorative Technique done on one part of the project. See how Alison Willoughby fills the entire project with texture, colour and interest. Any 'blank' spaces are intentional and carefully planned, rather than just forgotten.

Batik

1. Plan your chosen design on your fabric. It's important you use a natural fabric such as cotton, as it will absorb the dye later.

2. Use the Tjanting tool to drip the hot wax onto your fabric. Batik is a 'resistance' method of dying, meaning the parts of the fabric that have wax on them will resist the dye and star their original colour.

3. Once your wax has dried, either paint fabric dye on, or dip your fabric into the dye bucket.

4. When your dye is dry, start by scraping or picking off the larger pieces of wax, then iron out the rest, using newspaper to soak up the melted wax.

Fabric Construction

Fabrics are made up of different types of fibres. Fibres can come from nature, like cotton from the cotton plant, or wool from sheep and they can also be synthetic (man-made) and be made from chemicals. Fibres often look like hair and they can be processed in different ways to make fabric. How they are processed affects the properties of the fabric, as does the fibre you start with. There are three main ways to make fabric- Weaving, Knitting and Felting or Bonding.

Woven Fabric

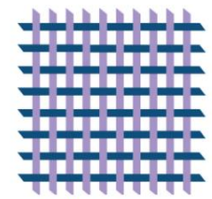
When fibres are collected from nature, they need to be cleaned before they can be turned into fabric, they also are often carded (combed) to remove any debris and help the fibres lay in the same direction. Imagine a sheep's fleece- that needs cleaning and carding before the next stage of the process can begin.

Carding machine

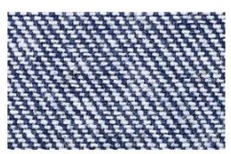
This giant machine spins all the fibres into yarn, ready for weaving or knitting.

Once the fibres are clean and ready to use, they are twisted together- this is called spinning. Lots of fibres are spun together making one long strand. The thickness of the strand varies, depending on how you want finished fabric to turn out.

The spun fibres are then woven together on something called a loom. There are lots of different types of weaves and they give a different end result. You might be most familiar one called a plain weave, this is used for fabric that could be made into school shirts, dresses and bedding. If you look very carefully at your school shirt, you might be able to see the different strands woven together. A Twill weave is used to make Denim fabric, which will be used to make Jeans.



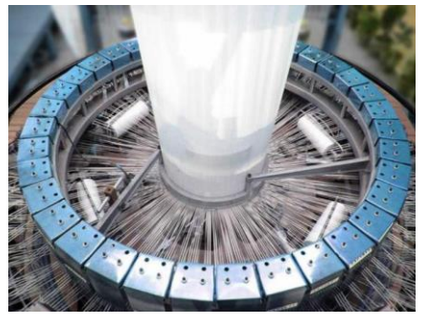
Plain weave



Twill weave

Knitted Fabric

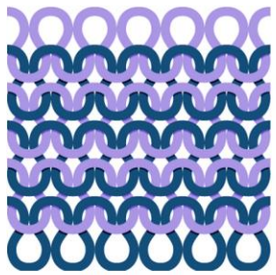
When you think of knitted fabric, you might think of what your grandparents or parents or even you do with knitting needles. Essentially, it is the same process for making knitted fabrics, but on a much larger scale, and using machinery.



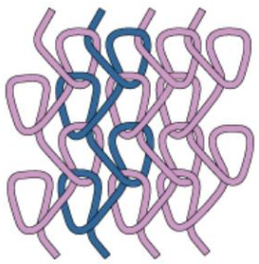
Just the same as when making woven fabric, the fibres need cleaning and carding and then spinning before they can be knitted. After that, the yarn is knitted into either rolls of flat fabric, or sometimes tubes of fabric or even whole garments such as tights or socks.

This is a type of loom that is making knitted fabric that is in the shape of a tube. This could be used to make the body of a t-shirt, the arms and neck hole would be attached separately.

This is a picture of what knitted fabric would look like if you looked at it very closely. You can see the yarn is looped together. This makes knitted fabric stretchy so it's great for making into things like T-shirts and sportswear. Woven fabric is not stretchy, but kitted fabric is.



'Weft' knit



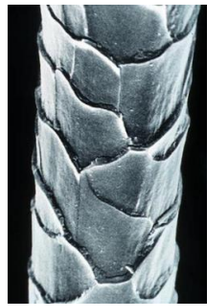
'Warp' knit

So it's not just woolly jumpers that are knitted, but also leggings, swim suits, underwear, socks and any other Textiles items that are stretchy, are likely to be made from knitted fabric.

Fabric Construction

Felted and Bonded Fabric

Felted fabric is made directly from the fibres. No spinning is needed, although the fibres are still washed and carded. Wool is one of the best natural fibres to create felted fabric, because each fibre has a scaly structure that looks a bit like a fir-cone. When the fibres are heated up, the scales open up and then lock together with other fibres when they are agitated (rubbed together).



Wool fibre under a microscope

Felt fabric does not stretch, and can be very warm because of the way it is made. Felt does not fray like woven fabric, or unravel or ladder like knitted fabric but it doesn't drape very well so tends to be used for items like hats, bags and coats.

You may have heard of Needle Felting and Wet Felting. These are both crafts that can be done at home to create a variety of different items. Felting is also done on an industrial scale, and felt can be shaped as it's being made- like into the shape of a hat!

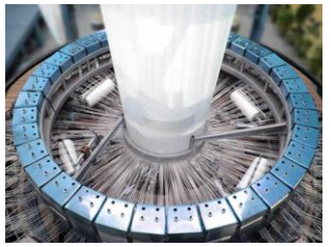
Bonded fabrics are also made directly from fibres, rather than yarn. The fibres are laid out in a random pattern, and then bonded together using heat or glue. These fabrics tend to be very weak, but they don't stretch or fray. They are used for disposable items like J-cloths, surgical gowns and wet wipes. Because they are quick to make, they are usually less expensive.

Test Yourself

Q1 What would be the best type of fabric construction for a school bag? Give reasons for your choice.

Q2 Why are fibres 'carded' before being spun into yarn?

Q3 What is the name for the machine that is used to make yarn into fabric.



Q4 Why is knitted fabric used for sports clothing?

Q5 What decorative Techniques can you see on Alison Willoughby's work?

A1 Woven, because it is strong and the bag won't stretch out of shape like knitted fabric would, and it drapes better and is more flexible than felted fabric. A2 To help clean it, and to help the fibres lay in the same direction. A3 A loom A4 Because it is stretchy so it is easier to move in. A5 Applique, cut and slash, reverse Applique, ruffles, embroidery, dying (lots and lots!)