

University for the Creative Arts
Research Project Portfolios

All That Remains

By Neil Bottle



Project Details

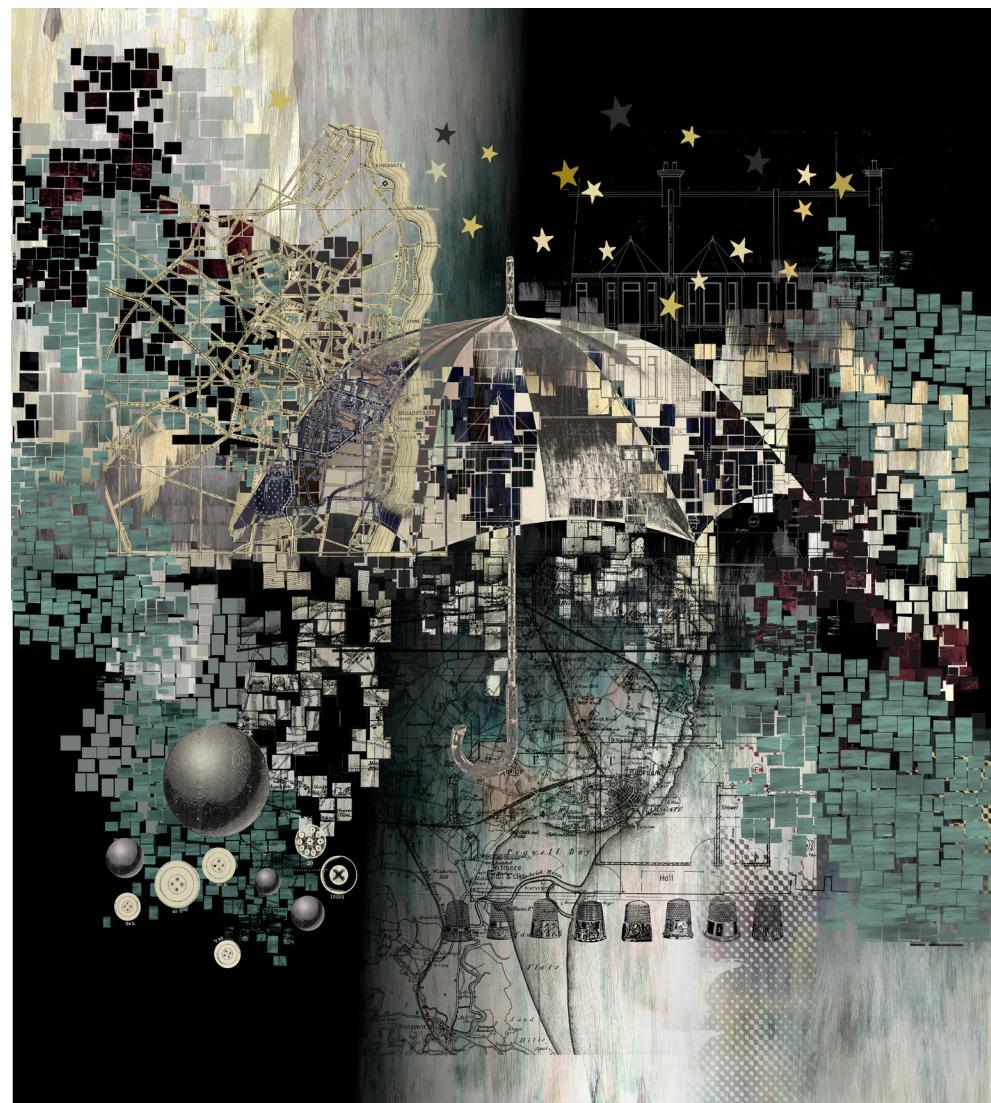
Name of Researcher:	Neil Bottle
Name of Output:	<i>All That Remains: Thirty Years in the Making</i>
UCARO link/s:	https://research.uca.ac.uk/5198/
Output Type:	M- Exhibition: two solo exhibitions of a body of textiles research
Year and mode of dissemination	<p>Solo exhibition, Contemporary Applied Arts Gallery, London, 13 September - 19 October 2019</p> <p>Solo exhibition, Ruthin Craft Centre, Denbighshire, 19 October 2019 - 12 January 2020 (total visitors 14,782)</p> <p>Solo exhibition, Rochester Art Gallery, Rochester, October 2010 - January 2021 (postponed until spring 2021 due to Covid-19)</p>
Key Words:	Digital design; printed textiles; one-off textiles; hand-crafted; photography and memory; collage; fine art textiles; digital craft
Funding:	Ruthin Craft Centre and Contemporary Applied Arts in-kind support; Ruthin Craft Centre artist grant £3000

Synopsis

All That Remains is a body of fine-art textile research. Neil Bottle has a thirty-year career working as both a researcher and a commercial fashion print textile designer, and *All That Remains* positions his practice firmly as research, unconfined by the constraints of commercial work. Bottle mines his own autobiography and archive of family photographs, exploring the nostalgia evoked by these material fragments. Physical photographic prints and digitally captured images are deconstructed and re-presented, translated into complex and layered digital designs. The work investigates society's transition from analogue to digital processes for the creation of family photographs and the storage, preservation and

transmission of memories. It investigates how people interact with digitally-created images, and considers the value of the physical artefact in a virtual world.

The research outcome is a series of 13 wall-hung textile art works (the largest approximately 120 × 180 cm), disseminated in one-man exhibitions at Contemporary Applied Arts in London and the Ruthin Craft Centre in Denbighshire, with further exhibitions planned. Supporting contextual information in this portfolio provides further explanation of research methods, processes and insights, and a range of visual material that represents the output.



*'Chasing the birds Away', wall-hanging,
hand and digital collage, printed on
cotton satin, 100×100cms*





*All That Remains, Ruthin Craft
Centre, 19 October 2019 - 12
January 2020*

Context

Bottle trained as an analogue print designer, and for the past 10 years has pushed himself to uncover the potential of digital techniques in fine-art textile research. He has extended the boundaries of computer software in the pursuit of the highest quality digital print resolution available. Digital production methods are often associated with mass production but Bottle's approach is more akin to that of a painter, building up complex surfaces and layers of imagery, in a process that he likens to Joseph Cornell's creation of his 'memory boxes'. The end results are textile works that are carefully crafted, honed, reworked and refined digital one-off pieces, which have required him to develop a fluency in the complex language of the digital world.

Bottle's previous work in this area includes the European-funded Crysalis project (2011-14, a collaboration between UCA, Plymouth College of Art, the International Centre of Lace and Fashion in Calais, and TIO3 Textiles Open Innovation Centre in Ronse, Belgium). In 2014 he took part in the exhibition *Model Making* curated by Brian Kennedy and held at Contemporary Applied Arts, London, in collaboration with architects Allies and Morrison. This looked at the increasing use of new technologies by both crafts people and architectural model makers, exploring how their use is influencing and changing the aesthetic demands of many creative disciplines. Exhibiting artists included Christian O'Reilly, Kane Cali, Naomi McIntosh, Ptolemy Mann and Vicki Ambery-Smith, all adopters of digital techniques as 'digital settlers' rather than the younger generation of 'digital natives'.

Bottle aligns himself to a community of researchers who investigate the implications of new technologies for craft skills, inventing new processes and 'future crafts' (eg, the Textile Futures research community at the University of the Arts London, or the Digital Craft and Embodied Knowledge research group at Nottingham Trent University). In 2017 he co-convened (in collaboration with Professors Lesley Millar and Victoria Kelley) *Digital/Material: the future of printed textiles*, a conference at UCA. Contributors included Phillip David Stearns (Glitchtextiles New York), David Mabb (Goldsmiths) and Rutter and Bennett (UCA).

Key Texts:

Bunnell, K. (2004) *Craft and Digital Technology*, keynote speech, World Crafts Council Conference (<http://www.autonomous.org.uk/archive/team/kb/craft%20and%20digital%20technology.pdf>)

Nimkulrat, N., Kane, F. and Walton K. (2016) *Crafting Textiles in the Digital Age* (London: Bloomsbury)

Palfrey, J. and Glasser, U. (2008) *Born Digital: understanding the first generation of digital natives* (New York: Basic)

Bayne, S. and Ross, J. (2011) "Digital Native" and "Digital Immigrant" Discourse: a Critique', in Land, R. and Bayne, S., *Digital Difference* (Rotterdam: Sense)

Research Questions and Aims

Research questions:

How can handcrafted and digital textile design and production processes be used to explore and communicate memory recall and our relationship with photographs, in the pre-digital and digital age?

Can textiles evoke a collective memory bank of nostalgia?

Research aims:

To explore the meeting point of material and digital imagery in printed textiles.

To explore how photography, which functioned formerly as a fixed personal memory bank, can now function as a means of constant digital self-remodelling in the formation of on-line identity.

To explore nostalgia and memory based on a personal archive of images and ephemera, in the context of autobiographical self-fashioning.

Research Methods and Process

Sue Prichard, Senior Curator of Decorative Arts at Royal Museums Greenwich, describes the starting point for Bottle's research methods thus:

'Photographs are the most ubiquitous objects found during the clearing of properties of loved ones. They are also the most emotive, conjuring up memories of special events – Christmas and birthdays, seaside holidays and ice cream treats. The discovery of the faded and sepia toned images transform the slips of photographic paper into inanimate objects of desire – triggering waves of nostalgia for an uncomplicated childhood overseen by loving parents or grandparents. The photograph appears to offer up a 'truthful' rendition of the past, one which reinforces our recollections of endless school holidays, dust motes floating in shafts of sunlight in a too warm front room and the scratch of upholstery on bare legs. 'Do you remember' becomes the mantra that accompanies the sorting through boxes of black and white and Polaroid images.'

(Prichard, S., critical essay for exhibition publication)

In *All That Remains*, Bottle took his extensive archive of family photographs and ephemera, starting the research in nostalgia for an idealised past, as discussed, in relation to photography, by Geoffrey Batchen (Batchen 2004: 14-15). He selected old transparencies and manipulated them, layering up and breaking down the images. His approach is to use what Janis Jefferies describes as 'textile knowledge as it emerges in felt experiences, traced back in time through stories and memories, shaped by transcription and narration' (Jefferies 2015: 101).

Bottle has a close working relationship with RA Smart, the UK's leading provider of specialist digital print equipment, and has collaborated with the company to build the digital print resource at UCA's Rochester campus. His research pushes the boundaries of this equipment and in *All That Remains* he took the analogue starting point of the family photographs and reproduced them in their new manipulated form at extremely high resolution. Bottle uses his longstanding experiences of craft design to approach the process of digital designing. The resulting bespoke outcomes could not easily be copied or reproduced commercially for mass production

Key Texts:

Batchen, G. (2004) *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press)

Goett, S. (2015) 'Materials, Memories and Metaphors: the textile self recollected', in Jefferies, J., Conroy, D.W. and Clark, H. (eds) (2015) *The Handbook of Textile Culture* (London: Bloomsbury)

Jefferies, J., Conroy, D.W. and Clark, H. (eds) (2015) *The Handbook of Textile Culture* (London: Bloomsbury)

Stickfaden, M., Stafiniak, L. and Terzin, T. (2015) 'Inspired and Inspiring Textile Designers: Understanding Creativity Through Influence and Inspiration', *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 33:3 pp.213-228

Research images:
ephemera





work in progress

Research Contribution and Recognition

Contribution and insights:

All that Remains demonstrates new technical advances and expertise in the digital manipulation and reproduction of analogue images to produce fine-art textile print outcomes of the highest possible resolution and quality. Paired with this technical innovation, it demonstrates a method for the capturing of autobiographical narrative in printed textile design.

All That Remains was shortlisted for the Vlieseline Fine Art Textile Award in 2019, the inaugural year of this new award, which is an international, juried prize open to artists using textiles as their medium to make works that ‘transcend the craft or making process, standing alone as visual art’.

Dissemination:

All That Remains: Thirty Years in the Making, solo exhibition, Contemporary Applied Arts Gallery, London, 13 September - 19 October 2019

All That Remains: Thirty Years in the Making, solo exhibition, Ruthin Craft Centre, Denbighshire, 19 October 2019 - 12 January 2020, 14,782 visitors

Selvedge magazine blog review, Jane Audas, November 22 2019:

<https://www.selvedge.org/blogs/selvedge/all-that-remains>

All That Remains was also shown in an exhibition of Vlieseline Prize shortlisted works at the Festival of Quilts 2019 and Knitting and Stitching Show, 2019

‘Meet the Maker’ events at Contemporary Applied Arts (5 October 2019) and Ruthin Craft Centre (1 December 2019)

Research talk, College of Fine Art & Design, University of Sharjah, UAE, November 2019

Research Contribution and Recognition

Follow-on activities:

Further development and exhibition of the work is planned, as follows:

All That Remains: Thirty Years in the Making, Rochester Art Gallery, scheduled for October 2020 - January 2021, postponed until spring 2021 due to Covid-19

Exhibition at Freehand Gallery, Los Angeles, scheduled for 2021, postponed until 2022 due to Covid-19



*'Winifred's Legacy', wall hanging,
hand and digital collage, printed
on cotton satin, 105 × 132cms*

ALWAYS



24:00



All That Remains



1939
posts

2019
followers

∞
following

Follow



Neil Bottle

Your life is recorded in
a series of images

neil@neilbottle.com



MEMORY



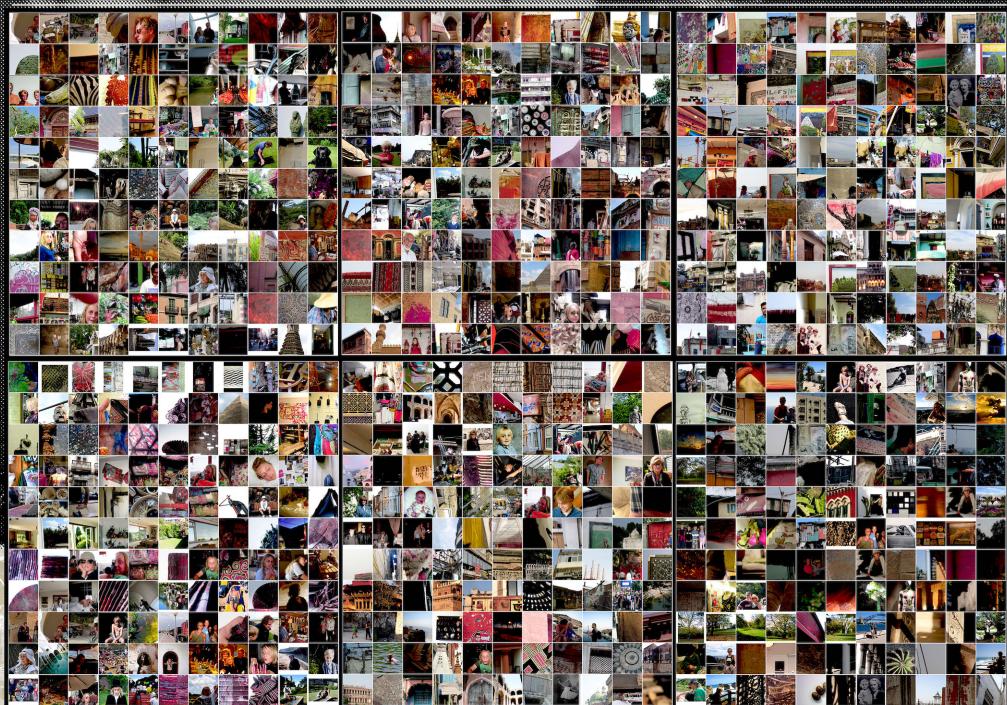
PAST



PRESENT



FUTURE



'Follow Me' wall hanging,
printed on cotton satin,
104 x 184cms



'Agnes - Film Star', wall hanging, hand
and digital collage, printed on cotton
satin, 95 x 119 cm



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