



Crafts Council / Education

Craft Journey

**Gareth Wadkin / Lecturer
and Widening Participation Officer**



Gareth Wadkin. All photos courtesy of the artist.

What I do

I am a Lecturer on Textile Design at Leeds Arts University and I also work there as a Progression & Widening Participation Worker.

As a Lecturer on Textile Design I help design, plan and deliver learning experiences on printed textiles and surface pattern design to undergraduate degree students. My design teaching specialism includes innovative and traditional printmaking, dyeing and screen-printing for paper and textiles.

My role in Progression & Widening Participation at Leeds Arts University includes encouraging achievement and raising the aspirations of young and adult learners through creative outreach with schools, colleges and community engagement. This includes offering information, advice and guidance on art, craft, design and higher education to prospective students.

Jobs in craft

Alongside being an educator and researcher at the University I am a practicing printmaker and textile designer. I've freelanced for various design agencies and organisations since graduating producing textile designs and prints for both fashion and interiors markets. Job opportunities in textiles include: designers and makers of woven, knitted or printed fabric for fashion or interiors; textile or colour technologists; surface pattern designers for products. Many textile designers and makers are self-employed, whilst others work as part of a design team. Within a specialist arts university there are opportunities to teach and provide technical support for students on textiles and fashion design subjects.



Print design.

Why craft?

I have always preferred to design and make textiles by hand, dyeing my own yarns and fabric before weaving or screen-printing. As an educator I have continued to champion craft preservation, helping to preserve age-old, textile techniques by incorporating them into contemporary, innovative designs and manufacturing processes. Craft is fundamental to the learning process and linked to design features such as sustainability and wellbeing so it's central to my teaching practice.

What I studied at school

I studied creative subjects at school, including GCSE Art & Design and Design Technology. After high school I went to an exceptionally creative sixth form college and studied A Level Art & Design, Fashion & Textile Design and Design Technology.

Art & Design and Design Technology were my favourite subjects at school and it was a natural choice to continue studying creative subjects at sixth form. Whilst studying A Levels I became fascinated by textiles and the many possibilities it presented, exploring both structured and surface technical processes. I had two great tutors who were both so inspiring and encouraged me to apply to university.

What I studied after school

I studied an undergraduate degree in Textile Design and a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (Continuing Education) at University of Leeds. I also gained an MA in Textile Practice from Manchester Metropolitan University and was awarded Fellow of the Higher Education Academy in 2018. Gaining these qualification has been essential to my career in teaching children and those in Higher Education.

I studied for my undergraduate degree at university for 3 years, full time. Afterwards, I started working as Print Technician and freelanced for several years before returning part-time to university to undertake a teaching qualification and later a postgraduate degree in Textile Practice.

My career path

My professional background, research and creative practice has led me to collaborate with the Crafts Council, Arts Council England, Nike, Sorrell Foundation's National Art and Design Saturday Club, Leeds Museums and Galleries, The Tetley, Yorkshire Sculpture Park and The Hepworth Wakefield.

Working with creative and cultural organisations, schools and colleges has been a key part of my career path. I love working with different groups of students, teachers and industry professionals on creative projects, it provides opportunities to share knowledge, experience and design perspectives.



Print design.

Important decisions

The most important decision I made was returning to university to study a teaching qualification and a Masters degree. Going back to university has definitely enhanced my career prospects and offered a variety of opportunities to collaborate with industry and educational professionals.

Tutors from my undergraduate and Masters degrees were incredibly inspiring, they had their own art practice alongside being teachers and this is what encouraged me to be both a textile designer and educator.

Challenges

Being the first of my family to go to university and finance were definitely challenges when I first started studying in higher education, but it was such an exciting and valuable experience, I made life-long friends and had some of the best years of my life.



Gareth Wadkin, Make your future.

My advice to you

The UK Creative Industries is the fastest growing sector in the economy and creative jobs are flourishing in the UK. It is a competitive industry so passion and a strong work ethic will go a long way.

The best advice I can give to young people considering a career in the textile design industry is to be proactive, visit galleries, read books, magazines, publications, blogs and websites to inspire creativity. Drawing is extremely important for many creative subjects at university and within print design drawing is really important. You have to practice and develop your skills in art and be open to trying new things and new ways of making imagery. Use your time in school or college and at home to practice and build strong drawing skills and a great portfolio.

Craft Careers

Craft generates £3.4 billion for the UK economy each year, with the contribution of the wider creative industries now growing at twice the rate of the UK economy. British craft has never been so sought-after and craft skills are revolutionising industries from aerospace to architecture.

To learn more about craft careers visit:
www.craftscouncil.org.uk/learning/craft-careers



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