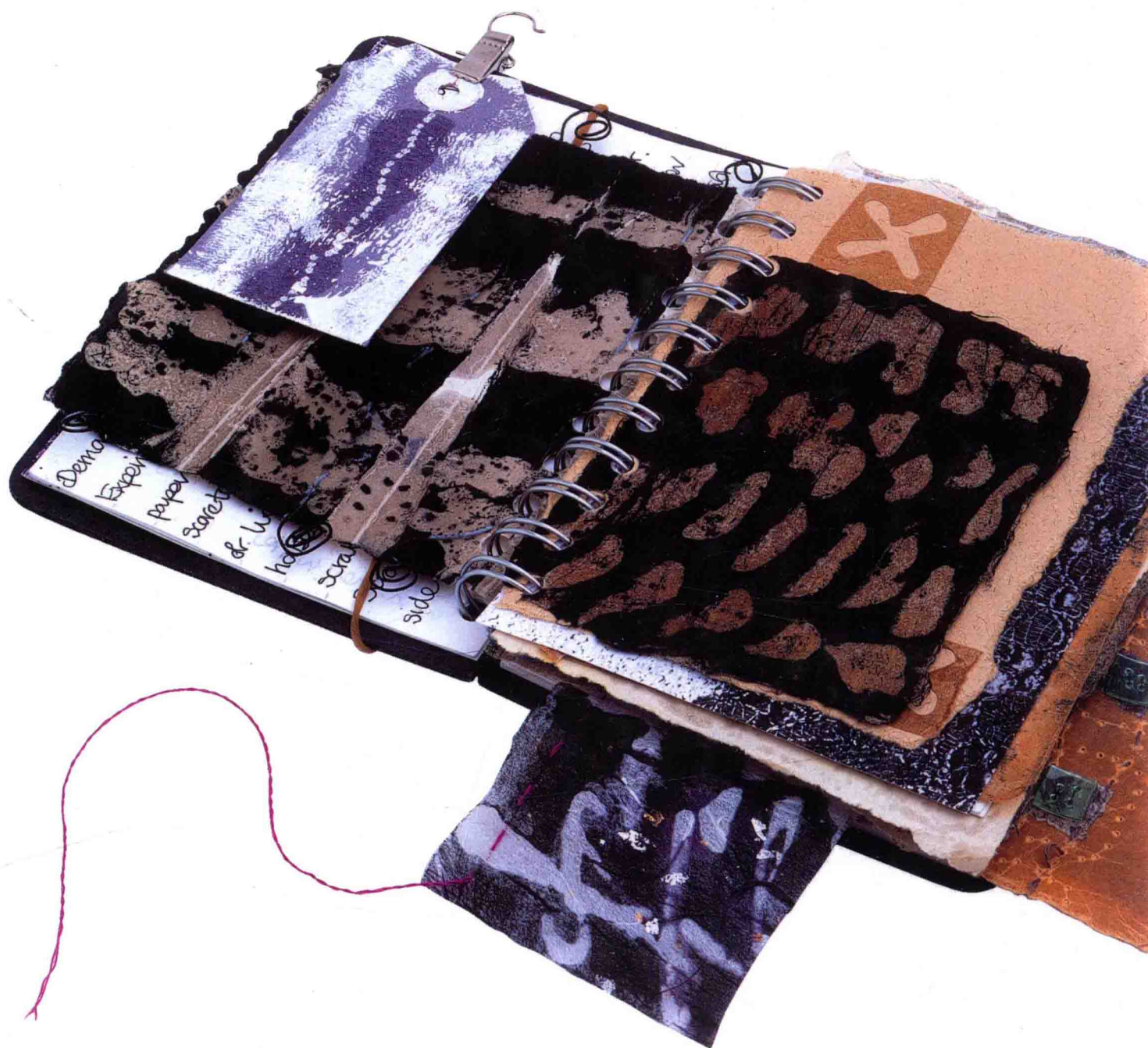


Kay Greenlees

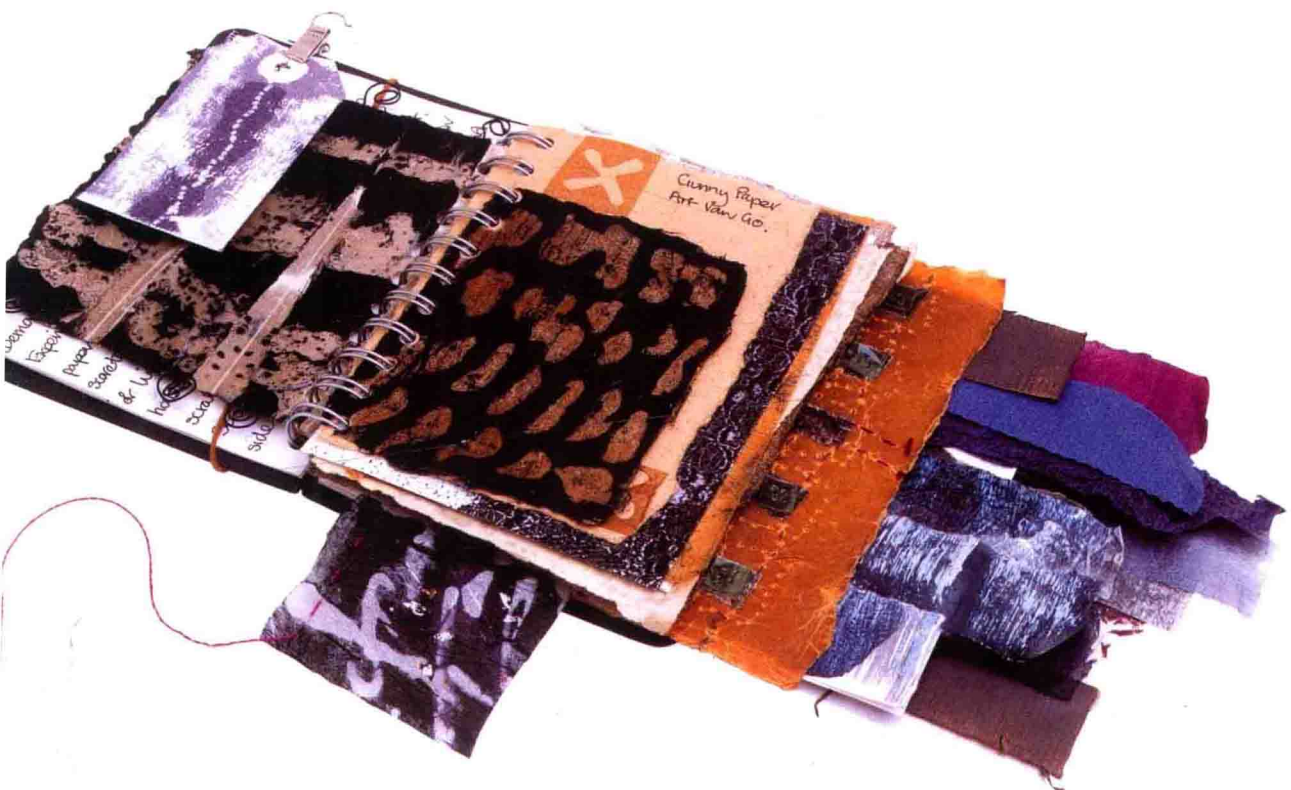


Creating Sketchbooks

for Embroiderers and Textile Artists

CREATING SKETCHBOOKS

FOR EMBROIDERERS AND TEXTILE ARTISTS





Previous page:

Greek sketchbook: Burnt Grass and Light

Julia Caprara

A3 (297 x 420mm [11½ x 16½in])

Above:

Untitled (detail)

Sally E Payne

Mixed media, calico, painting, screen printing,
paper, stitch, photographs, inks

Photography: Sally E Payne

First published in the United Kingdom in 2005 by

Batsford

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London W14 0RA

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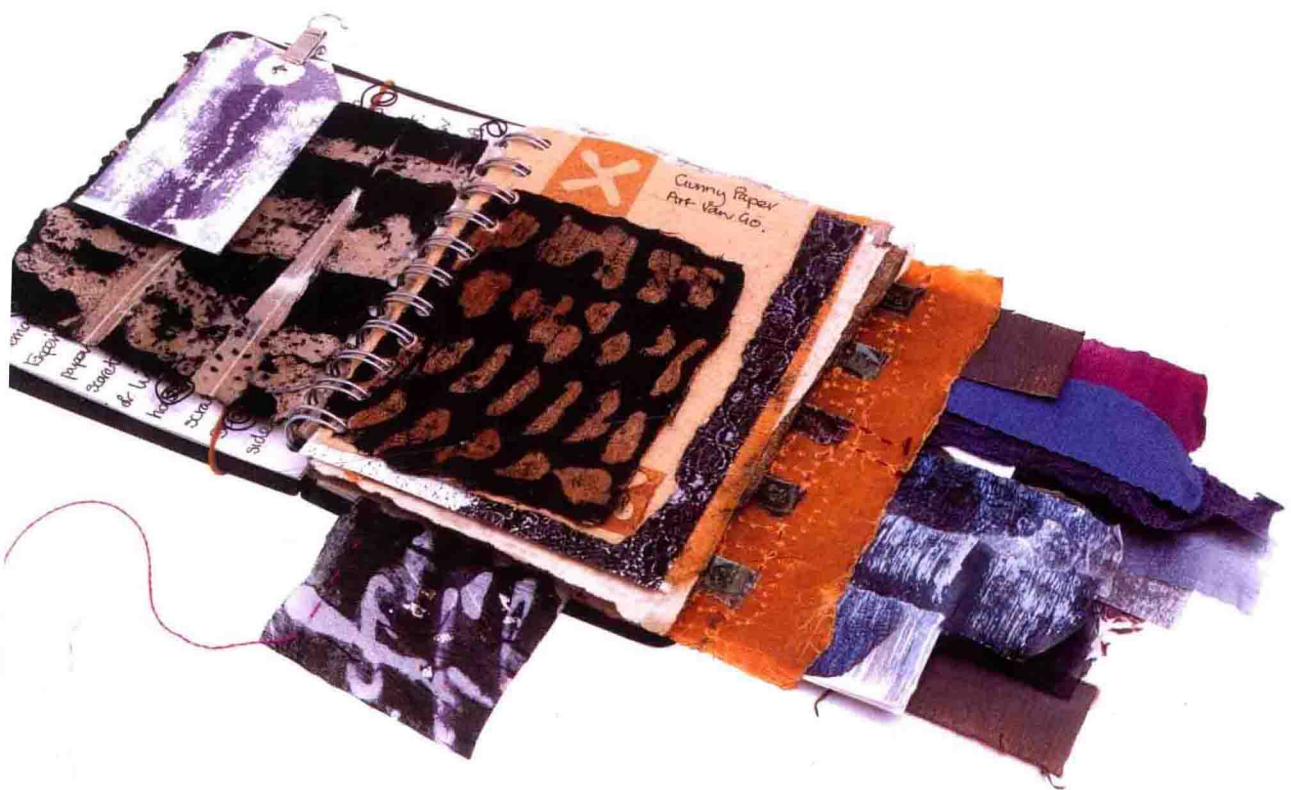
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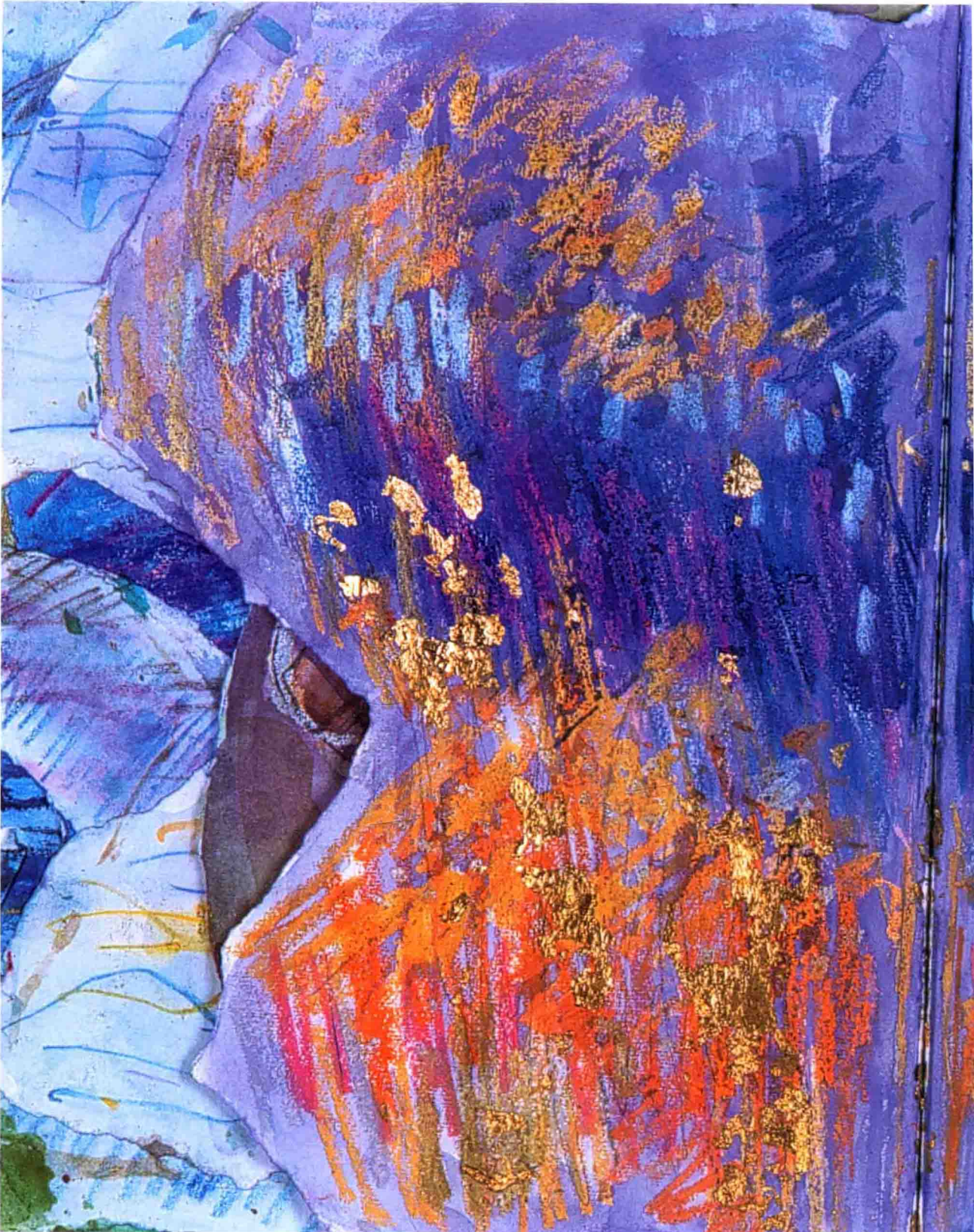
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FOR EMBROIDERERS AND TEXTILE ARTISTS





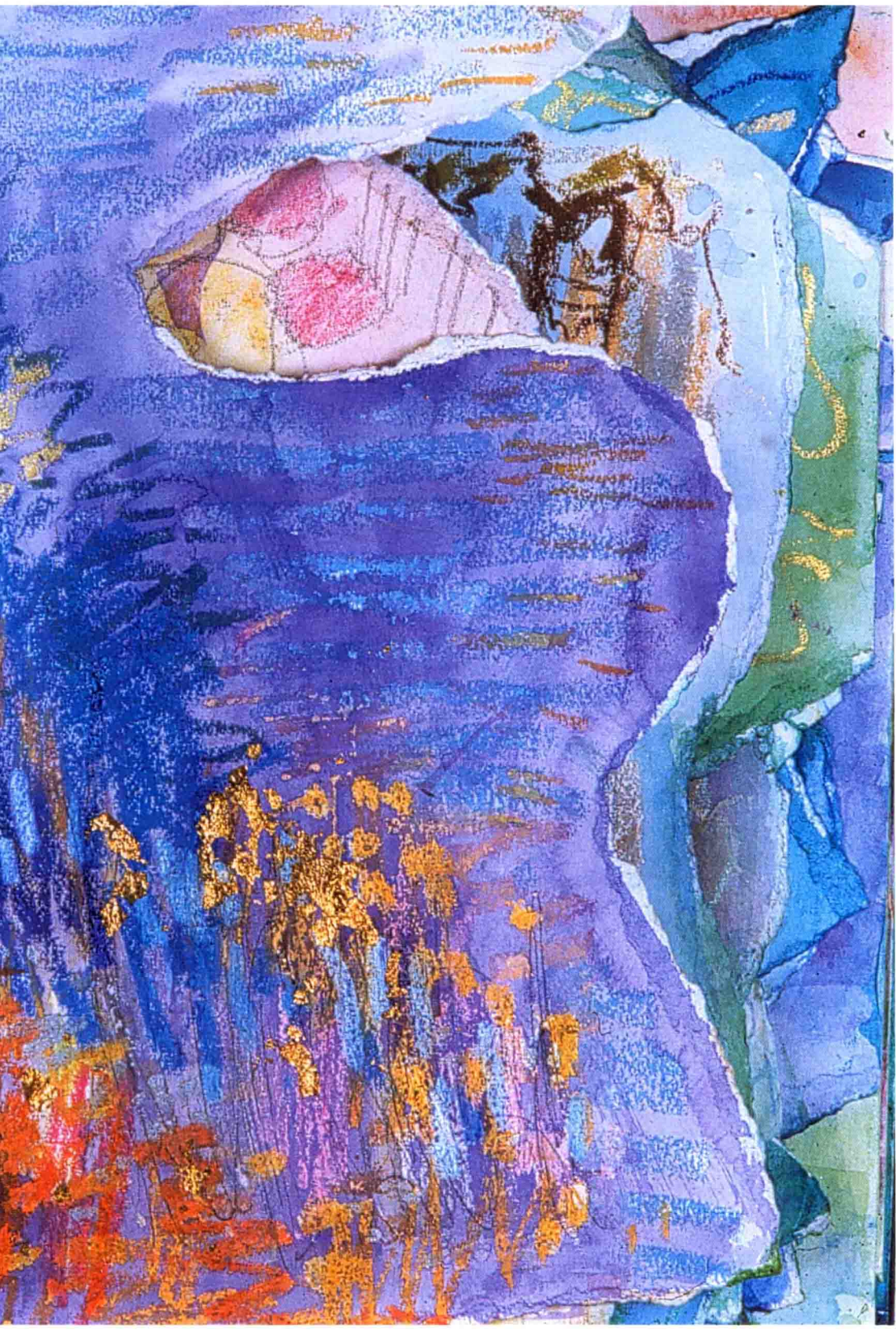
Kay Greenlees



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CREATING SKETCHBOOKS

FOR EMBROIDERERS AND TEXTILE ARTISTS





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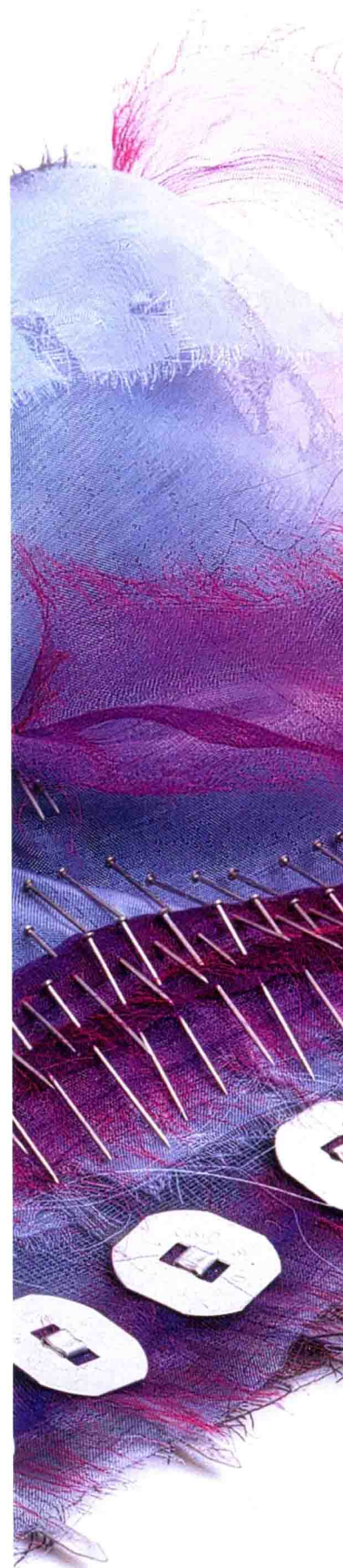
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INTRODUCTION

DEFINING THE FIELD

What is a sketchbook?

It may seem strange to have to ask the question 'what is a sketchbook?', because there are many different ideas about what the word means. The range of interpretations can be confusing and off-putting. Sketchbooks should be both enjoyable and serious. They require a degree of commitment from the beginner that may be quite daunting at first. Perhaps the white pages look too pristine, or what about mistakes? The most common cause for concern is the assumption that sketchbooks are full of drawings and that you have to be 'good' at drawing in order to get started.

What should be in a sketchbook? Regular sketchbook users always seem to take the practice for granted; it's often a habit that has become second nature – so easy and comfortable that the book over time becomes an old friend and its loss can be devastating.

It is the aim of this book to present some answers to these questions by reviewing a range of sketchbook approaches taken by different textile artists. Ideally, this will help you to feel comfortable with your own personal approach and consider ways of reviewing and developing this. Perhaps the most essential point about sketchbooks is that they should be personal to the maker.

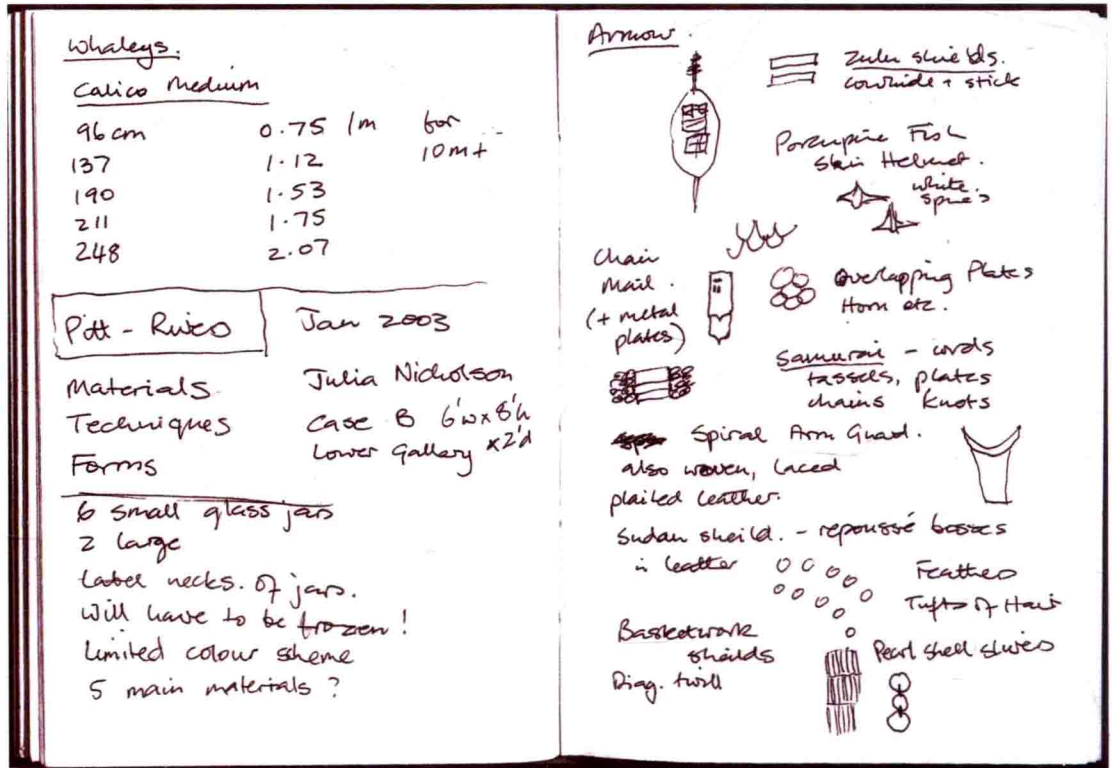
Sketchbooks may usefully be called other things. Common alternative names are: journals, notebooks, visual ideas books, visual diaries or workbooks. Within this book, all of these alternatives are embraced by the term *sketchbook*. For an individual artist, designer or maker, however, there may be important and significant differences in the use of a specific name. Many of the artists featured here prefer not to use the term *sketchbook*. Choose what suits you and make the book your own.

Themed sketchbook: rusted surfaces

Kay Greenlees

A6 (105 x 148 mm [4¹/₄ x 5³/₄ in])

Inks, wax, thread

**Notebook**

Penny Burnfield

A6 (105 x 148 mm [4 1/4 x 5 3/4 in])

What is a sketch?

There are a number of synonyms for the word *sketch*, some of which can be helpful in clarifying the intention behind the practice, for example: *outline, draft, skeleton, explanation, illustration, summary, drawing, design, representation, scrawl, scribble, doodle, write, jot, arrange, map* or *set out*. It is clear that for an artist (or writer, or musician), this stage of work is usually an early period of working or investigation that can include a great deal of freedom and excitement. In a visual situation, work must sometimes be undertaken within a limited timescale and is necessarily incomplete and unresolved. The resultant lack of resolution is often equated in a derogatory sense with *quick, rough*, or *ill-considered* rather than with the more positive corollaries, such as *lively, spontaneous, early, considered, deliberate, careful* and *studied*.

Working methods

Sketchbooks can contain a variety of working methods, but the most useful personal books are centred on first-hand observation or investigation. This offers insight, understanding and knowledge that can be referenced in the future. Simple drawings and annotations can contain more information than a snapshot and are therefore more useful than photographs. Although a supporting photograph album may be useful, even brief drawings and written notes will have prompted closer observation and for a more sustained time than photography; this will help you to develop increasingly more acute observational skills.

Sketchbooks may contain any or all of the following:

- Quick drawings and notes
- Flowers, leaves, feathers and other natural forms of interest
- Careful observations and recordings
- Poems or other written pieces
- Pieces of fabric and thread
- Technical information – how things may join, move or fasten, how colours mix
- Found items, such as tickets, wrappers, or cuttings
- Design development
- Textile samples – direct development on or with fabric and design development
- Supporting photography
- Annotations, measurements, instructions
- Targets, action plans

The sketchbook can be used to record all sorts of ideas and feelings, and thoughts about people, places and things. It becomes a unique way of exploring and storing information, including whatever arouses curiosity and interest.

Many people say they find it hard to draw and wish that they were 'better at it'. This sort of comment reveals a preconceived notion about what constitutes a 'good' drawing. If you identify with this, it is useful to try to be a little more analytical about what you mean. Are you seeking more accuracy with scale and form or perhaps a truer likeness? Do you want to create more mood and atmosphere? Are you looking for more accurate perspective? If you need support or enjoy working in the company of others, there is a wide range of books and videos, evening and holiday classes that can offer information on how to draw. However, nothing beats the old adage 'practice makes perfect', and the regular use of a sketchbook offers a good opportunity to go back and review your own development over time.

Why use a sketchbook?

Given that we have already acknowledged that some of us experience a degree of trepidation about starting a sketchbook, or about our skills in drawing, why do we do it? Why do textile courses promote the use of a sketchbook as good practice? What are the benefits of developing this way of working?

A sketchbook will provide:

- A library of responses to experiences as well as information about people, places and things that can inform future reference
- An opportunity to record ideas and images in the form of drawings and notes
- An opportunity to make a variety of personal evaluations and analyses
- Clarity of vision, refinement, simplification

- Fluency of thought and understanding
- Development of memory and imagination
- Identification of problems or possibilities
- Resolution of problems
- Development of the individual artist's vocabulary
- Stimulation and development of ideas
- A trigger for memory or association that links earlier experiences and suggests further ideas and developments

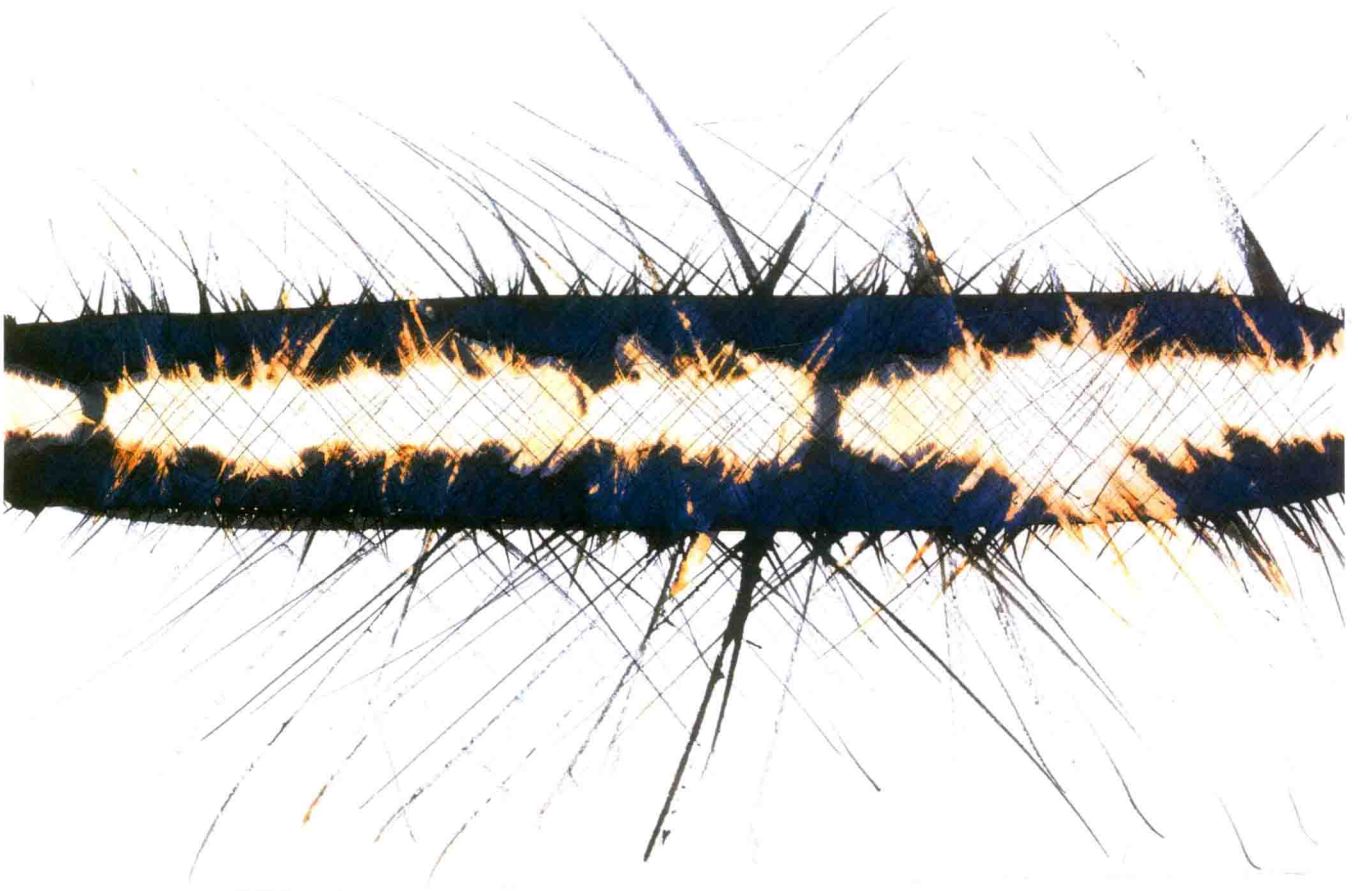
Taking all the above points into consideration when you are working will enable you to create a sketchbook of substance, which has personal meaning and value, recording as it does your own thoughts, images, recollections, observations and engagement with ideas or media. The sketchbook represents a commitment to discovery and investigation or a search for meaning that transcends the notions of triviality that are sometimes associated with 'quick' sketches. Even though one of the main uses of the sketchbook is to allow space for this sort of immediate or spontaneous work, working quickly should not be associated with a casual attitude or lazy observation.

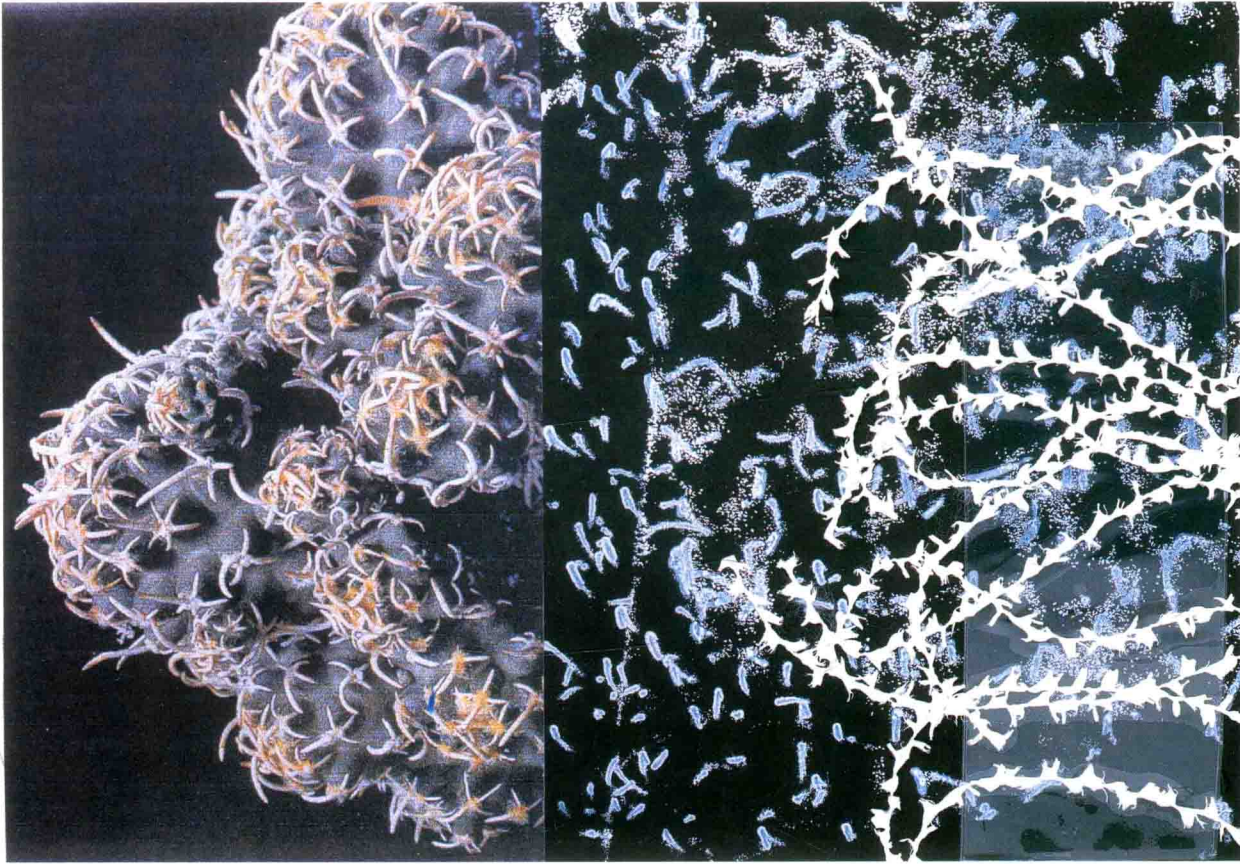
Themed sketchbook: cacti

Linda Livesey

A4 (210 x 297 mm [8¼ x 11¾ in])

Ink, bleach





Working with a sketchbook can imbue your work with depth, energy, rigour and significance through:

- Varied and lively content – not just drawings of landscapes or buildings but other drawings (for example of details or made objects), plus cuttings, found objects, comments and annotations
- Exploration of the visual language of art, such as line, shape, colour, tone, texture, pattern and form
- Understanding of space and distance and their relationship
- Experimentation with varied media

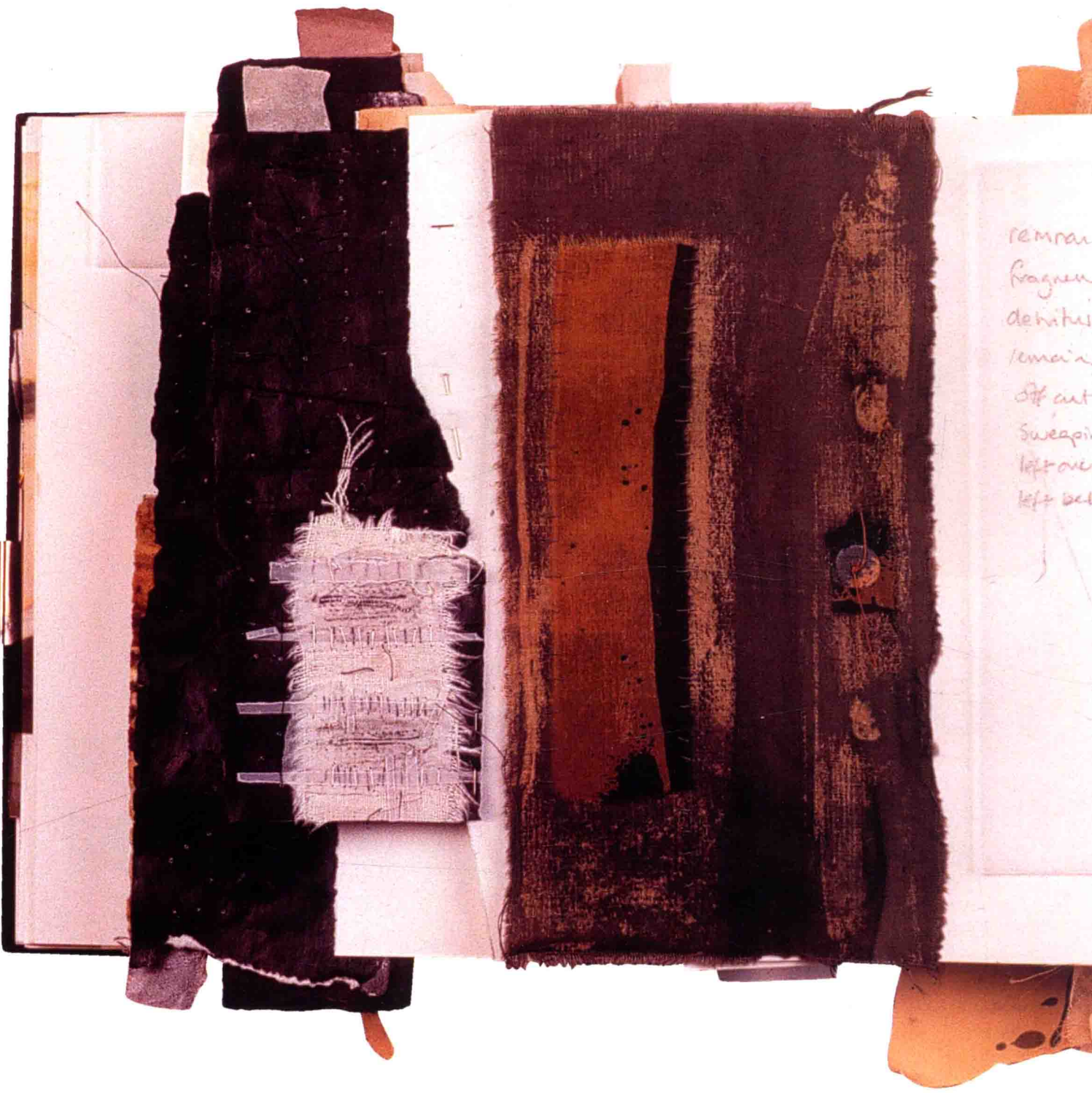
Themed sketchbook: cacti

Linda Livesey

A4 (210 x 297 mm [8 1/4 x 11 3/4 in])

Photocopy reference, monoprint

While this introduction makes it evident that drawing is an important component of sketchbook work, it should also be understood that different types of drawing are part of the sketching process. If drawing is not for you, then there are many other exciting possibilities open to you. Written journals also serve as a significant way of recording and communicating thoughts, ideas and feelings. Fabric samples may support a distinctive way of working. Sketchbooks, in whatever forms you choose, offer so much potential for individual development and enjoyment that it would be a shame not to make full use of them. The next section outlines some of the purposes that sketchbooks serve.



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CHAPTER ONE

PURPOSES OF A SKETCHBOOK: Pause, record, reflect, move on...

So far, I have remarked broadly on why we use sketchbooks and why, in a general sense, they are of value to all individual artists, designers or makers. Having considered the opportunities that using a sketchbook offers and the working methods that contribute to this development, it is worth considering briefly the purposes that sketchbook practice can serve.

I have used the terms *vision* and *re-vision* to encompass both the breadth of possibilities and the spirit of working in a creative and personal way. *Vision* moves beyond the straightforward description of 'to have sight', to include the more creative and personal use of imagination, insight, expression, revelation and the realms of dreaming and fantasy. *Re-vision* simply means 'to look again' or to examine or re-visit and refine ideas and thoughts.

It is fairly easy to list some of the purposes served by the sketchbook (see page 9). What is not easy is to tease these issues apart in order to talk about them, because in reality they overlap or appear in a variety of combinations. Nor do they have a particular order of importance, and for this reason I have chosen to present the possibilities in alphabetical form. This offers a fairly comprehensive list of purposes, to which you can add your own. In reality, all of these purposes might be served by your sketchbooks. The emphasis may vary from book to book, project to project or from time to time. You may move from a time of deep introspection and subjectivity to a more analytical and objective study. What matters is that the approach to the sketchbook work is personal to you.

Sketchbook

Jan Miller

A4 (210 x 297 mm [8 1/4 x 11 3/4 in])

Costume study – paper used as analogy for textile

Photography: Jerry Hardman-Jones