Seeing It Through.  
  
I have always loved semi-transparent materials and my favourite of all is a good cotton organdie. One of my first finished pieces of embroidery many years ago now was of cathedral window patchwork in organdie with centres of shadow stitching mounted over silver foil. It was based on ideas around the inside view of a plant growing on the outside of a bubble glass window. I laced it with fishing line into a Perspex box frame and I was very proud of it. I still love the crisp papery quality of organdie and the way it responds to creasing. Cotton organdie punctures when stitched leaving a hole that is almost impossible to erase, this means I have to be decisive when I stitch or even use the unpicked stitch lines as an intentional way of marking the cloth. Organdie has a slightly grey, milky quality and it isn't as semi-transparent as silk organza which is softer and more see through. I also love the way it rips, this is one of my guilty pleasures.  
  
Having architects in my family means I have always had plenty of strong architect's tracing paper available which I often use for trying out ideas and layering with other materials. If it's a heavy enough quality tracing paper prints well as long as it doesn't get too damp. Over the last few years I have begun to incorporate lens tissue into my work with layering, it prints well and has greater wet strength than some fine papers. It also virtually disappears when fixed to another layer with a suitable adhesive.  
  
Mono print, or as its sometimes called mono-type printing, has become a passion with me. I have always loved drawing and the way that a very simple drawn line or mark, made on the reverse of a piece of paper or fabric which has been laid on a thin layer of printing ink, picks up the ink and becomes so much more expressive and  interesting never fails to excite me. It's also a very accessible technique, it doesn't require expensive bulky equipment or complex fixative processes, so it's ideal for workshop teaching. Mono-print is  full of potential for original, creative work on paper or fabric where each print is totally unique and can never be exactly repeated.  
Working with print on semi-transparent surfaces gives lots of potential for layering marks and images, cutting through layers and over printing, reusing cut away areas on the front or back of the work and perhaps developing shadow stitch techniques within the layers.  
  
There is a lot of water in the valley where I live, streams and deeper pools give marvellous opportunities for reflection - in all senses of the word. The base of the pool may have decaying leaves and stones overlaid with floating weed with ripples across the surface and the reflections of branches overhead dancing in the breeze. Only the base of the pool is still, everything else is in motion, glimpsed; a fleeting impression of light, shape and movement that I find endlessly fascinating.  
  
I have also become exciting by the possibilities of creating my own shadows with some simple photographic experiments. In a darkened space I work with cut paper shapes and other materials to cast shadows using a lamp and my iPhone camera. I'm interested in the way the shadow edges can be sharper or more blurred depending on distances and I'm finding it an interesting way of developing more unexpected, abstract ideas. Again this is an area that can be explored in workshop sessions if there is the space and the possibility of creating  a darkened corner. The resulting images can give participants further ideas to develop in their own time following the workshop.  
  
This unexpectedly quiet time that we are living through just now also gives an opportunity for me to develop further ideas, some of which I am very much looking forward to exploring with participants at my Chasing Shadows workshop at Moor Hall in the Autumn.  
  
  
Sarah Burgess April 2020