Textiles are often referred to in Elam MFA graduate Sara Hughes' work, and Chromatic Interaction looks at first to be laid out like a pattern for busy fingers to follow in making a hexagon quilt.

In the case of this painting, the end point relates to a recognisable textile whereas in her earlier work Hughes used fabric patterns as a point of departure. Her investigation of the history of paisley and its Otago associations inspired the vinyl installation Love Me Tender which is still on the walls of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. It is competing for the distinction of being New Zealand's longest standing temporary installation in a public art gallery as it went up as the product of her Frances Hodgkins Fellowship year in Dunedin back in 2003 but has been kept up there by popular demand. In Dunedin, Hughes stretched her vinyl-cut patterns using computer rendering tools, and then printed out the sticky vinyl for direct application on the white walls. The effect morphs each tiny Indian motif into a range of giant orange and yellow creatures which chase

each other around the walls in a configuration which one commentator has referred to as paisley on acid.

Working at the epicentre of the global financial crisis during her recent residency in New York has brought money markets into view for this artist. Bright with colour, regularly patterned and with its noncommittal title, Chromatic Interaction, this work appears at first to be an exercise purely in colour relationships. Yet it is derived from a highly systematic analysis of colour which derives from the design of websites for banks. By researching each bank's website and obtaining information from a British website consultant, Hughes has analysed the six digit code (hexadecimal value) derived from the triumvirate of projected colour known as RGB (red, green and blue) colours. Each hexagon in her painted quilt is bisected with colours which are exact reproductions of the online hues as a result. The size of each slice of colour is scientifically determined and proportionally correct. The resulting kaleidoscope of colour fans out from the centre like a pie-chart graph with

all its associations of profit and loss, margins of error and patterns of production and consumption.

Each set of these colour values is contained within a thin white linear mesh which outlines the hexagon pattern as a metaphor for the interconnectedness of money and global economies. As the hexagons are like cells in a beehive and infinitely replicable, the artist has designed the painting to be either oriented horizontally in a landscape presentation or vertically as a portrait. In this way, the current drama of the recession with its economic and social repercussions is smuggled into a work which appears as a triumphant neo-geometric exercise in colour, form and composition.

The dominance of computer use in contemporary life is also a theme in the work. The artist writes: "Contemporary knowledge of colour has become very screen-focused and I am interested in the way that colour influences, manipulates and affects our understanding of web browsing. Within this context I have identified the largest commercial bank (by assets) in every country and taken the ten predominant colours of each of these websites to create a palette of 1950 paint colours for this exhibition. I have mixed each colour so that its pigmentation matches its hexadecimal value as closely as possible. Each online colour exists as a six-digit code created from a combination of letters and numbers that refer to the red, green and blue components of the colour, these codes are interpreted by HTML allowing for more than 16 million colours to be created for online visualisation. This method of colour matching has highlighted to me the contrast between the additive process of mixing light and the subtractive process of mixing paint, and emphasised the differences of seeing colour on screen or in a painting."

Linda Tyler

Sara Hughes, Chromatic Interaction, acrylic on linen 1600 x 2400mm (or 2400 x 1600mm)