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Question: *"How can psychology effect my practice of Surface Pattern Design?"*

I will be looking at three key words that relate to Surface Pattern Design and reflect my interests. The key words being researched are *Seeing*, *Pattern* and *Phenomenon*. These three words will show how they connect to my own practice and how they could connect together. The main focus is to see how we see through our eyes and how what we see can make us think differently with pattern and with different types of phenomena.

Seeing is to:

Perceive with the eyes or mind; understand; watch; find out; make sure (of something); consider or decide; have experience of; meet or visit; accompany seeing in view of the fact that (Collins, 2008, p.245).

Therefore, seeing can mean a variety of things and is not just seeing through our eyes. To see things through our eyes and to use the word seeing in a sentence like “seeing as” are completely different things but both are using the same vocabulary. Some aspects of how we see art are written about in a book called “*Ways of seeing*” by John Berger, (1972). This book changes the way people think about art. The opening line of the book is “*Seeing comes before words*” (Berger, 1972, p.7). It is a clever way of writing and an opening to a book as it gets you thinking immediately. Leading on to “*The relation between what we see and*

what we know is never settled" (Berger, 1972, p.7), this shows another way to interpret the term "seeing" as what we see in front of us is only known by what we have been taught, so without being taught that an object is a certain something we would not have know what it was. So we know what a book is because we were taught that it is a book, but if we were not taught that it was a book we would never know what it would have been. But sometimes *"the knowledge, the explanation, never quite fits the sight"* (Berger, 1972, p.7). We learn about things that we do not know why or the reason for it which is why it says that it might not fit the sight of the object. So what is trying to be put across here is *"the way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe"* (Berger, 1972, p.8).

A way to see is by what we have been taught but it is also to see feelings and a sense other people's feelings too.

When in love, the sight of the beloved has a completeness which no words and no embrace can match: a completeness which only the act of making love can temporarily accommodate. (Berger, 1972, p.8).

We do not only see objects and the things that surround us but we also see and sense feelings and emotions too. The quote above expresses that as when we see a beloved one we experience feelings which were

not through anything else but only through seeing. When looking we do not just look at one thing like the object, we always see something else with it, "*we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves*" (Berger, 1972, p.9) like our feelings for one another or our emotions to a certain object. We connect to what we know and our feelings towards that certain object which makes people look. We also look for connections to help us know what that certain something is or what it is feeling.

Our eyes are the most important feature of our body as seeing is the most important out of all the senses. In a book by *Juhani Pallasmaa* (2005) titled "*The eyes of the skin*" it is said that "the eyes are more exact witnesses than the ears" (p.15) and they are "*humanity's greatest gift*" (Pallasmaa, 2005, p.15). Eyes are really important as they allow you to see and live a normal life. When being blind they have to learn to feel and to touch to help them know what is there, making this completely different to when having normal vision.

The way we see amazes me as it is all through how the eye works and all of the layers. How the eye works and how we see is intriguing; we see images which are from light that is reflected from objects, then it enters the eye through the cornea and the other layers which then the

light is bent creating a image, which then our brain turns the image the right way round allowing us to see (*sightsavers, 2020*).

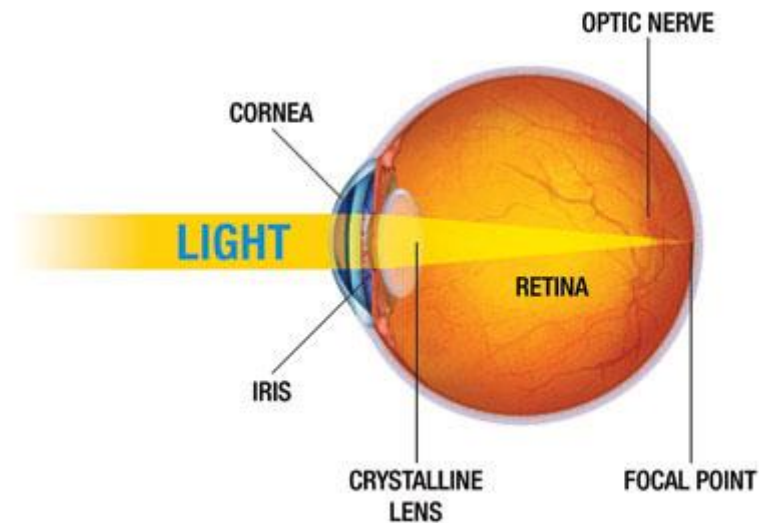
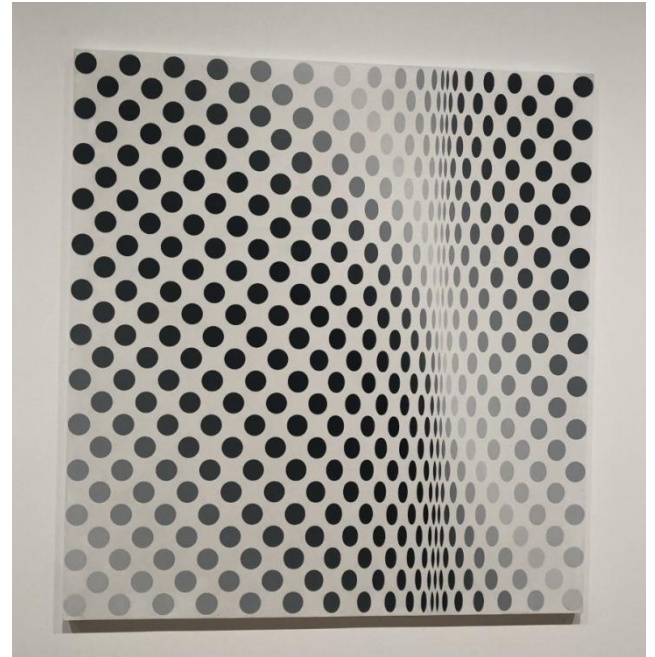
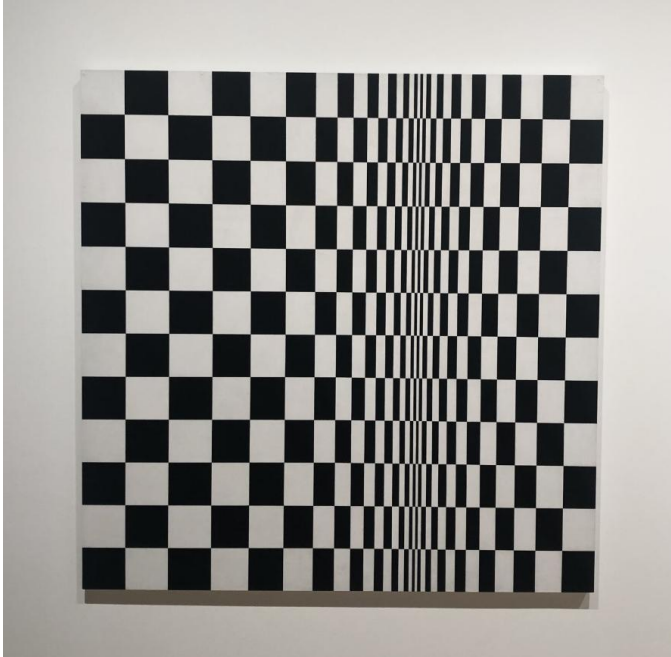


Figure 1: “*How does the human eye work?*” by National Keratoconus Foundation (2020)

It is interesting how the eye works and how it can make us see. The eye can focus on a lot of things but can be tricked by different movements like optical illusions. Optical illusions are type of art called *Optical Art* or commonly known as *Op Art*. *Op Art* is usually black and white, it creates effects that confuses the eye and “*it uses a framework of geometric forms as the basis for its effects*” (*Annie, Popup painting, 2016*). *Op Art* relates to my practice of Surface Pattern Design, as one of the main *Op Artists* was *Bridget Riley* who has been studied within my practice due to producing a lot of patterned worked within her work.



Figures 2 and 3: *Bridget Riley's work at The Hayward Gallery.*

(Heywood, 2019).

As my interests lie in Patterns and interiors, my eye automatically sees my interests and is drawn to patterns and artists who produce these patterns. This is why when visiting *Bridget Riley's* exhibition in *The Hayward Gallery (2019)* her work really captured my attention through the art movement of Op Art. The illusions did distort my vision which shows how Op Art works, but this was not the case for other people as they had different experiences than me. *"Every image embodies a way of seeing, our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own way of seeing". (Berger, 1972, p.10).* The way the experience can change for different people makes it link to a form of Psychology as it is to do with your mind and behaviour. *Op art* distorts and confuses

your mind with the tricks of the illusions so it is related to Psychology in that sense.

Pattern is an “arrangement of repeated parts or decorative designs; regular way that something is done; diagram or shape used as a guide to make something patterned decorated with a pattern” (Collins, 2008, p.199). Pattern is a major aspect of my practice. *Bridget Riley* creates patterns when she is creating her *Op Art* and this is how the two key words of seeing and pattern can have a connection. Seeing patterns is dependent on the viewer as other people could see and think about the pattern differently to me. But pattern is not only the patterns you find in your interiors or fashion within art there is also pattern within your life like routines and your life choices. Having patterns in your life could be through repeating events, having routines or even just the patterns in the natural world.

There are different elements of patterns which are explained thoroughly on a website called *ArtyFactory* (2020). The website goes through all the different elements of pattern explaining what they are and which artists were involved in them. The list of the different elements of patterns are endless, but the common ones are pattern in visual elements, in nature, man-made, environmental, landscape, contrast, repetition and decoration (*ArtyFactory*, 2020).

An artist mentioned on the website is *William Morris* who was a huge textile artist back in the day. *William Morris* produced amazing pieces for interiors such as wallpaper and he was also a part of the arts and crafts movement. *William Morris* is a big influence within my practice and especially for me as my main focus are textiles for interiors. *William Morris* is the artist listed for the man-made pattern element section on the website because of the way he used to paint. He would use natural resources like leaves and he would make them his own by bending and curving the leaves to produce a pattern. All is explained on the *ArtyFactory* (2020) website but there would be other websites with much more information on him.



Figure 4: *William Morris painting, (ArtyFactory, 2020).*

All of the elements of pattern above are all patterns within art and your surroundings as we notice patterns in our environment and within our life choices. But a lot of pattern is to do with the mind and how our brains

work when seeing a pattern. *“Detecting patterns is an important part of how humans learn and make decisions”* says Ohio State University on website *Science daily (2018)*. Patterns help us learn and see things that we would not normally see or recognise. Recognising patterns can be challenging but if you notice them daily and are able to remember them then it is much easier for you. *Ohio State University* also explains on *science daily (2018)* that:

If you are given driving directions in an unfamiliar city, you can try to memorize each turn. But if you see a pattern -- for example, turn left, then right, then left, then right -- it will be easier to remember. (2018).

The quote above explains everything to do with patterns in your life. It explains that when you see a common phrase like left and right it will makes it easier for you to remember. Left and right are easy to remember as they are in your every day movements which will then help you to remember the patterns. These are the sort of patterns which are meant when discussing patterns in life as well as your surroundings.

Another way we see patterns in our life is when our minds creates a pattern when the pattern is not really there. This is called ‘*Patternicity*’ by *Michael Shermer (2008)*. Shermer calls it “*Patternicity*” or “*the tendency to find meaningful patterns in meaningless noise*” (*Shermer, 2008*). He

explains how our brains think we can see something when it is not actually there, which then asks the questions “*why do people see faces in nature, interpret window stains as human figures, hear voices in random sounds generated by electronic devices or find conspiracies in the daily news?*” (Shermer, 2008). All of ‘Patternicity’ is to do with the mind and the way it works. There have been studies on it which is explained on the website showing how our brain can see true or false patterns and explaining why this is.

Another writer that speaks about ‘Patternicity’ is Jamie Hale on *Psychcentral* (2018) as he also studied Michael Shermer (2008) and investigated further:

Often, the patterns are real, while other times they are manifestations of chance. Pattern recognition tells us something valuable about the environment from which we can make predictions that help us with survival and reproduction. Pattern recognition is imperative to learning. (Hale, 2018).

This is interesting to me as it is everything to do with the mind and by having *false positives* and *false negatives* with ‘patternicity’ and *pattern recognition*. The fact that ‘patternicity’ can help us with reproduction and with our life is incredible which makes this relate with psychology reconnecting back to the keyword of ‘seeing’.

Phenomenon is “anything appearing or observed; remarkable person or thing. *Phenomenal* extraordinary, outstanding phenomenally” (Collins, 2008, p.203). Phenomenon can have different meanings as it can be something that is appearing or you can be a phenomenal person meaning that you are outstanding or great. As phenomenon can be used to describe people or things as ‘Phenomenal’ but there is also a scientific route which is called Phenomenology.

Phenomenon is phenomenology which connects to a way of thinking relating to psychology. “*Phenomenology can be practised and identified as a manner or style of thinking, that it existed as a movement before arriving at complete awareness of itself as a philosophy*” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, Preface p.Viii). Even though phenomenology can be a way of seeing and thinking it also “*focuses not on what appears, but how it appears.*” (Lewis and Staehler, 2010, p.1). This quote relates phenomenology to ‘*Patternicity*’ as with patternicity it is what it is now and what it appears to be, but with phenomenology it is how it appears which is what matters, so in some ways they relate but they are opposites. Phenomenon is a tricky one to explain and no one really knows a definite answer. Phenomenon has a lot of meanings where as phenomenology is what has been described above.

Phenomenon is for something to exist and can have different understandings of the word which could describe something as extraordinary or out of this world. Phenomena have multiply of ways of that one word. On the website article written by *Margaret Rouse (2017)* she explains the different Phenomena's. Natural Phenomena's includes gravity and tides, Social Phenomena is for groups of humans, Psychological phenomena in human behaviours and responses and finally visual phenomena which include optical illusions. Also explained in the article that *"the word phenomenon is derived from the Greek verb phainein, which means to show, shine, appear, to manifest or to be manifest"* (Rouse, 2017). With the Greek word meaning to *show* or *appear* it helps to make sense of the different elements descriptions as to show is showing the human behaviours or the tides and biological processes.

The different elements of phenomena which are listed above are really interesting as you would not believe that it is connected to a range of possibilities. With phenomena having the different elements to the word it helps widen your research into those elements, the psychological phenomena and the visual phenomena is what interests me the most as it connects to the other research within this essay. The connections are through psychology and optical illusions within the keywords of seeing

and pattern. These connections could lead to a different path of research but also can give a better understanding of what phenomenology is. It is hard to grasp the true meaning of phenomenology but looking at it with different avenues like the different phenomena's has helped a lot. It shows that the word has a very vast meaning to it and can connect to almost anything within my practice of Surface Pattern Design.

Concluding this essay the research of the three keywords words shows in depth research on them all but also a clear link between them too.

The three keywords *Seeing*, *Pattern* and *Phenomenon* all are linked by psychology. So going forward psychology would be my focus point.

Psychology relates to *seeing* by the optical illusions on how seeing the illusions can play tricks on your mind, *Pattern* is with patterns within your lifestyle and the *Patternicity* of your mind, then finally *Phenomenon* as there is psychological phenomena's as well as other phenomena's. It is fascinating to see how three random keywords that relates to me and my practice of Surface Pattern Design can all suddenly link after research.

To conclude, my question to go forward is "*How can psychology effect my practice of Surface Pattern Design?*".

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Figure 4: ArtyFactory (2020) *William Morris Painting*. [Painting].

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