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Surface Pattern and Textile Design

ADAD4018

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Tasks in the order I received them:

Task 1: Manifesto Writing = 514 words

Task 2: Observational Writing = 499 words

Task 3: Practice-based Writing = 513 words

Task 1: Manifesto Writing

1. Design should first and foremost prioritise environmentally friendly practices, materials, and products.
2. Products should be high quality *and* affordable.
3. Minimalism is Overrated. Pattern is Limitless.
4. Surface designers should work together with architects, craftsmen, fashion designers, and textile makers to make the world more beautiful and more sustainable.
5. Surface design should make an impact on the wider community – tied through charity work or working with low-income communities.
6. Affordability and efficiency of products should not come at the price of low quality and exploitation.
7. Overthinking is the enemy of creativity. One must imbibe oneself with a wealth of information, sources, artists, inspiration – then just *do*.
8. We have a duty to fight prejudice and create equal opportunities for all.

1. Design should first and foremost prioritise environmentally friendly practices, materials, and products



Fig.1, Ghana textile waste landfill, Foreign Correspondent, 2021.

Design is our greatest weapon in the war against climate change. Surface pattern, textiles, technology, architecture, domestic or commercial – we must bring them all to the frontline.

The fashion industry accounts for 8%-10% of carbon emissions, and 1/5 of industrial water pollution (Kowalski, 2020). Second-hand clothes are shipped from Western countries to places like Ghana, where they are buried in landfill, polluting the surrounding areas (ABC News In-Depth, 2021). As early as the mid-1800s, Karl Marx discussed the dangers that the “subjection of nature's forces to man” (2017, p.57) would have on the environment. For hundreds of years, we have ignored this problem. Now, we must fix it – or risk destruction.

It is essential that designers work together to implement sustainable practices. As stated in Manifesto #44 (Urban Think Tank, 2007), it is vital to “interact forcefully but productively with politicians, policy-makers, and community groups”. We must pressure large corporations to do the same. By collaborating, we stand a greater chance of making permanent impact.

We must consider the broader use of non-toxic dyes. We must source our materials locally so as not to abuse environmentally sensitive regions. We must pressure companies to reuse textiles, not bury them within our fragile earth. We must act now – from conglomerate to individual – to prevent our extinction.

3. Minimalism is Overrated. Pattern is Limitless.

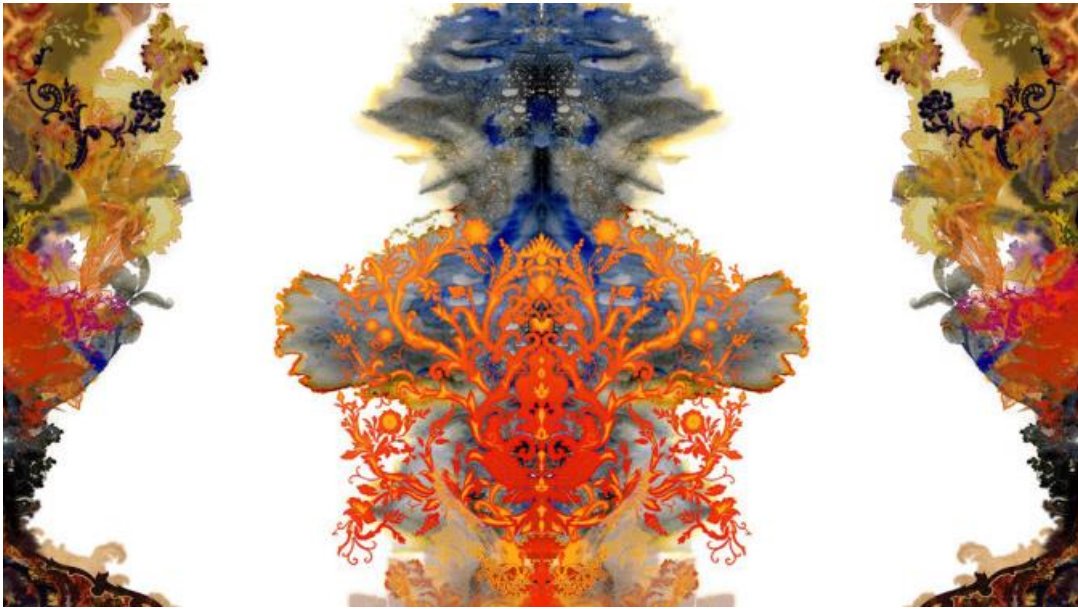


Fig.2, Grand Blotch Damask Wallpaper, Timorous Beasties.

Timorous Beasties' famous Glasgow Toile created controversy (Timorous Beasties, 2008) with its edgy motifs depicting crime, drugs, and homelessness in the 1990s. The attention drawn to class struggles is emphasised poignantly within the structure of the print (reminiscent of expensive French Toiles, late 18th century) and its monochrome, subtle colour palette.

In an age where minimalism is the norm – where efficiency, cleanliness and order are prioritised – I believe the true future of surface design lies within chaos. It should critique, shock, display, investigate. As proposed by Patterntity in their design manifesto (2015), it should be “challenging our perception of the everyday” – not flattening into white walls and grey concrete. Pattern spans across all aspects of our life. Pattern is limitless. Let us embrace this chaos, to create order.



Fig.3, Glasgow Toile Wallpaper, Timorous Beasties.

6. Affordability and efficiency of products should not come at the price of low quality and exploitation.



Fig.4, Workers in a cane factory in Nha Trang, Vietnam, 2004. Photograph: Andreas Gursky.

There are staggering numbers of sweatshops in Asia, China, South America, and India. In *Whose Utopia* (2004), director Cao Fei investigates the OSRAM lighting factory, south China. Each worker is assigned a miniscule aspect of the final product to make, inspect and pass on. In *Society of the Spectacle* (2005, p.14), Debord discusses how this process alienates the worker from their product. They become another cog in the behemoth factory machine. Furthermore, it alienates the consumer from this reality. We do not see the making of the product, or the people who make it. We rarely consider their working conditions or lively hoods, provided we get our delivery on time. We rely on their exploitation for our convenience.

We, in Western societies, must bring focus back to small, local businesses that can support communities and help them grow economically. We must understand the labour it takes to make a product. We must involve ourselves in the process, and not be dependent on the exploitation, poor working conditions, and early deaths of strangers.

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Figure 3: Timorous Beasties, *Glasgow Toile Wallpaper*. Available at: [Glasgow Toile fabric | Timorous Beasties](#) [Accessed: 31st October 2021]

Figure 4: Andreas Gursky, *Workers in a cane factory in Nha Trang, Vietnam* (2004). Available at: [Nha Trang | mumok](#) [Accessed: 19th October 2021]

Task 2: Observational Writing

Semiotics, at its most basic definition, is the study of signs. A 'sign', according to Roland Barthes (1972) consists of denotations and connotations. A denotation is solely descriptive; a connotation is subtextual meaning, often arbitrary. These are also known as 'signifiers' – the physical object - and the 'signified' – the meaning (Williamson, 1995). The "functional union of these two terms" (Barthes, 1972) create the 'sign'. I will be using semiosis to analyse an advertisement by Marc Jacobs for the Daisy perfume campaign.

The foremost recognisable signifier within this advert is the daisy. The word "DAISY" is placed on the right, above the perfume bottles adorned with flowers. The models in the photo are surrounded by daisies, lying on them, wearing them, holding them. Daisies are polysemic, in that they signify femininity but also innocence and purity (Seaton, 1989). It is common for children to discover the true affections of a crush by plucking daisy petals, and traditional for young girls to wear daisy chains around their head (Symbols and Meanings, 2021). Marc Jacobs uses the daisy here to anchor the name of the perfume line, but also affirm the myth of feminine innocence.

The myth of purity is re-established by the advert's colours. The models are dressed in all white, symbolic of bridal dresses - which historically have signified virginal status (Etiquette of Trousseau, 1849). Golden sunlight glows on the models' faces and the grass around them. Gold is an arbitrary signifier; it can signify wealth whilst also having connotations to summer, warmth, and love (Bourn, 2010). The entire advertisement consistently encodes a connection between femininity and girlhood. The models are slim, hairless, with clear complexions and round faces; these are strong signifiers of youth. Contrastingly, stated underneath the perfume bottles are the words "the fragrances for women". This suggests the target audience could be young girls who wish to be seen as women, or older women who wish to be seen as younger.



Fig 1: Daisy Marc Jacobs Trio – Ondria Hardin, Antonia Wesseloh, Sophia Ahrens, and Malaika Firth (2015)



Figure 2: *The One*, Dolce and Gabbana.
Scarlett Johansson (2011).

According to Williamson (1995), companies use differentiations within their advertising to stand out. It is particularly useful in understanding “symbolic annihilation” (Tuchman, 1979), where women are under-represented and portrayed in few social roles. Within other advertisements (such as Dolce & Gabbana’s *The One*), models are often portrayed as older and more sexualised; heavy makeup, revealing clothes, sexual poses. Within *Daisy*, the advert has chosen to anchor the sign of innocence and youth. This could be symbolic annihilation in relation to the virgin/whore complex (Parker, E.R, 2019) which separates women into the categories of pure and impure. When the spectator looks at *The One*, it appeals to the desire for sexuality; when the spectator looks at *Daisy*, it appeals to the desire for purity. It is important to understand that the “surveyor of woman in herself is male...” (Berger, 1972) meaning that whilst these adverts are aimed at women, it is still dependent on the desire of the male gaze (Griffin, 2017).

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Figure 2: The One, Dolce and Gabbana with Scarlett Johansson (2011). Available at: [Scarlett Johansson Gets Sultry For Dolce & Gabbana's The One - ButterBoom](https://www.butterboom.com/scarlett-johansson-the-one-dolce-gabbana/) [Accessed: 16th November 2021]

Task 3: Practice based writing

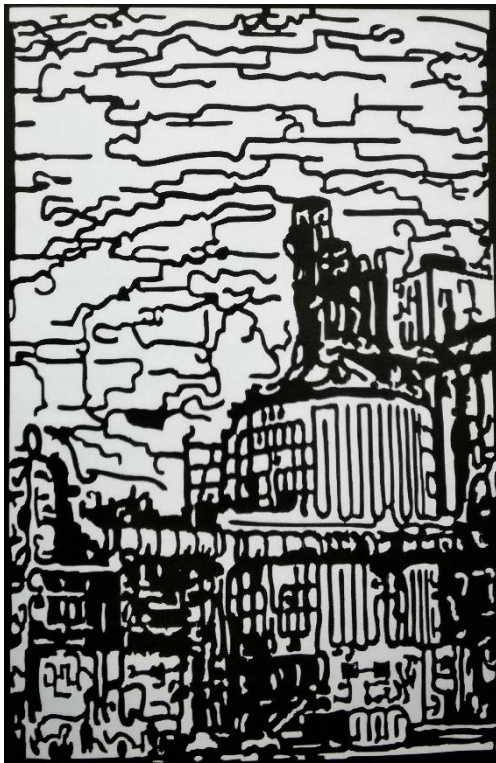


Fig 1. Barbara Foster, *ADM Silo* (2009).

Print is at once public and private, consumable and created (Pelzer-Montada, 2018). The word ‘print’ covers a wide range of objects; newspapers, the label on a bottle of ketchup, a lino-cut artwork. With the progression of modern technology, debate has grown around the perceived out-of-date versus post-digital print. Defined broadly in the dictionary as “produce...by a mechanical process involving the transfer of text or designs to paper” (Stevenson, 2010), it is important that the artists, designers, and printmakers of the future can navigate the ever-changing world of print technology.

The traditional idea of print is a highly process-orientated way of working (Catanese and Geary, 2012). One of Europe’s first means of mass reproduction was the woodblock print. By 1500, woodblock was being used for printing on textiles and for the reproduction of text – this was the first time the wider population had individual access to religious books and iconography. (Pelzer-Montada, 2018). Lithography, invented in 1798, was pivotal to the evolution of print. As stated by Walter Benjamin (1936), it was highly efficient and allowed for multiple different designs to be produced rapidly.

Whilst these processes are still used, we are now in a “post-digital” age. According to Catanese and Geary (2012, pp 19), “post-digital” printmaking is the collaboration between modern digital technology and traditional processes. One such technology is laser-cutting with a Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machine. These machines allow the artist to carve, etch or print onto a variety of surfaces without manual labour.

There are divided opinions about modern and traditional methods. Although both produce prints, they are considered different in materiality and associated labour. In the most prestigious printmaking competitions only traditional techniques can enter (Noyce, 2010). However, it is believed that traditional techniques are “outdated”, as opposed to “new and modern” mechanical processes (Kierulf, 2015). Suzuki (2011) even describes the preference for traditional techniques as a “fetishistic attachment”. Personally, I find the physicality of traditional printmaking fundamental to my practice: creating the screen design, mixing pigments, the unpredictability of outcomes.

Nevertheless, digital printmaking is still one of the most accessible techniques (Noyce, 2010). Digital printing technologies have become increasingly affordable in recent years. It can also be used on its own or in combination with traditional methods. For example, Barbara Foster uses CNC laser-cut machines to carve out the surface of woodblocks (Catanese and Geary, 2012, pp 87-98). She then uses these in conventional woodblock printing to create dynamic, unique outcomes. As an emerging textile designer, I find the importance of learning a variety of techniques essential. It creates a crossover between the efficiency of modern methods and the enjoyable materiality of physical printmaking.

I believe modern methods hold the key to new practices and ways of working. However, in a life that is otherwise digitised (Kierulf, 2015), we must not become alienated from our material world. The next generation of printmaking depends on learning from the past as well as engaging with the present. Therefore, a post-digital approach to printmaking is necessary for students; to allow them to explore, create, and grow with both historical and contemporary influences.

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