

Contextual Practices
Independent Inquiry
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Surface Pattern & Textiles
Floral, Pattern, Beauty
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Introduction

In this essay I will be looking at the three key words: floral, pattern and beauty within surface pattern and how they influence our views on art and design. Looking at each word in-depth and exploring how each one relates back into surface pattern. The artists I will be looking at are Tord Boontje, Maija Isola for floral and how their work relates. Floral is a theme in itself with many different views, I will be specifically looking at floral design within surface pattern the artist is Lucienne Day, Orla Kiely who both use pattern, and we can observe the influences of this pattern within their textiles and materials. Another key artist is, William Morris, he reveals his views on beauty, the aesthetic within surface pattern, how we visually see artwork and design.

Chapter 1: Floral

Flowers have been used as a symbolic language throughout history, as stated by Calman “few things have the broad and universal power of floral language; humans have used flowers to connect with nature and the sacred for thousands of years”

(Shemi, 2022). Floral can be defined as 'made of flowers or decorated with pictures of flowers' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024). Within all forms of art, floral is a very versatile component used not only as a language, but also as a form of decoration. Indeed, individual styles, such as graphics, illustration, and surface pattern design have their own uses and interpretations of floral motifs. Within surface pattern design when flowers or other plants are used in multiples this creates a floral pattern,

Florals are one of the most popular subject matters to use for surface pattern design motifs. (Patten and design, 2024).

Florals have influenced surface pattern designs for years and always featured across interiors, fashion and product design. "Floral work in surface pattern work seems to us to be ageless, and to some extent it is" florals, plants have been ages and inspire us which makes a great concept for pattern and textiles. "They give ample excuse to experiment with colour, form and dimension." Bring in trends that change through decades and years to styles like bohemian and contemporary these factors all have impacts to floral and the way we interpret it. (Fiber 2 fashion, 2024).

You can call a flower show a floral event, and a big bouquet of flowers is a floral arrangement. Something that's printed with pictures of flowers is floral too, like your grandmother's floral curtains or a little girl's floral pyjamas. The word floral meant "pertaining to Flora" in the mid-17th century — the Latin Flora is the Roman goddess of flowers, from flos, or "flower."
(Vocabulary .com, 2024).

Within creating a single motif for a pattern, we piece together multiple motifs or repeat them to create floral as a whole piece. Which makes the design floral and not a flower, as by using more than one flower motif that builds a more floral design to the work.

The two examples below are focusing on florals that have inspired the artists work within interior pieces. In this first design by Tord Broontje you can see how pattern and colour are really strong elements with floral art and have influences his work. Flowers have such a vast range of colours and shapes and can connect with the emotions of humans.



Fig. 1: *Frozen blossom branch*

Tord Broontje is an artist that uses the beauty of nature and floral art as part of his inspiration and in his designs. Broontje is a multi-disciplinary product designer, who created A frozen blossom branch they are called the blossom chandelier (see fig.1) created in 2002. The Chandelier is a romantic chandelier inspired by beauty and

nature combined together. This piece's ephemeral beauty is highlighted by his use of Swarovski crystal which enhances the blossom's own natural beauty. Broontje's concept and ideas refer back to his memory "when I was young, I saw a frozen blossom branch after an ice storm. I sensed this memory of the beauty of the frozen, sparkling flowers reflected in the crystal." (Broontji, 2002).

We, as humans, have this feeling when we see something that brings up a memory from our past, (Phenomenology) a connection, and are drawn towards it. Broontji utilises his memory in his chandelier as an attempt to bring his memory back to life. He states, "it brings nature inside the home as an ethereal sparkling branch" (2002). The chandelier is an asymmetrical shape bringing a difference to the traditional shape of chandeliers. He is playing with the scale, size and beauty, so we see it possibly as it would be in nature. Embracing the natural beauty of the flowers and mimicking their natural forms rather than formalising the flower into a generic, balanced form (Watson- Smith, 2010).



Fig.2: *Unikko*

Maija Isola is a fabric designer born in 1927. Her signature piece, *Unikko* (See fig.2), was created in 1964 and has become an international icon in print design. The majority of Isola's prints are used within the Marimekko company she worked for. Armi Ratia, the founder of Marimekko, "believed that the true essence of real flowers couldn't be faithfully captured in print" (Marimekko, 2024) Isola created *Unikko* to bring florals into print in a more abstract way in her design. This helped *Unikko* to become "a powerful emblem of joy and creativity, seamlessly integrated into Marimekko's design identity." (Marimekko, 2024).

Maija is inspired by nature and how it can transform in print. "Nature was an endless source of material" ((Marimekko, 2024). with ever-growing wildlife, we are surrounded by becoming a source of inspiration. Being able to bring in old flowers with more nature and how nature impacts our lives daily. Isola uses florals in a graphic pop-art-inspired style into fabrics to go alongside Marimekko's brand. Jackie Kennedy was one of the few people to wear Marija's design. "When she was featured on the cover of Sports Illustrated wearing a dress from the Finnish design house, Marimekko, the brand became a key player in 60s fashion" making this a great publicity for the company and for Isola to see her work on display. (Chagan, 2021).

"Isola's work was intended to break away from traditional cycles of fashion, instead, pointing towards a more enduring look" (Chagan, 2021). This gave a real change in

society and fashion and what can become something that is still used, time and time again till this day. Her famous pattern Poppy “unikko” “The asymmetric design, clash of colours, and use of graphical contrast made Poppy an instant success.” It embodied the design confidence of the 60s and still famous today. (Chagan, 2021). The combination of this bold floral contemporary design builds a base for pattern, which leads to creating a repeating floral design in the next chapter I will explore pattern and how it enhances florals.

Chapter 2- Pattern

The definition of pattern is a particular way in which something is done, is organized or happens (Cambridge dictionary,2024) pattern is used everywhere throughout the world. Pattern is used in fashion, interiors, home wear and textiles. Pattern has many forms and styles. “One distinctive design type that emerged used magnified representations of atomic structures to create patterns for ceramics, fabrics, wallpapers and other products.” (V &A, 2024) These are repetitive symmetry and natural beauty which provides a brilliant design for patterns. “Lucienne Day's famous *Calyx* – which debuted at the Festival of Britain and became one of her most

successful designs – was a bold, non-representational botanical pattern, unlike many of the traditional flower prints of the day.” (V & A, 2024). Pattern does not have to be traditional and changes frequently and bringing the designs into the current era and style of society. Day’s wallpaper patterns gave her a massive achievement with design.

“It was a huge leap on from the type of pattern compositions found on fabrics at the time – but they eventually agreed.” (V & A, 2024)

The design was made in mind of the current market and did great for the commercial element within the fabrics and wallpaper. Day’s work and pattern are not your standard pattern, and she introduces a different view on pattern and how it can be interoperated within textiles. (see fig .3 below)



Fig.3: Day’s *Wallpaper*

The artist *Kiely* has a very different aesthetic in her Wallpaper. Her famous piece she created is bold with different colours and in design, it is a simple motif that has been styled and repeated to create a pattern. Kiely’s work is such a different style of pattern to Day’s but also brings pattern into textiles and context. (See fig .4)

“Best known for our iconic Stem leaf print, which has grown and blossomed into an extensive library of nostalgic, of her best self joyful patterns.” (Kiely, 2024) These joyful colourful and eye-catching patterns are a flamboyant version of her best self.



Fig.4: *Kiely's wallpaper*

“Pattern is powerful and transformative, adding rhythm and movement to the sensory experience of colour and texture” (Kiely,2012) patterns can transform a textile and bring it to life. Leading the eye and making it an immersive visual piece. We see patterns and florals and are drawn to them which invokes the point of making something that catches the eye and makes us want the design. “In the purest sense, pattern, like colour, is a way of delighting the eye” (Kiely,2012)) it builds a sense of relationship to the room and the person, inviting us to make connections and pleasure within the piece.

Pattern builds our homes and brings our visions to life; it creates a style and a personality in itself. we see pattern everywhere, homes, buildings, clothes, furniture. Constantly surrounded by it in many different ways. “Pattern exists in the world: it is part of the underlying mathematical structure or design life.” (Kiely,2012) It is saying you can design something but without pattern it can’t be anything more than a placement. Pattern turns it into a statement, brings in element to the initial design or motif.

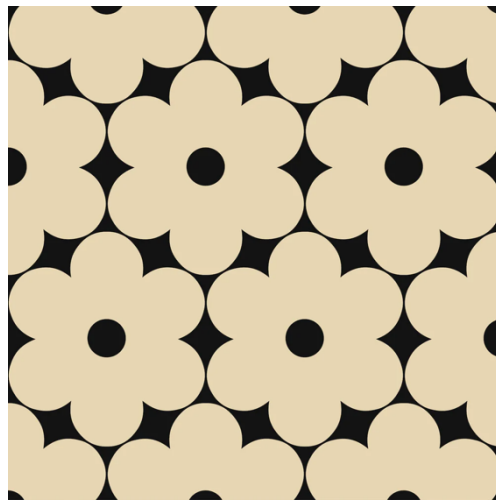


Fig.5: Kiely's patterns

Pattern is not just floral they “have a strong historical or cultural flavour” (Kiely,2012) meanings can be brought or influenced within pattern and can be specified for the certain cultures and religions. Like making the Victorian style motifs more modern and bringing them into this era and styling them into current patterns to bring a new lease of life to them. Colour can give pattern a style or trend, they can give pattern emotions or feelings in how we feel and see them. We are drawn in through colour not just by the style of pattern. “ a love of pattern has been a constant in my life – the way certain colours string together, the rhythm of repeat, the dynamism of scale” (Kiely,2012) her style of pattern is more graphic and stylized so its more playful with

colour and bold print, which gives her brand a strong appeal and stands out from the pretty patterns and more delicate designs. Patterns are different and have a certain aesthetic about them, but they all lead down to how the artist themselves see the beauty within their design.

Chapter 3- Beauty

The definition of beauty is the quality of being pleasing and attractive especially to look at (Cambridge dictionary, 2024) beauty has many meanings within how we as people see beauty, from how we look ourselves to finding certain things appealing that makes them beauty in our eyes. Beauty within textiles and surface pattern is how we design a piece and its beauty within the artwork. From fabrics to colour, beauty is not just about a certain object it has many features that contribute to it. Beauty and floral have a long history together the essence that flowers and floral designs and artwork have this natural beauty about them.



Fig.6 *Blackthorn*

In Fig .6 we see William Morris's sumptuous wallpaper named Blackthorn.

William Morris is a great artist for combining beauty and floral together. "Each pattern is created with flowers or foliage as the central structure" (Pugh, 2022) Morris uses florals in all his work from wallpaper to textiles it's his constant. Flowers themselves have a natural beauty about them and we are drawn to this. We are drawn to beautiful, pretty flowers that builds a strong start for a pattern bring beauty into the work just by one single flower or motif. "William Morris was unusual in his choice of flowers" (Pugh, 2022) he chooses to bring a different idea and style of artwork into the era, bring with the link to his patterns which contrasted to the current styles of wallpaper and began a new style.

With the use of different florals he could make them physically appealing to our eye and bring us to seeing them as beautiful and therefore beauty has once again been shown within art. "wherever nature works there will be beauty" (Morris , 1881) nature is really the main core of beauty, nature feeds beauty , brings it to life. It brightens up a day with its natural form, colour and texture. It can catch a person's attention. Nature like flowers we are surrounded with every day, from wildflowers like Morris likes to use, to a

bouquet of flowers in our homes. They can bring a so many emotions through them from happiness and sadness which brings with its own beauty, the beauty of family and friends and connections we build in our lives like flowers in our patterns.

“There is no square mile of earth’s inhabitable surface that is not beautiful in its own way, if we men will only abstain from wilfully destroying that beauty.” (Lauras beau, 2020) Morris says that we as humans are destroying the natural beauty, we live in. beauty isn’t just an object or a person its surroundings and land its in our homes and all around, but in today’s world natural beauty we seem to lose to pollution etc. If we become more eco-friendly the beauty within our world may come back and can build a better surface for future generations. “I determined to do no less than to transform the world with beauty” (Laura’s Beau, 2020)) he certain brought beauty to the world within his wallpapers and patterns which are still a big success today and many pattern artist take inspiration from him and his work.



Fig.7: Pimpernel

Beauty can combine pattern and floral in a way we never thought. It could be how other see the artwork or in itself natural beauty. It can be a mysterious thing beauty you can really name it to one specific thing. It can both describe and belongs to anything. “Beauty in things exists in the mind which contemplates them” Hume ,1757) We typical associate it with things we like from fashion to textiles to people to objects, we attach the beauty to things we like in our opinion which beauty may not be there for others. Beauty can be a general appeal or a very specific meaning to something.

Synthesis/ conclusion

Nature is a common theme throughout all the artists, they use nature within their designs and creates a similarity between them. Although they all interpret nature in different ways, through colour like Kiely's bold stem pattern to Broontje's clear simple colour theme. Even their style of shapes within floral motifs are different, on is more graphic and simpler Isola, unlike Morris who is more refined and detailed in his floral motifs , detail in his work is so important to showcase his designs giving them such a more realistic feel which like Broontje uses details is a different way , a more simple but realistic way as well through his visual 3D pieces , whereas the others take a more simplistic approach to detail but still bring their design to the same quality. Fashion is another relative theme for most of the artists in a way that their interior florals have been slowly transforming into fashion or accessories, like Isola who creates patterns for fashion, Kiely and Morris's work have ventured into the fashion industry, with things like tote bags and accessories. Many different mediums were used across each individual artist, from glass to hand painted designs with paints and watercolours. Medium to each artist is a big statement in how their work is viewed and each bring a different style to the piece.

The exploration of these three words has helped me to define the continuation of further research, and that in turn will inform also my practical work next year.

Surface pattern design will be the focus of my work next year.

My research question:

How can Surface Pattern Designers use floral and beauty within a focus on pattern?

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