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Three Keywords: Nature, Minimalism, Colour.

In this research document I will be looking into the meaning of my three chosen keywords, within the context of surface pattern design. These keywords are Nature, Minimalism and Colour. To do this, I intend to explore the definitions of each word as well as touch upon a few studies, artists, and designers. To name a few, these are the written piece 'Female artists and nature: An intuitive inquiry into transpersonal aspects of creativity in the natural environment' by Catherine Manos, book 'Aesthetic Sustainability' by Kristine H. Harper, Laura Perryman and her book 'The Colour Bible,' and designer William Morris. Using the knowledge gathered from this research; it is my plan to produce a question that is to be used in the future.

Nature:

What it is and how it impacts artists and surface pattern designers:

The first keyword I have decided to investigate is nature. This is due to it being an incredibly common design feature, used within surface pattern. The Cambridge English Dictionary defines nature as:

all the animals, plants, rocks, etc in the world and all the features, forces, and processes that happen or exist independently of people, such as the weather, the sea, mountains, the production of young animals or plants, and growth.

(Cambridge English Dictionary, 2022).

This explanation expresses the sheer number of areas that nature encompasses, which are often used as inspiration for artists and surface pattern designers. This can easily be seen in galleries and retail businesses throughout history, all over the world. (Manos, 2007). Nature is inspiring as the Earth produces magnificent, stunning scenes that fill us with a sense of awe and move us deeply. (Manos, 2007), making the viewer want to try to capture these beautiful moments, in their art and designs.

There are many ways artists and designers use nature in their work. For example: as motifs either by hand, digital or stitch. Another way nature can be used in art and surface pattern design is by being in the materials worked with themselves. Such as natural dyes, mark making with leaves, shells and more, among other methods, which also have the benefit of being eco-friendly.

One of the most famous textile designers in history, William Morris, was inspired by nature, specifically by English gardens. (V&A, 2022). This then influenced him to use it in his work, which he did through both ways mentioned above. Not only did his designs feature various types of flora motifs, but he also went against the industrial advancements of the Victorian era, by not using the newly discovered chemical dyes. Instead, he researched and used historical methods of printing and dying, choosing vegetable dyes. (V&A, 2022). (Britannica, 2022).

The book 'William Morris, Wallpapers & Chintzes' by Fiona Clark, exhibits a broad range of William Morris's designs. This wallpaper print design is called Jasmine, as can be seen in figure 1. (Clark, Book] It displays a full pattern of blossoms, branches, and hawthorn leaves. (V&A, 2022]. This wallpaper design was made by a block print on paper and is in 84.7cm height as well as 66.7cm in width. (V&A, 2022].

Figure 1 Jasmine, William Morris
Wallpaper 1872



This one, like most of William Morris's other designs, proves the strong influence and inspiration nature gave to him when designing, due to the large amount of nature motifs he used. Just like it was an influence for him, it continues to be one for countless more artists and surface pattern designers to this day. (Manos, 2007).

Nature and its effect on people:

Being interested in how nature can affect our feelings and emotions has led me to investigate this topic. Several studies have been done over the years, with the intention of finding out what effects nature has on our well-being and mental health. I will address two such studies here. The first is 'Cognitive, mental and social benefits of interacting

with nature; A systematic review' by Emine Zehra Kasap, Feyza Agzitemiz and Gulten Unal. The next is 'Examining Group Walks in Nature and Multiple Aspects of Well-Being; A Large-Scale Study' by Melissa R. Marselle, Katherine N. Irvine and Sara L. Warber.

Firstly, in the systematic review conducted by Kasap et al, published in 2021, interaction with nature was found to have a beneficial impact on mental health. This is due to nature being seen as a comforting and calming place, an emotional haven. It was found that nature improves mood, relaxation by decreasing stress and anxiety, psychological mental health and even recovery. Because of these results, it is believed that nature can be used to better one's well-being and may be successful in helping symptoms of mental health disorders of anxiety, depression and more. (2021).

The next study by Melissa R. Marselle, Katherine N. Irvine and Sara L. Warber found very similar results. These findings tell us that being in nature reduces stress and depression, as well as benefits mental and emotional well-being. (2014).

It is clear from these studies that nature can be truly helpful to individuals, as it has been verified to mitigate levels of stress and anxiety, and instead lift mood and more.

Human Nature:

Another definition for nature comes under the phrase "human nature". The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary explains this to be "the ways of behaving, thinking and feeling that are shared by most people and are considered to be normal". One may find this definition interesting by how it closely relates to our emotions, especially prior to writing about the link between nature and our feelings.

Given the evidence discussed above, nature can not only be for inspiration or used in the materials itself to create surface pattern designs but can also be beneficial for those humans who interact with it.

Minimalism:

What it is and how it relates to surface pattern design:

The next keyword I have chosen to look into is minimalism. The Cambridge English Dictionary defines minimalism as “a style in art, design, and theatre that uses the smallest range of materials and colours possible, and only very simple shapes or forms” (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2022). This explanation describes how the style of minimalism relates to the arts, by using a limited number of formal elements, as opposed to many multiple, which would result in a more simplistic design appearance.

Kristine H. Harper writes about minimalism in her book *Aesthetic Sustainability*. She states that minimalism is known to disregard ornamentation and instead welcomes clear, balanced and easily read expressions. (Harper, 2018). She goes on to point out the importance of space in minimalist design. Harper explains that space is a part of the pieces, which can stretch to the viewer, therefore allowing the audience to feel connected and there with the artwork. (Harper, 2018). This, in surface pattern design, could translate to purposefully including a lot of negative space, along with a small colour palette.

Background of Minimalism:

The art movement of minimalism arose during the late 1950's and started thriving in the 1960's and 1970's. A key feature of this movement is that art is meant to be exactly what you see, without any hidden meanings behind it. (Tate, 2022). Aesthetics of Minimalistic art has been described as visually presenting a pure, simplistic and tranquil appearance. (Tate, 2022).

The art piece, seen in figure 2, demonstrates the aesthetics of minimalist art quite well. It depicts a lone pair of blue and grey dandelions, on a plain white background. The minimalistic qualities displayed here consist of a limited colour palette, negative space, a small range of materials used, simple forms and a clean and peaceful atmosphere, free from clutter. This painting was made by artist Janine Aykens and is available to buy, as a print or on items such as bags and cushions, online.



Figure 2 Blue and Grey Minimalist Dandelion, Janine Aykens 2022

How minimalism can affect well-being:

The paper, 'Brief analysis about modern simple style in interior design' by Liwei Chen tells us that people desire a relaxing, uncomplicated living space. It also reports how people are leaving complicated styles behind, in favour of more simplified ones, particularly in contemporary living environments. Chen then admits that design can

directly affect one's mental health and quality of life. (Chen, 2015]. This would suggest that people are finding minimalistic design to be more calming and helping them to feel more comfortable in their own homes, due to the aesthetic qualities of minimalism mentioned previously.

From the evidence above in this section, it is clear to see the specific elements of the minimalist design aesthetic, as well as the benefits these qualities can have through design, on well-being and quality of life.

Colour:

What colour is and how it can relate to surface pattern designers:

The last keyword I have chosen to look deeper into is colour. The Collins Dictionary defines colour as "The colour of something is the appearance that it has as a result of the way in which it reflects light." (Collins Dictionary, 2022). This explains that colours are only visible due to light, and suggests without it, we wouldn't see colours at all.

Laura Perryman, in her book 'The Colour Bible', goes onto address this in more depth. She informs the reader why we can see a wide range of colours. This being because different colours reflect light in different ways, the way they do this then determines the particular colours appeared to the viewers. Colours reflect wavelengths of light variously, due to their position on the colour spectrum. The placements of colours on this can be valuable information for artists and surface pattern designers, when thinking about designing for an audience, as due to this, it can be more difficult for the viewers' eyes to see some. For reds and violets, this is the case, as they are placed on the outer

edges of the spectrum, which is generally harder for human eyes to see. (The Colour Bible, 2021)

Colour associations:

Colours often hold meanings for people which can come from a range of sources, personal and cultural. A common example of an association we have of colours in the West is the assumption that a white room feels bigger than one painted in a darker colour. Similarly, it is widely known that shades of blue seem to be colder than red and orange ones, which appear warmer. Additionally, colours are also thought to carry connotations and symbolism. A few of these are, innocence for white, hope for green and love for red. However, it is important to note that when designing, these associations will not be the same for everyone, as these often differ by culture, meaning one must have a good understanding of the colour associations anywhere their designs may go. This is to ensure their designs are not portraying an unintended message to the viewers. (Harper, 2018).

Another study, conducted in 2015, focused on which colours most people thought of as linked to the seasons in Turkey. This study 'Seasonal and emotional associations of the colours and their effects on directing the Turkish fashion' by Buket Arik, Tetsuya Sato, Gulsah Sarikaya and Yuksel Ikiz, resulted in four colours found to represent the four seasons. These are: an intense green for spring, a bright yellow for summer, a dim yellow for autumn and lastly an ashy brown for winter. This paper acts as proof that people all over the world hold connotations in colours, even in other cultures around the globe. (Arik, 2016).

Figure 3 Sunset Spirit Bed Linen, Yves Delorme:



As the sunset was the inspiration behind this, it is clear the designer tried to capture the specific colours often seen during that time of day for this bed linen, with the purpose of being instantly recognisable as resembling a sunset. We can see this,

in figure 3, due to the colours used here, as pale pinks, blues and yellows are all very reminiscent of the sunset. This cotton sheet set by Yves Delorme is an example of how surface pattern designers can use nothing but colours to convey a certain theme well to the viewer, through using the connotations and associations held by colours for a large audience. (Yves Delorme, 2022)

Colour and how it can affect our well-being:

Here I will look at the 2015 study 'The role of colours in the health and well-being of the built environment in the Tropics' by A A Mbina and E E Edem. Here they state that colour does indeed affect our mental health and our emotions deeply. Furthermore, they say using colour correctly can evoke feelings of happiness. It is very important to know both the emotion you want to emit as well as the purpose for a certain space, to ensure they can work together effectively. (Mbina, 2015).

The last paper included in this document is 'Colour and light: orientation and well-being in health care facilities' by Leonhard Oberascher, published in 2001. Here, Oberascher

agrees that colours can and do affect our emotions, while he also expresses the significance of using the right colours, for the right environment. This is because rooms in hospitals, for example, intensive care units, need careful consideration of colours as they need to visually communicate feelings of comfort and safety to patients. This reiterates the crucial factor designers need to consider when working on a project, to avoid any unfortunate, unforeseen meanings coming across to the audience.

(Oberascher, 2001)

As stated in the research in this section above, several studies have been done that confirm colour can absolutely carry meanings to the viewer, through the connotations they carry based on one's associations. Additionally, this research also supports the idea that colours do have the ability to affect our mood and well-being.

In conclusion, this research document investigates the three chosen keywords of nature, minimalism and colour. For each word, it began by looking at their dictionary definitions, then how they individually relate to surface pattern design. This is through the ways nature is often used, minimalist aesthetic qualities and the meanings colours can suggest. The figures by William Morris, Janine Aykens and Yves Delorme give examples of this in industry. Lastly, this paper explored the effects each of these areas can have on one's mental health and well-being.

This paper comes to the verdict that nature, minimalism and colour can all have a beneficial effect on the viewer, when managed correctly.

These keywords can link together in a few ways. Nature and colour have a link through natural dyes and pigments, as well as new colour technology that can limit waste in production. Minimalism relates to colour as not using a lot of colours is a key part of the minimalist aesthetic. These, and other links, are an area of study I would like to research in the future, leading me to the question of 'How do the relationships between nature, minimalism and colour work together, in the context of surface pattern design, and what effects do these have on the viewers.'

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