

INFORMED SOURCE

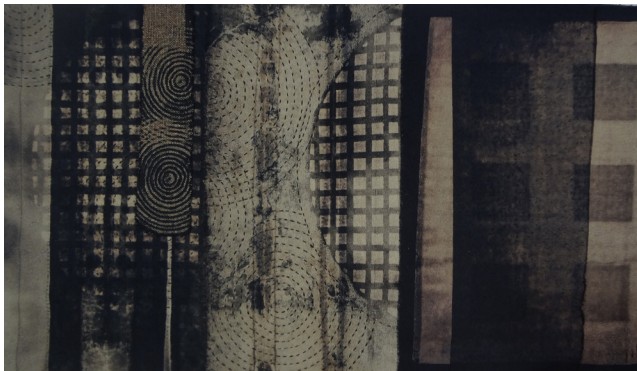
The Patterns of Our Lives

by Judy Newland

"Mankind is a weaver who from the wrong side works on the carpet of time. The day will come when he will see the right side and understand the grandeur of the pattern he with his own hands has woven through the centuries without seeing anything but a tangle of strings." –Lamartine

The Patterns of Our Lives

Pattern surrounds us from the time we make our appearance until the end of our days. Babies recognize pattern before color. Our brains crave the symmetry, order and simplicity of pattern—that gestalt wholeness that helps make sense of the world. Circles, lines, dots, and squares have been used for patterning since ancient times. But just what is pattern and how can we define it? Pattern is an organization and arrangement of repeating parts or motifs. It can be a decoration or ornament; a natural configuration, such as frost on a window; a distinctive style, model, or form; a paper outline to follow; an arrangement, diagram, figure, guide, impression, instruction, motif; a plan, stencil or template. And from all of this, we create the patterns of our lives.



Judy James *Overlay 2* 2005, cotton, silk, 13" x 22".



Kelsey Wiskirchen creates pattern in her studio with indigo-dyed tables as inspiration. Photo: Carl Valle.



Elaborate circles pattern a door in Cairo, Egypt.



Agave plants reflect nature's patterning.



Exploration of line in weaving.

Pattern Science

Early in my weaving experience I discovered Fibonacci numbers create pleasing stripes and plaids. The Fibonacci numbers are part of the geometry of nature. The Fibonacci Sequence, named after an Italian mathematician, is a series of numbers: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21... the next number always found by adding the two numbers before it. Symmetry is a pattern organizing principle, a way to arrange repeating parts into a pattern. Using four basic motions—translation, rotation, mirror and glide—designers can create 24 one or two-dimensional symmetries for use in wallpaper and textile design. Tessellations, often seen in quilting and architecture, are shapes that repeat to fill any surface without gaps or overlaps. Tessellations also form a class of patterns in nature such as honeycombs. Surface designers explore pattern science each time they create textile designs, quilts, weavings and more.



Floor mosaic in an Ancient Greek temple is an example of tessellation.



Kelsey Wiskirchen 2016, indigo-dyed plywood, detail from studio work table.



Judy Newland's screen print inspired by Jacqueline Groag.

Patterns of History

A key figure in the modern history of surface design is **William Morris**, the 19th century master of textile and wallpaper patterns. His designs were revolutionary and his influential social vision, the equality of art, craft and design, still resonates today. But an entire generation of exceptional women designers was not as highly regarded as Morris. The Wiener Werkstätte and the Bauhaus produced outstanding women textile designers and weavers, such as **Anni Albers**. Despite the perception that pattern design was unimportant to the modern art movement, key surface pattern designers like **Jacqueline Groag** produced exciting designs, ranging from abstract to representational, that jump from the pages and practically run down the street. Looking back to the history of pattern, ornament and surface design can inspire us to explore new paths, alter our life pattern and direction.

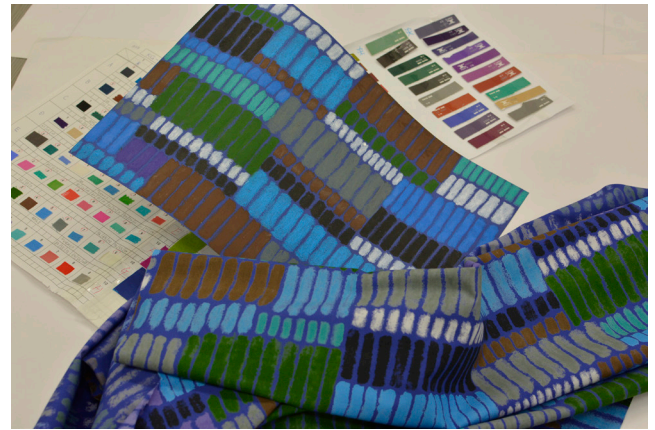


Knitted sweater of handspun yarn inspired by designer Kaffe Fassett.



Cultural Patterns

The Grammar of Ornament by **Owen Jones**, first published in 1856, is a wonderful place to start a study of cultural patterns. Jones gathered motifs and patterns from around the world from ancient to modern times. The simplest circle and square have symbolized the sun or the universe deep into the past, appearing on temples, clothing and people. In Teotihuacan, Mexico, we find examples of this ancient universal symbol. In Egypt, the lotus flower symbolized growth and the stylized lotus pattern changed over centuries. As we travel and explore culture we internalize lasting design and pattern influences.



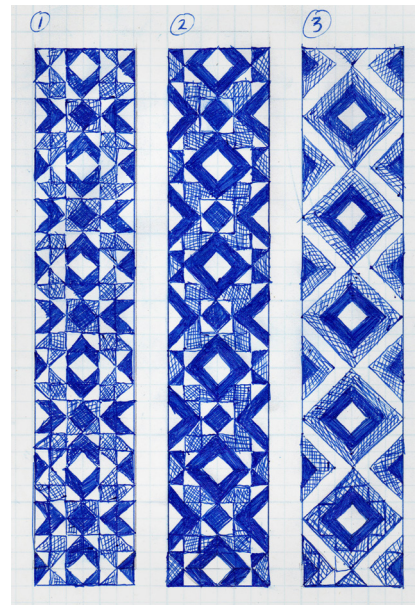
Technique

In digital fabric design various types of repeats such as straight, brick, half drops, random or tossed are used to make a pattern or composition with no gaps or holes. Symmetrical motions mirror and reflect motifs creating quilts and designs with repeating parts that go in both directions, filling an entire surface on a quilt, floor or wall (often called wallpaper designs). We fold paper patterns of dolls and snowflakes. We make dressmaker patterns, create original art, and we doodle our ideas and inspirations. Influences from nature, culture, science or history reflect our personal style and story.



Top: Circles in ancient Teotihuacan.

Bottom: **Kelsey Wiskirchen** *Handed On* 2012, MFA installation, Arizona State University. Photo: Peter Bugg.



Top: High end cotton fabric is precisely printed from the original artwork of **Keiko Goke**. "Cotton and Indigo from Japan" 2017, Schiffer Publishing. Photo: Teresa Duryea Wong.

Bottom: **Kelsey Wiskirchen's** Ink drawings are the first step in her indigo-dyed table patterns.



Telling a Story with Pattern

The patterns of our lives tell a story. Careers have a pattern, as do textiles. I was a maker/mom early in life then careened into museum anthropology and told stories with my students through exhibitions. As a textile historian I explore ancient Peruvian archaeological fragments containing their own patterns and cultural stories. Ancient cultures inspire my practice. When designing patterns for our work we can tell our story. This is what surface designers offer when they light up the world with patterns.

Judy Newland *My Arizona* 2012, wool, silk, eucalyptus, eco-dyed, 34" x 44".

Resources to explore:

- *Patternalia: An Unconventional History of Polka Dots, Stripes, Plaid, Camouflage, & Other Graphic Patterns* by Jude Stewart
- *Symmetries of Culture and Symmetry Comes of Age* by Washburn and Crowe

—Judy Newland lives in northern Colorado and is a museum anthropologist, textile historian, weaver, spinner, natural dyer, and a mom. She has created over 100 exhibitions during her museum career and loves sharing cultural stories. She currently blogs for ClothRoads. clothroads.com