

## Ornament and Design

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### Wallpaper and Emblematic Studies

Design Stories / Montserrat College of Art

May 2017

This volume records student work for two exercises done in Design Stories in Spring 2017. The is course devoted to design history, discourse and methods, engages with design as a rhetorical practice (ethos, pathos, logos), and emphasizes the frameworks in which designed objects have meaning and function.

The exercises here are wallpaper (relating to decoration, ornament and function) and emblems (word and image relationships, and method). Background to both exercises is presented in the Discussion beginning at page 52.

In a third and final exercise, students developed an analytical prototype of a design solution — or approaches — to a problem (or gap). The solution need not be a designed artifact, but could be a service, or set of procedures (that might involve some artifacts). Their projects — involving currency redesign, nomadic spaces for students, student studio spaces, and a community-empowerment app for zoning and other functions — were presented orally and in the form of prospectuses.

John McVey, instructor

*course blog*

<http://jmcvey.net/stories>

*course archive*

<http://studio.montserrat.edu/gd/stories/index.htm>

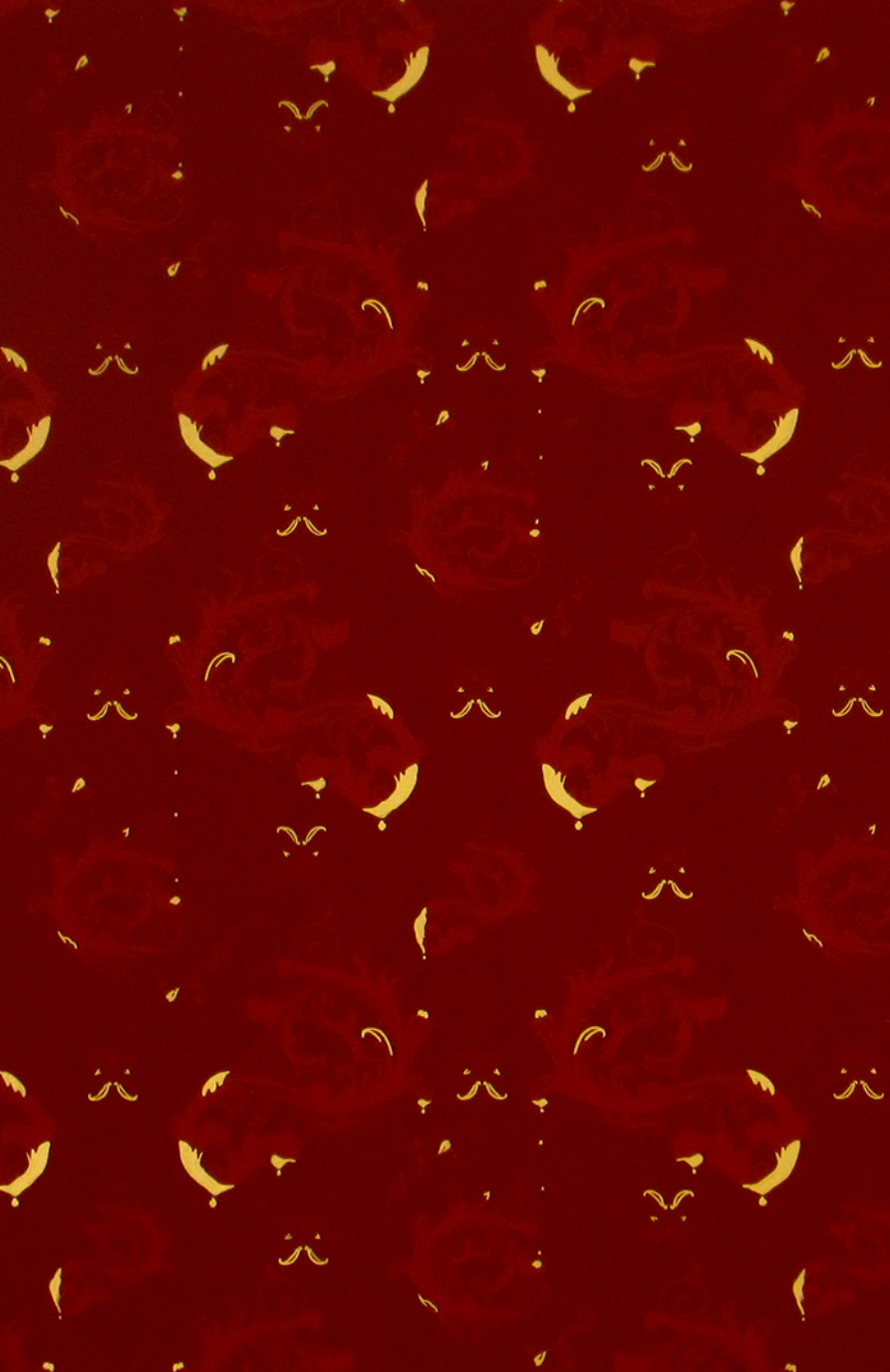
❧ Wallpaper

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Emblems ❧



# Wallpaper



Coral Azevedo

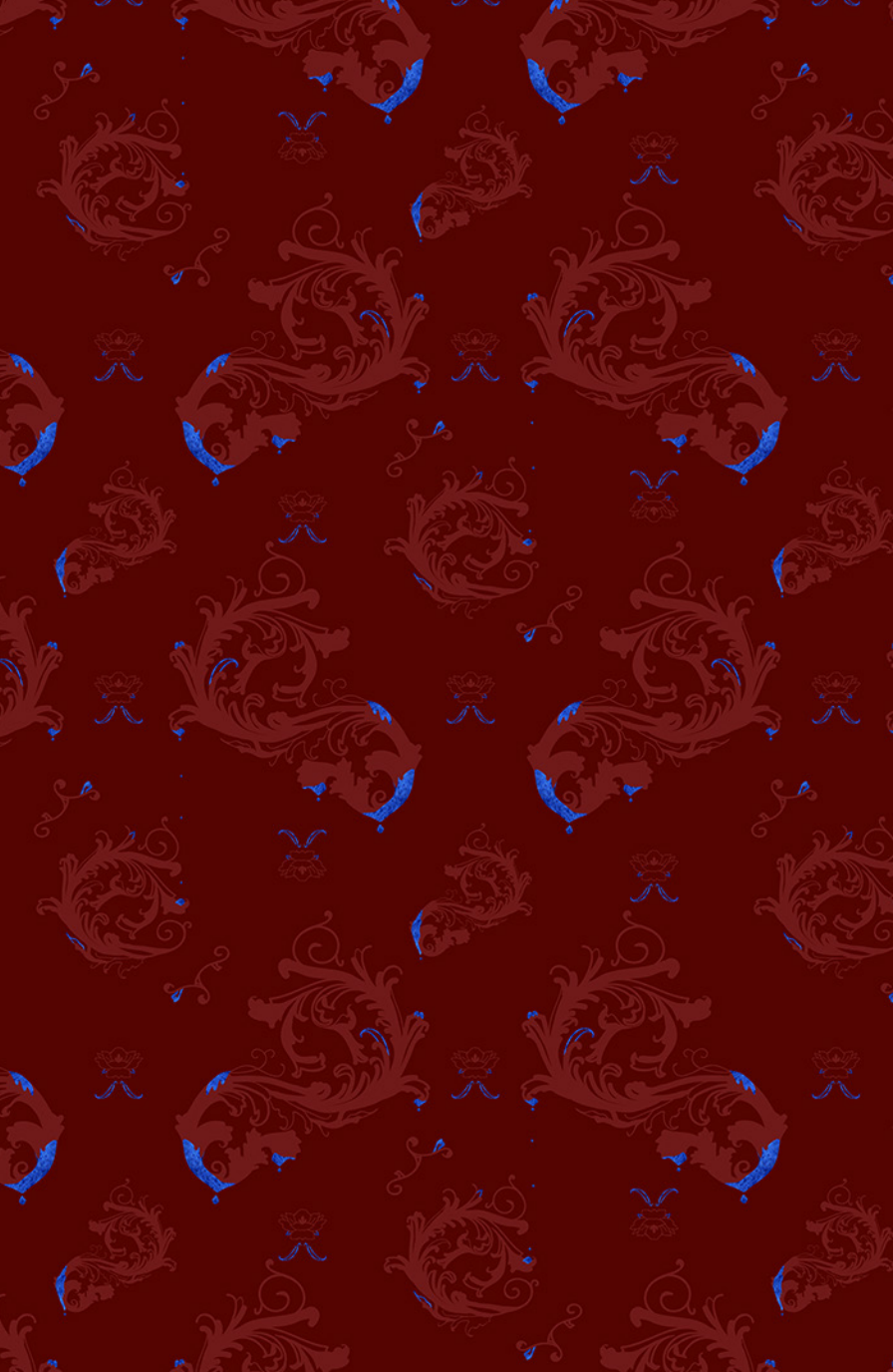
My initial goal for this wallpaper was to make something that looked expensive, but modern. I was inspired by intricate Rococo era wallpapers that were only attainable by the very rich. I enjoy the complicated floral patterns and the way some aspects of the design reacted to light differently. After this time in history beautiful wallpaper became affordable for anyone, decreasing its value and making price varied by the nature of the design irrelevant.

When I think of luxury and costly I think of gold and how some of the old wallpaper designs I took inspiration from had parts that reflect light so I used the image of gold in that way. I wanted to make a pattern that was I added gold accents and thought I could make that more modern by making some of the gold drip down off the floral filigree shapes. I started with the same twisted filigree shape, then continuously made more elements for the pattern and added more gold accents. Revisions were more like additions for this design; more elements appeared and evolved as I continued.

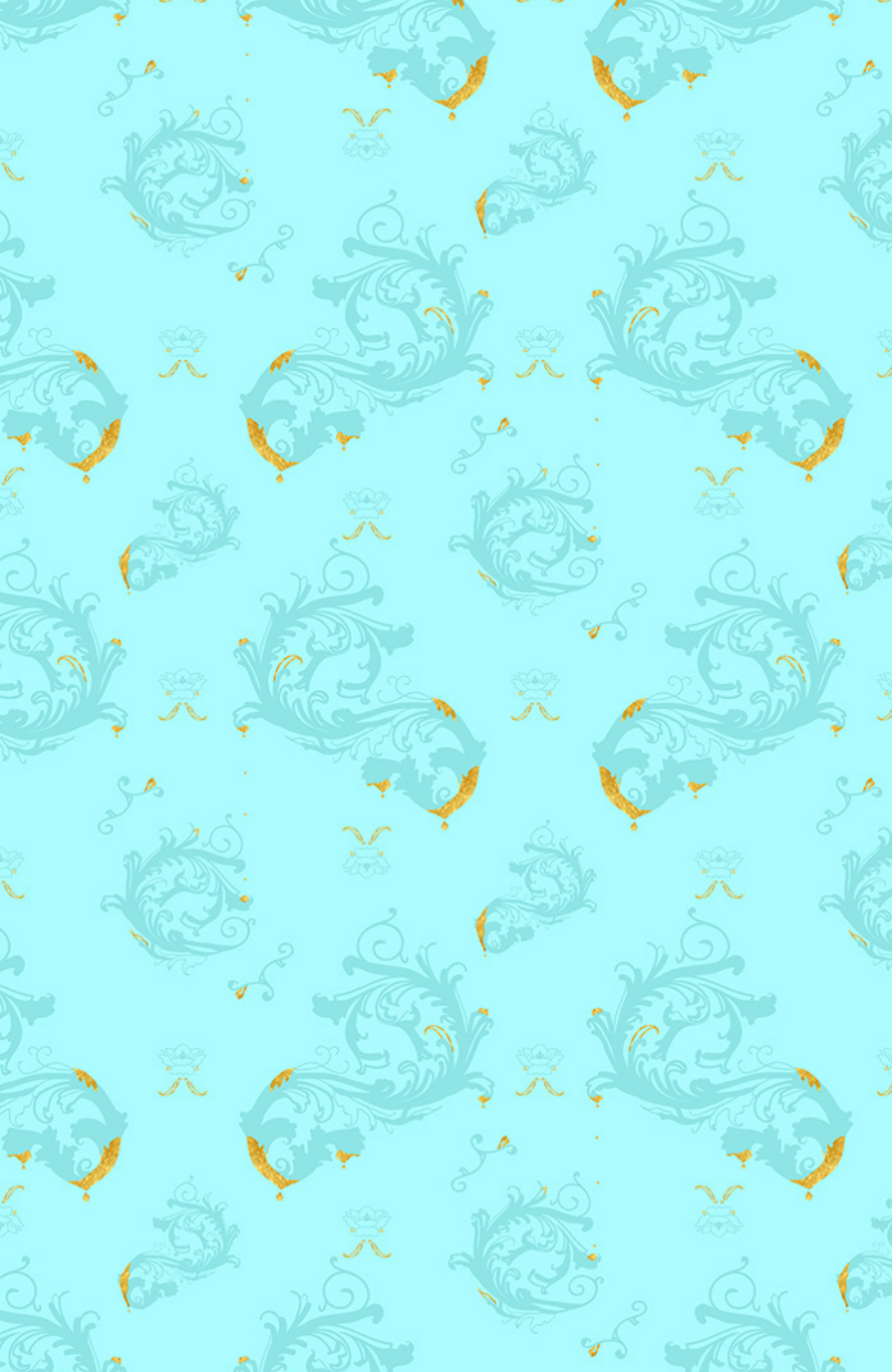
I ended up with two versions of the wallpaper. The mint blue was my initial design and I imagined it being in a dining room or sitting room or even a bedroom setting. I wanted a lighter more refreshing color to open up a Space. The red is the inverted colors of blue, came a bit later in the design process. It is much darker and more luxurious and I imagine it being in the same setting at the blue, but for a warmer more comforting mood.

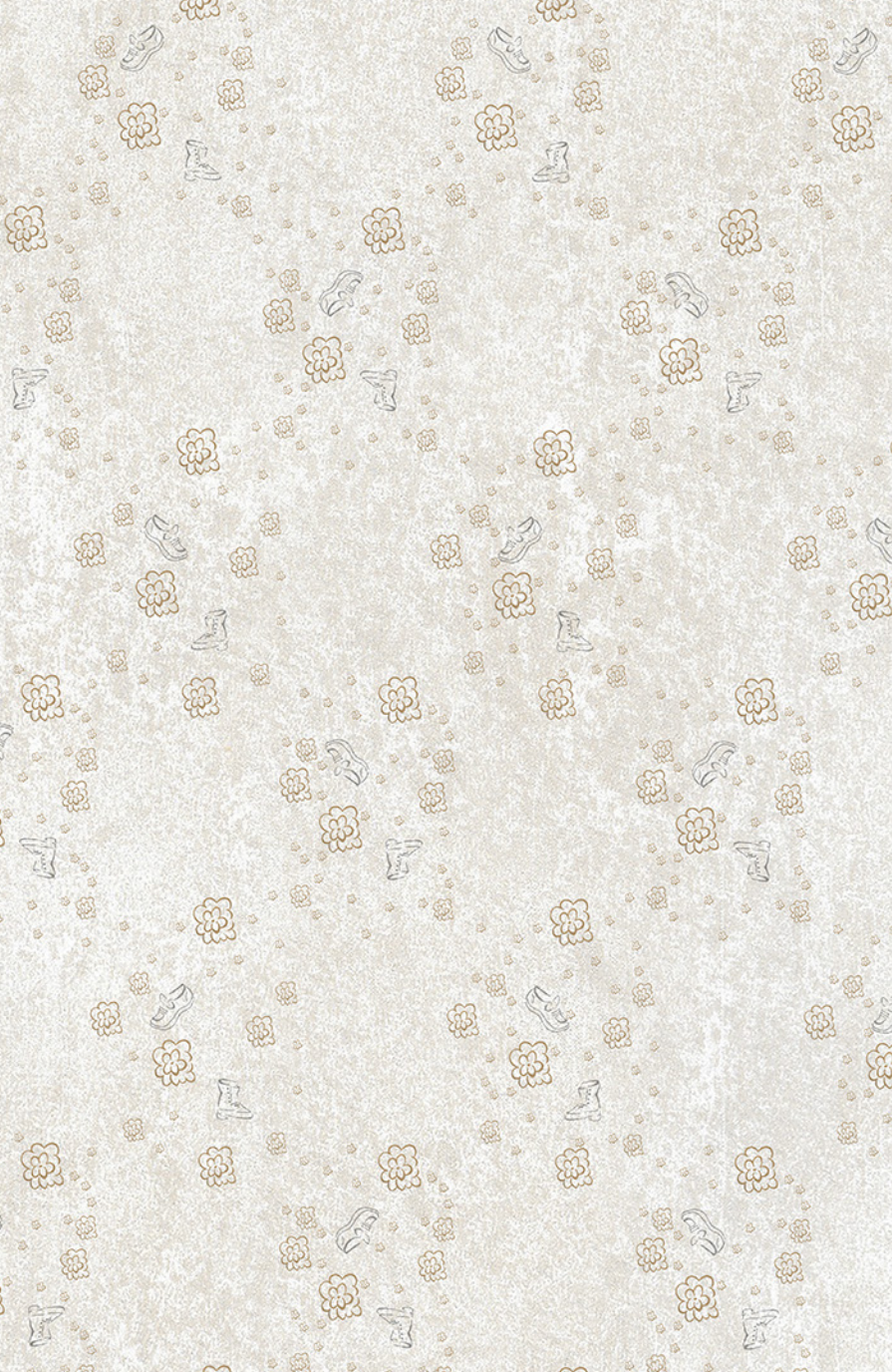
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at left, detail shot from installation in Open House, 24  
April 2017. Gold was applied by hand with metallic  
marker. Images on following two pages, original  
(turquoise) and inverted (red) designs.









Kaleigh Brann

The idea for this project was to create a wallpaper and study the great impact wallpaper has had on interior design as well as the designers of the time. I studied Candace Wheeler, the “founder” of interior design and although never saw herself as a feminist, did make strides to show how intelligent women were and created jobs. She gave me some inspiration for my wallpaper by studying the patterns in her designs.

The Wilton Wallpaper inspiration came from the Bass Shoe Mansions in Wilton Maine. When I was thirteen I was able to tour one of these mansions and drew some of the designs on the wallpaper in my sketch book. The golden flower in my design was seen at this mansion. In the town of Wilton, ME the Bass Shoe Factory was a great industry providing many jobs and fortune to the families of the area during the twentieth century. Towards the end of this century though, the factory left the area leaving Wilton in a rather broke state. Many business now have difficulty staying in business and the mansions often have rooms closed off during the cold winters.

The Wilton Wallpaper was designed with golden flowers from the Bass Shoe Mansions and then little shoes dancing around. The shoes were designed by the Bass Shoe Company, the Rangeley Moccasin and the Bass Shoe Moccasin. These shoes were designed to reflect the same graphic marks of the flowers and are placed together to show how shoes created the wealth that led to the creation and home of this wallpaper flower.

The design process for this took many turns. In the beginning, the wallpaper had a very grid like structure and was on a deep red wallpaper. It took me a while to create a less grid like structure but by researching wallpaper styles I was able to get closer to my finished design. I created a design and then had it repeated to create diamond like shapes repeating. Upon the next class critique, there were some unused spaces that was suggested to me that I try to activate those with the shoes. I created both and I think both are successful. The one with shoes activating the diamonds I feel have a new, crisp feel and the unactivated diamonds has a simpler and more reflective tone.

The Wilton Wallpaper I believe would be placed well in a living

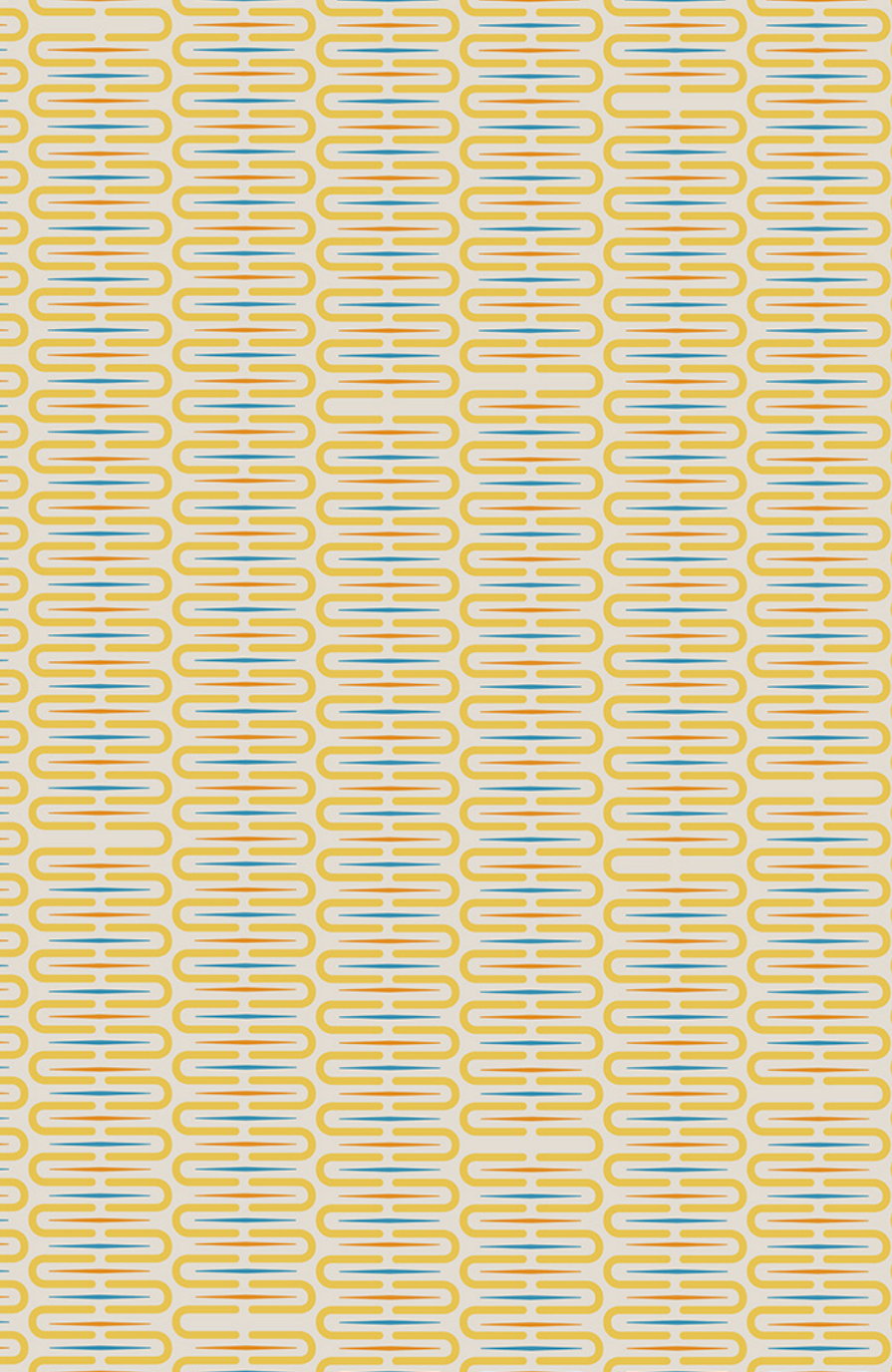


room or dining room. The pattern itself contains the history of the town in the twentieth century but carries a more subtle and delicate quality. The wallpaper has a simple cream color and really has to be read into in order to read the story woven into the design. This wallpaper could be located only Wilton too though, wildly narrowing down a customer base, but this is the history of the area. Other people could do research though about Wilton and the wallpaper and who knows, it could be a networking or knowledgeable experience.

This wallpaper personally makes me very happy and brings up feelings of reminiscence. I've never really incorporated my hometown into my works. This is where I grew up, all my memories of childhood are located here, so when I view it, no matter where I am, I will be reminded of where I grew up. It's like bringing a piece of home with me no matter where I am, and if it's on the walls of my house I think the feeling of home will be even deeper.

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The two versions are shown, the first without large shoe element, the second (at left) with the shoe.



Morgan O'Connor

I went through a few concepts at the beginning of this project. At first thought of filigree, but the concept quickly became boring to me and shifted to a concept a little closer to our modern age. The inspiration for the final pattern draws heavily from the 70's aesthetic of windy tubes and bold colors. I dulled the colors of the design to give it a vintage feel but kept it just bold enough to have effect when printed large. I went through about seven or eight color and shape variations before arriving at this point. From a distance the rows seem to vibrate, but this illusion is broken up by the random exclusion of a few of the blue elements. These gaps become prominent when the pattern is tiled.

I could picture this design on the lining of a vintage van/bus, which was what I had in mind when I created it. It might also be appropriate above a kitchen countertop or in a small bathroom. This is by no means a fancy or "exclusive" wallpaper, more like a common design you would find still stuck on the walls of the old apartment you're renting.

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*That's 70's / Far Out* (final variation, with random removed elements)

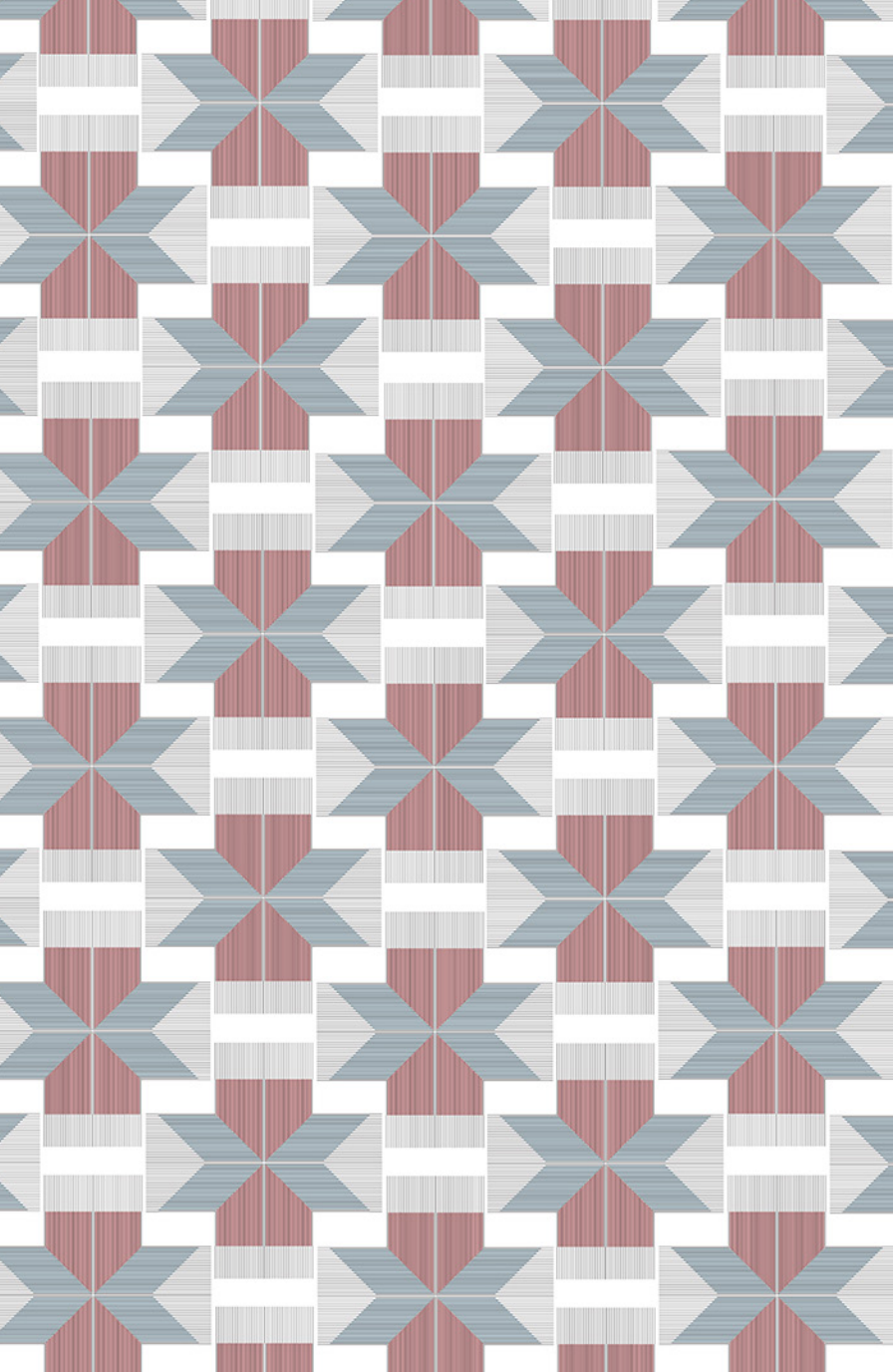




Jade Ruscio

Growing up in my childhood home my parents had a garden in our backyard. It carried a lot of vegetables and some household herbs that were often used. Basil and parsley, being an Italian household, as well as tomatoes, peppers, and some other staple vegetables. All of the maternal relatives in my family have always been very good plant growers in my life and i have learned a lot from them and their niche. My inspiration for this project, and in my interest in botanics comes from this.

For my wallpaper i decided to look into different plants that i was interested in. I love herbs and the different holistic values that they are given as well. Lavender used for calming, as well as sage used to cleanse, two major ones that i included in this that have a lot of meaning to me and in my anxieties and how i cope with them. Spawning from that i decided to stick to an herb based pattern adding in some bay leaves and thyme which which were visually pleasing, often used, and coincided with this theme well. My pattern was very nice visually at first, and gained more strength once i made my botanical elements more symmetrical. Going from about 7 elements to narrowing it down helped, because it was too busy of a pattern once i looked at it repeated and laid out just as it would be in the big picture fitting a whole wall as wallpaper. I created elements in themselves out of my botanical aspects which allowed me to create more negative space in between one another and gave it a nice look as a pattern. Having that much negative space i changed my background, from what had been consistently white, to a light shade of purple, which looked the strongest visually, and also coincided well with the lavender and sage, which are two of the biggest elements in this design.



Courtney Ryan

Starting this project I was interested by the idea of line instead of color. Why do our walls have to be one solid color, why not line and shape? Set on rejecting the dainty and graceful, I explored patterns and techniques that were unsettling to the perception of sight. Imagine walking into a room with walls of one giant optical illusion set on repeat, I can't think of anything more maddening than that. Sorting through the options I came up with I went with one based on line and space in a vertical layout.

I thought I had my wallpaper done and finalized until I went on spring break, when I visited my sister out in Arizona I was so shocked to see the beauty in not just the landscape but the architecture that I had to revisit the wallpaper with something better. Arizona is tied to its roots, you can see it in the Indigenous influence on the building style, landscaping, food, and still better, the patterns. Back in Beverly and in front of the computer screen once again I added color. Then I transformed the vertical lines to form a shape, then that shape became smaller and repeated, made it horizontal then vertical again. With that in mind, I present to you my wallpaper, Mesa, Arizona. Influenced by the Indigenous Peoples designs and culture Mesa, Arizona is not meant for any social class in particular, rather, it is meant to be on the walls of high transition areas.

Parts of the building where things shift, settle, then shift again is where this wallpaper should be implemented. The hallways where we take off our shoes and set aside, the closet where we hang our coats to dry, even the mudroom our guests first transition through to enter the rest of the home. There is energy that flows through this wallpaper, coming to life when someone is there to witness it only to fall into a soft hum once they've left.

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More on Courtney's wallpaper process at  
[https://bambsy.github.io/wa-sp17/wa\\_pro4/Index.html](https://bambsy.github.io/wa-sp17/wa_pro4/Index.html)



Harrison Turner

The reason why I chose to create a pineapple wallpaper is not solely based on my obsession for the fruit, but it is also based on the traditional symbolic meaning of the pineapple. In 2013 my family and I had visited the city of Charleston in South Carolina; and one of the major recurring symbols / objects seen around the city was the pineapple. A pineapple fountain at the city's waterfront park has stayed in memory these many years. I asked my mother why there were pineapples everywhere, and she told me that it was the southern symbol for good hospitality. This became my inspiration for the wallpaper project, and once I began working on the this project, I have done my research on the pineapple and it's symbol to find out more historical and symbolic information. From what I have gathered; pineapples are the American symbol for good hospitality, not just strictly pertaining to the southern states of America. Even from my everyday observation, I have noticed a great deal of pineapples being a decorative component to many other buildings in various states. As a decorative and other symbolic component to my wallpaper I added vines as well, because from my research I have found that there are other fruits, vegetation, plants, etc that all have symbolic meanings. Vines are a representation of life and growth based on the christian religion. I put these two as my main subjects for the wallpaper, because I felt that both of these symbols had positive meanings that paired well together. When creating my this piece, I started out by making various sketches of the pineapple with a very flat representational design, to a modern design, to a fancy decorative design; playing with various colors, and sizes. It took me about 6 to 7 redesigns before I found a style, and color palette that fit the overall aesthetic and purpose that I was trying to achieve. My final design ended up being 3D pineapples on a beige background, with the vines creating small frames for some of them in a repeating pattern in each row. This wallpaper could be found either in a bedroom, or a personal in home office, because of its decorative and fancy appearance.



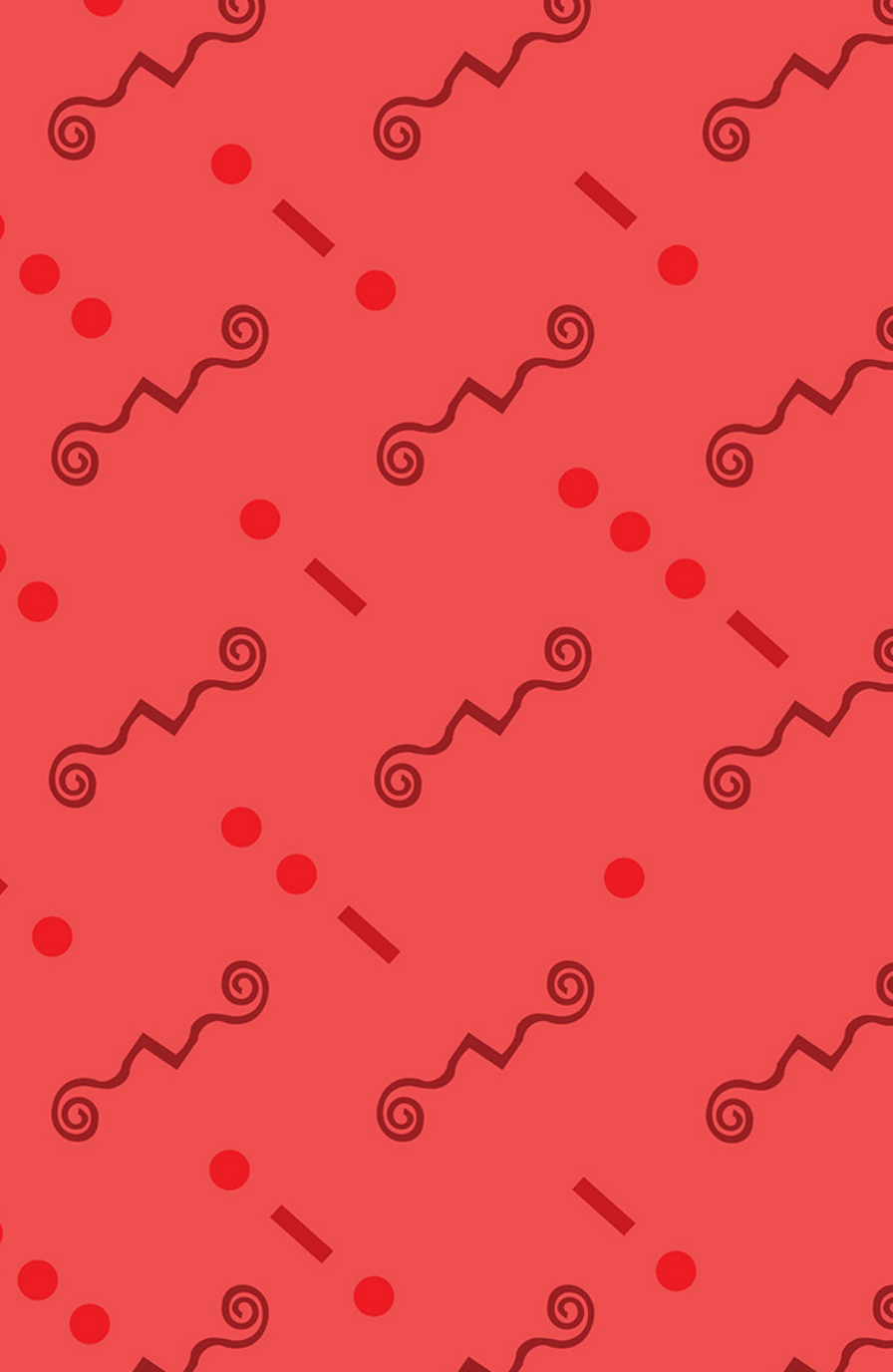
## Jeremy Rodas

The Bronx was my home for seven years. I lived in an apartment building at 2194 Barnes Avenue. The building inspired the design for my wallpaper. I started with sketches of window relief details that were scattered about, eventually sketching these in Illustrator. At that point I made the decision to focus on a smaller section of the reliefs, which is what the main design of the wallpaper is based on. From the main design elements I created two more designs in the form of dots and dashes. The dots and dashes are also used in the second wallpaper design to be international morse code. Repeating Barnes Avenue multiple times giving the secondary elements more reason to exist than just sharing qualities of the main design element of the wallpaper.

More on Jeremy's wallpaper at  
[https://jeremy-rodas.github.io/Web1\\_Final/](https://jeremy-rodas.github.io/Web1_Final/)

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left: original Barnes Ave. sign; overleaf, Barnes Ave.  
in Morse Code.





# Emblems

MISTAKE • A MOTH I SAW NEAR THE FRONT DOOR OF THE HOUSE. I TRIED NOT TO GET TOO CLOSE • 05-09-16 • MANCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS



MISPLACE • TIDEPool FILLED WITH TRASH AT A SEASIDE STATE PARK AND FORMER MILITARY FORT • 03-08-14 • FAIRHAVEN, MASSACHUSETTS



MISHAP • SEA TURTLE WITH A BOAT STRIKE INJURY BEING TAKEN CARE OF BY THE TURTLE HOSPITAL • 12-30-16 • MARATHON, FLORIDA



MISHAP

BOATERS, BE MINDFUL.

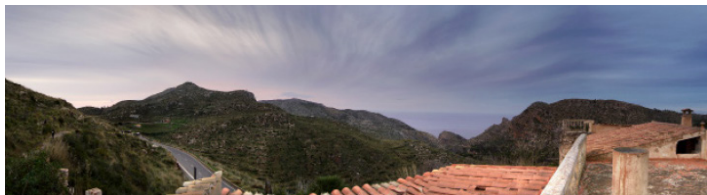
BUT MAN IS PART OF NATURE



and his war against nature is inevitably  
a war against himself.



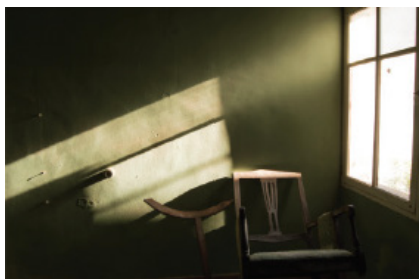
ONE WAY TO OPEN YOUR EYES IS TO ASK YOURSELF



What if I had never seen this before?

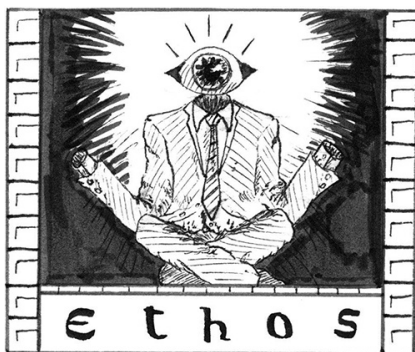
What if I knew I would never see it again?

DARKNESS CANNOT DRIVE OUT DARKNESS,  
ONLY LIGHT CAN DO THAT.



Hate cannot drive out hate,  
only love can do that.

LESS THAN ONE PERCENT OF THE POPULATION



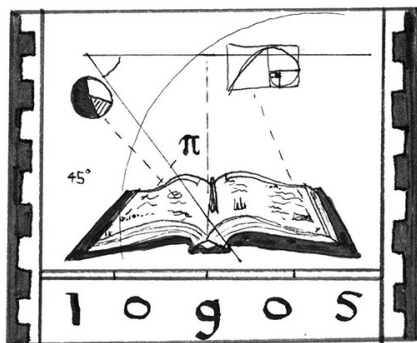
infj

NOTHING WOULD HELP THE WORLD SO MUCH AS  
LOVE AND COMPASSION



infj

SPEAKING IN HUMAN TERMS, RATHER THAN  
WITH PURE LOGIC AND FACT



infj

## FEELINGS



Phenomena of a short duration.

## SEDUCTION



Used to influence feelings and moods in the person

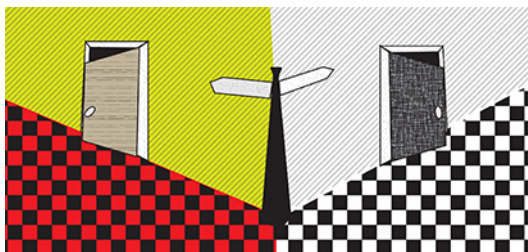
## MOODS



An approach to future possibilities of action



THE JUDGEMENTS WE MAKE DIFFER  
WHEN WE ARE INFLUENCED BY JOY OR SORROW

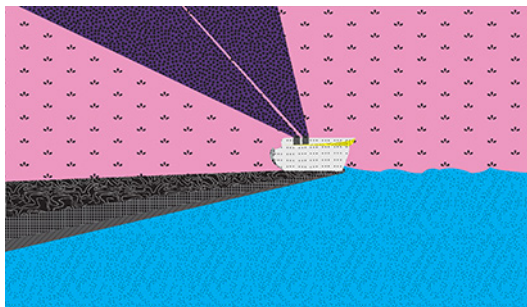


She said, “It’s not a reflection of you

It’s one of them

Make you feel down for a while but  
you’ll be back up again.”

BEING A HUMANBEING IS  
A DESIGN AGAINST NATURE



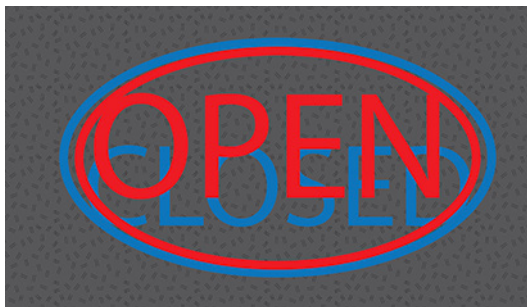
Waiting for our ship to come but our  
ship's not coming back

We have time like pennies in a jar

What are we waiting for

What are we waiting for

WE DO DIE, JUST AS OTHER MAMMALS

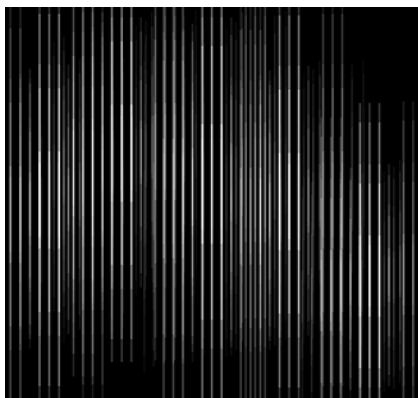


D is for death

Because death is certain

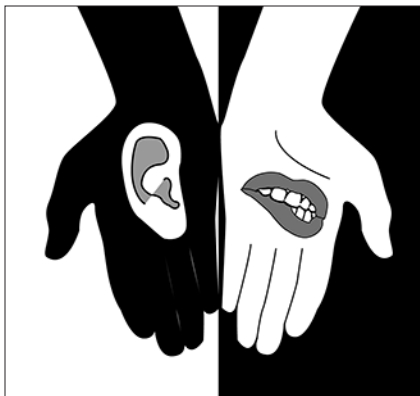
Even free houses sometimes have to  
close the curtain

## SILENCE



The darkness.  
The unsettling.  
The white noise.

When silence is about, it often feels like  
the emptiness of the dark, being stuck  
in a white box, or possibly surrounded  
by the faint sound of air.



The word of mouth.

The component to listen to the words  
of others.

The hands of humans.

Components of humanity, use your life  
wisely, be good to others.

We are capable of anything by word  
or deed, even to harm those whom we  
hold close to us.

PRAISING THE WRONG THINGS

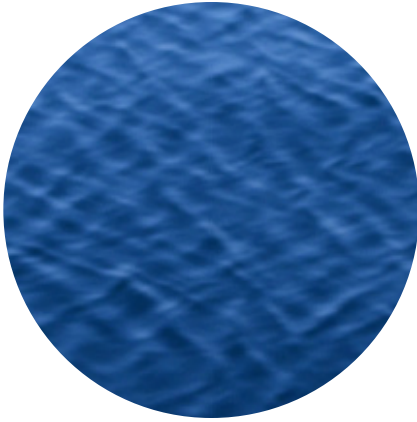


The middle ground.  
The Sense of Judgement.  
The giving in.

Sometimes we hold the wrong  
items or icons in our highest re-  
gard. Or are guilty of loss of  
judgement, which can be destruc-  
tive to an individual.

We forget what is important in our  
lives.

OCEANIC



Always an unknown  
Testing what we know to be  
Giving little in haul

INTRIGUE



Bewildered by size  
Lost in figure and design  
Feeling upside down



EXPANSION



Always an unknown  
Testing what we know to be  
Giving little in haul



## Discussion

## Wallpaper

We're thinking about the functions of ornament (and beauty) in design, in light of our readings of Gelernter (beauty as defense against complexity), Castiglione (*sprezzatura*), and Ulrich (aesthetics as separate from, almost supplemental to, function). We've been thinking about ornament, connected with developments in the nineteenth century, including the Crystal Palace exhibition (1851), designs for mass-produced goods, pattern books (Owen Jones *The Grammar of Ornament* 1856), and the combination of motifs from different times, places, cultures.

We designed wallpaper in parallel and in conversation with these and other readings.

Criteria for our wallpaper designs included usage: what room, for whom, to encourage what activity or frame of mind? Our designs needed to take into account function.

Our design of a decorative wallpaper provides an occasion for reflection on the notion of ornament as supplemental, as something extra, and therefore either devotional or wasteful.

### *previous years*

2015

[http://studio.montserrat.edu/gd/stories/index.htm#wallpaper-catalogue\\_2015](http://studio.montserrat.edu/gd/stories/index.htm#wallpaper-catalogue_2015)

2010

<http://montserrat.edu/studio/gd/stories/index.htm#tapeten>

2009

<http://montserrat.edu/studio/gd/stories/index.htm#walls>

2007

<http://montserrat.edu/studio/gd/216S07/wallpaper.htm>

2004

[http://montserrat.edu/studio/gd/wallpaper\\_04/index.htm](http://montserrat.edu/studio/gd/wallpaper_04/index.htm)

### *readings, extracts*

David Brett, *On Decoration* (1992) –

*The desire for decoration, however, appears to be a cultural constant and is, historically, one of the defining characteristics of specific cultures.*

and the presentation of symmetry and harmony, in 19th century

wallpapers, replaced “*narrative, pictorial or emblematic-symbolic transactions*” as a reminder and/or model of moral rectitude.

Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (written between 1508 and 1528, when it was first published; Charles H. Singleton translation, 1959)

—  
*...to practice in all things a certain sprezzatura [nonchalance], so as to conceal all art and make whatever is done or said appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it. And I believe much grace comes of this...*

Hal Foster, “Design and Crime” (2002)

originally appeared under title “Hey, that’s me,” a review of Bruce Mau’s *Life Style* (Phaidon, 2000), in the *London Review of Books* 23:7 (5 April 2001): 13-14

Isabelle Frank, introduction to her *The Theory of Decorative Art : An Anthology of European & American Writings, 1750-1940* (Yale UP, 2000)  
: 5-10 —

*The Crystal Palace exhibition helped transform decorative art from a domain of relatively limited interest into one of public consequence, exposing for all to see the relative merits and weaknesses of national products.*

David Gelernter, *Machine Beauty : Elegance and the heart of technology* (1998) : 22 —  
*Beauty is the ultimate defense against complexity. Beauty is our most reliable guide...*

Lesley Hoskins, *The Papered Wall : History, Pattern, Technique* (1994, 2005) —  
*Ever since wallpaper first became widely available its status has been questioned: is it background or foreground, art or decoration, vulgar or respectable, a substitute or the real thing?*

Adolf Loos, “Ornament and Crime” (1908/1929), in Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime : Selected Essays* (1998). —  
*The urge to decorate one’s face and anything else within reach is the origin of the fine arts. It is the childish babble of painting.... A person of our times who gives way to the urge to daub the walls with erotic symbols is a criminal*

*or a degenerate.... the evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornamentation from objects of everyday use.*

Alice Twemlow. "The Decriminalization of ornament. Spurned and marginalised for a century, decoration is enjoying a guilt-free renaissance." *Eye* 58 (Winter 2005) : 18-29

Karl T. Ulrich, *Design : Creation of Artifacts in Society* (2005-11), especially chapter 7 "Aesthetics in Design"

"Ornament," from Ralph Nicholson Wornum's "The Exhibition as a Lesson in Taste," published with other essays at the end of *The Great Exhibition : The Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue : The Industry of All Nations* (1851) : pp XXI-XXII, from Section IX.

## Emblems

The design brief, for this "quick" exercise —

Develop three emblems, one (textual) element of which should incorporate a phrase from our reading on and around rhetoric, and design. No size limit. Ideally, the emblems will, in their unique configurations of elements, lead to or encourage new knowledge and/or ideas.

An underlying purpose of this exercise was to work with limits, three instances of emblems, each with three elements (motto, image, epigram and/or explanatory text). The three elements need not, and even should not, provide redundant information. Rather and ideally, their configuration, in a kind of algebraic relationship, yields more than the sum of their parts.

We found that by homing in on three elements, we could adjust one alone, to see its consequences reflected in the two other, and unchanged, elements. The "takeaway" was the idea of working elements at fine calibration, to get the mix right (see reference to Achilles Bocchi (1574) below).

We examined a selection of emblems from Alciati to the present, and also looked for triadic structures in modern advertising (finding them everywhere).

Emblem “looklist” —

Andreas Alciati. *Emblematum Liber* (1531)

This crudely illustrated book was a plagiarization of a collection of epigrams published by Alciati in 1522, but the new form was successful, and over 150 editions of Alciati’s collection, alone, appeared over the next century. Something like 2000 emblem books were published in the heyday of the genre.

Cesare Ripa. *Iconologia* (1593)

Francis Quarles. *Emblems, divine and moral*, together with Hieroglyphicks of the life of man (1634)

Achilles Bocchi *Symbolicarum Quaestionum de Universo Genere* (1574)

Whose emblem 114 depicts the invention of gunpowder by an accident that, incidentally, killed its experimenter. The explication of that emblem concludes with the standard maxima-minima trope familiar to a baroque audience : In this way gunpowder was invented. A spark, though very small, often produces a very great fire. A second moral : get the mix of materials right, for maximum power of expression.

Geffrey Whitney. *A Choice of Emblemes*, and other devises, For the moste part gathered out of sundrie writers, Englished and Moralized. And divers newly devised. (1586)

Francis Wither. *A collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne*, Quickened with metricall illustrations, both Morall and divine: And Disposed into lotteries, that instruction, and good counsell, may be furthered by an honest and pleasant recreation. The first-fourth booke. (1635)

John Amos Comenius. *Orbis Pictus*

Teaching of words and things must go hand in hand. First edition 1657, this edition 1887

Mrs (Margaret) Gatty. *A Book of Emblems, with interpretations thereof*. London, 1872

Robert Louis Stevenson. *Moral Emblems* (1882)

W.A. Dwiggin. *A Bakers’ Dozen of Emblems* (1935 —promotion of his Electra typeface for Mergenthaler)

M.C. Escher, xxiv *Emblemata*, with epigrams by A.E. Drijfhout and woodcuts by Escher. (1933)

Bertolt Brecht. *War Primer* | *Kriegsfiibel* (1955, 1994)

Edward Lucie Smith. *Borrowed Emblems* (1967)

using emblematic images from Theodore de Beze (1519-1605), *Les Vrais Pourtraits Des Hommes Illustres* (1581)

Ian Hamilton Finlay. *Heroic Emblems* (1977)

David Wojnarowicz (his text + photographic works)

the “translations” of the California collagist Jess, in *Jess : A Grand Collage 1951-1993* (1993)

and his *Emblems for Robert Duncan*, in *Zyzzzyva* 5:3 (1989)

Hugh Buchanan and Peter Davidson. *The Eloquence of Shadows* | *Emblemata Nova : A Book of Emblems* (1994)

Ralfka Gonzalez and Ana Ruiz. *My First Book of Proverbs* | *Mi Primer Libro de dichos* (1995)

Megan Jenkinson. *Under the Aegis : The Virtues* (1997)

references —

John Manning. *The Emblem* (Reaktion Books, 2002)