Pattern Research Project: An Investigation of The Pattern And Printing Process - Golden Age

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Golden Age
Wallpaper Evolution

Seen to the left, the pattern has evolved in multiple iterations over time and the evolution is reflective of value and societal change rather than any alterations to the processes by which the pattern has been formed. As more security and limitations are placed on the masses, Ai Weiwei illustrates how one freed voice does not represent an entirely free nation.

Intent of Pattern

This pattern was intended as a piece of both propaganda and art and it has an extended audience that can be expanded to include the entire world as artist Ai Weiwei voiced his oppression and the oppressed that do not have a voice in China’s authoritarian state (AI, 2016).

Similar to historical precedents this wallpaper progression was intended to voice the ongoing strife felt by a group of people. Ai Weiwei has repeatedly used this them in his work, creating pieces to be shared and seen by the masses in public and private spaces worldwide. This wallpaper pattern is meant to spark discussion on the issues of public versus private spaces, seen globally. Ai Weiwei’s intended message being the difficulties of Communique and its continued effect on the global society we are presently apart of as “global citizens” (Weiwei, 2009).

Imbedded in the pattern, Ai Weiwei has used the literal motifs of the well known Twitter logo, locked handcuffs, and security cameras: all shining in gold. (AI, 2014) The layout focuses attention on the contained Twitter birds as well. Upon further examination each Twitter logo contains a reflection of the artist himself. The geometric relations between each literal motif bring a sense of hierarchy to the security cameras. Ai Weiwei’s logic behind the motif is representative of the localized surveillance and lack of freedom present in Chinese society due to the overarching power of the Chinese government. (AI WEIWEI, 2016) Also, Ai Weiwei uses this arrangement to tell a story and in a sense proclaims injustice similarly to styles seen in propaganda throughout Chinese history, especially those from the era of dictator Mao Zedong. (Taylor, 2008)

Size & Color

The scale of each repeat in Ai Weiwei’s Golden age wallpaper pattern is 27 x 27 inches square and the following wallpaper progression contains variations that show the increased scale bringing a sense of hierarchy to the security cameras and gold clad handcuffs as well as to the lucky cats seen in the latter.

2010

About the Artist

Artist and designer, Ai Weiwei came into light years ago as his studio and work became a threat to the Chinese Government and he was exiled for his accusations toward China and through the viral nature of his fame, was spared from the long arm of Chinese law. To put Ai Weiwei’s fear into scale, in 2012, Beijing’s Public Security Bureau had monitored the city as it was 100% covered by CCTV cameras! (excluding restrooms) and this became a trigger topic on social media in China’s authoritarian state (AI, 2016) and this included Ai Weiwei’s prison and censorship privileges.

Precedent

Dan Futterburg’s Vigilant Floral wallpaper, created four years prior to Ai Weiwei’s design, set a precedent of incorporating new and old ideas into a wallpaper form. Both wallpapers include a motif of surveillance cameras in each repeat. Additionally both artists have chosen to use classical french wallpaper styles in their pieces showing the new formality of mass surveillance in day to day life as well as highlighting the importance of acknowledging this action and its possible repercussions. Neither wallpaper is textured, yet both stole characteristics of damask styles in French royal prints. By using a French style to voice opposition to mass censorship, Ai Weiwei is uniting a rallying cry, a revolution of the people, once more to stand up for what they know is just.

Inspiration

Ai Weiwei credits lots of his voice to his understanding of the Pop Art movement and pivotal artists like Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol, and their predecessor Jasper Johns. As Ai Weiwei continues to create, his work has unfolded in a more critical light. His work as an undefined body, can be defined by the viewer and in turn will gain more traction and depth on his interpretation than any label would.

Citation:


“A work unable to make people feel uncomfortable or to feel different is not one worth creating. This is the difference between the artist and the fool.”

– Ai Weiwei