
Bella Ayer
Who’s Afraid of St. Luke
Why an Ox?

The contemporary designer of the patterns “Who’s Afraid of St Luke” and “Preaching to the Choir” is Christian Philipp Muller, a conceptual artist from Switzerland, currently practicing in Berlin. Muller partnered with Maharam in 2010 for this wallpaper project. The contemporary designer of the patterns “Who’s Afraid of St Luke” and “Preaching to the Choir” is Christian Philipp Muller, a conceptual artist from Switzerland, currently practicing in Berlin. Muller partnered with Maharam in 2010 for this wallpaper project.

The color and repeat of “Who’s Afraid of St Luke” are inspired by the Barnett Newman work “Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue.” Newman’s piece is a minimalistic piece that was showcased in the Amsterdam Museum of Modern Art before it was destroyed by another painter who hated the minimalistic approach to painting (Peeters, 2009). Christian Philipp Muller was introduced to the ox crest of St Luke while working on a commission at the Arti et Amicitiae. Newman’s piece and the history of its destruction are connected to Amsterdam, just like the ox crest of St Luke. By using the same colors and a similar name to Newman’s piece, Muller is virtually creating his own take on a minimalistic use of the crest. Compared to “Preaching to the Choir” which features ox designs from paintings not by Muller in combination with his own design, “Who’s Afraid of St Luke?” only contains motifs designed by Muller. “Who’s Afraid of St Luke?” is a modern, minimalist approach to the crest of St. Luke, which is a wonder it is not the ox and its color scheme, which was related to the name and piece created by minimalist artist Barnett Newman. The colors used in both patterns are applied using an ink-jet printing process, allowing Muller to control the color precisely. Since these patterns are digitally printed onto wallpaper, the motifs that exist are more about the narrative and history of the ox crest of St. Luke, rather than being heavily inspired by the craft. The design in itself is a craft of being able to take an old motif that has a specific hand-painted craft, and translating it into a more modern, minimalistic design, using modern technology.

Use

The current use for the patterns is a wallpaper installation created in 2010 for Maharam. Another pattern does not specifically precede these patterns, but there is plenty of work that does relate to the patterns. Historical precedents, oil paints were made using a large format ink-jet printer. This is similarly utilizing the newest technology of the time the pattern is being created.

The most important tool that is used to manipulate the materials used for the patterns is a large format ink-jet printer. The invention of digital printing allows for less waste of material at a lower cost that allows for the creation of something at many different scales. An ink-jet printer is a piece of equipment that is controlled by a computer and ejects fixed amounts of ink onto a surface, as predetermined by the computer. This tool allows the user to create a design that can be more elaborate in detail and produced more quickly than a hand drawn or painted design. It also creates endless possibilities for the user to experiment with, without having to completely re-do the design for each variation. Digital printing has allowed for cheaper, quicker, more detailed design, and can allow for mass production that hand made design cannot typically offer.

Color and Repeat

The colors used in “Who’s Afraid of St Luke?” are inspired by the Barnett Newman work “Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue.” Newman’s piece is a minimalistic piece that was showcased in the Amsterdam Museum of Modern Art before it was destroyed by another painter who hated the minimalistic approach to painting (Peeters, 2009). Christian Philipp Muller was introduced to the ox crest of St Luke while working on a commission at the Arti et Amicitiae. Newman’s piece and the history of its destruction are connected to Amsterdam, just like the ox crest of St Luke. By using the same colors and a similar name to Newman’s piece, Muller is virtually creating his own take on a minimalistic use of the crest. Compared to “Preaching to the Choir” which features ox designs from paintings not by Muller in combination with his own design, “Who’s Afraid of St Luke?” only contains motifs designed by Muller. “Who’s Afraid of St Luke?” is a modern, minimalist approach to the crest of St. Luke, which is a wonder it is not the ox and his color scheme, which was related to the name and piece created by minimalist artist Barnett Newman. The colors used in both patterns are applied using an ink-jet printing process, allowing Muller to control the color precisely. Since these patterns are digitally printed onto wallpaper, the motifs that exist are more about the narrative and history of the ox crest of St. Luke, rather than being heavily inspired by the craft. The design in itself is a craft of being able to take an old motif that has a specific hand-painted craft, and translating it into a more modern, minimalistic design, using modern technology.

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