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Pattern Research Project: An Investigation of The Pattern And Printing Process - Who's Afraid of St. Luke

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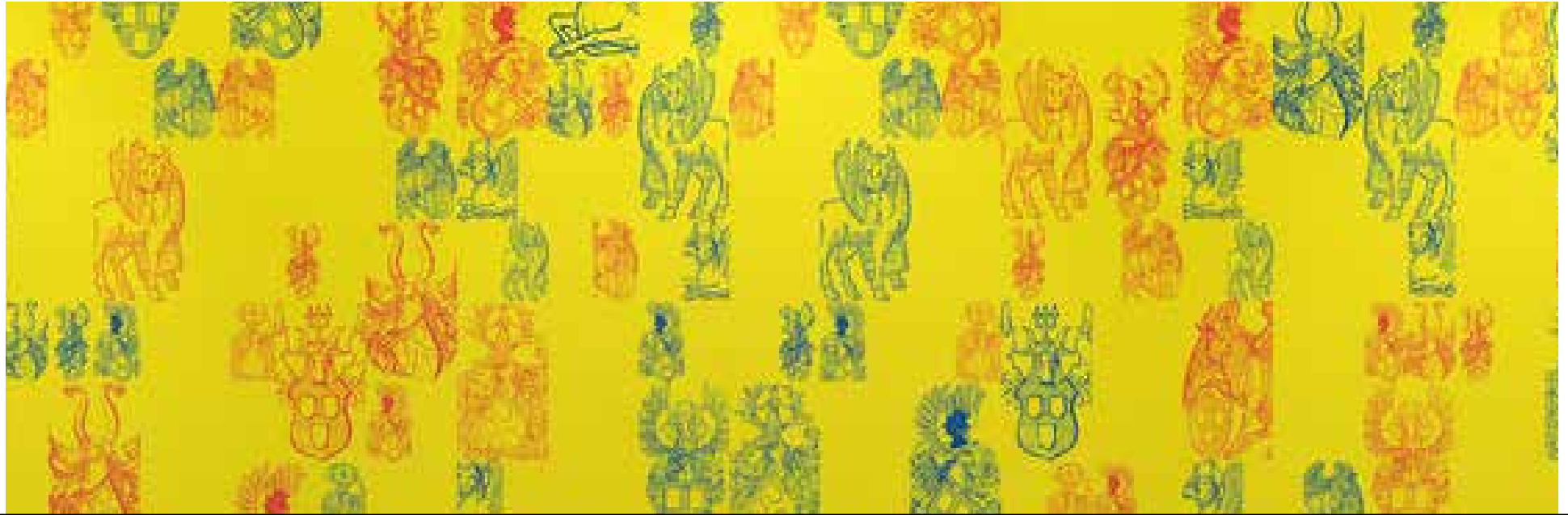
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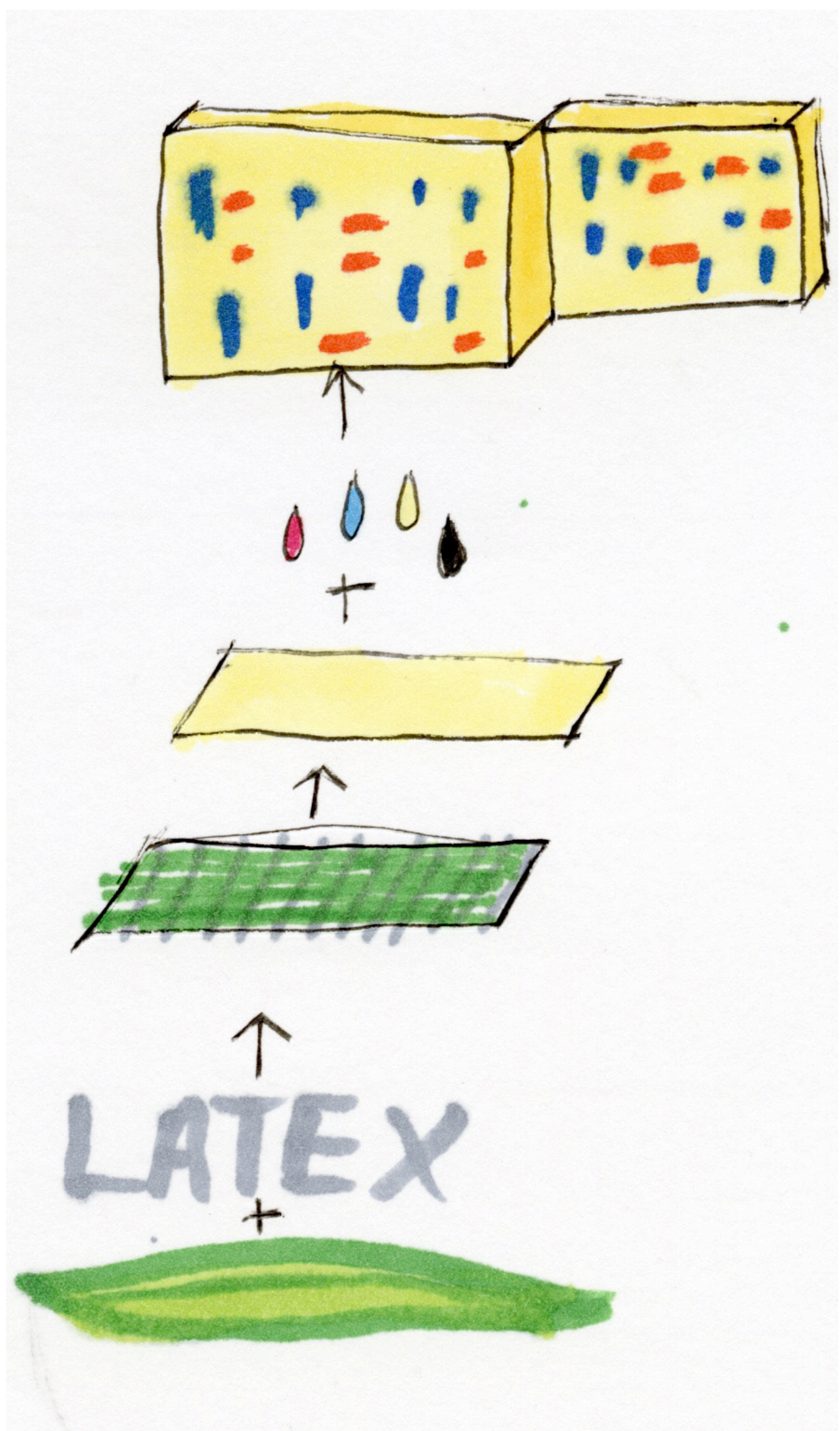
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Who's Afraid of St. Luke



Why an Ox?



Materiality of the Wallpaper



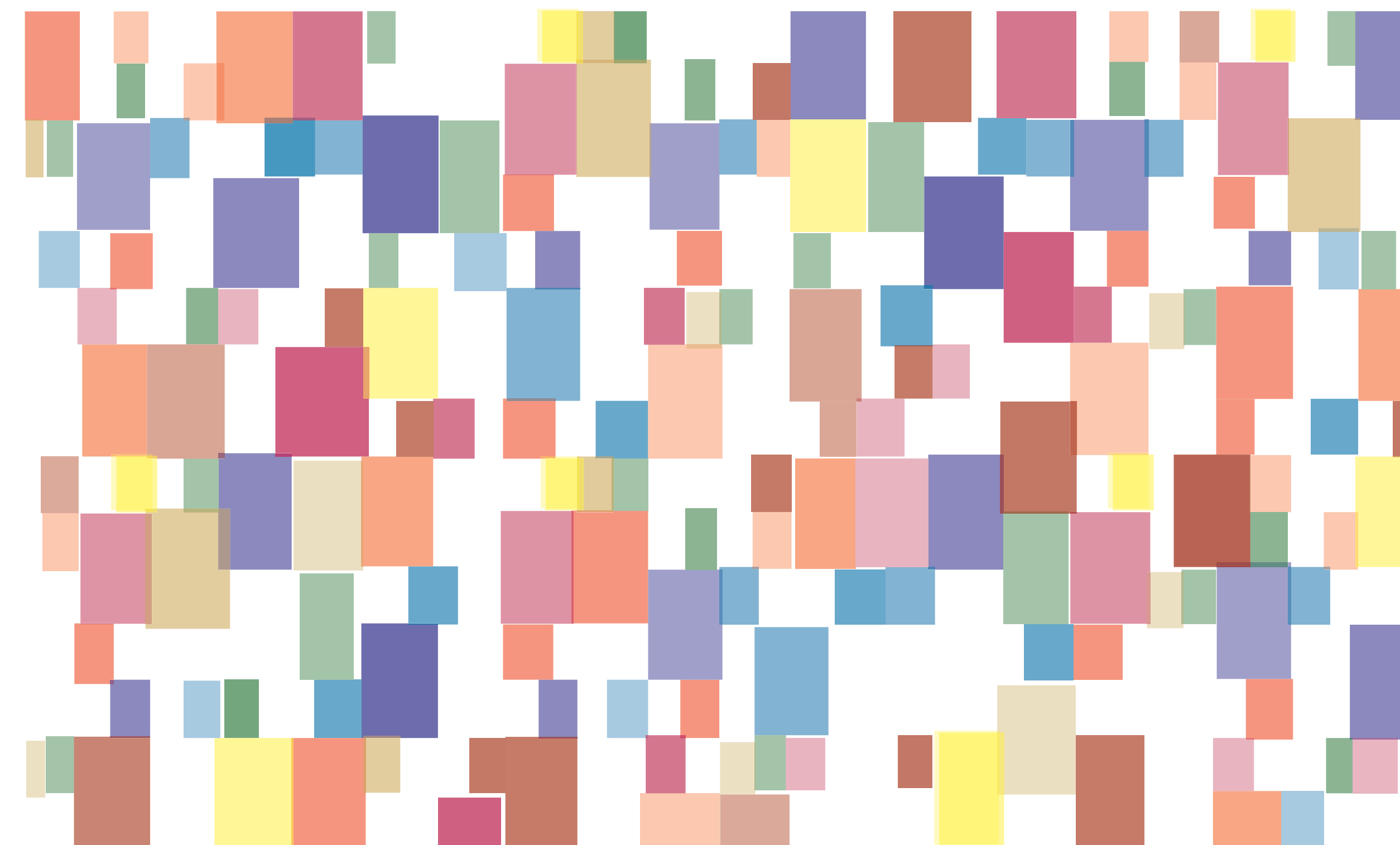
Saint Luke Painting the Madonna



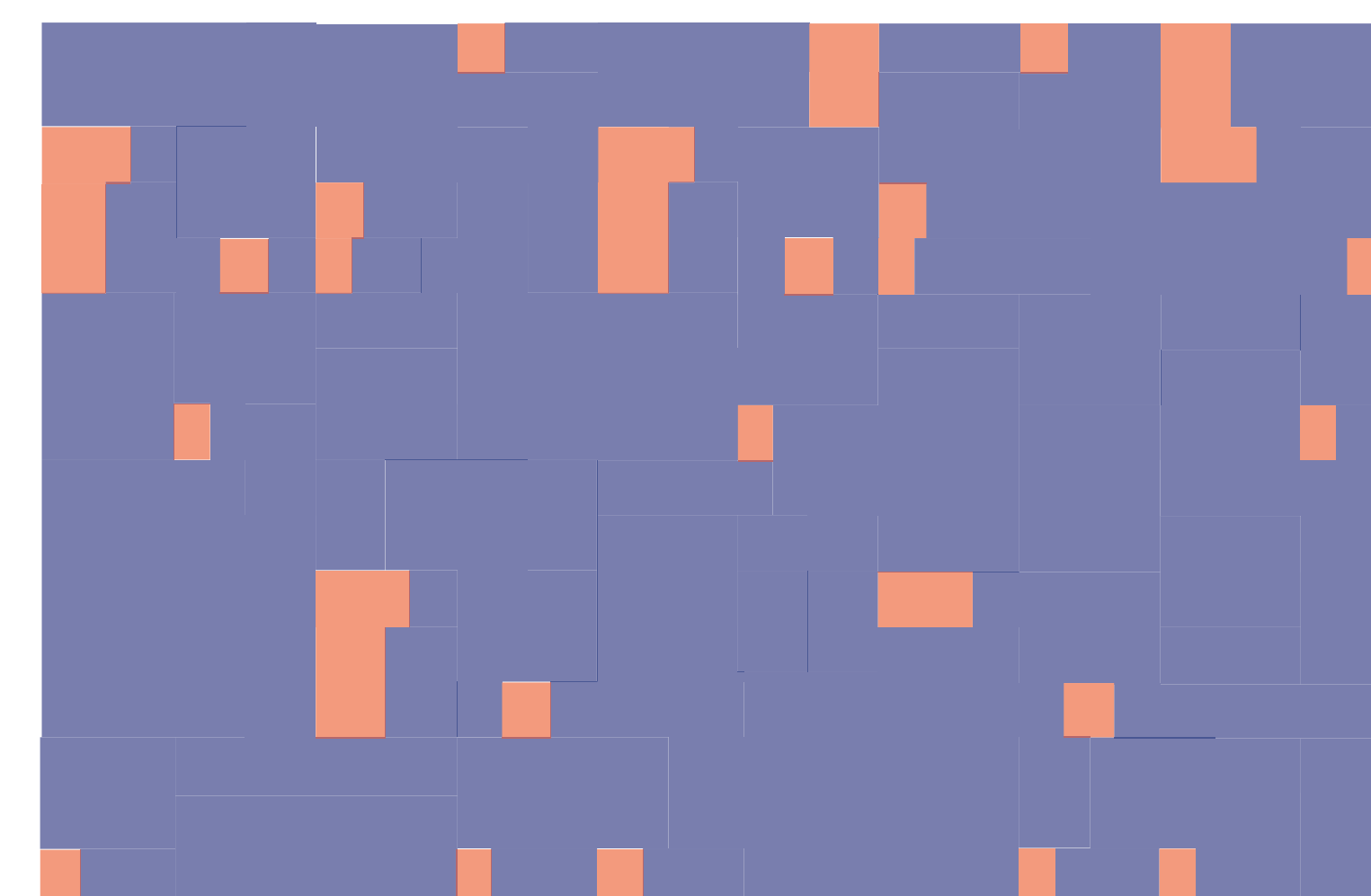
Who's Afraid of St. Luke?



Slaughtered Ox



Repeat of Who's Afraid of St. Luke?



Repeat of Preaching to the Choir



Preaching to the Choir



History

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. Both patterns are inspired by the Antwerp Painters Guild of St. Luke, which was founded in the 14th century in the Netherlands. The guild’s symbol is the ox-crest of St. Luke. The ox is a symbol of St. Luke that is seen in religious art throughout Europe, and is also seen in other artwork with speculation of other religious ties. Although there is no specific pattern that is a precedent for Muller’s patterns, there is plenty of other art containing an ox, both representing St. Luke and other religious symbolism.

These patterns are based on the Painter’s Guild of St. Luke in Antwerp, which has both religious and cultural significance. The painter’s guild is culturally significant in the Netherlands due to the diversity in craft and skill, and the amount of work produced under the guilds name. The painter’s guild of St. Luke was focused on art based specialties, but was not only focused solely on painting. Within the guild of St. Luke, there were 93 different professions, ranging from sculptors to brush makers. Considering that the guild offered that many professions, it rose to become significant in the everyday lives of the population surrounding Antwerp. The ox is seen in paintings of *The Slaughtered Ox*, which were recreated many times in the Netherlands. The ox represents a second chance, forgiveness and salvation, which are all important aspects of the writings of Luke. It would make sense that Luke is depicted with the ox or fattened cow because of the connection of symbolism of salvation that the ox has to the writings of St Luke.

The patterns are reflective of the regional identity of Antwerp, and in some ways, a national identity related to the Netherlands as a whole. The ox crest of St. Luke is important to the region of Antwerp, but the guild was also significant to surrounding areas. The motif of the ox relating to St. Luke is especially significant in the Netherlands due to a heavy importance on religion, both Catholicism and Protestantism.

Materiality

The history behind the materials of the wallpaper and the precedents are largely based on experimentation. Oil painting was developed in the Netherlands right before all of the precedent paintings were created. The precedent paintings were made using the newest technology of the time, in the same place it was developed. Painters like Giovanni and Van Eyck experimented with different mixtures and oils, until Van Eyck discovered a formulation that allowed for the driest, most vibrant results, leading to a whole new realm of painting that fresco could not create. The current patterned wallpaper is made using a blend of latex and cellulose paper, and ink that is digitally printed onto the paper using a large format ink-jet printer. This is similarly utilizing the newest technology of the time the pattern is being created.

Cellulose can be sourced from a number of different plants, from various sections of the plant, giving room for a lot of experimentation and options for use in paper. Not all papers are made of wood, and many non-wood plants are more easily obtainable, and end up being more affordable for use in paper. In certain parts of the world, using non-wood paper is much more affordable because it costs more to import wood based paper, when non-wood based paper can be cultivated in country with minimal irrigation and fertilization requirements. Non-wood plants also tend to have a shorter growth cycle than wood. One example of a commonly used non-wood based plant for paper is kenaf. The longer fibers of the kenaf plant make for a mechanical strength that allow paper made with kenaf to be suitable for printing on. Latex is a synthetic material that is used in many ways, and is used in paper as a reinforcement material. The precedents to the wallpapers are multiple oil paintings. Oil paint is traditionally made of linseed and nut oils and other mixtures that vary per brand. The specific ink used to print the wallpaper is not identified, but generally ink-jet ink consists of methyl, ethyl, ketone, and ethanol.

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 size and material that can be experimented on, 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 minimalist 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 (Wiersema, 2011, pg 1). Christian Phillip Mueller was introduced to the ox crest of St Luke while working on a curation 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, Mueller 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 Mueller in combination with his own designed ox, “Who’s Afraid of St. Luke?” only contains motifs designed by Mueller. “Who’s Afraid of St Luke?” is a modern, minimalistic approach to the ox crest of St. Luke, which is evident in his take on designing the ox’s and his color choice, which again relates back to the name and piece created by minimalist artist Barnett Newman. The colors used in both patterns are applied color, using an ink jet printing process, allowing Mueller 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 had 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, such as paintings featuring an ox with St. Luke include numerous prints, paintings, drawings and sculptures. One specific example of a painting that features St. Luke with an ox is “Saint Luke painting the Madonna” by Frans Floris. Floris was one of the most influential members of the painters guild in Antwerp, and this painting has been recreated many times since. The painting shows a man (St. Luke) in a studio setting and an ox resting under his legs. The ox has a symbol painted on its head, the coat of arms for the guild, and is also positioned in a pose that has possible significance to Aertsz. Luke is portrayed as painting the Virgin Mary, which is one of the aspects of St. Luke that makes him the person the guild is named after. St. Luke is said to have been the first person to paint the Madonna and son, which gives him, and symbols like the ox that are related to him, great significance for the painters guild. The same crest that is seen in Floris’s painting on the ox’s head is repeated throughout both patterns, but is more dominant in “Who’s Afraid of St Luke”. The crest is depicted at a large scale in this pattern compared to some of the other elements surrounding it, adding a hierarchy to the elements in the pattern. More specifically in “Preaching to the Choir”, the ox’s repeated are frequently laying down in a similar peaceful way that Floris has depicted the ox.

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