Where are you going, where have you been?

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Gdzie Idziesz, Gdzie Byłeś?
Where are you going, where have you been?

Aly Krajewski
Honors Project
Submitted to the Honors College at Bowling Green State University
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Jenn Stucker, School of Art, Graphic Design – Advisor
A Beginning
A Beginning

The genesis of this thesis topic arose from my immersion of my Polish heritage and the folk culture that comes with it. I was raised in what remains of Toledo’s Polish Village, with a former Polka Queen for a mother and a Polish folk musician for a father. I resented my heritage for a lot of my youth, hiding it away as if it were an embarrassing and ridicule-worthy blemish (kids tend to be fairly critical of what they don’t understand). In time, however, I’ve learned to embrace where I come from and have found a lot of solace – and even enjoyment – in studying my culture.

The entry point of my research came from the vibrant, rich patternwork that adorns Polish folk costuming. I have always been fascinated by the fact that so many different regions of tiny Poland could have such vast variations in folk fabric, color, and textile pattern. These regions take pride in their costume and patterned fabrics, and each textile has its own purpose and meaning. This concept extends beyond Poland’s borders and encompasses the majority of the civilized world. While the final product(s) of these patterned fabrics look extremely different from location to location, common threads (no pun intended) begin to appear when the cultures are compared to one another.
Inspiration

My original moodboard, & the abstract for my initial research:

“I want to explore the connections between cultural identity and pattern, use that exploration to generate a volume of pattern based work in multiple mediums, and interpret my findings into a final, large body of work. My hope is that these finished “things”, whatever they become, will allow the audience to consider their own cultural heritage and subsequently begin to think about the connections that their own cultural identity has to their peers.”
Research

I began my research at the broadest point – the history and movement of pattern and textile. As I learned about every continent’s usage and lineage of fabric work, one common theme kept popping up in texts: these techniques to make patterns and reasons for pattern usage were usually taken to different areas of the world through migration. The patterns might look a little different from country to country, but the general purpose and reasoning remained similar throughout. This connectivity was a huge part of the next steps of my research and overall synthesis. The project’s annotated bibliography is included in the back of this documentation.
A Beginning

Ideation

Process

Obstacles

Output

Final Thoughts

World Tokens: A Sourcebook

- Strong ritualistic & ceremonial significance
- Expression of identity and status
- Balkans
- Influence of Slaves, Thracians, Roman Bulgarians, and Greeks
- Also absorbed Ottoman & Islamic influences

Clothing Styles

- Indicated age & social status of weavers & identities
- Women got older → colors diminish
- Chemise (blouse) was embroidered at opening to protect against entry of evil spirits
- Aprons also thought to protect from evil spirits

Clothing in Society

- Rites of passage from birth to death
- Outfit = made with individual's own hands (displayed skill & maturity)

Belong to abugina age, destroys an elemental bodies & by the traumatic events of war

Palestine (only village embroidery)

- Diverse influences: major trade travel routes through Palestine
- Indigenous sources of inspiration
- Architectural ornaments
- Oriental rugs displayed in markets
- Uniforms of Ottoman/British officials
- Ornate vestments of clergy

Greece = 3 types of costume

- Naturalistic elements of Greek embroidery (influenced by Persian traditions)

Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria: town costumes made of expensive material: silk, velvet, fine linen

Macedonia: flower motif associated with historic battle of 1839 (Turks defeated Greeks)

Legend: 1000 of Janissaries grew up from the blood of slain warriors

- Headgear for each costume
- Male outfits simpler
Ideation

By this point, my thesis research led to a more funneled focus: rather than exploring all facets of ethnic patternwork and doing something with the results, I felt that I should focus on what I knew personally; and what I know best is what I come from. I am a Polish girl and I come from the north side of Toledo. I love who I am, and I knew that I could use my passion for my heritage and neighborhood to fuel a year-long thesis.

The perception of Toledo’s north end is generally negative, as is the perception of most outlying downtown areas in Toledo. Spikes in home prices and the loan shark epidemic of the 1970s forced low income families into these neighborhoods, and subsequently property values in these areas dropped. Today, these places are not taken care of by the city, and as such tend to see higher crime rates. All this considered, I felt that this thesis research could have the potential to aid in a more positive perception of my neighborhood. Creative outlets have been proven to drive traffic to less travelled areas, and public art is a benefit to both the artist and the viewer – free art for the viewer, easy display for the artist.

I knew at this point I what I wanted to communicate – so the next step was figuring out how to communicate it.
Experimentation

I worked with digital and tactile experiments throughout a 12 week period in an attempt to determine what media and output I would want the visuals to eventually be. I eventually settled on realizing that this public art piece needed to be a mural – the easiest, most accessible public art format.
The Arts Commission

By this point in my research and process, I knew that I wanted to work with my neighborhood in some collaborative gathering that would ultimately be an expression of what it meant to live within and without that community. The hard part came next – how to go about doing any of this realistically.

Soon after, I was put in contact with the wonderful staff at The Arts Commission of Greater Toledo. They were looking for someone to be a “test case” in a project that might then be implemented in multiple parts of the city; their project idea focused on introducing creative projects in the outlying downtown neighborhoods that are often seen as seedy or unsafe. It was pure luck that their project model and my thesis topic matched so perfectly.

They became a “sponsor” of sorts for the project, and assisted me in getting in touch with community leaders and artists so that I was not doing this alone – in fact, I was working with my community so that the end result was something that we could all be proud to show.

The most exciting outcome of the collaboration with TAC was their ability to obtain the ultimate venue for the mural in question – the Ohio Theater, a gem in the heart of the north end neighborhood.
Process

[Diagram with measurements and notes]
Process

If anyone ever tells you that it’s easy to make a mural, they are either delusional or a liar. From start to finish, the creation of this mural was an uphill battle, but in the best way possible. I was challenged from others and myself to consider all facets of this project, how it would resonate with the community and how it would affect the surrounding environment.

I knew that I wanted to work digitally. I love painting and tactile work; but I would have no proper time to devote to painting a mural of this scale in the short time span allotted. Using a computer allowed me a lot more time to create and ensure that the visuals were exactly what they should be.
Community Input

With the help of the Arts Commission, I was able to set up several meetings with community centers, resident artists, and student groups to talk about the community and what they wanted to see in this mural. I am not the best at public speaking, so it was incredibly helpful to have the Commission there to facilitate discussion. These discussions were also helpful in keeping me in check as to why I was doing this project in the first place. The community’s input acted as an accountability tracker for me to ensure that my rationale for what I was doing made sense.

1. What is this?
   - layers
   - culturally relevant
   - visual afterthought
   - community’s input
   - understood

2. Preliminary Sketches
   - an expression of cultural identity
   - a reason to collaborate
   - an opportunity to give back to an area that shaped who I am
   - a tribute to the neighborhood in which I was born and raised

3. Goals and Outcomes
   - a celebration of the neighborhood’s heritage throughout its long history
   - an expression of cultural identity
   - a reason to collaborate
   - an opportunity to give back to an area that shaped who I am
   - a tribute to the neighborhood in which I was born and raised

4. Layout
   - The history of the neighborhood is rich with diverse times and types of pattern, as if they had been peeled off or peeled back to reveal what’s behind it.
   - layering effect of the patterns (see fig.1) physically illustrate the peeling back of these layers, we’re taking a look at the past and seeing from which we came. The past and present are both influenced by the past, and the future is often shaped by the present. In this sense, we can work together to make that a reality – if we realize that we can do it together, we can work together to make that a reality. - Aly Krajewski

WHO ARE YOU?

a discussion about identity & community

research for an upcoming project by BGSU student (and North Toledo resident) Aly Krajewski

WHAT IS THIS?

This is an experiential wall that will be used to solicit neighborhood input to form questions revolving around you and your community. This wall will be a conversation starter and a way to encourage dialogue about identity and community. We all want to live in a place that we’re proud of, and we can work together to make that a reality – if we realize that we can do it together, we can work together to make that a reality. - Aly Krajewski

WHAT’S IT FOR?

This wall will be used to solicit neighborhood input to form questions revolving around you and your community. This wall will be a conversation starter and a way to encourage dialogue about identity and community. We all want to live in a place that we’re proud of, and we can work together to make that a reality – if we realize that we can do it together, we can work together to make that a reality. - Aly Krajewski

WHO’S MAKING IT?

This project is the senior BFA thesis of Aly Krajewski. She hails from Mettler St. in North Toledo, and she has a deep rooted curiosity towards and respect for the area she grew up in. This project is a chance for her to explore her feelings towards Toledo in a public setting, as well as talk to and interview members of the neighborhood about their feelings, too.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Well, you don’t have to necessarily! Some people don’t think about their identity too much, and that’s perfectly normal. However, with today’s tense climate in America, it’s important to open up dialogue about what it means to be an individual identity, and how that can work together to make that a reality. - Aly Krajewski

HOW DO I LEARN MORE?

You can contact Aly at AKRAJEW@bgsu.edu, or call The Arts Commission of Greater Toledo at (419) 254-2787 to learn more about this project.
Making A Mural

I had gathered all my research; I had talked to all resources; I had everything I needed to accomplish in a (long) checklist. Then the hard part came: actually making the thing. I built the mural from a shell that referenced the main street in the North end of Toledo: LaGrange St. This grid was then sectioned out into an abstract “quilt” of sorts, referencing the initial patternwork research that led me to this point. To build out the actual sections, I walked up and down the streets of my neighborhood for months, referencing architecture, nature, or people that I noticed in my travels. These visual cues became the motifs that I built out throughout the mural. While their meanings are intrinsic to my life, I feel that the visuals are abstract enough that they can be referenced by any viewer and interpreted to have meaning within their own lives.
Obstacles
Obstacles

While the overall exploration and creation of this thesis was by all accounts smooth sailing, there were definitely points of conflict or confusion (mostly self-inflicted). A project of this scale and scope required a lot of back end work, meeting with councils and students, working with resident artists, scheduling printer specs and a litany of other collaborative work. I was also working on this project while holding a job and taking classes for a full year.

I tested my own stamina and sanity at times working through the night on files and paperwork. It was a labor of love through and through; but I am looking forward to not having as many dotted lines to sign and meetings to schedule for a little while.
It was a slow start to begin visuals on the mural for many technical reasons. One of the most time consuming (and stressful) parts of the project was dealing with approval to even have the mural exist on the Ohio Theater’s facade. The building is on the national register of historic places; as such, I had to fill out form after form to ensure government approval, as well as local city paperwork for councils to approve. The silver lining to this process was fairly obvious – I learned a lot about what it takes to administratively get a project off the ground, and subsequently, I have much more respect and gratitude for those who do these projects solo.
Self-Doubt

Throughout this process, from research to output, I have constantly questioned myself and my relationship to this mural. I am already a person who tends to second guess my decisions; but the added pressure of this being a public piece that will attract attention and possibly garner criticism has emotionally crippled me at times. Do I have a right to “speak for” a community as a person who has been mostly privileged in her life? Does my opinion of this community matter? Yes, I had help from locals and I spoke to various organizations to ensure that this wasn’t just about me and my life; but I still had to sign off on the final piece that was totally visually crafted by me.

A lot of this was obvious overthinking. Someone will always have a comment about your work; I should know that by now. And I do. But part of me is actually a little thankful I was so critical on my thinking and theory at times. I forced myself to consider all of my actions and choose the best outcomes for all involved. I can only hope that my efforts will be seen as good natured, because they were certainly born from a place of love, reverence, and respect.
Nine months of research, experimentation, discussion, input, fact finding, creation, re-creation, and personal exploration culminated in the final visual pieces of this thesis.

I had initially wanted to leave the pieces untitled. I was never one for giving art pieces titles – I never thought I could distill the essence of a project into a few words. However, several outside factors influced me to really consider what I wanted this project to be named.

This whole process was a journey for me. I never expected to take on something this large or this public while in school. I have always been a critical thinker, analyzing what is within me and what is around me. As such, I wanted the title of this piece to reflect the questions I ask myself, and the questions I ask others about their place in their worlds.

I converted the English phrase, “Where are you going, where have you been?” into Polish as a nod to the neighborhood Polish Village where the mural will live. *Gdzie Idziesz, Gdzie Byles?* was the final set title.
Final Mural

The visuals were finished and approved in March of 2018. A 10 color palette was carried throughout the 50 foot mural, completely from vector drawings. Motifs from buildings along LaGrange St. can be seen all the way through.
Building Mockup

As of the publication of this documentation, the mural is in production to be printed in the next few weeks. The piece will be printed on a flexible substrate in panels and attached to the face of the building. Below is a quick mockup to show its eventual placement. Feel free to stop by the theater and check out the mural in late May!
BFA Installation

I was fortunate enough to receive a spot in the 2018 BGSU BFA exhibition in March. It was a fun challenge trying to recontextualize this project to fit into a gallery setting, as I could not display the full 50 foot mural. I chose to illustrate the map of North Toledo that the mural is gridded from so that viewers understood how this was ideated.
Takeaway Piece

The mural (obviously) can’t move; but, I wanted the viewer to have the option of interacting with a part of the mural after they had left the neighborhood. I created takeaway maps of LaGrange St. that referenced poignant places that affected my upbringing. I also challenged the viewers to walk the street and ask themselves what they see or what moves them; this way, their walk became much more experiential versus just learning about my life.
Final Thoughts

I am forever grateful for the opportunity to work on a project of this scale and magnitude. I learned a lot, I changed and I grew in the year that this project took to finish. I still don’t have concrete answers to my questions of heritage and identity; but that's okay, I think. I could keep exploring these topics for the rest of my life if I wanted to. Who we are and what we can do with that information are pretty large questions, in terms of scope. I am happy to have the ability to look inward and ask these questions, as well as recognize that my community can also benefit from exploring these questions.

There are so many people that helped this project come from just a rambling idea into the final piece that I want to thank. They are all wonderful people as well as thoughtful, inspiring mentors.

- BGSUGD Faculty and Staff
- Jenn Stucker
- Heath Diehl
- Lindsay Akens, Ryan Bunch, and the Arts Commission staff
- Student responders to the Toledo Survey
- TAC Resident Artists
- AIGA Toledo
- Senior Squad - Emily, Tyler, Justin, Kendel, Alex, Ryan, Tricia
- Baxter, Kaitlyn, Lily, Kim & Jacob

I can only hope that this project will help another young creative to express their own cultural heritage and identity questions with their communities. The better that we can all understand each other, the easier making progress moving forward becomes.

Dziekuje bardzo!

Techno Textiles focuses on up and coming textile and installation artists—primarily those who are pushing boundaries in their respective media through innovative applications of new technologies. Some of these new materials are originally intended for other professions, such as space exploration or military efforts; but these materials have been transformed by engineers, designers, architects and artists into improved (or just different) versions of objects traditionally made with plastic or natural fabric. The examples scattered throughout this book range from mildly interesting to absolutely groundbreaking. Embedding light sources into fabric; using metallic threads to weave and then burning them to create iridescent finishes; digital printing on to fabric; and thermochromic dyes and inks are just a sampling of the multitude of new ideas displayed in this book. The pieces that used digital processes to achieve intricate patternwork led me to exploring various ways I could replicate those processes for my own patterns.


This is primarily a visual diary of different ways to apply graphics to 2D and 3D objects in order to subvert both concepts of form and function. The book references around 50 different artists who are changing what it means to be a graphic designer. From fashion pieces to wall adornments; from matrushka dolls to mosaic bathrooms; if it can be re-imagined, it probably has, and it’s probably in this book. The main argument throughout clearly coaxes readers to believe that good graphics can enhance anything in life. Several artists and designers deal with patterns and groups of like images in their works. Kiyoshi Kuroda’s 3-dimensional paper bouquets challenge what dimensionality is and how the line between 2D and 3D can be explored; Dorophy Tang uses original Tang Dynasty patterns and reimagines them in upholstery pieces; and Kim Joon explores patterns of tattoos in dimensional digital prints.


Evans has an introduction in this book that explains his desire to make a reference book of patterns through the last 5 centuries. He explains that, “there has been a profound new fascination with and appreciation for all aspects of life in the past...Enormous decorative potential lies in the patterned holdings of the National Trust” (2). The book itself is a historical guide of evolving pattern work throughout Europe, Asia, and America. Fabric, textiles, wallpaper, curtains, and tile are all shown and briefly discussed throughout. It runs the gamut of what “design” is in the pattern world - from William Morris’ classic wallpapers, to 1950s children’s wallpaper. Aside from being heavily inspirational and referenced, the historical value of learning where the basic building blocks of pattern in a home-setting is important to understand if one wants to do the same thing on a slightly larger/different scale.


The volume of street art that Shepard Fairey has been prolific in the design world for over a decade. This book houses the majority of Fairey’s body of work - street murals, screenprints, and smaller framed works. Beginning with Fairey’s college projects, like “Andre the Giant Has a Posse” tagging, and running through dozens of politically charged projects, like the famous Obama “HOPE” poster series, all of his pertinent pieces are photographed and catalogued. Fairey has become a pop-culture icon himself, though he has remained true to his street-art roots. The political edge that Fairey puts on most of his pieces (specifically street murals) addresses hot button issues the country has faced for a long time: racism, sexism, political power, etc. In particular, his large-scale murals that incorporate pattern, text, and a multitude of layering appeals to my thesis topic directly.


In it’s 100-year evolution, street art has traveled to nearly every corner of the globe, evolving into a highly complex and ornate art form. Fekner’s collection of international street art focuses on the world’s most influential urban artists and artworks. The evolution of street art and graffiti within each region is also chronicled, providing essential historical context. Since the lives and works of urban artists are inextricably linked to specific streets and places, the book features specially commissioned “city artworks” that provide an intimate understanding of these metropolitan landscapes. This plays directly into my thesis, considering my interest in making murals with (and for) my neighborhood.

The Fashion Swatch Book is a referential guide to current and up-and-coming fashion designers around the world. Many designers today are on the cutting edge in terms of revolutionary patternwork, fabric creation, and form manifestation. Fogg’s catalog of samples from some of the industry giants ranges from children’s bedding to Dior couture swatches. While not necessarily related to patternwork, the book does a great job of covering contemporary and classic designs that come from all walks of life in many parts of the world. These designs more often than not are tiled into patterns for clothing, and some examples show the start-to-finish process of how one icon or motif is multiplied and becomes an entire clothing line.


The introduction to this book reads, “Female writers have always been in the vanguard of the graffiti movement, though often shunted to the sidelines by their male counterparts”; it’s a fitting introduction given the immense volume of female graffiti work packed into this relatively small book. Ganz and MacDonald explore several continents and find amazing street art created by women. Features some of the world’s most prominent artists, including Brazil’s Nina, Japan’s Sasu, Mexico’s Peste, and the Americans Lady Pink, Swoon, and Miss 17.


Embroidered Textiles is a referential and historical documentation of kinds of patterned fabrics throughout the world. It traces cultures from their genesis thousands of years ago, and explains why these cultures weave and sew what they create today. The book examines in detail the symbolism of the motifs and patterns that give life to these traditional textiles. Each textile from Sumatran sarong to Ghanaian banner to Native American pouch and Guatemalan trousers bears its own distinctive designs. A common thread through the entire book (no pun intended) is the purpose of various types of fabric weaving and embroidery; the majority of these garments are either religious, ceremonial, or burial related. Even though all of the cultures studied in this book come from radically different parts of the globe, the reasons behind their textile creations are all part of the same mindset.


This book is a factual, historical text that travels through 25,000 years of history in making fabrics and patterned textiles. In addition to process information about looms, threads, dyes, and beads, the book discusses the historical significance that these developments made in their respective times. This book surveys, from prehistory to the early twenty-first century, how textiles are made, what they are made from, how they function in society, the ways in which they are valued and given meaning, and the messages they contain. I felt it pertinent to research the history of patterned fabrics early on, so as to better understand the current state of visual patterns in the world.


Featuring textiles from the Balkans, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Central and South America, this book reveals an eclectic selection of over 150 textiles that illustrate the richness and diversity of world textiles. This book focuses on the social commentary behind various cultural patterns and textiles. One of the more interesting themes mentioned in the book is that patterns are indicators of cultural shifts and movements, both literally and metaphorically. It’s easy to trace a motif throughout history and deduce which regions of people moved across countries over time. This historical timeline of sorts is something that is immensely referential in tracing how today’s common patterns became multi-cultural symbols.


It’s no secret to pattern enthusiasts that William Morris is one of the more influential American pattern designers of the last 150 years. Rich natural colors, liquid floral patterns, light airy rooms, and simple wooden furniture are all radical principles of the Arts and Crafts movement, and are also the fundamentals of most modern decor. There has been a steep increase in the interest in Arts and Crafts works, and William Morris patterns are no exception. The book itself is marketed as a lookbook of sorts - placing classic Morris wallpapers in contemporary settings to illustrate their longevity. Chapters provide information on pattern-matching, wall and window treatments, floor coverings, tiles, and furnishings, so that a “Morris style” can be extended to whatever degree of authenticity desired. My usage of this book was purely referential/for historical purposes.