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The Ludwig Collection contains one of the world's largest selections of works from the Pattern and Decoration movement. This special combination of fine arts, cultural anthropology, and applied arts resonated with Peter and Irene Ludwig's own aesthetic conception: they had no reservations about considering diverse art forms and cultural spheres simultaneously and as integral parts of a single whole. An art that was more ethnographic than conceptual, more attentive to materials and craft than to art market strategies, stands to this day as an astounding parallel to Appropriation Art. Underrated as esoteric or kitsch, its non-mainstream mindset was quickly dismissed. It is the more gratifying, then, to see a younger generation of museum professionals now rediscovering and reinterpreting these artworks and artists against the backdrop of a globalized art development. This too is a groundbreaking move and of major interest in light of the material turn in discourse on the visual arts.

We are delighted that the exhibition is taking place within the close cooperation of two "Ludwig houses"—the Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst Aachen, and the mumok - Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien. Thus it builds on the two institutions' earlier successful cooperative ventures, for example, the HyperReal exhibition of 1998.

For their initiative in launching this project and their commitment to seeing it through to completion, the Foundation offers heartfelt thanks to the curators and directors of the two museums, and to everyone else who helped realize the exhibition. It is evident here, once again, how ecletic and open-minded an approach Irene and Peter Ludwig took to collecting the art of their era, and how keen their interest in it was. They were guided not by economic cycles and fleeting trends but by their personal expertise in art theory and art history. Despite the then predominance of PopArt in the public eye, the Ludwigs' focus when they began building their collection of American art in the late 1960s was neither one-sided, nor a direct fashion, and likewise not fixated on trophies. Until their deaths, they kept a close eye on developments in the USA by accompanying and supporting artists throughout their creative evolution. The Ludwig Foundation and the museums to which it is benefactor still do so to this day, while branching out in new directions.

We hope that the utmost attention is paid to this project. It is a splendid example of how fruitful it can be to leave well-trodden paths for less obvious ones on occasion, and to bring discoveries to light.

RegineFranzen  Chairwoman and CEO of the Peter and Irene Ludwig Foundation
The Terra Foundation for American Art is proud to partner with the Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunsts Aachen and the museum – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien to present Pattern and Decoration. Occurrence or Possibility, a fresh and serious reappraisal of an understudied artistic movement. For audiences that associate the 1970s with Minimalism and Conceptualism, this exhibition and catalogue are a surprising and overdue corrective to the art historical record.

Artists of the US Pattern and Decoration movement (1975–85), including Valerie Jardin, Joyce Kozloff, Kim MacConnel, Miriam Schapiro, and Robert Zakanitch, made a decisive shift away from Minimalism and Conceptualism, responding instead to transgressive hippie sensibilities through works that were imaginative, emotional, luscious, and bold. The spectrum of their artistic output ranged from floor mosaics, monumental textile collage, paintings, and graphic works to performances and room-sized installations. Via approximately seventy artworks—most of which come from the museums’ holdings, originally acquired by Peter and Irene Ludwig, who amassed the largest public collection of the movement in Europe—Pattern and Decoration. Occurrence or Possibility showcases works with wallpaper-like patterns, intricate ornamentation, and aggressively colorful compositions. Simultaneously optimistic and progressive, Pattern and Decoration artists questioned traditional notions of artmaking while also addressing larger socio-political themes: the position of women, Native Americans, and ethnic minorities.

Pattern and Decoration artists defied traditional art world hierarchies and created a universally understandable visual language that served as the basis for a rich intercultural dialogue. As such this comprehensive survey parallels the Terra Foundation’s global mission to foster the worldwide exploration, understanding, and enjoyment of the visual arts of the United States. It also amplifies the vision of our founder, Chicago businessman and art collector Daniel J. Terra (1911–1996), who understood that engagement with original works of art could be a transformative experience and ultimately possessed the power to both distinguish cultures and unite them.

For forty years, we have been connecting people worldwide with American art. On behalf of the Terra Foundation for American Art, I commend the Ludwig Forum and the museum on this fine exhibition and for its dedication to inspiring new perspectives and cultivating a robust cross-cultural dialogue through original works of art.

Pattern and Decoration can be described as a paradigmatic art movement of the 1970s—the hard-to-define decade of social, economic, and also cultural upheaval in which the socio-political utopias of the 1960s came up against the first signs of a burgeoning neoliberalism. As the American art historian Hal Foster declared in 1993 under the title “The Problem of Formalism,” the 1970s are a “problem” in cultural-theoretical terms (Art in America, January 1993). Among other things, Foster criticized the absence of style in that decade, and the absence of certainty, against the backdrop of the “pure” aspirations of the 1960s, first and foremost of Minimal Art. The art of the 1970s was, Foster felt, “provincialism.” Admittedly, the American Pattern and Decoration movement (1975–85) was “provincialism” on principle. Its spectrum of expression ranged from seemingly Oriental mosaics to monumental textile collages and paintings, to installations or “environments” to performances. Propelled by artists with feminist convictions—Miriam Schapiro, Joyce Kozloff, Valerie Jardin, and Robert Kushner, for example—and influenced by the hippie movement, Pattern and Decoration’s declared ambition was to bring color, formal diversity, and emotionality back into art—yet without falling prey to the pitfalls of individualistic expression. The decorative was of especial importance in this context, and this primarily implied handcrafted techniques—field that modernism as a rule considered “low.” In general produced anonymously and for specific purposes, such “accessories” were as far removed as possible from the self-sufficiently of the Western work of art. They also open up a new perspective on virtue beyond the familiar bounds of US history and geography: the Pattern and Decoration protagonists’ preoccupation with ornamental traditions brought them into contact with a broad range of cultures (Islamic, Mexican, Native American), whose rich heritage they further studied during their travels. Any proximity to folklore was not merely tolerated but consciously embraced as a counterweight to the “purism” of the Minimal Art or Concept Art of the 1960s.

Despite numerous exhibitions, including in Europe (Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 1979; Venice Biennale, 1980), and extensive media coverage throughout the early 1980s, interest in Pattern and Decoration art was for a long time largely limited to private collectors and gallery owners; museums, by contrast, were more hesitant. Associated as it was with the struggle for women’s rights, the Pattern and Decoration movement remained a specifically American phenomenon that the then predominantly male European art circles and curators tended to view with condescension. By contrast, Peter and Irene Ludwig were quick to recognize the value of this art. Through systematic purchases the collectors made Pattern and Decoration a major focus of their collection—wholly in keeping with their declared intent to comprehensively portray the artistic landscape of their era. On trips to the USA in the late 1970s they acquired around seventy pieces by Pattern and Decoration artists, the great majority of which are held today in the Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunsts Aachen while a substantial selection can be found at museum – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien. The present cooperative project Pattern and Decoration.

Andrew Bolton
Director, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunsts Aachen

Karola Kraus
General Director, museum – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien

Elizabeth Glaser
President and CEO of the Terra Foundation for American Art

Andreas Beristain
Director, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunsts Aachen
Ornament as Promise reviews those holdings of the two museums for the first time ever and is complemented, furthermore, by loaned works. This is according to the largest exhibition of the Pattern and Decoration movement to take place in the German-speaking countries since the acquisitions were first shown, in 1980, at the Neue Bauen. The Neue Bauen (Neue Galerie – Sammlung Linz, Austria) in his notorious essay Ornament and Veredelung (Ornament and Grace, 1989), the Austrian architect Ade de Luís (1970–1985) repudiated ornament as a reaction to the Vienna Secession. "The evolution of culture is synonymous with [its] removal," he wrote, while its revival "represents a crime against the national economy." The "Ornament as Promise" in our project title subverts Lout's polemic in order to highlight the Pattern and Decoration approach, while the one positive championing "high art" in unmistakably neo-gender and colonizer times. The others seek out alternatives to the values of the Western industrialized nation—different gender relations and cultural identities, and, at least, a new concept of art. With our joint exhibition of the impressive holdings of Peter and Irene Ludwig in Aachen and Vienna, almost forty years after the comprehensive collection was first unveiled, we are delighted to be able now to bring this often neglected art movement to the attention of a broader public and thus encourage debate and a critical review of it.

For the extraordinarily generous financial support of this ambitious undertaking we owe our heartfelt thanks to the Peter and Irene Ludwig Foundation, and in addition, to board of trustees, and its chairwoman and CEO Brigitte Frank. We also thank the Terra Foundation for American Art for its substantial sponsorship. We are deeply indebted to all those who kindly loaned the works in their possession to us as well as to all the artists who shared background information on the genesis of certain exhibits—to Joyce Kozloff and Valerie Jardin, above all, whose advice on the chronology and bibliography in the present volume was invaluable. We owe sincere thanks also to the authors of this publication: Michael Duncan for bringing a bridge to the present, Anne Swartz for her analysis of the relationship between Pattern and Decoration and Feminism, and Holger Otten for his reflections on the influence of Henri Matisse on the movement. For the attractive graphic design of the publication we warmly thank Yvonne Quintembach and likewise, for its faithful cooperation, the Buchhandlung Walther König. Andreas Böttner owes his special thanks to the Stiftung Kunst, Kultur und Soziales der Sparkasse West, for its generous funding, and the entire team of the Innerforest Aachen, fine and foremost to Birgit Boelke, the initiator and curator of the exhibition, and to Denise Pitzold, the curatorial assistant who was present with expertise over the production of the present volume. Heartfelt thanks also go to Julia Zeh and Jutta Götzke for their work on PA, to the conservators Heinz Hansch, Julia Rieh, and Christina Sodermann, and to Holger Otten, Petra Keller, and Karoline Schodler for the art education and outreach program. Karola Kresin is most indebted to the Dorotheum for its support. She also offers sincere thanks to her colleagues, in particular to Manuela Ammer, the curator of the exhibition; to Konstantin Horák for the exhibition production management; to Christina Hirtl and the conservation team; to the museum collection team, especially Astrid Kurz; to Katharina Mutschlechner and the PA team, to Magdalena Höbach, Anna Laichka, and Maria Koller in marketing; to Katharina Radmacher, Pia Birkowska, and Cornelia Stierwalt in sponsoring; events; to Tina Pulmann, Wolfgang Moser, Andreas Petz, and all those who supported the in-house service staff and technical teams; and, likewise, to Stefanie Fischer, Jörg Wolfert and the art education team.

In a world now characterized by even greater globalization and deeply divisive power imbalances, the issues raised by the Pattern and Decoration artists are proving once again topical and highly controversial. It is to be hoped that this exhibition and the present publication will foster lively discussion of the cultural, social, and political challenges facing our era.
Since the onset of their careers in the mid-1970s, Pattern and Decoration (P&D) artists like Valerie Jardin, Kim MacConnel, Joyce Kozloff, and Robert Kushner have created complex, visually arresting bodies of work that address cross-cultural, sociopolitical issues using decorative arts as a springboard. The "no art" guru was no longer a refuge for the "high art" critic. P&D opened up new possibilities for artists to explore the boundaries between high and low art.

**MORE THAN WHAT MEETS THE EYE:**

**THE CONTINUED RELEVANCE AND LEGACY OF PATTERN AND DECORATION**

What is pattern and decoration? It is a way of life, a way of thinking, a way of seeing the world. It is a language that speaks to us in ways that are both familiar and foreign. It is a means of expression that transcends cultural boundaries, allowing us to connect with people from all walks of life.

Pattern and decoration are not just about aesthetics, they are about culture. They are about the way we live, work, and play. They are about the way we communicate with each other. They are about the way we see the world.

Pattern and decoration are not just about the past, they are about the present and the future. They are about the way we live today and the way we will live tomorrow. They are about the way we see the world and the way we will see the world.

Pattern and decoration are not just about art, they are about life. They are about the way we live and the way we will live. They are about the way we see the world and the way we will see the world.
works actively comment on the historical derivation and cultural status of the works they appropriate.

Robert Zakanich's.calculating style is a kind of P&D launch pad, applying a virtuosic painterly style to the 1940s, wall designs as his childhood inspiration. Tapping into the life-affirming nature of the decorative impulse, his works shift the eye-driven exuberance of Abstract Expressionism into an up-beat, deftly orchestral celebration of ornament. P&D works turned "high art" to a "lowly" everyday designs with cerebral flair and erudite sophistication. In her early works, Joyce Kozloff appropriated Islamic patterns and motifs, playing off their relationship to geometric abstractions by artists like Sol LeWitt and Frank Stella. She followed the making of two 1977 artist books inspired by Islamic patterns with a twenty year preoccupation with public art based on cross-cultural decorative motifs. She recently returned to her early subject matter in two series of large-scale multi-patterned works, If I Were a Moroccan and If I Were a Venetian (2014-15). In the component elements of their patterns, these vibrant works include collided fragments of a myriad of other patterns, creating a kind of universal inventory of pattern making. The sources for other P&D artists were also from far-flung cultures: Ned Smyth used motifs from Islamic architecture; Kim MacConnel from Chinese cut-out art and lace textured; Brad Davis from Indian miniature; Thomas Langan-Schmidt from early Christian icons; and Robert Kushner from Art Deco ornaments, Japanese screens, and floral fabric designs. The appropriated designs in many P&D works offer a fresh approach to geometric abstraction, upping its arsenal of compositional gambits. The P&D artists replaced the monochrome stripes, dots, triangles, and diamonds of abstract painting with swoops depicting playas, slivers, blueberries, and Japanese landscapes. These are used for more than formal play. The content and historical derivation of these swoosh elements are integral to the works’ broader contexts and meanings. The result is a shift from formal discussion into cultural debate. Despite its attention to color, materiality, and form, P&D relies on historical and cultural references for its meaning. The use of patterns—seemingly an offshoot of geometric abstraction—becomes the vehicle for greater for P&D art to score its points. In a 1991 interview MacConnel explained, "What I like about patterns is something few artists have stumbled on and that is that patterns are not boring repetitively, it’s a rhythm, which is based on the interval between things. It’s an engaging tension, that’s what’s exciting about it." The P&D artists hijacked pattern’s association with the order of the grid and forced it to dance to a different, more unpredictable beat.

The late 1970s was a time for revisionist thinking. Other artists were then exploring similar ideas about patterning and decoration. Jasper Johns’s crosshatch paintings, Sigmar Polke’s freewheeling approach to Pop appropriations, Frank Stella’s trompe-l’œil compositional hyper-decoration, and Judy Pfaff’s collage reliefs of sprawling forms, lines, and colors were all reactions to the structures of Greenbergian modernism and stripped-down Minimalism, but the P&D artists were after something more. Inspired by their initial meetings in 1974 and 1975, they decided to make their radical cause more public, christening themselves as a movement, one that was so spurred on in group shows and a slew of critical writings. The enthusiastic endorsement by dealers-collectors like Holly Solomon gave P&D a commercial boost, leading to European exposure in important exhibitions such as DusE (Mannheimer Kunstverein, 1980) and Die Neue Wilden (Nene Galerie – Sammlung Ludwig, Aachen, 1990). Despite later fallout in the fickle contemporary art market, the core P&D participants continued to hone their particular stylistic approaches to the ideas initially discussed in those 1970s meetings. Ideas that have reigned their critical currency. The P&D approach to abstraction is of particular relevance today. Curious of anachronism and design. P&D artists never attempted to usurp or supplant modernist practices. Their cross-cultural pilfering was intended rather to bend and expand the tropes of Western art. Basic traditions were thrown out. Although the Renaissance, Western paintings have usually been presented on the wall in rectangular frames, the P&D artists quickly disregarded that rule. Kim MacConnel and Robert Kushner eliminated stretcher bars and hung their fabric paintings directly on the wall. The fan-shapes of Miriam Schapiro’s large-scale collages and shadow and cape shapes of Kushner’s paintings refer to utilitarian uses of decorative objects in other cultures. Many in the movement also sought to apply the traditional series of painting to surfaces other than stretched canvas. Kozloff’s mosaic to a floor covering that serves as a geometric abstraction (p. 101-102). Then Giannandrea’s wallpaper and muslin collage borrows the structure of stripe paintings by Barnett Newman and John McLaughlin (p. 91). Thomas Lawson Schmidt makes the filigreed ornamentation of Greek Orthodox Church in aluminum foil and plastic wrap, resulting in an altar to the gods of home-conscious (p. 119).

P&D also presents a crucial page in the history of feminist art, most evident in the works of Miriam Schapiro. Although her roots were in hard-edged abstraction, Schapiro underwent a radical change with the onset of the women’s movement in the late 1960s, merging, along with artist Judy Chicago, the influential Feminist Art Program at CalArts (California Institute of the Arts) in 1971. Later, back in New York, Schapiro became a key participant in P&D expanding the consciousness of the women’s movement and bringing her geometric paintings by employing found fabric components that were, for her symbols of "feminage"—the work of women’s work.

The semicircle of flowers in Rome (1976)—the shape of a traditional Asian painted fan—contains a strung pattern of floral and paisley swatches, an amalgamation of the geometric and the organic (pp. 136/137). The fully extended fan-shape reveals a pattern of patterns on its title, representing a cross-cultural world of decoration beyond abstract order. Schapiro’s large-scale works draw attention to the tradition of Asian painted fans, asserting an equivalency for this largely ignored decorative medium. In Bomer (1979), Schapiro presented a more literal domestication of abstraction: the house-shaped college lodges...
a textile form composed of swatches of gridied fabric (p. 134). Several of
the PAD artists challenged Western painting ideas in a different way applying
the “push-pull” fundamentals of abstract painting in subtractive works made
out of scraps of crazily patterned fabric. The arrangement of shape
components in the quilt-like collages, MacConnell’s No End of Things Never Return
(1978) and Schapiro’s Keep on Truckin’ (1978), involve themselves into
concrete “painted” scenes of variegated and swatches, overlaid with whimsical juxtapositions of plaids, flow-
ing textiles, and paisley (p. 124; p. 135).

Robert Kushner’s early attempt to invent new modes of
decorative painting resulted in wild celebratory experiments
of pattern and wacky design, multiple cartoonish slates,
cherty, and folk-on-vinyl canvases that dwell as wear-
able shades; prevailing motifs of irregular shapes, multi-
layered erotic and mythological imagery applied to found
objects. His Chime at Sea (1979) is a group of shaped, painted
Art Deco cherrons and rose roundels used like gigantic
brooches or badges to ornament gallery walls (p. 111/113).

Kushner’s refined commitment to beauty and the making
of more finely rendered images led at the end of the 1980s
to his embrace of flowers, subject matter to which he has
almost exclusively committed himself for over three decades.
Like a masterful Persian carpet or piece of patterned silk, these paintings are high and complex, offer-
ing structures that are both sensual and mind-bending. The tone, subject matter, and often asymmetrical compositions of traditional Japanese screen
painting have been major influence on these works, as well as a mimic-like
dedication to the idea of forming decoration and modernism.

The movement asks questions that threaten the sanctity and permanence
of “high art.” How is a flower painting or quilt different from an abstract
painting? Is a textile pattern any less interesting than a minimalist grid? Does a pattern have content? What is the difference between an abstract composi-
tion and a juxtaposition of textile designs? Can the seemingly random subj.
et matter of textiles convey meaning? How do textile design and room
decor differ from the practices of painting and installation? These questions are
similar to those raised by some of the most provocative and contro-
versial exhibitions of the past thirty years: Primavera in German Circassian Art at the
Museum of Modern Art (1994), Magazines of the Earth at the Centre Pompidou
(1989), The Quilt of Godlest at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2002),
The Encyclopaedia Exotic at the Venicè Biennale (2010), and Oxford and Boston
Magnet Art at the National Gallery Washington D.C. (2018). Many of
the concerns probed in the essays of PAD’s key spokespersons, Amy Goldin,
were taken up by the catalogue essays of those shows, and by Thomas McEvoy,
who was one of the voices of the 1980s instrumental in making today’s multilmual
approach to art.

Halsey Kelly has repeatedly been praised for making paintings derived
from simple geometric shapes found in the world around us. Similarly pay-
ing attention to life, the PAD artists have transformed the ornamentation of
shirts, skirts, bedrooms, and kitchens, working with an awareness of the
traditionally diminished status of decorative art. In the early 1970s Kim
MacConnell came across a batch of Chinese copybooks used in advertising
clip-art that encompassed a variety of Western objects and scenes in a generic
style, neither identifiable as Western. He appropriated images from
the copybooks—ranging from ducks and birds to yip-yop pigs and TV sets—
subject for patterns, juxtaposing them with traditional plaids, polka dots, and Deco designs, all conceived as a kind of reverse tape on the
existence of Chinoiserie. Rather than Eastern scenes being copied in Western
furniture and design (as in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europre), here
were Western tropes being propagated by Asian advertising. His historically
informed melanges are predicated on cultural mishaps and mis-registers:
the Chinese influences on French Rococo silks, the Dutch motifs in Japanese
harus, and contemporary global desires for American consumer products
and mass media. MacConnell’s Paper (1986) is a kind of jerrybuilt shirme
to honor the cultural mix (p. 138). Conceived to rehouse museums of an
experimental composition for toy organ and piano, the work is a speaker
chamber broadcasting decoration’s global refrain.

The self-consciousness of PAD works provides an intellectual base, one
inlaid with content and anthropological to the intentions of Minimalism.
MacConnell summarized his practice in a 1991 video interview: “What I was
doing was setting something up to try to take comments, political messages,
commentary, and sliding them into a decorative framework, letting the dec-
orative carry them as a vehicle much like what was proved out in the eighte-
enth century in the Rococo—of which Chinoiserie was a subset. To me, carry-
ing a message or content through a decorative vehicle was absolutely antithetical to the notion of Minimalism. Minimalism carried no message other than its formular that was clearly self-reflexive and ended up being decorative and being used decoratively. What I was interested in was when I called my work decorative was the irony. I was using a decorative vehicle while trying to carry content through the imagery—which I view as being non-decorative. And therein lies the irony.”

As an example of how his process worked, he cited the imagery of Sade (1997), a painted panel work whose
components refer to the Chinese ballet Sade, Chinoiserie silks, Chinese porcelain, Bruidt painting, Chinese finacial
money, and an ad-book depiction of decorative sheets of wheat crossed with rifles. For 1992 dual-coast gallery
shows—titled left Gehaen (literally: Yiddish for “air business,” meaning “pipe dreams”)—MacConnell reflected the
Reagan-era’s Late Cold War luxury through the use of wall hangings that in-
dicated patterns of Armic General caps and atomic symbols. Theobald (1998)
 investigación panels featuring dirst fish and a soaring butterfly from a Beaucraft
pattern with panels of looped downward spirals and a crude depiction of an
exploding electric pylon appropriated from a fireworks wrapper.

But PAD is not all fun and games. Its works can also be objects for
mediation—not unlike those by Minimalists Donald Judd, Bruce
Marden, or Agnes Martin. MacCormack’s recent paintings with compositions distilled from West African wall decorations are hard-edged geometric works in a classic abstract mode. But the master of contemplative F&D is Valerie Jardin, who in the late 1970s developed a style of slow painting dependent upon overlaid patterns derived from medieval calligraphic flourishes and Celtic designs. Jardin’s overlapping of these patterns results in designs so complex that unraveling them requires considerable intellectual rigor. Her arrays of intersecting arches, chevrons, cross-hatching, and curves create complex mandalas reflecting the twists and turns of the intellect. Contemplation of her visual puzzles provides a reward; the lines slowly resolve into ordered symmetries. Jardin’s curving contortions are blueprints of conjured labyrinths, offering arduous journeys into the satisfactions of neuronal thought.

Has the art world opened up to the issues raised by F&D? Although some craft-conscious artists such as Sheila Hicks, Yayoi Kusama, and Ken Price have recently been folded into museums and exhibitions, hierarchies are still largely in place—especially so in today’s all-dominating art market. Most museums still segregate decorative arts from paintings and sculptures. High-end contemporary art galleries merely—if ever—show fiber, textile, ceramic, or openly decorative paintings. Nevertheless, the major F&D artists have continued to explore the integration in their works of decorative themes and concepts, leading later generations of artists to expand the movement’s ideas in a number of directions.

In the past three decades, the art world has been inundated with abstract paintings, installations, and sculptures that first with the issues, traditions, and functions of the decorative arts. Contemporary artists such as Yinka Shonibare, Nick Cave, El Anatsui, Ishar Perkin, Jennifer Reinkamp, and Kay McFadden have blurred the distinction between art and design. Painters such as Philip Taaffe, Michelle Grabner, and Franz Ackermann have discovered subject matter in traditional decorative motifs and the stylizations of graphic arts. These artists’ works have helped reframe discussions about the aesthetic role of beauty and utilitarianism, the intersection of “high” and “low” cultures, the appropriation of tribal, outsider, or Third World cultural motifs, and the consideration of crafts and traditional “women’s work”—all issues invoked by the Pattern and Decoration artists in the mid-1970s.

Artists sympathetic to the ideas of F&D can be found in every art community. In Los Angeles alone, the ideas and approaches of the core F&D artists have been widely espoused in his brilliantly crafted, handmade, patterned works. Jim Isermann’s innovative treatment nearly every genre of decorative art, including weaving, stained glass, wallpaper, textiles, hooked rugs, and housewires. Isermann’s first works played off the flower-power furniture and textile decorations that he began to collect from thrift stores while a graduate student at CalArts (California Institute of the Arts) in the late 1970s. He became fascinated with the handloomed tapestry, space-age designs, and innovative scarfs of both early modernist artists such as Alexander Calder and Isamu Noguchi and high-modern designers such as George Nelson and Ray Kass. His work probes the simple geometry that has inspired both Doric columns and Las Vegas signage, the Golden Mean and the Golden Arches, Palladio and Google architecture.

Donald Judd and Victor Vasarely. With superb craftsmanship and respect for the intellectual content of certain shapes, lines, and symmetries, Isermann’s works confirm the power and the beauty of visual analysis regardless of the source.

Over the past three decades, Jean Lowe has created installations and paintings that update classic Rococo and Baroque decorative styles to comment acerbically on consumer waste and ecological devastation. Her 1995 installation, Assemblage of Men, included paper mâché Neo-classical furniture and decorations that commented on American’s odd and destructive relationship with nature, revealing the results of the impact of easy. Tapestry-like paintings depicted beautiful California mountainscapes—transformed by free-ways, a rush of freeway—ordered in rows for irrigation, rolling hills—covered with new housing projects, and an expanse of grazing cattle bred for the slaughterhouse. As Lowe’s hyper-ornamented decor made vastly evident, today nature has everywhere been altered by mankind.

In Lari Pittman’s paintings, decoration is used as a conceptual trope that represents the utopian impulse to embellish and enhance reality—and to counterbalance an object world view. With determined self-abandonment, Pittman literally decorates piles of shit with strands of pearls. A result is an almost unbelievably sophisticated “utopian eloquence,” to use Dave Hickey’s term for Pittman’s visually-based means of persuasion. The works by contemporary artists included in the exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art take the ideas of F&D into further fresh terrain. Since the 1990s, Polly Apfelbaum has created installations of elements arranged in patterned systems of color and shape, deconstructing decoration into its primal component forms. Adriana Caneva’s 2016 painting (2016) exemplifies the artist as an out-of-whack star pattern, cloaked and fore-grounded in an all-patterned world. In her abstract paintings, Christina Stenvall uses the shapes of stenciliated patterns and emblems as starting points for processes of free-flowing decomposition. Mesmerizing silicon appropriations of rug designs by Heike Weber transform traditional patterns into synthetic otherworldly realms.

In tune with the postmodern approach of F&D, British artist Dan Hays employs a complicated analytic process, appropriating in paint on canvas a digital image of a photographic landscape by an American photographer also named “Dan Hays.” The painstaking transformation of this image of a Colorado mountain—one that the painter has never seen in person—results in an oil painting that, despite its handmade, non-registrered replication of printed digital information, serves as a decorative and patterned rendering of a natural landmark.

The cultural context of decoration enable other contemporary artists to comment on social and political issues. In his photographs, Lee Wagenbach for example documents the ubiquitous practice of tattooing, emphasizing the way that patterned flesh alters traditional portraiture and the depiction of
Pattern and Decoration, or P&D, formed in the mid-1970s, included feminist artists in its ranks. As radicalized by the counterculture, P&D artists found inspiration in the tolerance, impartiality, and generosity promoted in the era. They were then fueled by the similarly emancipatory teachings and writings of art critic and painter Amy Goldin (1936–1976). She championed an outward gaze, away from the Eurocentric emphasis of American art, her idea largely defined P&D. She encouraged artists to look at pattern, ornament, decoration in its broadest applications, from architectural ornament of all time periods and nations to domestic uses like handmade crafts alongside mass-produced materials. For artists seeking alternatives to an art world dominated by a rigid, doctrinaire Greenbergian formalism, these sentiments resonated consequentially with their intellectual and political concerns.

The challenge in studying P&D and feminism is in estimating their relationship appropriately. Several of the artists relied on feminist thinking, mirroring P&D pursuits, like its embrace of provocation, pleasure, softness, decoration, craft, and equity in all its forms. The goals of the second wave of feminism, specifically, access and fitness, characterized feminist art in the P&D era. Feminist critic Lucy Lippard emphasized content as the primary component of feminist art, a blow to mid-century approval for elitist progress via formal evolution. Art historian Ruth Iskin described it as “Feminist art raises consciousness, invites dialogue, and transforms culture.” Several major P&D female players made art from personal content. It was often discussed as an avant-garde group led equally by women artists. Central to its influence was its pride, its privileging of art-making traditionally considered “women’s work,” a facet of creative production authorized by and cultivated within the feminist art movement. Amy Goldin first noted the special importance patterned had for women who may feel it as something particularly their own. But there are limitations resulting from the over-concentration.

Bagging P&D’s alignment with feminism diminishes some of its virtues. By looking at the reasons why P&D became tightly entwined with feminist art, we realize the reality will become clearer. Underlying the foundational assessments of artist interactions or recognitions of individual artists accomplishment is the tension in evaluating legitimacy. Today, feminism and feminist art exist differently in the consciousness than when P&D flowered in the period of the mid-1970s through the mid-1980s. At that time, exhibition opportunities were often for most women artists, sales were scarce, and recognition in art history unknown. Art historian Linda Nochlin’s essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” published in 1971, showed that the definition of artistic genius, limitations of art education, and institutional barriers all skewed towards masculinity or maleness, which prevented women’s access, opportunity, and advancement. Curators and collectors saw no issues with ignoring women artists. Women
arts frequently ran amok on the fraught gender politics of the era, even when men were willing to dialogue. They found that unity with other women artists confronted such disdain.

For all artists, anti-authoritarianism formed an essential component of the era. The embrace of alternatives, propelled by the Beat Generation, then the hippies, encompassed a desire to look elsewhere and onward.8 Beginning in the mid-1960s, artists raised by parents in union and labor movements applied protest techniques to their own professional and personal lives. Many young artists participated in the Civil Rights Movement and the Anti-War Movement. Students formed consciousness-raising groups, known as CR groups, to forge solidarity about their experiences.9

These coalitions became important because the slogan of the Women’s Liberation Movement was “the personal is political,” a rallying cry for many protest allies of the day,10 enabling them to overcome historic isolation and alienation from conventional domestic roles. For women artists, without occasions to exhibit or circulate their art, CR groups networks paved revolutionary in forging art world connections they would not otherwise experience. A form of CR groups also existed for the men artists, whom they explored masculinity and ways to support gender equality.11 Ideas central to P&AD spread through these consciousness-raising groups and aimed at communal paths through shared individual revelations. Reciprocal studio visits mirrored the personal group sessions.

Feminism helped make P&AD possible. But it was not a feminist movement.12 Those involved in feminist art were instrumental in creating the context for the emergence of P&D feminism provided P&D artists and thinkers with “its inclusive stance, its collaborative framework, and its recognition of women’s activities.”13 The women P&D artists came to feminist art seeking a transformation.

For these women artists, revolutionary politics and activism ideology became fundamental to their art-making. The presence of social change absorbed in their circles, making it almost an inevitability. Miriam Schapiro seemingly came to feminism on her own and then rapidly ascended to become one of the dominant figures in the feminist art movement in Los Angeles, California.14 Leading the Feminist Art Program at CalArts (California Institute of the Arts) with Judy Chicago in 1971/72, the Feminist Art Program and activities Schapiro and Chicago conducted with their students essentially mark the beginning of American feminist art. Schapiro and Chicago authorized students to make art from personal context—their lived experience and sensory encouragement by Schapiro and other women artists, Joyce Kozloff engaged as a feminist artist around the same time in Los Angeles. Participation in consciousness-raising meetings accelerated Kozloff’s radicalization.15 Subsequently, Schapiro and Kozloff relocated from California to New York and, back in New York City, the other artists participated in feminist groups. Valerie Jodon attended similar such groups. Jane Kaufman, Schapiro, Kozloff, and Jodon all variously participated in Heresies, a feminist magazine on art and politics. 

Jodon and Kozloff’s important 1977/78 “manifesto-like” article “Art: Hyberbolic Notions of Progress and Culture,” on the patriarchal heritage disparaging much female aesthetic, craft, and other analogous aesthetic practices associated with P&AD, resulted from working on Heresies. They participated in the editorial collective for “Women’s Traditional Arts: The Politics of Aesthetics,” the fourth issue of Heresies in spring of 1976.16 The same appeared in winter 1977/78, resulting from almost two years of labor Kozloff explained. “There was lots of discussion about how to put politics in our culture and in other cultures, in gender bias.”17 Both long interested in the pejorative language of criticism and art history in framing gender and decoration, among other mixed topics, Jodon, encouraged by Kozloff, suggested a piece on what she termed “outrageous and revealing” quotations from history.18 After arranging the quotations into categories with help from Goldman and Kozloff’s husband, critic Max Kozloff, Kozloff and Jodon then wrote biographies to each of the ten sections. Swiss curator Helene Schwartz commented on the artists’ “long cold look at a number of art-historical—which they call ‘art-historical’ terms” under the heading “In Opposition to the Traditional Hierarchy of Values,” in a 1977 piece about decorative art, patterning, and ornamental art, she viewed its rise in New York City as being of interest to the European art world of the moment.19 At that moment, artistic freedom lacking art world convention and authority enabled open-mindedness to technical experimentation, spatial activity the questing of social norms, and visual abundance. Patterning and the decorative offered radical directions for artists envisioning departures from the door; forlooking at art they saw in galleries. Wanting something else, they turned to new sources and options. As John Perreault wrote, patterning assumed “‘non-Minimalist, non-existential, historically conscious, sensuous, romantic, radical, decorative.’ The critical outpouring of attention actually embalmed them. The artists embraced ‘low art,’ craft, and decorative art, sentimentality, frivolous nostalgia, triviality, and ornament, among other highly-politicized and critically-excluded choices. Aesthetic pattern and surface decorations appeared in their art alongside other technical choices such as hybrid craft and text. Tactile materiality these preferences underscored their iconography, ornament, and fluidity extended acceptance to, and approval of, pleasure and beauty, decoration, ornament, and sentimentality. The accessibility of their vision, appropriation from other cultures, and maximalist sensibility are all
postmodern in character, characterized by an awakening of gender solidarity from feminism. The artists wanted to reflect on their inspiration and sources. This shift in personal and collective identity extended from content and form, materials and sources, and, eventually, scale, as many artists moved into increasingly larger forms, first in their installations, and then later in their public art commissions.

Feminist art was a movement that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was characterized by a rejection of traditional gender roles and a focus on issues such as sexism, gender inequality, and the struggle for women's rights. Artists such as Judy Chicago, Mary Kelly, and Barbara Kruger were at the forefront of this movement, using their art to challenge prevailing social norms and to advocate for women's rights.

The concept of feminism was much different than it seemed in the past. While many artists embraced the idea of feminism in their work, like Roberta Zakhari, as part of a much larger conversation about feminism, it was not uncommon for her work to be staged in a variety of settings. Some of her pieces were displayed in public spaces, while others were exhibited in galleries and museums.

Zakhari's artwork was a powerful tool for feminist activism. Her installations challenged traditional gender roles and highlighted the struggles of women in society. Her work often included政治 statements and images of female figures, which were juxtaposed with images of powerful women from history and mythology.

Overall, Zakhari's work was a significant contribution to the feminist art movement. Through her art, she helped to raise awareness about the issues faced by women and to promote a more equitable and just society. Her legacy lives on, inspiring new generations of artists to continue the fight for gender equality.
format and “broke loose from formalism.” This painting was typical of the way he abandoned the bravura of modernism. Instead, he embraced sweetness, gentility, beauty, using a manufactured version of an Ambrosian rug such as those found in his New Jersey childhood home of the 1940s. The local, the domestic and flowers factored significantly as visual complexities he pored for effect. As an example, Zakiiotti remembered the variously compelling linocut patterns of his childhood kitchen and wanted to bring them into the art-world context. Once abstraction and representation no longer constrained his attention, he explored openly. Retaining the antagonism to the domestic seemingly bred out of other artists, perhaps out of all men in American culture, Zakiiotti wanted to navigate to an art of caring, of faith. Such nurture comes directly from a different idea about masculinity, one only accessible to a woman with a feminist lexicon. For him, the decorated, ornamented home was a touchstone. Repeat fabric patterns and motifs, soft colors, gentle tones, ethereal forms, ephemeral shapes emerged in his development as an artist.

Robert Kushner and Kim MacConnel also experienced the thrilling impact of the countercultural moment and the expansion it allowed them. The idea of art as a way to play with taboo symbols appealed to them. As Goldin’s students, they internalized her ideas. Both sought ways to change art as they knew it. Curator Michael Armitage remarked that MacConnel’s “use of domestic techniques and materials traditional associated with the feminine gender refines the stereotyping of art into ‘typical’ male and female images.” For these artists, their main interests emerged from abandoning Western approaches and structures. Interested in kernels and seeds, which they had studied, they both used fabric and decorated it.

In 1978, MacConnel incorporated the traditional American domestic form of the apron and fastened it with global imagery. Where the apron, like the kimono, had served as a screen for Schoo to experience personal content, femininity, and to connect her to the legacy and traditions of all named and anonymous women artists, MacConnel regarded them as broadly as signifiers of domesticity, which he understood as feminine (then, and now). He arranged flopped Christmas aprons and bamboo imagery to make what he called “kites.” As part of his interest in paraching cultural imagery, the arranged aprons with their clearly American patterns newly resembled the Chinese kite once hung on the bamboo poles. They have a totemic quality while their eschatological function also recalls the divination of the dragon’s tail in a Chinese kite. Combining domesticity appropriation, and radical juxtapositions distanced his art from the severe geometry of Minimalism by foregrounding the decorative.

Kushner took this play further, engaging the flanboyant. He created provocative, altaring fashion shows, playing dandyism and defying what critic Alexandra Anderson-Spyry termed the world’s “hypermasculinity.” In their 1991 article on Kushner’s fashion-based art, curator Catherine Morris and art historian Darley Meyers-Kingley quoted the artist talking about herling needlecrafts from her grandmother: Interestingly, she did not speak of his engaging passion for crocheting as feminine, though as Morris and Meyers-Kingley note: “For Kushner, the activity was not meant to comment directly on feminist issues (though its undesirability ties to them), but was understood as a subversive activity when seen in relation to the status quo behavior of powerful men, particularly men in the art world, such as the minimal sculptors and earth artists. As Kushner has stated, while many of my colleagues (in the art world) moved in the direction of art and sex, I plunged into my memories of childhood treasures, and these became the materials of my costumes.”

They comment on how he had been asked to stop crocheting at men’s consciousness-raising meetings he attended because it was too extreme in its difference. From such personal experiences, he found ways to shift his art.

Between 1971 and 1978, Kushner had several performance-based fashion exhibitions of ephemeral costumes. The performance-based art made since his student days in California became the direct precursors to his P&O paintings. Kushner continued these performances after his move to New York City in autumn of 1972, but it would be the three-month journey to Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan in the spring of 1974 with Amy Goldin that proved particularly generative. Influenced by the chador, the full-length Muslim women wore in Western Asia, Kushner began making decorated swathing costumes, such as Gown of 1975, for these performance spectacles. These costumes were inspired by veils; they functioned as paintings configured as playful, temporarily wearable garments.

As the exhibitions developed, the costumes became enduring, featuring their transformation into paintings on fabric, which often would be pinned to the wall where the performers had worn them so they could have a second life. Understating these displays was a generation of gender non-conformity. Certainly as critics Tony Godfrey notes, his art formed a countercultural to the “patriarchal aesthetics of modern art.” Beauty for him is Upham— a pathway to visual freedom and gratification.

Though not all P&O artists were feminist, several were. Feminist art in the seventies spurred exclusion, propagated envy. The appropriation the P&O artists explored existed within a context where genderless essentialism informed art. Parochial celebration of patterning and decorativeness informed by the domestic and non-Western imagery and forms was a revelation for the art world. Ultimately, associating women, employing erotic complex imagery built from world imagery, and employing gesture prompted a critical backlash. A considerable amount of P&O art went to Europe and these artists, many young
new to their careers, suddenly found themselves purifying their image of patterning and the decorative in an American art world no longer disposed to frivolity, joy, and flourish. Though group exhibitions diminished and decoration became something the artists saw suppressed, they each continued thriving in their respective solo careers. F&D experienced a backlash in the mid 1980s concurrently with an increasingly reductive view of feministic art. Now, decades later, F&D offer tantalizing options for connecting to the broader possibilities of visual complexity. The intellectual questions raised remain as thought-provoking now as when initially raised because of the benefits in looking at decoration, patterning, and ornament about art centered on beauty, drawing from global and historical sources. Many of these issues with which the artists engaged remain formidable and forbidden.
Matisse's famous armchair is the most frequently cited of his kind yet probably also the most threadbare, because to this day it is most often depicted of modernist painting according to which the meaning of an image unfolds through the presence of colors and forms. Thus, on the occasion of the major Matisse retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1991/92, Robert Rosenblum enthused: "On the face of it, and literally on the surface of it, the Matisse retrospective made me discover the sheer endless joy of looking at paintings, inawakening the mysterious pleasures we all remember from kindergarten days when lines and colors had an engrossing impact, fusing the visual and the visceral—the experience, in other words, which made art like art on the first place.

Modernism countered the representative tableau by launching a more original pictorial idiom, which proved to have a dynamic, intransitive, “visual and visceral” impact—such as reveals itself to the innocent eye of a child. Apart from its actuality, which is to say its physical existence and sensory effects, it had no connection with the world. This connection would be rediscovered only in the fusion of modernist painting and architecture accomplished in the new world, the USA, after the end of the Second World War. As Sebastian Schildberger explains up in, "From the ‘closing window’ of easel painting was excised the ‘decorative’ ritual on which Clement Greenberg had set his sights at the time as a model for the longed-for reintegration of the avant-garde in an epochal high culture of Modernism that would involve the USA. It sounds like Greenberg may have been thinking of the transition from Matisse’s Le Danse (1909/10) to that ‘dance’ of 1938/39 integrated by the artist as a ritual—hence as an architectural feature—of the American collector Albert Barnes. From there, however, it was but a short step to an art which announced the figure completely, as its most consequential, the abstract monochrome or a style of painting which abandoned its support completely: the Minimalist object—which, while not what Greenberg had in mind, is yet consistent with the logic of that Modernism in whose ‘constructive error of figure/ground constellation’ Matisse remained entranced. In Greenberg’s view, the (photo-)abstraction was Matisse’s nonessential paradigm of the motif; the Modernists blamed from the École de Paris..."
to the New York School: "The abstraction of the cubists and Matisses flatness are the symptoms of a new vision of art [...]."[19] This touches on a Modernist perspective which wielded considerable influence on modern painting and the reception thereof—perhaps of traditional American art history of the particular period (not consider Matisses impact on abstract expressionism alone), and it hence simultaneously highlights a blind spot—namely that Modernism blanked out or marginalized the role of "visionary figures in a painting as well as their social, political, and cultural contexts or, to be more precise, their "frames."[12]

At this point one could begin to speak of Pattern and Decoration, and yet the proponents of the movement—astonishing as it is due to the fact that the methods of "Pattern and Decoration," Matisses influence on the American art establishment. Accordingly, this present essay is intended to regard rather as a premise fortd the critic's review of Pattern and Decoration's position in relation to Matisses. But first, let us turn to Matsisses and the reception of his work in the USA. Hardly any European artists, and certainly no women among them, had as high a status as Matsisses, whose work had been collected and known in the USA since 1908. A number of American artists had been studied under Matsisses, the painter Max Weber, for instance, who had a certain standing in Modernist circles. More influential was Hans Hofmann, who had frequented the Cafe du Dome in Paris until his emigration in 1931, and who was New York's artistic director, for example, Lee Krasner, the later wife of Jackson Pollock. But the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art, Alfred H. Barr Jr., and the art critic Clement Greenberg likewise did a great deal—in tandem, in part to promote Matsisses influence on the American art history of Modernism, particularly with regard to Abstract Expressionism. Much has been said and written about the significance of American Modernism. Since more extensive analysis is impossible here, suffice it to say that Greenbergs use of "flatness"—a term of pivotal importance to "the develop of painting in all likely to derive from Hofmanns teaching of Matisses, especially since Greenberg coinvented the height and width, and thickness and space—or Conceptualism. Its worth noting, modestly, that the P&D proponents themselves held widely divergent opinions on what exactly "conceptualism" should be taken to mean. little else."[17] Greenberg took the term "flattening" to mean that Modernist painting, unlike the illusionism of the past, reflected itself on its own materiality: "Because flatness was the only condition painting shared with no other art. Modernist painting oriented itself to flattened or to nothing at all."

It therefore comes as no surprise that the American critic Thomas B. Hess reached the following conclusion in his review of the Matsisses retrospective of 1970 at the Grand Palais in Paris: "Today we see Matsisses paintings with eyes trained by Newman and Rothko, Pollock and de Kooning, Still and Gottlieb, Noland, Stella, Poons and all the other American artists who have chosen the artistic adventure first illustrated by the king of the Ab..."[18] Around this time, Greenberg's concept of a development of Modernism collapsed. in a sense, especially owing to the success of Pop Art. And not only did Pop Art then spring up on the public eye but so did the Minimalist, Post-Modernist, Conceptual, Earth, Video, and Performance genres, to name but a few in parallel, intertwined in Matsisses "peak" in the USA—though this was a mere foretaste of what was to come. In 1975 The Museum of Modern Art purchased Matisses monumental late work The Springing Girl (1952), it was rapidly put on show and became a firm favorite with the public. That same year, the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris launched an internationally acclaimed exhibition of Matsisses drawings and sculptures; and the magazine Art in America paid tribute to the artist with its June-July issue, in which a broad variety of American contemporary artists expressed their admiration for the French master. Donald Judd honored Matsisses at the behest of the 1980 art critic. For example, Frank Stell expressed the view that "Matsisses teaches the highest level of art can teach..."[19] And Tony Wiliams simply added not with an air of wanting: "I want to be Matsisses."[20] The issue also featured art historian and critic Amy Golins article on Matsisses later cutouts.[21] Golins, another of those who had studied from 1950 to 1952 under Hans Hofmann, was by this time one of the leading advocates of Pattern and Decoration. And it seems this was a lucky break for the "P&D movement," as it was called for short—for the apparent creative kiss with Matsisses further fueled its growing popularity in the mid 1970s. Golins reflection on Matsisses and those of a number of P&D advocates complemented one another admirably, one might say, since in both cases the term decoration primarily pertains to "beauty," "pleasure," and also, ultimately, to "flattening"—hence, the very term "beauty," "pleasure," and also, ultimately to "flattening"—hence, the very term Greenberg had made so famous yet which the Patterns and Decoration art term has been read as to the point of being "purity."[22] They are more art in modernism—for the retrieval of two-dimensional painting in all likely to derive from Hofmanns teaching of Matisses, especially since Greenberg coinvented the height and width, and thickness and space—or Conceptualism. Its worth noting, modestly, that the P&D proponents themselves held widely divergent opinions on what exactly "conceptualism" should be taken to mean. She instead focused on the idea that Matsisses approach to abstraction was grounded in a program of "fattening"—a term of pivotal importance to the development of painting in all likely to derive from Hofmanns teaching of Matisses, especially since Greenberg coinvented the height and width, and thickness and space—or Conceptualism. Its worth noting, modestly, that the P&D proponents themselves held widely divergent opinions on what exactly "conceptualism" should be taken to mean. [27]
The rejection of “formalism,” however, especially in Minimalist and Conceptualist varieties, was unanimously approved. Statement to this effect can be found in pretty much every publication on Pattern and Decoration. By way of example, several quotes by John Perreault should be cited, who curated the comprehensive P&D exhibition of 1977 at The Contemproary Art Palace in Brussels, which later became the Brussels Arts in Brussels; the latter, the European Union’s entry in a major institution. “It is to be hoped that the next new ideas of art will come from the field of pattern,” wrote Perreault. “It is to be hoped that the next new ideas of art will come from the field of pattern.”

Robert Kushner, whose work, along with that of other artists, was on view, wrote in his essay for the catalogue: “At the time of the Brussels exhibition, the idea of using pattern in art was already well established. It was widely recognized that pattern could be a powerful tool in creating a visually stimulating environment. However, it was also clear that pattern had to be used in a way that was distinct from traditional uses of pattern. This was the case for the artists whose work was included in the exhibition. They used pattern in a way that was both new and exciting. This was a time when art was shifting away from formalism and towards a more conceptual approach. Pattern was seen as a means of exploring ideas and concepts, rather than being used as a decorative element.”

The Brussels exhibition was followed by a series of exhibitions and publications on the subject of Pattern and Decoration. One of the most significant was the exhibition “Pattern and Decoration in American Art” at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1978. This exhibition was organized by George Plank and included works by artists such as Robert Kushner, Pat Steir, and Wayne Thiebaud. The catalogue for the exhibition included essays by several prominent art historians, including Robert Kushner, who wrote an essay on the subject of Pattern and Decoration.

Robert Kushner, in his essay for the catalogue, wrote: “Pattern and Decoration in Art is a new art form that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is a form of art that is both new and exciting. It is a form of art that uses pattern as a means of exploring ideas and concepts. Pattern and Decoration is a form of art that is both conceptual and decorative. It is a form of art that is both new and exciting.”

In conclusion, Pattern and Decoration is a form of art that is both new and exciting. It is a form of art that uses pattern as a means of exploring ideas and concepts. Pattern and Decoration is a form of art that is both conceptual and decorative. It is a form of art that is both new and exciting.
to examine the approach to architecture and public space pursued by Joyce Kozloff and Valerie Jaudon, who—like Miriam Schapiro, their elder by one generation—viewed their work programmatically in light of a sociopolitical dimension of the term decoration which far exceeded Matisse's understanding of the latter.

However, these aspects, which pertain to the “bloody spot” of “orthodox Modernism,” I spoke of earlier, have been little discussed in connection with Pattern and Decoration and so must stand at this point merely as suppositions, since they merit extensive analysis in their own right.

One paradigm must be mentioned however: Kim MacConnel's 1973 exhibition of 1970s furniture that he himself had “decorated” and which visitors could take a rest. The furniture can be read as a means to resolve the distinction between “high” and “low” art and as a parody or, more precisely, an ironic affirmation of the “armchair” term threadbare by the formalist, that famous metaphor of Henri Matisse.66
Pattern, for Americans, has never even been an aesthetic issue. Our artistic self-consciousness developed out of painting, and, perhaps, architecture. Associated with decoration and the machine, pattern was always outside the area of legitimate artistic concern. The stylistic revisions of the last decade or so—remember the defense of horizons—might have been expected to alter that situation. Yet to artists now working with pattern (especially women, who may feel it as something particularly their own), it still seems to imply a lack of linearity and freedom, and they are often defensive about it. Pattern carries the aura of craft and connoisseurship, although many individual aspects of pattern—to allude to the number, rationality, mechanical production and depersonalized imagery—have been acclaimed for art. Pattern itself remains unanalyzed, its salient characteristics unknown. Unlike painting, pattern has no equivalent, and it has been underground so long that thinking about it reveals surprising complexities. I’ll try to start at the beginning, although that is already a lie. There is no beginning; middle or end to pattern. Its boundaries are vague, or, at least, I frankly don’t understand them. Perhaps I should just say that what follows seems to me to be generally true.

It is ordinarily supposed that pattern is the repetition of a motif; it isn’t. The crucial determinant of pattern is the constancy of the interval between motifs, a fact easily demonstrated by anyone with access to a typewriter. If you preserve the spacing between sequences of letters it doesn’t matter what letters or marks you use, a pattern will appear. On the other hand, a single motif, like a rubber stamp, irregularly applied to a sheet of paper does not yield any sort of pattern at all.

Two warnings are in order. First, we must distinguish between the creation of pattern and illusions of it. Early Masters, like Le Douanier Rousseau (The Bons, Harmony in Blue), refer to patterned cloth as a pictorial element, but the motif is so large, interrupted, and dispersed that pattern does not actually appear. At the beginning, Matisse’s painted pattern no more is a pattern than the painted lemon is a lemon. And when he does begin to use true pattern, he is very cautious. He chooses small, simple linear motifs: stripes, diamonds, squares.

Second, a pattern only comes into phenomenal existence when there are enough repetitions of the space interval to establish it clearly as a unit. On a typewriter, four or five rows are needed if you are using the short side of the page and varying the “motif” (which, of course, engenders small-scale differences in shape of the intervals).

To clinch the demonstration, introduce a new sequence of spacing in the next four lines. The result will be illegible as two patterns, regardless, again, of the marks you actually made.

The naive assumption that pattern is the repetition of a motif is fatal to any sophisticated understanding of use of motif. That assumption ignores the possibilities of pattern because, in effect, it allows the pattern maker to vary only the way in which his motif is stated. This does not necessarily vary the pattern itself. The truth of that statement depends on what you decide to call “the pattern itself.” It seems natural to say that one pattern can have variant forms or that you can perceive a whole range of changes as presenting alternative forms of a single pattern.

Taking interval as a constant, then, a single pattern can be maintained through changes in motif, through changes in color and through changes in density (the scale of the interval relative to the size of the patterned area). Of course the “feel” of the pattern will be different as it passes through those changes, but the juxtapositions of variants will usually, under scrutiny, support a sense of family resemblance. The mutations will

**Patterns, Grids, and Painting**

Avis Goldin
Ornamental base with hieroglyphs and vine branches, from the tomb (Ri-Herit), 26th dynasty. 26 cm. (10 in.), 162 p., Museum of the Royal Library. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

between a perceptual form and its extra-perceptual meaning is normally fragile, and requires support from the context in which it occurs. More repetition is dangerous enough—repeat any word ten times in a row and it becomes pure sound. Pattern is lethal and can kill the power of any image. Simply repeating the interval between pictorial elements makes forms lose their individual meaning. They become motifs whose similarity overrides any differences among them. It is here, in the difference between motif and subject, that the true “integrity” and “autonomy” of pattern lies. Pattern trivializes and degrades its themes by turning them into aesthetic details within a larger, more inclusive form.

In effect, patterned repetition in space has the same consequences as the repetition of symbols over a long period of time. To see the same image over and over again in a variety of situations desanges the control of context and erodes meaning. Without structural control, religious symbols readily become lucky emblems and ultimately “mere” decorative motifs, as we can see from the face of many pagan and Buddhist themes. From a strictly artistic point of view, the absence of referential meaning is not necessarily a loss. The artistic impulse is proactive—it does not necessarily take a respectable idea to turn an artist on. Like the gambler, he will go on any occasion.

Consider Wad'ah's early use of repeated images. They presented the paradox of an emotionally loaded subject (the car wreck, the scene, the electric chair) which flickered between carrying and failing to carry its expected emotional response. That peripatetic effect was attributed to Wad'ah's shockily color, the lowness of handling, or the association to mass media. Yet perhaps the crucial step was just the regular repetition of the motif, which suddenly made it possible to see the picture as a pattern and its subject as a motif. Certainly, similar themes and treatments never had the same flattened, trivialized effect in Rasen's hands. They remained stubbornly, if vaguely, poetic—his sensibility is implicitly intimate and nuanced. When Wad'ah began to use sentimental images, flowers, cows, portrait heads, the same pattern format sabotaged the sweetness as effectively as it had previously undercut the horror.

I think it is impossible to respond unambiguously because each evokes a different mode of perception and a different kind of aesthetic experience. Each evokes a specific kind of affection and particular set of expectations: The two are psychologically incomparable and the kinds structurally distinct. The fundamental structure of pattern is the grid, any pattern can be reduced to some grid. I suggest that grids and compositions are cues to different mobilizations of self. It may seem excessively magical to claim that in choosing one type of organization or another, the artist establishes a fundamental relationship to the viewer that no later artistic decision can alter. Yet we all learn to respect and set aside the cues for various sorts of attending. This is true even though we may not be able to say exactly what those cues are. Compositions breed involvement, intimacy and references to self. Grids generate a greater emotional distance—a sense of the presence of objective, pervasive law. Composition arises when an artist wishes to share something with the spectator; in order to impress it on him, to capture his attention, to become as close as possible to him. The artist must maintain his forms and forms elements together without losing any essential elements. Any composition has focal areas, and locally intensifies and subordinates control over the spectator's attention as he moves over the work. The most important, the sequence and tempo are established by exploiting the similarity and contrast of forms.
However complex the execution of a composition may be, seeing a composition is easy. It is a deliberately engineered reprise of ordinary-looking. Whenever we face some corner of the world, we are likely to find some parts of the display more interesting than others, to move our attention there and to check out the rest as subordinate settings. The hierarchic, relational aspects of pictorial composition simply replace and harden the usual process of floor and ceiling accentuations.

Scanning is a much more specialized, consciousness-oriented kind of looking. It contains an element of search, an unsatisfied search at that, since it implies a restless refusal to focus and attempt to grasp the nature of the whole. The characteristic response to patterns and grids is mood scanning.

Why should an organization that is instantly recognized as regulated and lawful evoke such an uneasy response? I think it is because the linear grid, whether it is expressed or implied (as it often is), is fragmenting. It has no organic shape, no body or geography of its own. It is a featureless field of equally stressed marks, a sea of notation that demands justification as a form before it can be intervened in detail. The first requirement in any unforesighted situation is to locate the boundaries of the field, since the boundaries alone can provide orientation. Thus any pattern or grid is initially scanned in order to establish its relationship to the physical world. It demands location as a physical unit. Does it also provoke justification in terms of a larger situation? If so, that “requirement” initiates the philosophical aspect of pattern.

Unless scanning elements are stressed, grids are centrifugal. The possibility of unscanned grid arises because the regular juxtaposition of repeated units itself establishes a unitary area or field. Thus, exhibitions of serial art and Conceptual Art (both of which are normally known to equalize the importance of their component parts) very often yield visual, unscanned grids. Sometimes the arrangement is more than just practical. In Robert Rauschenberg’s work, for example, the grid is explicitly used to his slight, static fields. They require such a close focus that the grid extends beyond the range of peripheral image and thus functions as the context of the viewer and his visual field simultaneously—a zone of silence. In Helen Frankenthaler’s most recent show of ceramic tiles at the Guggenheim, on the other hand, the presence of the grid was baffling. Were the tiles supposed to be tiny pictures of a participatory unit of a complex whole? In the immensity of the Guggenheim’s dynamic space, the question seemed less urgent.

Grids are hierarchical and relational, and that is not because relationships among its components of the grid are necessarily equally stressed. A grid is non-relational because internal spatial relations are marked out as irreversible and therefore imperceptible and disregarded. Its shapes are thus not shapes at all, but authoritative markers, indicating the space and rhythm by which we are to perceive the whole.

By denying informational value to shape, the normal center of form and content, the grid offers nothing more (or less) than a seamless experience of measured space, the experience of visual order itself. A grid is an isolated, specified, uncolonized field, as close as we can come to perceiving pure being, free from any added rationale or emotional activity.

This being so, it is not surprising that artists who begin with the grid usually proceed to destroy it. The step most commonly taken is the reintroduction of shape, either by breaking into the regularity of the field (turning the grid itself into a stressed shape) or by interrupting the unbroken equality of its internal relations. Turning the interval into a structural module naturally entails a return to shape and composition. The toughness of patterns, in which the grid is normally unstated, is utterly revered by actual grids, which are extremely vulnerable to inflection. They easily lose their unity, nonmaterial character and become a kind of composite—usually called constructions, lest the module escape your notice. Like all other constructions, grid-derived works are more or less tidy, more or less arbitrary. Subjected to the hazards of illusory-mimetic perspective, illumination and material process, grids lose their motional effect and return to the everyday world of things and symbols.

Few things on earth are more pointless than the grid seen through a temperament like an artificially illuminated prism, it clamps vision in favor of visibility. The expense of the grid can be interesting, but the form itself is noninformational. An “interpretation” of it is somewhat more various than hardnosed analysis. As an aid to art-making, the grid is trivial, a mechanism of Creative Playthings that generates neither order nor ingenuity. It has no more claim to intellectual significance than correct anatomy. Nevertheless, if you start with a grid, it would seem merely intelligent to stay with it and investigate its own odd nature, turning your materials into a substratification of it.

Surely the strength of artists as diverse as Aligned Jensen and Agnes Martin lies significantly in their unwillingness to subvert the grid. On the other hand, artists like Ayman and Kelly whose strength lies apart from rhythm and intuition, are sufficiently sensitive to interval to keep their relationship to the grid submerged, holding it as an untrusted backdrop. It keeps their views locked into relating to the instances of their different surfaces.

Most stenciled grids are pretty boring. Preserved grids, if the artist can hold you to them, are pretty interesting. Grid structures with sublimated asymmetries, of the sort found in Near Eastern carpets and some Buddhist paintings, are not only esthetically satisfying in a way that even good paintings are not. The enjoyment of patrons and grids, so often linked to religion, magic, and states of being not quite here, requires an indifference to self assertion unconfable to most Westerners. When I suggested that grids evoke the experience of law, I did not mean to speak metaphorically. It is one of our cultural quarks that we find law and creativity an odd pair. Abstractic personalia are another story—we expect creativity from them. Our art history is the history of leg artists—yet little artists, making small contributions to a collective articulation of form, embody an equally real creativity. An enormous amount of the world’s artistic production has been made at the process of discovering possibilities within rigid frameworks, like the requirements of the crafts or the structure of the grid. We are only beginning to think about such things...
ART
HYSTERICAL
NOTIONS
OF
PROGRESS
AND CULTURE

Verna Jendro and Joyce Krall

As feminists and artists exploring the decorative in our own paintings, we were curious about the pejorative use of the word “decorative” in the contemporary art world. In re-reading the basic texts of Modern Art, we came to realize that the prejudice against the decorative has a long history and is based on hierarchies: fine art above decorative art; Western art above non-Western art; men’s art above women’s art. By focusing on these hierarchies, we discovered a disturbing belief system based on the moral superiority of the art and civilization.

We decided to write a piece about how language has been used to communicate this moral superiority. Certain words have been handed down unexamined from one generation to the next. We needed to take these words away from the art context to examine and decode them. They have colored our own history, our art training. We have had to rethink the underlying assumptions of our education.

Within the discipline of art history, the following words are commonly used to characterize what has been called “high art”: man, manhood, the individual man, individuality, humanity, the human figure, humanism, civilization, culture, the Greeks, the Romans, the English, Christianity, spirituality, transcendence, religion, nature, true form, science, logic, purity, evolution, revolution, progress, truth, freedom, creativity, action, war, utility, violence, brutality, dynamism, power and greatness.

In the same texts other words are used repeatedly in connection with so-called “low art”: Africans, Orientals, Persians, Slavs, peasants, the lower classes, women, children, savages, pagans, sensuality, pleasure, decadence, chaos,archy, impotence, exotic, eroticism, artificial, tattoos, cosmetics, ornament, decoration, carpets, weaving, patterns, domesticity, wallpaper, fabrics and furniture.

All of these words appear in the quotations found throughout this piece. The quotations are from the writings of artists, art critics, and art historians. We do not pretend to neutrality and do not supply the historical context for the quotations. These can be found in the existing histories of Modern Art. Our analysis is based on a personal, contemporary perspective.

WAR AND VIOLENCE

Manifolds of Modern Art often exploit art to make violent, brutal work, and it is no accident that men such as Hirsch, Rivera, and Picasso like to think of their art as a metaphorical weapon. One of the long-standing targets of this weapon has been the decorative. The scorn for decoration epitomizes the machismo expressed by Le Corbusier, Gabo, Petersen, and Marinetti/Sant’Elia. Their brilliance may take the form of an appeal to the macho aesthetic: the machine is glorified as a tool and symbol of progress, and technological progress is equated with reduction, streamlined art. The machine to purify exists in order which is never described and condensate the chaos which is never explained.

Joseph Hirsch, From: Common Sense, D. W. Larkin, 1949:
“The greatest artist has wielded his art as a magnificent weapon truly mightier than the sword (…)”

Diego Rivera, The Revolutionary Spirit in Modern Art, 1932:
“l want to use my art as a weapon.”
Pablo Picasso, Statement about: The Artist as Political Being, 1945:
“No, painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war for attack and defense against the enemy.”

Le Corbusier, Guiding Principle of Town Planning, 1925:
“Decorative art is dead. [...] An immense, devastating brutal evolution has blown the bridge that link us with the past.”

Nikos Gaba and Antoine Pernier, Basic Principles of Construction, 1925:
“We reject the decorative line. We demand of every line in the work of art that it shall serve solely to define the inner directions of force in the body to be portrayed.”

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Antonio Sant’Elia, Futurist Architecture, 1914:
“The decorative must be abolished. [...] Let us throw away monuments, sidewalks, arcades, steps, let us sink squares into the ground, raise the level of the city.”

El Lissitzky, Malevich Superman, 1919:
“Destruction of the traditional. [...] Art has been declared on the aesthetic of chaos. An order that has entered fully into consciousness is called for.”

Menwe of the Future Names, 1910:
“The dead shall be buried in the earth’s deepest bowels! The threshold of the future will be free of humanity! Make room for youth, for violence, for daring!”

PURITY
In the polemics of Modern Art “purity” represents the highest good. The more the elements of the work of art are pared down, reduced, the more visible the “purity.” Here Greenberg equates reduction with rationality and function. But it is never explained why or for whom art has to be functional, nor why reduction is rational. Among artists as diverse as Sullivan, Cézanne, and de Kooning, we find the usual metaphor of “stipping down” art and architecture to make them “pure” or “pure.”

The assumption is that the artist is male, and the work of art (object) female.

Clement Greenberg, Denial of Modern Art, 1941:
“The ultimate use of art is to provide the experience of aesthetic value, therefore art is to be stripped down towards this end. Hence, modernist functionalism, ‘essentialism, it could be called, the urge to ‘puriﬁy’ the medium, any medium. ‘Puriﬁcation’ being conserved as the most efﬁcacious, effective, economical employment of the medium for purposes of aesthetic value.”

Louis Sullivan, Grammar of Architecture, 1892:
“ [...] it would be greatly for our aesthetic good if we should refrain from the use of ornament for a period of years, in order that our thought might concentrate wholly upon the production of buildings well formed and comedy in the mode.”

Amber Coeﬃce, Foundation of Modern Art, 1931:
“Decoration can be reviving, but a naked body moves us by the harmony of its form.”

Willem de Kooning, What Amedeo Modigliani Meant to Me, 1951:
“One of the most soothing of all our arts’ appearance is her nakedness, an art stripped bare.”

PURITY IN ART AS A HOLY CAUSE
Purity can also be sacriﬁced as an aesthetic principle. Modern artists and their expousers sometimes sound like the new crusaders, declaring eternal or religious values. A favorite theme is that of cleansing art. The ecclesiastical metaphor of transcendence through puriﬁcation (baptism) is used to uphold the “Greek” tradition (as in the van de Velde quotation) or the “Christian” tradition (as in the Loos quotation). Cleansing and puriﬁcation are sometimes paired with an exalted view of the artist as a god, as in Apollinaire’s desire to “deify personality.”

Henry van de Velde, Programme, 1903:
“As soon as the work of cleansing and stripping out has been ﬁnished, as soon as the true forms of things cease to be hid, then, once more, all the spirit and the logic of the Greeks for the perfection of this form.”

Ad of Loos, Ornaments and Crime, 1908:
“We have outgrown ornament; we have fought our way through to freedom from ornament. See the time is high, fulness awaits us. Soon the streets of the city will gleam like white walls, like Zion, the holy city, the capital of heaven. Then fulness will be come.”

Guillaume Apollinaire, The Cubist Names, 1913:
“To make a pure thing is to make it distinct, to humanize art, and to deify personality”

THE SUPERIORITY OF WESTERN ART
Throughout the literature of Western art there are several assumptions that derive the arts of other cultures. The ancient Greeks are held up as the model of the non-Western ideal of order. Art in the Greco-Roman tradition is believed to represent superior values. Malraux uses the word “barbarian” and Fry the word “savage” to describe art and artists outside of our tradition. The non-Western ideals of pleasure, meditation and loss of self are clearly not understood by the expounders of ego assertion, transcendence and dynamism.

David Hume, Of Natural Characters (on Africans), 1748:
“...there scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion nor any individual, eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures among them, no arts, no sciences.”

Roger Fry, The Art of the Bible, 1910:
“ [...] it it to be noted that all the peoples whose drawing shows this peculiar power of visualization (mental not conceptual) belong to what we call the lowest of savages, they are certainly the least civilizable, and the South African
Bushman are regarded by other native races in much the same way that we look upon negroes.

André Malraux, The Voice of Silence, 1935: “Now a barbarian art can keep alive only in the environment of the barbarian it expresses […]”

“[…] the Byzantine style, as the West saw it, was not the expression of a supreme value but merely a form of decoration.”

Roger Fry, The Munich Exhibition of Modern Art, 1910: “It cannot be denied that in course of time it [Islamic art] pandered to the baser instincts of the oriental craftsmen, his intolerable patience and thoughtless industry.”

Grave von Grumbkow, Medieval Islam, 1945: “Islam can hardly be called creative in the sense that the Greeks were creative in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. or the Western world since the Renaissance, but its flavor is unmistakable […]”

Sir Richard Wornum, Professor of Sculpture, Royal Academy (quoted in Hudson versus Art: Some Aspects of Sex, Design and Collecting in England and Rome, Francis Haskell, 1977): “… I think it impossible that any art can look at the Nineveh marbles as works for study, for such they certainly are not: they are works of prescriptive art, like works of Egyptian art. No man would ever think of studying Egyptian art.”

Adolf Loos, Ornament and Crime, 1908: “No ornament can any longer be made today by anyone who lives on our cultural level.”

“It is different with the individuals and peoples who have not yet reached this level.”

“I can tolerate the ornaments of the Kaffir, the Peranak, the Swedish peasant woman, my shoemaker’s ornaments, for they have no other way of amusing the high points of their existence. We have art, which has taken the place of ornament. After the toil and troubles of the day we go to Beethoven or Tristan.”

FEAR OF RACIAL CONTAMINATION, IMPOTENCE AND DECADENCE

Racism is the other side of the coin of lust. Often underlying fascination with the Orient, Indian, African and primitive is an urgent unconscious fear of contamination, decadence and domination by the “insiders” gathering importantly at the gates of civilization. Ornamental objects from other cultures which appeared in Europe in the nineteenth century were clearly superior to Western machine-made products. How could the West maintain its notion of racial supremacy in the face of these objects? Loos’s answer: by declaring that ornament itself was savage. Artists and architects who would succumb to decorative impulses were considered impotent and/or decadent.

Adolf Loos, Ornament and Crime, 1908: “I have made the following discovery and I pass it on to the world: The evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament from utilitarian objects. I believe that with this discovery I was bringing joy to the world: it has not thanked me. People were sad and hung their heads. What depressed them was the realization that they could produce no new ornaments. Are we alone, the people of the nineteenth century, supposed to be unable to do what any Negro, all the races and periods before us have been able to do? What mankind created without ornament in earlier millennia was thrown away without a thought and abandoned to destruction. We possess no jewelries, bracelets from the Carolingian era, but every trifle that displays the least ornament has been collected and cleaned and palatial buildings have been erected to house them. Then people walked sadly about between the glass cases and felt ashamed of their impotence.”

Amédée Ozenfant, Arabesque of Modern Art, 1931: “Let us beware lest the earnest efforts of younger people rob us of the incalculable values of decorative art. They might be of service to the dilettantes of the Greek decadence, or the Gallics to worm our homes.”

“Given many lions and few fleas, the lions are in no danger, but when the fleas multiply, how painful is the lion’s lot!”

Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger, On Cubism, 1912: “As all preoccupation in art arises from the material employed, we ought to regard the decorative preoccupation, if we find it in a painter, as an anarchistic atomism, useful only to conceal impotence.”

Maurice Barrès (on the Italian pre-Renaissance painters), 1897 (quoted in André Malraux, The Voice of Silence): “And I can also see why artists, emasculated of the anachronism which have deliberately emancipated their spirit in quest of a more fragile grace, relish the poverty and penitence of these minor artists.”

RACISM AND SEXISM

Racist and sexist attitudes characterize the same mentality. They sometimes appear in the same passage and are unconsciously paired, as when Bad emperor tortures and cosmetizes the tattooed, threatening customs of his offsprings and repugnant people. Cosmetics, a form of self-ornamentation, is equated with self-objectification and inferiority (Schapiro). Racism and sexism ward off the potential power and vitality of the “other” whereas nudity earlier allowed to women as the object of male desire, here Malevich associates the nude female with savagery.

Herbert Read, Art and Industry, 1951: “All ornament should be treated as suspect. I feel that a really civilized person would as soon tattoo his body as copy the form of good work of art with meaningless ornament. Legitimate ornament I conceive as something like mascara and lipstick—something applied with discretion to make more precise the outlines of an already existing beauty.”

Adolf Loos, Ornament and Crime, 1908: “The child is amoral. To our eyes, the Papuan is to a child. The Papuan kills his enemies and eats them. He is not a criminal. But when modern man kills someone and..."
see him he is either a criminal or a degenerate. The Popain tattoo on his skin, his boot, his paddy, is short everything he can lay hands on. He is not a criminal. The modern man who tattoos himself is either a criminal or a degenerate. There are prisons in which eighty percent of the inmates show tattoos. The tattooed who are not in prison are latest criminals or degenerate aristocrats. If someone who is tattooed dies at liberty, it means he has died a few years before committing a murder."


"A woman of this class [upper] is essentially an artist, like the painters whom she might patronize. Her daily life is filled with aesthetic choices; she buys clothes, ornaments, furniture, house decorations; she is constantly re-arranging herself as an aesthetic object."

Kazimir Malevich, Suprematist man and woman, 1924.

"[...] We don't want to be like those Negroes upon whom English culture bestowed the umbrella and top hat, and we don't want our wives to run around naked like savages in the garb of Venus."


"[...] Woman possesses a greater interest in her immediate environment, in the finished product, in the decorative, the individual, and the concrete man, on the other hand, exhibits a preference for the more remote, for that which is in process of construction or growth, for the useful, the general, and the abstract."

Leo Tolstoy, What is Art?, 1898.

"Real art, like the wife of an affectionate husband, needs no ornament. But counterfeit art, like a prostitute, must always be decked out."

HIERARCHY OF HIGH-LOW ART

Since the art experts consider the "high art" of Western man superior to all other forms of art, those arts done by non-Western people, low-class people and women are categorized as "minor arts," "primitive arts," "low arts," etc. A newer, more subtle way for artists to elevate themselves to an elite position is to identify their work with "pure science," "pure mathematics," "linguistics and philosophy." The myth that high art is for a select few perpetuates the hierarchy in the arts, and among people as well.

Clement Greenberg, An Evening of Art, 1939.

"It will be objected that such art for the masses as folk art was developed under extraordinary conditions of production—and that a good deal of folk art is on a high level. Yet, it is—but folk art is not Athenian, and it is Athenian whom we want: formal culture with its infinity of aspects, its immensity, its larger comprehension."


" [...] For the applied arts are more deeply emmeshed in our everyday lives and thus easier to a far wider public than do painting and sculpture, their purpose, as the name suggests, is to beautify the useful, an important and honourable one, no doubt, but of a lesser order than art pure and simple."

Andrè Ozenfant, Poudre de Modem Art, 1931.

"If we go on allowing the minor arts to think themselves the equal of Great Art, we shall soon be half fellow to all sorts of domestic furniture back to his palace! The decorators to the big shops, the artists on the next floor up, several floors up, as high as possible, on the pincushions, higher even. For the time being however, they sometimes do meet on the landings, the decorators having mounted at their heels, and numerous artists having come down on their bums."

Le Corbusier (Charles Jeanneret) and André Ozenfant, Art of Cubism, 1958.

"There is a hierarchy in the arts: decorative art at the bottom, and the human form at the top. Because we are men."


"The design of the carpet is wholly abstract, not so its color. Perhaps we shall soon discover that the sole reason why we call this art 'decorative' is that for us it has no history, no hierarchy, no meaning. Color reproduction may well lead us to review our ideas on this subject and rescue the masterwork from the North African bazaar as Negro sculpture has been rescued from the curio shop, in other words, liberate Islam from the drowsiness of 'backwardness' and assign its due place (a minor one, not because the carpet never portrays Man, but because it does not express him) to this last manifestation of the undying East."

Barney Newman, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1947 (on the Kwakwaka'wakw arts): "The abstract shape he used, his entire plastic language, was directed by a romantic will towards metaphysical understanding. The everyday realities he left to the toymakers; the pleasant play of non-objective pattern to the women basket weavers."


"In the same sense that science is for scientists and philosophy is for philosophers, art is for artists."

Joseph Kosuth, IntroductoryNota by the American Editor, 1970.

"In a sense, then, art has become as serious as science or philosophy which doesn't have audiences either."

THAT OLD CHRISTIAN "HUMANISM"

Humanius was once a radical doctrine opposing the authority of the church, but in our secular society it has come to define the traditional ideas of "mankind" and status quo attitudes. The "human values" such authorities demand of art depend on the use of particular subject matter or particular ideas of "human" expression. Without humanist content, ornament, pattern and ritual or decorative elaborations of production are condemned as inhuman, alien and empty. The limits of the decorative," says Malraux, "can be precisely defined only in an age of humanistic art." We could rather say that the generalities of "humanist" sentiment characterize only a small part of world art, most of which is non-Western and decorative. But why should anyone prefer the false
divisions of these writers, based on ethnic stereotypes, to a historical awareness of the interdependence of all human cultures.

Camille Mauclaire, La Réforme du décor en France (On the Impressionists), 1896:
“Decorative art has its aesthetic and for its effect not to make one think of man, but an order of things arranged by him: it is a decorative and harmonizing art, a grouping of spectacles the essence of which is to be seen.”

Rudolf Arnheim, Art and Visual Perception, 1954:
“Paintings or sculpture are self-contained statements about the nature of human existence in all its essential aspects. An ornament presented as a work of art becomes a fool’s paradise, in which tragedy and disorder are ignored and an easy peace reigns.”

Hilton Kramer, The Spectacle and Chill of Islamic Art, 1975:
“[…] for those of us who seek in art something besides a brief and pleasurable sensation, so much of what […] the Metropolitan Museum’s Islamic wing […] houses is, frankly, so alien to the expectations of Western sensibility.”

“Perhaps with the passage of time, Islamic Art will come to look less alien to us than it does today. I frankly doubt it—there are too many fundamental differences of spirit to be overcome.”

“[…] there is small place indeed given to what looks so large in the Western imagination: the individualization of experience.”

Sir Thomas Arnold, Among the Abbasids, 1858:
“[…] he was a painter apparently willing to spend hours of work upon the elaborate writing of the leaves of a tree […] but it does not seem to have occurred to him to devote the same pains and effort to the correctness of his human figures […] he appears to have been satisfied with the beautiful decorative effect he achieved.”

André Malraux, The Voice of Silence, 1955:
“The limits of decorative can be precisely defined only in an age of humanistic art.”

“I was the individualization of desire: this involuntary or unwitting imprint of his private drama on every man’s face, that prevented Western art from becoming like Byzantine mosaics always transcendent, or like Buddhist sculpture obsessed with mystery.”

“How could an Egyptian, an Assyrian or a Buddhist have shown his god nailed to a cross, without ruining his style?”

DECORATION AND DOMESTICITY

The antithesis of violence and destruction instilled by Modern Art is the visual enhancement of the domestic environment. (If humanism is equated with dynamism, the decorative is seen to be synonymous with the static.) One method “modernism” has used to discredit its opponents has been to associate their work with carpet and wallpaper. Lacking engagement with “human form” or the “real world,” the work of art must be stigmatized as decorative (Sedlmayr and Barnes/de Maria). So decorative art is a code term signifying failed humanism. Artists such as Gleizes and Kandinsky, anxious to escape the taint of the decorative, connect their work to older, humanist aspirations.

Aldous Huxley on Pollock’s Cézanne, 1947:
“It seems like a panel for a wall-paper which is repeated indefinitely around the wall.”

Wynford Lewis, Poems on Muscarenopy, 1940:
“[…] this confused, feeble, profusely decorated, romantic carpet.”

The Times of London critic on Whistler, 1878:
“[…] that these pictures only come one step nearer [to fine art] than a delicately tinted wallpaper.”

Hans Sedlmayr, The Metaphysics of Art, 1948:
“With Matisse, the human form was to have no more significance than a pattern on a wallpaper […]”

Dr. Albert C. Barnes and Violet de Maria, The Art of Glass, 1939:
“Pattern, in Cézanne an instrument strictly subordinated to the expression of values inherent in the real world, becomes in cubism the entire aesthetic content, and this degeneration of form leaves cubic painting with no claim to any status higher than decoration.”

Albert Gleizes, “Opium” (on Cubism), 1913:
“There is a certain immutability coefficient by which we may verify the legitimacy of our discoveries, avoid reducing the picture merely to the ornamental value of an anachronism or an Oriental carpet, and obtain an infinite variety which would otherwise be impossible.”

Wassily Kandinsky, Über die Geometrische Kunst, 1912:
“If we begin at once to break the bonds that bind us to nature and to devote ourselves purely to combinations of pure color and independent form, we shall produce works which are mere geometric decoration, resembling something like a beach or a carpet.”

AUTOCRACY

Certain modern artists express the desire for unlimited personal power. The aesthetics of “modernism”—its egomania, violence, purity fixation and denial of all other modes to the truth—is highly authoritarian. The reductivist ideology suggests an inevitable, evolutionary survival of the (aesthetic) fittest. Reinhardt declares throughout his writings that all the world’s art must culminate in his “pure” paintings. One series expresses passion with a “superstate.” Mendelsohn believes the advocates of the new art have a right to exercise control.”

Ad Reinhardt, There is Just One Painting, 1966:
“There is just one art history, one art evolution, one art progress. There is just
one aesthetic, just one art idea, one art meaning, just one principle, one force. There is just one truth in art, one form, one change, one secrecy.”

Amédée Ozenfant, *Foundations of Modern Art*, 1911:
“Purism is not an aesthetic, but a sort of super-aesthetic in the same way that the League of Nations is a super-state.”

Ernst Mendelsohn, *The Problem of a New Architecture*, 1919:
“The simultaneous process of revolutionary political changes and radical changes in human relationships in economy and science and religion in art give birth to the new form, believe me, as a point of departure to exercise control, and provide a justifiable basis for a rebirth amidst the misery produced by world-historical disaster.”

Adolf Hitler, speech inaugurating the Great Exhibition of German Art, 1931:
“I have come to the final inadmissible decision to clean house, just as I have done in the domain of political confusion [...]”

“National-Socialist Germany however, wants again a German Art, and this Art shall and will be of eternal value, as are all truly creative values of a people [...]”

Frank Lloyd Wright, *Weik Song*, 1896:
“I’LL THINK AS I’LL ACT AS I’M IN FASHION FOR SHAME NOR FOR FAME FER MAN MADE SHEATH THIS NAKED WHITE BLADE MY ACT AS BECOME THE MAN

We started by examining a specific attitude—the prejudice against the decorative in art—and found ourselves in a labyrinth of myth and mystification. By taking these quotes out of context we are not trying to hold these artists and writers up to ridicule. However, to continue reading them in an unquestioning spirit perpetuates their biases. The language of their statements is often dated—indeed, some of them are over a century old—but the sentiments they express still guide contemporary theory in art.

Modernism, the theory of Modern Art, claimed to break with Renaissance humanism. Yet both doctrines glorify the individual genius as the heart of creativity. It seems worth noting that such heroic genius has always appeared in the form of a white Western male. We, as artists, cannot solve these problems, but by speaking plainly we hope to reveal the inconsistencies in assumptions that too often have been accepted as “truth.”

Acknowledgements
We relied heavily on Joseph Maichak, “The Carpet Paradigm: Critical Prolegomena to a Theory of Flatness,” *Art Magazine*, Sept., 1976, for the quotes about carpets and wallpaper. To Amy Goldin whose ideas and encouragement made this piece possible.
"It seemed everything had been tried out, everything marketed, and progress had come to a stop; the avant-garde of modern art, indubitably present since the early twentieth century with new directions, styles, issues and fashions, spent eight long summers, weary and worn, at a virtual standstill. Yet now—so it was written—a 'revolution' is said to be opening the simmering scene and "a new chapter in the art of this century" (Will Bunge) becoming debated and turned over. The movement goes by the name of 'Pattern' or 'Decorative Art'—and that sums up its entire program.

With these words in Bern (No. 13, March 13, 1979), Alfred Neemeke introduced the German-speaking countries to a new art form that had shortly before made its European museum debut with eight American exponents—in a premier move to equality: four female, four male—in the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels. I believe in the adventure and the miracle of a new aesthetic sensibility and I've been lucky enough on several occasions to be able to sense it, and put into words. And although I've trodden other paths in the meantime—perhaps also owing to fear and, realizing that a novelty of this sort could never have the same intensity as, for example, the event of 1969, "At the Sign of the Rose or the Rose of Sign" (For Your Head: When Attitude Becomes Ronan)—I didn't hesitate to dive into the studio fray once again and seek out the advocates of "Pattern." The excellent information compiled by Johannes Gachmann, both on the latest in painting at the Kunsthalle Bern and on frustration at documents 7's having missed its chance to show a strong painting section, raised false expectations in me as well as hopes for something along the familiar lines of a "comparatively driven concept of [Duchamp's] Reclining Woman." I expected high points, and got abundance and quality of life from the artists' climate that these artists exemplarily exude: This is because, in contrast to earlier displacements of style or orientation in New York, the group of Pattern artists striking back against their elders this time around is not young but generational. "The youngest among them put their energies into filmmaking," says Richard Serra, one of the strongest artists of the last ten years. The Pattern artists range in age from thirty-three to fifty-five. And the most astonishing and positive thing is the high proportion among them of women artists, who—as the men themselves admit—have done a great deal to create this "relaxed" climate. Since 1974 they have continued regularly to discuss the relationship of "high" to "decorative," discovering common ground in their devotion to the mystery of Conceptual Art and Minimal Art, and in their love of an art for the senses that beautifies the environment without huge conceptual riddles or complex iconographic content. In most cases, the stimulus for these rich, bright, colorful creations was a trip to the Near East, India, Afghanistan, or Mexico, where the artists soaked up the charms of centuries-old ornamental traditions. Accordingly, many of them no longer wish to settle for the framed and hung painting or isolated object but have set their sights instead on major commissions for ornamental art in architecture or public space. The freedom afforded by Conceptual Art, that of non-execution, has been turned in to its opposite: a primal joy in doing and making.

A RE-EVALUATION OF ANONYMOUS WOMEN'S WORK

In the fine arts, the term "decorative" had long been an insult. It implied superficiality, a desire to please, gymnastics, and the absence of a coherent train of thought. Moreover, it was often used in connection with the terms "women's art" and "applied art," both far inferior to men's art; for example, to this day the two national artists' associations in Switzerland are divided along gender lines. But increasingly, the women's movement
is working not only to increase appreciation of women's everyday occupations, such as laundering, baking, cooking, sewing, cleaning, and ironing, but also to gain recognition of the full artistic status of both their ornamental activities—dressmaking, knitting, quilting, painting on little cards or on porcelain, and the like—and the abstract ornaments, floral patterns, and other visual elements thereby deployed. Miriam Schapiro, an ardent feminist, calls her present state of consciousness "anagnorisis," the result of her "male-oriented" approach, and she identifies it with her female-oriented present. Of her ornamental works of art, richly decorated, painted, and collaged fans and kimonos, she remarks: "Since my conversion to feminism in 1970 I have wanted my art to speak directly to women. I chose the kimonos as a ceremonial gown for the new woman. I wanted her to be clothed in the power of her new task, her personal authority. I wanted rich and dignified robes—with lots of gold and silver—for myself and for others, yet they were to be simple, too, with clear lines. Only later did it occur to me that men also wear kimonos and that my work therefore is androgynous in character. The work gave me a gift.

Schapiro coined the word "femmage" to typify female works of art: "a term we devise to encompass all the activities undertaken by women—collage, assemblage, decoupage, photo-montage—in accomplishing the tasks history has allowed them."

In order for a work to qualify as a femmage, it must meet the following criteria:

1. It must be the work of a woman.
2. Conservation and collecting must constitute important components of the work.
3. Remnants and cut-ups are part of the working process and are repeatedly incorporated (reworked).
4. The theme is to be the lives of women.
5. Language is the tool for manipulation.
6. The content should be addressed to women.
7. The work should reflect a private or public event.
8. The viewer is to be that of a woman writing daily in her diary.
9. Things briefly drawn or handwritten are subsequently executed in new form.
10. Silhouettes cut with scissors are to be affixed to different materials.
12. Abstract forms should compose a pattern.
13. Photographs and other printed materials are to be used.
14. The work must have a functional as well as an aesthetic existence.

IN OPPOSITION TO TRADITIONAL HIERARCHIES OF VALUE

From re-appreciating anonymous women's work to attacking the ideological preconceptions of men's art was but a short step for the two young artists Valerie Jardin and Joyce Kozloff. In the award-winning feminist journal Image they took a long, cold look at a number of art—historical—which they call "art-hysterical"—terms relating to progress and culture (cf. pp. 46–56 in the present volume). These feminists and artists, who worked "deconstructively," themselves, examined art journals, art theory, and art reviews, and explored the history of the art world, which is related to a hierarchical value system that places "high" art above the decorative arts and below Western, non-Western, or women's art.

The art-theoretical background to this new style of painting was likewise supplied by a woman, artist Amy Goldin, who broke new ground in articles on topics such as "Museums and Decoration: The Late Cut-Outs," and Islamic ornamentation among many others. "In the view of the potential they saw for privileging a joy in life over rationalism, festivity over fear,"

"THERE ARE NO PAINTINGS; THERE IS ONLY DECORATION."

This is the cheerful impression left by all the paintings I was able to see in New York: Miriam Schapiro's fans and kimonos, Mary Grigter's dynamic, large-format images composed of ornamental she of her own invention, Joyce Kozloff's silk cloths, ceramic columns featuring forms cut out with cookie cutters and, above all, her two books of ornamental patterns. In 1965 in Denmark and in 1967 in Australia, Robbin Klein's narrative sequences against quilt patterns backdrops; Valerie Jardin's cooler and more deliberately stylized monochrome geometric patterns; Dee Shapiro's geometric grids of color; and Cynthia Carlson's sculptural wall pieces, which consist of clumps of paint scattered over the wall and turning beyond the confines of the framed canvas. The older male exponents of Pattern, Harry Korraller and George Woodman, for example, usually stuck to a single form which they repeat in a variety of colors, a style reminiscent of the artworks of Vassily's "Planetary Folkloric" series. Kim MacConnel combined the most colorful weaves imaginable, while a revival of spatial complexity is once again the quest of Tony Robbin and Robert Kushner, the latter referencing here his past performances (for which he dressed solely in painted cloths) and with the figure already reconfigured in his wall hangings. He alone has catalogued the criteria for a good Pattern image: the open-ended visual frame, the absence of complex iconographic situations, and particular attention to what is happening on the margins—hence, the very postulates that in the Paris of the 1890s drove both the Nabi group of painters and Bonnard, inspired as they were by their discovery of the compositional possibilities of the Japanese woodcut. Kushner's style of drawing figures is vital and loose and calls to mind somewhat the allusive sketches and arabesques of Ravel. Drury The theorist of the Nabi group, Maurice Denis, long since produced the formulation that still holds true for our art: "Remember that a painting—before being a beautiful object, a nude woman, or an anecdote of some sort—is essentially a flat surface covered with color, put to gather in a certain order. And already back then in 1890, this proclamation of the primacy of the planes surface, this negation both of the linear and the b"
view perspective, was bound up with the legitimation of two-dimensional design that—inspired by the Japanese woodcut—permitted the distinction between ornament and image, pattern and sequence to blur. And the artist-monk Jan Verkade noted the battle cry of 1890: “Down with easel paintings! Down with merriment! Furniture! Painting may not usurp freedom that separate it from other arts.” The work of the painter begins where the architect considers his own work finished. Give us walls, and still more walls, to decorate! Down with perspective! The wall must remain a surface, not be perforated by the portrayal of endless horizons. There are no paintings; there are only decorations.”

The transfer of decorative or ornamental elements to large-scale paintings is being undertaken by a homoerotic abstract painter, Robert Zakanich, who around 1971 felt frustrated that much of what inspired him visually was considered impermissible in his art. He first drowned this frustration in alcohol before deciding finally to take the things that he loved—their Czech embroidery, Japanese woodcut, Native American painting, or Persian art—as inspiration for, and as references and allusions to, his own images so that his work would no longer separate him from the rest of the world. “Flowers, cherubs, redashes, my visual elements of choice, had been dismissed as trival by the main currents in contemporary art, as being decorative and ornamental. I am interested in them as an end in themselves. I want to use these ‘ornaments’ as a means to create cheerful and erotic painting.” The refinement of Zakanich’s paintings, tryptichi for the most part, lies in the emboldened expressive painterly depiction of the main themes on the central panel and the more restrained accompaniment of the lateral panels. He very often leaves the margins white, as a neutral zone into living, breathing ornamental paintings. In a most convincing way the knowledge of that aspect of monochrome painting that makes the viewer physically experience its dimension is united with the use of narrative in a painted landscape of patterns that lends itself to interpretation wholly in terms of content and drama.

**SYMPATHETIC IMPLUSSES**

Eight of the artists discussed here were shown in the aforementioned exhibition in Brussels while, as I remarked earlier, confrontation with the Europeans was achieved.
Joyce Kozloff: This was the most vivid period of my life. It opened with the heady days of the women’s movement: the demonstrations, consciousness-raising groups, breakup books, collectives—the feeling of optimism, as if we could change the world. I do not agree that it was a period of introspection and refinement. Women, men, and men were meeting and sharing their life experiences, building communities. There was an excitement and energy in the air, and much of the experimental art that was produced. We witnessed an outpouring of works in new media (performance, video, cable television, dance, installation), explorations of the body, gender, and sexuality, and a resurgence of autobiography and storytelling. Many of us in the Pattern & Decoration movement had absorbed these modes of expression. For those who were active in the women’s movement, paying homage to the decorative arts was a form of cultural feminism.

Kim MacConnel: As with most decades, how and when it begins is one thing, and when and where it ends is another. For me, much of the thinking that became my interest in pattern, as well as decoration, began in the late 1960s at the University of California San Diego, with my classmates, Robert Kushner, and our teacher, Amy Goldin. Our conversations revolved around the idea of “hierarchies” of class distinctions related to the place of fine art, painting, and sculpture, and what would define those engagements, and where craft engagements like occasions, textiles, or decorative imagery related historically to these craft engagements might fit. The Barnes Foundation collection in Philadelphia famously mixed these classifications in a way that both craft and fine art boundaries became less barriers than bridges to a fuller understanding of the roles that these and many other artistic interests play in a complex world. This could be applied to everything happening in society at the time, from politics, to views on culture boundaries, race, gender, if you see the world as “this is more important than that,” then one misses out on the complexity of what we might share. As the decade progressed these issues came more and more into focus generally, and particularly within the work of artists within what was becoming a movement of like minds with an astonishing array of differing interests. All of us individually were looking and thinking of ways to present the best that modernism had created and whose present dominant form manifested itself as Minimalism.

Valerie Jardin: 1970 was my first year out of art school in London and I began living in downtown New York. Student life and protest of the 1960s transitioned for me into a larger community of artists in downtown Manhattan. New York itself was in an economic decline, and it was very cheap, albeit illegal, to live and work in large inexpensive lofts. The largest manufacturing area south of Houston Street, SoHo, became impromptu community spaces for performance, dance, music, video, and all manner of installations and exhibitions.

By 1970, the first galleries were already in SoHo, sparsely populated by artists. Saturday openings became focal points for everyone to meet and talk, and the daily life in SoHo was an education in itself. Artists and friends would often cook large impromptu dinners together in the evenings in someone’s loft and see whatever projects they were working on. Life downtown was open and spontaneous, and the future seemed ripe with possibilities. By 1975, SoHo was full of art, artists, events, and lively talk, some formally organized, some more impromptu. The 66 Greene Street “Artists Talk on Art” panels, which began in 1970, were the first of such panels organized by Artists Talk on Art. In February 1975, the last of these panels was held in SoHo, “Artists Talk on Art,” in April 1976, the last of the Decoration Art, and the last of the Decoration Art, in September 1976.

Robert Kushner: It was all a lot more fun than your question (with all due respect) might indicate. The decorative adventure, at least in the early 1970s, was very fluid and open-ended. Let’s talk about it. Or maybe that’s what you thought of this? We were motivated by wanting to make a kind of painting that had never been seen before, something New Bright, Beautiful, Positive, Life-affirming. Is it any fun? Clearly, the adventure brought to an end all the expectations that underly the general hopefulness and progressive approach of modern art up to that time, with its faith in technology and open-ended belief in logic and formal procedures as values in themselves in the realm of abstract expression. It is often stated that 3-D was looking for a way out of what was experienced as an increasingly narrow mindset. What triggered this sense of failure of modernist ideas for you specifically?

JN: We were rebelling against formalism and modernism, which felt like a trap. And it was living. Personally, I never believed the rhetoric, which seemed overwrought and did not describe what was visually present. When we found another through a process of osmosis, it was liberating to talk about living ornament, loving color, loving Kraush. We were young, and we wanted to outrage the art establishment. So it was a combination of rejecting Modernism and embracing a wide range of non-traditional approaches. At our early meetings, we discovered that most of us had lived or traveled in parts of the world, and that those experiences had profoundly formed us, both politically and aesthetically.

KM: Robert Kushner and I were teaching assistants for Amy Goldin in a large lecture studio course in 1969, Introduction to Art Making. Amy was having difficulty trying to find a more “familiar” model to discuss formalist terminology with students than Abstract Expressionism. She asked us what we thought of Alcorn immediately and probably in unison, we said, “Near Eastern Textiles!” (We had been collecting damaged kilims, repairing, and trying to recall them.) So, we began to try to work out the translation of concepts and execution across two very different art forms, cultures, and hierarchically opposed objects. We viewed this as a huge breakthrough... and with that a possible artistic direction to mine.

VI: It is only in hindsight that we can talk about the end of modernism. It never occurred to us as the end of anything, only a firm belief, developed largely through travel experiences, that there were other ways to think about art. Those early group P&D exhibitions in New York were much more complex than any solo show, and the group installations challenged everyone, including the artists, in unexpected ways. Formalist criticism, and its concentration on the thing in itself, was stymied.

KK: I often get impatient when other writers (not you) identify our decorative movement as a reaction against Modernism. I think it was much more an issue of temporariness. We all lived things to look at that were new, not reduced to a barely reflected surface. I did and still prefer to look at things where there are dozens of artistic decisions rather than a handful. And I wanted my own work to reflect that. If a newly discovered source had color, movement, association, richness, charm, well, bring it on. Our work must indeed have looked shocking compared to most of the other artistic production going on at the time. But... I think it felt like a positive movement, not a calculated reactive one.

It has been noted that Pattern and Decoration was the last genuine art movement of the 1970s—and perhaps ever! The artists working with 3-D were friends and acquaintances, they shared similar politics shaped by the social movements of the counterculture and the war in Vietnam. The revolution associated with Minimal and Conceptual Art. In hindsight, did you feel that you were part of a movement? What changed in your outlook or practice when the first panels, meetings, and exhibitions identified a common denominator took place in the mid-1970s?

JN: We were definitely a movement, and we were in motion. I remember angry people showing up at us from the audience at some of those panels. We ridiculed the shibboleths that many artists believed in, what we all had learned from our teachers. This response unified us. We had a mission. There were articles written about us, both pro and con, a lively, engaged dialogue. And we wrote polemical pieces ourselves.

KM: The sense of Pattern and Decoration being a movement in our minds was explored in a few meetings in 1974 held by Amy Goldin as well as Mimi Alcorn at which the idea became a possibility. So many of us were engaged in a core interest in creating a unified voice to try and open up the possibility of bringing the different aesthetic, social awareness into the art world. While not everyone in the group came to show with Holly Solomon, her opening gallery in the midst of the 1974 recession did give real impetus to this possibility. And the exhibition with Alexandra Monet in Brussels, I think that Miriam had a hand in, was a long way to creating legitimacy. By mid-1975, it was pretty clear that we were being looked at as a group, as evidenced by a review of the Whitney Biennial in Art in America titled, “Is Pattern Emerging?”

VI: The “enemy” was Minimal Art or even artists, but a more direct method of criticism that could not deal with the purely visual experience of the art object itself. The purist rhetoric had a certain persuasive philosophical logic, but our group had identified an unbridled enthusiasm and deep respect for all of the world’s art, architecture, and art. Art was everywhere. (This is before the idea of visual culture or even theory.) The artists in SoHo in the 1970s could experience at close hand the experimental work of dancers, performers, musicians, and film, video, and installation artists, all speaking a common language. It was exciting to meet artists you admired who felt the same way.

The first panels themselves consisted mostly of presentations of images by individual artists, and the audience would often challenge statements made by the artists. The panels as a rule spoke for themselves, trying to explain why and how they worked as they did. The artists supported each other, but
none of the artists wanted to make specific claims for a group or another artist's work. There was the energy and excitement of discovery among the artists, but most important was the general group support and respect for each other. The first group exhibition in SoHo in September 1976 was curated and organized by the artist Jane Kupferman and her dealer, and she invited the artists to exhibit and wrote a personal statement. That was the last F/A group show organized by an artist in the seventies. The second exhibition in New York was in November 1977, over a year later, curated by the Village Voice art critic John Persean for P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center director Alan Wein.

Two New York exhibitions both received significant articles in Artforum, and opened the way for other exhibitions by F/A artists. All, art dealer in the US, from Florida to Texas, had organized group shows, all with a different emphasis and limited scope of view. Before the important European shows began in 1979, there were quite a few artists that had broken away from the established art-world, all with an independent developed work, exhibiting together as an art-Activists for everyone. It was only later in 1979, after several collaborative exhibitions with the curator Harald Szeemann, and with interest coming from Europe, that it occurred to me to establish the F/A artists were a movement with historical European affinities.

The group and its support was all important. A game changer: A validation. Without the group, I believe our work would not have grown, gained its strength, and certainly not its public visibility.

It feels almost like that Art Basel, of all places, marked the turning point for F/A in Europe when, in 1977, Holly Solomon took the week to be there. When Art Basel today stands for corporate brand art on a global scale, the then "globalization" only established its current meaning in the 1970s. Considering the cross-cultural influences in your work, as well as the emphasis on trend and exchange, what was your take on globalization then? What were the differences in its economic and political impact?

JK: I wasn't represented by Holly Solomon, so I can't objectively answer this question. I don't remember discussions about the global marketplace, and the word "globalization" was not in common use, as it is today. We were surprised that our work began to sell. I can remember Bob Kollinger telling me that when a European dealer came to his studio, Bob went from working class to middle-class in one afternoon. We weren't motivated by a market phenomenon, but we were delighted to bring our art to different audiences, and it afforded us opportunities to travel, which fed our art. And then by about 1982, it was over, and the parade moved on.

KM: Holly Solomon urged me to go to Art Basel "so I could experience my art amongst the ranks of other artists." It wasn't quite like that, but the agricultural element from production to production machinery was impressive (I was not there in 1977, but in a later year). This was, as you point out, a starting point in Europe for the movement, but it was Willi Bongard's newsletter, Artwood, in the November issue 1977, that really set the interest in Europe in motion, with the simple introductory line, "a veritable new art movement." In the following year, in December 1978, I exhibited with Gallerie Bruno Buchholz in Zürich, with Contra Baur, Rolf Behr, with which worked like Peresole, Peresole, Bondi, Oppermann, and New York, among others, addressed the following themes about globalization, politics, and a shifting global order.

VI: I was in the 1977 Art Basel and went to the opening parties that year with Horace and Holly Solomon. The fair was prestigious, international (ten countries), but the primary conversation was on art as a commodity. Remember it was small booth in a city tent. "Global" as we know it now was not mentioned, and each artist was always identified by country. First the European artists we met were unhappy that US galleries at that time exhibited so few living European artists, which was surprising, but that would change in the 1980s. The F/A artists by this time had more group meetings except for parties and openings. We were all in our studios trying to keep up with our work and exhibitions.

In an interview, Robert Kushner celebrated the constrictive attitude inherent in the debates — rejecting the idea of something completely new. Clearly the emphasis on tradition, or tradition, is important to all you see, the Avant-garde concept of a cycle of art history rather than the linear, progressive Western idea influenced in this concept? The Metropolitian Musuem in New York opened its Islamic wing in 1975, and other important exhibitions on Avant Garde art pieces took place at the time...
developed away from representation in an evolutionary survival-of-the-fittest progression, or toward an endgame made no sense. It is all representation. A younger generation of scholars has been discussing the enormity of art not as a modernist achievement but rather a historical one—this process of increasing social (self-)representation. In the context of P&D, the idea of art as well as its social dimensions were created almost entirely in performance and public commission. However, many works also came in the shape of traditional painting and sculpture—how are notions of ownership questioned here?

J.K. Members of our loose group created furniture, tiled walls, pottery, textiles, illustrated books—and also paintings and sculpture. We moved early back and forth, making a conscious effort to break down those hierarchies. We never demeaned the Western tradition but we conceptualized it within the long sweep of history and geography. For me, moving into public art was a way to reach a larger, more diverse audience than the visitors to art galleries, and it enabled me to greatly expand the scale of my work. Pattern is inherently expansive, it is especially effective when it surrounds the viewer, as in the great mosques of India.

KM. My engagement in trying to pull the formality of painting off the wall and into the room by painting on found furniture (from thrift stores first in 1972, and continuing) was an attempt to create a salon for an exhibition at the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego, California, in 1976. My painted cloth hangs and some framed graphics paintings surrounded a group of variously painted furniture pieces, lamps, tables, and a cardboard screen, to create a "living space" meant for museum patrons to sit on and enjoy a conversation, and perhaps break up the sense of separation of audience and the formality of viewing art in galleries and museums. This idea as played out was a little premature, as it was reported to me that two patrons during the exhibition got into a heated physical argument as to whether one or the other should be sitting on "the art." Reviews of the show were positive, except for the "thrash room furniture" being in a museum.

VJ. Those early P&D group exhibits held in 1970s in rambling white-washed old factory spaces were a challenge to the "white cube" exhibition spaces that they occupied. Any art shown in those old spaces had to struggle for recognition. Content becomes dominant, and paintings of sculpture easily became part of the surrounding environment.

Based on the frequent use of preclosing spaces, P&D are sometimes considered a precursor to Appropriation Art. While some procedures are similar, one can sense a crucial difference in attitude: P&D’s "appropriation" seems endemic rather than analytical (not that one excludes the other). How was the concept of appropriation discussed before Appropriation Art? If there were in fact a difference, how would you describe it?

J.K. Most art is appropriation. Some, like Picasso, are outright thieves. You cannot stop an artist from taking what he/she needs. I was criticized for it as a student during the heyday of Abstract Expressionism. When it was called copying and a considered bad form. I would frame the question to ask why and what the artist is appropriating. The Pattern Painters were reworking what we had no respect for, as an homage—sometimes to extend, sometimes to riff on, sometimes to adapt, sometimes to insert, sometimes to obscure, sometimes to layer, sometimes to interpret, but always to learn from.

KM. The issue of appropriation has become more and more significant since the late 1980s, and one that, frankly, caused me to shift my artistic engagement significantly. I was concerned that those whose voices really should have been heard prior to when I and others in the 1970s were trying to open up the discourse on representation. At some point though, that advocacy was lost and it became time to re-evaluate what I should and could engage. The solution for me was to become a tourist. Point and shoot images of real people living as real people in India, Africa, Yemen, Japan, China, Mexico, while commenting on the existence of cultures through the lens of photography, Homi Bhabha, in a symposium at Amherst in 2017, suggests that "appropriation" could be called "translation." I don’t think that term applies to Pattern and Decoration artists in the 1970s, as it was an exploration of different aesthetic norms outside of a prevailing Western modernist aesthetic. In the exploration of gender, non-Western cultures, class, social and artistic hierarchies, we found models and vehicles to make visual counter-arguments to maintaining existing formalist and modernist boundaries.

VJ. In the early 1970s "derivative" and "nonoriginal" were common critical terms. " Appropriation" later on seemed more of a challenge to the idea of copyright.

KK. The optimism of the early 1970s went on to the seventies. Gender politics, alternative lifestyles, questioning everything was still very much in the air, and included all of our studio decisions. We all wanted (I think) to make life better by extending the range of what was allowed into the formal lexicon of Art. More, great, Qualify, yes, Ceramic, pure, Carpets, why not. We looked at all these objects for their aesthetic merit and rich visual rewards and wanted others to see them as art as well. And if our paintings could encourage this outward looking, this inclusive embrace, then we had been successful. This is the opposite of a kind of genre, this genre that appropriates the past. In this way, oddly enough, we were still adhering to the avant-garde aesthetic of trying to make our lives more full, rich, satisfying through art. It seems odd quaint to this perspective.

Repetition or the figures has gained an increasingly prominent role in each of your practices, whether in the form of iconic elements, or actual figure. In the early projects, you created a link between P&D and what was then called "New Image Art," which Non-Expressionist—painters such as Julian Schnabel or Francesco Clemente—was considered a part of. How would you describe the changing relationship between the label "performativity" and the idea of representation in your work? And did you see it similar to the "Non-Expressionist" at the time?

J.K. I like the physicality of Julian Schnabel’s broken plate paintings, and the mystery of Francesco Clemente’s paintings that were based on Indian minature. Their paintings were also a break away from the formalist art that preceded us. The closed-off boundaries between abstraction and figuration had been broken. I had stopped thinking in those categories by then. There are sometimes figures in my art, why not? I’m realist, I could not make the same kind of art for fifty years, although I admire those who can. So I approach each body of work as if I’m starting over, and surprise myself occasionally. Our patrons may appear to be loyal, as they are based on grids, but we became more within those confines. The only works that interest me are those in which there is variation within the repetition, as in music.

KM. "New Image" painting really concentrated on the figure as subject, while the figure in P&D worked in a more unification of one way or another, with pattern as co-equal subject. But, the idea of looking at Julian Schnabel’s early plate paintings and seeing them as pattern painting Francesco Clemente’s big India paper paintings engaged me. Some of the same interest that I had of moving away from a Western aesthetic into a structural form more associated with non-Western art.
cultures. The paper creates in these works (meant to be folded and taken back to Italy later), creates the grid that much PAO work utilized, and that pattern comes out of that grid. Of course, can be filled with any number of forms or motifs or scale. I tried to create a range of images to play with, figure being one—and that could take many forms, like an image from a wall advertisement from Mexico (detailed feet and shoes). India (text with neon light feature), South Africa (a Chinese sign on a fence with guard).

I sat with the notion of "expression" for a moment. In many moments regarding PAO, the idea of an artistic subjectivity "expressing itself," (excited to write this: such as Jackson Pollock or William de Kooning) is considered a problem for an era focused on the individual, the (most, most often male). Were in each of your work one can make an autobiographical strand associates to pieces and experience. How would you differentiate "self expression" from this, perhaps more literal, version of autobiography? Or was "expression" really the big game for other issue?

J.K: Women artists (not only decorative ones) were in full recoil from the heroic male ego, as expressed in idealized representations of the female nude or erotic imagery, status of holy orders or gods, splashing mostly black abstractions.

The careful craft and modern in the "mirror" was moving to us. We wanted to show our respect by slowing down to experience the care that we found in those objects, which represented a shared aesthetic, rather than an individual statement. But we were exhibiting our work in galleries and museums, which remained in a "high art" context, a commodity. I encountered women and men who resisted our crossovers and privileges, as they wanted to be seen in art world venues. Were we downwardly mobile, as they were upwardly?

My work always had some elements of autobiography, as reflected where I'd been, what I'd done, whom I talked with, what I was thinking about. But in the last few years, it's become more explicit diary of my life, incorporating my childhood drawings. (This is a function of age. I see my contemporaries doing the same thing to find new ideas and images with older ones.

KM: To me nearly all artwork is self-expression—which is what gives work individuality. A body of work can be that self-expression, not simply the singular content of a piece. I tried to create a form of painting that was both familiar but not within the expectation of what a contemporary painting looked like, so unfamiliar. Loose-painted cloth cut out and re-sewn, pinned to the wall was different than painting the same images in the same way but on stretched canvas. That first choice would be for self-expression.

A younger generation of artists, scholars, and curators in Europe and the US are currently re-examining PAO. Coinciding with the show in Venice and Paris, a collaborative exhibition of works by makers and contemporaries (MOCAD), Venice, and Contemporary Museum, Diana, under the title Pattern, Decoration and Crime will be on view in addition, the Museum of Contemporary Art, DUBAI, is having a large-scale exhibition on PAO for 2020, which will subsequently travel to the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, and New York. 4 How do you explain this increased interest in the movement? What questions does today make us think about PAO?

J.K: Maybe it’s the inevitable cycle, the pendulum swing. Current art is pluralistic. Young artists are revisiting many past movements, and PAO is one of them. One sees it everywhere in the galleries. And we are living in such horrific times politically that people want to look at something beautiful and optimistic, that shows wider global ways of seeing and making.

KM: I really have no idea why there has been this renewed interest in Pattern and Decoration. It may be that there is actual fatigue of constant Warhol exhibitions. Or perhaps it is a desire to move away from the tyranny of technology for something more hands on, tactile rather than virtual. It may just be “missing history for genes.”

V.J: It’s very interesting to think about the younger generation and the tools they have to face today’s world, and the choices they will have to make. Graduate students in art and art history are truly global in outlook, and young artists from every part of the world—China, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Hungary, Germany, France, Spain, England—can talk the same language, understand each other’s work immediately and are curious about the world in similar ways. They all read contemporary theory, philosophy, and art history and are thoroughly comfortable with every corner of the internet. A curiosity regarding the decorative is a positive sign.

The PAO artists in the 1970s faced the world with brush in hand, but it was their openness to and embrace of other cultures and the world’s art that ultimately made a difference in their work and the way they thought.

Robert Zakriski. It was on the Pattern and Decoration works of the early seventies that I found the first stage of release from the rigidity of formality, while still being grateful for its thoughtful wisdom and a solid foundation based on the purity of materials. Up to that point in the history of art we artists had only two choices of subject matter representation and in the twentieth century, abstraction. Now, however, at the very root of the PAO concept was the discovery of a third subject matter which for me was the mysterious ideas and possibilities in the beauty of the use of ornamentation, a primal and expansive area that is always somewhere in the core of my paintings. All of this triggered the sense of a different kind of source from which art could be made, a source that was involved with feelings of compassion and humaneness and empathy and no longer a separate thing removed from us.

The rigid mainstream parameters of the modernist gave way to a boundless “beyond” of glorious things to feel and paint, such as delicate patterns, ornamentation, en plein air on design, designs from any culture in the world, folk art—which are sources that were considered too feminine and therefore trivial and referred to as “low art.” Also of importance was the re-embracing of the word “beauty,” which had disappeared from the art world in the late nineteenth century. It was here that I began to feel a kind of ephemeral clarity of what I wanted to do: Art work of art could now be shockingly soft and tender, sweet and romantic, and even sentimental. A seemingly endless source of imagery became accessible to me—imagery that I loved and grew up with and lived with but had not allowed in my paintings, firstly because of the severe restrictions of art historical formalist abstraction and, secondly and more importantly, because of the basic restrictions of gender role socialization, which was a major reason this movement encountered such difficulty in acceptance. It was considered dangerous because it went against the grain of all the masculine rites of passage, which are basically to show strength and sentimentality, beauty and even art itself as being sickless, weak, embarrassing, and embarrassing. But here we must also realize that one of the great powers of art is that it commands gender. It is as simple as that.
Then again with this revelation, slowly all this extraordinary imagery of great beauty that surrounded me was now becoming available to me—patterns and designs of all countries, jewelry, old wallpaper, and 1940s linoleum (our Aubussons). Rag rugs, lace, and knitted and crocheted objects (the my grandmother made), rug stores, domestic objects used as charms and adornments found in junk stores, flea markets, yard sales (that now became my museums and galleries). The shifting limitation on what art was supposed to look like, and he had finally lifted, and I felt the parameters of painting expanding. This ageless subject matter of ornamentation with its fresh new voice was now relating to all classes and away from the exclusivity of the world of academia and its stifling intellectualization that had never been able to realize this making art was not about how intellectual you were but rather about how to make your deepest feelings visible. This reveals an incident with my grandmother and grandfather: one spring they decided it was time to repaint the kitchen again, as they did every three years. They divided the walls horizontally into two colors. The bottom, four feet high or so, was a dark glossy brown and the top was a glossy cream. On the dividing line of the colors they applied a decorative stencil running completely around the kitchen. When I asked my grandmother why she did that her simple reply (in Italian) was, “Because it’s beautiful.” To this day I feel that her answer is still at the very center of all art making.

The source that I work from now, which I think of as a subtle but enormous shift, so much broader and generous, is a source that speaks of you and me and us and of our interconnectedness to each other and to all other things big and small. It speaks of new awarenesses made possible by quantum physics, of the fact that in each of our cells is contained the entire history of the universe, and it speaks of the finding concept of string theory and eleven dimensions. It speaks of “life force” and the oneness of each of us, all with the capacity, not always to destroy but to heal. It speaks of the diagramming and mapping of the genome. It speaks of vulnerabilities, civility, and humaneness; it speaks of planetary balance and the firmament that is constantly being torn. It speaks of the extraordinary technologies that have reduced the planet to an encyclopedia of visuals and changed the lives of every being. It speaks of evolution and the possibility to evolve away from our own planet mentality. It speaks of the universe (and now universes), of us and everything being made of the same material. This is in the ether now—very different from what was gesturing in the fifties to sixties and seventies.

My paintings directly question the myth of gender, because this work purposefully and consciously and specifically deals with sweetness, sentimentality, gentility, nurturing, caring, kindness, respect, and beauty, all of which were considered weaknesses, causing those qualities to be disregarded as to their true power as healers. The work continues to attack this stumbling block of gender thinking. It is interesting to me that we believe there is a preordained and acknowledged behavior for “manhood” and “womanhood,” never seeming to notice that they are sociological constructions partially based on fear factors, and are therefore impenetrable and prone to error. Whereas unlike the factual reality of “male” and “female” that is biological and scientific fact, both of these

facial realities of male and female are biologically contained in each man and woman. We are just beginning to scratch the surface as to just how deeply these yin and yang realities go.

There are new genders now. Maybe they are the beacon of our evolving forward.
A course in Chinese painting, which Brad Davis took while studying at Hunter College in New York in the late 1960s, left a lasting impression on him. It marks the start of what was to become a lifelong preoccupation with Asian fine arts—from motifs to compositional principles to the brushstroke—which was to also prove influential for other artists in the Pattern and Decoration movement. Admittedly, Davis’s early artistic ventures appear martial: the lyrical, abstract grounds teem with swastikas, eagles, daggers, explosions, suggesting repression and violence. Around 1975—the year Pattern and Decoration first took shape—Davis was inspired by the teachings of the Indian yogi Sri Chinmoy to apply himself to a more lyrical world; portrayals of plants and landscapes now began to predominate in his work. In this context, The Garden is of note; the installation, realized in collaboration with Ned Smyth at the Holly Solomon Gallery in 1977, includes paintings by the artist that simulate views of several (Oriental) gardens.

Animal motifs—dogs, birds, monkeys—gained in importance from the late 1970s on, and Davis framed them with conspicuously patterned polyesters, sometimes with a dual trim. A trip to India and an enduring absorption in Persian and Indian miniatures are notable influences. For subject matter too, the artist draws on Indian mythology in which animals often symbolize human characteristics; for instance, the stylized portrayal of two dogs in Sri’s Dogs / (1977) refers to the Hindu god Shiva and his fourlegged companion, the latter standing among other things for territorial attitudes (undesirable in Hinduism) and (self)protection. There’s an occasional splash of the red of the decorative floral border in Davis’s image—he often coordinates the colors of the content and the trim—while the dogs are rendered with such linear clarity as to be arabesques themselves; they are embedded in a pictorial space that is not so much illusionistic as ornamental.

Davis’s interest in painterly depictions of movement and flow—and hence in dispelling fixed concepts of form and space—is evinced particularly by the water motif found in many of his images (Night Cry, 1979); and, likewise, by the “omnidirectional” tondo, a form of support the artist used, in particular from the early 1980s on, to portray different times of day, for instance, or the changing seasons (All Seasons, 1980). Besides the gestural ductus and dynamic pictorial surfaces, the Faustian use of color is characteristic of every phase of Davis’s oeuvre, and it consistently lends a facticious or dreamlike quality even to his representations of nature. Thus Davis numbers among those “figurative” Pattern and Decoration artists who enjoy transferring the principles of ornament—fitness, momentum, artificiality—to metaphorical motives and narrative contexts. / Manuela Ammer
Frank Faulkner's paintings resemble large tapestries or Persian rugs while at the same time reviving the aesthetics of ancient metalwork or wooden screens; hence underscoring the conception that fine art cannot be separated from handicraft work. Like most Pattern and Decoration artists, Faulkner was active in New York during the 1970s and participated in a number of exhibitions of the movement. His paintings, however, derive from the bright and multicolored works by, for example, Kim MacConnel, Robert Kushner, and Miriam Shapiro.

InUntitled (1977?78), Faulkner uses seemingly subdued uniform and earthy colors, which he applies in patterns that remind the viewer of planar metalwork. This structure, however, consists of rhombic, smaller clusters composed of single dots, lines, and dashes drawn on paper. The individual elements are surprisingly detailed once the viewer approaches the painting. Brighter colors like pink, orange, and purple appear on and in between the darker brushstrokes. Countless lines and dots interfere with each other in a multilayered, yet systematic composition in regular intervals, collage-like rectangles, and dots are mounted on top of them. The relief-like application of the colors stands in contrast to the smooth paper support of the painting. Rather than referring openly to the decorative, Faulkner is fascinated with the combination of and transition between various grids, which he emphasizes through the use of lively shapes and colors that remain covert until viewed up close.

The same level of intricacy is recognizable in Atlantis II (Undated), a painting that first of all raises the association of a large-scale map or labyrinth. The work depicts Atlantis, the legendary, mythical island kingdom described in Plato's Kratos. Composed of vertical and horizontal lines, the triangular figure sitting in the rectangle resembles the shape of the main island. Atlantis was thought to be surrounded by rectangular, constructed canals, resulting in numerous inner islands connecting the main land to the sea. In Faulkner's painting, these islands envelop the central rectangular shape in the form of smaller squares. According to Plato's description, Atlantis was rich in resources like gold, silver, and orichalcum (a metal mentioned in several ancient writings and today understood to be brass). This is reflected in the tactile surface of the work but also in Faulkner's use of thin layers of shimmering yet natural colors like gold and copper tone. The painting appears to have undergone an organic aging process; the metal colors are toned down rather than "polished" and a greenish shimmer makes the surface look ancient, as if it had been exposed to and worn down by seawater. The decorative nature of the pearly colors Faulkner used in Atlantis II makes a contrast to the strict arrangement of pattern grids. It is through this confrontation that Faulkner achieves a visually intriguing dialogue between decoration on the one hand, and pattern on the other. / Denise Petrol

Frank Faulkner: Atlantis II (Undated), Acrylic on canvas, 1975 | 1978 or (71.0 x 70.2 cm), Courtesy: Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, on loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation
In addition to dance, performance, photography, and drawing, Tina Girouard’s artistic oeuvre encompasses installation projects executed in materials such as wallpaper, fabric, lino, or metal. The artist was a prime mover behind one of New York’s first non-commercial alternative art spaces, 112 Greene Street, which in the early 1970s quickly evolved as a new hub of innovative, interdisciplinary experimentation. Here, Girouard realized collaborative projects along with Gordon Matta-Clark and Suzanne Harris, who shared her fascination with architecture and space. Serially punched metal sheeting or lengths of wallpaper, for example, were used to create hybrids of installation and mural that play directly with their setting, overlaying and reconfiguring it.

Walls (Wallpaper II) (1974). Girouard combined four different industrially manufactured wallpapers featuring Bedenmeier motifs: ornamental floral patterns, stripes, and artful arrangements of pine branches and cones. A strip of each of the wallpapers was pasted on cotton cheesecloth. The upper and lower borders of the latter were left exposed. The strips together comprise a large square. The dirty elegant design in subtle tones of pink evokes a comforting sense of security; the exhibition venue thus becomes a private "home"—this is a recurrent theme in Girouard’s work.

Walls (Wallpaper III) is accompanied by an eponymous graphic work on squared paper consisting of a sketch and a description of the wallpapers’ formal structure. Instructions for installation of the work show that it was intended for permanent display. The affinity both for everyday materials and a purely decorative approach reveals how determined Tina Girouard and many of her Pattern and Decoration peers were to move beyond the academic practices of framing art for the wall and instead allow their work to unfold in, and open up space. Sequentiality and repetition attained by modulating color and pattern were nevertheless retained as rigorous compositional principles.

Likewise in the small-scale drawings with colored pencils in her series Text Pattern Sequence (1974), the artist experimented with four different combinations of patterns composed of crosses, dots, floral forms, and stars. “My use of pattern comes from a desire to communicate to a mass audience, that is to say, that repetition is common in industry and thus in life. This familiarity attracts the viewer’s attention and, at the same time, its mundaneness negates the need to focus in on a particular pattern.” / Esther Boehm

Of the artists associated with Pattern and Decoration, it is Valerie Jaudon who in her paintings most closely maintains the geometric abstraction of modernism. Early on in her career, Jaudon declared in an interview that “emphasizing the peripheral stabilizes the center.” The predominant conventions and values had to be shifted and realigned from the inside out. Accordingly, after periods of study in Mexico and London as well as trips to Morocco and across Europe, the artist found inspiration in the oeuvre of Frank Stella, who had likewise experimented in his early works with symmetrical arrangements of uniformly broad, monochromatic stripes. Jaudon shared Stella’s fascination both with the formal idiom of architecture and the intricate patterns of Islamic orscriptions and Celtic illuminations. Yet from the outset her focus was their socio-cultural dimension, which is to say, their impact on collective experience; in her view these were vital counterweight to that individualism personified to this day by the “male” Western artist.

Jaudon distanced herself from that traditional approach with an, in the postmodern sense, esoteric deployment of means and methods in her work: superimposing several grids propelled the logic of repetition and symmetry towards intricately intertwining decorative motifs and hence closer to those activities, such as knitting and weaving traditionally connoted as “women’s work.” (The 1977/78 issue of the journal OstkREISE, for which Jaudon and Joyce Kornfeld assumed joint editorship, compiled their legendary list of misogynist art-historical quotations, was dedicated explicitly to such “handicrafts.”) While Jaudon initially used as many as two hundred color shades or more per painting, she drastically reduced this range in 1974—which resulted in white, black, gray or metallic monochromes, the all-over structures of which evince a strongly graphic character (Lemaitre, 1978). A further shift occurs around 1979 in paintings such as Hatsburg (1979), the figure all-over pattern definitively gives way to a vertical orientation; architectural elements seemingly inspired by Gothic or Roman arches and gables create spatial and perspectival effects which the artist shortly afterwards begins to underscore by adding a second and then a third color.

As of 1985—the last year in which Jaudon named her paintings after cites in her native state of Mississippi—her work became more emblematic, with the interlocking grids now giving way to increasingly distinct figure-ground structures. A series of public art commissions, including the design of an urban square and garden, allowed Jaudon’s interest in architecture to come to fruition in public space. Playing with expectations remained a constant: the attempt to pin down the logic of her designs always ends in geometric impracticalities, inescapable labyrinths, and dead ends, and thus constitutes a structural equivalent to our experience of the world in which we live. / Manuela Anner
Joyce Kozloff, who has been active as a feminist since the 1970s (among other things, she co-founded the magazine Heresies), began her artistic career as a painter. During a lengthy sojourn in Mexico in 1973, intense exploration of indigenous ornamental traditions prompted her first to question the conventional hierarchical distinction between “high art” and decor, and then in her paintings to interpret, on an increasingly large scale, details of motifs from woven rugs or ceramic tiles. An ongoing preoccupation with geometric patterns in Islamic art, a trip to Morocco, and not least, discussion with those artists who, from 1973 on, had joined forces under the banner “Pattern and Decoration,” led Kozloff dissatisfied with merely portraying ornamental systems. She decided to quit canvas and soon afterwards realized her first installation, An Interior Decorated (1978/79).

While originally conceived for the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, New York, a venue renowned for its comprehensive collection of ceramic art, the interior was subsequently adapted for display in several other American institutions. Its centerpiece was always the impressive, richly ornamented mosaic floor composed of almost one thousand hexagonal and star-shaped ceramic tiles which the artist had cut out herself using cookie cutters, and then painted, gazed, and fired. In this, her “personal anthology of the decorative arts,” Kozloff brought together a huge variety of ornamental traditions yet kept the specifics of each of them intact: Native American ceramics, Persian miniatures, Berber carpets, Egyptian mosaics, Viennese Art Nouveau, and so forth. Wall hangings of silk and cotton surrounding the tile floor were silkscreen printed with patterns of Islamic and Egyptian origin (the latter inspired by the “Tutankhamun” exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in New York). A further feature was a series of lithographs with the titles “Is a Sin High Art?”

This installation in which painting, sculpture, and architecture are fused and various craft traditions are cited along with countless decorative systems, launched Kozloff on a new phase of creative endeavor: From the 1980s on, she executed a series of ambitious art projects in airports, subway stations, train stations, and the like, thereby allotting an even greater role to regional visual idioms and figurative motifs. The artist thus laid claim in her work to a sphere that had long been the focus of ornamental aspirations: public space, with its complex history as the site of representation, of manifestations of community, and not infrequently, also of culture clashes. (Manuela Ammer)
Jesus Kauff. *Turkish Wallpaper* (detail, 1979)
Silkscreen print, 140 × 195 cm (55.1 × 77.1 in.)
Museum für Moderne Kunst, Stiftung Ludwig, Wien, on loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation
While studying at the University of California in San Diego, Robert Kushner made the acquaintance, not only of Kim MacConnel—who, like himself, was fascinated by Oriental carpets, kitsch, and Chinese clip art books—but also of the art historian Amy Goldin, whose influence on theoretical discussions of Pattern and Decoration was unrivaled in her time. Based in New York from 1972 onwards, the artist worked primarily on performance pieces that were presented, for example, at 98 Greene Street, an alternative arts loft space directed by the art collector and later gallery owner Holly Solomon, along with her husband, Ira. These performances were inspired by formats such as the fashion show, piazzant, courtly masque, and variety theater; Kushner made the costumes himself from everyday (even edible) materials. In 1974 he embarked with Goldin on a three-month voyage to Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan, which was to leave a lasting impression. For his first solo show at the Holly Solomon Gallery in 1976 the artist used the form of the chador—the traditional garment of women in Iran, as a support for richly decorated paintings that likewise served in Persian Line Part II (1975), as costumes; the paintings were taken down from the walls for the performance and then rehung afterwards.

Following extensive tours throughout Europe, where, among other things, he showed the performance piece Layered (1977), in which splotches features as a metaphor for transformation, Kushner shifted his focus more decisively to painting. For the exhibition Arabesque at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati in 1978, he created Cincinnati ABC, an expansive fabric environment which, given its brilliant colors and eccentric forms, demonstrates par excellence the practices and motifs important to him then besides the chador; it features botanical patterns based on textile designs of the French entomologist Eugène Sélys (1890–1915).

In addition, for the first time Kushner made use of a technique he had learned of on a trip to India in 1977: areas of the painted support fabrics were cut away and replaced by glittering chiffons added from behind.

Increasingly, the human figure also began to play a larger role, almost as if the bodies were now crossing over from the performances to the canvas. Ikats (1978) is one example of a group of fabric paintings, in which Kushner oriented himself to German Expressionism—to the portraiture of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Alexej von Jawlensky. At the heart of these works, which rank among Kushner’s greatest commercial successes, are fashionable female figures and women’s faces which repetition mirroring, and the invention of color propel into a decorative format. Around 1982, Kushner entered a “more classic” phase of drawing from the model, which ultimately led him to explore mythological themes. In parallel, inspired by another trip to India he created his first sculptural works in metal and soon afterwards received public art commissions. Finally in the late 1980s, Kushner began painting floral compositions, and he has remained true to this quintessential decorative motif ever since. /Manuela Ammer

[Image of Robert Kushner artworks]
Thomas Langan-Schmidt creates surreal effects from profane materials, as in _The Mystical Supper_ (1977), a devotional image of the Last Supper painted on roughly stapled Saran wrap and aluminum foil and then laminated. The artist brought together numerous such icons in his works _Iconostasis_ (1976–78). In Orthodox churches, this kind of richly decorated, freestanding screen with three doors separates the altar from the nave, hence, the divine from the worldly realm. Executed in great detail, Langan-Schmidt’s installation corresponds in terms of its structure and visual agenda to this classic devotional element; but instead of precious woodcarvings, paint, and gold leaf, the artist used simple wooden slats, reflective foil, staples, and marker pens. The individual panels were meticulously handcrafted: numerous layers of foil were placed onto stretcher frames, painted, molded into ornamental forms and framing elements, then stapled onto the underlying layers. The sculpture _A Rite of Passage_ (1974–85)—additionally incorporates tinsel, Christmas tree baubles, candy wrappers, and glittery collectible cards depicting saints, for example.

In this way, Langan-Schmidt not only makes a stand against the sober style of Minimalism and formal abstract painting. His art of irrational excellence also combines “high art” and spirituality with pop culture and trash; and in the late 1960s he succeeded thus in bringing religion back into art with deconsecrating flair: His witty, ludic interpretation of traditional symbolism speaks not so much of critical absurdity as of an endeavor to master seemingly insurmountable contradictions between social classes as well as between his unwavering Catholic faith and his homosexuality, which he has been open about from an early age. In the late 1960s Langan-Schmidt was a pioneer of the gay rights movement in the USA and to this day he remains a major reference for queer artists.

His art is well and truly postmodern—it ramps up the camp, breaks with taboos, and transgresses the bounds of normative “good taste.” From everyday objects Langan-Schmidt creates art works of an almost Baroque opulence, thereby blurring the line between folk art and kitsch. Since his art dealer and agent Holly Solomon represented several artists active in the Pattern and Decoration movement, he too was rapidly and somewhat reluctantly linked with it in the late 1970s. The artistic references in his work are diverse however; they touch upon autobiographical aspects, cite “high” and “low art,” and draw on mythological and biblical sources, political and social commentaries, and humorous elements. For around fifty years Thomas Langan-Schmidt has been confronting us with his highly idiosyncratic world of tacky giza, plastic wrap, and scenes, a world in which homosexuality and religion need not be in conflict with each other. / Esther Boehe
The works by Kim MacConnel, one of the pioneers of the Pattern and Decoration movement, captivate their viewer with their colorfulness and diverse multicultural imagery. Besides depicting a broad range of fruits and flowers, as well as commercial products like bicycles, TVs, and washing machines, MacConnel has been significantly influenced by non-Western, particularly Islamic and Chinese, art. Studying at the University of San Diego in California together with Robert Kushner; in the late 1960s he met the art critic Amy Goldin, who became a mentor to both artists. Of particular interest to MacConnel was Goldin’s fascination with Islamic art which led him to study kilims, a type of woven carpet traditionally produced in the former Ottoman Empire, Iran, and Central Asia, as well as a weaving technique called khat where yarn is dyed in sections before being processed.

Soon, MacConnel examined the carpets’ compositional systems by tracing their patterns. This led him to cut and recombine patterned fabrics and bedsheets. The fragmentation and shuffling of various textiles is apparent in many of his works, for example in *House of Chan* (1975), whose color palette and language of form at first sight evoke the work of Henri Matisse. The pastiche-like composition of fabric strips however, results in a complex surface of visually disparate drawn patterns. Elements like fans and lanterns illustrate MacConnel’s fascination with Chinese imagery.

Throughout his artistic career, MacConnel leaned on features from utilitarian fabric design commonly associated with “women’s craft.” He not only made the processing of fabric and textiles his main concern but also appropriated domestic objects as visual elements. One example is the sewing machines in *Exotic Travel* (1978), which point to the movement to which the artist belongs but also serve as an indispensable tool for the creation of the work itself. Through his intertwining of domestic and multicultural elements brought forward by an intermedial approach to technique and material, MacConnel emphasizes issues pertinent to postmodern art: the role of women, the influence of globalization, and the rejection of purely Minimalist or conceptual frameworks.

The graphic series *Ten Items or Less* (1979/80) is inspired by Chinese advertising magazines, which the artist discovered in a bookstore in Chinatown, New York City. Meandered by the overlapping images—their arrangement followed no apparent logical system—MacConnel appropriated them in a manner reminiscent of Pop Art.

Like Robert Kushner, who presented his artworks in self-staged fashion shows, MacConnel was also involved with performance. The installation *Pagode* (1976) originally housed four musicians (with two toy organs and two toy pianos), who performed a musical piece called *Mr. Burt his Memory of Mr White his Fantasy of Mr Dunstable his Music.* Initiated by the composer Warren Burt, the musicians played fragments of works by the English Renaissance composer John Dunstable. *Pagode* is made out of a painted carton onto which MacConnel applied colorful, hand-drawn fabrics. An Asian paper umbrella protrudes from the work. As the earliest work by MacConnel in the Ludwig Collection, it reminds the viewer of an old-fashioned decorative music box. / Denise Patzold

*Kim MacConnel, Watermelons (detail, installation view), 1976. Acrylic paper collage on paper, 160 × 70.5 cm (63 × 27.8 in). Ludwig Museum für moderne Kunst, Kärntner Straße, Vienna. (Photo: Jürgen Hein, loan of the Peter and Irene Ludwig Foundation)*
Kim MacConnel, **Gibbe**, 1979
Acrylic and enamel varnish on cotton
238 × 302 cm (93⅞ × 118⅞ in.)
Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest, donation of Peter and Hanna Ludwig.
Before turning to Pattern and Decoration, Miriam Schapiro achieved recognition in the late 1960s as an abstract painter. When she taught at CalArts (California Institute of the Arts), Los Angeles, in the early 1970s, Schapiro became actively engaged with feminism. Together with Judy Chicago, whom she had met earlier, she founded the Feminist Art Program. The program aimed to bring the lives, experiences, and fantasies of female artists together with their artistic aspirations and had a profound impact on the development of feminist art in the U.S. Schapiro was also a founding member of the Hysters Collective, a group of women who published the periodical Hysters: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics.

Schapiro’s role in initiating and organizing these groups has been and still is considered indispensable. Yet it was in Pattern and Decoration that she found a way to visually articulate her concern with the role of women in art history. Schapiro questioned the status of women as “objects” and was driven by an unstoppable desire to explore her own female artistic ancestry. Pattern and Decoration enabled her to elaborate the artistic value of the decorative. The movement also gave her room to explore and express a significant part of her own life in meaningful artistic ways: domesticity, homemaking, and nesting.

Schapiro began making works aimed at closing the gap between art and the everyday life of women through the use of diverse fabrics taken from dresses, tablecloths, aprons, and coverlets. She termed these works “femmages”: collages and assemblages of women’s work, in the shape of kimonos, hearts, houses, fans, and vestures, with female content and created for women. Drawing from increasingly autobiographical sources during her career, painting and collaging printed fabrics became a means to confirm the strength and particularity of domesticity throughout history. The semi-circular Geometry in Flowers (1978) and Pink Light Fan (1979), for example, feature a pastiche of various printed fabrics in the shape of a large fan. Twenty-four radial spokes from lustrous fabrics in soft colors remind the viewer of a romantic sunrise. Monumental in dimension, however, the works question the divide between women’s work and “high art.”

The quilted appearance of the co-added, symmetrical pieces is not only a formal strategy but at the same time the content of the works. Patchwork has been central to Schapiro’s art. This aspect becomes especially visible in Crazy Kaotic Carpet (1973). Different scraps of fabric and paper seem to explode from a painted, central point of rotation as if the work itself gave birth to a conglomerate of textiles. By fragmenting, scattering, and overlapping these pieces, Schapiro sought to find an expression for the notion of a non-fixed female identity. In Domer (1979), the artist uses paint and countless pieces of fabric to create a house-shaped collage. The work illustrates how Schapiro employed the grid not as a pure form, but rather as a formal system. Square shreds of fabric, arranged in grids, stand in noticeable visual tension with the organic shapes that look like walls of smoke emanating from the house. This juxtaposition recalls Schapiro’s insight that “domesticity is also chaos.” Throughout her career, Schapiro approached this chaos in a constantly changing and energetic manner, with dedication and sentiment. / Denise Peterson

Miriam Schapiro, Crazy Kaotic Carpet (1973), Acrylic, textiles, paper on canvas, 133.5 x 127 cm (52 x 50 in.)

Ludwig Forum für internationale Kunst, Aachen, Issu of the Peter and Irene Ludwig Foundation
Kendal Shaw's abstract painting Bethune (1978) clearly reveals to us the formal roots of the Pattern and Decoration movement: the frequently gridlike visual frame serves as a kind of substructure while repetition is used to attain an overall planar composition reminiscent of a woven tapestry. These two visual strategies also informed the work of Minimalist painters, who relied mostly on geometric elements to structure an image. Shaw and other artists of the Pattern and Decoration movement tended rather to draw on everyday instances of abstraction in which formal repetition unfolds an emotional impact and colorfulness holds immediate appeal for the senses, and hence is physically engaging.

Energy, sensuality, and musical elements are the core preoccupation and message of the paintings of Shaw, who graduated in chemistry before studying art with Mark Rothko, among other mentors. In Bethune he combines countless small squares and diagonal lines to create a rhythmic grid. Modulating this basic form and highlighting the striking contrasts in a spectrum of warm, earthy tones makes the canvas appear to vibrate or even hum, generating a pattern of sound subject to ever novel variations: single parts recur yet always in modified form. In places, one can see the coarse, unprimed canvas support between the squares as well as faint traces on it of the grid scratched out in pencil. The artist plays and experiments in multifarious ways with the material properties of the paint. While applied on the margins a glossy and bound matt with the canvas, on the squares in the foreground its effect is of impasto with an especially glossy sheen, which heightens the dynamism of this intensely haptic work.

Mosaics or traditional handwoven textiles evidently inspired the composition. Kendal Shaw was fascinated by the play of individual elements assembled into larger units and then as such, repeated in subtle variations. If on the one hand the mosaic elements are formalized by patterning, on the other hand the craft in technical execution lends them an individual character: Besides Shaw's interest in handicrafts of a wide range of cultures, he has been influenced by the music of his birthplace, New Orleans, specifically jazz. According to Shaw, art is a revelation—for the recipient and the artist alike. "Patternings in painting mirrored my personally scientific perception of universal reality as vibrating energy in space. I attempted to create visual music that celebrated reflected energy of colored light by painting rhythmically spaced squares of color on canvas." With their musical rhythmic compositions in which small pulsating vibrating areas of color meet, Kendal Shaw's works are truly a highly individual modus operandi; at the same time his artistic approach, with its formal image composition, also stands as a prime example of the Pattern and Decoration movement. / Esther Boeije
Living periodically in Italy as a child, Ned Smyth was decisively influenced by the visual and emotional impressions of European architecture. The archaeological sites, museums, and cathedrals that he would visit with his father, the Renaissance art historian Craig Hughes Smyth, came to be the explicit source of the Judeo-Christian references visible throughout his oeuvre. In an effort to mediate the experience of reverence that he perceived in these places, Smyth has created complex architectural environments (a majority of which were public commissions), which he articulated through a language of forms reminiscent of ancient architectures.

When he joined the New York art scene at the beginning of the 1970s, however, Smyth wrapped his work in the cloak of Minimalism. Concentrating on modular compositions and gray surfaces, this formal way of working helped him arrive at his architectural representations. It was through exhibiting at Holly Solomon Gallery that Ned Smyth met and befriended Brad Davis in the late 1970s. Inspired by Davis’s use of color in painting, Smyth broke with Minimalist limitations, and found in decoration the possibility to re-contextualize his historical source material in order to develop a more personal, expressive style.

Fabrics, mosaics, and ceramics were the mediums Smyth chose to turn color and decoration into crucial elements of his work. As historical materials that can be found, for example, in the interiors of cathedrals, they proved an ideal means to pursue the concept of reverence that still captivated Smyth. Subsequently, he unified his historical, architectural approach with decorative arts.

In Philadelphia Colonnade (1979), Smyth formulates a synthesis between the motifs of the palm and columns that are drawn from Egyptian architecture, thereby connecting culture and nature. Philadelphia Colonnade was the first work in which Smyth utilized fabric. It depicts a dynamic pattern with images of plant and animal life, which surround the stylized palm trees that symbolize life and growth. A comparable arabesque pattern is depicted in Portale Fish and Fabric (1979), which stems from the same period. In the drawing, Smyth investigates depth and surface movement of the goldfinch—which also stands for the unconscious, for ideas and insights that we only catch glimpses of—enhances the viewer’s perception of depth, whereas the pattern emphasizes the work’s surface qualities.

Gradually, Smyth’s emphasis shifted from forms to surfaces. With this shift, his imagery became more narrative. Colorful mosaics were the most fitting material for this process, since they have been used as a medium for figuration throughout history. In The Deep (1985), Smyth combines aspects of the sculptural and the pictorial as well as the architectural and the figurative. The work depicts a belly dancing woman in a moonlit garden, an image which at first sight evokes critical associations of the sexualization and exoticism brought by the male gaze. However, it is through the female figure that Smyth wants to examine men’s attraction to women as well as question their fear of embracing or expressing their own femininity. The extravagance of the scene is enhanced by the glistening, shiny mosaic. The belly dancer symbolizes the freedom to enjoy sensuality as well as emotions and thus stands for a new conception of Smyth’s work—one that the artist was only able to identify and express with the help of decoration. / Denise Retzold

Ned Smyth, Portale Fish & Fabric (1979)
Mixed media on paper: 63.5 x 41.3 cm (25 x 16.2"
Museum: Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, © image from the Artist/Ludwig Foundation
When Robert Zakanitch met Miriam Shapiro at the University of California in San Diego in 1974, he had already made a name for himself in the New York art scene for his reduced color-field paintings. Both artists, however, were seeking alternative artistic routes, sensing that minimalist painting had come to an end. Desiring to break free from established intellectual artistic rules, his paintings claim that beauty in art is neither a simple nor a disreputable concept, it is something rich and complex that must be achieved. Zakanitch also acknowledged that beauty resonates deeply within the viewer: "Art can plant seeds of optimism deep in the human psyche?" Denise Peterson

In the mid-1970s, Zakanitch developed graceful surface designs reminiscent of garden structures, feathered cloths, and exquisite Victorian textiles. He also continued to employ tools from his abstract phase Blue Hound (1978) and Tea Party (1979) illustrate how a sensitivity to formalist issues, particularly the grid and an awareness of the paintings' edges, remained crucial to the artist. Of almost mural dimensions, the triptychs by far exceed the notion of "simple" decoration. In each work's central panel, large blooming flowers are arranged in a rhythmic pattern. The motifs stop abruptly at the central panel's edges. Different smaller floral designs are depicted on the side panels. The outer borders of the triptychs are painted white, as if to simulate the transition between canvas and wall. Constructing the works by combining and adding various panels corresponds to Zakanitch's idea that a painting could potentially be wrapped around an entire room. When observing the alignment of the patterns, it also becomes clear that the grid remains a foundation for compositional codes, as can even be seen in Flash (1979), where ornate vines and lushous flowers intertwine to form a repetitive pattern similar to a sheet of wallpaper. Zakanitch's embrace of the decorative grew out of a desire to broaden the formal language of art through additive rather than reductive ideas that changed dramatically in his practice was not the use of formalist procedures but the "content" he applied them to.

Zakanitch brought forward a celebratory lunacy that questioned the notion of beauty within art. Beauty, for the artist, was a means to break free from established intellectual artistic rules. His paintings claim that beauty in art is neither a simple nor a disreputable concept, it is something rich and complex that must be achieved. Zakanitch also acknowledged that beauty resonates deeply within the viewer: "Art can plant seeds of optimism deep in the human psyche?" Denise Peterson

Robert Zakanitch, Flash, 1979
Acrylic on canvas, 247 x 210 cm, 97 x 82.7 in.
Courtesy Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien
 ingin from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation
Throughout his artistic career, Joe Zucker has explored the boundaries of painting. In the 1960s, he started at The Art Institute of Chicago by making paintings in which he reproduced the canvases’ weave structures—resulting, so to speak, in portraits of canvases. Since then, Zucker has been interested in examining the construction of painting by manipulating its materiality. He considers his paintings to be objects with sculptural qualities by using unusual materials such as cotton and Rhoplex—an acrylic, colorless binder—Zucker’s works obtain unique topographies that move beyond the scope of traditional easel paintings.

Zucker began exhibiting with the Solomon Gallery in 1977 and has subsequently been associated with the Pattern and Decoration movement yet his paintings can hardly be labeled as purely decorative. His connection to Pattern and Decoration rather lies in his interest in grids, the emphasis of craftsmanship, and questioning what has been associated with “low art.” Central to his work is the idea that constructing a painting is not dependent on artistic genius but craft-related, practical knowledge that can be passed on from generation to generation. Zucker embraces the idea of process instead of completed stylistic resolutions and thus consistently moves between various styles. The lack of a coherent style allows his paintings to depart from various subject matter and therefore to constitute open-ended considerations of materiality and conception of image and process.

In Two Male Pirates in the South China Sea (1978), Zucker intertwines subject matter, materials, and history to create an eccentric and comical imagery, inspired by unconventional references in the art world—particularly outsider art and humor—the frivolity of the work is reminiscent of the language of pop culture. In this way, the pirates function as a metaphor for the artist himself: they drift through the world by help of their intuition, looking for goods (of history) to steal. The scene, which depicts a sailing ship and a junk crossing each other in shark-filled waters, illustrates Zucker’s visual strategy. By applying Rhoplex on cotton, Zucker creates thick-layered but sweeping brushstrokes. The use of cotton, a historically charged material, refers on the one hand to the harvesting and shipping of cotton related to slavery and plantation work, and on the other hand to the domestic making of clothing or carpets.

In Splitter de Mortel (1979), Rhoplex is used to tackle the idea of the grid by methodologically filling empty spaces of a preformed structure with the acrylic. In the painting, Zucker uses the grid as a pattern and tool to investigate different degrees of abstraction and figuration: the depicted homemaker and his horse are barely visible. The effect is intensified by the glossy surface obtained through the Rhoplex which eventually gives the impression of a decoratively stained glass window. In this way, Zucker transforms the grid—a central motif of Minimal and Concept Art—into a functional tool in order to achieve a unique, physical density.

Denise Petzold
CHRONOLOGY
Selected Group Exhibitions, Meetings and Panels 1975–today

1977

- Fried. “Fashion in Painting.”
  The College Art Association, Los Angeles, California (11.3.1977).
- Makower, A. Group exhibition.
  “If I Had a Million,” Robert Polidori, Robert Rubinstein, Alfredo Rodriguez.

1976

- Fried, R. Group exhibition.
- Deitch, P. Group exhibition.

1975

- Fried, R. Group exhibition.

- Fried, R. Group exhibition.
- Deitch, P. Group exhibition.

1974

- Fried, R. Group exhibition.
- Deitch, P. Group exhibition.

1973

- Fried, R. Group exhibition.
- Deitch, P. Group exhibition.

1972

- Fried, R. Group exhibition.
- Deitch, P. Group exhibition.

1971

- Fried, R. Group exhibition.
- Deitch, P. Group exhibition.

1970

- Fried, R. Group exhibition.
- Deitch, P. Group exhibition.

1969

- Fried, R. Group exhibition.
- Deitch, P. Group exhibition.
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JOSEPHINE WOODS is an American artist and writer based in Mexico. Her work explores the relationship between painting and writing, and she has received fellowships and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the American Academy in Rome. Her paintings are featured in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Her writing has been published in journals such as Artforum and Arts magazine.