

A CREATIVE PROJECT IN THE DESIGN
OF PRINTED TEXTILES FOR
CONTEMPORARY INTERIORS

by

MERLIN G. DOW

A THESIS

Presented to the Department
of Architecture and Allied Arts
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

June 1947

APPROVED:

[REDACTED]

(Advisor for the Thesis)

(For the Committee)

The written material herein is
meant merely as a supplement to
the creative project, a factual
record of accomplishment.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION TO THE CREATIVE PROJECT	1
THE CREATIVE PROJECT	8
BIBLIOGRAPHY	10

INTRODUCTION TO THE CREATIVE PROJECT

Textiles always have been definitive of an age. To see an Empire toile is to sense the sweep of the Napoleonic era, with its return to the cold magnificence of classical times, and its expanding imperial domination; to see a Modernistic textile is to feel the chaotic struggle for constants after the first World War. Today, just as ever, art in any form is a result of, and must reveal its own period. The design of present-day textiles can be no exception. Contemporary fabrics must express the bold freedom, the extreme casualness, the swift pace, the political expansion, and the arrogance of a young nation now more powerful than any other in the world.

Architecture was one of the first art forms to begin creation in terms of our present. It began a return to the essentials of structure, accepted change as an inevitable element of man and his environment, took dynamic rather than static qualities as a basis for life. The result today is an ever-changing architecture that demands attention from every other art form.

Contemporary architecture is an articulation of space

founded on the basic equilibrium of horizontal and vertical surfaces. Rather than being conceived in terms of solidity and mass, it is conceived in terms of composition of infinite variety within space; just as space in modern physics is relative to a moving point, so is space in contemporary architecture relative to a moving, functioning life of man in flux.

Problems in modern architecture are never identical, but there are constants of theory which underly each problem. Architecture is considered an organism which plastically grows from the inside out, as in nature itself, resulting in the most logical structure for the demands of the human in his environment. Man is no longer considered an absolute individual, but instead, a social individual who is relative to what goes on about him. Structures are now built for the present, not for the future generations to whom architecture will have a new meaning. The nucleus of architecture, therefore, arises from the demands of the site, to the needs of the social individual, to the structure of the state, to the world as affected by space and time. Order is one of the dominant human needs, so particulars are subordinated to the whole to form a unity in which saneness and symmetry of being predominate.

For these reasons modern architecture stresses function

and structure and beauty. These in turn include: adaptability, which allows addition; flexibility, which allows change within upon demand; space articulation, which gives a simultaneous relationship between the outside and the inside, a feeling of spaciousness as a result of harmonious relationships of scale; the use of new and local materials for themselves to gain an affinity with the earth and for the enrichment of the plain surface; and, the emphasis upon light, hygienics, ease, naturalness, and informality.

Through all these things contemporary architecture strives to create a precision instrument whose function is aiding men to gain the greatest benefit out of life, to form an organism patterned to human needs as a result of both a conscious plan and an emotional response to space and time.

This movement in architecture has necessitated a reformation in the design of textiles employed in interiors. The need for competent and creative designers in the textile field is obvious. Even today there is too little concern for the basic function of textiles, for the design of textiles appearing in actual use, for the relationship of textiles to the total architectural plan. The apparently inexhaustible market for fabrics has caused manufacturers to base their lines on sales and the catch phrase "public taste"

rather than on the validity of good design. This is the cause for a flood of period copies and floral pieces that neither express the feeling of modern life nor have any correlation with the function they must perform in contemporary interiors. Just as there is no place for unrelated decoration in modern architecture, there is no place for the unrelated, purely decorative fabric. There have been periods in the past when textiles were used for their aesthetic appeal alone, but contemporary life demands that fabrics be functional as well as aesthetic. That is their reason for being. Textiles can define the basic forms of the total and the particular parts of the architectural whole, can offer flexible walls, can integrate the entire architectural effect, and can control light upon demand. Textiles too can create added space experiences, can supply color where it is needed, can create a greater variety of texture for further interest, and can please both the senses and the intellect at the same time. Thus, contemporary textiles, in addition to their purely aesthetic qualities, should be considered constituent elements of the complete architectural design.

The artist-craftsman of this creative project has designed his textiles with the above theories as a basis.

The artist has sought in this project to create prin-

ted textiles for contemporary interiors through organization and structure within space. To build in space he has regarded the fabric itself the center of the spatial field and has allowed a controlled play of opposing forces behind, before, and through this field. He has related the positive space to the negative space, making the void as important a consideration as the solid. To aid in the control of space, he has employed the scale variations, the inertia, the tensions, the overlapping, the interpenetration, and the transparency of planes and lines. He has accentuated color, taking into account both the physical properties and the psychological functions native to color. He has stressed the natural texture of the material upon which the designs were printed, the specific texture within the designs themselves, and the total textural effects of entire printed samples. He has sought unity and rhythm and movement in the single design motif as well as the entire printed sample by means of repetition and variation of the elements with which he worked. He has attempted to maintain the qualities inherent in printed textiles, both as they appear in the total flat design area and as they appear in a particular function. He has tried to achieve vitality through boldness of contrast as well as through subtlety of relationships. Realizing that all elements in each design have a dynamic inter-

relationship, he has considered relativity one of the foremost qualities of organization. To increase interest in this creative project, and because he did not have specific practical problems, such as commissions, with which to work, he has attempted to design for as great a variety of situations as possible within the limits of the handprint processes for textiles.

The fabrics in this project, handprinted by both the silk screen process and the linoleum handblock method, have been designed for either commercial mass production or handprinted commission sales. Actually there is no compromise between industry and art in such a case. Though custom designs for a single specific problem are financially out of the question for most of the general public, such designs are important in that they can bring to the attention of manufacturers and consumers alike the current developments and applications of design in the textile fields. In that way they are invaluable because they can aid greatly in raising the standards of design in commercial industry. The period in which we live is capable of utilizing handprinted fabrics, as proved by a few modern designers, but more important is the fact that just such handprints already have had some influence in bringing about better designs in the

field of commercial textiles. As products for commission designing the textile samples in this project actually are incomplete; every architectural problem demands a solution peculiar to its own requirements. However, the artist has considered the general theories of contemporary architecture a sound basis from which to take his problems. The artist feels that the textiles in this project are complete for production in commercial industry.

Thus, the result of this creative project are textiles for either mass production or custom handprinting designed to be aesthetically and functionally consistent with modern life and contemporary architecture.

THE CREATIVE PROJECT

Following is a list of colored slides which are a complete record of this creative project; they are on file in the library of the Department of Architecture and Allied Arts of the University of Oregon:

378 1947 D75 1	378 1947 D75 6	378 1947 D75 11	378 1947 D75 16	378 1947 D75 21
378 1947 D75 2	378 1947 D75 7	378 1947 D75 12	378 1947 D75 17	378 1947 D75 22
378 1947 D75 3	378 1947 D75 8	378 1947 D75 13	378 1947 D75 18	378 1947 D75 23
378 1947 D75 4	378 1947 D75 9	378 1947 D75 14	378 1947 D75 19	378 1947 D75 24
378 1947 D75 5	378 1947 D75 10	378 1947 D75 15	378 1947 D75 20	378 1947 D75 25

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ashikaga, Ensho, List of Five-Hundred Kanji, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1943.
- Biegeleisen, J. I., Busenbark, E. J., The Silk Screen Printing Process, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1941.
- Biegeleisen, J. I., Cohn, Silk Screen Stenciling as a Fine Art, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1942.
- Birren, Faber, Color Dimensions, Chicago: The Crimson Press, 1943.
- Birren, Faber, The Story of Color, Westport: The Crimson Press, 1941.
- Bossert, H. Th., The Art of Ancient Crete, London: Zwemmer, 1937.
- Bowie, Henry P., On the Laws of Japanese Painting, San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1911.
- Built in U. S. A., New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1944.
- Buschor, Ernst, Greek Vase-Painting, New York: E. P. Dutton and Company.
- Chaffers, William, Marks and Monograms on European and Oriental Pottery and Porcelain, Los Angeles: Borden Publishing Company, 1946.
- Clawson, H. Phelps, By Their Works, Buffalo: Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences, 1941.
- D'Harnoncourt, Rene, Linton, Ralph, Wingert, Paul S., Arts of the South Seas, New York: The Museum of Modern Art,
- Ficke, Arthur Davidson, Chats on Japanese Prints, London: T. Fisher Unwin Limited, 1915.

- Ford, James, Ford, Katherine Morrow, Design of Modern Interiors, New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, 1942.
- Giedion, Sigfried, Space, Time and Architecture, Cambridge: The Harvard University Press, 1944.
- Glazier, Richard, Historic Textile Fabrics, London: B. T. Batsford Limited.
- Gunsaulus, Helen C., Japanese Textiles, New York: Japan Society, 1941.
- Hawley, Walter A., Oriental Rugs, Antique and Modern, New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1936.
- Hobson, R. L., Morse, E. S., Williams, R. S., Chinese, Corean and Japanese Potteries, New York: Japan Society, 1914.
- Honey, William Bowyer, Ceramic Art of China, London: Faber and Faber Limited and Hyperion Press Limited.
- Hunter, George Leland, Decorative Textiles, Grand Rapids: The Dean-Hicks Company, 1918.
- Jones, Owen, Grammar of Ornament, London: Bernard Quaritch, 1868.
- Kelemen, Pál, Medieval American Art, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943.
- Kepes, Gyorgy, Language of Vision, Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1944.
- Lewis, Albert Buell, Blockprints from India for Textiles, Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1924.
- Lewis, Ethel, The Romance of Textiles, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937.
- Moholy-Nagy, László, The New Vision, New York: Wittenborn and Company, 1946.
- The New Architecture, 2nd edition, Zurich: Walter Imbaumgarten AG, 1946.

No Drama Costumes, Japan: Warner Oriental Museum Collection,
University of Oregon.

Outline of the Silk Screen Printing Process, Brooklyn:
American Artists' Color Works, Inc.

Parkyn, Ernest A., An Introduction to the Study of Prehis-
toric Art, London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1915.

Piggott, Sir Francis, Studies in the Decorative Art of Japan,
London: B. T. Batsford, 1910.

Priest, Alan, Simmons, Pauline, Chinese Textiles, New York:
Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1934.

Raymond, Antonin, Architectural Details, New York: Architec-
tural Forum, 1938.

Read, Herbert, Art and Industry, London: Faber and Faber
Limited, 1934.

Seidlitz, W. von, A History of Japanese Colour-Prints, Lon-
don: William Heinemann, 1910.

Tapisseries et Etoffes Coptes, Syracuse: Ceramic Studio Pub-
lishing Company.

Toda, Kenji, Japanese Scroll Painting, Chicago: The Univer-
sity of Chicago Press, 1935.

Velonis, Anthony, Technical Problems of the Artist: Tech-
nique of the Silk Screen Process, volumes I and II,
Federal Art Project, WPA.

Wright, Frank Lloyd, Modern Architecture, Princeton: Prince-
ton University Press, 1931.

TYPED BY:

Merlin G. Dow
Merlin G. Dow