Decorator or narrator: A contextualisation of Slavic and Australian pattern making and its relationship to my painting practice

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Edith Cowan University

Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts

Decorator or Narrator: A Contextualisation of Slavic and Australian Pattern Making and its Relationship to My Painting Practice

for

Master of Arts (Creative Arts)

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Supervisor Doctor Christopher Crouch

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Decorator or Narrator:  
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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I will examine pattern making in art practice from two cultural perceptions, Slavic and Australian. Existing differences between the two cultural backgrounds will be used to debate how pattern is understood by the viewer or practiced by an artist in a particular chosen environment. The central argument focuses on pattern as a decorator and/or a narrator.

I will examine the outcomes and changes in narrative pattern according to cultural context and exchange. By introducing Slavic pattern into contemporary (Australian) art practice, I examine how traditional cultural values and functions change. In discussing the processes of changes that occur in intercultural exchange, I will draw my opinions and observations from writers, critics and artists such as William Morris, Lucien Henry, Stuart Hall, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Grace Cochrane, Nicolas Pevsner, Faith Ringgold, Joan Snyder, Miriam Schapiro and Cynthia Carlson.

My final conclusion will be drawn from my personal visual practice that uses pattern.
INTRODUCTION

WHY PATTERN?

Pattern in art has fulfilled many different functions throughout time, space and location. These functions are so numerous, and spread out into so many diverse categories of social and artistic life that it is impossible to collect, discuss and examine them all. This thesis will concentrate on the aspect of the role of pattern in art practice from two cultural points of view: Slavic (Baltic) and Australian. These two types of pattern will be introduced, incorporated together and later placed into contemporary Australian art through intercultural practice as a brief contextualisation of my own creative practice.

The Slavic and Australian outlook on pattern is influenced by different originating cultural backgrounds. Their foundations have also been derived from different eras in art and their purposes and reasons for producing them in the first place. I will concentrate on Australian pattern's roots, which reach back to the Industrial Revolution that swept through Europe in the 19th century. Even if Slavic pattern was to some extent touched by the Industrial Revolution, its foundational rock was constructed in another era. Its starting point was, if not earlier, in the prehistoric era when the first Indo-European settlers migrated to the Baltic region and mingled with the Old Europeans (mainly between the 1st and 2nd century B.C.).
The two different backgrounds and expectations of what is pattern are introduced in greater detail in the first section of the thesis. It will then progress further into the second section, which will mainly concentrate on intercultural identity and practice. I will ask how Slavic pattern could be introduced into contemporary Australian art, and what are some of the processes of transformation that it has to go through in order for it to be able to communicate in Australian culture.

In the second section, there will also be an examination of what might happen to the Australian cultural comfort zone when disruptive new ideas are introduced. How much will Slavic and Australian pattern be forced to change? Do the newly migrated theories and practices become a threat and discomfort to the old established ones, or are they seen only as something that will sit on the margin? I ask these questions to push for an investigation so that a common cultural dialogue might be found between Slavic and Australian pattern making, so as to help create a productive creative space for a migrant artist such as myself.
This chapter argues that pattern has a narrative, as well as a decorative function. It will help to establish a particular view of how Slavic pattern might be looked upon and understood in relation to Australian art. When the arguments have been presented, it might allow for the introduction of Slavic pattern into Australian culture, and for it to be more easily incorporated by the reader and audience. As Rene Smeets mentions: "Without a deeper understanding ... it is not possible to penetrate into the soul of works of art, much less share in the creative process itself." ¹

Decoration and narrative are often used in pattern making. Decoration was (and still is) regarded as something that allows the creation of "utility and the harmony of all parts in relation to each other." ² The idea of 'decoration' in Western visual art practice has acquired a derogatory label. Decoration became regarded as a visual temptation that tested the individual's strength. Through its decorative appearance, it made an object or space become more important and prominent. For as E. H. Gombrich states in his book, The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art, decoration:

“is dangerous precisely because it dazzles us and tempts the mind to submit without proper reflection. The attractions of richness and splendor are for the childish; a grown-up person should resist these blandishments and opt for the sober and the rational. In this sense the warnings against displays of decoration are a tribute to its psychological attraction. We are asked to be on our guard because they may work only too well.”

Decoration was there for other purposes as well. These were to produce attention, harmony and balance in a composition, to pull everything together so as to create visual unity. The best examples of this that could be presented to the reader are the colossal monumental interior and exterior walls of Nachod Castle and the Choir of Monreale Cathedral (12th century) (see images 1 and 2). Both decorated architectural spaces demonstrate one role of pattern making very clearly: the use decorative pattern to create an emotional reaction from the viewer. This reaction might be amazement, wonder, curiosity or interest. The scale of the architecture was impressive when compared to the surrounding buildings. The composition of repetitive geometric patterns on the walls helped to present the personality and status of the buildings’ owners. The patterns created an impressive appearance that is hard to ignore. The Green Dining Room (see image 3) is another example of pattern that reflects status and conceptualises Gombrich’s idea of decorative pattern as excessively emotional and distracting.

Pattern is not just empty decoration: it also has a narrative function. The term narrative conveys the practice of being able to communicate a message or to produce a dialogue with and between the audience and work. It has played a significant part in visual art. For as Rene Smeets pointed out in her book, *Signs, Symbols and Ornaments*:

"Man is a "seeing animal": the most plentiful and the most direct information comes via our eyes and our brains to our consciousness. Our world is becoming more and more a visual world: letters and signs, emblems, trademarks, signals, pictures, news, and other means of communication in all forms and colours threatens to overwhelm us." 

Narrative pattern can be found on objects or in places where some kind of message or cultural inheritance was meant to be passed on to the next generation. An example of this is the decorative Easter eggs that are still painted in most Polish (Slavic) families on Good Friday. Many Polish families still tend to decorate their eggs in the intricate symbolic patterns that have been passed down in their families for centuries. Every pattern holds a particular meaning, a message that when it is combined with other patterns starts to narrate a story. In this instance, the stories are about the cycle of life, movement and rebirth. "On Easter eggs, those important objects of folk belief symbolizing the earth power, we find a range of plant motifs from the simplest to the most highly developed". From image 4 and 5, it is evident that motifs of plants and animals are still incorporated into pattern making. In particular, sun shape motifs tend to

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dominate and use a lot of animals and plant parts in their composition. Each design seems to mimic the large monumental wooden crosses that are very common in Slavic folk art.

Each culture (in this essay, it is the Australian and Slavic cultures that I will examine) has left different visual and theoretical supports that underline and strengthen opinions and arguments about the function of pattern. What they share is a process in which “the realistic form is transmuted as if seen through a prism of beauty and belief.” Designs and ideas that have been developed are influenced by particular cultural inheritances and their own contemporary surrounding environments.

“In early civilizations ornament arose from peaceful occupation without any thought of monetary gain; it was a meaningful symbolic language laden with magic powers. Above and beyond the symbolic content there was undoubtedly the joy of rhythmic decoration itself.”

Returning to the aforementioned Slavic Easter eggs, a viewer might notice that the compositions incorporate other recurring motifs. These are usually stars/crosses, rams and snail-like coils. These motifs tend to represent the environment that surrounded the local communities. The Slav communities mainly specialized in breeding animals and working the soil. As such, it is not surprising that the imagery they used was of animals (or animal parts) and plants.

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Drawing from the practices of folk culture, William Morris decided not to mimic plant motifs from other cultures, but to use his own native ones. It was his own immediate environment that influenced him. He, like Slavic artists, tried to incorporate them into his own artwork. The "use of appropriate motifs drawn from the natural world or from styles native to Britain"\(^8\) gave a visual identity to his works. The flower motifs used in his work did not only identify with the English flora and fauna, but also the rural working class in his society. He chose plants that were small and considered insignificant. Daisies and jasmine were often associated with the countryside, farms and peasants. These flowers were visually small, unimportant, and did not compare to the large luxurious flowers that grew in city parks and greenhouses. Willows, for example, were considered working material for weaving baskets. Other plants he depicted were used to extract oil essences, or even used as food for farm animals.

Morris decided to use such plants as the focal motifs in his compositions. They have since become monumental and important because they had a profound narrative function. Just like Morris, Lucien Henry's work was another example of a struggle to give visual decoration a narrative value. Observing the art education being taught at Australian Universities (see Chapter Two, *Pattern and Order*), Henry was interested in combining indigenous Australian flora and fauna into Australian art practice. By incorporating native Australian plants into his pattern/decorations (image 6), Henry struggled to create an Australian characteristic in design.

He had a similar goal to the Slav folk artists and William Morris. He "wrote an unpublished but extraordinarily imaginative book, Australian Decorative Arts, demonstrating the 'applicability of the flora and fauna of the new world to its decorative arts'."\(^9\) The different patterns due to the flora and fauna from each culture, as well as cultural practices and spiritual beliefs, helped to produce individual patterns that gained their own cultural qualities and demonstrate that pattern making "is a language of signs, which come from the deeper regions of human nature where mimicry, gesture, song and dance originate."\(^10\)

I now wish to define what decorative and narrative pattern is in Slavic and Australian art in detail. The word decoration might imply the changing of an objects visual appearance so that it will look attractive, the enhancement of an object, thing or space so that it will give visual pleasure, or the creation of a feeling of status and power, importance and beauty: "artistic works created for both use and decoration."\(^11\) However, decoration might sometimes be seen as a powerful tool that is able to catch someone's attention and direct the viewer in a specific way. "Good decoration is alive yet unpretentious and subordinate to what it adorns -- a vase, a dress, a building. The history of ornament runs parallel with the

history of art, for it is art. It might also be something able to awaken curiosity in the audience so that they will be interested to study or examine it further, or as a medicine for empty spaces that need to be filled up by something, this something being pattern. I will argue that much contemporary Australian decoration is empty of the intense cultural traditions of Slavic decoration.

DECORATIVE PATTERN

As we have already established, "decorative pattern is used for a number of different purposes, ranging from small decorative personal pieces that could be used on the human body like jewelry, to the large political architectural displays of cathedrals, museums and palaces. "Ornament is subservient and subordinate; it fulfils a role, whether it is on buildings, tapestries, kitchen utensils, or the human body." 13

As Gombrich observed, decoration can influence the viewer's behavior by dictating how they feel or behave towards it. An example of how small scale decorative pattern could serve a particular purpose is the small domestic clay pots found in Central and Eastern Europe. These pots date back to the prehistoric Old Europeans (5th and 6th century B.C.) and Slavic cultures (1st and 2nd century A.D.). Many of these pots were richly decorated with the narrative patterns that are still to this day familiar and used. These include zigzags, wave-like patterns and dots (see image 7).

"Prehistoric art was symbolic art. Old European artisans could create schematic figurines easily, and, like the Christian cross, in religious practice these figures communicated the same symbolic concepts as the more representational art." 14

Some of the pots had a distinctive function, such as the water containers that had been decorated with zigzag and wave-like marks. These types of patterns usually stood for water or moisture. There are a number of ways of reading them, and these depend on the other kinds of patterns with which they have been presented. If, for example, a bird or two horns of a ram were placed next to the “water” patterns, the patterns might not only speak about water or moisture, but also about a goddess and reproduction. As such, the clay pot could have been used for ritualistic purposes (see images 8 and 9).

“Their makers often incised them with symbols, such as two or three lines, spirals or meanders, a chevron or a lozenge. These geometric symbols may have stimulated or identified certain functions of the divinity. In fact, I believe that these schematic renderings distinctively focused attention on the symbolic message they conveyed.”

It causes a person to regard this type of object with a different meaning. A feeling of respect or sacredness might appear because of the particular function it had in a past society. “Old European cultures produced vases with both aesthetic appeal and symbolic meaning. They expressed their symbolic designs on vases through painting, incision, or encrustation.”

One example out of many in the art history of Western culture in which such tactics had been used in Europe was the Catholic Church during the Baroque era. It used architectural pattern to create ‘spiritual’ atmosphere:

“It can emphasize something and focus attention on it; it can increase the worth or meaning of a certain part, it can make it lighter or heavier or higher or lower.

An ornament makes something more valuable and richer if it is well done and not misused by unnecessary elaboration and overemphasis.”

Through their richly decorative appeal, these patterns depicted in culturally specific ways the human and spiritual world of the heaven and of all the Saints. The decorative patterns had apparently “enriched the traditional imagery by introducing a new pictorial world”18. For people who lived during this period, the church and Mass was a physical and metaphorical place where:

“interior decoration became an element which shaped the collective and individual imagination. Entering a church meant taking a step into a different world, one which allowed the senses to experience new ... forms.”

Even in Neolithic architecture, pattern seemed to have played an important cultural part. There are assumptions that the Slavic temples were decorated in pattern. In The Living Goddesses, Gimbutas suggests the remains of these temples do not show much detail due to being mainly constructed from timber. However, there are other temples/catacombs that demonstrate this early use of conceptual pattern. The Hypogeum in Malta, which dates back to Neolithic times, still has different types of patterns on

its walls. These patterns are similar to the Slavic ones as the compositions are also made out of spirals, crosses and vine-like imitations painted in red. They decorate the interior walls of the temple, causing an interesting atmosphere between the pale walls of the limestone and the red paint that supposedly, as in the Slavic cultures, stands for blood and life.

More recent non-religious buildings that held an important cultural significance such as libraries, museums or theaters started to be decorated in pattern. The aim was to present to the public the importance of these buildings. The National Library of Vienna is a wonderful example of this struggle to achieve a balance and relationship between pattern and architecture. The detail, grandness and size all play a part in representing the idea of wealth and the strength of a particular nation/country. Decorative pattern making is able to fulfill many functions. Even if its superficial role is mainly to enhance the visual appearance of a thing, it also possessed a deeper role of cultural narrative.
NARRATIVE IN PATTERN

Narrative is something that might represent a story or an idea. It is a conceptual process (sometimes expressed in a particular style) used by different cultures to present their opinions on particular issues that are currently happening around a particular community: “NARRATIVE ... appeals to one of humankind’s basic ... impulse to share stories. Sometimes the aim of the story-teller is simply to entertain ... escape from the business of the day or the horrors of the night ... to help others in their understanding of something.”

Narrative might not only present stories, it might also function as a teaching method that provides examples or suggestions on how people should act or react to particular things and situations in life. Overall, however, it is a method that allows story telling to be presented and expressed publicly and visually. “narrative is present in written literature, oral conversation, drama, film, painting, dance, and mime.”

In literature, there are many writers that used/use this kind of strategy. For example, Jane Austin in Mansfield Park, where she briefly raised some issues on slavery that existed at that time. Another English writer, Elizabeth Gaskell, identified in one of her books, Wives and Daughters, the social and gender structure that existed in 19th century England. “Gaskell sets out to clearly marked boundaries between classes and genders in Wives and Daughters.”

issue that needs to be investigated at this point in time is what exactly is narrative in art and pattern?

Figurative narrative can be identified with novels. By using pictorial illustrations on front covers and inside the novels, it generally helps the reader/viewer more easily and quickly identify the written content. The imaginary world is aided and supported by examples of narrative illustrations, which allows the mind to engage and participate in a scene, and explain and describe what has been presented in a novel. Even if the reader/viewer was not able to read and/or understand the text itself, the presentation of the different scenes, visual characteristics of the characters and their actions might also unfold and narrate a story. In image 12 of Sleeping Beauty, created by Burne-Jones and William Morris or Philip Webb, it can be seen how visual images have become the dominant narrator of the story.

Narrative art has been used for centuries in Western culture as a form of communication. The figurative narrative is usually the most common style used by artists. Through its pictorial and recognizable interpretations of animals, houses, people and plants, ideas were more easily expressed. Cave paintings are good examples of early depictions of different hunting scenes that have been carefully presented. This form of art has close links to the rural life of many communities. The images were recognizable and allowed people to capture the most important events happening in their
lives. It was almost like a frozen picture that had been preserved and later presented to future generations as a document that displayed past events.

The Tomb of Saint Adabert or the Gniezno Doors that date from the 12th century (1170 A.D.) are good examples of how figurative narrative in art was used to present either a story, a regional/national history or a respect for the visual art practice of a community (see image 13). As Bogdan Suchodolski expressed: “The magnificent Gniezno Doors ... presented in bronze the life and death of Saint Adabert; they are the best example of how the Romanesque style could express and commemorate important events in Polish history.”23 Other good examples of public narrative art works are the ceiling of Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel or the numerous cave paintings in Europe (see image 14 and 15).

Pattern, like figurative practice, can also be used and recognized as a device that is able to narrate visually. It has been part of the visual language since the appearance of settlers in Europe. Although the Slavs brought with them their pattern, it is also believed that the Old Europeans possessed an advanced form of narrative patterns. “Old Europeans developed a writing system; like many other Old European achievements, writing grew out of religious symbols and signs.”24 During the Stone Age, this form of visual language (pattern making) slowly became a common and popular form used in art practice. (Paintings and sculptures/carvings

that represented organic life have slowly disappeared and a new form of art practice has taken place that has remained for a long time in Western culture).

Pattern started to be used for symbolic purposes during pagan times (Stone Age), and later in Christian times (from around the 4th century A.D., or even slightly earlier), for ceremonial purposes in what is now Western, Central and Eastern Europe. However, pattern was not there to represent a life image, but rather an idea, a memory of some emotion that the creator experienced: “[a] cult or religion requires an idol, a mask, a totem - something which is not naturalistic, but symbolic ... creating a substitute for reality, thus evading actuality.”25 Herbert Read also pointed out later in his book, Art and Society, that: “Their significance lies in the fact that the native makes an abstract design - that is to say, he draws or engraves a symbol which ... represent an idea – even a succession of ideas.”26

This particular practice tends to differ from figurative art because it is seen to be symbolic.

“A symbol ... moves the deep, secret recesses of the human soul. A symbol is directed inwards; an allegory, outwards. Symbols carry the mind over the borders of the finite into the realm of the infinite. They give rise to conjecture, speculation – they are the signs of the unspeakable.”27

Symbols represent more the idea than the actual visual image of an idea.

"Should we ask ourselves, "When did the symbols come into existence?" We should have to reply that they are indistinguishable and inseparable from the entire religious ritual; further, that they are closely associated with the ideas which ancient man attempted to express in his symbolic art."^{28}

This means that the artist would produce more of an abstract image that is more symbolically presented by the creator's cultural ideas on a particular subject. "It is not the picture which is the symbol of the ideas associated with the object depicted, but the object itself is the symbol."^{29} They do not have to be a realistic replica because there is no need for it; they are representations that have been simplified from Man's beliefs and ideas.

"In thinking of symbols for design it is clear that we must deal mainly with conscious symbolism. It is not, however, always possible to separate unconscious, subconscious, and conscious symbolism, for they so often merge."^{30}

To a large extent, Slavic pattern is based on these kinds of symbolic narrative ideas. It is through cultural beliefs, religion and symbolic representations that communities become familiar with how narrative has been slowly constructed and introduced. The message is the first in many cases, and it is the most important aspect of pattern making. For example, although Slavic crosses are presented in many different variations, the meanings attached to them are usually the same: "crosses ... chiefly

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express the idea of combating evil."\(^{31}\) Also, "The symbol of the cross is variously employed to ensure good crops, or as protection from maladies and misfortunes."\(^{32}\) The styles and presentations to the public varied from region to region in Slavic cultures, such as appearing on roofs, in front of villages, and on hills that held a significant importance to a community. The most common and popular ways that crosses were displayed were in the forms of a cross, star, circle-spiral and even sometimes as a simple dot like shape. "Being without end, the circle has from ancient days been a symbol of eternity."\(^{33}\) A cross is also:

\[\text{"a much-used sign with many meanings— all life is the combination of male and female elements, action and rest, life and death, and earth and cosmos. It symbolizes godlike power, which fulfils the world and preserves all life. It is an old symbol of the sun."}\(^{34}\)

These simple shapes were regarded as the first, and main, supports that allowed for further patterns (visual narrative pattern) of other things to be displayed on them. The other patterns were usually attached to the background supports, and were there to strengthen and emphasize even more the meaning/idea that the artist wanted to represent to the rest of the community. However, take these motifs (patterns) away from their cultural context and they become meaningless because all the other props that supported and promoted cultural meaning have been taken away. It is


then just a mark that might awaken some curiosity in appearance. It no longer holds any significance. I shall develop this idea in more detail in later sections.

From images 16 and 17, the idea of the Earth and cosmos is presented. The plant/animal pattern-like composition has been carefully planned out into a circle that has the sun rising, making it look like a sun that has been placed under other solar patterns. However, from the crosses in image 18, and especially in 19, it is evident that the idea of life and nature are the main focal points in the entire composition. Both crosses in their complex outlays have recognizable bell and sun shaped flowers, this being an old visual custom in Slavic cultures to unite the masculine and feminine.

The reason for the large production of sun crosses in Slavic communities was that they were sun worshippers.

"Such bodies as the sun, moon, and stars in themselves suggest strong spontaneous powers. They observe their own definite paths of movement, their own manner of birth, transmutation and motion. They become living bodies, with powers supposed to be analogous to those of human and animal life." ³⁵

The Slavs worshipped the sun because they noticed its influence and how it divided their activities. In trying to understand and become more in touch with nature, they also noticed that the surrounding environment was very much influenced by the sun’s movements. As a result, temples were

built that represented the deep respect the communities held toward the sun, the father of the sky. He represented all things that belonged to the masculine side of nature.

The cross became the main replica of the sun; it was a sign, almost a visual prayer that gave protection, brought good fortune, and represented movement and rebirth. Other patterns that also represented these or similar ideas were attached to the cross and involved patterns with female and male flowers: male flowers were in the shape of a sun or circle, while female flowers were in the shape of a bud or bell. These types of bud-like shapes were supposed to depict the womb of the earth mother. Heads or legs of animals and lizards can also be noticed in many of these types of compositions:

"monuments that recall the shapes of toads, reptiles, or lizards of a scarcely recognizable type ... Some of these are combined with motifs of plants or flowers. For instance, a lily, tulip, or small cross replaces the animal's head."36

They all supported and celebrated the idea of movement, progress that surrounded nature and Man.

Even if these crosses were seen as individual motifs in their designs, decoration, and to some extent repetition, could be introduced. Although the Slavs infrequently used the mass repetition that later seemed to bloom in Western cultures, it could not be said that repetition was completely

ignored. It was even to some extent essential in their art practice because repetition was seen as a highlighter that underlined the most important parts of the story or idea that was presented through pattern to a community. “Greater power is supposedly generated by doubling such symbols, since two have more strength than one.” Repetition was also seen as a protector that strengthened the power of prayers.

“Doubling, multiplication, and iteration are popular.... Duplication is particularly evident in the construction of roofed poles, where we frequently find several stories of unequal size, several tiers of small wheels, several rows of semi-circles, arcs and zig-zags, winding figures of snakes on both sides of the post, four, five or six sunlets rising above the chapel roof.”

While the idea of beauty in decorative pattern was important and not pushed aside by the Slavs, the reason for the production of their narrative pattern was because it was meant to be a sign of respect that was given to their gods, community and the artist. “Both the religious intention and the sense of aesthetics were influential in the doubling and repetition of symbols in art ... Everything that moves and grows and lives combats evil and death.”

Slavic pattern drew its influences from the Indo-European, Old European, Mediterranean and Germanic cultures, unlike colonial Australia, which drew its influences from the Industrial Revolution. Through the long span

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of art history, each culture added a part of its narrative that helped to
enrich Slavic pattern making. At that time, it was religion that influenced
most pattern making in art and culture, while industrialization was the
promoter of mass production, economy and the market.

It is often difficult to separate the narrative from the decorative in Slavic
pattern; they went together hand in hand, thus creating a strong
relationship. It is evident that in discussing decoration and its role in
pattern, it is in most cases hard to entirely exclude its narrative quality.
The possibility of pattern working under two levels at the same time
seems possible. Although artists might sometimes have done it
unconsciously, in most cases it is hard to separate these two qualities
because even if pattern was meant to function purely as decoration, it still
narrates an idea.

Narrative and decorative pattern might sometimes, if not always, overlap,
thus creating confusion and making an audience concentrate on only one
aspect of pattern, while ignoring the other. This usually happens due to a
lack of cultural knowledge that the audience might have towards pattern
making, or because the artist does not present all the information needed
for the audience to understand and relate to what the artwork is about.
Slavic pattern might be misunderstood by an audience that is not related
or familiar with Slavic culture. "Man tried to fan this spark of vitality, the
source of all blessings in human life. He nurtured and fought for the
dynamic force which rules all life and makes possible its forward
progress. This is because Slavic pattern making is strongly linked to beliefs, ceremonies and religious customs. The environment that surrounds a particular pattern helps it to be readable and understandable for the people that live in the Slavic community.

"contact with nature gives Man a feeling for simplicity and naturalness, and these two things are necessary conditions for Man, and in particular for creative Man, to reach and further true culture."

So what is meant by decorative pattern making in Australian art practice? In looking at Australian decorative pattern from the Western cultural perspective, it is very much linked to the industrialization of Europe. Industrialism promoted decorative pattern and produced it in mass quantities; thus taking it away from the old ritualistic practices that had accompanied it in pre-industrial cultures.

In the 19th century, pattern no longer had the quality of uniqueness, individuality and visual grandness that was so much promoted and important in the Neolithic and Baroque eras. It had become a vehicle for pure visual pleasure, a decoration that had one goal and task to fulfill. It was this type of pattern that had become one of the most influential foundations of Australian pattern. The industrialization of goods during the 19th century had also disrupted the traditional relationship that existed between art and craft. Craft skills had been destroyed by mass production.

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This also influenced how the original functions of pattern making changed in Europe (see Chapter Three, *Pattern and Industrialization*, for more information).

The migrants who established Australian culture brought with them the trends that were current in Europe, especially in England. "The predominant influence in Australia was British, largely because the teachers here had trained in the ‘South Kensington’ system, subscribing to the magazine ‘Studio’, and continued to travel to and study in Britain."^42^ The new art education structure that has been set up in colonial Australia had a large impact on its pattern. In a new and different environment that was so far away from Europe, it still continued to follow the English curriculum. Colonial Australian pattern making did not evolve from long examinations of its immediate natural surroundings, as it was in Slavic art practice. Australian pattern had been taken out of its original context, which caused it to lose its old traditional functions and purposes even further.

Non-Aboriginal pattern in Australian culture can be looked upon as a ‘migrant’ practice. The pattern that arrived in Australia had to try and adjust to a new and different environment. It was taken from another world, a world that was very different to the Australian one, not only in environment, but also in the way of life. Pattern had suddenly become misplaced, causing further complexities such as it being misinterpreted.

and misused. "Most of the work that was made in Australia maintained the characteristics of the English Arts and Crafts Movement". 43 All this made it become even more detached from the reality that was once so strongly linked to it.

It is important to point out at this stage of this thesis, that despite pattern practice being greatly influenced by English culture, it started to slowly express a multicultural interaction. The migration of other cultures helped to introduce other understandings on what is pattern in art practice. This enabled some artists to start to question and play with pattern. The previously mentioned Frenchman Lucien Henry tried to find a resolution to this problem by giving pattern an Australian characteristic and ‘narrative’ function. He could not accept the way that pattern in Australia still tried to mimic the European (especially the English) model. Instead of using English native plants, he tried to incorporate Australian flora and fauna into his designs, a method similar to that used by the Slavs. Following long examinations and studies of what was surrounding their communities, they incorporated it into their patterns. They saw the world as if it was a cosmos that was:

"built up on a simple scientific canvas that radiates through all forms and all movement. Observe starfish, snow crystals, the mathematically pure spiral of the nautilus, ammonites, the seed pods of fruit, the placing of leaves around stems, cobwebs." 44

They later simplified them into patterns that suited their lifestyle and art practice.

What then is the difference between Slavic and Australian pattern? Is it that Slavic pattern making, despite often being used as decoration, especially in current years, tended to constantly fall back to its original narrative values? This might be one of the reasons where a difference appears between the two patterns and where misunderstandings start to occur. These questions are important as I am trying to present my own visual practice using Slavic pattern in contemporary Australian art practice. How will the Australian perceptions towards Slavic pattern influence how my work will evolve during this research? I believe that the differences in how the two cultures value and understand pattern will become one of the major issues in how my visual practice will be finally presented.
Image 1. anon., Nachod Castle (13th century, remodeled 16th century).

An interesting geometric and controlled pattern that has been used as a decoration and placed on the outside rather than the inside walls of the Nachod Castle.
Image 2. anon., *Choir of Monreale Cathedral*, (12th century).

The richly decorated outside walls of the Sicilian *Choir of Monreale Cathedral* strongly presents the influences of pagan art practice beliefs represented by sun (cross) motifs. This Cathedral dates back to the 12th century when Christianity still borrowed heavily from pagan practice in art and religion.
Although a reaction against industrial design, ironically this kind of decorative pattern became one of the promoters that pushed pattern into the category of kitsch in the 19th century.
Image 5. anon., *Post card for Easter,* (n.d.).

Image 5 represents a more traditional approach to decorating Easter eggs. Each egg has been painted in motifs that draw inspiration from pagan Slavic sun (cross), spiral and floral images. In these compositions there is the presence of the masculine and feminine elements of nature that pagan Slavs worshiped and cherished in their religion and pattern making. Image 4 represents a more modern approach in decorating Easter eggs. The paint is dripped repeatedly on the surface, creating an abstract effect.
One of Lucien Henry's designs from his unpublished manual Australian Decorative Arts (1890's). In this illustration Henry to incorporated native Australian motifs into architecture.
Symbolic geometrical motifs were placed on Neolithic pottery. According to Marija Gimbutas these motifs represented religious ideas about nature and life.

Geometric motifs had symbolic and religious significant in pagan Slavic and Maltese cultures. The composition on the two vases represent the most common practiced and popular motifs like zigzags, triangles and spirals.
This tile panel depicts the story of *Sleeping Beauty*. The visual images have become the dominant narrator of the story.


The *Gniezno Door* depicts the story of Saint Adabert through visual images rather than text.

A close up cave painting in Lascaux that depicts a composition of a group of animals. A visual documentation of past communal events.
Michelangelo's didactic visual representation of *The Last Judgment*, that was made especially for public viewing.
Typical Slavic wooden crosses that managed to visually incorporate the pagan and Christian religion. The sunrays or/and arms of the cross are made into plants and sun like shapes.
A Wooden Cross from Raseiniai, that includes its design heart, and sun and plant shape motifs.
An Iron Cross from Kaunas. This cross has in its design incorporated human and animal body parts that give the impression of sun rays coming out of the sun.
Church of Santa Maria, Assunta Dei Gesuite, (18th century), different mediums.

Church of Santa Maria (Assunta Dei Gesuite) is located in Italy. This particular church's interior is ornamented in decorative floral patterns that slightly mimic the old Slavic flower shaped pagan patterns. Also through the rich ornamentation the interior of the church is portraying an atmosphere of grandness, beauty and power.
CHAPTER TWO

PATTERN AND ORDER

This chapter will examine how the relationship between pattern and order is culturally constructed. The different compositional patterns display techniques of production and purpose in Slavic and Australian art practice that represent the cultural structures that exist in pattern making. In this chapter, there will also be many references to a text of E. H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*. This text covers many ideas that tend to deal with order and how it later had a large impact on pattern making in art practice.

In Chapter One of my thesis, *Pattern: Decorator or Narrative*, pattern was introduced as a decorator and a narrator. Both are able to visually depict a particular area of their culture’s characteristics. I will argue that this particular ability that pattern has acquired through its constant practice in art might have come from strong ties with the idea of ‘order’. Cultural order has strong connections to a culture’s existence, so it influences how pattern develops visually.

Can the term ‘order’ be looked upon as a particular condition in a culture? The term ‘order’ by itself can represent a number of different things. The article *Learning to See Timelessness EverythingForever.com* presents explanations for a variety of definitions such as: “Grouping Order which
can be understood as any class, or similar kind of thing grouped together, and located in a specific area or separate place usually apart from another group and "we think in terms of order and disorder. Well, nature doesn't simply include order and disorder, rather there are two kinds of order in nature. There are two opposite directions in which order increases." These are two of fourteen examples that try to explain the different meanings that might be used in different situations.

The idea of order gives a feeling of cultural, perceptual and emotional stability from which a basic tenet has developed in Western culture. This particular idea can also be seen in art practices that include pattern making. The reason for this is because Man keeps borrowing the model of order from the immediate surroundings he finds himself in, and later transfers it into art practice.

There are unwritten and unspoken laws that can dictate how pattern is produced in art. Actions, certain behaviors and other particular aspects of a culture that surround Man on a day-to-day basis will eventually become regarded as normal and accepted without much consideration or thought from members of that particular community. However, what may happens when the individual steps away from their culture? Will they start to compare their 'order' to that developed in other communities? The previous perception of 'order' that they had considered common had

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suddenly turned into something unique (this theme will be discussed in
greater detail in Chapter Four). Sometimes the creator might not even be
consciously aware of the laws that influence the final outcome of a design.

For as Gombrich has suggested:

"Man can only be creative in relation to problems which he
seeks to solve. The idea of the artist as a divine being turning
chaos into any kind of order in a free display of creativity is a
romantic myth. Even a Beethoven was a 'composer', he
worked within an established medium and within a firm
tradition, composing his tones in marvelously new patterns
which are, of course, modifications of patterns he had learned
and studied." 

Even if some art movements such as Dada (Dada and Surrealism by C.
W. Bigsby on pages 6-8) tried to step out of the cultural boundaries that
had been set up, the reality is that they are still working with and within
the boundaries of the order of that particular culture. This is because
artists often draw their inspirations from events that occur in the
immediate environment. This might later influence the progress and
evolution of order.

Image 20 presents a very controlled composition of pattern, with each
motif being placed with utmost care. The calculated space between the
motifs achieves an almost mathematical appearance. In Slavic pattern
practice, there are very popular wooden decorations attached to the walls
or roofs of houses (see image 21). In their compositions, there is evidence
of mathematical order. Each leaf, curve and line follows a guideline that

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New York: Cornell University, p. 64-65.
has been carefully constructed in their folk art. Although these motifs tend to repeat themselves due to the different compositions and the artists' personal style, they become unique and original. In many other pattern compositions, be it Slavic or Australian, these types of compositions seem to be quite popular (see image 23).

In these images, the designs repeat themselves in an ordered mathematical precision. The motifs reflect each other in a mirror-like fashion. The term Isomorphism can be raised when looking at this rhythmic repetition. Isomorphism, a term used in chemistry, is applied to similarities that are found in crystalline structures of two or more different substances.

"Does not the natural world exhibit many examples of regularity and simplicity – from the stars in their courses to the waves of the sea, the marvel of crystals and up the ladder of creation to the rich orders of flowers, shells and plumage?"\(^{48}\)

A broader view of this word can mean that everything in nature has an almost identical replica or double – such as leaves on trees, twins, or a reflection in a mirror.

From the introduced images, it is clear that an understanding of this type of mathematical order has been passed down from one generation to the next with close and careful instructions. This is seen in Islamic cultural art practice that deals with pattern. In *A World History of Art* by Hugh Honor and John Fleming, and *Islamic Art and Patronage: Treasures from*

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Kuwait, there are examples of this kind of practice in pattern making. This type of order was constructed around the religious cycle ceremonies that had been derived from observations of nature. In it, nature, religion and art (pattern) became one. They were all connected and fed off each other. For an artist wanting to produce an artwork (composition of pattern), they had to have a purpose that was usually connected to a particular religious ritual. This, in turn, had to follow the order that had been set out by nature. The cycles, existence, growth, rebirth and motion in the natural world were the foundation for the kind of order that the Slavic culture followed.

"It is never without danger to draw analogies between nature and culture, but I believe that here, as elsewhere, such dangers must be faced if progress is to be made. Clearly culture can derive analogous advantages from the creation of orders which proved themselves in the process of evolution." 49

Mathematical order is also present in Australian pattern, even if the quality and final outcome is different to the Slavic one. A lot of inspiration for Australian pattern making was also derived from nature (I have already mentioned Henry and his work). His designs are also divided into sections that are later incorporated so as to produce the final effect of one. In image 6, it is obvious how floral pattern has been applied onto other constructions. The pattern repetition in appearance mimics the one that nature herself is producing. However, the reader has to remember that his kind of order derives from mechanical industrialization. While Henry

has also designed rooftop decorations, unlike the Slavic roofs, they do not have religious meaning, or the "single" shape motif quality.

From all of the above examples, it somehow seems as if the meaning and practice of order might no longer mean a straight line in a composition or a strict plan of a particular task. Order in pattern making has a much deeper meaning in both production and appearance. Each mark and shape in a pattern's composition might carry a conscious or subconscious influence from a cultural practice to which the reader has been introduced that supports the idea of the relationship between order and nature that exists in pattern making. This strengthens the evidence that the practice of order is not only considered to exist in the human world, but may derive from nature. She produces the idea of order herself, creating a repetitive rhythm.

It is this particular rhythm in order that Gombrich decided to analyze in his book, *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*. He points out that: "Nature around us is throbbing with complex rhythms, and these rhythms serve the purpose of life". It seems as if these rhythms can play a part in the different functional orders that are needed and accepted by nature, and later by Man. This idea of control and continuity that appears to come from order has taken a central focal point in existence. It is this kind of order that needs a closer and more careful examination.

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The term 'order' holds various functions in pattern making that are practiced by each culture. This large variety that exists in order might cause confusion as people struggle to grasp the true meaning and function in their understanding of 'order'. Gombrich explains some of the functions that it might have in art practice, for as he writes: "Nor is our response to meaning always accompanied by full awareness."\(^{51}\) Are we always aware of how culture can direct order, and how order can influence pattern making?

Gombrich often tries to present explanatory examples through nature and its influence on the later compositions that occur in pattern. His technique is to first grasp the function of order in nature and to later slowly transfer and examine how it might present itself in the visual designs (patterns) that have been made by Man. For as he later states: "we could never have gathered any experience of the world if we lacked that sense of order which allows us to categorize our surroundings according to degrees of regularity, and its obverse."\(^{52}\) Gombrich presented many observations on how Man tries to mimic order from nature through decorative works.

"The decorative shapes and patterns ... testify to man's pleasure in exercising the sense of order by making and


contemplating simple configurations regardless of their reference to the natural world. The world which man has made for himself is, as a rule, a world of simple geometric shapes ... they stand out against the pleasing medley of the natural environment.

So deeply ingrained is our tendency to regard order as the mark of an orderly mind that we instinctively react with wonder whenever we perceive regularity in the natural world.53

I have already observed that Gombrich accuses pattern of controlling ignorant minds because of its ability to order our senses. Image 23 represents a very controlled and ordered design of a repetitive floral pattern. The compositional design gives a standard example of how every space, corner and colour has been carefully constructed and chosen. It is very controlled, leaving little space for flexibility. The floral shapes seem to be taken from nature, and even if they represent a kind of sun shaped flower, the real identity is lost and no longer important. This kind of image is one of many that tend to portray how much Man has become comfortable in working with the whole notion of order.

"these forms are rare in nature that the human mind has chosen those manifestations of regularity which are recognizably a product of a controlling mind and thus stand out against the random medley of nature."54

It is an order that allows for the creation of regulations that directs how cultures construct themselves.

Gomrich is concerned with how quickly Man is able to forget its first teacher. Nature has constructed order from which patterns have developed, patterns that perhaps later become the first inspirations for art practice. Man has taken interest in the different shapes that nature was able to offer, such as the construction of petals, shapes of animals and birds, or the seasonal cycles. For Man, this has become pattern, a visual representation of order that is able to keep control and continuity. A lot of Slavic folk art, especially pattern, depicts images that have been taken straight from nature. The Slavs believed that this kind of pattern making would enable them to establish a closer connection with order, and thus, also with nature. A complex system of passing information through visual imagery in pattern has slowly developed and became heavily dependent on the idea of order.

Later, the surface that pattern was placed on also become an important part of the composition. This is because it stressed the meaning more strongly. For example, image 24 depicts the wooden poles that were erected in the countryside. On the poles, small motifs of suns, moons, animals, plants and all sorts of other things had been carved or attached. These poles, with all their decorations, were supposed to represent the boundary and meeting place between the sky and the earth. “According to old beliefs, the sky is a roof supported by a column or tree - a cosmological pole or three - which connects the earth and sky.”

Another example can be represented through flower motifs. This is because flowers can also represent different ideas, depending on how they have been placed, and on what kind of surface. By placing a flower on an egg (see image 5), it symbolized new life and the power of the earth, "earth power"\textsuperscript{56}. The very shape of a flower itself could present an idea of the masculine or feminine side of nature. This was pointed out by Gimbutas in *Ancient Symbolism in Lithuanian Folk Art*, who noted that: "Bell-shaped flowers like lilies were feminine, while the rosette, clover, flax-blossom and all sun-shaped flowers were masculine."\textsuperscript{57}

Sets of rules had been created in Slavic art practice in pattern making and:

"our sense of order can be seen to influence the communication of meanings through signs. In the development of script, we remember, it is the device of the line which universally serves as a guide to the eye." \textsuperscript{58}

Slavic pattern has an interesting quality that sets it apart from Australian and other repetitive patterns. This difference is that it has a 'single shape' appearance. By this I mean it has a unique quality of repetitiveness that is only repeated inside of a design, which causes the effect of a one, non-repetitive pattern. It is a special order, internal to the design. The cross, even the paper cutout (see image 25), are wonderful examples of this type of order. To produce such a decorative paper cutout, careful and strict


procedures need to be followed so as to end up with the correct outcome. These procedures have been mainly passed down verbally in families or primary schools by parents or teachers. The procedures are mainly based on the techniques of how to apply the pattern to paper, and to later cut it out. The folklore aspect is usually introduced while applying the different symbolic motifs as compositions onto paper.

This order exists within the boundaries of the shape (usually a circle). In it, each shape/motif is strictly calculated and repeated with a similar copy to the next one. In that one shape, the repetition can be numerous, and even the shape and composition can promote the idea of motion, constant repetition. However, when looked upon as a whole, the composition gives the illusion of a single motif, a paper cutout that is an individual work.

The need for order is so that information can be passed down efficiently, quickly and successfully. It is still important to remember that pattern making can be classified under the category of visual language, and that it can sometimes produce problems while being interpreted. One of these problems might arise when it is being misinterpreted by another culture. This is particularly the case when the other culture follows a different notion of ‘orders’, as might be the case between the Slavs and Australians, or as happened during the Renaissance era in Western culture, when Islamic decorations where adopted. The Western artist often ignored, or was ignorant to the fact, that much Islamic decorative art followed a different order. This subject will be developed in Chapter Five.
The attitudes towards pattern making in Australian colonial culture were different to those in Slavic culture. The purpose, need and expectations of it in art practice demanded a different cultural ordering. The first difference was the background in religion, for most settlers were Christian and followed different practices to the pagan religion of the early Slavic cultures. Most settlers had also come from an industrial culture, which unlike the Slavic one was far removed from a celebratory interaction with nature. As such, it gave a different purpose and standard to art practice. Grace Cochrane pointed out in her book, *The Craft Movement in Australia: A History*, that pattern was used mainly for manufacturing purposes. Most colleges were established in Australia for these types of reasons.

"These colleges were established to train local tradesmen such as plumbers, plasterers, carpenters, joiners, metalworkers and stonemasons, and in some areas people with specific skills and knowledge associated with mining industries."\(^{59}\)

Art departments in Australia had their beginnings first set out as technical colleges, as was the case with the Melbourne Institute of Technology, the East Sydney Technical College and the Perth Technical School (1899).

Perth (the cultural environment in which I have been working creatively for the last seven years) had become the cultural center for Western Australian. However, unlike other cultural centers in Australia such as

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Melbourne, Sydney or Brisbane, it was very isolated. New ideas involving art practice that came from overseas, or were even developed in other parts of Australia, always reached Perth with some delay. "Isolated not only from the rest of the world, but also from the rest of Australia, the development of cultural life in Perth lagged behind that of other states." While the arts and crafts keep flourishing in other states of Australia, in Perth they had a much slower start and progress. Unlike other states, Perth did not form its own local society of art and craft. It rather ended up following the English system, which was introduced and promoted by James W. R. Linton (1869-1947).

Linton was a painter, but he also worked in the craft field and ended up teaching for 30 years at the Perth Technical School. His activeness through his teaching and involvement in the local art scene had left strong imprints of his ideas and views on art and craft practice (including pattern).

"Linton 'exerted the greatest influence of any one person on the applied and decorative arts in Western Australia ... he taught most of the professional artist-craftspeople who worked in Western Australia in the first half of this century'".

His strong connections to the English arts and crafts practice, due to his personal relationship with John Ruskin and William Morris, helped to establish a basic foundation on how pattern making was introduced and

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continued to be practiced in Western Australia. “Linton’s father was a friend and colleague of both Ruskin and Morris, so Linton himself had a firm understanding and experience of the movement when he arrived in Australia in 1896”62. The consequence of Perth being isolated from the rest of the other art and craft centers enabled Linton’s ideas and practices to become a passed down legacy. Other introduced examples might not have been strong enough to challenge Linton’s proposed ideas. This convinced me, as an artist practicing in this community, to acknowledge and incorporate some of his ideas on pattern into my work. This subject will be developed in Chapter Five.

Pattern was mainly produced for a consumer culture. It was mainly seen as decoration, and by producing compositions with Australian flora and fauna, was seen by the English market as exotic, thus more interesting for the consumer. The idea of order was directed so as not to narrate a message that held symbolic religious connotations, but on how to make an object visually intricate in order to sell it.

This kind of practice has caused an even greater cultural dislocation to occur in Australian pattern making. Inspirations, needs and ideas for Australian pattern did not develop in the immediate surroundings. They came from overseas and were brought and introduced from a different culture that had little to do with the Australian environmental one. They were produced under a different cultural context, in a different physical

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environment, and then once again re-introduced into the English art practice.
CHAOS AND CHANCE

Even if everything in pattern appears to be carefully planned, there is no guaranteed that the original idea will be exactly as conceived. Somehow and somewhere through the creative process, something will influence its creation and cause a change in the final outcome of the work. The influential intruders responsible for such changes are often considered by many artists as 'chaos' and 'chance'.

Chaos has a prominent place in both Slavic and Australian pattern making. Although the given appearance of a carefully planned composition might not give much indication of the chaos present in it, the placing of the work or motifs does. It mainly influences the existing context of the work. An example is when a wooden cross is placed in an open field far away from any settlement. The viewer might wonder about the selection of the chosen place, its significance and the context behind it. With the lack of any supporting context (or background knowledge), these works are difficult to understand, as there is no relationship between the object and its environment, and no indication as to why it was placed there. This can also be depicted in how pattern was produced in colonial Australia. By following the English example, the artists produced pattern that had little corresponding order between it and the new developing culture. This lack of context between the environment and work resulted in the production of patterns that were chaotic.
The term ‘chaos’ is usually recognized by Western culture as a thing that represents disorder or confusion, something that is without control: “a confused mixture; confusion; disorder.” While the term ‘chance’ tries to describe something that happens without planning: “that happens unpredictably without discernible human intention or observable cause.”

Often in art practice, which includes pattern making, order is necessary so as to create some type of structure that facilitates the understanding of a possibly complex message. Order has another side to it, a fact often pointed out in books such as The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art. This side is recognized as chaos, and one cannot exist without the other, for they balance each other out: “even disorder is experienced as order.” Also, “it is the contrast between disorder and order that alerts our perception.” It becomes the cause for order that needs to be reinforced.

In looking at order, then later at chaos and chance in pattern making, there can be found many examples of art works and artists that tended to work intentionally with these kinds of notions. The Dada artist Jean (Hans) Arp and Marcel Duchamp both welcomed the other side of order into their art works. The Dada movement, to which Jean (Hans) Arp is usually connected, often practiced and played with the idea of order through chaos

and chance. Dada also tried to avoid working with the negation of
decoration and narrative. Its works were supposed to have been more
experimental and nonsensical.

"It is essential to grasp that Dada was never an art style, as
Cubism was; nor did it begin with a pugnacious socio-political
programme, like Futurism. It stood for a wholly eclectic
freedom to experiment; it enshrined play as the highest human
activity, and its main tool was chance." 6

Dada was established at the beginning of the 20th century during the First
World War, between 1915 and 1916. It was a time when most of the
Western world was in one way or another connected to the war and there
was the idea that Western civilization had lost its moral structure. This
lack of cultural control (order) made some artists look for a new way to
express the feelings they directed towards the situations that were
happening around them. For these artists, "The war of 1914-1918 was ...
final proof of the bankruptcy of a whole intellectual, cultural and social
system." 68 Many artists and writers associated with this movement, such
as Marcel Duchamp, Hans Richter, Kurt Schwitters, Jean (Hans) Arp and
Sophie Taeuber, in one way or another welcomed the idea of introducing
chaos and chance into their work. They believed that this would enable
them to find a new structure of order and morality.

Hudson, p. 61.
The Dada manifesto had at the same time "destructive and constructive sides". These artists and writers searched for "an elementary art which, we through, would save men from the curious madness of these times .... aspired to a new order." They wished to find or create a new order from the old corrupted one that has fallen apart during the war. They wanted to find their place in a world that had fallen into chaos and destruction. For this reason, they turned to a style that looked away from the industrial side and back to the 'primitive' or experimental.

Experimentation gave a sense of freedom to the artists. It was a style full of new ideas, but at the same time it was dictated by the primitive techniques of creativity: "the only hope lay in a fresh start, in cultural infancy." Masks, songs and drawings were made in such a way so as to once again recapture the spiritual, symbolic side of art practice. These artists wanted to step aside from the industrial outlines that dictated much of the production of Western art. They did this by making their works ridiculous and tending towards a more primitive, instinctual side of art (using chance) produced in a culture very much driven by industry.

These artists tried to mimic and work with the idea of order provided by nature and influenced by many primitive art practices such as Slavic. In a lot of Slavic design, and even to some extend in Australian design, nature dictated many of the motifs that had been transformed into patterns.

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Circles, hearts and wave-like lines - they all mimic and represent a movement that allowed the eye to travel through the composition. The traditional Slav pattern makers, like the Dadaist, worked with the idea of taking structures apart so as to find order. By borrowing shapes from nature, they had to deconstruct them, but in such a way that the meaning would still follow the old structure of nature and at the same time make sense according to their own cultural context.

In Arp's work, this experimental side of allowing order and chance to freely enter is noticeable. Some of his works consisted of scattered bits and pieces over a particular surface: wherever they landed, he attached them. The idea of this was to allow chance and nature to take part in his composition. He believed that nature had order that brought things under some kind of control. “Arp also tore out scraps of paper ... and let them drop on a sheet, fixing them where they feel, thus achieving collages made wholly in accordance with the laws of chance.” 72 In image 26, Constellations According to the Laws of Chance, there seems to be a representation of strict organization and order. Every piece gives the impression of being placed through long and careful planning. It is hard to imagine that the idea of chance had any place in dictating how the composition was arranged on the surface.

Perhaps the only real difference that exists between Slavic and Australian pattern making and Arp's practice, apart from style, is the technique in

which order is achieved. Arp created order with the repetitive scattering of bits and pieces onto a surface. Australian order consisted of the industrial model that had been set up by the mass production of motifs, while Slavic practice had its order established in how the motifs were connected to each other and on what kind of surface they were applied. However, despite their different applications, each art practice had a carefully constructed order that came through the different procedures taken before and during the creation of the artworks. The techniques were repeated in the production of each new work, becoming almost like a ritual pattern of production in itself.

Context in an artwork (pattern) is important as it provides a reason for its production. It is an idea or goal that an artist strives to achieve in order to create a narrative structure (relationship) between them, the artwork, place and the viewer. Order allows for a narrative context to be established while the work is presented to the community. Throughout this chapter, the notion of order varies and is constantly deconstructed and reconstructed so that it can keep up with the changes that are happening in each culture and cycle of nature.
Different examples of a well controlled decorative and geometric pattern that have taken their inspirations from decorative organic forms.
Image 21. anon., (n.d.), wood

Slavic hybrid motifs that have been placed on top of home roofs or on many wooden crosses. Each of these motifs has incorporated masculine and shape of plants and animal body parts.
A copper plaque created by Elizabeth Soderberg in Sydney (1909). This copper plaque depicts native Australian fauna and flora motifs.


Geometric designs that try to mimic plant life and the repetition that existed in nature.
Wooden *Roofed Poles* that have been found in Kuliai. Many Slavic communities believed that the Poles were holding up the sky like a roof that was over their heads. The Poles were also supposed to be a meeting place between the earth and the sky.

A Polish paper cut that is influenced by Slavic sun (cross) shapes from folk art. This particular work represents the one, single motif. It design consists of repetitive motifs that when they are put together create one single piece of work.
Image 26. Jean Arp, *Constellation According to the Laws of Chance*, (1930), oil on wood relief, 54.9 x 69.8 centimetres.
Arp's work uses chance, order and chaos, and speaks of an alternative view of pattern making.
CHAPTER THREE

PATTERN AND INDUSTRIALISATION

In this chapter, I wish to examine how the traditional role of European pattern making and communication changed as a result of industrialization. Industrialization not only influenced the economic market, but also art practice. Texts such as Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius, Kitsch: The World of Bad Taste and The Craft Movement in Australia: A History examine how the relationship between art and craft changed by being separated even further and subjected to new standards of expectations.

The term ‘industrialization’ by itself presents ideas such as mass production, commercialism and mechanization. It is also often used when a particular society moves away from a more traditional practice, such as form agriculture into mechanization. “significant amount of manufacturing took place in rural areas, many ... located in the emerging cities.”[^73] Also, “In its broadest sense, industry is any work that is undertaken for economic gain and that promotes employment.”[^74] Cultural practices such as art and craft had changed in the way they were produced, needed and understood. Pattern no longer had the quality of narration, and

started to be regarded as a decoration that was, "acceptable for fabric, printing, and wallpaper."  

In *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius*, Pevsner examines how the industrial boom that occurred in the 19th century introduced a new standard to life and art practice. A new kind of order appeared that caused many country people and farmers to leave their land and move into the industrialized cities. "One of the results of the Industrial Revolution was a decline in the need for, and value of, skills and a loss of feeling for materials." The peaceful country lifestyle was no longer enough. The cities became cultural centres in which new demands and expectations were made. Man moved away from nature and enclosed himself inside glass and iron rooms. Their fake illusionist images were created on walls that brought a faint distant echo of the past when Man was forced to live closer to nature. Paintings and decorations were produced that depicted the lands, forests and different seasons of the year, or the play of light at different times of the day.

The numerous stained glass windows that depicted different wildlife scenes such as birds, tree, plants, animals and other landscape imagery were presented in complex compositions that tried to mimic the rural country lifestyle (see image 27). The landscape paintings of many artists such as Monet depict rural scenes such as farms, country towns, houses.

overgrown with wild vegetation and uninhibited fields. Even an impressionist artist like Monet tried to capture light at different times of the day when he produced a series of paintings that presented water lilies, the *Blue Waterlilies* from the *Waterlilies* series.

By creating a bigger gap between Man and his traditional rural life, and because industry was involved in the everyday tasks of city life, many traditions started to fade away, and with them the different symbolic meanings of ritualized existence. From Chapter One and Two, it is evident that in order for pattern to exist and function, it had to have strong ties with traditional practicing customs.

"Moreover, contact with nature gives man a feeling for simplicity and naturalness, and these two things are necessary conditions for man, and in particular for creative man, to reach and further true culture." 77

Traditions, as was pointed out by Gimbutas in *Ancient Symbolism in Lithuanian Folk Art*, gave inspiration to Man, a feeling that they wished to preserve and document. They demanded visual and spiritual support so that worshippers could realize their beliefs. For primitive man, pattern became "indistinguishable and inseparable from the entire religious ritual; further, that they are closely associated with the ideas which ancient man attempted to express in his symbolic art." 78 However, with the introduction of industrialization, pattern making detailed even more the

once strong motifs that were extracted from long observations of the environment. For the city dwellers, nature became a distant paradise that was hard to reach during working days. The idea of bringing ‘wildlife’ back into everyday life slowly became popular. Parks and public botanical gardens started to be erected in many city living areas. The longing for greenery had become something of a new trend: “in English cultural life a longing for fresh air and gaiety expressed itself at the end of Queen Victoria's reign.”79

Another change also entered Western culture. A new class developed, and it was quickly labelled the middle class. The new outlook of the middle class had a profound influence on how art evolved. Artists and craftsman started to produce their work in an economically driven fashion. It created: "The lack of solid craftsmanship"80. No longer was quality important, it was quantity that was fashionable at that time. With that, the idea of novelty also arose. This caused an even further shattering of traditional values, and was accompanied by art.

This result in the reproduction of antique works and objects that caused "works from the past, which were conceived as unique, and were intended to remain unique"81 to be unique no more. The removal and separation of art and craft and their traditions was allied to a multitude of cheaply produced objects in a variety of styles. As Nikolas Pevsner noted, the

European middle class had no traditions and this prompted them to buy goods that "masqueraded as 'Art', and brought about a deterioration of public taste."82

The further separation of art and craft brought new outlooks from the Western world. Art became recognized as a more elite form of creativity that resulted in artists being set apart from other creative practices and culture. Craft, on the other hand, was regarded as a more traditional form of practice that drew its inspirations from folk art. The old belief that art and craft formed a coalition and were part of a traditional culture no longer existed. This caused the industrial market to take over the tasks that artists and craftsman once held in their societies, "manufactures were, by means of new machinery, enabled to turn out thousands of cheap articles in the same time and at the same cost as were formerly required for the production of one well-made object."83 Everyday objects such as bells, cups and plates were created in the shape of animals, different types of plants and other representations of nature.

The Slavic art practice, which presented a deep understanding between the chosen art form and material, was not apparent in industrial art. The decorative objects that were made to represent the ideas of nature were made in such a way that they showed just how little thought or understanding was put into the work. The objects were made to look like delicate plants or animals, but were crudely made out of materials such as

metal or glass. These materials somehow failed to portray the soft fur of an animal, or hard substances like glass were used to try and present the delicate petals of a flower. Even if the mould of the shape tried to communicate this type of an idea to the audience, “practically all industrial art was crude, vulgar, and overloaded with ornament.” Or as Ralph Warnum remarked, “How can ... soft leaves produce metallic sounds?”

The loss of ‘aura’ from such works caused many culturally dislocated artworks, including pattern making, to be labelled as vulgar and distasteful in the 19th century by artists and critics such as Percier, Fontaine and Pugin. These artists, ideas and criticisms have been presented in Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius and The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art. All of these new practices that were derived from industrialization had a large impact on pattern making. For example, image 28 and 29 represent two art movements that had drawn from examples displayed by industrial art on pattern making. Pattern in these two artworks was used purely for its decorative quality. The Art Novae poster has adopted pattern as an elaborate border, while the textile rug made by a Bauhaus student, Ruth Hollos-Consemuller, used its geometric qualities for decoration and colour arrangement. Pattern was not seen as a visual tool that was able to

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communicate religious and cultural beliefs. It, like a lot of other ornamental artworks, fell into the trap of mass production.
As I established, European pattern was starting to lose its narrative 'aura' in the 19th century. It was becoming more often regarded as an ornament that was threatened by the idea of kitsch: "the artistic nourishment of the masses." (More on kitsch will be discussed in greater detail on page 69, and is similar to other areas of art practices that tried to mimic nature). Pattern was also used as a vehicle that was supposed to bring the outside natural world into the comforts of the home. Wallpaper and decorative tiles were created that depicted beautiful artificial imagery of all types of flora and fauna. Nature was depicted in many ways, without being entirely aware of how it actually functioned. Unlike the previous art practice that intimately studied the habit and appearance of nature, industrial art became only an: "echo of the symbolic art of prehistoric agriculturists." Pattern became more and more recognized as ornamentation, or rather as 'Ornamental Pattern'.

Some Western European writers and art critics could not quite agree with this new trend that pattern had acquired and criticized the misusage of pattern in art practice. One such critic was Charles Nicholas Cochin, who expressed his dismay at how craftsman and designers took some designs to extremes. He was much more interested in the production of objects

that would function for users. He argued that goldsmiths and other designers should not "contravene the rules of reason too outrageously."\(^8^8\)

Cochin felt that there was much more to pattern than its ornamental quality. After all, folk art in the past had proven that art works that consisted of pattern held a particular function in their cultures: "there is more to folk art than ornamentation, expressiveness, color; there is the heritage of past ages conserved in symbolism."\(^8^9\)

Johann Joachim Wincklemann was another person who showed some concern about the changing role of pattern making. He stressed how the meaning that once accompanied different motifs has been ignored and wiped away by many craftsmen. "Wincklemann's attack is against lack of meaning in decoration, a fault he wants to remedy by the use of more symbolic motifs."\(^9^0\) However, most producers of the objects and designers ignored these aesthetic pleas and arguments. The reason for this ignorance was because the economic logic of the Industrial Revolution demanded the opposite.

The constant mass repetition in designs was undertaken without an understanding of its true function. Before the appearance of industrialization in pattern making, repetition had a different purpose. It was used to visually strengthen the power to combat evil and bring good


fortune. Multiplication of motifs also gave a sense of motion. “The strengthening of power in the fight for survival is variously represented in customs and folk art. Doubling, multiplication, and iteration are popular.”

91 These examples of multiplications (repetition) can be seen in single shape motifs (discussed in Chapter Two, *Pattern and Order*) such as crosses, roof poles with their three struts, or on folk costumes. Even artists who tried to step aside from mass production still ended up bordering on the verge. Artists such as William Morris, Walter Crane, C. R. Ashbee, John Ruskin and August Pugin tried to produce pattern as a unique piece of work that was not seen as mass production because they were: “also dissatisfied with the design and quality of industrially manufactured products, but made their assessments in a context of social concerns.”

In 1861, William Morris established a firm known as *Morris, Marshall, Faulkener and Co.* There, he designed ornamental patterns on numerous surfaces that could be incorporated into architecture such as on wallpaper, stained glass, furniture, tiles and glassware. *The Green Dining Room* is a wonderful example of the numerous pattern designs that were made and later incorporated into an interior living environment so as to produce one whole compositional work (see image 3). This notion of trying to bring part of nature into enclosed interior spaces was not invented in the 19th century. It could be traced right back to the Neolithic era, if not even further back. Old temples are covered in different shapes (motifs) that

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represent symbolical representations taken from nature. The previously mentioned Hypogeum, or even other Maltese temples, are good examples of this practice (see image 30). Slavic folk art also decorated many interior walls of houses, and continues to do so (see image 31).

Morris’s numerous wallpaper designs also tend to mimic the shapes of nature. These designs were achieved with the assistance of ornamental pattern and repetition. The Jasmine (see image 38) design is composed in such a way that it gives the illusion of repetition. Although it plays with mass production, the design does not possess the correct repetitive trend when examined closer. The patterns do not exactly copy each other and tend to vary. It is evident that Morris kept toying with the idea, but still seemed to work within the boundaries of industrial pattern. However, he still used pattern as a device for ornamentation that was promoted by industrial art and tried to bring manufactured nature into enclosed spaces of city life with ornamental pattern. This was achieved to some extend by applying patterns onto surfaces such as steel, glass and tiles: “furniture, textiles, wallpaper, stained glass, metal and glassware, and tiles”93. He did not try to follow the examples of previous art works in pattern that had been set up and left behind by folk art and Neolithic cultures.

Despite Morris’s struggle to try and establish a style that went back to traditional art practice, later in his career, he noticed that his work was

only affordable by a small group of the population. This resulted in a larger promotion of 'machinery products', including patterns.

"Ruskin and Morris both became disillusioned in the end about their efforts to reform ... because what ... had envisaged as a liberation for all classes became the preserve of the rich ... and the failure of the art schools to train artists and designers who could work successfully with industry indicated a shift towards a need for a 'machine' rather than a 'crafts' aesthetic." 94

Despite this, Ruskin and Morris did influence how pattern was later to be practiced in both the art and craft movement in Europe.

"Largely influenced by William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement, various secessionist groups were formed in other European countries, as alternatives to the Academies." 95

As mentioned in the previous two chapters, these influences were also introduced into Australian art. This was through convicts and later from migrants from different walks of life, some of whom were architects, designers and craftsman. "Among the convicts and free settlers were skilled architects, draftsmen, or tradesmen." 96 From their work, these settlers brought with them current trends that were practiced in England and other parts of Europe.

From being separated and isolated from their home countries, a feeling of nostalgia crept into their practices. Mimicking the ideas and styles that

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were happening overseas, it helped them feel closer to home. The new
introduced environment became less threatening.

“little understanding or experience of the new environment, or
its indigenous people. Long delays in communication, and
dependence on slow sea transport ... contributed to feelings of
isolation and nostalgia ... strong ties with Britain and Europe
reflected experiences ... These ties also determined values and
expectations: schools and universities taught the English
curricula; galleries purchased English and European works; and
art and music were taught in prevailing English and European
styles.”97

With them, they also brought the industrial side of art. This left a large
imprint on the current understanding of pattern making in Australian art
practice.

“Many of our contemporary perceptions of the visual arts,
crafts, industry and design have their roots in nineteenth
century philosophical beliefs on the nature of art and aesthetics,
the roles of artist and artisan, and the effect of the Industrial
Revolution and the new middle class on art and craft
practice.”98

In Australia, it was difficult to try and follow the old traditional order that
has been set out by the Neolithic artists in pattern making. Art practice in
Australia was often dictated by the English curriculum. “For many years
the work of Australian art students was even sent there for examination
and assessment.”99 The constant flow of current ideas that came from
England made it difficult for Australian artists to become familiar with the

old traditional order that was also disrupted in industrial Europe and later became even more disturbed with the resettlement to Australia.

Henry, like Morris, tried to establish a context in pattern by going back to the idea of 'tradition'. Tradition, which was very much lacking in Australian pattern making, resulted in it becoming third hand.\textsuperscript{100} Henry tried to make himself more aware of his immediate environment and examined the nature that existed and was so different from the European one. From image 6, it can be seen how Henry struggled to bring the two worlds together, the cosmopolitan and the rural, in using and incorporating old traditional practices by applying natural motifs onto and into architectural spaces and structures. Even if visually different, a small comparison could be made with Slavic country houses, which had their architectural spaces combined with different motifs (patterns), such as on their ceilings and rooftops. Henry placed his Australian motifs onto gates, doors and also rooftops, and these designs reflected the struggle he had in trying to somehow combine the two orders. By trying to bring the Australian quality into his designs, Henry believed that it would once again create a unique quality in pattern making.

However, Linton’s patterns expressed something different. Despite his close connections to Morris and his practice, Linton somehow avoided, or rather misunderstood, Morris’s struggles in pattern and its link to ‘tradition’. Unlike Henry, he did not really go back and try to re-examine

\textsuperscript{100} At this stage of my research I am generalising about Australian pattern making in order to map out the bigger picture. In doing that I am trying to make my statements include a wider cultural discussion so as to promote a new way of thinking in contemporary Australian art practice.
the traditional context of pattern making. He merely copied Morris's work. In Linton's practice, there is one focal point missing that was so important in pattern making. In order for pattern to be able to keep its 'aura', it needed narrative and a strong link to traditional folk art that had to be undisturbed.
Despite the industrialization that took over Europe, the traditional function of pattern making survived in Slavic folk art. The reasons for this are many. One might be that there was never such a big division between art and craft, as there was in England and later in Australia. Craft was still looked upon as a valuable and important part of cultural development. Many people regarded it as an art form that still represented strong cultural traditions and values. This caused Slavic communities to respect craft and to regard it with sacredness and importance. This allowed pattern to preserve its cultural past and present its traditional context.

“Lack of heavy industry, a strong folk craft tradition, and existing crafts and design organizations enabled links to be made between craftspeople, designers, producers and consumers that others had advocated but not attained.”

Slav art practice (including pattern making) also had strong connections with many cultural practices: “folk art are never dissociated from the custom.” These practices greatly promoted the production of art (pattern), as they where visually used for private and public ceremonies. The numerous art works created to enrich the different ceremonies were made so that Man could believe in his power even more. They were artworks that held symbolic significance and were able to realize his ideas, feelings and beliefs. They materialized from the dream world to
become reality and were no longer a part of Man's imagination. "They
decorated with the meaningful signs, symbols, and motifs that had
survived, whose deeper meaning and significance was still clearly
apparent." Each cultural practice held strict rules that dictated the way
pattern had to be produced in order to narrate a story that was linked to
ceremonial activities.

"The spiritual foundation of folk art was the constant sameness
of life, the continuous cycle of the seasons that regulated the
course of man's life and work. The interdependence of earth,
wind, sun, rain, the blessing of God, the health of man and
beast, and the good and evil spirits formed the philosophy of
life." 104

One such festivity was Easter, and the previously mentioned Easter eggs.
Another was the 21st of June, the shortest night in the year. It was when
the sun overcame darkness, and it was then the sun was supposed to show
its power by dancing in the sky.

"The symbolic circle is likewise noticed in customs and dances.
The circles and wheels of folk art are never dissociated from
the customs, on St. John's Eve, of raising a wheel on a long
pole on hillocks. The tall poles surmounting the wheel and the
burning barrels of tar retain the essential significance of
combating the powers of winter, and stress the rejuvenation of
nature." 105

The cross motif often comes up in Slavic pattern making, either as a cross,
circle or as a sun shape flower. It is a popular and a favorite element of

Society, p. 104.
folk art (image 34). The cross has a strong symbolic significance in pagan Slavic religion. It is the representation of the sun, and the masculine side of nature. There are still many monumental crosses scattered throughout the Polish countryside (image 17).

Of the festivities that took place at the end of the new year, and the welcoming of the new one, the Martenice took place in March. It represented the end of winter and the coming of spring. In March, people exchanged small ornamental red and white decorations, pompons or figurines of female Penda and male Pizo. The figurines once again represented the two sides of nature needed for life to exist (image 32).

All of these festivities (and more) were constructed on old pagan beliefs. They all tended to celebrate the idea of good fortune, progress, motion and the cycle of life, and are still practiced in present Slavic cultures and repeated every year. All hold some type of art in which pattern is allowed to be used as a main source of celebration. These patterns are incorporated into the Kukeri masks, or decorations people placed around the house or on themselves. Slavic folk art, like any form of art, has its own language of interpretation. In order to understand and use it, a person has to become even closer to the rural life style that might still exist in many farming communities.

"To understand folk art, we must leave city life and technical progress behind and go back to the land ... is primarily rural
art, that is, art of the land and the farmer, bound to heaven and earth and creative nature.”

By familiarizing ourselves with the customs, dances, songs, stories and costumes, we can than understand the central ideas that exists in many Slavic patterns.

From the previous examples, it is obvious that pagan influences still run deep in Slavic culture and art practice. A concept that made Slavic pattern evolve slightly differently to other patterns is that it did not function as ‘ornamentation’. Even if there was an idea behind it to try and achieve a type of beauty that represented harmony, of honoring the god/s, nature and man, it also become one in relation with the surrounding world,

“Man himself is a part of creation. He is made up of the same component parts as all life in the cosmos, he obeys the same rules; the proportions of his body are analogous to the rules of proportion in the whole of nature.”

For the Slavs, ornamentation and beauty in pattern was slightly different. Beauty was conceived as harmony within a composition, and Slavic culture did not need or accept any other understanding of beauty.

It has been established that Slavic culture (including art practice) is strongly based on agriculture.

"The roots of this symbolic art can hardly be traced to their origin among European people. The basic impulse which encouraged the rise of symbolic art is to be found in the spread of agricultural occupations."\textsuperscript{108}

So, even if industrialization was introduced to the cities, it could not totally disrupt the centuries of customs and practices that had been formed. This can be noticed by studying how many Slavic communities still tend to regard nature. There are many old trees that are sacred and respected by the communities. "Even in accounts of the 18\textsuperscript{th}, 19\textsuperscript{th}, and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries, we find constant mention of sacred trees: mostly sturdy, ancient oaks, limes, or firs which are untouchable; none dare cut them down."\textsuperscript{109}

For example, there is an ancient tree in Sliven (Bulgaria) that is apparently 1000-years-old. It stands in the center of the town square, and despite being open to large crowds that pass it everyday, it is respected and looked after. It is believed by the people to be sacred: "illustrating the fact that the belief in the sacredness of such trees persists."\textsuperscript{110}

There might be another reason in the way Slavic pattern kept evolving differently. Often Slavic cultures were regarded as the gateway between the east and the west, as represented throughout the first part of \textit{A History of Polish Culture} and \textit{Polskie Dzieje: Od Czasow Najdawniejszych do Wspolczesnosci}.\textsuperscript{111} There are many influences that came from the Orient and left a mark on how art practice (including pattern) kept evolving. The

\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Polish Events: From Pre-history to the Present}. (Translated by author, 2004, Jordanov, I. H.)
constant attacks from the Mongols and the Turkish Empire slightly subdued the new trends that later appeared in pattern. Slavic art practiced continually received two examples on how to produce pattern. One was industrialization, a consumer market that promoted mass production: "mechanized decorations, which are obviously not painted on but drawn, duplicated, and applied by modern technological means." The second produced pattern in a still very traditional style that held a long religious narrative custom. "This integration of art with spiritual beliefs is central ... allowing its artists to draw on a rich heritage of narrative iconography." 

This stopped Slavic pattern, unlike Australian, to fall into the trap of kitsch. The term 'kitsch' originated from the German language and its usage quickly spread throughout Europe. It was developed to depict problematic works that were produced in the 19th century. Unlike Slavic pattern, industrial pattern had fallen under the category of kitsch because it was dislocated from its original culture. When any cultural artifact loses contact with its original roots, it wilts, leaving it somewhat empty and vulnerable. So why do we need ornamentation when its original cultural function is no longer quite proper? When it:

"is no longer a privileged moment in administering artistic nourishment, and contrary to what happened in the past, all traces of ritual have been lost, thus depriving the work of art of

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that aura of mystery and sacredness which once characterized it."\textsuperscript{14}

Pattern, under a mass industrial culture, developed new characteristics that promoted the idea of kitsch rather than of elite and sacred art, which: "has acquired completely different characteristics ... from the typical features of elite culture and has contributed to the spreading and triumph of kitsch art."\textsuperscript{15}

The industrial methods of art practice have slowly disrupted and changed some traditional notions. A division between art and craft, art and folk art, and art and nature has occurred. The mass production and new standards of expectations had arisen, causing pattern to lose its narrative and sacred 'aura' in most European cultures. In pattern, becoming disrupted from traditional functions created the notion of kitsch. The Slavic and Australian formation of pattern was created in different times, when different expectations and needs existed.


Jardiniere created by Day (1923). This Jardiniere tries mimics the English tradition by presenting native Australian animals and plant life in the composition.
This particular movie poster is one of many examples of how pattern became more controlled and decorative during and after the Industrial Revolution. It slowly became to be regarded as kitsch, especially when designers try to copy a particular style, in this case Art Nouveau.
Ruth Hollos-Consemuller, (1925).

Ruth Hollos-Consemuller has used geometric pattern to create a composition of repetitive pattern appropriate to industrial reproduction.
The vine, and spiral like repetitive patterns that decorate the internal space of the underground temple. According to Marija Gimbutas it is believed that these motifs held a symbolical significant in the Neolithic religious and cultural practice.
These traditional ceiling motifs in a Bulgarian homes still hold a similar significant function as to traditional motifs.
Figurines of female and male, Martenica. Old pagan symbolic (ritualistic) tradition that has survived and is still widely practiced in Bulgaria.
In this chapter, I wish to examine some circumstances of intercultural visual art practice that appear in art and how they might later affect the traditional narrative function of Slavic and to some extend Australian pattern.

From the previous three chapters (*Pattern: Decoration or Narrative*, *Pattern and Order* and *Pattern and Industrialization*), the reader/viewer has been introduced to some of the characteristics and roles that pattern has in Slavic and Australian art practice. Pattern is both a decorator and a narrator that provides visual information about a particular culture. Through its symbolic traditional narrative, it visually presents the particular customs, beliefs and values of a culture. Slavic and Australian pattern making differ from each other because each society’s cultural values have influence in how pattern making is visually produced and understood in art practice. So, what does culture mean, and how does it relate to art practice (pattern making)?
The term 'culture' represents a wide variety of ideas. It might be (or could consist of) a group of people who are joined together by sharing and holding onto of common ideas, customs, traditions, beliefs (such as religion), history and language: "Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving."\(^{116}\) Also, "Culture is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another."\(^{117}\) All these things tend to create a bond, a place of belonging in which communication is developed. People who share common ideas tend to understand each other more because a dialogue is produced and used. This is because communication is a style(s) that might reflect the kind of life that exists in a particular community.

The term 'communication' represents something that enables one person to express their ideas to another. It is when a dialogue of exchange occurs between a group of people. "The oldest meaning of the world, in English, can be summarized as the passing of ideas, information, and attitudes from person to person."\(^{118}\) Many methods have been established between human societies in order to communicate with each other. These include


newspapers, books, media and art practice (including pattern making):
“ideas, information, and attitudes are transmitted and received ... communication is the process of transmission and reception.”

Communication enables a community (culture) to establish itself. For if there is no established form of expression, individuals will not be able to communicate with one another: “society is a form of communication, through which experience is described, shared, modified, and preserved.” The forms of communication available combined the verbal and visual language together, so that at: “combination of visual and verbal effect, developed.”

The term ‘culture’ has become representative of a number of different things that collectively create a traditional character appeal to a particular community. R. Williams in Culture and Society 1780-1950 stated that: “The development of the world culture is a record of a number of important and continuing reactions of these changes in our social, economic, and political life, and many be seen, in itself, as a special kind of map by means of which the nature of the changes can be explored.”

Art, or in the case of this essay, pattern making, became one of many parts that drove cultural development and vice versa. For as Eric Wolf noted, it is: “better seen as a series of processes that construct, reconstruct, and

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dismantle cultural materials.”123 This is because, in reality, a culture is a collection of many different things. Pattern making has a descriptive part; it describes the different things that exist and are important to Man in his surrounding environment. An environment that has soaked into a community and later been reflected in art practice.

Pattern making allows the creator to establish a level of communication between themselves and the rest of the community. It allows the artist to present their own culture, its progression, evolution and “way of life.”124 This can be especially seen in Chapter Three, *Pattern and Industrialization*, which traces the way pattern has constantly changed its role in Western culture. From being closely tied with the everyday life of the agricultural community, it then became an elite form of art practice. This form of art allowed cultural ideas, customs and traditions to be expressed, and caused the unification of small communities: “common memories, a shared past, as one of the elements which bind men and help form a nation.”125 These shared similarities also came out in other art practices through shared interpretations and later helped to develop a traditional character in the pattern making of each culture.

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All this can be observed in the creation of pattern produced by different cultures. Each culture traditionally has its own unique style that differs from neighbouring cultures. Through time it developed its own distinctive visual appearance and was passed down to future generations. With the help of folk art, which entered pattern making, certain cultures were able to visually present their strongly valued beliefs and traditions. For as Stuart Hall remarks in his book, *The Popular Culture*: "In any culture one of the most significant ways in which meanings, aspirations and values are made active is through the language and images of art." 126 It was previously mentioned in Chapter One, *Pattern: Decorator or Narrative*, that pattern making might possess narrative qualities that allow the presentation of information to the viewer. I now wish to present the values, natural environment and characteristic style of the composition of pattern of two different cultures, this being Slavic and Viking. Slavic and Viking artworks have been chosen as examples to visually demonstrate the similarities and differences that exist between cultures in the traditional narrative practice of their pattern making.

Image 34 and 35 was produced within the Slavic culture, while image 33 was created by a Viking culture. Both represent similar visual images. They represent the image of a circle (sun), but despite the existing visual similarities between the two works, each tends to use different symbolic motifs that were derived from their own cultural folklore, surrounding environment and religious practices. This is because these things, as

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previously mentioned in other chapters, usually influenced the traditional practice in prehistoric art (pattern). It is still interesting to note that despite having some differences in motifs and styles, there are still existing similarities. These include flora and fauna and animal motifs that are present in both compositions.

The Viking composition consists mostly of different sun, animal and plant shape motifs, which are carefully interlocked together to form a complex pattern. They are woven together with other motifs that emphasize even more strongly the story that is being told. Circles and other unrecognizable creatures (that might have a symbolic meaning in Viking culture) are present. The bodies of the creatures are created almost like the stems of plants, sometimes making them hard to distinguish from one another.

The Slavic pattern composition is visually very different. Although it is much bolder, it still has a nice balance and gracefulness, and the motifs still manage to interlock in a very complex fashion. The Slavic motifs are even more undistinguishable because they seem to have become almost hybrids-like (for more information on hybrid, see page 86). There are no single individual motifs of whole animals or plants that are joined together by the weaving of their shapes. There are only parts of plants and animals that are combined together, creating creatures that are neither plants nor animals.
"These are neither crosses nor roofed poles, but monuments that recall the shapes of toads, reptiles, or lizards of a scarcely recognizable type ... Some of these are combined with motifs of plants or flowers. For instance, a lily, tulip, or small cross replaces the animal's head." 127

The overall composition has been placed by a cross (circle) like shape that mimics the sun. The placement and arrangement of the motifs into the pattern is different from that of the Viking. Not only is there a difference in visual representation, but also in how the symbolic motifs have been assembled together.

Each culture's folk traditions and art helped promote pattern making to develop in different ways. In their pattern making, symbols were used that were necessary and common in usage for communication. For example, the horns of rams or legs of reptiles were used in Slavic pattern compositions as culturally symbolic motifs. The reason for this was because these animals/reptiles held a strong traditional symbolic role in their religious customs. The ram was associated with the sun: "The male animals and birds – the elk, bull, goat, ram, stallion, swan, cock and other small birds frequently appearing in folk and prehistoric symbolic art – are associated with the symbols of the circle family." 128 Reptiles were associated with constant reproduction within nature: "Serpents, snake, toads and other reptiles seemed to embody the very essence of life." 129

These beliefs were later depicted through folk art (pattern making), which

later helped to produce the idea of cultural identity. This particular identity was later to be recognized as a form of representing 'nationalism'.
“Nationality’ is a term that is both able to set apart, and at the same time unite, individuals. It is an ‘identity’ that creates a sense of belonging for individuals and allows for past and shared memories to be produced that unites a community. As was stated in *Culture, Identity, and Politics* by E. Gellner: “Nations are made by human will”\(^{130}\). It is individuals who strive for this communal identity, for it is a process where a place, past and cultural heritage is being created. This has been presented in *Representing the Nation: A Reader, Histories, Heritage and Museums and Modernity and its Futures*.

It is easy to see how often individuals tend to divide and segregate themselves into different ethnic groups. This produces nationalistic borders that not only divide the world into geographical (political) sections, but also into cultural practices. “Racism, cultism, and nationalism continue to construct barriers between communities. Within the separating walls ... where he belongs and where he feels comfortable.”\(^{131}\) All of this has been done because of Man’s attitude towards life and the nature that surrounds it. The individual feels better when there is someone who supports and understands their ideas. They


feel safer with the world as it creates a place where they feel that there is some kind of order (see Chapter Two, *Pattern and Order*).

This need for order has made Man divide and segregate himself into groups. These national groups have become cultures (nations) that tend to influence the progress of their art practice. There are many different styles and types of cultural art practices (pattern making) that exist in the Western world. Sometimes these styles might cross over national boundaries, but they are still in danger of being labelled 'original' or 'authentic' national cultures without being fully understood or examined.

"In the modern world, the national cultures into which we are born are one of the principal sources of cultural identity. In defining ourselves we sometimes say we are English or Welsh or Indian or Jamaican. Of course, this is to speak metaphorically. These identities are not literally imprinted in our genes. However, we do think of them as if they are part of our essential natures."^132

It is similar with pattern making. The styles and influences tend to crisscross, making it impossible for them to be completely 'authentic'. Even so, Slavic pattern can be seen and regarded differently to Australian pattern because of differences in their traditional narrative functions and appearance.

The reader/viewer has already been introduced to some of the existing differences between Slavic and Australian pattern making in art practice.

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Their reasons, establishments and purposes in producing pattern have been discussed in all three previous chapters. Despite their differences or similarities, does it truly make these patterns ‘authentic’? A quick examination has to be made of the two national cultures (Slavic and Australian) and how this might have affected their traditional narrative function.

Slavic national culture(s) reaches back to the migration of the Indo-European groups. The dates of the resettlements made by the Indo-European groups vary and their settlement in central Europe dates back to the 5th millennia B.C. “The Indo-European incursion into central Europe, from the late fifth to the early third millennia B.C.”133 In the book, The Living Goddesses by Marija Gimbutas, she stated that the Slavs slowly moved north between the 6th and 7th century A.D.

“Slavic movements northward into the Dnieper Basin during the sixth to seventh centuries A.D. During the eight to twelfth centuries A.D., Slavic language and culture came to dominate about half of the eastern Baltic lands.”134

These groups slowly settled Eastern and Central Europe and most of the Balkan Peninsula. The Slavic group, like all the other groups that settled Europe, is not a pure blood race. With their resettlement, they mingled with neighboring communities. “The Slavs are not a blood group; there is

no Slavic race, as there is no Germanic or Romanic race." Gennanic or Romanic race." The Slavs preferred to intermix with other already existing communities. They exchanged their knowledge and ideas in peace rather than to gain territorial land through war.

The Slavs brought and introduced a lot of their cultural traditional customs and art practices. At the same time, they tended to borrow from the Old Europeans, who were known to possess a rich cultural practice, both in religion and art. "Old European cultures produced vases with both aesthetic appeal and symbolic meaning. They expressed their symbolic designs on vases through painting, incision, or encrustation." Some of the Old European motifs in pattern making (art practice) overlapped in meaning with Slavic motifs. For example, the circle, net-like shapes and coils and snake lines, which stood for eternity, fertility and continuity, respectively. Both cultures used their pattern making in religious practices and worshipped the natural world and the idea of regeneration. They sun motif was valuable and used as one of their main symbols.

Slavic culture and its traditional narrative qualities in pattern making were derived from strong ritualistic religious beliefs. Intercultural exchange, migration and strong community relations helped to form a culture that influenced how pattern was later to be practiced. This was the case with Maltese art and its relation with other cultures:

“This factor is often considered an asset ... All too often, the flow of concepts and existing communication mechanisms are conditioned by passive or active filtration ... to material cultural aspects such as architecture and the arts, may again have a range of attributes that are particularly distinctive in character and appearance.”

As previously mentioned, pattern for many Slavic communities became a visual language that allowed for communication to be established between Man, his community, culture, national culture and the ‘other’ spiritual world. Pattern also allowed for an identity to be formed that visually expressed their culture to their neighbours: “ancient symbols ... were highly characteristic representatives of ... folk art, expressing the people’s view of life and their ability in the filed of artistic creation.”

Pattern still seems to dominate in many Slavic folk art practices (see image 34 and 35). The placing and use of the most common domestic objects such as napkins, aprons, shoes and bags, and moving them to larger surfaces such as interior or exterior architectural spaces, allowed pattern to present and visually narrate its function. Placing pattern on an object often narrated its function and owner. For example, the traditional folklore bags that were produced differently for males and females. The bags for females usually contained a richer composition of pattern that dominated the shape and size of the bag. The colours had to be vibrant, and the motifs usually presented themselves in plant or geometric patterns. However, the male bags were less decorative, and the motifs and

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colours limited. Even if pattern was later divided into two areas, private and public (see Chapter One, *Pattern: Decoration or Narrative*), or recognized better in folk art as domestic and religious (sacred), the motifs still shared a common language. As with the domestic bags, the motifs had religious undertones. The female side was presented as a life-giver; she carried with her symbols of life such as flowers and animals. The masculine side had its own symbols (motifs), which supported and underline the female side of nature.

Later, pattern divided not only into domestic and religious styles, but also into national styles. Although differences in the visual characteristics of current folk art helped distinguish the area in which they were produced, the symbolic meanings and representations of the patterns were still similar (see image 37). For example, the Bulgarian depiction of the sun, along with its meaning and composition, is similar to that of the Polish. Both sun motifs are displayed in the center, and from here their rays come out and are decorated with other motifs such as animals and plants. The heart shapes and ram horns are still evident in each artwork and represent both sides of nature. The only difference is in the style. The Bulgarian sun appears more like a sun shape flower, while the Polish sun is represented more like a cross (see image 18 and 36).

Australia national culture is often regarded as a collection of many different cultures (see Cochrane, *The Craft Movement in Australia: A History*). Like Slavic culture, it has a history of resettlement and
migration. The Western cultural influences were not the first to dominate in Australia. Despite Australia being regarded as a young nation, its cultural past and art practice is quite old. Although the Aboriginal cultural art practice dates back much further, it is too broad a topic to be examined in this thesis. As such, the common belief in the Western world (when Australia become a part of it) was that it was just starting to form its own post colonial 'identity' and 'authenticity'. As J. Kapfere has pointed out in Being All Equal: Identity, Difference and Australian Cultural Practice: “Australians, like everyone else, are always on the road, engaged together in ceaseless movement, explorations and wanderings, forever waltzing their Matildas.”¹³⁹ Along with other nations, Australia is still evolving, changing and struggling with the constant intercultural exchanges that are coming from overseas.

In the previous chapters, the way art practice (including pattern making) in Australia mainly followed the English model was discussed. It is also important to note that unlike Slavic culture, which was eager to accept and exchange new ideas into their pattern making (art practice), in Australia it was a bit different. This was particularly the case after the First World War, when Australia decided to close itself to any influences (especially in art and craft practices) that might have come from Central, but mainly, Eastern Europe. This was due to a fear that these influences might change Australia's art and craft practice.

"The 1920s generally supported a notion that Australia and Australians – and by implication Australian arts – should be protected from the evils of the rest of the world, which included the cultural customs of non-Anglo-Saxon migrants.\(^{140}\)

The settler’s backgrounds were also different to the early Slavs as they came from an industrial culture. It was no longer the land or agriculture and religion that ruled in the struggle of trying to understand and function in their communities. Pattern making in Australia did not start, and was not produced, for religious purposes. It was part of an individual trading system, which made it even more removed from its immediate communal practice.

Despite the appearance or perception that Slavic and Australian pattern making have particular characteristics that make them appear 'authentic', in reality it is not true. Their cultural migration, resettlement and intercultural exchanges later had an impact on their traditional narrative functions and appearance. This caused the long process for pattern making to become more of a 'hybrid', or even an 'authentic hybrid', which might (if not always) keep to its original principal ideas.

Hybridization in both Slavic and Australian pattern making cannot be ignored. In the past, its creation depended on intercultural practice that kept criss-crossing through different cultural boundaries. The term 'hybrid' is most often used when describing something that has been crossed over, such as in a plant or animal: "offspring of two parents that differ in one or more genes". This term can also be used in a more literary way when there has been a mixture of two or more things in a certain area, such as in art practice.

These particular exchanges often occur in art practice (pattern making) through migration, invasion, trade or even communication. Both Australian and Slavic pattern making are a collection of different cultural

practices or copies from their previous cultural heritage. This could often have occurred unconsciously because members of different national cultures cannot ignore or escape from other intercultural exchanges that are happening on a day-to-day basis, from the food that is eaten to the latest fashion that is worn. For as Jean-François Lyotard pointed out in his book, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*: “one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald’s food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and “retro” clothes in Hong Kong”\(^\text{142}\). One day it is the Orient that dictates the fashion, the other France. Visual cultures are appropriated and often used in other cultures as a promoter of particular cultural values, ideas and traditions, thus making it a hybrid.

“this has suggested to many philosophers that art is not so much an object of aesthetic ‘experience’ as an instrument of knowledge. In particular, art has the power to represent reality and to express emotion, and it is in understanding these specifically artistic properties that we come to appreciate art.”\(^\text{143}\)

Migration, as was earlier pointed out in this chapter, produces dislocation and intercultural exchange. With migration, Man brings along a part of his culture to a new and unfamiliar surrounding. It is done so that the new, alien surrounding will become more familiar and comfortable. Later, the penetration of both environments (cultures) will occur, causing hybridization. This new introduced environment into another culture will

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influence how the previous traditional narrative functions of pattern are regarded by the viewer. This will start to dictate both the visual appearance in composition and the symbolism of motifs in their meaning.

Once again, Henry's work is a wonderful example of this (see image 6), and represents to some extend the struggle of intercultural exchange between the European influences and the introduction of the 'Australian' influence. His designs for garden pergolas or iron front gates had a European quality, and yet introduced an Australian characteristic. They no longer looked as if they belonged in a European setting, but fitted into an Australian landscape. His work represented the meeting place of two cultures, one that had already established itself in the Western world, while the other was just being born. "The protective filters of time and space have disappeared, and the encounter with the 'alien' and 'exotic' is now instantaneous and immediate." 144 Henry tried to, and tended to, indulge himself in this new introduced surrounding. It brought a lot of new ideas that set his work into new areas of practice.

"works of art we learn not about themselves but about the world to which they refer. They are systems of symbols which transmit to us, much as a language transmits to us an awareness of the world in which we live." 145


Artists, like Henry or myself, struggle with the constant occurrence of intercultural exchange in art practice, even if we might not always be aware of it, or even welcome it. This was the case with the Australian art and craft practice at the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century because of the confusions that could occur. It is important to remember that despite its early intercultural exchange, through time Slavic pattern making managed to establish its own symbolic traditional narrative function. However, Australian pattern did not at first have its own structure and was very much a copy of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century English model. Complications might arise because of this when comparisons of intercultural exchange are made between Slavic and Australian pattern making. How will the two cultures recognize, read and understand the messages or ideas that are conveyed in each art practices? How can communication evolve when old meanings, values and ideas might be lost, ignored or misinterpreted through translation. This can later cause the participants in the exchange to miss some of the important elements that can often make a particular work complete.

"""in the attempt to mediate between different cultures, languages and societies, there is always the threat of mis-translation, confusion and fear .... There is also, and even more tragically, the danger of a fearful to translate: the threat of a retreat into cultural autism and of a rearguard reinforcement of imperial illustrations."""
An Australian viewer might not completely understand the complex Slavic traditional narrative system that is placed into a composition in pattern. How can a viewer understand if they had not been previously introduced to this cultural practice? They might struggle to gain meaning from the carefully displayed symbolic motifs and see them more as decretive pattern, rather than as a narration. Perhaps some viewers who are familiar with Henry's or Morris's works will try to question and understand that there is more to the function of pattern making in art practice (visual language) than it being only used for decorative purposes (see Chapter One, *Pattern: Decoration or Narrative*, and Chapter Three, *Pattern and Industrialization*). Pattern making might also be associated with a rural cultural lifestyle and symbolism.

What will happen when a viewer from a Slavic culture is introduced to Australian pattern? Will they try to read into the mass repetitive patterns some religious pagan symbolism? Will the viewer think that the mass repetition is actually a modernized representation of the idea of constant regeneration? During such a task, will the viewer eventually be forced to learn to negotiate between the two cultural practices in pattern making? The lack of historical or personal background experience can sometimes create some difficulty in reading this type of work. Suddenly there is a need "to learn other skills, other lessons ... They are obliged to inhabit at least two identities ... to negotiate and 'translate' between them."

When in intercultural exchange a small part from a large network (in this case it

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is Slavic pattern making) is removed from its natural surroundings, it is
than similarities or differences in ideas and styles might arise. For
example, plant motifs appear in both Slavic and Australian cultural
practices in pattern, but they might represent different things.

The borrowing of other cultural ideas and symbolism in motifs for pattern
might later promote ignorance in their usage in art. This can cause
advantages and disadvantages in how pattern is understood. The
disadvantages might promote a loss in old narrative meanings. The
cultural characteristics and heritage might no longer come across to the
viewer. Advantages of this borrowing might be that pattern would gain
new cultural narrative meanings and be open to “other cultures, other
states, other histories, other experiences, traditions, peoples”148. This can
to some extend be noticed in Linton’s work. He practiced and copied an
idea that he did not quite understand. His ignorance changed the practice
from the original ideas that Morris struggled to achieve. Linton continued
to teach and promote this inappropriate private understanding further
through his art practice. The original meaning, identity and traditional
narrative values had been changed.

Can this also occur when Slavic pattern is introduced into Australian
culture in art practice and vice versa? Probably, because each culture
might not be familiar with each other’s past in art practice (pattern

Histories, Heritage and Museums. London, New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group in
association with The Open University, p. 16.
making). Their understanding might be limited because of a lack of personal experience and familiarity in folk art. The reason for this is that through time visual language has become an important part of communication in Western culture. The evolving structures of art are a complex process that the viewer and artist have to learn patiently and slowly. As with putting together many small pieces, it creates a large system in the way people are visually informed. It depends on the kind of reaction and information a person might receive from an artwork (pattern making), and would depend on the background knowledge the person possesses because "understanding comes to rest in an 'experience'"\textsuperscript{149}. The artwork will speak out to us through our experience.

Viking art that is characterized by the complex of integrated motifs that mimic birds, animals and beasts. The two bronze buckles have been made into round sun like shapes that have been divided into three parts. In this design, as in the Slavic ones repetition is essential, but it also gives a one single motif appearance.
On this distaff there are engraved the symbols of the sun (cross) and animals or reptiles like snakes that in pagan religion symbolized health and good fortune.
One of the pages of the *Book of Kells* that gives an example of a richly decorated letter that was a very popular style in decoration of many Manuscripts in the Middle Ages. This particular book was done in the 9th century and is currently located at the Trinity College in Dublin.
On this distaff there are engraved the symbols of the sun (cross) and animals or reptiles like snakes that in pagan religion symbolized health and good fortune.
This golden application from Bulgaria depicts the Christian influence as well as the sun (cross) motif that has been made from flower, heart and ram horns shapes. The design is simple but manages to imitate the flower like motifs of both male and female shapes.
Typical Slav sun motifs that have been found engraved on much clay pottery.
Jasmine wallpaper design was created by William Morris. This design has repetitive qualities but similar to the Slavic single motif, each repetition is not quite the same.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONTEXTUALISING MY VISUAL PRACTICE USING PATTERN

This chapter will examine how far tradition motifs can be reinforced in contemporary practice. I will examine how artists like Miriam Schapiro, Joan Snyder, Faith Ringgold and Cynthia Carlson have used some aspects of pattern to help them narrate their ideas to the viewer. I would also like to conceptualise my own visual practice that uses pattern.

Throughout this thesis, pattern has been presented in many forms, styles and perceptions. Its various functions are often dependent on the time in history in which it was produced and the culture that produced it. Visual examples of this include the Slavic crosses, the Maltese Neolithic temples (Hypogeum), the Jasmine wallpaper design and the walls of the Nachod Castle. By examining the patterns that have been created by different cultures, the reader or viewer might be introduced to some of the aspects of cultural operation in visual art and its many influences. In gaining these different sets of information, the viewer and artist might try to conceptualise the use of traditional motifs in current pattern making.
The artists mentioned in the previous chapters have chosen pattern as a decorator, narrator, or both. Artists like Morris, Henry, Pugin, Linton and the many un-named prehistoric artists whose works have been written about in this thesis have managed to find one aspect in pattern making that aided them in the production of their work. This causes pattern to shift in its role in art practice, from being a sacred religious art to a representation of cultural folklore, and later becoming part of industrial mass production in 19th century Europe and Australia.

It is interesting to note that pattern is often used in artworks which folklore and social issues dominate the main themes. Many artists like to include pattern in works that are often derived from traditional art and craft practices. Artists like Miriam Schapiro, Joan Snyder and Faith Ringgold do not work directly with pattern, but use it selectively for some of its qualities. These qualities help each of the three artists narrate their ideas more successfully to the viewer.

Faith Ringgold is probably best known for her painted story quilts. The use of pattern is not immediately evident in her work because she concentrates mainly on intercultural issues, genders, racism and feminism. She taps into her African-American folk heritage, mainly through quilt making. This tradition of quilt making has been passed down in her family for many generations. In Africa, quilts were firstly produced by men, not woman. Later, the woman continued to practice this tradition as slaves in America. Through their quilt making, the African-American slaves were
able to visually communicate. It also allowed them to pass down their cultural heritage.

“Quilts in the African-American slave community served various purposes: warmth, preserving memories and events, storytelling, and even as “message boards” for the Underground Railroad to guide slaves on their way north to freedom.”

Ringgold managed to combine art and craft in her work. Textiles, weaving and embroidery are part of her quilt making. This style of combination different crafts allowed Ringgold to introduce this form of art into elite visual practice. This might be regarded similarly to what Morris or Henry achieved with their common, country style fauna and flora. By incorporating them into designs or wallpapers, they acquired an elite appearance (see Chapter Three, Pattern and Industrialization). Like Ringgold, Morris and Henry managed to introduce some aspects of craft into city life and urban galleries.

“Ringgold ... began making art objects in a medium formerly referred to as “woman’s work” (textiles, sewn fabric, weaving, quilting, embroidery, etc), beginning in the 1970’s, offering their work as ‘serious’ art, rather than the former label of ‘craft.’”

Her images (figures) are painted in a flat style that shows no dimensions. It is here that the viewer comes in contact with pattern. “They are often

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painted in a 'folk' style - no indications of perspective; two dimensional patterning, rich colors, and no shading to indicate three-dimensional volume in the forms, such as figures." The pattern is there to create a particular symbolic atmosphere and setting for the figure. In the illustrated children’s book *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*, pattern is not just there as a pictorial background, but rather as a device that helps narrate the story to the viewer (see image 39). It is there to set a mood that will evoke a particular emotion. Ringgold uses geometric motifs that are connected to her African-American pattern making traditions. Some of the geometric motifs hold strong spiritual and religious meanings: “some characteristics included asymmetrical designs, bright colors and bold geometric shapes, which were spiritual symbols.” Ringgold, like artists in Slavic culture, included her own traditional patterns into work that dealt with current cultural and social issues. Issues that were important in her environment. She combined pattern with other images in order to pass down her cultural background and ideas. This combination made it easier for her work to be understood by viewers who came from a different cultural environment. Coming from a different background, the viewer is allowed to participate at a visual and emotional level with the characters from Ringgold’s stories. They, like the characters, take a journey in which the viewer is introduced to a new environment and becomes familiar with

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it. Through these stories, Ringgold allows the viewer to gain an insight into her own opinions on some of the issues that are important to her.

Unlike Ringgold, Joan Snyder has a different approach towards pattern in her art practice. Instead of gaining inspirations from her cultural heritage, Snyder prefers to use organic pattern. Coming from a sociological background, and also being a painter, Snyder combined these two things in her work. "Snyder (originally a self-taught painter) has held forth as a painter who translates the panorama of emotional states into the language of paint."\textsuperscript{154} The main themes of her work explore the sociological problems that exist in her immediate environment. Issues of gender, class and society dominate her paintings.

"B.A. in sociology and her work combines an interest in the process by which images are made with an interest ... in a world that puts person against person, gender against gender, class against class, society against society."\textsuperscript{155}

Snyder, like Ringgold, is interested in creating an emotional atmosphere in her paintings. Although she raises issues that are current, she tends to use symbols that were applied in prehistoric art. Similarly to Neolithic art, her symbols narrate about life. Images such as egg(s), wombs, trees or stars appear in her compositions, along with human figures. In paintings such as \textit{Tiny Garden} (1995) and \textit{The Orchard/The Altar} (1986), there is the presence of the cycle of life in nature, regeneration and cultural


practice (see images 40 and 41). Other patterns that appear alongside these symbolic motifs are bold, expressive, loose and organic. They seem to be placed in random and give the impression of being a backdrop or more of a gap filler. This type of pattern appears to pull all of the separate motifs together, making them one in the composition. This particular usage of organic pattern allows Snyder to produce images that appear as individual, but at the same time unites them. This creates one complex network that narrates a story, which for Snyder is more like a poem. Snyder once remarked that her paintings are like poetry. "She saw her art as visual poetry, a language that opened up her world"\textsuperscript{156}.

Miriam Schapiro is another artist who works with the theme of gender and its role in art practice.\textsuperscript{157} Schapiro established herself as a feminist artist who examined the role of woman in art and craft. She is "a leading figure in the feminist art movement"\textsuperscript{158} who has developed a style in art practice that is currently recognized as 'femmage'. This particular practice consists of putting art and craft together. Her interest is also in incorporating craft into her work. Like Ringgold, it is there to highlight the contributions of female artists. In her collage works, Shapiro "used this explorative process as a means of restructuring their identities as women artists in a


\textsuperscript{157}It is important for me to acknowledge that artists like Schapiro also have a political agenda in their artwork. She, like Ringgold, often tends to discuss gender issues through their pattern making. However, I feel that at this moment in my research that issues of gender fall outside of my particular discussion. For more information on Miriam Schapiro and her work please see Miriam Schapiro: The Politics of the Decorative by Tracey Bashkoff.

patriarchal (art) world. In both Ringgold's and Schapiro's works, pattern seems to communicate about a specific culture (or part of a culture). In Ringgold's work, pattern represents a cultural heritage that goes back to ancestral Africa and female art in Western culture. Her patterns draw from African symbolic and religious beliefs that held an important part in some African communities. Schapiro's pattern also represents the female side of art and craft practice. Through decretive pattern, she presents the female role in art and how it fits in and is accepted in Western culture.

Schapiro likes to combine a number of different things in her artwork. Using various scraps of materials such as lace, fabric, sequins and coloured paper or cardboard, she creates intriguing artworks that consist of strong compositions. Similar to the Slavs who used ordinary objects as surfaces for their patterns, Schapiro uses common everyday objects as part of her art. She manages to bring art and craft closer together. The layering and combination of different elements of materials enables Schapiro to acquire complex layers of meaning:

"she developed her own personal style which she called femmage. Combining such commonplace elements as lace, fabric, scraps, buttons, rickrack, sequins, and tea towels she transformed them into sophisticated compositions that often imply multiple layers of both space and meaning."
In all of this, pattern somehow found a place to exist. Schapiro often uses pattern as a background, which is achieved from the numerous scraps that have been combined together. On this collection of pattern, Schapiro applies human figures that are in some kind of motion (see image 42). “Her recent works juxtapose intricately patterned abstract backgrounds with stylized human figures in motion – whether falling or dancing – made of brightly colored paper.” As with works of the previously mentioned artists (Ringgold and Snyder), pattern has a narrative purpose. This background creates a mood that helps to express the artist’s message. The figures are combined within the backdrop, making it become a dominant part of the work. The figures and background tend to support each another.

Even if differences existed between Ringgold, Snyder and Schapiro’s use of pattern in their work, there is a common trend. Pattern is used mainly as a backdrop that allows the establishment of a particular atmosphere in each work. This allows pattern to become an important and dominant aspect of the composition. Pattern produces a narrative atmosphere that makes communication easier. This pattern might not hold as many symbolic motifs in its design as prehistoric Slavic pattern. Instead, the figures become the narrative motifs that help present the message to the audience. Pattern and the other images or figures become dependent on each other, each supporting the ideas the artist wishes to present.

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Cynthia Carlson's work differs from that of Ringgold, Snyder and Schapiro. Carlson does not usually use pattern as a backdrop support in order to narrate cultural issues on gender, race or class. She mainly works directly with pattern. Pattern for Cynthia often functions as a decoration that contains historical resources about American culture. It often becomes the dominant visual feature and subject of Carlson's work. "In our culture decoration means the amount of eyeball left over after the main event. In this case the decoration is the art and the main event."\(^{162}\) Carlson uses her patterns as a doorway into the past and vice versa. She tries to introduce and incorporate the knowledge that she has gained from researching pattern. "Carlson infused her work with references to the cultural past."\(^{163}\)

Carlson is known for her large public artworks such as at the Pennsylvanian Academy of Fine Arts (1979) or the Hudson River Museum. Her designs for floors, ceilings and wall spaces have been moved from large public spaces and into confined galleries. It is in these confined spaces that Carlson is challenged. From the clean white washed and plain walls that give little character, Carlson has to create a new and different environment: "inside the faceless white cube of a gallery ... Carlson installs shows in other settings, she is careful to quote from her


surroundings." This can sometimes be difficult because of the bare walls that have often been removed from the original characteristics of the architecture. Carlson likes to work with and within an architectural space as it allows her to research the architecture's history and include such information in her work (see image 43). Through this research, Carlson wants to point out the cultural heritage of the space and pattern making in American art and craft practice.

"Carlson's use of stencils reminds one that Colonial Americans, faced with high shipping costs from England, used to stencil "wallpaper" on their floors. A fanciful association? Not really. Carlson is aware of ... rich, pragmatic heritage of vernacular design that manifests itself, quite literally, in the walls around us." Carlson often presents her pattern through an elaborate 'wallpaper' design, which makes the wall seen no longer as a wall, but as 'wallpaper'. "The wall, in other words, has become the wallpaper, and vice versa." Carlson mainly uses flat, stencil like motifs as her work consists little of the pictorial paintings used by the three previous mentioned artists. It speaks more about the prejudice and scorn of decorative art that has occurred in America and shows that it might also belong to an elite form of art and narrate current and past events of a culture. Through her work,

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Carlson presents American reaction towards industrial kitsch and its influence on their own patterns in art practice.

"The advantage of quoting the decorative arts is that a whole range of social, cultural, and historical associations is opened up: the disadvantage is that "decorative" painting is sometimes outclassed in sheer flashy gorgeousness by the forms it imitates"\(^{167}\)

It is interesting to note how each of the four artists used pattern in their art practice. When pattern was introduced to an artwork, there were often links made to both art and craft practices. Pattern also became important when it was incorporated with other images, or architectural spaces. It then became a narrator, rather than just a plain decorator, and created discussion in and about that particular work.

MY VISUAL ART PRACTICE

This chapter mainly examines the personal experiences and observations I made during the three exhibitions I held during my Master's studies. The first took place at The Works Gallery under the title Blood Heritage, the second at The Moores Building Fremantle (Western Australia) in 2002, and the third at the St James Cavalier Center for Creativity under the title Beyond a Whisper in Valletta (Malta), 2004.

My art practice questions how far traditional Slavic motifs (patterns) can be reinvented in contemporary (Australian) art practice. What is the percentage of Slavic characteristics, styles and influences that could be incorporated into the Australian understanding (and practice) of pattern? This particular cultural exchange can be problematic, because throughout this thesis it is evident that pattern making is different in each culture. The unfamiliarity in Australian pattern making about symbolic Slavic motifs can make it difficult for the viewer to understand the message that has been presented. There is the danger that in Australia, the viewer might regard Slavic motifs as only decorations rather than narrators.

By examining the works of artists such as Carlson or even Morris, it is evident that this type of decoration or narration dilemma in pattern
making is not new, and is still current. Carlson is aware of this problem when producing her 'wallpaper' designs and tries to overcome it by incorporating historical information that deals with 'American' pattern and architectural spaces. It is these extra resources that enable Carlson to educate and narrate information to the viewer through her patterns. Other artists such as Ringgold, Snyder and Schapiro have also found ways to overcome this difficulty. They have chosen to manipulate the ideas (and practice) of pattern by incorporating it with other images. These three artists use images that are usually recognizable by their environment (culture). By doing so, there is a chance that a dialogue might develop between the viewer, the work and the artists.
In my work, I deal with pattern and cultural exchange in art practice. The difficulties that came up with using pattern were when I decided to incorporate Slavic patterns into Australian contemporary art practice. It became challenging when I needed to find a borderline between the similarities and differences that might exist between Slavic and Australian pattern making. With my first solo exhibition, Blood Heritage, which was held at The Works Gallery, I tried to present pattern as both a decorator and a narrator. Having to work with a rather large and difficult space, I decided to divide my art into two sections. Section one would be visually similar to what Carlson tried to produce through her 'wallpaper' designs. The other section would consist of motifs that were present in the wallpaper and paintings that gave an indication of a repetitive idea.

The 'wallpaper' (see image 45, 46, 47 and 48) covered one of the main front walls and small sections of other walls. This gave the impression of different wallpapers that had been removed, and only small sections that had been left behind, thus presenting different layers of existing pasts. The wallpaper was not mainly placed to represent and support the repetitive and decorative side of pattern making. It was more of a chosen image (layout) that gave support to the already familiar perception that most Australian viewers have towards pattern. It was interpreted at first as
decoration and repetition, rather than as the holder of a narrative. In a similar way, Snyder and Schapiro presented familiar images so as to catch the viewer's attention. As the viewer becomes more familiar and comfortable with the presented image, the other layer, in which messages are embedded, slowly unfolds.

My wallpaper design was made out of Slavic traditional motifs that presented symbolic messages of a culture's traditional practice. Incorporated in the designs were circles (crosses) and plant and animal images that symbolized the cycle of nature (see image 49). In the previous chapters, the reader has become familiar with the Slavic circle (cross) and how it often dominated folk artworks (compositions). The incorporation of plants and animals in my designs underlined even more the theme of regeneration and continuity (see image 50). The repetition within the motifs and the motifs themselves was meant to introduce the Slavic single motif image (repetitions) and relate it to the industrial mass production that has influenced the Australian perception of pattern making.

In this wallpaper composition, I tried to break the monotony of repetition by changing or adding extra bits to some of the motifs. In doing so, I was trying to present the imperfection of repetition that may occur during its production. The idea of chance and chaos is introduced (see Chapter Two, Pattern and Order). I tried to underline this particular idea by framing two 'original' motifs (from which all other motifs were derived). By framing the two motifs, they acquired an appearance of individuality and
uniqueness. They were no longer just one of the many repeated images, but a representation of one, making it 'elite'.

The second part of the exhibition consisted of paintings (acrylic on canvas). These studies dealt with the idea of cultural continuity and the cycle of life. Some images were more symbolical, and pattern dominated over representation and overtook the composition. These included paintings such as *From Darkness Let There Be Light*, *Siberian Story*, *Black Hole*, *Devoted Eye*, *Evolution* and the *Four Seasons*. Paintings such as *Autumn Tango*, *Echo* and *Discretion* concentrated more on studies of plant life that might later have been turned into motifs. These paintings were more case studies that later influenced the final piece, the wallpaper designs.

The repetition in the paintings is never direct. It exists within the motifs and the organization of the canvas lay out. Such was the case with the lay out of the four equal sized canvases of the work, *Autumn Tango*. The leaf changes its appearance on each canvas, representing once again the cycle of life. In many of the other paintings that consisted of plant studies (like the *Echo* series), there is once again the idea of repetition. A red line is repeated in each painting, representing the idea of continuity and creating a link between the paintings.

The risk in this visual practice was that the viewer might completely ignore the Slavic cultural traditional ideas that I tried to include. After all,
not everyone in Australia has a Slavic background or is familiar with their traditional pattern making in art and craft practice. Still, it was interesting to note that some viewers were able to see past the decorative aspect of the wallpaper and notice the incorporated cross motifs. However, often links were made more to the Celtic traditional art practice rather than the Slavic. The viewers were trying to create a connection and understanding between Australian and Slavic pattern making through their familiarity with traditional Celtic folk art. From this experience, can it be assumed that an Anglo-Celtic tradition still exists and might influence the interpretation of pattern in Australian art practice? Celtic folk art thus becoming a connecting bridge that allowed some viewers to grasp and recognize the Slavic ideas presented in a Western Australian contemporary art practice.168

168 From the above written statements it might be assumed by the reader/viewer that an Australian understanding of pattern in art practice comes mainly from an Anglo-Celtic background. I wish to mention that it is not completely so. My observations have come from the different materials that I have examined during my research, and in my daily life experience as a non Anglo-Celtic migrant. However it is important to note that currently, unlike in the past, Australia is considered as a multicultural nation, rather than an Anglo-Celtic one. There is a constant influx of new cultural understandings of what is and what could be pattern in art practice. Still, due to my current results, I feel that non Anglo-Celtic pattern making is still marginal to the mainstream life as expressed in the different types of media.Sadly with the length and time limit that has been given to me, it has not allowed me to document all the different existing possibilities.
THE MOORES BUILDING

It was also interesting to examine my work when placed next to artworks that dealt with more familiar themes. This was during the second exhibition, which was also held in Fremantle, but in a different gallery, The Moores Building. This was a group exhibition that did not have a specific theme. It consisted of a large collection of different styles and types of works (mainly paintings and drawings), mostly created by local (Fremantle) artists. This caused many of the works to share common themes such as landscapes of popular places in and around Fremantle or of portraits of close friends and nude studies of woman in black charcoal on paper.

This made my two selected paintings (Devoted Eye and one from the Echo series Message from the Past) look even more abstract. Even if my paintings were studies also taken from the local environment, they still did not depict recognizable city or beach scenes. Many of the other artists used themes that the viewer was familiar with. As such, the message(s) that the artist(s) tried to present through their work(s) was easier to determine by the viewer. They could relate more personally to the streets, beaches and shops that were depicted in the works. They have seen the juggler, they have met the lady who works behind the counter of a beach cafe. The viewer was not threatened by a new outlook on an environment
that also presented a new cultural art practice that they were not personally familiar with.

My paintings seemed to have threatened the comfortable atmosphere of familiarity. They did not represent a Fremanite landscape or a portrait of a member of a family. My paintings have become hybrids that consisted of Slavic patterns that had been reinvented in an Australian environment. These compositions tried to present a cultural exchange between Slavic and Australian pattern making in contemporary art practice. This meant the paintings became more abstract when placed next to the more pictorial narrative landscape and portraits pictured both abstractly and culturally.
After this last experience, I became more curious as to how my pattern making might be accepted not only in Australia, which has no traditional culture of pattern, but also by another culture. A culture that is not Slavic, but which has a rich heritage in pattern making in their art practice. I was curious to examine how the viewers from that culture would look and accept pattern and how they might later relate to my visual art practice. I wanted to exhibit in an environment, which like the Slavic, also had a strong background in traditional narrative and industrial pattern. I wanted to later make a comparison between the outcomes of the three exhibitions and how they related to each other.

Throughout this research, I read many books written by Marija Gimbutas. In her books, Gimbutas often mentioned the Slavic (Lithuanian) and Maltese art practices and used many visual examples such as wooden crosses (image 17) or ceramic objects (image 7) to support her arguments that were connected to pattern making in the two cultures. She examined many common motifs between the two cultures and how they were used in different compositions in architecture, on domestic or religious objects, and in nature. She presented them in texts such as *Ancient Symbolism in Lithuanian Folk Art*, *The Slavs* and *The Living Goddesses*. Gimbutas tries to examine and incorporate the cultural influences that were incorporated
into prehistoric (Neolithic) pattern making into her art practice. This gained information made me decide to exhibit my work in Malta. Since I have personally spend a short time living in Malta and have investigating the many places described by Gimbutas, I feel I am to some extend familiar with the Maltese environment and their cultural perception towards pattern making in art practice.

Traditional Maltese culture sees pattern as something that was (and still is) an important part of their cultural art practice. They, like Anthony Pace, Anthony Bonanno and David Trump, along with Gimbutas, suspected that pattern had been used (like in Slavic cultures) for aesthetic and ritualistic purposes. Their compositional designs made from pattern apparently support this idea, that “design and decoration followed non-functional pathways that may suggest a concern with aesthetics and, as suggested from the Maltese evidence, ritual ... purposes.”

Even if artists, historians and anthropologists might currently not be aware of some of the symbolic representations in some of the motifs (pattern), they do suspect that this form of art allowed for a greater interaction to occur in communication between communities, art and religion. “Art, art objects and architecture, or more significantly the communicative power of art, played a significant role in facilitating interaction between such diverse aspects of prehistoric life.”

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on domestic objects, it can be seen how much of it was part of everyday life. In image 8 and 9, the different shaped motifs represent an aspect of nature, the cycle of life. It has also been suggested by Anthony Pace that much care was given when applying pattern onto different surfaces. In the book, *Maltese Prehistoric Art*, this technique of applying pattern to a surface is presented. "Surviving megaliths suggest that spiral decorations were carefully prepared with measurements and a design stage prior to actual execution."\(^{171}\) Also, "Beyond abstract motifs, some evidence survives of underlying beliefs or concerns related to anatomical problems that may have been confronted through symbolic representation."\(^{172}\)

Maltese pattern, like Slavic, had its own symbolic traditional narrative function in cultural art practice. However, Maltese pattern making did not manage to avoid industrialization and commercialism and was quickly adopted for commercial purposes. Having a strong uninterrupted history of pattern making, and also producing one of the finest qualities of lace, these two practices were quickly unified. The traditional patterns allowed the lace industry to develop one of the finest and most intriguing designs that were later mass-produced and sold in other countries. Maltese pattern could also not avoid the tourist market. With most of their economy based on tourism, pattern started to appear as cheap imitations that were sold to tourists as souvenirs. This caused pattern to be later recognized as part of an industrial market and as an elite form of art with deep connections to a


cultural heritage. Unlike the Australian art practice, Maltese artists are aware of the current influences that dictate how pattern is recognized and produced in art practice.

I held my exhibition at the St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity (Valletta) under the title *Beyond a Whisper*. The space in itself was different to others I had worked in before, and was also difficult because the gallery was located in an old fort considered by the government as an important heritage building in Maltese military and architectural history. This caused a limitation of wall space in which artwork could be hanged and influenced how my work could be represented to the viewer. I decided to avoid working with the wallpaper concept and tried instead to concentrate on paintings (acrylic on canvas). The paintings had to become both the wall decorations and the main narrators. I wished to incorporate the two existing sides of pattern making, the industrial and the narrative, by placing them together.

I decided to incorporate a lot of 'lace' and tablecloth imitations in my paintings because, as mentioned previously, Malta is renowned for its lace making, which includes the production of pattern and its designs. Lace enabled me to visually present both a divider and connector between industrial and prehistoric pattern making. This is similar to how I tried to use the ‘wallpaper’ effect in the *Blood Heritage* exhibition. Malta is familiar with lace making and can relate to it, just as Australia is familiar with William Morris’s and can relate to his wallpapers designs (*Jasmine*).
In most of my paintings, I wanted to represent the contrast of the two types of patterns that tend to currently exist in contemporary art in Western culture. In the compositions, there is a more organic, single motif that draws from prehistoric Slavic (Neolithic) symbolic patterns. It is a representation of a rhythmic, and yet 'loose' composition. The lines weave together a complex system of narrative that has a far from purely decorative purpose. Next to this pattern, I introduced an industrial, very much controlled and repetitive pattern. Even if this pattern tended to imitate in some instances the prehistoric one, its style and placement was different. It was either as a lace, a fabric, the cover of a book, or a border design of an object. The layout of the composition of the paintings leaned toward a still life. Through this imitation of a still life, I tried to produce the feeling of snapshot images from a mainly birds-eye point of view. I wanted to create them as if they were taken from an intimate, private surrounding. As if in my drawings or sketches, that was the presence of someone who was near, someone who would come back soon to collect the things that had been left behind, to make order again and to place the things in their correct place.

The paintings were not all at eye level. They were hung at different levels, depending on the composition of each painting. For example, Impatiens was hung at eye level. The painted curtain is parted in the middle of the canvas, creating the illusion that there is something behind it. The curtain represents a peephole that allows someone to look through and see a
different world, a world that is hidden from everyday life, thus making it a mystery. The unknown world is only partly revealed, tempting and pulling human curiosity toward it and making the viewer speculate. Curiosity was hung below eye level, on the side of a wall. I wanted it to give the effect of paper being peeled off the wall, revealing another layer that has been hidden behind the clean white painted gallery wall. Is this revealed pattern part of a wallpaper or a single motif? Is it an industrial pattern, folklore or more of a hybrid with combined motifs from animals and plants? Pattern and Lace gives the impression of a close up birds-eye point of view snapshot. Once again, there is a questioning of what is reality and what is imagination in the composition. Is the single motif a part of the puzzle, or is it made into a puzzle? By repeating the imitation of cutout shapes that are still individual and unique (one single motif), this pattern compares to an industrially made pattern. The lace has more controlled repetitive images that seem different when displayed next to the organic one.

In most of the paintings, I wished to establish a story that narrates the two styles of pattern being caught together in a particular surrounding. I wanted to make the viewer question, compare and examine the two styles. In Industrial Revolution, the two styles of pattern are placed next to each other. Apart from the controlled repetitive geometric pattern and the more symbolic single motif (symbolizing the circle), there is no other visual supportive image. The repetition in the single motif is more the idea of it being round, a constant never ending motion.
I was unable to stay for the entire duration of my exhibition in Malta. Despite that, the gallery was kind enough to pass on to me some of the comments, feedback, letters and newspaper articles that were written about my work. I was surprised to find out that students from the University of Malta were interested in my exhibition and apparently did some work on it. Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain their written remarks and comments. The letters that I received were mostly thank you messages. The article in *Malta Today*, which was also under the same title as my exhibition, *Beyond a Whisper*, concentrated on my theme of how I tried to compare the two styles of pattern that tend to exist in pattern making (see document 1). The verbal comments and article made me feel that the public had responded in a much more positive way than in Australia and gave me the impression that the Maltese public were able to relate much more intimately to these paintings and to my theme.

These three experiences made me wonder as to how far traditional motifs could be reinvented in (Australian) contemporary practice. I think it might depend on the surrounding culture itself, and the relationship it has with pattern making in art practice. It is also important to familiarize yourself with a particular culture's pattern making in art practice. Australian art practice is more aware of industrial patterns, although there is a slight understanding of Celtic tradition. This made it to some extend difficult for me to present prehistoric Slavic pattern to a culture far removed from this from of art practice. In Malta, it was much easier because prehistoric patterns in Malta still had a quite strong impact on art practice and some
similarities in ideas and symbolism to Slavic pattern making. This meant that I felt less limited in presenting Slavic motifs, being aware that the viewer could relate to them more easily.

During each exhibition, I became aware of just how difficult it could be to work with pattern, especially in a culture far removed from traditional folk art practice. There has to be a balance between how great a need there is to introduce traditional motifs into one's art practice and how many supportive props are required to successfully explain them. I feel that purely relying on traditional motifs in current Australian and Maltese art practice is not enough. Communication in a visual form has expended and changed with time in Western culture, giving us more diversity and mediums to use. As a result, and similarly to Ringgold, Snyder, Schapiro and even Carlson, I feel that there is a need to include other supportive materials with pattern at this stage. These materials will help pattern visually communicate and narrate art practice to the viewer.
An image taken from Faith Ringgold's children's story book *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*. The patterns have incorporated within the figures and landscape so as to narrate the story better.
Image 40. Joan Snyder, *Tiny Garden*, (1995), herbs, oil, acrylic on linen, 12" x 18".
Image 41. Joan Snyder, *The Orchard/The Altar*; (1986), mixed media on canvas, 6' x 8'.

In both of the two paintings Joan Snyder has incorporated pattern with other images. Together they support one another, making her message easier to the audience more easily.
Miriam Schapiro has used pattern as a prominent background that produces a narrative atmosphere in her work.
Cynthia Carlson has incorporated paintings and pattern into this architectural space. She has drawn from the space’s history, and has later presented her research through pattern. Here pattern is no longer regarded as decoration but as a visual narrator.
My Blood Heritage exhibition that was held at The Works Gallery in Fremantle (Western Australia) between 2nd of August to 11 of August 2002.


My *Blood Heritage* exhibition that was held at The Works Gallery in Fremantle (Western Australia) between 2nd of August to 11th of August 2002.

Motifs that were later incorporated into a wallpaper design for the *Blood Heritage* exhibition.
Motifs that were later incorporated into a wallpaper design for the *Blood Heritage* exhibition.
Image 52. Iliana Helena Jordanov, *Devoted Eye*, (2002), acrylic on canvas 30 (w) x 30 (h) centimeters.
Beyond a Whisper

As an artist specialising in pattern making, Iliana Jordanov has been pleasantly captivated by the uniqueness of Maltese prehistoric patterns.

From an outsider's point of view, it is interesting to examine how these patterns have used and incorporated into the everyday lives of Maltese visual culture. For the past ten years, the artist has been surrounded by Australian industrial repetitive and decorative pattern and it was easy for her to observe how the pattern in Malta represents stability and has not been interrupted in its history.

The circular, spiral motifs that can be found on the numerous excavated pottery and on temples like the Hypogeum, are visually different to the bold geometric designs that have been often considered by contemporary Australian art as pattern.

Jordanov believes that the reason for their visual presentations and appearance are due to the different backgrounds that the two patterns have derived from. The Australian pattern derives mainly from the Industrial Revolution that took place in the nineteenth century, while Maltese pattern goes back to the Neolithic period.

This new outlook on pattern making in art practice has inspired Iliana Jordanov to try and incorporate the two styles - and outlooks - on pattern making in her paintings. Through narrative compositions she has tried to present the particular functions that may exist in each of their cultures. There is the individual organic pattern that is autonomous, or there is the industrial pattern that has been incorporated into a napkin, tablecloth or wallpaper. The industrial pattern has no longer as individual quality, but a quality of mass production that has been used to highlight other objects like a teacup, or a table.

Iliana Jordanov’s exhibition was launched yesterday at St James Cavalier, in Valletta and runs till 26 March.

Iliana Jordanov capturing the uniqueness of Maltese prehistoric pattern.
Throughout this thesis, I have examined the ability of pattern to communicate and the role it has in my own creative practice. I have identified that its narrative abilities, which once had strong links to cultural identity, are diminishing as cultural globalization increases.

The main debate in this thesis centred on the function of pattern as a decorator and/or narrator in art practice. The suggestion is that pattern making in industrial communities might have lost its ability to narrate. The slow disintegration of visual communication in pattern has caused a lack of familiarity with symbolic motifs. Motifs that were once able to narrate long forgotten tales of the past, gods, nature, a culture's heritage, belief and traditions have slowly given way to a new type of pattern making that presents a different world.

Industrialized culture has become dislocated from traditional practice, and the traditional functions of pattern making have been eroded in the process, being re-categorized as either craft or kitsch. The removal of pattern from its previous functions and contexts further dislocates it, and with dislocation comes the loss of its original purpose in a culture. This forces it to acquire new values and functions to fulfill in order to survive in art practice.
‘Globalization’ has forced new roles on pattern. The term ‘globalization’ comes originally from the world ‘global’, which stands for “being worldwide” and ‘globalization’ is ‘the process of spreading various objects and experiences to people at all corners of the earth’.”\(^{173}\) Also, “‘globalization’ entails a ‘reconfiguration of geography, so that social space is no longer wholly mapped in terms of territorial places, territorial distances and territorial borders.’”\(^{174}\) Globalization is a term given to something that pulls in and tries to unify different ideas, customs, traditions and practices under one roof and onto a global scale. Globalization means that once isolated communities, in which traditional cultural practices have continued with little disturbance from the outside world, are no longer isolated. They are forced to open up to the world, thus making them more vulnerable. This causes such cultures to change their perception of the values of the culture that they have. So, where does the role of pattern making fit into all this? How can a de-conceptualised pattern still relate to contemporary art practice?

Globalization has picked up from where industrialization left off by diminishing even further the existing cultural differences in pattern making. This is especially evident in Australian cultural practice. With the spread of globalization, the ‘unification’ of countries, cultures and


practices under different unions is becoming more common. However, intercultural practice might still appear to be difficult sometimes because of newly introduced ideas. In my own creative circumstances, it is clear that some cultures might be more eager to accept outside ideas because they are similar to their own, as it was with the exhibition in Malta, \textit{Beyond a Whisper}. Other cultures, however, accept ideas with caution, as was the case with my two exhibitions in Australia, \textit{Blood Heritage} and at The Moores Building.

I continue to believe that pattern is still able to enchant a certain surface or space. It can still narrate a cultural past, its identity and traditions. Praxis suggests that its ability to communicate depends on how it has been presented, in what culture it has been displayed, and the point of view the viewer is looking at it from.
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