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Pattern Research Project

Dept. of Interior Design

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## Pattern Research Project: An Investigation of The Pattern And Printing Process - Golden Age

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# Golden Age

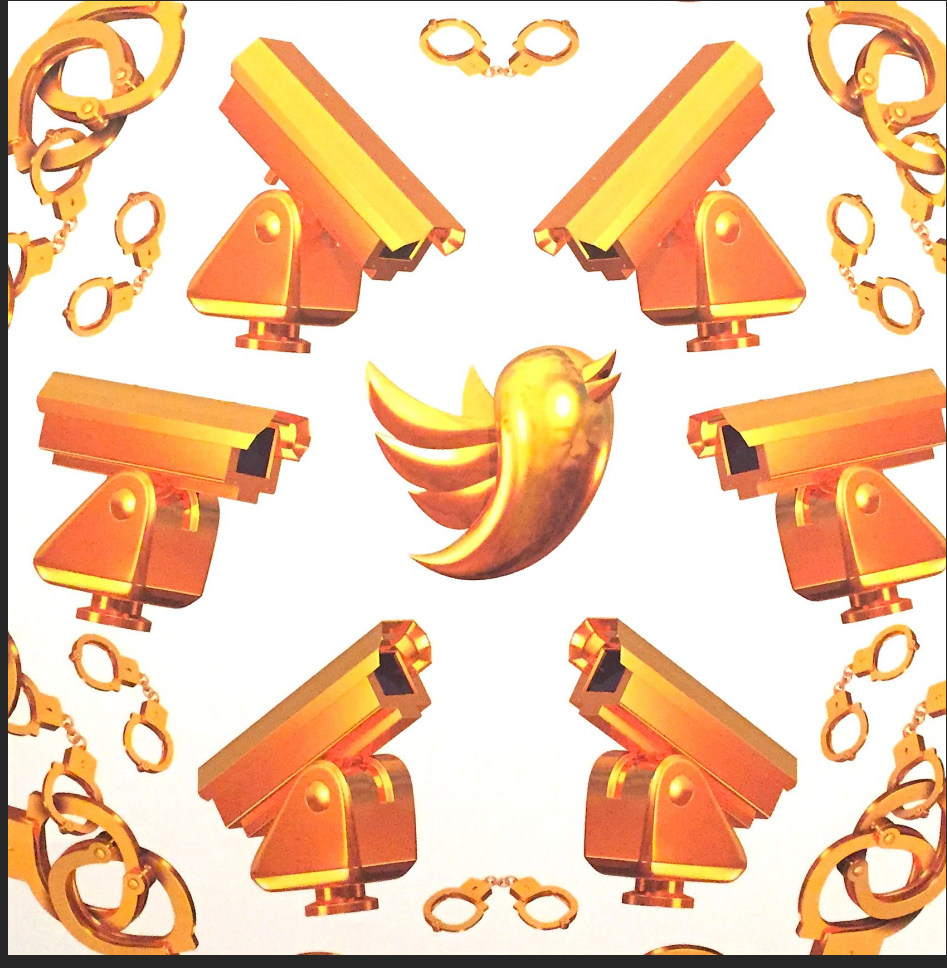






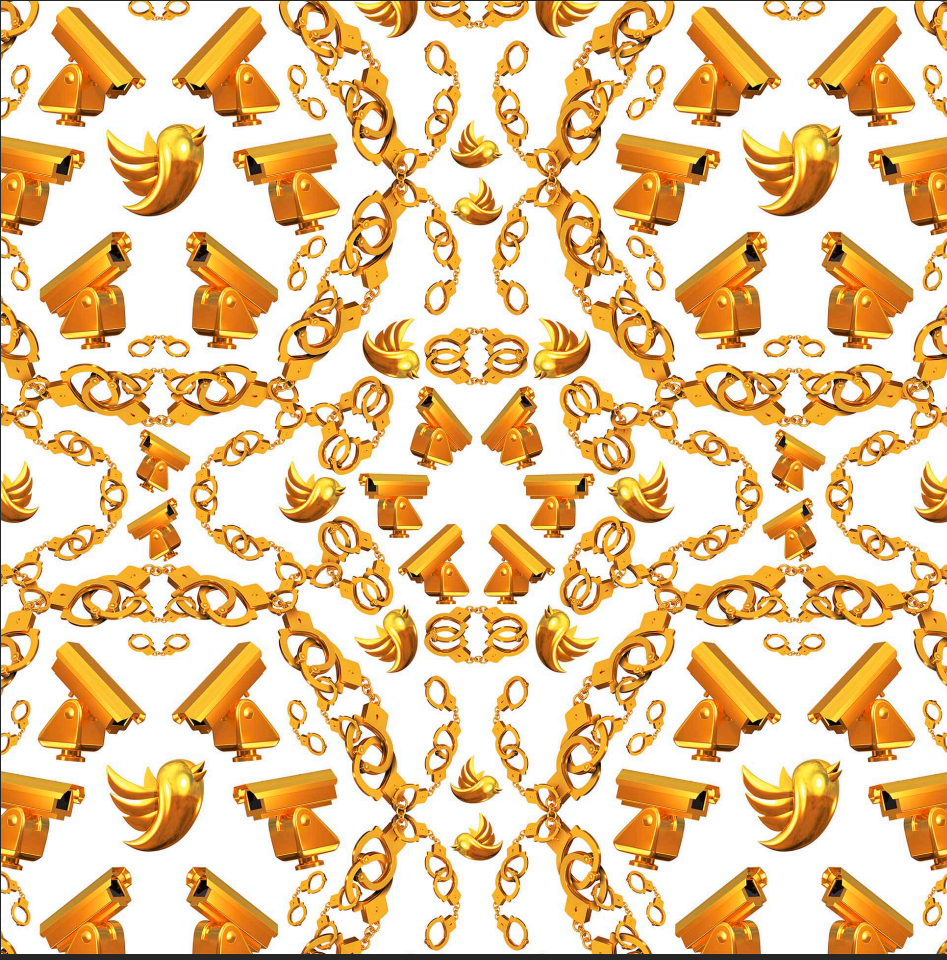
Michael Rogers  
IDES 2018

2014



This enlarged section of the first wallpaper pattern contains Ai Weiwei's face on the Twitter bird logo, this is removed in Maharam's print.

2014



This wallpaper contains a simple regular repeat, with a very rotational rhythm. The layout forces an implied grid which plays on the rigid nature of the pattern.

2016



This wallpaper version has added lucky cats, a symbol regular to Chinese culture, with a very un-common body type and a very stretched feel.

2018



This wallpaper version has reimagined the first iteration and appears more complex and dimensional.

Citations:

AI, WEIWEI. (2016). Retrieved from <https://iriscovetbook.com/ai-weiwei/>

Ai Weiwei: According to What? (2014, April). Retrieved from [https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/ai\\_weiwei/](https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/ai_weiwei/)

Brady, A. (2010). Marketing dictatorship: Propaganda and thought work in contemporary China. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Maharham. (2018) Ai Weiwei Golden Age Wallpaper Images. <https://www.maharam.com/products/golden-age-by-ai-weiwei/colors/001>

Taylor, P. M. (2008). Munitions of the mind: A history of propaganda from the ancient world to the present era. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Weiwei, Ai. (2006-2009) Ai Weiwei's Blog: Writings, Interviews, and Digital Rants. Mit Press.

## Wallpaper Evolution

Seen to the left, the pattern has evolved in multiple iterations over time and the evolution is reflective of value and societal change rather than any alterations to the processes by which the pattern has been formed. As more security and limitations are placed on the masses, Ai Weiwei illustrates how one freed voice does not represent an entirely free nation.

## Intent of Pattern

This pattern was intended as a piece of both propaganda and art and it has an extended audience that can be expanded to include the entire world as artist Ai Weiwei voiced his oppression and the oppressed that do not have a voice in China's authoritarian state (AI, 2016)

Similar to historical precedents this wallpaper progression was intended to voice the ongoing strife felt by a group of people. Ai Weiwei has repeatedly used this them in his work, creating pieces to be shared and seen by the masses in public and private spaces worldwide. This wallpaper pattern is meant to spark discussion on the issues of public versus private, seen globally. Ai Weiwei's intended message being the difficulties of Communism and its continued effect on the global society we are presently apart of as 'global citizens' (Weiwei, 2009).

Imbedded in the pattern, Ai Weiwei has used the literal motifs of the well known Twitter logo, locked handcuffs, and security cameras; all shining in gold. (Ai Weiwei, 2014) The layout focuses attention on the contained Twitter birds as well. Upon further examination each Twitter logo contains a reflection of the artist himself. The geometric relations between each literal motif bring a sense of hierarchy to the security cameras. Ai Weiwei's logic behind the motif is representative of the increased surveillance and lack of freedom present in Chinese society due to the overarching power of the Chinese government. (AI WEIWEI, 2016) Ai Weiwei uses this arrangement to tell a story and in a sense proclaims injustice similarly to styles seen in propaganda throughout Chinese history, especially those from the era of dictator Mao Zedong. (Taylor, 2008)

## Size & Color

The scale of each repeat in Ai Weiwei's Golden age wallpaper pattern is 27 x 27 inches square and the following wallpaper progression contains variations that share the increased scale bringing a sense of hierarchy to the security cameras and gold clad handcuffs as well as to the lucky cats seen in the latter. (Ai Weiwei, 2014) Lastly, as stated before Gold, has traditional roots to the Chinese imperial family, and has been for years reserved for nobility. (Brady, 2010)

## About the Artist

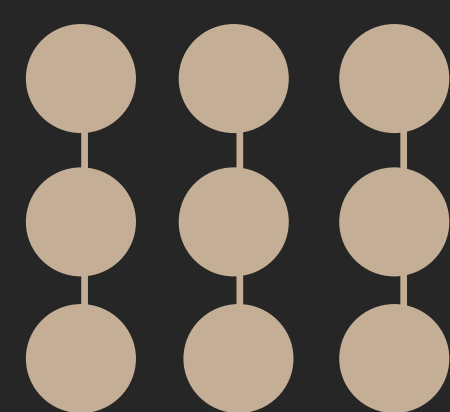
Artist and designer, Ai Weiwei came into light years ago as his studio and work became a threat to the Chinese Government and he was ousted for his accusations toward China and through the viral nature of his fame, was spared from the long arm of Chinese law. To put Ai Weiwei's fear into scale, in 2012, Beijing's Public Security Bureau had announced the city is was 100% covered by CCTV cameras! (excluding restrooms) and this became a trigger topic on which Ai Weiwei began to investigate. This pattern, Golden Age, strictly beams down on President Xi Jinping's mass censorship of Chinese media and public outlets. It is a digital print wallpaper produced by Maharam design group. Sculptures also go along with this as pictured to the left. Having a single repeat size of 27" V, 27" H, this wallpaper is overt in its enunciation on security and censorship privileges.

## Inspiration

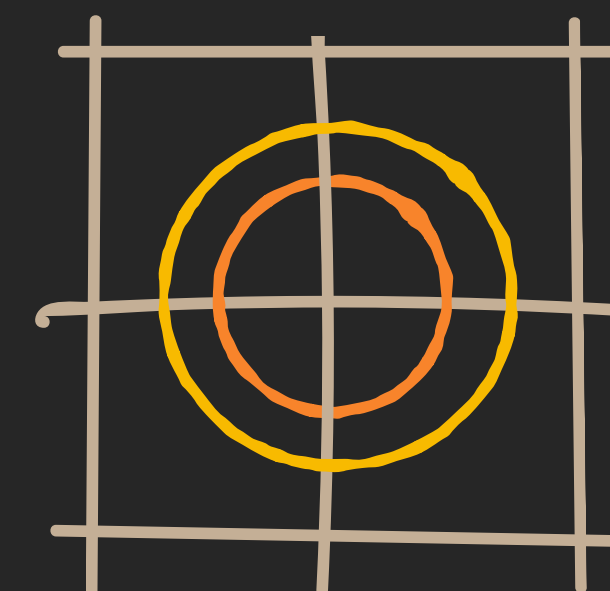
Ai Weiwei credits lots of his voice to his understanding of the Pop Art movement and pivotal artists like Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol, and their predecessor Jasper Johns. As Ai Weiwei continues to create, his work has unfolded in a more critical light. His work as an undefined body, can be defined by the viewer and in turn will gain more traction and depth on his interpretation than any label would.

## Precedent

Dan Funderburgh's Vigilant Floral wallpaper, created four years prior to Ai Weiwei's design, set a precedent of incorporating new and old ideas into a wallpaper form. Both wallpapers include a motif of surveillance cameras in each repeat. Additionally both artists have chosen to use classical french wallpaper styles in their pieces showing the new formality of mass surveillance in day to day life as well as highlighting the importance of acknowledging this action and its possible repercussions. Neither wallpaper is textured, yet both stole characteristics of damask styles in French royal prints. By using a French style to voice opposition to mass censorship, Ai Weiwei is uniting a rallying cry, a revolution of the people, once more to stand up for what they know is just.



Abstracted pattern of simple repeat



Abstracted pattern consistent in each variation

If you look closely the Twitter icon hides Ai Weiwei's face on its breast.



Representation of Golden Age wallpaper installed (Maharam)

**Common threads:**  
Representation of how surveillance is the leading force in China. (Taylor, 2008)

Gold color scheme and emphasis on the use of the Twitter logo as a symbol for social media in each developing iteration



Selection of colors in the pattern used in all variations, duplicates present show growth.

I think those technology platforms constantly put the government on trial. And every event, every policy they make, people will laugh about it, and they will make fun about it. This is amazing for the younger generation.

- Ai Weiwei

"An artwork unable to make people feel uncomfortable or to feel different is not one worth creating. This is the difference between the artist and the fool."

-Ai Weiwei

