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Honors Creative Project

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A Creative Project Reflection

The natural world is all around us and throughout history, in both written and visual methods of communication, organic patterns based in nature have played a large part in how we as individuals interpret and interact with the world. Organic material is at the forefront of our minds as we navigate through the challenges that life throws at us, and for me, I wanted to celebrate this through my own artistic journey. The natural world for me is a large part of my own work, academically, personally, and professionally, and over the years my artistic style has grown because of it. It has grown to meld together both the natural world and modern design.

While looking at my work in recent years, I can see a shift in the way I approached creative projects and the progression from colorful imagery to black and white, especially in my pattern-based work. My younger brother is quite severely colorblind and growing up his coloring books wouldn't follow a conventional color palette. I watched him struggle with this for years, and even as an adult, he continues to struggle with this in his day-to-day life. I wanted to create work that would be better suited to those that struggle with color and can't see it as well as myself and others.

During my time at college, I have taken several printmaking classes. These classes sparked something, they sparked a newfound passion, one which I think will stay with me well into the future. I had dabbled in the medium before but had not really pursued it fully. I felt the need to learn more as I felt a strong connection to it. I began to delve deeper into the art form and started to develop a cohesive body of work.

After exploring different areas of printmaking, I decided that I wanted to combine both my love for illustration and graphic design to create something that I could be proud of and call my own while

utilizing all the skills that I had nurtured and developed throughout my degree. I decided to focus on British wildflowers as they are something that symbolizes both my personal and artistic growth via my journey from the United Kingdom to the United States. I wanted to stay connected to home and bring part of that natural world with me and create something more permanent.

The Process

I sat and mulled over how I wanted to incorporate all the skills that I had learned. Did I want it to be a form of printmaking that was more traditional, a timeless classic, or did I want to move forward and create something that would be based in the digital age? That was the first question that I asked myself as it would inform a lot of the decisions throughout the design process. After much deliberation, I decided on digital. Going this route would give me the best opportunity to combine my love for digital printmaking and use the skills that I learned through graphic design. Instead of blindly jumping into the process, I wanted to sit down and create a loose plan that would be like the outlining of a research project.

Initial research – As a guide, I used a collection of my own flower photography that I had gathered over the years from the UK to develop a list of the flowers that I wanted to focus on. Many of these flowers were reminiscent of flowers found on long walks through forests as a child. I also drew loose inspiration from the artist William Morris (1834-1896) famous for his pattern design, as much of his work features organic plant forms and wildlife.

Moodboards – An integral part of my own design process to help explore different ideas and set my work on the right track. This is usually a collection of imagery that relates to the style of the project and helps inform design choices so that everything will stay consistent.

Sketches – These are usually quick and loose; the idea is to get thoughts down on paper as quickly as possible. The drawings don't have to be perfect; they just have to exist.

Compositions – These are like sketches but larger, more detailed and take ideas from the sketches to make them neater and more refined. I worked traditionally through this and the previous stage as there is a sense of permanence with pen and paper and would allow for mistakes to remain visible.

Initials – These are as complete as possible and are where the shift to the digital medium happens. In my case, I had decided early on that I would be working in the Procreate app on the iPad as this allowed for the use of a symmetry tool that I had had success with previously.

Full Designs – This step required feedback from both my mentor and other students. While I wanted to create something for myself, I also thought it important to gather critique from different sources, as this would allow me to create for both myself and others.

Printing – I decided that I wanted to print large scale using a large format printer.

Exhibition – I wanted to display my work publicly, so to achieve this I displayed it at the end-of-semester show.

Constraints



Figure 1 Large Scale Print of 'British Wildflowers' by Megan Quinn

While I felt very much at home throughout the project, it wasn't without problems. The overall illustration went smoothly, and it was a joy to create, though when I had completed the drawing, I realized too late that I had switched up the canvas size to be much smaller than I had originally anticipated. This caused the final print that would be displayed in the exhibition to be 16"x16" as opposed to the larger 30"x30" that I had intended it to be. This was my fault and due to the strict timeline that the gallery had for dropping off work, I was limited to the smaller print for display. Fortunately, the file size was able to be resized and changed a couple of weeks later, so I was able to print large scale as originally intended. (Figure 1)

Visual Analysis

Visual analysis is a technical and personal description of the work, and no one will be the same. So, I have decided to include a short and condensed analysis from my own point of view as the artist, to give a better sense of the work and what I wanted to show. This will be based on Figure 2, as shown below.

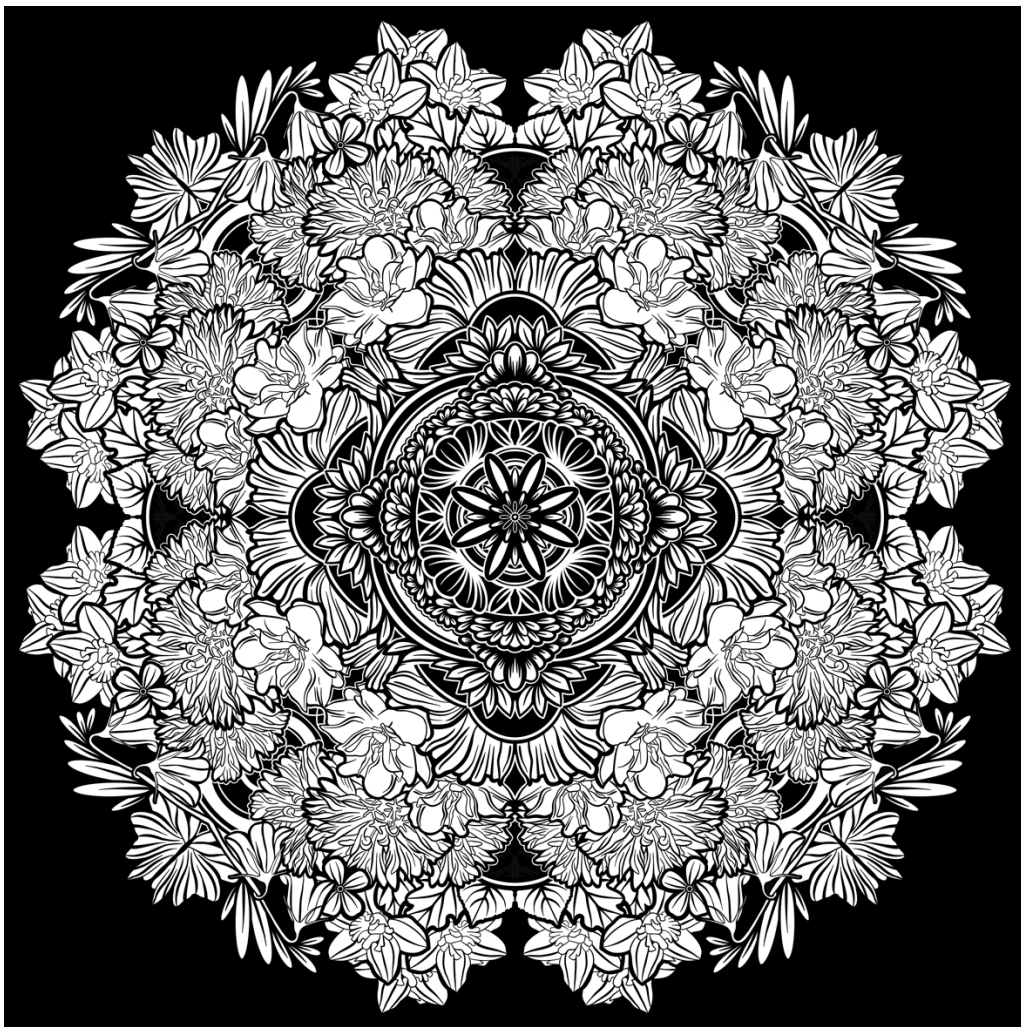


Figure 2 'British Wildflowers' by Megan Quinn

Firstly, the piece is in black and white with a black background. The lack of color could be reminiscent of negative emotions, or it could be indicative of a coloring book, allowing the work to take on an interactive element. The piece contains a variety of different flowers in a symmetrical design. This allows the piece to feel well-balanced and gives a sense of calmness to the viewer. The flowers are drawn in a way that is similar to a bouquet where petals and leaves overlap one another, organized yet still organic, like a seasonal wreath, given the circular motion of the organic elements.

The line weight appears to be an important element in the work. There are a variety of thick and thin lines that taper out at the beginning and end to add visual interest and a more stylized approach. These lines appear more illustrative than realistic, almost like the artist was trying to portray the work in a comic book style. In the center of the image, this stylized approach is more prominent as the elements feel more pattern based as opposed to realistic in terms of floral designs. This lessens the further the flowers reach the outer edges of the image. The thicker line weight outlined on some of the flowers creates visual interest by guiding the eye through the image, leading to many of the repeating elements.

The sense of balance is strong as it appears as though it was drawn with symmetry in mind. The work is separated into four squares with each respective square mirrored. If the illustrative qualities of the image reached the edge, then it could be part of a much larger series of tiles which in turn could be used for a wide range of pattern designs. The illustration doesn't reach the edge, so it is indicative of a singular image as opposed to a larger body of work. This is interesting as it allows the work to breathe with the negative space that is left on the outer edges.

The above piece of writing is a short and condensed version of a visual analysis that can be undertaken by anyone that is viewing a piece of art or design. It's good practice to look at work and allow your mind to run free with what the work means to you. What I see may be completely different to what someone else sees.

Conclusion

Overall, I found the project to reflect my time at college quite well. I have seen a large growth in my work and have seen also seen myself grow as an artist. I have found that my approach to art and design has also changed immensely. Before, I found it hard to start projects and would frequently jump into just drawing as opposed to sitting down and planning out my work as I did for this creative effort. This project taught me the importance of planning and time allotment, and for that, I am grateful as I will take those skills forward into my job as a graphic designer. While I was encouraged over my academic journey to explore color, I stuck with my original principles of making my art colorblind-friendly, and while restrictive in certain ways, I am glad that I have fallen into that style. I feel proud of my work and would encourage others to do the same. To take the time to think about their work and follow their guiding principles, so they too, can create something they feel strongly about and most importantly, proud of.